

March-April 2014

Video Librarian

VOL. 29 ■ THE VIDEO REVIEW MAGAZINE FOR LIBRARIES ■ NO. 2



IN THIS ISSUE

ALA Notables | Spotlight on Fitness | Cutie and the Boxer | Do Libraries Have a Future? | Latino Americans | Our Nixon | Buying Sex

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Cutie and the Boxer

★★★

Anchor Bay, 82 min., in English & Japanese w/ English subtitles, R, DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray: \$29.99

Filmmaker Zachary Heinzerling's Oscar-nominated documentary begins with an arresting title sequence in which diminutive 80-year-old avant-garde Japanese emigrant artist Ushio Shinohara creates one of his trademark "boxing" paintings—methodically moving left to right while beating the bejeezus out of a huge rectangular canvas with his paint-drenched boxing gloves, finishing the work in about two minutes. In 1969, the 41-year-old Ushio married 19-year-old art student Noriko in New York City, where the couple still live, struggling to make rent payments (at one point, Ushio literally stuffs some of his surreal sculptures into a battered suitcase and jets to Japan, returning with a few thousand dollars and a beaming smile). Noriko continues to pursue her own artistic dreams, creating drawings of a nude "Cutie and Bullie" in

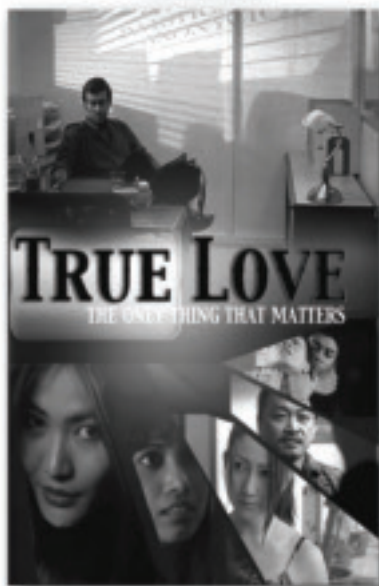


a series of semi-autobiographical cartoon panels (sometimes presented in striking iconographic animation here), although Ushio feels that his own work is much more important ("the average one has to support the genius"). But while the couple clearly have a loving relationship, Noriko is also starting to chafe at the proverbial bit, a little tired of being a "free secretary, free assistant, free chef." Fate smiles on Noriko when she lands the chance to do a joint exhibition with her husband (tellingly, he wants to call the exhibit "Roar!"; she successfully names it "Love Is a Roar"). Heinzerling's documentary interweaves fly-on-the-wall footage of the artists' daily lives (and interactions with their alcoholic artist son, Alex), combined with excerpts from a 1970s documentary by Rod McCall entitled *Shinohara: The Last Artist* (included as a bonus feature). Other extras include deleted scenes, a Q&A with the artists and director at the Sundance Film Festival, and the wonderful short: "Action Is Art: A Study of Ushio Shinohara's Boxing Painting." Serving up a delightful portrait of an unusual artist couple, this entertaining documentary is recommended. (R. Pitman)

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"The Hunchback of Notre Dame" Starring Lon Chaney Slated for Blu-ray Debut on March 11 from Flicker Alley

Flicker Alley's high-def debut of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (Blu-ray: \$34.95) is slated for March 11. Starring Lon Chaney as Quasimodo (looking as if he had just stepped out from the original illustrations of Victor Hugo's novel), this huge production features sets re-creating 15th-century Paris that covered 19 acres of Universal Pictures' backlot, and included the famous façade of Notre Dame Cathedral. Filming took six months and the climactic sequence employed 2,000 extras, but it's Chaney's performance here that remains the centerpiece. Premiering at New York's Astor Theatre on September 2, 1923, the success of the film was immediate, making Carl Laemmle and Universal Pictures a fortune, and turning Chaney into a screen legend. Mastered from a multi-tinted 16mm print struck in 1926 from the original camera negative, this edition of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* represents the best condition in which this landmark film survives today, with a new symphonic score arranged by Donald Hunsberger. Bonus features include audio commentary by Chaney scholar Michael F. Blake, exclusive on-the-set footage of Chaney, and the 1915 short "Alas and Alack" featuring Chaney as a hunchback.

Kurosawa, Bergman, Errol Morris Head Up March Criterion Releases

The Criterion Collection's March slate kicks off on March 11 with David Gordon Green's 2000 career-launching independent drama *George Washington* (Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.95), which chronicles the hot summer of a group of adolescents in the decaying rural South who confront a tangle of difficult choices. Coming March 18 is virtuoso documentarian Errol Morris's 1991 *A Brief History of Time* (Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.95), an adroitly crafted tale of personal adversity, professional triumph, and cosmological inquiry detailing the incredible life story of pioneering astrophysicist Stephen Hawking. Also available March 18 is Akira Kurosawa's 1958 *The Hidden Fortress* (Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.95)—the film that inspired *Star Wars*—starring the inimitable Toshiro Mifune as a general charged with guarding his defeated clan's princess (a fierce Misa Uehara) as the pair smuggle royal treasure across hostile territory.

Arriving March 25 is silent slapstick star Harold Lloyd's most popular film, 1925's *The Freshman* (Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.95), which features the befuddled every-



man at his eager best as a new college student. Also bowing on March 25 is Ingmar Bergman's transformative 1966 masterpiece *Persona* (Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.95), starring Liv Ullmann as an actress who has inexplicably gone mute, with an equally mesmerizing Bibi Andersson as the garrulous young nurse caring for her at a remote island cottage. Also coming on March 25 is *The Great Beauty* (Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.95)—reviewed in this issue on pg. 26—director Paolo Sorrentino's Italian submission for the 2013 Academy Awards, which follows a 65-year-old writer (Toni Servillo) who unexpectedly turns his cutting wit on himself and his contemporaries—looking past the lavish nightclubs, parties, and cafés to discover Rome itself, in all its monumental glory.

"I Am Divine" Drag Superstar Doc Coming April 8 from Wolfe Video

Award-winning documentary filmmaker Jeffrey Schwartz turns his camera on a plus-sized "cinematic terrorist" who became an international icon of bad taste in *I Am Divine* (DVD: \$29.95), available April 8 from Wolfe Video. Actor Harris Glenn Milstead, aka Divine, comes to life in this documentary tracing his humble beginnings as an overweight teased Baltimore youth up through his rise to become an internationally-recognized drag superstar. Featuring interviews with many key figures from Divine's life, including his mother, legendary filmmaker John Waters, and costars Ricki Lake, Tab Hunter, and Mink Stole, the film earned Audience Awards from FilmOut San Diego, Out-takes New Zealand, Out East Queer Film Festival, Cinema Q Denver, the Seattle Lesbian & Gay Film Festival, and the Madrid International LGBT Film Festival. A dynamic, fun and often poignant portrait, *I Am Divine* brings to life Waters' favored muse, who spit in the face of the status quo when it came to body image, gender identity, sexuality, and preconceived notions of beauty—all the while blurring the line between performer and personality. Bonus materials include more than 30 minutes of deleted footage.

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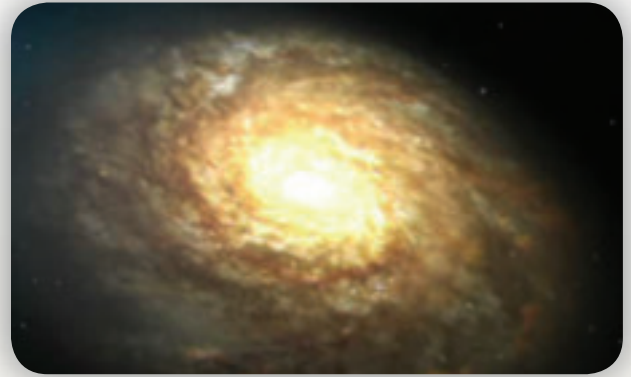


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The following films based on books are slated to open during March and April. Movie release dates are subject to change.

Slated for March

Divergent (Mar. 21), director Neil Burger's adaptation of the 2011 first installment in Veronica Roth's popular dystopian sci-fi YA trilogy, stars Shailene Woodley, Theo James, Kate Winslet, Zoë Kravitz, and Ray Stevenson.



Slated for April

Under the Skin (Apr. 4) is based on Dutch-born Scottish author Michel Faber's 2000 sci-fi debut novel—short-listed for the Whitbread Award—about an alien who picks up hitchhikers. Directed by Jonathan Glazer, the dark satire stars Scarlett Johansson, Antonia Campbell-Hughes, and Paul Brannigan.



Heaven is for Real (Apr. 16) is based on Christian pastor Todd Burpo's 2010 New York Times best-seller *Heaven is for Real: A Little Boy's Astounding Story of His Trip to Heaven and Back*. Directed by Randall Wallace, the drama stars Greg Kinnear, Kelly Reilly, and Thomas Haden Church.



Looking Ahead

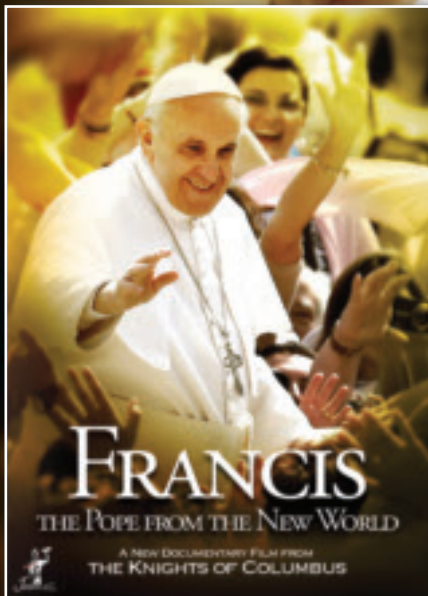
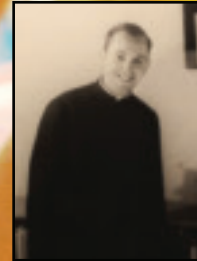
Coming in May is **Filth**, based on Scottish author Irvine Welsh's 1998 sociopath policeman thriller. Directed by Jon S. Baird, the film stars James McAvoy, Imogen Poots, Jamie Bell, Shirley Henderson, Joanne Froggatt, and Jim Broadbent.



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Francis: The Pope from the New World unveils the personality, passion and extraordinary faith of the new Pope. Filmed on location in Buenos Aires, and featuring interviews with close friends, collaborators, and his official biographer — this documentary traces the remarkable rise of Jorge Mario Bergoglio.

From growing up surrounded by soccer games and tango music to his defense of the poor and marginalized of Buenos Aires during his time as Archbishop, *Francis: The Pope from the New World* explores the abiding compassion and unwavering resolve of a priest, a bishop and now a Pope seeking to bring the Church to the frontiers of society. From overcoming the challenges of the day — including Argentina's Dirty War, to his tireless advocacy for the poor, this film paints an indelible portrait of a towering figure of our time.



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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

NASCAR '14 (Deep Silver, PS3/X360: \$49.99, Rated: E). In this racing simulation game, players will be able to participate in the full race week experience, complete with practice, qualifying rounds, and race day challenges in career mode.

March 2—March 8

South Park: The Stick of Truth (Ubisoft, PS3/X360: \$59.99, Rated: M). In this third-person role-playing game based on the characters and universe of the Comedy Central animated series, players take on the role of the new kid, hoping to join Stan, Kenny, Kyle, and Cartman in a battle of good vs. evil that threatens to consume the world.



March 9—March 15

Atelier Escha & Logy: Alchemists of the Dusk Sky (Tecmo Koei, PS3: \$49.99, Rated: E10+). This third-person RPG sequel allows players to choose between two alchemist protagonists—male Logy or female Escha—whose adventures take place in the Land of Dusk.

Dark Souls II (Bandai, PS3/X360: \$59.99, Rated: T). In this third-person action sequel to the extremely challenging action-RPG hit *Dark Souls* (which featured the prophetic tagline “prepare to die”), players will struggle in a vast world with brand new enemies.



Titanfall (EA, X360/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: M). From the co-creators of *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare*, this futuristic first-

person shooter features gigantic mechs that players can call down onto the battlefield to aid them in combat. [Libraries should note that this high-profile title is online multiplayer only (there is no single player campaign)].

March 16—March 22

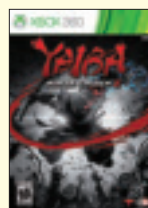
Final Fantasy X / X-2 HD Remaster (Square Enix, PS3: \$39.99, Rated: T). Remastering one of the most popular *Final Fantasy* storylines in high definition, this release includes both 2001's *Final Fantasy X* and *Final Fantasy X-2*, two third-person action RPGs set in the world of Spira.

inFAMOUS: Second Son (Sony, PS4: \$59.99, Rated: T). This next-gen PS4 third-person action-adventure game—the latest entry in the popular *inFAMOUS* franchise—puts players in the role of superhuman Delsin Rowe, who goes up against the oppressive Department of Unified Protection.



Metal Gear Solid V: Ground Zeroes (Konami, PS3/PS4/X360/XOne: \$29.99-\$39.99, Rated: M). In this third-person stealth-action prequel, players don the familiar eye patch of Snake while sampling a part of the upcoming *Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain*, which features a radical new open world game design with a main story mission and multiple side-ops.

Yaiba: Ninja Gaiden Z (Tecmo Koei, PS3/X360: \$59.99, Rated: M). In this third-person side-scrolling action-fighting game, players take on the role of cyborg ninja Yaiba, who must battle fierce zombies to reach (and extract his revenge on) Ryu Hayabusa.



March 23—March 29

BlazBlue: Chrono Phantasma (Aksys, PS3: \$49.99, Rated: T). The latest entry in the *BlazBlue* 2D fighting game series introduces five new characters and redesigned moves, along with a story mode that finds the fate of the entire world hanging in the balance as Ragna the Bloodedge marches toward one last confrontation.

The Witch and the Hundred Knight (NIS, PS3: \$49.99, Rated: T). From the makers of the acclaimed *Disgaea* series, this humorous third-person action-RPG

game suits players up in the armor of the lone Hundred Knight, who is summoned by the Swamp Witch to help her defeat her longtime foe, the Forest Witch.

March 30—April 5

MLB 14: The Show (Sony, PS3/PS4: \$59.99, Rated: E). This update to the popular Major League Baseball series includes new game features and more realistic gameplay physics, as well as year-to-year saves that will allow players to transfer to future versions of *MLB: The Show*.



April 6—April 12

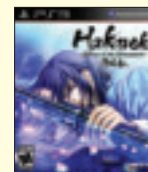
LEGO The Hobbit (Warner, PS3/PS4/WiiU/X360/XOne: \$49.99-\$59.99, Rated: RP). From the makers of the *LEGO The Lord of the Rings* game, this third-person action game puts players in the diminutive role of Bilbo Baggins, and features stories from the first two *Hobbit* films: *An Unexpected Journey* and *The Desolation of Smaug*.

April 13—April 19

2014 FIFA World Cup Brazil (EA, PS3/X360: \$59.99, Rated: E). Incorporating all of the improvements and innovations featured in the award-winning *FIFA 14* (plus 100 new animations), this *World Cup Brazil* edition from the popular soccer simulation franchise puts players in authentic Brazilian stadiums.

April 27—April 30

Hakuoki: Stories of the Shinsengumi (Aksys, PS3: \$39.99, Rated: M). In this text-based dating simulation game, players take on the role of Chizuru, a young woman who finds herself fighting alongside the infamous Shinsengumi as competing factions engage in a war to control Japan.



TV on DVD/Blu-ray

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Above Suspicion, Set 3 (Acorn, DVD: \$29.99). DI Anna Travis (Kelly Reilly) again crosses paths with former boss DCS James Langton (Ciarán Hinds) in this 2012 three-

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part storyline from the crime drama series based on the bestselling books by Lynda La Plante.

Doctor Who: The Moonbase (BBC, DVD: \$24.98). The titular time traveler and his friends are wrongly accused of creating a killer plague in this four-episode story arc from the 1966-67 fourth season of the sci-fi series, featuring Patrick Troughton as the Doctor.



Here Comes Honey Boo Boo: Season One (Gaiam, DVD: \$14.95). Six-year-old child pageant circuit star Alana "Honey Boo Boo" Thompson and her homespun family are featured in this 2012-13 first season spin-off from the TLC-aided *Toddlers & Tiaras*.

Law & Order: The Fourteenth Year 2003-2004 Season (Universal, DVD: 6 discs, \$36.98). This 2003-04 14th season of Dick Wolf's long-running NYC crime-drama series features guest appearances by Bobby Cannavale, Jay O. Sanders, Mandy Patinkin, and Chris Sarandon.

Les Petits Meurtres D'Agatha Christie, Set 1 (Acorn, DVD: 4 discs, \$59.99). These French adaptations of works by mystery author extraordinaire Agatha Christie hail from 2009-12.

Midsomer Murders, Set 23 (Acorn, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.99; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$49.99). Midsomer County continues to provide the backdrop for sinister doings in this set from the 2012-13 15th season of the crime-drama, which includes "The Dark Rider," "Murder of Innocence," and "Death and the Divas."



Monsters: The Complete Series (Entertainment One, DVD: 9 discs, \$99.98). This 1988-1991 supernatural horror anthology series includes guest spots by Tempestt Bledsoe, Meatloaf, Tori Spelling, Linda Blair, Imogene Coca, Richard Moll, and Jerry Stiller and Anne Meara.

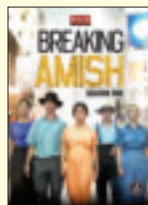
Under Capricorn (Acorn, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99). Peter Cousens, John Hallam, and Lisa Harrow star in this 19th-century Australian historical saga based on the novel by Helen Simpson.

March 4

Ancient Aliens: Season Five, Volume 2 (A&E, DVD: 2 discs, \$19.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$19.99). Espousing various theories, this second volume from the 2012-13 fifth season of the History Channel-aided documentary series features episodes including "Emperors, Kings, and Pharaohs," "Mysterious Relics," and "The Anunnaki Connection."

The Best of The Red Skelton Show (Shout! Factory, DVD: 2 discs, \$12.99). Comedian Red Skelton is spotlighted in this collection of skits and sketches that features guest appearances by Don Knotts, Cesar Romero, Charles Bronson, and Jayne Meadows.

Breaking Amish: Season One (Gaiam, DVD: 3 discs, \$14.95). Aired on TLC, this 2012 first season follows a quintet of erstwhile Amish and Mennonite adults who debate going back to the old ways after a whirlwind trip to New York City.



Doctor Who: The Time of the Doctor (BBC, DVD: \$14.98, Blu-ray: \$19.98). Aired stateside on BBC America, this widely-anticipated special says goodbye to Eleventh Doctor Matt Smith and introduces Peter Capaldi in his first televised appearance as the latest time-traveling humanoid alien.

Mr. & Mrs. Murder, Series 1 (Acorn, DVD: 4 discs, \$59.99). A crime-scene cleaning couple (Shaun Micallef and Kat Stewart) also solve mysteries in this 2013 first season from the Australian comedy series.

Poirot: Series 11 (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 2008-10 11th series starring David Suchet as Agatha Christie's debonair Belgian sleuth.

Rawhide: The Seventh Season, Volume 1 and Rawhide: The Seventh Season, Volume 2 (Paramount, DVD: 4 discs each, \$45.98 each). These sets from the 1964-65 penultimate seventh season of the Golden Globe-nominated Western series starring Clint Eastwood feature guest appearances by Barbara Eden, Harry Dean Stanton, and Julie Harris.



Restaurant: Impossible—Season 3 (Gaiam, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.95). Chef Robert Irvine uses his expertise to help rescue failing businesses in this 2012 third season of the Food Network series.

March 11

Dirty Jobs Down Under (Gaiam, DVD: \$29.95). Host Mike Rowe is back in this four-episode 2012 ninth and final season of the Discovery Channel series, featuring the episodes "Lost in Aboriginal Land," "Deadly Snake Wrangler," "Journey to Croc Country," and "Outback Treasure Hunter."

Rogue: The Complete First Season (Entertainment One, DVD: 3 discs, \$34.98). Thandie Newton stars as a rogue detective in this 2013 first season of the action thriller series, which costars Marton Csokas.



Siberia: Season One (Lionsgate, DVD: 3 discs, \$24.98). Reality show contestants learn that the prize is not worth their lives in this 2013 first season of the adventure thriller series.

Trinity: The Complete First Season (Eagle Rock, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.98). Antonia Bernath, Charles Dance, Claire Skinner, and Christian Cooke star in this 2009 first season of the dramedy series set at a formerly exclusive and wealthy university.

March 18

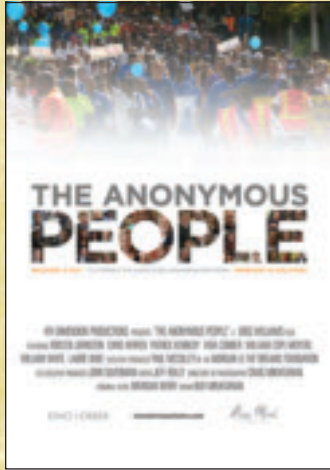
Atlantis (BBC, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$39.98). Aired on BBC America, this 2013 adventure fantasy series set in the ancient city of Atlantis stars Jack Donnelly, Mark Addy, Robert Emms, and Juliet Stevenson.

Devious Maids: The Complete First Season (Buena Vista, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.99). Latina housekeepers keep secrets for their sordid employers in this 2013 debut season of the Lifetime-aided sassy dramedy series starring Roselyn Sanchez, Ana Ortiz, Judy Reyes, Tom Irwin, and Susan Lucci.



Flashpoint: The Final Season (Paramount, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98). Lead Toronto negotiator Sgt. Greg Parker (Enrico Colantoni) and his team (including Hugh

Best Sellers and New Releases from KINO LORBER ^{edu}



THE ANONYMOUS PEOPLE

23.5 million Americans live in long-term recovery from alcohol and other drug addiction. Deeply entrenched social stigma and anonymous 12-step groups have kept recovery voices silent and faces hidden for decades – until now. Courageous addiction recovery advocates are starting to tell their true stories and demand policy change.

“An important and timely project that has the potential to transform the conversation about addiction...”

– Bill White, Addiction Historian

(With PPR \$249 • Without PPR \$149)



PANDORA'S PROMISE

The atomic bomb and meltdowns like Fukushima have made nuclear power synonymous with global disaster. But what if we've got nuclear power wrong? PANDORA'S PROMISE asks whether the one technology we fear most could save our planet from a climate catastrophe, while providing the energy needed to lift billions of people in the developing world out of poverty.

“Provocative and important... essential viewing.”

– The New York Times

(With PPR \$249 • Without PPR \$149)



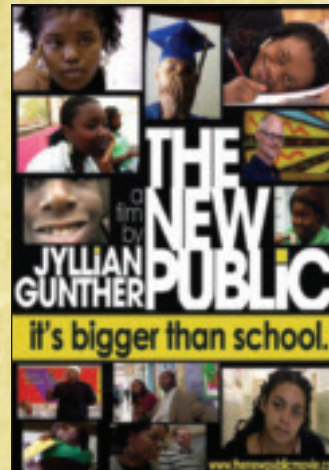
TRICKED

Modern-day slavery is alive and well in the United States as thousands of victims are trafficked throughout the country to satisfy America's \$3 billion a year sex trafficking industry. Meet the pimps, the johns, the police, the parents and the victims of the thriving sex trade in TRICKED, a comprehensive documentary that uncovers one of America's secrets.

“The film is wisely sparing of melodramatic flair, allowing the inherent drama of the situation to horrify and harrow on its own.”

– Heather Baysa, Village Voice

(With PPR \$349 • Without PPR \$149)



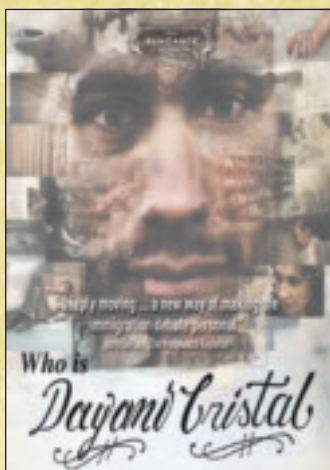
THE NEW PUBLIC

In fall 2006 a small public high school in Brooklyn opened in a community where 1/3 of residents live below the poverty line and the majority of students drop out. The underlying philosophy for the school was to offer an arts-oriented curriculum that emphasizes self-development, community collaboration and social change. But when untested idealism is challenged in the classroom and hallways, conflict is unavoidable.

“With humor and nuance, The New Public is inspiring and sobering.”

– Greg Kauffman, The Nation

(With PPR \$349 • Without PPR \$149)



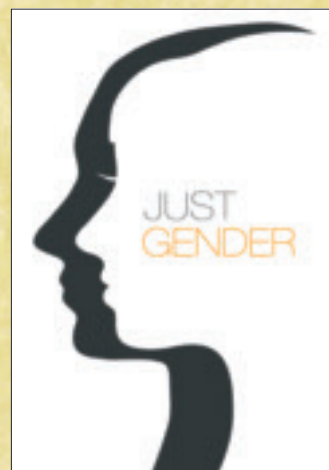
WHO IS DAYANI CRISTAL?

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 persona.”

– John DeFore, The Hollywood Reporter

(With PPR \$349 • Without PPR \$149)



JUST GENDER

JUST GENDER explores the common myths and misunderstandings about the world of trans- gender, and touches on the discrimination, hardships and brutality that transgender people face because of these misconceptions and prejudices. It also reveals their growing awareness and acceptance, and ultimately their joy in blossoming comfort as transgendered persons.

The perfect tool for campus diversity trainings and Gender Studies departments, JUST GENDER comes with an extensive instructor's manual and discussion guide.

(With PPR \$349 • Without PPR \$149)

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Dillon and Amy Jo Johnson) go up against a terrorist bomber in this 2012 fifth and final season of the Canadian action-crime series.

Mako Mermaids—An H2O Adventure: Season 1, Vol. 1 and Mako Mermaids—An H2O Adventure: Season 1, Vol. 2 (New Video, DVD: 2 discs each, \$19.95 each).



A trio of mermaids (Lucy Fry, Ivy Latimer, Amy Ruffle) protect the waters of Mako Island in these compilations from the 2013 first season of the Australian YA series, a spin-off from *H2O: Just Add Water*.

Survivorman: 10 Days (Gaia, DVD: \$29.95). This 2012 Gemini Award-winning Science Channel-aired series follows survival expert Les Stroud as he endures life in the wilderness for more than a week.

March 25

Californication: The Sixth Season (Paramount, DVD: 2 discs, \$45.98). Novelist Hank Moody (David Duchovny in a Golden Globe-winning role) works on a rock opera with a superstar (Tim Minchin) in this 2013 sixth season of the Showtime-aired dramedy series.

Continuum: Season Two (Universal, DVD: 3 discs, \$44.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$49.98). Futuristic cop Kiera Cameron (Rachel Nichols) works with the contemporary Vancouver police in this 2013 sophomore season of the Syfy-aired thriller series.



Hoarding: Buried Alive—Season Four (Gaia, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.95). This 2012-13 fourth season of the TLC-aired series chronicles stories of hoarders and includes the episodes "This is Garbage Land," "As Bad As It Gets," "Sleeping In a Dumpster," and "Just Tear It Down."

Key & Peele: Seasons 1 & 2 (Paramount, DVD: 4 discs, \$22.98; Blu-ray: 4 discs, \$24.99). Former *MADtv* cast members Keegan Michael Key and Jordan Peele star in this compilation of the 2011-12 first and second seasons of the Comedy Central-aired sketch series.

Little House on the Prairie: Season One (Lionsgate, Blu-ray: 5 discs, \$38.99).

Based on the beloved pioneer books by Laura Ingalls Wilder, this 1974-75 debut season of the family series (plus the pilot movie) starring Michael Landon, Melissa Gilbert, and Karen Grassle is newly available on high-definition Blu-ray.



Veep: The Complete Second Season (HBO, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$49.99). Julia Louis-Dreyfus stars as the nation's second-in-command in this 2013 sophomore season of the HBO-aired comedy series.

April 1

Broadchurch: The Complete First Season (Entertainment One, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98). David Tennant and Olivia Colman star as detectives working to find the murderer of a young boy in a coastal town in this 2013 first season of the BBC America-aired crime-drama series.



The Dick Van Dyke Show: Classic Mary Tyler Moore Episodes (Image, DVD: 3 discs, \$24.98). This compilation includes 20 episodes from the classic 1961-66 series that focus on Mary Tyler Moore as matriarch Laura Petrie.

Finding Bigfoot, Volume 3 (Gaia, DVD: \$29.95). Investigators travel across the U.S. in search of the mythical Sasquatch in this third volume of episodes from the Animal Planet series.

George Gently: Series 6 (Acorn, DVD: 4 discs, \$59.99; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$59.99). Starring Martin Shaw as a former Scotland Yard detective who solves crimes in the North Country, this 2014 sixth season of the Irish series based on the novels by Alan Hunter includes "Gently Between the Lines," "Blue for Bluebird," "Gently with Honour," and "Gently Going Under."

Psych: The Eighth and Final Season (Universal, DVD: 3 discs, \$59.98). Crime-solving "psychic" Shawn (James Roday) and his partner pal Gus (Dulé Hill) wrap up their escapades in this 2014 eighth season of the USA Network comedy, which features guest appearances by Ralph Macchio, Anthony Michael Hall, Kristy Swanson, and Cary Elwes.

April 8

The Bobby Darin Show (MPI, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98). Featuring 13 episodes from singer Bobby Darin's (1936-73) 1973 variety show, this compilation includes duets with Nancy Sinatra and Connie Stevens, as well as guest appearances by Andy Griffith, Redd Foxx, and Phyllis Diller.



Earthflight (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$34.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$39.98). Narrated by David Tennant, this BBC One-produced "birds eye view" nature documentary series was filmed over four years and across 40 countries.

Holliston: The Complete Second Season (Image, Blu-ray: \$19.98). Produced by FEARnet, this 2012-13 second season of the horror comedy series includes an animated episode and a musical season finale.

I Love Lucy: Ultimate Season 1 (Paramount, Blu-ray: 6 discs, \$129.99). Starring Lucille Ball, Desi Arnaz, Vivian Vance, and William Frawley, this high-definition Blu-ray edition of the 1951-52 first season of the Emmy-winning comedy series features original sponsor openings and closings.

Mayberry R.F.D.: The Complete First Season (Warner, DVD: 4 discs, \$29.99). This 1968-69 first season continuation spin-off of *The Andy Griffith Show* focuses on widower farmer Sam Jones (Ken Berry).



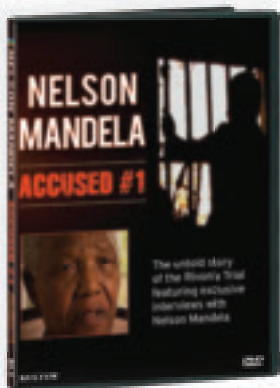
Moonshiners: Season 2 (Gaia, DVD: 3 discs, \$14.95). This 2012-13 second season of the Discovery Channel series profiling activities at a backwoods Appalachian still includes "Storm's a Brewing," "Adios, Mr. Still," and "Moonshine Treasure Hunt."

April 15

Anger Management, Volume Three (Lionsgate, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$39.98). Charlie Sheen is back as chaotic private therapist Charlie Goodson in this third volume of episodes from the FX-aired spin-off series from the 2003 feature film.

The Beverly Hillbillies: The Official Fourth Season (Paramount, DVD: 4 discs,

NEW & BEST-SELLING DVDs FROM KULTUR



NELSON MANDELA: ACCUSED #1

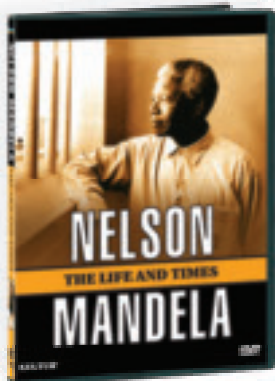
This documentary recounts the untold story of the Rivonia Trial and features exclusive interviews with Nelson Mandela and all the surviving co-accused along with fascinating testimony from their defense lawyers and from members of the prosecution, intelligence services and defense forces of apartheid South Africa.

DVD • D4898 • \$19.99

Color • 59 Minutes

ISBN: 978-0-7697-5049-1

UPC: 032031489899



NELSON MANDELA: THE LIFE AND TIMES

Celebrated as an international hero upon his release from prison, Nelson Mandela is one of the 20th century's towering leaders. Mandela rose from poverty to become president of the richest, most culturally diverse country in Africa. This biography is replete with the mishaps and fortunes of a truly historic life.

DVD • D4615 • \$19.99

Color/B&W • 103 Minutes

ISBN: 978-0-7697-8940-8

UPC: 032031461598



BALLET CLASS FOR KIDS! A FANTASY GARDEN I & II

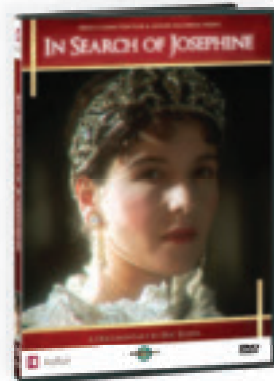
Learning ballet is fun and easy with these two acclaimed programs created especially for preschoolers. The beautiful melodies and memorable lyrics make these ballet classes a unique and exciting experience for the young child!

DVD • D4866 • \$19.99

Color • 70 minutes

ISBN: 978-0-7697-5011-8

UPC: 032031486690



IN SEARCH OF JOSEPHINE

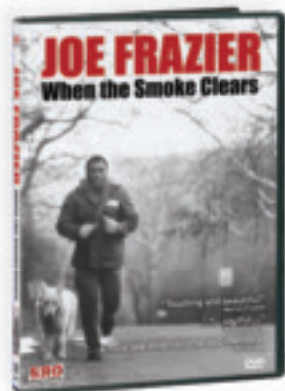
This two-part documentary reveals the life of Josephine, mistress and wife of the Emperor Napoleon. Through historical reenactments, paintings and illustrations, we experience her adventures in France and Italy. She led a life filled with drama and grandeur, greater than any role ever imagined in fiction.

DVD • D4950 • \$19.99

Color • 122 Minutes

ISBN: 978-0-7697-4950-1

UPC: 032031495098



JOE FRAZIER: WHEN THE SMOKE CLEARS

Smokin' Joe Frazier is considered one of the greatest heavyweights of all time. This film brings to life his story, including intimate interviews shortly before Joe's death. Archive footage of the matches, interviews with key players in the story and unparalleled access to the man himself make this historic film truly a main event not to be missed.

DVD • D4793 • \$19.99

Color • 71 Minutes

ISBN: 978-0-7697-9249-1

UPC: 032031479395



MARVEL COMICS

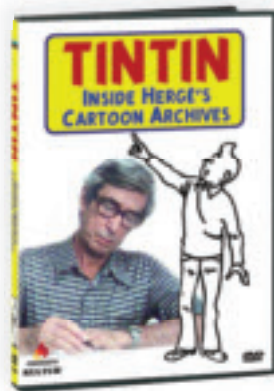
This fascinating documentary looks at the success of Marvel Comics in both the US and UK. Featured in this program is a unique interview with Marvel legend Stan Lee, the man who created Spiderman, the Incredible Hulk, Iron Man and all of the other Marvel heroes during a career lasting over 50 years.

DVD • D4883 • \$14.99

Color • 25 minutes

ISBN: 978-0-7697-5040-8

UPC: 032031488397



TINTIN: INSIDE HERGÉ'S CARTOON ARCHIVES

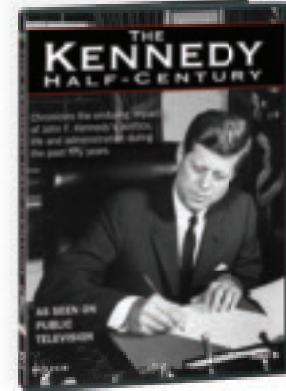
Tintin has become one of the most popular comic strip figures in the world. In this fascinating and revealing program, cameras were given an unprecedented look inside creator Hergé's archives of his world famous cartoon hero Tintin and his timeless cast of characters.

DVD • D4889 • \$14.99

Color • 25 minutes

ISBN: 978-0-7697-5046-0

UPC: 032031488991



THE KENNEDY HALF-CENTURY AS SEEN ON PUBLIC TELEVISION

This DVD chronicles the impact of John F. Kennedy's life on every US president since his death. Featuring archival photos of Kennedy's assassination and funeral, historic moments and interviews with major political and media figures.

DVD • D4913 • \$19.99

Color/B&W • 58 Minutes

ISBN: 978-0-7697-5077-4

UPC: 032031491397

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\$29.98). Country bumpkins (Buddy Ebsen, Irene Ryan, Donna Douglas, and Max Baer Jr.) navigate life in Californy in this 1965-66 fourth season of the comedy series, featuring guest appearances by Bill Baldwin, Sharon Tate, and Julie Newmar.

The Practice: The Final Season (Shout! Factory, DVD: 6 discs, \$29.95). This 2003-04 eighth and final season of David E. Kelley's crime-drama series stars James Spader, Camryn Manheim, and Steve Harris.

Ripper Street: Season Two (BBC, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$34.98). Inspector Edmund Reid (Matthew Macfadyen) and his team from the H Division police district are plagued by the shadow of killer Jack the Ripper in this 2013 second season of the Victorian-era mystery series, which includes the two-part finale "Our Betrayal."



April 22

Doctor Who: Web of Fear (BBC, DVD: \$19.98). Patrick Troughton stars as the time-traveling Doctor in this 1968 six-part story arc from the fifth season of the long-running popular sci-fi series.

April 29

Dynasty: The Eighth Season (Paramount, DVD: 6 discs, \$69.98). The escapades of wealthy Denver oil families the Carringtons and Colbys are showcased in this 1987-88 penultimate eighth season featuring John Forsythe, Linda Evans, Joan Collins, Heather Locklear, and Emma Samms.

Hill Street Blues: The Complete Series (Shout! Factory, DVD: 34 discs, \$199.99). Co-created by Steven Bochco, this compilation includes the complete 1981-87 Golden Globe, Emmy, and Humanitas Prize-winning cult favorite cop drama.

Mr. Selfridge: The Complete Second Season (BBC, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.99, Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$44.99). Based on the biographical book *Shopping, Seduction and Mr. Selfridge* by Lindy Woodhead, this 2014 second season starring Jeremy Piven as Wisconsin-born London department store magnate



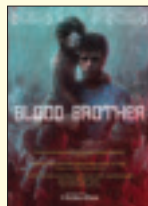
Harry Gordon Selfridge takes up five years later.

Looking Ahead

Coming in May is the sophomore season of **Longmire**, the third seasons of **Call the Midwife** and **The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis**, the fourth seasons of **Nikita** and **Rookie Blue**, the fifth seasons of **Barney Miller** and **Happy Days**, the eighth and final season of **Laverne & Shirley**, and the complete miniseries **Arthur Hailey's The Moneychangers**. Coming in June is the first season of **Red Shoe Diaries**, and the fourth season of **Pretty Little Liars**.

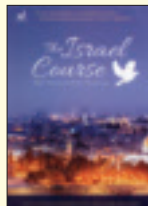
Re-priced or New to DVD/Blu-ray

Blood Brother (Cin-edigm, DVD: \$29.95). A young American in India has a life-changing experience after visiting an orphanage/care center housing women and children with HIV and AIDS in filmmaker Steve Hoover's Sundance Grand Jury Prize-winning 2013 documentary (VL-11/13 ★★). Debuting on home video, bonus features include additional footage.



Cousin Jules (Cinema Guild, DVD: \$395, web: cinemaguild.com). Newly restored, director Dominique Benicheti and cinematographer Pierre-William Glenn's lost masterpiece—shot over five years from 1968-1973—chronicles the daily lives of Benicheti's French farmer cousin and his wife.

The Israel Course (Passion River, DVD: 2 discs, \$72, web: passionriver.com). Featuring an intro by Rabbi Ken Spiro, this seven-part biblical education series produced by Jerusalem U includes *Israel in the Bible*, *Israel Inside* (reviewed in VL-9/12 ★★), *Crossing the Line*, *Creation of a State: A Modern Miracle*, *Israel & the West*, *Speak Up for Israel*, and *The Edge of History: Prophecy & the End of Days*.



James Joyce's Dublin (Kultur, DVD: \$19.99). The influences of author James Joyce's hometown on his life and work are explored in this 1988 documentary that features interviews with Robert Nicholson of the James Joyce Museum, David Norris of the James Joyce Cultural Centre, and Joyce's nephew Ken Monaghan. Also newly available are **Rainer Maria Rilke: Letters to a Young**

Poet, Signs and Secrets: The Worlds of Umberto Eco, Stalin: The Red God, and Yvonne Kenny: Viva La Diva!

London Master Classes: Cello Classes with Ralph Kirshbaum, London Master Classes: Conducting with Benjamin Zander, London Master Classes: Piano Classes with Norma Fisher, and London Master Classes: Singing with Sherrill Milnes (Kultur, DVD: \$29.99 each). These 2001 programs for young artists from the *London Master Classes* series provide instruction from British musical professionals.



The Nature of Genius (PBS, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$29.99). Directed by acclaimed documentary filmmaker Michael Apted (the *Up* series), this compilation showcasing human advances in the arts and sciences includes 1999's *Me & Isaac Newton* (VL Online-6/01 ★★) and 1997's *Inspirations* (VL Online-9/02 ★★1/2)—newly available on high-definition Blu-ray. Extras include bonus interviews.

People of a Feather (First Run, DVD: \$27.95). Focusing on winter life for the Inuits in northern Canada, director Joel Heath's 2011 documentary (VL-5/13 ★★1/2) explores the history of the Inuits, as well as challenges they face related to modern technology and energy. Debuting on home video, bonus features include additional short films, behind-the-scenes segments, and a music video.



Secrets of Ancient Egypt (Athena, DVD: 2 discs, \$49.99). This set compiling documentaries (made between 1994-2006) centering on ancient Egypt includes *Secrets of the Pharaohs: A Quest for Ancient DNA*, *Oasis of the Golden Mummies*, *Secrets of the Sands*, and *The Sacred Animals of the Pharaohs*. Extras include the bonus program "Realm of the Dead."

Why We Fight (Periscope Film, Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$24.95). Prolific filmmaker Frank Capra's epic 1942-44 homegrown propaganda documentary series—winner of an Academy Award—is newly available on high-definition Blu-ray and includes seven films: *Prelude to War*, *The Nazis Strike*, *Divide and Conquer*, *The Battle of Britain*, *The Battle of Russia*, *The Battle of China*, and *War Comes to America*.

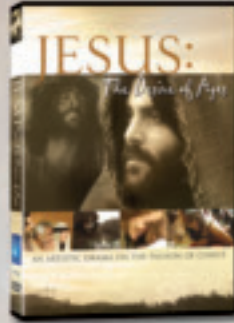
COMPELLING NEW DVDS FROM VISION VIDEO



Come Follow Me

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

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



Jesus: The Desire of Ages

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

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



The Pink Room

The Pink Room tells the story of Mien and other young girls who have been victimized in the unspeakably dark world of child sex slavery in Cambodia. But this is not just a story about the problem. *The Pink Room* is an inspiring story of restoration as ordinary people become heroes, lives are mended, and Cambodians rise up to take back their country. In a world where it is estimated that over one million children are held captive and sexually abused, a flower blooms in the heart of Cambodia. Documentary, 57 minutes.

DVD - #501543D, \$19.99, UPC 7 27985 01543 9



Sidewalk Singer

Kris Kivi is a man who has lost his family to a tragic accident and his job to the recession. Forced to play his guitar on the streets for donations, Kris must overcome harassment from a small town gang as well as prejudice from members of a local church. Written by novelist Alan Maki and directed by New York International Film Festival winner Jeff Thomas, *Sidewalk Singer* is an uplifting slice-of-life film about overcoming hardship through the strength of faith. Featuring performances by Jason Carter (*Babylon 5*) and Joshua Haze (*Days of Our Lives*) and original songs by Maki and Kent Marcum. Drama, 103 minutes.

DVD - #501559D, \$14.99, UPC 7 27985 01559 0



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



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



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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

2 Jacks ★★1/2

Breaking Glass, 90 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99

Based on a story by Leo Tolstoy, filmmaker Bernard Rose's *2 Jacks* is a comedy about history repeating itself across generations.



Danny Huston, son of legendary director John Huston, stars as Jack Hussar, a maverick filmmaker much in the tradition of cinematic giants such as his father and Orson Welles. Jack arrives in Los Angeles circa 1970 to seek financing for an ambitious feature to be shot in Africa. In short order, he's turned away from his favorite hotel for unpaid bills, antagonizes one of his old producers, seduces a starlet (Sienna Miller), and allows a young, hungry producer with a credit card to believe he's going to produce Jack's movie. The film's second half—shot in present-day L.A.—finds Jack Huston (nephew of Danny) playing Jack Hussar Jr., like his father also an aspiring director seeking financing for his debut work. The engine of karma proves to be powerful here: Jack Jr. has trouble at that same hotel, runs afoul of that same producer, ends up in the house of the one-time starlet (now played by Jacqueline Bisset), and exploits his relationship with a starving writer-producer. While *2 Jacks* never rises above its central gimmick (nor provides a reason why the twin storylines matter), it is fun to watch this cast, as well as Rose's evocation of a time in Hollywood when (flawed) greats roamed the earth. A strong optional purchase. (T. Keogh)

12 Years a Slave ★★★★★

Fox, 134 min., R, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$39.99, Mar. 4

In 1841, Solomon Northrup (Chiwetel Ejiofor)—an educated, well-to-do, freeborn black man with a wife and children in upstate New York—was lured from his home to ostensibly work as a musician in Washington, D.C.,

where he was kidnapped and shipped in shackles and chains to New Orleans. Forcibly renamed Platt Hamilton by a slave trader (Paul Giamatti), "Platt" was sold to genteel mill owner/Baptist minister William Ford (Benedict Cumberbatch), who was impressed with Platt's skilled fiddle-playing. But Platt's obvious intelligence infuriated Ford's brutal, spiteful overseer, Tibeats (Paul Dano), who tortured him unmercifully. To save Platt's life, Ford sold him to despicably sadistic plantation owner Edwin Epps (Michael Fassbender). Oscar-nominated British/Nigerian actor Ejiofor embodies imprisoned Northrup's grievous mental suffering and gruesome physical torment—constantly displaying the dignified resiliency that enabled him to endure and survive—while fellow nominee Lupita Nyong'o delivers a heart-wrenching portrayal as Patsey, the long-suffering, cotton-picking slave who becomes psychopathic Epps' mistress. Based on Northrup's memoir, published in 1853 (a year after *Uncle Tom's Cabin*), director Steve McQueen's powerful biographical drama—up for nine Academy Awards—is highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** (S. Granger)



20 Feet from Stardom

★★★★

Anchor Bay, 91 min., PG-13, DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$24.99



This poignant and inspiring Oscar-nominated documentary centers on pop music's backup singers—most of them African American women—who could be described as perennial underdogs. With the exception of Darlene Love, who crossed over into the spotlight after backing Aretha Franklin, Dionne Warwick, Frank Sinatra, and Sam Cooke, the majority of the vocalists featured aren't well known, even though they backed famous bands and legendary singers on some of the most popular recordings of the past half-century. Profiled subjects include Judith Hill, who was Michael Jackson's last backup singer (and a recent competitor on NBC-TV's *The Voice*); Merry Clayton, a preacher's daughter who trained in gospel choirs and went on to record with Carole King, Mick Jagger, and Lynyrd Skynyrd; and Lisa Fischer, who started out as part of Luther Vandross's band and later won a Grammy in 1992 for her first single, "How Can I Ease the Pain"—but the demands of stardom took a toll (although she still tours with the Rolling Stones). Also featured are Claudia Lennear, who was an Ikette with Ike and Tina Turner and a Stones regular in the early '70s, and Tāta Vega, a once-promising Motown star who developed psychological problems. Directed by Morgan Neville, this uplifting narrative mixes interviews with

vibrant archival footage. Sure to appeal to fans of R&B and classic rock 'n' roll, this is recommended. (S. Granger)

About Time ★★★★★

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



Writer-director Richard Curtis's (*Love Actually*, *Notting Hill*) latest is an inventive fantasy fable about life, love, and living every day as if it were your first—or last. The dramedy commences when—on his 21st birthday—Tim (Domhnall Gleeson) is told by his loving father (Bill Nighy) that he can time travel backwards within his own lifetime; an extraordinary gift that is bestowed on the men in the family. At first, Tim doesn't believe him, but when he realizes he can re-meet his adored Mary (Rachel McAdams)—and ensure that she doesn't fall in love with anyone else—this incredible genetic legacy becomes a real boon, allowing Tim to revisit and repair experiences that he regrets. Curtis excels at charming and witty romantic comedy, so when Tim is courting Mary, a sense of daffy, self-deprecating delight reigns. But when the narrative shifts focus to subplots involving Tim's reckless kid sister (Lydia Wilson) and his father's terminal illness, the twisty time-travel concept falters. Fortunately, *About Time* doesn't delve too deeply into quantum physics, employing sci-fi only when it suits the meandering philosophical plot. Gawky, ginger-haired Gleeson evinces little of the breezy bumbling charm of a Hugh Grant; he's "too tall, too thin, too orange." But McAdams is adorable, and Nighy exudes a characteristically idiosyncratic charisma. Shamelessly sentimental, this will nevertheless tickle funny bones and tug hearts. Recommended. (S. Granger)

The Act of Killing ★★★★★

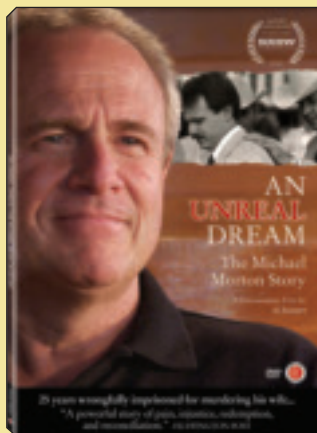
New Video, 122 min., in Indonesian w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$27.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95



Joshua Oppenheimer's Oscar-nominated documentary centers on Indonesia's violent campaign against Communists and other "undesirables," begun in the 1960s, and still being waged by powerful paramilitary groups. But the material is presented from the oddball perspective of a group of vicious perpetrators, self-styled "gangsters" who are given the opportunity to make a movie dramatizing their actions. Bringing their grisly deeds to light is worthwhile, but watching these thugs enjoying a comfortable life is galling, and it's deeply unsettling to see them playing their victims—suggesting some sort of convergence between killer and killed. *The Act of Killing* offers a textbook example of what Hannah Arendt called the banality—or,



FIRST RUN FEATURES PRESENTS



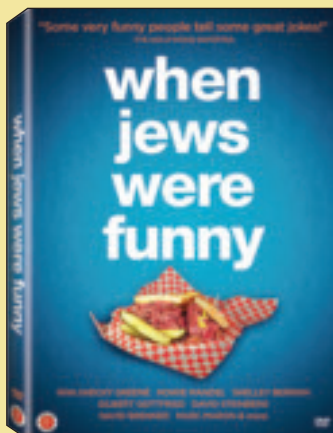
AN UNREAL DREAM THE MICHAEL MORTON STORY

92 minutes, color, SRP: \$24.95, FRF 915854D
STREET DATE: APRIL 1

In 1986 Michael Morton's wife is brutally murdered in front of their only child, and Michael is convicted of the crime and locked up for 25 years. But the Innocence Project and Michael's pro bono attorney spend years fighting for the right to test DNA evidence found at the murder scene. Their discoveries reveal that the price of a wrongful conviction goes well beyond one man's loss of freedom.

"A stunning tale." -The New York Times

"Riveting...inspiring." -Variety



WHEN JEWS WERE FUNNY

89 minutes, color, SRP: \$24.95, FRF 915892D
STREET DATE: APRIL 1

This insightful and often hilarious documentary surveys the history of Jewish comedy, from the early days of Borshht belt to the present, exploring not just ethnicity in the entertainment industry, but also the unruly question of what it means to be Jewish.

"Some very funny people tell some great jokes!" -The Hollywood Reporter

"Entertaining. Engrossing. Fun viewing!"

-The Globe and Mail



LOST ISLANDS

103 minutes, color, SRP: \$24.95, FRF 915885D
STREET DATE: APRIL 1

The Levis are a large, fun-loving family in early 1980s Israel. The father advises his children every day on the importance of fulfilling their dreams, while his wife preaches absolute family loyalty. But the family's idyllic life is shattered when twin brothers Erez and Ofer fall in love with the same girl.

"Breezy, entertaining...a crowd-pleaser!"

-Variety

"One of those movies that audiences love!"

-Jerusalem Post



ALICE (ON BLU RAY)

84 minutes, color, SRP: \$24.95, FRF 915878B
STREET DATE: APRIL 15

When Alice follows the White Rabbit into Wonderland, so begins this dream expedition into the astonishing landscape of Lewis Carroll's classic tale. Combining techniques of animation and live action, Czech animator Jan Svankmajer gives anew and fascinating dimension to the timeless tale of childhood fantasy.

Now digitally remastered on Blu Ray!

"A piercing, original vision...brilliantly inventive. An extraordinary piece of work."

-The New Yorker



THE END OF TIME

114 minutes, color, SRP: \$27.95, FRF 915939D
STREET DATE: APRIL 15

Peter Mettler's mind-bending new documentary challenges our conception of time and the very fabric of our existence. With stunning cinematography, it explores the links between renewal and destruction, between primordial mysticism and modern science, giving the viewer a transcendent cinematic experience.

"Recalling the work of Terrence Malick, Werner Herzog and Chris Marker...a ravishingly beautiful experience, immersive and hypnotic."

-The Hollywood Reporter



PICTURE OF LIGHT

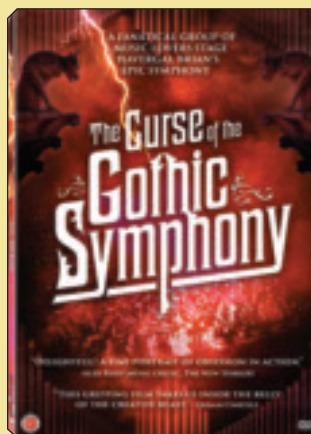
83 minutes, color, SRP: \$24.95, FRF 915922D
STREET DATE: APRIL 15

From Peter Mettler, director of *The End of Time*, comes this mesmerizing tale about a filmmaker's journey to Canada's arctic in search of one of Earth's greatest natural wonders: the Aurora Borealis, also known as the Northern Lights. The film reveals the paradoxes involved in trying to capture the spectacular light show on celluloid.

"An extraordinary piece of filmmaking, bursting with visionary power." -Vogue

"Ravishing...constantly surprising."

-Washington Post



CURSE OF THE GOTHIC SYMPHONY

82 minutes, color, SRP: \$24.95, FRF 915908D
STREET DATE: APRIL 15

Follow the adventures of a fanatical group of music lovers who aspire to break the curse behind British composer Havergal Brian's notorious First Symphony. Requiring two orchestras, four brass bands and five full choirs it is regarded as the Mt. Everest of classical music.

"Delightful! A fine portrait of obsession in action." -Alex Ross, The New Yorker

"This gripping film takes us inside the belly of the creative beast." -Urban Cinefile



PEOPLE OF A FEATHER

92 minutes, color, SRP: \$27.95, FRF 915748D
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Featuring stunning footage from seven winters in the Arctic, *People of a Feather* takes you through time into the world of the Inuit and their unique relationship with the eider duck.

"Lyrical...stunning."

-The New York Times

"Artful and meditative. The film is a near mystical mix of time-lapse Arctic landscapes, marine-life photography, and interwoven imagery of present-day and historical Inuit life."

-The Georgia Straight

in this case, the absurdity—of evil, personified here in the form of Anwar Congo, an elderly, genteel man who proudly describes (and demonstrates) a method of execution with a wire noose he invented to cut down on bloodletting and clean-up time. Congo and his associates—including a publisher who identified people for interrogation that inevitably led to their deaths—are eager to talk about their history, even appearing on TV talk shows to promote their movie. But there are strangely discordant moments in which some express regret for the slaughter even as they gloat about their own roles in it. The result is a surrealistic collage that aptly reflects the opening epigram from Voltaire, who noted that murder is something that must be punished—unless it is done on a massive scale for the “public good,” in which case it is glorified. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

American Hustle

★★★★

Sony, 138 min., R, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$40.99, Mar. 18



“Some of this actually happened” reads the intro to David O. Russell’s demystified, audaciously amoral multiple-Oscar-nominated homage to hustlers, grifters, and con artists. Loosely inspired by the FBI’s Abscam sting in the late-’70s, the story revolves around Irving Rosenfeld (Christian Bale) and his brazen partner/girlfriend, Sydney (Amy Adams), who are reluctantly coerced into going undercover by ambitious agent Richie DiMaso (Bradley Cooper). Their assignment is to take down charming-yet-corruptible Camden, NJ, Mayor Carmine Polito (Jeremy Renner) by tempting him with a \$2 million investment from an Arab sheik/FBI agent (Michael Peña) to revive Atlantic City’s resort casinos. What the trio haven’t banked on is that Rosenfeld’s bitter, dimwitted wife, Rosalyn (Jennifer Lawrence), could botch the entire entrapment operation, particularly after Polito’s Mafia pal, Victor Tellegio (Robert De Niro), grows suspicious. A cleverly comedic, character-driven thriller, *American Hustle* is an actor’s showcase, with Bale, Adams, Cooper, and Lawrence all landing Academy Award nominations. Almost unrecognizable with a pot-belly and toupee, Bale convincingly embodies a sleazy, minor-league manipulator who runs an art-forgery scam on the side. As seductive Sydney, who’s as fraudulent as her faux-British identity, Adams epitomizes eccentricity, confidently strutting in a series of cleavage-challenging costumes. Cooper brings an edginess that was so effective in Russell’s *Silver Linings Playbook*, and his costar Lawrence proves that she can also be a terrific screwball comedienne. A zany, relentlessly entertaining crowd-pleaser, this is highly recommended. **Editor’s Choice.** (S. Granger)

The Armstrong Lie

★★★1/2

Sony, 124 min., R, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray: \$35.99



The story of disgraced cyclist Lance Armstrong follows along the lines of classic Greek tragedy: Hubris (the sin of pride and arrogance) to Ate (moral blindness or madness) to Nemesis (inevitable destruction). In 2008, Alex Gibney started filming a celebratory documentary about Armstrong’s cycling comeback after a three-year retirement. The project was shelved when the cyclist’s doping scandal erupted, and was re-opened after Armstrong’s confession. Using Armstrong’s TV interview with Oprah Winfrey to set the stage, Gibney recalls Armstrong’s trials and tribulations—from his battle with testicular cancer in 1996 to his seven consecutive Tour de France victories (1999-2005). Widely acclaimed as one of the world’s greatest athletes, Armstrong would have retained his glory had he not yearned to bask once again in the warmth of public adoration. But his former teammates knew that the duplicitous Armstrong had used EPO (a drug prescribed by his Italian doctor), testosterone, cortisone, human growth hormone, even blood transfusions to enhance his performance over the years. With many professional cyclists being busted for doping, resentful bikers were ready to testify against Armstrong. Gibney intercuts these revelatory interviews with clips of Armstrong vehemently denying drug use and viciously lashing out at critics and detractors. Although the narrative lacks the broader insight that Gibney brought to other films (such as *We Steal Secrets*, *Taxi to the Dark Side* and *Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room*), this should be considered a strong optional purchase. (S. Granger)

Bad Grandpa ★★1/2

Paramount, 91 min., R, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99



In this gleeful gross-out comedy, actor/comedian Johnny Knoxville hams it up, buried under layers of latex as Irving Zisman, the proverbial dirty old man. Originally introduced during the final season of MTV’s *Jackass*, crotchety 86-year-old Irving now has a full-fledged family, including a crack-addicted daughter (Georgina Cates), who’s headed for prison—leaving Grandpa to deliver cherubic, 8-year-old Billy (Jackson Nicoll) to the boy’s derelict father (Greg Harris) in North Carolina. Adopting the improvisational *Borat*/*Bruno* faux-documentary style of Sacha Baron Cohen, the self-absorbed, foul-mouthed, totally irresponsible Irving pulls hidden-camera pranks that wreak havoc on unsuspecting real people’s lives, such as

having unwitting furniture movers help him load the swaddled corpse of his late wife into the trunk of his decrepit Lincoln—and that’s just the beginning. At one point, lecherous Irving enters a strip club only to discover that the clientele are black women and that the performers are hunky men. Undeterred, he doffs his pants and gyrates so enthusiastically that his pendulous prosthetic scrotum falls out of his underwear. But where Baron Cohen goes for biting satire, Knoxville, writer Spike Jonze, and director Jeff Tremaine instead opt for geriatric sweetness as they follow a raunchy, superficially-scripted storyline that includes a visit to a bingo parlor, beer-puking, Irving’s penis caught in a vending machine, and even an obnoxious *Little Miss Sunshine*-inspired child beauty-pageant performance in which deadpan Billy performs in drag to Warrant’s “Cherry Pie” while another contestant makes Miley Cyrus’s tongue-twisting and twerking look mild (outtakes during the end credits reveal why unwitting bystanders didn’t immediately report child neglect/abuse). Optional. (S. Granger)

Bad Milo! ★1/2

Magnolia, 84 min., R, DVD: \$26.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98



Writer-director Jacob Vaughan was obviously aiming for cult midnight-movie status with this mixture of comedy and horror, but *Bad Milo!* tries much too hard in its attempt to be a gross-out laugh fest. Ken Marino stars as financial analyst Duncan, who suffers from acute constipation, which he believes stems from stress at the office. But it turns out the problem is actually Milo, a rubbery gremlin who lives in Duncan’s digestive track and pops out of his derrière periodically—which involves a good deal of pain, not to mention blood and excrement—and then literally chews people up before returning to his, uh, home. Duncan seeks help from a weird psychiatrist who is familiar with such a condition, and also looks for answers from his long-estranged father (Stephen Root), who lives an isolated hippie-like existence on a remote farm. The big revelation at the close will surprise no one, nor will it come as a shock that Duncan will be tasked with saving his pregnant wife from the ravenous little beast. In fact, despite its strenuously outrageous premise, virtually everything here has a recycled air. Not recommended. (F. Swietek)

The Battle of Pussy Willow Creek ★★★

Passion River, 96 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95

Documentarian Ken Burns himself gave a thumbs-up (probably an old still photo of thumbs, in a slow, upward pan) to this rollicking indie parody of PBS-style historical documentaries—most notably Burns’s *The*

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Civil War—from filmmaker Wendy Jo Cohen, who used the onscreen pseudonym “Grace A. Burns.” The title battle involves the long-suppressed story of how the Union’s all-misfit Rhode Island 13th Brigade, commanded by a drug-addicted homosexual transvestite, saved Washington, D.C., from a Confederate offensive, despite having no artillery and a drummer boy with only one arm (and not really a boy, either). The economical presentation is mostly mock-ups of vintage illustrations, old letters, photographs, and faux 19th-century popular music (composed by “Colin F. Stephens,” and including tunes such as “I Dream of Annie’s Biscuits”), interspersed with modern talking-head experts, explaining how fey Jonathan Lang, an androgyne for Lincoln, went to war as part of an obsessive lover’s quarrel with his southern boyfriend. Lang was joined in his mission by an elderly Chinese immigrant (“General Li”) fond of basing military strategy on I Ching castings, and a young black techno-nerd raised by his white adoptive mother in utter ignorance of slavery and racism. A fine farce with an LGBT angle, this is recommended. (C. Cassidy)



Berberian Sound Studio

★★★

MPI, 92 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.98

Set in 1976, Peter Strickland’s thriller follows the emotional disruption of Gilderoy (Toby Jones), a British sound engineer who arrives at an Italian studio to work on the soundtrack mixing for a *giallo* endeavor titled *The Equestrian Vortex*. But the normally reserved Gilderoy is out of his element, unable to connect with the studio’s gregarious Italian staff, and ill-treated by the domineering tag team of the film’s producer and director. The increasing unhappiness of Gilderoy’s sole ally on the project, Silvia (Fatma Mohamed)—a voice actress hired to dub the film’s screaming starlets—coupled with a series of somewhat menacing handwritten letters from his mother back in England, begin to erode Gilderoy’s sense of well-being. Strickland never shows any of the footage from the production Gilderoy is working on, although the repetitious recordings of screams and hacked-up vegetables clearly suggest an unpleasantness that further shakes up Gilderoy’s fragile state. Unfortunately, *Berberian Sound Studio* comes across as an odd and ultimately unsatisfying mix of *The Conversation* and *Blow Out* with liberal doses of David Lynch-level surrealism thrown in. A disappointing effort, this is not a necessary purchase. (P. Hall)



The Best Man Holiday

★★★1/2

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

A follow-up to his 1999 hit *The Best Man*—a romantic dramedy about African American college friends working out life’s complicated problems—Malcolm D. Lee’s *The Best Man Holiday* centers on a Yuletide reunion. While the first film focused on Harper (Taye Diggs), the sequel shifts to Mia (Monica Calhoun), who married New York Giants superstar Lance (Morris Chestnut). According to Lance, what’s important in life is: “God, family, football—in that order.” But Mia desperately misses her friends, so she invites everyone to their magnificently decorated suburban mansion for Christmas weekend. Not surprisingly, each guest faces his/her own quandary. NYU professor/struggling writer Harper, who hasn’t had a bestseller since his semi-autobiographical novel, is making the trip with an ulterior motive, while his long-suffering, very-pregnant wife, Robyn (Sanaa Lathan), harbors fears about him reconnecting with former flame Jordan (Nia Long), who has brought along new “vanilla” boyfriend Brian (Eddie Cibrian). Private school administrator/social activist Julian (Harold Perrineau) is worried about a scandalous YouTube video of his wife Candace (Regina Hall), as well as the catty revelations of his slutty ex, Shelby (Melissa De Sousa), who is now a reality-TV star. And troublemaking bachelor Quentin (Terrence Howard) is up to his usual rascally tricks. Mixing raunchy comedy with predictable (and sometimes forced) Christian melodrama, the film is uneven but does benefit from a talented cast. A strong optional purchase. (S. Granger)

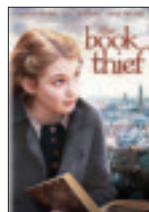


The Book Thief

★★★

Fox, 125 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$39.99, Mar. 11

Narrated by Death and told from the perspective of a child in a small German village during the Third Reich, this coming-of-age tale revolves around Liesel Meminger (Sophie Nélisse), an adolescent who attracts the interest of the omniscient Grim Reaper (voiced by Roger Allam). In 1939, following the deaths of her mother and brother, orphaned Liesel is delivered to new foster parents: benevolent housepainter Hans Hubermann (Geoffrey Rush) and his cranky wife, Rosa (Emily Watson). Liesel is quickly befriended by their neighbor, Rudy Steiner (Nico Liersch), an aspiring track star. After Liesel is ridiculed by schoolmates who discover that she is illiterate, Hans teaches her to read, beginning with *The Gravedigger’s Handbook*, a book she grabbed when it fell from a workman’s



coat at her brother’s funeral. Later, Liesel defiantly snatches a burning book from a bonfire at a Nazi rally, where she’s spotted by the Burgermeister’s wife (Barbara Auer), who invites Liesel into her late son’s library. Meanwhile, the Hubermann household is secretly harboring Max Vandenburg (Ben Schnetzer), the seriously ill son of Hans’ Jewish WWI comrade. Adapted from Markus Zusak’s lyrical 2006 bestseller, director Brian Percival’s *The Book Thief* is unfortunately far too episodic and emotionally restrained to evoke more than superficial attachment to the characters—despite the horrors of the Holocaust and Allied air raids. Still, even though this gently engaging historical melodrama lacks the magic of Zusak’s novel, it is recommended, overall. (S. Granger)

The Broken Circle Breakdown

★★★★1/2

New Video, 70 min., in Flemish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$26.95, Mar. 11

Honored in its native Belgium with multiple awards and nabbing an Oscar nomination for Best Foreign Film, filmmaker Felix Van Groeningen’s drama presents a story of wrenching marital crises blended with some exquisite bluegrass and C&W music. Adapted from a stage production, *The Broken Circle Breakdown* employs a time-splintered narrative to contrast the delirious highs and agonized lows in the relationship between Elise (Veerle Baetens), a Ghent tattoo artist (who has made her own body a multicolored canvas), and Didier (Jonah Heldenbergh), a bearded gentleman farmer and avid banjo player in a successful bluegrass ensemble. Set against a backdrop of 9/11 and its faraway echoes on the American scene, the story finds Elise becoming a twangy vocalist for Didier’s band, but offstage their young daughter’s tragic ordeal with cancer fractures the relationship. Although somewhat manipulative and melodramatic, the film successfully captures emotional pain within a smooth blend of narrative and appealing soundtrack. Highly recommended. (C. Cassidy)



Caesar Must Die

★★★★1/2

Adapt, 77 min., in Italian w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95

Paolo and Vittorio Taviani’s *Caesar Must Die* serves up a docu-drama starring Italian penitentiary inmates—using their real names—who perform in an abridged version of Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*. So, we are seeing actual roughneck prisoners in a movie, playing themselves as prisoners acting in a play. Got that? Surprisingly powerful, the film is mostly shot in stark black-and-white, with only the formal staging in full color. As



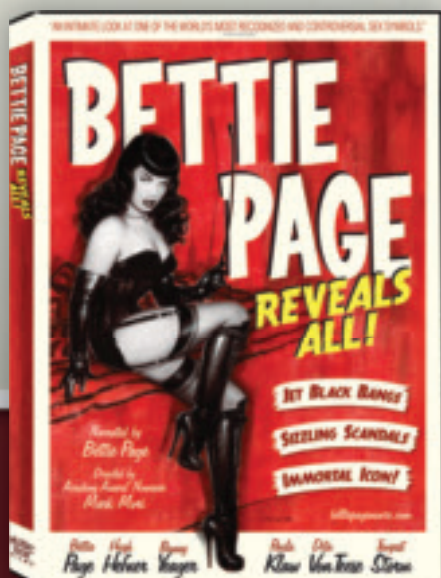
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the show rehearses, in corridors and exercises yards, the men—as well as the appreciative guards—take stock of the various characters, with some of the criminals here easily able to relate to the themes of abuse of power and the fate that awaits the conspirators. Shakespeare, it seems, knew how things work on the mean streets. A fascinating piece of behind-bars theater that is also an absorbing work of cinematic meta-narrative, this is highly recommended. (C. Cassidy)

Coexist Comedy Tour

★★★

Kino, 88 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.95

The original concept for this documentary—directed by horror schlockmeister Larry Brand—was to bring six comedians of different religious faiths together on stage for one night of religious-themed standup. That high-minded gimmick—to “unite the world’s religions for a few moments”—is supposed to be a sort of “can’t we all get along” testing ground to see if some common ground could be found amongst a Christian, a Muslim, a Hindu, a Jew, a Buddhist, and an atheist. But then the Christian comic drops out, and Brand intercuts the painful audition process for the Christian substitute with the live onstage acts of the featured comedians. Not surprisingly, much of the humor stems from poking fun at each others’ faiths: “I don’t have anything against Muslims,” says the Buddhist comic, “but I wouldn’t want to fly with them.” The biggest surprise turns out to be that the Jewish comic is actually angrier and more profane than even the atheist. Although the original “experiment” of bringing these faiths together in some symbolic or meaningful way never quite comes to fruition, the strong material from each comedian here (including a guest appearance by seasoned pro John Fugelsang) makes this well worth watching. Recommended. (M. Sandlin)

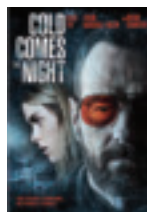


Cold Comes the Night

★★

Sony, 90 min., R, DVD: \$26.99, Blu-ray: \$30.99, Mar. 4

In frigid upstate New York, Eastern European thug Topo (Bryan Cranston) is being chauffeured through Greene County by his nephew to deliver a bag of money to a kingpin across the border in Montreal. The pair make a brief stop at a seedy roadside motel—frequented by hookers and drug users—that is managed by hard-working single mother Chloe (Alice Eve), who is worried about her young daughter, Sophia (Ursula Parker), the target of a social services worker threatening to take her into custody unless Chloe finds more “appropriate” housing within two weeks. After Topo’s



nephew tangles with a prostitute, the dead bodies of both are discovered by a corrupt cop, Billy (Logan Marshall-Green), who confiscates the Jeep Cherokee that Topo arrived in. Ruthless Topo, who is nearly blind, threatens to kill Sophia unless Chloe will help him recover the valuable stash that is hidden in the impounded SUV. Filmmaker Tze Chun’s *Cold Comes the Night* begins with a pervasive aura of treacherous violence and atmospheric isolation but winds up failing to make good on its early promise. Optional, at best. (S. Granger)

The Counselor

★★★
Fox, 117 min., R, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$39.99

Directed by Ridley Scott from an original screenplay by acclaimed novelist Cormac McCarthy, *The Counselor* stars Michael Fassbender as the titular Texas lawyer, a man who encounters all sorts of disreputable folks, ranging from men like weird, wild-haired nightclub owner Reiner (Javier Bardem) and sly, smooth-talking Westray (Brad Pitt), to women such as Reiner’s femme fatale girlfriend, the callously manipulative Malkina (Cameron Diaz), and jittery jailbird Ruth (Rosie Perez). When the rather naïve legal eagle (ignoring explicit warnings about the risks involved) makes a pivotal choice to participate in a dangerous \$20 million drug trafficking deal—involving cocaine stashed in a septic truck that will be driven across the border from Mexico to El Paso en route to Chicago—it turns out to be a fateful decision that will not only affect his own life but also that of his beloved fiancée, Laura (Penélope Cruz). *The Counselor* suffers from a clumsy, confusing plot peopled with ambiguous yet decidedly archetypal characters who are emotionally detached and given to Shakespearean-like soliloquies. Despite a plethora of steamy sex scenes and unrelenting violence, this is a visually dull tale (with some vivid moments, such as elegantly colored cheetahs dashing through the desert) that is both brutal and depressing. Optional. (S. Granger)



Dallas Buyers Club

★★★★

Focus, 117 min., R, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.98

Based on true events, this gritty, frail man-against-the-system drama stars Matthew McConaughey as electrician and bull-riding rodeo cowboy Roy Woodruff, a Texas redneck bigot who openly mocks homosexuals—at least until 1985, when he learns that he’s HIV-positive. Stunned by the diagnosis, Roy refuses to believe the doctors (Denis O’Hare, Jennifer Garner) who say he only has 30 days



to live. Proclaiming, “I ain’t no dang queer,” Roy balks at participating in a double-blind AZT trial at Dallas Mercy Hospital, afraid he’ll be given a placebo. So he buys AZT illegally, only to discover that it makes him worse, especially since he also chain-smokes, guzzles booze, snorts cocaine, and gulps methamphetamines. Conducting extensive research, Roy discovers an unorthodox doctor (Griffin Dunne) at a Mexican clinic offering alternative drug treatments and he starts a smuggling operation into Dallas. With the help of an unlikely friend named Rayon (Jared Leto)—a transsexual druggie—street-smart Roy organizes a “buyer’s club” for HIV-positive/AIDS-infected members, who pay \$400 monthly dues for Roy’s unauthorized supplies, as opposed to the \$10,000 annual charges from pharmaceutical companies for AZT. That success leads rebellious, resourceful Roy to visit Japan, China, and the Netherlands, searching for new AIDS drugs, despite attempts by the FDA, DEA, and IRS to shut him down. Grittily helmed in a minimalist style by Jean-Marc Vallée, *Dallas Buyers Club* is most memorable for McConaughey and singer/musician Leto’s convincing, complex, Oscar-nominated performances (and astonishing physical transformations) in this desperately sad yet redemptive character study. Recommended. (S. Granger)

Devil’s Pass

★★★1/2
MPI, 100 min., R, DVD: \$24.98

Filmmaker Renny Harlin applies the *Blair Witch Project* found-footage formula to this fanciful tale tied to 1959’s so-called Dyatlov Pass incident, when nine adventurers died under mysterious circumstances while ski-hiking in the northern Ural Mountains. Here, five photogenic University of Oregon students decide to follow the doomed expedition’s route and try to discover what actually happened—all the while filming their efforts. Grainy news footage interrupts to inform viewers that their trek also ended badly, after which *Devil’s Pass* rewinds in order to chronicle (using film that the students supposedly shot) the horrors they encountered in the wintry Russian landscape. Unfortunately, the revelations about secret Soviet experiments involving aliens and time travel don’t succeed in delivering the intended jolts, so that—ultimately—this feels like lukewarm leftovers from a now-tired genre. Optional. (F. Swietek)



Diana

★★★
Entertainment One, 113 min., PG-13, DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98

Oliver Hirschbiegel’s biopic about Princess Diana boasts lovely location filming—with plush interiors and first-class costuming—as well as a solid performance from Naomi Watts in the title role (she may not much

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"Boasting intelligent performances by **Miranda Otto** and **Gloria Pires**."
– *Variety*

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– *Slant*

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I am Divine

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Contact: Kim Frizza, kim@wolfevideo.com • Ph: 323.441.9111 • WolfeVideo.com

resemble Diana but Watts does get the voice and mannerisms right). The script is fashioned from Kate Snell's 2000 book *Diana: Her Last Love*, depicting a two-year love affair between Diana and Hasnat Khan (Naveen Andrews), a Pakistani-British surgeon, which began in 1995 and ended shortly before her death in 1997. (In this telling, Diana's short involvement with Dodi Fayed was little more than a ruse to make Khan jealous and overcome his reluctance to commit to marriage.) Perhaps a trenchant story of a woman scorned by her husband who seeks romance elsewhere could be fashioned from this basic material, but here it becomes little more than a "poor little rich girl" tale. Diana meets Khan during a visit to the hospital where he works and soon they are a secret item—he sneaks into her residence for dinner, and she dons a black wig to accompany him to a jazz club. Unfortunately, the dialogue is so forced and banal that it reeks of a bad 1940s melodrama. And the sequences illustrating Diana's charitable crusades—particularly against land mines—are equally trivialized. Whatever her quirks, the princess surely deserved better than this. Not a necessary purchase. (F. Swietek)



Ender's Game ★★1/2

Summit, 114 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99

Set in the future, *Ender's Game* finds Earth still in recovery from an alien invasion 50 years earlier—when giant, ant-like creatures called Formics attacked. After a daring aerial maneuver by heroic Mazer Rackham (Ben Kingsley), the Formics retreated to their home colony, but Earthlings still fear their return. To combat that eventuality, the International Fleet has developed Battle School—situated in an orbiting space station—where Earth's brightest and most gifted children are trained to fight the Formics. Col. Hyrum Graff (Harrison Ford) insists to Maj. Gwen Anderson (Viola Davis) that a coldly calculating lad named Andrew "Ender" Wiggin (Asa Butterfield) shows the most promise as a future Commander—but first he must prove himself. Based on Orson Scott Card's 1985 coming-of-age novel, the movie is dutifully adapted and humorlessly directed by Gavin Hood, who traces Ender's long and rigorous training, followed by a climactic battle. The CGI zero-gravity exercises, pitting one student squad against another, demonstrate Ender's strategic cleverness, but the teen is emotionally torn between ruthlessness and compassion, as he's befriended by fellow Cadet Petra Arkanian (Hailee Steinfeld) and brutally bullied by Cadet Officer Bonzo Madrid (Moises Arias). In the novel, Ender

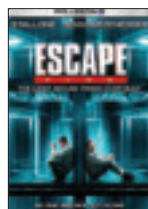


ages from 6-to-12, but Hood has compressed the timeline into a single year here. *Ender's Game* made more headlines for author Card's widely reported homophobic remarks than for its cinematic qualities, although it does actually succeed in raising the provocative question of defensive genocide. Viewers can debate this relevant geopolitical issue—along with the topics of preemptive strikes, child soldiers, and drone warfare—long after the credits roll. Optional. (S. Granger)

Escape Plan ★★

Summit, 115 min., R, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99

Structural engineer/former lawyer Ray Breslin (Sylvester Stallone) is the author of the definitive nonfiction tome *Compromising Correctional Institutional Security*, drawn from his experiences in finding security glitches in American prisons. Usually, Breslin serves as an undercover consultant, allowing himself to be incarcerated as a phony criminal, after which he breaks free to illustrate a particular penitentiary's potential flaws and then become an advisor on how to correct them. After escaping from a Colorado Federal Prison, Breslin is hired for \$5 million by a CIA operative to infiltrate an ultra-secret, privately funded, high-tech, heavily-fortified facility known as The Tomb, which is filled with underground glass cells housing the worst-of-the-worst criminals, while masked, jackbooted guards patrol catwalks above the cells. Problem is: Breslin's evacuation code doesn't work and the warden who knows his real identity is missing, so Breslin and his co-workers (Vincent D'Onofrio, Amy Ryan, Curtis "50 Cent" Jackson) have been deceived and double-crossed. Joined by gregarious, goateed, German-speaking inmate Emil Rottmayer (Arnold Schwarzenegger) and an Islamic terrorist (Faran Tahir), barrel-chested Breslin is determined to outwit and outsmart soft-spoken, sadistic warden Hobbes (Jim Caviezel) and his heinous henchman, Drake (Vinnie Jones). Generically written for hulking monosyllabic sexagenarians Stallone and Schwarzenegger, *Escape Plan* is burdened with slow-paced, banal, and often unintelligible dialogue, except for Schwarzenegger's amusing "You hit like a vegetarian!" Swedish director Mikael Håfström opts for extreme close-ups and testosterone-laden tough-guy violence over compelling characters and story in this forgettable popcorn flick. An optional purchase. (S. Granger)



The Fifth Estate ★★

Touchstone, 128 min., R, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$36.99

Based on real events, this edgy, dramatic thriller looks at the cyber-power wielded by Julian Assange, founder of WikiLeaks.

The story begins when arrogant Australian anarchist Assange (Benedict Cumberbatch), who is determined to use his database to uncover corporate fraud and government corruption, is joined by idealistic partner/assistant Daniel Domscheit-Berg (Daniel Brühl). Railing against injustice, the pair bring down Swiss banking group Julius Baer, uncover Kenyan death squads, disclose the identities of neo-Nazi British National Party members, and post a video illustrating how the murder of two Reuters journalists in Iraq was covered up by U.S. troops. But all that is window dressing compared to WikiLeaks' publication—in conjunction with *The New York Times*, London's *The Guardian*, and Germany's *Der Spiegel*—of Bradley Manning's stolen classified military documents and diplomatic cables from Iraq and Afghanistan. The thorny ethical problem lies in the fact that the WikiLeaks posting of un-redacted names threatens the lives of loyal informers. Wearing a white wig, British actor Cumberbatch powerfully embodies megalomaniacal Assange's ruthless manipulation, while Brühl is fine as his rational counterpoint (Laura Linney, Stanley Tucci, and David Thewlis lend support). Based on *Inside WikiLeaks: My Time with Julian Assange at the World's Most Dangerous Website* by Domscheit-Berg and *WikiLeaks: Inside Julian Assange's War on Secrecy* by David Leigh and Luke Harding, filmmaker Bill Condon's *The Fifth Estate* unfortunately offers too little in the way of unbiased backstory and too much feverish frenzy while exploring the nature of 21st-century Internet journalism—which seemingly lacks any semblance of accountability. Optional. (S. Granger)



Four ★★

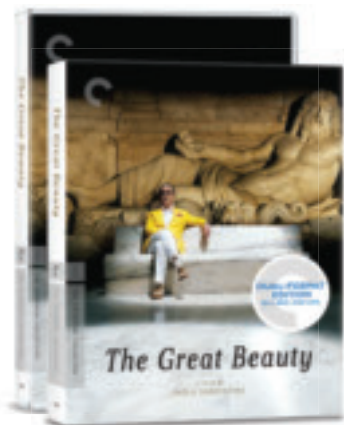
Wolfe, 75 min., R, DVD: \$24.95

Four focuses on a quartet of characters who will intersect on a fateful night. Two—a white teenage boy named June (Emory Cohen) and a middle-age African American man named Joe (Wendell Pierce)—hook up online for sex but find their relationship becomes more complicated after Joe takes a paternal tone with the deeply ambivalent June (although that doesn't stop Joe from having illegal sex with the younger June in a tawdry motel room, an action that certainly undercuts the fatherly benevolence). Meanwhile, Joe's adolescent daughter, Abigail (Aja Naomi King), who is consigned to babysit her clinically depressed mother, reaches out to Dexter (E.J. Bonilla), a former high school basketball-playing clod who bores her but gives her the illusion of having at least one experience she can call her own. When these





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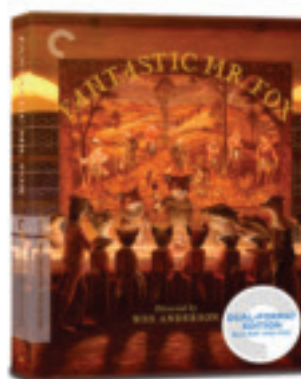
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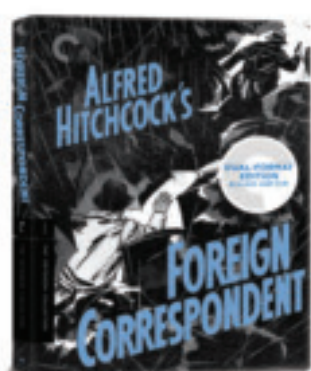
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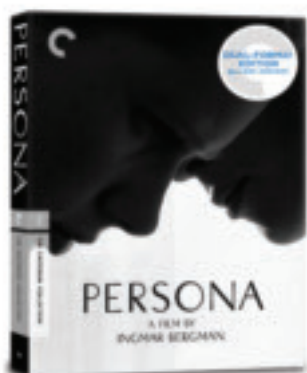
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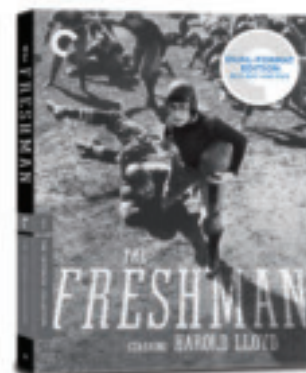
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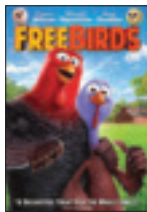
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two pairs briefly and inevitably meet, the moment proves mystifying to Abigail, but that is the only highlight in this well-acted but very uneven drama based on a play by Christopher Shinn and directed by Joshua Sanchez. Not a necessary purchase. (T. Keogh)

Free Birds ★★

Fox, 91 min., PG, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99



This animated buddy-caper serves up time-traveling turkeys who are determined to change history and keep themselves and their ancestors off the Pilgrims' menu on the first Thanksgiving in the New World. When astute Reggie (voiced by Owen Wilson) tries to warn his free-range flock what's in store for them, they shun him as "anti-corn," but when they discover that he's right, he's tossed out of the coop. Fortunately, Reggie is rescued by the plucky daughter of the President of the United States, who designates him as this year's "pardoned turkey." While languishing at Camp David, Reggie is kidnapped by renegade Jake (Woody Harrelson), who convinces him that it's their destiny to make use of S.T.E.V.E.—an egg-shaped, government-built time machine (voiced by *Star Trek* vet George Takei)—for a Turkey Freedom Front trip back to Plymouth Colony, circa November 1621. Upon landing, the toms confront gun-toting colonists, but they're saved from the harvest feast by Jenny (Amy Poehler), the sassy daughter of Wild Turkey Chief Broadbeak (Keith David), which leads to a daring raid on the settlers' weapons and the arrival of Chuck E. Cheese pizza. Pixar animator-turned-director Jimmy Hayward presents fast-paced, meticulously choreographed action sequences, but the shallow script—stuffed with cranberry-sauced humor and gentle jabs against factory farming—lacks the inherent cleverness and fun of the similarly fowl-themed *Chicken Run*. Optional. (S. Granger)

Frozen ★★★★★

Walt Disney, 102 min., PG, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99, Mar. 18



With the Oscar-nominated *Frozen*, Walt Disney Studios reclaims its animation crown. Elsa (voiced by Idina Menzel) and Anna (Kristen Bell) are fairy tale princesses, heirs to the enchanted Scandinavian kingdom of Arendelle following the death of their parents in a shipwreck. Older Elsa was born with a scary, supernatural, difficult-to-control ability to spontaneously create snow and ice. After Elsa inadvertently condemns her subjects to bleak, perpetual winter in a bizarre accident, she leaves and builds an Ice Palace sanctuary on North Mountain. Younger Anna goes looking for Elsa, longing to reestablish the close

connection with her beloved yet estranged sister that they once shared as children. For this arduous quest, Anna teams up with rugged mountain man Kristoff (Jonathan Groff), his trusty reindeer Sven, and an endearing, anthropomorphic, carrot-nosed snowman named Olaf (Josh Gad), who loves "warm hugs" and dreams about summer. Complicating matters are the scheming Duke of Weselton (Alan Tudyk) and handsome Hans (Santino Fontana), Prince of the Southern Isles. Very loosely based on Hans Christian Andersen's *The Snow Queen*, this fast-paced comedic adventure from filmmakers Chris Buck and Jennifer Lee combines gorgeous animation with an absorbing story that incorporates clever contemporary gender revisions. An unexpected treat here is the soaring musical score by husband-and-wife songwriting team Robert Lopez and Kristen Anderson-Lopez (including the Best Original Song-nominated "Let It Go"). Sure to warm even the coldest of hearts, this is highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** (S. Granger)

The Great Beauty ★★

Criterion, 141 min., in Italian w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.95, Mar. 25



Visually dazzling, Paolo Sorrentino's Golden Globe-winning and Oscar-nominated odyssey through Rome examines the hedonistic lifestyle of acclaimed writer Jep Gambardella (Toni Servillo), whose story begins at a bacchanal celebrating his 65th birthday. With hundreds of revelers romping around him, Jep thinks about his squandered years as a charming socialite who not only threw the best parties but who could ruin other people's soirees at will. Jep wrote a novel 40 years ago, and has since lived on his literary laurels, meanwhile scribbling superficial celebrity profiles. Dwelling in a sumptuous flat overlooking the Colosseum, he surrounds himself with friends and admirers. Accompanied by a middle-aged stripper (Sabrina Ferilli), Jep attends fashionable events with the upper bourgeoisie, strolls along the banks of the Tiber, meanders through deserted palazzos, and muses about his mysterious neighbor—until, one day, a stranger appears who introduces himself as the widower of Jep's first true love. *The Great Beauty* serves up a pulsating, satirical portrait of a suave, world-weary journalist searching for his long-lost idealism, while also experiencing the exquisite sights and sounds of the glorious Eternal City. Extravagant, elegant, and enigmatic, this wonderful meditation on opulence and decadence is recommended. (S. Granger)

The Happy House ★★½

First Run, 80 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95

One has to admire the ambition of writer-

director D.W. Young (who proves a triple threat by also serving as editor) to make a different sort of horror picture, employing the conventions of the genre while also simultaneously spoofing them. Young begins with a well-worn premise: bickering young couple Joe (Khan Baykal) and Wendy (Aya Cash) leave their urban apartment for a vacation at a rural bed-and-breakfast run by the weirdly upbeat Hildie (Marcelline Hugot), who serves blueberry muffins with a secret ingredient that makes them simply irresistible, while also enforcing a decidedly old-fashioned code of conduct for guests. Also on hand are Hildie's hulking unwelcoming son and a Swedish lepidopterist desperate to find a supposedly extinct butterfly. For the first half, *The Happy House* toys with the newcomers' reaction to their quirky surroundings, after which two new characters—a stern English professor and an escaped serial killer—are added to the mix. Although the film wants to elicit both shudders and smiles, the humor is mild and the frightful moments are awkward. Still, it does boast an agreeably oddball tone and doesn't overstay its welcome. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)



The Hunger Games: Catching Fire ★★

Lionsgate, 146 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99, Mar. 7



Jennifer Lawrence returns as heroic Katniss Everdeen in this adaptation of the second book in Suzanne Collins' dystopian trilogy—a film that is even darker and more dramatic than the first. After winning the 74th Annual Hunger Games, Katniss and Peeta Mellark (Josh Hutcherson) embark on a Victory Tour of the oppressed, underprivileged districts. But first Katniss must face suitor Gale (Liam Hemsworth), now that she is supposed to be romantically involved with Peeta. This fictional liaison is fostered by diabolical President Snow (Donald Sutherland), who—along with wily gamemaker Plutarch Heavensbee (the late Philip Seymour Hoffman)—is planning the next survival-of-the-fittest TV reality show, *The Quarter Quell*, which will bring together former Victors in competition, even as the seeds of subversion and rebellion continue to sprout throughout Panem. "Last year was child's play," warns Katniss' manipulative mentor, Haymitch (Woody Harrelson). *Catching Fire* is adroitly directed by Francis Lawrence, who not only adheres to the central themes of loyalty, trust, and betrayal, but also maintains the resonant political undercurrent and suspenseful tension of the jungle Games, which involve a rotating rock island, rabid monkeys, attack birds, blood rain, and a rolling fog of poison

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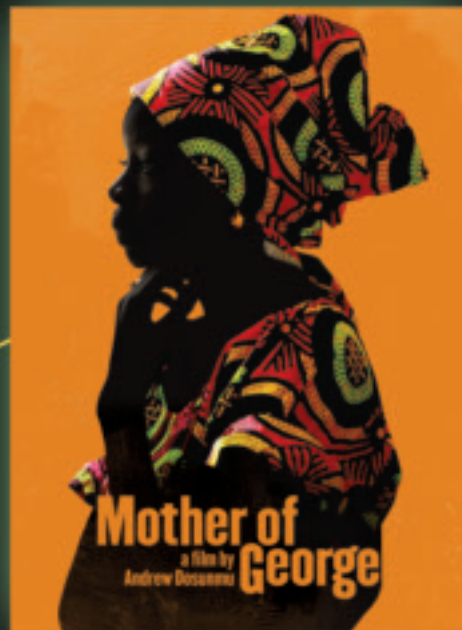
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gas. Acclaimed actress Lawrence once again effectively embodies the outspoken, revolutionary warrior whose weapon of choice is the bow and arrow. And she receives masterful support from Elizabeth Banks as PR-maven Effie Trinket, Lenny Kravitz as designer Cinna, and Stanley Tucci as TV host Caesar Flickerman, along with newcomers Jeffrey Wright, Amanda Plummer, and Jena Malone. An exciting, engaging, and escapist entertainment spectacle, this is recommended. (S. Granger)

I'm So Excited! ★★

Sony, 90 min., in Spanish w/English subtitles, R, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$40.99



Pedro Almodóvar's fans may find some reason to praise this farce set aboard an airplane suffering from a mechanical problem, but the sad fact is that *I'm So Excited!* quickly stalls and sputters as it desperately tries to be wickedly wacky but fails at every turn. And turn endlessly is what the plane does: the landing gear has been jammed in a pre-takeoff accident (allowing for flat cameos by Antonio Banderas and Penelope Cruz), leaving the aircraft to circle around Toledo while the control tower searches for an airstrip to accommodate an emergency descent. All of the coach passengers except one are sound asleep, but the crew—three swishy male stewards (Javier Cámara, Raúl Arévalo, and Carlos Areces), the pilot, and co-pilot—are awake, along with the first-class passengers: an actor with a suicidal lover back on the ground, a corrupt financier fleeing the law, a darkly handsome gent who turns out to have criminal connections, and a notorious dominatrix named Norma (Cecilia Roth). They are joined from coach by a self-proclaimed psychic looking for love. What follows is the usual Almodóvarian round of sexual pyrotechnics, with the randy psychic eventually losing her virginity to a handsome stud she takes advantage of as he snores away in the economy cabin, the pilot and co-pilot both confessing their AC-DC proclivities, and Norma regaling the assembled multitude with tales of her exploits with men of influence—all of their behavior lubricated by drinks that the attendants mix liberally for everybody. An unfocused and ultimately tiresome slumming lark from a talented director, this is not a necessary purchase. (F. Swietek)

Inside Llewyn Davis

★★★

Sony, 104 min., R, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray: \$35.99, Mar. 11



Filmmakers Joel and Ethan Coen have concocted a droll, darkly sardonic comedy that pivots on the sweet desperation

of one week in the life of a folksinger in New York's Greenwich Village, circa 1961. Llewyn Davis (Oscar Isaac) is trying to earn a living as a musician, but it's not working out. Homeless, he often sleeps on a sofa at the Gerfeins (Ethan Phillips, Robin Bartlett) who live near Columbia University. One day, the Gerfeins' cat escapes, igniting a series of escapades that lead Llewyn to also crash with the Berkeys (Justin Timberlake, Carey Mulligan), but that relationship turns out to be complicated. So, guitar in tote, Llewyn takes an ill-fated road trip to Chicago with two strangers (Garrett Hedlund, John Goodman) to audition for a music manager (F. Murray Abraham). Naturally, since this is a Coen brothers film, it's the journey, not the destination, that is important. Isaac is superb as the irritable and eccentric central character, a surly, self-sabotaging misanthrope whose choices are relentlessly self-defeating and result in unrelenting misery. Recommended. (S. Granger)

Iron Man & Hulk: Heroes United ★★

Buena Vista, 71 min., PG, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99



This CGI-enhanced Marvel superhero team-up flick won't disappoint viewers looking for bloodless but virtually nonstop cartoon violence. Guest villains (actually *Captain America* crossover enemies, as any comics geek can tell) capture the Hulk (who is articulate and intelligent here) in order to use his radioactive power in some kind of reactor. Inventor Tony Stark, aka Iron Man, flies to the rescue, but the reactor's meltdown accidentally creates a living being of pure energy, who starts draining electricity, and can also take over machines. Since Tony Stark's flying HQ is an aircraft-carrier-like weapons platform, filled with robots and backup Iron Man suits, this means...*beaucoup* fights, as the two heroes battle the evil entity. Although hardcore fans might want to watch, the mostly one-note mayhem here will not appeal to a wider audience. Optional, at best. (C. Cassady)

It's Not Me, I Swear!

★★★1/2

First Run, 110 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95



Director Philippe Falardeau's *It's Not Me, I Swear!* tells the tale of a 10-year-old boy who acts out in both destructive and self-destructive ways as he watches his parents' marriage fall apart. Léon (Antoine L'Écuyer) is already on the edge before the actual split takes place—setting a bed on fire to stop his mother and father from fighting, and even trying to hang himself in the front

yard. But after his mother leaves for Greece, Léon quickly develops into a proficient thief and liar, breaking into nearby houses to steal money in order to finance a trip to join his mom. Léon is helped by a neighbor girl named Léa (Catherine Faucher), who has an equally troubled home life. An exceptionally perceptive tale of children who feel abandoned, the film isn't grim or depressing, but rather filled with as much humor as heartbreak. And while some viewers may consider Léon to be uncommonly precocious for his age—he holds personal religious views, quotes Greek philosophers, and deftly plays Bach on the harpsichord—he's certainly unforgettable. One of those rare films about childhood trauma that resolutely avoids mawkishness and simple solutions, this is highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

Jayne Mansfield's Car

★★★1/2

Anchor Bay, 122 min., R, DVD: \$26.98, Blu-ray: \$29.99



Directing from an uneven tragicomic script that he co-wrote, Billy Bob Thornton also costars as Skip Caldwell, the deceptively "normal" member of a large, affluent, oddball Alabama military family, circa 1969, headed up by crusty patriarch Jim (Robert Duvall), a WWI vet strangely obsessed with fatal car accidents (hence the title). Hippie culture, drugs, and Vietnam have challenged the Caldwells, but a real culture-clash arrives with the unexpected death of Jim's runaway wife Naomi, who bolted for England long before and married Kingsley Bedford (John Hurt), an aristocratic old soldier with a knighthood. With Naomi's body sent home for burial, the British and American relatives get together for a wobbly conclave that turns into mutual fascination—sexual in Skip's case, while Jim and Sir Kingsley find a complex comradeship anchored in their shared disappointment with sons. Although *Jayne Mansfield's Car* sometimes feels like a strained actor's exercise (all the better to show off the ensemble that includes Kevin Bacon, Frances O'Connor, Robert Patrick, and Ray Stevenson), occasional brilliant moments make the sum of the film's parts greater than the whole. A strong optional purchase. (C. Cassady)

Key of Life ★★

Film Movement, 128 min., in Japanese w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95



A struggling, suicidal actor and an amnesiac hitman both get an unexpected shot at a brand new life when they cross paths and swap identities in a bathhouse in this lighthearted black comedy from director Kenji Uchida. Masato Sakai stars as likable but self-defeating actor Sakurai

(he can't even kill himself without botching it) who swaps his one-room dump for the lavish apartment of Kondo (Teruyuki Kagawa), a methodical assassin who loses his memory after slipping on a bar of soap (and wakes up in the actor's life). Costar Ryoko Hirose adds a twist of oddball romantic comedy as a coolly efficient career woman who organizes her life the same way she runs her magazine: setting a wedding date before even finding a boyfriend. Uchida deftly tracks the inevitable chaos while putting the full-blooded characters front and center in this amiable mix of social satire and wild goofball twists, where personality triumphs over circumstance, even when circumstances take some unexpected (and thoroughly entertaining) turns. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Kill Your Darlings ★★1/2

Sony, 103 min., R, Blu-ray/
DVD Combo: \$35.99, Mar. 18

In 1944, when Jack Kerouac (Jack Huston), Allen Ginsberg (Daniel Radcliffe), and William Burroughs (Ben Foster) were students at Columbia, recklessly experimenting with drugs, poetry, and homosexuality in Greenwich Village, the trio were influenced by charismatic classmate Lucien Carr (Dane DeHaan), who became the obsession of David Kammerer (Michael C. Hall), Carr's creepy former teacher/ex-boyfriend. One night in Riverside Park, Carr killed Kammerer, and Kerouac, Ginsberg, and Burroughs were all implicated in the murder through guilt by association. Kerouac and Burroughs later wrote a novel about the case—a manuscript that Carr, who went on to become a respected journalist/editor, suppressed until his death in 2005. Somewhat incoherently scripted by director John Krokidas and Austin Bunn, this melodrama about the birth of the Beat Generation is presented in distractingly fragmentary fashion. Authentic as the gullible, gay poet from Paterson, NJ, *Harry Potter* star Radcliffe displays more range than he has before. His bespectacled Ginsberg is sensitive, sullen, and socially insecure, and the film features a touching subplot about his poet father (David Cross) and emotionally unstable mother (Jennifer Jason Leigh). Subversively stylish and seedy—evoking nostalgia for a hallucinogenic period almost seven decades ago—*Kill Your Darlings* is ultimately unsatisfying as drama, though likely to be popular due to Radcliffe's presence. A strong optional purchase. (S. Granger)

Last Vegas ★★1/2

Sony, 105 min., PG-13, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray/
DVD Combo: \$40.99

Starring Michael Douglas, Robert De Niro, Morgan Freeman, and Kevin Kline, this senior citizen comedy reunites the Flatbush Four—best friends who grew up together in Brooklyn. The occasion is a

bachelor party for wealthy womanizing Billy (Douglas), who is set to marry his gorgeous thirtysomething girlfriend. That prospect rouses interest from Sam (Kline), who's terminally bored at a Florida retirement community; Archie (Freeman), who is being held for health surveillance by his overly-protective son; and grieving widower Paddy (De Niro), a cranky curmudgeon who also harbors a serious grudge against Billy. In Sin City, the geezer quartet gloms onto Diana (Mary Steenburgen), a sassy lounge singer searching for happiness in life's second act. While gambling in the hotel casino as they wait for rooms, Archie scores at blackjack, ultimately catapulting the group into a palatial penthouse suite newly available when rapper 50 Cent cancels his reservation. Naturally, what follows is one of the wildest parties Vegas has ever witnessed as the foursome work out their respective emotional issues. Amiable directed by Jon Turteltaub, *Last Vegas* is chockfull of good-humored one-liners—such as when Archie describes Red Bull as “getting drunk and electrocuted at the same time”—along with some predictable situations (as when the elders judge a poolside bikini contest). Disarmingly slick and spicy, this Baby Boomer comedy is a strong optional purchase. (S. Granger)

Linsanity ★★★

Ketchup, 89 min., PG, DVD:
\$20.99

“Linsanity” is the clever label attached to the whirlwind rise of NBA point guard Jeremy Lin, a player who seemingly came from nowhere to light up the New York Knicks' scoreboard in early 2012. In this punchy (if sometimes repetitive) documentary, viewers get the inside story from Lin himself, starting from his Harvard days, where filmmaker Evan Jackson Leong began filming him. Luckily for both of them, Lin's success story panned out in a way neither could have expected. Lin grew up the son of poor Taiwanese immigrants in Northern California and took to hoops almost instinctively, especially when he sprouted into a lanky 6-foot-3-inch frame. Home videos and Harvard gameplay footage depict an eager, naturally nimble player. But he was left out of the NBA draft, eventually signing to D-leagues, summer squads, and becoming a benchwarmer for several pro teams. His breakout came days before the Knicks were going to cut him, when he scored 25 points in a single game. What followed was instant Linsanity, which the film captures with rousing good cheer, including the famous Knicks-Lakers game where Lin answered a diss from Kobe Bryant with 40 points. Of course, Lin also experienced plenty

of lows, such as the frustrating period when he sat the bench, and the hurtful racism that began at Harvard (and has continued to hound him). But a feel-good vibe generally pervades *Linsanity*, which heavily emphasizes the star's reliance on family and his strong Christian faith—in good times and bad. Combining interviews with archival footage, this engaging profile is recommended. (T. Fry)

Nebraska ★★★

Paramount, 114 min., R, DVD:
\$30.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo:
\$37.99

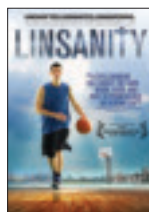
Filmed in monochromatic black-and-white, filmmaker Alexander Payne's multiple-Oscar-nominated *Nebraska* subtly conveys the melancholy lives of ordinary Midwesterners. Best Actor nominee Bruce Dern stars as grizzled Woody Grant, an alcoholic, aging resident of Billings, MT, who is convinced that he won a million dollars in a Publisher Clearing House-like mega-sweepstakes lottery. Obviously struggling with senility, Woody is stubbornly determined to reach the company's headquarters in Lincoln, NE, even if he has to walk there. This is what Woody tells his younger son, David (Will Forte), who picks up his dad after he's wandered down the highway. David's older brother, Ross (Bob Odenkirk), and their exasperated mother, Kate (June Squibb), want to put Woody in a nursing home, but David, feeling empathy for the frail, confused old man, offers to drive him to Lincoln to claim his alleged prize. En route, the pair visit relatives and friends, and David learns more about his reticent, inscrutable father—from an old girlfriend (Angela McEwan) and former business partner (Stacy Keach)—while also discovering that everyone wants a cut of Woody's windfall. As the cantankerous old coot, Dern delivers a restrained-yet-convincing, career-crowning performance, while cinematographer Phedon Papamichael's austere, elegiac imagery evokes Ansel Adams, Diane Arbus, and Edward Hopper. Recommended. (S. Granger)

Night Train to Lisbon

★★1/2

Lionsgate, 111 min., R, DVD:
\$26.98

Filmmaker Bille August's adaptation of Pascal Mercier's titular novel is a visually elegant philosophical mystery starring Jeremy Irons as a buttoned-down Swiss professor who becomes so obsessed with a book that he accidentally acquired from a young woman he saved from suicide that he impetuously travels to Portugal, not only to find the girl, but also to locate the author. His search soon reveals that the writer is dead, but this discovery leads him to investigate



the man's work as a member of a resistance cell opposing the brutal dictatorship of Antônio Salazar—an endeavor that brings him into contact not only with the author's relatives and former comrades, but also with a pretty optometrist who rekindles his own interest in living. The film aims to raise basic existential questions about the importance of making choices and following through, but it's hampered by the excerpts from the supposedly life-changing book (which are more banal than profound) that Irons' character solemnly intones throughout, and by August's lugubrious pacing—drawbacks that can't be overcome, even with a fine cast that includes Bruno Ganz, Tom Courtenay, Lena Olin, Christopher Lee, and Charlotte Rampling. Optional. (F. Swietek)

Out of the Furnace

★★★1/2

Fox, 116 min., R, DVD: \$22.98, Blu-ray: \$29.99, Mar. 11

Set in 2008 in blue-collar Braddock, PA, filmmaker Scott Cooper's *Out of the Furnace* revolves around hard-working steel mill welder Russell Baze (Christian Bale), who has a girlfriend named Lena (Zoe Saldana), and dutifully visits his terminally ill father whenever he can. Russell is concerned about his younger brother, Rodney (Casey Affleck), who has just returned from four Army tours in Iraq and is obviously suffering from PTSD. When Russell goes to prison for a drunk-driving accident that results in manslaughter, Lena strays and Rodney turns to bare-knuckle boxing, falling under the influence of the local bookie (Willem Dafoe), which leads him into notoriously volatile Harlan DeGroat's (Woody Harrelson) hillbilly crime ring in New Jersey's Ramapo Mountains. Despite realistic performances from an impressive A-list cast that also includes Forest Whitaker and Sam Shepard, this violent, hardboiled drama is slow-paced and meandering, while the archetypal characters are sketchily drawn. So when calm, rational Russell suddenly turns vigilante, it feels false. A dark, melancholy, and depressing dirge centering on contemporary decay and the decline of the American Dream, this is a strong optional purchase. (S. Granger)



Pit Stop

★★★1/2
Wolfe, 80 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95

Writer-director Yen Tan's low-simmering tale set in a small Texas town follows characters who are wary of altering a numbing status quo in order to open up to new—and uncertain—experiences in love. Gabe (Bill Heck), a gay carpenter in his mid-30s, has rebounded from an affair with a married man and is now living in an awkward domestic situation with

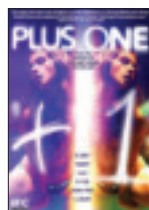


his ex-wife, Shannon (Amy Seimetz), and their young daughter. Across town, Ernesto (Marcus DeAnda) is feeling stifled by the constant presence of his younger, immature ex-lover, Luis (Alfredo Maduro), and he worries over the well-being of another former companion. Everyone needs to move on, but no one quite knows how to do that exactly. The script is full of small but often comically telling scenes of quiet desperation, such as the sight of Ernesto fueling his pickup while reading an article about ending relationships, or a sexually starved Shannon trying hard to convince a timid date to grope her. A film about raw, lovable humanity that boasts excellent performances all around, this is highly recommended. (T. Keogh)

Plus One

★★★1/2
IFC, 96 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.98

Winding up with some screwy combination of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, *Dawson's Creek*, and an old *Jerry Springer* episode, director Dennis Iliadis becomes a victim of his own creative ambition with this teen-comedy/romance/sci-fi thriller. *Plus One* opens with a look at the flagging relationship between laconic teen hunk David (Rhys Wakefield) and amateur fencing star Jill (Ashley Hinshaw). In short order, Jill dumps David after she catches him locking lips with a rival fencer, and David later makes the fateful decision to attend the mega-party of the year hoping to make up with Jill. And that's when everything begins to go seriously wrong: as luck would have it, a meteorite from outer space lands in the vicinity of the party. Soon, the snotty rave-dancing mob of upper-middle-class teen revelers begin to notice doubles of themselves—doppelgängers who mimic the partyer's own actions with about a half-hour lag, only it soon becomes clear that these doubles will incrementally get to the same temporal point as the humans they're doubling. Unfortunately, while the film's stoner humor initially clicks and the romantic angle holds up well, the sci-fi-horror concept never quite lives up to its full shock-value potential. *Plus One* only reminds us of what we already know from earlier cheapo B-horror-sci-fi movies: nothing good will ever be brought to Earth by errant meteorites from space. Optional. (M. Sandlin)



The Prey

★★★
Cohen, 105 min., in French w/English subtitles, R, DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray: \$34.98

This French crime thriller, centering on a working-class bank robber who has to break out of prison in order to save his family from a serial killer, opts for rough-and-tumble grit over slick

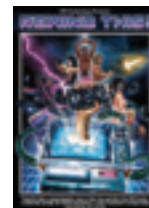


action choreography. Albert Dupontel displays an appropriately scuffed-up quality as Franck, an ordinary criminal who proves to be extraordinarily resourceful and resilient in his search for his former cellmate—a religious fanatic whose meek exterior hides a psychotic murderer. Alice Taglioni is the tough-as-nails detective assigned to track him down. *The Prey* is kind of like *The Fugitive* with a creepy psycho in place of the one-armed man, and the life of a kidnapped child at stake. Director Eric Valette delivers on the action if not on the intelligence of the cops (who would forget to stake out the suspect's own home after he escapes from prison?). Dupontel is convincing as an ordinary man driven to extraordinary feats—he endures prison beatings, jumps through windows, falls from buildings, and doesn't let bullet wounds slow him down—and the film's momentum is swift enough that you can almost overlook the rampant clichés and lazy script. Already optioned for an American remake, this is optional, at best. (S. Axmaker)

Rewind This!

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

An affectionate documentary about the cultural impact of videotape, *Rewind This!* serves up a tribute to the low-fidelity glory of VHS, celebrating the brief era from the early '80s through the end of the century when video stores were at the center of home video culture. Over the course of this colorful tour, viewers learn the history of videotape, home recorders, and players; chart the rise and fall of videotape rental stores; and observe how the video revolution transformed not just the entertainment habits of movie watchers but the way movies were made and marketed. At the heart here are those die-hard collectors who continue to embrace the format and unique productions that came out only on VHS—from strange low-budget movies made directly for the video market by amateur filmmakers to oddities ranging from bizarre exercise tapes to exotic how-to videos. A number of filmmakers (Canadian indie director Atom Egoyan, cult horror filmmaker Frank Henenlotter, and Japanese animation legend Mamoru Oshii among them) join home video producers and rental store managers to discuss the impact and influence of videotape on their own careers as well as the culture at large. Offering an entertaining and illuminating look at a significant element of late-20th-century American popular culture, this is recommended. (S. Axmaker)



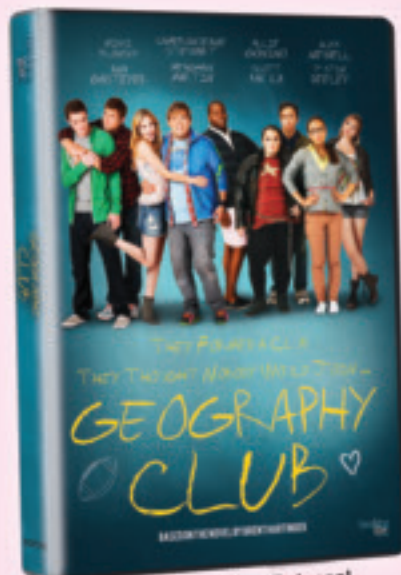
The Rooftop

★★★1/2
Well Go USA, 122 min., in Mandarin w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98

Taiwanese music idol Jay Chou writes, directs, and stars in this lavish Far East ac-

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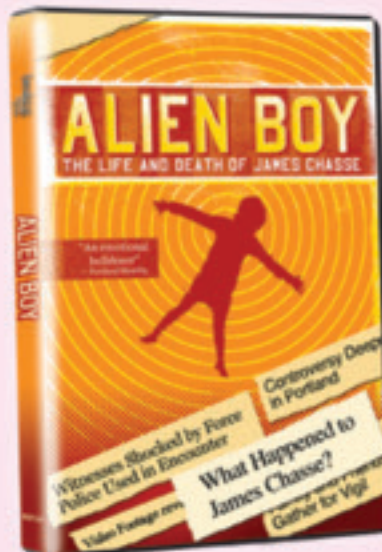
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Geography Club

Based on the best selling young adult novel by Brent Hartinger. Cameron Deane Stewart (*Pitch Perfect*), Nikki Blonsky (*Hairspray*), Meaghan Martin (*Camp Rock*, *Mean Girls 2*), Allie Gonino (*The Lying Game*), Justin Deeley (*Drop Dead Diva*), Ally Maki (*10 Things I Hate About You*), and Alex Newell (*Glee*) star in this moving comedy about a group of high school students who form an after school club to share their feelings and experiences.

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Shocking, gut-wrenching documentary that chronicles one man's struggle with schizophrenia and examines the actions of the police officers responsible for his death, exposing a city grappling with accountability in the death of James Chasse, an innocent, unarmed man. A plea for a new and better understanding of mental health issues.

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Junk

From the creators of cult hit *Zombies of Mass Destruction* comes a smart new stoner comedy about two ex-friends, who are forced to reunite when their film, *Isma-Rama 2*, is accepted by a film festival, and they travel to pitch their new script to the festival's mysterious and powerful guest producer. Cast includes Jake M. Johnson (*New Girl*), Brett Davern (*Awkward*), and Lynn Shelton (*Laggies*).

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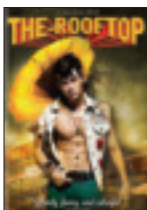
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tion-comedy-musical. *The Rooftop* is set in a mythical Asian coastal metropolis called Galilee in the 1970s, where Wax (Chou) is a streetfighter, part of a bunch of ne'er-do-wells living in Rooftop, the city's high-rise poor quarter (dominated by a giant, functioning gramophone). Wax has a secret crush on Starling (Li Xinai), a ubiquitous ad model being groomed for movie stardom. While collecting "rent" for the gangster-like Housing Authority, Wax stumbles across Starling's film shoot, where his kung fu gets him cast as the stunt double for his dream girl's leading man. Can love blossom between the hooligan and the aristocratic maiden (whose career is also being guided by crooked types)? The musical interludes are blends of 1970s western pop melodies and 11 original Chou tunes, sometimes presented with exquisite trompe l'oeil choreographed sequences. The elements of Cantonese chopsocky potboiler, Indian Bollywood escapism, and MGM song-and-dance Technicolor spectacle make for a most agreeable stir-fry here. Highly recommended. (C. Cassidy)



Sightseers ★1/2

MPI, 88 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.98

This wispy British import from filmmaker Ben Wheatley stars Alice Lowe as Tina, a lonely depressed young woman who lives under the domination of her cranky mother and a mountain of kitsch in their mundane home, a place where the air of gloom over the death of their beloved little terrier still hangs heavy with mum. Alice breaks free of the bleakness to go on a road trip holiday with her new boyfriend, Chris (Steve Oram), an aspiring writer who is also a major sad sack. Chris has a new prized possession: a rundown caravan that the couple attach to his car for a tour of Northern England attractions, including the Pencil Museum and Crich Tramway Village. Along the way, Chris happens to develop a taste for bloody murder as the couple encounter various nobodies who offend his sensibilities. The gruesome killing spree is apparently meant as humorous counterpoint to the dull momentum of Tina and Chris's daily lives, not to mention a possible commentary on class division. Unfortunately, however, it's also a bit of a bore, not terribly funny, and pointlessly nasty. Not recommended. (T. Fry)



Sister ★★★1/2

Adopt, 97 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95

Ursula Meier's exquisitely acted character study serves as a reminder that downhill skiing is hardly a sport for the poor, espe-

cially not with all the transportation and equipment costs involved. Resourceful 12-year-old Simon (Kacey Mottet Klein) routinely hits the Swiss slopes in order to rob skiers of their supplies, later selling items to friends and sharing the spoils with his older sister, Louise (Léa Seydoux), who would rather hang out with her flashy boyfriend (who represents a chance at a more comfortable future) than try to earn money. No one at the ski resort notices Simon's smuggling operation—until Irish cook Mike (Martin Compston) catches him in the act. Simon tells Mike that his parents are gone and that he needs money for "pasta and toilet paper," so Mike helps him to move some of the goods. This encounter emboldens Simon, who soon ingratiates himself with another foreigner named Kristin (Gillian Anderson), telling her that his parents are busy running their hotel. Whether she believes it or not, Kristin provides him with a brief, yet tantalizing taste of a more conventional life. In truth, however, there is more to Simon's domestic situation than he lets on. As the seasons change, Simon's relationships are stretched to the breaking point, but there's a glimmer of hope that better days might lie ahead. A powerful coming-of-age drama, this is highly recommended. (K. Fennessy)



Tiger Eyes ★★1/2

Freestyle, 92 min., PG-13, DVD: \$14.99

Filmmaker Lawrence Blume's *Tiger Eyes* marks the first feature-film adaptation of mother Judy Blume's work (although other novels, such as *Forever*, have been filmed for television). Published in 1981, the story revolves around a teenager's recovery from a devastating loss. After 17-year-old Davey (Willa Holland) loses her sandwich shop proprietor father in a violent incident, depressed pill-popping mother Gwen (Amy Jo Johnson) moves Davey and younger brother Jason (Lucien Dale) from Atlantic City to Los Alamos to stay with Gwen's sister, Bitsy (Cynthia Stevenson), who works as a museum tour guide, and her husband, Walter (Forrest Fyre), who is engaged in weapons research (which Davey finds fairly reprehensible). Davey quickly finds friends in insecure classmate Jane (Elise Eberle), and Wolf (Tatanka Means), a college student who becomes a hiking companion (Davey tells him her name is Tiger). Through Jane, Davey lands a job as a candy stripper, where she meets Wolf's father, Mr. Ortiz (the late Russell Means), who is dying from cancer. As Gwen emerges from her pharmaceutical funk, she takes up with a family friend, a move that makes Davey uncomfortable, but other challenges lie ahead, including Jane's drinking problem. Some of these complica-



tions are resolved by the end, but *Tiger Eyes* doesn't completely satisfy, since many plot developments fail to receive the attention they deserve. Still, given Blume's popularity, this should be considered a strong optional purchase. (K. Fennessy)

Toad Road ★1/2

Artsploitation, 75 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.95

Filmmaker Jason Banker's *Toad Road* is being marketed as a horror movie, but is really more of a would-be psychological thriller with supernatural overtones. Set in rural Pennsylvania, the film stars James Davidson as James, a slacker who hangs out with a bunch of equally scruffy, drugged-out friends. James becomes involved with Sara (Sara Anne Jones), a college girl who has abandoned her studies and is now obsessed with a local legend about a forest housing the entrance to hell. The pair set out to find the infernal gate, but Sara disappears and James is found wandering in the wilderness some six months later, unable to recall what happened. Naturally, James is suspected of having murdered Sara. Banker eventually offers, via blurry flashbacks, some suggestion of what might have happened, but many will be disappointed by the relative lack of payoff, especially given the film's other drawbacks, which include amateurish acting, bland dialogue, and threadbare production values. Not recommended. (F. Swietek)



Una Noche ★★★

MPI, 91 min., in Spanish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.98

Feverish, gripping, and teaming with youthful energy, *Una Noche* is a remarkably affecting compression of one frenetic day and one *mala* night in the lives of three Cuban teenagers desperate to break free of their oppressive situations. The setting is the crumbling, vibrant streets of contemporary Havana, which features colorful building facades, 50-year-old cars, seawalls, and impoverished denizens. Hot-blooded Elio (Javier Núñez Florián), twin sister Lila (Anailín de la Rúa de la Torre), and their friend, Raul (Dariel Arrechaga), race around the city in preparation for a 90-mile seaborne escape to Miami and the promise of *buena* fortune in America. Their getaway plan becomes more urgent with the police on Raul's trail for assaulting a tourist. The perspective alternates amongst the three as they rush through the thrumming alleys and avenues in the oppressive heat, bartering or stealing supplies to make a slapdash tire-tube and wood raft that will take them away from their wretched destinies. A steamy sexuality surges beneath their interactions—along with a fair amount of humor—all captured



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"If this is an early sign of what 2014 has in store... horror is going to have a hell of a year. This is a must see film."

Stitch

Starring Edward Furlong (American History X, Terminator 2: Judgement Day), Stitch follows the story of grieving parents coping with the loss of their young daughter. A desert healing ritual meant to burn emotional baggage goes awry and cosmic forces are unleashed.

Street: February 11



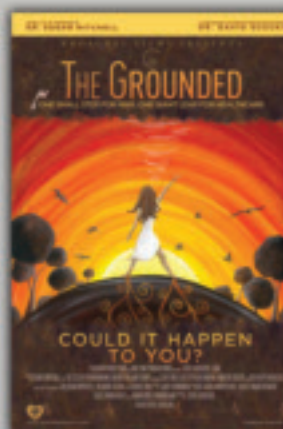
Documentary | 84 mins.
Color | PRDVD2277
DVD: \$24.95

"A fascinating dip into the gender history of yoga."
– Variety

Yogawoman

Yoga was brought to the west from India by a lineage of male teachers. Now there's a generation of women leading the way. They're strong, they're inspiring, and they're radically changing people's lives. From the busy streets of Manhattan to the dusty slums of Kenya, Yogawoman uncovers a global phenomenon that has changed the face of yoga forever. Narrated by Academy Award Nominee Annette Bening.

Street: March 18



Documentary | 74mins.
Color | PRDVD2279
DVD: \$24.95

"Full of Wonder"
– The New York Times

The Grounded

Featuring Dr. David Suzuki, Clint Ober, and Dr. Joseph Mercola, The Grounded tells the true tale of a wildlife filmmaker's quest to confirm the claims of "grounding", a healing concept involving bare skin contact with the Earth. He tests this concept in Haines, Alaska, capturing miraculous results generated by reconnecting residents to the Earth's healing energy. News of the town's response draws the attention of Apollo astronauts, doctors and scientists.

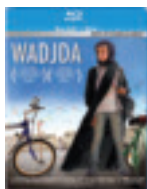
Street: March 18

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with zest and urgency by New York filmmaker Lucy Mulloy in this solid portrait of disaffected youth looking for a new start. Recommended. (T. Fry)

Wadjda ★★½

Sony, 97 min., in Arabic w/ English subtitles, PG, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$40.99



Haifaa Al Mansour is the first Saudi woman to write and direct a feature film. And it's a superb effort, weaving a tale that carries political bite but makes its points through the eyes of children. On the surface, *Wadjda* is a lightweight fable about a 12-year-old tomboy who challenges societal expectations with her desire for a bike. But the story is meant to convey a general indictment of the treatment of women in fundamentalist Islamic society. Waad Mohammed, a bright-eyed girl with a winning smile, stars as the title character, confronted by turmoil at home (her father wants a son, and is considering taking a second, younger wife in order to sire one) and at school, where she receives stern looks from a principal who insists on absolute female propriety. But *Wadjda* suddenly earns academic approval by excelling in a contest centered on the Koran, although—of course—the principal isn't aware that the girl's dedication arises from her hope of winning the prize money to buy a bicycle. Mansour's film isn't shy about driving home its criticism concerning the subservient status of Saudi women, adding myriad subplots to *Wadjda*'s story, but she wisely subordinates the adult-oriented narrative threads to the central tale of the girl, who learns that even though she may enjoy a passing small triumph, she remains part of a culture in which females are constrained by custom and law. By turns uplifting and realistic, charming and caustic, this is highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

We Are What We Are

★★★

Entertainment One, 105 min., R, DVD or Blu-ray: \$24.98

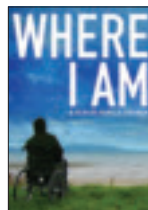


Jim Mickle's film about a present-day family of cannibals eschews the one-slaughter-after-another mentality so monotonously common in contemporary horror movies, opting instead for subtle over gross, and (until the final reel) creepy rather than oodles of explicit gore. Loosely adapted from a same-titled 2010 Mexican film, *We Are What We Are* focuses on the Parker family, a reclusive clan with peculiar culinary needs that are not a matter of choice but stem from physical necessity (resulting from 18th-century events, revealed in periodic flashbacks)—leading to occasional disappearances in their economically depressed Appalachian neighborhood. When a torrential rainstorm

unearths some human bones in a creek near their ramshackle home, the discovery piques the interest of the town's medical examiner—a man determined to find out what happened to his missing daughter. For most of the running time, the movie coasts along on atmosphere, gradually building up a sense of uneasiness until the carnage-laden last act (that is still relatively subdued). Ultimately, the Parkers—who are driven to act not out of mere bloodlust but rather from genetic compulsion—are a strangely sympathetic bunch. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

Where I Am ★★½

MPI, 72 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.98



Philadelphia writer Robert Drake, a gay man who writes gay-themed novels, is the subject of director Pamela Drynhan's documentary about the author's life following a brutal 1999 gay-bashing incident in Sligo, Ireland, where Drake was researching a novel. Drake was assaulted by two men—later sentenced to eight years in prison—who he had met earlier that night at a bar. Beaten bloody and senseless, Drake was left partially paralyzed from the incident. Now years later, Drynhan follows Drake back to Ireland, as he bravely re-connects with the places he lived and traveled through during the run-up to the terrible event that changed his life forever. Drynhan wisely allows Drake to tell his own story, a moving personal journey that unfolds with emotional ebbs and flows, free of manipulative directorial prompting or news-journalism-style interrogation. Along the way, it's hard not to be moved by this fiercely objective but heartfelt portrait of one man's courage in revisiting a traumatic past that most would want to simply forget. Highly recommended. (M. Sandlin)

Classic Films

The April Fools ★★

Paramount, 94 min., PG, DVD: \$19.99



The 1960s boasted numerous comedies and dramas about middle class rebels who were fed up with the rat race and tried to defy traditional measures of success. This 1969 film stars Jack Lemmon in the role of an Everyman named Howard Brubaker, who dutifully climbs the corporate ladder until a chance meeting with a French beauty named Catherine (Catherine Deneuve) at a high society cocktail party causes him to reevaluate his entire life. Lemmon is charming as the earnest but out-of-step stockbroker who rebels against the empty values of corporate

culture, while Deneuve (in her American film debut) is lovely but also largely enigmatic as a woman who decides to leave her unfulfilling life as the trophy wife of a philandering CEO (Peter Lawford). The opening scenes effectively satirize New York society pretentiousness with a light touch and the first half of the film carries a poignant undercurrent, but *The April Fools* veers into loud, broad comedy when Brubaker tries to make his escape in the company of his drunk lawyer (Jack Weston) and a lush (Harvey Korman) whom they meet on the train. Another Lemmon vehicle, Billy Wilder's *The Apartment*, explored similar themes with more wit and insight, and the culture of "swingers" and miniskirts and ridiculous conceptual art pieces here dates this film as an artifact of the '60s mainstream trying desperately to be hip. Not a necessary purchase. (S. Axmaker)

Big ★★★

Fox, 104 min., PG, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$19.99



Penny Marshall's beloved 1988 warm-hearted comedy tells the story of an adolescent who makes a wish at a fortune-telling machine—hoping to be big—and subsequently wakes up in the body of a man. Landing a job at a toy company, fully-grown Josh (Tom Hanks) is promoted to the corporate leadership circle thanks to his unfeigned enthusiasm, and has his first romance with chilly and ambitious executive Susan (Elizabeth Perkins), who is warmed up by his guileless charm. An innocent in a cynical world, Josh struggles through a challenging new social environment. Fresh-faced Hanks was then a rising star and he's absolutely winning as the 13-year-old "adult," consistently delivering the body language and energy of a kid. And while Josh's reactions to grown-up situations spark much of the comedy, it's never at his expense. This new Blu-ray/DVD Combo 25th anniversary edition compiles both the original theatrical version and an extended cut (about 20 minutes longer), and includes extras such as an "audio documentary" commentary track, deleted scenes, and behind-the-scenes featurettes. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

The Black Swan ★★★

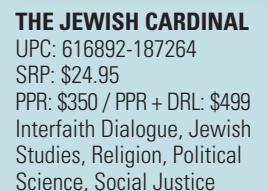
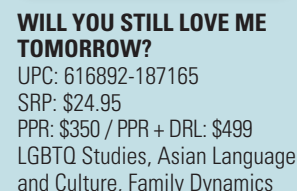
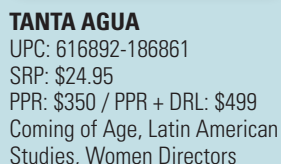
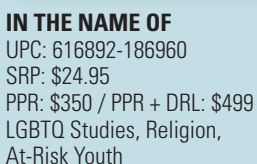
Fox, 85 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$24.99



Tyrone Power was one of the top leading men at 20th Century Fox when the studio refashioned him into a swashbuckling hero in the Errol Flynn mode. In 1942's *The Black Swan*—Power's first turn as a buccaneer—he brings to the role a bit of flashy arrogance and brooding seriousness (which Power excelled at, although he was not known for his physical derring-do). Renegade Jamie Waring (Power) reluctantly



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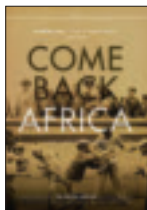
gives up the outlaw life to serve as the right hand to Capt. Henry Morgan (Laird Cregar), a former pirate king appointed by Britain to be governor of Jamaica. Maureen O'Hara is all flashing eyes and furious temper as Jamie's love interest, Lady Margaret Denby, but there is little electricity visible when Powell and O'Hara collide. Based on a novel by Rafael Sabatini (inspired in part by real-life pirate Sir Henry Morgan), director Henry King's production is a poor cousin to other Sabatini adaptations such as *The Sea Hawk* and *Captain Blood* in terms of both action and romantic heat, but what Technicolor glory! Ships set sail against luminous skylines and battle in a riot of indigos and crimsons with flourishes of gold. The intricate model vessels in the scenes of high-seas combat are a testament to old Hollywood craft, and the lively cast features some of Hollywood's most memorable supporting players (including George Sanders and Thomas Mitchell). Making its gorgeous-looking Blu-ray debut, extras here include audio commentary by O'Hara and film historian Rudy Behlmer. Good fun for fans of classic adventure movies, this is recommended, overall. (S. Axmaker)

Come Back, Africa

★★★

Milestone/Oscilloscope, 2 discs, 86 min., not rated, DVD: \$34.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99

This re-issue of a 1959 feature from American neo-realist filmmaker Lionel Rogosin—shot guerilla-style with a low-budget crew in South Africa—presents an unfiltered docu-drama of black life under apartheid. A rural Zulu man named Zacharia (Zacharia Mgabi) arrives in the bustling metropolis of Johannesburg, looking for work before the expiry of vital permit papers issued by white authorities. Zacharia lands and loses various menial jobs, including laborer in an outlying gold mine and “houseboy” for a whisky-swilling Boer wife and her slightly more enlightened husband. Eventually he marries a young woman, Vinah (Vinah Makeba), and fathers a child, but limited opportunities in the racist society end up banishing the tiny family to the lawless slum-townships. Look for a tuneful walk-on role by vocalist Miriam Makeba (who would spend decades in exile fighting apartheid and popularizing native music, often with Harry Belafonte). Even with its amateurish acting, *Come Back, Africa* remains a fascinating snapshot of a troubled era from which South Africa is still struggling to heal. Bonus features on this deluxe edition include an introduction by Martin Scorsese, “An American in Sophiatown” making-of documentary, a radio interview with Rogosin, Rogosin's 1970 film *Black Roots* (and a “making-of” featurette), and Jürgen Schadeberg's 1989 film *Have You Seen Drum Recently?* Recommended. (C. Cassidy)



Far From Vietnam

★★★

Icarus, 116 min., in English & French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.98

This 1967 French film stitched together by Chris Marker is an unabashed propaganda piece against American involvement in Vietnam, featuring the work of five directors: Alain Resnais, William Klein, Joris Ivens, Claude Lelouch, and Jean-Luc Godard. Some of the material consists of documentary and archival footage outlining the history of the war and also capturing pro- and anti-war street demonstrations. Much of this is accompanied by narration—rather smug, considering that the situation in Indochina largely resulted from French colonialism—that castigates the U.S. policy of Communist containment, contrasting the Americans' desperation to avoid another Bay of Pigs (reinforced by a monologue from Fidel Castro) with their adversaries' calm determination. Other contributions are cinematic inventions that comment on the reluctance of westerners to take a stand on the conflict: Resnais offers a scripted diatribe in which a French intellectual offers a defense of his irresolution; Godard's stream-of-consciousness rumination voices his doubts about being able to contribute anything meaningful about the distant conflict. Also included are a song by Tom Paxton and a segment about an American Mennonite who immolated himself as a statement against his country's policies. *Far From Vietnam* may, in hindsight, seem like a reductionist portrait of yet another global battle of the rich and powerful against the weak and impoverished, but the film still retains a great deal of visceral power. DVD extras include the documentary short *The Sixth Side of the Pentagon*—by Marker and François Reichenbach—documenting a 1967 peace demonstration in Washington. Recommended. (F. Swietek)



Il Generale della Rovere

★★★

Raro, 132 min., in Italian w/English subtitles, G, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.95; Blu-ray: \$34.95

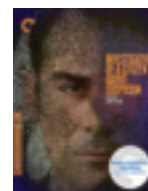
Roberto Rossellini's 1959 drama stars Vittorio De Sica as Bardone (aka “Grimaldi”), an Italian con man in World War II who profits in the margin that existed between desperate Italian families and the German Gestapo (who essentially were policing the country). De Sica is better known in the U.S. as the director of such classic films as *Bicycle Thieves* and *Umberto D.*, but he was a matinee idol before he turned to directing (and he continued to act throughout his career). In one of his greatest performances, he here plays a swindler—posing as a war hero—who is forced by the Gestapo to inform on the Italian



resistance. Inspired by a true story, *Il Generale della Rovere* is a richly-drawn portrait of an opportunist whose conscience is reignited, a role De Sica deftly inhabits with understatement and ambiguity. Winner of the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival, this film was a rare popular hit for Rossellini and remains one of his most accessible works. Previously released by Criterion, this new Raro Video edition—mastered from the original 35mm negative and featuring both the theatrical version and a longer director's cut—has been re-released on DVD and is making its Blu-ray debut (note: this version is presented in a windowboxed 1.33:1 aspect ratio, which has caused some controversy among cinema scholars since the film was originally released in traditional 1.66:1—although most viewers won't notice the difference). Extras include a video essay and interviews. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Investigation of a Citizen Above Suspicion

Criterion, 3 discs, 115 min., in Italian w/English subtitles, not rated, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.95



Elio Petri's blackly comic 1970 satire of politics and power in the late 1960s opens with a charismatic chief of detectives known as Il Dottore (Gian Maria Volonté) murdering his mistress, Augusta (Florinda Bolkan), on the day of his promotion to the political division—and then brazenly staging the crime scene with clues as if creating a puzzle for his successor. *Investigation of a Citizen Above Suspicion* chronicles this perverse power game launched by a bored corrupt politico who seems to be daring the department to arrest him (his disappointment in their response is less a matter of moral judgment than unhinged obsession). Petri views this whole culture as one enormous political construct designed to protect itself from all challenges, and the film is certainly Kafka-esque in its grotesque portrait of a fascist society operating under the guise of a modern European democracy. The message here is aggressive rather than subtle, but Volonté is magnificent as the cop who displays a mix of hearty decadence and wily game-playing. Although not well known today, this did win the Academy Award for Best Foreign Film. Criterion's Blu-ray/DVD Combo set is mastered from a recent 4K digital restoration, and features extras including documentaries on Petri and Volonté, new and archival interviews (including one with composer Ennio Morricone), and a booklet with essays and notes. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

The Killing Fields

Warner, 142 min., R, Blu-ray: \$27.98

In 1975, after the fall of Cambodia to the Khmer Rouge, Cambodian national

Dith Pran—a translator and journalistic partner of *New York Times* reporter Sydney Schanberg—was plunged into the terror of Pol Pot's oppressive and brutal prison camps. In 1979, Pran escaped to Thailand and, with the help of friend and colleague Schanberg, was brought to the United States and reunited with his family. This 1984 film, developed by acclaimed British producer David Puttnam and directed by British TV and stage veteran Roland Joffé, presents Pran's story, with Dr. Haing S. Ngor—a fellow survivor of Pol Pot's regime—as Pran and Sam Waterston as Schanberg. Joffé shoots the drama—the first major western film to confront the Cambodian genocide and the Khmer Rouge atrocities—with unforced realism, lending a terrible grace to the horrors. The striking cinematography of Chris Menges follows the characters through scenes of bloody chaos, ranging from the aftermath of a guerilla bombing in a busy city street, to the rubble and human suffering in a village destroyed by bombs, to the disconcerting torture of prisoners. Winner of Academy Awards for Ngor, cinematography, and film editing, *The Killing Fields* makes its Blu-ray debut packaged in a digi-book with an audio commentary by Joffé. Highly recommended. (S. Axmayer)



Late Ray ★★½

Criterion, 3 discs, 357 min., in Bengali w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$44.95

Late Ray features the DVD debuts of three films hailing from the twilight of Indian filmmaker Satyajit Ray's brilliant career. Most notable is 1984's *The Home and the World*, a profoundly moving adaptation of Rabindranath Tagore's 1916 same-titled novel about a sheltered woman's intellectual liberation. While the narrative explores themes similar to Ray's earlier 1964 classic *Charulata* (another film based on a Tagore novel), it also offers a subtle yet disturbing meditation on the consequences of wading into dangerous emotional territory. Unfortunately, subtlety is in short supply in Ray's 1989 adaptation of Henrik Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People*. Shifting the story to 1980s Bengal, and using a Hindu temple as the source of the contaminated water supply that provides the crux of the plotline, Ray's direction is unusually stiff and wooden, and the sense of urgency in Ibsen's work is never tapped here. Ray recovers with his final film, 1991's *The Stranger*, an entertaining light drama in which a middle-class family finds itself in a complex guessing game concerning the identity of a visitor claiming to be a long-lost relative. While this release from the Criterion Collection's Eclipse series offers no extras beyond liner notes, the set does make more of Ray's titles available for American



audiences. Sure to be welcomed by fans of the great Indian filmmaker, this is highly recommended. (P. Hall)

Operation Grandma

★★★

SISU, 51 min., in Hebrew w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95

Filmmaker Dror Shaul's 1999 farce is a short feature that was an Israeli hit. When their senile grandmother, Haya (Davida Karol), dies at 92, her three adult grandsons—the Sagiv brothers—are left to make the necessary arrangements for a burial on the ancestral kibbutz. Not much mourning here: eldest brother Alon (Rami Heuberger), a hard-charging commando, is eager to get it over with and proceed on a career-enhancing anti-terrorist mission; so he tries to plan the solemn memorial with utmost haste and military precision. But the two other Sagiv boys, gadget-nerd Benny (Ami Smolartchik) and bumbling scoutmaster Idan (Tzachi Shpitzen), are easily distracted, and Haya's corpse goes astray, among other disasters. *Operation Grandma* often resorts to unsubtle mugging and schtick, but it's also frequently very funny and doesn't overstay its welcome. DVD extras include a director and producer audio commentary (in Hebrew only, unfortunately), deleted scenes, and a photo gallery. Recommended. (C. Cassidy)



The Secret Life of Walter Mitty ★★½

Warner, 110 min., not rated, DVD: \$14.98

James Thurber's classic short story was first adapted for the big screen in this energetic if oddball 1947 film, charmingly anchored by Danny Kaye as the titular daydreamer who rises above his humdrum life by imagining himself the hero of countless adventures. Thurber's clever—if narrow—premise doesn't boast enough material for a full-scale movie, so the screenwriters and director Norman Z. McLeod build up Walter Mitty's world. This Walter is a mild-mannered proofreader at a pulp-fiction publishing house, where he timidly allows his boss, Mr. Pierce (Thurston Hall), to appropriate his creative ideas without acknowledgment or reward. Not that Walter minds: his energy is entirely channeled toward pleasing his dominating mother (Fay Bainter) and engaging in fantasies that always involve the same dream girl. When that lovely blonde turns up in real life as Rosalind Van Hoorn (Virginia Mayo)—a young woman seeking Walter's help in fighting an art-theft conspiracy—reality and imagination collide. Boris Karloff is very effective and funny as Dr. Hugo Hollingshead, one of the villains trying to make Walter doubt his own sanity.



Despite a determined effort, however, the film still feels like a collection of random sketches highlighting Kaye's comedic antics. DVD extras include an interview with Mayo. The recent remake starring Ben Stiller may generate some interest in the original, so this should be considered a strong optional purchase. (T. Keogh)

Sunrise ★★★★★

Fox, 79 min., not rated, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$29.99

After German director F.W. Murnau was invited to Hollywood, he was given carte blanche to make his first American film: 1927's *Sunrise*, which won the Academy Award for Best Picture at the very first Oscars ceremony and is still considered one of the greatest motion pictures ever made. In this silent movie masterpiece, Murnau takes a simple tale of reconciliation and renewal between an unnamed young peasant farmer (George O'Brien)—who's under the spell of a sexy urbanite (Margaret Livingston)—and his innocent, angelic wife (Janet Gaynor) and turns it into a deliriously romantic fable. The couple leave their idyllic village and embark on a second courtship through the bright lights and modern culture of a magnificent big city, an American metropolis for the jazz age. *Sunrise*—subtitled *A Song of Two Humans*—is one of the loveliest pieces of cinematic poetry ever, with beautiful images, graceful camerawork, stunning sets, and a romantic optimism of paradise lost and regained. Produced at the very end of the silent era, the original release was accompanied by pre-recorded music and sound effects. Fox's Blu-ray/DVD Combo release features both Hugo Riesenfeld's original score and another by contemporary composer Timothy Brock, plus a recently discovered alternate version of the film prepared for Europe. Both are remastered for this high-def debut which also includes extras such as audio commentary by cinematographer John Bailey, outtakes, the original screenplay, and restoration notes. Highly recommended. Editor's Choice. (S. Axmayer)



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Antigone 34: The Complete Series ★★★

MHz, 3 discs, 298 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$39.95



Thriller meets procedural in this French miniseries that combines car chases with narrative twists, turns, and blind alleys. In the first episode, Capt. Léa Hippolyte (Anne Le Nen), who resides in coastal Montpellier, receives a clean bill of health from staff psychologist Hélène de Soyere (Clare Borotra). Back on the beat, Hippolyte partners with the youthful Lt. Serge Ravel (Aubert Fenoy), who learns that Hippolyte's former partner killed himself. Ravel doesn't ask her about it, and Hippolyte—who takes her frustrations out on a punching bag—doesn't offer any information, but the tragedy shadows events to come (when Ravel later takes time off after an injury, Lionel Erdogan's Fifi takes his place). Their first case, which reverberates throughout the six episodes, concerns the murder of a medical student, which leads them to ex-convict Victor Carlier (Bruno Todeschini), the victim's father. Although the pair solve the crime, Carlier believes that someone else killed his daughter. Since he can no longer practice medicine, Carlier stays at a gypsy encampment, where he works off the books, and is occasionally approached by Hippolyte for help. Other cases take on a more personal dimension: in one, Hélène reunites with a classmate when her husband goes missing; in another, Hippolyte goes head to head with Pérez (Bruno López), a fellow detective who blames her for the death of her partner. Towards the end, the threads come together—which require several coincidences, but creators Brice Homs and Alexis Nolent have put together an overall compelling series that takes advantage of a talented cast and a distinctive location. Recommended. (K. Fennessy)

Archer: The Complete Season Four ★★★

Fox, 2 discs, 286 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$39.98



Sterling Archer (voiced by H. Jon Benjamin with a mix of machismo and frat-boy exuberance) has worked his way to the top of the spy game with a combination of arrogance, recklessness, hard drinking, womanizing, and nepotism: his mother, Malory (Jessica Walter), is the head of ISIS, the private intelligence agency that sends Archer around the world with weapons he should definitely not be trusted with. This animated spoof of spy movies and TV shows has become one of the FX network's biggest hits, thanks to the mix of action-movie parody, international intrigue, and cutthroat office politics. Part of the joke is that for all his adolescent behavior

and pop-culture quoting, Archer has James Bond skills—just no intelligence, which leaves number-two agent Lana (Aisha Tyler) doing clean-up. The season kicks off with a surreal *Bob's Burgers* cross-over (for which Benjamin also does a lead voice), features Timothy Olyphant as a guest, and serves up an epic two-part finale at an underwater marine station with Jon Hamm as an eco-terrorist villain. For fans, this stretch heralds the end of an era: it's the final run with the characters at ISIS (the fifth season reinvents them as kingpins of a South American narcotics empire). Compiling all 13 delightfully raunchy episodes from 2013, extras include an original short and a live appearance by the voice cast. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Being Human: The Complete Third Season ★★★

Entertainment One, 4 discs, 572 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.98, Blu-ray: \$49.98



A vampire, a ghost and a werewolf walk into a bar... But seriously (and *Being Human* is often deadly serious), the premise here does sound a lot like an opening to a joke. This American remake of a popular BBC-aired series throws three supernatural beings together as BFF housemates: vampire Aiden (Sam Witwer), ghost Sally (Meaghan Rath), and werewolf Josh (Sam Huntington), who appear in the form of attractive twentysomethings, kidding around and caring for each other just the way human friends do on other modern romantic comedies. Season three maintains the unique tone and balance between horror, humor, and humanity that the show has striven so hard to establish, adding several curveballs along the way. Aiden is freshly dug-up after having been banished to the grave in season two. The good news is that he avoided a vampire plague by being out of action; the bad news is that his untainted blood is coveted by those who would use it for profit. Josh discovers that he has been cured of lycanthropy and can now pursue mortal life with his human girlfriend, Nora (Kristen Hager), although that doesn't stop the worries over recurring troubles with the werewolf world. After her exile in Limbo, Sally returns to human form with the help of a witch, but this development will not end well. Compiling all 13 episodes from the 2013 third season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes, bloopers, and a panel discussion from the 2013 San Diego Comic-Con. While not as clever as legendary precursor *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, this is a solid series with an appreciative following. Recommended. (T. Fry)

Bonnie & Clyde ★★1/2

Sony, 2 discs, 174 min., not rated, DVD: \$45.99, Blu-ray: \$55.99

The story of Depression-era outlaws Bonnie

Parker and Clyde Barrow is retold in this 2013 hit mini-series (which premiered simultaneously on the A&E, History, and Lifetime channels). After opening in the aftermath of the couple's bloody deaths, *Bonnie & Clyde* flashes back to the beginning, with Clyde (Emile Hirsch) recounting his birth, childhood, and initial forays in crime. British actress Holliday Grainger costars as Bonnie, a small-town Texas beauty who is swept off her feet by Clyde and helps him to escape from jail. Bonnie gets a kick out of robbing banks and she promotes their exploits to the newspapers, shaping coverage of the pair as romantic rebels who are fighting the system. This production features details overlooked in the famous 1967 film with Warren Beatty and Faye Dunaway—notably the couple's numerous arrests, and Bonnie's savvy control of their media image—and the actors here are closer to the ages of the real criminals, who were only in their mid-20s when they died. But it also distorts facts (Clyde logged his first murder before he ever joined Bonnie), presents Bonnie as the bloodthirsty instigator of their violent spree, and paints their demise as a double suicide planned by Clyde to end their reign of terror: entertaining melodrama to be sure, but not reliable history. Extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes (with a bonus featurette on the Blu-ray release). With its likable young stars and a good supporting cast (including Sarah Hyland, Holly Hunter, and William Hurt), this is a strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

**Doctor Who: The Day of the Doctor ★★★**

BBC, 75 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$29.98



This 50th-anniversary *Doctor Who* special was a major TV event in 2013 in Britain (where the series is a pop-culture institution), marking the first time that multiple Doctors have appeared in the same episode since the original incarnation of the series, when it was used as an occasional gimmick. *The Day of the Doctor* brings the most recent two Doctors from the 21st-century—David Tennant and Matt Smith—together with the mysterious “War Doctor” (John Hurt) as they converge on the pivotal moment that destroyed the Time Lord home world and the Dalek race. A tricky but successful balancing act of whimsy and tragedy, it's a standout time-travel story that is ultimately about second chances. Series producer and episode writer Steven Moffat approaches the narrative with the same clockwork precision he lavishes on season arcs, with every curve or surprise ingeniously woven into a densely imagined big picture (and it's great fun to see Tennant

and Smith play off one another). While this is likely to be eventually included in the next *Doctor Who* boxed set, it's available separately now for those who can't wait. Extras include a pair of mini-episodes (previously available solely on the web) and behind-the-scenes featurettes (the Blu-ray edition also features a 3D version and a bonus DVD copy). Recommended. (S. Axmayer)

Downton Abbey: Season

4 ★★½

PBS, 3 discs, 520 min., not rated, DVD: \$49.99, Blu-ray: \$54.99



The fourth season of this megahit British series and top-rated PBS import opens with the household still in mourning following the death of Downton heir Matthew Crawley, who left his grief-stricken widow, Lady Mary (Michelle Dockery), with an infant son. Displaying dignified restraint, creator-writer Julian Fellowes addresses antiquated laws of inheritance in 20th-century England, as well as chauvinism, rape, and prejudice—the latter as fun-loving cousin Rose (Lily James) secretly dates black American jazz singer Jack Ross (Gary Carr). Lady Mary blossoms in her new role as estate manager—frustrating her father, Robert Crawley (Hugh Bonneville), but winning gentle support from her mother, Cora (Elizabeth McGovern). Lady Mary is also courted by two new suitors, while Lady Edith (Laura Carmichael) evolves into a free-thinking young woman—pursuing a romance with married publisher Michael Gregson (Charles Edwards). Meanwhile, the servants deal with their own dramas and romantic tribulations. The extended season finale has Rose being presented at court in London and features guest stars Shirley MacLaine as Cora's brash American mother, Martha, and Paul Giamatti as her playboy brother, Harold. And a lively subplot leads our aristocrats into a little heist drama. Walking a fine line between appreciation for the rituals and codes of this long-gone way of life and offering a gentle critique of the doomed culture of privilege, *Downton Abbey* has amassed a huge American following that will be clamoring for this latest set. Compiling all eight episodes aired in the U.S. in 2014, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes. Highly recommended. (S. Axmayer)

First of the Summer Wine: Series One ★★½

BFS, 2 discs, 223 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.98



Creator Roy Clarke's 1988-89 BBC comedy series was a spin-off to *Last of the Summer Wine*, a beloved show—the longest-running sitcom in the world at 31 seasons—that followed a group of aging friends in the lovely countryside

of contemporary Yorkshire. *First* didn't quite strike the same chord with its silly tales of the lads' teenage days (lasting for only 13 episodes, including the pilot), but it occasionally boasts a special charm. The foursome—Clegg (David Fenwick), Compo (Paul Wyett), Foggy (Richard Lumsden), and Seymour (Paul McLain)—are seen sharing laughs and learning about life and love in the same Yorkshire village in 1939, where big changes—for them and the rest of the world—loom on the horizon. As in *Last*, Clegg is the marginal leader of the group here (his father is played by Peter Sallis, who portrayed the older Clegg in *Last*). Compiling the first six episodes from 1988 (plus the pilot), this set may appeal to fans of *Last of the Summer Wine*, and therefore should be considered a strong optional purchase. (T. Fry)

The Following: The Complete First Season

★★★

Warner, 654 min., not rated, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$49.99



This absorbing Fox crime drama falls into the burgeoning genre of envelope-pushing TV shows laced with disturbing imagery and thematic elements, along with a touch of the supernatural. The slightly derivative premise centers on ex-FBI agent Ryan Hardy (Kevin Bacon), who's been traumatized by his capture of the mad-genius serial killer Joe Carroll (James Purefoy in Hannibal Lecter mode). Years later, Carroll escapes prison with the ultimate intent of gaining revenge, but what no one knows (the show's most preposterous yet brilliant conceit) is that Joe has garnered an unknown number of seemingly normal people in the outside world as his unquestioning disciples. Created by Kevin Williamson (*Scream*), the series employs well-edited flashbacks to flesh out the stories of Joe and Ryan, as well as those of the brainwashed cultists. With its ritual deaths and often gruesome crime-scene tableaux, *The Following* is not meant for the timid. Compiling all 15 nail-biting installments from the 2013 debut season, extras include audio commentaries, behind-the-scenes featurettes, and deleted scenes. Recommended. (T. Fry)

The Gene Autry Show: The Complete Television Series ★★

Timeless, 15 discs, 2,864 min., not rated, DVD: \$79.99



Singing cowboy Gene Autry (and Champion the Wonder Horse) followed Hopalong Cassidy and the Lone Ranger to the small screen in this half-hour series that ran for 91 "ready for action" episodes from 1950 to 1956. Sponsored in its early years by

Wrigley chewing gum (which Autry himself touts in episode prologues), *The Gene Autry Show* was more like a series of mini-movies, with Autry engaging in different occupations from week to week. *Green Acres* fans will get a kick out of seeing slacker "Mr. Haney" (Pat Buttram) as Autry's stalwart punch-throwing sidekick, except for the episodes in which that position is filled by Chill Wills, Fuzzy Knight, and Alan Hale, Jr.—the latter best known as the Skipper on *Gilligan's Island*). Each episode features a song, some fightin', some shootin', and perhaps a chase on horseback, although viewers could depend on Autry rounding up the bad guys by the time the credits rolled. The first four seasons are in black-and-white, the final one is in color, and for shows roughly 60 years old, the image here is pretty good. A bonus disc contains 10 episodes from rarely-seen TV Westerns produced by Autry's company, including *The Range Rider*, *Annie Oakley*, *Buffalo Bill, Jr.* and *The Adventures of Champion*. Many vintage TV Western fans will thrill to seeing *The Gene Autry Show* back in the saddle again on DVD, although this is likely too dated to enthrall a new generation. Recommended. (D. Liebenson)

House of Lies: The Second Season ★★★

Paramount, 2 discs, 340 min., not rated, DVD: \$46.99



The characters in *House of Lies* are venal, slick-talking, backstabbing hucksters—and they're irresistible. Showtime's cutting, kinetic, and foul-mouthed comedy features a "pod" of overachieving MBAs elbowing their way up the ladder of an L.A. management consulting firm. Don Cheadle is Marty, their Machiavellian master, who's renowned for closing deals with clients including celebrities, casino owners, sports stars, political hopefuls, and anything in between. Jeannie (Kristen Bell), Clyde (Ben Schwartz), and Doug (Josh Lawson) are Marty's minions, and their acid wit is displayed in dizzying bursts of dialogue. The second season digs deeper into personal machinations behind the big deals, including an ongoing flirtation between Marty and Jeannie, and Marty's battle with ex-wife Monica (Dawn Olivieri) over their young son, Roscoe (Donis Leonard Jr.). The episode "Damonchildren.org" is a standout: Matt Damon shows up as himself and turns out to be nothing like his popular image. Compiling all 12 episodes from the 2013 second season, extras include cast audio commentaries. Recommended. (T. Fry)

The Indian Doctor: Series 2 ★★½

BFS, 2 discs, 211 min., not rated, DVD: \$34.98

This BBC-aided series about an Indian physician and his family settling in a Welsh mining village in the early 1960s got off to a solid start during its first season, but here

the writing is even more focused and compelling, with increased attention to character development. Dr. Prem Sharma (Sanjeev Bhaskar) faces parallel challenges. On the medical front, his efforts to vaccinate the town against the threat of smallpox is violently thwarted by evangelical preacher Herbert Todd (Mark Heap), who tries to turn the villagers against Prem (and he is stymied by a lack of medical supplies needed to address the growing crisis). On the homefront, Prem's imperious mother-in-law, Pushpa (Indira Joshi), has arrived from India, and she's not shy about stating her disappointment in the life that Prem is offering her daughter, Kamini (Ayesha Dharker). Running alongside Prem's problems are a pair of romantic dilemmas: a local police officer tries to work up his courage to declare his love for an unsuspecting young lady, while Todd's daughter engages in a torrid affair with a married man. *The Indian Doctor* is a show that is rich in fully-textured situations and wonderful acting—especially by Heap as the reckless minister and Joshi as the interfering in-law. Compiling all five episodes from the 2012 second season, this is highly recommended. (P. Hall)

Justified: The Complete Fourth Season ★★½

Sony, 3 discs, 558 min., not rated, DVD: \$55.99, Blu-ray: \$65.99

The fourth season of the Kentucky-set crime drama starring Timothy Olyphant as U.S. Marshal Raylan Givens—a maverick agent sent back to the home state he once tried to escape—puts Raylan on the trail of a cold case from 30 years ago, which involved a getaway by parachute and a stolen cache of mob money. Meanwhile, Raylan's old friend and current nemesis, Boyd Crowder (Walton Goggins), tries to consolidate his control of the Harlan County crime culture in a tricky alliance with the area's business mafia—a relationship that offers its own challenges and betrayals. Initially adapted from an Elmore Leonard short story, *Justified* may be TV's smartest serial pulp fiction show, and this set builds on its rough-edged characters and colorful culture to deliver the best season yet, one that finds Raylan preparing for fatherhood, brings his knotty relationship with his weasel of a father (Raymond J. Barry) to a bitter conclusion, and introduces guest stars Jim Beaver and Patton Oswalt as fellow lawmen. Compiling all 13 episodes from the 2013 fourth season of this critical and popular FX hit, extras include audio commentaries, behind-the-scenes featurettes (the Blu-ray version includes two bonus featurettes), deleted scenes, and outtakes. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)



NYPD Blue: Season 05

★★★

Shout! Factory, 6 discs, 960 min., not rated, DVD: \$34.99

After an eight-year hiatus, the defining police drama of the 1990s is rolling out on disc again. The fifth season opens with Detective Bobby Simone (Jimmy Smits) on suspension after being implicated in the murder of a witness in an undercover FBI investigation—and suspicious that his partner, Detective Andy Sipowicz (Dennis Franz), may have been involved. That thread is wrapped up early on, but palpable tension remains between veteran Sipowicz, who still struggles with a temper on his path to redemption, and the younger Simone. But their partnership ultimately strengthens, as does Simone's romance with Detective Diane Russell (Kim Delaney), whom he finally marries. This run is the final full stretch for Smits, who left early the following season, and for Sharon Lawrence, whose Assistant District Attorney Sylvia Costas married Sipowicz a few years back. Nicholas Turturro, Gordon Clapp (who won an Emmy for his performance), and Andrea Thompson fill out the squad, with James McDaniel in command. This set also features a two-part episode revolving around child abuse and murder that earned Emmys for writing and directing, and another in which Sipowicz undergoes surgery for prostate cancer. In its day, *NYPD Blue* pushed the envelope with its language and nudity, willingness to address race and racism, gritty portrait of New York City, and handheld camerawork, which created an immediacy that distinguished it from other shows. Compiling all 22 episodes from 1997–98, this is recommended. (S. Axmaker)



Old Dogs & New Tricks: Complete Seasons 1 & 2

★★★

Wolfe, 109 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.95

Created by Leon Acord, this web-aired series focuses on four gay men in West Hollywood. Fifty-year-old talent agent Nathan Adler (Acord) narrates the sexual travails of his friends Brad King (Curt Bonnem), Alan "Muscles" Carter (Jeffrey Patrick Olson), and Ross Stein (David Pevsner). Although Alan works as a personal trainer, it's hard to determine how former pop star Brad and former TV star Ross make a living, aside from past royalties (Brad, who has modeled his look after Billy Idol, also speaks in a faux British accent). Except for Ross, who has been with Neal (Doug Spearman) for 10 years, all of the characters are single. Much as in *Sex and the City*, the men often get together to dish about their dates



and fears of aging. Brad is the adventurous one, while Alan is saving himself for Mr. Right (whom he finds in a sports reporter). In the second season, Nathan dates a 25-year-old client with whom he has little in common, but his efforts to resist Damian (Ryland Shelton) prove futile. As he tells his assistant (Amanda Abel), "He's broke, he has issues, and he's way out of my league." Neal also gives Ross the go-ahead to see other people, so he hooks up with a fan, but his heart isn't really in it. *Old Dogs & New Tricks* features plenty of sex talk (but no actual nudity), and if the humor can be hit-and-miss, the storylines are consistently entertaining. Compiling all 15 episodes from the 2011-13 first and second seasons, DVD extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette, and a gag reel. Recommended. (K. Fennessy)

Perry Mason Movie Collection, Volume 1

★★½

Paramount, 3 discs, 571 min., not rated, DVD: \$58.99

Almost 20 years after the end of the original *Perry Mason* TV show—based on the novels by Erle Stanley Gardner—Raymond Burr and Barbara Hale revived the characters of defense attorney Perry Mason and secretary Della Street in *Perry Mason Returns*, the first in a series of 26 TV movies made between 1985 and 1993. This boxed set collects the initial six telefilms, relaunching the character by having him step down from the bench (Mason became a judge in the intervening years) to defend Della from a murder charge (the guest victim here is Patrick O'Neal). William Katt completes the team as Paul Drake Jr., son of the former investigator played by William Hopper. The super-serious Perry still manages to find only innocent clients, whom he saves with courtroom theatrics and a witness-stand confession by the guilty party in the final act, but the movies tend to play more like *Columbo* or *Murder, She Wrote* with their meandering investigations and casts of old movie stars and contemporary TV celebrities. David Ogden Stiers takes over the Hamilton Burger role as District Attorney Michael Reston—the man who loses every case to Perry—in the second film, *The Case of the Notorious Nun* (with Timothy Bottoms). Burr, Hale, Katt, and Stiers continue on through the rest of the set: *The Case of the Shooting Star* (with Joe Penny and Ron Glass), *The Case of the Lost Love* (with Jean Simmons and Gene Barry), *The Case of the Sinister Spirit* (with Robert Stack and Kim Delaney), and *The Case of the Murdered Madam* (with Ann Jillian and Anthony Geary). *Sinister Spirit* is the standout here, a mystery about a murdered horror author in a haunted hotel that is rigged with practical jokes. Mostly of interest to nostalgic Perry Mason fans, this is a strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)



Shameless: The Complete Third Season ★★★

Warner, 650 min., not rated, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: 5 discs, \$49.99

This raucous and edgy Showtime-aired series is an acquired taste, with notes of sweet, sour, tragic, and comedic as it follows the fighting-Irish Gallagher family and their ragtag neighborhood friends and relatives. "Patriarch" suggests a certain responsibility that Frank Gallagher (William H. Macy) absolutely does not have: drunk, selfish, and frequently AWOL (in the first episode here he wakes up in Mexico with no cash and no passport), Frank lets his six children fend for themselves in matters of love and survival—tasks for which the Gallaghers are dysfunctionally equipped. The narrative arcs here are like extended soap operas—filled with sex, drugs, violence, profanity, child endangerment, and moral corruption as the colorful characters find themselves in situations that are alternately moving, outrageous, or wickedly funny. Three seasons in, the Gallaghers show no signs of redemption or reform. Compiling all 12 episodes from 2013, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes and deleted scenes. Recommended. (T. Fry)



The Simpsons: The Sixteenth Season ★★★

Fox, 460 min., not rated, DVD: 4 discs, \$49.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$59.99

Matt Groening's long-running animated sitcom featuring wacky Homer, his put-upon wife Marge, bratty son Bart, know-it-all daughter Lisa, and mute baby Maggie continues as the Simpsons experience silly escapades with friends and neighbors in the town of Springfield. Featuring 21 episodes, this 2004-05 16th season still shows moxie, and features plenty of guest appearances. "Homer and Ned's Hail Mary Pass" showcases the big bald oaf's exuberant victory dances and the voices of sports stars including Michelle Kwan, LeBron James, and Yao Ming; "Pranksta Rap" follows Bart's supposedly stealthy trip to a prohibited concert (guest 50 Cent wonders if advice given to Bart will "...count as community service?"); and "The Seven-Beer Snitch" lands Homer in jail for literally kicking a can. Other standouts include "There's Something About Marrying," in which a (somewhat) surprising character comes out of the closet; the bitter Bart and Lisa battle "On a Clear Day I Can't See My Sister"; and another flash-forward "Future-Drama" episode that features the Simpson teens during prom and graduation. Notable guests include Gary Busey, Ray Romano, Amy Poehler, Stephen Hawking, and Fantasia Barrino. Extras include audio commentaries,



bonus episodes, deleted scenes, sketch galleries, and a "Live! It's the Simpsons" table read. Recommended. (J. Williams-Wood)

Teen Wolf: Season 3, Part 1 ★★★

MGM, 3 discs, 528 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.98

MTV's supernatural series has proven so successful that the cable channel has expanded the third season and divided the DVD release into two parts. This initial set takes the high school drama into the junior year of star lacrosse player/teen werewolf Scott McCall (Tyler Posey) and his friends and fellow shape-shifters, who must face a pack of super-powered alpha beasts that invade the town. Students turn up dead in some kind of ritual slaying, but that's life in this community, where night falls early and the mist brings monsters and demons. In this milieu, Scott is becoming a leader of the unconventional mix of werewolves and "normal" people who fend off supernatural and human threats to their coexistence. This is melodrama tinged with dark fantasy, a world where kids know best and grown-ups are either mostly old-world warriors or well-meaning but clueless parents. Self-aware, sexy, and stylish-on-a-budget, the show is full of attractive teens who act on their hormonal urges, including well-toned young men spending time shirtless flexing their pecs. But *Teen Wolf* plays the story straight and acknowledges the deaths with a sense of loss and mourning that only steels our heroes to continue the fight. Compiling the first 12 episodes of the 2013-14 third season, DVD extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette, "shirtless" montage, deleted scenes, and a gag reel. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



Top of the Lake ★★★1/2

BBC, 2 discs, 360 min., not rated, DVD: \$34.98

Created and written by Oscar-winning filmmaker Jane Campion along with Gerard Lee, this compelling six-hour miniseries—which aired on the Sundance Channel in 2013—plays like an original novel for television. Set in rural New Zealand, the dark drama—directed by Campion and Garth Davis—is built around the story of a pregnant 12-year-old girl who goes missing, and a young outsider detective named Robin Griffin (Elisabeth Moss in a Golden Globe-winning performance) who specializes in adolescent victims. A troubled but committed investigator, Robin's queries collide with a chauvinist culture that is already dealing with new-age women in a local commune. Peter Mullan is intimidating as the girl's father, Matt, a feudal mountain patriarch who runs his lofty spread like a duchy outside of police jurisdiction,



using threats and violence to maintain his power and independence. Holly Hunter is odd and fascinating as GJ, an American self-help guru in the makeshift women's collective; and David Wenham is Al, a character who straddles the modern world and rural culture. Yet another example of powerful long-form storytelling being created for TV, *Top of the Lake* is highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Treme: The Complete Fourth Season ★★★1/2

HBO, 410 min., TV-MA, DVD: \$39.98, Blu-ray: \$49.99

Created by David Simon (*The Wire*) and Eric Overmyer, HBO's ensemble drama set in post-Katrina New Orleans won great acclaim but was overlooked in the Emmys and struggled to gain viewers over its first three seasons. So Simon wrapped up his characters' stories in a brief fourth season while still maintaining the same focus on community and distinctive culture that made this one of cable's finest dramas. The narrative arc here opens in 2008, as the election of President Barack Obama brings a surge of hope that inspires some "next steps." Antoine Batiste (Wendell Pierce) makes a sincere commitment to his music students; chef Janette Desautel (Kim Dickens) battles her former partner to open her own restaurant; and fiddler Annie (Lucia Micarelli) takes a leap into the national music scene. Meanwhile, the residents struggle with police corruption, political graft, and outside money that is trying to raze the local environs and rebuild a tourist-friendly city. And Albert Lambreaux (Clarke Peters), the stubborn Big Chief determined to preserve the Mardi Gras traditions of old, winds up facing his own mortality when his cancer returns. Compiling all five episodes from 2013, extras include episode audio commentaries. HBO has also released the entire series in a Blu-ray boxed set (priced at \$134.99 and featuring an exclusive bonus disc with 15 music videos) that is well worth picking up if you haven't already invested in previous seasons. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)



Video Librarian Online

Visit Video Librarian Online (www.videolibrarian.com) for more reviews during March and April, including: *Burn Notice: Season Seven—Final Notice*, *Copper: Season Two*, *Cranford: The Original BBC Miniseries*, *Game of Thrones: The Complete Third Season*, *Johan Falk Trilogy*, *Lilyhammer: Season One*, *LA Law: Season One*, *Line of Duty: Series 1*, *The Promise*, 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

Creepy Carrots! ★★★

(2013) 10 min. DVD: \$59.95 (study guide included). Weston Woods Studios. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 0-545-62377-4.

Narrated by James Naughton, this animated adaptation of author Aaron Reynolds and illustrator Peter Brown's 2012 picture book features a spooky-ish soundtrack by David Mansfield. Jasper the rabbit loves gobbling up the fat, crisp, and juicy carrots in Crackenhopper Field...until the day he hears a sinister noise. Are some of the vegetables actually *following* him? The shaken young hare begins to think that he sees carrots everywhere, mistaking slightly similar household objects, and generally freaking out. Eventually, Jasper creates a misguided plan (including crocodiles and a moat) for keeping the carrots penned up. Depicted in mainly muted tones of black, white, and gray with various shades of orange details, this silly story with a fun twist includes a read-along option and a featurette with Brown on his design process. Recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Danny Phantom: The Complete Series

★★★

(2014) 10 discs. 1,140 min. DVD: \$29.95. Shout! Factory (avail. from most distributors).

This Nickelodeon series—animated in a jagged style similar to *Dexter's Laboratory*—

gene-splices the ghostbuster mini-genre with superhero spoofs. Fourteen-year-old Danny Fenton (voiced by David Kaufman), son of a ghost-obsessed inventor couple, is accidentally mutated by his parents' technology into a half-ghost with otherworldly superpowers (and, of course, a costume). Assuming a secret "Danny Phantom" identity, Danny and his multicultural ensemble of classmates get busy fighting (with *Batman*-type POW! and ZAP! graphics) against a variety of campy spirits who invade the Fentons' hometown of Amity Park. As the rambunctious series progresses (with jokes about *Hello Kitty*-style anime, goth-teen culture, Spike Lee, "Scooby-Doo," and Burning Man), a vampirish type (robustly voiced by Martin Mull) becomes Danny's regular antagonist. Other celebrities incarnated as guest ghosts include Patricia Heaton, Peter MacNicol, Mark Hamill, Jon Cryer, William Baldwin, Chynna Phillips, and the late David Carradine. Compiling all 52 episodes aired from 2004-07, this fun series is recommended. Aud: P. (C. Cassidy)

French for Kids: Dedans et Dehors

★★★★1/2

(2013) 30 min. DVD: \$19.99. Whistlefritz (avail. from most distributors). PPR.

Mixing animation and live-action, this playful French-immersion program for preschool and elementary children features human host Marie, who is assisted by Fritz the animated mouse, a few cuddly hand puppets, and a group of smiling kids as she introduces several basic words and phrases. The short lighthearted sketches and songs here feature hand motions, props, and French subtitles that correspond with each word, making it easy to follow along. The tone is lively, with the youngsters laughing, adopting silly voices, and obviously having a lot of fun. While the presentation is continuous, the content is arranged so that it can be easily played in shorter sections (viewers also have the option to view the

musical numbers separately). Packing a lot of information into a compact program, this is an effective immersion program aimed at ages 2-7. The DVD also includes a pamphlet featuring song lyrics and English translations for the words used in the show. Highly recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (K. Cruver)

I Love Toy Trains: Ticket to Ride

★★★★1/2

(2014) 52 min. DVD: \$9.99. TM Books & Video (avail. from most distributors). PPR. ISBN: 978-1-936890-96-5.

Both informative and whimsical, the latest entry in the 20-year-old *I Love Toy Trains* series serves up another winning mix of cheerful train tunes by James Coffey coupled with segments on classic trains and elaborate model train sets. The Illinois Railway Museum houses vintage diesel engines, including the "general purpose" diesels used for hauling freight. Viewers also learn about the Shay—invented in 1880—which employed a novel design for moving pistons, thus giving it greater-than-average power to work with heavy loads (especially helpful in mining). Other segments include a visit to Indiana's Talltree Railway Garden, where a fantastic outdoor model train setup celebrates the first transcontinental railroad; a close-up look at a beautiful carnival setting through which toy trains roll; an interesting tutorial about different width scales for different tracks; and a fun bit of reverse-action footage during a trip to "Backwardsville" that will have kids giggling. Highly recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

Pinky, Elmyra & the Brain: The Complete Series ★★

(2014) 2 discs. 278 min. DVD: \$19.98. Warner Home Video (avail. from most distributors).

Evil genius laboratory mouse Brain (voiced by Maurice LaMarche, channeling Orson Welles) and his utterly insane and energetic sidekick Pinky, stars of a Steven



Bink & Gollie: Two for One ★★★★★1/2

(2013) 14 min. DVD: \$59.95 (study guide included). Weston Woods Studios. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 0-545-57031-X.

Odd couple best buds Bink and Gollie are back in this second volume of stories (the first, *Bink & Gollie*, was reviewed in VL-9/12) based on the 2012 picture book by authors Kate DiCamillo and Alison McGhee and illustrator Tony Fucile. Centering on the dynamic duo's trip to a local fair, "Whack a Duck" finds enthusiastic Bink going overboard in a quest to beat the titular carnival game in order to win the prize of "World's Largest Donut." "You're Special, Aren't You?" follows a nervous Gollie,

who fudges her recitation during an amateur talent show but does much better in front of a bovine audience. Finally, in "Without Question," the girls have an illuminating visit with fortune teller Madame Prunely. Also featuring a read-along option, *Bink & Gollie: Two for One* is this year's winner of the Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Children's Video. Highly recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

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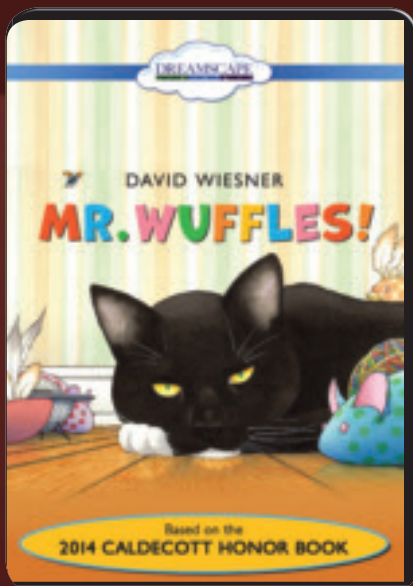
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Building Our House ★★★

(2013) 8 min. DVD: \$38.99. Dreamscape Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-9777098-3-0.

Adapted from author-illustrator Jonathan Bean's 2013 picture book—a Boston Globe Horn Book award-winner—this iconographic-animated program narrated by Jacquie Floyd tells the story of Bean's own family house-building adventure. Told from the viewpoint of his older sister, *Building Our House* follows mom, dad, and the two siblings from city to country living, as they work together to turn a weedy farm plot into their dream home. The foursome—along with family, workers, and friends—all pitch in from the ground up, working in different weather conditions, raising the frame (with sound effects such as hammering and drilling), and adding electricity and insulation. The seasons change, the pregnant mother grows bigger as the house progresses, and eventually the new quintet enjoy their cozy digs. Recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Spielberg-produced cartoon series for Warner Bros. in the mid-'90s, became the pets of *Tiny Toons* costar Elmyra—an overstimulated little girl based on the classic *Looney Tunes* character Elmer Fudd—in this 1998-99 single season animated series. Brain is still plotting world domination, but first he must endure Elmyra's attentions, which usually entail elaborate games of dress-up, toy props, and the kind of physical abuse against small animals that kids really should not be encouraged to consider. Meanwhile, Brain turns Elmyra's toys into interstellar communication devices, ingenious power sources, elaborate weapons, and other implements of creative abandon. Where the original *Pinky and the Brain* was a self-aware spoof of comic book supervillains filled with pop culture parodies, this spin-off is all slapstick and puns, but never as clever as either of its parent series. Compiling all 13 episodes in an extra-less set, this is not a necessary purchase. Aud: P. (S. Axmaker)

Those Darn Squirrels and the Cat Next Door ★★★

(2013) 8 min. DVD: \$38.99. Dreamscape Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-933938-45-5.

Narrated by Kirby Heyborne, this 2011 sequel to the original picture book adaptation (reviewed in VL-1/14) in author Adam Rubin and illustrator Daniel Salmiere's trilogy continues the escapades of a gaggle of fun-loving squirrels who are a nuisance to elderly grump Old Man Fookwire. Some things remain the same: the old guy still hates snow (he misses summer, with its suntan lotion and weenie roasts), is annoyed by the wacky squirrel antics, and loves watching the chirping colorful birds in his yard. However, here the threat to his outdoor aviary-ish paradise comes in the form of new neighbor Little Old Lady Hu, the town baker, who has a pet cat named Muffins. The latter makes things miserable for everyone on Fookwire's side of the street, until the squirrel gang comes up with a plan. Also featuring a read-along option, this fun addition to the series is recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Worlds Together: Tibet ★★★

(2013) 25 min. DVD: \$29.95 (teacher's guide included). Master Communications. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60480-108-8.

The latest program in producer Elmer Hawkes' long-running cultural appreciation series for young people looks at the tiny region of Tibet, a formerly independent country that has been under Chinese occupation since 1950. Called "the roof of the world," Tibet is known for picaresque mountains, Buddhist monasteries, and rural life that revolves around agricultural cycles. Featuring footage of the gorgeous Himalayas (including the north Mt. Everest Base Camp), outdoor markets in the capital of Lhasa, and the Chinese and Tibetan sections of second-largest-city Shigatse (the Tibetan area is described as a place where "time almost seems to be standing still"), the program also follows a pilgrimage to Lake Namtso, looks at ancient rock paintings, and details the importance of monasteries, which serve as everything from meditation centers to burial sites to printing houses. And for budding foodies, there's even passing mention of yak enchiladas. Without being overtly political, *Worlds Together: Tibet* nevertheless explores how Tibet is struggling to preserve tradition while also being pressured to change. Recommended. Aud: I, J, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

LIBRARY SCIENCE

Leading the Change: Libraries Breaking New Ground ★★★1/2

(2013) 57 min. DVD: \$99. Library Video Network. PPR. ISBN: 1-56641-129-7.

Libraries in the U.S. often look to each other for inspiration. *Leading the Change* reminds us that great institutions—and fresh approaches—can also be found in other countries. This program bridges foreign and domestic, examining two libraries in The Netherlands (the Tower of Books Library in (cont. on pg. 48)

ALA-ALSC Notable Videos 2014

ALA's Association for Library Services to Children (ALSC) has selected its 2014 list of Notable Children's Videos, which includes DVDs for children 14 years of age and younger. Unless otherwise noted, titles are available from most distributors or the companies are listed in the "Distributor Addresses" on page 78.

And Then It's Spring (Weston Woods, 8 min., DVD: \$59.95). Written by Julie Fogliano and illustrated by Erin E. Stead, this animated adaptation of the 2012 picture book follows a bespectacled young boy and his pet companions as they work on garden projects and anticipate turning the barren ground into a spring bounty. (VL-9/13)

The Ant and the Grasshopper (Weston Woods, 6 min., DVD: \$59.95). This animated adaptation of the 2012 picture book by daughter/father team Rebecca and Ed Emberley updates the titular classic fable with a story about a girl-ant who meets a hip grasshopper and his buggy boogie band. (VL-1/14)

Bear Has a Story to Tell (Weston Woods, 9 min., DVD: \$59.95). Based on the 2012 picture book by author Philip Stead and illustrator wife Erin E. Stead, this animated adaptation follows the impatient Bear, whose attempts to share a story are thwarted by his forest friends who are busy preparing for winter. (See upcoming review in VL-5/14)

Bink & Gollie: Two for One (Weston Woods, 14 min., DVD: \$59.95). Best buds Bink and Gollie are back in this 2014 Carnegie Medal-winning adaptation of stories from the 2012 picture book by authors Kate DiCamillo and Alison McGhee and illustrator Tony Fucile. (See review on page 42)

Blackout (Weston Woods, 7 min., DVD: \$59.95). This adaptation of author and il-

lustrator John Rocco's 2011 picture book features a rousing salsa-ish soundtrack for an almost-luminously animated story that focuses on a young boy and his family who experience a blackout in a city apartment on a hot summer night. (VL-1/14)

Children and Grief: Children Teaching Children About Grief (Professor Child, 40 min., DVD: \$34.99, web: professorchild.com). Featuring 10 children (ages 4-to-14) who share their feelings about losing a loved one in a series of interviews that cover several aspects of death, this powerful program deals with worries and challenges related to grief, while also offering strategies for coping. (VL-9/13)

Coretta Scott (Weston Woods, 7 min., \$59.95). Author Ntozake Shange's fine poetic text is combined with illustrator Kadir Nelson's epic artwork in this iconographic-animated adaptation of the 2009 picture book on the U.S. Civil Rights movement and inspirational activist Coretta Scott King. (See upcoming review in VL-5/14)

Creepy Carrots! (Weston Woods, 10 min., DVD: \$59.95). This animated adaptation of author Aaron Reynolds and illustrator Peter Brown's 2012 picture book tells a spooky-ish story about Jasper the rabbit, who loves gobbling up crisp and juicy carrots in Crackenhopper Field...until one day he hears a sinister noise and thinks he sees carrots following him. (See review on page 42)

Frenemies: Unhealthy Relationships & What to Do About Them (Human Relations Media, 21 min., DVD: \$109.95, web: hrmvideo.com). Hosted by teens, this short primer

featuring illustrative vignettes in which young people deal with "frenemies"—i.e., persons who are considered friends but sometimes behave like enemies—counsels viewers on telltale behaviors, how to fix a frenemy relationship, and how to maintain healthy friendships. (VL-11/13)

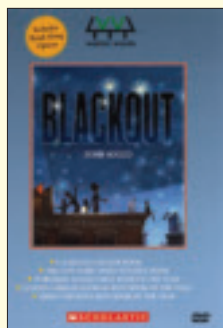
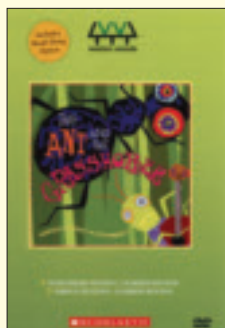
Hooray for Amanda & Her Alligator (Weston Woods, 12 min., DVD: \$59.95). Amanda's alligator grows lonely when she's away, but is—usually—delighted with the surprises she brings with her when she returns in this animated adaptation of author Mo Willems and illustrator Pete List's 2011 picture book.

I Want My Hat Back (Weston Woods, 9 min., DVD: \$59.95). This animated adaptation of Canadian author and illustrator Jon Klassen's 2011 picture book tells the cute story of a bear who searches high and low for his missing hat. (VL-1/14)

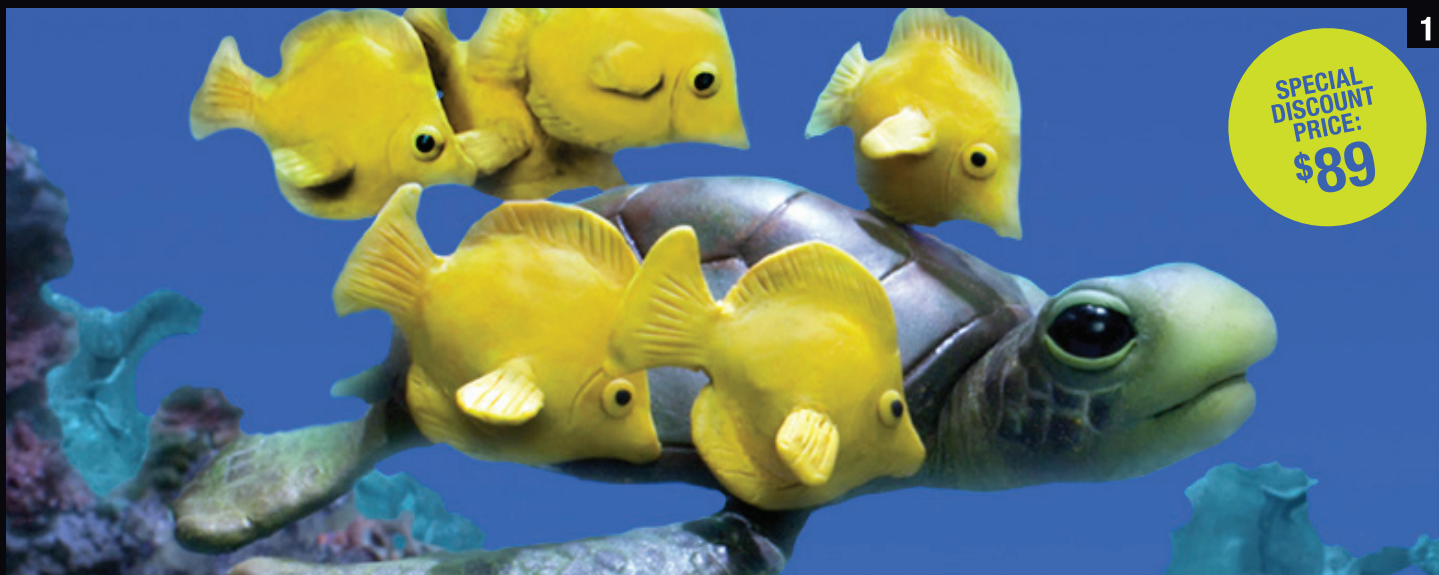
Lemonade in Winter (Weston Woods, 12 min., DVD: \$59.95). Siblings Pauline and John-John add a touch of summer to their wintry community and hopefully will make a little money in this animated adaptation of the 2012 picture book by author Emily Jenkins and illustrator G. Brian Karas. (See upcoming review in VL-5/14)

Lost and Found (Entertainment One, 24 min., DVD: \$9.98). Based on the popular 2005 children's book by Australian author Oliver Jeffers, this charming and gorgeously animated short tells the story of a boy who comes to terms with taking responsibility for an impetuous penguin. (VL-1/14)

Nelson Mandela (Weston Woods, 10 min., DVD: \$59.95). Former South African President Nelson Mandela is paid timely tribute in this iconographic-animated adaptation of author and illustrator Kadir Nelson's richly detailed 2013 biographical picture book, which provides a balanced look at the life of the late world-famous leader. (VL-11/13)



ALA NOTABLE CHILDREN'S VIDEOS

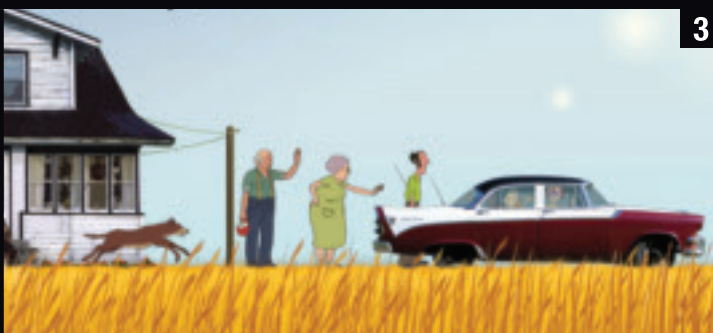


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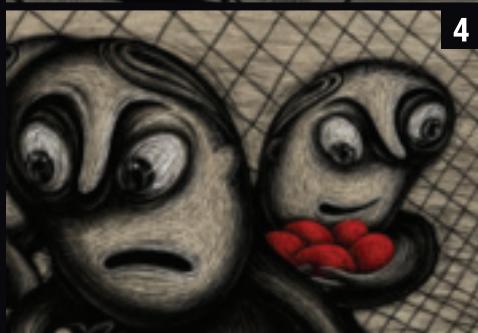
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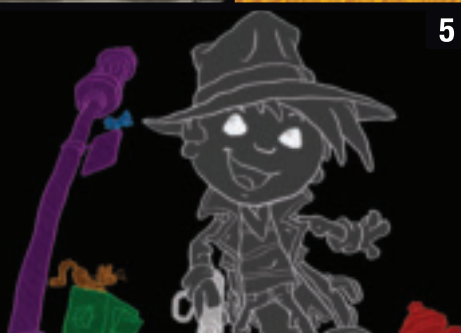
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6

1 _ A SEA TURTLE STORY

Beginning with a mother sea turtle laying eggs on a moonlit beach, this quiet but sparkling claymation film follows the life of one baby turtle until she returns to lay her own eggs. (10 min)

2 _ 55 SOCKS

During World War II in the dark "winter of hunger" in Holland, a group of women and a girl unravel a beautiful bedspread in order to make socks that can be bartered for food. Based on a poem by Marie Jacobs, this poetic animated film leaves viewers with hope for a brighter future. (8 min)

3 _ BIG DRIVE

Squeezed into the back of the family car, four restless sisters find magic in a road trip across the prairie. This exuberant animated short beautifully captures the bond between sisters and the power of the imagination. (9 min)

4 _ KALI THE LITTLE VAMPIRE

Viewers are alternately terrified and deeply moved by the plight of a little vampire who is isolated and lonely, but willing to risk life and limb to save a potential companion. Told in stark black, white and red, this animated short will linger long in the memory. (9 min)

5 _ PRIVATE EYES

Pretending to be a detective, Matthew searches for his birthday present. Being blind does not stop him from navigating his world using the "eyes" in his ears, nose, feet, and hands. (15 min)

6 _ WIPEOUT

Brain injury is the leading cause of death and disability among young men. Narrated by Ross Rebagliati, the 1998 Olympic gold medalist in snowboarding, this documentary shows the consequences of practising extreme sports without a helmet. (51 min)

Online: NFB.ca/USeducation Phone: 1-800-542-2164



A Sea Turtle Story (National Film Board of Canada, 10 min., DVD: \$99, web: nfb.ca). Directed by Kathy Shultz, this moving and enthralling stop-motion animated film chronicles the life of one endangered baby sea turtle, while also exploring the surrounding ecosystem. (See upcoming review in VL-5/14)

Split: A Film for Kids of Divorce (and Their Parents) (Ellen Bruno Film Library, 28 min., DVD: \$29.95: individuals; \$49: K-12 schools & public libraries; \$195: colleges & universities, web: brunofilms.com). Kids ages 6-12

share their feelings and experiences as children of divorce in this production from producer-director Ellen Bruno, who presents one-on-one interviews with her subjects. (VL-11/13)

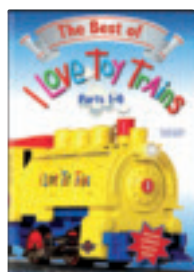
Those Darn Squirrels (Dreamscape Media, 8 min., DVD: \$38.99, web: dreamscapeab.com). Based on the 2008 picture book by author Adam Rubin and illustrator Daniel Salmieri, this iconographic-animated adaptation introduces crotchety Old Man Fookwire, who loves to paint pictures of the myriad birds that fly near his little home, but is upset by a group

of crafty, extremely intelligent squirrels. (VL-1/14)

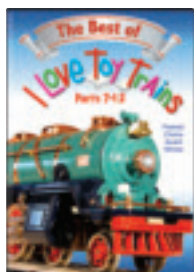
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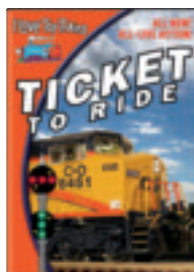
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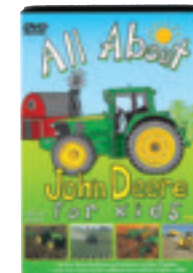
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(cont. from pg. 44)

Spijkenisse and the DOK Library in Delft) and a couple American counterparts (the San Diego County Library and Darien Public Library in Connecticut)—all organizations that are renowned for their innovations. Taking a rather counterintuitive stance, Spijkenisse, which features plenty of high-tech elements, has directly confronted the notion that physical books are passé by making books the primary design motif; volumes literally cover much of the wall space, and while in some cases they are just for decoration, a surprising number serve as back stock for circulating titles. Clever marketing is just one way the DOK fulfills its mission to be “the living room of Delft,” while similar outreach efforts in San Diego and Darien help reach a broad swath of patrons. A recurring theme here is the importance of focusing on the services that are most needed by the communities being served. Although manifesting in different ways at different libraries, the key points are to maintain a local emphasis and be willing to embrace risk—and the interviewees offering insights on best practices here are quick to acknowledge failures as well as successes. Libraries embarking on a building or remodeling program would be well-served by this armchair tour of four exemplary sites, while the ideas presented will also help spark general discussion amongst staff. Highly recommended. Aud: P. (C. Block)

Out of Print ★★★1/2

(2013) 55 min. DVD: \$295. Filmmakers Library (dist. by Alexander Street Press). PPR. ISBN: 978-1-4631-1834-1.

Narrated by Meryl Streep, director Vivienne Roumani's documentary explores the challenges of preserving written information

in the digital age. Touching on the history of reading and writing from its Mesopotamian roots up through the invention of the world-changing Gutenberg printing press and on to contemporary times, *Out of Print* combines graphics, vintage newsreels, and interviews with educators, cognitive scientists, teens, and others, including Amazon's Jeff Bezos, CNN and *New Yorker* legal analyst Jeffrey Toobin, ebook company CEO Jane Friedman, and author and lawyer Scott Turow. While noting the ways in which the digital revolution has brought monumental benefits—including the promise of universal access, and the comparative ease of self-publishing—the film also looks at attendant downsides, such as the fragile, ephemeral nature of digital text; the fact that companies (such as Google) can monopolize the market; and how information overload is affecting young people (a few interviewees brag about not reading). One of the more sobering comments here is indie bookseller Fred Bass's observation that “a couple of generations down may not even know what a book is.” Sure to spur discussion, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

PSYCHOLOGY & SELF-HELP

Consumed: Identity and Anxiety in an Age of Plenty ★★★

(2011) 52 min. DVD: \$169.95. Films Media Group. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-61753-425-6.

By turns pessimistic and thought-provoking, *Consumed* examines the human desire to acquire goods—such as designer merchandise—for reasons other than survival. In between interviews with academics, director

and narrator Richard Heap intercuts vintage advertisements. Psychologist Geoffrey Miller (*Spent: Sex, Evolution and Consumer Behavior*) believes that we consume in order to promote ourselves to others, and that those who feel they lack the necessary traits to attract a partner are vulnerable to the notion that the right products will help compensate. Advertising, which has only grown more pervasive over the years, plays on these fears of inadequacy. Dr. Alastair McIntosh (*Hell and High Water*) talks about how consumption distances us from each other and from the Earth as we obsess over ourselves and our image (overconsumption, Heap fears, risks destroying the environment). But it isn't all doom and gloom. Tim Cooper suggests that a culture of sustainability could aid in turning the tide, although consumers can't do it all by themselves, so forward-thinking corporations would need to help lead the way. For Cooper, it's all a matter of prioritizing long-term results over instant gratification. Catalogers should note that the original onscreen subtitle is *In the Belly of the Beast*. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Loving Someone with an Addiction

★★★

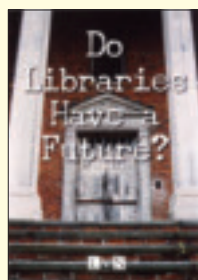
(2013) 65 min. DVD: \$59.95. Paraclete Press. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-61261-420-5.

Featuring expert commentary from Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery executive director Phillip Valentine (who has logged 25 years of sobriety) and Boston Medical Center addiction psychiatrist Dr. Domenic Ciraulo, this guidance program explores the heartbreaking and traumatic effects of addiction on family members. *Loving Someone with an Addiction* looks at the chronic nature of addiction (which can alter brain chemistry); explores the hopelessness and stress that addiction can place on family and friends; and notes that shame and stigma can keep an addict from getting help. Interweaving explanatory graphics with interviews of addicts and loved ones, the film provides tips on how to avoid being an enabler (“You can love an addict to death”) and instead learn to set boundaries, as well as suggestions about Al-Anon, working with primary care physicians, and celebrating “small victories.” Even with some repetition in the personal stories and a religious overtone, the overall content here is strong. Recommended. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

The Song Within: Sedona ★★★

(2010) 75 min. DVD: \$24.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors).

What would happen if more people took the time to look to their communities for strength and healing, asks Enocha Ryan, an artist who lives in Sedona, AZ. That question is at the heart of *The Song Within: Sedona*, an interesting documentary from filmmaker Kathy Douglas about a number of creative



Do Libraries Have a Future? ★★★1/2

(2013) 37 min. DVD: \$50. Library Video Network. PPR. ISBN: 1-56641-128-9.

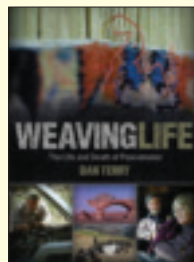
Do libraries have a future? Well, that depends on who you ask. A number of current and up-and-coming leaders in the field of librarianship here address provocative questions concerning the relevance of libraries now and in the future, while also examining ways that libraries can do better. The comments reflect different approaches to leadership in various communities, ultimately underscoring the local nature of institutions.

While there are some common themes—such as the critical need to adapt in a rapidly changing environment (particularly in terms of the digital revolution)—the observations are not uniform, which is as it should be if libraries really reflect their varying users' needs. The eight interviewees featured here are: John Szabo (Los Angeles Public Library); Pam Sandlian Smith (Anythink Libraries, CO); Nicolle Davies (Arapahoe Library District, CO); Brian Bannon (Chicago Public Library); Felton Thomas Jr. (Cleveland Public Library); Patrick Losinski (Columbus Metropolitan Library, OH); Jose Aponte (San Diego County Library); and David Lee King (Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library, KS). A fine discussion starter for library staff and board members—offering plenty of thought-provoking insights—this is highly recommended. Aud: P. (C. Block)

Weaving Life: The Life and Death of Peacemaker Dan Terry

★★★★1/2

(2013) 58 min. DVD: \$24.95. MennoMedia (dist. by Vision Video). Closed captioned.



A documentary project undertaken by students at Eastern Mennonite University, *Weaving Life* draws on the example of one individual—an American named Dan Terry—to explore the question of why some people repeatedly put themselves in jeopardy by doing humanitarian work (sometimes for long periods) in extremely hostile areas of the world. Terry, a United Methodist missionary, worked in the field for 40 years before being assassinated by the Taliban in Afghanistan in 2010 along with nine others also accused of spying. Terry was clearly a man of passion who strongly believed in living his faith, someone who exhibited a devotion that manifested itself in his constant efforts to forge relationships and take action to help rebuild a country caught up in a perpetual state of destruction. Family members and friends (including some other aid workers) here paint a loving portrait, weaving together recollections full of insights and humor. One particularly poignant memory comes from Terry's daughter, who recalls an impromptu bike excursion with her father that turned into an overnight trip that helped her understand the inner vision that propelled her dad. Telling a deeply moving personal story of faith and good works, this is highly recommended. Aud: P. (C. Block)

women living in the land of bold sandstone formations who turn to one another for support and sustenance. Ryan, who runs a sanctuary for people trying to replenish exhausted spirits, says the natural beauty of the area reflects the internal beauty of those seekers who come to find themselves. Andrea McShane Radoccia, a dancer and gardener, suggests that trusting where one's inner compass is leading is essential for good living. Along with her husband, Radoccia has slowly built a vast complex for living, working, and providing a soulful getaway, all made from natural resources. Composer and author Ani Williams describes her mission as a quest to see how all things are moved by the power of music, while Rhianne Teija NewLahnd describes the magic of finding a place within a woman's group, and being seen for who she is in that healthy atmosphere. A number of other delightful women also weigh in here on the benefits of living in Sedona. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

Toward Daylight ★★★★★1/2

(2010) 18 min. DVD: \$189. Icarus Films. PPR.

Although Barbara Bird's short documentary begins as a compassionate look at the devastating effects of depression on an individual, *Toward Daylight* is really about the survivors of those who take their own lives. Underscoring the old maxim that no man (or woman) is an island, the film offers gritty proof that suicide brings years of collateral damage to the lives of family and friends. Presenting several cases, Bird interviews people who describe how persons they cared about went downhill as a result of depression, untreated bipolar disorder, substance abuse, and other conditions. Anger is also acknowledged in devastating statements made here by children of suicidal parents, such as "she

didn't love me enough" or "when it came down to it, her feelings were above all others." When another survivor says of a late loved one, "he didn't think about what the impact would be," the comment seems to speak for many who were damaged by similar losses. Although the film describes and defines symptoms that may signal a predisposition toward suicide, the documentary is not a preventive guide, but rather serves up visceral testimony reminding us that suicide has more than one victim. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

Sue Thomas: Nothing but the Truth

★★★★

(2013) 55 min. DVD: \$19.99. Sue Thomas Ministries (dist. by Vision Video). Closed captioned.

Expert lip reader and FBI crime fighter Sue Thomas (whose real-life adventures were chronicled in the Pax network's 2002-05 series *Sue Thomas: F.B. Eye*) here shares her moving story of faith and redemption—a tale that she says doesn't "fit neatly into an uplifting Hollywood TV script." Profoundly deaf since infancy, Thomas (who speaks clearly, eloquently, and passionately in front of a live audience) says her physical handicap has also been her greatest challenge. She recounts how being deaf has often served to separate her from others—something she found unbearable before making a grave mistake at seminary (she lied, telling people she had a terminal illness as a way to secure the attention of friends). Her subsequent surrender to God marked the beginning of a life of service and satisfaction. Thomas worked

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for the FBI for three and a half years, and while she never ran down the streets to catch bad guys, her contributions were critical. Starting as a fingerprint examiner (literally counting the lines of prints for eight hours a day, five days a week), she was rescued from this drudgery when her exceptional skills as a lip reader were recognized. Now an inspirational speaker, Thomas sees her work as helping individuals “who struggle to find their place in God’s plan.” DVD extras include a brief history of Thomas’ life, an interview with one of her former instructors, and information on her ministries. Recommended. Aud: P. (C. Block)

SOCIAL & POLITICAL ISSUES

The Anonymous People ★★★

(2013) 88 min. DVD: \$149 (\$250 w/PPR). Kino Lorber Edu.

Offering a different take on addiction/recovery, Greg Williams’ provocative, borderline-angry documentary focuses on America’s 23.5 million addicts and alcoholics in “recovery” (including Williams, a self-confessed drug addict) as a potential political force. Despite success stories fostered by Alcoholics Anonymous and similar programs, and the fact that orthodox medicine has redefined addiction as a disease, *The Anonymous People* argues that recovering (and potentially recovering) addicts remain the subject of shame, screaming headlines, and harsh prison terms. Much blame is placed on the Reagan/Bush 1980s “Just Say No” war against drugs (and users), painted here as a racially tinged hysteria that created a boom in the prison and law enforcement business, but was a setback to sobriety. Williams also points a finger at another insidious foe: the sacred tradition of “anonymity,” which silences many in recovery programs. Instead, he says, these people should campaign visibly and boldly for allowances (more funding for treatment, for example) just as AIDS sufferers did. Featuring interviewees including authors Dan Griffin and William Cope Moyers, and actress/memoirist Kristen Johnston, the film effectively makes a case for addiction being a vital public-health issue that has been stigmatized and mishandled. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Bronies ★★★

(2013) 87 min. DVD: \$16.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).

An addition to the mini-genre devoted to sci-fi and fantasy obsessive types (*Trekkies*, *Jedi Junkies*, etc.), *Bronies* centers on grown-ups—largely male—who are drawn to the TV cartoon *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic*, a series with a target audience assumed to be little girls. Director Laurent Malaquais introduces a British guy with Asperger’s, a bullied



Electoral Dysfunction ★★★1/2

(2012) 91 min. DVD: \$24.95. Passion River (avail. from most distributors).

Aired on PBS, this humorous exposé on the “bizarre” (and not necessarily accurate) system of American voting is hosted by a playfully arch Mo Rocca, a man who is equally convivial whether speaking with regional Tea Party superstars or hardcore liberal Democrats. A “Rednecks for Obama” poster conjures poignant memories of the hope-filled election year of 2008, as Rocca travels to Indiana in order to watch the ballot process under some of the nation’s strictest electioneering laws. Rocca looks at the U.S. electoral college system, a horribly flawed compromise hatched among individual states and selfish special-interests during the early years of the republic. The controversial voter ID mandate here emerges as a troublemaking “solution” to a problem that never existed, while tallying of absentee ballots lets both sides charge that the other is “stealing” the election (no mention is made of campaign finance, a whole other witch-brew). Interviewees include author Larry Norden and designer Todd Oldham (who points out how poor page layout contributed to the 2000 Bush-Gore chaos). Clearly reform is needed, but viewers will unlikely find much in this entertaining film by David Deschamps, Leslie D. Farrell, and Bennett Singer to suggest that change will be coming any time soon. Sure to appeal to political junkies on both sides of the aisle, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

North Carolina pilot, Israeli composer/YouTube sensation “the Living Tombstone,” and Maine adolescent Lyle, who is fearful of what his “conservative” father (a Bush poster is visible during an interview) will say. All are captivated by the non-violent, rainbow-filled cartoon and its morality lessons, which are recapped by a unicorn at the end of each episode. Viewers visit conventions of “Bronies” (i.e., bros + ponies) in the U.K., Germany, and U.S. Attendees at the American show include voice actors John de Lancie and Tara Strong and writer Lauren Faust (all executive producers of this doc), with de Lancie playing family mediator between Lyle and his dad. Only a grouch (or *My Little Pony* hater) could take offense at the message of acceptance and tolerance for beatific fans. Excerpts from *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic* don’t quite justify the awe (previous shows exist in the long-running franchise, although apparently only *Friendship is Magic* has mojo), but the transcendence of cult-fandom experience comes across well. Recommended. Aud: P. (C. Cassidy)

The Chairman and the Lions ★★★

(2013) 46 min. In Maa & Swahili w/English subtitles. DVD: \$19.95: individuals; \$219 (w/PPR): institutions. Documentary Educational Resources.

Peter Biella’s straightforward documentary on village life in the East African nation of Tanzania will definitely be of interest to anthropologists and ethnographers, but general viewers should enjoy this as well due to its unquestioned star—Chairman Frank Ikoyo, the vigorous young community leader of Lesoit. Ikoyo aims to bring modern changes to his people—including the education of girls—while still encouraging his constituents to maintain Maasai traditions (even after

abandoning their formerly nomadic lifestyle for a more pastoral existence—one increasingly affected by external influences). *The Chairman and the Lions* follows Ikoyo, whose work ranges from efforts to combat an outsider’s attempt to seize local land (through unfamiliar legal processes), to enlisting the aid of a tribal elder in helping teach young men how to hunt down a lion that has been ravaging nearby fields. For Ikoyo—whose election when he was in his mid-20s was largely due to the fact that he was the rare man who had completed primary school—education is the key not just to survival but to progress; yet he’s also devoted to tradition, objecting on one occasion when a villager appears on camera proudly wearing a non-native shawl. The resistance of the Maasai to full assimilation has attracted much scholarly interest. Serving as a window to the Maasai world, Biella’s film is an engaging study. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

China Concerto ★★★1/2

(2012) 50 min. In English & Mandarin w/English subtitles. DVD: \$295. Icarus Films. PPR.

Bo Wang’s fascinating documentary examines a schism in contemporary China, or as Wang puts it, “capitalism putting on the face of socialism.” Even as China prospers through increased capitalist activity and a certain amount of democracy, the country continues to cling to old values, driven by ideological nostalgia that is apparent in both government bureaucracy and cultural life. This is best exemplified by the “red culture” campaign launched by the city of Chongqing’s former Communist Party chief, Bo Xilai (whose rapidly ascending political star plummeted after he was found guilty of corruption in 2013). China’s “democratic dictatorship”

not only bans some forms of commercial television—preferring to broadcast old Chinese movies about the joys of joining the party—but also makes homegrown pop songs indistinguishable from political anthems and immerses theater in collectivist ideals. Wang's cinematic essay takes the form of a series of fictional letters describing a man's trip to China, read in voiceover narration by an unidentified female. The letter writer says his goal is to "get past the seduction of aesthetics" and not be personally swayed by the steady drumbeat of the propaganda machine. Wang includes plenty of examples—such as film clips and excerpts from pop concerts and stage productions—to illustrate how the yearning for a bygone China is rampant in daily life. But (befitting the title) *China Concerto* is actually more bemused than accusatory—a fine reflective piece about the difficulties of holding a grip on reality while undergoing cultural upheaval. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

Free China: The Courage to Believe

★★★

(2013) 61 min. DVD: \$24.95. *Passion River* (avail. from most distributors).

A harrowing, eye-opening documentary, filmmaker Michael Perlman's *Free China* examines a repressive regime from a spiritual perspective. In 1989, when students gathered at Tiananmen Square to call for democracy, former Communist party member Jennifer Zeng joined them, while Dr. Charles Lee decided to leave the country for the United States. Both became followers of Falun Gong, which provides some of the same benefits as Tai Chi. At first, China promoted this

spiritual practice, but when it began to attract more adherents than the Communist Party, they cracked down on practitioners, labeling people as cult members and proceeding to incarcerate them. In 2000, they arrested Zeng, who says, "We refused to say black was white." After a month of jail time, authorities let her go, but kept an eye on her Internet activities (Cisco would later face a lawsuit for cooperating with China's cyber-spying program), after which she was sentenced to a year of hard labor. When Lee saw what was going on, he returned to China, but his attempts to protest also landed him in one of the labor camps, where prisoners made sweaters, stuffed animals, and other items intended for export (some U.S. companies claimed the goods were made in America). Although they have denied it, camp officials also reputedly sold the organs of Falun Gong members for harvesting, a fate that Zeng and Lee would thankfully escape. After her release, Zeng sought political asylum in Australia, wrote a book, and became an activist. Once freed, Lee came to the U.S. to testify before Congress. A powerful film that exposes injustice while also counteracting China's misinformation campaign, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

F*ck for Forest ★★★

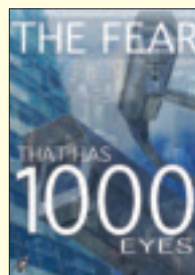
(2012) 85 min. DVD: \$99.95; public libraries; \$350; colleges & universities. *The Cinema Guild*. PPR. ISBN: 0-7815-1458-4.

Werner Herzog meets the Farrelly Brothers, as Polish filmmaker Michal Marczak turns a generally non-gimmicky handheld lens on an outlandish situation that others might have milked for laffs (or, worse, reality-TV sensation). The title (minus the asterisk)

The Fear That Has 1000 Eyes ★★★1/2

(2013) 52 min. DVD: \$24.95. *Suissimage* (dist. by Janson Media). ISBN: 978-1-56839-476-3.

How do contemporary cities cope in the age of terrorism? German filmmakers Dagmar Brendecke and Walter Brun's interesting documentary explores how several major European metropolises have addressed that challenge, not only through increasing surveillance, but also integrating the act of monitoring people into the very design of urban spaces. In other words, we're long past the idea of merely attaching cameras to buildings in order to spy on passersby. A dozen years after the events of September 11, 2001, visual monitoring has become organically woven into the places people congregate for work, shopping, or recreation—something that a new generation accepts as normal. The film begins in London, where 20,000 official or private (i.e., commercial business) cameras are so pervasive that almost any public movement by residents and visitors is captured on a screen somewhere. Viewers are reminded that modern terrorist activity in London goes back decades to the early bombings by the Irish Republican Army. Such a history necessitated a "ring of steel" security approach, which includes random checkpoints. Brendecke and Brun then look at similar efforts in Bern, Berlin, and Madrid, where security measures are intended to make people feel safe under a semblance of normal living. Informative, provocative, and often disturbing, *The Fear That Has 1000 Eyes* reminds us of the dangerous times we live in and of the precarious balance between public safety and individual freedom and privacy. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)



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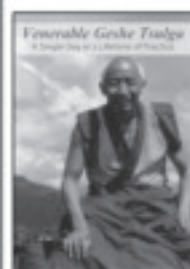


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refers to the name of a charity fringe-group (apparently genuine) consisting of lissome young Germans and Scandinavians—many outcast by their families—who raise money for eco-causes via Internet pornography and public sex-performance shows in Berlin. Their bizarre neo-hippie-meets-club-kid attire and squatter lifestyles are the initial focus of the film, which in its early stages borders on ennui (despite some graphic nudity and intercourse). But the casual narrative takes a stranger-than-fiction turn when a remote South American tribe asks online for help in saving their land from deforestation. Fuck for Forest is the only NGO that responds, fortuitously traveling to a Peruvian climate where they can go around naked. Can hedonists armed mainly with sexual freedom actually make a difference for these distrustful and desperate natives? It turns out that even the power of porn has limits. The subject matter, content, and title will obviously pose an obstacle to collections in conservative areas, but once you look past the jaw- (and pants-) dropping premise, this is an ultimately sad look at activist idealism and naïveté gone limp (sorry) in the face of reality. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Harvest ★★★

(2012) 71 min. DVD: \$59.95; public libraries; \$295 w/PPR; colleges & universities. Seventh Art Releasing.

The harvesting of California wine grapes comes under scrutiny in John Beck's informative documentary. Beck spent an especially rainy three-month season in Sonoma County observing the picking process at five family-run wineries and one home operation, where the managers are American (although not always American-born) and the workers are Mexican. Rudy Rodriguez, a hardy 73-year-

old who has been picking for 33 years, hails from Michoacán, the same southern state as his male colleagues at the Robert Hunter Winery. Bacchus Vineyard Management, on the other hand, hires all-female teams to work; Glenn Alexander explains that attention to detail is just as important as strength, speed, and stamina. As Matt Reilly of Lone Oak Vineyards notes, however, almost no chances exist for advancement, especially since many workers can't read, write, or speak English. An exception is Reynaldo Robledo, who moved up the ranks decades ago and now oversees his own vineyard. Other vineyards, like Foppiano, save money through the use of picking machinery, although insects and other detritus tag along with the clusters. Unfortunately, everyone takes a hit here when too much rain leads to rot that reduces yields. Ironically, American and Canadian wine lovers pay thousands of dollars for the opportunity to pick grapes, while migrant workers take great risks to enter this country simply to provide for themselves and their families. DVD extras include deleted scenes and a photo gallery. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

How to Make Money Selling Drugs

★★★

(2012) 96 min. DVD: \$26.95. Docurama (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

First-time director Matthew Cooke presents an invigorating look at the U.S. narcotics industry, focusing on both the dealers who can soak up millions in profits and the law enforcement agents who work to put dealers behind bars. One of the more interesting figures profiled here is Barry Cooper, a former police officer with a talent for drug arrests. Cooper would later advocate against what he defined as illegal police tactics used to

drive up drug-related arrests (he subsequently left the U.S. to live in Brazil, citing fears for his safety). *How to Make Money Selling Drugs* constantly stresses the fact that the majority of drug-related arrests are for the lowest-level figures in the narcotics world, which has resulted in an absurdly high number of prisoners serving sentences for drug charges. While much of the insight here is fascinating, the film loses some power when it brings in various actors (Woody Harrelson and Susan Sarandon) and rappers (Eminem and 50 Cent) for commentary, although *The Wire* creator David Simon offers astute observations. DVD extras include a director's commentary, and an interview with Russell Simmons. Like the similarly-themed *The House I Live In* (VL Online-7/13), this thought-provoking documentary is sure to spark discussion. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Last Call ★★★

(2013) 90 min. DVD: \$99; high schools & public libraries; \$295; colleges & universities. The Video Project. PPR. Closed captioned.

Last Call revisits the surviving authors of the influential 1972 book *The Limits to Growth*, which served as a wake-up call that Earth was running out of resources, and stressed the need for physical limits to economic, agricultural, and population growth. Widely discussed (and reviled by some), the report—which drew its conclusions from the first computer model capable of analyzing the interaction between finite resources and unchecked expansion—also suggested that an orderly transition to new ways of living would become more difficult as time passed. More than 40 years later, the authors are sticking with their message, talking to conference audiences and other groups, as well as politicians (who listen politely and do nothing). One of the scientists, Jørgen Randers, predicts that as global temperatures continue to rise, Earth's tundra will melt, releasing enough methane and carbon dioxide from the previously frozen vegetation to suffocate the planet. By then—as early as 2080—it really will be too late. Interweaving personal recollections with archival footage, filmmaker Enrico Cerasuolo's *Last Call* is a disturbing documentary with an alarming message. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Gardner)

The Lower 9: A Story of Home ★★★

(2011) 52 min. DVD: \$79.95; public libraries & high schools; \$300; colleges & universities. Third World Newsreel. PPR.

Six New Orleans residents share stories about life before Hurricane Katrina in this oral-history-style documentary from codirectors Matthew Hashiguchi and Elaine McMillion. Images of the devastated remnants of homes are intercut with scenes from house parties, backyard barbecues, church services, and a street corner rap session. Community organizer Mack McClendon has fond



Men at Lunch ★★★

(2012) 67 min. DVD: \$24.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

The old adage that a picture is worth a thousand words is validated in filmmaker Seán Ó Cualáin's documentary about a famous photo in which 11 (mostly Irish) construction workers casually eat their lunches while perched on a steel girder some 70 floors above street level during the construction of Manhattan's Rockefeller Center in 1932. According to Corbis Corporation—the world's largest repository of archival photos—it remains the most requested item in their collection. Combining detailed analysis

and interviews with writers, filmmakers, a Rockefeller Center archivist, and ordinary folk, *Men at Lunch* contemplates what this legendary shot continues to say about the immigrant experience in the United States, the indomitable spirit of Americans in the throes of the Great Depression, the courage of ironworkers both 80 years ago and post-9/11, and the relationship of New Yorkers to their city. Although sometimes meandering—a feeling compounded by Fionnula Flanagan's hushed, almost dreamy narration—the film builds to considerable cumulative effect. And while it is not an investigative piece, the documentary does identify three daredevil photographers who shared the workers' defiance of acrophobia by joining them on the scaffolding on September 20, 1932—the image's established date. DVD extras include five bonus shorts. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

memories of the people, music, and food of the Lower Ninth Ward. On an ordinary day, McClendon recalls, newspapers would run a single page of obituaries; now it has grown to four. Pre-Katrina, Vietnam veteran Sandro McGee ran a repair shop, while Stanley Stewart operated a custom service shop. Although Stewart still takes on jobs, McGee now spends most of his days drawing cartoons. When the storm hit, McGee climbed up into his attic, where powerful gusts pummeled his roof—and broke his ribs. Siblings Leo Gant Sr. and Donna Gant Williams talk about their childhood, which revolved around their father, who was strict but loving. Angela Shelbia, an aspiring actress, makes the most provocative statement when she says, “Katrina was the best thing that happened to New Orleans, period.” Shelbia feels that too many people were living in abject poverty; the hurricane may have displaced thousands, but it also encouraged others to find more reliable housing. Stewart adopts a more cautious viewpoint, but appreciates the fact that the disaster has brought neighbors closer together. Offering a powerful look at Katrina’s legacy on one of the hardest hit areas of New Orleans, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

My So-Called Enemy ★★★

(2010) 89 min. In English, Arabic & Hebrew w/ English subtitles. DVD: \$95: high schools & public libraries; \$349: colleges & universities. Good Egg Productions (dist. by New Day Films). PPR. ISBN: 978-1-57488-482-3.

For seven years, director Lisa Gossels followed six Israeli and Palestinian teenage girls who met at the Building Bridges for Peace camp in 2002. During this 10-day event, campers participate in group sessions where they air grievances and attempt to find common ground. It’s easier for some than others, such as Hanin, a Palestinian Muslim who wants all of the Jews out of Israel, and has no sympathy for Gal, an Iranian-Israeli Jew (Hanin thinks her family should return to Iran). To make matters worse, the camp takes place in the wake of the Second Intifada, but camp founder Melodye Feldman believes young women have the potential to make a difference. After 15 months, Gossels catches up with the girls and their families, shedding light on their evolving perspectives. Gal and Adi, who serve two years in the Israeli army, worry that military service will hinder their relationships—and it does indeed put a strain on Gal’s friendship with Rezan, a Christian from East Jerusalem. Hanin, meanwhile, turns more religious, and starts to wear the hijab, while Rawan gets a degree in education and Inas moves to the States. As the film ends, the wall between the West Bank and Gaza looms higher than ever, but the women do seem to have learned from their encounters with each other (end credits reveal that all six are working towards careers in education, politics, and journalism). An inspiring film

They Think I’m Chinese ★★★

(2011) 52 min. DVD: \$195. National Film Board of Canada. PPR.

For this intimate and revealing National Film Board of Canada documentary, Nicole Giguère spent several years filming five adopted Chinese girls, including her own daughter, Alice. Due to China’s one-child policy, 7,000 Chinese children—98% female—have found new homes in Quebec. Giguère first began filming Alice, Julia, Flavie, Anne, and Léa when they were children; here she concentrates on their teen years and passage toward adulthood, starting with a 2007 tour in which four of the girls visited their homeland. The trip includes a stop at the orphanage in Hunan where some began their journey to the West. None are obsessed with meeting their birth parents, so a subsequent lack of contact information doesn’t cause disappointment. As they move through their teens, the girls display the usual concerns about boys, grades, and body image. After graduating from high school, they go on to college, travel abroad, and fall in love, but life is harder on some: Léa suffers from an eating disorder and Flavie ends up in a juvenile facility (she also acknowledges a problem with drugs). Over time, Léa develops a healthier relationship with food, but admits that she can’t predict the future, while Flavie bypasses college for the independence of work. As the film draws to a close, all five seem to have found some degree of stability in their lives. Interestingly, the girls are ultimately more vested in finding themselves as young Canadians than as Chinese-born immigrants. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)



that maintains hope for better Israeli-Palestinian relations, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

The Pink Room ★★★1/2

(2013) 57 min. DVD: \$19.99. Goat Rock Films (dist. by Vision Video).

Of the millions of sex slaves worldwide, an estimated 50,000 are found in Cambodia. Filmmaker Joel Sandvos’ *The Pink Room* is an informative (and often depressing) documentary about mixed success with trying to end the trafficking of child sex slaves in Cambodia, a country described as ripe for the objectification and brutalization of children a generation after Pol Pot and the sweeping psychological effects of mass genocide. Poverty naturally drives children into prostitution, but sadly not the ordinary kind: a wide market exists for girls as young as five who can be easily subjected to fetishes and torture. The filmmakers introduce us to Mien, who sold herself to a brothel at age 13 in order to provide food for her starving sister and mother. Mien experienced sickening brutality for years, but was ultimately rescued by an advocacy organization offering aftercare, rehabilitation, and skills training. That group plays a large role here, guiding viewers through the complications of trying to end child sex trafficking—which has met with limited if cherished success. Some of the most powerful moments here are when one advocate confronts obvious pedophiles and chases them away, knowing full well that they will simply travel to the next village to pay for a victim. Despite the hopelessness, however, Mien’s story (she is now a tailor and married) and that of others offers encouragement. A powerful festival

award-winner, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

Service: When Women Come Marching Home ★★★1/2

(2012) 55 min. DVD: \$19.95: individuals; \$89: public libraries; \$295: colleges & universities. Women Make Movies. PPR. Closed captioned.

Filmmakers Marcia Rock and Patricia Lee Stotter profile seven American women struggling to cope with and adapt to civilian life following military deployments in Afghanistan or Iraq. Having served in the Marines, Army, Coast Guard, and Marine Corps Reserves, the women suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), physical disabilities, and military sexual trauma; one is a double amputee (the only survivor of a horrific IED attack), another was raped by an officer shortly before her 19th birthday, and a third wound up homeless after her mother changed the locks on the family home. In interviews, conversations, and encounters with therapists, the subjects describe the incidents that left them with serious physical and psychological aftereffects (such as feeling unsafe in public and inadequate in their relationships), and talk about their subsequent efforts to unite and work with government agencies to improve services for women veterans (women now comprise 15% of military forces). An expert explains the differences between male and female vets’ experiences of PTSD, one major aspect of which is a feeling of betrayal and fear in women who’ve been sexually harassed or attacked by their supposed brothers in arms. Featuring both the full-length film and a 21-minute abridged version, extras include bonus footage from

a Disabled American Veterans event where *Service* was screened. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (M. Puffer-Rothenberg)

We Were Children ★★★1/2

(2012) 83 min. DVD: \$195. National Film Board of Canada. PPR.

Canada's Indian Residential School System removed children of aboriginal families from their homes to be placed in religious-operated boarding schools designed to foster assimilation into what was legally defined as superior Anglo-French culture. Originating in the mid-19th century and continuing until 1996, the practice has come to be condemned as a form of cultural genocide, which ultimately resulted in a public apology from Prime Minister Stephen Harper and the Canadian House of Commons in 2008. As this documentary by Tim Wolochatiuk also manifestly shows, the system involved horrendous mistreatment of youngsters. *We Were Children* is based primarily on the recollections of Lyna Hart and Glen Anaquod, who recount their experiences as children, enduring not just harsh treatment in the classroom—where they were compelled to converse in French or English rather than their native languages—but also instances of severe psychological oppression and corporal punishment, as well as sexual abuse. Their poignant reminiscences—accompanied by dramatic re-creations—also include occasional kindnesses on the part of staff that served to briefly alleviate suffering (along with one instance of organized rebellion, quickly suppressed), together with reflections on the terrible long-term effects of their ordeal (Anaquod mentions

the alcoholism prevalent among many of his co-survivors, and discusses an occasion when his own suicide was prevented only by his children's intervention). This powerful indictment of one nation's cruelly misguided policies carries a broader message about the damage caused by narrow-mindedness and intolerance, regardless of intentions. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

What Time Is Left ★★

(2012) 65 min. DVD: \$99. Terra Nova Films. PPR.

In *What Time Is Left*, first-time director Dakin Henderson ponders quality-of-life issues while filming his octogenarian grandmothers. Grandma Deedee is an active and vibrant woman who gives speeches before nursing conferences on geriatric care issues, while Grandma Polly is in an advanced stage of dementia and can neither speak nor move freely (the two women lived in the same seniors' complex). Polly's decline was a painful experience for the family, and Henderson's father notes how she "died every day a little bit for 10 years" before eventually passing away. Deedee, who experiences a health scare during the course of the film, uses her remaining time to ensure that "do not resuscitate" legal paperwork is in place. Running concurrent to this narrative is the story of twentysomething Henderson's own brush with death—he collapsed and stopped breathing for two minutes during a Frisbee game, although subsequent medical exams were unable to determine what happened, and he had no evidence of physical damage. While the production considers weighty subjects, Henderson's filmmaking

is a bit too slapdash, so that instead of a serious portrait on life's fragile nature, the documentary sometimes comes across as an overly ambitious home movie. Optional. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

TEEN ISSUES

Confessions of a Bully ★★★

(2014) 17 min. DVD: \$149.95 (teacher's guide included). Human Relations Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62706-020-0.

Drawing on stories from real-life bullies, this guidance program interweaves dramatic re-enactments with comments from national anti-bullying speaker and clinical psychologist Dr. Joel Haber. *Confessions of a Bully* features John, who picks on a girl he'd known since elementary school, mocking her awkwardness and dousing her with ketchup packets; Ebony, who calls other girls fat and ugly, and admits to being upset only by being confronted about her bald-faced lies; and Tyler, whose Facebook trashing of a friend's girlfriend led to a school service project ("...as terrible as it sounds, it was rewarding"). Exploring the different forms of bullying—including physical, verbal, rumors, and exclusion—the program points out that "it's never too late to change your ways," while also driving home the lesson that respecting others will lead to more opportunities in life. DVD extras include a PDF teacher's guide with student activities and fact sheets. Recommended. Aud: J, H, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

EDUCATION

Unmanned: America's Drone Wars ★★★1/2

(2013) 63 min. DVD: \$19.98. The Disinformation Company/TDC (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-939517-20-3.



Provocateur filmmaker Robert Greenwald's chilling and heartbreaking documentary challenges claims made by the Central Intelligence Agency and White House that America's use of drones in Pakistan and Afghanistan follows a rigorous application of standards. Although the official position is that no collateral damage stems from these strikes—and only militants and terrorists are intentionally pursued—*Unmanned* presents anecdotal evidence that attacks can be indiscriminate at best and

deeply flawed in both planning and execution. Greenwald begins with a lengthy story about a 16-year-old boy who traveled some distance to Islamabad in order to attend a tribal conference condemning drone use, only to be killed by one a day or two later (the youth was specifically targeted despite a lack of evidence of terrorist ties). In on-camera interviews, an army of experts from the government, universities, the press, and legal fields note that U.S. policy in this area relies heavily on paid informants rewarded for identifying potential targets, thus encouraging people to point the finger at anyone they wish. A former U.S. Air Force specialist who helped guide the aircraft (via satellite) thousands of miles away from his own location describes the guilt he feels over his conviction that the machines kill innocent children. Greenwald also describes how the drone business is worth \$80 billion a year, giving the industry lots of incentive to lobby lawmakers to keep using this lethal technology in the field. DVD extras include audio commentary by Greenwald and extended interviews. A timely and disturbing exposé, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

Best Kept Secret: Aging Out with Autism

★★★

(2012) 85 min. DVD: \$295. Filmmakers Library (dist. by Alexander Street Press). PPR. ISBN: 978-1-4631-1815-0.

Samantha Buck's documentary was shot over the course of a year and a half at the John F. Kennedy High School for special needs students in Newark, NJ. Buck follows dedicated teacher Janet Mino as she works to prepare her severely autistic charges for life in the outside world. The focus here is on three 20-year-old men—two from Newark and a third from Orange—whom Mino strives to help in expressing themselves and interacting productively with others, despite their occasional violent outbursts. Mino's ultimate goal, however, is even larger: because earlier graduates often wound up in institutions or on the street, she also searches for employment opportunities suitable for the young men once they leave Kennedy's support system—a difficult task. *Best Kept Secret* captures various ordinary elements of school

life—classes, field trips, recess—along with events such as the senior prom. The camera also drops in on parent-teacher conferences (which can sometimes grow tense) and leaves the campus to visit the students' homes. The documentary closes with the graduation ceremony, followed by poignant recaps detailing how the three subjects fared afterward—a mixed report. It also shows Mino and her colleagues returning next year to resume their tireless efforts on behalf of other kids. *Best Kept Secret* offers a compelling personal portrait of a troubling social situation in which autistic young students struggle to find a place in adult society. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Go Public ★★★

(2013) 90 min. DVD: \$350. Blue Field Productions. PPR.

The subtitle of James W. O'Keeffe's documentary—*A Day in the Life of an American School District*—offers an accurate summary of this feature-length presentation that was edited from the work of 50 camera crews who shot fly-on-the-wall footage on May 8, 2012, at the 28 schools comprising California's Pasadena Unified School District. *Go Public* doesn't just include on-campus material, but instead starts with students, teachers, and administrators waking up in the morning, preparing for the day, and making their way to their respective buildings before moving to the classrooms, cafeterias, auditoriums, laboratories, hallways, and offices. Overall, the result—which includes some direct-to-camera comments from subjects but no narration or commentary—serves as an effective rebuttal to critics of American public education. Instead of depicting a troubled system characterized by uncaring teachers and unresponsive students, the film emphasizes the skill and dedication of the staff and the learning efforts of their young charges. And it culminates in its own critique as students, parents, administrators, and teachers appear before the school board to argue against slashing budgets in ways that would require curtailment of programs and the elimination of positions—pleas that, unfortunately, did not ultimately prevent severe cuts. Although one might debate whether the Pasadena USD is truly representative of school districts across the country, *Go Public* does offer an engrossing glimpse of hard work being done in our much maligned American education system. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

LAW & CRIME

Follow Me Down: Portraits of Louisiana Prison Musicians ★★★

(2012) 96 min. DVD: \$169.95. Films Media Group. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-61753-953-4.

The subjects of *Follow Me Down* are pris-

oner musicians whose songs and stories deserve an audience. Canadian filmmaker Bruce McDonald profiled some of the same inmates from Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola in his 2012 documentary *Music from the Big House* (VL Online-2/13), but director Ben Harbert—a music professor at Georgetown University—also visits Elayn Hunt Correctional Center and the Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women (LCIW). Musical genres among the three institutions range from gospel to hip-hop. At LCIW, for instance, choir serves as the sole musical outlet. Rockelle Gregory, who has been serving time for eight years, says she's written 920 songs, concluding, "I am awesome," but when she later gets into an altercation, she is forced to leave the ensemble. By contrast, the men of Angola have several groups from which to choose, including the Pure Heart Messengers, the Jazzmen, Angola's Most Wanted, and the Family Choir. During the course of filming, the Messengers coax John Henry Taylor Jr., a 39-year inmate, into singing again. Wilfred Cazelot, a guard, believes that music offers somewhere constructive for the men to channel their energy. Similarly, correctional officer Latasha Roy encourages female inmates to avoid cliques and to join choir instead. Other notable subjects include saxophone player Leotha Brown, incarcerated at Angola since 1964, and guitar player Clay Logan, who murdered his mother, and is now president of the Hunt music association. An abundance of talent is on display here, but for the singers and players serving life sentences, music careers aren't likely to be forthcoming. In a state notorious for denying parole, in-

mate Ivy Mathis, notes that "life means life." Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Unlikely Friends ★★★

(2013) 62 min. DVD: \$14.95. Chance Films.

Documentaries about violent crimes often take the perspective of either the victim or the criminal, but Leslie Neale's film—narrated by actor Mike Farrell—splits the difference, examining tragic circumstances that brought people together, and looking at what happened next. In the first example, Wyoming sheriff Stephen Watt and robber Mark Farnham exchanged gunfire that left Stephen seriously injured. Stephen initially felt that Mark, who was a former military policeman, should have received the death penalty, but after five years, Stephen decided to reach out, hoping that forgiveness would help relieve his anger, and the pair eventually became friends. Also profiled are four parents who lost their sons in separate incidents and wound up contacting the men responsible for their deaths, forcing the perpetrators to come face-to-face with the painful consequences of their actions. Harriet Salarno, founder of Crime Victims United of California, doesn't judge the other survivors, although she says that she could never forgive her daughter's killer. A woman named Jane has faced criticism that she replaced her son with his murderer, while Rhada—who started by meeting with convicted murderers at San Quentin—found that the man who took her son's life has chosen not to take responsibility. As author Azim Khamisa notes, perpetrators can be victims, too: a 14-year-old killed Khamisa's son as part of a gang initiation, which eventually



How Sherlock Changed the World ★★★1/2

(2013) 120 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.95 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-953-7.

Over the decades, fiction writers have created hordes of crime fighting detectives, but no one has ever rivaled Arthur Conan Doyle's master sleuth Sherlock Holmes, a man sometimes fondly called the "first CSI." Filmmaker Paul Bernays' PBS-aired documentary explores how Holmes both anticipated and inspired modern forensic scientists. In the early days, police were merely evidence gatherers, not thinkers. In Doyle's very first Sherlock Holmes story, *A Study in Scarlet*, the detective employed logic and deduction, never jumping to conclusions while studying crime scenes, and always keeping an open mind while sifting through evidence that included often overlooked elements of toxicology, gait analysis (how a person walks), and blood evidence (originally trained as an eye doctor, Doyle was inspired by a real-life surgeon and mentor he met in medical school). Dr. Henry Lee and other modern crime scientists describe how actual cases—notably that of the notorious 1950s wife murderer, Dr. Sam Sheppard—prove the validity of Sherlock's methods. Of course, even Doyle/Holmes could be wrong about some theories, and today's advances in the study of ballistics and DNA evidence were beyond Doyle's dreams. Always restless, Doyle not only took on an actual bizarre case of animal mutilation, but later in life also became concerned with miscarriages of justice and the plight of the wrongfully convicted. Mixing forensics, true crime science, and a bit of literary history, this engaging documentary should have wide appeal, especially with fans of the popular series' *Sherlock* and *Elemental*. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

led to Khamisa working towards eradicating youth-on-youth violence. Also including a director's audio commentary, this thought-provoking documentary is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

NATURE, MATH & SCIENCE

Cosmic Journeys ★★★

(2012) 4 discs. 464 min. DVD: \$29.95. Thomas Lucas Productions (dist. by Janson Media). ISBN: 978-1-56839-469-5.

Compiling 16 instructional documentaries from writer-director Thomas Lucas—whose films on science and natural history have appeared on PBS and the Discovery Channel—*Cosmic Journeys* addresses various subjects related to our understanding of the cosmos, using a medley of computer graphics, archival footage, and occasional clips from movies and TV programs to illustrate points. Topics range from the general—the nature of anti-matter, the extent of the universe, the meaning of time—to the relatively specific in individual episodes dealing with the sun, the moon, Venus, Mars, and Saturn. The phenomenon of black holes takes up two installments, while a third is devoted to the search for planets apart from Earth that could support life. Well researched and skillfully presented, the episodes here successfully convey even the most esoteric material in an approachable style, and will not only serve nicely in middle and high school science classes, but also appeal to NOVA viewers. Recommended. Aud: J, H, P. (F. Swietek)

Glacial Balance ★★★1/2

(2013) 2 discs. 95 min. DVD: \$25; individuals: \$300 w/PPR; institutions. Dalton Films. PPR.

Filmmaker Ethan Steinman's beautifully-filmed and sobering documentary paints a bleak picture of the future for an already struggling people. Tropical glaciers have historically topped the Andes Mountains, running all the way down the western spine of South America. But as Earth's atmosphere warms, those glistening white expanses are shrinking, with immense consequences for farmers who rely on glacial melt for their water; many, if not most, will have no choice but to relocate, most likely to an urban setting. Steinman follows scientists as they collect core samples from the remaining glaciers (to be stored and studied when the ice masses themselves are gone). Interviewees include educators and environmentalists (including Al Gore), as well as men and women working the soil in Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Chile, and Argentina, who understand what is happening to the climate, even as residents of the Northern Hemisphere debate whether anything significant is occurring at all. A second disc includes deleted scenes and extended interviews. As much an anthro-



Parrot Confidential ★★★

(2013) 60 min. DVD: \$19.99 (\$42.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-002-2.

In the wild, parrots are known for their chatter, colorful feathers, and grace as they soar among jungle treetops. Although parrots inspire awe and inspiration they remain wild birds, not easily adapting to confinement and domestication. Narrated by Allison Argo, this PBS-aided *Nature* documentary looks at the sad plight of pet parrots. The loud squawking of parrots (who can live up to 80 years) is meant to be heard across a jungle, and therefore is hardly appropriate for many homes or apartments, where some also discover that the birds have a powerful bite. Sadly, many owners tire of their birds, leading all too many to be "re-homed"—given away or consigned to overcrowded rescue shelters, which is a difficult fate for these intelligent social birds, who tend to form a "mate bond" with their owners. Since wild birds can no longer be legally imported, a thriving illicit trade has grown, with many parrots dying in transit from the forests, or bred in filthy "parrot mills." Parrot lovers have tried to conserve birds in the wild and protect adopted animals, in some cases employing "detox" procedures, such as one for a parrot that suffered ill effects from sharing small quarters with a chain-smoking owner. These naturally active birds aren't suited to a sedentary life, which can lead to premature heart disease. Unfortunately, with an estimated 10-40 million birds in captivity, not all can be rescued or treated. Offering another sobering example of humankind's often thoughtless abuse of nature's wildlife when good intentions go wrong, this disturbing documentary is recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

pological study and geography lesson as a climate-change documentary, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Gardner)

Last Days of Man ★★★

(2011) 120 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-017-6.

Dinosaurs, woolly mammoths, and Neanderthals became extinct. Does *homo sapiens* face the same fate? This PBS-aided documentary by Magnus Sjöström asks whether we are currently at the beginning of human life on this planet, or nearing the end of days, describing in ascending order how humanity might expire during this century. Some scenarios seem unlikely, including close encounters with hostile extraterrestrials, a takeover by computers with superhuman intelligence (remember HAL in *2001: A Space Odyssey?*), or gamma ray bursts that could wipe out the planet's protective ozone layer. But others seem possible. One scientist notes that Earth is "in the middle of a shooting gallery," where a huge asteroid—like the celestial body that doomed dinosaurs 65 million years ago—could hit the planet, extinguishing all life. Or super-volcanoes, such as the dormant one under Yellowstone Park, could erupt and trigger huge climate changes (unlike with asteroids, no present solution exists to prevent this kind of cataclysm). Other doomsday situations include pandemics (easily spread by global travel), climate change, biological weapons in the hands of rogue states and terrorists, a Chernobyl-like nuclear meltdown, or even black holes. The program ominously notes that perhaps the greatest threat might simply be "unknown." Featuring testimony

from scientists and futurists, *Last Days of Man* engagingly invites speculation and discussion (although it's definitely not for worriers). Recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)

Tokyo Waka: A City Poem ★★★

(2012) 63 min. DVD: \$295. In Japanese & English w/English subtitles. Bullfrog Films. PPR. SDH captioned. ISBN: 1-93777-244-6.

By turns playful and meditative, *Tokyo Waka* sometimes seems like a non-fiction response to Alfred Hitchcock's thriller *The Birds*. Of course, the crows of Tokyo may not be pecking citizens to death, but they are certainly more visible than pigeons and rats. Crows are brainy birds that can make tools, recognize faces, and solicit assistance. Although they occasionally attack people perceived as a threat—such as those who get too close to a nest—crows are more pesky than predatory. Hiroyoshi Higuchi of the University of Tokyo notes that crows gravitate towards cities because they're omnivores that will eat almost anything. This makes the city a "crow paradise," although the birds' voraciousness can also cause problems. Zoo-keeper Motoyasu Ida points out that crows sometimes swoop down to pick off tiny mammals, like prairie dog pups. Nonetheless, many observers feel some sort of affection for the crows, even though they poke through garbage bags for food, or steal wire hangers and dog fur to build nests. Misako, a homeless resident who lives in a tent city, takes comfort from their presence because the crows keep her company and provide a subject for her to draw. Municipal functionaries, however, take a dimmer view, since crows like to situate themselves near power lines and their

nest-building can lead to blackouts and train stoppages (the city asphyxiates a portion of the crow population each year to keep the situation in hand—it's now around 20,000). Co-directors John Haptas and Kristine Samuelson also speak with bird watchers, beekeepers, visual artists, architecture students, and spiritual practitioners in this well-rounded look at some of Tokyo's most colorful and industrious aviary inhabitants. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

HEALTH & FITNESS

Here.U.s.Now. ★★☆☆1/2

(2012) 67 min. DVD: \$89; high schools & public libraries; \$250: colleges & universities. The Video Project. PPR. Closed captioned.

Rüdiger Poe's documentary focuses on Hugh and Chris Hempel, a California couple whose 8-year-old twins are slowly dying from Niemann-Pick Type C—a rare neurological affliction often referred to as childhood Alzheimer's. No cure exists for the disease, nor for thousands of other uncommon conditions that impact nearly one in 10 Americans. Indeed, of the 7,000 known rare diseases today, only 200 have drug treatments approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Writer-director Poe details how the Hempels aggressively researched potential treatments for their daughters—Chris Hempel determined that a drug called cyclodextrin would offer the best course of action—and then pushed doctors and pharmaceutical companies for help. Running concurrent to this riveting real-life story is an investigation into why medical research is so slow in finding breakthroughs for unusual disorders. Poe assigns much of the blame to the laborious tenure process for university-based researchers, which takes time and energy away from laboratory work in favor of trying to raise academic standing. Perhaps due to the input of pharmaceutical executives and representatives from the National Institutes of Health, the film makes no overt criticism of corporations or government agencies for dragging their respective feet (the initial lethargic response to the AIDS/HIV crisis in the 1980s was the most egregious contemporary example). Offering a compelling call to action on behalf of people with non-mainstream conditions in dire need of medical attention, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Homesick: Living with Multiple Chemical Sensitivities ★★☆☆

(2013) 56 min. DVD: \$19.95; individuals; \$200: institutions. Dual Power Productions. PPR. Closed captioned.

Filmmaker Susan Abod—a professional singer forced to give up her career and dreams due to Multiple Chemical Sensitiv-

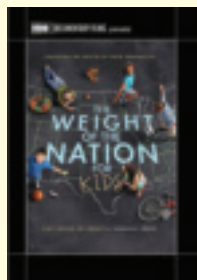
ities (MCS)—embarks on a journey through the U.S. Southwest to talk with others who have discovered ways to cope with the disease. MCS, Abod tells us, presents as a chronic sensitivity to the toxins that are ubiquitous in our daily lives: treated carpets, paint, cleaners, pesticides, gases, and so on. Symptoms range from constant pain to fatigue, skin burns, nausea, asthma, confusion, fevers, and headaches. MCS makes it extremely difficult for people to live in ordinary homes or work in office environments, although the Southwest is a little easier on sufferers due to wider spaces and less manufacturing. Abod discovers a wide variety of ideas for building homes that largely eliminate (or at least minimize) toxins, including a house on stilts, outdoor bedrooms made of steel and screen, tents, teepees, outside kitchens, and designer homes made entirely of inert materials and heated by hot water pipes beneath floors. The film concludes with Abod's own complicated but ultimately successful efforts to customize a home for herself. Besides learning about alternative homes, viewers are made aware of what people with MCS experience while trying to fit into the world, ranging from the skepticism of doctors to the difficulties of trying to hold a job. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

Orange Witness ★★☆☆

(2012) 42 min. DVD: \$70; public libraries; \$90: high schools; \$195: colleges & universities. Green Planet Films. PPR.

Almost four decades have passed since the end of the Vietnam War, but the legacy of Agent Orange lives on. In Andrew Nisker's hard-hitting documentary, voiceover speak-

ers from four different countries discuss the deadly herbicide's origins and effects, backed by an ambient score and stock footage of the trucks and planes that served as delivery devices. As scientific experts explain, two herbicides were combined to create the "super poison" known as Agent Orange, which contained dioxin, a toxin about which—according to retired forestry worker Don Romanowich—little information was available at the time. Just as the U.S. military used toxic chemicals for strategic purposes in Southeast Asia, some of these same substances were employed in Canada and New Zealand for agricultural reasons, such as weed extermination. Ton Nu Thi Ninh (former co-chair, U.S.-Vietnam Group on Agent Orange) notes that Vietnamese citizens experienced longer-term exposure than American soldiers, so they suffered more extreme outcomes as trees died, water became contaminated, and the rate of birth defects and cancer (mostly in women) increased. In Canada, animals would graze and children would play in affected parks and forests, and Dr. Wayne Dwernychuk believes that dioxin has led to an increase in diabetes. Andrew Gordon says that New Zealand used dioxin extensively in the 1950s and 1960s until the dangers came to light. And in Oregon, during the 1970s, author Carol Van Strum (*A Bitter Fog*) remembers dead and deformed fowl materializing in the wake of coastal spraying. Other speakers cite a rise in miscarriages and stillbirths. Although many of these examples are anecdotal, the overwhelming number leaves a strong impression, and the first-person testimony brings the horror home in a way that simple facts and figures cannot. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)



The Weight of the Nation for Kids ★★☆☆

(2013) 89 min. DVD: \$19.98. HBO Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

A companion to the earlier HBO-aired series on the American obesity epidemic (*The Weight of the Nation*, reviewed in VL-1/12), directors Shari Cookson and Nick Doob's three-part follow-up is presented in association with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the National Institutes of Health. Part one, "The Great Cafeteria Takeover," travels to Louisiana's Recovery School District, where some students displaced after Hurricane Katrina have formed a "Rethinker" group that focuses on healthier lunch options and local foods. Rethinker Victoria Carter cracks "it's a delicacy" when an unidentifiable entrée is offered, but the kids here are serious, including putting out a book, doing a press conference and presentations, and implementing surveys and plans to further improve awareness. "Kebreeya's Salad Days" follows the titular North Carolina teenager as she strives to break out of her family cycle of obesity and health problems, volunteers at a local elementary school (where the kids plant a garden), and pushes for a salad bar at her high school. Finally, the more generalized "Quiz Ed" rattles off trivia, features segments with real-life kids, and explores topics ranging from the benefits of physical activity to the use of color for motivation in snack advertising. Sure to get young people thinking about making smart lifestyle changes, this is recommended. Aud: J, H, P. (J. Williams-Wood)



"Fascinating."

Editor's Choice, VIDEO LIBRARIAN

He can bend a penny with his fingers . . .



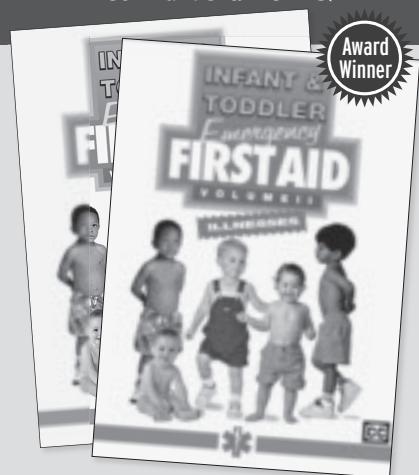
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Spotlight on Fitness

Absolute Beginners: Cardio & Strength Training Workout for Seniors ★★★

(2012) 63 min. DVD:

\$14.99. BayView

Entertainment (avail. from
most distributors).



Instructor Angie Miller gets solid gold(en) backup from three seniors aged 68-75 in this simple and safe exercise program designed to improve flexibility and stimulate blood flow to the brain. Miller begins with cautionary remarks about using a chair for stability if needed and other modifications ("don't get breathless") before launching into a warm-up that incorporates moves that will be used in the upcoming four cardio routines, including knee lifts, step-touch, "mambo" step, lunges, hamstring curls, V-step, diagonal double-steps, "chug" step, and arm reaches. The strength training segment features chair-based movements and also employs small hand weights for squats, heel lifts, arm curls, rows, and raises. Bookended by a gradual stretch cool-down (Miller likens the workout to a plane ride, with the most important parts being the take-off and landing), and also including bonus "pre-mixes" that combine the different routines, this low-impact program is recommended. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Escape Your Shape: 21-Day Body Makeover ★★★

(2013) 120 min. DVD:

\$16.99. Acacia (avail. from
most distributors). ISBN:
978-1-62172-122-2.



Based on the book *Escape Your Shape: How to Work Out Smarter, Not Harder* by fitness expert Edward Jackowski, Ph.D., this series of workouts is customized for three common body types, referred to as Hourglass, Ruler, and Spoon. Created by Jackowski, the exercises are designed according to how weight is distributed around the body. An introductory section provides guidance to help viewers determine their body type and direct them to the correct routine (it also offers pointers on which kinds of exercises are best for a particular shape and which—if any—should be avoided). Each of the three categories has its own specific circuit workout (divided into two 20-minute segments), although

all follow the same basic format: a presenter and a pair of assistants work through a series of activities that include stretching, weightlifting, aerobic movement, and a rest period. Level one for all types includes running in place, as well as jumping, and punching moves, alternating with slower sections. Level two adds more complex moves, a faster pace, and a wider range of motion. For the most intense sections, a countdown clock helps motivate tired participants to keep pushing through to the end. Some routines require hand weights. Recommended. Aud: P. (K. Cruver)

Fit Mommy-to-Be Prenatal Yoga ★★★

(2013) 59 min. DVD:

\$16.99. Acacia (avail. from
most distributors). ISBN:
978-1-62172-125-3.



In an advanced state of pregnancy herself, instructor Hilaria Baldwin presents a series of yoga moves designed to improve the fitness level and well-being of mothers-to-be. Baldwin works with a pair of pregnant assistants (one further along than Baldwin, the other in an earlier trimester), serving up easygoing stretches and lifts that are made less demanding by the use of yoga blocks and pillows. Viewers can pick from sections for back relief (including measures to improve posture); hip openers (to better prepare the body for childbirth); and tension-releasing maneuvers (intended to quickly reduce stress). Most of the exercises are performed on the floor, although some of the more challenging routines are in a standing position, requiring a moderate level of balance and strength. The presentation is fine-tuned for the intended audience; Baldwin even delivers pointers on attempting the moves with a growing belly in different phases. DVD extras include a bonus segment featuring "partner stretches" with Baldwin's husband, actor Alec Baldwin—although clearly meant to take advantage of his star power, the simple moves could be effective in comforting expectant mamas and improving couples' teamwork in anticipation of delivery. Recommended. Aud: P. (K. Cruver)

Pregalates: Complete Set ★★★

(2012) 4 discs. 213 min.

DVD: \$29.95. Pregalates

(dist. by Janson Media).

ISBN: 1-56839-468-3.



Pilates instructor Tasha Lawton here guides viewers through four hour-shy routines

for pregnant women. Lawton started the series when she was seven weeks pregnant and completed it following the birth of her second child, so viewers should be able relate to her growing midsection for each of the trimester segments and the post-natal follow-up. Exhorting the benefits of Pilates for a stronger, smoother delivery and faster recovery time, Lawson includes in each workout a "health and safety section" with guidelines, a look at oft-experienced side effects for a given trimester (such as tiredness and increased thirst), and various risk factor conditions. Filmed against a stark white background with only a mat and a towel, Lawton presents a straightforward and effective series of customary Pilates stretches, shoulder and neck rolls, and "hundreds." Since this is an Australian production, viewers will find alternate spellings and terms, including "labour," "bum," "loo," and "foetal," but Lawton's encouragement ("I hope everything's going really well at home for you!") is definitely cross-cultural. Recommended. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Shazzy Fitness: In the Beginning ★★1/2

(2013) 30 min. DVD: \$19.99. Shazzy Fitness (avail. from www.shazzyfitness.com).



Marketed towards "today's Christian," this dance fitness title featuring Christian dance music exhorts viewers to "shape what the Father gave ya." Taking its name from what the producers believe the biblical Daniel's (Belteshazzar in Hebrew) hip-hop name would be, *Shazzy Fitness: In the Beginning* includes two 10-minute workouts with instructors Vera, Leslie, and Apollo, accompanied by a half-dozen background participants. The "Genesis" and "Victory" workouts include three chapters each, the first two with different high-energy songs and verbal cues for the moves, and the last one offering repetition with just the music. Thank goodness for the "Favorite Moves" tutorial, which provides step-by-step demos for the row, stomp, "Around the Clock," "Rainbow Slide," and "Church," among others, because—at least initially—Vera's commands (i.e., "kick it out!")—which segues into complicated arm and footwork) are not exactly intuitive. Also including a cool-down, behind-the-scenes segments on "Team Shazzy," and outtakes, this Christian-themed workout

is a strong optional purchase. [Note: also newly available at the same price is *Shazzy Fitness: A Time to Dance*]. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Targeted Toning Pilates for Beginners

★★★1/2

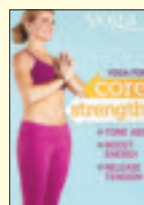
(2013) 80 min. DVD: \$14.98. Anchor Bay Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



Filmed amidst a flower garden on a lush green lawn overlooking the Pacific Ocean, Los Angeles-based Pilates expert Elizabeth Ordway presents three 20-minute routines for sculpting the body. First up is "The Long, Lean Waistline," which focuses on core muscles, abs, and a trim midsection. Next is "The Lower Body Lift and Sculpt," which emphasizes leg exercises and "seat-lifter" maneuvers. Finally, the "Total Body" segment demonstrates movements that deliver widespread benefits. In voiceover instruction, Ordway emphasizes the importance of breathing and long easy stretches, while also offering guidance about how certain motions should feel in progress and upon completion. Although the pace is moderate, many of the lifts require intermediate-level strength and stamina. DVD extras include a 10-minute core-strengthening routine. Highly recommended. Aud: P. (K. Cruver)

Yoga for Core Strength ★★★

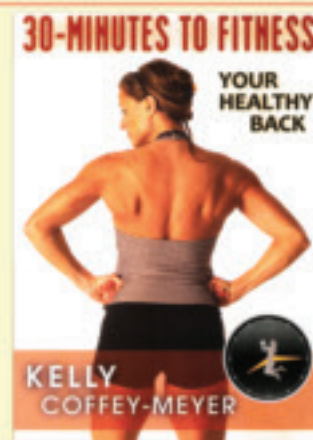
(2013) 73 min. DVD: \$19.99. BayView Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



Yoga Journal contributor and instructor Coral Brown offers onscreen instruction as Sarah Yates demonstrates the moves in this exercise program aimed at toning abs and increasing stability and flexibility. Featuring four routines, *Yoga for Core Strength* includes "Key Core" (with sphinx roll-up, and "threading the needle"), "Standing" (including the "Warrior III" pose), "Twisting" (plank and upward dog), and "Backbending" (low lunges), all designed to be used sequentially or integrated into a regular practice. Also featuring "Arm Balance Prep" and "Vinyasa Transitions," this non-soundtrack, sparsely-produced yoga practice is probably better for viewers with advanced or at least intermediate knowledge of yoga. Recommended. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

DVD PICKS

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30 MINUTES TO FITNESS YOUR HEALTHY BACK BAY540 \$19.99

This unique self-care DVD will guide you through eight different exercises that simulate everyday movements of your back and hips to help you improve and maintain a healthier foundation. Designed by fitness professional Kelly Coffey-Meyer in conjunction with a licensed chiropractor and practicing physical therapists, the goal is to safely increase the strength and flexibility of your back in the comfort of your own home. Also included is an abbreviated 15 minute mix for days when 30 minutes are too difficult to spare.



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RELATIONSHIPS & SEXUALITY

Coming Out Polish Style ★★1/2

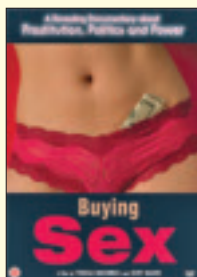
(2011) 61 min. DVD: \$295. Filmmakers Library (dist. by Alexander Street Press). PPR.

What's it like to be a member of the LGBT community in today's Poland? Although no official figures exist, co-directors Sławomir Grünberg and Katka Reszke's documentary estimates that as many as two million homosexuals currently live in Poland. The capital of Warsaw seems to be the most welcoming city, with gay pride parades and demonstrations occurring without incident (if other Polish locales host similar events, they're not cited here). *Coming Out Polish Style* focuses on LGBT Poles involved in the arts and media, since people outside those fields face difficulties in being open about their sexuality (indeed, there is no Polish expression for "coming out," so Poles use the English-language phrase instead). A few street-theater opponents to gay rights are seen, but the film suggests that the average citizen is unimpressed with their rhetoric. And while there's talk of homophobia, very few cases of actual harassment or violence are discussed (an arrest of two men hugging on a Warsaw subway platform is followed by a demonstration of same-sex couples showing open affection at the same site). One young gay Jewish man complains about not being able to find a soul-mate of his faith, but the influence of the Catholic Church in shaping national values is mostly ignored. More of a snapshot than an in-depth portrait, this is nevertheless a strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Intersexion ★★1/2

(2012) 68 min. DVD: \$50: individuals; \$100: public libraries; \$250: colleges & universities. Frameline Distribution. PPR.

The Intersex Society of North America estimates that at least one in 2,000 children is born with ambiguous genitalia—the internal organs of one sex and external organs of another—or a mix of X and Y chromosomes. Filmmaker Grant Lahood's *Intersexion* interviews a group of adults with these characteristics (from the U.S., Ireland, Germany, South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand), who talk about how they've come to identify as one gender or another—or neither. Interviewees range from those whose mothers and fathers allowed them to develop sexual identities as they matured, to former patients of the infamous specialist Dr. John Money, a New Zealander who advised parents of intersex children to name and dress them as either boys or girls (and enforce stereotypical behaviors) in order to prove his theory that youngsters could be assigned sexual roles despite their physiology. Toddlers in Money's care received hormone therapy and underwent multiple surgeries, and subjects here describe these



Buying Sex ★★★

(2013) 75 min. DVD: \$24.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Examining the relationship between sex and commerce, this Canadian documentary talks with lawyers, professors, and sex workers, who discuss the economic and social benefits and drawbacks of prostitution, while clients talk about paying for sex. Activist Valerie Scott, who believes that prostitution will always exist, advocates for legal protection; she would like to see Canada follow the lead of New Zealand, where prostitution has been decriminalized. Fellow activist Trisha Baptie remembers colleagues who went missing when she worked the streets, some of them ending up as victims of serial killer Robert Pickton. Like Scott, she fears that prostitutes are vulnerable to the most dangerous predators. Co-directors Teresa MacInnes and Kent Nason also speak with academics and brothel owners in New Zealand and Sweden (the latter nation has decriminalized prostitution but—somewhat paradoxically—paying for sex is still considered a criminal activity). In addition, *Buying Sex* includes footage from *Teen Rebel*, *Teen Mom*, which features Baptie, and *Pascha—The Biggest Brothel*, which contains explicit material (MacInnes co-directed the first film). Although violence against Swedish street walkers has decreased since decriminalization, sex workers are finding it harder to make a living since their customers still face the possibility of arrest and public humiliation. Toronto professor Janine Benedet, on the other hand, would like to see prostitution abolished altogether, but knows that won't happen anytime soon. During the course of the documentary, Ontario's high court rules that the laws against brothel operation and earnings from prostitution are unconstitutional. If *Buying Sex* raises more questions than answers, MacInnes and Nason vividly illustrate the complexity of the issue, where every solution seems to create a new set of problems. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennesy)

events, as well as the subsequent physical and emotional pain they suffered (a few only discovered their physiological and hormonal ambiguities in early adulthood). All of the interviewees seem to be grounded and well adjusted—sometimes angry or bemused, but otherwise no different from their sexually conventional counterparts. A documentary that goes a long way towards building a better understanding of a not altogether rare condition, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (M. Puffer-Rothenberg)

Just Gender ★★★

(2013) 96 min. DVD: \$149 (\$349 w/PPR). Kino Lorber Edu.

Clips from Ed Wood's notorious *Glen or Glenda* appear in *Just Gender*, but for once they're not played for laughs. George Zube's documentary—narrated by actress Bebe Neuwirth—takes a serious look at the pain and paradoxes suffered by transgendered individuals in contemporary society. Although their identity is appended to the LGBT umbrella, we're told that even homosexuals and lesbians often look askance at the transgendered, since the latter do not identify themselves as being "gay," but rather as being trapped in the wrong bodies and attracted to the opposite sex. A procession of transsexuals (pre- and post-op), transvestites, and various advocates testify to bullying, violence, and homicides; rejection by families; stigmatization from employers and health insurers; and the dilemma of deciding which public

restrooms to use. Sometimes talking heads contradict each other, especially regarding cross-dressers (who may declare themselves as "normal," but are often categorized with those longing to switch genders). Unsurprisingly, media portrayals in films such as *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* and *Silence of the Lambs* did little to advance social acceptance, which is what transgenders most crave. *Just Gender* succeeds in taking oft-abused subject matter out of the carnival-sideshow tent and into a caring spotlight. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Seeking Asian Female ★★★

(2012) 83 min. In English & Mandarin w/English subtitles. DVD: \$100: high schools & public libraries; \$200: community colleges; \$325: colleges & universities. New Day Films. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-57488-484-7.

The derogatory-sounding phrase "yellow fever" is used to describe someone's romantic preference for Asians in filmmaker Debbie Lum's PBS-aired *Independent Lens* documentary *Seeking Asian Female*. Chinese-American Lum profiles Steven, a sixtiesomething quirky airport parking cashier who combs dating sites, collects photos, and makes visits abroad looking for an Asian woman to marry. Steven eventually returns from China with 30-year-old Sandy, who speaks little English but has plenty to say to bilingual Lum, who finds herself caught in the middle, constantly translating the new couple's bickering about an

ex, wedding plans, and money troubles. Watching this relationship train wreck, the viewer can't help but wonder whether the couple will last. Featuring both the full-length film and a 53-minute abridged version, DVD extras include deleted scenes, and Lum's five-part webseries "They're All So Beautiful." Recommended. Aud: C, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

FOOD & SPIRITS

American Meat ★★★★★

(2013) 85 min. DVD: \$24.95. Passion River (avail. from most distributors).

Joel Salatin's Polyface farm in Virginia—a place where chickens, hogs, and cattle are sustainably raised on a mere 1,550 acres, garnering \$2 million a year in sales and supporting 20 full-time jobs—has been the subject of articles, books, and even other documentaries, but few have been as insightful or balanced as *American Meat*, which eschews diatribe and hyperbole. Directed by Graham Meriwether, the film begins by introducing the feedlot and confinement systems that are current mainstays within the industry. Viewers then meet enthusiastic and engaging advocate Salatin and other farmers, who make the case that sustainable farming on constellations of small enterprises could indeed feed America were it not for huge impediments, including the leviathan federal farm bill, which favors large-scale agriculture. Another roadblock lies in the struggle to entice workers away from the city to work in the countryside; among the interviewees here are several enthusiasts who did leave city jobs to return to the land (at one point, Salatin asks visitors if they'd be interested in giving up their "Dilbert-cubicle jobs"). It looks like a dream worth pursuing: the provision of humanely raised meat that is produced with minimal impact on the environment—where manure is reintroduced into the ecosystem rather than gathered in today's vast ponds, which emit more greenhouse gases than all of the motor vehicles in the U.S. combined. A thought-provoking documentary that offers clear explanations of successful small-farming methods, this is highly recommended. Editor's Choice. Aud: C, P. (F. Gardner)

Canning Basics with Chef Tom Small

★★★

(2013) 84 min. DVD or Blu-ray: \$24.95. Bennett-Watt HD Productions. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-60490-073-6 (dvd), 978-1-60490-107-8 (blu-ray).

Seattle-area Chef Tom Small is the presenter for this effective primer on canning techniques. Briefly touching on the history of food preservation (now more of a hobby than the absolute necessity it used

to be), as well as sanitary conditions (to avoid bacteria), quality equipment, altitude considerations, and changing practices, *Canning Basics* features onscreen recipes and instructions, with subsequent demonstrations by Small. Including instructions for canning applesauce, strawberry freezer jam, strawberry jelly (using cheesecloth to strain), refrigerated lemon curd (made with butter and egg yolk), citrus marmalade, jalapeno jelly (with bell peppers), and fruit and vegetables (using a weighted gauge pressure canner), the program serves up concise and easy-to-follow directions for novices and experienced canners alike. Recommended. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

BUSINESS & ECONOMICS

Masters of Money ★★½

(2013) 2 discs. 149 min. DVD: \$39.99. Athena (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62172-066-9.

Originally broadcast on the BBC in 2012, this three-part documentary series features a unique premise: trying to guess how three of the most influential figures in economics—John Maynard Keynes, Friedrich A. Hayek, and Karl Marx—would have viewed the 2008 economic crash and how they might have charted a course for global recovery.



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ery. Narrated by former BBC economics editor Stephanie Flanders—a brisk and insightful commentator—each episode offers an intelligent consideration of the very different views presented by Keynes, Hayek, and Marx during their respective careers, while also determining what impact the men continue to have on current affairs. Although Flanders appears to have a personal favorite in Keynes, the segment on Marx is the most colorful, not least because few people today bother to have spirited discussions of Marxism in public forums. The series is peppered with colorful appearances by such diverse figures as Nobel laureate and *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman, former Congressman and presidential candidate Ron Paul, and humorist P.J. O'Rourke. Extras include "Adventures in Economics" shorts, and a viewer's guide with articles on 20th-century economics and the 1929 Wall Street crash. A fascinating and entertaining "what if?" series, *Masters of Money* is highly recommended. [Note: this is also available in a three-volume set with public performance rights for \$509.85 from Films Media Group at www.films.com.] Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Money for Nothing: Inside the Federal Reserve ★★★

(2013) 104 min. DVD: \$95; high schools & public libraries; \$295: colleges & universities. Liberty Street Film. PPR.

Jim Bruce's documentary offers both a brief history of the Federal Reserve System and a critical but fair-minded view of its policies—particularly in response to the economic collapse of 2008. With archival material and graphs complementing Liev Schreiber's narration, *Money for Nothing* describes the Fed's creation in 1913—in response to frequent 19th-century financial panics—explaining how it was set up as a decentralized version of a national bank to deflect complaints of Washington overreach. Bruce's main focus, however, is on Fed policy, which many interviewees—including historians, past Fed chairman Paul Volcker, erstwhile members of its Governing Board, and former heads of the system's 12 regional entities—contend has become politicized despite its theoretical separation from electoral concerns. Although this problem is traced back to the 1950s and '60s, the central argument here is that Alan Greenspan—chairman of the Fed from 1987-2006—manipulated monetary policy in ways that helped promote the financial bubble that would ultimately burst to global catastrophic effect in 2008 (and, the film suggests, things have not improved much since). The film livens up the talking head exposition with clips from movies (Buster Keaton slapstick chases and *It's a Wonderful Life*) and TV (*The Daily Show*), as well as news footage and periodic shots of wooden blocks being stacked until they collapse. More of a solid introductory illustrated lecture than a thorough inves-

tigation, this informative documentary is recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

COMPUTERS & TECHNOLOGY

Time Zero: The Last Year of Polaroid Film ★★★

(2012) 95 min. DVD: \$99.95; public libraries; \$350: colleges & universities. The Cinema Guild. PPR. ISBN: 0-7815-1457-6.

In February 2008, the Polaroid Corporation announced the end of an era, discontinuing the 600-series of self-developing instant-print film. Grant Hamilton's melancholy, loving, cinematic snapshot explores the twilight of a unique technology, with interviews of fervent disciples who mourned its loss after the rise of digital cameras (one shutterbug actually breaks down and weeps). The documentary pays tribute to Polaroid's late founder, Dr. Edwin Land, whose company could be compared to Apple for innovation and the creation of easy-to-use products—literally

immediate art/self-expression that you could hold in your hand. Interviewees range from former Polaroid employees and Polaroid-centric art photographers (such as Lou Noble), to the one and only John Waters (the filmmaker-author has Polaroids of every visitor to his door since 1992 and despairs over what he will do now). Can a daring Dutch startup (founders of "The Impossible Project") keep the format alive? Oddly, no mention is made of an epic 1980s lawsuit during which Polaroid successfully prevented then-mighty Kodak from producing competing instant film and cameras, and very little commentary addresses the fact that celluloid film was also laid low by digital. Some photog fans may also quibble at the exclusion of the iZone or other Polaroid instant-positive cameras that continued to impact the market. Regardless, *Time Zero's* nostalgia for a retro-analog lifestyle will find a warm resonance even outside of specialized art-and-technology audiences. A few swear words crop up on the soundtrack (from disgruntled Polaroid users, naturally). Recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

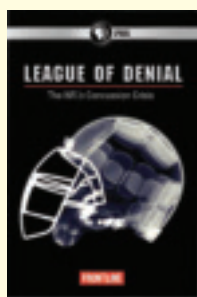
SPORTS, GAMES & RECREATION

Legend of Aahhh's: A True Fable ★★★

(2013) 93 min. DVD: \$19.99. TOPICS Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-61894-380-4.

Filmmaker Greg Stump, director of 1988's *Blizzard of Aahhh's*—the ski film many consider to be the best in its category—here

takes a retrospective look at the history of this niche sports film genre. The fact that *Blizzard's* impact on an emerging generation of freestyle and extreme skiers forms the centerpiece of *Legend* might seem self-serving, but Stump's larger point is that North American skiers were ready by the late 1980s



League of Denial ★★★

(2013) 120 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-005-3.

Fueled by primetime advertising, lucrative network deals, and product tie-ins, the National Football League has become America's richest and most powerful sports league, attracting fans who savor the hard-charging action and violent tackles or "sacks." But recent years have revealed a darker side to the game, as former players have found themselves plagued by depression, rage, and confusion, with some even choosing to end their agony by suicide. Filmmaker Michael Kirk's PBS-aided *Frontline* documentary presents an in-depth look at pro football's "concussion crisis," which first attracted notice after the deaths of several retired players whose autopsies showed signs of CTE (chronic traumatic encephalopathy). Football players often speak of hard tackles as "getting their bell rung," and many formerly used their heads as butting weapons to bring down opposing players (today, this earns a penalty). Coroners raised the alarm, both in interviews and in articles published in scholarly medical journals. Reporters interviewed here note that the NFL's initial reaction was to "go nuclear," refuting the evidence with skepticism, denial, and delaying tactics (the NFL's original point-man on the issue was a concussion expert labeled "Dr. No"). But doctors, and wives of former players, picked up the concussion cause, which led to congressional hearings—and NFL commissioner Roger Goodell stumbled badly when his denials were compared to the tobacco industry's claim that smoking wasn't harmful. After several years, the NFL agreed to a large settlement to be divided among affected players. The question remains: can football eliminate concussion risks, yet still remain football? A powerful cautionary tale of money, science, and sports, this compelling report is a solid companion to the similarly-themed *Head Games* (VL-11/13). Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

to break away from cozy resort culture and test themselves by dangerously plummeting down some of the world's steepest mountains. Somewhat startlingly, Stump maintains that German filmmaker Arnold Fanck's 1931 *Der Weisse Rausch* was the "first real ski movie" (the film starred future director Leni Riefenstahl, who would become an integral part of the Nazi propaganda machine). Stump also highlights the legacies of Warren Miller, Klaus Obermeyer, and the late Dick Barrymore (all of whom appear in interviews here), treating them with deserved respect even as he draws a line between their work and *Blizzard*, which changed the landscape with its groundbreaking "rockumentary" style and showcasing of known and unknown heroes of the sport. Stump also includes footage of some of his bygone ski buddies, who were determined as youths to break rules behind and in front of the camera. Sure to please ski aficionados, this is recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

Performance Enhancing Substances in Sport ★★★

(2012) 21 min. DVD: \$189. VEA (dist. by Insight Media). PPR.

Focusing on legal and illegal ergogenic aids, this Aussie production combines solid information and interviews with related professionals including Drug Control Centre expert Dr. Alan Brailsford, Victorian Institute of Nutrition coordinator Kylie Andrew, water polo Olympian Sam McGregor, Olympic diver Mathew Helm, and Paralympics medalist Kelly Cartwright. *Performance Enhancing Substances in Sport* looks at nutritional supplements (such as protein, ribose, and B-vitamins); explores the ethical question (and examines the side effects) of illegal use of steroids, narcotics, and oxygen transfer enhancement; surveys various testing protocols that keep up with scientific advances; considers oddball consequences (such as "man-boobs"); and points out that scandals can result in a bad reputation for both a sport and for otherwise honest athletes. Packing a flood of data into a brief running time, this is an illuminating and timely program (Alex Rodriguez being only the latest poster boy for performance enhancing drug abuse). Recommended. Aud: J, H, C, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Running of the Bulls ★★★

(2014) 80 min. DVD: \$19.99. Questar (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-59464-866-3.

Immortalized in Ernest Hemingway's novel *The Sun Also Rises*, and parodied in Billy Crystal's film *City Slickers*, the annual running of the bulls in Pamplona, Spain, is a sacred ritual to some, and faintly absurd to others. For about a week in early July, bulls are herded from the countryside and then released onto narrow streets, where they charge along a set path towards a large arena. Hundreds of people willingly run ahead of the beasts, knowing that there's a risk of be-

ing gored, thrown, trampled, or even killed. Filmmaker Olivier van der Zee's documentary follows some regulars as they get ready for the run, which many have engaged in for years (and some have been seriously injured). The interviewees stress the importance of preparation and luck, but for a bit of added protection some touch the small statue of Saint Fermin as it is carried through the town before the race begins. Although the course is full of unpredictable elements—and many of the runners must struggle to control their fear while avoiding falls and human pile-ups—surprisingly few people have been killed in the event's long history. Runners describe the race as an "incredible rush," and most plan to return the following year. Although some of the race footage is repetitive, interested viewers will be intrigued by this inside look at a unique festival. DVD extras include bonus featurettes. Recommended. Aud: P. (S. Rees)

THE ARTS

Birth of the Living Dead ★★★1/2

(2013) 76 min. DVD: \$24.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

George A. Romero's 1968 cult classic *Night of the Living Dead* kicked off decades of zombie apocalypse stories in popular culture—a trend that is currently bigger than ever on TV and in films and books. Rob Kuhns' engaging documentary tells the story of the making of *Night*, a tale full of wondrous details about a novice director, cast, and crew determined to make a movie without actually knowing how. A bemused Romero sits for a lengthy interview, recalling his days shooting short works for *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* as well as beer commercials, which gave him basic training in production. With the decision made to film a horror feature, Romero and his investors and collaborators moved into the farmhouse (which had no running water) that served as *Night's* primary setting, where everyone performed multiple jobs in front of and behind the camera. It is both illuminating and often hilarious to discover that most members of the now-iconic cast were professionals in other production areas, such as creating monster makeup or special effects or demolition. The film's star, Duane Jones, was squeamish about violence, and Romero and various experts weigh in on the unintended racial repercussions of casting Jones in the lead as an alpha-male black character among whites. Packed with juicy factoids (one of the movie's investors was a meatpacker who brought in buckets of those entrails we see the zombies devour), this is an entertaining retrospective look at a legendary film. Extras include an extended interview with Romero. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

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To Dance Like a Man ★★1/2

(2012) 58 min. In Spanish w/English subtitles. DVD: \$24.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors).

Basically a love letter to the Ballet Nacional de Cuba and its associated school, Sylvie Collier's documentary focuses primarily on 11-year-old triplets Ángel, César, and Marcos, enrollees who dream of careers as dancers. The youngsters, who are seen in classes and rehearsing for roles as three cats in a production of Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* at Havana's Grand Theatre, speak directly to the camera about their love of ballet, while teachers and parents add comments about the boys' talent and dedication. The kids are certainly an engaging trio, but Collier resorts too often to extended footage of them simply gamboling about in city squares or enthusing about their passion. Fortunately, she also includes brief portraits of several more-advanced students—including twins who hope to graduate to the professional troupe—along with comments from audience members who unanimously testify to Cubans' general support for ballet. Collier also captures a sweet scene in which José Carreño, who went on from the academy to enjoy an international career, encourages the central threesome in their hopes. Some of the points made here—such as the idea that the academy cultivates a more virile, masculine style of dance than is typical—may be debatable, but when the final captions announce which of the subjects have been chosen to continue to the next level of instruction, viewers can't help but hope for the success of them all. A strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Furious Beauty: A Hip-Hop Family

★★★

(2013) 88 min. DVD: \$19.95. Cinema Libre Studio (avail. from most distributors).

Calvin Leung's upbeat documentary focuses on Los Angeles couple Jackie Lopez and Leigh Foaad, who run a nonprofit hip-hop dance studio called Versa-Style. Dedicated to raising the self-esteem of young dancers, the pair work with a troupe of adolescents and young adults, supplying mentorship and friendship, as well as opportunities for combining self-expression with discipline. Leung takes viewers behind-the-scenes to witness the intricate rehearsals for a new Versa-Style production, one that requires both courage and honesty from the dancers as they explore (through dance) such personal issues as abuse and abandonment. Several dancers offer moving testimony about the impact of Versa-Style on both their confidence and sense of readiness for life in the larger world. *Furious Beauty* concludes with Leung's stylish filming of the new show, which indeed proves to be captivating. Extras include a bonus featurette on Versa-Style, comments by



Sample This: The Birth of Hip Hop ★★1/2

(2012) 83 min. DVD: \$24.95. Kino Lorber (avail. from most distributors).

KISS frontman Gene Simmons is the rather oddball choice of narrator for this documentary centering on a '70s album track that gave birth to hip-hop. Director Dan Forrer starts with the assassination of Robert F. Kennedy, which had a huge impact on Michael Viner, one of the presidential candidate's aides. Viner left politics behind to pursue a career in music, moving from Washington, D.C., to Los Angeles, where he worked as a producer and music supervisor. That eventually led him to football-player-turned-actor Rosey Grier, who here recalls their time as roommates. Commissioning bongo tracks for two films, including the Grier vehicle *The Thing with Two Heads*, Viner assembled the Incredible Bongo Band, which began life under the leadership of Perry Botkin Jr. and featured in-demand session players such as percussionist King Errisson and drummer Jim Gordon. Unfortunately, their records didn't sell, and the group later dispersed. Meanwhile, New York DJ Kool Herc came across the band's cover of the surf instrumental "Apache." By extending the break beat, Herc drove the crowd wild, after which Afrika Bambaataa, Grandmaster Flash, and others added it to their arsenal. Rapping and scratching made the transition to hip-hop complete. Forrer doubles back to catch up with members of the Bongo Band—a colorful crew who went on to play with everyone from Frank Sinatra to Eric Clapton (although one would also become a murderer). By the time the credits roll on this fascinating documentary, the participation of Simmons—a friend of Viner's (who died in 2009)—doesn't seem so strange after all. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

dancers on freestyling, and a photo gallery. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

A History of Great Playwrights ★★1/2

(2013) 2 discs. 145 min. DVD: \$149.90 (teacher's guide included). Ambrose Video Publishing. PPR. Closed captioned.

This five-part overview of the birth and evolution of theater begins with the proposition that "plays help make sense of the world." It's hard to imagine an era in which theater was a new art form, but that was the case when the ancient Greek plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides were first performed, with a handful of mask-wearing male actors playing all of the roles, usually accompanied by a speaking chorus who commented on the action. Theater was initially about tragedy—injustice, pain, power—but soon also gave rise to fantasy and irony-based comedy. Viewers will learn that late-16th-century English playwright Ben Jonson—a contemporary of Shakespeare (considered the Bard's equal during his era)—reinvented comedy through his use of urban contemporary settings and a focus on individual follies. Later, during the 19th century, Henrik Ibsen—the most-produced playwright after Shakespeare—brought realism to the theater and a focus on the problems of ordinary people, while August Strindberg introduced an unvarnished naturalism to drama. Other key wordsmiths covered from the 19th-21st centuries include Oscar Wilde, Anton Chekhov, Bertolt Brecht, George Bernard Shaw, Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller, Samuel Beckett, August Wilson, and Harold Pinter. An excellent survey of civilization's greatest playwrights, extras

include an educator's guide, timeline, and list of plays. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (T. Keogh)

The Oyler House: Richard Neutra's Desert Retreat ★★★

(2012) 46 min. DVD: \$24.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

A house built at modest cost by a local realtor in the desert outside a small California town might seem to be of little interest, but the visually striking piece of property that wound up being purchased by Richard Oyler was intriguing to Richard Neutra, an Austrian-American architect who, along with Frank Lloyd Wright, was a major force in the modernist movement of the mid-20th century. Neutra not only accepted a commission to design a structure but he also gave it the same attention that he lavished on much larger projects, going so far as to create innovative furniture for the house's confined spaces. Thanks to the care taken by its present owners—actress Kelly Lynch and her husband, producer Mitch Glazer—the simple post-and-beam residence remains in perfect condition, while the surroundings, including magnificent outcroppings of rock (from which a swimming pool was carved), are largely untouched. This documentary by Mike Dorsey, Oyler's step-grandson, features generous footage of the home's exterior and interior, as well as engaging recollections from the late Oyler (who died shortly after returning to the site for filming), and excerpts from interviews with Lynch, Neutra's sons, and the realtor who introduced Lynch and Glazer to the property. Oyler's home movies along with other archival materials are effec-

tively integrated into the narrative to create a combined historical portrait and artistic appreciation of a characteristically unusual project from one of the last century's most prominent American architects. DVD extras include deleted scenes. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

HISTORY & CURRENT EVENTS

JFK Assassination: The Definitive Guide

★★★★1/2

(2013) 90 min. DVD: \$14.98. Lionsgate (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

After the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, many Americans were skeptical of the investigative Warren Commission's conclusion that a lone gunman was responsible. This History Channel-aided documentary looks at every major conspiracy theory that has emerged over the past 50 years, debunking each one with a mix of expert commentary and physical re-enactments. The origins of many of these alternate scenarios can be traced to questionable behavior following the crime, including the insistence on having the autopsy performed in Washington instead of Dallas, the lack of security that enabled Jack Ruby to kill Lee Harvey Oswald on live television, and the supposedly unsatisfactory research that went into the Warren report. Anyone vaguely familiar with these suppositions will recognize the likely suspects, which

include the CIA, the Secret Service, the Mafia, Cuban leader Fidel Castro, the Soviet government, and the military-industrial complex. Many also raise the question of possible snipers in other buildings around Dealey Plaza and on the infamous "grassy knoll"; one speculation even has the driver of the presidential limousine shooting JFK at point blank range. As for the propositions that denigrated Oswald's marksmanship, a former Navy SEAL is brought in to show that the allegedly crummy rifle used by Oswald was capable of firing three shots in rapid succession, and author and investigative journalist Gerald Posner insists that rumors of Oswald being an inept shooter are simply untrue. Although unlikely to sway conspiracy theorists (who will only find more fuel for controversy here), *JFK Assassination's* wide scope and matter-of-fact approach make for an excellent examination of a volatile subject. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (P. Hall)

Memory of Forgotten War ★★★★★1/2

(2013) 37 min. In English & Korean w/English subtitles. DVD: \$95: high schools & public libraries; \$195: colleges & universities. Mu Films. PPR. Closed captioned.

Filmmakers Deann Borshay Liem and Ramsay Liem's documentary revisits the "forgotten" Korean War (1950-53), interweaving history with a look at the ongoing human costs of the war's legacy. The film begins with pleasant memories shared by survivors who recall what life was like on the

Latino Americans ★★★★★1/2

(2013) 2 discs. 360 min. DVD: \$34.99 (\$64.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-973-5.

Spanish-speaking people dominated the New World of America for three centuries, covering much of modern-day Texas, New Mexico, and California. But when early American explorers and settlers headed west, seeking to fulfill a "Manifest Destiny" (also attracted by the prospect of gold and the desire to spread Christianity), a collision course was set that would inevitably lead to conflict. Narrated by Benjamin Bratt, this six-part PBS-aided series from filmmakers David Belton and Sonia Fritz traces the history of Hispanics in America, from early struggles with being treated as second class citizens, to more recent assertions of political power and cultural pride. Hispanics have always been a hybrid culture with a conflicted identity, as members tried to figure out where they fit into the larger society. Some Spaniards rushed to join Anglos in defending the Alamo, only to be quickly marginalized. Interviewees here talk about the experiences of ancestors who were suddenly cast as a "foreigner in my own land." Combining personal anecdotes with historical profiles, the series looks at revolution in Mexico and Central America, followed by the influx of Cubans and Puerto Ricans, who fled from economic depression and Communism. World War II offered some economic opportunities and witnessed a demonstration of Hispanic patriotism, but old patterns of segregation and discrimination remained. Change came with Cesar Chavez and "la causa" (the move to unionize migrant farm workers), renewed efforts to assert Chicano identity and pride, and the Latin pop explosion of the 1980s (interviewees include actress Rita Moreno and singer Gloria Estefan, among many others). More recent topics covered include the immigration wars, the growth of Spanish language media networks, bilingualism, and a rise to political power. With numbers exceeding 50 million, a young and growing Hispanic population rightfully demands to be heard. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)



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Our Nixon ★★½

(2012) 84 min. DVD: \$29.95. Docurama (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

While many are aware that damning audio recordings helped sink the presidency of Richard Nixon, few likely know that the FBI's investigation of Watergate included the seizure of more than 500 reels of Super 8 film footage shot by Nixon aides H.R. Haldeman, John Ehrlichman, and Dwight Chapin. This documentary from director Penny Lane (yes, that's her name) compiles visually interesting moments from the Nixon presidency, most notably the landmark 1972 trip to China, and the White House wedding ceremony for Tricia Nixon. The Super 8 footage, alas, was silent, so the soundtrack here features a late-life interview with Haldeman and Ehrlichman, as well as many of Nixon's paranoid rants from the Watergate tapes (one of the weird highlights here is Nixon's lengthy discourse on how the sitcom *All in the Family* promoted homosexuality). Since *Our Nixon* encapsulates Nixon's tumultuous presidency into a relatively compact framework, it's not surprising that some personalities and issues—most notably, the circumstances that brought down Vice President Spiro Agnew—are either downplayed or absent from consideration. DVD extras include bonus featurettes and a helpful "Who's Who" subtitle track. Offering a fascinating inside glimpse of Nixon's rise and fall, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)



Korean Peninsula before (what would become) North Korea invaded the south in 1950. In an instant, everything changed: some hid or fled, but an estimated million-plus people died, including those who lost their lives during American bombings of cities and villages all over the once-unified country. Families were quickly separated, scattered on either side of an eventual border that would be impermeable for decades. Four Korean-Americans interviewed here recall coming to the U.S. for different reasons—ranging from the hope of traveling to North Korea to see family members, to leaving behind discrimination in the South for those who were born in the North. It would not be until the 1980s before letters to relatives stuck in North Korea could be sent, and longer still before travel was possible. Offering a powerful personal take on a tragic experience, *Memory of Forgotten War* is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

Numbered ★★★

(2013) 55 min. DVD: \$59.95. Passion River (avail. from most distributors).

Israeli physician Dana Doron and photo-journalist Uriel Sinai teamed up to co-direct this moving documentary on Auschwitz survivors that features an unusual focus: the concentration camp serial numbers tattooed on their left arms by the Nazis. Survivor reactions to the tattoos vary—one woman compares it to the branding of cattle, while a man slyly refers to it as a symbol of prestige for coming out of the Holocaust. Another interviewee notes that getting the tattoo was a first step in avoiding immediate death, since those numbers kept people alive for the Auschwitz labor details. The subjects talk about the patience required to explain the tattoos to their children, and one woman adds that her number has been complimented by

younger people who indulge in their own forms of body ink expression. Most of the interviewees are able to recite their numbers immediately, although one woman says that she cannot recall hers and another refuses to recite the number in Hebrew. Altogether some 400,000 prisoners received serial number tattoos. *Numbered* is ultimately a positive and life-affirming documentary on how the Auschwitz survivors moved beyond the horrors of wartime Europe to lead peaceful and productive lives. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Sweet Land of Liberty ★★½

(2013) 70 min. DVD: \$14.95 (\$19.95 w/PPR). Marshall Publishing. ISBN: 978-1-936134-20-5.

Subtitled *Memorable Moments in American History—The 20th Century*, this program presents pivotal issues and events in short segments featuring archival footage and photos, audio clips, animation, and narration. In the section charting the course of civil rights in America (starting in the 1900s and ending in the 1960s), for example, the film effectively describes how the lasting impact of slavery and the Civil War created an environment that led to flashpoints—the KKK, *Plessy v. Ferguson*, Jim Crow laws, the murder of Emmett Till, and the bravery of Rosa Parks, among others—which eventually sparked the mid-century Civil Rights Movement. The excellent writing and strong visuals deliver a powerful punch, while the content covers more than just milestones and major personalities, providing a broader cultural context. For instance, the chapter on "The Great Depression & Recovery" mentions the expansion of radio in the 1930s, as well as more familiar elements such as FDR's New Deal; and the advent of TV, the 3D movie craze, and UFOs receive mention in the seg-

ment titled "Suburbia & Levittown." Other topics covered here include "The Atomic Solution," "The Space Race," and "The Cold War." Serving up a well-executed historical outline, this is highly recommended. Aud: J, H, P. (C. Block)

TWA Flight 800 ★★½

(2013) 91 min. DVD: \$59.95. Passion River.

Although Kristina Borgesson's documentary disdains the word "conspiracy," *TWA Flight 800* essentially covers a conspiracy theory that simply will not die. On July 17, 1996, a TWA flight bound from New York to Paris, exploded off Long Island, killing all 230 aboard. Multiple witnesses claimed to see a "missile" hit the plane, but National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) investigators ultimately concluded that a mystery malfunction/fuel explosion was responsible. Here a self-styled TWA 800 investigator—physics student Tom Stalcup (who is also a co-producer of the film)—demands that the case be re-opened, based on radar returns, nitrate residue, and the physical condition of the wreckage. His verdict: an entire salvo of missiles hit Flight 800, and the FBI, CIA, NTSB (current head David Mayer is outed as a prime evildoer), and mainstream media have covered up the truth. Most compelling here are the tales from dissenting investigators and whistleblowers, who talk of rogue government agents disobeying protocol, evidence tampering, and the bullying of witnesses. *TWA Flight 800* offers no thoughts on who might have shot down the plane—or why; presumably, the filmmakers are trying to avoid comparison to hysterical conspiracy-mongering takes on the Warren Commission or the 9/11 Report. But it's hard to miss the connection during the closing accusations aimed at those who declined to be interviewed here, right up to Bill Clinton. Still, this film has its supporters—including Oliver Stone—and a viewing audience that will surely embrace it. A strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

War of the Worlds ★★★

(2013) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-964-3.

In October 1938, Americans were racked by fears of war, anxiously awaiting radio bulletins of breaking news. Twenty-three-year-old "boy wonder" Orson Welles would spring a Halloween surprise with his pulse-pounding radio rendition of H.G. Wells' novel *The War of the Worlds*—about an invasion from Mars—but even he could not have anticipated the panicked reaction of millions of listeners. In tribute to the famed broadcast's 75th anniversary, filmmaker Cathleen O'Connell's PBS-aired *American Experience* documentary, narrated by Oliver Platt, describes this landmark event, which was hailed by some, while

others denounced Welles as “a carbuncle on the rump of degenerate theatrical performers.” The script scored a coup by placing the fictional invasion in the real world hamlet of Grover’s Mill, NJ (and many listeners tuned in late, missing the disclaimer at the beginning of the show). The broadcast featured dramatic news bulletins, realistic sound effects, screams, and—at a crucial moment—complete silence. Not waiting for the resolution, thousands tried to flee from towns, while others flocked to churches, or phoned family members and friends. Welles, who had an uncanny sense of what would work, even included a bogus FDR impersonation. When the hoax was revealed, people felt foolish but relieved. Some admired Welles for his ability to use the power of radio to create vivid “theater of the mind” images—demonstrating our collective vulnerability to propaganda and mass hysteria—but others called for investigations and enhanced media scrutiny. In any case, the broadcast marked a turning point in Welles’ career, leading to his cinematic triumph as the writer, director, and star of *Citizen Kane* just a few years later. Interweaving interviews, archival material, and dramatic recreations of letters from listeners, extras include bonus featurettes and outtakes. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

With My Heart in Yambo ★★½

(2012) 137 min. In Spanish w/English subtitles. DVD: \$89; high schools & public libraries; \$295: colleges & universities. PRAGDA. PPR.

Ecuador escaped the massive “disappearances” that Chile and Argentina suffered

in the 1980s. But according to a 2010 truth commission finding, the tenure of democratically elected President León Febres Cordero (1984–88) witnessed over 300 instances of human-rights abuses, and nine people were “disappeared” during a crackdown on suspected subversives by the National Police’s Criminal Investigative Service (SIC). María Fernanda Restrepo’s documentary is partially an investigation of the fate of her two teenaged brothers, who vanished while driving along a mountain road in 1988; the film unequivocally concludes that they were abducted, tortured, and killed by the SIC, and their bodies—according to one witness—were dumped in Lake Yambo. Along the way, viewers witness a family’s torment as they struggle to obtain answers in the face of a governmental cover-up and endure hoaxes from telephone callers who claim the two are still alive. Restrepo records both the devastating impact on her mother and the campaign to uncover the truth that consumes her father—and herself—up to the present day, including two inconclusive searches of the lake. *With My Heart in Yambo* interweaves archival footage and interviews, coming across as a nightmarish collage, with haunting tracking shots of the boys’ untouched rooms alternating with clips of old news conferences, and poignant recollections that are set against excerpts from home movies. The result is more cinematic fever dream than conventional examination, but one can’t demand objectivity from such a deeply personal project, one that powerfully communicates the Restrepos’ continuing outrage. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Red Reign: The Bloody Harvest of China’s Prisoners

★★★½

(2013) 62 min. In English & Chinese w/English subtitles. DVD: \$19.95. Cinema Libre Studio (avail. from most distributors).

Documentary filmmaker Masha Savitz focuses on the efforts of human rights lawyer David Matas and former Canadian parliamentarian David Kilgour to call attention to a potential human rights catastrophe in China. According to Matas and Kilgour, the Chinese government has adopted an abusive policy against supporters of Falun Gong, a non-political spiritual movement introduced in 1992 but banned by the Communist government in 1999. Hundreds of thousands of Falun Gong practitioners have been arrested and imprisoned in labor camps by the Chinese government. A 2006 report by Matas and Kilgour accused the Chinese of using the Falun Gong practitioners as subjects of a massive for-profit organ harvesting operation (the report noted that two-thirds of the 60,000 transplants performed in China between 2000–05 came from “unidentifiable sources”—a surprisingly high figure in a nation with no history of encouraging voluntary organ donations among its citizens). The film interviews persecuted Falun Gong practitioners as it details efforts made by the Chinese government to silence any discussion regarding Falun Gong prisoners. Although *Red Reign* never presents truly hard evidence that would offer an unqualified confirmation of the Matas-Kilgour allegations, ongoing Chinese censorship efforts would seem to suggest that something nefarious is taking place. A disturbing documentary, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)





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Women in WWII ★★★

(2013) 170 min. DVD: \$14.99. TOPICS
Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).
ISBN: 978-1-61894-381-1.

Compiling 12 films—made during 1941-45—from the National Archives, *Women in WWII* focuses on the emerging role of women during the Second World War. “Women in Defense” is an inspiring short—written by Eleanor Roosevelt and narrated by Katharine Hepburn—that praises how “women have always been the guardians of the home” and can now excel in various fields ranging from the scientific to sewing parachutes or working for the Red Cross. Also included are the colorized National Youth Administration production “Training Women for War Productions” (featuring Roosevelt), “Glamour Girls of 1943,” “Women of Steel,” the Eugene O’Neill dramatization “No Exceptions” (targeting slackers), the Coast Guard-produced “Battle Stations,” “It’s Your War, Too” (calling the idea that it’s all work and no fun “strictly Axis propaganda”), and “The Hidden Army” (a stout woman is flattered to be helping at home, especially when a superior tells her that she’s worth her “weight in gold”). The set also features a bonus 13th film, 1993’s “Women in Combat.” Although definitely hailing from a more sexist period in American history—constant reassurances are given here that the little ladies will give up jobs when the menfolk come home—the films do effectively illustrate the substantial contributions women made to the war effort. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

TRAVEL & GEOGRAPHY

Discoveries... America National Parks: Arizona—Footprints of the Ancients

★★★1/2

(2013) 50 min. DVD or Blu-ray: \$24.95. Bennett-Watt HD Productions. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-60490-170-2 (dvd), 978-1-60490-193-1 (blu-ray).

This new entry in Jim and Kelly Watt’s acclaimed high-definition *Discoveries...America National Parks* series focuses on nine national monuments and one national historic site in Arizona and New Mexico that are largely dedicated to preserving the ruins of ancient cities, villages, community centers, and great homes built from the 8th through 13th centuries by the region’s original inhabitants. These early Native Americans left behind architectural legacies that are as remarkable in their own ways as castles built in Europe during the same era. At Navajo National Monument, which harbors homes built into solid rock, viewers learn that the farmers who lived and worked the area also left a mere 50 years after establishing their community—probably due to disappearing water sources. At Wupatki, a savannah-like stretch where local tribes built an elaborate



Wild Wales/Rugged Wales ★★★1/2

(2011) 2 discs. 300 min. DVD: \$34.98. BFS Entertainment & Multimedia (avail. from most distributors).

Wales may be a small country, but it boasts a wide variety of wildlife and—thanks to Ice Age glacial forces—some impressive geography, including woodland, mountaintops, moors, rushing rivers, waterfalls, and the sea. In this set of two BBC-aired programs, host Iolo Williams guides viewers to some of the best nature sights that Wales has to offer. Against a picturesque backdrop of castle ruins and ancient hill forts, one can find rare animals such as the pointy-eared red squirrel, as well as colorful birds that—attracted by extensive conifer plantations—migrate in season from as far away as the Arctic and Africa (many native endangered birds and mammals have been reintroduced into the landscape in recent decades). Accompanied by preservationists and nature lovers, Williams also ventures through parts of the most extensive cave system in Europe, navigates rugged coastlines where birds nest in craggy cliff sides, and even descends underwater for close-up views of river and sea creatures that are attracted to the cold water found throughout Wales. He also examines depleted industrial sites and abandoned coal and slate mines that are being reclaimed by nature. In his rich Welsh brogue, Williams serves up an enthusiastic “journey of discovery” in a country that is “small enough to get to know intimately yet is big enough to have a few surprises.” Capturing stunning landscapes and striking vistas, this will be much appreciated by nature and travel buffs. Highly recommended. Aud: P. (S. Rees)

community center (complete with ball court), multiple ethnicities were bound together by a common economy. At Montezuma Castle National Monument, the titular edifice is a breathtaking relic several stories tall, full of rooms for all sorts of living and working purposes. This and other edifices served to anchor expansive cities and a network of surrounding villages—all accomplished without wheels or beasts of burden. Serving up a picturesque journey that is sure to appeal to armchair travelers, this is highly recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

Joanna Lumley’s Greek Odyssey ★★★

(2013) 2 discs. 183 min. DVD: \$39.99. Acorn Media (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62172-147-5.

Although best-known as an actress (*Absolutely Fabulous*), Joanna Lumley has recently become a chatty tour guide for a series of documentary journeys to foreign locales, airing on Britain’s ITV network. This four-part odyssey takes Lumley to Greece (including various Aegean islands), where she combines visits to standard sights—the Parthenon in Athens, the shrine of Apollo at Delphi, the gigantic theater at Epidaurus, the racetrack at Olympia, the ascent to Mount Olympus, Minoan ruins on Crete—with trips to less famous locales, including several isles off the Anatolian coast and areas in the north where tension exists due to proximity to Turkey. Ancient historical matters are dealt with rather perfunctorily, but more recent events—conflicts with the Turks, the German occupation during World War II—are handled in greater detail, not least because Lumley is able to talk with individuals who were directly involved. Lumley also spends time with colorful char-

acters, such as a prize-winning bartender who prepares for her an array of exotic drinks, and singer Nana Mouskouri, who tests the acoustics at Epidaurus. And she’s game enough to participate in some odd customs (like jumping over a bonfire, although she wisely waits until it’s nearly gone out). The treatment is predictably Anglocentric (especially during a visit to the Ionian island of Corfu, once a British protectorate), but Lumley is an engaging companion and most armchair travelers will find this enjoyable. DVD extras include a viewer’s guide with a map, interview with Lumley, Greek history timeline, and more. Recommended. Aud: P. (F. Swietek)

BIOGRAPHY

American Revolutionary ★★★1/2

(2013) 82 min. DVD: \$179: high schools & public libraries; \$349: colleges & universities. Transit Media. PPR.

Filmmaker Grace Lee serves up a portrait of charismatic now-98-year-old Chinese-American author and activist Grace Lee Boggs (no relation to the filmmaker), who is known particularly for her work with African American civil rights leaders beginning in Chicago in the mid-20th century. Filmed over a 12-year period, Boggs tells her own story via interviews (with occasional narration from the director), which are illustrated with archival photos and film clips, including TV appearances and speaking engagements. *American Revolutionary* traces Boggs’ career over seven decades, touching on the theories of philosophers Georg Hegel and Karl Marx, Boggs’ involvement with Martin Luther King

Jr. and Malcolm X, her work with Leninist C.L.R. James and the Socialist Workers Party, her activism within the Black Power movement, and her continuing meetings with young people and others. Interviews with Boggs, late husband James, activists, and friends emphasize Boggs' favorite theme: "conversation as a crucible for change and development of revolutionary ideas." Boggs is resolutely optimistic, a woman who after 70 years of political activity is happily looking ahead to the next, as yet unknown, revolution. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (M. Puffer-Rothenberg)

Quality Balls: The David Steinberg Story

★★★

(2012) 80 min. DVD: \$59; public libraries; \$350 w/PPR; colleges & universities. Seventh Art Releasing.

This Canadian documentary is a love note to veteran standup comedian David Steinberg (it better be; wife Robyn Todd Steinberg produced it), whose career spans three decades. Hailing from Winnipeg's Jewish community, the handsome young Steinberg attended the University of Chicago and fell in with both the original Second City troupe and its later Canadian spin-off. Working the performance circuit with Richard Pryor, Robert Klein, Elliott Gould, and others, Steinberg's star rose when a *New York Times* review of a sparsely attended gig at The Bitter End crowned him as a new Woody Allen/Lenny Bruce. Steinberg's intellect won the admiration of Johnny Carson on many *Tonight Show* appearances, while his pointed political and then-daring religious humor (sharpened by years at yeshiva school) made him a focus of the

censorship that plagued the Smothers Brothers' CBS variety hour. Steinberg also guested on the Nixon administration's "enemies list." In the late 1970s, Steinberg stepped away from the mic to a more settled Hollywood career as a sitcom director, working on *The Golden Girls*, *Mad About You*, *Seinfeld*, and *Curb Your Enthusiasm*. While other documentaries about standup comics often emphasize emotional pain, Steinberg's bio is as upbeat as the man himself. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

A Self-Made Man ★★½

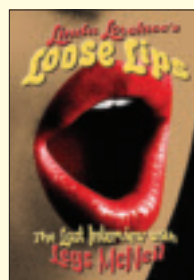
(2013) 56 min. DVD: \$50; individuals; \$100; public libraries; \$250; colleges & universities. Frameline Distribution. PPR.

Lori Petchers' uplifting and moving documentary centers on the life and work of Tony Ferraiolo, a certified transgender youth advocate and life coach working in New Haven, CT. *A Self-Made Man* alternates between Ferraiolo's own story about being a transgender male and his remarkable support programs for teens and younger children with gender-identity issues. Charismatic, buoyant, and accessible, Ferraiolo is both a friend and an adviser to the kids who come to group meetings, which provide a safe place to hang out, share feelings, and (for the adolescents) receive nitty-gritty counseling. Petchers captures warm and sometimes funny footage of these activities (younger participants often work on art projects, and talk about gender only if the subject comes up), as well as scenes of the parents' support group in session. Along the way, Ferraiolo discusses his own childhood experiences as a girl who knew she was a boy, followed

Linda Lovelace's Loose Lips ★★★

(2013) 90 min. DVD: \$16.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).

This interesting documentary takes an open-minded approach to the story of the late Linda Lovelace, whose lengthy 2001 interview (a year before she died) with pop culture historian Legs McNeil forms the centerpiece here. Lovelace, a superstar in the world of pornography during the 1970s, offers her own, now-familiar account of how she was forced to participate in the 1972 porn hit *Deep Throat* by her boyfriend manager, Chuck Traynor, who—Lovelace charges—beat her and turned her into a "robot" tasked with performing sexual acts on camera. Lovelace says the sex was an out-of-body experience during an out-of-control chapter in her life, although some of the other interviewees here—which include Traynor, retired FBI agent Bill Kelly (who tracked the porn industry for decades), biographer Eric Danville, and porn stars Marilyn Chambers and Sharon Mitchell—dispute her claims. Regardless, viewers will learn many details about Lovelace (whose show business friends included Elvis Presley and Sammy Davis Jr.) and *Deep Throat*—a film that was funded by Mafia money (the criminal investors reaped enormous profits that eluded IRS scrutiny). The U.S. federal government's eventual legal case against *Deep Throat* was really aimed at organized crime, although bringing charges against cast members—including costar Harry Reems—for violating the law proved to be fruitless. Offering tantalizing suggestions that Lovelace was more than the victim she claimed to be, this solid biographical slice of pop culture history is recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)



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ALA-VRT Notable Videos 2014

The American Library Association's (ALA) Video Round Table Notable Videos Committee has compiled its 2014 list of Notable Videos for Adults, a list of 15 outstanding programs released on video within the past two years. Unless otherwise noted, titles are available from most distributors or the companies are listed in the "Distributor Addresses" on page 78.

Ai Weiwei: Never Sorry (MPI, 91 min., DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98). Winner of a Special Jury Prize at Sundance, director Alison Klayman's engrossing documentary paints a revealing portrait of unconventional Chinese artist and dissident Ai Weiwei. (VL-3/13)

Brooklyn Castle (Millennium, 90 min., DVD: \$19.99 [\$60 w/PPR from First Run Features, www.firstrunfeatures.com]). Directed by Katie Dellamaggiore, this engaging documentary spotlights the highly-ranked junior high chess team at inner-city Brooklyn Intermediate School 318. (VL-9/13)

The Central Park Five (PBS, 120 min., DVD: \$24.99 [\$54.95 w/PPR, www.teacher.shop.pbs.org], Blu-ray: \$29.99). Famed filmmaker Ken Burns's documentary presents a gripping true crime story about five black and Latino teenagers who were wrongly convicted of raping a white woman in New York City's Central Park in 1989. (VL-5/13)

The Gatekeepers (Sony, 101 min., in Hebrew w/English subtitles, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray: \$35.99). An Oscar nominee for Best Documentary, director Dror Moreh's behind-the-scenes look at Shin Bet—aka the Israel Security Agency—offers an illuminating insider's view of the Arab-Israeli conflict. (VL-7/13)

The House I Live In (MPI, 108 min., DVD: \$14.99). Eugene Jarecki's Sundance Grand Jury Prize award-winning documentary presents a searing indictment of

both the ineffectiveness and the flawed social justice of the so-called "War on Drugs." (VL Online-7/13)

How to Survive a Plague (IFC, 109 min., DVD: \$24.98). Filmmaker David France's Oscar-nominated chronicle of the AIDS crisis during the dark years of the late 1980s and 1990s focuses on the activist group ACT UP (AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power), which fought against institutional apathy towards the pandemic and its victims. (VL-5/13)

The Imposter (Indomina, 99 min., DVD: \$19.98). Filmmaker Bart Layton's suspenseful documentary interweaves interviews and dramatizations to tell the almost-unbelievable-but-true story of a 23-year-old French Algerian man who assumed the identity of a missing Texas teenager. (VL-1/13)

The Invisible War (Docurama, 97 min., DVD: \$29.95 [\$295 w/PPR from Ro*co Films Educational, www.rocoeducational.com]). Filmmaker Kirby Dick uncovers the disgraceful and often-hidden epidemic of rape within the U.S. military in this documentary that focuses on servicewomen who were betrayed by their comrades. (VL-11/12)

Jiro Dreams of Sushi (Magnolia, 82 min., in Japanese w/English subtitles, DVD: \$14.98, Blu-ray: \$19.98). Director David Gelb's documentary offers an artistic portrait of world renowned 85-year-old Tokyo sushi chef Jiro Ono and his relationship with his middle-aged apprentice son. (VL Online-7/12)

Kumaré (Kino Lorber, 84 min., DVD: \$29.95 [\$349 w/PPR, www.kinolorbered.com]). In this playful but discomfiting documentary, filmmaker Vikram Gandhi—an assimilated Indian-American from New Jersey—becomes the titular sham holy guru on the Southwest mysticism circuit. (VL-11/12)

Leviathan (The Cinema Guild, 87 min., DVD: \$29.95 [\$395 w/PPR, www.cinemaguild.com]).

Filmmakers Lucian Castaing-Taylor and Véréna Paravel's non-narrative documentary captures the chaos of a fishing trawler at work in the roiling seas off New Bedford, MA. (VL-9/13)

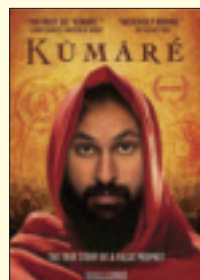
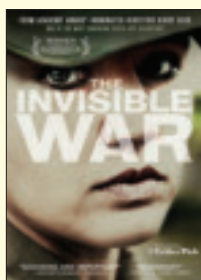
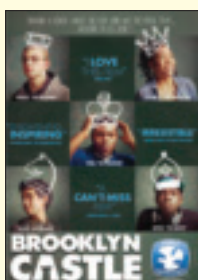
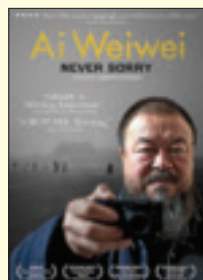
A Place at the Table (Magnolia, 84 min., DVD: \$13.98, Blu-ray: \$16.98). Filmmakers Kristi Jacobson and Lori Silverbush's award-winning documentary on hunger in the U.S. paints a haunting portrait of ordinary people struggling with poor diets and food stamps. (VL-7/13)

Project Nim (Lionsgate, 93 min., DVD: \$14.98). Filmmaker James Marsh's documentary tells the fascinating and heart-breaking story of simian Nim Chimpsky, which began in 1973 when Columbia University psychologist Herbert Terrace and student Stephanie LaFarge embarked on a project to teach the baby chimp American Sign Language. (VL-1/12)

Soul Food Junkies (PBS, 60 min., DVD: \$24.99 [\$275 w/PPR from Media Education Foundation, www.mediaed.org]). Writer-director Byron Hurt's PBS-aired *Independent Lens* documentary examines the complex relationship between black people and soul food, which experts warn carries high health risks. (VL-7/13)

Where Heaven Meets Hell (Sasha Films, 80 min., in Indonesian w/English subtitles, DVD: \$25; individuals [\$295 w/PPR from Transit Media, www.transit-media.net]). Director Sasha Friedlander's beautifully-lensed debut documentary travels to the fog-enshrouded hills of East Java to profile four workers at the Kawah Ijen sulphur mine in Indonesia. (VL-11/13)

Members of the 2013-14 committee are Chair, Julia Churchill, Oak Lawn Public Library, IL; Brian Boling, Temple University, PA; Linda Frederiksen, Vancouver Library, WA; Mary Hanlin, Reynolds Community College, VA; Wendy Higby, James A. Michener Library, CO; Maura Lynch, Guilderland Public Library, NY; Sandra Macke, University of Denver; Michele McKenzie, Berkeley Public Library, CA; Maureen Tripp, Emerson College, MA.



by his later years as a dysfunctional woman who couldn't find purpose or happiness until making the decision to change. Petchers' approach is honest, blunt, open, and consistently positive. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

The Trials of Muhammad Ali ★★½

(2013) 94 min. DVD: \$149 (\$349 w/PPR). Kino Lorber Edu.

Focused on race and culture-clash politics (not sports highlights), filmmaker Bill Siegel's documentary begins with extraordinary contrasting sequences. First, a Parkinson's-afflicted Muhammad Ali is honored as a great American by President George W. Bush. Then we see a flashback to *The David Susskind Show* in the 1960s, in which Ali is vilified as the worst kind of traitor and Enemy of the People. Precious archival footage and modern interviews recount how Kentucky native Cassius Clay, a charismatic boxer backed by an all-white syndicate of Louisville businessmen, abruptly KO'd the sports world with two startling revelations: the champ was converting to the Nation of Islam—widely perceived as a hate-mongering black-nationalist cult—and the newly rechristened Muhammad Ali (a name many journalists wouldn't print) refused to register for the draft and possible Vietnam service (an ethical stance, since Ali's people could have easily arranged a safe, stateside hitch in the military reserves). Besides incurring the wrath of Joe Louis and Jackie Robinson, Ali's bid to become a legitimate conscientious objector on moral/religious grounds led to a three-year suspension from boxing when he was at the peak of his physical strength (Ali supported his family from talks on the lecture circuit), as well as a key Supreme Court decision, which is here analyzed as closely as any pugilistic bout. Ali himself is not interviewed directly, but a plethora of testimony (all of it supportive and respectful of the man) comes from sources including second wife Khalilah, brother Rahman, writer Robert Lipsyte, and the magnetic Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan. Offering a fresh look at a sports icon, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Video Librarian Online

Visit Video Librarian Online (www.videolibrarian.com) for more reviews during March and April, including: *Bay of All Saints*, *Britain's Hidden Heritage Collection*, *End of the Line: Seeshaupt*, *Nazi Mega Weapons*, *Rebels with a Cause*, *Saving Sunshine*, *Secrets of Scotland Yard*, *Terms and Conditions May Apply*, *Treasures of New York*, 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.

Cinedigm recently released three new titles in the Emmy and BAFTA award-winning PBS Kids-aided CGI-animated preschool *Jakers!* series: *Jakers! Legends of Raloo*, *Jakers! Rock Around the Barn*, and *Jakers! Wish Upon a Story* (Cinedigm, 96 min. each, DVD: \$12.95 each), which follow Grandpig Piggle Winks' grandchildren as they learn about responsibility, friendship, self-esteem, and following rules on Raloo Farm in Ireland. See review of *Jakers! Sheep on the Loose* in VL-1/07.



Produced by the Jim Henson Company, *Dinosaur Train: I Love Dinosaurs* (50 min., DVD: \$9.99) is the most recent computer-animated compilation from the popular PBS Kids-aided series, featuring four episodes and a bonus interactive game and activities. See review of *Jim Henson's Dinosaur Train: Dinosaurs Under the Sea* in VL-1/11.

Newly available from Nickelodeon and Paramount is the latest in the popular computer-animated underwater adventure *Bubble Guppies* series: *Bubble Guppies: Animals Everywhere!* (138 min., DVD: \$16.99), which includes the episodes "Puppy Love!" "Ducks in a Row!" "Boy Meets Squirrel!" and "The Lonely Rhino." See review of *Bubble Guppies* in VL-7/12.



Shout! Factory Kids' *The Adventures of Chuck & Friends: Trucks Versus Wild* (110 min., DVD: \$12.98) is the latest edition from the Hasbro Studios series featuring dump truck Chuck and his automotive friends, seen here in episodes including "Beach Blanket Uh-Oh" and "The Checkup." Extras include a bonus sing-along feature. See review of *The Adventures of Chuck & Friends: Monster Rally* in VL-11/12.

Dora the Explorer: Dora in Wonderland (66 min., DVD: \$16.99) is the whimsical latest addition to Paramount Home Entertainment's Nickelodeon-aided

preschool series, which follows young traveler Dora and her monkey buddy Boots as they take a journey to Wonderland when they follow her kittens through a magical mirror. See review of *Dora the Explorer: Big Sister Dora* in VL-5/05.

Guess How Much I Love You: The Adventures of Little Nutbrown Hare—Friendship Adventures (80 min., DVD: \$12.98) is the latest compilation in the series based on the books written by Sam McBratney and illustrated by Anita Jeram. Episodes include: "Favorite Thing," "Fly Away Home," "Follow Me," and "New Friend." See review of *Guess How Much I Love You: Hidden Treasure* in VL-1/14.



Care Bears: The Care-a-thon Games (88 min., DVD: \$14.98) is the latest collection from Lionsgate's computer-animated series following a group of friendly bears, seen here in the sports-themed episodes "Compassion-NOT!," "Shunshine," "Care Campout," and "Cheer Factor." See review of *Care Bears: Journey to Joke-a-Lot* in VL-1/05.

Recently released from HIT Entertainment and Lionsgate is *Angelina Ballerina: On with the Show* (61 min., DVD: \$14.98), featuring Angelina the rodent dancer and her ballet classmates, who find musical ways to communicate when teacher Ms. Mimi loses her voice. See review of *Angelina Ballerina: Rose Fairy Princess* in VL-7/02.

Also newly available from Lionsgate and HIT Entertainment is *Barney: Story Time with Barney* (71 min., DVD: \$14.98), featuring the big purple dinosaur in the storybook adventure episodes "Fairy Tales," "The Emperor's Contest," and "The Sword in the Sandbox." See review of *Barney: Best Manners* in VL Online-3/04.

Newly available from Vision Video is the Christian History Institute's latest addition to *The Torchlighters* series for ages 8-12: *The Corrie ten Boom Story* (30 min., DVD: \$14.99), which focuses on the life of the Dutch Christian whose family helped save Jews during the Holocaust. Extras include a bonus documentary and a comprehensive PDF leader's guide for lesson plans. See review of *The William Booth Story* in VL-3/12.



Accel World, Set 01

★★★

(2012) 2 discs. 288 min. DVD: \$44.98, Blu-ray: \$54.98. Viz Media (avail. from most distributors).



Accel World is a TV anime/novel series/video game franchise set on Earth, circa 2046, featuring a plot that mostly unspools in home and school settings, where characters grow and mature based on their high-tech game interactions and socializing. In need of growing: atypical protagonist Haruyuki, a short, overweight, bullied 13-year-old living in a society where humanity links via neural implants to the online world—or, for virtual-reality game players, worlds. Haruyuki is startled when the prettiest, most accomplished schoolgirl suddenly shares her neural link in the cafeteria. She has sensed Haruyuki's superior gaming skills and she introduces him into Brain Burst—a mysterious and vast VR dueling realm that exists in micro-time and is only accessible to elite "Burst-Linker" kids. Before long, oft-humiliated Haruyuki dons a superhero avatar and gains self-esteem (and even a possible girlfriend, or two), as he fights a group of top players who are stalling the game from evolving to its programmed outcome (which remains unresolved at the end of this episode cycle). Presenting the first 12 episodes from 2012 on a dual-language set, rated TV-14, extras include a character art gallery. A solid series that raises surprisingly profound questions within its framework of cyberspace youths fighting in mecha-like disguises, this is recommended. [Note: *Accel World, Set 02* is also newly available.] (C. Cassidy)

Aquarion Evol: Part One

★★★1/2

(2012) 4 discs. 325 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$64.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4210-2759-3.



A spectacular color palette (and liberal CGI) somewhat offset the many mecha/sentai genre clichés trotted out in this sequel to the decade-old TV series *Genesis of Aquarion*. The setting is the planet Vega, which is experiencing regular body-snatching attacks from the rival world of Altair. Vega's most potent defense against the abductors are transforming fighter-planes called Vectors and a robo-mecha named Aquarion. Hormone-fueled teens train to pilot the weapons at an academy called Neo-DEAVA, a place where boys and girls (with secret superpowers) are segregated, so that romantic tension, hormonal frustration, occasional peek-a-boo outfits, and wardrobe malfunctions will make them more effective fighters. The series also sports much double entendre discussion of the meaning of "holes" and what happens when virginal males and females ecstatically "merge" (to make a giant

robot, of course—what else?). Over the long haul, the saga ultimately grows a little more sober and original, even as events, imagery, and characters—including the lead boy-girl pair of Amata and Mikono—continue to reflect the mythos of the preceding series, which was set 12,000 years earlier. While the *Aquarion* series definitely has a following, newcomers may wonder if this is all meant as satire. Compiling the first 13 episodes from 2012 on a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, rated TV-14, extras include audio commentaries and a Japanese-only featurette with interviews of the Japanese cast. A strong optional purchase. (C. Cassidy)

Blood-C: The Last Dark

★★★1/2

(2012) 2 discs. 105 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4210-2768-2.



Released theatrically in Japan, this 2012 standalone effort is a sequel to the *Blood-C* series (VL-7/13), in which mysterious villain Fumito Nanahara oversaw the massacre of an entire village—with the exception of sole survivor Saya, an ageless, virtually indestructible sword-warrior with the appearance (and uniform) of a teenaged Japanese schoolgirl. *The Last Dark* takes place six months after the horrific conclusion of *Blood-C*, as a vengeful Saya arrives in Tokyo bent on finding Nanahara, who is in some kind of pact with monstrous, human-devouring entities called Elder Bairns. As Nanahara's government-corporate conspiracy works to impose harsher laws, Saya joins a small group of young computer hackers committed to exposing his organization. The murky mythology of this gory reboot will pretty much limit its appeal to fans of *Blood-C* and of the all-female anime collective CLAMP, one of the forces behind the outstanding animation. In addition to the titular blood, the film also features some nudity and awesome tentacle-monster CGI (not at the same time) beyond what was found in the series. Presented on a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, rated TV-MA, extras include audio commentary, and a weird-cute set of six shorts in which doll-like ghosts of two earlier, slain characters recap *Blood-C* in comic fashion—providing the only (slim) hope that newcomers will understand what's going on. A strong optional purchase. (C. Cassidy)

The Future Diary, Part 1

★★★★1/2

(2011) 2 discs. 325 min. DVD: \$59.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4210-2678-3.



Technology becomes a key tool in a fight-to-the-death game that pits 12 people against each other in a contest orchestrated by a mysteri-

ous godlike entity called Deus Ex Machina, who is dying. Deus, who is searching for a successor, has equipped the combatants—who are unknown to each other—with cell phone diaries that can predict the future, and will be used to identify competitors. The hero at the center of all this is awkward 14-year-old Yuki, who slowly allies himself with two of the other contestants: the detective Keigo Kurusu, and a female classmate named Yuno, who grows violently obsessed with Yuki. The plot is fairly complex—even by anime standards—with the mobile phones creating a domino effect that eventually brings everyone down. *Future Diary* certainly deserves praise for its distinctive concept, and the psychotic Yuno is a remarkable example of emotionally unhinged youth. Compiling the first 13 episodes from the 2011–12 series in a dual-language set, rated TV-MA, DVD extras include episode commentaries, and a bonus short. Highly recommended. [Note: *The Future Diary, Part 2* is also newly available.] (P. Hall)

Good Luck Girl! The Complete Series

★★★
(2012) 4 discs. 325 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$64.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4210-2756-9.



A smart-alecky paranormal sitcom airing on Japanese late-night TV, *Good Luck Girl!* centers on high-school teen-queen Ichiko Sakura, whose wealth, confidence, popularity, awesome breasts (earning her the nickname "Tits-chiko"), and chronic good luck create an imbalance of "happiness energy," which affects her district. To even things out, celestial deities send a female spirit of ill-fortune—a sarcastic, nose-picking "poverty god" named Momiji—to disrupt Ichiko's life and humble her. But Ichiko is actually more complex than she initially seems—displaying poor-little-rich-girl qualities and harboring trust issues rooted in her past—and she rises to the challenge of helping out struggling classmates, despite Momiji's constant scheming and needling (literally, with a big syringe intended to drain Ichiko's happiness particles and redistribute them to the more deserving). Gags here center on Japanese pop-culture references, anime in-jokes, boobs (goddess or not, Momiji is flat-chested), and even what minor characters in Yoshiaki Sukeno's source comics were cut in the video adaptation. It's not too far from the *Family Guy* school of humor—especially when a "bathroom god" in a dung-shaped costume is set ablaze, and says he "doesn't give a flaming crap." Yet the farcical tale here is also still capable of adding some noteworthy emotion now and then. Compiling all 13 episodes from 2012 on a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, rated TV-MA, extras include episode audio commentaries and a video commentary. An

offbeat and entertaining anime series, this is recommended. (C. Cassidy)

Little Busters! Season One, Collection One

★★★★1/2

(2012) 325 min. DVD: 3 discs, \$59.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$69.98. Sentai Filmworks (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-6161-5364-9 (dvd), 978-1-6161-5366-3 (blu-ray).



Felines rarely play a significant role in anime plots, so their presence here offers a welcome distraction in this strange story about high school student Riki, who is tasked with recruiting new members for his gang, the Little Busters (preferably females, as the group is overwhelmingly male). Complicating matters is a weird adventure involving Riki and the group's only girl, the slightly odd Rin: the pair begin receiving messages tied to cats, communications that urge them to perform unusual tasks while simultaneously hinting at remarkable secrets of global proportions. Riki also has a problem with narcolepsy, which makes life even more challenging. *Little Busters* often seems to be comprised of seemingly plot-less journeys, but not unlike the legendary *Seinfeld*, this series that seems to be about nothing manages to quietly hook the audience with its offbeat humor and idiosyncratic characters. The chemistry between Riki and Rin boasts a winning charm, and the leisurely style offers a welcome contrast to the more violent knockabout of many anime titles. Compiling the first 13 episodes from 2012 on a dual-language set, rated TV-14, this is highly recommended. (P. Hall)

Maken-Ki! The Complete Series ★1/2

(2011) 5 discs. 325 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$64.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4210-2716-X.



Following a faux-lyrical opening, female cleavage—breast, butt, and vagina—comes to the fore in this action-comedy-fantasy. Blinded by lust, schoolboy Takeru transfers to Tenbi Academy because it's a girls school gone co-ed, where he will be surrounded by bosomy young ladies. What Takeru doesn't know is that the high school specializes in magical combat techniques—based on tapping into distinct “elements” called Maken—and that super-duels are routine. Soon Takeru (who turns out to be descended from an important Maken clan) shares a dorm suite and enrollment in the campus security squad alongside a harem of nubile she-warriors, including a childhood friend who has, uh, blossomed, and one petite beauty with advanced powers, who insists that she is his fiancée/protector.

Desultory jeopardy eventually arrives in the form of a cabal of evildoers who infiltrate the school to challenge Takeru's dormant superpowers—and also provide a secondary harem-full of boob scenes and crotch shots. A superfluous swimsuit episode indulges a notorious Japanese fetish for girls molested by tentacles (although, actually, the whole series is pretty superfluous). Presenting all 13 episodes from 2011 on a Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, extras include episode commentaries, and erotic workout routines with the heroines. Not recommended. (C. Cassidy)

Tiger & Bunny: The Movie, The Beginning

★★★★1/2

(2012) 2 discs. 272 min. DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$24.98. Viz Media (avail. from most distributors).



Based on a manga by Masakazu Katsura, this colorful semi-satirical action-comedy feature—a 2012 origin-movie spin-off from the popular TV anime series—lampoons superhero mania. The setting is the reality channel Hero TV, where the exploits of costumed crime-fighters in the high-tech metropolis of Stern Bild are treated like sporting events, with point-scores and popularity polls amping up the drama and competition between contestants (who wear real-life corporate logos on their outfits). Case in point: newcomer Barnaby Brooks Jr. is a young blond hunk with short-duration super-strength who becomes the rival of veteran do-gooder (and single father) Kotetsu Kaburagi, aka Wild Tiger. Sponsors have demanded that the older guy become a mere sidekick to the rising Barnaby, whom Tiger scornfully nicknames “Bunny.” Together they tackle a widespread array of situations, including a plague of living statues, a slippery teleporter-supervillain, and an ongoing, more serious challenge in which Barnaby vows to solve the murder of his parents. The violence here is cartoon harmless, while the token super-heroine sexpot, Blue Rose, is modest by anime standards. Presented in a dual-language release, rated TV-14, extras include a bonus disc with a concert and full-costume extravaganza tied to the film's premiere—a riotous celebration worth seeing in itself. Highly recommended. (C. Cassidy)

Wolf Children ★★★★★

(2012) 117 min. DVD: 2 discs, \$29.98; Blu-ray/DVD Combo: 3 discs, \$34.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4210-2754-2 (dvd), 1-4210-2755-0 (blu-ray).

A theatrical hit in Japan, animator Mamoru Hosoda's tender and visually striking 2012 fantasy does not hail from Hayao Miyazaki's renowned Studio Ghibli, but it bears a strong resemblance, particularly in its reverence for the natural world. Hana, an orphaned college student with a keep-smiling attitude to-

wards life, falls in love with a handsome nameless loner on the fringes of the campus, who has an astounding secret—he's actually a Japanese wolf, the last of his kind, hiding in human form (werewolf movies have it all wrong, he says). The pair are living together in the city as wolf-man and wife when a tragedy leaves Hana a single mother with two babies who have inherited their father's lycanthrope qualities: headstrong daughter Yuki, and more timid son Ame. For the kids' protection, inexperienced young mom Hana moves to the sparsely settled, forested countryside, trying to subsist off the land while her growing offspring react to their mixed heritage in different ways. Presented in a dual-language edition, rated PG, extras include audio commentary and footage of Hosoda and principal voice cast attending premiere events. Highly recommended. (C. Cassidy)



Zetman: The Complete Series ★★★★★

(2012) 312 min. DVD: 3 discs, \$44.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$54.98. Viz Media (avail. from most distributors).



This dark and graphically violent postmodern saga of dysfunctional super-beings centers on avenging pals Kouga Amagi and Jin Kanzaki. As a wealthy boy, superhero-obsessed Kouga teamed up with homeless waif Jin to fight Tokyo bullies and lawbreakers. However, most of the super-strength work fell to Jin, an experimental homunculus who is human in appearance but was secretly bred in a corporate lab alongside monstrous “Players”—homicidal mutants used in gladiatorial duels. Today, Kouga and Jin are young adults, and Kouga has been built up by mecha-suit technology, the media, and his ambitious family to become a sort of Iron Man-type celebrity. Meanwhile, Jin (aka ZET) has made a deal with his creators to hunt down and kill rogue Players. As their personalities develop, Kouga appears to suffer from a big ego and a simplistic, black-and-white sense of justice, while Jin's attitude is much less zealous. Their differing philosophies take them on divergent paths, but they eventually come together again when faced with the threat of an EVOL—an advanced form of Player. Only a few named female characters appear—including former sex worker Akemi, who provides a home for Jin for a while—but there is a lot of wholesale injuring and slaughtering of innocent girls and some gratuitous fan-service nudity. Compiling all 13 episodes on a dual-language set, rated TV-MA, extras include a brief interview with Masakazu Katsura, author of the original manga comic series. Highly recommended. (C. Cassidy)

Aida ★★★

(2012) 150 min. In Italian w/ English subtitles. DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99. Opus Arte (dist. by Naxos of America).



The monumental quality of Giuseppe Verdi's 1871 opera—about the doomed love between the titular Ethiopian princess and Egyptian army commander Radames, who faces the forces of Aida's father—is certainly conveyed in this 2012 production from the massive Arena di Verona. Directed in highly traditional fashion by Gianfranco de Bosio, the staging features magnificent sets and costumes designed to replicate the 1913 performance that opened the Arena as an operatic venue, filling the huge space with color and opulence. The musical side doesn't quite match up, but this is nonetheless a solid reading of the score, with Daniel Oren coaxing strong playing from the company orchestra, while numerous choristers and dancers ably fulfill their responsibilities—as do the four horses that bow before the king. Among the singers, Hui He and Andrea Ulbrich stand out as Aida and Amneris, her rival for Radames' affections, while Ambrogio Maestri makes a powerful sound as Aida's father, Amonasro. Only Marco Berti is on a distinctly lower level (in terms of both vocalism and acting) as Radames. Presented in DTS 5.1 and Dolby Digital stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include a cast gallery (as well as a 3D option for those suitably equipped). In a crowded field, this *Aida* may not be the first choice (Franco Zeffirelli's 2001 mounting from Verdi's birthplace in Busseto, Italy, reviewed in VL-11/02, would be better), but it can easily be recommended. (F. Swietek)

All the Labor ★★★

(2013) 96 min. DVD: \$19.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).



With an assist from Fugazi drummer-turned-filmmaker Brendan Canty, director Doug Hawes-Davis's scrappy documentary here profiles Austin roots band the Gourds (the quintet prefers the term "collective" to "band," as they've maintained the same lineup since 1999). Drummer Keith Langford notes that the members hail from various parts of Texas, except for Shreveport-born accordion player Claude Bernard. All are middle-aged men with wives and children, although the group clearly doubles as their second family. Guitarist Kevin Russell chalks up their longevity to the fact that they're still having fun, but expresses frustration over the way they defy easy categorization, stating that "the Gourds are a difficult, tangled, complex, weird, awkward mess." The group also features two singer-songwriters: Russell and bass player Jimmy Smith, who squabble

like an old married couple, but the traits that have made them difficult to market have also enabled them to develop a following over the course of 10 albums and countless tours. The Gourds also credit a heavily-downloaded cover of Snoop Dogg's "Gin and Juice" for bringing new fans their way, although this means they have to play it at every show in order to keep audience members happy (Langford says he doesn't mind). While most of the players come across as extroverts, multi-instrumentalist Max Johnston, who has worked with Uncle Tupelo and Wilco, seems more camera-shy, letting his musician father, "Dollar" Bill Johnston, speak on his behalf. Hawes-Davis organizes his material by members rather than chronology, which may frustrate anyone expecting a conventional biography, but there's a lot of music here for fans to enjoy, including live numbers and solo selections from Russell and Smith. DVD extras include extensive bonus performances. Recommended. (K. Fennessy)

Black Lips: Kids Like You & Me ★★1/2

(2011) 75 min. DVD: \$16.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).



This engaging documentary covers four weeks in the life of a rock band from Georgia called the Black Lips. While the band itself is decent although not extraordinary, there's nothing ordinary about what's covered here: the quartet of Atlanta musicians just happen to be touring the Middle East in 2011, at the early peak of the Arab Spring in Egypt (shortly before Hosni Mubarak was ousted from the presidency) and as events in Syria are beginning to teeter toward disaster. Producer-director Bill Cody follows the Black Lips as they not only play in those countries—as well as Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, the United Arab Emirates, and Cyprus—but also try to understand tumultuous events and serve as goodwill ambassadors despite rising anti-U.S. sentiment. Touring with a Lebanese band called Lazy Lung, the Black Lips make a joyful noise and get people dancing, dealing along the way with media attention and difficult questions about values as best they can. While the concert footage is satisfying, the film's greatest strength is its street-level view of rapidly changing circumstances in Cairo and Alexandria, especially a remarkable scene in Tahrir Square with artists and others enjoying a new sense of freedom. DVD extras include bonus footage of an earlier tour and an MTV appearance. Highly recommended. (T. Keogh)

Carmen ★★1/2

(2013) 141 min. In French w/English subtitles. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Opera Australia (dist. by Naxos of America).

Performed on a large stage at Sydney

Harbour, Gale Edwards' Opera Australia production of Georges Bizet's popular warhorse about the manipulative seductress whose romantic tricks drive soldier Don José to violence is heavier on spectacle than musicality. The performance is punctuated by big moments (cranes lowering military vehicles onto the set, a parade of supernumeraries waving gigantic flags while fireworks explode in the night sky, the illuminated outline of a bull appearing in the background, etc.) that tend to overwhelm the more intimate story elements. Still, Rinat Shaham is superb in the title role, her allure evident both physically and in her rich mezzo voice, while Nicole Car also exhibits strong vocalism as the sweet young peasant girl, Micaëla. The men are less impressive, with Dmytro Popov (Don José) and Andrew Jones (the toreador Escamillo) showing signs of strain, although both have imposing stage presence (all suffer, however, from the ungainly head microphones that look like orthodontic devices). Brian Castles-Onion conducts a sprightly reading of the score (although the sound of the unseen orchestra comes across as a bit tinny), but some of the music is missing (such as the jaunty urchin march in the first scene) and the dialogue is severely cut (the large audience, which applauds lustily throughout, doesn't seem to be bothered). A more conventional *Carmen*—such as the 2002 Glyndebourne mounting starring Anne Sofie von Otter (VL-7/03)—would be a better choice. Presented in DTS 5.1 and Dolby Digital stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include a cast gallery. Optional. (F. Swietek)



Cliff Richard: Still Reelin' and A-Rockin'—Live in Sydney ★★1/2

(2013) 148 min. DVD: \$14.98, Blu-ray: \$19.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



For this 2013 concert, drawn from a four-night stint at the Sydney Opera House, Cliff Richard performs in a studded black blazer and glossy pants, looking considerably younger than his 72 years. Richard, who has the stage largely to himself (his band, with the exception of two keyboard players, occupies the second level), shares stories about his career (he was a star by the age of 16) between songs, noting that he's had hits, flops, and still finds it amusing when people recognize him in public. With the sparkles, crowd-pleasing banter, and dancing guitar players, Richards' show is basically a Vegas revue filled with solo singles, sides recorded with the Shadows (his backing band), and covers, such as Brian Hyland's "Sealed with a Kiss." But while Richards'

voice is in fine form during this 35-song set, the concert suffers from some sappy and dated choices, like the synth-saturated ballad "Miss You Nights" (one of his self-described flops). Still, oldies fans may enjoy classics such as "Reelin' & Rockin'," "Living Doll," and "Move It." Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette. A strong optional purchase. (K. Fennessy)

Così Fan Tutte ★★½

(2013) 202 min. In Italian w/English subtitles. DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99; Blu-ray: \$39.99. C Major (dist. by Naxos of America).



Mozart's 1790 opera—about two friends who don disguises and exchange their fiancées (who are sisters) in a bet meant to test the women's fidelity—is often dismissed as a frivolous trifle, but not by Austrian film director Michael Haneke, who treats the story as a melancholy fable about the vagaries of romance and emotional turmoil of relationships in this 2013 production from the Teatro Real de Madrid. Amidst a striking set featuring a luxurious modern villa, the young couples wear contemporary dress, but elderly Don Alfonso, who initiates the wager, sports an 18th-century costume, and the girls' maid, Dorabella (who in this version is Alfonso's unhappy wife as well as co-conspirator), is clad in vaguely clown-like garb. Haneke's dramatic staging features repeated expressions of anger and pain, along with a recitative that's extraordinarily slow and pointed, and conductor Sylvain Cambreling complements the approach with a deliberate but sensual reading of the score. Soloists Anett Fritsch, Paola Gardina, Juan Francisco Gatell, Andreas Wolf, Kerstin Avemo, and William Schimell do not possess voices of enormous range or richness, but all acquit themselves ably while meeting Haneke's dramatic demands. A dark take on Mozart's ebullient confection that theoretically shouldn't work, but Haneke and his collaborators pull this alternate rendition off well. Traditionalists will prefer something like the 2006 Glyndebourne mounting (VL-9/10), but this performance is beautifully realized on its own unique terms and makes a worthy adjunct. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray release) and PCM stereo, extras include an interview with Haneke. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

The Cunning Little Vixen ★★½

(2009) 103 min. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Arthaus Musik (dist. by Naxos of America).



The appearance of yet another version of Czech master Leoš Janáček's 1924 beast opera—jux-

taposing the lives of villagers and forest animals in order to highlight the connection between the change of seasons and the natural cycle of life—underscores the fact that this erstwhile rarity has become part of the regular repertory. In this 2009 production from Florence's Teatro del Maggio Musicale, Seiji Ozawa conducts the score with both finesse and sensuality, with the orchestra responding enthusiastically. The splendid cast includes Isabel Bayrakdarian in the title role, and Quinn Kelsey (cutting an imposing figure, both vocally and in sheer stage presence) as the gamekeeper whose ruminations on the passage of time tie together the libretto's elements. Director Laurent Pelly stages the action with a sure hand; he's also responsible for the elaborate animal, insect, and bird costumes that almost make the singers and dancers look as if they'd stepped out of a Disney film. And apart from a few distracting modernizing touches, Barbara de Limburg Stirum's sets are also lovely. One might argue that this mounting underplays the work's dark undertones and the spikiness of the music, but it's a performance that almost perfectly fulfills its vision, and is easily the equal of the best of earlier renditions such as Mackerras in Paris (VL-3/11) and Jurowski at Glyndebourne (VL-9/13). Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 and PCM stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and PCM stereo on Blu-ray, this is highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

Die Zauberflöte ★★★

(2013) 150 min. In German w/English subtitles. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. C Major (dist. by Naxos of America).



This 2013 production of Mozart's much-loved fantasy opera—depicting a struggle between good and evil that mingles philosophy, religion, romance, and lowbrow humor—will be dismissed by some because it sanctions a few cuts, ignores the break between acts, and is presented on the floating lakeside stage that is home to the Bregenz Festival. Patrick Summers leads the Vienna Symphony in a fluent reading of the score, although the orchestra's placement in a separate locale sometimes leads to a disconnect with the singers, who are generally quite fine, with Ana Durlowski particularly impressive in the coloratura passages of the Queen of the Night's arias. Working from an extravagant concept, director David Pountney defines the space with three towering dragon figures linked by suspension bridges that the characters traverse (often acrobatically). The areas where the less dangerous action occurs include a field of huge, swaying, luminous tubes. Puppetry is frequently employed (most notably for the Queen's trio of ladies prancing atop mythic beasts), fireworks are occasionally lit, and other special effects abound. Ultimately, even though some viewers may

be put off by the excessive pizzazz, none of it truly distracts from the beauty of the music, and younger viewers will be enchanted. Presented in DTS 5.0 and Dolby Digital stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.0 and PCM stereo on Blu-ray, this *Magic Flute* may not be a first choice, but it's both inventive and likable. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

The Doors: R-Evolution

★★½

(2013) 72 min. DVD: \$14.98, Blu-ray: \$19.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



A proverbial odds 'n ends collection, *The Doors: R-Evolution* compiles "music films" and TV appearances featuring one of the quintessential West Coast bands of the late '60s. Ranging in date from 1967 to 1995 (some pieces were made long after the 1971 death of lead singer Jim Morrison), the 19-song collection kicks off with a moody "Break on Through," with band members lit against a dark background (shot on 16mm in 1967, this is arguably one of the first "music videos"), followed by a lip-synced version of the same song filmed on the TV show *Shebang* (the difference is dramatic: the Doors rarely look at the camera, and Morrison's face is almost deadpan as the soundtrack screams "break on through, break on through!"). Other selections—all featuring late keyboardist Ray Manzarek, guitarist Robby Krieger, and drummer John Densmore—include the Doors lip-syncing "The Crystal Ship" and "Light My Fire" on *American Bandstand*; performing a wacky "Light My Fire" on a fire truck for the Ricky Nelson-hosted show *Malibu U* (Morrison was a no show, so his footage was later cut in—other shots of the singer seen from the back are actually of Krieger's brother, Ron); delivering a surreal "People Are Strange," introduced by Murray the K in New York (the band "performs" sans instruments while Morrison lip-syncs; cutaway shots capture people wearing pantyhose on their heads); and serving up their hit "Hello, I Love You" (filmed outside for German TV in front of a bored-looking audience, most of whom are likely unfamiliar with the Doors). Highlights include a wonderful rendition of "Touch Me" on the Smothers Brothers show (with Morrison actually singing); in-studio films of the band performing "Wild Child" and "Crawling King Snake"; and the 1970 music film "Roadhouse Blues," featuring footage of Morrison being arrested and other onstage mayhem. The newer pieces, such as Manzarek's 1985 music video for "L.A. Woman" (starring Krista Erickson and X's John Doe, and featuring brief nudity), are mostly forgettable, with the exception of 1995's "Ghost Dance," a song beautifully built around a Morrison poetry recording). Presented in DTS 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1 and

stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include video commentary, a Ford car sales training film (with Doors music on the soundtrack), a bonus performance of "Break on Through," and an insightful behind-the-scenes documentary with band members. Sure to be appreciated by hardcore Doors fans, this is otherwise an optional purchase. (R. Pitman)

Gene Kelly: *Dancing, A Man's Game* ★★½

(1958) 55 min. DVD: \$29.98. Entertainment One (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned. ISBN: 1-4172-3527-6.



Gene Kelly made a rare television appearance in this December 1958 episode from the long-running cultural series *Omnibus* (then on NBC). As both writer and narrator here, Kelly gave himself plenty of opportunities to indulge in bouts of terpsichorean skill, but he's hardly the only star on display. To illustrate his essential thesis—that much of dance, especially American dance, mirrors the movements of athletes—Kelly recruited an array of sports greats to perform alongside him: baseball icon Mickey Mantle, football quarterback Johnny Unitas, basketball legend Bob Cousy, boxing champ Sugar Ray Robinson, Olympic skater Dick Button, golfer Vic Ghezzi, and tennis star Vic Seixas (along with dancers Edward Villella and Lou Wills Jr.). Some of them have little more than cameos while others join Kelly in fairly elaborate bits—such as Robinson in a tap-dancing duet (Alistair Cooke, of course, fulfills his usual hosting duties). The live program found Kelly at times a bit winded by the nearly nonstop activity, and some of his remarks about the different roles of men and women dancers might sound a bit sexist to a contemporary audience. But the fact that directors and cameramen pulled off such a smooth presentation—given the complexity of the movements—is still pretty amazing. Technically, the black-and-white visuals show their age, and the mono sound is lackluster, but this is a worthy entry in the Archive of American Television series of productions from the Golden Age of TV. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

George Thorogood & the Destroyers: *Live at Montreux 2013* ★★★

(2013) 84 min. DVD: \$14.98, Blu-ray: \$19.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



For their 2013 first appearance at the Montreux Jazz Festival, George Thorogood and the Destroyers—on tour in support of *2120 South Michigan Ave.*—bring their revved-up American sound to the Swiss stage (they shared the bill with ZZ Top). Thorogood introduces the show by

saying, "We're gonna play some dirty things, and we're gonna play some nasty things—if anyone's gonna get arrested for rock and roll, it might as well be me," but there's nothing too dangerous here, aside from a few instances of the word "motherhumper." Thorogood delivers a solid 12-song set with backing from bassist Billy Blough, guitarist Jim Suhler, saxophonist Buddy Leach, and drummer Jeff Simons, who has been with him since 1973. The band performs the expected originals and covers, such as "I Drink Alone" and John Lee Hooker's "One Bourbon, One Scotch, One Beer" (to which Thorogood adds, "don't drink and drive"). The Destroyers wrap things up with the classic "Bad to the Bone," after which they return for a three-song encore. Presented in DTS 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include an interview with Thorogood. Recommended. (K. Fennessy)

The Green Table ★★★

(2013) 37 min. DVD: \$19.99. Kultur International Films (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-0-7697-5090-3.



Chicago's Joffrey Ballet is to be congratulated for this revival of renowned German choreographer Kurt Jooss's antiwar piece, which premiered at a Paris competition in 1932 and brought its young creator international recognition. Although one can interpret *The Green Table* specifically as a commentary on the diplomatic blunders that led to World War I, the ballet embodies a more general critique of the human inclination to aggression. After an introductory sequence of masked gentlemen arguing around the titular table—goaded by the figure of Death to draw guns and fire—the dance transitions to scenes illustrating the impact of warfare: the separation of soldiers from families, the destructiveness of combat, the plight of the dispossessed, the desperate efforts of combatants to forget the horrors they've endured during respite from fighting, and the physical and psychological aftermath of their experience. Finally, we return to the opening, with diplomats again engaged in furious dispute, on the verge of yet another war. Performed to a spare but energetic score for two pianos by Frederic Cohen, the work retains its freshness and power in this 2000 studio staging directed by Jooss's daughter, Anna Markard. Presented in LPCM stereo, this is recommended. (F. Swietek)

Leonard Bernstein's Young People's Concerts with the New York Philharmonic, Volume 2 ★★★

(2013) 9 discs. 1,620 min. DVD: \$149.99. Kultur International Films (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-0-7697-5047-7.

Fans of Kultur's first collection of the

New York Philharmonic Orchestra's TV concerts designed by charismatic conductor Leonard Bernstein to introduce young people to classical music (VL-1/05) will embrace this second set featuring 27 additional episodes of the legendary series that ran sporadically on CBS from 1958 through 1972 (only one program of the 53 total is not included on either set). The present selection features installments from as early as 1960 to the final March 1972 broadcast (centering on Gustav Holst's orchestral showpiece *The Planets*). Throughout, Bernstein displays the perfect combination of erudition and kid-friendliness, neither talking down to his audience nor sailing over their heads. And the adventurousness of the programming is astonishing by today's standards. One expects the segments on Beethoven and Bach (although the latter concentrates on the "transmogrification" of his music on the Moog synthesizer, a Columbia Records staple of 1969), but other pieces are devoted to Charles Ives and Paul Hindemith (hardly popular figures), and an hour on "Unusual Instruments" even includes a concerto for tape recorder. While notables such as Aaron Copland appear as guests, the up-and-coming "young performers" here include cellist Lynn Harrell and pianist André Watts, as well as conductors Seiji Ozawa and the late Claudio Abbado. Although digitally restored, the dated video and sound quality still require a degree of tolerance, but the rewards are well worth the effort. Recommended. (F. Swietek)



The Makropulos Case

★★½

(1995) 95 min. In Czech w/English subtitles. Blu-ray: \$29.99. Kultur International Films (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-0-7697-5075-0.



Leoš Janáček's 1926 opera is not one of his most popular, but it shares with many others the overarching theme of life having a natural and limited span—an idea conveyed here through a beautiful singer named Emilia Marty, who intervenes in the titular legal case, a century-long dispute over an inheritance. Emilia's remarkable knowledge of the case's details is eventually explained by the fact that she's actually 300 years old and was involved in the original litigation. Her sudden reappearance arises from her desire to retrieve the formula that caused her longevity—although she intends to use it to finally end her existence. Janáček's score juxtaposes surging romantic moments with sharp, astringent notes, deftly played by the London Philharmonic under Andrew Davis in this 1995 production from the Glyndebourne Festival. But

while the supporting cast is generally excellent, the performance is marred by Anja Silja as Emilia; despite her great stage presence, she looks too old for the part, and her soprano is no longer a magnificent instrument. Nikolaus Lehnhoff's imaginative staging still comes across well, and Silja's many admirers will undoubtedly appreciate this Blu-ray release of one of her late-career triumphs, but it cannot be preferred to the superb 2011 Salzburg Festival release under the baton of Esa-Pekka Salonen (VL-9/12). Presented in LPCM stereo, this is a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Maurice Béjart's *The Nutcracker* ★★★

(2000) 125 min. DVD: \$29.99. Kultur International Films (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-0-7697-5070-5.



This version of Tchaikovsky's most famous ballet—a 2000 film of a performance at the Théâtre Musical de Paris-Châtelet—carries the name of the choreographer rather than the composer, and rightly so: even though it retains a good selection from the original score (ably played by the Orchestre Colonne under Edmon Colomer), the traditional Christmas-oriented libretto has been jettisoned in favor of a semi-autobiographical tale of a boy's attempt to deal with the loss of his beloved mother by giving himself over to a passion for dance. Projections of Béjart commenting on the action appear periodically, and at one point we even see video of his grandmother reminiscing about Béjart. And when the story reaches a Parisian section, even Tchaikovsky's music gives way to a traditional French dance played by accordionist Yvette Horner, sitting atop what looks like a stage cloud. Obviously this will not appeal to someone looking for a conventional *Nutcracker*—who can be directed instead to the excellent Royal Opera ballet staging (VL-3/11). But this is a fascinating mounting, performed with dedication and verve by the late choreographer's Lausanne troupe. Central character Bim is charmingly danced by Damaas Thijs, with other lead roles featuring an expert Gil Roman and Juichi Kobayashi. Presented in LPCM stereo, DVD extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette with Béjart and many of the dancers. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

Move Me Brightly ★★★

(2012) 190 min. DVD: \$14.98, Blu-ray: \$19.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



Actor Luke Wilson hosts this home-movie-style look at a tribute concert held

to commemorate the life of Grateful Dead guitarist Jerry Garcia, who died in 1995. Led by band mate Bob Weir, the 2012 show marked what would have been Garcia's 70th birthday and featured friends both old and new playing a set of Dead material at Weir's San Rafael studio. In between performances, director Justin Kreutzmann, son of Dead drummer Bill Kreutzmann, interweaves commentary from family members and fans, including Carlos Santana, Mike Campbell (Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers), Perry Farrell (Jane's Addiction), and Garcia's wife and daughters (even Sammy Hagar puts in a cameo). Jerry's brother, Tiff, and David Hidalgo (Los Lobos) offer the most colorful stories, with Tiff recalling a childhood incident that led to the loss of Jerry's middle finger, while Hidalgo remembers Garcia's generous and unexpected gift of his 1958 Stratocaster, an instrument Hidalgo would never have been able to afford. The 10-song show incorporates Dead standards such as "Mission in the Rain" and "Shakedown Street," and features vocals from Weir, Jim Lauderdale, Jonathan Wilson, and Mike Gordon (Phish), all of whom sound reasonably close to Garcia's voice. Unfortunately, Kreutzmann truncates the first few songs, but eventually eases up on the editing, and Wilson proves to be a genial and well informed interviewer. Although Weir plays on almost every selection, bass player Phil Lesh and percussionist Mickey Hart only put in brief appearances. Presented in DTS 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include six bonus songs (only three on the DVD version—but both formats feature a particularly fine rendition of "Friend of the Devil"). Recommended. (K. Fennesy)

Peter Grimes on Aldeburgh Beach ★★★

(2013) 141 min. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Arthaus Musik (dist. by Naxos of America).



Tim Albery's 2013 production of Benjamin Britten's 1945 opera *Peter Grimes*—a parable of intolerance in which an eccentric, reclusive fisherman is hounded to death by his judgmental fellow villagers—was conceived as a tribute for the centenary of the composer's birth and is performed at the very same coastal Suffolk town in which it is set. Given the technical difficulties—including the windy conditions on the North Sea shore—this filmed version directed by Margaret Williams is visually quite impressive (although the oversized head microphones are a distraction in close-ups), with an imaginative set and powerful footage of roiling waves to ac-

company the four orchestral interludes that punctuate the drama. The musical side offered its own challenges, particularly since conductor Stuart Bedford had to electronically manipulate the pre-recorded performance of the absent Britten-Pears Orchestra, who play with great intensity. While newcomer Alan Oke in the title role doesn't efface memories of Peter Pears or Jon Vickers, the vocal work is accomplished, including that of Giselle Allen as supportive schoolmistress and widow Ellen Orford. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 and PCM stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and PCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include an intro, cast interviews, and behind-the-scenes featurettes. While not in the same league as the 2012 Milan production (VL-9/13), this unique staging can certainly be recommended. (F. Swietek)

Written on Skin

★★★★1/2

(2013) 90 min. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Opus Arte (dist. by Naxos of America).



Contemporary British composer George Benjamin's first full-scale opera—seen here in its 2013 debut performance at the Royal Opera House at Covent Garden—is an extremely powerful work. The libretto is based on a legend about a 13th-century troubadour who is murdered by a nobleman, a man who not only suspected the bard of seducing his wife, but also feeds his spouse the dead poet's heart, which leads to her suicide. In Martin Crimp's adaptation, the young troubadour is hired by the powerful Protector to create an illuminated manuscript honoring his family—a task that brings the lad into contact with his patron's wife, sparking an attraction that will ultimately lead to tragedy. As the drama unfolds, a chorus of angels comments upon both the action and the art that initiates it. Despite the familiar romantic-triangle narrative, no one will confuse Benjamin's work with someone like Puccini or Strauss; his music is abrasively modern, but also intricate and exotically orchestrated, at one point even employing a glass harmonica. The score is conducted by Benjamin himself, with Christopher Purves (The Protector), Barbara Hannigan (his wife, Agnès), and Bejun Mehta (the Boy) bringing full commitment to the demanding vocals. The production also sports an attractive set and simple but appropriate costumes. While impossible to predict whether *Written on Skin* will endure, this beautifully filmed staging gives the work a superb send-off. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray version) and LPCM stereo, extras include an intro, a cast gallery, and an interview with Benjamin. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

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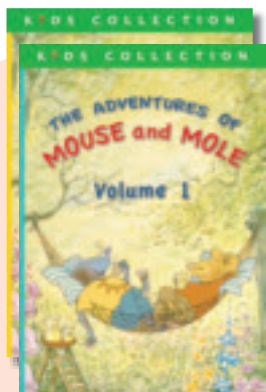
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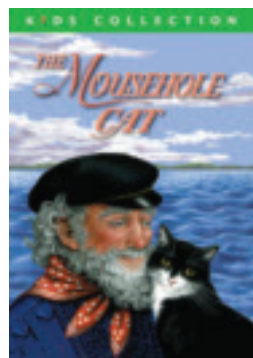
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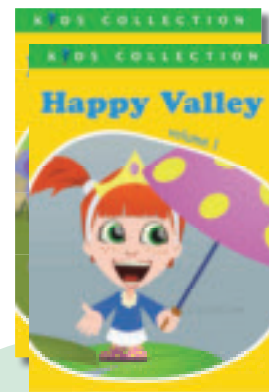
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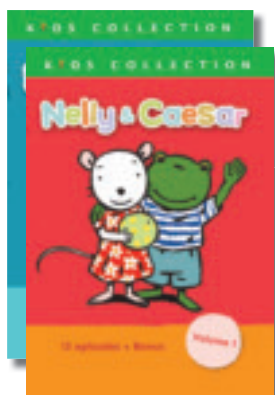
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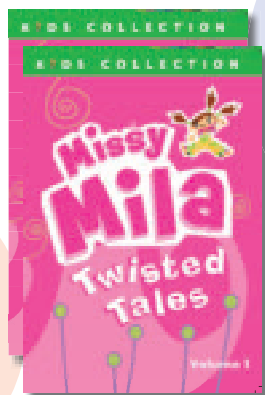
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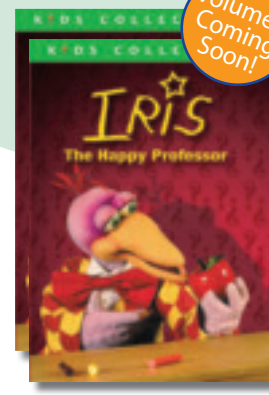
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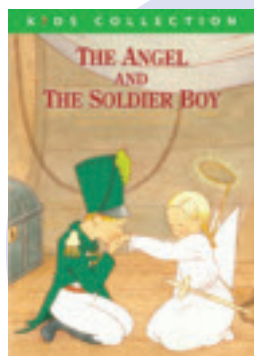


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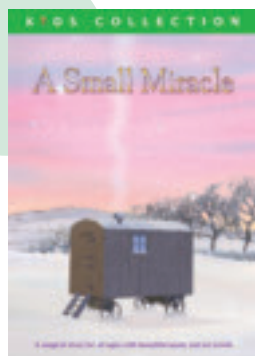
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60 minutes

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Remembering Jeff

Last December was a bad month. On December 17, I ran a list of possible titles for review by Jeff Shannon, a longtime reviewer for *Video Librarian*. Jeff sent back the following message: "That sounds good, Randy. I do have to tell you I have a very very serious problem with pneumonia right now and I'm in the hospital and I will be in the hospital for another 10 days so if you want to hold off for now that would be fine and I will keep in touch. Okay, take care."

I wished Jeff well and told him he would be in my thoughts.

The next day I suffered a major heart attack (complete blockage of an artery that required a stent and a series of new medications) and landed in the hospital myself (on our side of Puget Sound; Jeff was across the water in Edmonds).

I left the hospital on the afternoon of December 20. Jeff Shannon died the same day.

Jeff wrote a total of 688 reviews for *Video Librarian* between September 2004 and December 2013—reviews that were always smart, fair, and well-written (Jeff was an absolute joy to edit). Sometimes Jeff's reviews could run a bit long, but that was due to his

sheer exuberance and love for film. Jeff also had a lot to say; in fact, some of his sharpest remarks were about Clint Eastwood's film *Million Dollar Baby*, a movie that struck a deep chord with Jeff due to the fact that he was a quadriplegic, having suffered a spinal cord injury during a diving accident as a teenager (Eastwood was so impressed with Jeff's comments that he invited him to be on the set when he was directing *Flags of Our Fathers*).

The late Roger Ebert was a big fan of Jeff's. In addition to writing reviews and articles for Ebert's website, Jeff also wrote about film for the original *Cinemania* CD-ROM, the *Seattle Times*, and the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, and was an editor at Amazon.com. Not all of Jeff's writing was film-related, however; he also wrote for *New Mobility* and *FacingDisability.com*, and served as a tireless advocate for people with disabilities. Despite the fact that he had to use glove-like pointers in order to write, Jeff was not a complainer—on the contrary, he was one of the most life-affirming people I have ever known.

Jeff Shannon (1961-2013) will be sorely missed by everyone here in the office, as well as our contributing Seattle writers who called him friend and colleague—Sean Axmaker, Kathy Fennessy, Ted Fry, and Tom

Keogh.

Sean kindly sent me a wonderful write-up that Jeff's brother, Kevin, wrote on Jeff's Facebook page.

Here's an abbreviated version:

"It is with both great sadness and great joy that I report the passing of my little brother Jeff...who fought so hard for so long, but put an end to his trials this afternoon at 2:25. He was able to clearly communicate to me his wish to be off the ventilator; the tubes were removed at 2:10 and he died in peace and without pain just 15 minutes later.

He faced his death as he faced his life, head on, with focused, solid purpose and reason.

He was very much at peace, and at the very end, even appeared happy.

One of our favorite films as kids was *Little Big Man* and I told him, as Chief Dan George's character often said in the film, "It is a good day to die." There was an almost laugh to his response, but with my final words to him, he was gone.

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Randy Pitman



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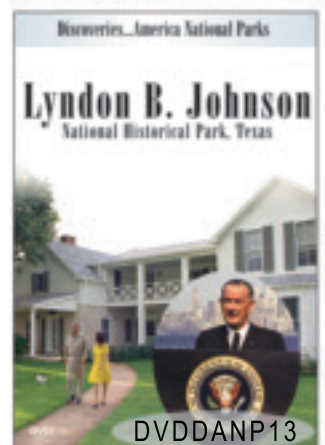
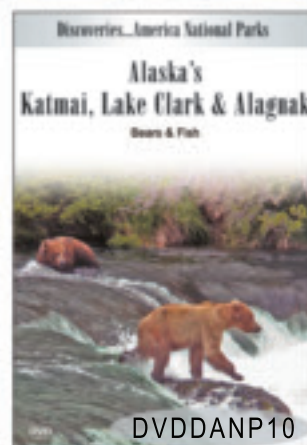
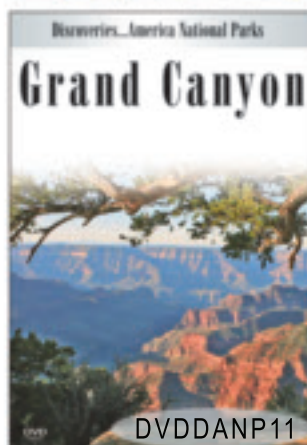
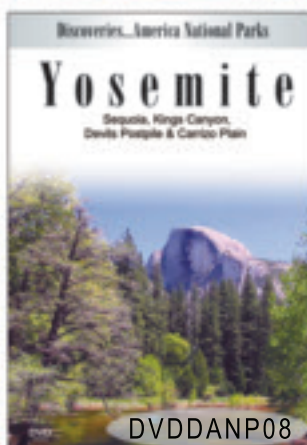
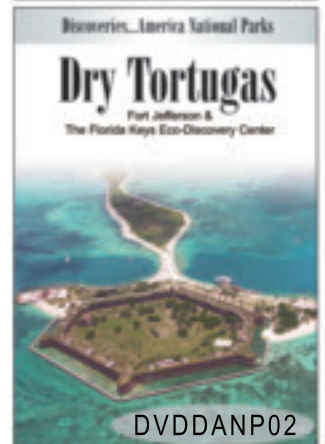
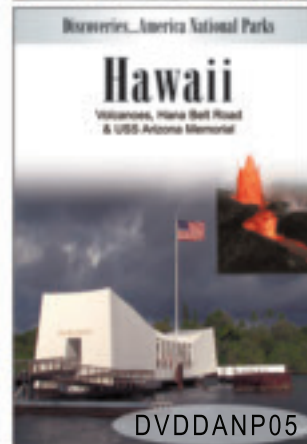
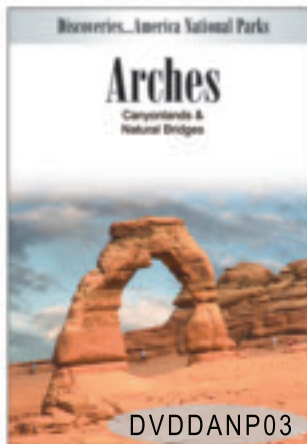
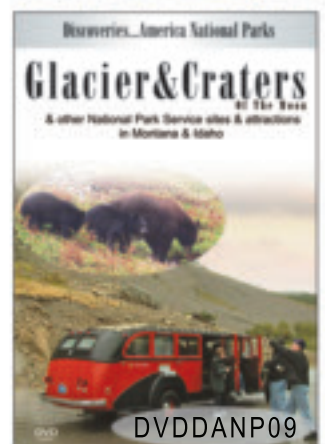
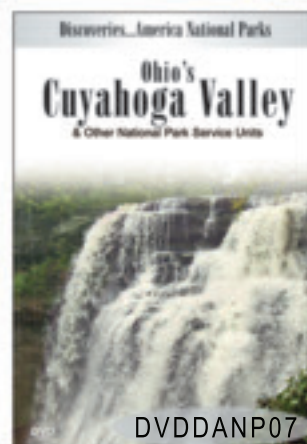
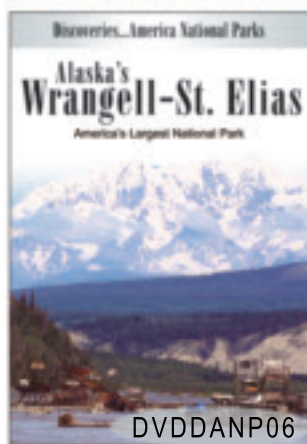
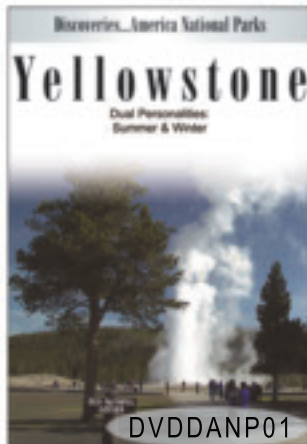
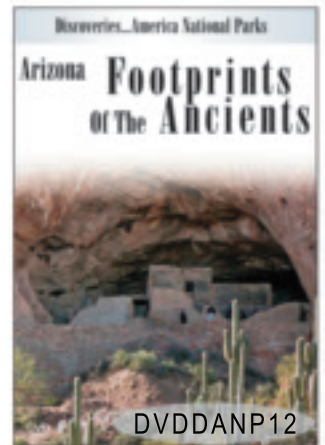
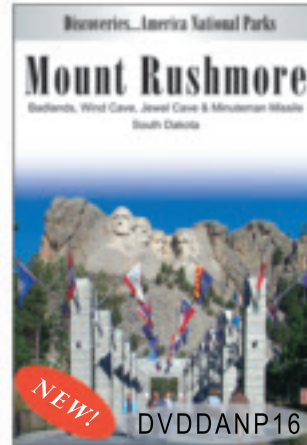
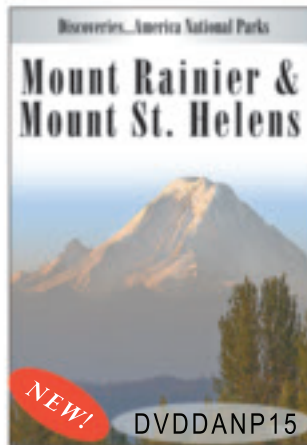
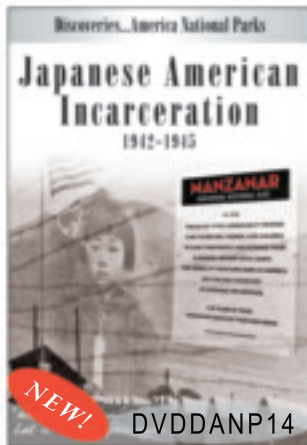
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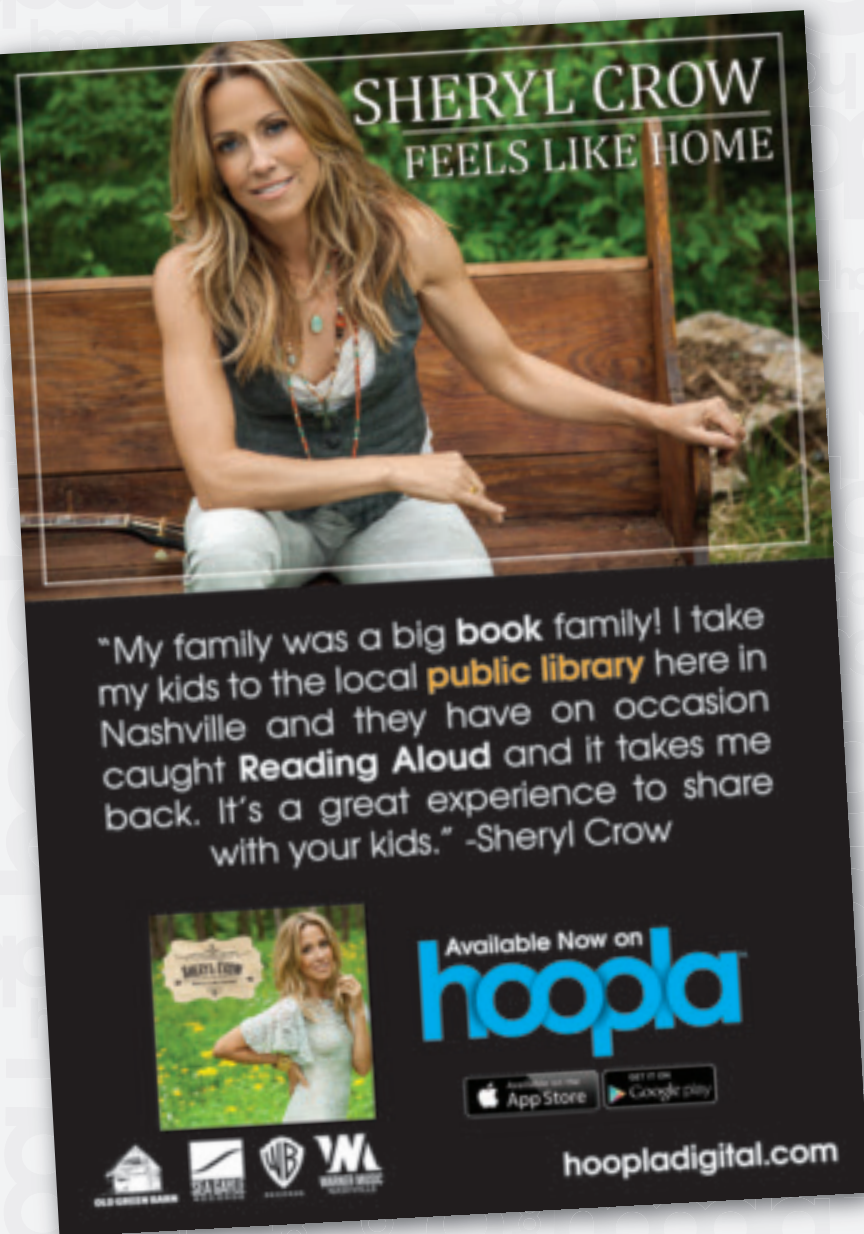
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