

May-June 2014

# Video Librarian

VOL. 29 ■ THE VIDEO REVIEW MAGAZINE FOR LIBRARIES ■ NO. 3

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Love in the Animal Kingdom | I Am Divine | The Iran Job | Moon Man | 16 Acres | Let the Fire Burn | The Booker | Vikings

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

### Contributing Writers

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

### Additional Contributors:

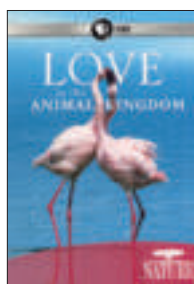
Sean Axmaker  
 Carson Block  
 Charles Cassady  
 Ted Fry  
 Fran Gardner  
 Phil Hall  
 Tom Keogh  
 Kendahl Kruger  
 Lisa Martincik  
 Michael Sandlin

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

### Love in the Animal Kingdom ★★★

(2013) 60 min. DVD: \$19.99 (\$42.99 w/PPR), Blu-ray: \$24.99 (\$42.99 w/PPR). PBS Video (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-999-5 (dvd), 978-1-60883-003-9 (blu-ray).



In the natural world, courtship serves as a vital aspect of ensuring the survival of the species. Just as with humans, in many cases the female is in control, watching as the male struts, dances, and displays, looking for physical clues as to whether he would be a good partner to nurture and protect offspring. Filmmaker Mark Fletcher's PBS-aided *Nature* documentary examines animal mating rituals, asking whether love or affection plays any part in the process. In the vast, snowy wilderness of the Arctic, male polar bears use their keen sense of smell to locate receptive mates. The tropical bird of paradise performs a show for the female, scattering berries on his "stage," before executing elaborate, colorful dances. The gorilla looks to create a female harem, using bluster to ward off rivals, and employing staring as a seduction ploy. Long-tailed lemurs

of Madagascar parade for females, while the usually placid male bison wallows in his own urine to scare off other males, offering a testosterone soaked come-on to the ladies. Some animals play hard to get, and in cases of infidelity, some—such as the blue-footed boobies of the Galápagos Islands—forgive, but do not forget, rolling any eggs sired by rivals out of the nest. How much of this is truly related to what we consider love may be open to question, but the fact is that some animals do pair for life and many will protect their offspring. And in a poignant case shown here featuring two African flamingos, a partner stays with a stricken mate right to the end. Combining vivid footage, information, humor, and a playful musical score, this examination of mating rituals and bonding in the animal kingdom is recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

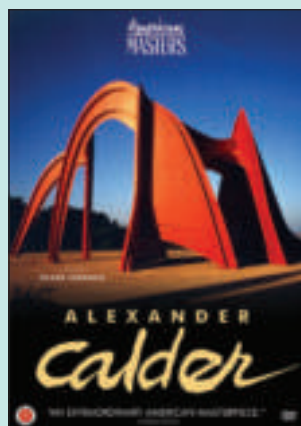
### VL at ALA

*Video Librarian* will be exhibiting at the American Library Association's Annual Conference in Las Vegas, June 27-30. Please drop by our booth (#1960) to say hello!

Cover photo credit: Mountain Gorillas. Rwanda, Africa. ©Andy Rouse/Naturepl.com

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## ALEXANDER CALDER

57 minutes, color, SRP: \$24.95, FRF 915953D

**STREET DATE: MAY 6**

The definitive portrait of one of the preeminent artists of the 20th century, and the inventor of an art form, the mobile. This acclaimed film shows Calder at work in his studio and never-before-seen archival films and photographs.

*"An extraordinary American masterpiece."*

-Charlie Rose

*"The film does a wonderful job exploring and explaining the inspiration behind the artist. Like Calder's art, it's self-assured and singularly delightful."*

-New York Daily News



## MERCEDES SOSA: THE VOICE OF LATIN AMERICA

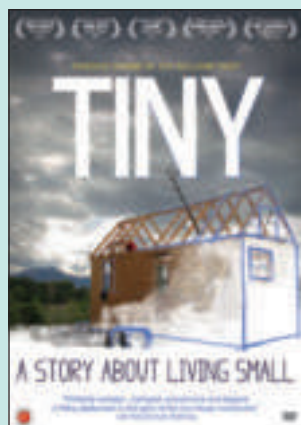
93 minutes, color, SRP: \$24.95, FRF 915915D

**STREET DATE: MAY 6**

Over a 50 year career, Mercedes Sosa built a legacy as an artist who went beyond the borders of music to become one of the most influential and loved personalities of the 20th century.

This intimate documentary reveals Sosa's early life and her rise to worldwide stardom while exploring the impact she had on the musical and political heritage of Latin America...and the world.

*"A deeply loving portrait that proves quite rewarding."* -Film Journal



## TINY: A STORY ABOUT LIVING SMALL

62 minutes, color, SRP: \$24.95, FRF 915984D

**STREET DATE: JUNE 3**

In the last 40 years, the average size of a new house has almost doubled. Yet in recent years, many are redefining their American Dream to focus on quality of life over quantity of space. These 'Tiny Housers' live in homes smaller than a parking space. *Tiny* takes us inside several tiny homes, exploring the owners' stories and the design innovations that make them work.

*"Perfectly realized. A fitting testament to the spirit of the tiny house movement."*

-Hot Docs Film Festival



## BROWNIAN MOVEMENT

97 minutes, color, SRP: \$24.95, FRF 915946D

**STREET DATE: MAY 6**

Charlotte is a doctor living in Brussels with her husband, Max, and their son. She leads a normal, harmonious life – except for the fact that she secretly maintains an apartment where she has sex with her patients, selecting them as if setting up a scientific experiment. When Max finds out about this unusual situation, their relationship is put to the test.

*"Provocative adult drama...a daring exploration...challenges conventional thinking around sex and relationships."*

-Screen Daily



## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

109 minutes, color, SRP: \$24.95, FRF 915991D

In French with English subtitles

**STREET DATE: JUNE 3**

A delightfully funny yet sharp French film about a first-time father-to-be, whose choice of name for his future offspring throws his family and friends into chaos.

*"Critic's Pick! Uproarious!"*

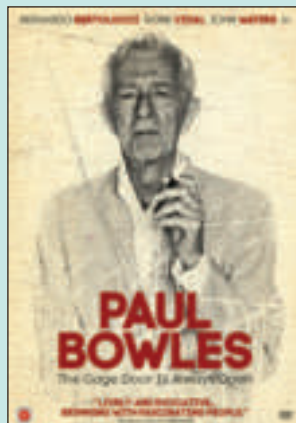
-The New York Times

*"Hilarious! Smart & witty."*

-Variety

*"Delightful! Full of ribald humor and compelling, intelligent debate."*

-Village Voice



## PAUL BOWLES: THE CAGE DOOR IS ALWAYS OPEN

87 minutes, color, SRP: \$24.95, FRF 916028D

**STREET DATE: JUNE 17**

Bernardo Bertolucci, John Waters and Gore Vidal are featured in this cinematic portrait that deciphers the turbulent writing and mysterious persona of Paul Bowles, who moved to Morocco and wrote the novel *The Sheltering Sky*, and who also became an inspiration to the Beat Generation.

*"Lively and evocative. This thoroughly researched documentary is brimming with fascinating people."*

-The Hollywood Reporter



## TOP HAT & TALES: HAROLD ROSS AND THE MAKING OF THE NEW YORKER

47 minutes, color, SRP: \$19.95, FRF 916011D

**STREET DATE: JUNE 17**

How a high school drop-out and miner's son from Colorado began the iconic magazine is the subject of this engaging documentary. Interviews with John Updike, Roz Chast, David Remnick, Roy Blount, Jr. and others shed light on how *The New Yorker's* signature style and content were shaped by its early contributors, including E.B. White, James Thurber, Charles Addams and J. D. Salinger.

*"This charming film reflects the glamorous era into which The New Yorker was born."*

-The New York Times



## 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



## GOD LOVES UGANDA

83 minutes, color, SRP: \$24.95  
FRF 915960D  
STREET DATE: MAY 19

*"A searing look at the role of American evangelical missionaries in the persecution of gay Africans."*

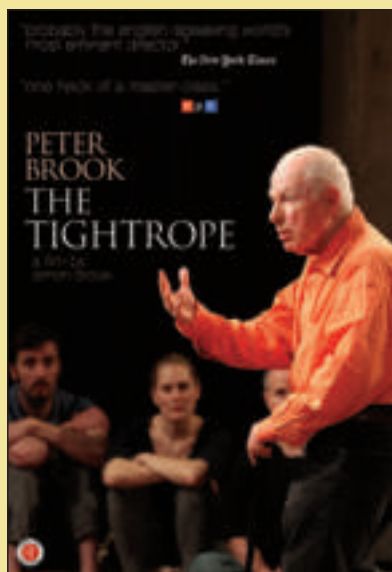
-The New York Times

*"An extraordinary, excellent film."*

-MSNBC

*God Loves Uganda* explores the role of the American Evangelical movement in fueling Uganda's terrifying turn towards biblical law and the death penalty for homosexuality. Thanks to charismatic and well-financed religious leaders, these draconian new laws and the politicians that peddle them are winning over the Ugandan public. But these dangerous policies and the money that fuels them aren't coming from Africa; they're being imported from some of America's largest megachurches.

Using vérité, interviews, and hidden camera footage, the film allows American religious leaders and their young missionaries to explain their positions in their own words.



## PETER BROOKS: THE TIGHTROPE

83 minutes, color, SRP: \$24.95  
FRF 915977D  
STREET DATE: JUNE 3

*"Offers a rare glimpse behind the scenes."*

-The New York Times

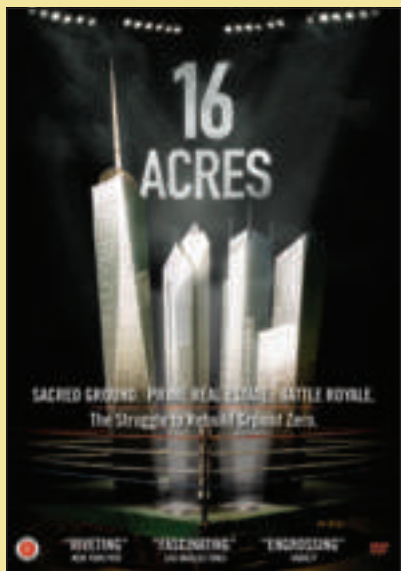
*"It's difficult to imagine any living actor who wouldn't want to see Simon Brook's inspiring documentary."*

-Screen International

**"CRITICS' PICK!"** Brook offers himself as a teacher whose goal is to help his students discover brief, ephemeral moments of bliss.

-The Village Voice

Peter Brook is one of the world's most respected and revolutionary directors of contemporary theatre. To help his actors achieve extraordinary performances, he has a special exercise, 'the Tightrope,' that evolved over decades of experimentation and practice into a process of transformation that revitalizes the theatrical experience for actor and audience alike. In this unique film, director Simon Brook-Peter's son-reveals how 'the Tightrope' works its dramatic alchemy.



## 16 ACRES

92 minutes, color, SRP: \$24.95  
FRF 915861D  
STREET DATE: MAY 20

*"Riveting."*

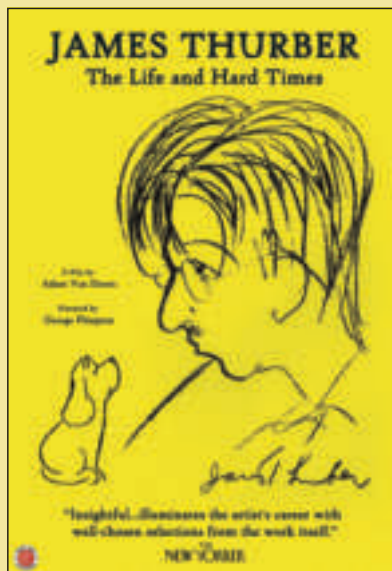
-New York Post

*"Inclsive and absorbing. This fascinating portrait builds a concise, enlightening account from a decade of confusion."*

-Los Angeles Times

Rebuilding Ground Zero is the most architecturally, politically, and emotionally complex construction project in recent American history. The struggle to develop these 16 acres of 'sacred' land has encompassed 12 years, 19 government agencies, and over \$20 billion, as various constituencies – politicians, developers, architects, insurers, local residents, and relatives of 9/11 victims – profess conflicting claims to the site.

*16 Acres* is the story of how and why this historic project got built. At the heart of the story is the dramatic tension between noblest intentions, the desire of everyone involved to "get it right," and the politics, hubris, ego and ideology that is the bedrock of New York City.



## JAMES THURBER: THE LIFE AND HARD TIMES

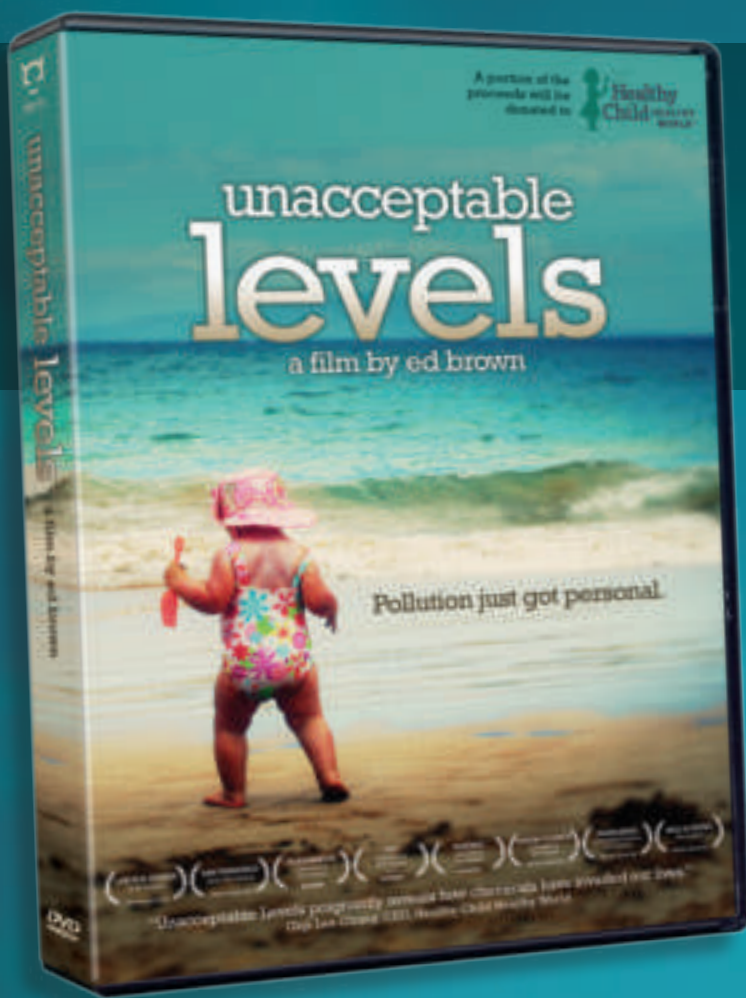
57 minutes, color, SRP: \$24.95  
FRF 916004D  
STREET DATE: JUNE 17

*"Inisghtful...illuminates the artist's career with well-chosen selections from the work itself."*

-The New Yorker

"The first major biographical film about the wit that many consider second only to Mark Twain as an American humorist" (*Boston Globe*), *James Thurber: The Life and Hard Times* provides details and insight into the life and work of one of America's brightest minds. Known for his classic short story, *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*, Thurber was a legendary contributor of prose and cartoons to *The New Yorker* magazine where he worked for many years. Narrated by George Plimpton, this documentary includes interviews with Edward Albee, John Updike, Alistair Cooke, Fran Lebowitz, Roy Blount Jr. and others.

# POLLUTION JUST GOT PERSONAL



"From the products we use, to the food we eat, to the air we breathe, *Unacceptable Levels* documents how prevalent toxic chemicals have become a part of our everyday lives. Ed Brown uses the powerful connection of family to illustrate how broken our system has become, and why we must do something about it. Our children's futures depend on it."

- Gigi Lee Chang, CEO, Healthy Child Healthy World

Over 80,000 chemicals flow through our system of commerce, and many are going straight into our bodies. *Unacceptable Levels* examines the results of the chemical revolution which began the 1940's and continues today. Due to this constant exposure we have approximately 200 synthetic industrial chemicals interacting with our cells every single day. Until recently, modern science didn't understand what that could mean for all of us in the long run. That is changing.

Filmmaker Ed Brown presents us with the story of how the chemical revolution brought us to where we are, and of where, if we're not vigilant, it may take us going forward.

## SALES / MARKETING POINTS

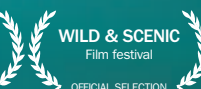
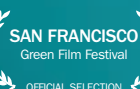
Multi Award winning documentary

Hot button topic of the American psyche

Limited 2014 Theatrical run

Currently on national festival, university campus and non-profit group exhibition tour

A portion of the proceeds from sales of this film will be donated to HealthyChild.org



## UNACCEPTABLE LEVELS

Written & Directed by ED BROWN in association with MACROSCOPIC MEDIA Executive Producer PETER KINDERSLEY

Producers ED BROWN, SUSAN CANN, VICTORIA DI IORIO, & MARTIN ESSIG Edited by ED BROWN Music by ROBIN APPLEWOOD

Additional Post Production ROBIN BELL Sound Mixing BRENDAN CANTY Title Graphics STEVE BRAZELL Public Relations JO CHICAGO Branding by HITMAN INC

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## Video Newsbriefs

### "The Rodgers & Hammerstein Blu-ray Collection" Available as Amazon Exclusive from Twentieth Century Fox

The magical songs of Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II were featured in some of the most iconic movie musicals of the 20th century. Newly released by Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment, *The Rodgers & Hammerstein Blu-ray Collection* (Blu-ray: 8 discs, \$199.99) is an Amazon-exclusive collection of six of the Academy Award-winning movie musicals by the Oscar, Tony, Pulitzer, Grammy, and Emmy award-winning team: Best Picture winner *The Sound of Music*, *Oklahoma!*, *The King and I*, *South Pacific*, *State Fair* and *Carousel*. Showcasing brand new 4K digital restorations of *The King and I* and *Carousel* (*Oklahoma!* is meticulously restored in 4K from 8K scans), Fox will also release *Oklahoma!* and *The King and I* in standalone Blu-ray and DVD combo sets on October 7 in commemoration of the films' 60th anniversaries in 2015 and 2016, respectively.



### Beatles, Antonioni, and Sirk Lead Criterion Collection June Releases

The Criterion Collection's June slate kicks off June 10 with a newly restored version of Douglas Sirk's stunning 1955 Technicolor tearjerker *All That Heaven Allows* (Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.95), a heartbreakingly beautiful story of the blossoming love between a well-off suburban widow (Jane Wyman) and her handsome and earthy younger gardener (Rock Hudson). Also coming June 10 is Michelangelo Antonioni's quintessential 1962 Rome-set romance *L'eclisse* (Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.95), in which a young woman (Monica Vitti) leaves one lover (Francisco Rabal) and drifts into a relationship with another (Alain Delon). Available June 17 is Peter Davis's Oscar-winning 1974 documentary *Hearts and Minds* (Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.95), a landmark film that uses interviews and newsreels to unflinchingly confront the issue of U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Also arriving June 17 is Georges Franju's cool 1963 crime caper *Judex* (DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.95), which

kicks off with the mysterious kidnapping of a corrupt banker by a shadowy crime fighter (American magician Channing Pollock). Finally, slated for June 24, Richard Lester's raucous 1964 Beatles movie musical *A Hard Day's Night* (DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.95) features a soundtrack full of iconic pop anthems.

### "The Wonder Years: The Complete Series" Coming from StarVista and Time Life in 2014

StarVista Entertainment/Time Life has announced plans to release *The Wonder Years: The Complete Series* on home video. Airing on ABC from 1988-1993—and garnering multiple Emmy Awards, a Golden Globe, and a Peabody—the series is likely to make its long-awaited debut this fall. Starring Fred Savage, Danica McKellar, Dan Lauria, Alley Mills, Jason Hervey, Olivia d'Abo, Josh Saviano, and Daniel Stern (as narrator), this Vietnam War era suburban coming-of-age drama featured an unforgettable theme song—Joe Cocker's rendition of the Beatles' "With a Little Help From My Friends." StarVista Entertainment/Time Life has painstakingly secured the rights for virtually every song in *The Wonder Years*—from Cocker's tune, to hundreds of other classic soul, rock, and pop songs by the Beatles, Bob Dylan, Smokey Robinson, Joni Mitchell, Van Morrison, and many others. For more information on the particulars, visit [www.WonderYearsDVDs.com](http://www.WonderYearsDVDs.com).

### Werner Herzog's "Nosferatu the Vampyre" Arrives on Blu-ray May 20 from Shout! Factory

The award-winning *Nosferatu the Vampyre* (Blu-ray: \$24.98) is slated to debut on Blu-ray on May 20 from Shout! Factory. Released in 1979, director Werner Herzog's acclaimed film offers one of the most compelling and visually-striking interpretations of the Dracula story ever committed to film. In his haunting re-interpretation of F.W. Murnau's 1922 classic (based on Bram Stoker's horror novel), Herzog eschews the popular conception of a confident and alluring vampire, instead focusing on the tragedy of the creature: doomed to immortality, weary, and full of self-loathing. Starring Klaus Kinski, Isabelle Adjani, and Bruno Ganz, the film is set in 1850 in the beautiful town of Wismar, Germany. Including both the German and English versions of the film, bonus features include audio commentaries with Herzog, and a vintage "making-of" featurette.

# COHEN MEDIA GROUP PRESENTS



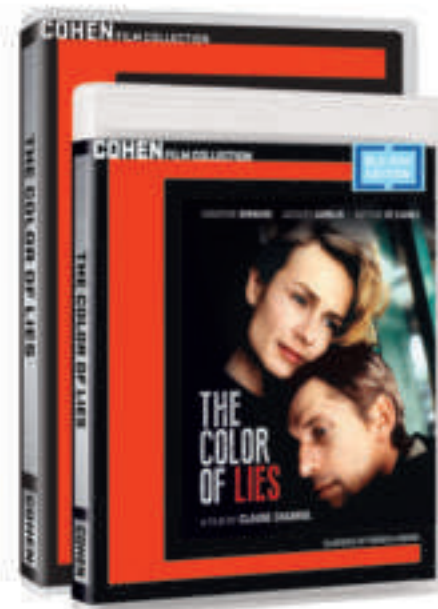
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The following films based on books are slated to open during May and June. Movie release dates are subject to change.

## Slated for May

**Devil's Knot** (May 9, in limited release) is based on Mara Leveritt's 2002 nonfiction crime account, subtitled "The True Story of the West Memphis Three." Directed by Atom Egoyan, the drama stars Reese Witherspoon, Colin Firth, Dane DeHaan, and Mireille Enos.



**The Double** (May 9, in limited release), director Richard Ayoade's adaptation of the 1846 novella by Fyodor Dostoyevsky—a comedy about a man who encounters his doppelgänger—stars Jesse Eisenberg, Mia Wasikowska, Chris O'Dowd, Sally Hawkins, and Wallace Shawn.



**God's Pocket** (May 9), adapted from Pete Dexter's 1983 working-class novel, is directed by John Slattery, and stars Richard Jenkins, Christina Hendricks, John Turturro, and the late Philip Seymour Hoffman.



**Legends of Oz: Dorothy's Return** (May 9) is a computer-animated musical adaptation of *Dorothy of Oz* (1989) by Roger Stanton Baum, great-grandson of L. Frank Baum. Directed by Will Finn and Dan St. Pierre, the film features the voices of Lea Michele, Dan Aykroyd, Bernadette Peters, Hugh Dancy, and Kelsey Grammer.



**Tracks** (May 23) is based on Australian writer Robyn Davidson's 1980 memoir about her 1700-mile desert journey in 1977. Directed by John Curran, the film stars Adam Driver and Mia Wasikowska as Davidson.



**Filth** (May 30) is based on Scottish author Irvine Welsh's 1998 thriller about a sociopathic anti-hero detective sergeant. Directed by Jon S. Baird, the film stars James McAvoy, Imogen Poots, Jamie Bell, Eddie Marsan, and Jim Broadbent.

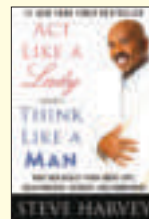


## Slated for June

**The Fault in Our Stars** (June 6) is adapted from John Green's 2012 bestselling YA novel about a teen cancer patient who falls in love. Directed by Josh Boone, the romantic drama stars Shailene Woodley, Ansel Elgort, Willem Dafoe, Nat Wolff, and Laura Dern.



**Think Like a Man Too** (June 20) is a sequel based on Steve Harvey's 2009 nonfiction bestseller *Act Like a Lady, Think Like a Man: What Men Really Think About Love, Relationships, Intimacy, and Commitment*. Directed by Tim Story, the film stars Taraji P. Henson, Kevin Hart, Regina Hall, and Michael Ealy.



## Looking Ahead

Slated for July is **Dawn of the Planet of the Apes**, 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.



Coming in August is **The Giver**, director Phillip Noyce's adaptation of Lois Lowry's 1993 Newbery Medal-winning dystopian YA novel, which stars Brenton Thwaites, Meryl Streep, Alexander Skarsgård, Katie Holmes, Jeff Bridges, and Taylor Swift.



# CELEBRATING OUR 25TH ANNIVERSARY

## NEW RELEASES FROM JANSON MEDIA

*"...the documentary's chosen angle is meaningful: The world of autism is as diverse as the nation."* -**New York Times**

*The United States of Autism* weaves the tale of a broad spectrum of American life in all its faiths, disparities, colors, and cultures – and the story of one man's 40-day, 11,000 mile journey across America to find answers for his family and son. What he learns along the way changes not only his life forever, but the lives of those he meets.

If ever there were a story that embodies the heart of America, it's the story found in individuals affected by autism and their families. Autism is a bio-neurological developmental disability that generally appears before the age of 3, and is one of the fastest growing developmental disabilities in the United States, affecting 1 to 1.5 million Americans.

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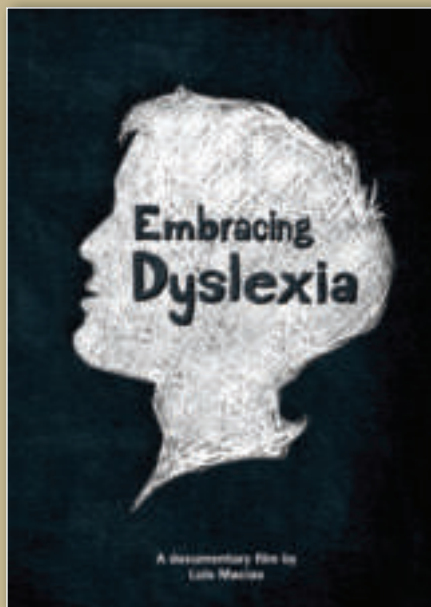


*"Ultimately, the film succeeds in its admirable goal of putting a human face on a disorder that many of those who lack a personal connection to it fail to fully comprehend or, in the worst cases, tolerate."*

**-The Hollywood Reporter**

*What you get instead are vivid glimpses of high-functioning kids and adults, full-syndrome kids who do or don't respond to various treatments, siblings who are coping or not... You have to admire the sheer energy and intelligence that shines through — We see an evolution in Everts' approach to his son — aided by a remarkable family reunion — that is subtle and unforced but deeply moving."*

**- Age of Autism**



*Embracing Dyslexia* is a thoughtful and moving exploration of dyslexia from an insider's perspective, weaving together interviews with parents, adult dyslexics, researchers, educators and experts to provide an accurate portrayal of a learning difference that affects between 15-20% of the population. Parents share emotional stories of their anxiety and frustration over failing to understand why their children were struggling with school, and the life-altering impact of a dyslexia diagnosis. Dyslexic adults courageously open up and speak candidly, sharing their struggles and successes they have had in school and in their adult lives. Experts and educators illustrate why early screening is vital, and share the effectiveness of classroom accommodations and tutoring — both inside and outside the school.

Recognizing and fostering a dyslexic child's natural gifts and abilities can be life-altering. Children that had experienced failure on a daily basis can begin believing in themselves and knowing that they can be as successful as their peers. Although it is the most common learning disability, dyslexia is grossly misunderstood in the one environment where it can least afford to be — our schools. *Embracing Dyslexia* sets out to change this by enlightening and inspiring those who are responsible for the education of these amazing children.

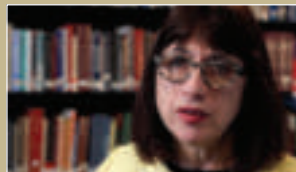
LENGTH: 50 Minutes • MRSP: \$19.95 • CATALOG# 20557 • UPC# 6-4603205579-5 • PRICE WITH PPR: \$295 • PRICE WITH DSL: \$495 • PRICE WITH PPR AND DSL: \$595



Cornell Amerson,  
Author, "The Janitor's Secret"



LeAnn & Mark Harbaugh



Maryanne Wolf, Ed. D.



Susan Barton  
Founder, Bright Solutions for Dyslexia

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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.*

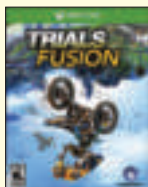
## Video Games

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

**Kinect Sports Rivals** (Microsoft, XOne: \$59.98, Rated: E10+). The bestselling Kinect motion-tracking game for the next-gen Xbox One console features new competitive activities including tennis, bowling, soccer, wake racing, target shooting, and climbing.

**Trials Fusion** (Ubisoft, PS4/X360/XOne: \$39.99, Rated: E10+). This latest release in the popular motocross racing simulation series finds players trying to achieve their best times on a wide array of inventive and challenging tracks.



### April 27—May 3

**The Amazing Spider-Man 2** (Activision, PS3/PS4/WiiU/X360: \$49.99-\$59.99, Rated: T). In this third-person action-adventure game tie-in to the feature film, Spider-Man discovers that he's not the only one who is tracking down Manhattan's criminals.

**JoJo's Bizarre Adventure All-Star Battle** (Bandai Namco, PS3: \$49.99, Rated: T). Adapted from Hirohiko Araki's smash manga hit, *JoJo's Bizarre Adventure*, this one-on-one fighting game features more than 40 characters.

### May 4—May 10

**Bound by Flame** (Majesco, PS3/PS4/X360: \$39.99-\$49.99, Rated: M). In this third-person fantasy action-RPG, players step into the boots of a mercenary warrior of the Pure-Blades who can call upon the devastating powers of a demon



during epic fights, but only at a cost to his humanity.

### May 18—May 24

**Drakengard 3** (Square Enix, PS3: \$49.99, Rated: M). A prequel to the original Drakengard, this third entry in the third-person action-RPG series puts players in a medieval fantasy world where six magic-wielding sisters attempt to keep the peace...until one of the sisters goes rogue.



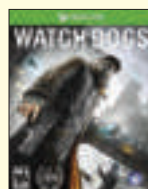
**Mugen Souls Z** (NIS America, PS3: \$49.99, Rated: T). In this third-person turn-based strategy RPG, players take control of the goddess Sylma, who is out to stop an ancient threat to her world.

**Wolfenstein: The New Order** (Bethesda, PS3/PS4/X360/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: M). Playing as B.J. Blazkowicz from the original *Wolfenstein* (the game that spawned the first-person shooter genre), this entry sends players across Europe on a mission to bring down the Nazi war machine in an alternate history set in 1960 after the Germans have won WWII.

### May 25—May 31

**Mario Kart 8** (Nintendo, WiiU: \$59.99, Rated: E). This latest entry in the long-running kart racing series starring Nintendo's signature Italian plumber also features gliders, motorbikes, and underwater racing.

**Watch Dogs** (Ubisoft, PS3/PS4/X360/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: M). In this third-person technology-driven action game, players step into the shoes of Aiden Pearce, a brilliant hacker and former thug able to access security cameras, download personal information to locate a target, and control traffic lights and public transportation, all while on the hunt for those who hurt his family.



### June 1—June 7

**Murdered: Soul Suspect** (Square Enix, PS3/PS4/X360/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: M). In this third-person action-thriller game set in Salem, MA, players control Ronan O'Connor, a police detective who was killed during a violent burglary and now finds himself in the afterlife trying to discover his murderer's identity.

### June 8—June 14

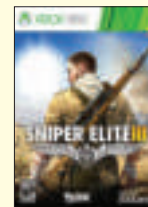
**Enemy Front** (City Interactive, PS3/X360: \$39.99, Rated: M). In this strategic WWII first-person shooter, players will mix combat, sniping, stealth, and sabotage while fighting in breathtaking European locales.

### June 15—June 21

**EA Sports UFC** (Electronic Arts, PS4/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: RP). In this first next-gen mixed-martial-arts fighting game, players control UFC fighters with more accurate likenesses, realistic damage, and dynamic striking moves.

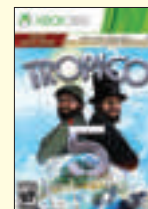
### June 22—June 28

**Sniper Elite 3** (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.



**Transformers: Rise of the Dark Spark** (Activision, PS3/PS4/WiiU/X360/XOne: \$49.99-\$59.99, Rated: T). In this third-person action game, players explore two unique worlds drawn from the *Transformers: Age of Extinction* feature film and the Cybertron universe, with over 40 playable characters battling to secure an ancient and powerful relic known as the Dark Spark.

**Tropico 5** (Kalypso Media USA, X360: \$49.99, Rated: RP). In this strategy simulation sequel, players once again find themselves on the remote island of Tropico in the role of El Presidente during a multigenerational tale that spans the 19th-21st centuries, as the nation's leaders struggle to stay in power during both World Wars, the Great Depression, the Cold War, and more.



**XBLAZE Code: Embryo** (Aksys, PS3: \$39.99, Rated: M). In this visual-novel game set two centuries before the events of the popular fighting game *BlazBlue*, players learn the story of Touya Kagari, a mostly unremarkable high school sophomore with a remarkable past, who is transformed from



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a typical teenager into the target of various organizations.

## TV on DVD/Blu-ray

### Available Now

**The Bletchley Circle: Season 2** (PBS, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.99; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$34.99). Four female former war codebreakers use their talents to crack crimes in this 2014 second season of the series starring Anna Maxwell Martin, Rachael Stirling, Julie Graham, and Sophie Rundle.



**Petticoat Junction: The Official Third Season** (Paramount, DVD: 5 discs, \$29.98). This 1965-66 third season of the rural family comedy series set at a hotel along a train line stars Bea Benaderet, Pat Woodell, Lori Saunders, and Gunilla Hutton.

### May 6

**The Andy Griffith Show: Season 1** (Paramount, Blu-ray: 4 discs, \$129.99). Newly available on high-definition Blu-ray, this 1960-61 set showcases the debut season of the Emmy-winning series following the life of a small-town sheriff, starring Andy Griffith, Ron Howard, and Don Knotts.

**Eureka: Season Three** (Universal, DVD: 4 discs, \$29.98). Sheriff Carter (Colin Ferguson) balances family life with the daily craziness found in the titular futuristic small town in this 2008-09 third season of the Syfy-aired series.



**The Honeymooners: Classic 39 Episodes** (Paramount, Blu-ray: 5 discs, \$129.99). Newly available on high-definition Blu-ray, this collection includes 39 episodes from the classic comedy series starring Jackie Gleason, Audrey Meadows, and Art Carney.

**Laverne & Shirley: The Final Season** (Paramount, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98). This 1982-83 eighth and final season of the silly sitcom starring Penny Marshall and Cindy Williams (seen only briefly here) features guest stars including Hugh Hefner, Carrie Fisher, Carol Kane, and Anjelica Huston.

**Little House on the Prairie: Season Two** (Lionsgate, Blu-ray: 5 discs, \$38.99). Based on the beloved pioneer books by Laura

Ingalls Wilder, this 1975-76 sophomore season of the popular family series is newly available in a remastered edition on high-definition Blu-ray.

**The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis: Season Three** (Shout! Factory, DVD: 5 discs, \$29.95). Starring Dwayne Hickman and Bob Denver as junior college students, this penultimate 1961-62 third season features guest stars including Michele Lee, Tuesday Weld, and Joyce Van Patten.

**Poirot: Series 12** (Acorn, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$49.99). Newly remastered and available on high-definition Blu-ray, this compilation includes the 2010-11 12th series centering on the crime-solving capers of Agatha Christie's titular debonair Belgian sleuth (David Suchet).



**Rookie Blue: The Complete Fourth Season** (Entertainment One, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.98). Five Toronto rookie police officers (including stars Missy Peregrym and Gregory Smith) are back on the beat in this 2013 fourth season of the Canadian drama series.

### May 13

**Afterlife** (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$24.98). This 2005 first season of the British drama series follows academic lecturer Dr. Robert Bridge (Andrew Lincoln), whose life becomes intertwined with a psychic medium (Lesley Sharp).



**Barney Miller: The Complete Fifth Season** (Shout! Factory, DVD: 3 discs, \$24.98). Starring Hal Linden as a down-to-earth police captain, this 1978-79 fifth season of the Golden Globe-winning comedy series features guest stars including Christopher Lloyd, Doris Roberts, and Mabel King.

**Eastbound & Down: The Complete Fourth & Final Season** (HBO, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$39.98). Former major league baseball player Kenny Powers (Danny McBride) balances his career comeback with his responsibilities as a family man in this 2013 fourth season of the HBO series, featuring guest appearances by Marilyn Manson, Sacha Baron Cohen, and Lindsay Lohan.

**Kendra on Top: The Complete Second Season** (MPI, DVD: 2 discs, \$24.98). Former costar of *Playboy's The Girls Next Door* reality-TV series Kendra Wilkinson, her NFL player husband, and their son are back in this 2013 second season of the WE tv-aired reality series.

**Longmire: The Complete Second Season** (Warner, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98). Sheriff Walt Longmire (Robert Taylor) puts together clues that will help solve his wife's murder in this 2013 sophomore season that also stars Katee Sackhoff and Lou Diamond Phillips.



**Perry Mason Movie Collection, Volume 2** (Paramount, DVD: 3 discs, \$58.99). Set nearly 20 years after the end of the original *Perry Mason* TV series based on the novels by Erle Stanley Gardner, these TV movies star Raymond Burr as the iconic defense attorney.

**Orange Is the New Black: Season One** (Lionsgate, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.99; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$39.99). Based on the memoir by Piper Kerman, this first season of the Netflix-produced prison dramedy series stars Taylor Schilling, Laura Prepon, Kate Mulgrew, and Jason Biggs.



### May 20

**Amish Mafia: Season One** (Gaiam, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.95). This 2012-13 first season of the Discovery Channel-aired series follows "gang" members within the Amish community.

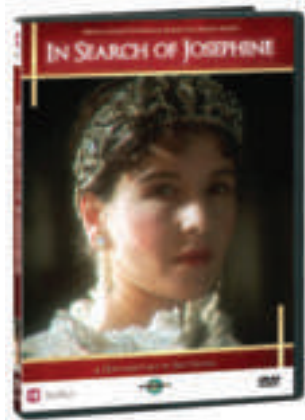
**Arthur Hailey's The Moneychangers** (Paramount, DVD: 2 discs, \$19.99). Adapted from Arthur Hailey's 1975 bestseller, this 1976 TV miniseries following banking business rivals who butt heads stars Kirk Douglas, Christopher Plummer, Timothy Bottoms, and Anne Baxter.

**Call the Midwife: Season Three** (BBC, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$49.98). Featuring episodes from the 2014 third season, this latest compilation of the British period drama based on the memoirs of a real-life nurse stars Jessica Raine, Miranda Hart, and Jenny Agutter.

**Dalziel & Pascoe: Season 9** (BBC,

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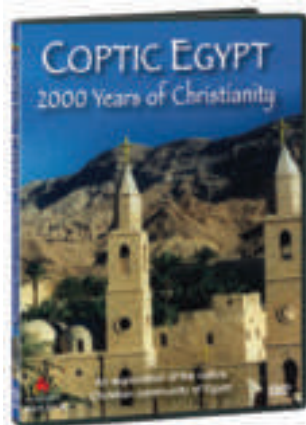
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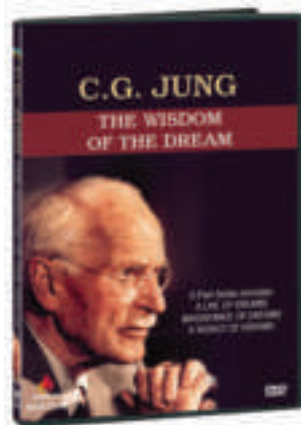
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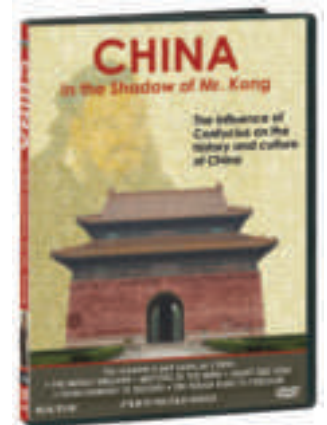
DVD • D4892 • SRP \$19.99  
53 Minutes • Color  
UPC: 032031489295  
ISBN: 978-0-7697-5052-1



## C.G. Jung The Wisdom of the Dream

Access to Jung's library and consulting room, and to his retreat, the Tower at Bollingen, enabled producers to refer Jung's story with exact visual references.

DVD • D4887 • SRP \$29.99  
159 Minutes • Color  
UPC: 032031488793  
ISBN: 978-0-7697-5044-6



## China In the Shadow of Mr. Kong

This series takes a look at the history and culture of China, from the time of Mr. Kong, (known as Kong Fu or Confucius) to the present day.

DVD • D4796 • SRP \$24.99  
253 Minutes • Color  
UPC: 032031479692  
ISBN: 978-0-7697-9184-5

DVD: 2 discs, \$34.98). Compiling four two-parters from the mystery series adapted from the novels by Reginald Hill, this 2005 ninth series includes "Heads You Lose," "Dead Meat," "The Dig," and "Dust Thou Art."



**Doctor Who: The Enemy of the World** (BBC, DVD: \$19.98). The time-traveling TARDIS spaceship lands on a Down Under beach in this six-episode story arc from the 1967-68 fifth season of the long-running sci-fi series, here starring Patrick Troughton as the Doctor.

**Duck Dynasty: Duck Days of Summer** (A&E, DVD: \$9.98). Centering on a double-episode featuring the popular A&E redneck Robertson family on an RV trip and taking a Hawaiian vacation, this set includes three additional episodes.

**Happy Days: The Fifth Season** (Paramount, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.98). Fonzie (Henry Winkler) introduces the inspiration for "jumping the shark" to the cultural lexicon in this 1977-78 fifth season that also features a guest appearance by Robin Williams in the episode that led to his spin-off series *Mork & Mindy*.

**LA Law: Season Two** (Shout! Factory, DVD: 6 discs, \$29.95). The 1987-88 sophomore season of Steven Bochco's early legal drama stars Harry Hamlin, Susan Dey, Corbin Bernsen, Jimmy Smits, and Blair Underwood.

**Nikita: The Complete Fourth and Final Season** (Warner, DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$25.98). Super assassin Nikita (Maggie Q) is thrown together with her old team in this 2013 final season of the action-espionage series.

**Waking the Dead: Season Nine** (BBC, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98). The cold case team welcomes a new colleague (Eva Birthistle) in this 2011 ninth season of the Edgar Allan Poe Award-nominated crime-drama series that also stars Trevor Eve and Sue Johnston.

**Warehouse 13: Season Five** (Universal, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.98). Following agents who retrieve global artifacts, this 2014 fifth and final season of the popular Syfy-aided series stars Eddie McClintock, Joanne Kelly, and Saul Rubinek.



## May 27

**The Bob Newhart Show: The Complete Series** (Shout! Factory, DVD: 19 discs, \$129.99). Golden Globe and Emmy winner Bob Newhart stars as a friendly neighborhood psychiatrist in this 1972-78 comedy series.

**Cimarron Strip: The Complete Series** (Entertainment One, DVD: 8 discs, \$79.98). A U.S. Marshal (Stuart Whitman) undertakes the mammoth challenges of keeping the peace between homesteading Kansans and Native Americans in this 1967-68 Western series that features guest appearances by Rita Moreno, Dean Stockwell, Leonard Nimoy, and Dinah Shore.

**Covert Affairs: Season Four** (Universal, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.98). CIA operative Annie Walker (Piper Perabo) is back in this 2013 fourth season of the USA Network series.

**Jack Irish, Set 2** (Acorn, DVD: \$34.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.99). Starring Guy Pearce as the titular brooding alcoholic private investigator, this second set of episodes from the series based on the novels by Australian crime author Peter Temple includes the 2014 TV movie *Dead Point*.



**Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries, Series 2** (Acorn, DVD: 4 discs, \$59.99; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$59.99). Based on the novels by Kerry Greenwood, this 2013 second series stars Essie Davis as 1920s Melbourne sleuth Phryne Fisher.

**Pioneers of Television: Season 4** (PBS, DVD: 2 discs, \$24.99). Narrated by Benjamin Bratt, this fourth season of the documentary series chronicling the evolution of popular television genres features the episodes "Standup to Sitcom," "Acting Funny," "Doctors & Nurses," and "Breaking Barriers."

**Suits: Season Three** (Universal, DVD: 4 discs, \$44.98). The firm merges with an elite British group in this 2013-14 third season of the USA Network drama starring Gabriel Macht, Patrick J. Adams, and Gina Torres.



**The Universe: Season 7** (A&E, DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$19.99). This 2012 seventh season of the History-aided series includes the episodes "How Big, How Far, How Fast," "Alien Sounds," "Our Place in the Milky Way," "Deep Freeze," "Microscopic Universe," "Ride the Comet," and "When Space Changed History."

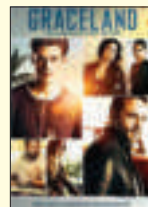


## June 3

**Barbary Coast** (Acorn, DVD: 4 discs, \$59.99). Set in 19th-century San Francisco, this 1975-76 Western spy adventure series stars William Shatner and Doug McClure.

**Falling Skies: The Complete Third Season** (Warner, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$49.99). Set months after the alien race arrived in Charleston, SC, this 2013 third season of the sci-fi TNT-aided drama series stars Noah Wyle, Moon Bloodgood, and Drew Roy.

**Graceland: The Complete First Season** (Fox, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98). A rookie FBI agent's (Aaron Tveit) first job leads him to a fabulous beach mansion in this 2013 USA Network-aided series' debut season, which also features Daniel Sunjata and Vanessa Ferlito.



**Pretty Little Liars: The Complete Fourth Season** (Warner, DVD: 5 discs, \$59.99). The enigmatic Red Coat makes mysterious moves following a suspicious lodge fire in this 2013-14 fourth season of the ABC Family teen drama series starring Ashley Benson, Lucy Hale, Troian Bellisario, and Laura Leighton.

**Rawhide: The Eighth and Final Season** (Paramount, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.98). This 1965-66 eighth season marks the end of the trail for this classic Western series, with guest appearances by Bruce Dern, Rip Torn, and Cesar Romero.

**Star Trek—The Next Generation: Season Six** (Paramount, Blu-ray: 6 discs, \$129.99). Newly available on high-definition Blu-ray, this compilation features the penultimate 1992-93 sixth season of Gene Roddenberry's contemporary cult classic sci-fi series.

**Stephen Hawking's Grand Design** (Gaiam, DVD: \$14.95). World-renowned

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physicist Stephen Hawking hosts this 2012 miniseries—based on his titular 2010 popular science book—which includes the episodes “The Meaning of Life,” “The Key to the Cosmos,” and “Did God Create the Universe?”

**True Blood: The Complete Sixth Season** (HBO, DVD: 4 discs, \$59.99; Blu-ray: 4 discs, \$79.98). Long-lost relations and power shifts are at the center of this 2013 sixth season of the supernatural thriller series based on the books by Charlaine Harris, starring Anna Paquin, Stephen Moyer, and Alexander Skarsgård.



**Workaholics: Season Four** (Paramount, DVD: 2 discs, \$19.99; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$22.98). Co-worker pals Adam, Ders, and Blake (Adam DeVine, Anders Holm, and Blake Anderson) are back in this 2014 fourth season of the Comedy Central series, with guest stars including Alex Borstein and Lorenzo Lamas.

#### June 10

**Brazil** (BBC, DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray: \$29.99). Host and narrator Michael Palin tours Brazil—from wealthy cities to remote tribes—in this 2012 cultural-appreciation miniseries.



**The Chisholms: Complete TV Series** (Timeless, DVD: 3 discs, \$19.98). Robert Preston, Brian Keith, Rosemarie Harris, and Delta Burke star in this 1979-80 Western miniseries that follows a family of pioneers traveling the California Trail.

**Major Crimes: The Complete Second Season** (Warner, DVD: 4 discs, \$59.99). Aired on TNT, this 2013-14 sophomore season of the legal drama spin-off from *The Closer* stars Mary McDonnell and G.W. Bailey.

**Ray Donovan: Season One** (Showtime, DVD: 4 discs, \$55.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$76.99). Starring Liev Schreiber as the titular fixer for L.A. celebrities, this drama also features Jon Voight, Paula Malcomson, and Dash Mihok.

**Resurrection: The Complete First Season** (Buena Vista, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.99). Residents of a small Missouri town are shocked when formerly dead loved ones

come back home un-aged in this 2014 first season starring Omar Epps, Frances Fisher, and Kurtwood Smith.

**Rizzoli & Isles: The Complete Fourth Season** (Warner, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.98). Boston crime-solving duo Jane Rizzoli and Dr. Maura Isles (Angie Harmon, Sasha Alexander) are back in this 2013-14 fourth season of the drama series.

**True Detective** (HBO, DVD: 3 discs, \$59.99; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$79.98). Matthew McConaughey and Woody Harrelson star as Louisiana homicide detectives on the trail of a serial killer in this 2014 first season of the acclaimed neo-noir crime drama.

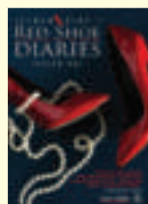


#### June 17

**DCI Banks: Season One** (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$34.98). This 2011 debut season of the ITV drama series starring Stephen Tompkinson and Lorraine Burroughs includes the episodes “Playing with Fire,” “Friend of the Devil,” and “Cold is the Grave.”

**Death in Paradise: Season One** (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$34.98). Set on a fictional Caribbean island, this 2011 debut season of the crime dramedy series follows a British cop (Ben Miller) who adjusts to his new surroundings.

**Red Shoe Diaries: Season One** (Kino Lorber, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.95). Aired on Showtime, this 1992 first season of the erotic drama anthology series with David Duchovny features guest stars including Ally Sheedy and Annabelle Gurwitch. Also newly available is 1992's *Red Shoe Diaries: The Movie* (DVD: \$26.95).



**Scott and Bailey: Season One** (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$34.98). This ITV-produced detective drama stars Suranne Jones and Lesley Sharp as detective constables and close friends.

**Teen Wolf: Season 3, Part 2** (MGM, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.98). Starring Tyler Posey, Crystal Reed, and Dylan O'Brien, this second compilation of episodes from the 2013-14 third season of the MTV-aired supernatural series features the shocking death of a main character.

#### June 24

**Comedy Bang Bang: The Complete**

**Second Season** (Anchor Bay, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.98). Based on creator and star Scott Aukerman's podcast, this 2013 sophomore season of the sketch comedy series includes guest appearances by Andy Samberg, Zoe Saldana, and Jessica Alba.



**Duck Dynasty: Season 5** (Lionsgate, DVD: 2 discs, \$19.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$19.98). This 2014 fifth season of the A&E reality series showcases the ups and downs of the bayou-based Robertson family.

**NYPD Blue: Season 06** (Shout! Factory, DVD: 6 discs, \$34.99). Created by Steven Bochco, this 1998-99 sixth season of the Big Apple-set Golden Globe and Emmy-winning crime-drama series stars Dennis Franz, Jimmy Smits, and Kim Delaney.

#### Looking Ahead

Slated for July are the first seasons of *Derek* and *The Soul Man*, the second season of *How the West Was Won*, the complete series of *Now and Again*, and more episodes of *Doctor Who*. Slated for August is the fourth season of *The Walking Dead*.

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

**Freestyle: The Art of Rhyme** (Music Video Distributors, DVD: \$14.95). Newly available in a 10th anniversary edition, Kevin Fitzgerald's (aka DJ Organic) documentary (VL-7/05 ★★) on underground hip-hop MC subculture features artists including Mos Def, Run DMC, Kool Moe Dee, and Tupac Shakur.

**La Maison de la Radio** (Kino Lorber, DVD: \$29.95). Film maker Nicolas Philibert turns his camera on the government-funded broadcaster Radio France in this “day in the life” portrait (VL-11/13 ★★) that features musician Maïa Vidal and journalist Alain Bedouet.



**Picture of Light** (First Run Features, DVD: \$24.95). Peter Mettler's 1994 Super 16mm-filmed documentary (VL-9/07 ★★) follows the director and his crew to the Canadian Arctic Circle on a quest to capture the Aurora Borealis. Extras include an article on Mettler.

# COMPELLING NEW DVDS FROM VISION VIDEO



## 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.

DVD - #501564D, \$19.99, UPC 7 27985 01564 4



## The Shortest Way Home: C.S. Lewis & Mere Christianity

Doubt and disbelief live in the hearts of many people as they wrestle with the questions of good and evil and the existence of God. *The Shortest Way Home: C.S. Lewis & Mere Christianity* is an introductory review to Lewis's classic work on issues of faith and reason. Viewers will find honest discussion and helpful insights for the tough questions asked by believers and skeptics alike. Those who journey to the heart of Lewis's most famous apologetic work will find that the longest way round is the shortest way home. Documentary, 56 minutes.

DVD - #501563D, \$19.99, UPC 7 27985 01563 7



## Corrie ten Boom: A Faith Undefeated

When Nazi forces invaded Holland in 1940 and began rounding up Jews, Corrie ten Boom and her family risked their lives to save as many as possible. They secretly hid oppressed Jews in their home until a Gestapo raid put an end to their operation. Corrie and her sister were sent to a concentration camp, where they suffered relentless cruelty. Her sister died in the camp, but Corrie was miraculously released due to a clerical error. Featuring an interview with Corrie's longtime assistant and scenes filmed in the ten Boom house in Holland, this unforgettable story is told. Documentary, 55 minutes.

DVD - #501550D, \$19.99, UPC 7 27985 01550 7



## Torchlighters: The Corrie ten Boom Story

Corrie ten Boom and her family are masters of their craft; they repair broken watches and return them safely to their owners. But as the evil of World War II sweeps through their city, a new kind of "watch" comes to their care: an innocent Jewish baby, desperately needing protection from the cruelty of the new Nazi regime. How will the ten Booms keep this baby and others out of harm's way, and what will be the cost of doing so? See her amazing story of courage, sacrifice, and forgiveness anew through this gripping episode of *The Torchlighters*, an animated series for ages 8-12. 30 minutes.

DVD - #501538D, \$14.99, UPC 7 27985 01538 5



## Proof Through the Night

In the 200 years since Francis Scott Key first wrote the words to "The Star-Spangled Banner" on the back of a letter, they have inspired millions. The hope and joy expressed in the American National Anthem are so moving that more than five million people signed petitions for its official adoption. Yet within those words is an expression of faith and gratitude for deliverance. Told through the words of eyewitnesses and those who knew him best, this presentation tells the story not only of the song, but of the man and the beliefs that inspired it. Documentary, 56 minutes.

DVD - #501449D, \$19.99, UPC 7 27985 01449 4



## The Watchers: Revelation

Is a race of benign extraterrestrials secretly influencing the world's governments? Are these creatures really ancient aliens sent to protect humanity from self-destruction, or are they evil beings set on deception as the world approaches its final days? An inexplicable archeological find leads Dr. Peter Kenner to conclude that we are not alone, aliens have visited the Earth in the distant past and have now returned. It becomes clear that nine-year-old Kara has a very special gift, one that can expose the true nature of the extraterrestrials. Drama, 90 minutes.

DVD - #501540D, \$14.99, UPC 7 27985 01540 8



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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

### Adventures of the Penguin King ★★

Cinedigm, 78 min., PG, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95

No doubt inspired by *March of the Penguins*, this U.K. true-life nature narrative serves up a visually stirring examination of king penguin colonies on South Georgia Island off Antarctica. Narrated by comic actor Tim Allen, the anthropomorphic tale follows waddling hero "Rex," a no-flock Everypenguin who wisecracks and monologues throughout this tale of finding a mate, minding an egg, and raising a chick. Predatory orcas, seals and ugly, marauding albatrosses add some darker elements to this film, which has been rated PG evidently due to Allen's single use of the word "damn." Likely to appeal to fans of nature documentaries and series' hosted by the omnipresent Sir Richard Attenborough (who narrated the British original for this film), this is recommended. (C. Cassidy)



### Alien Boy: The Life and Death of James Chasse ★★

Breaking Glass, 90 min., not rated, DVD: \$21.99

The tragic story of James Chasse is not just for viewers familiar with the late Portland rocker's role in the burgeoning grunge-punk scene of the 1980s. While there is ample evidence of that history in director Brian Lindstrom's documentary *Alien Boy*—including video footage of Nirvana's Kurt Cobain discussing Chasse's band The Wipers—the larger tale told here is of Chasse's mental-health decline over time. The filmmaker is especially focused (via interviews with Chasse's friends and family) on the growing schizophrenia that led Chasse to run from Portland police one night after being



accused of public urination. What followed is a shocking account of official brutality and negligence that ended in a terrible death for a man described as harmless by those who knew him. *Alien Boy* hits home—both as a specific story of one troubled human being known by many in Portland, and a cautionary tale of what happens when police are unprepared to deal compassionately and professionally with the mentally disturbed. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

### Anchorman 2: The Legend Continues ★★ 1/2

Paramount, 118 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99

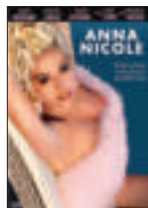
Set in Manhattan, circa 1980, this sequel to the popular 2004 original finds Ron Burgundy (Will Ferrell) and his co-anchor wife, Veronica Corningstone (Christina Applegate), being summoned by the head news honcho (Harrison Ford) only to learn that Veronica has been promoted and Ron is being fired. Furious, Ron deserts Veronica and their son, Walter (Judah Nelson). But after an enterprising producer (Dylan Baker) offers him a gig on Global News Network (GNN)—the first 24-hour cable news channel—Ron not only has the chance to reunite his old team but also to try to win back Veronica, who has taken up with a psychotherapist (Greg Kinnear). The secret of Ron's success this time 'round is simple: "Why tell people what they need to hear? Why not tell them what they want to hear?" As long as ratings rise, that works for GNN's Aussie owner (Josh Lawson) and general manager (Meagan Good), while also humiliating Ron's vain rival (James Marsden). Director Adam McKay's character-driven comedy also adds improvisational quirkiness in the figures of investigative reporter Brian Fantana (Paul Rudd), sportscaster Champ Kind (David Koechner), and wacky weatherman Brick Tamland (Steve Carell), who falls for an equally daft secretary (Kristen Wiig). All builds to a crescendo when competing news teams confront one another, aided and abetted by a star-studded cluster of cameos. Sure to be popular, this is a strong optional purchase. (S. Granger)



### Anna Nicole ★ 1/2

Sony, 89 min., not rated, DVD: \$22.99

Blonde, buxom, baby-voiced supermodel Anna Nicole Smith encouraged comparisons to Marilyn Monroe. Like the 1950s icon, Smith also fell victim to the darker aspects of celebrity life and died amid a swirl of personal crises. This Lifetime-aided biopic attempts to retrace Smith's meteoric rise and calamitous fall, but winds up being mostly



a soapy mess. Agnes Bruckner bears a so-so physical and voice resemblance to the late model-actress, but she fails to channel any of the vibrancy and charisma that fueled Smith's career. The prominent ensemble cast—including Virginia Madsen (as Smith's free-spirited Texas mother), Martin Landau (as billionaire husband J. Howard Marshall), Cary Elwes (as Marshall's son), and Adam Goldberg (as Smith's controversial lawyer Howard K. Stern)—brings a level of prestige to the film, but everyone here seems to be playing their parts with tongues firmly planted in cheek. The real disappointment, however, lies behind the camera: director Mary Harron once electrified the indie world with inventive and emotionally jolting feature films like *I Shot Andy Warhol* and *American Psycho*. Seeing her at the helm of this silly, connect-the-dots endeavor is sad. Not recommended. (P. Hall)

### The Artist and the Model ★★ 1/2

Cohen, 105 min., in French w/English subtitles, R, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$39.98

An elderly sculptor in Nazi-occupied France finds his creative spark rekindled by a vivacious young model in Fernando Trueba's beautifully-lensed black-and-white film, which centers on Marc Cros (Jean Rochefort), an internationally famous artist living with his wife—a onetime model—Léa (Claudia Cardinale) in a small village near the Pyrenees. On a visit to the market, Léa finds Mercè (Aida Folch)—a refugee from Spain—huddled in a doorway and she brings her home, thinking that Mercè might serve to inspire her inactive husband to fashion another of his masterly nudes. The stratagem succeeds, and as the cranky old man and nervous young woman work in his disheveled studio, they begin to care for one another. As Cros's ever-supportive spouse, Cardinale is luminous as ever, and Trueba inserts a variety of other characters—local children trying to spy on the pair, a wounded Resistance fighter, an art historian friend of Marc's who's now a German officer—into the plot as well. But the heart of the film lies in the relationship between the sculptor and his model, a deep connection between a man approaching the end of his life and a woman who is just beginning hers. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)



### Best Friends Forever ★★

Horizon, 113 min., not rated, DVD: \$26.95

Part ironic takeoff on the classic girl-bonding road movie *Thelma & Louise* and part *Mad Max* for the twentysomething indie-rock-listening hipster



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

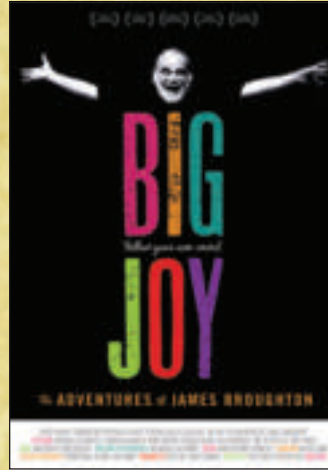


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Years before the Beats arrived in San Francisco, the city exploded with artistic expressions. At its center was the groundbreaking filmmaker and poet James Broughton. *Big Joy* explores his passionate embrace of a life of pansexual transcendence and a fiercely independent mantra: 'follow your own weird.'

*"A tale of James Broughton's loves, anxieties and artistry, it will provoke passionate discussions about what to make of a full and messy life well-lived. This Is It!"*

— Don Romesburg, Ph.D.,  
Chair of Women's and Gender Studies,  
Sonoma State University

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## FAUST

Winner of the Venice film festival's Golden Lion, this idiosyncratic and playful reinvention of Goethe's play marks the return of Aleksandr Sokurov after a four-year absence, the Russian master concludes the "Men of Power" series he initiated in 1999 with *Moloch* as a tetralogy per the classical Greek prescription — a group of four dramas, the first three tragic and the last satiric.

*"The movie expands in its frame, surpassing simple comprehension and continuing to grow in your mind — and perhaps to blow it — long after it's over."* — A.O. Scott, New York Times

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## AFTERNOON OF A FAUN:

### TANAQUIL LE CLERCQ

She was the foremost dancer of her day until, at age 27, Tanaquil Le Clercq was struck down by polio and paralyzed. But she gradually took control of her life in a way few women of her day would've done. With great beauty and without sentimentality, *Afternoon Of A Faun* demonstrates how to avoid being defined by tragedy.

*"In order to work through such a loss, and retain something precious from it, it is necessary to face it head on."*

— Jeanne Safer, Ph.D., Psychology Today

(With PPR \$349 • Without PPR \$149)



## WHO IS DAYANI CRISTAL?

The body of an unidentified immigrant is found in the Arizona Desert. In an attempt to retrace his path and discover his story, director Marc Silver and Gael Garcia Bernal embed themselves among migrant travelers on their own mission to cross the border, providing rare insight into the human stories which are so often ignored in the immigration debate.

*"Deeply moving...a new way of making the immigration debate personal."*

— John DeFore, The Hollywood Reporter

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## MAUVAIS SANG (NEW RESTORATION)

Marc and Hans, two old gangsters, are ordered by a rival, the American woman, to repay a debt. They plan to steal the vaccine for a mysterious virus, STBO, which affects those who make love without being in love and is wreaking havoc among teenagers. After the death of their associate Jean, the two accomplices call on his son, Alex, known as "Chatterbox", who is a talented conjuror. Alex, who has just left his girlfriend Lise, falls madly in love with a girl in a white dress he sees on a bus. Her name is Anna and she turns out to be Marc's mistress...

(With PPR \$349 • Without PPR \$149)

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set, writer-director-star Brea Grant's *Best Friends Forever* centers on two female slacker protagonists caught up in what seems to be some sort of vague terrorist nuclear attack. In a seemingly unintentional critique on the inward-turning flabby narcissism of contemporary hipsterdom, the bed-hopping wisecrack-y Reba (co-writer Vera Miao) and empty-headed failed librarian Harriet (Grant) decide to leave Los Angeles, embarking on a road trip to Austin, TX. The pair's inability to deal with reality is partly responsible for their subsequent car-jacking by a band of seemingly innocuous hip musicians, but who in fact are already in anything-goes survival mode. After enduring a ride with a psychotic Texas trucker—among other things—Reba and Harriet suddenly find themselves alone in the desert, still yapping away about their own personal problems while America is being destroyed by shadowy terrorists. In some ways, *Best Friends Forever* is postmodernist mumblecore at it's worst: inane banter dominates every conversation, so much so that one can only hope that Armageddon will sweep in soon and finish off this road-tripping pair of nattering narcissists. Not a necessary purchase. (M. Sandlin)

## The Best of Men

★★★1/2

PBS, 90 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99

This PBS-aided BBC production details the true story of how Dr. Ludwig Guttman changed the concept of treating paralyzed hospital patients and created a movement that evolved into the Paralympics. Dr. Guttman, a Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany, settled in Great Britain and joined the staff of Stoke Mandeville Hospital in 1944. Angered that paralyzed servicemen were mostly kept immobile and sedate—which led to further physical and emotional health issues—Guttman advanced the radical notion of using sports to improve his patients' physical well-being and lift the acute depression that reigned in their hospital ward. Although Guttman was initially treated with suspicion by his patients—who were confused that a German doctor was treating them—and by his peers in the medical profession, his indefatigable spirit and astonishing success led to the Stoke Mandeville Games of 1948, which would expand on a quadrennial basis into the first international Paralympics in 1960. Tim Whitby's crisp direction ably steers this insightful and uplifting drama, with Eddie Marsan delivering a fine performance as Guttman, and scene-stealer Rob Brydon bringing wonderfully earthy humor to his role as a paralyzed Welsh sergeant eager to regain his sexual prowess. Highly recommended. (P. Hall)



## Better Living Through Chemistry ★★

Universal, 92 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$26.98

The ironic title riffs on a DuPont advertising slogan—"Better Things for Better Living Through Chemistry"—which was used to promote the company from 1935 to 1982. In this dark comedy, it refers to a pill-popping pharmacist who misuses prescription drugs. Doug Varney (Sam Rockwell) is a straight-laced, small-town druggist whose life catapults out of control after delivering medication to the home of enticing Elizabeth Roberts (Olivia Wilde), the tipsy, negligee-clad trophy wife of a traveling executive (Ray Liotta). Dominated by his exercise-obsessed wife, Kara (Michelle Monaghan), and unable to handle their troubled, insolent 12-year-old son, Ethan (Harrison Holzer), Doug has just taken over control of Bishop's Pharmacy, previously owned by his condescending father-in-law, Walter Bishop (Ken Howard). Seduced by uninhibited Elizabeth, Doug quickly learns about mixing medications. While the discovery that he can "get high on his own supply" ultimately liberates Doug's sex life, it also inevitably leads to an investigation by a bumbling DEA official (Norbert Leo Butz). Written and directed by Geoff Moore and David Posamentier, this is an alternately edgy and formulaic romp that suffers from syrupy, self-referential narration by Jane Fonda ("I know a thing or two about working out"). Optional. (S. Granger)



## Bettie Page Reveals All

★★★

Music Box, 101 min., R, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95

This documentary portrait of 1950s pin-up model Bettie Page—who disappeared from the public eye in 1957 but became a celebrated icon and sex symbol when her work was rediscovered in the 1980s by artists and fashion designers—offers a familiar mix of biographical detail, commentary by experts and witnesses, and photographs and film clips from her career. The title is a double entendre that refers both to her nude modeling and to the film's narration by Page herself, via frank audio interviews conducted before her death in 2008 (Page refused to be photographed in her retirement). She describes her troubled youth (neglected by her mother and molested by her father), along with her struggles with depression and schizophrenia that would lead to 10 years of psychiatric care in a mental institution in her later years, but filmmaker Mark Mori is much more interested in her image. Page projected innocence, confidence, and joy in everything: cheesecake snaps, nude photo shoots, staged bondage scenes,



and short films, illustrated here with scores of photos (both clothed and nude) and film clips. Her first-person narration offers a privileged glimpse into the person behind the image but Mori simply adores her too much to dig any deeper into the darker episodes she describes. Still, this offers a good—albeit limited—introduction to the famous icon. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

## Beyond Outrage ★★1/2

Magnolia, 112 min., in Japanese w/English subtitles, R, DVD: \$26.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98

This sequel to star and director Takeshi Kitano's bloody yakuza flick *Outrage* continues a tale of gang rivalries that are exacerbated by police efforts to set mobsters against one another. Early scenes focus on the inner workings of the hostile syndicates—depicted here as corporations run by suit-wearing thugs who won't hesitate to betray one another. Although he appeared to die at the end of the first film, Otomo (Kitano), erstwhile boss of one of the families, returns here—emerging from prison an older and even more cunning figure, primed to cooperate with the semi-corrupt police detective who sprang him from jail in order to manipulate the gangs into a civil war. *Beyond Outrage* cheekily juxtaposes the ostensibly businesslike yakuza with their continuing propensity for the most grotesque brutality (fingers are still lopped off as an honorable means of apology, while enemies are dispatched not only with guns but also drills, and in one memorable sequence by a baseball pitching machine). Along the way, double- and triple-crosses occur with such bewildering speed that it's difficult to keep all of the characters and their scheming straight. Still, the abrupt ending carries a wallop, Kitano's performance as the sleepy-eyed but menacing Otomo is genuinely frightening, and he directs with an impressive degree of technical control. Likely to appeal to fans of yakuza films (and Kitano), this is a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)



## Big Bad Wolves ★★1/2

Magnolia, 110 min., in Hebrew w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$26.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98, Apr. 22

Although the box cover art prominently quotes Quentin Tarantino's blurb hailing this Israeli revenge thriller as the "best film of the year," it's doubtful whether many will agree. Directors Aharon Keshales and Navot Popushado are unquestionably skilled craftsmen, but technique alone can't transform the grim tale of one man's obsession with punishing the monster who raped and killed his daughter into much more than a slicker variant of *The*



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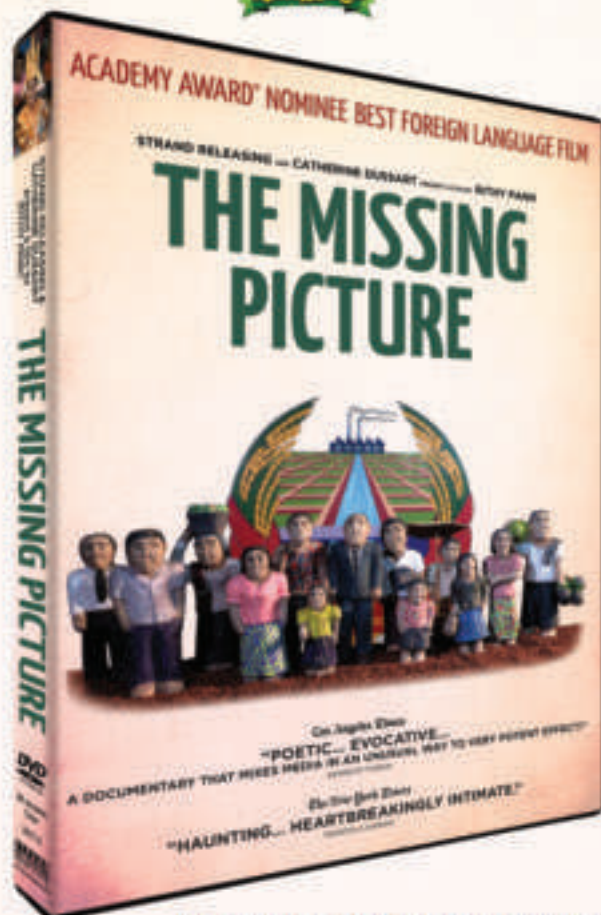
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*Last House on the Left*, Wes Craven's seminal 1972 shocker. *Big Bad Wolves* begins with its most compelling scene—a moody credits sequence during which an angelic little girl disappears while playing hide-and-seek with friends. But it soon switches to less subtle mode as the chief suspect in the crime—a nerdy teacher named Dror (Rotem Keinan)—is brutalized by the cops, leading to investigating officer Micki (Lior Ashkenazi) being dismissed from the force after a video of the beating appears online. But then the detective and the teacher are kidnapped by the dead girl's father, Gidi (Tzahi Grad), who invites the ex-cop to help him extract a confession by any means necessary. From here on, the level of sadistic violence escalates exponentially with gallows humor occasionally interrupting the nastiness before it's all resolved in a twist ending. One could read into *Big Bad Wolves* a metaphor for Israeli treatment of Palestinian prisoners, but ultimately this is little more than torture-porn. Optional. (F. Swietek)

### Black Nativity ★★1/2

Fox, 93 min., PG, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$39.99

A contemporary adaptation of Langston Hughes' titular 1961 gospel music oratorio, writer-director Kasi Lemmons' inspirational musical-melodrama centers on Langston (R&B pop star Jacob Latimore), a wary, street-wise teen from inner-city Baltimore who was raised by his embittered single mother, Naima (Jennifer Hudson). Faced with eviction, recently laid-off Naima puts Langston on a bus to New York City so that he can celebrate Christmas with grandparents he's never met: proud, eloquent Reverend Cornell Cobbs (Forest Whitaker) and his wife, Aretha (Angela Bassett). Led into temptation in Harlem, the rebellious, conflicted Langston connects with a local hustler (Tyrese Gibson) and eventually embarks on a revelatory, redemptive journey, during which—thanks to new friends and a little divine intervention—he discovers the true meaning of family, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Recasting the classic Nativity tale with African American performers, *Black Nativity* features a moving Times Square dream sequence in which Mary and Joseph are envisioned as a homeless, pregnant couple who sing "Silent Night." The supporting cast includes Nasir Jones (aka rapper Nas) as the street prophet Isaiah, Vondie Curtis-Hall as a pawnbroker who knew Langston's dad, and Mary J. Blige as an angelic parishioner at Cobbs' Holy Resurrection Baptist Church. Lemmons' interpretation is punctuated by hip-hop riffs, traditional hymns, and folk spirituals such as "Go Tell It On the Mountain," along with original songs including Hudson's "Test of Faith." The music works better than the

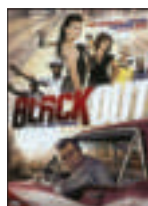


melodrama in this uplifting holiday film. A strong optional purchase. (S. Granger)

### Black Out ★★★

Doppelganger, 92 min., in Dutch w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99, June 3

A hybrid gangster-comedy very much in the style of British director Guy Ritchie's violent farces, *Black Out* is a jaunty Dutch thriller full of fun plot twists. Raymond Thiry stars as Jos, a former cocaine dealer now living an ordinary life, who is set to marry the lovely Caroline (Kim van Kooten), a woman unaware of his checkered past. With a wedding-day tuxedo hanging in his closet, Jos awakens to find a gun in his hand, a dead man in his bed, and no memory of the past few days. What follows is a crazy maze of drug deals, double-crosses, murders, betrayals, and lots of surprises as Jos tries to recall how he got into this fix and figure out how he's going to get out of it in time to make it to the altar. Director Arne Toonen handles everything with a brisk clip and tongue-in-cheek wickedness, tossing in a number of memorable characters (e.g., a mob boss too old to maintain his reputation for cruelty) and changing up expectations at every turn. *Black Out* may be heavily derivative of other voguish crime movies, but it runs like clockwork. Recommended. (T. Keogh)



### Blue Caprice ★★★

MPI, 93 min., R, DVD: \$24.98

In 2002, Washington, D.C., and neighboring sections of Virginia were terrorized by a series of shootings that left 10 people dead and three wounded. Police eventually apprehended John Allen Muhammad and Lee Boyd Malvo, who were dubbed the Beltway Snipers by the media. The pair left a series of cryptic and taunting messages for the police, which gave their crimes the aura of a serial killing spree. Alexandre Moors' feature dramatizes the circumstances that brought the two together and launched them on their vicious odyssey. Muhammad (played with ferocious intensity by Isaiah Washington) was an ex-convict obsessed with killing his estranged wife. Malvo (Tequan Richmond) was an emotionally needy minor who latched himself on to Muhammad, viewing the older man as a father figure (Muhammad was denied access to his children via his wife's restraining order). At one point, Muhammad punishes Malvo for perceived bad behavior by tying him to a tree in a forest and leaving him alone for an extended period. Tim Blake Nelson and Joey Lauren Adams turn up in showy supporting roles as the ammunition suppliers that provide the weapons used in the shootings. Although the film signifi-



cantly downplays the racial elements of the shootings—back in 2002, the police initially believed the crimes were being committed by a single white man instead of two African Americans—it nonetheless compellingly captures the fury of Muhammad and Malvo and the sense of confusion and fear their actions created. Recommended. (P. Hall)

### Blue Is the Warmest Color ★★★1/2

Criterion, 179 min., in French w/English subtitles, NC-17, DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$24.95

This provocative and emotionally intimate drama from France, which chronicles a romance between two young women, won the Palme d'Or at Cannes while its two stars, Adèle Exarchopoulos and Léa Seydoux, shared the Best Actress prize. Then it became the center of a furious critic tug-of-war for months when its male director, Abdellatif Kechiche, was accused of exploiting the actresses in a sexually graphic lovemaking scene. Unfortunately, this brouhaha overshadowed the real subject of the film: first love, overpowering desire, the excitement of discovering yourself, and the fear of what others may think of you. Adèle (Exarchopoulos) is an unfulfilled young woman until she meets Emma (Seydoux), an artist whose self-confidence is as attractive as her physical beauty. But while Emma embraces her sexual identity publicly, Adèle hides their true relationship from her friends and family. A compassionate and intense film about love, desire, commitment, and fear—especially Adèle's reluctance to embrace her true nature before the world—this is highly recommended for more adventurous collections. (S. Axmaker)



### Café de Flore ★★★1/2

Kino Lorber, 120 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95

Writer-director Jean-Marc Vallée's haunting, meta-physical romantic drama follows two narrative timelines. In 1969 Paris, working-class Jacqueline (French singer-actress Vanessa Paradis) gives birth to a boy with Down syndrome. Fiercely determined to give him as much of a normal, nurturing life as possible, Jacqueline's maternal ardor ultimately turns dangerously possessive. And, in present-day Montreal, an internationally successful DJ named Antoine (Kevin Parent) finds his mind wandering to the heartbroken wife of 20 years he divorced for a sexy blonde fellow member in Alcoholic Anonymous. Seemingly tied together by the titular song—a common French-language ballad—the dual stories and characters are ultimately connected in a manner with supernatural inferences. But the whole bitter-



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sweet mise-en-scène, thankfully, never tips into horror/suspense or becomes carried away with f/x, instead offering a mature and wise (if a little male wish-fulfillment-tinged) take on themes of “soulmates” and the limitations of love. Highly recommended. (C. Cassidy)

## Camille Claudel 1915

★★★

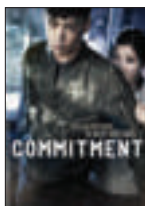
Kino Lorber, 95 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95



Juliette Binoche plays Camille Claudel—famed sculptor and one-time lover of Auguste Rodin—in Bruno Dumont’s biographical film, which is inspired in part by the correspondence between Camille and her poet brother Paul. Rather than chronicle its subject’s stormy life completely, *Camille Claudel 1915* focuses solely on Camille’s ordeal in middle age when she was committed to an asylum. Here, Camille is an anxious, angry woman, racked with paranoia (she’s convinced that Rodin and his cronies are engineering her imprisonment and trying to poison her), but her greatest loss is not her freedom but rather the ability to express her artistic drive. She is lucid compared to the seriously mentally-challenged inmates and at times is disgusted by their state, but she also shows compassion when she recognizes the vulnerable human inside who is in need of help. Dumont’s characters express a powerful duality; not just Camille, but also the nuns who look after the patients with tender concern. In sharp contrast to their caring is Camille’s brother, Paul (Jean-Luc Vincent), whose insufferable piety makes service to God paramount at the expense of those on earth. Benefiting from Binoche’s subtle and powerful performance, this is recommended. (S. Axmaker)

## Commitment ★★★

Well Go USA, 113 min., in Korean w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98



Set during the final weeks in the life of North Korea’s late “supreme leader,” Kim Jong-il, *Commitment* is a story of shifting loyalties and power-grabbing during a time of transition. The fact that it makes its points through a gritty action tale built around a tragic anti-hero and his unexpectedly sweet relationships serves to drive home how innocent human beings get trapped in webs of corruption and intrigue. First-time director Park Hong-soo brings equal amounts of delicacy and explosiveness to the engrossing narrative centered on 19-year-old Myung-hoon (Choi Seung-hyun), who is imprisoned along with his sister, Hye-in (Han Ye-ri), in a harsh labor camp—locked away following the death of their father, a spy. Myung-hoon

is offered a chance to save Hye-in from a cruel fate by agreeing to become an assassin operating in South Korea. Single-minded in his goal to protect his sister, Myung-hoon infiltrates the neighboring nation and takes an alias as a quiet student, killing targets at night. But Myung-hoon draws unwanted attention—and experiences unwanted feelings—when he demolishes bullies harassing a female student (Kim Yoo-jeong). The fact that her name also happens to be Hye-in, and she becomes a de facto second sister to Myung-hoon, brings a fable-like element to this expansive film in which Myung-hoon evolves from assassin to knight-errant in pursuit of a virtue he barely understands. Highly recommended. (T. Keogh)

## Concussion ★★

Anchor Bay, 96 min., R, DVD: \$24.98



First-time director Stacie Passon’s *Concussion* focuses on Abby (Robin Weigert), a benign stay-at-home mother in an upper-middle-class world whose life is turned upside down after she is hit in the head by a baseball and the injury unleashes a hitherto untapped erotic element in Abby’s life. Unbeknownst to her devoted partner (Julie Fain Lawrence) and their children, Abby rents an apartment and begins a secret life as a high-price escort named Eleanor. Although she is supported in her secret work by a handyman who doubles as her pimp (Johnathan Tchaikovsky), it’s only a matter of time before Abby’s family will get a clue that something unusual is going on. While Passon frames *Concussion* with a chic style that covers up its low budget, the basic concept is borderline ridiculous—the transformation of mild-mannered Abby into the sexually omnivorous Eleanor is the most unlikely bump-on-the-head plot device since Stan Laurel’s knocked-up noggin in *A Chump at Oxford*. Although Weigert tries very hard to sell her role, she is unable to make her double-life character plausible. Still, *Concussion* was a Grand Jury Prize nominee at the 2013 Sundance Film Festival, so some were persuaded by the story. Optional. (P. Hall)

## Contracted ★★★

MPI, 84 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.98



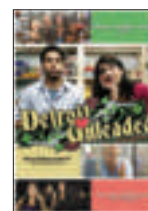
Filmmaker Eric England’s *Contracted*—part-horror tale, part-morality play—is more than a little ridiculous but also oddly compelling. Najarra Townsend stars as Samantha, a lesbian waitress who passes out drunk during a party and is raped by a mysterious man. In the days following the attack, Samantha becomes seriously ill. She fears that she has a sexually transmitted disease, but her physician is not overly concerned. When her eyes

turn bloodshot and her hair and fingernails fall out, however, it appears that Samantha has something a little stronger than the common cold. Faster than you can say *Night of the Living Dead*, Samantha turns into a sexually omnivorous and homicidal zombie. *Contracted* feels like five very different stories going on at once: a furious mother-daughter feud, a souring lesbian relationship, a social commentary about low-wage restaurant work, a mysterious disease thriller, and a flat-out horror flick. Yet England’s direction is consistently inventive and Townsend performs acting alchemy, plumbing a golden performance from such unlikely source material. For sheer escapist entertainment, this high-voltage film doesn’t disappoint. Recommended. (P. Hall)

## Detroit Unleaded

★★★1/2

Gas Afterhours (avail. from [www.detroitunleaded.com](http://www.detroitunleaded.com)), 92 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99



When his father is shot to death during a robbery, young Sami (E.J. Assi) inherits his dad’s convenience store and all the responsibilities and crazy dramas that go with it. The problem for Sami in this sweet but sardonic comedy is that running a store was never his dream, but taking charge of it is expected by his Arab-American family. Trapped behind bulletproof glass everyday, Sami sits in a cage-like booth that serves as both protection and metaphor. While his cousin and partner, Mike (Mike Batayeh), zips around the store, looking for ways to increase revenue with a fancy coffee machine and DVDs, restless Sami sits idle in the booth, dealing with a parade of wacky customers. When the lovely Najlah (Nada Shouhayib)—who sells phone cards to the store—begins a chaste relationship with Sami (despite opposition from their families), a world of possibilities suddenly opens for our hero. Written and directed by Rola Nashef—born in Lebanon but largely raised in Michigan—*Detroit Unleaded* is a gentle, straightforward romantic comedy that is refreshingly missing the lame slapstick and gross-out excesses that have overtaken the genre in Hollywood. It’s also a rare tale of young Arab-Americans carving out identities and destinies in the face of overwhelming family pressures. Highly recommended. (T. Keogh)

## Endless Love ★1/2

Universal, 105 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.98, May 27



Never being a great fan of Franco Zeffirelli’s sudsy 1981 love story about star-crossed teens, starring Brooke Shields, I wasn’t surprised by the low quality of this maudlin melodramatic

remake. Although Jade Butterfield (Gabriella Wilde) and David Elliot (Alex Pettyfer) are members of the same Atlanta graduating class, it seems that she's spent the past four years so buried in her studies that she never looked up and saw the handsomest hunk in her high school. But he's had his eye on her, and when he's parking cars at a posh inn, he attracts her attention. Under the watchful eye of her cardiologist father, Hugh (Bruce Greenwood), Jade is headed for Brown University to study medicine and will spend the summer working with a high-profile surgeon. Although her mom (Joely Richardson) and brother (Rhys Wakefield) have gone through their mourning periods, her dad is still grieving over his older son's death from cancer—and he's furious when lonely Jade ditches the internship and invites David to join them at the family's magnificent lakeside summer home. The friction between the ardent working-class suitor and upper middle-class protective dad is palpable, presumably because David's widower dad (Robert Patrick) is an auto mechanic and David has a blemish in his rebellious past. Tepidly co-scripted by director Shana Feste, *Endless Love* is both clichéd and contrived, discarding the tragic, pivotal elements of pyromania, prison, and political activism that were key in Scott Spencer's 1979 bestselling novel. Not recommended. (S. Granger)

## Escape from Tomorrow

★★

Gaiam, 99 min., R, DVD: \$19.98, Apr. 29

Filmmaker Randy Moore's low-budget horror fantasy about a man going insane at Disney World was filmed inside the enormous amusement parks in Florida and California—without permission from Disney. The story revolves around a park-hopping family of four headed up by Everyman father, Jim (Roy Abramsohn), who begins to go bonkers after receiving a phone call from his boss informing him that he's been fired. Deciding not to tell his family and ruin their fun, Jim is nevertheless testy with his nagging wife (Elena Schuber) and kids (Jack Dalton, Katelynn Rodriguez)—particularly when the Buzz Lightyear ride shuts down just as they're preparing to board. Obviously distressed and disoriented, Jim ogles two flirty teenage French girls and drunkenly imagines himself in bed with a middle-aged fairytale princess (Alison Lees-Taylor). He views animatronic figures as the personification of evil, pretends to shoot himself with a Frontierland rifle, and believes that he's been tasered in the groin and brainwashed in a secret laboratory underneath Epcot's Spaceship Earth sphere. So how did Moore and his crew get away with this stunt? Cinematographer Lucas Lee Graham used an innocuous Canon 5D Mark II camera to slip the House of Mouse



this sinister, surreal mickey. Unfortunately, it all comes across more as gimmick than cogent commentary on Disney fantasy during hard times. Optional, at best. (S. Granger)

## Flowers in the Attic

★★1/2

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

Late author V.C. Andrews' (1923-86) crowning glory was the titular (insanely popular) 1979 gothic horror novel (which spawned several sequels and morphed into a moneymaking ghostwritten franchise), previously adapted for the big screen in a 1987 film starring Louise Fletcher and Kristy Swanson. Produced by Lifetime, this remake does reasonable justice to the beloved guilty pleasure, which tells the story of the dysfunctional Dollanganger family, whose thirtysomething beautiful mother Corinne (Heather Graham) falls to pieces after her husband is killed. Running back home to her wealthy parents, the Foxworths, Corinne drags along her four children: five-year-old twins, teenaged Chris (Mason Dye), and 'tween protagonist Cathy (Kiernan Shipka), who never quite trusts Mommie Dearest's instincts. With good reason: Grandmother Foxworth (Ellen Burstyn) is a religiously devout ogre who terrorizes the kids, forcing them to live in one room until their grandfather dies, because, well...there's a deep, dark family secret. Compressing the storyline seems to work here, and even though the acting is so-so, fans will be drawn to this (Lifetime has already announced plans to air the sequel, *Petals on the Wind*). A strong optional purchase. (J. Williams-Wood)



## Free Fall ★★★

Wolfe, 100 min., in German w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95

Stephan Lacant's somewhat familiar drama tells the story of a German policeman who—despite having a pregnant girlfriend—falls in love with a gay male colleague, engaging in a clandestine relationship that threatens to destroy both men's careers and personal lives. Hanno Koffler stars as Marc, who meets Kay (Max Reimelt) during a departmental exercise run. Before long the men are jogging together, and a sudden kiss leads to something more serious. Marc's girlfriend eventually comes to suspect that he is having an affair (with another woman), but when his parents and colleagues discover what's happening, their attitude towards him and Kay changes radically, leading to shunning, reckless behavior, and even physical violence. Eventually, the birth of his child will force Marc to make a decision about how he'll live his life. While



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there are obvious similarities here to the superior *Brokeback Mountain*, this honest and often powerful drama is no mere copy and it benefits from solid performances. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

### Geography Club ★★★

Breaking Glass, 90 min., PG-13, DVD: \$21.99



Based on a novel by Brent Hartinger, *Geography Club* tells a sweet-and-sour story of a good kid who compromises his values and character in order to hide his homosexuality. Russell (Cameron Deane Stewart) is a high school track-and-field athlete whose off-screen father has a plan in mind for his son's life. Unfortunately, dad's blueprint doesn't really fit Russell, especially the part about marrying a female. Keeping his gay identity under wraps, Russell tries to go through life with his head down, being relatively unnoticed except by longtime pal Gunnar (Andrew Caldwell), a pudgy nerd. But things change when Kevin (Justin Deeley), a quarterback for the school's football team, reveals his own gay identity to Russell with a kiss. Suddenly both boys have a lot to keep secret for a variety of reasons, and problems ensue when each decides to camouflage his true self through macho displays of cruelty. The film's title refers to a secret support group—where Russell discreetly hangs out—for kids of varying sexual orientation. An intelligent, often funny film that benefits from strong performances from the cast (which also includes Scott Bakula and Ana Gasteyer), this is recommended. (T. Keogh)

### Gimme Shelter ★★

Lionsgate, 101 min., PG-13, DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$24.99



Earnest but ham-fisted, filmmaker Ron Krauss's tale of a pregnant teen who finds familial support in a religiously-affiliated group home plays like an Afterschool Special for the Eternal Word Network. Vanessa Hudgens delivers a committed but uneven performance as Agnes "Apple" Bailey, who flees the apartment of her violent, drug-addict mother (Rosario Dawson) and makes her way to the father (Brendan Fraser) she's never known, a wealthy Wall Street broker. Although surly and abrasive, dad takes her in, much to the distress of his wife (Stephanie Szostak)—a situation that becomes even more tense once they discover that Apple is pregnant. Pressured towards having an abortion, Apple takes off again, winding up in a hospital where kindly Father McCarthy (James Earl Jones) refers her to a private Catholic shelter for unwed mothers and mothers-to-be. Here, Apple warms to

the sense of camaraderie and gives birth to her child. Based on a true story, *Gimme Shelter's* portrait of a disadvantaged young woman who overcomes myriad obstacles to triumph as a person aims to capture a sense of gritty realism, but instead comes across as mawkish and grossly manipulative—more high-minded pro-life lecture than compelling drama. Not a necessary purchase. (F. Swietek)

### Girl Rising ★★★

Cinedigm, 103 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.95



Filmmaker Richard E. Robbins' documentary focuses on the importance of education for young women in the developing world. Introduced by Liam Neeson, *Girl Rising* is divided into nine sections, with each pairing a different writer with a girl to help tell her story using dramatic re-enactments. Seven-year-old Wadley from Port au Prince was enjoying a normal weekday when an earthquake devastated Haiti. While she and her mother are stuck in a tent city, Wadley is unable to attend school due to a lack of funds, and must find a way to continue her education (this segment is written by Edwidge Danticat, whose acclaimed novel *Claire of the Sea Light* centers on a 7-year-old Haitian girl). Suma, who lives in Nepal, must forgo school because of work commitments. Her life of servitude finally ends when she meets a schoolmaster who takes her under his wing. The weakest segment concerns Yasmin, an Egyptian girl who critically injures an attacker—an act that involves more courage than education (she was also lucky to be able to overpower a fully-grown adult). Other stories, which hail from Cambodia, Ethiopia, India, Peru, Afghanistan, and Sierra Leone, concern homelessness and arranged marriage. When the subjects or their onscreen surrogates aren't speaking in their native language, actresses and musicians provide voiceover, including Meryl Streep, Cate Blanchett, and Alicia Keys. This is only partially effective since they are speaking for those who can speak for themselves, although Anne Hathaway's voicing of an 11-year-old Afghanistan wife's frustration is particularly effective. A powerful documentary, overall, this is recommended. (K. Fennessy)

### Gloria ★★★

Lionsgate, 109 min., in Spanish w/English subtitles, R, DVD: \$26.98, Apr. 29



Set in Santiago, Chile, *Gloria* revolves around the romantic travails of attractive, flirtatious, 58-year-old Gloria (Paulina Garcia), who becomes involved with 60-ish Rodolfo (Sergio Hernán-

dez), a recently divorced owner of an arcade amusement park. Torn between family obligations and personal fulfillment, Rodolfo is obviously conflicted and clearly not ready for the kind of mature bond that Gloria wants. Opening in a crowded singles nightclub, we see bespectacled Gloria sitting at the bar, sipping champagne, puffing on a cigarette, and surveying the scene unfolding around her until she catches the eye of a man she knows and moves onto the dance floor. But the next morning and the morning after, she awakens alone—until meeting Rodolfo, who is immediately attracted to her. Rodolfo introduces Gloria to Vertigo Park, where men play war games, and alludes to the neediness of his ex-wife and two grown daughters who phone him incessantly and with whom he obviously has a co-dependent relationship. But Gloria also invites Rodolfo to a family birthday party, where she thoughtlessly ignores him, preferring to engage in nostalgia with her ex-husband and his new wife. Eventually, Rodolfo plans a romantic getaway to the beach resort of Viña del Mar. Filmmaker Sebastián Lelio's *Gloria* is dominated by the sensual complexity of the indomitable titular character, magnificently played by Garcia, who won the Berlin International Film Festival's Silver Bear Actress Award. An emotionally uplifting film that will be particularly appealing to a middle-aged audience, this is recommended. (S. Granger)

### Haunter ★★1/2

MPI, 97 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98



Atmosphere trumps scares in Vincenzo Natali's supernatural thriller, which stars Abigail Breslin as Lisa, a teen who comes to realize that she and her Reagan-era parents and younger brother are endlessly repeating a single day over and over again in their fog-shrouded home. After investigating strange sounds coming from the basement (amongst other peculiarities), Lisa concludes that she and her family are in fact ghosts, their predicament somehow linked to the mysterious disappearances of numerous teenage girls dating back more than half a century—as well as to the unhappy fate that might befall someone living in the house right now. All the spooky goings-on eventually focus on a menacing telephone repairman (Stephen McHattie) who shows up to warn Lisa that her investigations are dangerous to her entire family. Although the script raises more questions than it answers, *Haunter* successfully creates a genuinely creepy mood, while Breslin and McHattie deliver first-rate performances. In the end, *Haunter* is not exactly a groundbreaking ghost story, but it does bring enough twists to the haunted-house genre to merit a look. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

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## Hellbenders ★★1/2

Lionsgate, 87 min., R, DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$24.99

The subject of exorcism receives the *Ghostbusters* treatment—with a heavy dose of raunchiness—in writer-director J.T. Petty's cheerfully over-the-top horror comedy, which gathers an assortment of actors familiar to genre fans from secondary roles in other movies (most notably Clancy Brown and Clifton Collins Jr.) to play the wacky members of the Augustine Interfaith Order of Hellbound Saints, affectionately known as the titular Hellbenders. They represent the final line of defense against demons so impervious to conventional rites of exorcism that the only way to send them back into the abyss—follow me closely here—is to invite your own possession by living the most dissolute possible life and then committing suicide to drag the devils back to hell with you. The crunch comes when an officious representative from the diocese threatens to disband the crew just as a dangerous Norse demon arrives in New York who is intent on opening the gates of hell and destroying humanity. In the early going, *Hellbenders* is amusingly coarse, but the laughs eventually wear thin, and the big confrontation at the close—marked by deliberately chintzy special effects—falls flat. A hit-and-miss film that strains for midnight-movie cult status but never quite makes the grade, this is a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)



## The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug ★★★

New Line, 161 min., PG-13, DVD: \$28.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$35.99

Filmmaker Peter Jackson's second installment in the trilogy adaptation of J.R.R. Tolkien's beloved fantasy novel picks up with resourceful Bilbo Baggins (Martin Freeman) continuing his journey with the wizard Gandalf (Ian McKellen) and a band of dwarves on their quest to steal the magical Arkenstone, which will enable the latter to reclaim their lost kingdom of Erebor. Unfortunately, the gem is guarded by the fearsome, fire-breathing dragon Smaug (sonorously voiced by Benedict Cumberbatch). En route, the group are attacked by vicious Orcs, befriended by shape-shifting Beorn, and captured by a swarm of giant spiders in Mirkwood forest—all episodes from Tolkien's text. But the filmmakers here also introduce a new character: Tauriel (Evangeline Lilly), a spunky elf archer who flirts with hunky, handsome dwarf Kili (Aidan Turner), thereby igniting jealousy in Legolas (Orlando Bloom). Middle Earth purists rightly point out that Legolas never appeared in *The Hobbit*, but his presence here is captivating,

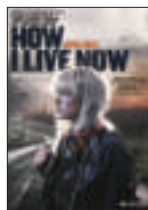


while Lilly bears a startling resemblance to Liv Tyler's Arwen. Undoubtedly, the most exciting chase sequence occurs when the dwarves engineer a spectacular escape that has them being swept downriver in barrels—hounded by malicious Orcs—until being assisted by Bard the Bowman (Luke Evans), who smuggles them into Laketown, where they prepare to confront Smaug in his cavern. While this overlong trilogy is not as emotionally involving as *The Lord of the Rings*, the Oscar-nominated visual effects are impressive. An intense, action-packed adventure that concludes with an exciting cliffhanger, this is recommended. (S. Granger)

## How I Live Now ★★★

Magnolia, 101 min., R, DVD: \$26.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98

Kevin Macdonald's adaptation of Meg Rosoff's titular 2004 young adult novel presents a near-future world on the brink of collapse. Bleached-blond New Yorker Elizabeth (Saoirse Ronan)—who goes by the name Daisy—travels to Britain to stay with relatives for the summer. From the start, the 16-year-old treats her cousins Isaac (Tom Holland), Piper (Harley Bird), and Edmond (George MacKay) like underlings, but warms up to 17-year-old "Eddie" when she witnesses his way with animals, including a hawk with a broken wing. With her aunt (Anna Chancellor) called away on business in Geneva, the kids have free reign over the cat-filled farmhouse, but when a bomb goes off in London, the quartet lose power and contact with the outside world. Because she's an American citizen, a consular official gives Daisy a ticket back to the States, but she decides to stay—come hell, high water, or nuclear annihilation. Within days, authorities arrive to evacuate the children, leading to division and relocation, but Daisy and Eddie make a vow to meet up again. After escaping from a work camp, Daisy and Piper work their way through empty towns and shadowy forests towards home, with no idea of what they'll find when they get there. A science fiction tale that prioritizes character over special effects, *How I Live Now* (featuring music from Nick Drake and Fairport Convention) is a lovely film about ugly times. Recommended. (K. Fennessy)



## The Human Scale ★★★1/2

KimStim, 77 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.98

Divided into five "chapters," Andreas Daalsgard's documentary addresses the continued growth and evolution of cities around the planet—a timely topic, especially as more and more people (particularly in the developing world) embark on permanent migrations to impersonal



"megacity" urban centers. Interviewees discuss how planners and architects—somewhat belatedly in many cases—try to come up with "humanistic" living designs that are healthy and functional for people, instead of the monolithic old model that offered up exhaust-choked thoroughfares for motor vehicles (and monstrous skyscraper-blocks for Big Business). Much of the material and outlook derives from the work of Danish author Jan Gehl, whose architectural firm addressed these problems with the designing of Copenhagen in the 1960s and the rebuilding of Christchurch, New Zealand, following a devastating recent earthquake. Gehl's solutions include priority consideration for pedestrians, rickshaws, and bicyclists, while also retaining social public spaces and small merchant venues. Additional filming locations here include China, Italy, Australia, Bangladesh, and New York City, all of which illustrate quality-of-life issues for citizens. Offering a thought-provoking look at a pressing social issue, this is highly recommended. (C. Cassidy)

## I Am Divine ★★★1/2

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

This surprisingly sweet and touching documentary serves up a full and rounded portrait of Harris Glenn Milstead, better known to the world as Divine, the larger-than-life transvestite star whose fame was launched in John Waters' anarchic comedies (including *Pink Flamingos*, *Female Trouble* and *Hairspray*). A bullied Baltimore kid, Milstead found solace in a long-term romance with a high school sweetheart, and also received support and acceptance from his parents, who got him work in a hair salon. But Milstead yearned to be a star, and he allied himself with Waters, an up-and-coming independent filmmaker whose manic, trashy features proved a perfect vehicle for Divine's brassy, over-the-top persona. Together, Waters and Divine—the latter wrapped in outfits far too small for her 300-pound frame and covered in layers of outrageous makeup—became darlings of underground film in the U.S. But Divine wanted even more, conquering off-Broadway theatre in New York and countless stages around the world. In *I Am Divine*, filmmaker Jeffrey Schwarz pieces together an engaging mosaic of the likeable Milstead/Divine, drawing on loads of archival footage (Milstead was soft-spoken in real life), as well as interviews with people from Waters' and Andy Warhol's circles. Perhaps the most poignant material here comes during the interviews with Milstead's mother, who largely watched her son's transformation into Divine from a distance. Milstead died too young (age 42 in 1988) at a time when he was happy and entering new frontiers in his acting career. A



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thoroughly entertaining profile, this is highly recommended. (T. Keogh)

### I, Frankenstein ★1/2

Lionsgate, 93 min., PG-13,  
DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.99,  
May 13



Since it was first published in 1818, Mary Shelley's classic novel has seen many screen incarnations but few as ridiculous as Stuart Beattie's convoluted concept of using the monster as a pawn in the perennial battle between good and evil (here featuring gargoyles and demons). Beginning with the monster (Aaron Eckhart) burying his creator, the story catapults forward to the present-day, where—wandering the world alone and pursued by (literal) demons—he's dubbed "Adam" and offered shelter in a massive, medieval Gothic cathedral by gargoyle queen Leonore (Miranda Otto), who recognizes him as a fellow outsider, noting, "Humans think of us as mere decoration." What the fiery-eyed demons covet is the book that Adam carries with him: Dr. Victor Frankenstein's handwritten journal, detailing exactly how to create life. Their leader, the nefarious Prince Naberies (Bill Nighy), has been collecting an army of soulless human corpses which he plans to re-animate in order to obliterate mankind. Towards that end, he has created an impressive high-tech laboratory run by attractive electrophysicist Terra (Yvonne Strahovski). Not surprisingly, she eventually allies with Adam, who skulks around in the shadows. Humorlessly adapted by Beattie from a graphic novel by Kevin Greivoux, *I, Frankenstein* is full of expository dialogue, choppy-edited fights, an invasive musical score, and CGI-enhanced transformations. Aside from his glowering, grimacing and growling, Eckhart obviously spent endless hours at the gym to achieve his admirably ripped physique, but poor Mary Shelley must be spinning in her grave. Not recommended. (S. Granger)

### Interior. Leather Bar.

★1/2

Strand, 60 min., not rated,  
DVD: \$19.99



A good idea becomes a less-than-scintillating sort of documentary in *Interior. Leather Bar.*, directed by (and featuring) James Franco and Travis Mathews. The film's inspiration comes from the lore surrounding 40 minutes of sexually-explicit scenes cut from William Friedkin's controversial 1980 thriller *Cruising*, which starred Al Pacino as an undercover cop infiltrating a leather bar to seek out a killer who was targeting gay men. Franco and Mathews speak at length about how that footage was removed in order for *Cruising* to achieve an "R" rating, but then go beyond that bit of his-

tory by imagining what could possibly have been left on the editor's floor. The directors decide to shoot their own version of the lost material, casting straight actor Val Lauren in Pacino's role and hiring other straight and gay actors whose characters are part of the loud, fever-dream sequences set in the bar. But most of the scenes are devoted to frank discussions involving Lauren, Franco, Mathews and others about how far an actor should go to give a director what he wants (Lauren seems especially concerned that he'll be asked to participate in a gay sex scene on-camera). Both the filmmakers and actors become preoccupied with issues of authenticity and redefining what is "normal" in a filmed story—and so on. In the end, the leather bar footage—with shadowy sexually-explicit acts—doesn't add up to much, while the rest of this talky project is just a bore. Not recommended. (T. Keogh)

### The Invisible Woman

★★★

Sony, 111 min., R, Blu-ray/  
DVD Combo: \$35.99



Ralph Fiennes stars in and directs this romantic drama about the scandalous affair between celebrated English novelist Charles Dickens and a young actress named Ellen "Nelly" Ternan. In 1857, 45-year-old Dickens (Fiennes) is thoroughly enjoying his fortune and fame, relishing every public appearance before an adoring audience. But his longtime marriage to stoic Catherine (Joanna Scanlan)—who has borne him 10 children—has gone sour. Born into a theatrical family, 18-year-old Nelly Ternan (Felicity Jones) sadly lacks acting talent, much to the chagrin of her protective mother (Kristin Scott Thomas)—who views an illicit liaison with the distinguished Dickens as her daughter's greatest opportunity. But prim Nelly is understandably fearful, particularly when energetic, enthusiastic Dickens takes her to visit his friend, Wilkie Collins (Tom Hollander), who is happily cohabiting with a woman to whom he's not married. Adapted from Claire Tomalin's 1991 biography, the story is cleverly bookended by sequences in the windswept seaside resort town of Margate, where troubled, middle-aged Nelly—now-married to the staid headmaster of the local school (Tom Burke)—furiously paces the beach, as if pursued by demons. Elegantly directed with meticulous, Victorian restraint—depicting a time when women were suffocated by restrictive manners and morals—*The Invisible Woman* is a dark and secretive tale from the shadows of literary history. Recommended. (S. Granger)

### The Iran Job ★★1/2

Film Movement, 95 min., in English & Farsi w/  
English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95

Filmmaker Till Schauder's documentary

focuses on a "journeyman" basketball player (i.e., accustomed to short-term contracts with teams around the world) named Kevin Sheppard, a U.S. Virgin Islands native who signs up for a season with A.S. Shiraz, one of the harder-luck teams in Iran's thriving basketball league. Along with fellow outsider player Zoran Majkic (a Serbian), Sheppard not only witnesses anti-American murals and slogans but also enjoys the fun-loving side of this Islamic nation. Appreciative fans (segregated in male/female sections) treat b-ball contests more like celebrations than high-pressure rivalries. Braving possible arrest for being without male escorts, beautiful ladies arrive at Sheppard and Majkic's Christmas party, while some Iranians who have visited the USA even speak of America glowingly. The narrative unfolds against a backdrop of the Bush and Obama administrations, Washington's strained diplomatic relations, and the Tehran dictatorship cracking down on women while also fighting grassroots democratic uprisings in 2009. Farsi-language hip-hop provides a solid soundtrack to this captivating cross-cultural entry about athletics serving as a humanizing window into an "enemy" culture. Highly recommended. (C. Cassidy)

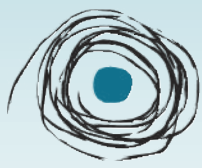


### Junk ★★

Breaking Glass, 104 min., not  
rated, DVD: \$21.99



A feature-length in-joke for co-screenwriters and stars Kevin Hamedani and Ramon Isao, *Junk* centers on the world of B-movie independent filmmaking. Hamedani is Kaveh, an obnoxious yet vaguely sympathetic writer who fails to woo back an ex-girlfriend on the eve of reluctantly accepting an invitation to attend a film festival. Already in a bad mood when asked to bring his schlocky new horror flick to a midnight screening, Kaveh is even more put off when he discovers that his creative partner on that movie—Raul (Isao)—is also at the festival. The feuding Kaveh and Raul soon declare a truce for the sake of their film, but also for a more urgent reason: a legendary Japanese producer of exploitation movies is in the vicinity, and he might hear their pitch. What follows, unfortunately, is an overstuffed comedy about everything that can go wrong (or right) at a festival: sparse audiences, deep rivalries with other filmmakers, disposable sex, impenetrable security, too many drugs, too many sycophants, and numerous opportunities to discover just how irrelevant one is in the big picture. While there are some genuinely funny moments, *Junk* too often wanders off in random directions without compelling purpose. Not a necessary purchase. (T. Keogh)



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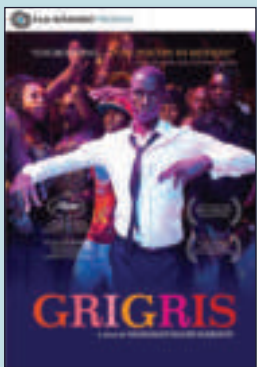
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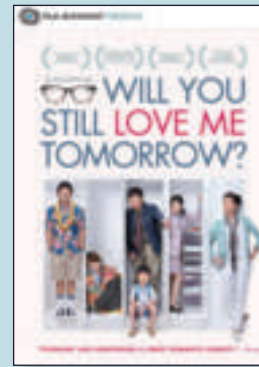
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## The Last Elvis ★★★

First Run, 92 min., in Spanish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95

Filmmaker Armando Bo's quirky, dreamlike drama centers on a working stiff named Carlos (John McInerney), whose life revolves around being an Elvis Presley impersonator. Chubby and laconic, Carlos has become immersed in his unspecified dreams of Elvis-y success at enormous personal cost. His wary ex-wife, Alejandra (Griselda Siciliani), is trying to increase the distance between him and his already estranged young daughter, Lisa Marie (Margarita Lopez), and his employer at a factory is tired of Carlos' distractedness. None of that matters to this oddball anti-hero: Carlos receives enough audience love at the occasional club date to keep him going, deepening his obsession. Things change when Alejandra is seriously injured in a car accident and Carlos has to take care of Lisa Marie. Father and daughter slowly find their way to a middle ground where she begins to get dad's Elvis thing and he steps up, clumsily, to take responsibility for someone else. Benefiting from a strong central performance—McInerney's otherworldly aura and Elvis chops are weirdly compelling—this is recommended. (T. Keogh)



## The Last Time I Saw Macao★★

Cinema Guild, 85 min., in Portuguese w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95

Part impressionistic essay, part sci-fi noir nonsense, and part political commentary, *The Last Time I Saw Macao* plays like a shotgun wedding of arbitrary narrative and generally random images. Portuguese filmmakers João Rui Guerra da Mata and João Pedro Rodrigues open their experimental film with a playful nod to Josef von Sternberg's 1952 thriller about mistaken identities, *Macao*, presenting transsexual Cindy Scrash as a buxom singer lip-synching to Jane Russell's performance of "You Kill Me" from Sternberg's movie. It turns out Scrash is playing a character named Candy here, although the audience only hears her disembodied voice for the duration of the film. Through enigmatic messages, Candy instructs off-screen narrator/co-director Guerra da Mata to save her from a noir-ish fate that is vaguely like Russell's situation in *Macao*. None of which makes *Last Time I Saw Macao* a successful homage to a minor classic; instead, it's nearly an act of found art with a chicken-or-egg riddle: did the directors dream up the wispy, loony plot (which also involves human zealots turning into animals) to mischievously link a lot of meaningless shots, or did they have a story



to present elliptically? Either way, the novelty wears thin after 30 minutes of often tourist-y footage of Macao's streets, parks, swanky hotel lobbies, and grim alleys. Da Mata's world-weary reflections on the identity of Macao (or Macau)—a former Portuguese colony in China that, like nearby Hong Kong, now has a degree of autonomy—are too thin to tell us much about the region or its existential dilemma as a semi-independent territory. Optional, at best. (T. Keogh)

## The Legend of Hercules★1/2

Summit, 98 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.99

Renny Harlin's tepid and tedious sword-and-sandals epic will be long forgotten by the time Brett Ratner's *Hercules*, starring Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson, opens this summer. One of the best-known figures in Greek mythology, the demigod Hercules has been portrayed onscreen by musclemen like Steve Reeves and Lou Ferrigno; now it's Kellan Lutz. Here, Olympian god Zeus impregnates mortal Queen Alcmena (Roxanne McKee), wife of the tyrannical King Amphitryon (Scott Adkins). Loathed by his stepfather and envied by stepbrother Prince Iphicles (Liam Garrigan), now-grown Prince Alcides/Hercules (Lutz)—clueless as to his true origins—is dispatched to Egypt, where he is ambushed and enslaved. Now, Iphicles can inherit the kingdom and marry Crete's Princess Hebe (Gaia Weiss), who has already publicly pledged her love to Alcides/Hercules. All of this is witnessed by the Queen's mentor Chiron (Rade Serbedzija) and Alcides/Hercules' fellow soldier Sotiris (Liam McIntyre). According to legend, Hercules tackled 12 great labors, including fighting the nine-headed Hydra and the Cretan bull. Aside from a brief and unimpressive skirmish with the Nemean lion, however, these tasks are ignored in favor of a choppy, insipid, utterly predictable love story. Except for McIntyre and Serbedzija, the acting here is ludicrous and laughable, particularly on the part of uncharismatic Lutz. Not recommended. (S. Granger)



## Lost in Thailand★★★

Well Go USA, 105 min., in Mandarin w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98

This middlebrow farce, a smash hit in its native China, stars Xu Zheng (who also directs) as Xu, a starchy Chinese scientist who has just perfected a fuel formula. Coldly walking away from a marital crisis, Xu races an estranged business partner (Huang Bo) to Thailand (which is seen through Chinese eyes as a riotous, yet laidback culture, analogous to western stereotypes of southern California) for a



crucial patent meeting with a key investor. But en route Xu hooks up with off-his-meds loon Wang (Wang Baoqiang), a simpleton come to Thailand with a touristy to-do list, who throws Xu off his mission plan time and again. Although promo spots compare this to the *Hangover* series, *Lost in Thailand* is really more of the time-tested Hollywood road-comedy formula in which a fun-loving nut teaches an uptight type how to loosen up and reprioritize, despite one disaster after another. That routine works well here, right down to the bloopers-outtakes over the closing credits. Recommended. (C. Cassidy)

## Lost Islands★★★

First Run, 103 min., in Hebrew w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95

Israeli writer-director Reshef Levi's early-'80s set *Lost Islands* follows an unorthodox family of five brothers and their parents, who approach most difficult situations with humor and acceptance—or resignation in the case of the boys' father, Avraham (Shmil Ben Ari), a banker with a penchant for growing cactus. At the film's center are twin brothers Ofer (Oshri Cohen) and Erez (Michael Moshonov), who each fall for the spirited Neta (Yuval Scharf). Erez and Neta share an emotional intimacy—Neta becomes a repository for Erez's most secret thoughts—although it is Ofer she marries. When a car accident disables Avraham, Erez flees into the Israeli army, forcing Ofer—who wanted badly to serve in the military and become an officer—to stay home and help take care of their father. Set to a soundtrack of 1980s hit songs from Europe and the U.S., *Lost Islands* explores the price of unfulfilled dreams across generations and over years of unspoken disappointment. Recommended. (T. Keogh)



## Mademoiselle C★★★

Cohen, 93 min., R, DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray: \$34.98

In contrast to the intimidating Anna Wintour portrayed in the documentary *The September Issue* and the roman à clef *The Devil Wears Prada*, the heroine here—fashionista Carine Roitfeld—is an all-around wonderful person and women's-wear muse. Director Fabien Constant's upbeat (although not terribly weighty) look at fashion-editor Roitfeld shows her operating in nonstop glamour-drive. Quitting the Paris edition of *Vogue*, where she had made her reputation (especially with highly eroticized Tom Ford photo layouts dubbed "porno chic"), Roitfeld heads to New York and launches her own magazine, *CR Fashion Book*, as a "laboratory" for her imagery and fantasies (a brief, silly "war" with her former publisher Condé Nast ensues



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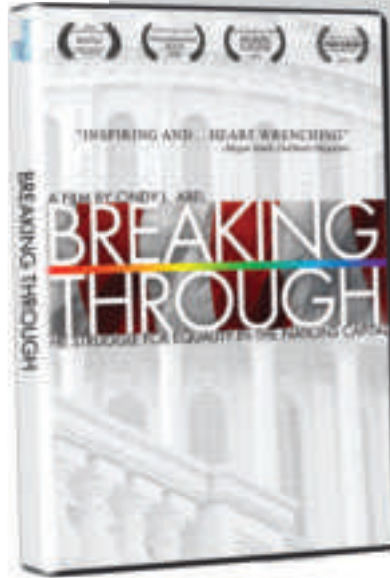
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**THE M WORD COMING IN JUNE**

Henry Jaglom's newest film (fresh from its theatrical run) is set in a struggling television station threatened by economic downturn. Jaglom's muse, Tanna Frederick, stars as Moxie, a children's TV show actress who unexpectedly turns into a Joan of Arc when she finds herself leading a band of rebelling women demanding their rights in the midst of a cost cutting mission. Also stars Frances Fisher, Corey Feldman, Michael Imperioli, Mary Crosby.

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over the use of star photographers). Roitfeld also creates the deluxe illustrated book *The Little Black Dress*, wows the Cannes Film Festival with an all-black catwalk show, and becomes a grandmother. She is described as an inspiration who inspires the best from everyone around her, including shutterbug Bruce Weber; models Lara Stone, Kate Upton, Linda Evangelista, and Stephanie Seymour; and celebrity guests Sarah Jessica Parker, Kanye West, and P. Diddy. *Mademoiselle C* offers only mere glimpses into Roitfeld's stable (unmarried) private life with long-term partner Christian Restoin, and serves up only small hints of Roitfeld's childhood and Coco Chanel-influenced evolution. Fans of similar catwalk-u-mentaries like *Unzipped* or *Lagerfeld Confidential* will likely enjoy this one as well. Recommended. (C. Cassidy)

## The Missing Picture

★★★1/2

Strand, 92 min., not rated, DVD: \$27.99, June 10



Although ostensibly an autobiographical narrative about his family's harrowing experiences during the Khmer Rouge terror of the 1970s, Cambodian director Rithy Panh's iconoclastic Oscar-nominated film takes quite a different stylistic tack from his previous documentaries on Cambodia's killing fields. The nightmarish scenarios his family experienced firsthand are re-created here by Panh using meticulously carved wooden and clay figures that he arranges in various situations in a number of different diorama-like artificial backgrounds, all with an accompanying voiceover. Adding crude but effective visual effects and a haunting downbeat violin-driven soundtrack, Panh creates a mesmerizing flow of images to animate his family's terrible hardships under the Pol Pot-led Communist takeover of once-thriving Phenom Penh. Although one might assume that this homespun approach would serve to trivialize the tragic events that befell Panh's family, the effect is actually just the opposite. Combining the figurine "actors" with starkly realist touches—such as integrating actual propagandistic documents and images from Khmer Rouge files—Panh brilliantly blurs the borders between the real and surreal, delivering a fascinating and moving portrait of his family's sufferings under a murderous despotic regime. Highly recommended. (M. Sandlin)

## The Monuments Men

★★★1/2

Sony, 118 min., PG-13, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$40.99, May 20



Given unexpected timeliness by the recent discovery in Germany of yet another hidden art collection, this earnest, often

sermonizing WWII docudrama-like escapade unfortunately lacks coherent tonality. Hugh Bonneville delivers one of the most memorable performances here as an alcoholic British art historian, seeking noble redemption as part of the small, multinational squad headed by Fogg Museum curator/conservationist Frank Stokes (George Clooney), who is determined to preserve Europe's greatest works of art from acquisition and/or destruction in 1944 by the retreating Nazis. Working within the newly formed Monuments Fine Arts and Archives program, Stokes' team also includes an art restorer (Matt Damon), architect (Bill Murray), sculptor (John Goodman), and connoisseur (Bob Balaban). The group is charged with advising frontline commanders and recovering masterpieces looted from museums and private Jewish collections—treasures include Michelangelo's *Madonna of Bruges* and Flemish masters Hubert and Jan van Eyck's 12-panel altarpiece *The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb*. They're aided by a Parisian assistant curator/collaborator (Cate Blanchett), painting instructor (Jean Dujardin), and teenage driver/translator (Dimitri Leonidas). Episodically adapted from Robert M. Edsel's detailed nonfiction account, *The Monuments Men* is sketchily co-scripted and directed by Clooney, but suffers from too little structure and too many subplots, peopled with diverse characters who should be fascinating but aren't because their individual roles are never fleshed out. Optional. (S. Granger)

## Moon Man

★★★1/2  
New Video, 95 min., not rated, DVD: \$26.95



This is a delightful adaptation of the beloved titular 1966 children's book by French author and illustrator Tomi Ungerer. Using simple words and unforgettable pictures it tells the story of the Man in the Moon, who has long watched over Earth—with a special fondness for the children who feel a mutual devotion toward him. When he decides to hitch a ride down on a comet to experience the joy of life, he unwittingly unleashes a cataclysm that affects children and grownups alike. The President of Earth sees the cosmic hiccup as a chance for greater domination, while the children who were charmed by his comforting appearance, can't sleep when he's not in his proper place. The simplicity and vibrant colors of Ungerer's graphical narrative are faithfully rendered in the hand-drawn animation of filmmaker Stephen Schesch's adaptation, which adds some embellishments that will touch both children and adults. Ungerer (who serves as the film's narrator) was fond of social satire, so the subtext of politics and the '60s space race strike a droll chord, although friendship and trust are the more compelling themes here. A memorable,

sublime film, *Moon Man* is highly recommended. (T. Fry)

## Mother of George

★★★1/2

Oscilloscope, 106 min., in English & Yoruba w/English subtitles, R, DVD: \$32.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99



Danai Gurira—who plays the warrior-like Michonne on television's *The Walking Dead*—is the star of this visually stylish drama set within a Nigerian community in New York City. Gurira plays the sympathetic Adenike, a new bride who can't conceive a child with her husband, Ayodele (Isaach De Bankolé). Shamed and criticized by the latter's mother, Adenike visits a specialist and for the first time raises the possibility with Ayodele that he might be the one who is infertile. Ayodele is outraged by the suggestion, and his interfering mother pressures her daughter-in-law—astonishingly—to have sex with her husband's brother. The aftermath of that fateful decision threatens to destroy the fabric of this tight-knit community of family and friends, as well as push Adenike to the margins, with nowhere to go. This taut drama, directed by Andrew Dosunmu, might tell a stark story, but it is a visually lavish affair of exotic colors and textures. Gurira shines in the lead, delivering a sensitive and complex performance using very few words. Highly recommended. (T. Keogh)

## Mr. Nobody

★★★1/2  
Magnolia, 155 min., not rated, DVD: \$26.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98



A visually striking but tonally uneven 2009 fantasy film, *Mr. Nobody* stars recent Oscar winner Jared Leto (*Dallas Buyers Club*) as Nemo Nobody, a man living several lives. In two lives, he's a 34-year-old with a wife and children, but the wives and children are different, while in the future, Nemo is a 118-year-old mortal, the last left on Earth (the old-age makeup renders Leto largely unrecognizable). The elderly Nemo meets with a counselor (Allan Corduner) and a journalist (Daniel Mays), recalling his past. Nemo grows up in the British suburbs with a weatherman (Rhys Ifans) and a homemaker (Natasha Little). When his parents split up, nine-year-old Nemo (Thomas Byrne) goes to live with his father in one reality and his mother in the other—a situation that fractures further when his mother marries the father of Anna (Juno Temple), a girl whom 15-year-old Nemo (Toby Regbo) has a crush on (Diane Kruger plays Anna as an adult). In the other reality, Nemo moves to New York and falls for the emotionally unstable Elise (Clare Stone), whom he will later marry (played as an adult by Sarah Polley). As Nemo grows up, he continues to see

glimpses of events to come, so the timelines are constantly shifting. The overall concept recalls Kurt Vonnegut Jr.'s *Slaughterhouse-Five*, the Gwyneth Paltrow vehicle *Sliding Doors*, and the TV series *Awake*, but even though it doesn't all work, director Jaco Van Dormael has conjured up an engaging scenario. A strong optional purchase. (K. Fennessy)

### Muhammad Ali's Greatest Fight ★★★

Warner, 97 min., TV-14, DVD: \$19.98

While revered today for his athleticism and exuberant personality, Muhammad Ali had more than a few detractors in the 1960s. Turned off by his brashness and perplexed by his embrace of the Nation of Islam and subsequent name change from Cassius Clay, Ali created an even greater fury among many Americans by refusing to be drafted into the U.S. military, which could have theoretically led to his being sent into the Vietnam War. Ali cited his Muslim religious principles for his opposition to the war, but his actions resulted in his being stripped of his boxing championship, as well as a prolonged judicial fight that went to the U.S. Supreme Court. In Stephen Frears' HBO-aired film, Ali's case is debated among the Supreme Court justices (and their clerks). The real treat here is the starry cast: Frank Langella as Chief Justice Warren Burger, Christopher Plummer as Justice John Harlan, Danny Glover as Justice Thurgood Marshall, and Ed Begley Jr. as Justice Harry Blackmun all offer entertaining displays of dramatic flourish as the court's members weigh the legalities of Ali's complex case. A nice surprise is filmmaker Barry Levinson, who proves equal to his costars in his role as Justice Potter Stewart. As for Ali, he only appears in TV news clips. Serving up an interesting behind-the-scenes look at Supreme Court machinations during a historic case, this is recommended. (P. Hall)



### Muscle Shoals ★★★1/2

Magnolia, 111 min., PG, DVD: \$26.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98

The story of the distinctive music sound tied to the little Alabama town of Muscle Shoals is the story of record producer Rick Hall, who brought black and white players together—ultimately laying the foundation for some of the most memorable music of the '60s and '70s, ranging from Percy Sledge's "When a Man Loves a Woman" to Lynyrd Skynyrd's "Sweet Home Alabama." In Greg "Freddie" Camalier's documentary, interviewee Jimmy Cliff believes the place has a mystical aura, but Hall takes a more matter-of-fact approach: he grew up poor, and he wanted to make hit records. It wasn't easy as he struggled with



loss, abandonment, alcoholism, and other problems, but he had an ear for talent, and when he met bellhop/songwriter Arthur Alexander, his fortunes began to change (Sledge, another hit maker, started out as a hospital orderly). Regional singles led to covers by British superstars like the Beatles and the Rolling Stones. And the white players at Hall's FAME Studios—known as the Swampers—also attracted attention. Drummer Roger Hawkins believes the Swampers were greater than the sum of their parts, which may be why individual players didn't become stars in their own right, although everyone (including the Rolling Stones) wanted to record with them. Hall hit the big time when he formed an alliance with Jerry Wexler of Atlantic Records, who brought in Wilson Pickett and Aretha Franklin (who calls the development a turning point in her career). When guitar player Duane Allman joined the group for a spell, he helped usher them into the rock 'n' roll era. The Swampers eventually broke away to form their own studio, Muscle Shoals Sound, so Hall started over again with new players; fortunately, musicians flocked to both. For rock and soul fans alike, this is essential viewing with interesting asides, colorful anecdotes, and amazing music. Highly recommended. (K. Fennessy)

### Narco Cultura ★★★

Docurama, 103 min., in Spanish & English w/English subtitles, R, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95

Just as many pundits criticized gangsta rap for glorifying inner-city violence in America during the '90s, Shaul Schwarz's documentary points an accusatory finger at songs with lyrics glorifying the violent exploits of Mexican drug traffickers but set to the traditionally jaunty rhythms of popular Latin music. *Narco Cultura* focuses on two individuals: Richi Soto, a crime scene investigator in Juarez—where drug violence is an everyday occurrence—and Edgar Quintero, a Los Angeles musician who not only writes and performs "narcocorrido" songs, but also longs to immerse himself in narco culture while enjoying the relative safety of American suburbia. The film juxtaposes footage of Soto, grimly visiting sites where bullet-ridden corpses lie in roads where children play and mothers mourn their sons' deaths (or Soto attending the funerals of fellow officers gunned down by gangs) with scenes of Quintero performing his happy-sounding songs about the ongoing slaughter in front of gyrating club audiences, or singing them to his wife and young son at home. The contrast is jarring, as the music appears to cheapen the real pain and loss suffered by ordinary people across the southern border. *Narco Cultura* doesn't entirely escape the feeling that it is essentially two separate films stitched together, but its



overall impact is undeniable. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

### Nuit #1 ★★★

Kino Lorber, 91 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95

A one-night stand involves more than sex in this French-Canadian character study. Director Anne Émond superimposes the opening credits over a rave where sweaty bodies appear to float through the air before she settles in on Clara (Catherine de Léan) and Nikolai (Dimitri Storozev). Soon, they're back at his place, tearing off each others' clothes, only then introducing themselves before returning to their ministrations. Afterwards, while Nikolai sleeps, Clara attempts to leave, but he convinces her to return, only to lament, "Modern women make me sick. They think they're men." Clara tells Nikolai that she expected to spend more quality time with him, and tries to leave again, but ends up back at his apartment, where Nikolai opens up about his life as an aimless art school dropout of Ukrainian descent. He's a bad bet, but there's something beyond physical attraction here, which becomes clear when Clara reveals a similar set of failings. It's hard to tell if they're suffering from depression, ennui, or some sort of generational disorder, but their unhappiness unites them as surely as their sexual compatibility. Opening an independent film with a sexually-explicit scene isn't new, but Émond proves that she isn't just looking to shock or titillate, but rather to explore the developments that brought these two lost souls together. Still, given the graphic sex, this is only recommended for more adventurous collections. (K. Fennessy)



### The Nut Job ★★

Universal, 86 min., PG, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.98

Expanded from a 2005 animated short by filmmaker Peter Lepeniotis, *The Nut Job* finds the animals in Oakton City's Liberty Park facing a severe nut shortage after Surly the Squirrel (voiced by Will Arnett) sets fire to the massive oak tree that contains their winter stockpile. Booted out of his home and banished into the big bustling city, self-centered Surly discovers Maury's Nut Shop. Salivating over the prospect of an unlimited supply of peanuts, cashews, hazelnuts, and even peanut brittle, Surly figures that if he can snag the booty from the basement storage area—which he describes as "the lost city of Nutlantis"—he'll be back in everyone's good graces. Unfortunately, human thieves plotting a bank heist are also tunneling into the same location, which is guarded by a wacky, bug-eyed pug



named *Precious* (Maya Rudolph). Meanwhile, two other squirrels, egotistic Grayson (Brandon Fraser) and ethical Andie (Katherine Heigl) have been dispatched to the city to forage for food, while the rest of the park's animal kingdom is left under the steadfast dictatorship of Raccoon (Liam Neeson) and his lackey, Mole (Jeff Dunham). *Lepeniots* was a Disney/Pixar animator, but his breakout feature is ultimately a disappointing film that is structurally disjointed and bogged down by relentless puns. Optional. (S. Granger)

### Oldboy ★★★

Sony, 104 min., R, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray: \$35.99



From a purely technical perspective, Spike Lee's remake of Korean filmmaker Park Chan-wook's cult revenge film is respectable—a nicely-lensed (apart from some regrettably artsy shots) effort that boasts a couple of intriguing sets (one opulently modernistic, the other deliberately dingy), an effective music score, and a solid pace. And Lee directs the tale—about a man who is kidnapped and secretly imprisoned for 20 years (framed for murdering his ex-wife), only to emerge two decades later as an avenging angel determined to punish his unknown abductor—with admirable craft and efficiency. The cast shines as well, with Josh Brolin in the central role as Joe Doucette, backed by Samuel L. Jackson and Elizabeth Olsen, among others. But while it has quite a few virtues, this *Oldboy* suffers from one fatal defect: it turns what had been a weird, bizarrely nightmarish tale (with lots of unexplained links and strange lapses of logic) into what amounts to a pedestrian thriller in which the narrative connections are all tidily spelled out, opting for the utterly conventional, compared to the absolutely gonzo original. Paradoxically, this approach makes the whole story seem even more preposterous and absurd. A glossy but unnecessary and ultimately ill-conceived remake, this is not a necessary purchase. (F. Swietek)

### On the Job ★★★

Well Go USA, 116 min., in Filipino w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98

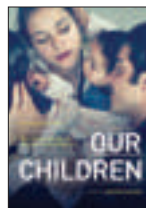


This wily Filipino crime drama moves at an exhilarating pace while tracking the sometimes interconnected movements of two master/apprentice teams on opposing sides of the law. Seasoned hit man Tatang (Joel Torre) brings his protégé, Daniel (Gerald Anderson), along on sanctioned outings from jail to do the dirty work of shady political types high up the food chain. Meanwhile, hard-charging cop Acosta (Joey Marquez)

takes on enthusiastic new investigator Francis (Piolo Pascual). The good guys will ultimately tangle with the bad guys, but not before viewers are thrown a steady stream of curveballs and perplexing diversions in this bloody saga of family, honor, power, and corruption. In fact, the plotlines don't meaningfully intersect until more than halfway through, but along the way *On the Job* makes terrific hay with the colorful characters, bustling mayhem of urban Manila, and whiz-bang combination of smart camerawork, editing, and adroitly staged action scenes. Action fans who appreciate some narrative substance behind the thrills will enjoy this. Recommended. (T. Fry)

### Our Children ★★★1/2

Cinema Guild, 111 min., in French & Arabic w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95



*Our Children* begins, essentially, at the end—with a foreboding long-shot of four tiny coffins being loaded onto an airplane. A slow-burning, corrosive, tragic film from director Joachim Lafosse, the film quickly rewinds to tell a family-oriented love story, in which a young couple in love—Mounir (Tahar Rahim) and Murielle (Émilie Dequenne)—find themselves with a growing family and little money, so they end up living with Mounir's bourgeois doctor father (Niels Arestup), who initially comes off as a loving patriarch but gradually morphs into an arch, controlling aristocrat. Mounir, who feels increasingly indebted to his emotionally needy father, finds himself torn between what his wife wants and what his father wants. Mounir and Murielle's predicament is, of course, self-made: trying to raise four kids and work while living with Mounir's father seems to be an obvious recipe for disaster. But even when Murielle eventually experiences a total emotional breakdown in the face of her increasingly impossible domestic situation, viewers are not prepared for the sadness to come. A powerful, compelling drama, this is highly recommended. (M. Sandlin)

### Paranormal Activity: The Marked Ones ★★★

Paramount, 84 min., R, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99



This supernatural horror-thriller—the fifth entry in a highly successful, low-budget franchise—is a bit different from its predecessors: instead of being set in a haunted house in middle-class WASP-y suburbia, the story shifts to a working-class Latino apartment complex in Southern California and features an ethnically diverse cast of characters. Jesse (Andrew Jacobs), a recent Oxnard High School graduate, awakens to find an odd bite

mark on his arm. Before long, he discovers that he now has some extraordinary powers—including the ability to levitate himself and others—along with inexplicable mood swings. These mysterious experiences coincide with the sudden death of his downstairs neighbor, reclusive Anna (Gloria Sandoval), whom many suspect was part of a coven of witches performing Santeria blood rituals. A curious Jesse and his friend Hector (Jorge Diaz) peeked into Anna's apartment after the police left, unearthing her collection of occult artifacts and documenting their discoveries with Jesse's new camera. When Hector and Jesse's sister, Marisol (Gabrielle Walsh), become increasingly concerned about Jesse's transformation and increasing inability to control his violent temper, they consult Ali (Molly Ephraim), who recognizes the telltale symptoms of demonic possession. Writer-director Christopher Landon tries to introduce new elements—notably the sinister use of the electronic Milton Bradley game *Simon*, which begins answering yes/no questions like a Ouija board—but ultimately this is a so-so chiller in the increasingly tired “found footage” genre. Optional. (S. Granger)

### The Past ★★★

Sony, 130 min., in French w/English subtitles, PG-13, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$35.99



Iranian filmmaker Asghar Farhadi's powerful psychological drama begins with the dissolution of a marriage. As soon as Ahmad (Ali Mosaffa) arrives in Paris from Tehran to finalize his divorce from Marie (Bérénice Bejo), he becomes embroiled in a sticky situation. When Ahmad left four years ago, Marie began an illicit affair with Samir (Tahar Rahim), a married man whose wife now lies comatose in a hospital. Samir has moved in along with his young son, Fouad (Elyes Aguis), joining Marie's daughters: young Léa (Jeanne Jestin) and 16-year-old Lucie (Pauline Burlet). Instead of booking Ahmad into a hotel, as he requested, Marie insists he stay at their dilapidated suburban house, to try to find out what's bothering sullen, rebellious Lucie. The plot thickens when Marie reveals that she's pregnant with Samir's child. Farhadi delineates this complex, multi-layered melodrama bit-by-bit, slowly revealing one pivotal twist after another, as Ahmad—the detached outsider—learns more about the household's mysterious turmoil and shameful secrets. *The Past* sensitively exposes the tremendous price that vulnerable, insecure children pay when they are inexorably caught up in their parents' self-centered entanglements. Bejo exudes hot-tempered, Gallic sexuality, heedless of the repercussions of her romantic predicaments, while Mosaffa embodies insightful stability, and Rahim stoically endures guilt and misery. An intense and engrossing look at

**“STUNNING! A FEROCIOUS PSYCHOLOGICAL DRAMA with the pace of a thriller.... As good a foreign language film as you will likely see all year!”**

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# CHILD'S POSE

a film by CALIN PETER NETZER



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**“A GRIPPING PSYCHOLOGICAL THRILLER built around the luminous and terrifying performance of Luminita Gheorghiu, who is something like the Meryl Streep of Romania.”**

—Andrew O’Hehir, SALON



The top prize winner at the Berlin Film Festival, Calin Peter Netzer’s sharply crafted thriller *Child’s Pose* pivots on a riveting performance by Luminita Gheorghiu (4 Months, 3 Weeks & 2 Days; L.A. Critics Circle Best Supporting Actress, for *The Death of Mr. Lazarescu*) as a steely, well-to-do Bucharest architect determined to keep her 30-something deadbeat son out of jail after a deadly car crash. How far will she go to convince the police, eyewitnesses and even the victim’s family that her son was not recklessly speeding? A spellbinding amalgam of social commentary and psychological realism, this caustic look into the corrupt heart of the Eastern European bourgeoisie twists into a brilliantly ambiguous study of obsessive motherly love.

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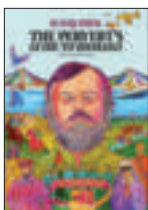
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the troubled tapestry of contemporary family life, this is recommended. (S. Granger)

### The Pervert's Guide to Ideology ★★★1/2

Zeitgeist, 136 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.99

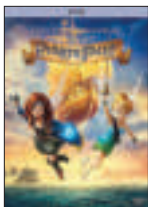
In this follow-up to 2006's *The Pervert's Guide to Cinema*, documentarian Sophie Fiennes reunites with Slovenia's celebrity philosopher (and onetime presidential candidate) Slavoj Žižek for an intellectual odyssey set off by movie clips. Along the way, cosplaying Žižek speaks from impeccable recreations of sets from popular Hollywood classics (*West Side Story*), propaganda pictures (Soviet and Nazi), and some well-remembered B-movies—such as John Carpenter's 1988 anti-consumerist allegory *They Live*. Topics covered include the meaning and uses of ideology, the brilliance and thematic versatility of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony (employed meaningfully in *A Clockwork Orange*), and a literally amoral side to the Catholic Church as shown in *The Sound of Music*. Although the free-associative style sometimes seems a bit meandering, Žižek's lectures are consistently entertaining, even if he does spoil a few endings, especially for all three of you who haven't seen *Titanic*. Recommended. (C. Cassidy)



### The Pirate Fairy ★★★

Walt Disney, 78 min., G, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$36.99

One of Disney's most popular (and best) spin-offs, the candy-colored CGI-animated Tinker Bell franchise starring the beloved fairy from *Peter Pan* returns with a fifth feature-length outing—albeit one that has a disquieting start since several minutes pass before everyone's favorite sprite even appears onscreen. Instead, we follow Zarina (voiced by Christina Hendricks), an inquisitive but also headstrong fairy who exiles herself after she is shamed when her unauthorized experiments with pixie dust go horribly wrong. Zarina returns, however, with a vengeance—putting most of the residents of Pixie Hollow to sleep while absconding with the all-important blue pixie dust that is used to generate the yellow stuff that enables fairies to fly. Fortunately, Tinker Bell (Mae Whitman) and her friends escape the mass slumber party and track Zarina to a pirate ship where the latter is serving as the diminutive captain and helping with plans to make the vessel airborne (with pixie dust) for the purposes of long-distance international thieving. Or so she thinks: it turns out that a young pirate named James (Tom Hiddleston)—a somewhat familiar figure with black hair who has a red coat—has been stringing Zarina along...until she can



make the ship fly. It's up to Tinker Bell and her compadres to reclaim both the blue pixie dust and their wayward friend. Returning voice cast members include Anjelica Huston, Lucy Liu, and Raven-Symoné in this entertaining film from director Peggy Holmes that cleverly incorporates aspects of the Peter Pan mythology into the story. Also featuring the catchy tunes "Who I Am" (performed by Natasha Bedingfield) and the boisterous "The Frigate That Flies," the sure-to-be-popular *The Pirate Fairy* is recommended. (R. Pitman)

### Pompeii ★★

Sony, 105 min., PG-13, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray: \$35.99, May 20

Paul W.S. Anderson's sword-and-sandals epic plays like a video game version of a disaster movie, commencing with Pliny the Younger's firsthand account of the A.D. 79 devastating eruption of Mount Vesuvius in which his own esteemed uncle—soldier/scholar Pliny the Elder—perished in the bay at Stabiae. *Pompeii* then rewinds to visit northern Britannia, where a youngster named Milo watches as his Celtic tribal family is slaughtered by marauding Roman soldiers under the command of decadent General Corvus (Kiefer Sutherland), who is determined to extend the reign of Emperor Andronicus. Young Milo is captured and enslaved, and within 15 years he has become an accomplished gladiator and is shipped off to Pompeii in Southern Italy. Here, muscle-bound Milo (Kit Harington) catches the eye of beautiful Cassia (Emily Browning), daughter of an upper-class merchant (Jared Harris) and his noble wife (Carrie-Anne Moss). Cassia is betrothed to now-Senator Corvus. Meanwhile, the Vinalia festival is underway and the African champion, Atticus (Adewale Akinnuoye-Agbaje), is only one death-match victory away from emancipation. So, Milo needs to wreak vengeance against Corvus, and Atticus must earn his freedom. The campy beefcake quotient is high in this cheesy, cliché-riddled poor boy/rich girl *Titanic*-like scenario, which never allows us to forget that the volcano looms in the background, ready to bury everyone in fireballs and bubbling lava. Optional. (S. Granger)



### The Punk Singer ★★★

MPI, 81 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.98

Although musician Kathleen Hanna has appeared in other documentaries—including 2010's *Who Took the Bomb*—filmmaker Sini Anderson's *The Punk Singer* is the first to focus on her life story, covering Hanna's years in Bikini Kill, Le Tigre, and her current outfit, the Julie Ruin (in which



she has reunited with Bikini Kill bassist Kathi Wilcox). As a student at Evergreen State College in Washington state, Hanna combined her interests in feminism and punk rock, producing politically-oriented fanzines and launching the confrontational outfit Bikini Kill, a key figure in the riot grrrl movement. When she needed money, Hanna also worked as a stripper—for which she took some hits, although she never claimed to be contradiction-free. Hanna ultimately inspired other young women to speak their minds about body image and sexual abuse. Nirvana's Kurt Cobain even took a phrase she spray-painted on his wall to the top of the charts: "Kurt Smells Like Teen Spirit." After Le Tigre called it quits, however, Hanna fell silent for several years, which confused her fans. Anderson attributes her disappearance to chronic Lyme disease (a condition the director shares). Now largely under control, Hanna has returned to the road and the recording studio. Aside from Hanna and her band mates, other speakers include Joan Jett, Sleater-Kinney's Carrie Brownstein, and Sonic Youth's Kim Gordon, who introduced Hanna to her husband, Adam Horovitz of the Beastie Boys. Drawing from a wealth of archival audiovisual material, Anderson makes a persuasive case that today's music scene wouldn't be the same without the efforts of this unstoppable force. Recommended. (K. Fennessy)

### Reaching for the Moon

★★★1/2

Wolfe, 118 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95

Bruno Barretto directed this compelling drama about the tragic love affair between the American poet Elizabeth Bishop (Miranda Otto) and Brazilian architect Lota de Macedo Soares (Glória Pires). The film begins with a skittish and remote Bishop traveling to Petropolis, Brazil, to visit an old college friend named Mary (Tracy Middendorf), and the latter's live-in lover, the seemingly fearless and boldly creative Soares. After initial frustration with Bishop's neurotic aloofness, Soares falls for the writer, initiating a 15-year relationship marked by alcoholism, jealousy, conflict, and competing ambitions. Bishop, who grew up without a father and whose mother was confined to a mental institution for decades (ultimately dying there), at first seems happy to fall under the nurturing, take-charge sway of Soares. But as her stock as a poet rises (Bishop wins a Pulitzer and National Book Award, among other accolades), there are tensions with the ambitious architect exacerbated by liquor and disagreements over Brazil's political future. Barretto takes a sweeping approach to the story, coaxing strong performances from the cast. Highly recommended. (T. Keogh)



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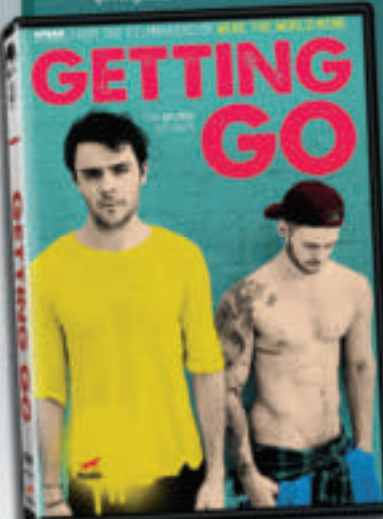
This innovative and sexy drama has an infectious energy and a completely unique aesthetic! **Tanner Cohen** (*Were The World Mine*) is a college boy named Doc who cruises a gay go-go boy named Go (**Matthew Camp**) with the pretense of making a documentary about him. CC

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## Return to Nuke 'Em High, Volume 1 ★★1/2

Anchor Bay, 85 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$24.99

Cult filmmaker Lloyd Kaufman—head of the infamous low-budget exploitation studio Troma—revives the mutant high school series he launched in 1986 with his first directorial effort in almost a decade. Kaufman builds this new chapter quite literally on the ruins of the previous films, with an organic food factory—resting on the bulldozed remains of the old nuclear power plant—serving up tainted food in the high school cafeteria. That's pretty much the plot in a nutshell: students eat the glowing green tacos, leading to a succession of mutant outbreaks and dumb gags that escalate with the spread of the green slime (which is transmitted just as effectively through sex as through cafeteria food). In the middle of it all is a love story between Lauren (Catherine Corcoran), a dizzy rich girl with a runaway pet duck, and social activist blogger Chrissy (Asta Paredes), whose instant animosity to Lauren turns into lust. This being Troma, the film features gratuitous nudity, mutant creatures, melting bodies, spontaneous combustion, adolescent fart gags, foul language, and outrageously bad behavior, as Kaufman indulges his fondness for old-style slapstick mixed with grotesque, goeey, over-the-top gore effects. Forget satire, this is for cult audiences who loved *The Toxic Avenger*. Be warned, however: this is just the first installment of a two-part story. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)



## Saving Mr. Banks ★★1/2

Walt Disney, 125 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$36.99

*Saving Mr. Banks* tells the backstory of Walt Disney's 20-year struggle to convince prim 'n' proper novelist P.L. Travers to let him make *Mary Poppins*. No fan of films—particularly Disney cartoons—prickly Mrs. Travers (Emma Thompson) has adamantly refused even to consider a screen adaptation of her beloved novel about a magical nanny. But in 1961, finances are running short, so she reluctantly agrees to go to Los Angeles for two weeks of meetings. A culture clash commences as soon as the solicitous studio chauffeur (Paul Giamatti) meets her at the airport and delivers her to the posh Beverly Hills Hotel, where she's appalled to discover a Disney toy menagerie in her suite. Things go from bad to worse during spoonful-of-sugar script conferences with Walt (Tom Hanks), screenwriter Don Da-Gradi (Bradley Whitford) and the songwriting Sherman brothers (Jason Schwartzman, BJ. Novak). Brusque, irritable Travers grows



even more defiantly stubborn until, eventually, persuasive Walt figures out what the real issues are behind her stonewalling. Along the way, director John Lee Hancock intercuts revelatory scenes from Travers' formative childhood in rural Australia, revealing her poignant devotion to her charismatic, wildly imaginative, alcoholic father (Colin Farrell), an erstwhile banker who doted on her and her sisters. Exuding charm, Hanks nicely captures folksy Walt's shrewd devotion to syrupy storytelling, while Thompson does a flat-out fabulous job, tossing off wry zingers like Bette Davis. An irresistibly enchanting and high-spirited film that deftly mixes comedy and drama, this is highly recommended. (S. Granger)

## Stranger by the Lake ★★1/2

Strand, 100 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$27.99, Blu-ray: \$32.99, May 13

Alain Guiraudie's remarkable, if also sexually-explicit, *Stranger by the Lake* is one of the oddest film noir thrillers ever made. Set entirely in a most unlikely place for psychological terror—a nude beach for gay men, bordered by woods where anonymous sex (quite hardcore) is rampant and as elemental as the surrounding shoreline, water, trees, sun, and moon—the film can be described as an updated tale of Eden before, during, and after the Fall. Naïve Franck (Pierre Deladonchamps), a newcomer to the beach, meets handsome Michel (Christophe Paoou) and soon falls in love. Only there's a problem: Franck secretly witnessed Michel drown another suitor in the water and has chosen to keep that knowledge a secret—even from Michel. But when a body turns up and a raptor-like investigator begins prowling the beach and asking tough questions, loyalties begin to slowly crumble. Visually primitive (in the most interesting sense), this is a fable-like story with a striking air of danger. Although the graphic sex will rule this out for many, it is highly recommended for more adventurous collections. (T. Keogh)



## Terraferma ★★1/2

Cohen, 88 min., in Italian w/English subtitles, R, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$39.98

Writer-director Emanuele Crialese's *Terraferma*, set on the tiny islands between Sicily and North Africa that form the southernmost part of Italy, is a neo-realist film with a hot-button political issue: the plight of illegal immigrants trying to sail from Africa to Europe. The policy of the Italian government is to intercept the small boats and return those onboard to their homelands, but often these vessels are initially encountered by fishermen from the



islands, who are struggling to survive themselves and frequently must cater to the tourist trade to supplement their meager income. By law they are supposed to lend no aid to the immigrants despite the fact that the latter are often in desperate straits. Crialese confronts this ethical dilemma by focusing on a single case in which a grandfather named Ernesto (Mimmo Cuticchio) follows his conscience, giving shelter to an Ethiopian boy and his pregnant mother, but Ernesto's widowed daughter-in-law—who wants to move to the mainland—is concerned with the ramifications. Caught in the middle is young Filippo (Fillipo Pucillo), who loves both his mother and his grandfather but eventually has to make a choice about doing the right thing. *Terraferma* successfully captures the ambience of the isolated island culture as well as the central family dynamic, but it presents the moral quandary in such schematic terms that it winds up feeling more like a sermon than a nuanced drama. Optional. (F. Swietek)

## That Awkward Moment ★★

Sony, 94 min., R, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray: \$35.99, May 13

Three twentysomething buddies find themselves at that awkward moment in a relationship when their casual sex partner suddenly asks, "So...where is this going?" Jason (Zac Efron), Daniel (Miles Teller), and Mikey (Michael B. Jordan) are enjoying the good life in Manhattan. Jason and Daniel are both single, designing book covers at the same trendy downtown publishing company, while Mikey is an E.R. doctor. But after Mikey wakes up one morning to discover that his wife, Vera (Jessica Lucas), has cheated on him—with her lawyer—and is serving him with divorce papers, he and his commiserating friends make a pact that they will not "date" women. Instead, they plan to mate and vacate—guilt-free—and vow to avoid serious entanglements for a year. But when Jason glibly connects with smart 'n' sexy Ellie (Imogen Poots)—rescuing her from an insistent suitor at a bar—and Daniel turns to their longtime "wing-woman" platonic friend Chelsea (Mackenzie Davis), both of these supposed one-night stands predictably develop into something more emotionally substantial, while Mikey covertly tries to reconcile with his ex. Writer-director Tom Gormican's film presents an immature version of the dating experience—often substituting frenetic pace for intelligent insight—and its hardly surprising that the female characters are sketchily underwritten and ill-served. Add to that an inordinate amount of screen time devoted to male genitalia—Viagra-induced, extended erections; a discolored penis; and urinating horizontally (awkward, indeed). Not a necessary purchase. (S. Granger)



## A Touch of Sin ★★★1/2

Kino, 130 min., in Mandarin & Cantonese w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95



Director Jia Zhangke here draws from four true stories of life in the modern China economy, weaving them into an unsettling portrait of the country, where runaway growth takes its toll on citizens simply struggling to survive. After an opening scene involving a gang of highway robbers armed with axes and a motorcycle rider who responds with a gun, *A Touch of Sin* serves up the first story, centering on Dahai (Jiang Wu), an exasperated man who descends into violence while trying to obtain justice from a corrupt town boss who has sold-out the local miners and pocketed the profits. The second story catches up with the biker (Wang Baoqiang) from the prologue—a shallow, morally bankrupt criminal who kills because it is more profitable (and more fun) than working for a living. The last two stories take us to a brothel, where a woman (Zhao Tao, wife of the filmmaker) works as a clerk, and through a revolving door of factory and customer service jobs that grind down a young worker (Luo Lianshan) until he can't take it anymore. Jia isn't known for his sense of humor, and this film—with its stories cleverly and subtly connected—maintains a mercenary edge while dealing with murder, predation, and bureaucratic indifference that borders on criminal neglect, but there's also a strain of sardonic wit in its satire of a modern economy where everything is for sale and human capital is just another commodity. A challenging and timely film, nominated for Canne's Palme d'Or, this is highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

## The Truth About Emanuel ★★

Well Go USA, 96 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98



Francesca Gregorini's psychological drama stars Kaya Scodelario as the titular character, who expresses—in rather gruesome terms during her big opening monologue—her intense guilt over “killing” her mother during childbirth. Emanuel is nasty towards everyone—her loving father, put-upon stepmother, even the sweetly submissive young man who longs to become her boyfriend—except for Linda (Jessica Biel), a beautiful single mother who moves in next door and needs a babysitter for her infant daughter. Emanuel agrees to take the job, but quickly learns that little “Chloe” is actually a plastic doll. Rather than reveal that Linda is deluded, however, Emanuel helps to conceal the fact from prying eyes, apparently seeing in this woman a symbol of

her own dead mother. Viewers will be hard-pressed to take this scenario in realistic terms (Gregorini even inserts a few hallucinatory sequences—mostly involving lots of water in which Emanuel is eventually swamped, as though back in the womb), but even as bizarre fantasy, the director never manages to find the right tone for this weird piece, nor does Scodelario succeed in eliciting much sympathy for the abrasive young heroine. Not a necessary purchase. (F. Swietek)

## Vampire Academy ★1/2

Anchor Bay, 104 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$39.99, May 20



A *Twilight* knock-off set in a *Harry Potter* Hogwarts-like boarding school for blood-suckers, *Vampire Academy* revolves around teenage girls who cope with dating dilemmas while battling evil supernatural forces. Three tribes of vampires exist: full-blooded, mortal Moroi—peaceful folk who don't kill people when they drink their blood; half-human, half-vampire Dhampirs, who guard the Moroi; and evil, undead Strigoi, who are ruthless, vicious marauders, killing their victims and drinking their blood. Conflict inevitably occurs when the demand for hemoglobin exceeds the supply. Returned to St. Vladimir's (aka Vampire Academy) in Montana after running away, 17-year-old Rose Hathaway (Zoey Deutch) is a Dhampir whose mission is to protect her best friend, Vasilisa “Lissa” Dragomir (Lucy Fry), a Moroi princess, last in her lineage. Complicating matters are the usual high school tropes: nasty gossip, clique bullying, preparations for the Equinox dance, and forbidden romance. Added to the mix are Lissa's mentor, Dimitri Belikov (Danila Kozlovsky); Lissa's love interest, Christian Ozera (Dominic Sherwood); Queen Tatiana (Joely Richardson); Headmistress Kirova (Olga Kurylenko); and the elderly, terminally ill Moroi leader, Victor Dashkov (Gabriel Byrne), with his ditzy daughter Natalie (Sarah Hyland). Based on the bestselling ‘tween book series by Richelle Mead, filmmaker Mark Waters' *Vampire Academy* is a fast-paced but ultimately flaccid fable that shamelessly combines clichéd pop culture references and clunky vampire puns with oh-so-familiar themes. Not a necessary purchase. (S. Granger)

## Veronica Mars ★★1/2

Warner, 107 min., PG-13, DVD: \$28.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98, May 6



Ever since the titular teenage super-sleuth TV show was cancelled in 2007, creator Rob Thomas has been trying to get a spin-off feature film made. Through an audacious, groundbreaking Kickstarter campaign, 91,585 of its most

ardent fans contributed \$5.7 million (setting a record for the use of crowdsourcing in fundraising), finally making the film possible. Nine years later, now-in-her-late 20s Veronica (Kristen Bell) is a law school graduate, seeking employment in New York City, where she's living with her longtime boyfriend Stosh “Piz” Piznarski (Chris Lowell). But when her ex-flame, Logan Echolls (Jason Dohring), is charged with murdering his rock-star girlfriend, Carrie Bishop—now known as Bonnie DeVille (Andrea Estella)—Veronica heads back to her fictional hometown of Neptune in Southern California, an affluent beach community where wealthy socialites and working-class folk clash (often with violent consequences), just in time for her 10-year reunion at Neptune High. Co-scripted by Diane Ruggiero and director Thomas, *Veronica Mars* serves up a video collage of exposition and voiceover narration as returning cast members slip into their accustomed roles, including Veronica's close friends Cindy “Mac” Mackenzie (Tina Majorino) and Wallace Fennel (Percy Daggs III), the surfer/philosopher Dick Casablancas (Ryan Hansen), and the sleazy, corrupt Sheriff Lamb (Jerry O'Connell). Veronica's relationship with her father, Keith (Enrico Colantoni), a former sheriff-turned-private-investigator, has the most depth. Jamie Lee Curtis comes as Veronica's prospective Manhattan employer, while James Franco plays himself. More TV than Hollywood movie, this low-budget effort that can be sassy and snappy in its best moments is a strong optional purchase. (S. Granger)

## Viola ★★★1/2

Cinema Guild, 65 min., in Spanish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95



Worlds don't exactly collide when Viola (María Villar) meets William Shakespeare's “Viola” (Agustina Muñoz) in Argentine writer-director Matías Piñeiro's comically magical film, but they do harmonize and overlap in such unexpected ways that no one in this ingenious story is ever aware of mysterious forces afoot. *Viola* opens with Sabrina (Elisa Carricajo)—who stars as Olivia in a stage production of *Twelfth Night*—breaking up with her boyfriend. Cecilia (Muñoz) is Sabrina's costar in the play, taking the role of Viola, a woman pretending to be a male emissary on behalf of Olivia's would-be suitor. The complex dynamics between Sabrina and Cecilia's roles spill offstage when the latter decides to prove that the newly single Sabrina can be seduced simply by telling her what she wants to hear. In a buoyant, insightful, and sexy scene, the women privately exchange *Twelfth Night* dialogue until the words carry an entirely different emotional context. Suddenly, the film pivots to the other Viola (Villar), an un-

derachiever who (like her *Twelfth Night* counterpart) also serves as an obscure go-between for strangers and their fantasies, delivering bootlegged movies to private customers. Viola will cross paths with Sabrina and Cecilia on a journey that merges dreams and reality in this delightful film that will charm fans of the Bard. Highly recommended. (T. Keogh)

### Watchtower ★★★

Film Movement, 100 min., in Turkish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95

An odd, unnerving drama by Turkish director Pelin Esmer, *Watchtower* tells the fable-like tale of two strangers—each burdened with deep secrets—whose destinies merge. Nihat (Olgun Simsek) is a taciturn, isolated man suffering from a recent tragedy who finds an appropriate job as a lone watchman in a hilltop observation tower overlooking a wide swath of high-elevation forest. Nihat's only means of communication is a two-way radio that he uses to check in with other watchmen. Seher (Nilay Erdonmez) works at a nearby rest stop for long-distance bus travelers, literally hiding her pregnancy until concealment becomes impossible. Seher's path eventually crosses Nihat's and she winds up taking shelter in the watchtower, but their relationship is uneasy, a strange dance of resentment, compassion, and yearning for a familial bond. The characters' solipsistic behavior is difficult to take at times, but filmmaker Esmer knows that sometimes people change slowly, and part of what makes *Watchtower* a compelling drama are these little signs of glacial—but real—evolution in the characters. Recommended. (T. Keogh)



### Welcome to the Jungle

★★★/2

Universal, 95 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$26.98

Featuring a premise superficially similar to the darker 2006 workplace gore-comedy *Severance*, the office employees of a product-packaging corporation are forced here to embark on a survival-retreat that goes badly wrong. Fearing that their jobs are at stake, the cubicle denizens are sent to a tropical island to persevere in team-building exercises under the direction of macho ex-commando Storm Rothchild (Jean-Claude Van Damme). When Storm succumbs to a tiger attack, the staffers have to fend for themselves, torn between the tribal chieftain-ship of flashy alpha-jerk senior VP Phil (Rob Huebel) and the more level-headed, smarter, milquetoast Chris (Adam Brody). The very broad spoof of *Lord of the Flies* that ensues is not quite at the anarchy level of a Troma title (despite brief toplessness, drugs, and silly violence), but



it's still more eye-rolling farcical than either the U.S. or U.K. versions of *The Office*, both of which drew more blood out of corporate-predator mini-society. Still, Van Damme fans will enjoy the Muscles from Brussels' fleeting presence, making this a strong optional purchase. (C. Cassady)

### The Wolf of Wall Street

★★★

Paramount, 180 min., R, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99

Martin Scorsese's Oscar-nominated hedonistic Wall Street saga is peppered with wild orgies, as crude, money-hungry, drug-fueled swindlers celebrate how they've deluded and cheated naïve investors, happily spending other people's money on hookers, liquor, cocaine, heroin, and Quaaludes. Making a killing with penny stocks is only the beginning for smooth-talking stockbroker Jordan Belfort (Leonardo DiCaprio) and his sidekick Donnie Azoff (Jonah Hill). Soon their Stratton Oakmont brokerage house is raking in millions, serving as an epitome of America's amoral addiction to the acquisition of wealth. Based on Belfort's memoir, and presented as an episodic black comedy about moral corruption, *The Wolf of Wall Street* is a gleefully vulgar glorification of the Seven Deadly Sins. Some viewers will certainly balk at the despicable excess (Scorsese clearly pushes the envelope of the "R" rating during the numerous sex scenes), not to mention the fact that there are no sympathetic characters, no contrition, and no redemption. Indeed, after arrogant Belfort spends 22 months in a country-club prison for securities fraud and money laundering, he is eager to carve out a new career: motivating future salesmen to fleece the flock. Look for an early scene-stealing performance by Oscar winner Matthew McConaughey. Cynical, unconventional, and edgy, this is an incredibly polarizing film: some may find the exuberant alpha-male energy hilarious, but others will be repulsed by the misogynist depravity on display here. Recommended. (S. Granger)



### You Will Be My Son

★★★

Cohen, 102 min., in French w/English subtitles, R, DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray: \$34.98

A French vineyard produces some heady conflict along with fine wine in Gilles Legrand's melodramatic but stylish film. Paul (Niels Arestrup) is the perfectionist owner of a Bordeaux winery who depends heavily on his longtime estate manager, François (Patrick Chesnais). When the latter falls ill, Paul must come to terms with the fact that he has no faith in the ability of his dutiful but uninspired son, Martin



(Lorant Deutsch), whom he trusts to keep the books but not take over the production side of the business. Instead, Paul turns to François' son Philippe (Nicolas Bridet), who has recently returned from a successful stint in California's Napa Valley. Saying that the land itself has chosen Philippe, he even suggests that he adopt the young man so that he will ultimately inherit the winery. That proposal obviously doesn't sit well with either the infuriated Martin (and his wife) or with François, who sees it as a threat to his own fatherhood. At heart this is a story of a man so obsessed with preserving his legacy that he is willing to sacrifice anyone, including his own son and his closest friend. A dark, uncompromising, and ultimately compelling tale, this is recommended. (F. Swietek)

### Young Detective Dee: Rise of the Sea Dragon

★★★

Well Go USA, 134 min., in Mandarin w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98

Director Tsui Hark's second film featuring legendary 7th-century Chinese sleuth Dee Renjie is a prequel in which young and untested magistrate Dee (Mark Chao) arrives at court just in time to be faced with: a complicated case involving the kidnapping of the capital's most voluptuous courtesan by a scaly green creature (the beast to the woman's beauty), a plot to overthrow the ruling house using poisonous parasites that kill from within, and an immense sea monster that can annihilate entire fleets with its tail. In tying together these disparate plot strands, the script offers plenty of opportunities for flamboyantly staged martial-arts combat and special-effects showpieces, and Hark takes full advantage, fashioning a sprawling, episodic film that might not be particularly strong on logic but compensates with lots of eye-popping action. Silly but enjoyable, *Young Detective Dee* is recommended. (F. Swietek)



### Classic Films

#### 5 Fingers ★★★

Fox, 107 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.98

James Mason is superb as a mercenary valet to Britain's ambassador to Turkey during World War II in this smart 1952 espionage thriller directed by Joseph L. Mankiewicz. A career servant to the titled classes of Europe, Mason's Ulysses Diello decides to make his fortune selling British military secrets to the Germans, enlisting a penniless French countess he once served, Anna Staviska (Danielle Darrieux), to help him hide his money and provide a safe house. The story is based on



# NEW RELEASES AND BEST SELLERS



## THE GREAT FLOOD

A film by Bill Morrison | Music by Bill Frisell  
80 min. | B&W | 2013 | 4:3  
UPC # 8-54565-00166-4 | SRP: \$24.98

### NATIONAL ARTHOUSE RELEASE!

*The Great Flood* is a film-music collaboration by Bill Morrison and Bill Frisell based on, and inspired by, the catastrophic Mississippi River Flood of 1927 and the ensuing transformation of American society.

**"Visual Poetry...Critic's Pick!"**

—*The New York Times*

**"Cinema as art, and a classic!"**

—*LA Weekly*



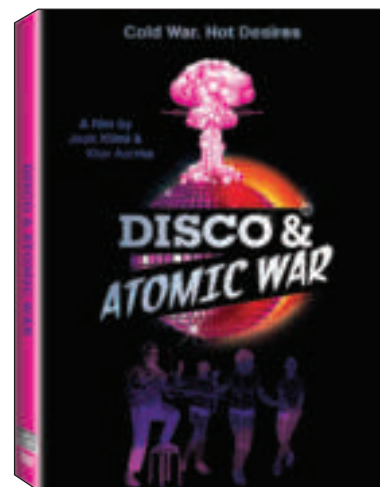
## TO CHRIS MARKER, AN UNSENT LETTER

A film by Emiko Omori  
78 min. | Color | 2013 | Closed Captions  
UPC # 8-54565-00165-7 | SRP: \$24.98

A cinematic love letter to Chris Marker, the notoriously private filmmaker and artist--director of *LA JETÉE*, *SANS SOLEIL*, *LE JOLI MAI* and many other films. Directed by Emmy-award winning cinematographer and filmmaker Emiko Omori, the film is a contemplative essay whose form is inspired by Marker's signature style.

**"Lively and engaging!"**

—*Cinesource*



## DISCO & ATOMIC WAR

A film by Jaak Kilmi  
80 min. | Color + B&W | 2009 | 16:9  
UPC # 8-54565-00164-0 | SRP: \$29.98

Hijacking broadcasts from Finland with makeshift yet powerful TV antennas, the people of Estonia, while still under the rule of the Soviet Union, found new heroes in JR Ewing and David Hasselhoff, and quickly became obsessed with the forbidden fruit that was Western pop culture.

**"Unusual, provocative, and very funny!"**

—*IndieWIRE*



## LE JOLI MAI

A film by Chris Marker & Pierre Lhomme  
2 discs | 145 min. | B&W | 1963  
UPC: 8-54565-001-62-6 | \$34.98

Chris Marker (*LA JETÉE*) and Pierre Lhomme's legendary portrait of Paris during the month of May, 1962. Filmed just after the ceasefire that ended France's colonial war in Algeria, *LE JOLI MAI* captures the people of Paris during the "first springtime of peace," as they struggle to make sense of their moment in history.

**"One of the most influential movies you have likely never seen."**

—J. Hoberman, *Artinfo*



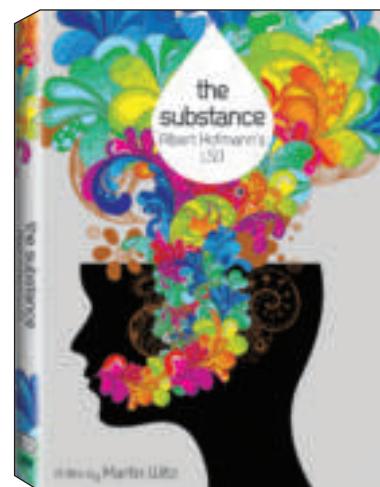
## FAR FROM VIETNAM

A film by Jean-Luc Godard, Joris Ivens, William Klein, Claude Lelouch, Chris Marker, and Alain Resnais.  
115 min. | Color | 1967  
UPC: 8-54565-001-63-3 | \$29.98

The epic 1967 collaboration between cinema greats made in protest of American military involvement in Vietnam. Passionately self-critical, and as bold in form as it is in rhetoric, *FAR FROM VIETNAM*—twice screened at the Cannes Film Festival—is a milestone in political documentary and in the French cinema.

**"The most eloquent and rankling protest film ever made."**

—Michael Atkinson, *The New York Times*



## THE SUBSTANCE: ALBERT HOFMANN'S LSD

Directed by Martin Witz  
90 min. | Color | 2011  
UPC #: 8-54565-00158-9 | SRP: \$29.98

In 1943, Swiss chemist Albert Hofmann made a sensational discovery: a powerful molecule with the power to alter both the scientific world and human perception itself. But did its benefits outweigh its dangers? *THE SUBSTANCE* investigates the discovery and history of LSD in a fascinating historical, scientific and cinematic trip.

**"A fascinating film... makes for compulsive viewing!"**

—*Screen Daily*

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real events but fictionalizes the main character, who is given the code name Cicero by the Germans, and turned into a bitter, resentful man determined to break through class barriers and enter the old world of European high society. The direction is low key, with a focus on the culture of war-time Ankara (Turkey did not choose sides, and Allied and Axis powers both maintained a presence in the city). Mason exudes smooth arrogance and cynicism, while Darrieux schemes under a front of practiced social elegance—neither of them committed to anything but themselves. Released as part of Fox's manufacture-on-demand line of DVD-R releases, this is adequately mastered from a good-quality print with a clean (if soft) black-and-white-image. Recommended. (S. Axmayer)

### Foreign Correspondent

★★★

Criterion, 120 min., PG, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.95

Alfred Hitchcock followed his American filmmaking debut *Rebecca* with this motion picture that brought him back to Britain but featured an American in the lead. Joel McCrea stars in 1940's *Foreign Correspondent* as newspaper reporter John Jones, who is sent to Europe to get a fresh perspective on the clouds of war but once there uncovers a conspiracy involving the murder of a peace activist. Hitchcock's fast-paced, action-packed thriller is full of memorable locations (including the windmill-dotted landscape of Holland), well-designed set pieces (a crash landing in the Atlantic Ocean), agents and double-agents, romance (courtesy of Laraine Day as love interest Carol Fisher), and a little humor. Produced after Germany invaded Poland but before the Nazis declared war on Britain (American studios were pressured to remain neutral), the film feels as much like an early 1930s Graham Greene-style suspense drama as it does a portrait of old Europe about to be upended by conflict—and it only slips into wartime patriotism in a postscript (added months later) set during the bombing of London. While this is lesser Hitchcock, it's still superior filmmaking. Remastered from a beautiful new restoration for this Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, extras include a vintage interview with Hitchcock, a 1946 radio drama adaptation starring Joseph Cotten, a featurette on the special effects with Craig Barron, a new interview with writer Mark Harris, a 1942 *Life* magazine "photo-drama" by Hitchcock, and a booklet. Recommended. (S. Axmayer)

### Hairspray

New Line, 92 min., PG, Blu-ray: \$14.98

The original 1988 *Hairspray* remains the most accessible and family-friendly movie ever made by John Waters, the cult filmmaker nicknamed the "Pope of Filth."

Not bad for a satirical nostalgia comedy that takes on bigotry, racial integration, body image, and the liberating power of rock-and-roll music. Ricki Lake stars as Tracy Turnblad, the unlikely civil rights activist on a Baltimore TV dance show that, in 1962, is still not integrated (the local black kids are only allowed on the show on "Negro Day"), with Divine costarring as her supportive mother, Edna, who stands proudly behind her outspoken daughter. Lake, who was plus-sized when she made the film, is confident, funny, and likable as a heroine whose popularity infuriates mean-spirited beauty queen Amber (Colleen Fitzpatrick) and Amber's status-obsessed parents (Debbie Harry, Sonny Bono). *Hairspray* features plenty of class conflict and populist energy, and Waters punctures the era's prejudice through parody and exaggeration, upending stereotypes and transforming race hysteria into hysterical humor. Funnier, warmer, and more audacious than the 2007 musical remake, it is still the only John Waters film to receive a PG rating. Bowing on Blu-ray, extras include audio commentary by Waters and Lake, vintage interviews with cast and crew, and tributes to Waters regulars Divine and Cookie Mueller. Recommended. (S. Axmayer)

### Hollow Triumph

Film Chest, 83 min., not rated, DVD: \$11.98

Actor Paul Henreid (most famous as resistance hero Victor Laszlo in *Casablanca*) produced and starred in this crime thriller—actually taking two roles: as criminal mastermind John Muller, a medical school dropout who comes out of prison with a scheme to rob a casino owned by a vindictive mob boss; and as Dr. Bartok, a chilly psychiatrist who is Muller's exact double, differentiated only by a scar running down his cheek. When the heist goes bad and Muller flees into hiding, he hatches a plan to kill the doctor and put his medical training to use by taking over the physician's identity. This low-budget 1948 noir, directed by Steve Sekely, boasts a couple of clever twists, some memorable nocturnal Los Angeles location shots by the great stylist John Alton, and a confident Joan Bennett in a supporting role as Evelyn Hahn, a single woman who has no illusions about dating the seductive but shady Muller. Although readily available in poor-quality editions, this "HD restoration from 35mm film elements"—while featuring visible wear on the print and crackle on the soundtrack—offers a noticeable leap in quality over previous releases. An enjoyable but minor work, *Hollow Triumph* did spawn

the great noir line: "It's a bitter little world." A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmayer)

### The Inn of the Sixth Happiness

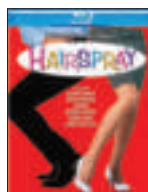
Fox, 158 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$24.99

Ingrid Bergman stars as Gladys Aylward—an English maid who travels to China as a missionary in the 1930s because she believes that God wants her there—in this 1958 screen adaptation of Alan Burgess' novel *The Small Woman*, which was inspired by Aylward's real-life story. One in a long line of screen portrayals of selfless Westerners heading to Asia in the name of religion and charity, Oscar-nominated director Mark Robson's *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness* is a well-meaning, handsomely mounted, but also somewhat ponderous travelogue drama that rests on the shoulders of Bergman, who brings a believable commitment and strength of character to the role. Depicting Aylward's chronicle through her heroic rescue of hundreds of villagers from Japanese troops invading China during World War II, the film was shot entirely in Great Britain, with highland locations substituting for the mountains of northern China. It also features Western actors in the two most prominent Chinese roles: Curt Jürgens as the dedicated Capt. Lin Nan, a Eurasian who falls in love with Gladys, and Robert Donat (under elaborate makeup) as Yang Cheng, the local Mandarin ruler straddling traditional culture and government attempts to modernize the country. Very much a product of its era, this is both a romanticized version of a true story and a Western representation of Chinese culture; as such, fans of classic movies will appreciate it more than history buffs. Extras include audio commentary by film historians Nick Redman, Aubrey Solomon, and Donald Spoto, and Fox Movietone News clips. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmayer)

### King of the Hill

Criterion, 103 min., PG-13, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.95

Director Steven Soderbergh based his third feature film, 1993's *King of the Hill*, on A.E. Hotchner's memoir about life as an adolescent during the Depression, recreating early-1930s St. Louis as seen through the eyes of a hopeful boy in an increasingly desperate situation. Jesse Bradford stars as Aaron, a smart, creative, and generous kid who spins stories to hide the truth: namely, that his family is broke and living in a hotel. Over the course of the film, Aaron's younger brother, Sullivan (Cameron Boyd), is sent to live with relatives; his frail mother (Lisa Eichhorn) is checked into a sanitarium; and his father (Jeroen Krabbé) all but abandons Aaron in order to



take a job as a traveling salesman. As his life unravels, Aaron grows increasingly isolated and desperate, but he's also very resourceful and resilient. Soderbergh doesn't flinch from the hard realities of life during the Depression, but he suggests the worst rather than showing it, illuminating the drama in sepia colors brightened by the summer sun. Co-starring Adrien Brody, Spalding Gray, Katherine Heigl, and Lauryn Hill, *King of the Hill* is presented in a Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, with extras including 1995's *The Underneath* (Soderbergh's fourth feature, essentially making this a double-bill release), interviews with Soderbergh and Hotchner, a video essay, and a booklet. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

## The Long Day Closes

★★★★½

Criterion, 85 min., PG, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.95

This autobiographical 1992 film from British director Terence Davies is set in mid-1950s Liverpool, covering a year or so in the life of Bud (Leigh McCormack), a gentle, quiet schoolboy who is the youngest member of a loving family, looked over by an affectionate widowed mother (Marjorie Yates). Rather than tell a traditional story, Davies offers snapshots of moments in Bud's life at home, at school (where he's increasingly teased and bullied), at holiday celebrations (with neighbors singing and joking), and at the cinema, where the camera lingers on his captivated expression as we hear the soundtracks from movies such as *Meet Me in St. Louis* and *Great Expectations*. Although they clearly have little money, it's a happy time of life for Bud and his family, and Davies presents this through the warm glow of memory, full of evocative textures and rich moods, using the lighting techniques of old-master paintings to suggest the changing weather and shifting light from day to night, while also incorporating lush romantic songs from the era to set the tone. While it won't appeal to all viewers, this beautiful and accomplished film will reward patient viewers. Presented in a handsomely remastered Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, extras include audio commentary by Davies and cinematographer Michael Coulter, a 1992 episode of *The South Bank Show* featuring Davies, interviews, and a booklet with an essay by critic Michael Koresky. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

## Ms. 45 ★★★

Drafthouse, 80 min., not rated, DVD: \$27.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95

Maverick American director Abel Ferrara made his breakthrough with this 1981 down-and-dirty urban thriller, a femme-centered take on the vigilante revenge films of the 1970s written by Ferrara's longtime col-

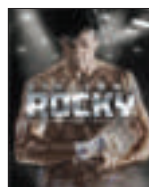


laborator, Nicholas St. John, and shot in the garment district of New York. Zoë Tamerlis stars as Thana, a mute young seamstress in a dumpy fashion house who is raped twice in a single afternoon and lashes back with unbridled rage (think *Death Wish* merged with *Taxi Driver* with a twist of *Repulsion*). Thana transforms herself from passive victim into vengeful vigilante, hunting for potential predators and using herself as bait. While it would be an overreach to call this a feminist film, Ms. 45 is an intelligent and confident piece of filmmaking steeped in the central character's helplessness and anger, which eventually heat up to the level of psychotic retribution. Ferrara also gives us a snapshot of New York City at its worst, with a potential predator in every alley, gangbangers in the parks, pimps beating their women on the streets, and junkies and the homeless weaving along the sidewalks. A significant cult movie restored for DVD and Blu-ray, extras include filmmaker interviews, two short films, a booklet, and a bonus digital copy. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

## Rocky: Heavyweight Collection ★★★

Fox, 6 discs, 635 min., PG/PG-13, Blu-ray: \$59.99

All six *Rocky* films—a series that ultimately spanned 30 years—are collected in this new Blu-ray set. Sylvester Stallone was a struggling young actor when he wrote the original *Rocky* (1976), an underdog tale of a small-time Philadelphia club boxer (Stallone) plucked from obscurity and offered a chance to fight the champ, Apollo Creed (Carl Weathers). Directed by John G. Avildsen, *Rocky* became an underdog hit, earning 10 Academy Award nominations, and winning Oscars for Best Picture and Best Director. It also launched Stallone's screen career, and featured an iconic performance from Talia Shire as Adrian, Rocky's shy, shop-clerk girlfriend. Stallone directed the next three entries in the series: the rematch of *Rocky II* (1979); *Rocky III* (1982), with heavyweight champ Rocky taking on the hungry, angry challenger Clubber Lang (Mr. T); and *Rocky IV* (1985), in which Rocky turns cold warrior to fight brutal Russian champ Drago (Dolph Lundgren). John G. Avildsen returned to helm *Rocky V* (1990), which drops the family back into hard times and forces the retired Rocky into taking on a protégé in the form of Tommy "Machine" Gunn (Tommy Morrison). The narrative arc comes to a belated close in *Rocky Balboa* (2006), which takes the rough-hewn but pure-of-heart fighter out of retirement and back into the ring for an exhibition bout with cocky champion Mason "The Line" Dixon (Antonio Tarver), a man 30 years his junior (Stallone once again scripts, directs, and pounds sides of beef in an obligatory training montage). The original



*Rocky* is a classic; the second and third expand on Stallone's success story; the fourth film is the nadir, steeped in Cold War jingoism; and the last two are unnecessary but mildly entertaining continuations. Extras include audio commentaries and behind-the-scenes featurettes for the first film. Collections that don't already have the *Rocky: Undisputed Collection* will want to consider adding this one. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

## Samson and Delilah

★★½

Paramount, 133 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$24.99

Cecil B. DeMille has the longstanding reputation of being Hollywood's defining big-screen showman. In 1949's *Samson and Delilah*—DeMille's first Technicolor biblical epic—Victor Mature plays brawny strongman Samson, who kills a lion with his bare hands in the opening. Although he's actually tussling with a moth-eaten relic, it's still manly enough to rouse the passion of Hedy Lamarr's exotic temptress Delilah. Samson heaves enormous building stones at enemy soldiers, all but destroys a royal house in a wild brawl, and for the finale pulls down a temple around him. DeMille's special effects are grand if dated by modern standards, and he remains one of the gaudiest of Hollywood filmmakers. *Samson and Delilah* is all about lavish sets, slinky outfits, wicked Philistines, sexy maidens, and holy retribution (in glorious Technicolor!). Mature walks a plodding balance between grinning arrogance and righteous vengeance as God's strongman on Earth, while Lamarr purrs through her turn as the Bible's bad girl, a temptress with a wicked sense of vengeance. George Sanders contributes his brand of silky villainy as the Saran of Gaza, and DeMille allows him to indulge his inner ham. This is decidedly smaller scale than *The Ten Commandments*—DeMille's ultimate biblical *tour de force*—and it suffers from a dopey script and some wooden performances. But DeMille nevertheless manages to put on quite a pageant. Remastered in HD for its Blu-ray debut, this is a strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)



## Trans-Europ-Express

★★★

Kino, 94 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95

Best known as an experimental novelist of the 1950s and screenwriter of Alain Resnais' *Last Year at Marienbad*, Alain Robbe-Grillet was also a filmmaker in his own right, and *Trans-Europ-Express*—a light-hearted 1967 riff on spy movies, erotica, and storytelling—was his most popular, audience-friendly work. A director named Jean (played by Robbe-Grillet himself) and



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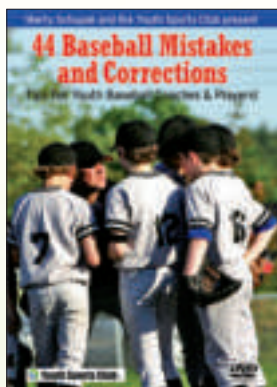
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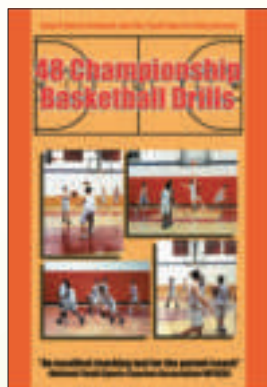
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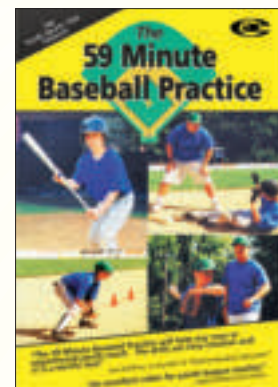
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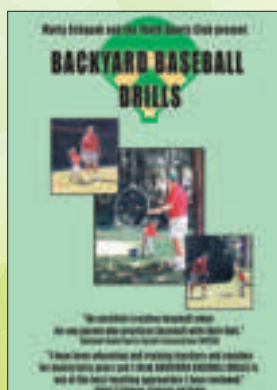
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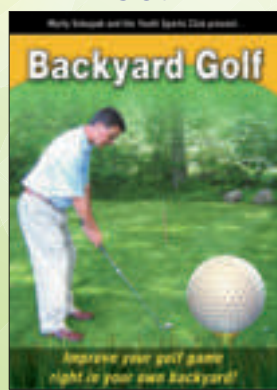
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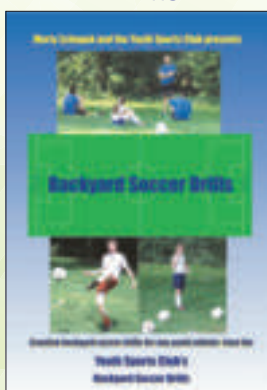
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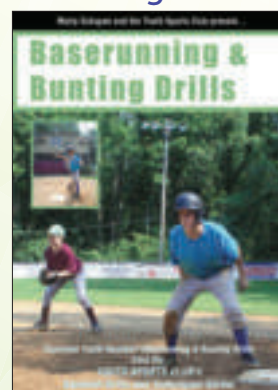
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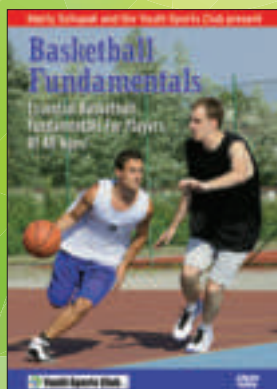
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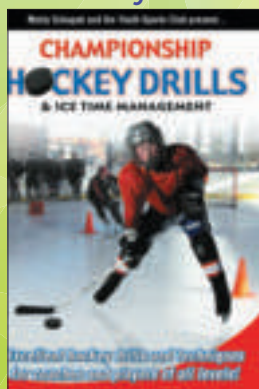
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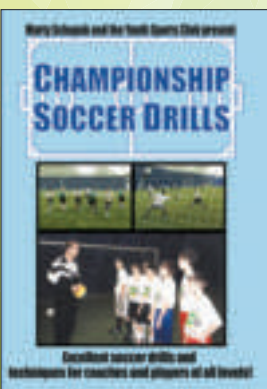
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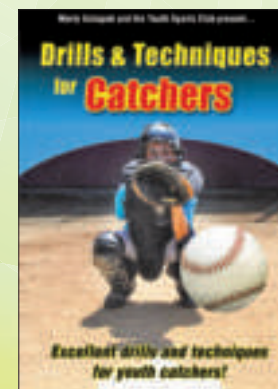
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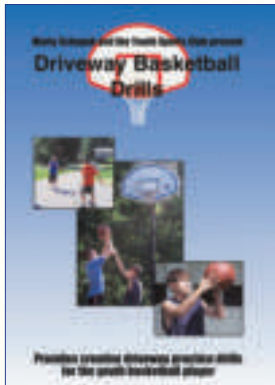


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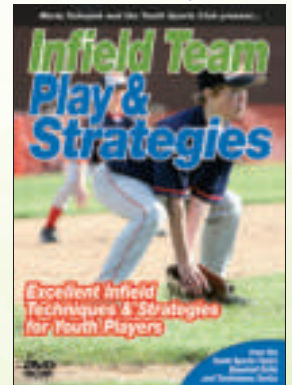
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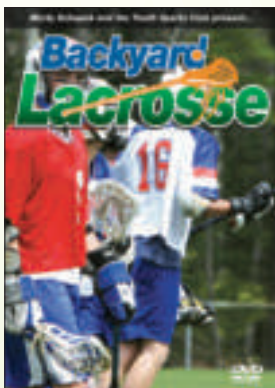
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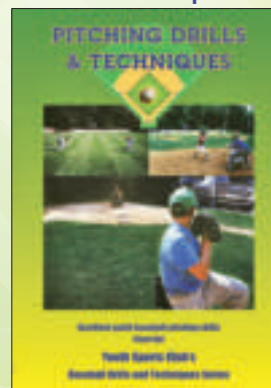
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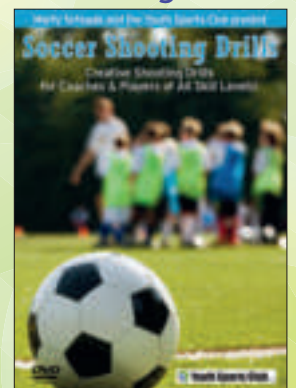
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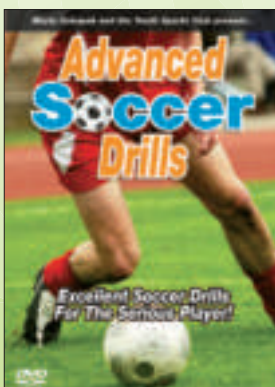
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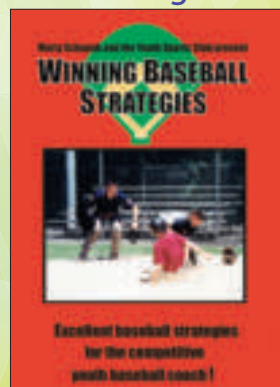
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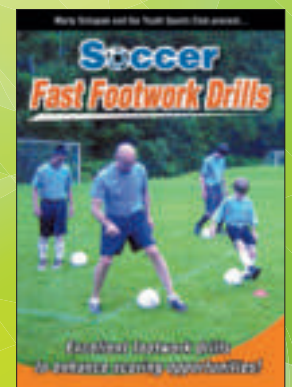
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two members of his production team board a train to work out the story for a film about drug trafficking. When actor Jean-Louis Trintignant briefly ducks into their cabin, he is quickly cast as the main character, Elias, a smuggler who not only is involved in a big score with a shady criminal but also harbors a bondage/rape fantasy that he acts out with a prostitute named Eva (Marie-France Pisier). Robbe-Grillet continually plays with the overarching gimmick as scenes are constantly revised and rewritten by the trio, causing the movie-within-a-movie to rewind and twist back on itself as multiple versions emerge and the fiction crosses over into the threesome's actual surroundings. Robbe-Grillet laces humor throughout the crime narrative, making it pulp fiction with a modernist flair. Never before released on home video in the U.S., *Trans-Europ-Express* boasts an excellent remaster from original elements for its domestic Blu-ray and DVD debuts. Extras include an interview with the director. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

### Uomini Contro (Many Wars Ago) ★★½

Kino, 101 min., in Italian w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95



Francesco Rosi's 1970 film could be considered a companion piece to Stanley Kubrick's 1957 anti-war classic, *Paths of Glory*, which painted a devastating portrait of the trench combat on World War I's western front from the perspective of French forces. *Many Wars Ago* is set on the Italian lines, where the enemy is Austrian rather than German, but it draws a similar distinction between the lower-class soldiers in the ranks and their aristocratic commanders, whose contempt for ordinary infantrymen—and willingness to sacrifice them in hopeless assaults and applications of summary discipline—resemble the actions of the martinet generals in Kubrick's film. Those caught in the middle are the lieutenants who—despite misgivings—must follow orders to send their men to certain death (in one instance outfitted in ineffectual armor that merely makes them sitting ducks for the Austrian snipers). Rosi doesn't match Kubrick in level of artistry, but he fashions some startling battlefield images while also capturing the grim mood that permeates camp life. And he secures strong performances from Gian Maria Volonté and Mark Frechette as two very different but equally doomed lieutenants, and Alain Cuny as the mad general who enjoys watching soldiers die in futile operations or executing them for failure to measure up to his perverted notion of honor. Never theatrically released in America, *Many Wars Ago* has been expertly restored for DVD and Blu-ray, with extras including an interview with Rosi, a restoration demo, and an

illustrated booklet. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

### The Visitor ★★½

Drafthouse, 108 min., not rated, DVD: \$27.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95



This nearly forgotten 1979 supernatural horror film—an Italian production with an American cast directed by a former Fellini assistant with more imagination than storytelling discipline—is quite possibly the strangest of the *Exorcist* copycats to appear in the 1970s. Filmmaker Giulio Paradisi (directing under the screen name Michael J. Paradise) here turns the idea of a satanic thriller into a cosmic battle, with John Huston starring as Jerzy Colsowicz, a paternal emissary sent from heaven (where Franco Nero is Jesus, surrounded by bald children) to stop Satan's bid to take over Earth through 8-year-old Katy Collins (Paige Conner). Paradisi also borrows from *The Omen*, *Carrie*, and *The Birds*, and works in a basketball game with an exploding dunk shot, an abduction out of UFO lore, and Glenn Ford as a police detective whose eye is pecked out by a hawk. The script is essentially incoherent in this minor cult film with a supporting cast that includes Mel Ferrer, Shelley Winters, Sam Peckinpah, and a young Lance Henriksen as an Atlanta sports mogul. Bowing on Blu-ray and DVD, extras include new interviews with Henriksen, screenwriter Lou Comici, and cinematographer Ennio Guarnieri (who all confess that they don't understand the movie or its director), and a booklet. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

### The World According to Garp ★★

Warner, 136 min., R, DVD: \$17.99



George Roy Hill's 1982 screen version of John Irving's 1978 bestselling novel stars Robin Williams as Garp, the only son of idiosyncratic single mother and feminist Jenny Fields (Glenn Close). As a young man, Garp aspires to become a writer, and as an adult he's a devoted father and high school wrestling coach who does indeed find success as an author. The story is filled with eccentric characters (notably John Lithgow as transsexual ex-football player Roberta Muldoon), strange events, and small tragedies, and the film at times seems to jump from one scene to another in order to fit in the many details of the sprawling source work. Yet the movie, like the book, is ultimately centered on the characters, and Williams shines as Garp (playing the role without slipping into his familiar comic goofiness), delivering one of the best performances of his career as he creates a likable, affectionate guy who loves his family and his life, a man who

moves ahead with optimism and good cheer, even as bad things happen around him. Close and Lithgow both earned Academy Award nominations for their work here, and they are joined in solid supporting performances by Mary Beth Hurt and Swoosie Kurtz. Long out of print, *The World According to Garp* has been re-released as part of the Warner Archive line of manufacture-on-demand DVD-R discs. A warm and eccentric American drama, this is recommended. (S. Axmaker)

### The Year of Living Dangerously ★★

Warner, 115 min., PG, DVD: \$17.99



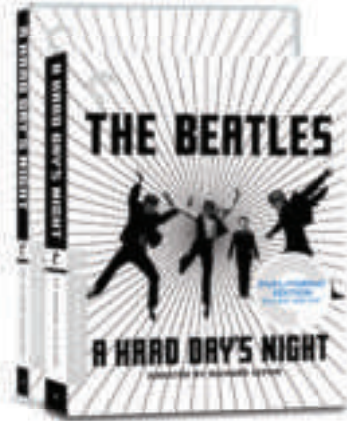
Set amidst the turbulence in Jakarta, circa 1965, when Indonesia was on the verge of a coup, this award-winning 1982 romantic drama stars a young Mel Gibson as Guy Hamilton, an ambitious Australian reporter looking to make his name with his first overseas assignment, and Sigourney Weaver as Jill Bryant, an attaché at the British embassy—and Guy's source, with whom he soon falls in love. Linda Hunt, in her first major film role, earned an Oscar for her performance, playing a man—photographer Billy Kwan. A half-Chinese/half-Australian dwarf with a savvy understanding of power and politics, Billy remains an outsider but becomes Guy's local contact and brings him and Jill together. The political narrative serves as a backdrop to both the romance and the story of ambition, loyalty, and responsibility, but as a portrait of Third World poverty, corruption, and extremist groups using instability to increase their own control, *The Year of Living Dangerously* belongs with other like-minded films of the era, including *The Killing Fields*, *Missing*, and *Salvador*. An intelligent and handsome piece of filmmaking (the Philippines stand in here for Jakarta), this film helped make stars of Gibson and Weaver, launched Hunt's career, and brought Australian director Peter Weir to Hollywood, where his next film would be *Witness*. Out of print for several years, this is being re-released as part of the Warner Archive line of manufacture-on-demand DVD-R discs. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

## Video Librarian Online

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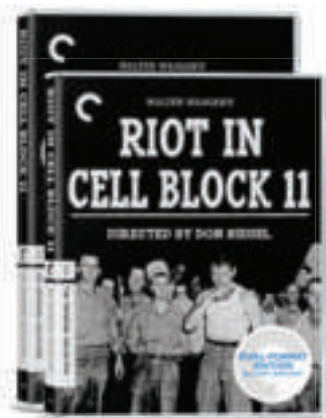
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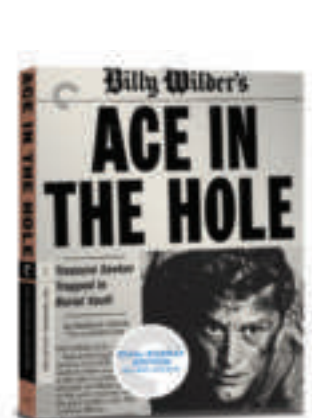
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ISBN: 978-1-60465-837-8

## The Americans: The Complete First Season

★★★1/2

Fox, 572 min., not rated, DVD: 4 discs, \$49.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$59.99



This FX original series stars Keri Russell and Matthew Rhys as Elizabeth and Philip Jennings, deep-cover Soviet agents living as typical parents in early-1980s Washington, D.C.—raising two kids in suburbia by day while dutifully carrying out acts of espionage by night. Their marriage is a professional partnership that exists under the guise of a loving relationship, but this creates a strain when it becomes clear that Philip has fallen in love with Elizabeth but she doesn't reciprocate. Adding to the drama, their neighbor Stan (Noah Emmerich) happens to be an FBI agent on the trail of their undercover network. Like *The Sopranos*, *Breaking Bad* and *Mad Men*, the show uses the disconnect between appearance and reality to create both a character study and a cultural portrait. If Elizabeth's commitment is to a Soviet ideal, Philip's is to wife and family, which grows complicated when their job calls for seducing a target. And while they both remain dedicated to spying on America for their Russian homeland, they also want to give their U.S.-born children a future that only the United States can offer—an irony that they recognize. The spy elements bring a compelling tension to the series, but the roiling emotions of love, resentment, suspicion, jealousy, and trust are what provide the spark. Compiling all 13 episodes from the 2013 debut season, extras include an episode commentary, deleted scenes, behind-the-scenes featurettes, and a gag reel. An intelligent, introspective domestic drama neatly tucked inside of a thriller, this is highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

## Braquo: The Complete First Season

MHz, 3 discs, 375 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$49.95



A gritty cop show with a Gallic accent (the title here is French slang for a bank robbery, but also means "crazy"), Olivier Marchal's series centers on a special police unit that not only skirts the rules in fighting crime but often breaks the law to protect its members. The narrative arc is tied to the suicide of the group's leader, whose brutal interrogation of a rape suspect brought the internal affairs department down on him with threats of dismissal. His four colleagues—Eddy (Jean-Hugues Anglade), Walter (Joseph Malerba), Théo (Nicolas Duvauchelle), and Roxane (Karole Rocher)—are determined to clear his name in order to secure a pension for his family, but after abducting the accuser to force him to recant, they accidentally kill the

man. Thus begins a spiral of violence, twists, and double-crosses in which the unit has to deal not only with their hostile colleagues (a vile internal affairs investigator and a bunch of self-interested superiors) but also an assortment of criminal types, including a cunning man who is instrumental in springing a trap that serves as the season-ending cliffhanger. *Braquo* is a nasty, cynical show in which it's difficult to tell the good guys from the bad. But solid writing and acting make its quartet of anti-heroes a fascinating bunch, and their enemies are almost equally compelling in this series that ably captures the seediness of assorted Parisian locales. Compiling all eight episodes from the 2009 debut season, extras include a brief preview of the second season, which is also newly available on DVD. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

## Californication: The Sixth Season

Paramount, 2 discs, 341 min., not rated, DVD: \$45.98



The 2013 sixth season of the long-running Showtime series finds David Duchovny's Hank Moody waking up in a hospital after barely surviving a drug overdose that was secretly administered to him by an ex-girlfriend. And that is the most sedate thing to occur in this 12-episode set, which is mostly anchored around efforts by a rocker named Atticus Fetch (Tim Minchin) to turn Hank's novel into a Broadway rock opera. Hank does a brief rehab spell, falling (not surprisingly) for the most beautiful woman in the facility, and he later continues to mismanage his relationship with daughter Becca (Madeleine Martin) and lover Karen (Natascha McElhone). Meanwhile, Hank's agent, Charlie (Evan Handler), pretends to be gay in order to sign an up-and-coming gay actor as part of a deal to remake the 1980 film *Cruising*. The challenge of maintaining freshness is no mean feat, and the creative forces behind *Californication* have been losing that battle for at least the past two seasons. The plotting is convoluted, the subplot of Charlie pretending to be gay (his ruse is exposed when he cannot perform oral sex on his male client) is borderline offensive, and the main cast seem to be on autopilot (although guest appearances by Rob Lowe and Marilyn Manson offer some amusement). Not a necessary purchase. (P. Hall)

## Dallas: The Complete Second Season

Warner, 4 discs, 636 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.98



The makers of TNT's reboot of the 1980s mega-hit series suffered a tragic setback with the death of star Larry Hagman in the middle of filming this second season. The killing of his character—

the ultimate villain-you-love-to-hate, J.R. Ewing—was quickly written into the storyline but it left *Dallas*'s future decidedly uncertain (TNT ultimately ordered a third run, but the show's survival past that point is iffy). Even after the gunshots that end J.R.'s life at the close of the seventh episode, it's his scheme of using his own demise to advantage against the family's enemies that drives the remaining action, although it's doubtful whether the continuation here of the Barnes-Ewing feud from the original show into the next generation—a fairly colorless group, despite the attempt to turn J.R.'s son, John Ross (Josh Henderson), into a younger version of his old man—will be enough to sustain the narrative. Still, the ongoing presence of some of the original cast—Linda Gray and Patrick Duffy among them—maintains the nostalgia, and insofar as nighttime soaps go, the new *Dallas* ably holds its own. Compiling all 15 episodes from 2013, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes, deleted scenes, an extended episode, a Q&A panel with cast and crew at PaleyFest 2013, an interview with Hagman, and a tribute to the late actor. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

## Doctor Who: The Time of the Doctor

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



This 2013 *Doctor Who* Christmas special (the 800th episode!) marks the end of Matt Smith's run as the Doctor, sending him and Clara (Jenna Coleman) on an adventure to a town called Christmas, which is located on a planetary body that is emitting a strange signal. Their escapade leads to a centuries-long battle to save the hidden planet of the Time Lords from the Doctor's worst enemies, including the Weeping Angels, the Cybermen, and the Daleks. Boasting another of the densely woven scripts created by series producer Steven Moffat, the story zips through time, ricochets off events from previous episodes, and ends with the Doctor's next incarnation in the form of actor Peter Capaldi. Ripping along at a furious pace—stuffed with invention and humor—this is a fun ride for the show's fervent cult followers. Extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes. While this is likely to end up in the eventual complete season set release, *Doctor Who* junkies will want to see it now. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

## Dolmen

MHz, 3 discs, 542 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$39.95

Heavy on atmosphere and a strong sense of place, this 2005 French TV miniseries serves up a mysterious vibe, but the slow-paced execution over the course of six 90-minute episodes disappoints in the areas of acting, directing, and script construction. At the

center of the action—or lack thereof—is attractive police lieutenant Marie Kermeur (Ingrid Chauvin), who has returned to her home on Ty Kern—a picturesque island off the coast of Brittany—to marry her childhood sweetheart. But her brother turns up dead on the beach the day before the wedding, the first in a series of strange events—and more deaths. Marie suspects murder arising from the welling of old feuds between Ty Kern's residents, but there are also some nightmarish phenomena that could only be supernatural (as the death toll mounts, runic markings on ancient standing stones begin bleeding). All of this is the stuff of legend and prophecy, and Marie is in danger of falling into its trap as she starts investigating. But handsome off-island policeman Lucas (Bruno Madinier)—called in to assist—is having none of it. The real and unreal become melded, as—predictably—do Marie and Lucas. Despite an exquisite setting and moody atmosphere, *Dolmen* feels a bit amateurish, with little to distinguish it from other, far better international TV diversions. Optional, at best. (T. Fry)



### Family Matters: The Complete Fourth Season

★★★  
Warner, 3 discs, 524 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.98

Jaleel White is back as Steve Urkel—genius nerdy neighbor to the Winslow family—in this 1992-93 fourth season of the sitcom. Although previous seasons usually featured a “very special episode” or two, this time around the series mainly sticks to the slapstick, including Steve and Carl’s (Reginald Vel Johnson) stint on *American Gladiators* to settle a score in the season opener “Surely You Joust”; Steve and Eddie (Darius McCrary) trying to get a dimwitted pal out of the Army in “An Officer and a Waldo”; and Steve’s hopes of scoring with his longtime crush, Winslow daughter Laura (Kelly Shanygne Williams), in “Just One Date.” Standouts include “Rumor Has It,” in which a school lothario lies about Laura; Steve and Eddie’s first stint on their own in “The Oddest Couple”—their apartment showers them with plaster generated by a nearby L train; and the fantasy holiday switcheroo episode “It’s Beginning to Look a Lot Like Urkel,” which features a guardian angel (T.K. Carter) showing Laura what it’s like to be Steve. This season also introduces Michelle Thomas as Steve’s attractive new love interest, Myra Monkhouse, who loves smart guys and considers Laura a rival. Featuring guest appearances by Naya Rivera, Tracie Spencer, and Dave Koz, this latest set from the Emmy-nominated series is recommended. (J. Williams-Wood)



### Generation War ★★★

Music Box, 2 discs, 279 min., in German w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95

Philipp Kadelbach’s three-part 2014 German miniseries, which clocks in at nearly five hours, focuses on the experiences of “ordinary” citizens living under the Nazi regime during World War II. At the center are five young adult friends—Wilhelm (Volker Bruch), a career officer, and his younger brother, bookish private Friedhelm (Tom Schilling), who are being sent east to participate in the 1941 invasion of the Soviet Union; Charlotte (Miriam Stein), a nurse who silently loves Wilhelm and will soon serve in a military hospital; Greta (Katharina Schüttler), who hopes to become the next Marlene Dietrich; and the latter’s Jewish boyfriend, Viktor (Ludwig Trepte). As the quintet enjoy a farewell drink together, the mood is jovial, especially given Hitler’s assurances that victory is not far off. But it doesn’t take long for events to turn sour: the soldiers engage in acts of barbaric cruelty, while Greta becomes involved with an S.S. officer, initially to help keep Viktor safe but then—after Viktor is among those rounded up for deportation—to advance her career. Even mousy Charlotte displays a dark side. As the characters bump into each other while the war grinds on, the coincidences grow, almost reaching a breaking point when the survivors reunite in 1945. But despite the melodramatic turns, *Generation War* carries serious visceral power, particularly during the battle sequences, which combine grainy newsreel footage and newly-shot material to remarkable effect. Recommended. (F. Swietek)



### Here’s Lucy: The Complete Series ★★1/2

MPI, 24 discs, 4,320 min., not rated, DVD: \$159.98

Lucille Ball’s third sitcom mostly kept to the formula established in its beloved predecessor *The Lucy Show*, with Ball starring here as Lucille Carter, scatterbrained secretary to her business-owner brother-in-law, the endlessly flustered Harry (Gale Gordon), while a parade of A-list stars make guest appearances. The one major format change here was having Ball’s children, Lucie Arnaz and Desi Arnaz Jr., appearing as her onscreen kids, Kim and Craig (Ball’s character is a widow with no evidence of a regular love life). However, the younger performers had relatively little to do but play second banana to their mother (Desi Jr. left after the third season). For too many episodes, the slapstick seems contrived and the absurd plots have a been-there/done-that feel. Still, there are high points, including the only sitcom appearance of Richard Burton



and Elizabeth Taylor during their tumultuous married years, and occasional eruptions of pure energy—including Ball and her daughter joining Ginger Rogers in a wild Charleston dance, and Jackie Gleason making a surprise entrance as Ralph Kramden. And for sheer strangeness, nothing surpasses Ball going wild over female impersonator Jim Bailey as Phyllis Diller. Vivian Vance turns up occasionally for old time’s sake, offering a rueful reminder that Ball once did much more inspired work. Compiling all 144 episodes from 1968–74 on a whopping 24 discs, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes, interviews, episodes from the *Let’s Talk to Lucy* radio chat show, and clips from Ball’s home movies. Ball’s fans will likely appreciate this, making it a strong optional purchase. (P. Hall)

### Joanie Loves Chachi: The Complete Series—Seasons 1 & 2 ★

Paramount, 3 discs, 410 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.98

*Joanie Loves Chachi* was a misbegotten spin-off from *Happy Days* that only lasted a mercifully brief 17 episodes. Ranked No. 17 by *TV Guide* on a list of TV’s “25 Biggest Blunders,” this series jumped the shark in its opening credits, which featured a cringe-worthy duet by its appealing (albeit musically and comedically-challenged) stars, Erin Moran and Scott Baio. The series packed Richie Cunningham’s sister and Fonzie’s cousin off to Chicago to pursue their rock dreams. Providing adult supervision and comic relief were Chachi’s mother (Ellen Travolta) and *Happy Days* regular Al Delvecchio (Al Molinaro), married owners of the restaurant where Joanie and Chachi performed. *Joanie Loves Chachi* was filmed before a live studio audience, which dutifully erupts whenever Chachi (and to a lesser extent, Joanie) enters the scene, laughing hysterically at the lame jokes. *Happy Days* icons Tom Bosley and Marion Ross, as Joanie’s parents, and Henry Winkler’s Fonzie were brought in for guest star appearances, but it wasn’t enough to save the show, whose greatest (if also dubious) claim to fame may be a name-check in the comedy *Dodgeball*. Let’s just leave it at that. Not recommended. (D. Liebenson)



### Legit: The Complete First Season ★★

Fox, 2 discs, 286 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$39.99

Australian comedian Jim Jefferies takes the lead in this aggressively non-PC, FX-aired sitcom, playing a fictionalized version of himself as a struggling Los Angeles comic sharing a bungalow with best friend Steve (Dan Bakkedahl). Jim is an obliviously



self-involved dude who wants to be a better person for strictly selfish reasons—he thinks it'll make him look good to women. Each episode follows him as he attempts to do something nice for someone else—gestures that are often ill-thought-out and usually have unintended consequences. First up: taking Steve's brother Billy (DJ Qualls)—who is confined to a wheelchair with crippling muscular dystrophy—to a brothel so he can lose his virginity. As a comedy built around bad behavior, *Legit* falls somewhere between the intelligence of *Louie* and the outrageously misanthropic characters of *It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia*, but Jim does actually improve, becoming more compassionate and self-aware (albeit in tiny steps) as the season develops. Compiling all 13 episodes of the 2013 debut season, extras include a director's cut of the pilot, episode commentaries, behind-the-scenes featurettes, deleted scenes, and a gag reel. Optional. (S. Axmaker)

### Les Petits Meurtres d'Agatha Christie, Set 1

★★★1/2

Acorn, 4 discs, 663 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$59.99



Fans of the queen of English detective fiction will have to set aside any ideals of absolute fidelity to her work in order to enjoy this French series. Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple do not appear here, although most of the mysteries are ones they originally solved (including *The ABC Murders* and *The Body in the Library*). Here, the plots have been refashioned to serve as puzzles untangled by—in six of the seven episodes—an eccentric but brilliant 1930s French police detective named Larosière (Antoine Duléry), who is accompanied by his comic assistant, Lampion (Marius Colucci). The seventh installment shifts to the mid-1950s and features suave Commissioner Laurence (Samuel Labarthe) and reporter Alice (Blandine Bellavoir). Generally speaking, the transformations are adroitly handled, and certainly the acknowledgement here of the debt to Christie is an improvement over the many cases in which her plotting has been appropriated without attribution. The period detail is excellent, the supporting players well-chosen, and the production values quite high. Still, Christie devotees are more likely to prefer the far more faithful British adaptations starring David Suchet as Poirot and a succession of actresses (the best of them Joan Hickson) as Miss Marple. Curiously, the seven episodes compiled here seem to be rather randomly chosen from the 13 produced in this short series between 2009 and 2013. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

### The Middle: Season 4

Warner, 3 discs, 512 min., not rated, DVD: \$44.98

In the fourth season of what some con-

sider to be one of TV's most under-appreciated series, the beleaguered Heck family faces some very real life changes and rites of passage. Wife Frankie (Patricia Heaton) loses her job at the car dealership, daughter Sue (Eden Shur) desperately tries to get her driver's license, and surly son Axl (Charlie McDermott) enters his senior year with chances for a college football scholarship endangered by a broken foot. But perhaps taking its cue from *Seinfeld*, there is little character growth here. The pathetically clueless Sue still reacts to everything with unbridled enthusiasm, Frankie and husband Mike (Neil Flynn) still consider themselves "awesome parents who care," Brick (Atticus Shaffer) develops even more unsettling quirks, and Axl continues to be the thoughtless entitled son from hell. *The Middle* is essentially a cross between *Roseanne* and *Malcolm in the Middle*—not as bleak as the former, but also more grounded than the latter. Still, no matter how "real" it gets (Sue finds one of her father's paychecks and realizes the family's desperate financial situation), most episodes manage to end with a sliver of hope or a poignant moment. Memorable guest stars this season include a very game Brooke Shields as a hostile, white trash neighbor; *Pawn Stars* proprietor Rick Harrison as a bemused pawn store owner; Dave Foley as Brick's guidance counselor; Norm MacDonald back as Mike's feckless brother; and Jane Kaczmarek as a hard-nosed dental school teacher who has it in for student Frankie. The Hecks are still making the best of bad situations in this sharply written and intimately observed series. Presenting all 23 episodes (one a two-parter) from the 2012-13 fourth season, this is recommended. (D. Liebenzon)



### Mr. & Mrs. Murder: Series 1

★★★  
Acorn, 4 discs, 599 min., not rated, DVD: \$59.99

This breezy Australian mystery series follows in the footsteps of similar light-hearted British detective shows, here featuring a likable married couple who run a crime-scene-cleaning business but inevitably turn into ersatz investigators when they spot overlooked clues during clean-ups. Nicola (Kat Stewart) is excitable and impulsive, while husband Charlie (writer and co-creator Shaun Micallef) is quick to back up her hunches ("It's one of the reasons I married her," he explains at one point). The pair are fun to watch as they banter affectionately, whether busily scouring up a bloody mess after a murder or sneakily engaging witnesses and suspects in covert interrogations. Lucy Honigman costars as their niece, Jess, who invariably is drafted into helping out in the



investigations, and Jonny Pasvolsky is Peter Vinetti, the police detective who shares more information than he should with the civilians because of his crush on Nicola, which Charlie barely tolerates. Nicola and Charlie are the latest in a long line of talented amateurs who turn detective, quite plausibly here since their job puts them at the site of killings in high-end hotels, restaurants, and other colorful crime venues. Compiling all 13 episodes from the 2013 first season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes, interviews, extended scenes, and a photo gallery. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

### Mystery Science Theater 3000: Volume XXIX

★★★1/2

Shout! Factory, 4 discs, 480 min., not rated, DVD: \$59.99

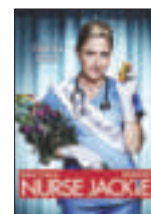
The latest boxed-set quartet from the long-running series—in which terrible movies are screened with snarky commentary delivered by a man and his robot companions imprisoned on a space station—is evenly split between episodes starring Joel Hodgson and others with Mike Nelson as host. Hodgson mocks *Untamed Youth*, a 1957 teen-rock-exploitation drama directed by Howard W. Koch and starring Mamie Van Doren and Lori Nelson as hitchhikers en route to Los Angeles who are arrested for skinny-dipping. *The Pumaman* is a 1980 Italian *Superman* take-off helmed by Alberto De Martino (and riffed on here by Nelson) about a mild-mannered archaeologist (Walter George Alton) who turns hapless flying superhero via his ancestral UFO puma power. Nelson was also the top-liner for filmmaker Will Cowan's *The Thing That Couldn't Die* (1958)—the story of a 500-year-old decapitated wizard (Robin Hughes) terrorizing a California dude ranch (!). Finally, 1961's Italian *Hercules and the Captive Women*, from Vittorio Cottafavi, perfectly sets up Hodgson and the robots with the plot's revelation that Hercules (Reg Park) faces the power of the god Uranus. Each movie is packaged here separately, so collections carrying this perennially popular series have the option of lending out individual films. Extras include introductions by Hodgson, behind-the-scenes featurettes, and interviews. Highly recommended. (C. Cassidy)



### Nurse Jackie: Season Five

★★★  
Lionsgate, 280 min., not rated, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$39.98

For those following this acclaimed Showtime-aided series centered on the personal and professional life of Jackie Peyton, R.N., these jaunty episodes will be a welcome hit of pharmaceutical-grade dramedy. Edie Falco has grown more firmly into the title



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role, one that has perfectly suited her tart and tangy persona from the start. Her Jackie is now healthier—if not happier—and back at All Saints Hospital after a stint in rehab. Unfortunately, the atmosphere that helped foster her spiraling addiction and criminal drug-seeking behavior are obstacles to staying clean. Egotistical Dr. Prentiss (Morris Chestnut) is named E.R. chief, and leggy resident Dr. Roman (Betty Gilpin) alarms everyone with her ineptitude and unbridled sexuality. Series-long characters Dr. Cooper (Peter Facinelli) and chatty neophyte nurse Zoey (Merritt Wever) develop in ways that will be sardonically satisfying to longtime fans. Jackie is now divorced, casting off relationships and making room for adorable cop Frank Verelli (Adam Ferrara), who falls hard for her. Deftly uniting medical drama and comedy, *Nurse Jackie* continues to upset convention with its off-kilter pathos. Compiling all 10 episodes from the 2013 fifth season, extras include cast and crew commentaries, behind-the-scenes featurettes, deleted scenes, and a gag reel. Recommended. (T. Fry)

### The Red Skelton Show: The Lost Episodes ★★

Timeless, 2 discs, 380 min., not rated, DVD: \$14.95

It's not quite true that "everybody loves a clown," as Gary Lewis once sang. But America loved Red Skelton, who rose from vaudeville, radio, and movies to headline his own variety series, which lasted two decades and won several Emmys for Skelton, the series, and the writing. Alas, these 18 new-to-video episodes—all of them 50-plus years old—have not aged well and may only be of interest to early Baby Boomers or seniors with fond memories of the entertainer. Skelton was a skilled clown and a deft mime as he demonstrates here in several mostly non-verbal sketches (the man on a high-dive who discovers that he forgot to put on his swimsuit is good for a cheap laugh). The dated verbal sketches are worse, particularly those in which Red portrays a stereotypically henpecked husband opposite the likes of guest star Eve Arden. One of his signature characters, Clem Kaddidleshopper, appears in a sketch in which a computer picks the ideal candidate for President of the United States. The guest star lineup is less than stellar, including Buster Crabbe, Sebastian Cabot, Terry Moore, William Demarest, Gordon MacCrae, Jackie Coogan, and Vivian Vance. In two bonus segments, Danny Thomas, Arthur Godfrey, and Jackie Gleason fill in for Red while he is recuperating from surgery. The black-and-white picture quality is only fair, although the price is certainly low enough for this to be considered for larger TV collections. Optional. (D. Liebenson)



### The Returned: The Complete First Season ★★★

Music Box, 440 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.95; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$34.95

Like so many recent American network TV dramas, this moody, absorbing French series is built around a darkly stylish core with a supernatural twist. *The Returned* is based on the 2004 French film *Les Revenants* but takes a subtler, more emotionally disturbing tack in telling the tale of a small mountain town where the dead return to take their place among the living. These are not zombies per se, but rather perfect facsimiles of children, lovers, wives, and ruffians who reappear in the lives of families and friends, turning up unchanged, unknowing, and without explanation over the course of many years—sometimes even decades after their deaths. They have not aged, and virtually no time has passed for them since they last saw their loved ones. Each episode here is structured around one of the Revenants and the haunting emotional consequences ignited by their reappearance. Although seemingly unconnected, the destinies of the little boy, the teenage girl, the serial killer, the young fiancé, etc.—and the people from their former lives—gradually begin to show some correlation through flashbacks and shadowy events taking place in the community, such as a slowly draining reservoir and the weird secrets it reveals. Compiling all eight episodes from the 2009 debut run, this spooky thriller is recommended. (T. Fry)



### Rogue: The Complete First Season ★★1/2

Entertainment One, 4 discs, 500 min., not rated, DVD: \$34.98

This original DirecTV dark crime drama stars Thandie Newton as Grace Travis, an undercover cop in Oakland who goes rogue to investigate the death of her son in a drive-by shooting, winding up in a shadowy place between the police—defying orders and protected only by a couple of colleagues who feed her information—and the gangsters she is investigating, some of whom discover her true identity. *Rogue* takes place in a culture of corruption, betrayal, fractured families, gang war, and conspiracies, with the show moving from suburban sunshine to the slums and industrial waterfront at night to create a gritty, dangerous world. More interesting is the wary partnership between Grace and rising crime boss Jimmy Laszlo (Marton Csokas), as well as the way Grace tears her family apart during her obsessive quest—abandoning the living to lose herself pursuing vengeance for the dead, using danger as a kind of drug to numb the guilt and grief. Otherwise, this is



pretty familiar territory, with bad apples on the force, power struggles in the underworld, and a reckless, driven detective following her instincts to uncover a conspiracy. Compiling all 10 episodes from the 2013 debut season, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette and bonus webisodes. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

### Sebastian Bergman: The Cursed One, Parts 1 & 2 ★★

MHz, 2 discs, 176 min., in Swedish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95

Swedish actor Rolf Lassgård—best known in the United States as the star of the original *Wallander* crime series—plays Sebastian Bergman, a criminal profiler who has been unable to overcome the deaths of his wife and daughter during the 2004 tsunami that hit Thailand. After belatedly returning to his hometown for his mother's funeral—two weeks too late for the event—he's recruited by police to help nab a serial killer. Invigorated by this assignment, Bergman comes out of his emotional miasma to use his profiling knowledge to apprehend the criminal. Lassgård does a fine job playing a tormented anti-hero; however, the script is strictly a connect-the-dots effort that will feel overly familiar to fans of police-investigative TV dramas. The one uncommon aspect here—details of Bergman's past indiscretions as a sex addict—ends up being a sour novelty that fails to enhance the development of the character or the direction of the story. Falling far short of the best of the genre, this 2010 Swedish TV series is an optional purchase, at best. (P. Hall)



### Sherlock: Season Three ★★1/2

BBC, 2 discs, 270 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$39.98

The 2014 third season of this BBC-aided favorite picks up the inventive update/re-interpretation of the Arthur Conan Doyle tales two years after John Watson (Martin Freeman) witnessed what he assumed to be the death of Sherlock Holmes (Benedict Cumberbatch). But just as Holmes survived Doyle's attempt to kill him off at the Reichenbach Falls, he is resurrected here, making a surprise return before an unprepared Watson just as the latter is about to propose marriage to Mary (Amanda Abbington). Mary is a marvelous addition to the series and even impresses Sherlock with her ability to deal with his antisocial personality and understand his friendship with Watson, and this new chemistry is one of the most enjoyable elements of the season's three feature-length episodes. As mysteries, the stories here are clever, if also somewhat gimmicky, but the delight lies in



the smart storytelling, sense of humor that borders on the Python-esque, and playful plotting. And while Holmes describes himself as a “high-functioning sociopath,” he takes the hurt he inflicted upon Watson in the first episode, “The Empty Hearse,” and transforms it into a fierce protectiveness of his only true friend through “The Sign of Three” (where he’s best man at Watson’s wedding) and “His Last Vow” (which pits Sherlock against a new master criminal). Extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

### Trinity: The Complete First Season ★★

Eagle Rock, 3 discs, 369 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.98

A mix of drama, raunchy college comedy, and shadowy conspiracy thriller, this 2009 British series is set at an exclusive, Cambridge-like British university where children of the rich and powerful lord it over the scholarship students—and members of a centuries-old Dandelion Club are experimented upon by a faceless cabal for reasons never revealed. The young adults here are involved in plenty of romantic entanglements and sexual hook-ups—including relationships across the battle lines of class—while the adults struggle over control of the administration, with the imperious dean, Edmund Maltravers (Charles Dance), shielding the Dandelion Club from the progressive new college warden, Angela Donne (Claire Skinner), who is determined to end the system of elite privilege and protected bad behavior. *Trinity* ran for only a single season, ending before anything about the experiments or the shadowy group behind them was revealed. Compiling all eight episodes from 2009, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes. Optional, at best. (S. Axmaker)



### Under Capricorn ★★1/2

Acorn, 2 discs, 204 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.99

A&E recently broadcast this 30-year-old Australian television relic—an often absorbing 19th-century soap opera/psychological drama—to some acclaim. The landscape of Australia’s upper class makes for an interesting diversion from British drawing rooms and provides a bit of Wild West atmosphere in the two 90-minute episodes. Charles (Peter Cousens), young nephew of the territorial governor, ingratiates himself and becomes something of a protégé to wealthy landowner Sam (John Hallam) and his alcoholic wife, Henrietta (Lisa Harrow). The secret passions and mysteries of a romantic triangle (or quadrangle) here features suspense—the element that clearly drew Alfred Hitchcock to Helen Simpson’s source novel for his 1949 film ver-



sion. The action here is slightly more languorous, with many unseen detours when Charles is taken for dead and scheming housekeeper Milly (Julia Blake) undermines Henrietta in a play for Sam. Although the production dates from 1982, the image is crisp. Likely to appeal to fans of *Masterpiece Theatre*, this is a strong optional purchase. (T. Fry)

### Veep: The Complete Second Season ★★★

HBO, 2 discs, 278 min., TV-MA, DVD: \$39.98, Blu-ray: \$49.99

Julia Louis-Dreyfus stars as Selina Meyer, fictional vice president of the United States, in this satirical HBO comedy created by British writer-producer Armando Iannucci, who made his name stateside with the feature comedy *In the Loop*. Like Iannucci’s U.K. productions, *Veep* finds its humor not in political issues but in the process: bureaucratic dysfunction, mistakes made by functionaries, public relations superseding government action, and the personalities and competing interests that trip over one another trying to get anything accomplished. The second season improves upon the first by reminding us that Meyer is, in fact, a savvy politician in a culture of powerbrokers, number-crunchers, PR flaks, sycophants, backstabbers, and a news media that will always rush for the shallow end of the pool. While her party melts down around her during midterm elections, and the (still unseen) POTUS cedes his decision-making power to a poll-watcher, Meyer rides out potential scandal and bad press by (often inadvertently or impulsively) sliding off-message and issuing statements that make her look decisive and honest—frequently in direct contradiction to the reality of the situation. Compiling all 10 episodes from 2013, extras include episode commentaries, and deleted scenes. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



### The White Queen ★★1/2

Anchor Bay, 3 discs, 580 min., not rated, DVD: \$49.98, Blu-ray: \$59.99

The Starz cable network follows up its successful adaptations of Ken Follett’s *The Pillars of the Earth* and *World Without End* with this new historical miniseries, based on three novels by bestselling author Philippa Gregory. Co-produced with the BBC, this eight-part drama takes on the 30-year War of the Roses from the point of view of the women in the 15th-century struggle for the British throne. When King Edward (Max Irons) takes Elizabeth Woodville (Rebecca Ferguson), a widow in an out-of-favor royal family, as his queen, the “kingmaker”—Lord Warwick (James Frain)—plots to replace him with a controllable monarch. Edward and Warwick are soon



dead, but Elizabeth continues the fight to install her son, the Prince of Wales, as ruler. She finds her fiercest rivals in Anne Neville (Faye Marsay), the daughter of Warwick, and Lady Margaret Beaufort (Amanda Hale), who claims to be following God’s plan to put her child, Henry Tudor, on the throne. The royal lineage and tangle of relationships, grudges, and alliances between the various houses are complicated, to say the least, and only become harder to follow as the years march on. Handsomely produced, the show offers its fair share of bodice-ripping sex and nudity, as well as violence, but is less explicit than HBO’s *Game of Thrones*. Fans of period pieces and Gregory’s novels will likely be interested, but the series lacks the intelligence and historical detail of better British counterparts. Extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

### Wolfblood: Season One

★★★1/2

Cinedigm, 2 discs, 340 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.95

Although its premise brings to mind the *Twilight* series, this hit BBC-TV show doesn’t feel overly derivative of Stephenie Meyer’s novels; instead, it smoothly blends paranormal elements with gritty, non-patronizing YA drama set in present-day England. Attending a forest-bordered rural school, 14-year-old Maddy Smith (Aimee Kelly)—along with her cheerful working-class parents—are secretly “Wolfblood,” i.e., a shadowy ancient people with a pack mentality and heightened senses and powers, who shape-shift (clothing and all) into wolves. Maddy recognizes brooding transfer student Rhyddian Morris (Bobby Lockwood)—abandoned as an infant—as a Wolfblood who is ignorant of his heritage. As the pair navigate an adolescence made even hairier by lycanthropy, Maddy and Rhyddian support each other through crises of lupine self-control (during the full moon), family turmoil, and suspicious classmates getting near the truth. Wolf scenes (clearly digital f/x) are actually quite sparse in this well-written, realistically cast, and superbly acted Celtic riff on *I Was a Teenage Werewolf*. Compiling all 13 episodes from the 2012 debut season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes, and interviews with the cast. Highly recommended. (C. Cassidy)



## Video Librarian Online

Visit Video Librarian Online ([www.videolibrarian.com](http://www.videolibrarian.com)) for more reviews during May and June, including: *Continuum: Season Two*, *The Dean Martin Celebrity Roasts: Collector’s Edition*, *Monsters: The Complete Series*, *William & Mary: The Complete Collection*, 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

### "All About the Book!" A Kid's Video Guide to Charlotte's Web ★★

(2013) 22 min. DVD: \$59.99. Tim Podell Productions. PPR. ISBN: 1-58543-185-0.

Adult host Tim Podell questions a panel of young people about E.B. White's 1952 classic children's tale *Charlotte's Web* in this entry from the "All About the Book!" series. Serving up a lighthearted *CliffsNotes*-esque primer, the program presents a synopsis by magician "The Great Charlini" before asking the 'tween participants about their opinions of the book, including its characters, motivations (why was spider Charlotte going out of her way to help pig Wilbur?), and themes (including injustice). Also included are segments featuring real-life kids, info on spiders with a librarian, and a fleeting cameo by one of my favorite children's authors, Newbery Medal-winner Cynthia Voigt (who visits White's grave in Maine). Also newly available is "All About the Book!" A Kid's Video Guide to *A Wrinkle in Time*. Recommended. Aud: I, J, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

### Bear Has a Story to Tell ★★

(2013) 9 min. DVD: \$59.95 (study guide included). Weston Woods Studios. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 0-545-57025-5.

Based on author Philip C. Stead and illustrator Erin E. Stead's 2012 *New York Times* bestselling children's picture book, this iconographic-animated adaptation done in

wet and dry chalk follows the titular big ol' bear as he wanders along, trying to tell a tale to friends including Mouse, Duck, Frog, and Mole. But the gang is much too busy with gathering goods and hunkering down for the approaching winter, so a yawning Bear joins in helping...although by springtime, it's hard to remember what he was going to say. Featuring music by Ernest Troost, this Cha-Pow!-animated program nicely incorporates autumn colors, simple animation (such as drifting leaves), and sound effects (including chirping birds). Extras include a bonus segment with Erin E. Stead. While not as winsome as the Steads' *A Sick Day for Amos McGee* (VL-9/12), this 2014 ALA-ALSC Notable Children's Video selection is still recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

### Betsy's Kindergarten Adventures: Volume 2 ★★½

(2011) 120 min. DVD: \$19.95. Polka Dot Productions (dist. by Janson Media). ISBN: 978-1-56839-458-9.

Five-year-old Betsy navigates kindergarten life with her classmates in this second set of adventures from the charming and relatable PBS Kids-aided animated series. In the four episodes compiled here (with two stories in each), the youngest class at Lakeshore Elementary learns about things such as the library, show and tell, and the environment, using their imaginations and playing pretend, while also expressing curiosity and fears about the wide world around them in ways that ring true to life. In one especially amusing segment, the kids are astonished to learn that their teacher, Mrs. O'Connor, actually has interests outside of the classroom (even a husband!), and that she doesn't live at Lakeshore. These life experience segments are interwoven with mini-lessons about topics including vowels, plants and seeds, and the days of the week. The constant variety keeps the show lively and fun, while the fanciful, light tone adds a bit of zest but still keeps the action grounded in the reality of an elementary-age child. A fine program for

helping youngsters with the transition from home to school, this is highly recommended. Aud: K, P. (K. Cruver)

### Coretta Scott ★★

(2013) 7 min. DVD: \$59.95 (study guide included). Weston Woods Studios. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 0-545-62383-9.

Narrated by Phylicia Rashad, this adaptation of author Ntozake Shange and illustrator Kadir Nelson's 2009 picture book serves up a biographical portrait of civil rights activist Coretta Scott, depicted in realistic oils. Briefly touching on key moments from Scott's life—from walking five miles to the "colored" school with her siblings, to meeting husband Martin Luther King Jr. ("two minds, attracted in prayer" for freedom)—the narrative is buttressed by gospel music (including the classic "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me 'Round") and scenes from the Montgomery Bus Boycott and March on Washington. Featuring music by Michael Bacon, as well as a read-along option, extras include a segment with historical background and archival photos. A 2014 ALA-ALSC Notable Children's Video selection, this fine tribute to an American icon is recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

### Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood: Life's Little Lessons ★★

(2013) 100 min. DVD: \$12.99. PBS Video (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-990-2.

Featuring four two-part animated episodes, this compilation from *Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood* features the 4-year-old offspring of the classic *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* puppet character Daniel Striped Tiger. "Prince Wednesday Goes to the Potty" and "Daniel Goes to the Potty" feature scenes of uncomfortable wiggling and anxious faces but offer pertinent reminders for youngsters to stop what they are doing and go to the bathroom right away (and wash their hands), incorporating catchy songs, sequences featuring real-life kids, and fantasy scenes. Also



### Doug Unplugged ★★½

(2013) 6 min. DVD: \$38.99. Dreamscape Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-9777098-0-9.

Narrated by Chris Patton, this iconographic-animated adaptation of author and illustrator Dan Yaccarino's 2013 picture book centers on robot boy Doug, whose parents plug him in each morning, wishing him "Happy downloading!" as he learns a number of facts about city life. However, once Doug notices a real-life pigeon outside, he begins to understand that his education has been limited to a lot of awfully sterile statistics. Setting off with his awesome jet pack, Doug tours the city to go beyond simple figures, where amidst a profusion of bright colors he explores the subway (screaming as it goes around a bend), wet cement, smelly garbage, cool fountain water on a hot day, and friendship. Incorporating fun urban sound effects with neat imagery (such as Doug kneeling over to marvel at a flower growing out of a sidewalk crack), bonus features include a read-along option. Highly recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

# COMING SOON

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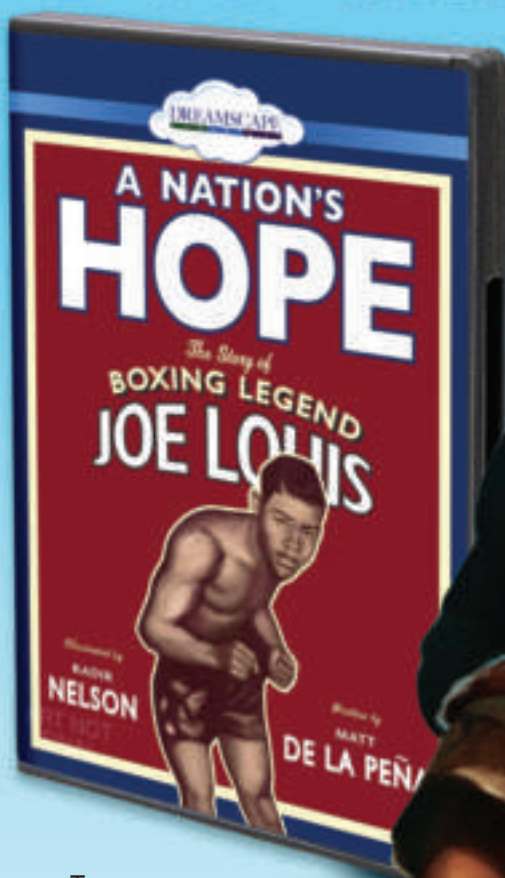


## Big Bad Bubble

From the creators of *Dragons Love Tacos* and *Those Darn Squirrels*.

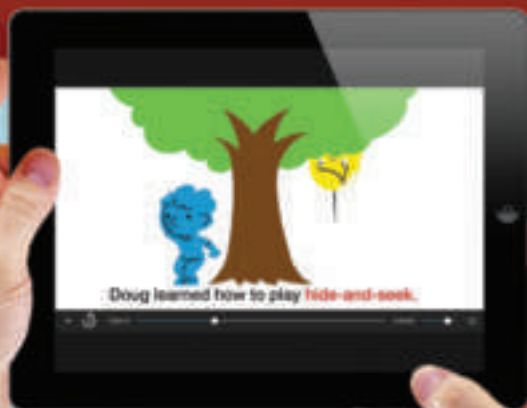
## A Nation's Hope

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including “Daniel Visits School / Daniel Visits the Doctor,” which discuss fears and outline activities to help little ones feel at ease; “Daniel Shares His Tigertastic Car / Katerina Shares Her Tutu,” and “Good Morning, Daniel / Goodnight, Daniel” (on morning and evening routines), this interactive preschool series also features extras including printable activities and coloring pages. Recommended. Aud: K, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

## Dragons: Defenders of Berk, Part 1

★★★

(2014) 2 discs. 220 min. DVD: \$19.98. Fox Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Featuring 10 animated episodes from the 2013-14 second season (see review of *Dragons: Riders of Berk, Part 1* in VL-11/13), this continuation of characters from the DreamWorks movie and book series *How to Train Your Dragon* (by British author Cressida Cowell) picks up following a battle against the villainous Alvin the Treacherous (Mark Hamill), who has learned how to train dragons himself. In “Live and Let Fly,” Hiccup risks his chief father’s wrath when he disobeys the village ban on dragon flying and starts a secret training society. Fears over Alvin and his Outcasts continue in “Race to Fireworm Island,” in which Hiccup’s cousin Snotlout takes his training too seriously, wearing out his dragon Hookfang and causing the group to search the titular island in order to help reignite the creature’s flaming abilities. Also including “Fright of Passage” (fiery Astrid works to clear her family name and discover the secret behind an incandescent ghostly creature that emits a paralyzing mist) and—the first in a two-parter—“A View to a Skrill” (centering on a mythical lightning-powered dragon who is coveted by the evil Dagur the Deranged, voiced by David Faustino), bonus features include additional featurettes. A solid addition to the popular series, this is recommended. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

## Drawing with Mark: Good to Grow / Life on the Farm ★★★½

(2014) 60 min. DVD: \$14.98. Shelter Island/TDC (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-939517-14-2.

Former Disney cartoonist Mark Marderosian guides young artists through a series of farm-related drawings in this two-episode compilation from his Parents’ Choice Award-winning series. “Life on the Farm” and “Good to Grow” both begin with a visit to Smolak Farms in Massachusetts, where Marderosian gets a feel for his artistic subjects—in this case, learning about planting, and meeting animals such as Judy the cow. Then Marderosian heads for his animated attic, where—accompanied by one of his



## Justin Time: Goes Exploring! ★★★½

(2013) 92 min. DVD: \$12.95. Cinedigm Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Aired on the preschool-friendly Sprout network, this compilation features four two-story episodes from the Emmy-nominated Canadian animated series following imaginative 6-year-old Justin and his shape-shifting orange clay creature sidekick Squidgy. Each segment finds Justin and Squidgy enjoying some real-world activity before (often nonsensically) segueing into alternate worlds where the pair generally meet up with school-aged friend Olive. In “It’s a Viking Thing,” Justin is disappointed when a thunderstorm wrecks camping plans with his dad, but he is able to help Bjorn and his brothers dodge Beasties and search for new land on a purple Viking ship. In “Follow Those Chickens,” Olive is worried when her three birds go missing and the trio travel through the Aussie outback to track them down, running across native animals including platypus, emu, and kangaroo (luckily, Squidgy can translate their respective languages). “The Pancake Express” train trip uses problem solving to help the gang get a batch of maple syrup to Flapjack Falls in a timely fashion, and “The Big Stone Circle” looks at the importance of following instructions instead of taking shortcuts. Also including “You Forgot to Say Arrgh / The Sultan’s Wish” and “Blast Off / Up, Up and Away,” this colorful high-energy series is lots of fun and teaches deductive reasoning. Also newly available are *Justin Time: Amazing Adventures* and *Justin Time: Far Away Friends*. Highly recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

flying-animal characters—he begins the drawing lesson, breaking each picture down to its basics, showing how images are made of ovals, triangles, and other familiar shapes. Marderosian starts with a simple image, such as an animal or flowers, before progressing to more complex scenes, such as a barn with a horse peeking out of the window. In addition to conveying the basic building blocks of illustration, Marderosian shares tips for refining technique and adding interesting shadings. DVD extras include a simple how-to guide for making a horse puppet out of construction paper and a more advanced lesson on adding details to one of the featured drawings. Marderosian is a friendly, encouraging host who serves up straightforward, easy-to-follow instructions (that make for surprisingly sophisticated results) in this program that is sure to inspire creativity in children of elementary school age and beyond. Also newly available is *Drawing with Mark: Something Fishy / A Day at the Aquarium*. Recommended. Aud: E, I, P. (K. Cruver)

## Elmo’s World: All About Animals ★★★

(2014) 137 min. DVD: \$14.98. Warner Home Video (avail. from most distributors).

This imaginative compilation featuring 4-year-old Muppet monster Elmo continues the standard *Elmo’s World* format, combining puppetry, animation, real-life footage, and silly asides from other *Sesame Street* characters, while exploring various types of animals. “Frogs,” for instance, features a leapfrog game with Mr. Noodle, an interactive segment on where frogs live, a young person’s visit to the frog exhibit at the American Museum of Natural History, and an animated look

at the frog lifecycle. *All About Animals* also includes segments on fish, cats, dogs, wild animals, horses, birds, and penguins. Bonus features include a downloadable activity book. Recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

## The Flintstone Kids: Rockin’ in Bedrock

★★★

(1986) 2 discs. 239 min. DVD: \$19.98. Warner Home Video (avail. from most distributors).

A little-remembered ABC-TV spin-off of Hanna Barbera’s classic *Flintstones* TV cartoon series, *The Flintstone Kids* lasted only a season and a half (1986-88), but the 10 episodes selected here for this compilation are reasonably entertaining. The show revisits the Bedrock of Fred Flintstone’s boyhood, with child versions of Fred, Barney Rubble, and future wives Betty and Wilma (Wilma’s maiden name: Slaghoople). Looking past the campy 1980s tropes (prehistoric exercise-routine leg warmers! Stone-age Walkmen!), the scripts are actually a bit more sophisticated than the 1960s original—the canned laugh track is jettisoned, and the boy “Freddy” sometimes seems smarter than the adult version. Voiceover actor Henry Corden does double duty: not only serving up a convincing Alan Reed mimicry as Freddy’s inventor-father, but also voicing Fred’s mother (voiceover drag?). Mel Blanc encoed as both Dino and Barney Rubble’s car-salesman father, and there was even some crossover with Hanna Barbera’s ultrasilly Saturday-morning superhero Captain Caveman. Missing from this set, however, is the Reagan-era 1988 primetime special, “The Flintstone Kids ‘Just Say No.’” Recommended. Aud: P. (C. Cassidy)

## Geronimo Stilton: Intrigue on the Rodent Express ★★★

(2009) 96 min. DVD: \$12.98. Entertainment One (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned. ISBN: 1-4172-4174-8.

New Mouse City investigative reporter, editor of *The Rodent's Gazette*, and bestselling author Geronimo Stilton solves mysteries in this lavishly animated series based on the popular books from Scholastic (penned by Stilton). Spouting "cheddarific" puns about cheese, the intrepid rodent stars in four spoofs of spy and detective flicks: "Intrigue on the Rodent Express," "The Mummy With No Name," "The Mask of the Rat-Jitsu," and "Starring Geronimo." Grown-ups will recognize similarities in the plots to famous heist movies and Agatha Christie tales. Traveling around the world as he seeks out the next big scoop, Stilton is helped by his younger sister, Thea; nephew Benjamin; Aunt Sweetfur; and, for comic relief, bumbling cousin Trap. Good fun for elementary-age children, this is recommended. Aud: P. (K. Cruver)

## League of Super Evil: Season 1, Volume 1 ★★★

(2013) 2 discs. 286 min. DVD: \$19.95. Cinedigm (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Before the arrival of the arch-villain

CGI-animated movie spoofs *Despicable Me* and *Megamind*, this 2009 Canadian TV show mined similar thematic territory in standard 2D cartoon format. Set in a futuristic community full of good guys and bad guys, the series centers on the maladroitness of the League of Super Evil (LOSE). LOSE is headed by pint-sized Voltar, a masked marauder whose schemes and antics are aptly small-scale—such as masquerading as a substitute teacher, trying to win a pet show with reptilian companion-creature Doomageddon, steaming while lunkhead sidekick Red Menace unexpectedly becomes a music star, or taking another supervillain's giant mecha suit for a joyride (a bit that includes an amusing parody of the Power Rangers; another segment cleverly sends up Kubrick's *HAL 9000*). The show offers no character-building moral lessons, just mischievous rainy-day comedy for kids in the 13 entertaining episodes compiled here. Recommended. Aud: P. (C. Cassidy)

## Martha Speaks: Puppies! Puppies! Puppies! ★★½

(2013) 75 min. DVD: \$9.99. PBS Video (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-991-9.

Based on the book series by Susan Med-

daugh, this compilation from the PBS Kids series follows titular canine Martha, who can speak, thanks to some special alphabet soup she eats. Featuring various vocabulary words—with recaps at the end to help with retention—*Martha Speaks* serves up fairly bland dog-centered stories in episodes that include "Puppy Skits," which centers on non-talking family dog Skits, who a friend believes came from a time-traveling expedition; and "Dinosaurs in Trouble!," in which Martha becomes excited about the big bones in the museum, while the rest of the gang tries to raise funds to keep the fossil room open. Other segments include "The Puppy Tooth Fairy," "Martha's Blue Period," "Martha's Puppy" (in which she trains youngest family member Jake in the ways of dogs), and "The Cheating Chum Caper" ("tween owner Helen thinks a friend has a mysterious secret...which coincides with Martha also acting strange). Extras include printable coloring pages and activities. A strong optional purchase. Aud: K, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

## Moonday ★★★

(2013) 6 min. DVD: \$38.99. Dreamscape Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-933938-94-3.

Narrated by Susie Berneis, this adaptation of author and illustrator Adam Rex's 2013



# Children's Classics

				
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fanciful picture book centers on a young girl who—from the backseat of the family car—sees the moon following her during a nighttime drive. But this moon really does follow the girl; the next morning, it is literally in her backyard. At first excited to explore the craters and crevices (“from Dad’s shoulders, I brushed the moon with my fingertips”), the girl and the rest of the townspeople are quickly adversely affected by the moon settling in such an unlikely place, as without sunlight everyone must drudge around in sleepy darkness. While the family initially resorts to hiding the moon under blankets and tablecloths, more troubles surface (the tide comes in the backyard, and neighborhood dogs cluster around the fence), so our young protagonist must think of a solution. A whimsical story that is handsomely illustrated, this is recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

### **Poppety in the Fall ★★½**

(2012) 27 min. DVD: \$129. National Film Board of Canada. PPR.

One of a quartet of seasonally-based animated shorts featuring forest animals and an abandoned boy named Léon who has been adopted by bears, *Poppety in the Fall* focuses on the titular hedgehog, who narrates a strange tale about a blight that settles over the kingdom after the storyteller Bonifacio makes the mistake of stealing a unicorn’s horn, thereby banishing all stories from the land (and his head is transformed into that of a wolf). The main plot thread involves a journey to the belly of the earth to rectify the situation and—in the process—save the life of the elderly king who is dying of boredom in the absence of stories. Along the way, Poppety is forced to admit his love for a female friend; a sensitive elephant is persuaded to adopt an orphaned fish; and the truth is finally revealed about Léon’s real family. The stop-motion animation

in this French-Canadian production from Pierre-Luc Granjon and Antoine Lanciaux is attractive, and it certainly deserves credit for grappling with the subjects of death, parenthood, and the importance of imagination. But many youngsters will likely find it too strange to relate to. The other titles in the series are: *Bonifacio in Summertime*, *Leon in Wintertime* and *Molly in Springtime* (series price: \$399). Presented in both French and English versions, this should be considered a strong optional purchase. Aud: E, P. (F. Swietek)

### **A Sea Turtle Story ★★★**

(2012) 10 min. DVD: \$99. National Film Board of Canada. PPR.

Writer and director Kathy Shultz’s realistic stop-motion animated short eschews narration while chronicling scenes in the life of the endangered sea turtle. Witnessed against a backdrop of sparkling sand on a moonlit night, a mother turtle drops and covers her eggs, topping them with a teardrop. When the babies hatch, various predators on hand—including a creepy lizard, a crab, a vicious-looking bird, and a shark—mean that not every hatchling makes it to the water safely. Featuring brilliant tropical blues and pinks during the day, as well as detailed underwater scenes, the cyclical and dreamlike *A Sea Turtle Story* is a 2014 ALA-ALSC Notable Children’s Video selection. Recommended. Aud: E, I, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

### **Sesame Street: Be a Good Sport**

★★★½

(2014) 124 min. DVD: \$14.98. Warner Home Video (avail. from most distributors).

This fun compilation from the long-running popular educational series includes two episodes. “The Good Sport” finds Elmo becoming much too competitive while playing “hot potato” (he’s also quite

silly in a *Rocky*-ish training montage with Tully), Abby Cadabby judging a chicken-calling contest (featuring Los Angeles Clipper Blake Griffin), a segment from the computer-animated “Abby’s Flying Fairy School,” and the *Elmo: The Musical* segment “Athletes” (reviewed in VL-7/13). Also from *Elmo: The Musical*, “Sea Captain” shows up at the close of the second episode “Practice Makes Proud,” in which Abby goes above and beyond to help Elmo by using her magic so he can score meaningless victory baskets. Other segments include actor Timothy Olyphant and a bunch of fairytale characters discussing pride, a “Belly Breathe” song (with Elmo, rapper Common, and pop singer Colbie Caillat), a sweet Muppet ditty about naturally curly hair, and skits with Super Grover and The Count. Also including the bonus segment “The Worm Games,” and activity pages, this is highly recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

### **VeggieTales: Veggies in Space—The Fennel Frontier ★★★**

(2013) 45 min. DVD: \$14.98. Big Idea Productions (avail. from most distributors).

Obviously inspired by *Star Trek*, this new *VeggieTales* animated adventure built around the theme of sharing finds familiar characters Larry the Cucumber and Bob the Tomato starring in a tale about a galaxy-hopping starship and its commanding officers, Captain Cuke (Larry) and Mr. Spork (Bob). When the two heroes and their brave crew take on an aggressor, they are hampered by an inability to share—not just the small stuff such as food or straws, but essentials necessary to get the job done, including tools. The lesson for young viewers is clear: everyone benefits from cooperation and sharing. Also “starring” Mr. Lunt, Junior Asparagus, and Madame Blueberry, the story is full of cute and funny references to *Trek* lore, as well as *Doctor Who* and the space-horror classic *Alien* (the latter might go over the heads of youngsters, but will be fun for older viewers). Recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

### **Winx Club: The Complete Original Season 1 ★★½**

(2014) 4 discs. 570 min. DVD: \$24.95. Cinedigm Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

This precursor to the flashier current franchise (reviewed in VL-11/12 and VL-11/13) includes the 26-episode English-dubbed version of the 2004 first season of the Italian animated series. “An Unexpected Event” introduces viewers to red-haired 16-year-old Bloom, whose boredom at the prospect of facing another summer in the town of Gardenia disappears when she comes across an ogre attacking fairy princess Stella and subsequently discovers

### **Lemonade in Winter ★★★½**

(2013) 12 min. DVD: \$59.95 (study guide included). Weston Woods Studios. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 0-545-62374-X.

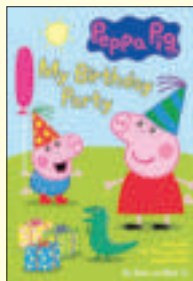
Based on the 2012 picture book by author Emily Jenkins and illustrator G. Brian Karas, this animated adaptation from Soup-2Nuts is narrated by Rebecca Soler. Young Pauline hopes to add spice to an icy winter day, excitedly coming up with an idea for a stand to sell lemonade, limeade, and naturally, lemon-limeade. Enlisting the help of little brother John-John—and brushing aside her discouraging parents’ qualms about the unlikelihood of people stopping for a cool drink in freezing weather—Pauline collects enough money to buy fruit, sugar, and cups. All bundled up on an empty street, the enterprising duo employ various advertising techniques to draw customers...with mixed results. Focusing on money-related math principles, the sweet and silly *Lemonade in Winter* (“You kids are crazy! You know that, right?”) also features a read-along option and a bonus segment in which Pauline explains money to John-John. A 2014 ALA-ALSC Notable Children’s Video selection, this is highly recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)



### Peppa Pig: My Birthday Party ★★½

(2014) 80 min. DVD: \$14.98. Entertainment One (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4172-4185-3.

Giggly and polite young Peppa and her porcine family are back in this latest collection of 12 stories from the BAFTA-winning animated series, aired stateside on Nick Jr. The titular segment finds Peppa waking at 5 a.m., anxious to celebrate her special day, and getting ready for a party and magic show by "The Amazing Mysterio" (aka Daddy Pig). "School Play" stars Peppa in the lead role of Little Red Riding Hood, as she and the other animal children practice at home and perform in front of overbearing but endearingly excited family members. Also featuring "Grandpa Pig's Boat," "Grandpa's Little Train," "At the Beach (where Peppa and sweet little brother George wear sun cream and water wings, and bury Daddy in the sand), and more, bonus episodes include "Frogs and Worms and Butterflies," and "Cleaning the Car" (everyone pitches in to ready the filthy car for a drive in the country, but "naughty Mummy" Pig gets it muddy all over again). Also including "Learn the Alphabet" and "Learn to Count" segments, this fun compilation is highly recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)



her own magical powers. Stella convinces Bloom and her human parents that Bloom should head to the whimsical realm of Magix and start attending school at the Alfea college. Along the way, the girls meet up with some hot boy warrior Specialists, and the ogre shows back up looking for vengeance with a troll ("You dummy! You got beat by a cutesy blonde!"). "Welcome to Magic" chronicles Bloom's introduction to schooling; meeting her dorm mates Flora (who creates talking plants), smarty pants Techna, and tomboy Musa; coming across three villainous chicks from a rival school—the Trix; and forming the titular club (what does it mean? "Nothing...just Winx!"). Also featuring "Betrayed" (Bloom busts out some crazy powerful kick-butt magic after having disturbing dreams), "Bloom's Dark Secret" (she worries about ties to evil ancestors), and the season finale "The Witches' Downfall" (the Trix get what's coming to them), this inaugural season featuring anime-ish sparkly battle scenes, vapid teen angst troubles (a beauty contest, midterms, and boy drama), and midribs galore is an optional purchase. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

### Worlds Together: Cuba ★★★

(2013) 25 min. DVD: \$29.95 (teacher's guide included). Master Communications. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60480-157-6.

The latest entry in Elmer Hawkes' youth-oriented travelogues, *Cuba* focuses on the island nation located less than 100 miles from Florida, serving up numerous historical and geographical facts against a backdrop of colorful visuals, beginning with the country's agricultural successes: sugar plantations, tropical fruits, and many farms. But there is much more to Cuba's vibrant life, including good theatre, an abundance of festivals, a unique cuisine, and homegrown music genres. Havana is one of the oldest cities in the Americas, and is home to an emerging

bio-tech industry and regularly hosts film production. The street culture here is especially lively, where dining on the fare of outdoor vendors is the norm and the sound of Spanish guitar blended with African rhythms provides an ongoing urban soundtrack. Cuba boasts free healthcare, a solid education system, and busy churches, although not everything in the country is peachy (the narration alludes to news blackouts, food shortages, and a flimsy power grid). Combining insightful looks at both city and country life (including a stop at the island's eastern coast, where hurricanes make farming more challenging), this is recommended. Aud: E, I, J, P. (T. Keogh)

## PSYCHOLOGY & SELF-HELP

### Listening is an Act of Love ★★½

(2013) 100 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-016-9.

This PBS-aided animated special features six narratives from the long-running StoryCorps nonprofit oral history project, presented in episodes animated by brothers Mike and Tim Rauch. The stories are heartfelt, heartwarming, and can even be hilarious despite the sometimes painful subject matter: a woman talks about coping with short-term memory loss, a man remembers painting his tennis shoes white as a child living in poverty, a grateful friend thanks his buddy for helping him emerge from homelessness and alcoholism, a feisty and reluctant grandmother shares stories from her childhood in China, a mom finally tells her son about the baby she gave up for adoption, and two adults fondly remember the stern church lady of their youth who made sure they went to Sunday school. Framing the collection is a conversation between StoryCorps founder Dave Isay and his 9-year-old nephew, Benji. DVD extras include bonus shorts, as well as interviews

with Isay and the Rauch brothers. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (F. Gardner)

### Talks About Nothing ★★½

(2013) 3 discs. 468 min. DVD: \$59.99. Athena (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62172-142-0.

Those with a passion for online TED Talks and/or a high tolerance for brainy nebulous conversation may find this series of cerebral discussions between seemingly random personalities an interesting diversion. Everyone else will likely be bored to death by the lugubrious droning here that proudly (!) claims to be about nothing. New York's Rubin Museum of Art hosted these 2010-11 programs that have been edited into 10 "episodes" pairing recognizable figures such as neurologist Oliver Sacks, filmmaker Ken Burns, actor Brian Cox, performance artist Laurie Anderson, and other cognoscenti darlings with less identifiable authorities from the worlds of science, spirituality, publishing, and the arts. Onstage in easy chairs, the conversationalists casually chew over topics that are very far from nothing—Shakespeare, Buddhism, philosophy, child development, meditation—but too often meander into aimless tangents. Granted, there are moments of engaging exchange here between smart cookies who are thought-provoking; mostly, however, the wall of verbiage turns into an endurance test (or prescription for insomnia). Another big drawback is the poor sound and image quality (these feel like extended YouTube clips). DVD extras include a booklet with a timeline, participant profiles, and more. An optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (T. Fry)

### The United States of Autism ★★★

(2013) 90 min. DVD: \$24.95. The Tommy Foundation (dist. by Janson Media).

Made with a \$50,000 grant from Pepsi, filmmaker Richard Everts' *The United States of Autism* tours America, interviewing families with children who are autistic or have Asperger's syndrome—two disorders exhibiting symptoms that include difficulties in communication and interaction, as well as repetitive patterns of behavior and interests. A Puerto Rican family who immigrated to the U.S.—and barely speak English—uprooted themselves because the parents thought their child would receive better services in America (speaking openly, the parents describe the impossibility of doing anything in public with their autistic son). Viewers also meet an autistic adolescent who serves as an advocate for his peers, parents of a boy with Asperger's who say it's just better to let him be himself, and a young man who claims he outgrew his autism and now speaks to groups about his experience. The documentary also covers volunteer organizations that work with autistic kids and examines the difficulties of educating a child with autism or Asperger's in the public school system. Over the course of

### Embracing Dyslexia ★★½

(2013) 50 min. DVD: \$19.95. Luis Macias (dist. by Janson Media). ISBN: 978-1-56839-481-7.

This heartbreaking documentary presents the stories of numerous adults who say they were mistreated, belittled, overlooked, and ultimately shoved aside in the education system (and often at home) because of their dyslexia. Clarifying that dyslexia is not about seeing words backwards on a page (the popular myth), filmmaker Luis Macias' *Embracing Dyslexia* introduces viewers to many intelligent adults who survived humiliation and a truncated education because of a neurological disorder, one that is often misinterpreted by educators and some parents as a sign of laziness and weakness, resulting in punishment and even exile to a trade school, sometimes despite high intellectual capabilities. The testimony by dyslexic adults here is consistently sad, as they recount stories of childhood punishment and being dismissed as merely stupid, after which they learned to keep their heads down and tried to remain invisible at home and school. Fortunately, the documentary also offers promising news about fresh research and progressive programs at some schools, along with a host of emerging experts who can teach coping skills. Highly recommended. Aud: J, H, C, P. (T. Keogh)



an 11,000-mile, 40-day journey, Everts—who has an autistic son—hears a wide array of opinions from a multicultural group of people, who also offer helpful advice. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

## RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

### 400 Miles to Freedom ★★★

(2012) 60 min. In English & Hebrew w/English subtitles. DVD: \$100; public libraries & high schools; \$350 w/PPR: colleges & universities. Seventh Art Releasing.

Married co-directors Shari Rothfarb and Avishai Mekonen explore the exodus of Jews from Ethiopia to Israel through the story of Mekonen's personal experience (Rothfarb, who is American, traces her Jewish heritage back to Russia, Poland, Egypt, and Palestine). Surrounded by Christians and Muslims, Mekonen grew up feeling like an outsider, even though his roots go back 2,500 years. When a dictatorship came to power in the 1970s, after which it was dangerous to practice Judaism, his family made plans to relocate to Jerusalem along with 12,000 other Beta Israel followers. En route to Sudan, 4,000 died from starvation and malaria, while Sudanese traffickers kidnapped 10-year-old Mekonen. Rescued by a kindly stranger (with whom he reconnects here), the incident continues to haunt Mekonen. In 1984, he and 8,000 others were flown to Israel as part of "Operation Moses." It was the first time Mekonen's mother had seen white people, although she notes that, "We quickly became Israeli in almost every way." Over the years, Mekonen—who now lives in New York—would meet people who were surprised that he was Jewish, and he speaks with other black believers, such as American philosophy professor Lewis Gordon (who always felt welcome in Jamaica), and

Ugandan Rabbi Gershom Sizomu (who felt less comfortable in Kenya). Mekonen's Cuban-born rabbi, Manny Viñas, also discusses the migration of Jews to Latin America, while Angela Buchdal talks about her efforts to reconcile her Korean heritage with her rabbinical practice. Although Mekonen's first-person recollections might have worked better as a standalone film, there is value here in all of the stories told. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

### American Jesus ★★★

(2014) 75 min. DVD: \$19.98. Shelter Island/TDC (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-939517-22-7.

Actor Larry Fessenden co-produced this fascinating look at peculiar mutations and iterations of Christianity in the modern United States, focusing on strange examples of "American exceptionalism." Specialty churches and ministries target cowboys, bikers, surfers, and even strippers and porn addicts. Evangelicals have arisen from drug dealers, standup comics, snake handlers, indie rockers, and TV's *Power Rangers*. Billy Talen, who sermonizes against corporate-consumerism with the persona of a fiery preacher—"The Reverend Billy" (subject of more than one documentary all by himself)—appears here, underscoring how religion changed to cope with an increasingly commercial marketplace, grabbing for niche disciples after children stopped automatically adopting their parents' faiths. This is not necessarily a good thing, and filmmaker Aram Garriga's tone grows alarmist at midpoint, as journalists and apostates (chiefly writer-artist-filmmaker Frank Schaeffer Jr., son of a prominent "hippie" theologian) describe how evangelicals baptized themselves as Republican powerbrokers (the legalization of abortion being a motivating catalyst). Now, the charge goes, the WASP religious right promotes guns, science ignorance, Zionism, and

military extremism, hell bent on ushering in Armageddon as soon as possible. Authors interviewed besides Schaeffer include David Dark, Jason Boyett, and Mara Einstein. DVD extras include a "making-of" featurette and bonus interviews with more alt-Christians, including Joanne Cash, the C&W pastor-sister of Johnny Cash. Unquestionably biased (conservatives interviewed here only serve to illustrate the main points), this is nevertheless a thought-provoking documentary. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

### Corrie ten Boom: A Faith Undefeated

★★★½

(2013) 55 min. DVD: \$19.99. Christian History Institute (dist. by Vision Video).

This engrossing documentary tells the story of Cornelia "Corrie" ten Boom, a Dutch Christian who helped keep a number of Jews alive during the Nazi occupation. Raised in Haarlem in the Netherlands, Corrie was unlucky in love as a young woman and chose to channel her energies into aiding others, along with her father and siblings, especially her sister Betsie. With the coming of the Germans in 1940, Corrie's commitment to service and her faith were put to a severe test, one that she and her family met with determination and courage. Hiding Jewish refugees in their large home, the ten Booms were ultimately found out and made to suffer terrible consequences: Corrie and Betsie were sent to three different prison camps, the last at the Ravensbrück concentration camp in Germany, where Betsie died and Corrie barely survived, ultimately released due to a clerical error. Throughout, Corrie's Christian faith and her hidden Bible kept her from losing all hope, and with the war's end she became an author, public speaker, benefactor, and symbol of love and forgiveness. This powerful and dynamic biographical portrait features moving audio clips of Corrie speaking to an audience about her world view and life experiences. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

### The Shortest Way Home: C.S. Lewis and Mere Christianity ★★★

(2013) 56 min. DVD: \$19.99. Ensign Media (dist. by Vision Video).

This intellectually challenging documentary centers on a collection of writings by theologian and author C.S. Lewis about concepts that unite all Christians. During World War II, Lewis was invited to present a series of talks on BBC Radio about faith. He took the assignment as an opportunity to unite Christians of all denominations in a common understanding of such essential principles as forgiveness and repentance. One of Lewis's most popular books, *Mere Christianity*, was born from these lectures, a series of essays that reflect Lewis's own transition from atheist to believer. Certainly Lewis's most persuasive observation—as described and

clarified by a number of experts interviewed here—was that Nazi aggression was universally condemned by people of all religious or humanist beliefs. This suggested to Lewis—who also penned the popular *Chronicles of Narnia* series—the strong possibility of an absolute and ubiquitous moral law that was as firm as any law of nature, which pointed towards a guiding power instilling everyone with a sense of right and wrong. That power was God, Lewis said, and from there *Mere Christianity* went on to make logical arguments for Christ's status as the Son of God, the existence of the Holy Trinity, and Jesus' death providing salvation for humanity. A solid overview of Lewis's epiphany regarding moral law, and his argument that God gives humans free will so they can choose to find their way to goodness, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

### Yangsi ★★★

(2013) 79 min. DVD: \$149 (\$229 w/PPR). Kino Lorber Edu.

Mark Elliott's intriguing documentary follows the upbringing of a child named Jigme Lhundrup, who was recognized as the Tibetan Buddhist reincarnation—or Yangsi—of master Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, a man regarded by the Dalai Lama as one of his most important spiritual instructors. The chronological footage here extends from 1995, when the 4-year-old boy was first taken into the care of a disciple of Rinpoche, up through 2009, when a series of examinations determined that the 18-year-old was ready to assume his predecessor's role. Narration is provided by Lhundrup, a gregarious, smiling young man who enjoys a game of basketball with his fellow monks, as well as meditation (Lhundrup describes himself as a sometimes

difficult youngster who often shirked his schoolwork but eventually became a devoted student of the traditional monastic texts). *Yangsi* culminates in Lhundrup's emergence as a teacher during a tour of Europe and the United States, where he offers instruction that is notable for its humility and directness. One needn't accept the Buddhist concept of reincarnation to appreciate the "Yangsi," an amiable figure who will serve as a fine spokesman for the spiritual tradition he has spent so many years studying. A charming portrait, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

## SOCIAL & POLITICAL ISSUES

### The Black Fatherhood Project ★★★

(2013) 73 min. DVD: \$89: high schools & public libraries; \$195: colleges & universities. The Video Project. PPR. Closed captioned.

Filmmaker Jordan Thierry notes that he was different from many of his African American friends because he grew up in a two-parent household. Nationwide, 67 percent of black children live in single-parent homes, with the father being the absent adult in most cases. Thierry divides this study of African American family issues into two parts: the first, relying largely on vintage photographs and expert commentary, offers an in-depth consideration of how slavery and the Jim Crow era brought chaos and, frequently, violence to those who were victimized; the second section opens the microphones to a diverse group of African American men who speak frankly about their childhoods and the value system within contemporary black society. To his credit, Thierry offers a mature presentation of a topic that is often treated as a taboo

by mainstream media, elected officials, and civil rights leaders. And while one could easily question whether too much time here is spent trying to link current woes to situations from an increasingly distant past, *The Black Fatherhood Project* honestly addresses a significant social problem in contemporary America. Presented in both its full-length version and a 53-minute abridged edition, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

### Danchi No Yume: Dreams of the Projects

★★★

(2013) 78 min. In Japanese w/English subtitles. DVD: \$24.95 (\$150 w/PPR). Microcinema International. PPR. Closed captioned.

Kyoto rapper Kenta Kitaoka, who goes by the name of "Anarchy," takes center stage in this documentary that examines poverty and hip-hop culture in Japan. Anarchy, who grew up in the Mukaijima Projects, started rapping at home. As his surprised but supportive father Lucky—a rock singer and tattoo artist—recalls, "he just started talking to himself" (Anarchy sports almost as much ink as his father). When his wife abandoned the family, Lucky stepped up to raise Anarchy and his sisters. The rapper's lyrics recount these incidents, and his relatable stories have helped him attract a following and secure a deal with R-Rated Records, although he's hardly rich. Anarchy's friends in the four-piece outfit Ruff Neck grew up in the same neighborhood. As a kid, Ruff Neck member Young Bery believed he had only two choices: to become a thug or to conform. His colleague, Naughty, also notes the high rates of drug addiction in the area. Both musicians feel that hip-hop offered them a way out. Granted, they drink and smoke, but things could always be worse; in Anarchy's case, he wound up doing time for theft, but wants to set a better example in the future. As Lucky puts it, "He turns his obstacles into weapons." Anarchy eventually becomes an established artist with a fancy car, but doesn't leave Mukaijima—either because he can't afford fancier digs or because he would prefer to remain with family and friends. DVD extras include bonus interviews, music performances, and deleted scenes. An intriguing look at hip-hop life in the Land of the Rising Sun, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

### Single Creek ★★★1/2

(2013) 53 min. DVD: \$19.95. Lifestreams Media (dist. by Vision Video).

The title of Chris Lang's documentary may be unintentionally funny—many of the interviewees here must feel that they're "up a creek" when it comes to the social conventions of Christianity, which (as depicted here) doesn't have a strong handle on how to include and involve single adults within the church. Christianity tends to be more family-oriented, but for believers who aren't hitched (including those who are unmarried, divorced, widowed, or celibate), the religious experience can be difficult, especially when efforts at organizing groups can result in feeling even further isolated within the community. The interviewees here are smart, funny, attractive, and articulate in describing the awkwardness of activities designed to serve them. Probably the most amusing and heartbreaking moments come when they describe the "meet market" (note the spelling) of the typical singles ministry, which include: retreats composed of mostly women and "that one guy"; speed-dating events that pair people in their 30s with people in their 70s or 80s; and the dreaded but well-meaning offer to "fix you up with one of my friends" who might have a Christian faith in common—but little else. Observations from authors and speakers well-versed on the subject are interspersed throughout this helpful and humorous guidance program that also will surely give non-single churchgoers better insight into their solo counterparts. DVD extras include an audio commentary and a music video. Highly recommended. Aud: P. (C. Block)



### Downtown Dream ★★★

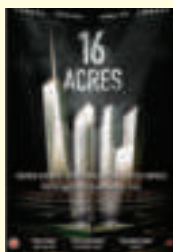
(2013) 45 min. DVD: \$348. Icarus Films. PPR. Closed captioned.

Filmmaker Aaron Matthews' *Downtown Dream* offers a disturbing yet also inspiring documentary portrait of a dying city and a struggle over its salvation—speaking to the larger plight of urban centers that have lost their vitality with the vanishing of traditional manufacturing jobs. The city under the microscope here is Lewiston, PA, once the home of Standard Steel and other large factories. With the migration of those jobs

### 16 Acres ★★½

(2012) 95 min. DVD: \$24.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

All of New York City united in grief right after 9/11, but when the time came to resurrect the Ground Zero site of the destroyed World Trade Center complex, unseemly squabbling quickly ensued. Lease-holder Larry Silverstein, here perceived as a greedy developer (had to be, says one interviewee, since locals didn't know any other kind), needed a big insurance payout and a commercial structure to supplant billions in lost revenue, so out went any thoughts of solemn green space. Architectural competitions jubilantly announced winners for skyscraper and memorial designs, which were then arbitrarily scrapped/revise on the whims of top officials and Gov. George Pataki ("winning" architect Daniel Libeskind, son of Holocaust survivors, remained as a convenient figurehead). Another pressure group, families of FDNY casualties, also demanded their say, citing the Oklahoma City bombing as their precedent. Filmmaker Richard Hankin's *16 Acres* serves up a riveting and gossipy slice of recent history and special-interest civics, a tale that would even be funny were it not for the monumentally tragic trigger event. Besides Pataki, Libeskind, and Michael Bloomberg, the film also features pithy input from authors/scenesters Philip Nobel and Scott Raab. And the optimistic conclusion? Business and power games as usual meant that New York had indeed returned to normal. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassady)



overseas during the last 30 years, Lewiston now looks like a ghost town: images capture shuttered businesses, homeowners auctioning possessions and property, buildings in decay and disrepair, and dispirited people drooped on benches and stairs. The search for an answer preoccupies council meetings, church gatherings, and town hall discussions, but the visions for a future rebound are in competition. On one hand, a longtime developer advocates redesigning downtown to look more appealing to business owners and shoppers; on the other, a strong-willed minister believes that nostalgia for the days when Lewiston looked better is irrelevant, given the desperate need for jobs. In the end, the answer turns out to be a blend of both approaches, but it's the journey toward that shared truth that proves to be compelling here. Many details will linger in the memory of viewers, ranging from a haunting collection of postcards illustrating Lewiston's changing exterior over the decades, to a Walmart opening that resembles an ecstatic church service. A thought-provoking look at urban struggles in a depressed global economy, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

### In the Shadow of the Sun ★★½

(2013) 85 min. DVD: \$99.95; public libraries; \$350: colleges & universities. The Cinema Guild. PPR. ISBN: 0-7815-1452-5.

Harry Freeland's troubling documentary focuses on a lesser-known skin-color tragedy being played out in black Africa—namely, the plight of albinos, who have long been feared and treated as outcasts by tribal society (and sometimes killed). In recent years, however—particularly in areas of Tanzania, where the albino population is estimated at 170,000—native witch doctors have spread

the myth that albino body parts bring good fortune and harbor magic medicinal ingredients. As a result, albino graves are routinely disinterred, and the living dwell in fear of murder and/or dismemberment at the hands of desperate or greedy neighbors. Despite official government disapproval, albinos have essentially become refugees in their own land, living apart and attending segregated schools. Cameras follow albino activist Josephat Torner on a grassroots campaign across the countryside to educate the xenophobic and superstitious on the proper science of albinism. But many Tanzanian villagers remain less than sympathetic, while one unimpressed witch doctor declares that Torner's limbs will be a valuable commodity (during the course of the filming, an attempt is made to abduct Torner). The question of who is exactly profiting off the grisly limb trade remains a grim enigma, but one interviewee—a single-armed victim who survived being cut up—suspects that his father sold him out to attackers. A powerful film about a disturbing situation, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassady)

### IQ: A History of Deceit ★★½

(2011) 52 min. DVD: \$169.95. Films Media Group. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-61753-757-8.

IQ looks at the history of the famous—and often misused—so-called intelligence quotient test, the appeal of which has always been its simplicity in reducing one's smarts to a single number. After opening with clips from a MENSA convention—an organization whose members are admitted solely on the basis of IQ—the film travels back to the early 1900s in France, where Alfred Binet designed a scale to measure the mental ages of children. That original concept remains popu-

lar—the Stanford-Binet version used today is an American adaptation of the French prototype—but such assessment tools have often been administered unfairly, as exemplified by practices at Ellis Island, where exhausted, frightened immigrants with little education or grasp of English were given written examinations. In the 1930s, Americans fearful of immigration embraced theories of eugenics and predetermined intelligence, which supposedly could be ascertained using just paper and pencil. Also covered here are Cyril Burt's early 20th-century claims that intelligence is inherited (an assertion "proved" in studies that Burt faked); eugenicist William Shockley's arguments in the 1970s that less intelligent people were having too many children, leading to a general drop in IQ among Americans; and the controversial 1994 book *The Bell Curve*, which suggested racial differences in intelligence (co-author Charles Murray appears here to defend his views). Also noted is the fact that claims of the immutability of intelligence have been used to support funding cuts for educational and social programs. Serving up an informative and thought-provoking history of the IQ concept, this is highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (M. Puffer-Rothenberg)

### It's Better to Jump ★★★

(2014) 73 min. In English & Arabic w/English subtitles. DVD: \$19.95. Cinema Libre Studio (avail. from most distributors).

This spirited documentary masks—though only slightly—a heavy heart felt by many Arab people living in the ancient walled city of Acre (or, as referred to in this film, Akka) on the coast of northern Israel. A cosmopolitan, ancient destination site that does not experience the daily hardships endured by Palestinians, Akka was once a seat of power and today enjoys relative harmony between Muslims, Christians, Jews, and Bahá'í all sharing the same urban space. It's a city where many generations of Arab families have lived, worked, and thrived, guarded by a formidable sea wall first built during the Crusades. But the shadow hanging over Akka's prosperity and multicultural success has been—and still remains—a concerted effort to gentrify the city. Investors are trying (and often succeeding) to buy up family-owned land and businesses in order to slowly transition Akka into an exclusive tourist resort. Directed by filmmakers Gina M. Angelone, Mouna B. Stewart, and Patrick A. Stewart, *It's Better to Jump* does serve up a grim account of the fate of Palestinians following the 1948 establishment of the state of Israel, but it also makes the point that Arab culture can be dismantled in other ways besides violence and repression. Akka residents express fear that their collective identity and heritage is being trampled under economic progress (for some). Based on what we see here, it's hard to argue with that assertion. DVD extras

include bonus interviews. Recommended.  
Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

### Janeane from Des Moines ★★★

(2012) 78 min. DVD: \$100: high schools & public libraries; \$250: colleges & universities. Good Docs (avail. from [www.gooddocs.net](http://www.gooddocs.net)). PPR.

Filmmaker Grace Lee's *Janeane from Des Moines* is built around a Borat-type media hoax, although one that is more subtle and is not played for laughs. Janeane Wilson (actually actress/co-writer Jane Edith Wilson) is introduced as a non-caricatured Christian-activist Republican in Iowa, who is unhappy with where the Democrat White House is taking the nation. Prior to the 2012 presidential elections, "Janeane"—in character as a middle-aged Des Moines health-care worker—attends Tea Party gatherings, faith-based financial seminars, and rallies and speeches given by Rick Perry, Herman Cain, Mitt Romney, Michele Bachmann, and Newt Gingrich. She searches for candidates who aren't "elites" with nothing in common with ordinary folk; meanwhile layoffs, medical-coverage loss, and (gay) infidelity destroy the heroine's fragile "covenant" marriage and home life. A mix of actual news footage (unflattering to the GOP) and invented drama may understandably have some viewers crying foul (where is the mockumentary showing a fervent Democrat suffering under Obama policies?), but the point made here about Washington leaders being detached and distant from downtrodden Americans is a sharp one. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

### Jealous of the Birds ★★★1/2

(2011) 78 min. In English & German w/English subtitles. DVD: \$79: public libraries; \$295 w/PPR: colleges & universities. Seventh Art Releasing.

Family history expands into a broader sociological investigation in Jordan Bahat's powerful documentary about Holocaust survivors who chose to live in Germany after World War II, despite hostility from the majority population and not-so-gentle criticism from many Jewish thinkers. Bahat focuses on his grandparents, Stefan and Rusja Orlean, both of whom speak movingly but circumspectly about their wartime experiences, the decision to settle in Frankfurt, and a sense of isolation. Bahat also interviews other survivors and their descendants, discovering that the reasons for staying in Germany might be as simple as being unable to emigrate, or finding out that one's family had been wiped out. Compelling anecdotes highlight the estrangement that the Jews felt from the surrounding society—one girl visited a friend's home to find a photo of a man in an SS uniform on the wall, another was asked by a teacher to leave the class when the curriculum called for discussion of the Third Reich, and a third was singled out to read a poem about the Holocaust by a Jewish

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writer. Bahat also incorporates a recurrent scene of two elderly men playing chess in a park, one bearing a concentration-camp tattoo and the other an SS stamp. Yet, there are also uplifting stories here, including one about a wedding that brings an erstwhile German tank commander and his Russian counterpart together in mutual reconciliation. The title, incidentally, refers to Stefan's envy of the birds that could fly over the fences surrounding the camp where he was imprisoned. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

### Man for a Day ★★★

(2012) 59 min. DVD: \$390. Icarus Films. PPR.

Fascinating and insightful, filmmaker Katarina Peters' documentary *Man for a Day* centers on a group of German women who take instruction in how to experience the world as men do—by passing as men. Meeting periodically and guided by performance artist Diane Torr in sex roles and gender behavior, the participants are encouraged to become “detectives” in the real world, observing details of male behavior and body language on the street. In time, the women dress up as men and incorporate a variety of physical details, ranging from the way men take a step with a sense of ownership of the ground below them to a tendency not to nod and smile automatically. What these students learn is exactly why many men experience a greater sense of control and power than women do: the difference is not just an issue of fairness but rather of daily reinforcement of gender stereotypes through the most commonplace, assumption-based actions. *Man for a Day* is also full of laughs when the women make their costumed transition into

daily life, seeing the world anew. An offbeat, thought-provoking film about gender roles, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

### The Suzuki Diaries: Future City ★★★

(2013) 45 min. DVD: \$250. Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (dist. by Bullfrog Films). PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 1-93777-278-0.

In this episode from the CBC series *The Nature of Things*, septuagenarian scientist David Suzuki and his daughter Sarika travel across Canada to showcase projects that are making major cities more environmentally responsible, in an effort to convince viewers that sustainable urban renewal is possible (80 percent of Canadians are city-dwellers). In Toronto, the pair see how ingenious design has reclaimed industrialized waterfront areas to create energy-efficient, non-polluting public parks. In Montreal, they visit Santropol Roulant, an “edible campus” program yielding three tons of produce annually, and go to Lufa Farms, an organic rooftop greenhouse. A stop in Edmonton not only leads them to an architect who builds homes with zero environmental impact, but they also get an inside look at Edmonton's renowned waste management, composting, and recycling plant. In Vancouver, they learn about city planning for density, biofuels made from wood waste, and sewer heat. Noting that younger people often spearhead and manage these undertakings, the Suzukis talk about the big picture and how the future might play out if more places were to embrace sustainable development. Director Hadley Obodiac's presentation is a tad gimmicky in spots; the Suzukis make a point of traveling in a small Airstream trailer to mimic energy conservation in cramped spaces, and Sarika's line readings

convey a somewhat ingenuous, gosh-golly attitude. Nonetheless, the pioneering ventures highlighted here are impressive, offering a welcome look at what's possible—and what might, at some point, be necessary if cities are to survive. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (M. Puffer-Rothenberg)

### Xmas Without China ★★1/2

(2013) 63 min. DVD: \$275. Bullfrog Films. PPR. SDH captioned.

During the past few years, there has been growing debate over the amount of Chinese-made merchandise being sold in U.S. retail channels. For Chinese-born, California-based Tom Xia, the resulting negativity over the “Made in China” label prompts him to post a challenge to his neighbors: live one month in the weeks prior to Christmas without using or purchasing any Chinese-made objects. Xia's challenge is accepted by the Joneses, a young family concerned over news reports about dangerous Chinese-made toys. But the Joneses find themselves in something of a predicament: almost everything in their house—ranging from their coffee pot to their Christmas lights—was made in China. The family stubbornly presses on with their challenge, eating from paper plates and using candles for illumination while trying to avoid anything that came from China. The Joneses' perseverance would be an interesting subject in itself, but director Alicia Dwyer unwisely divides this documentary with a focus on how Xia's family is trying to assimilate further into their California culture by constructing a rather large house and creating an elaborate Christmas light display. The elder Xias are charming, but their story just doesn't have enough resonance to command attention, while Tom himself is too laidback to make much of an impression (his personal conflict about taking on American citizenship becomes something of a distraction, especially when he lies to the Joneses about being a U.S. citizen). Still, given the timely subject matter, this should be considered a strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

### Forbidden Voices ★★★1/2

(2012) 96 min. DVD: \$89; public libraries; \$395: colleges & universities. Women Make Movies. PPR.

Filmmaker Barbara Miller's *Forbidden Voices* profiles women bloggers Yoani Sánchez (Cuba), Zeng Jinyan (China), and Farnaz Seifi (Iran), who have all risked their lives to expose, via the Internet, human rights violations. Interviews, blog excerpts read by the authors, and live footage tell the story of police actions against peaceful demonstrators, freedom of speech and press denied, and state-sponsored propaganda accusing dissenters of threatening national security. Sánchez has been arrested and beaten for writing about political prisoners on her award-winning blog, Generation Y member Jinyan and her husband write about forbidden topics including human rights, pollution, and the spread of AIDS; charged with subverting state power, they live under house arrest and have suffered years of constant police surveillance. Seifi wrote about “taboo things,” particularly discrimination against Iranian women and restrictions based on religious laws; she was repeatedly arrested and interrogated until 2007, when she fled Iran. Finding ways around government efforts to block Internet access, Sánchez, Jinyan, and Seifi represent thousands who have suffered brutal attempts to silence their criticisms of totalitarian regimes. *Forbidden Voices* conveys the terror of living under despotic powers that are both vicious and capricious in enforcing restrictions on daily life, while also illustrating how the Internet provides ordinary citizens an unprecedented platform for political speech. Informative and inspiring, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (M. Puffer-Rothenberg)



### Young Lakota ★★★

(2013) 83 min. DVD: \$250. Incite Pictures. PPR.

Two young Native Americans attempt to balance respect for their culture with the realities of modern life in this PBS-aided *Independent Lens* documentary. Sunny, an Oglala Lakota who lives on South Dakota's Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, worries about the health problems that plague the local population. The 21-year-old, who works in a convenience store, also expresses fears about the limited career options for women. Her boyfriend is already talking about children, but she isn't ready (she's also concerned that his problems with alcohol will only get worse). Her 23-year-old neighbor, Brandon, a father of two, studies television production and works on a current affairs podcast. Dur-

## The State of Arizona ★★

(2013) 90 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-036-7.

With over 11 million illegal immigrants in America, critics charge that both the nation's southwest border and the emigration system itself are "broken." Few states are as stressed as Arizona, with its overcrowded prisons and underfunded schools. Filmmakers Carlos Sandoval and Catherine Tambini's PBS-aired *Independent Lens* documentary describes Arizona as the epicenter of the immigrant earthquake, with emotions and rhetoric running high on all sides. Conservatives call immigrants an invading army, raising worries about violent drug cartels, while fearing a loss of communities and hard-earned lifestyles. Immigration advocates decry racial profiling and "harboring" charges, which could be something as simple as inviting an undocumented grandfather to one's home for dinner. Some argue that police departments and local governments are waging a war of attrition, making life so miserable for illegal immigrants that they will choose to self-deport. The film interviews vocal critics including Maricopa County sheriff Joe Arpaio, Governor Jan Brewer, and former state Senator Russell Pearce, as well as average citizens who complain that immigrants are indoctrinating their children with hatred for white people. Also covered are the numerous demonstrations and boycott drives, along with voter registration and legal cases that have led all the way to the United States Supreme Court. Meanwhile, other states are adopting Arizona's punitive model. Although the documentary basically supports the immigrant cause, the coverage here is mostly fair to both sides, and no simple solutions are suggested. Opening a window on a red hot emotional topic, this is sure to spark debate among viewers (a bonus PDF discussion guide is included). Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)



ing the filming, the state of South Dakota seeks to ban abortion except in cases where the mother's life is at stake. Sunny's mentor, Cecelia Fire Thunder, Pine Ridge's first female president, speaks out against the initiative, arguing that it doesn't apply to tribal lands, but so many of her constituents disagree that she is ultimately impeached and Vice President Alex White Plume takes over. When Alex invites Brandon to serve as his public relations director, the young man jumps at the chance to make a difference and better provide for his family. As Brandon moves up in the world, Sunny stays in the same place, underscoring her point about the difficulties facing Native women, although she continues to stand up for herself and Cecelia achieves some success in her efforts to insure that Native women will have better resources in terms of reproductive health and protection from domestic violence. Presented in the full-length version or a 52-minute broadcast edition, this is a solid documentary about tribal politics that features strong personal stories. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

## TEEN ISSUES

### Heroin Rising: Cheap, Addictive and Deadly ★★1/2

(2014) 19 min. DVD: \$149.95 (teacher's guide included). Human Relations Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62706-041-7.

Given the headline-making heroin overdose death of actor Philip Seymour Hoff-

man, *Heroin Rising* offers a timely, expert overview of heroin addiction, serving up an inside perspective from two teenagers who are recovering addicts, and making a plea that viewers find counseling before becoming ensnared in drug abuse. This guidance title goes beyond the core message (don't do drugs) to address heroin's appeal and current low cost, while also reaching out to those at risk. Physicians and counselors explain the effects of heroin and the horrors of addiction in terms of what they've witnessed in young patients, while the featured teens talk about the easy path of heroin addiction, and how they supported their habits. In retrospect, both teens understand the heartbreak and trauma that their behavior caused parents, siblings, and friends; but while taking the drug, they saw only the immediate effect on themselves. *Heroin Rising* presents relevant facts while also looking past the standard pejorative stance to hit a tone of emotional empathy aimed at young people whose circumstances or psychological pain could lead to a deadly habit. DVD extras include a PDF resource guide. Highly recommended. Aud: J, H, C, P. (M. Puffer-Rothenberg)

## EDUCATION

### The Graduates/Los Graduados ★★

(2013) 120 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-996-4.

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on time. Many feel marginalized and left out—a product of underfunded, segregated schools. In addition, kids are traumatized by broken homes, gang violence, and the gnawing issue of living in the shadows, fearful of being discovered as undocumented. But the situation is not completely hopeless, as viewers learn in this PBS-aided documentary from filmmaker Bernardo Ruiz, which concerns efforts by Latino students to claim an American identity along with their share of a hopeful future. Boys often feel tugged by a twin pull: the streets, and the need to leave school to help support their families. One girl's future is temporarily sidelined when she becomes pregnant shortly after entering high school, requiring her to balance the needs of her infant against the goal of pursuing her education. Another young man deals with the question of coming out as gay, worrying about his mother's reaction, and risking being bullied in a traditional macho Latin culture. The kids here are articulate, often wise beyond their years when describing traumatic events, such as when a girl sees her best friend gunned down in front of her house. Some possible solutions suggested are "peer juries" for mediating disputes, support groups, and organizations such as Reality Changers, which provide ideas and encouragement. The gay teen finally embraces his identity, finding acceptance while performing dance at school, while another boy lobbies for passage of the immigration "DREAM Act," working towards legal status for undocumented students and workers. No one claims that change is easy, but in the end, students realize that it's all about "how you see yourself, not what everybody else thinks about you." Also featuring testimony from parents, educators, and other mentors who have traveled the same path, this is recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

## LAW & CRIME

### An Unreal Dream: The Michael Morton Story ★★½

(2013) 92 min. DVD: \$24.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Al Reinert's documentary traces the case of Michael Morton, a Texas man wrongfully convicted of murdering his wife and subsequently imprisoned for a quarter-century before being exonerated by evidence that the prosecution failed to share with Morton's lawyers. Although the subject invites a highly-charged emotional stance, Reinert takes a sober approach, juxtaposing a moving interview of Morton with archival material (including contemporary news footage), telling the story of how his incarceration was brought to the attention of Barry



### The Cheshire Murders ★★★½

(2014) 118 min. DVD: \$19.98. HBO Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

In July 2007, the upscale town of Cheshire, CT, was the scene of an extraordinarily horrific crime: two career criminals attacked the home of Dr. William Petit, a prominent endocrinologist. Petit's wife Jennifer was raped and fatally strangled, while his daughters Hayley (age 17) and Michaela (age 11) were tied to their beds and doused in gasoline. Dr. Petit was beaten, but managed to escape as the intruders set fire to the house, killing the trapped girls. What made the crime all the more ghastly was the fact that Cheshire police surrounded the house without attempting to gain entry while the assaults were taking place (prior to her death, Dr. Petit's wife was coerced by her captors to withdraw \$15,000 from a bank account, and police were alerted that the home intrusion was underway). The Cheshire police leadership never publicly explained their actions and refused to participate in this HBO-aided documentary from filmmakers Kate Davis and David Heilbroner, which also goes into great depth on the state's prosecution of the killers. Both Steven Hayes and Joshua Komisarjevsky offered to enter guilty pleas in exchange for life imprisonment, but the state stubbornly (and successfully) pushed for the death penalty. A disturbing and jolting true-crime documentary, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Scheck's Innocence Project, which enlisted Houston attorney John Raley to take on the case pro bono. The upshot was the discovery of a statement made by Morton's 3-year-old son, Eric—present when his mother was killed—that prosecutor Ken Anderson had suppressed, along with a bloody bandana found near the scene that the new defense team fought to have tested for DNA against stiff resistance from Anderson's successor. In addition to Morton's eventual release, the film follows his difficult reconnection with Eric and legal proceedings against Anderson (who had since become a judge), as well as the arrest of the actual perpetrator. DVD extras include footage of the SXSW premiere; a Q&A with Reinert, Morton, and Raley; and excerpts from the court of inquiry regarding Anderson's conduct (and the hearing at which he copped a plea). A powerful and poignant tale of justice long denied, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

## LANGUAGE ARTS

### Deaf Jam ★★★

(2011) 70 min. DVD: \$150: high schools; \$195: public libraries; \$295: colleges & universities. New Day Films. PPR.

Lively and illuminating, filmmaker Judy Lief's PBS-aided POV documentary *Deaf Jam* focuses on the Lexington School for the Deaf in Queens, NY, where high school students become the beneficiaries of a grant to pursue American Sign Language poetry writing. Incorporating signing, body movement, hand gestures, and facial expressions, ASL performance poetry emphasizes images over words. The combination of expressive freedom and unique discipline proves a

winner for the students who absolutely shine here, including Aneta Brodski, who is a human dynamo but worries about what will happen to her once she graduates from Lexington and faces the real world without the security of her deaf peers. Aneta's ASL poems draw cheers from supporters, but things are different when she and fellow students enter a mainstream poetry slam competing with hearing teens. *Deaf Jam* is as much about the future for Aneta and other deaf kids once the grant money runs out and choices have to be made. A wonderful bonus here is archival footage of Allen Ginsberg enjoying an ASL interpretation of his classic poem "Howl." Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (T. Keogh)

## NATURE, MATH & SCIENCE

### The Age of Aluminum ★★★

(2013) 90 min. DVD: \$89: high schools & public libraries; \$295: colleges & universities. The Video Project. PPR. Closed captioned.

Based on his own book *Dirty Little Secret: The Aluminum Files*, author and filmmaker Bert Ehgartner's *The Age of Aluminum* explores the so-called "dark side" of the titular ubiquitous metal, which humans have only been aware of for less than 200 years. Aluminum—the third most common element in the earth's crust (after oxygen and silicon)—is difficult to mine and smelt, demanding extraordinary amounts of energy. As the narration dryly says of a smelting operation in Brazil, extracting bauxite—the ore that is the leading source of aluminum—is easy: "you just have to remove the forest." Ehgartner acknowledges aluminum's important role in manufacturing, but also points out the downsides of

our reliance on this strong and lightweight material—namely, as a neurotoxin implicated in medical conditions including allergies, cancer, and dementia. Viewers learn that the caustic soda required for the extraction process poses a dire threat to ecosystems, animals, and people, while the “red mud”—created as a byproduct—builds growing mountains of dangerous waste around smelting plants. Scientists and researchers offer their views here, as do individuals who contribute personal stories. Ehgartner also includes comments from industry representatives who, not surprisingly, defend their product. In a short digression, the film also explains that burning aluminum was what caused the Twin Towers to “explode” on 9/11, generating countless conspiracy theories. Presented in both a full-length version and a 52-minute abridged edition, *The Age of Aluminum* offers an eye-opening perspective on an element that—in its many forms—has become a part of everyday life. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Gardner)

### The End of Time ★★1/2

(2013) 114 min. DVD: \$27.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Although technically a science documentary, Peter Mettler's *The End of Time* is more of an unstructured cinematic essay, a meandering visual poem about time and our highly elastic perceptions of its nature, as well as how advanced measuring gadgets and graphs seem to echo the contemplative mandalas of Buddhism. As uncredited interviewees and voiceovers speak on the soundtrack, the camera visits the CERN particle-accelerator complex, where physicists hope to reconstruct the instant after the Big Bang (looking back in... time). Deep-sky telescopes in Hawaii peer at the light from distant stars which may have expired long ago (i.e., from another... time). On a nearby volcanic island, a lone holdout dwells in a house amidst ongoing lava flows that have forced the evacuation of all other humans (so he's got lots of... time). Forlorn, abandoned structures of the city of Detroit slowly decay, unheeded (as...time...passes). Although sometimes the film seems to be taking its own sweet...time, this is a thought-provoking meditation that shares elements with other documentaries as diverse as *Detropia* (VL-3/13) and *Nostalgia for the Light* (VL-1/12). A strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

### Megastorm Aftermath: Investigating Hurricane Sandy ★★★

(2013) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.95 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-006-0.

In October 2012, Hurricane Sandy devastated the coastlines of New York and New Jersey, becoming the biggest, most destructive storm to hit Manhattan in recorded history.

Was this a freak of nature or a window on our future? With climate change, shrinking ice caps, and rising sea levels, flood surges threaten not only New York City, but also Miami, New Orleans, and Charleston, SC. Filmmaker Miles O'Brien's PBS-aired NOVA documentary examines the causes and consequences of Sandy, which brought flood waters that shorted out transformers in lower Manhattan, leaving the area in the dark, and wiping out the phone system in the hub of the city's financial district, while also swamping the subways. Some have proposed erecting a “fortress New York” system of seawalls and barriers, a move that could cost untold billions of dollars, with no guarantee of success. Scientists point to the Netherlands, which constructed a complex of walls, dikes, and levees following a catastrophic 1953 storm (the film explores how the system works, and notes recent unforeseen ecological effects). New thinking leans toward a combination of hard barriers and “soft defenses” such as wetlands, marshes, and bulked-up barrier islands. The idea here is not retreat, but rather accommodation—a plan to “make room for the river,” even if it means that the government buys and clears land. Regardless, it's still questionable whether massive storm surges can be stopped. Weather forecasts call for fewer but more powerful hurricanes, with one scientist here flatly predicting that “Florida is doomed”—destined to become “one large swimming pool.” Featuring input from meteorologists, engineers, urban planners, and concerned citizens, this is a solid complement to PBS's earlier *Hurricane Sandy: Inside the Megastorm* (VL-7/13), which dealt more broadly with related scientific issues and policy. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

### Space Voyages ★★1/2

(2013) 230 min. DVD: \$19.98. Inception Media Group (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Americans were caught by surprise in 1957 when the Soviets launched the beach-ball-sized *Sputnik*. In a rush to catch up, the U.S. launched the *Vanguard* rocket, which attained an elevation of four feet before crashing and exploding on the launch pad. The bright side is that there was no way to go but up after that. This Smithsonian Channel-aired four-part documentary series offers an in-depth examination of America's space program over the last 50-plus years: from its faltering and sometimes disastrous baby steps to current ambitious plans to probe deep space and land humans on Mars. Viewers will revisit the early days, when space travel was about as cramped and uncomfortable as spending “14 days in the men's room,” in the words of astronaut Jim Lovell. President Kennedy fired the country's imagination by challenging scientists to land a man on the moon by the end of the 1960s, a goal

achieved through trial and error, although JFK didn't live to see it. Alternating between current programs and past landmarks, *Space Voyages* looks at the uncertainties related to whether humans could survive in space, the risky maneuvers in docking spacecraft, the first space walks, and the 1986 and 2003 space shuttle disasters. Viewers are reminded that NASA's ingenuity and perseverance has led to technological advances in computers, miniature chips, communication systems, medicine, and other areas that have helped society as a whole. Space is now “open for business,” with private companies building on government investment and research to make plans for space colonies, tourism, and mining, even looking toward the day when man explores and even inhabits other planets. Former astronauts and NASA technicians offer commentary here, interwoven with vintage footage and amazing views from outer space. A thrilling and inspiring paean to the overall success of America's space program (although space exploration is now a cooperative international venture), this will definitely appeal to space buffs. DVD extras include the bonus program “Shuttle Discovery's Last Mission,” which follows the retired space shuttle's move to its new home at the Smithsonian. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

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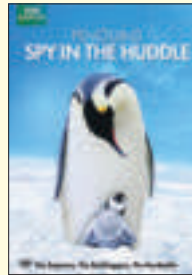
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### Penguins: Spy in the Huddle ★★★★★

(2014) 150 min. DVD: \$19.98. BBC Worldwide Ltd. (avail. from most distributors).

Of the 17 types of penguins—an animal that survives in some of the world's most hostile environments—this BBC-aided documentary concerns three breeds: the Emperor penguin, which lives in the frozen wasteland of Antarctica; the Humboldt, which is found near the deserts of Peru; and the Rockhopper, a hardy specimen inhabiting the wind- and sea-swept coast of the Falkland Islands. Penguins are some of “nature’s most devoted parents”—returning from the sea to breed, after which both sexes assume responsibility for the welfare of the chick. While one penguin (usually the female) heads out to sea in search of food, the other bird protects the chick in a “brood pouch” (chick snatching attempts by penguins unable to breed or who have lost their chick is not uncommon). When the grown chicks are finally able to go to the sea—the only place they will be fully at home—they face barriers, predators, and obstacles every step of the way. A key element for the group’s survival when on land is the “huddle,” in which penguins crowd together for warmth and protection (the numerous threats include falling into crevasses, as well as being picked off by sea lions, birds of prey, and—in the case of the desert-dwelling Humboldts—the vampire bat). Using an ingenious robotic device called the “PenguinCam,” the filmmakers are able to maneuver among these shy creatures (there is also a chick, rock, and egg cam) in this delightful, visually magnificent documentary that features scenes on land, in the air, and below the sea. An informative, inspiring example of nature photography at its best, this is highly recommended. **Editor’s Choice.** Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)



people pursuing extra-abilities in order to get an edge on the job or in school. Debates will carry on, but *Fixed* offers a powerful introduction to this provocative subject. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

### R.I.P.P.E.D. Total Body Challenge ★★★★★

(2013) 48 min. DVD: \$16.99. Acacia (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-62172-002-7.

Husband and wife fitness team Terry and Tina Shorter take center stage for this exercise program approved by the American Council on Exercise. Including warm-up and cool-down segments, *R.I.P.P.E.D. Total Body Challenge* features five routines for Resistance, Interval, Power, Plyometrics, and Endurance (the “D” stands for Diet and Nutrition). Backed by a spirited group of participants (with one performing advanced and another doing modified moves), the high-energy, smiling Shorters take turns leading the workouts, which include various lunges, pulls, floor work, stretches, and martial arts punches, with some sequences using hand weights. Featuring an original pumping soundtrack and good repetition to help beginners remember the arrangements, extras include an additional abs workout. Recommended. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

### Tracie Long Longevity Series: Defining Shape ★★★★★

(2014) 50 min. DVD: \$14.98. Shelter Island/TDC (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-939517-17-3.

Fitness expert Tracie Long is back with this first volume in her *Longevity* series focusing on total body strength. Warming up with a marching combo and squats, *Defining Shape* incorporates the use of two or three sets of weights (preferably light, medium, and heavy). Featuring segments that exercise the legs, butt, shoulders, and upper and lower body, moves here include kickbacks, stagger squats, pushups, pliés, side lunges, and step squats, as well as taps and reaches (for balance and core). Also including matwork for abs (including side plank and sit-ups) and a cool-down stretch, the program provides two “premix” workouts: “Below the Belt” and “Hour Glass.” Also newly available in the series are *Staying Power* and *Step Forward*. A solid exercise title with precise and focused attention on techniques for optimum strength training and resistance, this is recommended. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

### Weight Watchers Ultimate Belly Series ★★★★★

(2013) 62 min. DVD: \$14.98. Anchor Bay Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Weight Watchers fitness spokesperson Jennifer Cohen serves up a variety of workout solutions for getting abdominal muscles into shape in this useful program. She is joined

## HEALTH & FITNESS

### Beauty and the Breast ★★★★★1/2

(2013) 88 min. DVD: \$225. Film Ideas. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60572-720-2.

Liliana Komorowska’s documentary tracks the varied experiences of seven women with breast cancer, beginning with receiving the doctor’s “verdict” and continuing through medical care and survival. Whether discussing difficulties in obtaining a correct diagnosis, responses of family members, or choosing and coping with treatment options (surgery, chemotherapy, or radiotherapy), the subjects all take individual journeys. Their choices of how to confront the disease range from natural remedies to double mastectomy, with each patient acting in accordance with her self-image, beliefs, fears, and ability to cope physically and/or psychologically. The debilitating effects of chemo and radiation are not glossed over; in particular, Komorowska examines the impact of chemical and surgical treatments on body image and ideas about femininity, especially in women whose work is or was tied closely to their physical appearance. A professional model says implants once made her a lot of money, but now she’s ready to have smaller breasts after a double mastectomy and reconstruction. A visual arts performer who had one breast removed now dances as a form of therapy, wearing only colorful body paint. Two of the featured interviewees are activists who educate others, and are able to offer both personal and expert perspectives. Presenting

a wide range of personalities, strategies, and viewpoints, this multiple festival award-winner is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (M. Puffer-Rothenberg)

### Fixed: The Science/Fiction of Human Enhancement ★★★★★1/2

(2012) 60 min. DVD: \$150: high schools & public libraries; \$285: colleges & universities. Making Change Media (dist. by New Day Films). PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-57448-483-0.

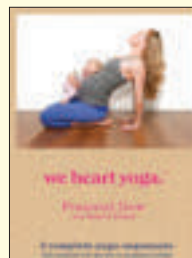
Filmmaker Regan Brashear’s remarkable documentary focuses on the intersection of disability and science. We often hear about various achievements in helping people with disabilities through prosthetics, brain implants, eye implants, and drug therapies, but *Fixed* argues that the real cutting edge in these fields is not approximating “normalcy” but rather in extending human capability. State-of-the-art leg prosthetics, for example, can make someone stronger and faster, while bionic arms with robotic capabilities can do more than human arms. Memory can also be enhanced, while computers can be controlled by a person’s thoughts. *Fixed* introduces viewers to the world of the “extra-abled,” or “trans-humans,” along the way exploring some of the ethical and philosophical quandaries that are accompanying progress. While various advocates for human enhancement are interviewed here, there are equally strong points-of-view that there is nothing wrong with accepting a disability and living with it. Others foresee a time when a “rat race” for extra-abilities overtakes more traditional advocacy for issues such as access to buildings. Still others anticipate a wide range of

## We Heart Yoga: Prenatal Flow with Jessica James

★★★★1/2

(2014) 135 min. DVD: \$22.95. *We Heart Yoga* (avail. from [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)).

In this soothing but challenging video, celebrity yoga instructor Jessica James leads moms-to-be through a series of exercises aimed at building strength, maintaining a healthy weight, and preparing for labor. The three routines (running 20, 40, and 60 minutes long) are customized to accommodate different skill levels, as well as the fluctuating energy of pregnant women. James was eight months into her second pregnancy at the time of filming, and she uses her own birth and recovery experiences to create an approach to yoga that is sensitive to all of the phases associated with childbearing and delivery. While beginners may be able to adjust to the slower-paced, shortest workout, the program is most appropriate for those who already have an established practice, since many of the moves would even challenge someone who is not expecting a child. DVD extras include a 10-minute meditation. Note: blocks and an exercise band (not included) are used for some of the routines here. A fine prenatal yoga workout program, this is highly recommended. Aud: P. (K. Cruver)



by two assistants, who present easier and more challenging options. The 10-minute "Ab Toner" and 20-minute "Ab Express" segments include routines that consist of a series of stretches, lifts, and crunches performed on a floor mat, while the last section—a 30-minute "Standing Ab Toner"—picks up the pace with standing maneuvers. The location set is a bit busy, with a bright orange and pink painting in the line of vision that causes some distraction; however, the moves themselves are fairly simple and effective. Note: floor mats and five-pound weights (not included) are used for the exercises. Also newly available is *Weight Watchers: 15-Minute Boot Camp Series*. Recommended. Aud: P. (K. Cruver)

## Your Love Never Fails ★★★

(2013) 21 min. DVD: \$79. Terra Nova Films. PPR.

Filmed over a two-and-a-half-year span, Terry Lee's documentary short examines the challenges faced by an adult child caring for an aging parent. Virginia-based Brenda has looked after her mother, Carolyn, for more than 25 years—originally in the home that Brenda shares with her husband and daughter, and then in assisted-living facilities. The details are somewhat vague on the exact nature of Carolyn's physical problems, although her badly swollen legs and a tabletop full of pharmaceutical bottles suggest significant difficulties; but what is clear is that the two women share a religious bond that makes their relationship uncommonly strong. The situation is also helped by Brenda's spouse, who patiently helps his mother-in-law without voicing the slightest hint of unhappiness over her presence. But when Carolyn is injured in a fall, Brenda reluctantly agrees that it's time for her to move to a place that can provide professional care. Carolyn is initially satisfied with her new surroundings, although she's later relocated.

Meanwhile, Brenda is challenged by her own health issues—requiring a neurologist's input—and at several points she acknowledges the stress that she has felt over the years as a caregiver. While too short to provide a deep understanding of the subject, this film nonetheless presents a poignant snapshot of a family whose love and strength are sorely stressed during a time of poor health. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

## CHILDBIRTH & PARENTING

### Sister ★★★

(2012) 86 min. In Tigrinya, Khmer, Haitian Kreyol & English w/English subtitles. DVD: \$29.99 (\$125 w/PPR); public libraries; \$250 w/PPR: colleges & universities. Collective Eye.

Childbirth in Third World nations comes under scrutiny in this sobering, intermittently harrowing documentary from director Brenda Davis that follows three healthcare workers in Ethiopia, Haiti, and Cambodia, where the rates of childbirth-related deaths are alarmingly high. In Haiti, Davis shadows the gregarious Madam Bwa—a traditional birth attendant—on her rounds through twisting, poverty-stricken streets. Despite a lack of formal medical training, Madam Bwa has helped to deliver 12,000 babies over the course of 32 years. In Cambodia, Pum Mach—a soft-spoken supervising midwife for 22 years—meets with several patients, including a 19-year-old with malaria who will need a caesarian section, but lacks the funds for surgery (Pum Mach comes up with a solution, but the delivery presents additional complications). Other medical dilemmas encountered involve an impacted placenta, a stillborn fetus, and a gangrenous uterus (doctors successfully remove the damaged portion of the organ). As Ethiopian OB/GYN resident Goitom Berhane laments,

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After a UFO sighting, four friends journey to the woods to investigate but soon find that their exciting weekend has turned into a nightmare of terror and survival. What happened to the quartet remains a mystery; however their video documentary material—consisting of POV camera, computer chat recordings, and frightening attack footage—survives as a terrifying vision of an isolated small town subjected to an alien invasion. This chilling film is in the tradition of *Paranormal Activity* and *The Blair Witch Project*.



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### Romeo Romeo ★★

(2013) 80 min. DVD: \$125: high schools & public libraries; \$275: colleges & universities. Good Docs (avail. from [www.gooddocs.net](http://www.gooddocs.net)). PPR.

Lizzie Gottlieb's intimate documentary begins with home video footage of the wedding between New York lesbian couple Alexis "Lexy" Casano and Jessica Antonellis, but it wouldn't exist if their marriage lacked for complications. Casano, who works as a nanny and choir director, longs to have children. Antonellis, an account manager at a public relations firm, never shared the same desire, but changed her mind after meeting Lexy. Although they considered a friend as a sperm donor, the pair decide that an anonymous contributor will cause fewer problems (they pay \$6,000 for the "family plan," which allows for additional children). Lexy tries artificial insemination several times, but it doesn't work, so her OB/GYN prescribes a medication to help her produce more eggs. As time passes, however, the two find themselves running low on funds and patience, which puts a strain on their relationship. When several members of their social circle become pregnant, Lexy and Jessica feel left out—until they secure a state grant that allows them to try in-vitro fertilization. When that procedure fails, they consult with another lesbian couple, whose low-tech method ironically turns out to be the most successful of all. From the beginning of their journey to the end, the camera seems to be everywhere—possibly because the women shot some of the footage themselves—although Gottlieb has edited the material with care in order to stave off any impressions of over-intrusiveness. An engaging documentary, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)



most of these problems are preventable, but a lack of education and reliable transportation transforms minor issues into major ones. Fortunately, Ethiopia also has health extension workers, such as Hirity Belay—a tracksuit-sporting high school graduate with a year of training—who travels to remote villages on foot to assist pregnant women with nutrition, hygiene, and other concerns. Without the kind of dedicated professionals who appear in Davis's documentary, the situation would be worse, but she makes it clear that the women of developing nations need far more care than they've been receiving. Viewers should be forewarned that *Sister* is fairly graphic, with frequent nudity and some squirm-inducing surgical procedures. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

## RELATIONSHIPS & SEXUALITY

### Americans in Bed ★★1/2

(2014) 80 min. DVD: \$19.98. HBO Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).

HBO Documentary Films—no stranger to nonfiction intimacy-cum-voyeurism productions (*Taxicab Confessions*, et al.)—here crosscuts between 10 couples from a wide spectrum of ages, races, and genders (two couples are gay/lesbian), who talk about various facets of their relationships while filmed in sleepwear, reclining in their beds together. It's not exactly groundbreaking; in the U.K., the late rock-star-wife Paula Yates did an entire talk show that way, and *Americans in Bed* often feels like an ocean-leaping translation of the BBC's *The British in Bed*.

No particularly startling revelations emerge here. Naturally, the mature couples who are longest-married (one pair of seniors marking 71 years together, in fact) come across as the healthiest, most loving, and respectful in their attitudes to each other, whereas the younger ones—at least the heterosexuals—attach utmost importance to regular sex and fervent desire. Infidelity, jealousy, and serial breakups also feature prominently among the younger lovers, while some oft-divorced middle-agers give the impression of having just surrendered carnal ecstasy to the passage of time, settling for amicable companionship. The overall happiest husband and wife? In this sampling, it's possibly a traditional Muslim pair, of Egyptian descent, the woman demurely clad in her headscarf even in bed. While the documentary features mature language and themes, this is actually pretty light, by HBO standards. A strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

### Photos of Angie ★★1/2

(2011) 55 min. DVD: \$59.95: public libraries & high schools; \$225: colleges & universities. Third World Newsreel. PPR.

In July 2008, 18-year-old Angie Zapata was beaten to death in an apartment in Greeley, CO. Angie was a transgender victim, and prosecutors in the politically conservative Denver suburb made history by charging her killer, Allen Andrade, with a hate crime in connection to her death. Filmmaker Alan Dominguez offers a sincere study of Angie's brief life and violent death, including a lengthy review of the contentious murder trial of Andrade. The murder victim was born Justin Zapata, but began

to self-identify as a female at a very young age and is referred to by the Zapata family throughout the film as being female. Despite hostility from the extended Zapata family, Angie insisted on being a woman, but would claim that she always identified her actual biological state in social settings. Angie met Andrade through the Internet, and he visited her apartment for sex, later arguing that he beat her to death out of panic when he discovered that she was a biological male. During the trial, the prosecution repeatedly referred to Angie as female, but Andrade's defense insisted on calling the victim Justin, stating that the deceased was male. But Andrade proved to be his own worst enemy, at one point joking in a tape-recorded prison telephone conversation that "all gay things must die"; later evidence also showed that he frequented bisexual community sites online and socialized with Angie prior to their fatal encounter. The successful conviction of Andrade has been celebrated by LGBT activists as a milestone in promoting a new era of civil rights protection. *Photos of Angie* offers a powerful examination of how Angie's tragic death became a legal and sociological turning point. Highly recommended. [Note: this has also been released on home video for \$19.95 by IndiePix.] Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

### Tricked: The Documentary ★★

(2013) 75 min. DVD: \$149 (\$349 w/PPR). Kino Lorber Edu.

It's about time that someone—here a Las Vegas vice cop—noted that the cherished phrase "What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas" is an open invitation to sex crimes. In marked contrast to some other documentaries on the subject of prostitution and pimping (such as *American Pimp* [VL-9/00] and *Meet the Fokkens* [VL-7/13]), the tone of filmmakers John-Keith Wasson and Jane Wells' *Tricked* is uncompromisingly negative and depressing. *Tricked* argues that prostitutes are brutalized, violated, and ultimately cult-brainwashed into supporting their pimps and not cooperating with police. Ex-hookers, lawmen, and therapists in Nevada, Boston, Denver, and Chicago offer pointed comments, with one officer bemoaning the fact that department budget cuts have resulted in making human trafficking a low priority. Viewers are warned to dismiss popular images of the pimps' comical flamboyance and the self-justification of the male predators—here, a dapper Ph.D. defends his routine as a john, while pimp Robert Money says that *his* ladies hold their heads high and proud, not like the submissive chattel shown off at an annual pimp convention (!) in Chicago. One officer warns that if legalized prostitution gains a foothold (as is advocated in the recent *American Courtesans* [VL-9/13]), anyone's daughter could be swept up in modern-day sex slavery. Sure to spur discussion, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

## FOOD & SPIRITS

### Lidia Celebrates America: Life's Milestones ★★☆☆1/2

(2013) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-887-5.

The latest addition to popular chef and author Lidia Bastianich's cross-country cultural series *Lidia Celebrates America* (see review of *Freedom & Independence* in VL-11/13), *Life's Milestones* explores four rites of passage. First up is a trip to Nashville, where Lidia meets with country singing hopeful Lacy Cavalier, who is gearing up for her sweet 16th birthday celebration (complete with alligator sauce picante crafted by Lacy's dad) and her debut at the famous Bluebird Cafe with the help of singer-songwriter record producer Victoria Shaw. A visit to Campbell, OH, captures the family festivities surrounding the baptism of Greek Orthodox girl triplets, with segments on the history of the religion and classic cuisine such as spanakopita and souvlaki. Lidia also spends time with a Brazil-raised graduate of Boston University's masters gastronomy program (the segment features a ceviche creation), and takes a sunrise-to-sunset look at a Navajo housewarming in Bluff, UT (which includes making flatbread). Also featuring appearances by reporter Nicole Petallides, restaurateur Gabrielle Hamilton, and Grammy-nominee Radmilla Cody, extras include additional interviews and printable recipes. Highly recommended. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)



### Dare to Cook: Gourmet Food Preservation ★★☆☆

(2013) 88 min. DVD or Blu-ray: \$24.95. Bennett-Watt HD Productions. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-60490-074-3 (dvd), 978-1-60490-108-5 (blu-ray).

This program from Bennett-Watt's *Dare to Cook* series features Chef Tom Small expanding on previous methods for preserving food (see review of *Canning Basics* in VL-3/14), using "boutique shop"-quality techniques. Prefacing each segment with onscreen text (recipe and instruction), Small offers step-by-step preservation demonstrations for various pickled veggies, including green beans with garlic and dill; jalapenos; bread and butter pickles made from zucchini; and Italian-style marinated mushrooms. Small also makes pickled beets with sugar, cinnamon, and cloves; cucumber and sweet pickles; and pickle relish. *Gourmet Food Preservation* also features preservation processes for delicacies including crème fraîche (made from heavy cream and buttermilk) and homemade yogurt, as well as feta and charbroiled veggies (kept in oil), and also looks at freezer and alcohol preservation methods (the latter including liqueur/cordial type tangerine vodka and blackberry bourbon recipes). Recommended. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

documentary profiles a Midwestern beauty pageant for girls with disabilities. According to Jan Selman—one of the contest judges—it's about "seeing the beauty behind the challenge." Abbey Curran, a former Miss Iowa with cerebral palsy, founded the event to encourage contestants to believe in themselves, but also as an opportunity to make friends and for parents to connect with others in similar situations. Like Curran, several of the girls here have cerebral palsy; others have spina bifida, Down syndrome, and spinal muscular atrophy (SMA)—a degenerative muscular disorder. At seven years of age, ebullient Tierney has already outlived most children with SMA. Unlike the participants on *Toddlers & Tiaras*, the families here haven't built their lives around the pageant circuit, although the girls are just as eager to make a good impression with fancy outfits and hairstyles. Everyone goes home with an award, although there is only one overall winner, and the judges prioritize attitude over appearance. Davis's focused approach oddly makes the film feel sligher than intended since no outside voices—such as psychologists or medical professionals—are heard here. Every scene seems to be also underscored with syrupy strings, although the polished approach makes the film equally appropriate for child and adult viewers. The former might even have the most to gain—whether they have disabilities or not—since it's never too early to learn a little empathy. Joining other unusual documentaries about beauty pageants—including the Siberian prison-based *Miss Gulag* (VL-1/11) and Miss India-centered *The World Before Her* (VL-7/13), this is recommended. Aud: P. (K. Fennessy)

## BUSINESS & ECONOMICS

### American Winter ★★☆☆1/2

(2013) 90 min. DVD: \$20; individuals; \$100; high schools; \$150; public libraries; \$300; colleges & universities. View Film. PPR.

The twin blows of job losses and advancing poverty hit several Portland, OR, families hard in filmmaker Joe Gantz's *American Winter*, a melancholy look at paycheck-to-paycheck despair and reduced circumstances in the wake of 2008's economic crash. Cameras follow several representative families in weakening income brackets, whose breadwinners have lost jobs to overseas, suffered cuts in benefits, and are now left slaving for the minimum wage—when they can find jobs at all. One woman is newly widowed, experiencing her first winter with her son in a homeless shelter. Another household has to choose between paying the mortgage or utilities bills (a good neighbor allows them to run an electrical cord all the way to his property). A man whose son has Down syndrome faces foreclosure on a homestead that he says brings the boy stability. Another couple, turned out of their own place, must move back in with parents. While some social-service organizations offer relief, one pastor interviewed here declares that he has never seen so many new needy with so few safety nets. Occasional intertitles offer statistics on corporate job-killing practices and the pernicious decay of the middle-class, but policy-makers and apologists for Wall Street are conspicuous by their absence. A powerful, timely documentary, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

### Careers Without College ★★☆☆

(2014) 24 min. DVD: \$108 (downloadable instructor's guide included). LINX Educational Publishing. PPR.

Four careers are highlighted in this brief but informative program, which outlines requirements in each field through narration and contributions from individuals who discuss their jobs and training. The first segment, on web developers, makes clear that the phrase "without college" doesn't mean there isn't loads to learn—knowledge acquisition and skills required are ongoing, from languages such as HTML5 to platforms such as Drupal; but much of the training is freely available on the Internet or at the local library (naturally), and experience counts for a lot. Those who are adept at transcription (creating documents from the spoken word) might consider becoming a court reporter or stenographer, which doesn't require a degree, but does demand excellent listening skills, expertise in grammar and spelling, knowledge of legal terminology, and the ability to use a keyboard with speed and accuracy. Plumbing is the next suggestion, with

## BEAUTY & FASHION

### Miss You Can Do It ★★☆☆

(2013) 74 min. DVD: \$19.98. HBO Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).

Director Ron Davis's upbeat HBO-aired

a description of specific steps related to level of experience—starting as an apprentice and then over time earning the right to be called a journeyman and finally a master plumber. The last option covered is pharmacy technician, which requires skills in basic math, spelling, and customer service. Providing some solid possibilities for those who aren't inclined toward—or can't afford—the traditional higher-education route, this title is recommended. Aud: H, P. (C. Block)

## COMPUTERS & TECHNOLOGY

### Developing a Website ★★★

(2013) 20 min. DVD: \$129.95. VEA (dist. by Films Media Group). PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-81608-738-9.

This introductory video looks at the process of building a website, starting with a segment that gives viewers an overview of the virtual switchboard, or Domain Naming System (DNS); the Internet Protocol (IP) form of addressing; and the Uniform Resource Locator (URL)—i.e., the line that starts with “http://” in your browser’s “location” bar. From there, the program explains the role of the Internet Service Provider (ISP) in making web resources available to the masses and allowing subscribers to access material through Internet connections. With that foundation established, *Developing a Website* turns to the main languages of the graphical web: HTML (for HyperText Markup Language) and its newer iteration HTML5, which, among other things, helps websites display properly on super-large screens, itty-bitty devices, and everything in between; and JavaScript. Narration plays over footage showing developers at work, while the various terms and acronyms used are intermittently shown onscreen. In addition to the technical aspects, the production discusses planning a website for specific clients, including determining particular needs and ensuring the primary end goal that all users have a positive experience. Experts in media, digital marketing, and technology provide insights and tips along the way on how to get started on this career path. For those eager to gain some rudimentary information and start coding, this will be a helpful introduction. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (C. Block)

## SPORTS, GAMES & RECREATION

### 1976: Hunt vs. Lauda ★★★1/2

(2014) 60 min. DVD: \$19.98. Revolver Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).

Filmmaker Matthew Whiteman’s exciting BBC-aired documentary recounts the story of the 1976 Formula One racing season, which essentially came down to a duel between

flamboyant British racer James Hunt and the highly-disciplined Austrian Niki Lauda (also told in Ron Howard’s 2013 movie *Rush*). 1976: *Hunt vs. Lauda* focuses not only on the contrast between the competitors’ personal and professional styles, but also on the conflicts between their teams and instances in which one or another driver felt sabotaged by a Grand Prix host. Lauda participated in the making of this documentary (Hunt died in 1993), and his honest insights into the season—including the accident that nearly killed Lauda and left him permanently scarred—provide a personal context for this incredible chapter in racing history. Narrated by Ed Stoppard, the film also features interviews with Lauda’s Ferrari F1 team manager, Daniele Audetto, and Hunt’s McLaren F1 manager, Alastair Caldwell, who lead viewers through the many ups and downs of the 1976 season: the disqualifications, collisions, and pressures of TV coverage on driver safety. Hunt and Lauda liked and admired one another off the track but were fierce opponents behind the wheel and their intertwined story reaches its climax here in the 1976 season’s fateful final race. Sure to appeal to racing fans, this is highly recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

### Pride and Perseverance: The Story of the Negro Leagues ★★★1/2

(2013) 50 min. DVD: \$9.98. Lionsgate (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

This Major League Baseball Productions documentary tells the story of the Negro Leagues, who were around long before Jackie Robinson broke baseball’s color barrier. Narrated by Hall of Famer Dave Winfield, *Pride and Perseverance* looks back as far as the 19th century, when (prior to the Jim Crow era in the South) black players were actually part of the burgeoning professional ranks—starting with Moses “Fleet” Walker, who played for the Toledo Blue Stockings in the 1870s. But

it wasn’t long before unwritten rules shut out African Americans, prompting them to eventually form a league of their own. The brainchild of player Andrew “Rube” Foster, the mostly black-owned Negro Leagues’ first official year was 1920 (when Babe Ruth hit 54 home runs) and right from the start the teams were popular enough to draw thousands of fans, especially for “barnstorming” events that had black teams playing against their all-white counterparts (much to the chagrin of the baseball commissioner at the time, who put a stop to the practice). The teams had their ups and downs (taking a big hit—like many other enterprises—during the Depression), and debates raged over who were actually the greatest players in the world during that time (many think that Josh Gibson could have topped Ruth’s record). Footage from the 1920s through the 1950s is interspersed here with recent and archival interviews in this fascinating documentary centering on a little-documented piece of sports—and U.S.—history. Highly recommended. Aud: P. (C. Block)

### Running for Jim ★★★

(2013) 78 min. DVD: \$295. Filmmakers Library (dist. by Alexander Street Press). PPR. ISBN: 978-1-4631-1814-3.

Filmmakers Robin Hauser Reynolds and Dan Noyes’ *Running for Jim* profiles a high school coach who has inspired students for over 17 years. Jim Tracy started out as a runner who was not always the fastest in short races, but excelled at long distances. While living in the Bay Area, Tracy competed in high school and college, racking up numerous awards. Afterward, he continued to run, but drifted in his professional life until a freelance gig as a running consultant led to a position as the coach of the girls’ cross-country track team at San Francisco University High School. Tracy’s assistant, Stella Beale, describes him as “unrelenting,” while stu-



### The Booker ★★★1/2

(2012) 96 min. DVD: \$19.95. IndiePix (avail. from most distributors).

Shot in black-and-white, filmmaker Michael Perkins’ *The Booker* follows Hawaii-born Steve Scarborough, an obsessive fan since childhood of the larger-than-life choreographed spectacle that is “pro wrestling.” After wrestling for a time himself (under the moniker “Lethal Litigator”—a nasty-yuppie persona based on his law-student self), Scarborough went to Atlanta in a do-or-die quest to promote his own upstart pro-wrestling franchise—Platinum Championship Wrestling—in hopes of reclaiming the sport/performance from the likes of the giant WWE (which, he contends, has lost sight of the audience and “wrestling culture”). Careening through profiles of the wrestlers (one a Wells Fargo banker), partnerships, and venues that don’t work out, the PCW saga discovers an unlikely patron in Atlanta’s Academy Theatre, whose director (against his board’s wishes) embraces pro wrestling as an extreme form of theater arts. Well-educated Scarborough (capable of profanity-laced abusive tirades) here delivers a classic rant praising pro wrestling over David Mamet plays and avant-garde sculpture (“with fish heads!”) in terms of getting a reaction out of audiences. A funny, bracing, offbeat sports documentary, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

dents praise his constant encouragement. To Tracy, it isn't just about winning, but about living up to one's potential; a lackluster effort counts as a disappointment even if it results in a win. For all his achievements, Tracy has nevertheless lived out of his car at times due to money management problems (according to one student, he "is a pretty crazy, strange man"). Around 2004, Tracy began to notice weakness in his hands and feet, which led to a diagnosis of the degenerative motor neuron disease amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). After consulting with his athletic director, Tracy decides to continue and while he's no longer able to run, he does take up swimming to keep up his strength—and his students form a trust to raise money and help him move to an apartment better suited to his needs. The documentary leads up to a race that made Tracy the most-decorated girls cross-country coach in California history, a race with such a dramatic finish that it appeared on national news and even went on to inspire teams in other sports, including the New York Giants. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

## CRAFTS, ARTS & HOBBIES

### Arts & Crafts Glass-Front Cabinet

★★★★1/2

(2013) 74 min. DVD: \$19.95. The Taunton Press (dist. by The AV Cafe). ISBN: 978-1-62113-835-8.

There are two audiences for this latest entry in the *Fine Woodworking Video Workshop Series*: woodworkers who understand every step of host Michael Pekovich's detailed instructions for building a beautiful, white-oak, glass-front arts-and-crafts cabinet (digital plan included), and observers who will simply enjoy watching an expert craftsman do his thing. But more serious woodworking hobbyists will certainly learn from Pekovich's methods: for identifying the best grain in his choice of lumber (it's not just about beauty), laying out joinery, cutting through mortises, gluing, making drawers (the most time-consuming part), building a door frame (and fitting the door to the case), and much more. Pekovich's specialized and experience-based knowledge will certainly help viewers prevent mistakes while making this handsome (albeit complicated) cabinet. Highly recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

## THE ARTS

### Becoming Traviata ★★

(2012) 112 min. DVD: \$24.95. The Cinema Guild (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 0-7815-1442-8.

Director Philippe Beziat follows the process of mounting a new production of Verdi's popu-

lar warhorse for the 2011 Aix-en-Provence Festival in this feature-length documentary that will fascinate opera lovers. Although conductor Louis Langrée is shown putting the London Symphony Orchestra and the company chorus through their paces, the focus is on stage director Jean-François Sivadier and soprano Natalie Dessay, who rethink the central character of Violetta, the courtesan who sacrifices herself to save the reputation of her lover, Alfredo. Some of the other singers—including Charles Castronovo as Alfredo—appear in the rehearsal footage, but Beziat mostly emphasizes the give-and-take between Sivadier and Dessay as they bounce ideas off one another and try out gestures and bits of stage business that might bring Violetta to dramatic life. The result somewhat downplays the musical element: when Dessay, Castronovo, and their colleagues go full-bore, the effect is momentarily impressive from a vocal perspective, but Beziat's camera constantly returns to the interplay between the director and star as they give shape and texture to Verdi's tragic heroine. Some may be disappointed that *Becoming Traviata* features no footage of the finished production, but it's appropriate for a documentary that concentrates on the creative process. Opera lovers and music libraries will find this an especially worthwhile acquisition, although it should also be of interest to drama collections. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

### Bomb It 2 ★★

(2013) 73 min. DVD: \$19.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).

In this sequel to his 2007 documentary *Bomb It*, director Jon Reiss travels the world to showcase more street artists. Some work alone, some as part of a crew; some concentrate on letters, others on characters. All seek the visibility that comes with freely acces-

sible art, even if they also show in galleries. Munnad Alazzh, who lives in a Bethlehem refugee camp, looks for spaces where the poor live, since they are the audience he is trying to reach with his political art. By contrast, Klone, who lives in Tel Aviv, simply avoids politics, because "there's so much in our daily lives." He acknowledges, however, that making one's mark in a public space is a form of political activism. In most cases, the artists gravitate towards abandoned buildings, knowing full well that their creations won't last as new structures rise up in their place. All of the subjects show their faces on-camera, with the exceptions of Husk Mit Navn and Great Bates from Copenhagen, and Darbotz from Jakarta, who don't want to attract attention to their illegal activities (Darbotz works in advertising). Reiss also travels to Hong Kong, Bangkok, Perth, Singapore, Chicago, and Austin to sample the work, which ranges from stylized words to surrealistic paintings. Reiss gives the artists a chance to talk about their work (although little is mentioned about their personal lives), including Vexta, a stencil enthusiast from Melbourne, who speaks for others as well when she says, "I think it's important to work in the street, because it enables art to reach a bigger audience than it does in the gallery." A solid addition to the graffiti doc genre, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

### Road to the Globe: Troilus & Cressida

★★★

(2012) 52 min. DVD: \$24.99. Kultur International Films (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-0-7697-5081-1.

The universality of Shakespeare's plays is nicely demonstrated in Mike Jonathan's documentary about the preparation of an unusual production of Shakespeare's romantic tragedy *Troilus & Cressida*—set against the backdrop of the Trojan War—for London's Globe Theatre.

### Ballroom Confidential ★★1/2

(2013) 84 min. DVD: \$20. Lilla Films (avail. from www.ballroomconfidential.com).

Up-tempo and irresistibly sweet in spirit, filmmaker Brian Lilla's engaging documentary centers on a ballroom-dance school that caters to senior citizens in Daytona, FL. Many of the pupils are widowed or never-married women, some of whom devote most of their expenditures to the school (and consider it money well spent). In advance of the school's big annual show—here a spy takeoff entitled "Mission Dance-Possible"—cameras follow the assorted participants, who have found in ballroom dance not only a healthy exercise activity (ballroom, we are told, has medical value, combating Alzheimer's and dementia) but also glamour, fellowship, and an antidote to loneliness. Of the ballroom instructors themselves, viewers only get a detailed look at relative newcomer Caleb, a local kid who actually migrated to the bright lights of the New York City music/performing scene, but returned to Florida with his own baggage of romantic loss. Although Florida libraries are a natural, any collections in which the youth-ballroom documentary *Mad Hot Ballroom* (VL Online-10/05) scored points should partner up with this film from the opposite age demographic. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)



An entry in the “Globe to Globe” project to stage all of the Bard’s works by companies from different countries in their native languages as part of the 2012 Olympics, this *Troilus* involved translation into the Maori language of the indigenous Polynesians of New Zealand to be performed by the Ngakau Toa company of Rawiri Paratene (an actor best known for his role in the film *Whale Rider*). Jonathan follows the staging from its genesis and rehearsals up through its triumphant presentation as the London festival’s opening play. Viewers will be fascinated by how the action is transposed to the classical Maori world of rival tribes whose combatants engage in extraordinarily vigorous war dances as the doomed love between a youthful couple plays out. The success of the venture was also a personal triumph for Paratene, a longtime activist in the movement to preserve Maori culture (the Maori language, formerly suppressed by government fiat, finally won official national status in 1987 alongside English). A unique and inspiring documentary, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

## Songwriter: The Complete Season One

★★★

(2014) 2 discs. 183 min. DVD: \$24.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).

What is it like to be a songwriter? Filmmakers Mike Purcell and Eric Fazzini address that question through the words, experiences, and songs of Nashville-based professionals, some of whom you may be unfamiliar with, but who nonetheless make their living from songs. In six segments, the bands/performers—including Pageant, Froskull, Brad Pounders, and Them Vibes, covering genres from rock to country, folk to progressive, and urban to pop—share stories of remarkably similar challenges in both their art and the music business. Interviews and footage of the subjects during their day-to-day activities reveal the creative process behind the music, from the (sometimes) mundane details of arrangements or compositions that take years to write, to the proverbial flash of inspiration in which a great tune is created in minutes. For those interested in what it’s really like to follow the path of music-as-business, the insights shared by the remarkable folks showcased here may be one of the best available introductions to the trade. DVD extras include music videos. Recommended. Aud: P. (C. Block)

## When Jews Were Funny ★★★1/2

(2013) 89 min. DVD: \$24.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Was 20th-century humor primarily Jewish? Multiple comedians interviewed in Alan Zweig’s engaging documentary *When Jews Were Funny* argue that this is the case, although—tellingly—it’s a theory advanced more by Baby Boom (and younger) comics



## Shelter Island ★★★

(2013) 77 min. DVD: \$24.98. Shelter Island/TDC (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-939517-21-0.

An unlikely bond between an “outsider” artist and his unusual patron is the subject of this engaging documentary by Michael Canzoniero. Harald Olson is an unconventional resident of Shelter Island, NY—a gangly, reclusive man so obsessed with painting that he gives scant thought to necessities, happily embracing a virtually homeless lifestyle while regularly visiting the local recycling center to scavenge materials needed for his art. By contrast, Jimmy Olinkiewicz is a garrulous gas station owner who frets about the future for his autistic son. Olinkiewicz is also kind of a scavenger himself, collecting unusual items at rummage sales that he then posts on eBay to turn a profit. When these two dissimilar men met, they unaccountably hit it off—Olson decorated the pumps at Jimmy’s station, and Olinkiewicz in turn constructed an addition to his building to serve as an ad-hoc showplace for Olson’s canvases. Olinkiewicz also used his promotional skills on Olson’s behalf, eventually helping to secure a showing for his friend’s paintings at a Manhattan gallery, where they won considerable praise despite the fact that Olson had no formal training (at one point he admits that he’s never even heard of Jackson Pollock, whose splatter technique he sometimes unknowingly emulated). A charming portrait of two guys who are individually rather odd but make an even odder couple, DVD extras include the short film *In My Mind* (made by Olinkiewicz’s son, Alex), and a montage of Olson’s paintings. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

than older guys such as Shelley Berman and Jack Carter, who here wave away Zweig’s questions and assumptions about Jewish humor being wrapped up in a history of pain and persecution. But comedians such as David Steinberg, Howie Mandel, Gilbert Gottfried, and the late David Brenner have much to say. Brenner (“Jews had nothing...oppression led to humor”) goes on to talk about his father, a one-time vaudeville performer who helped his son pinpoint what was funny in any given life situation. Mandel says that Jewish humor “came out of darkness,” and then demonstrates how “Jews have to express everything [even when happy] as a complaint.” Zweig, who is also in the comedy business, has a knack for pressing a question that gets under the skin of some interviewees, and much of what is funny here is watching guys like Bob Einstein (*Curb Your Enthusiasm*) push back with incredulity. Also appearing here are the irrepressible Shecky Greene, Ed Crasnick, and Judy Gold, one of only two female comics interviewed (and the only one to talk about Jewish mothers). DVD extras include bonus clips. An entertaining and thought-provoking documentary, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

## HISTORY & CURRENT EVENTS

### Big History ★★★

(2013) 3 discs. 442 min. DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Lionsgate (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned.

The title here refers to a newly popular multidisciplinary academic discipline that—according to *Breaking Bad* star Bryan Crans-

ton, narrator of this 17-part series broadcast on the H2 network—involves “taking simple things and making epic connections,” along the way setting aside the tendency to think of history as a chronological timeline and instead approaching it as a web of complex relationships extending over billions of years. The final episode actually presents this argument in its broadest sense, describing eight “threshold moments,” beginning with the Big Bang and finally looking toward the eventual end of our solar system. Each of the preceding episodes traces particular connections that intersect over long periods, such as the importance of gold, silver, and salt in the rise and fall of civilizations; ways that the domestication of the horse allowed people to indirectly harness the energy of the sun; how weaponry evolved in relation to human anatomy; and the significance of water, cold, and caffeine as determining factors in the development of societies. Slickly produced, *Big History* skillfully blends archival footage, computer graphics, dramatic re-enactments, and interviews. Extras include 10 bonus segments. Based on the bestselling book *The Big History Project* by Bill Gates and David Christian, this miniseries often feels amorphous and reductionist, but is nevertheless fascinating. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (F. Swietek)

### The Death of Pinochet (La Muerte de Pinochet) ★★1/2

(2011) 67 min. In Spanish w/English subtitles. DVD: \$89: high schools & public libraries; \$295: colleges & universities. PRAGDA. PPR.

The death of General Augusto Pinochet on December 10, 2006, spurred divergent emotional responses among the Chilean

people. While many looked back in anguish and horror at the years that Pinochet ruled as the head of a military junta, others celebrated the former leader's strong anti-Communist policy. Filmmakers Bettina Perut and Ivan Osnovikoff use the news of Pinochet's death as the embarkation point for an unusual documentary that mixes nonfiction filmmaking with dramatizations of the Chilean public reaction to Pinochet's death. While the subject is certainly deserving of consideration—no one in Chile was without opinion regarding Pinochet's style of government—the filmmakers strangely opt for an experimental approach to their work, filming interviewees with extreme close-ups of their lips, eyes, hands, and feet. One woman is constantly presented within an oversized frame made of flowers. The visual aspects quickly become ridiculous to the point where the core subject is lost amongst the oddball imagery. Even worse is a poorly staged recreation of a pro-Pinochet rally, in which a photogenic crowd taunts the "Communist faggots" that opposed the dictator. Fans of avant-garde works may appreciate this, but others will find it off-putting. Optional. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

### Lincoln@Gettysburg ★★★

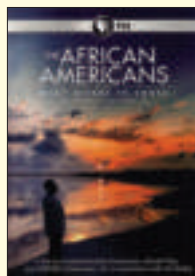
(2013) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-029-9.

1863 was the make or break year for the northern cause in the Civil War. As Lincoln shuffled a succession of top Union generals, he fell into deep despair, visiting the war command center almost daily to keep in touch with his military leaders. Thanks to the new invention of the telegraph, Lincoln's concerns were heightened in June 1863 by news that Lee's army had invaded Pennsylvania, a possible threat to major northern cities—including the nation's capitol. Narrated by David Strathairn, filmmaker Peter Schnall's PBS-aired documentary describes the Civil War as a "transitioning" conflict, one in which Lincoln was able to utilize then-advanced technology to virtually command the Union army. By July, Lincoln had replaced his top general, but he agonized over tactics and battlefield news, a struggle that was only made worse when Confederate troops cut Union telegraph lines. Although the Union army prevailed at Gettysburg (at great cost to both sides), Lincoln's despair

### The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross ★★★★★

(2013) 2 discs. 360 min. DVD: \$34.99 (\$64.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-997-1.

The story of African Americans is an epic tale some five centuries in the making. This six-hour PBS-aired documentary series, hosted by Henry Louis Gates, Jr., traces black history from Africa (where slaves were sometimes delivered into bondage by rival tribes), through the early Jamestown settlement, the Civil War, the numerous trials and setbacks during the fight for civil rights, and up through the election of President Barack Obama. Gates pinpoints many small details and telling anecdotes, helping history come alive, sometimes in gruesome ways: for instance, sharks trailed slaves ships, waiting for corpses to be thrown overboard. Africans suffered the indignity of slave auctions and the trauma of broken families, as men, women, and children were separated and identities erased (one such story is movingly told in the Oscar-winning *12 Years a Slave*). Topics covered here include the slave economy, slave revolts, the rise of abolitionism, and the determination of blacks to survive while always hoping and planning for a brighter future. Unfortunately, the years following Reconstruction were marked by unmet promises, a reign of terror, and the institutionalizing of racism through Jim Crow laws. The documentary expertly balances key personalities, landmark events, legal challenges, and high points such as the Harlem Renaissance, with low points like the everyday "boot on your neck" racial incidents and tensions that exploded into lynching and riots, from Tulsa to Detroit. Each era comes to life: the 1920 pan-Africanism of Marcus Garvey; the return of black veterans from World War II, who expected and rightly demanded full citizenship; and the "televized morality play" of 1960s assaults by fire hoses and police dogs in Birmingham, AL. Contemporary issues addressed include the rise of the black middle class and the concomitant exploding black prison population, as well as major cultural impacts (such as Motown and *Soul Train*) and the election of Obama, which offered the promise of a post-racial future. Gates notes that even after this election, for African Americans it's still "a journey in progress." The series stitches together an incredible variety of film clips and interviews with authors, historians, and political figures, to present a seamless and arresting historical survey, and while Gates' pointed political comments during the last hour will spark some disagreement, this series is likely to long remain the gold standard for its comprehensive treatment. Highly recommended. Editor's Choice. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)



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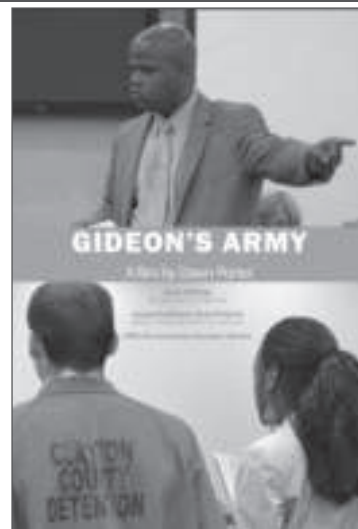
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### Let the Fire Burn ★★½

(2013) 95 min. DVD: \$29.99. Zeitgeist Films (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned.

Relying on comprehensive archival material, filmmaker Jason Osder's searing documentary *Let the Fire Burn* recreates a horrific episode in American race-relations history, during which Philadelphia dropped explosives on its own people. On May 13, 1985, during the tenure of the city's first black mayor, Wilson Goode, a long-running series of clashes between authorities and a radical Afro-centric sect called MOVE came to a showdown. Paramilitary-like police (many were veterans of the infamously brutal Frank Rizzo administration), who previously had a deadly 1978 shootout with MOVE members, laid siege to and ultimately bombed the group's Osage Avenue stronghold. The resulting blaze (that City Hall allowed to burn) killed leader John Africa and 10 disciples, including women and children. While MOVE—despite its proclaimed peace-loving philosophy—certainly comes across as nightmarish to its (black) neighbors, the police strike was nonetheless a heinous and ruinous overreaction that brought a lengthy (but sadly unsatisfactory) public hearing. In the inquest footage, a few adult MOVE members who survived the inferno speak with a mix of cult-brainwashed dogma and devastating common-sense zingers, angrily launched against the city's (mostly white) representatives. Ultimately, however, there is a powerful sense of justice not being served. Extras include a director's Q&A, and a 2002 interview with MOVE survivor Michael Ward. A multiple-award winner, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)



returned as the Southern army managed to retreat to fight another day. The bulk of this documentary focuses on Lincoln's decision to attend the dedication of a cemetery for veterans in Gettysburg, where he delivered his immortal address in which he promised the nation "a new birth of freedom." Some of the interviewees here, including *Lincoln* screenwriter Tony Kushner and General Colin Powell, describe the address as Lincoln's chance to essentially "press the reset button," harkening back to the democratic ideals of the American Revolution with its stated (if not honored) goal of universal human equality. *Lincoln@Gettysburg* sometimes suffers from its dual subject (Lincoln's war and the telegraph), but it is still a potent if also somewhat familiar reminder of Lincoln's greatness and humanity during a time of terrible national and personal trials (Lincoln was also worried about his desperately ill son when he made his speech). Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

### Meltdown: The Fukushima Disaster

★★★

(2012) 45 min. DVD: \$225. National Film Board of Canada. PPR.

Co-produced by the National Film Board of Canada and the Japan Broadcasting Corporation, *Meltdown: The Fukushima Disaster* revisits the tense hours in the control room of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant on March 11, 2011, after the largest earthquake to strike Japan in recorded history generated a 30-foot tsunami that overwhelmed the facility's seawall and knocked out its emergency generators. Employing

dramatic re-creations and animation, directors Wally Longul and Akihiko Nakai show how design flaws, misunderstandings, and mistakes combined to cause a meltdown that in hindsight was entirely preventable. The statistics—150,000 left homeless, more than a million buildings destroyed or damaged—might seem cold and abstract without interviews of survivors or stories of how individuals were affected, but as a blow-by-blow account of what went wrong with Fukushima No. 1, *Meltdown* effectively chronicles that story. Presented in both French and English versions, this National Film Board of Canada release is recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Gardner)

### Pussy Riot: A Punk Prayer ★★★

(2014) 88 min. In Russian w/English subtitles. DVD: \$29.95. Docurama (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Co-directors Mike Lerner and Maxim Pozdorovkin's fast-moving documentary premiered while two members of the feminist art collective Pussy Riot were still incarcerated for a world-headline-making 2012 church protest. After looking at that key event that landed Nadia, Katia, and Masha in prison, the film backtracks to the reelection of Vladimir Putin, the man who inspired the group's formation. Nadia explains that the group chose the Russian Orthodox Church because "it symbolizes the union of church and state." Her father, Andrei, supported her efforts, and even contributed lyrics to the performed song "A Punk Prayer," but Katia's father, Stanislav, regrets that the women didn't choose a lower profile location. After being arrested, the

women stayed in a detention center while opposition groups voiced their support. One Orthodox practitioner describes Nadia as a "demon with a brain," while Western celebrities such as Yoko Ono and Madonna speak out on their behalf. If these young women come across as somewhat naïve and idealistic, it's also hard to sympathize with local media figures who characterize them as a destructive force, even though they did no harm to the church. After six months, a trial unfolds during which the women watch from cages (which seems barbaric). By refusing to repent, they seal their fate, albeit while scoring a moral victory. As Masha says to the court, "Nobody can take my inner freedom." A clear-eyed documentary about an unusual act of political protest (all of the women are now free), this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

### Red Metal: The Copper Country Strike of 1913 ★★★

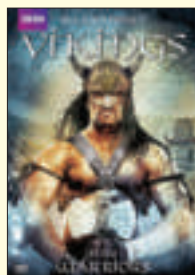
(2013) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-033-6.

A hundred years ago, Michigan's Upper Peninsula was rich in copper deposits, which were needed for America's rapidly growing industrial might. However, copper was located deep underground, and mining for it was dirty, dangerous work, requiring long hours spent in damp, dark conditions. The Calumet and Hecla mining company often hired immigrants, many just off the boat, dividing workers into ethnic groups, and mostly paying them low wages. This PBS-aired documentary by filmmaker Jonathan Silvers highlights an often forgotten worker effort to unionize the mines, which was followed by a bloody 1913 strike, and a tragic fire in a labor hall that killed 73 people (many of whom were children). Employees lived in company-owned houses, shopped in company stores, and went to company controlled hospitals and libraries. The company resisted all union efforts, refusing to negotiate, and cutting the number of workers by bringing in bulky one-man drills, which resulted in unsafe workplace conditions. Any sign of labor activism was met with professional strike breakers, company spies, and the state National Guard, while the equally militant union accepted the help of the Western Federation of Miners, which employed the radical language of class warfare. Topics covered here include the pivotal role of women in supporting the strike; the company's rigid, race-based attitudes in dealing with ethnic groups; and inflammatory rhetoric, such as the company's vow that "grass will grow in the streets" before they would bargain with the union. Events culminated after Christmas 1913, when workers held a morale-building party in a large hall, which was disrupted when unknown parties shouted "fire!"; resulting in a deadly stampede. The strike

### Vikings ★★½

(2012) 177 min. DVD: \$24.98. BBC Worldwide Ltd. (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned.

Neil Oliver serves as host and narrator for this three-part BBC-aired documentary series that attempts to shine some realistic light on the often exaggerated reputation that history has bestowed on the Vikings. Oliver travels across Scandinavia to visit archeological sites that offer clues to the transformative rise of the Vikings from farmers to aggressive warriors whose power reached as far as the Middle East. While the image of the Vikings as sword-swinging ruffians remains popular, historical evidence suggests a somewhat more sophisticated reality that included a shrewd understanding of foreign trade, a highly flexible ability to colonize distant lands, and an early embrace of the Christian faith. Alas, the one thing the Vikings failed to do was to firmly establish their own historical record. After the death of the last great Viking monarch, King Canute, in 1035, the story of the Vikings was either mostly forgotten or rewritten by future non-Scandinavian historians with little regard to the facts—most egregiously in the image of Vikings wearing horned helmets (there is no evidence to support that fashion statement). Offering a fascinating deconstruction of a much-mythologized group in early European history, this is highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (P. Hall)



eventually failed, setting labor's cause back for decades, although the federal government began to take a more active role in settling strikes. A solid overview of a little-known historical episode that still carries lessons for us today, this is recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

### Uprising: The Birth of the Egyptian Revolution ★★★

(2012) 85 min. In English & Arabic w/English subtitles. DVD: \$195. Zeitgeist Films. PPR.

The revolution that toppled Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak from power in 2011 can no longer be described in unreservedly effusive terms as the beginning of true Egyptian democracy, following the military coup in 2013. But it remains a remarkable key element of the so-called Arab Spring movement. Fredrik Stanton's *Uprising* (which doesn't extend past the summer of 2012, when the now-deposed Mohamed Morsi was elected president) expertly charts the course of events. After a brief introduction sketching the decades of dictatorship and repression that prevailed until the beginning of 2011, the documentary shifts to chronologically arranged footage of the January demonstrations, which began peacefully but grew in size and intensity as security forces became increasingly violent in their efforts to dispel the crowds. Interspersed throughout are reflections by protest organizers and participants, as well as comments from academics, government officials, and diplomats from both the Middle East and the United States. *Uprising* gives some shape to the chaotic street battles, while also helping to explain how the tide turned against Mubarak, forcing him to resign. If *Uprising* doesn't tell the whole story, it nonetheless

offers much insight, presciently concluding with the observation that the struggle for democracy in Egypt is ongoing. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

### What the Allies Knew ★★★

(2012) 70 min. DVD: \$149 (\$349 w/PPR). Kino Lorber Edu.

Countering the popular view (which is generally disavowed by scholars of World War II) that Hitler's so-called Final Solution—i.e., the extermination of European Jewry—remained unknown to Allied governments until the liberation of the death camps, Virginie Linhart's sober documentary presents a compilation of compelling archival footage that clearly demonstrates such was not the case. World leaders were aware of the genocide as early as 1941—Stalin first, but Churchill, de Gaulle, and Roosevelt soon after—and chose to suppress or minimize the reports they were receiving from intelligence agencies and diplomats in order not to inflame public prejudices and undermine the war effort. Some of the most interesting material here shows Stalin using appeals from notable Russian Jews to encourage financial aid from the outside world to support Soviet resistance to German invasion, and government figures in Great Britain and the United States (as well as other countries) maneuvering to prevent Jews from fleeing Nazi-occupied areas even though doing so essentially doomed them. Attention is also paid to a consideration toward the end of the war to use bombing to stop the continuing slaughter, although ultimately it was decided that such a mission would be impractical and ineffective. A solid documentary that puts to rest a longstanding myth, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)



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## TRAVEL & GEOGRAPHY

### Discoveries...America National Parks: Japanese American Incarceration 1942-1945 ★★½

(2013) 56 min. DVD or Blu-ray: \$24.95. Bennett-Watt HD Productions. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-60490-172-6 (dvd), 978-1-60490-195-5 (blu-ray).

This unusual entry in Jim and Kelly Watt's acclaimed *Discoveries...America National Parks* series focuses on the incarceration "camps" that imprisoned Japanese-American U.S. citizens during World War II. Combining archival materials with contemporary research (including video interviews of camp survivors), the film touches on the history of how and why peaceful Japanese-Americans were considered dangerous following Japan's air assault on Pearl Harbor in December 1941. But most of the attention here is on what has been done by federal and state governments to preserve and restore such camps as Poston, Manzanar, Minidoka, and Tule Lake. In some cases, little remains in such places aside from signs commemorating the former imprisonment of innocent people. At other sites, however, much of the basic camp infrastructure is still in place, albeit in disrepair. Viewers learn about efforts to make these places a draw for visitors—largely as a reminder of a shameful chapter in U.S. history, but also as a symbol of the resilience of Japanese-Americans who lost everything (including their freedom). Full of powerful personal testimonies, this eye-opening travelogue is highly recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

## BIOGRAPHY

### Better Things: The Life and Choices of Jeffrey Catherine Jones ★★★

(2014) 82 min. DVD: \$29.95 (avail. from most distributors), \$349 w/PPR (avail. from [www.kinolorberedu.com](http://www.kinolorberedu.com)). Kino Lorber.

Maria Paz Cabardo's biographical documentary combines interview excerpts, artwork, and archival material to provide an insightful sketch of renowned comic book illustrator Jeffrey Catherine Jones (1944-2011), who marched to his (later her) own drummer both personally and professionally. Much of the presentation consists of an extraordinarily revealing autobiographical conversation with Jones (illustrated with stills) that covers his childhood, education, career choices, and relationships. Jones' reminiscences are interwoven with recollections from an array of admiring colleagues, including some with whom he famously shared space in a Manhattan studio in the 1970s. Examples of his unique fantasy artwork—both comic covers and standalone paintings—provide

further context. Contributions from Jones' ex-wife and daughter, along with the son of short-lived fellow artist Vaughn Bodé, delve into major aspects of Jones' personal life, including his relationship with Bodé, long-time transvestitism, and ultimate decision to undergo hormone replacement therapy. Jones' later years (which included a nervous breakdown) are treated somewhat perfunctorily, but *Better Things* closes with poignant remarks from an obviously frail Jones about coming to terms with death—comments that serve as a fitting conclusion to this touching portrait of a complex, troubled, but undoubtedly talented human being. Especially for stronger American art collections, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

### Big Joy: The Adventures of James Broughton ★★★

(2013) 82 min. DVD: \$149 (\$349 w/PPR). Kino Lorber Edu.

Stylistically, filmmaker Stephen Silha's documentary mirrors the *joie de vivre* of its subject, James Broughton, a gay filmmaker-poet who was part of the San Francisco Renaissance (a movement that inspired the Beat poets). While celebrating the exuberance with which Broughton embraced life (with injunctions like "follow your weird" and "when in doubt, twirl"), the film doesn't overlook the many personal difficulties he confronted, including a father who died young, a mother who humiliated him for his effeminacy, a relationship with the young Pauline Kael that ended unhappily, a marriage that derailed when he found himself in love with Joel Singer (a

student 35 years younger), and estrangement from his children, only one of whom agreed to participate here. But the overwhelming attitude is ebullience, combining clips from Broughton's inventive short films (including an extended excerpt from *The Bed*, a 1967 effort featuring the titular piece of furniture rolling down a hillside before coming to rest in a field and hosting assorted occupants); largely appreciative interviews with ex-wife Suzanna Hart, friends, colleagues, and Singer (as well as voiceover reminiscences by Kael); readings from his poetry; and loads of archival footage—including scenes of Broughton lecturing and teaching. An engaging portrait of a quintessential free spirit, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

### Dante: The First Renaissance Man

★★★

(2013) 80 min. DVD: \$19.99. Kultur International Films (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-0-7697-5082-8.

Malcolm Hossick's documentary offers a rich cultural introduction to the life and times of Dante Alighieri. Born in 1265, Dante was a poet, ambassador, scholar, and fierce defender of his Italian city-state home of Florence (where a protracted battle for control played out between secular and papist powers). The Church of Rome was the pre-eminent authority in Italy—amassing power and wealth for its rulers while suppressing individuality and anti-doctrinal thought in common people—until the arrival of the Renaissance period that saw the rediscovery of pre-Christian writings from the Greeks

### Glickman ★★½

(2014) 83 min. DVD: \$19.98. HBO Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).

Many are aware that the great African American runner Jesse Owens humiliated Hitler when he triumphed during the 1936 Berlin Olympics, but few are likely to be familiar with the related story of one of Owens' teammates, 18-year-old Brooklyn native Marty Glickman. Two days before he was scheduled to compete as part of the U.S. 400-meter relay team, Glickman and teammate Sam Stoller were abruptly pulled in favor of Owens and Ralph Metcalfe; Owens vehemently protested the decision, but to no avail. The fact that Glickman and Stoller were the only Jewish members of the U.S. track team was no coincidence, and Glickman claimed that the Americans were under pressure from their Nazi hosts not to run Jewish athletes (although black runners were apparently not a problem for the Aryan Olympic organizers). More than six decades would pass before the U.S. Olympic Committee formally apologized for how the runners were treated. Filmmaker James L. Freedman's HBO-aired documentary highlights the shameful anti-Semitism of the 1936 Olympics, but also celebrates Glickman's second career as one of the pioneer sportscasters of the postwar years. Glickman's colorful command of the language and his enthusiastic play-by-play descriptions made him a fan favorite across a number of professional sports, and he influenced a second wave of commentators including Marv Albert and Spencer Ross. This is an entertaining documentary that offers a wonderful tribute to Glickman's talents and his ability to re-invent himself. DVD extras include an introduction by Freedman, sports broadcasts by Glickman, and a remembrance by Albert, Bob Costas, and Jim Brown. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)



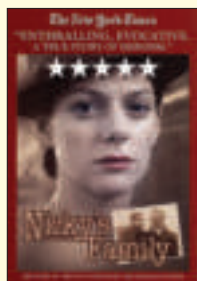
(Plato, Aristotle, etc.) and Romans (Virgil, Ovid, etc.), works that focused on ordinary human experience and expression. Caught up in the fight for the soul of Florence, Dante was exiled forever from his birthplace, although not before writing *La Vita Nuova*, his unique contribution to the genre of unrequited love poetry. Dante eventually found patronage in Verona and began work on what would become his masterpiece, the three-part epic poem trilogy *The Divine Comedy*, pointedly written in Italian rather than the more customary Latin. Combining insightful narration, location filming, and period artwork and illustrations, this guided tour offers a fine overview of a titan of world literature. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (T. Keogh)

### Marvin Hamlisch: What He Did for Love

★★★★1/2

(2013) 84 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-032-9.

Popular composer and music prodigy Marvin Hamlisch (1944-2012) heard music in everyday sounds, whether it was the wind rustling through trees or the knocking at a door. Although trained in classical music, Hamlisch was drawn to popular songs and Broadway musicals. Dori Berinstein's PBS-aired *American Masters* tribute describes the life and career of the "ultimate chameleon," whose only constant was to "make it Marvin." At an early age, Hamlisch secured a gig as a rehearsal pianist for *Funny Girl*, where he formed a lifelong personal and professional friendship with Barbra Streisand. In short order he won three Oscars for one year (1973: two for *The Way We Were* and one for *The Sting*, which renewed the popularity of ragtime music). Hamlisch quickly went on to collaborate on the landmark musical *A Chorus Line* (which helped revitalize a sagging Broadway in the 1970s). With such amazing early success, some wondered if Hamlisch had peaked too soon. After the death of *Chorus Line* choreographer Michael Bennett, Hamlisch sometimes had problems finding compatible musical partners. Fortunately, he could always fall back on performing: a natural stage presence, Hamlisch loved chatting up and entertaining his audience. In numerous archival film clips and interviews here, Hamlisch describes his efforts to find a balance in his personal and professional life, which was fortunately resolved later in life when he enjoyed a happy marriage. Streisand, Carole King, Quincy Jones, Christopher Walken, the composer's wife, and many friends describe the man as the "ultimate mensch," never too busy to support a colleague or community symphony orchestra. Also featuring home movies and clips from the composer's memorial service, this biographical portrait serves up a fine appreciation of a prodigy who left us all too soon. DVD extras include bonus footage, and "making-of" recordings



### Nicky's Family ★★ ★1/2

(2013) 96 min. DVD: \$29.95. Menemsha Films (avail. from most distributors).

In 1938, British stockbroker Nicholas Winton was in Czechoslovakia on a skiing trip when he witnessed the beginnings of Nazi plans for the Jewish population. Rather than waiting for governments or nonprofit organizations to mount a relief effort, Winton took it upon himself to save as many Jewish children as possible, resulting in the successful transport of 669 Czech and Slovak children to safety in Great Britain before war overtook Europe. For many years after the war, Winton refused to call attention to his extraordinary work—even his wife was unaware of what he accomplished, although she would discover the evidence of his heroism in papers and photographs in their attic in 1988, after which Winton's story was belatedly heralded in the British media, and he was knighted and nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize (in 2008). Matej Mináč's documentary serves up an invigorating retelling of the story of the man (now 104 years old) dubbed "Britain's Schindler," and of the many children he saved, some of whom here relate how his example inspired them to devote their lives to humanitarian efforts. The film has a few awkward moments—notably in less-than-compelling dramatic re-enactments—and Winton himself is only briefly seen in short interviews, but this is a marvelous tribute to one of the unsung heroes of the Holocaust. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

from *A Chorus Line*. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)

### Melvin & Jean: An American Story

★★★

(2012) 60 min. DVD: \$295. Filmmakers Library (dist. by Alexander Street Press). PPR. ISBN: 978-1-4631-1827-3.

African American couple Melvin and Jean McNair live in France, as have many Americans who have either committed crimes or faced penalties for perceived misdeeds, such as the writers of the "Blacklist Era." The McNairs face arrest if they return to the United States, so director Maia Wechsler divides her time between France and the U.S., where she interviews Melvin's siblings, Kate and James, who recall facing segregation while growing up in North Carolina. Melvin lost his college scholarship after participating in a protest, so he joined the Army and served in Germany, where he suffered discrimination from fellow soldiers. After being joined by his wife, Jean, Melvin dropped out to stay with her and their baby rather than serve in Vietnam (the pair would have a second child a few years later). Afterward, the McNairs went into hiding in Detroit, where in an act of political resistance in 1972 they hijacked a jet to Florida with three other African American activists, and from there, flew to Algeria to join Eldridge Cleaver's Black Panther Party conclave. When that community fell apart, the McNairs fled to Paris, where they found refuge with a left-leaning white family (by this point, they had sent their children to live with their parents). In 1976, authorities caught up with the couple, who stood trial in France. Although they were allowed to remain, more legal and personal challenges would lie ahead. In the decades since, the McNairs have poured their energies into youth

programs in provincial Caen, where they serve as mentors for at-risk youth. The pair have even befriended the pilot of the plane they hijacked, but America still remains off-limits to them—and that may never change. An intriguing profile of a couple's experiences (and the consequences) during the greatest period of political protest in 20th-century America, this is recommended. Aud: C. P. (K. Fennessy)

### Who Bombed Judi Bari? ★★ ★1/2

(2012) 93 min. DVD: \$49; public libraries & high schools; \$175; colleges & universities. Green Planet Films. PPR.

On May 24, 1990, in Oakland, CA, a bomb exploded in a car carrying Earth First! activists Judi Bari and Darryl Cherney. Both survived, only to be arrested and charged with transporting explosives. The charges were dropped, but Bari and Cherney sued the FBI and the Oakland Police Department for falsifying evidence in their attempt to discredit the pair's prominence within the environmental movement. Bari died from breast cancer in 1997, but before her passing she offered cogent testimony in a videotaped deposition as part of her civil lawsuit. Director Mary Liz Thomson's *Who Bombed Judi Bari?*, which was produced by Cherney, relies heavily on other video depositions from the lawsuit as well as TV news coverage of the 1990 bombing and Bari's activism prior to the attack. Bari and Cherney's style actually seemed like a throwback to the early 1960s brand of social protest: the duo used folk music to rouse attention and sought to build links between seemingly disparate segments of American society. Although Bari achieved posthumous vindication via her lawsuit, the mystery of who planted the bomb in the car

was never resolved. Offering a stirring tribute to Bari's life and her indefatigable spirit, this multifaceted documentary is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

## A Woman Like That ★★1/2

(2010) 93 min. DVD or Blu-ray: \$199; high schools & public libraries; \$299; colleges & universities. 7th Street Film Syndicate. PPR. ISBN: 978-0-982823-00-2 (dvd), 978-0-982823-01-9 (blu-ray).

Artemisia Gentileschi was one of the few notable female painters during Italy's 17th-century Baroque era. Because of her ambition to succeed in a male-dominated world—as well as her courage in testifying against a teacher whom she claimed raped her—she's been embraced as a heroine by feminists. Certainly Artemisia is seen as a role model by documentarian Ellen Weissbrod, whose *A Woman Like That* melds biographical details with tales of the filmmaker's own personal and professional struggles—including being refused permission to shoot at a traveling exhibit of Artemisia's works (Weissbrod responded by surreptitiously sneaking a camera into the museum, a ploy played here more as amusing caper than opportunity to reveal much about Artemisia's art). Weissbrod does manage to photograph canvases in private hands, conversing with their owners, and she adds commentary from art historians and dealers about Artemisia's depiction of female nudes and strong women (such as the biblical Judith, who slew Holofernes), while also incorporating lots of person-on-the-street interviews with museum-goers who express their admiration for the paintings and their maker. The film also features some curious re-enactments by students and readings from the artist's letters. Unfortunately, the final product feels self-indulgent, not only due to Weissbrod's constant reiteration of how Artemisia's problems reflect her own, but also in her technical choices, which include plenty of split-screen images and overlapping sound. Extras include deleted scenes. A mixed bag of a film, there is enough insight here to make this a strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

## Video Librarian Online

Visit Video Librarian Online ([www.videolibrarian.com](http://www.videolibrarian.com)) for more reviews during May and June, including: *100 Years of Wrigley Field*, *Always Faithful*, *A Cut Above: The Legend of Larry Roberts*, *Forward 13: Waking Up the American Dream*, *The Kalusz I Thought I Knew*, *Kiss the Water*, *Mike Tyson: Undisputed Truth*, and much more!

## Series Update

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

Newly available from Lionsgate and HIT Entertainment are **Thomas & Friends: Railway Mischief** (56 min., DVD: \$14.98), **Thomas & Friends: Spills & Thrills** (67 min., DVD: \$14.98), and **Thomas & Friends: Trouble on the Tracks** (57 min. DVD: \$14.98), featuring Thomas the talking train engine and his pals who live on the Island of Sodor. See review of *Thomas & Friends: Percy's Chocolate Crunch & Other Thomas Adventures* in VL-3/03.



Fox Home Entertainment has recently released **Strawberry Shortcake: Berry Big Help** (66 min., DVD: \$14.98), which follows sweet computer-animated protagonist Strawberry Shortcake in a three-episode compilation. See review of *Strawberry Shortcake: Spring for Strawberry Shortcake* in VL-5/03.

PBS Home Video is releasing another collection from one of its popular preschool series with the six-story compilation **Caillou: Caillou's Garden Adventures** (50 min., DVD: \$9.99). See review of *Caillou: Let's Go Sledding* in VL-11/13.

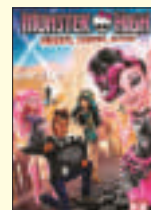
Lionsgate and LeapFrog Enterprises are back with the newest addition to their problem-solving educational series: **LeapFrog Letter Factory Adventures: The Letter Machine Rescue Team** (35 min., DVD: \$14.98), which follows the Frog Family and pals, who here work as junior engineers and learn about adjectives and consonant blends. See review of *LeapFrog—Scout & Friends: The Magnificent Museum of Opposite Words* in VL-3/13.

Merging music and deaf culture through the creation of "deaf-centric" music videos for popular songs, the second volume in D-PAN's (Deaf Performing Artists Network) music series, **It's Everybody's Music: Volume Two** (43 min., DVD: \$19.99), features tunes from the White Stripes, Carly Rae Jepsen, and Owl City. See review of *It's Everybody's Music: Volume One* in VL Online-8/09. Avail-



able from: D-PAN, 1581 East 9 Mile Rd., Ferndale, MI 48220; web: [d-pan.org](http://d-pan.org).

Draculaura and her pals travel to Transylvania to search for the true Vampire Queen in **Monster High: Frights, Camera, Action!** (74 min., DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$26.98), the latest feature-length movie from Universal Studios Home Entertainment's popular computer-animated series based on the toy franchise. See review of *Monster High: Ghouls Rule* in VL-1/13.



The latest compilation from the popular series, Shout! Factory Kids' **My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic—A Dash of Awesome** (120 min., DVD: \$14.95) showcases the antics of spirited young pony Rainbow Dash in five episodes (plus a bonus sing-along). See review of *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic—Royal Pony Wedding* in VL-11/12.

Universal Studios Home Entertainment has released **Barbie: The Pearl Princess** (74 min., DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$26.98), the latest addition to the popular computer-animated series featuring the plastic doll, appearing here as a magical mermaid named Lumina who wants to be a princess. See review of *Barbie: The Princess & the Popstar* in VL-11/12.

**Happy Birthday Barney** (64 min., DVD: \$9.98), the newest program in Lionsgate and HIT Entertainment's long-running children's series starring big purple dinosaur Barney, features the episodes "It's Your Birthday, Barney!", "Caring," and "The Magic Lamp." See review of *Barney's Beach Party* in VL-5/02.

The latest volume in Ambrose Video's instructional series hosted by geographer Dr. Alexander B. Murphy, the nine-part **Advanced Placement Human Geography: Making Sense of Planet Earth** (DVD: 5 discs, \$249.99) is designed for advanced placement teaching and includes an 80-page educator's guide. See review of *Human Geography: Making Sense of Planet Earth* in VL-11/13. Available from: Ambrose Video, 145 W. 45th St., Suite 1115, New York, NY 10036; tel: 800-526-4663; web: [ambrosevideo.com](http://ambrosevideo.com).



## Aesthetica of a Rogue Hero ★★

(2012) 4 discs. 300 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$64.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4210-2766-6.



Many anime series feature far-out action-adventure with small, sexy sidebars of “fan service.” This “boobie show” (as the English-dub cast calls it during a frank bonus audio commentary) shifts the balance in the other direction. Young people with “summoning syndrome” are suddenly able to teleport to other dimensions of heroic fantasy, often returning home with paranormal mojo. Akatsuki is a cocksure fighter and flippant ladies’ man, who is now back in Japan after escapades on the world of Alayzard. Akatsuki brings home a special, oft-naked souvenir: Miu, bosomy daughter of an evildoer Akatsuki slew in battle. Mysteriously sworn to protect the pneumatic, pink-haired princess, Akatsuki passes Miu off as his amnesiac teen sister when both enroll in Babel, a high school studying young returnees from other worlds in order to gauge what magic they’ve gleaned. Akatsuki claims to be magic-resistant, but sinister types behind Babel have a prophecy that he will become all-powerful, leading forces in two worlds to conspire against the pair. Only halfway through the series do things finally become mildly dangerous and engaging. Presenting all 12 episodes from 2012 in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, rated TV-MA, extras include episode commentaries and short comedy videos (that raise the T&A quotient even higher). Optional, at best. (C. Cassidy)

## BTOOOM! Complete Collection ★★½

(2012) 300 min. DVD: 3 discs, \$59.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$69.98. Sentai Filmworks (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-6161-5419-6 (dvd), 978-1-6161-5420-2 (Blu-ray).



Twenty-two-year-old slacker Ryuta is a top ranked player of the popular *BTOOOM!* video game, but his expertise is put to an extreme test when he wakes up one day and finds himself on an island, immersed in a live-action version of his favorite game. In this case, however, the contestants play for keeps—with real ammunition used to annihilate the competitors. As Ryuta navigates his way through this deadly world of warcraft, the story interweaves flashbacks that recall Ryuta’s tense relationship with his mother (other unwilling participant players also have flashbacks detailing disturbing incidents from their past). Although the violence is often graphic, it never seems gratuitous, and the story’s disturbing psychological thrills are consistently smart. One minor quibble would be the too-early explanation

of the entity behind the island-based game, which somewhat dilutes the sense of mystery and fear towards the end. Nonetheless, the 12-episode 2012 series *BTOOOM!* is both striking and compelling. Presented on a dual-language set, rated TV-MA, this is highly recommended. (P. Hall)

## Girls & Panzer: Complete TV Series ★★

(2012) 300 min. DVD: 3 discs, \$59.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$69.98. Sentai Filmworks (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-6161-5415-8 (dvd), 978-1-6161-5416-5 (Blu-ray).



Now here is a concept that almost seems tailor-made for anime: the madcap antics of bubbly high school girls in an armored tank. The central character here is Miho, who enrolls at the Oarai Academy specifically because the school *doesn’t* have a tank training program. To Miho’s horror, the academy suddenly adds a required “tankery” class. Miho, who had an upsetting tank-based incident at another school, eventually overcomes her loathing of tanks and quickly joins her classmates in cleaning their vehicles and participating in war games with rival girls’ schools. Along the way, the girls learn quasi-lessons about teamwork, overconfidence, overcoming fears, and—of course—plotting military maneuvers. Despite a relatively compact 12-episode stretch, the 2012 series *Girls & Panzer* ultimately feels like a weird joke stretched to the fraying point. Miho is not particularly engaging, her classmates are fairly one-dimensional, and even the war games are not all that exciting. Presented in a dual-language set, rated TV-14, this is not a necessary purchase. (P. Hall)

## Jormungand: The Complete First Season ★★

(2012) 4 discs. 300 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$64.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4210-2781-X.



The heroine of this manga-derived, non-sci-fi battle-adventure series is Koko Hekmatyar—a last name cleverly borrowed from a notorious real-life Afghan warlord. She’s a striking, pale young woman—known as the “Little Lady”—who is part of the family-run, international arms-dealing business known as HCLI. Koko purports to be ethical, claiming that HCLI’s seeding of world trouble-spots with high-quality weapons actually increases the peace (she and her crew also routinely kill the worst-behaved militia leaders, customers, and rivals). A fresh recruit to Koko’s loyal team of mercenaries is Jonah, an orphaned boy soldier who hates firearms yet is a prodigy as a sniper/gunfighter. Thanks to his skills, Jonah is hired as Koko’s bodyguard and becomes her surrogate little brother. The English-dub

version name-checks Quentin Tarantino, which seems appropriate for the overall vibe and characterizations of this series that also features lengthy philosophizing about gun-runner morality (as well as female nudity and some R-level language—although the violence and bloodshed are mostly stylized). Presenting all 12 episodes from the 2012 first season in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, rated TV-MA, extras include a lighthearted discussion with American voice director Christopher Bevins about the English-dub casting process. Recommended. [Note: *Jormungand: The Complete Second Season* is also newly available.] (C. Cassidy)

## Kamisama Kiss: The Complete Series ★★

(2012) 5 discs. 325 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$54.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4210-2816-6.



Covering early storylines from the manga series by Julietta Suzuki, *Kamisama Kiss* begins with homeless Nanami rescuing a strange man from a dog, whereupon the man gives her his home and walks off. Nanami soon finds that the house is a shrine and she has become the new Land God, complete with duties and attendants. This anime series treads a lot of familiar territory, with its kind but initially hapless teenage girl, cute childlike helpers, bevy of smitten boys (who happen to be supernatural monsters), and sulkily sexy male “familiar,” or servant. Tomoe (who is literally foxy) resents being in the service of a squishy mortal who has godly power and doesn’t know a thing about taking care of a shrine. Whether or not the two will eventually fall in love is not really in question, but watching them reach that point is pleasantly amusing and occasionally touching. Nanami is a likeable heroine, and Tomoe’s gruff exterior results from a dark past. Offering sharp and appealing animation coupled with engaging voice acting, *Kamisama Kiss* is presented in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, rated TV-PG, that compiles all 13 episodes from 2012, with extras including audio and video commentaries. Although it serves up nothing new under the reverse-harem sun, this is nevertheless a sweet and playful series. Recommended. (L. Martincik)

## Naruto Shippuden—The Movie: Blood Prison ★★

(2011) 102 min. DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$24.98. Viz Media (avail. from most distributors).



The hugely popular, multi-volume *Naruto* fantasy franchise (with extensive manga, anime, and video game versions) centers on the

perilous adventures of a headstrong teen warrior-ninja—one of many such guardian-types in his beloved village—who sports awesome “Chakra” superpowers. In this 2011 feature-length anime, ramen-loving Naruto Uzumaki is framed for a crime he didn’t commit and forsaken by his friends (a conspiracy pulled off so absurdly easily it’s no surprise that it turns out to be a narrative trick). Naruto lands in an escape-proof island prison, where disgraced ninjas dwell in enforced harmony, bound with spells that not only stifle their martial magic but will also kill them if they stray too far from formidable warden Mui. Of course, Naruto still makes rebelling and escaping a part of his regular routine—inspiring the other inmates—and in the process learns that power-hungry secret societies are behind all of this, harboring a scheme to open a dangerous “Box of Enlightenment” of wish-granting mojo. Ultimately, the plot turns into a monster-vs.-ninja smackdown reuniting many of the *Naruto* past cast members, including a giant toad and an immense hip-hop cross between a bull and an octopus. Needless to say, all of this will make more sense to longstanding fans of the series. Presented on DVD and Blu-ray in a dual-language edition, rated TV-14, extras include a bonus Naruto short, an interview with Japanese voice actress Junko Takeuchi, and an art gallery. Recommended. (C. Cassady)

### Nyan Koi! Complete Collection ★★1/2

(2009) 300 min. DVD: 3 discs, \$59.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$69.98. Sentai Filmworks (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-6161-5335-9 (dvd), 978-1-6161-5398-4 (blu-ray).



Based on manga comics, this goofy-to-grating TV anime series focuses on hapless high-schooler Junpei Kosaka, who—despite his severe allergy to cats—is able to understand feline language. Because Junpei accidentally broke a sacred temple-cat statue, he is committed to doing good deeds for at least 100 of the many cats who now seek him out (if he doesn’t, he’ll turn into a cat himself—and still be allergic!). This magical premise mainly furlines a typical classroom-centered “harem comedy” formula, as Junpei is infatuated with classmate Kaede Mizuno but also draws the attention of Kanako Sumiyoshi, Junpei’s childhood playmate (now an aggressive beauty with an impressive bustline). And the notice of a wealthy sheltered daughter of yakuza gangsters. And twin girls with paranormal savvy about Junpei’s curse. And a clichéd lady athletic coach with Sapphic tendencies. Fans will be attracted to the abundant Japanese cultural references/parodies here, and the female nudity and panty-

flash cheesecake elements are mild-ish for the genre. Presenting all 12 episodes from 2009 in a dual-language set, rated TV-14, this briskly-paced series is a strong optional purchase. (C. Cassady)

### OniAi: Complete Series

★★  
(2012) 4 discs. 300 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$49.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4210-2774-7.



Jean-Luc Godard once famously said that all you need for a movie plot is a guy, a girl, and a gun. The anime corollary would only require an innocent young guy surrounded by seductive girls. Although derived from both a novel and a manga, *OniAi* is a reductionist sitcom with a well-worn “harem” plot, stripped (an apt choice of words) to its bare (ditto) essentials. Transfer-student Akito, a pure-hearted 16-year-old virgin, resides in a school dormitory where he is ever-besieged by libidinous young female classmates determined to sleep with him. The ultra-competitive harem includes busty, eye-patch-wearing, aggressively bisexual class president Arashi, and...Akito’s very own sister, Akiko—a reader of Japanese “forbidden love” novels who thinks of little besides how to entice the boy into consensual incest/marriage. Even at his part-time job—freelancing for a publisher (some jabs at Nippon literature here)—polite Akito is amorously pursued by his curvy cougar editrix. *OniAi* is chockfull of double entendres, panty flashes, nipple slips, and gratuitous swimsuit shopping, although the sex remains only talk (except for the bonus mini-shorts showcasing the femme cast in softcore lesbian clinches). Presenting all 12 episodes from 2012 in a Japanese-language-only set (with English subtitles), rated TV-MA, this is not a necessary purchase. (C. Cassady)

### Robotics;Notes 1

★★★★1/2  
(2012) 4 discs. 275 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$64.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4210-2830-1.

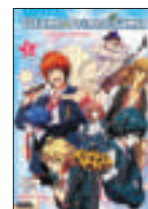


Cleverly mixing classroom dramedy with darker conspiracy overtones, *Robotics;Notes* is set in a Japanese high school in the near future. A once-great student robot-building society is nearly offline, down to just two members: the spirited Akiho (whose elder sister went on to an illustrious career in technology) and the less motivated Kaito, a rather apathetic gamer dude. Akiho is determined not just to win in national robotics contests but also finish the club’s long-mothballed project, GunBuild-1, a giant replica of a classic an-

ime mecha hero (whose TV show suffered a rash of mysterious, unsolved slayings of key production personnel and embargoing of the final episode). A few lucky finds and transfers in the student ranks eventually furnish the Robot Research Club with unexpected talent. Meanwhile, Kaito meets a ghostlike AI (in the form of a winsome girl, naturally), putting him on the trail of her missing/presumed dead creator, who might have stumbled on a NASA cover-up of an impending catastrophe. Full of Japanese pop-cultural references, social-media jargon, secret societies, and near-subliminal references to the same producers’ *Chaos;Head* and *Steins;Gate* series (with which *Robotics;Notes* forms a verrry loose trilogy), this is a smart, superior anime entry. Presenting the first 11 episodes from 2012 in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, rated TV-14, extras include episode commentaries and an interview with the English-language scripters. Recommended. [Note: *Robotics;Notes 2* is also newly available.] (C. Cassady)

### Uta no Prince Sama: Complete Collection, Season 1 ★★

(2011) 325 min. DVD: 3 discs, \$49.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$59.98. Sentai Filmworks (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-6161-5368-7 (dvd), 978-1-6161-5434-9 (blu-ray).



A minor-key “shojo” (girl-oriented) anime series—inspired by a dating-simulation video game—*Uta no Prince Sama* (which could be loosely translated as “I love princes a lot!”) takes place at Saotome Academy, a performing-arts boarding-school founded and staffed by former pop-star idols (including a gender-bending transvestite). Despite uncertain piano chops and a lack of confidence, good-hearted heroine Haruka Nanami is accepted in the elite institute and finds herself in a typical “harem” situation, collaborating on notes, lyrics, and drama with six very different guy classmates. Each seems to regard the guileless girl with bubblegum-colored hair as his muse. In another common trope, rules forbid any student romance, although that doesn’t stop the set-list of hunky “princes” from attempting to concoct love songs with Haruka. Foremost is brooding Tokiya, an established chart-topper who lost his melodic mojo in a car accident and subsequent music-industry machinations, and is now masquerading incognito (à la Hannah Montana) as his own twin brother. Featuring J-pop boy band tunes, this is an inoffensive if also rather bland series. Presenting all 13 episodes from the 2011 debut season in a Japanese-language-only set (with English subtitles), rated TV-14, this is an optional purchase. (C. Cassady)

# '83 US Festival: Days 1-3

★★★1/2

(2013) 135 min. DVD: \$19.95.  
Music Video Distributors  
(avail. from most distributors).



The US Festival—brainchild of Apple's other "Steve" (Wozniak)—was a sunny California three-day blowout concert held during the 1983 Memorial Day weekend, featuring a wide (and somewhat discordant) array of bands on New Wave Day, Heavy Metal Day, and Rock Day—presented here in three separate programs that mix full or partial songs, interviews, and comments from original MTV DJ Mark Goodman. Given the musical spread, it's no surprise that this will likely please some of the viewers some of the time, as fans of the ska/reggae band English Beat ("Jeanette") will not necessarily appreciate the big-hair guitar-shredding sounds of Triumph ("Fight the Good Fight"). Some acts perform an entire song (or three), beginning with the opening number by The Divinyls ("The Boy in Town"), while others are severely truncated, such as Berlin's "Sex (I'm A)." Highlights (which will surely vary among viewers) include the Stray Cats ("Rock This Town"), The Clash ("Should I Stay or Should I Go"), The Scorpions ("Can't Get Enough"), U2 ("Sunday Bloody Sunday"), and Stevie Nicks ("Stand Back"). The lowlight here is Triumph, who not only play an unprecedented four songs total but also suffer from an audiovisual syncing problem on the DVD. Presented in a 4:3 standard aspect ratio with Dolby Digital stereo, this is a mixed bag of a concert video that will nevertheless appeal to fans looking for a blast of '80s past. A strong optional purchase. (R. Pitman)

# Death in Venice

★★★★1/2

(2013) 153 min. DVD: \$29.99,  
Blu-ray: \$39.99. Opus Arte  
(dist. by Naxos of America).



To celebrate the 2013 centenary of the birth of Benjamin Britten, the English National Opera revived its superb 2007 production of his last work in the form, an adaptation of Thomas Mann's novella in which dance is an element as integral to the piece as vocalism. Perhaps for that very reason (along with the possible implications of the plot), *Death in Venice* is often considered a "problem" piece. The role of Aschenbach, the self-doubting author who during a trip to Venice discovers a beautiful Polish boy he embraces as his muse, is brilliantly sung by John Graham-Hall. But Tadzio, the entrancing youth, is a wordless part expressed through ballet, with Sam Zaldivar here as remarkable as Graham-Hill. Of course Aschenbach's hope that Tadzio's Dionysian passion will shatter the Apollonian intel-

lectualism that has rendered his writing so sterile proves to be a delusion—indeed leading to his destruction, partially at the hands of a Mephistophelian figure who appears in seven guises throughout the opera and is here sung well by Andrew Shore. The remaining cast members, including countertenor Tim Mead as Apollo, are consistently excellent, and Edward Gardner brings out the score's myriad orchestral felicities without sacrificing urgency. Tom Pye's sets, Jean Kalman's lighting, and Kim Brandstrup's choreography also deserve high praise. Presented in DTS 5.1 and Dolby Digital stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and LCPM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include a cast gallery. Slightly superior to the recent Venice release (VL-9/13), this is highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

# Devo: The Complete Truth About De-Evolution

★★★★

(2014) 70 min. DVD: \$14.95.  
Music Video Distributors (avail.  
from most distributors).

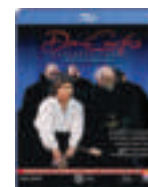


Originally released on Pioneer laserdisc in 1993, this re-release of a compilation of Devo music videos from the '70s and '80s adds the popular "Theme from *Doctor Detroit*," as well as exclusive bonus material. The 20 clips kick off with the "Devo Corporate Anthem," a video which was made before the Akron, OH, "spud boys from tire town" were really even a band. The four-piece New Wave electronic pop/art group fronted by Mark Mothersbaugh were pioneers of music videos that were influenced by Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, the Dadaists, and TV commercials. "Jocko Homo," a cut from their 1978 debut *Q: Are We Not Men? A: We Are Devo!*, set forth the Devo manifesto (which essentially cast a questioning eye on the prevailing idea of human progress). Also featured here from the opener is the classic, stripped-bare monotone version of the Rolling Stones' "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction," as well as "Come Back Jonee," a song that—according to the audio commentary by Mothersbaugh and fellow band member Gerald V. Casale—was "neo-fascist *Bonanza* music." By the time of their second album, 1979's *Duty Now for the Future*, Devo was experimenting with electronic visuals, such as the Atari-video-game-console generated background in "The Day My Baby Gave Me a Surprise." Other standouts here include the commercial breakthrough hit "Whip It" (banned in Europe because dorky-looking cowboy Mothersbaugh bullwhip-snaps the clothes off a woman), "That's Good" (banned by MTV because it featured animation of a french fry entering a donut followed by a shot of a woman with a pleased look on her face; as the commentary notes: "now, Madonna could stick a french fry in her asshole and they wouldn't care"),

"Love Without Anger" ("love without anger isn't love at all," offering a realistic take on romance illustrated with a fighting Barbie and Ken); and "Worried Man" (a 35mm clip featuring Devo in Neil Young's 1982 movie *Human Highway*). Extras include early live performance clips, Bruce Conner's seminal music video film "Mongoloid," illustrated essays, and more. Presented in a standard 4:3 format with Dolby Digital stereo, this is an entertaining slice of pop art cultural history charting the evolution of a band that found itself rebelling against consumerism while lodged "deep between the butt-cheeks of the Me generation." Definitely recommended. (R. Pitman)

# Don Carlos ★★★1/2

(1996) 210 min. In French  
w/English subtitles. Blu-ray:  
\$29.99. Kultur International  
Films (avail. from most  
distributors). ISBN: 978-0-  
7697-5069-9.



Verdi's 1867 masterpiece—a romantic triangle involving King Philip II, wife Elisabeth, and son Charles, set against the backdrop of the Spanish Inquisition—was written as a "grand opera" for Paris, but the composer's 1884 and 1886 revisions (including translation into Italian) became the repertory standards. This 1996 Théâtre du Châtelet production, however, presents the 1867 French original, adding a few passages that Verdi cut before the premiere while also eliminating a couple others (a peasants' chorus and the ballet that was mandatory in Paris). This superb performance finds the Orchestre de Paris responding brilliantly to Antonio Pappano's vigorous, sensitive conducting, and the young Roberto Alagna exhibiting a remarkably firm, heroic tone in the title role. He's matched by Karita Mattila, in resplendent voice as Elisabeth, and Thomas Hampson, exuding nobility as Carlos' friend Rodrigo (despite an unflattering wig). The rest of the cast—Waltraud Meier as the "other woman" Eboli, José van Dam as Philip, and Eric Halfvarson as the Grand Inquisitor—make a strong team, even if each shows occasional vocal imperfections. The sets are relatively spare, but the costumes—in black, white, and red—are striking, and Luc Bondy's staging is nearly flawless, except for the hokey lightning that accompanies the Inquisitor's entrance. There are fine Italian versions available—including Bernard Haitink's 1985 Covent Garden production (VL-3/06)—but this is the best French mounting. Presented in LPCM stereo, this is highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

# Le Corsaire ★★★

(2013) 100 min. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99.  
Opus Arte (dist. by Naxos of America).

Adolphe Adam's 1856 ballet—loosely

inspired by Lord Byron's 1814 poem—is basically a romantic triangle involving a sultan, a harem girl, and a pirate. Despite enjoying success in its original form, a series of revisions by various composers were begun as early as 1867, and choreographer Kader Belarbi's 2013 production for the Ballet du Capitole de Toulouse continues that tradition with a radically altered new version. In addition to returning to Byron's poem to rework the libretto, Belarbi enlisted David Coleman not only to conduct but also revamp the score by adding pieces from Arensky, Lalo, Massenet, and Sibelius (as well as himself) to Adam's music and reorchestrating much of it. The result is really Belarbi's *Le Corsaire* as much as Adam's, but this is still an enjoyable work, with colorful costumes (but only minimalist sets), fine playing from the Orchestre Nationale du Capitole, and energetic dancing from principals Maria Gutierrez as the slave girl, Davit Galstyan as the pirate, and Takafumi Watanabe as the sultan, as well as from the entire corps de ballet. Presented in DTS-5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray version) and LPCM stereo, extras include an illustrated cast gallery. Recommended. (F. Swietek)



### Lou Reed: Transformer & Live at Montreux 2000

★★★

(2013) 206 min. Blu-ray: \$19.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



This nicely matched set combines a 2000 concert and 2001 documentary featuring rock icon Lou Reed, who succumbed to liver failure in 2013. Looking hale and hearty during the Montreux concert—Reed's only performance at the Swiss jazz festival—the singer-songwriter is on tour in support of 2000's *Ecstasy*, serving up material from the new record along with selections from *New York, Songs for Drella*, and the legendary *Transformer*, his second solo recording. Reed's sidemen include Mike Rathke on electric and acoustic guitar, Fernando Saunders on electric and acoustic bass, and Tony "Thunder" Smith on drums. The 16-song set begins in perfunctory fashion, but builds intensity as it powers along, although the crowd has trouble catching up with the musicians. When Reed sings, "It's all downhill after the first kiss" from *Ecstasy*'s "Modern Dance," he expects a reaction. "No? Yes?" he asks, but receives no answer. Still, like a true professional, Reed forges on, winning the audience over by the end, despite the slightly muffled vocals during louder songs like "Small Town." The 2001 *Transformer* documentary, part of the *Classic Albums* series, features Reed, producers David Bowie

and Mick Ronson, engineer Ken Scott, and the London session musicians who played on the album (Ronson died in 1993). Since Andy Warhol exerted a major influence, Factory denizens Gerard Malanga, Joe Dallesandro, and Holly Woodlawn show up to set the scene, while Reed performs several songs acoustically, including the hit "Walk on the Wild Side." Presented in DTS-HD 5.1 (*Montreux*) and LPCM stereo (*Transformer* and *Montreux*), this is recommended. (K. Fennessy)

### The Metamorphosis

★★★1/2

(2013) 89 min. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Opus Arte (dist. by Naxos of America).

Arthur Pita's "dance-theatre adaptation" of Kafka's classic tale about Gregor Samsa—who awakens one morning transformed into a gigantic beetle—proves to be a stunning vehicle for Edward Watson, a principal at London's Royal Ballet, who twists and contorts his body impressively and by the close is literally sliding about the stage in oily black gunk. Apart from Watson's sinuous performance and the production's striking visual design, however, *The Metamorphosis* feels overextended. The opening scenes are devoted to Gregor's routine of going to and from work while also putting up with his parents and younger sister, all set to music composed and played by Frank Moon and a small instrumental ensemble. After the mutation, Moon's score turns creepy and insinuating, although it makes room for duets for Watson with the two female dancers (Laura Day as the sibling and Nina Goldman as Mrs. Samsa), as well as a boisterous klezmer bit for three visiting rabbis. One has to admire the precision that Pita secures from all of his performers, not only during the dance routines but also in the dramatic moments. But while this adaptation, directed by Ross MacGibbon, does achieve some poignancy along with the horror, it remains a decided oddity. Presented in DTS-5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray version) and LPCM stereo, extras include a brief introduction, a "making-of" featurette, and a cast gallery. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)



### The Stone Roses: Made of Stone

★★★

(2012) 96 min. DVD or Blu-ray: \$19.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).

Director Shane Meadows follows the 2012 reunion of Manchester rock band The Stone Roses some 16 years after the superstar group broke up, offering historical and critical context related to the significance of the



Roses' re-formation, touching on the esteem with which the foursome was held in the late 1980s and early '90s, and capturing the anticipation felt by longtime fans and the press prior to a new tour. Combining interviews and extensive performance and rehearsal footage (tracks include "I Am the Resurrection," "I Wanna Be Adored," and "Made of Stone," among others), Meadows displays a storytelling sophistication that elevates *Made of Stone* beyond a simple concert documentary (although he is thrown a major curve ball when the guys decide to break up again just before a homecoming event in Heaton Park). Viewers get close-up with the band members, whose crass arrogance during the Roses' beginnings has given way to humility in middle age. Even so, demons seem intent on pulling the team apart, despite best intentions. DVD extras include audio commentary by Meadows and producer Mark Herbert, behind-the-scenes featurettes, and bonus live-performance excerpts. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

### Wayne McGregor: Going Somewhere / A Moment in Time

★★★

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

One of today's most prolific and influential choreographers of modern dance, Wayne McGregor—artistic director of his own company (Random Dance), and resident choreographer at the Royal Ballet—is known for integrating film, science, and technology into his work, which has also included the staging of operas and movement direction in feature films, TV programs, and theatrical productions. This presentation can serve as a fine introduction to both his style (which emphasizes abrupt but supple and often sinuous movement) and method (constant experimentation in the drive for fresh expression). McGregor's methodology is showcased in the longer of the two pieces compiled here, the documentary *Going Somewhere*, in which McGregor and his staff are shown a) rehearsing dancers from Random Dance and the Royal Ballet while the performers are monitored by neuroscientists, and b) conducting a workshop at a high school where McGregor encourages students to explore how external influences can be imaginatively transformed into emotional movement. The accompanying piece, *A Moment in Time*, illustrates McGregor's creative technique through excerpts from several of his dance works. Skillfully directed by Catherine Maximoff, both films present an insightful portrait of McGregor's creative process and its often provocative results. Presented in PCM stereo, extras include an illustrated booklet. Recommended. (F. Swietek)





# THE LIFE OF RILEY

A FILM BY JON BREWER

NARRATED BY  
**MORGAN FREEMAN**

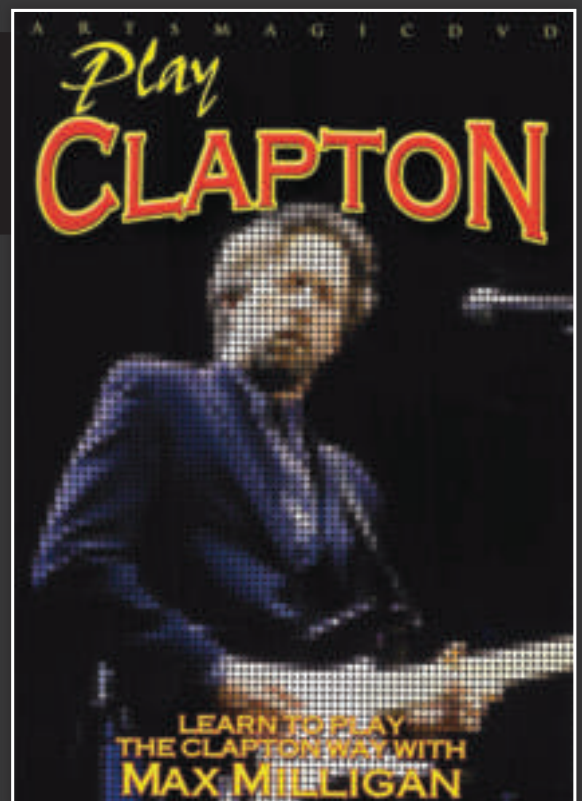
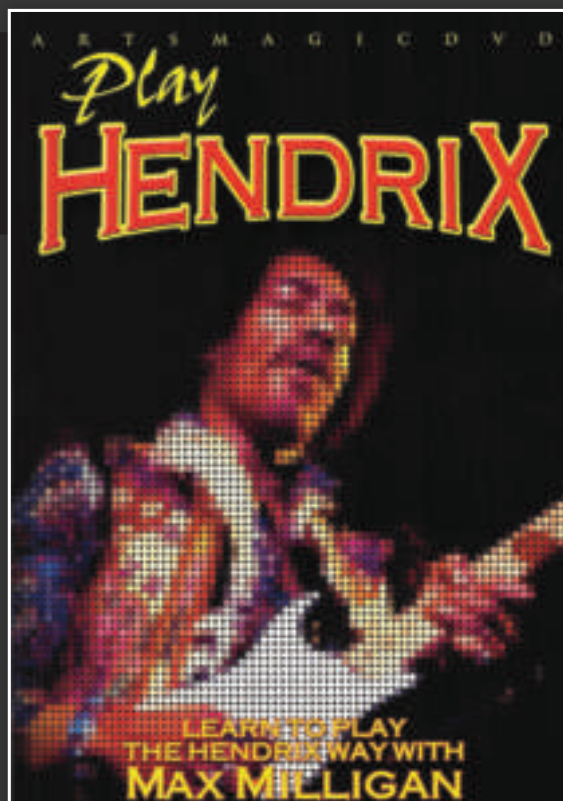
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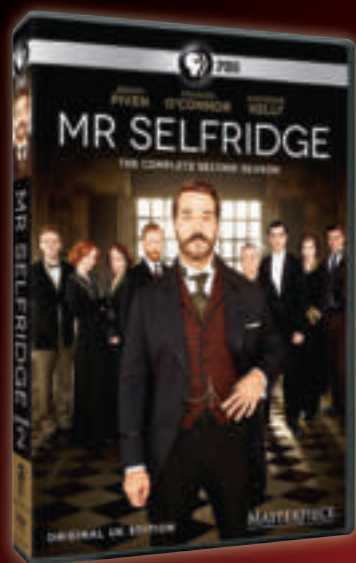
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# Survey Says...

In the April 1, 2014 issue of *Library Journal*, an interesting article called "Stepping Into the Stream" by Stephanie Klose noted that "streaming video is now a reality in many libraries." How many "many" is, we're not told, but my guess is that the number lies somewhere in the hundreds, as opposed to thousands. Klose goes on to report that an *LJ* "Materials Survey" found that responding libraries said that 0.6 percent of materials budgets were being spent on "downloadable movies," which represented 0.9 percent of total circulation.

During the Public Library Association's annual conference in Indianapolis this past March, we informally asked librarians visiting the *Video Librarian* booth whether they offered video streaming in their libraries. Almost everyone said "no" (one librarian from a rural library went on to add that their VHS collection was still in heavy use).

Recent surveys and reports in the consumer market note that while digital is indeed the wave of the future, it may still be some way off.

As reported by Chris Tribbey in the April 9, 2014 daily newsletter edition of *Home Media Magazine*, analyst Michael Arrington

with the research firm IHS shared some telling numbers during the "Ultra HD Physical and Digital Media Conference" at the 2014 National Association of Broadcasters convention. Arrington noted that the physical disc market, which hit a high in 2004—bringing in \$22 billion—would fall below \$10 billion by 2015.

While that may sound like the death knell for discs, Arrington went on to say that, "The curves may look scary, but physical media will still be around. We have plenty of opportunity to put content on disc." Adding that home hardware storage and bandwidth aren't nearly advanced enough to supplant the high-def Blu-ray format, Arrington also pointed out that "there are a lot of benefits to physical that can't be matched by digital... and people do just like to have [content] in their hands."

Digital's toehold rather than foothold was also underscored in the December 4, 2013 daily newsletter edition of *Home Media Magazine*, in which Erik Gruenwedel reported that "Hollywood's ongoing effort to convince consumers to rent higher-margin digital movies (rather than discs) through their multichannel video program distributor (MVPD), including cable, satellite and telco, doesn't appear to be gaining traction, according to a new study." In that study by Digitalsmiths,

nearly 73% of the survey respondents said that they have never rented a movie from their MVPD.

Just like "winter" in George R.R. Martin's wonderful bestselling *A Song of Fire and Ice* fantasy series, digital is "coming," but the so-called tipping point still lies far off on the horizon.

Particularly troubling is the fact that with each format advance in the video marketplace, the actual amount of available content seems to shrink: VHS is still king for sheer number of titles released; DVD boasted much-improved quality but many titles remain unavailable; Blu-ray technically shines, but the selection is decidedly limited. And digital? The image quality can't match Blu-ray (sometimes a Netflix stream doesn't look much better than VHS) and titles can literally vanish overnight due to license expirations (in May 2013, Netflix subscribers abruptly lost the option to stream nearly 1,800 films).

Digital offers tremendous promise and will ultimately be the winner, but libraries would also be well-advised to continue to buy (and hold on to) physical media—especially since a physical library is the only one you can currently control.

Randy Pitman

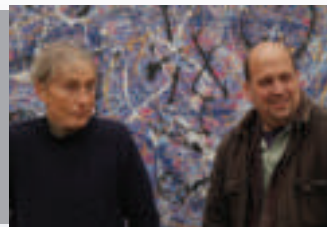


## ART + FRIENDSHIP + DISCOVERY



"One can't help but draw comparisons between Harald and Jackson Pollock... The film takes a Cinderella story twist when renowned painter and sculptor David Rankin gets Harald an exhibition in New York City."

— Sag Harbor Express



*Shelter Island* is an uplifting account of how compassion and human connection can unlock great potential in hidden places. The story of Shelter Island, NY resident and 'outsider' artist Harald Olson and his equally eclectic patron, Jimmy Olinkiewicz, a blue-collar gas station owner and father of an Autistic child follows their amazing journey from selling paintings alongside a picket fence to a major showing at a Chelsea art gallery in Manhattan. On their journey towards this goal it becomes clear that Harald's art is the perfect parallel to Jimmy's kindness: it is innate, beautiful, and wholly unexpected.

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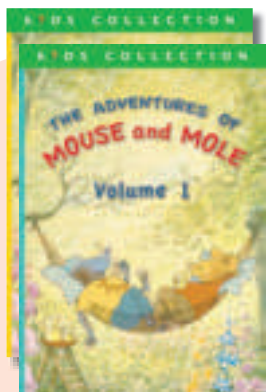
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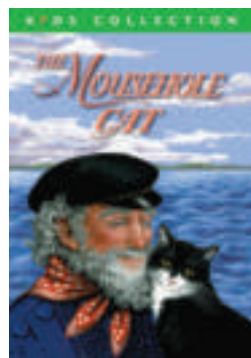
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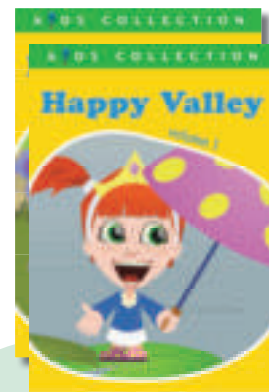
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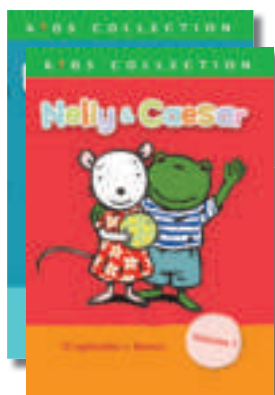
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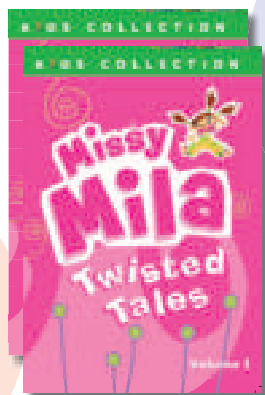
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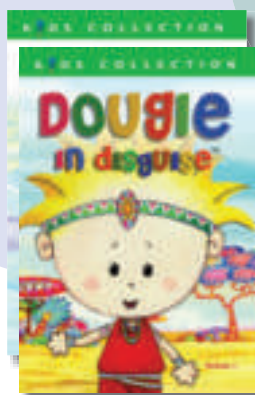
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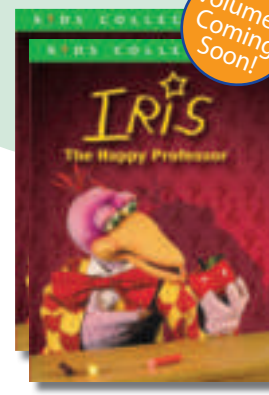
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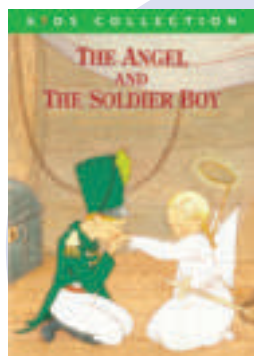


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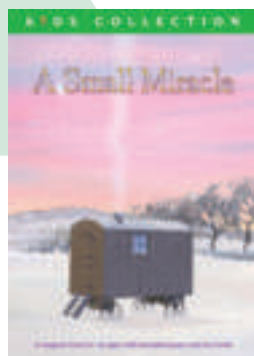
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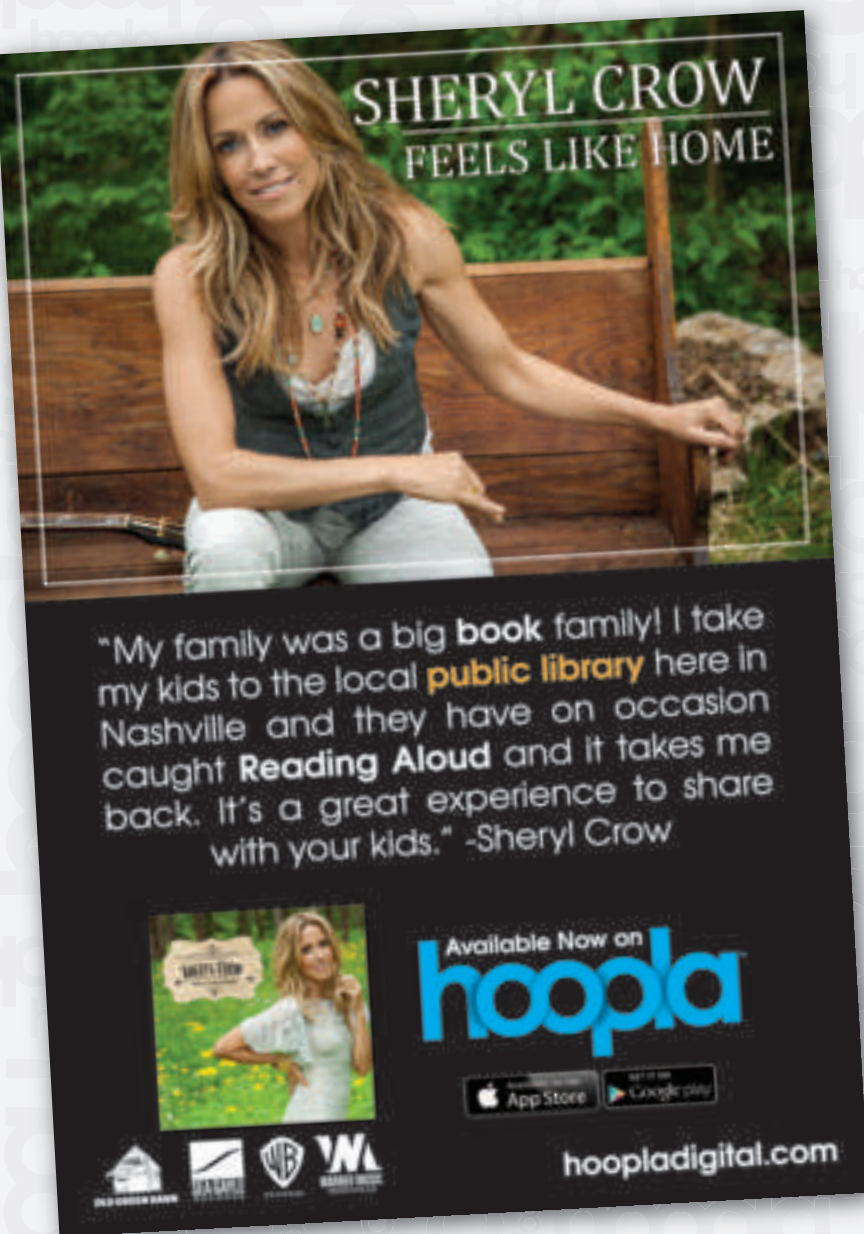
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