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Video Librarian

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IN THIS ISSUE

The Kings of Summer | Kind Hearted Woman | Death By China | A Girl & a Gun | War on Whistleblowers | What Plants Talk About

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Spotlight Review

The Kings of Summer ★★½
Sony, 95 min., R, DVD:
\$30.99, Blu-ray: \$35.99,
Sept. 24



Amidst a cinematic landscape filled with action-packed popcorn flicks and recycled comedy franchises, this compelling, refreshingly touching, and genuinely funny, low-budget independent dramedy stands tall. A coming-of-age story, *The Kings of Summer* revolves around three conflicted teenagers: Joe (Nick Robinson) and Patrick (Gabriel Basso)—best friends since childhood—and eccentric tagalong Biaggio (Moises Arias). School's out, leaving the trio caught between tantalizing freedom and being imprisoned by overbearing parents. So they decide to run away to build their own cabin deep in the nearby woods, and live off the land. It's not that difficult to borrow tools, scavenge and salvage materials from construction sites, and dumpster-dive for scraps—particularly when there's a Boston Market restaurant within walking distance. Wielding axes and swords, the boys are intrepid adventurers, but also naïve adolescents who have some important life lessons to learn. Conflict surfaces most

often between gawky Joe and his cranky, still-grieving widower father (Nick Offerman), and there's an interlude of unrequited love that threatens the trio's friendship and tests their loyalty. The film boasts vivid, bucolic montages, as the boys race through pastoral fields, climb trees, splash around in the river, jump off quarry cliffs, and stage an impromptu jam session—all of which was captured when director Jordan Vogt-Roberts took his actors into the woods near Chagrin Falls, OH, and filmed them fooling around and improvising. A simple yet also timeless tale that is both emotionally engaging and irresistibly likeable, this is highly recommended. (*S. Granger*)

2013 National Media Market

The 35th National Media Market will be held in Charleston, SC, at the Embassy Suites from November 3-7. Producers/distributors will showcase new programming and technology during the event, which in addition to on-site film screenings will include informal networking meetings for buyers and exhibitors, plus professional development sessions. For more information, visit www.nmm.net.

Cover photo: image from theatrical poster for *The Kings of Summer*. © CBS Films

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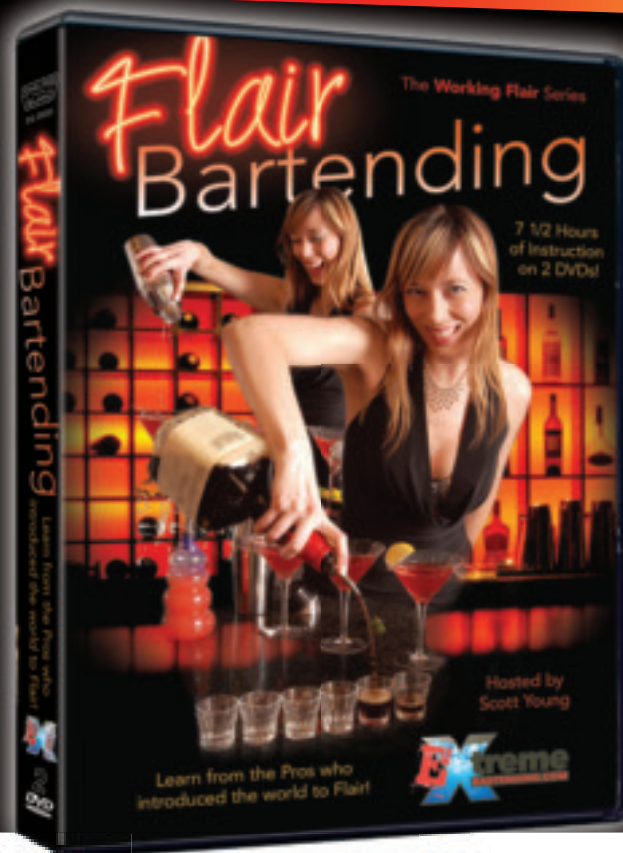
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Video Newsbriefs

Diamond Editions of "The Jungle Book" and "Sleeping Beauty" Coming in 2014 from Walt Disney

Walt Disney Studios has announced that the animated classics *The Jungle Book* and *Sleeping Beauty* will be added to its prestigious Blu-ray Diamond Edition Collection. Sprung from the Disney vault for the first time in almost seven years, *The Jungle Book* will swing onto Blu-ray on February 11, 2014. Based on Rudyard Kipling's beloved novel, this 1967 film—the last to have Walt Disney's personal touch—follows young Mowgli on a fun-filled journey with unforgettable characters, including wise panther Bagheera, jazzy orangutan King Louie, hypnotic snake Kaa, and the lovable, happy-go-lucky bear Baloo, who teaches Mowgli "The Bare Necessities" of life and the true meaning of friendship. And Disney's *Sleeping Beauty*—based on the fairy tale by Charles Perrault—will bow on Blu-ray in October 2014. The wondrous story of a princess cursed by an evil witch, protected by three loving fairies, and ultimately saved by "true love's kiss," *Sleeping Beauty*'s vibrant visuals were created by a team that included five of Disney's legendary Nine Old Men.

Warner's "James Dean: Ultimate Collector's Edition" Arrives November 5

On November 5, Warner Home Video will debut *James Dean: Ultimate Collector's Edition* (Blu-ray: 6 discs, \$99.98), which will include the only three films (also available in standalone Blu-ray editions for \$27.98 each) that Dean made before his tragic death at the age of 24. Based on John Steinbeck's 1952 novel, Elia Kazan's *East of Eden* (1955) stars Oscar-nominated Dean as Cal, a wayward California youth who vies with his favored brother (Richard Davalos) for the affection of their hardened father (Raymond Massey). In Nicholas Ray's *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955), Dean turned in one of the most influential performances in movie history as Jim Stark, a new kid in town whose loneliness, frustration, and anger mirrored the lives of postwar teens. Based on Edna Ferber's bestselling 1952 family saga about a Texas family of ranchers and oilmen, *Giant* (1956)—costarring Elizabeth Taylor and Rock Hudson—features Dean as wrangler-turned-oil-baron Jett Rink. Directed by George Stevens, the sprawl-

ing epic received 10 Academy Award nominations, including a Best Actor

nod for Dean. Bonus features include audio commentary, archival documentaries, screen and wardrobe tests, deleted scenes, premiere footage, and a 48-page photo book.



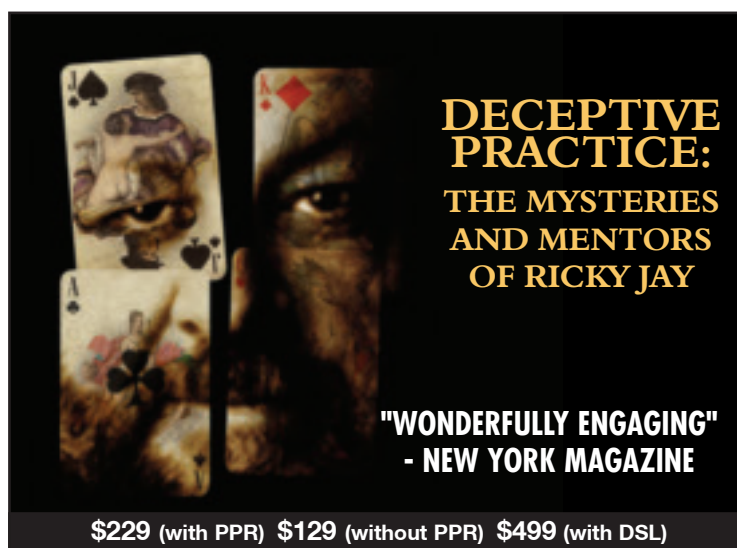
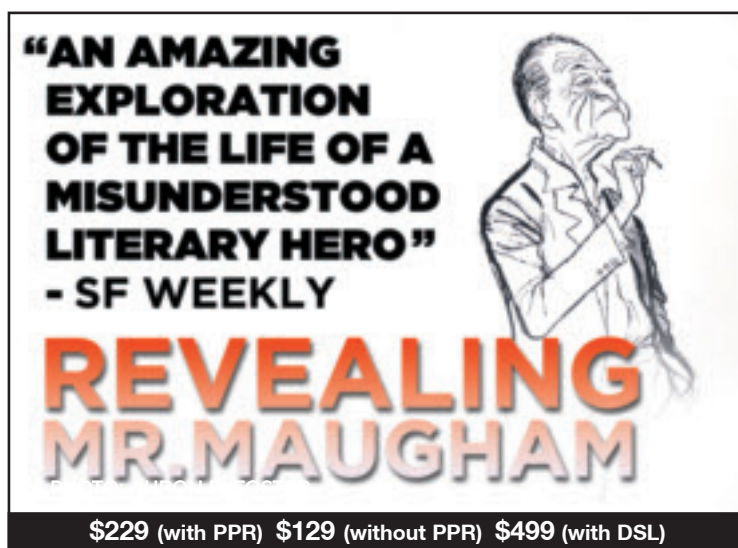
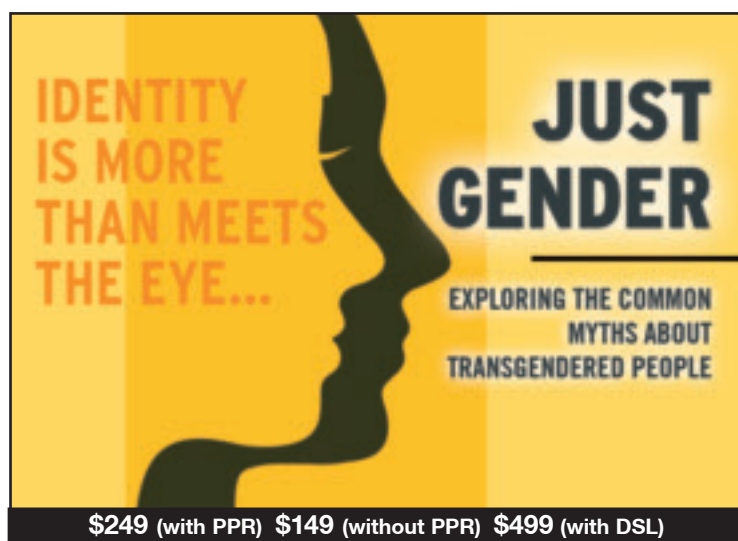
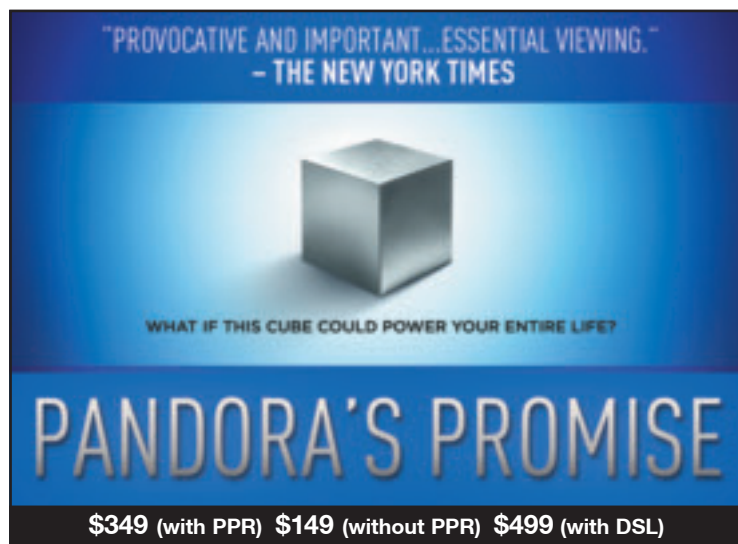
PBS Bows "Downton Abbey" Limited Edition Three-Season Set on October 1

On October 1, PBS Distribution will release the limited edition set *Downton Abbey: Seasons 1, 2 & 3* (DVD: 9 discs, \$89.99; Blu-ray: 8 discs, \$99.99). Compiling the 2011-13 first three seasons of the Golden Globe and multi-E Emmy award-winning series—which spans a period from pre-war England through the storms of World War I and into the social upheaval of the 1920s—this beloved show created by Academy Award-winner Julian Fellowes has captivated millions of viewers, who are caught up in the trials and tribulations of the Crawley family and their servants (in the U.S. alone, some 24 million viewers tuned in for the third season—aired on *Masterpiece*—making it the highest-rated PBS drama of all time). This limited edition set will include the bonus disc *Secrets of Highclere Castle*, focusing on the castle featured in the series.

First Volume of "Betty Boop: The Essential Collection" Available from Olive Films

Newly re-mastered in HD from 4K scans of the original negatives, *Betty Boop: The Essential Collection, Volume 1* (DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95) is now available from Olive Films. Regarded as one of the first and most famous sex symbols on the animated screen, Betty Boop was a symbol for the Depression era and a reminder of the more carefree days of the Roaring Twenties. The first in a projected four-volume series, this collection includes 12 animated short films from 1932-37—produced by Max Fleischer and directed by his brother Dave Fleischer—available for the first time on DVD and Blu-ray, featuring the voices of Mae Questel, Bonnie Poe, and Ann Little as Betty Boop, with guest voice appearances by Cab Calloway, Jack Mercer, William Pennell, and The Royal Samoans.

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

Winnie Mandela (Sept. 6) is based on Anné Marië du Preez Bezdrob's 2003 biography *Winnie Mandela: A Life*. Directed by Darrell Roodt, the biographical drama stars Jennifer Hudson, Terrence Howard, and Elias Koteas.



The Family (Sept. 13) is based on French author Tonino Benacquista's 2004 novel *Malavita*. Directed by Luc Besson, the crime comedy stars Robert De Niro, Michelle Pfeiffer, Dianna Agron, and Tommy Lee Jones.



A Single Shot (Sept. 20) is adapted by screenwriter Matthew F. Jones from his 1996 novel. Directed by David M. Rosenthal, the crime thriller stars Sam Rockwell, William H. Macy, Jason Isaacs, and Melissa Leo.



Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs 2 (Sept. 27) is an animated sequel to the 2009 film based on author Judi Barrett and illustrator Ron Barrett's 1978 fantasy children's book. Directed by Cody Cameron and Kris Pearn, the film features the voices of Bill Hader, Anna Faris, and Neil Patrick Harris.



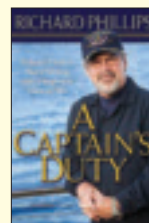
Thérèse (Sept. 27) is based on Émile Zola's 1867 novel *Thérèse Raquin*. Directed by Charlie Stratton, the romantic drama stars Elizabeth Olsen, Tom Felton, Jessica Lange, Oscar Isaac, and Shirley Henderson.



Coming in October

Captain Phillips (Oct. 11) is based on Captain Richard Phillips's 2010

nonfiction book *A Captain's Duty: Somali Pirates, Navy SEALs, and Dangerous Days at Sea*. Directed by Paul Greengrass, the biographical film stars Tom Hanks and Catherine Keener.



Great Expectations (Oct. 11) is adapted from Charles Dickens's 1861 classic. Directed by Mike Newell, the film stars Helena Bonham Carter, Ralph Fiennes, and Jeremy Irvine as Pip.



Horns (Oct. 11) is adapted from Joe Hill's 2010 supernatural novel. Directed by Alexandre Aja, the dark fantasy thriller stars Daniel Radcliffe, Juno Temple, and Max Minghella.



Carrie (Oct. 18) is the third adaptation of Stephen King's 1974 debut novel. Directed by Kimberly Peirce, the classic horror story stars Chloë Grace Moretz, Julianne Moore, Judy Greer, and Gabriella Wilde.

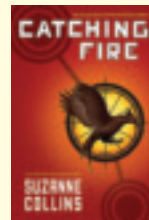


Looking Ahead

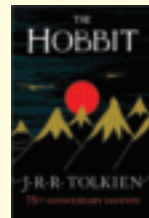
Slated for November is **Ender's Game**, director Gavin Hood's adaptation of Orson Scott Card's 1985 military sci-fi novel, starring Asa Butterfield, Harrison Ford, and Abigail Breslin.



Also slated for November is **The Hunger Games: Catching Fire**, based on the 2009 second book in Suzanne Collins's YA sci-fi trilogy. Directed by Francis Lawrence, the film stars Jennifer Lawrence.



Coming in December is **The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug**, the second entry in filmmaker Peter Jackson's trilogy adapted from J.R.R. Tolkien's 1937 fantasy novel, starring Martin Freeman and Ian McKellen.



“Amazing is an understatement. He was brilliant.” – ARETHA FRANKLIN, the Queen of Soul

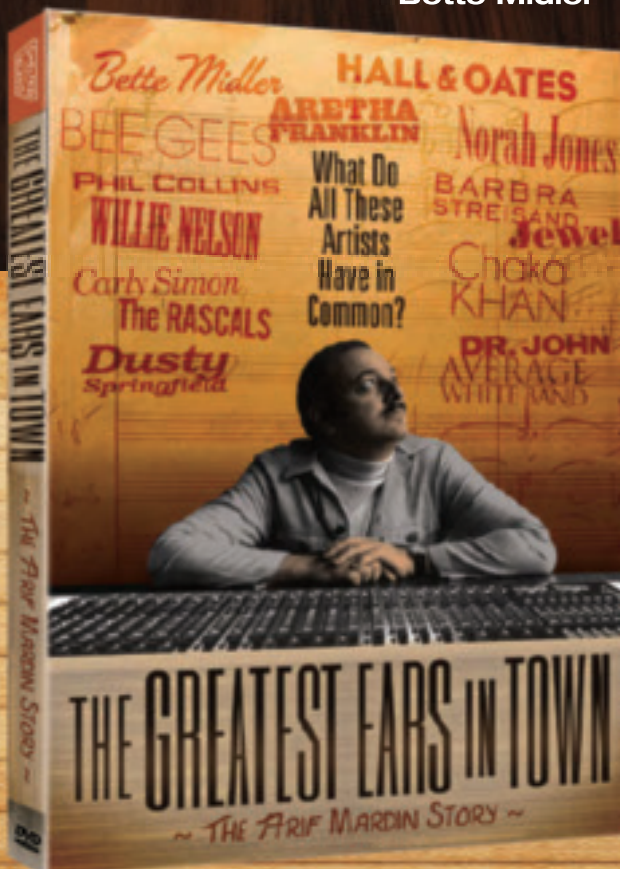
Aretha Franklin's *Until You Come Back To Me*, the Bee Gees' *Jive Talkin'*, Norah Jones' *Don't Know Why*, Chaka Khan's *I Feel For You*, Bette Midler's *Wind Beneath My Wings* ... are just a handful of the legendary artists and iconic hit recordings produced by 12 time Grammy Award winning producer, arranger and composer, Arif Mardin.

The Grammy nominated film, *The Greatest Ears In Town: The Arif Mardin Story* chronicles the life and career of the man who produced more than 50 gold and platinum records with sales topping 50 million units.

Filled with rare footage, photos, and packed with incredible music, *The Greatest Ears In Town* includes in-depth and intimate interviews with music luminaries and friends, Quincy Jones, Ahmet Ertegun and Sir George Martin as he reunites with many of his artists to record what would become his final album, *All My Friends are Here*.

**“Mister Mardin make your music
‘cause your music makes my day!”
– Bette Midler**

Featuring interviews and/or studio footage with Willie Nelson, Carly Simon, Jewel, Daryl Hall, Phil Collins, Nora Jones and many others, *The Greatest Ears In Town* is one of the most insightful, enjoyable documentaries about how hits are created ever made.



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Warwick • Daryl Hall • Phil
• Latife Mardin • Young
Padgham • Ahmet Ertegun •
Ramone • Sir George Martin
Brook Benton • Chaka Khan
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Clive Davis • Lara Agar Stoby •

EXTRAS

- EPK (5:40)
- Film Noir (1:57)
- Mardinis, Tabloids, Turks and Doorknobs (2:39)
- “Separate Lives” w/ Phil Collins and Doug Morris (1:14)
- Lunch with Chaka Khan (9:00)
- “No Way Out” Alt Edition by Nicki Parrott (5:29)

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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

Hatsune Miku: Project DIVA F (Sega, PS3: \$49.99, Rated: T). Players join Hatsune Miku, a popular Japanese Vocaloid character, in this rhythm video game featuring 38 songs, including "Tell Your World" and "BlackRock Shooter."

Tales of Xillia (Namco Bandai, PS3: \$59.99, Rated: T). The newest *Tales* entry, this Japanese third-person role-playing game is set in the magical world of Rieze Maxia, where players have the option of experiencing the story as either Jude Mathis, a medical student attending school in the capital city, or Milla Maxwell, a mysterious woman flanked by four unseen beings.



September 1—September 7

Diablo III (Blizzard, PS3/X360: \$59.99, Rated: M). This highly-acclaimed third-person action role-playing game (the fastest selling PC game to date) takes players back into the world of Sanctuary, where they can choose from five different character classes to battle evil.

Rayman Legends (Ubisoft, PS3/WiiU/X360: \$59.99, Rated: E10+). Delayed for a year in order to simultaneously release on all consoles, this sequel to one of the best platformers of 2011 is a strikingly-animated third-person action game that finds Rayman and the gang being sucked into mysterious paintings.



September 8—September 14

Kingdom Hearts HD 1.5 ReMIX (Square-Enix, PS3: \$39.99, Rated: E10+). Featuring HD remakes of *Kingdom Hearts Final Mix*

and *Kingdom Hearts Re: Chain of Memories*, as well as cinematic story videos from *Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days*, this collection from the beloved Square/Disney third-person action role-playing series features Mickey, Donald, Goofy, and others.

NHL 14 (EA, PS3/X360: \$59.99, Rated: E10+). This latest entry in the popular professional hockey simulation game features cutting-edge collision physics and new levels of speed and control as players strive to lead their team to the Stanley Cup playoffs.



Puppeteer (Sony, PS3: \$39.99, Rated: E10+). In this side-scrolling third-person fantasy platformer—boasting gorgeous CGI animation—players control a young boy named Kutaro, who was carried away by the maleficent Moon Bear King to a black castle where he was transformed into a puppet.

September 15—September 21

Grand Theft Auto V (Rockstar, PS3/X360: \$59.99, Rated: M). In this third-person action game, players step into the shoes of ethically-challenged protagonists Michael, Franklin, and Trevor, who operate in Los Santos: a sprawling sun-soaked metropolis full of self-help gurus, starlets, and fading celebrities.



The Wonderful 101 (Nintendo, WiiU: \$59.99, Rated: T). In this third-person action-fighting game, players take on the role of Wonder Red as he leads a team of superheroes against colossal robots and alien masterminds bent on obliterating Blossom City.

September 22—September 28

Armored Core: Verdict Day (Namco Bandai, PS3/X360: \$49.99, Rated: T). In this third-person mech-action game, players battle in 90 new missions over seven continents in a bid to gain control of territories and establish peace.

FIFA 14 (EA, PS3/X360: \$59.99, Rated: E). In the latest edition of the bestselling soccer simulation franchise, players will benefit from a new ball physics system that will transform shooting, making every shot attempt feel real.

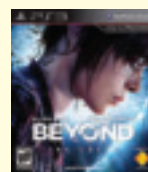
Pro Evolution Soccer 2014 (Konami, PS3/X360: \$59.99, Rated: E). In this soccer simulation game, players will experience the sense of bodily contact within tailored animations that seamlessly segue into the action.

September 29—October 5

NBA 2K14 (2K Sports, PS3/X360: \$59.99, Rated: E). This latest entry in the bestselling NBA franchise series returns with reigning four-time MVP LeBron James on the cover and the addition of 14 Euroleague basketball teams.

October 6—October 12

Beyond: Two Souls (Sony, PS3: \$59.99, Rated: M). From the makers of the award-winning *Heavy Rain*, this third-person psychological action thriller game puts players in the role of Jodie (voiced by Ellen Page) in an original narrative that also features the voice of Willem Dafoe.



F1 2013 (Warner, PS3/X360: \$59.99, Rated: RP). This racing simulator features all of the cars, circuits, and stars from the 2013 FIA Formula One World Championship, with updated rules.

Just Dance 2014 (Ubisoft, PS3/WiiU/X360: \$39.99-\$49.99, Rated: E10+). Featuring over 40 new tracks, the latest entry in this top-selling dance game franchise uses the three major consoles' motion-tracking capabilities.

October 20—October 26

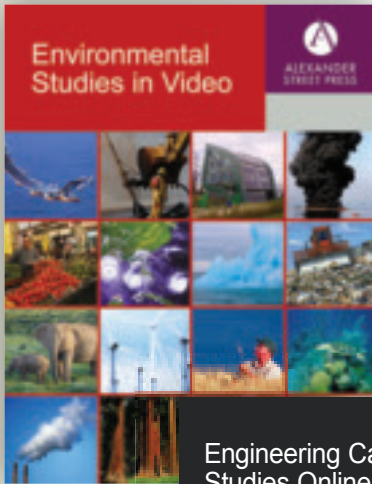
Batman: Arkham Origins (Warner, PS3/WiiU/X360: \$59.99, Rated: T). In this third-person action game set before the hit franchise entries *Arkham Asylum* and *Arkham City*, Batman must face eight assassins who are working to collect the bounty put on his head by brutal crime lord Black Mask.



LEGO Marvel Super Heroes (Warner, PS3/WiiU/X360: \$49.99, Rated: RP). In this LEGO themed action platformer, players battle evil using all the powers of Marvel's greatest heroes: soaring through the air as Iron Man, spinning webs as Spider-Man, and bringing the thunder as the mighty Thor.

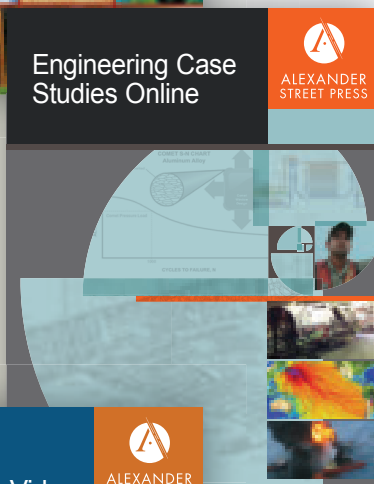
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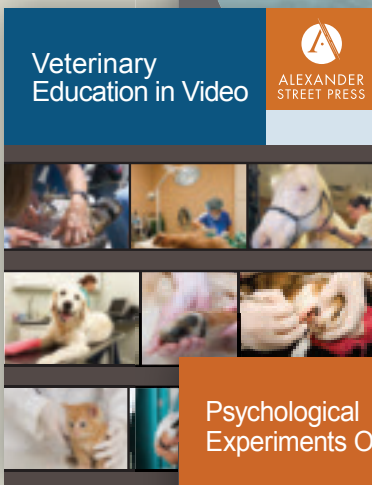
Environmental Studies in Video

Environmental Studies in Video brings together seminal documentary films and powerful footage about the environment from diverse sources around the globe. At completion, the collection will contain 500 hours of film covering all realms of environmental studies, with specific topics including alternative energy, pollution control, eco-design, sustainability, farming and agriculture, the food industry, LEED certification, waste issues, and climate change.



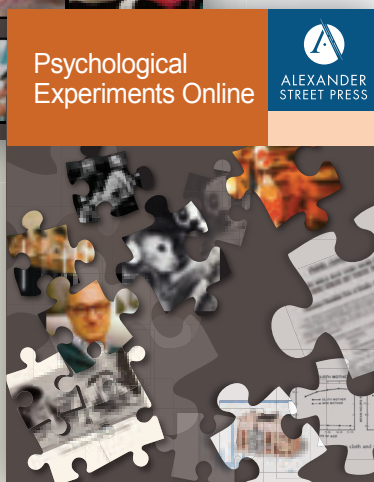
Engineering Case Studies Online

Engineering Case Studies Online offers 250 hours of video and 50,000 pages of text resources to meet the growing needs of engineering programs worldwide. It will provide in-depth coverage for 50 of the most frequently taught and seminal engineering case studies around the world together with supplementary materials from more than 1,000 additional engineering failures.



Veterinary Education in Video

Veterinary Education in Video is an encyclopedia of veterinary science and care illustrating more than 500 procedures and techniques. The collection will include more than 600 titles from RACE-approved content partners, each showing an expert demonstrating clinical skills, explaining conditions, or delivering detailed training on technology and animal handling.



Psychological Experiments Online

This collection pairs 75 hours of audio and video recordings of quintessential experiments in psychology with 40,000 pages of primary-source documents. It's packed with exclusive and hard-to-find materials including notes from experiment participants, journal articles, books, field notes, final reports, and more in topics from obedience to authority and conformity to operant conditioning.



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Sonic: Lost World (Sega, WiiU: \$49.99, Rated: E10+). Sega's signature hedgehog returns in this third-person action platformer that finds Sonic being forced to unite with his arch nemesis Eggman in order to defeat a group of menacing creatures known as the Deadly Six.

October 27—November 2

Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag (Ubisoft, PS3/WiiU/X360: \$59.99, Rated: M). In this time-traveling third-person action game—the latest in the popular series—players control a fearsome young captain named Edward Kenway, whose exploits earn the respect of pirate legends such as Blackbeard, but also draw him into an ancient war.



Battlefield 4 (EA, PS3/X360: \$59.99, Rated: M). In this latest addition to the blockbuster first-person action-shooter series, players start with the evacuation of American VIPs from Shanghai and then follow their squad's struggle to find the way home.

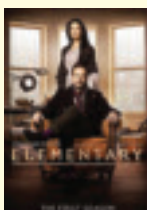
WWE 2K14 (2K Sports, PS3/X360: \$59.99, Rated: T). Switching from previous license holder THQ, this initial 2K Sports entry in the popular WWE franchise includes a new single player campaign titled "The 30 Years of WrestleMania."

TV on DVD/Blu-ray

Available Now

Damages: The Complete Fifth Season (Sony, DVD: 3 discs, \$45.99). Glenn Close (in a Golden Globe-winning role), Rose Byrne, and Ryan Phillippe star in this 2012 fifth and final season of the legal drama series.

Elementary: The First Season (Paramount, DVD: 6 discs, \$55.98). Starring Jonny Lee Miller as contemporary NYPD consultant Sherlock Holmes and Lucy Liu as sidekick Dr. Joan Watson, this 2012-13 first season also features Aidan Quinn.



The Good Wife: The Fourth Season (Paramount, DVD: 6 discs, \$64.99). Julianna Margulies is back in her Golden

Globe and Emmy-winning role as a wife and mother who balances her personal life with her work as a D.A. in this 2012-13 fourth season that also features Stockard Channing, Matthew Perry, Chris Noth, and Martha Plimpton.

Mike & Molly: The Complete Third Season (Warner, DVD: 3 discs, \$44.98). The newlyweds come back from their Paris honeymoon with babies on the brain in this 2012-13 third season of the Emmy-winning sitcom.

NCIS: Los Angeles—The Fourth Season (Paramount, DVD: 6 discs, \$64.99). Chris O'Donnell and LL Cool J star in this 2012-13 fourth season of the mystery thriller spin-off series.

Sons of Anarchy: Season Five (Fox, DVD: 4 discs, \$59.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$69.99). As the new president of motorcycle club SAMCRO, Jax (Charlie Hunnam) battles betrayal, enemies, and ghosts from his past in this 2012 fifth season of the FX series that also stars Katey Sagal and Ron Perlman.



The Walking Dead: The Complete Third Season (Anchor Bay, DVD: 5 discs, \$69.98; Blu-ray: 5 discs, \$79.99). Rick Grimes (Andrew Lincoln) and his fellow post-apocalyptic survivors battle zombies—and worse—in this 2012-13 third season of the Golden Globe-nominated AMC-aided horror series.

September 3

Blandings, Series 1 (Acorn, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99). Based on P.G. Wodehouse's madcap 1935 short story collection *Blandings Castle and Elsewhere*, this 2013 six-episode comedy series stars Timothy Spall, Jennifer Saunders, and Mark Williams.



Bomb Girls: Season 1 (Peace Arch, DVD: 3 discs, \$24.99). Set in a WWII-era munitions factory, this 2012 first season of the Canadian drama series stars Meg Tilly, Jodi Balfour, and Ali Liebert.

Criminal Minds: Season 8 (Paramount, DVD: 6 discs, \$64.99). This 2012-13 eighth season of the FBI profiler series stars Joe Mantegna, Shemar

Moore, Matthew Gray Gubler, and Jeanne Tripplehorn.

Da Vinci's Demons: The Complete First Season (Starz, DVD: 3 discs, \$44.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$54.99). Framed as a fictional account of genius artist and inventor Leonardo da Vinci, this 2013 debut season of the historical fantasy series stars Laura Haddock, Blake Ritson, and Tom Riley as the iconic polymath.



Haven: The Complete Third Season (eOne, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 4 discs, \$49.98). Emily Rose, Lucas Bryant, and Eric Balfour star in this 2012-13 third season of the Syfy-aided supernatural series set in the titular Maine town.

It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia: The Complete Season 8 (Fox, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$49.99). The depraved crew of Philly watering hole Paddy's Pub are back in this 2012 eighth season of the FX-aided series starring Danny DeVito, Charlie Day, and Kaitlin Olson.

The League: The Complete Season Four (Fox, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$34.99). Fantasy football fanatics continue their antics in this 2012 fourth season starring real-life couple Mark Duplass and Katie Aselton, and featuring guest appearances by Robert Griffin III, DeSean Jackson, and Deion Sanders.

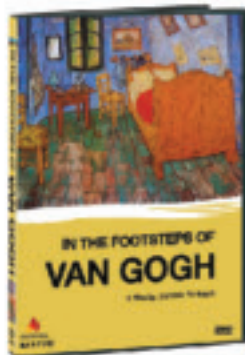
The Office: Season Nine—The Farewell Season (Universal, DVD: 5 discs, \$49.98; Blu-ray: 4 discs, \$59.98). Andy (Ed Helms) is back as regional manager at Dunder Mifflin in this 2012-13 ninth and final season of the mockumentary series featuring Rainn Wilson, Jenna Fischer, and John Krasinski.

Parks and Recreation: Season Five (Universal, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98). Leslie Knope (Amy Poehler) takes on a new role as city councilwoman in this 2012-13 fifth season of the sitcom revolving around Indiana government workers.



Person of Interest: The Complete Second Season (Warner, DVD: 6 discs, \$59.98; Blu-ray/DVD Combo: 10 discs, \$69.98). A former CIA agent and his scientist partner work together to prevent crimes in this Emmy-nominated 2012-13 sophomore

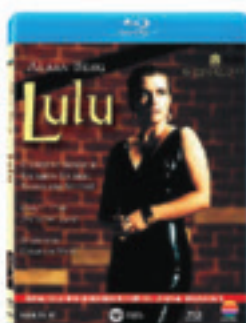
KULTUR - Keeping the Arts Alive! on DVD



IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF VAN GOGH

This documentary is ablaze with the vibrant colors of the canvases van Gogh painted in the last years of his life. The program traces the events of van Gogh's final years with extracts from letters to brother Theo, vivid paintings and stunning location footage.

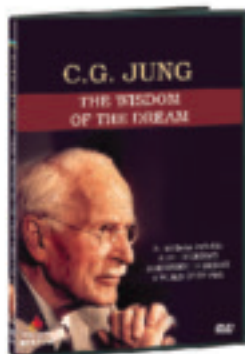
DVD • D4880 • \$19.99
Color • 56 Minutes
ISBN: 978-0-7697-5037-8
UPC: 032031488090



ALBAN BERG'S LULU

Based on a pair of once-banned plays by Frank Wedekind, Alban Berg's operatic swan song charts the rise and fall of a femme fatale from life as a society hostess to prostitution and eventual death at the hands of Jack the Ripper.

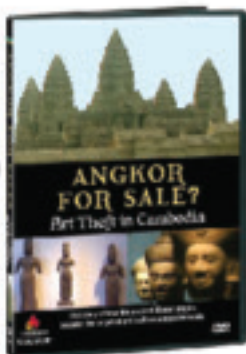
Blu-ray • BD2253 • \$29.99
Color • 183 Minutes
ISBN: 978-0-7697-5063-7
UPC: 032031225374



C.G. JUNG: The Wisdom of the Dream

This program provides access to Jung's family house near Zurich, and to his famous retreat, enabling the producers to refer Jung's biographical story with exactly appropriate visual references. This DVD consists of 3 full programs.

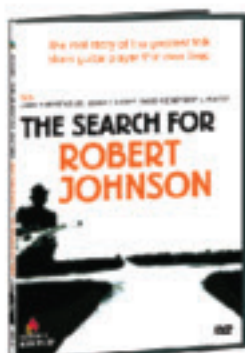
DVD • D4887 • \$29.99
Color • 159 Minutes
ISBN: 978-0-7697-5044-6
UPC: 032031488793



ANGKOR FOR SALE? Art Theft in Cambodia

Filed on location in Cambodia and Thailand, this documentary investigates the illegal trade in much-coveted Khmer artefacts and the measures being taken to try to put a stop to it.

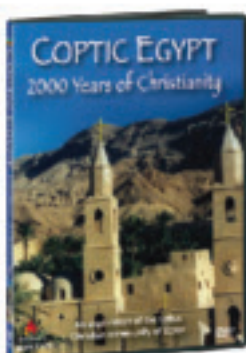
DVD • D4884 • \$19.99
Color • 53 Minutes
ISBN: 978-0-7697-5041-5
UPC: 032031488496



THE SEARCH FOR ROBERT JOHNSON

This program traces the path of this most legendary of Bluesmen, a figure whose blues influenced the development of popular music in the US and UK but whose life story was shrouded in mystery.

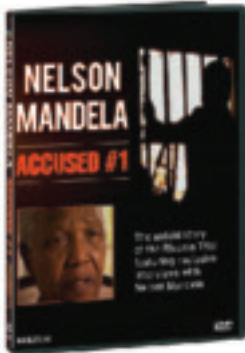
DVD • D4893 • \$19.99
Color • 72 minutes
ISBN: 978-0-7697-5053-8
UPC: 032031489394



COPTIC EGYPT: 2000 Years of Christianity

This program visits two of the oldest desert monasteries in Egypt to observe religious practices and a way of life that have changed remarkably little since the beginnings of Coptic Christianity.

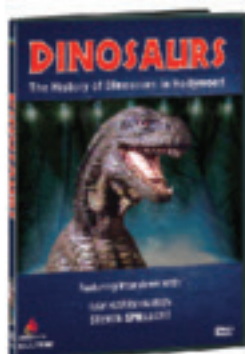
DVD • D4892 • \$19.99
Color • 53 minutes
ISBN: 978-0-7697-5052-1
UPC: 032031489295



NELSON MANDELA: Accused #1

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

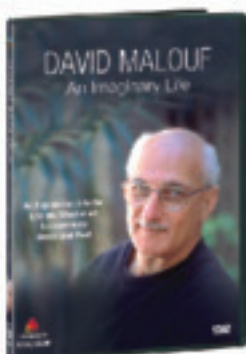
DVD • D4896 • \$19.99
Color • 59 minutes
ISBN: 978-0-7697-5049-1
UPC: 032031489699



DINOSAURS: The History of Dinosaurs in Hollywood

This program explores children's fascination with dinosaurs and examines the history of dinosaurs in Hollywood, from the early 1900s animation to the work of Ray Harryhausen, then Steven Spielberg's 'Jurassic Park'.

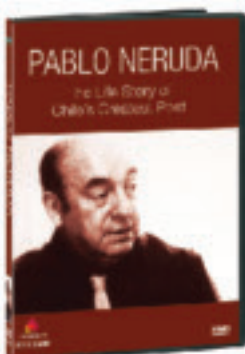
DVD • D4896 • \$14.99
Color • 24 minutes
ISBN: 978-0-7697-5058-3
UPC: 032031489691



DAVID MALOUF: An Imaginary Life

Filed on location in Australia, England, Ireland and Italy, and making atmospheric use of archive footage and dramatization, this documentary is an emotive exploration of his work.

DVD • D4895 • \$19.99
Color • 55 minutes
ISBN: 978-0-7697-5055-2
UPC: 032031489592



PABLO NERUDA: The Life Story of Chile's Greatest Poet

Using a wealth of archive material, this documentary tells Neruda's story and gives voice to his poetry, exploring the profound links between his political engagement and his writing.

DVD • D4894 • \$19.99
Color • 45 minutes
ISBN: 978-0-7697-5054-5
UPC: 032031489493

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season starring Jim Caviezel, Michael Emerson, and Taraji P. Henson.

Revolution: The Complete First Season

(Warner, DVD: 5 discs, \$59.98; Blu-ray/DVD Combo: 9 discs, \$69.98). This 2012-13 debut season of the post-apocalyptic adventure series set during a technological blackout stars Billy Burke, Giancarlo Esposito, and Tracy Spiridakos.



Scandal: The Complete Second Season

(Buena Vista, DVD: 5 discs, \$45.99). Professional crisis management firm head Olivia Pope (Kerry Washington) and her talented crew clean up other people's messes in this 2012-13 sophomore season of the drama that also features Katie Lowes and Guillermo Diaz.

Sinbad: The Complete First Season

(BBC, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$34.98). Starring Elliot Knight as the titular 8th-century sailor, this 2012 first season of the adventure series also features Orla Brady, Naveen Andrews, and Elliot Cowan.

Spartacus: War of the Damned (Starz, DVD: 3 discs, \$49.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$59.99). This 2013 third season of the historical action-adventure series stars Liam McIntyre, Manu Bennett, and Todd Lasance.

The Vampire Diaries: The Complete Fourth Season (Warner, DVD: 5 discs, \$59.98; Blu-ray/DVD Combo: 9 discs, \$69.98). Elena's (Nina Dobrev) senior year is marred by her struggle to transform from human to vampire in this 2012-13 fourth season of the supernatural series based on the books by L.J. Smith.

September 10

Army Wives: The Complete Seventh Season

(Buena Vista, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.99). Aired on Lifetime, this 2013 seventh season following a group of friends who struggle with the challenges of having family members in the military adds Ashanti and Jesse McCartney to the cast.



The Big Bang Theory: The Complete Sixth Season

(Warner, DVD: 3

discs, \$44.98; Blu-ray/DVD Combo: 5 discs, \$54.98). Johnny Galecki, Kaley Cuoco, and Jim Parsons star in the 2012-13 sixth season of this smart sitcom, which also features guest appearances by Buzz Aldrin, LeVar Burton, Wil Wheaton, and Regina King.

Blue Bloods: The Complete Third Season

(Paramount, DVD: 6 discs, \$64.99). Starring Tom Selleck as patriarch Frank Reagan, this 2012-13 third season of the drama revolving around a family of NYC law enforcement workers also stars Donnie Wahlberg, Will Estes, and Bridget Moynahan.

Castle: The Complete Fifth Season

(Buena Vista, DVD: 5 discs, \$45.99). Mystery author Richard Castle (Nathan Fillion) and detective Kate Beckett (Stana Katic) finally get together in this 2012-13 fifth season of the crime-solving comedy series.

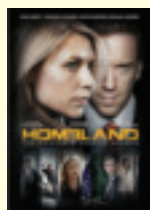


Chicago Fire: Season One

(Universal, DVD: 5 discs, \$44.98). The rescue workers of Chicago Firehouse 51 are showcased in this 2012-13 debut season of the action series starring Jesse Spencer, Taylor Kinney, and Monica Raymund.

Homeland: The Complete Second Season

(Fox, DVD: 4 discs, \$59.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$69.99). Congressman Brody (Damian Lewis) and CIA agent turned civilian Carrie (Claire Danes) are thrown back into the fray to face a new terrorist situation in the 2012 sophomore season of this drama thriller series.



Luther 3

(BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$34.98). In this 2013 miniseries starring Idris Elba as obsessively dedicated DCI John Luther, members of his own team attempt to sabotage him.

Mama's Family: The Complete Second Season

(Time Life, DVD: 4 discs, \$29.98). Vicki Lawrence stars as titular overbearing matriarch Thelma Harper in this 1983-84 second season of the sitcom, which costars Rue McClanahan and Betty White.

Supernatural: The Complete Eighth Season

(Warner, DVD: 6 discs, \$59.98; Blu-ray: 4 discs, \$69.98). The Winchester brothers (Jared Padalecki and Jensen Ackles) are reunited after a year apart in this 2012-13 eighth season of the fantasy drama series.

September 17

Arrow: The Complete First Season

(Warner, DVD: 5 discs, \$59.98; Blu-ray/DVD Combo: 9 discs, \$69.98). After being marooned for five years on a remote island, wealthy Oliver Queen (Stephen Amell) returns with a set of powerful crime-fighting skills in this 2012-13 debut season of the action series.



CSI: The Thirteenth Season

(Paramount, DVD: 6 discs, \$69.99). Ted Danson, Elisabeth Shue, and Jorja Fox star in this 2012-13 13th season of the Las Vegas crime series that includes a crossover two-part episode with *CSI: NY*, starring Gary Sinise.

Dalziel & Pascoe: Season 8

(BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$34.98). Disparate detectives Dalziel and Pascoe (Warren Clarke and Colin Buchanan) work well together to solve mysteries in this 2004 eighth season that includes the cases "A Game of Soldiers," "The Price of Fame," "Great Escapes," and "Soft Touch."

Grimm: Season Two

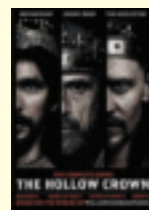
(Universal, DVD: 5 discs, \$59.98; Blu-ray: 5 discs, \$69.98). Portland homicide detective Nick Burkhardt (David Giuntoli) embraces his ancestral lineage as a supernatural hunter in this 2012-13 sophomore season of the fantasy drama series.

Harbor Command: The Complete Television Series

(Shout! Factory, DVD: 5 discs, \$29.99). San Francisco Bay's Coast Guard Harbor Police is spotlighted in this 1957-58 crime series starring Wendell Corey and featuring guest stars including Leonard Nimoy.

The Hollow Crown: The Complete Series

(Universal, DVD: 4 discs, \$44.99). This BAFTA-winning 2012 miniseries includes adaptations of Shakespeare's history plays *Richard II*, *Henry IV (Part One and Part Two)*, and *Henry V*, featuring actors including Ben Whishaw, Jeremy Irons, Tom Hiddleston, and Julie Walters.



Leverage: The 5th Season

(Fox, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.99). Erstwhile insurance investigator turned thief Nate Ford (Timothy Hutton) and his team are back in this



Latino Americans

Latino Americans chronicles the rich and varied history and experiences of Latinos, who have for the past 500-plus years helped shape what is today the United States, and have become, the largest minority group in the U.S.

360 minutes on 2 discs

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The March

The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom was to become one of the most important moments in contemporary history. This watershed event in the Civil Rights Movement helped change the face of America.

This film reveals the dramatic story behind the event through key players such as Jack O'Dell, Clarence B. Jones, Julian Bond, and Andrew Young. Supporters and other testimonials include Harry Belafonte, Diahann Carroll, Roger Mudd, Peter Yarrow, and Oprah Winfrey, in addition to historians, journalists, authors, and ordinary citizens.

60 min.

DVD \$24.99

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How Sherlock Changed the World

Forensic scientists, crime historians, and Sherlockian experts reveal for the first time the astonishing impact the fictional detective had on the development of real-life criminal investigation and forensic techniques. Using a mix of interviews, dramatic recreations, and archival footage, How Sherlock Changed the World details the impact and legacy of the most famous crime fighter in history.

120 min.

DVD \$24.99

ISBN# 9781608839537



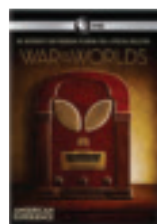
War of the Worlds

The night of October 30th, 1938 began as any other, with millions of listeners tuned to their radios. Then, at 8:15 p.m., there was a report on the radio that Martians had landed in New Jersey. Almost instantly, people listening in responded to the shocking news. Newspapers were flooded with calls from worried listeners; many feared that New Jersey had been laid to waste and that the Martians were heading west. What began as a broadcast performance of H.G. Wells' fantasy, The War of the Worlds, turned into one of the biggest mass hysteria events in U.S. history. AMERICAN EXPERIENCE examines the elements that together created this frenzy, including our longtime fascination with life on Mars; the emergence of radio as a powerful new medium; and the creative wunderkind Orson Welles.

60 min.

DVD \$24.99

ISBN# 9781608839643



JFK

In this probing biography, AMERICAN EXPERIENCE presents a fresh look at an enigmatic man who remains one of the nation's most beloved and mourned leaders, John F. Kennedy. Beginning with Kennedy's childhood years as the privileged but sickly son of one of the wealthiest men in America, the film explores his early political career as a lackluster congressman, his successful run for the U.S. Senate, and the game-changing presidential campaign that made him the youngest elected president in U.S. history.

240 min.

DVD \$29.99

ISBN# 9781608839650



Superheroes

Superheroes: The Never-Ending Battle is the first documentary to examine the dawn of the comic book genre and its progenitors, as well as the evolution of the characters who leapt from the pages over the last 70 years and their ongoing worldwide cultural impact. It chronicles how these "disposable diversions" were subject to intense government scrutiny for their influence on American children and how they were created in large part by immigrants whose fierce loyalty to a new homeland laid the foundation of a multi-billion-dollar industry that became an influential part of our national identity.

180 min.

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Step inside one of Britain's best-known manor houses. It may be more famous now than any time in its 1,300-year history as the setting of Downton® Abbey, but England's Highclere Castle has its own stories to tell. In its heyday, Highclere was the social epicenter of Edwardian England. See how all the inhabitants of Highclere lived, from the aristocrats who enjoyed a life of luxury to the army of servants toiling "below stairs." Also find out how the current inhabitants, Lord and Lady Carnarvon, spend their \$1 million in annual upkeep funds, and what life in a fairytale castle is like today.

60 min.

DVD \$24.99

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2012 fifth and final season of the TNT action series that also features Beth Riesgraf and Aldis Hodge.

The Mentalist: The Complete Fifth Season (Warner, DVD: 5 discs, \$59.98). This 2012-13 fifth season of the drama series stars Simon Baker in a Golden Globe and Emmy-nominated role as a California police consultant looking for revenge against the serial killer who killed his wife and daughter.

Nashville: The Complete First Season (Buena Vista, DVD: 5 discs, \$45.99). A time-tested Queen of Country Music (Connie Britton) is challenged by a younger diva (Hayden Panettiere) in this 2012-13 debut season of the musical drama series.



Vegas: The DVD Edition (Paramount, DVD: 5 discs, \$55.98). Starring Dennis Quaid and Michael Chiklis, this 2012-13 period drama is based on the real-life account of a Las Vegas sheriff who butts heads with a Chicago mobster.

Waking the Dead: The Complete Season Eight (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$34.98). Trevor Eve stars as Cold Case Squad DS Peter Boyd in this 2009 eighth season of the crime-drama mystery series.

September 24

2 Broke Girls: The Complete Second Season (Warner, DVD: 3 discs, \$44.99). Brooklyn roommate gal pals Max and Caroline (Kat Denning and Beth Behrs) continue to balance waitressing with trying to start their own cupcake business in this 2012-13 sophomore season of the sitcom, also featuring Garrett Morris and Jennifer Coolidge.



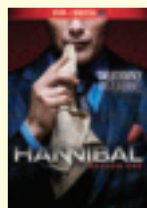
Doctor Who: The Complete Seventh Series (BBC, DVD: 6 discs, \$79.98; Blu-ray: 6 discs, \$89.98). Starring Matt Smith as the Eleventh Doctor, this compilation from the 2012-13 seventh season of the contemporary version of the cult classic sci-fi series includes two specials.

Foyle's War: Set 7 (Acorn, DVD: 3 discs, \$49.99; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$49.99). After the end of WWII, retired DCS Christopher Foyle (Michael Kitchen) is lured back to British secret intelligence

in this 2013 seventh set of episodes that includes "The Eternity Ring," "The Cage," and "Sunflower."

Gene Simmons: Family Jewels—The Final Season (Lionsgate, DVD: 3 discs, \$19.99). KISS singer Gene Simmons and wife Shannon Tweed adjust to newlywed life in this 2012 seventh and final season of the A&E reality series.

Hannibal: Season One (Lionsgate, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$39.98). Inspired by Thomas Harris's 1981 novel *Red Dragon*, this 2013 first season of the dramatic thriller series stars Hugh Dancy, Laurence Fishburne, Caroline Dhavernas, and Mads Mikkelsen as Dr. Hannibal Lecter.

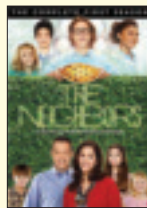


Hawaii Five-0: The Third Season (Paramount, DVD: 7 discs, \$64.99; Blu-ray: 6 discs, \$72.99). This 2012-13 third season of the contemporary update to the classic crime-drama series stars Alex O'Loughlin, Scott Caan, and Daniel Dae Kim.

Law & Order—Special Victims Unit: Year Fourteen, 12-13 Season (Universal, DVD: 5 discs, \$59.98). The 2012-13 14th season of the long-running crime spin-off series features guest appearances by Anna Chlumsky, Doug E. Doug, Tom Sizemore, and Anne Meara.

Modern Family: The Complete Fourth Season (Fox, DVD: 3 discs, \$49.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$59.99). Ed O'Neill, Sofia Vergara, and Julie Bowen star in this 2012-13 fourth season of the Golden Globe, Emmy, and Humanitas Prize-winning comedy series.

The Neighbors: The Complete First Season (Buena Vista, DVD: 3 discs, \$34.99). An unsuspecting family moves into the alien-infested community of Hidden Hills in this 2012-13 first season of the comedy series starring Jami Gertz, Lenny Venito, and Simon Templeman.



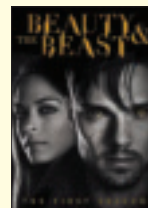
South Park: The Complete Sixteenth Season (Paramount, DVD: 3 discs, \$42.99; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$59.99). Fourth grade pals Cartman, Kyle, Stan, and Kenny are back in this 2012 16th season of Trey Parker and Matt Stone's long-running Comedy Central-aired series.

Two and a Half Men: The Complete Tenth Season (Warner, DVD: 3 discs, \$44.99). This

2012-13 10th season of the silly sitcom features guest appearances by Michael Bolton, Miley Cyrus, Scott Bakula, and Hilary Duff.

October 1

Beauty and the Beast: The First Season (Paramount, DVD: 6 discs, \$49.99). A homicide detective (Kristin Kreuk) joins forces with an enigmatic doctor (Jay Ryan) harboring a beastly secret in this 2012-13 first season of the thriller series.



New Girl: The Complete Second Season (Fox, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98). The escapades of a single woman living with bachelors continue in this 2012-13 sophomore season set starring Zooey Deschanel, Jake Johnson, Max Greenfield, and Lamorne Morris.

October 8

90210: The Final Season (Paramount, DVD: 5 discs, \$49.99). This fifth and final 2012-13 season of the nighttime soap series following a group of West Beverly High School graduates stars Shenae Grimes, Tristan Wilds, and AnnaLynne McCord.

American Horror Story—Asylum: The Complete Second Season (Touchstone, DVD: 4 discs, \$49.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$59.99). Evan Peters, Jessica Lange, Lily Rabe, Joseph Fiennes, and Zachary Quinto star in this 2012-13 second season of the acclaimed FX-aired thriller series.



Bones: The Complete Eighth Season (Fox, DVD: 6 discs, \$59.98; Blu-ray: 5 discs, \$69.99). Emily Deschanel and David Boreanaz match wits as partners in forensics and in love in this 2012-13 eighth season of the crime comedy series.

Doctor Who: Terror of the Zygons (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$34.99). Tom Baker stars as the time-traveling Doctor in this four-part story arc from the 1975-76 13th season of the long-running sci-fi adventure series.

In the Flesh (BBC, DVD: \$19.99). This 2013 horror series follows the return to civilization of a zombie teenager (Luke

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Islamic Economics



After the banking and financial crisis of 2008 and the events of the Arab Spring in 2011, the West has been exposed to an alternative, religion-influenced system of economics called Islamic Finance. Indeed, in the shadows of our conventional financial system, the Gulf States, Turkey and the Islamic countries of Southeast Asia have developed another option that appears to have been less affected by the crises of recent years. Islam's sphere of influence also happens to comprise an economic zone with more than 1.5 billion faithful. What makes Islamic Finance different from the Western system? How did it emerge? Could it be the long sought-after "third option" to capitalism and communism?

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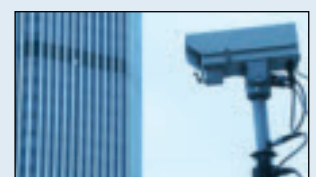
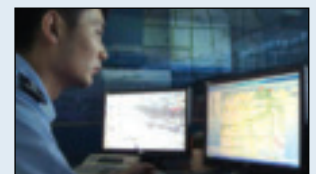


The Fear That Has 1000 Eyes Cities in the Age of Terrorism

We live in an "Age of Cities." Small cities become bigger cities, and eventually big cities become mega-cities, metropolises. For now, security means security of the "public space." Cameras, sensors and computers make this security possible by observing every step we take and looking for deviations "from the norm." But what is "the norm?" What is public and what is private? And, more importantly, who has access to all this data? Who, exactly, is watching and listening?

The Fear That Has 1000 Eyes explores how the threat of terrorism, and perhaps even more, the *fear* of terrorism, has changed urban life.

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Newberry) who wishes his suicide would have been truly final.

The Middle: Season 3 (Warner, DVD: 3 discs, \$44.98). Patricia Heaton and Neil Flynn star as weary Indiana parents with a trio of eclectic kids in this 2011-12 third season set of the Young Artist Award-winning comedy series.



Psych: The Complete Seventh Season (Universal, DVD: 3 discs, \$59.98). James Roday and Dulé Hill star as crime-busting best pals in this 2013 seventh season of the USA Network comedy series, featuring guest stars including Cybill Shepherd, Jeffrey Tambor, Christopher Lloyd, and Garrett Morris.

The Secret of Crickley Hall (BBC, DVD: \$19.98). Starring Suranne Jones, Tom Ellis, and Maisie Williams, this 2012 thriller miniseries follows the terrifying ordeal of a family troubled by supernatural occurrences.

The Six Million Dollar Man: Season 4 (Universal, DVD: 8 discs, \$39.98). Starring Lee Majors as an agent with nuclear-powered body parts, this 1976-77 fourth season of the action series features guest appearances by Flip Wilson, Robert Loggia, and Kim Basinger.

White Collar: The Complete Fourth Season (Fox, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.98). Matt Bomer, Tim DeKay, Tiffani Thiessen, and Willie Garson star in this 2012-13 fourth season of the USA Network mystery crime series.

October 15

Anger Management, Volume Two (Lionsgate, DVD: 2 discs, \$34.98; Blu-ray: \$34.98). Charlie Sheen stars as a chaotic private therapist in this FX-aired 2013 collection of episodes (11-32) from the sitcom inspired by the 2003 feature film.



Defiance: Season One (Universal, DVD: 3 discs, \$59.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$69.98). Set in the titular frontier town, circa 2046, where people and aliens coexist, this 2013 debut season of the Syfy series stars Grant Bowler, Julie Benz, Stephanie Leonidas, and Mia Kirshner.

Hart of Dixie: The Complete Second Season (Warner, DVD: 5 discs, \$59.98). A New York doctor enjoys her new practice in small-town Alabama in this 2012-13 sophomore season starring Rachel Bilson, Jaime King, Cress Williams, and Wilson Bethel.

Last of the Summer Wine: Vintage 2000 (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$34.98). Chronicling the escapades of a sprightly elderly trio (Peter Sallis, Frank Thornton, Bill Owen), this compilation from Roy Clarke's long-running comedy series includes episodes from the 2000 21st season.

Vikings: The Complete First Season (Fox, DVD: 3 discs, \$49.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$59.99). Produced by the History Channel, this Irish historical series following a daring explorer and his family stars Travis Fimmel, Clive Standen, and Katheryn Winnick.



October 22

Nikita: The Complete Third Season (Warner, DVD: 5 discs, \$59.98; Blu-ray: 4 discs, \$69.98). Based on the titular rogue assassin character from filmmaker Luc Besson's *La Femme Nikita*, this 2012-13 third season stars Maggie Q, Shane West, Lyndsy Fonseca, and Aaron Stanford.

October 29

Family Tree (HBO, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.98). A thirty-something Englishman explores his genealogy in this 2013 HBO comedy series—co-created by Christopher Guest—starring Chris O'Dowd, Nina Conti, Ed Begley Jr., and Michael McKean.



Looking Ahead

Slated for November are the first seasons of *The Paradise*, *Silk*, and *Under the Dome*, the third seasons of *Lost Girl* and *Peter Gunn*, the fourth season of *MADtv*, the eighth and final season of *Dexter*, and the 13th season of *Law & Order*.

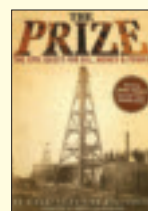
Re-priced or New to DVD/Blu-ray

Last Summer Won't Happen (Icarus Films Home Video, DVD: \$29.98). Presented in a newly restored edition, filmmakers Peter Gessner and Tom Hurwitz's 1968 documentary was filmed in New York's East

Village during the more revolutionary summer following the "Summer of Love." Bonus features include Gessner's 1966 Vietnam War short critique "Time of the Locust," plus two new filmmaker interviews.

Let's Talk About It! (S'more, DVD: \$14.98). Emmy-winning TV talk show host Dick Cavett is showcased in this hour-shy 1974 interview from *The David Susskind Show* (which ran from 1958-87). Also available are *Dear Ann Landers*, *The Geniuses of Chocolate* and *Uncensored! An Interview with Gore Vidal*. Coming October 22 are *Lifting the Bamboo Curtain* and *You Should Meet Studs Terkel*.

The Prize (Mill Creek, DVD: 2 discs, \$9.98). Subtitled "An Epic Quest for Oil, Money & Power," this excellent eight-part 1992 miniseries (VL-3/93 ★★★★★) is based on the Pulitzer Prize-winning nonfiction book by Daniel Yergin—chronicling the global hunt for oil—and features narration by Donald Sutherland.



Robert Drew: Ten Masterworks of American Cinéma Vérité (New Video Group, DVD: 10 discs, \$995; web: newvideo.com/robertdrew). Acclaimed documentary filmmaker Robert Drew is spotlighted in this collection that includes 1960's *Primary*, 1961's *On the Pole: Eddie Sachs and Mooney vs. Fowle*, the 1962 films *The Chair*, *Susan Starr*, *Jane*, and *Blackie*, 1966's *Storm Signal*, 1968's *Man Who Dances*, and the 2008 Alec Baldwin-narrated *A President to Remember: In the Company of John F. Kennedy*, which interweaves footage from *Primary*, *Adventures on the New Frontier*, *Crisis: Behind a Presidential Commitment* [VL Online-1/04 ★★1/2], and *Faces of November*. A 48-page booklet with diary-like notes on *cinéma vérité* is also included.

Sushi: The Global Catch (Alive Mind, DVD: \$29.95). Newly re-priced for home video, filmmaker Mark S. Hall's culinary-minded ecological documentary (VL-11/12 ★★★) scrutinizes the state of today's bluefin tuna population—particularly in light of sushi's growing popularity—and includes a profile of fourth-generation master chef Mamoru Sugiyama.



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The true-life story of professional soccer player Kurt Kuykendall is told in this riveting drama. Facing the death of his older brother, the rejection of his perfectionist father, his mother's crippling alcoholism, and his own failure to make it as a college basketball player, Kurt is driven to an emotional and spiritual crossroad. At the bidding of an insistent friend, Kurt reluctantly tries out for his fraternity's soccer team and becomes an overnight sensation. In time, his skill as a goalkeeper leads him all the way to represent USA in the Olympics. Drama, 106 minutes.

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NEW!

For Love's Sake

Days before Christmas 1978, Peter Walker, a young English preacher, is killed in a motorcycle accident. His wife Mary, already emotionally fragile, falls into the depths of suicidal depression. As a result, she loses custody of her two young boys, Paul and James. Through the intervention of her church, a dedicated social worker, and a caring therapist, Mary heals emotionally and finds the strength to fight a skeptical bureaucracy for custody of her children. *For Love's Sake* offers an honest and emotional glimpse inside a broken family. Drama, 93 minutes.

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NEW!

Catching Hearts

Professor Mark Gavin is a bestselling author and speaker who makes his living by disproving the existence of God. But what happens when extraordinary and unexplainable life events shake his faith in atheism? This provocative drama follows the intertwined stories of Gavin and two of his biggest fans, an aimless young man who can't see beyond the next party and a young woman who can't face her guilt after a tragic mistake. When "coincidence" brings all three together, they must face the evidence before their eyes. Drama, 74 minutes.

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NEW!

Scientology: The Science of Truth or the Art of Deception?

What is the truth about Scientology? Find out in this compelling documentary that takes you through the history and inside the walls of this controversial organization. To some, Scientology is a bona fide religion based upon rigorous research, and its doctrines are akin to universal scientific laws. But to others, including some former members, Scientology is a cult whose so-called doctrines are nothing more than ridiculous science-fiction stories invented by founder, L. Ron Hubbard. Documentary, 60 minutes.

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Charting Christmas

Why do we celebrate Christmas on December 25? How did Saint Nicholas become Santa Claus? Why do we have Christmas trees? *Charting Christmas* provides answers to these questions and many more as it explores the history of Christmas. See how Christmas celebrations evolved through the ages and were influenced by notable figures and entities including Saint Francis of Assisi, Saint Boniface, Charles Dickens, and even the Coca-Cola Corporation. Commentaries by scholars and historians illuminate the origins of Christmas and tell us why we celebrate Christmas as we do today. Documentary, 41 minutes.

DVD - #501542D, \$14.99, UPC 7 27985 01542 2



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This section features reviews of studio, independent, and foreign feature films. Each review includes pricing information, as well as running time, rating, subtitled information, and street dates for yet-to-be-released titles. Most titles reviewed here are widely available through most distributors.

★★★★ = Excellent
 ★★★ = Good
 ★★ = Fair
 ★ = Poor

11 Flowers ★★★

First Run, 115 min., in Mandarin w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$27.95



The boyhood recollections of writer-director Wang Xiaoshuai provide the inspiration for this alternately charming and poignant coming-of-age tale that also carries a serious, if nicely understated, political subtext. Set during the last year of the Cultural Revolution in 1975-76, *11 Flowers* focuses on 11-year-old Wang Han (Liu Wenqing), the son of a painter who was exiled from the city to work in a rural factory. The family struggles merely to keep food on the table, and when Wang is selected by his teacher to lead the school's daily exercise regimen, he's instructed to replace his tattered shirt—an expense that his mother shoulders despite financial difficulties. After only a couple of days, however, Wang encounters a man on the run from the police who snatches the shirt to staunch a wound. The fugitive turns out to be the son of another exile, who has taken violent revenge for a wrong done to his sister. The drama is punctuated by touching moments of closeness between father and son, as well as chilling episodes in which radicals and conservatives confront each other in the streets. Yet, despite the potent subject matter, *11 Flowers* is essentially a gentle film that is ultimately quietly moving. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

45 Minutes from Broadway ★★

Breaking Glass, 108 min., R, DVD: \$24.99



A filmmaker for over 40 years, Henry Jaglom remains a controversial figure, with some praising the uniqueness of his small-budget, highly personal pictures, and others dismissing him as an untalented hack whose movies amount to tedious navel-gazing. Hardly likely to bridge the divide, Jaglom's latest effort is a big-screen version of his

own 2009 play about a family of obscure actors who bicker, reminisce, and reveal secrets about their pasts during a visit from two daughters—Pandora (Tanna Frederick), a neurotic, stage-obsessed failure, and Betsy (Julie Davis), a straitlaced escapee from her relatives' theatrical mania. Observing the campy domestic drama is Julie's fiancé, James (Judd Nelson), a businessman who—it turns out—will be attracted to the family's outlandishly impractical lifestyle, using the occasion to reveal secrets and longings of his own. Although obviously intended as a tribute to artists who have pursued their dreams—no matter how small the success or recognition achieved (which feels like a defense of Jaglom's career)—the structure here is formulaic, the writing artificial, the acting unsubtle, and the cinematic execution, as usual with Jaglom, haphazard at best (the use of old songs as transitional devices is especially grating). Recommended for Jaglom fans, but optional elsewhere. (F. Swietek)

American Mary ★

Xrator, 103 min., R, DVD: \$14.99, Blu-ray: \$20.99



This creepy, perverted, feminist-themed thriller is a disgusting fright flick filled with horrific imagery. "You're going to be a great slasher," supervisor Dr. Grant (David Lovgren) tells eager, aspiring surgeon Mary Mason (Katharine Isabelle), whose plans to continue in medical school are jeopardized due to insufficient funds. Answering an ad for a stripper, Mary meets a sleazy sex club owner (Antonio Cupo), who eyes her impressive résumé and immediately offers her \$5,000 cash to stitch up a mutilated knifing victim. Soon, Bloody Mary builds a reputation as an underground surgeon who is particularly adept at bizarre body modifications. After she's drugged and raped at a doctors' private party, Mary quits medical school—taking a grisly revenge on her attacker while her patient list continues to grow. There's the deluded doll collector who doles out \$10,000 to have Mary modify her external sex organs so she can resemble a perfectly neutered Barbie (much to the dismay of her husband), and the man who pays her for a new penis and then ignores Mary's warnings about masturbation. Tongue-splitting and genital alteration fall more into the category of the routine. Written and directed by twisted twin sisters Jen and Sylvia Soska, this murky, low-budget schlock film was made in 15 days in Vancouver, British Columbia—with the Soska sisters playing fetishistic lesbian lovers who wish to exchange left arms (among other alterations). Not recommended. (S. Granger)

Arcadia ★★★

Film Movement, 91 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95

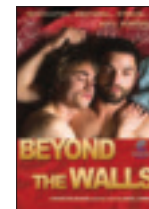
Underappreciated actor John Hawkes

shines in this road movie about a flawed family man driving his three kids on a coast-to-coast journey for initially obscure reasons. Tom (Hawkes) is largely an upbeat dad with a mercurial streak that surfaces when his children begin to suspect that something isn't quite right about their car trip. Tom claims that a new job in California beckons and that life will be perfect once they arrive, but his behavior along the way suggests that there is something darker going on, especially regarding their absent, off-screen mother. Daughters Greta (Ryan Simpkins) and Caroline (Kendall Toole), and son Nat (Ty Simpkins), increasingly feel the heat of Tom's growing anxiety, as well as his eccentric (even paranoid) notions about the law, restaurant service, and even the cost of entering a national park. Writer-director Olivia Silver brings a sure hand to this family odyssey, expertly modulating the tone from cheerful confidence to disillusionment to rage, resignation, and acceptance. Recommended. (T. Keogh)



Beyond The Walls ★★1/2

Strand, 98 min., in French w/English subtitles, DVD: \$24.99, Sept. 3



A touching if not entirely satisfying drama about the love between two Brussels musicians, *Beyond the Walls* introduces Paulo (Matila Malliarakis), a waif-like pianist who accompanies screenings of silent film classics. Paulo is living with an increasingly unhappy girlfriend when he meets Ilir (Guillaume Gouix), an Albanian bassist who keeps his sexuality discreet in a busy urban neighborhood. Booted out of his apartment, Paulo insinuates himself—a helpless boy-man—into Ilir's life and home. Despite initial resistance, Ilir falls for Paulo, and the script by writer-director David Lambert spends a long time focusing on the early, passionate stages of their romance. There's a wonderful moment when Ilir, riding a moving sidewalk, and Paulo—watching Ilir inch his way toward a train platform—horse around for their own amusement: lovers enjoying life in their own bubble. But that bubble bursts when Ilir is arrested for drug possession, forcing Paulo to struggle to survive physically and emotionally without his partner. The film's patient unfolding of moments turns various details into the building blocks of these evolving lives, but *Beyond the Walls* also sometimes suffers from an emotional flatness. A strong optional purchase. (T. Keogh)

The Big Wedding ★

Lionsgate, 89 min., R, DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$24.99

While the original French sex farce was an amusing trifle, this American remake is a

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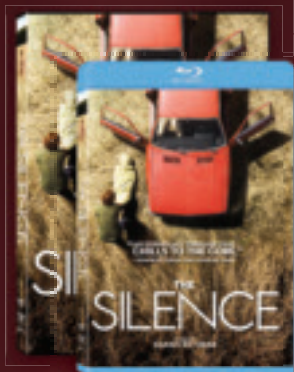
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crass, crude, mean-spirited, smarmy mess, unredeemed by a star-studded, multi-generational cast. "Marriage is like a phone call late at night," intones Robert De Niro, as the dysfunctional family story begins. "First comes the ring, and then you wake up." Missy (Amanda Seyfried) and Alejandro (Ben Barnes) are getting married. What complicates their nuptials is that Alejandro was adopted as a young boy from Colombia and raised by the Griffins, who already had two kids. Alejandro's devoutly Catholic, biological mother (Patricia Rae) is coming to the wedding—but Alejandro never told her that his adoptive parents, Don (De Niro) and Ellie (Diane Keaton), got divorced, or that Don's been happily cohabiting for 10 years with Bebe (Susan Sarandon), Ellie's best friend. Because they love Alejandro, the principals agree to "pretend" that the divorce never happened. Predictably, the charade backfires when lewd, lecherous Don and giggly Ellie once again share the master bedroom. Also present are the other now-grown Griffin children: unexpectedly pregnant Lyla (Katherine Heigl), who has just separated from her husband, and Jared (Topher Grace), her 29-year-old still-virginal doctor brother, who immediately falls for Alejandro's sexy, skinny-dipping Colombian sister, Nuria (Ana Ayora). Adding to the turmoil are a parish priest (Robin Williams) and the bride's prejudiced parents (Christine Ebersole, David Rasche). Based on Jean-Stephane Bron's 2006 film *Mon Frère Se Marie*, this formulaic, ploddingly directed remake by Justin Zackham is not recommended. (S. Granger)



intelligence, or plain common sense. By the end, two bloodied survivors have endured an ordeal that is only slightly more challenging than sitting through this mercifully brief waste of a movie. Not recommended. (J. Shannon)

The Bling Ring ★★

Lionsgate, 87 min., R, DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$24.99, Sept. 17

In *The Bling Ring*, acquisitive Southern California teenagers embark on an intoxicating, guilt-free burglary spree in the Hollywood Hills. Dazzled by the luxurious excess they witness on television and in fashion magazines, the group is headed by Rebecca (Katie Chang), who befriends shy, socially awkward Indian Hills High School newcomer Marc (Israel Broussard). Other members include Chloe (Claire Julien), and siblings Nicki (Emma Watson), Emily (Georgia Rock), and their "adopted" sister Sam (Taissa Farmiga)—the latter three home-schooled by their ditsy mom (Leslie Mann), whose curriculum draws from the self-help bestseller *The Secret*. Consulting stalker websites, they target the palatial, surprisingly unprotected homes of fashionistas Paris Hilton, Lindsay Lohan, Megan Fox, Rachel Bilson, and Orlando Bloom, among others. Based on a real-life crime spree that led to a *Vanity Fair* article, the teen intruders' haute-couture haul in glittery designer loot was said to have exceeded \$3 million (apparently none of these high-profile celebrities used a burglar-alarm; Hilton actually left her house key under the front-door mat). While this could have been a cautionary caper—a societal fable about materialism and amorality—the shallow, atmospheric script by director Sofia Coppola instead seems blatantly besotted with the idle rich, more enticed and titillated by their vacuous extravagance than interested in exploring the consequences of inept parenting. Optional. (S. Granger)



Black Rock ★

Lionsgate, 83 min., R, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$24.99

Written by prolific indie-film stalwart Mark Duplass and directed by his actress/director wife, Katie Aselton, *Black Rock* is a wholly unbelievable thriller that plays like an idiot's mash-up of *Deliverance* and *The Descent*, with a dash of *Thelma & Louise*. The story begins with good-looking girlfriends Sarah (Kate Bosworth), Lou (Lake Bell), and Abby (Aselton) reuniting for a weekend excursion to the tiny island in Maine where they played as kids. Before long the women discover that they're not alone—meeting a trio of rifle-toting war veterans, recently returned from Middle East tours of duty, who are presumably hunting. The girls invite the guys to share a few too many drinks around a campfire, and from there on everybody starts behaving like morons. Blood is spilled, leading to a free-for-all battle between the sexes, whose members start beating and killing each other in a plot that is almost completely bereft of logic,



Boy ★★★

Kino Lorber, 88 min., not rated, DVD: \$26.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95

In this semi-autobiographical film, New Zealand filmmaker Taika Waititi spins a fanciful tale about an 11-year-old Maori boy who worships Michael Jackson. Set in 1984, the story finds Boy (James Rolleston) living on tribal lands with his grandmother Nan, younger brother Rocky, pet goat Leaf, and a houseful of cousins. Boy is a fabulist who tells his Waihou Bay neighbors that his widowed father, Alamein (Waititi), works overseas, although he is actually in prison for robbery. When other kids make fun of him, Boy fights back, and often finds himself in trouble, although a teacher tells

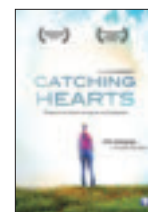


him he has "potential." Boy also imagines that older classmate Chardonay (Ricky Lee Waipuka-Russell) is his girlfriend, although she expresses no interest in him. When Alamein returns home after several years, Boy is over the moon (Boy believes that Alamein can dance like Jackson, which leads to Maori-by-way-of-Bollywood interpretations of the "Beat It" and "Thriller" videos). Initially, Boy emulates Alamein—which makes him a bit of a boor—but once Boy realizes that his emotionally-stunted father cares more about his missing loot than his kids, Boy's affection wanes. An enjoyable indigenous comic drama, this is recommended. (K. Fennessy)

Catching Hearts ★★1/2

Vision Video, 74 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.99

Three storylines connect in F.C. Rabbath's Christian drama about lost souls. Mark A. Maple plays Mark Gavin, a popular author and atheist whose new book denouncing religion is landing him on talk shows even as it masks an inconvenient truth: Mark has had a recent experience that has secretly led him to believe in God. While Mark is struggling to suppress this epiphany, young Dean (Michael Varde) is battling with his father (James M. McMurtry Jr.) over the former's addiction problems and destructive behavior. Meanwhile, Rachel (Jada Sanders), a young woman in a trying relationship with an uncaring boyfriend, loses sight of a child she's babysitting, which results in the little girl's disappearance. Dean and Rachel turn to Mark's book for advice about self-reliance, even as Mark's anti-God façade is inexorably crumbling. All three characters have pivotal encounters with a park maintenance man (Henry Tisdale), a God-like figure keeping order in a green kingdom, dispensing advice and reading human hearts. Rabbath directs the action effectively, although the cast is uneven, and—as sometimes happens in Christian-based feature dramas—the story seems to abruptly stop when the subject of faith comes up. But for the most part this is an enjoyable movie that is recommended for larger religious fiction collections and a strong optional purchase elsewhere. (T. Keogh)



Clip ★★1/2

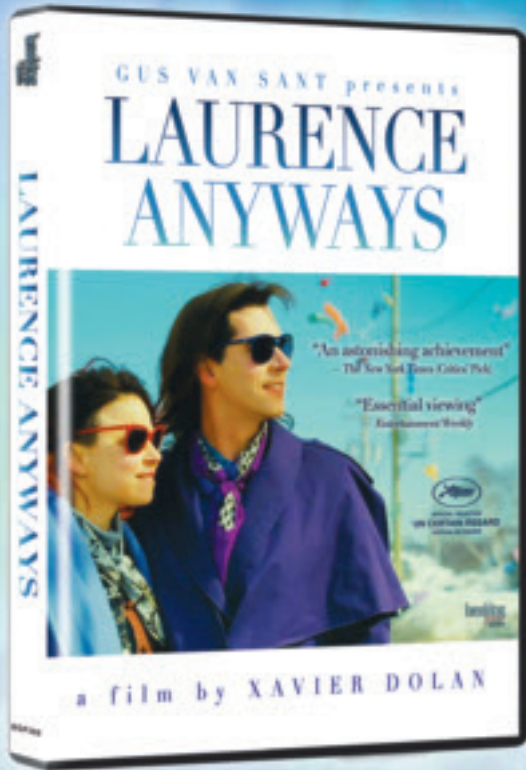
Artsploitation, 101 min., in Serbian w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95

The hedonistic lifestyle of teens growing up in post-Communist Serbia is examined in graphic detail by writer-director Maja Milos through the figure of Jasna (Isidora Simijonovic), a Belgrade high school student who tries to escape an unhappy home life (with an ill father and exhausted mother) by giving herself over



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Laurence Anyways

Laurence enjoys an intense and mutually loving relationship with his fiancée, Frédérique. But on the day after his 35th birthday, Laurence confesses to Fred that he longs to become a woman, asking her to support his transformation. The film follows the couple's on-again, off-again relationship throughout the 1990s.

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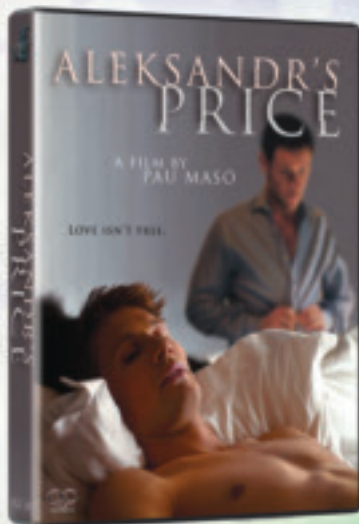
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to sex, drinking, and drugs. The voyeuristic camera follows Jasna's self-destructive fling with Djordje (Vukašin Jasnic), a brutal bully who alternates between using her for immediate sexual gratification and beating her when she dares to flirt with someone else. When not servicing his needs, Jasna is hanging out with friends, salivating over new clothes, binge-drinking, and watching lustfully as her thuggish boyfriend offhandedly attacks passersby or engages in random acts of vandalism. Throughout, Jasna and the other girls have their ubiquitous cell phones at the ready, recording every act of degradation and humiliation. *Clip* takes no hopeful turn—even a visit to a home for abandoned children ultimately says more about the characters' desperate self-absorption than exhibiting any substantive concern for society's rejects—and the extremely graphic depictions of sex and violence will be way too explicit for many viewers. But the performances of the young cast are impressive, and Milos' portrait of a generation in moral free-fall is unquestionably potent, with implications that go beyond the borders of Serbia. A strong optional purchase for only the most adventurous of collections. (F. Swietek)

Cloudburst ★★1/2

Wolfe, 93 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95

Thom Fitzgerald adapts his own 2010 play for this romantic road trip comedy starring Oscar winners Olympia Dukakis and Brenda Fricker as Stella and Dot, respectively, two Maine retirees who have lived together for 31 years. With Dot's eyesight failing, the tequila-swigging Stella serves as her eyes, describing phenomena such as clouds, to her partner. Dot's granddaughter, Molly (Kristin Booth), has a hard time accepting their relationship, and obtains a court order to place Dot in a home after she suffers another medical setback, so Stella busts her out, and the pair drive to Canada to get married. Along the way, they pick up Prentice (Ryan Doucette), a stripper en route from New York to visit his ailing mother. During the trip, the trio tangles with truck stop waitresses, suspicious border guards, a rapidly rising tide, and an angry naked man. With each challenge, however, they grow closer, creating more of a family with each other than with their blood relatives. Unfortunately, Molly and her police officer husband Tommy (Michael McPhee) follow them to Nova Scotia, throwing a wrench in their plans. *Cloudburst* suffers from some unnecessarily crass dialogue and a sometimes awkward fit between the comedy and the drama, but Fitzgerald's heart is in the right place with regards to the benefits of gay marriage and respect for the aged, making this multiple award-winning film a strong optional purchase. (K. Fennessy)



Come Out and Play ★1/2

New Video, 86 min., R, DVD: \$26.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95

The second film adaptation of Juan José Plans' novel *Who Can Kill a Child?*, the story here revolves around a young couple who travel to a small island paradise, only to discover that all of the adults have been killed (or are being pursued) by children who have suddenly turned into a soulless, ravenous mob. Made by the mono-named, reclusive filmmaker Makinov (who appears in public wearing a mask; he not only produced, scripted, and directed the movie, but also served as the cameraman and editor), the story moves the location from an island off the Spanish coast to the shore of Mexico, and turns the couple into Americans. But while the location is interesting, the film itself is both flaccid and uninvolved, shot in a jerky handheld style and featuring flat performances—not only by the children, but also by Ebon Moss-Bachrach and Vinessa Shaw as unlucky vacationers Francis and Beth. Makinov periodically tosses sudden scenes of blood and gore into the endless chases, but they only serve as repugnant interruptions. Ultimately *Come Out and Play* resembles Rob Zombie's remakes of the *Halloween* movies—not only unnecessary but also unpleasant and unwelcome. Not recommended. (F. Swietek)



The Company You Keep ★★★

Sony, 122 min., R, DVD:

\$30.99, Blu-ray: \$35.99

Robert Redford directs and stars in this compelling thriller about former members of the Weather Underground, the controversial radical 1970's anti-Vietnam War group. Just as she's about to turn herself in, Vermont housewife Sharon Solarz (Susan Sarandon) is arrested in New York by FBI agents. Solarz has been on the "wanted" list for 30 years for her role in a botched Michigan bank robbery that resulted in the death of a security guard. Reprimanded by his editor (Stanley Tucci) for not breaking the story locally, enterprising *Albany Sun Times* reporter Ben Shepard (Shia LaBeouf) uses a former lover/now FBI agent (Anna Kendrick) to zero in on civil rights lawyer Jim Grant (Redford), who has surprisingly declined to take Solarz's case. A widower raising his young daughter, it turns out that Grant has also been in hiding; he's really Nick Sloan, believed to be another bank robber. The only way Nick can clear his name is to contact his former compatriots (Nick Nolte, Richard Jenkins) and track down his ex-lover, still idealistic Mimi Lurie (Julie Christie). Meanwhile, Ben continues to delve into the back story, not only interviewing Solarz but also the investigating officer (Bren-



dan Gleeson), whose beautiful daughter (Brit Marling) catches his attention. Adapted from Neil Gordon's novel, *The Company You Keep* is a solid conspiratorial crisis-of-conscience tale about facing the consequences of one's actions. Unfortunately, Redford, Christie, and Sarandon seem too old to have been naïve student-activists in the '60s. Still, this is recommended, overall. (S. Granger)

The Croods ★★

Fox, 100 min., PG, DVD:

\$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$38.99, Oct. 1

Living in the Stone Age, life isn't easy for overprotective, prehistoric patriarch Grug (voiced by Nicolas Cage) in this animated family film from directors Kirk De Micco and Chris Sanders. Grug gets crushed by boulders, hit by lightning, and—worse—screamed at by his mother-in-law, Gran (Cloris Leachman). Convinced that darkness brings death, he awakens every morning proclaiming, "I'm still alive!", acknowledging that there's a perilous world outside the protection of the family's cave. No wonder Grug's cautious credo is "Never not be afraid!" But when the tectonic plates shift, causing earthquakes and lava flows, his Neanderthal family winds up in grave danger. This terrifies everyone except Grug's rebellious, titan-haired teenage daughter Eep (Emma Stone), who is curious about what exists in the mysterious beyond, especially after she meets Guy (Ryan Reynolds), a more advanced dude who not only has mastered the art of making fire but also wears shoes and has a pet sloth. When a landslide reduces Grug's cave to rubble, spunky Eep, her frightened mother Ugga (Catherine Keener), doltish brother Thunk (Clark Duke), belligerent baby sister Sandy (Randy Thom) and tart-tongued Gran convince reluctant Grug to venture forth with Guy as nomads into the unknown. Lifting liberally from both *The Flintstones* and the plot of *Ice Age*, the stereotypical, formulaic script here is somewhat offset by the imaginative digital animation, which is filled with fantasy creatures such as canine-crocodiles, flying turtles, tiny piranha-birds, spotted mastodons, lime-tinted saber-toothed housecats, and walking whales. It's energetic slapstick, squarely aimed at indiscriminating youngsters who will want to buy lots of Crood toys. An optional purchase. (S. Granger)



Dead Man's Burden

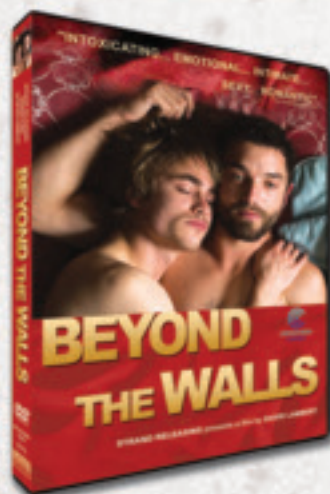
★★★1/2

New Video, 93 min., not rated, DVD: \$26.95

Writer/director Jared Moshé has crafted an intriguing tale of secrets, revenge, betrayal, and greed, set in New Mexico, circa 1870, where the land still bears the scars from the upheaval of the



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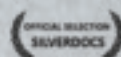
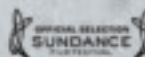
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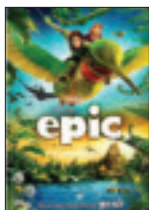
80 minutes - In English and Farsi - Not Rated

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Civil War, and married farmers Heck (David Call) and Martha (Clare Bowen) struggle to make a living on their parched property. Fortunately, a mining company has taken an interest in the couple's land, and a representative (Joseph Lyle Taylor) is dispatched to begin negotiations for a potential sale. Unfortunately, the situation is complicated when Martha's brother Wade (Barlow Jacobs)—an Army deserter believed to have been killed during the Civil War—returns to claim his share of the inheritance that Martha acquired following their father's death. But the circumstances of pop's demise appear to be in dispute, and that is only one of the many quarrels, conflicts, and confrontations that erupt within this small circle of people. *Dead Man's Burden* is fueled by an intelligent and artistic style, making it one of the more impressive independent films of the year. And the heart and soul lie with Bowen, who delivers a striking performance as a frontier woman who will stop at nothing to achieve her dreams. Highly recommended. (P. Hall)

Epic ★★1/2

Fox, 103 min., PG, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99



Beautiful to watch but allegorically bewildering, this eco-friendly, computer-animated fable from the creators of *Ice Age* and *Rio* revolves around a recently widowed, absentminded scientist named Professor Bomba (voiced by Jason Sudeikis), and his estranged 17-year-old daughter, Mary Katherine—aka M.K. (Amanda Seyfried)—who live on the edge of a vast woodland. When their one-eyed, three-legged pug runs off one day, feisty M.K. follows, leading to a fateful encounter with dying Queen Tara (Beyoncé Knowles), a tiny, Persephone-like creature who embodies the life force of the forest. The Queen entrusts now-miniaturized M.K. with her chosen Royal water-lily pod which will guide her people to crown their new Queen—but only if it blooms at midnight in the moonlight during the summer solstice. Embarking on her perilous mission, M.K. is guided by a Leaf Man warrior (Colin Farrell) and befriended by a rebellious Leaf teen (Josh Hutcherson), while facing evil forces such as the ferocious Boggen (Christoph Waltz), who wants the endangered forest to rot and decay. Based on William Joyce's illustrated children's book *The Leaf Men and the Brave Good Bugs*, filmmaker Chris Wedge's *Epic* manages to come across as both contrived and unfocused, with the central story of coping with loss becoming muddled in magic and mysticism. On the plus side, however, the vividly, deeply textured animation is exquisite, particularly when Leaf Men ride hummingbirds, and the Munchkin-like flower-people blossom, and some nice comic relief comes from a slug

(Aziz Ansari), a snail (Chris O'Dowd) and a guru caterpillar (Steven Tyler). A strong optional purchase. (S. Granger)

For the Glory ★★★

Vision Video, 106 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.99



An enjoyable, low-key Christian drama, *For the Glory* stars Jason Burkey as Kurt Kuykendall, a likable college student living with an angry, alcoholic mother (Nancy Fondriest) and a controlling father (Michael Landers). Residing in Bethesda, MD, the family enjoys deep connections to power in Washington, D.C., and the elder Kuykendall's plans for his son's future include a basketball scholarship. When Kurt—whose own wishes are ignored (he also bears the burden of his parents' grief over a long-ago family tragedy)—is cut from his college team, his father regards him as a near-loser who can barely be redeemed. Kurt becomes even more of a pariah at home when he discovers a talent for playing soccer and is invited to try out for the U.S. Olympic team. His romance with a supportive and spirited cheerleader (Chelsie Casagrande) adds further complications, and when a huge setback causes Kurt to doubt himself, he looks to God to help give him the strength to move forward. Director Donald Leow does a fine job of presenting the sports action, while also solidly evoking Washington wealth and power, and nicely capturing the modest grace of a community church. Combining fine performances with a compelling story about the tension between past trauma and future hope, this is recommended. (T. Keogh)

From the Head ★★★

Breaking Glass, 93 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99



Actor-writer-director George Griffith is the triple-threat talent behind *From the Head*, an independent comedy-drama largely set in an unlikely venue: the men's room at a topless bar. Griffith plays Shoes, the affable attendant in a small bathroom that witnesses a constant parade of flawed humanity through its door. The clever script presents endless possibilities for brief, interesting encounters, while drawing out the conflicts deep inside Shoes' seemingly easygoing personality. The bar's patrons (including a few familiar faces, such as Matthew Lillard and Jon Polito) visit the facilities and speak to Shoes about their hopes, dreams, regrets, episodes of guilt, and the topless dancers whose attention they crave. Meanwhile, several of the club's dancers are forced to stop by the men's room when their own bathroom is in disrepair, and through them the viewer learns that Shoes has been on the job for many years—an abnormally long time for a young man who

reads Samuel Beckett between handing paper towels to customers. Throughout, Griffith manages to find fresh visual angles inside a limited space while simultaneously delivering a warm, knowing, yet also enigmatic performance. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

Ginger & Rosa ★★1/2

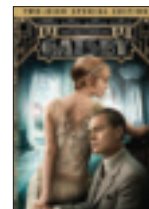
Lionsgate, 90 min., PG-13, DVD: \$19.98



Like or loathe them, Sally Potter's films (including *Orlando*) typically feature an extravagant visual style, and her latest is no exception, although the narrative itself is comparatively conventional. A tale of two girls whose friendship is threatened when one seduces the other's father, *Ginger & Rosa* is set against the background of the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, as the teens test the hedonistic waters of trendy London amidst fears that the world is about to explode. Unfortunately, the juxtaposition of the deterioration of their relationship and the unraveling of international relations comes across as schematic, and in the last act the film takes an abrupt turn into old-fashioned melodrama. Still, *Ginger & Rosa* benefits from excellent performances by Elle Fanning as Ginger, the more serious and intense of the pair, and Alice Englert as the carnal Rosa, and there are solid supporting turns from Timothy Spall, Oliver Platt, and Annette Bening as adults who offer advice to the girls about confronting the possibility of imminent annihilation. Although likely to appeal mostly to Potter's base of dedicated fans, this is more accessible than much of her earlier work, making it a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

The Great Gatsby ★★★

Warner, 142 min., PG-13, DVD: \$28.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$35.99



F. Scott Fitzgerald's classic 1925 American novel, set in the sizzling, sexy bacchanal of Jazz Age New York, is tackled here by Australian auteur Baz Luhrmann, who emphasizes style over substance. Narrated by wannabe writer Nick Carraway (Tobey Maguire), who serves as ambivalent observer and moral compass, the story revolves around the ever-hopeful attempts by Carraway's mysterious, party-throwing, Long Island neighbor—self-made millionaire Jay Gatsby (Leonardo DiCaprio)—to convince his first love, Daisy Buchanan (Carey Mulligan), to leave her philandering, polo-playing husband, Tom (Joel Edgerton), in order to marry him. Also on hand are Daisy's socialite friend, pro-golfer Jordan Baker (Elizabeth Debicki), and a Jewish "gambler" named Meyer Wolfsheim (Bollywood star Amitabh Bachchan). On a deeper level, this adaptation tries to explore the issues of

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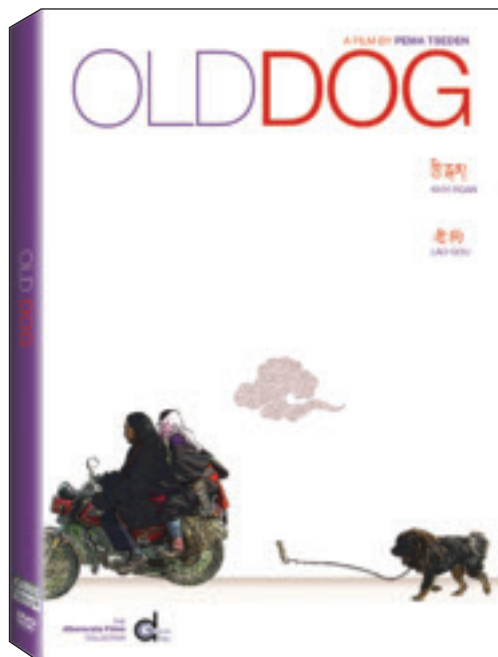
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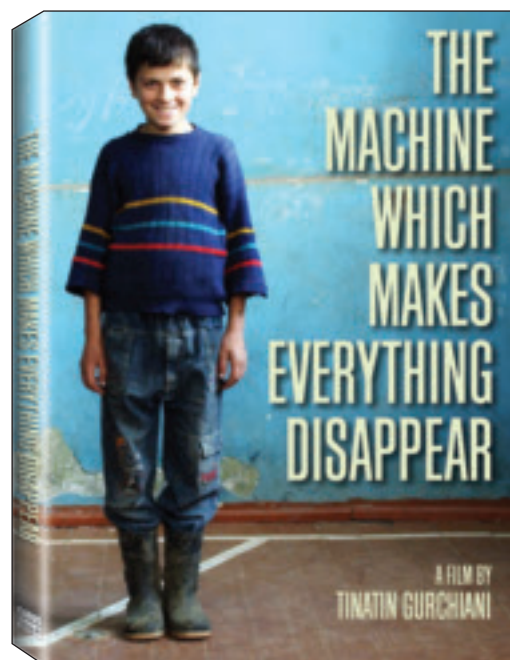


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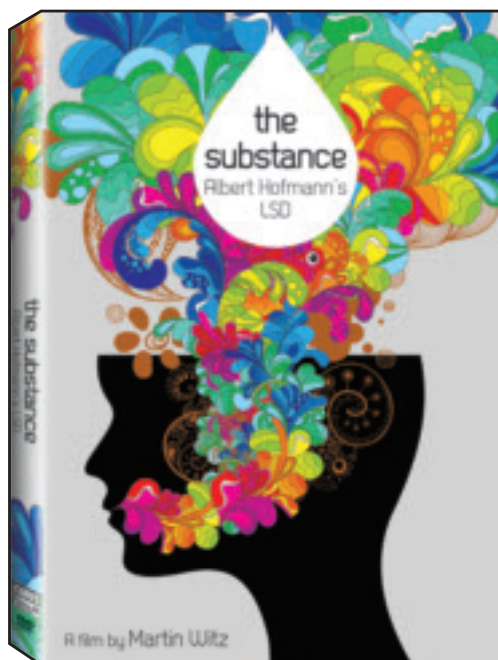
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inherited wealth, income inequality, social mobility, and the tenacious pursuit of the American Dream, but it's far more concerned with being glamorous and visually opulent—serving up an exquisitely gaudy spectacle (with lavish Art Deco style sets and haute couture costumes) that is musically punctuated by Jay-Z's contemporary, hip-hop-fueled soundtrack. DiCaprio embodies the naively idealistic, obsessively romantic cipher known as Gatsby, while Mulligan's frivolously fickle, golden girl flapper is sensual and seductive. A notoriously difficult book to adapt—note the 1974 production starring Robert Redford and Mia Farrow—this version is also sure to split audiences down the middle. Recommended, overall. (S. Granger)

The Hangover, Part III

★★

Warner, 100 min., R, DVD: \$28.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$38.99, Oct. 8



Back in 2007, screenwriters Jon Lucas and Scott Moore pitched director Todd Phillips a script called *What Happens in Vegas*—a raunchy comedy about a bizarre bachelor party in which the groom went missing. Re-titled *The Hangover*, the film—starring Bradley Cooper, Ed Helms, and Zach Galifianakis—cost about \$35 million to make and went on to gross \$461 million worldwide, leading to an inevitable sequel that raked in a record-shattering \$581 million. While not quite as profitable, *The Hangover, Part III* still did \$351 million in global box office. Here, nobody wakes up, having forgotten what happened; instead, spoiled, self-centered Alan (Galifianakis) is off his meds, and friends Stu (Helms) and Phil (Cooper) are taking him to an Arizona psychiatric/rehab facility when they're ambushed. Alan's brother-in-law, Doug (Justin Bartha), is kidnapped by menacing mobster Marshall (John Goodman) and his gang, which includes Black Doug (Mike Epps), who holds the Wolfpack responsible for millions in gold ingots stolen by Mr. Chow (Ken Jeong), an obnoxious, trash-talking Asian gangster. So hapless Doug is held hostage until Mr. Chow can be brought to justice. After trekking to Tijuana, they wind up back in Vegas, where they run into stripper pal Jade (Heather Graham), and Alan falls in love with a surly pawnshop clerk (Melissa McCarthy). Screenwriter/director Phillips juggles genres in a tepid rehash of gross, stale material that is no longer amusing (not even the smoking monkey), as the moronic plot revolves around clueless man-child Alan and stereotypically mean-spirited Mr. Chow. An optional purchase. (S. Granger)

The Happy Poet

Cinema Libre, 85 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95

This low-key but frequently funny comedy—written, directed by, and starring

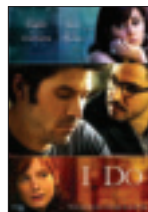
Paul Gordon—tells the off-beat story of a part-time writer named Bill (Gordon), whose modest dream is to sell healthy, vegetarian food from a hot dog stand in a park. With a tiny loan from a bank and a rented cart, Bill starts up his business...and quickly fails, but manages to attract the support of the freeloading Curtis (Chris Doubek) and stoner Donny (Jonny Mars). The latter plays a big part in transforming Bill's confusing business plan into a success, while secretly grafting his own pot-dealing side project onto the enterprise. Meanwhile, a lovely customer (Liz Fisher) is drawn to the obtuse Bill, encouraging him to show her some of the poems he wrote during his years in graduate school. Gordon's real gift as a comic filmmaker lies in tone and dialogue, the latter often hysterical when Bill's choppy syntax and flat-lining expression meet Donny's wary dude-speak. This is that kind of movie where the sight of someone landing his bowling ball in a gutter says volumes about abject cluelessness and slacker misery. Recommended. (T. Keogh)



I Do

Breaking Glass, 91 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99, Sept. 3

A smart and delicate story about conflicting obligations in life and love, *I Do* tells the story of a gay British national named Jack (David W. Ross), who has been living in the U.S. as a registered alien since his teens. Following the death of his brother—shortly after the latter's American wife, Ali (Jamie Lynn-Sigler), becomes pregnant—Jack takes on the role of dutiful support to his sister-in-law, and becomes a loving father figure to Ali's daughter, Tara (Jessica Tyler Brown). That cozy if complicated family arrangement is threatened when Jack's request for a visa extension is turned down and he is ordered to leave the country. In hopes of getting a green card, Jack marries his lesbian best friend, Mya (Alicia Witt), but that plan goes awry when he falls for Mano (Maurice Compte), a U.S. citizen with strong ties to Spain and intentions to move soon. Jack's dilemma—carry on with his fake marriage scenario in order to stay near Ali and Tara, or follow his heart and go with Mano—becomes all the more tortuous when his key relationships seem to sour simultaneously. Director Glenn Gaylord gracefully balances all of the film's distinctive elements, bringing the story to a bittersweet close that reminds us that life is full of hard choices. Recommended. (T. Keogh)



The Iceman

Millennium, 105 min., R, DVD: \$28.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99, Sept. 3

Inspired by actual events, *The Iceman* tells

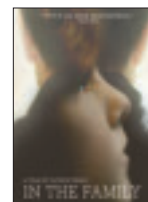
the sordid story of ferocious hit man Richard Kuklinski (Michael Shannon), who murdered more than 100 men in and around New Jersey between 1948 and 1986. Opening with a question—"Do you have any regrets for the things you've done?"—the film flashes back to the time when hulking, young Richie begins dating sweet, unsuspecting Deborah Pellicotti (Winona Ryder). Richie tells Deborah that he dubs Disney cartoons, although he's actually bootlegging porno films—when he's not stabbing, shooting, or bludgeoning those who annoy him. Richie's malevolence attracts the attention of a local gangster (Ray Liotta) who hires him as an enforcer. Dubbed "the Iceman" because he freezes his blood-splattered victims' bodies to disguise their time of death, Richie begins working as an assassin for various East Coast crime families, often using cyanide since it both kills quickly and is difficult to detect in toxicology tests. By the time Richie and naïve Deborah marry and have a couple of daughters, he's earning enough to move to suburbia (a former altar boy, Richie insists that the girls attend Catholic school). Based on Anthony Bruno's titular true-crime biography (as well as an HBO documentary featuring interviews with the incarcerated Kuklinski before he died at age 70), *The Iceman* features supporting performances from James Franco, Stephen Dorff, Chris Evans, and David Schwimmer, but the centerpiece is certainly Shannon's menacing turn as a man leading a double life. Unfortunately, filmmaker Ariel Vromen offers no psychological insight into Kuklinski's sadistic, psychopathic behavior in this chilling neo-noir that essentially glorifies a despicable killer. Optional. (S. Granger)



In the Family

In the Family, 169 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95

A film about a child custody case involving a gay man may immediately bring the words mawkish and melodramatic to mind, but these terms definitely don't apply to this excellent movie from Patrick Wang, who wrote, directed, and stars as Joey Williams, a small-town Tennessee contractor who has served as a second daddy to 6-year-old Chip (Sebastian Brodzia) for almost the boy's entire life. As flashbacks reveal, Chip's mother died in childbirth, and his grieving father, Cody (Trevor St. John), wound up falling in love with Joey. The trio enjoy a happy, loving household within a supportive extended family, but the comity is shattered when Cody is killed in a car crash. Since Cody never updated his will, his sister claims guardianship of Chip and freezes Joey out of the lad's life. Joey eventually finds a



soft-spoken retiree lawyer (Brian Murray) willing to represent him, but instead of leading to a high-strung courtroom battle, the script features a lengthy deposition that avoids histrionics and rhetorical bombast, opting instead for gently moving soul-searching. This upending of expectations is characteristic of the entire film, which boasts refreshingly naturalistic dialogue and unforced performances. Powerful and rewarding, this is highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

In the Fog ★★★

Strand, 128 min., in Russian w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$27.99, Sept. 17



The fog of war—i.e., the inability to comprehend what is really happening in the heat of conflict—is dramatized in an intensely personal manner in Sergei Loznitsa's somber adaptation of a novel by Vasil Bykov. Set in German-occupied Belarus in 1942, *In the Fog* opens with an eerily quiet sequence in which Resistance fighters Burov (Vladislav Abashin) and Voitik (Sergei Kolesov) approach the isolated farm of Sushenya (Vladimir Svirskiy) and shepherd the man away for execution. Gradually revealed, via flashbacks, is the fact that Sushenya was one of four workers taken into custody for sabotaging a rail line, but he was later released unharmed while the others were hanged. This turn of events led locals to assume that Sushenya had collaborated with the Germans, although in reality he was freed to serve as bait for the partisans. When the three men are ambushed while trudging through the forest and Burov is severely wounded, Sushenya must decide whether to carry him to safety or take the opportunity to escape. Along the way, the narrative is further deepened by flashbacks to the episodes that led Burov and Voitik—one a hothead, the other a sniveling coward—to join the Resistance. Watching this grim, deliberately paced film requires patience and attention, but those willing to surrender to its languorously hypnotic rhythm may find that the expertly-crafted *In the Fog* has a powerful effect. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

Iron Man 3 ★★★

Walt Disney, 135 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$44.99, Sept. 24



Opening with narration by Tony Stark (Robert Downey Jr.), this third chapter in the lucrative billionaire-turned-superhero franchise starts with a flashback to Stark's earlier life as a brash-but-brilliant playboy who is spending New Year's Eve, 1999, in Berne, Switzerland, with scientist Maya Hansen (Rebecca Hall), while arrogantly brushing-off nerdy geneti-

cist Aldrich Killian (Guy Pearce). Back in the present, Stark suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder and is obsessed with his ever-growing collection of cool metal suits, including his new Mark 42, which can be remotely-piloted. This installment's threat is two-fold: an evil extremist known as The Mandarin (Ben Kingsley), who is staging seemingly random terrorist bombing attacks, and—of course—devious entrepreneur Killian (creator of a game-changing nanobot serum technology known as Extremis), whom Stark's CEO and long-suffering/neglected girlfriend, Pepper Potts (Gwyneth Paltrow), is busy rebuffing. After Stark's magnificent Malibu beachfront compound is obliterated in a helicopter attack, our hero is presumed dead...until he surfaces in Tennessee, where he is befriended by a resourceful youngster (Ty Simpkins). As inventive Stark rebuilds his high-tech suit and adjusts the priorities in his life, buddy James Rhodes (Don Cheadle) pursues The Mandarin—discovering that duplicity and double-identity twists abound. The imaginative screenplay, co-written by director Shane Black, is full of clever, whimsical dialogue and wisecracking one-liners, while the jet-propelled CGI action sequences are awesome. But what sets this series apart is still the irreverently droll performance by Downey in the lead. Recommended. (S. Granger)

It's a Disaster ★★★

Oscilloscope, 90 min., R, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99



Armageddon comes to a nice suburb at an inconvenient time in *It's a Disaster*, an ensemble comedy about a group of friends meeting up for their regular brunch just when someone launches a widespread attack using nerve gas. Writer-director Todd Berger situates the action in a house owned by Emma (Erinn Hayes) and Pete (Blaise Miller), exploring the effects of the disaster on a handful of people who are increasingly aware that they have mere hours to live. Is this a tearful tragedy? Not at all: Berger milks the scenario for all kinds of comic possibilities, and there is much here, given that old chums keep secrets from one another and often repress resentments for years. Emma and Pete, who were planning on announcing their separation at the gathering, discover that each has been sleeping with the opposite-sex member of another couple, Lexi (Rachel Boston) and Buck (Kevin M. Brennan). Meanwhile, Hedy (America Ferrera) wants to lose herself in booze while boyfriend Shane (Jeff Grace) reveals a survivalist mentality. Stepping into this already complicated mess is Glen (David Cross), the charming if disoriented new boyfriend of Tracy (Julia Stiles), who thinks she has finally struck gold in the romance department—until it's too late. The cast is solid and Berger keeps the ideas com-

ing, with each scene playing like a blackout sketch with a punch line. While this could have grown monotonous, the script is smart enough to keep the viewer hanging on until, uh, The End. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

Joshua Tree, 1951: A Portrait of James Dean ★★★

Wolfe, 93 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95



This black-and-white biopic brings a specific period in James Dean's life to light, using jump cuts, moody music, and epigrammatic musings that lend it a French New Wave feel. Directed by Matthew Mishory, the film stars James Preston—displaying a chiseled retro look—as Jimmy, a pretentious hedonist who smokes, drinks, and lounges around the pool of his wealthy benefactor, Roger (although Jimmy insists that he's "thinking" and not simply sunbathing). Jimmy dismisses his contemporaries, serves up quotes from Rimbaud and Hemingway, and appears to have high self-regard (which may not have been far off the mark). On a whim, Jimmy takes a trip to Joshua Tree in 1951 with his unnamed UCLA roommate (Dan Glenn) and Violet (Dalilah Rain), Roger's assistant—a journey that frames an extended flashback focusing on his college days. A lackluster student, Jimmy tells his roommate that he thinks in pictures rather than words. When he isn't taking acting classes, he sleeps with both men and women (in scenes sporting a fair amount of male and female nudity). Although the roommate has a crush on him, Jimmy is slow to respond, possibly because he prefers the rougher stuff. Violet tells him he's not that different from other actors in terms of attitude and ambition, but he refuses to believe her—and his meteoric fame would, in a sense, prove her wrong. Offering an unusual take on a well-worn story, this is recommended. (K. Fennesy)

Killing Lincoln ★★

Fox, 96 min., not rated, DVD: \$22.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98



Woe be to Billy Campbell, or really any actor charged with portraying Abraham Lincoln in the wake of Daniel Day-Lewis's definitive, Oscar-winning performance in Steven Spielberg's vastly superior *Lincoln*. And woe-ful is Jesse Johnson—more Jerry Lewis than Day-Lewis—as John Wilkes Booth, whose audacious assassination plot is the focus of this docudrama based on Bill O'Reilly and Martin Dugard's bestselling titular book. The A-list talent associated with this production is all off-screen, from executive producers Ridley and Tony Scott to narrator Tom Hanks, who ticks off the days, hours, and minutes

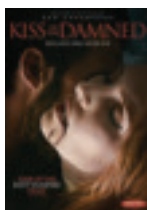
until both men meet their fates. Meticulously researched—with enough minutiae about Booth and his conspirators to attract history buffs and Abe aficionados (although little here may be new to them)—the film is undermined by the broadly-acted dramatic recreations. Booth was by all accounts a brilliant actor whom history, Hanks states, has reduced “to a two-dimensional scoundrel.” As portrayed by Johnson, however, he is more one-dimensional, a dastardly villain who might make even Snidely Whiplash cringe. Not recommended. (D. Liebenson)

Kiss of the Damned

★★★1/2

Magnolia, 96 min., R, DVD: \$26.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98

This lurid vampire saga from Xan Cassavetes (daughter of indie auteur John Cassavetes) recalls the stylistic excesses of Italian horror masters such as Dario Argento and Mario Bava while also ridiculing the swooning supernatural romanticism of films like the *Twilight* series. Beautiful bloodsucker Djuna (Joséphine de La Baume) lives in a remote mansion owned by Xenia (Anna Mouglalis), a well-heeled actress who is assisting her fellow vampires in their efforts to wean themselves off human blood (and be content with animals). But when Djuna meets Paolo (Milo Ventimiglia), the sparks fly, leading not only to a smoldering affair but also to his decision to be initiated into the undead in order to continue their passion indefinitely. The pair's sultry, strenuous nights together are interrupted, however, by the arrival of Djuna's sister, Mimi (Roxane Mesquida), a temptress who feigns an interest in Xenia's rehabilitation scheme but is ready to indulge in hunts for sustenance in bars and nightclubs rather than forests and bloodbanks, exhibiting a lack of inhibition that threatens the entire community. In terms of vampire lore, the mythology here is standard (even the modern twists all have precedent in the works of Anne Rice and her many successors). But what distinguishes *Kiss of the Damned* is Cassavetes' splashy style, marked by feverish camerawork, copious blood, and plenty of steamy sex. Likely to appeal to fans of HBO's *True Blood*, this is a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)



Koch

Zeitgeist, 95 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.99

Former New York City Mayor Ed Koch died at age 88 on February 1, 2013, the same day that Neil Barsky's documentary about his life and legacy opened in Manhattan. Almost two years in the making, *Koch* nicely captures Koch's refreshingly acerbic candor, beginning with his account of once flying into



New York, and looking down and thinking “All this is mine!” Born in the Bronx, Ed Koch began his controversial political life as a reformist Democratic congressman from Greenwich Village before going on to serve for three terms (1978-1989) as New York City's 105th Mayor. At the time of his initial election, the Big Apple was rotting. Traveling to Washington, D.C., in an effort to head off the city's bankruptcy, Koch instituted draconian budget cuts, even closing Harlem's Sydenham Hospital (which he admits was a mistake), a move that earned him the ire of the black community. Koch also had run-ins with the gay community, which accused him of exacerbating the AIDS crisis. Since he never married, many believe that Koch was a closeted homosexual (when asked about his sexual orientation, Koch snaps, “It's none of your fucking business!”). According to Barsky, the price that Koch paid for being in the public eye was not having a lifelong companion. A former *Wall Street Journal* reporter, Barsky shot extensive interview footage of Koch puttering around his small apartment, appearing at political functions, attending TV gigs, and just walking around the city, asking everyone in his characteristically whiny voice: “How'm I doing?” This engaging portrait serves as a fine celebratory eulogy for this outspoken, yet also polarizing, political legend. Recommended. (S. Granger)

Kon-Tiki

Anchor Bay, 118 min., in Norwegian, English, French & Swedish w/English subtitles, PG-13, DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray: \$29.99

In 1947, Norwegian explorer Thor Heyerdahl decided to cross 4,300 miles of Pacific Ocean on the huge balsa wood raft *Kon-Tiki*, named for the Inca sun god. Determined to prove his theory that some 1,500 years ago South Americans crossed the sea and settled in the South Pacific, Heyerdahl wrote a book about his perilous expedition that has sold more than 50 million copies, while his cinematic chronicle of the journey won the Oscar for Best Documentary in 1951. Financed by the Peruvian government, the charismatic Heyerdahl (played here by blond-haired, blue-eyed Norwegian actor Pål Sverre Hagen) and his brave crew of five men—four Norwegians and a Swede—spent more than 100 days afloat, encountering whales and sharks, along with treacherous storms, while a radio operator did his best to stay in contact (when the transmitter worked). While he did bring along a movie camera, Heyerdahl's craft had no motor onboard, and was built using only the indigenous materials available to the original sailors (the logs were lashed together with rope, not wire). Serving up an exciting re-creation of an astonishing adventure, directors Joachim Rønning and Espen Sandberg's *Kon-Tiki* was an Oscar nominee for



Best Foreign Language film. Highly recommended. (S. Granger)

La Sirga

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

A haunting, mesmerizing feature from Colombia with an edge of danger overlaying its exotic images, *La Sirga* is set in a remote lakeside village called La Cocha, in the High Andes. One day a traumatized young woman named Alicia (Joghis Seudyn Arias) arrives in La Cocha, seeking refuge in the home of her estranged uncle, Oscar (Julio César Robles), who runs a dilapidated inn. Alicia has fled the destruction of her town and the murder of her parents by unidentified guerrillas, and while Oscar offers her sanctuary, he is clearly reluctant to do so. Oscar warms to her over time, however, especially when he sees how hard Alicia works to help housekeeper Flora (Floralba Achicanoy) make the inn ready for tourists—who might never even show up, given the constant thunder of distant gunfire. Writer-director William Vega employs subtle dramatic tones, while Soffia Oggioni's dreamlike, disquieting cinematography captures enigmatic images: cracks of light seen through gaps in a bedroom wall; the strange sight of a grassy mound drifting on a lake against the wind; the seemingly innocent appearance of one boat following another—many alluding to unspoken forces that are bearing down on the story's characters. Recommended. (T. Keogh)



Let My People Go!

★★★

Zeitgeist, 87 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99

A hilarious romantic farce, *Let My People Go!* is a perfectly paced fable that at times feels like a living cartoon. Ruben (Nicolas Maury)—a Paris native working as a postman in Finland while living with his gay lover, Teemu (Jarkko Nieminen)—is more or less forced to take possession of nearly 200,000 Euros from a dying man on his delivery route. Teemu refuses to accept Ruben's explanation about innocently acquiring the money, throwing his partner out of their home. Reluctantly, Ruben returns to his wacky Jewish family (and community) in Paris, where writer-director Mikael Buch stages one comically surreal scene after another. One can quickly see why Ruben (who is somewhat reminiscent of actor Paul Reubens, aka Pee-wee Herman) was previously very happy to be living a long way from his relatives. His mother (Carmen Maura) passes out at yoga; an uncle tries to get him into the dry cleaning business; and his brother and brother-in-law engage in a slapstick fight. Buch establishes





SOMM

93 minutes, color, SRP: \$24.95, FRF 915663D
AVAILABLE NOW

Somm is a humorous, emotional and illuminating look into the mysterious world of the Court of Master Sommeliers - one of the world's most exclusive organizations - and their intimidating Master Sommelier Exam.

"Engaging! Reveals the astonishing level of qualification required to enter the top ranks of sommeliers."

-The Hollywood Reporter

"A Delicious Tipple! Suspenseful, entertaining & enlightening."

-New York Post



WITH LOVE FROM THE AGE OF REASON

89 minutes, color, SRP: \$24.95, FRF 915700D
In French with English subtitles
STREET DATE: OCTOBER 1

"Dear Me. Today I am seven years old and I'm writing you this letter to help you remember the promises I made when I was 7..."

Thus begins the letter that Margaret receives on her 40th birthday. Moved by the words of herself at 7, Margaret returns to her childhood village to rediscover the fanciful dreams and playful idealism of her youth.

"A clever, intriguing premise...with 'Amelie'-style visuals." -Variety



A GIRL AND A GUN

76 minutes, color, SRP: \$24.95, FRF 915687D
STREET DATE: SEPTEMBER 17

Breaking through the stereotypes, *A Girl and A Gun* reveals how some women have embraced this object whose history is deeply bound to men and masculinity. Punctuated with archival footage and expert commentary to provide a rich historical and cultural context, the film presents a nuanced yet empowering perspective on a deadly serious issue.

"Well-researched...a vital glimpse into a cultural phenomenon." -NY Daily News



YOU DON'T NEED FEET TO DANCE

81 minutes, color, SRP: \$24.95, FRF 915502D
STREET DATE: SEPTEMBER 17

This astonishing documentary about a man who overcomes his disability one day at a time reveals the extraordinary life of Sidiki Conde, who lost the use of his legs to polio at age fourteen. Today, he balances his career as an performing artist with the almost insurmountable obstacles of day-to-day life in New York City.

"Spectacular! The story is sweet and inspiring." -The Village Voice



A FIERCE GREEN FIRE

101 minutes, color, SRP: \$24.95, FRF 915526D
STREET DATE: OCTOBER 1

Spanning 50 years of grassroots activism, this exhilarating documentary brings to light the vital stories of the environmental movement where people fought - and succeeded - against enormous odds.

"Truly riveting. A sweeping history of the environmental movement, it's both a cautionary tale and a triumphant one."

-The Washington Post

"Melding history, science, and up-to-the-minute urgency, this is a clarion call that's passionate and provocative."

-Boston Globe



WHAT IF...?

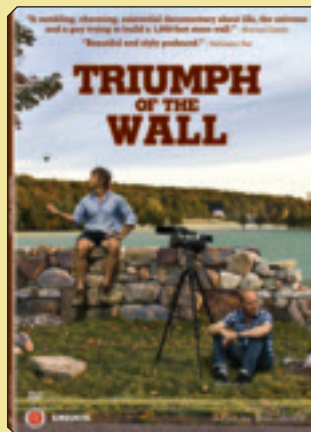
84 minutes, color, SRP: \$24.95, FRF 915670D
In French with English subtitles
AVAILABLE NOW

Two lawyers, in love, are on the fast track to success at a major law firm. But only one will get an important promotion.

What If...? explores the feelings so many of us have as we question the trajectory of our lives: What if this had happened, and not that?

"In the tradition of such movies as Sliding Doors." -Jerusalem Post

"Entertaining, thoughtful & fun!"
-The Ace Black Blog



TRIUMPH OF THE WALL

102 minutes, color, SRP: \$24.95, FRF 915618D
STREET DATE: SEPTEMBER 17

As hilarious as it is meditative, *Triumph of the Wall* begins as a chronicle about the construction of a 1000-foot stone wall by a novice stonemason in rural Quebec. What is supposed to take 8 weeks ends up as an 8 year journey.

"Provocative and oddly touching, it's a documentary unlike any you'll come across. In an era when seemingly every documentary is tied to a hot-button issue, making one about a guy building a wall is endearing." -The Village Voice



FAR OUT ISN'T FAR ENOUGH: THE TOMI UNGERER STORY

103 minutes, color, SRP: \$27.95, FRF 915656D
STREET DATE: OCTOBER 22

One man's wild, lifelong adventure of testing society's boundaries through his subversive art, *Far Out...* combines traditional documentary storytelling with original animation culled from seven decades worth of art from the renegade children's book author and illustrator.

"★★★★ Excellent!" -Washington Post

"CRITIC'S PICK! Charming...tantalizing captivating!" -The New York Times

the right pitch early on in this sharp and disciplined comedy that carries a hint of madness. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

Masquerade ★★★1/2

CJ Entertainment, 131 min., in Korean w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$26.98

The basic premise of Mark Twain's classic novel *The Prince and the Pauper* has proven remarkably versatile in terms of movie adaptation, its influence found in such diverse films as Kurosawa's 1980 samurai classic *Kagemusha: The Shadow Warrior* and Ivan Reitman's 1993 White House comedy *Dave*. In this lavish South Korean costume drama, Twain's cleverly executed plot is echoed in broad strokes. Set during Korea's early-17th-century Joseon Dynasty, *Masquerade* begins as lowly and seemingly malleable peasant Ha-seon (Lee Byung-hun) is recruited to replace the recently poisoned and still-healing King Gwang-Hae (also played by Lee). Taken for a fool by the King's corrupt council, Ha-seon (who of course bears a striking resemblance to the king) gradually wises up and begins to take noble advantage of his power, combating corruption, while ruling in favor of the oppressed and disadvantaged. Director Choo Chang-min deftly orchestrates a fine balance between comedy and drama within the king's court, especially when Ha-seon falls in love with the oppressed Queen (Han Hyo-joo), who quickly returns his affections. Nicely combining political intrigue with low-key humor, *Masquerade* was a huge hit in its native land, sweeping the Daejong Film Awards (Korea's equivalent to the Oscar) where it won in 15 out of 20 possible categories. Highly recommended. (J. Shannon)



Mosquita & Mari ★★★

Wolfe, 85 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95

A rule-abiding high school student forms a friendship with a troubled classmate in this touching drama. Yolanda (Fenessa Pineda) quickly notices Mari (Venecia Troncoso) when the latter moves to Huntington Park, a suburban-industrial neighborhood in East L.A. If Yolanda's Mexican immigrant parents want her to make something of herself, Mari's undocumented mother is just trying to make money enough to provide for her two children. Yolanda spends her free time hanging out with friends, while Mari smokes pot, rides her bike around town, and keeps her ear-buds in at all times. Yolanda is not only friendly with her new neighbor but also appears to have some kind of crush, although Mari doesn't return the attention initially. Eventually, Yolanda (whom Mari nicknames "Mosquita") and Mari start spend-



ing time together, mostly at an abandoned auto-body shop, but as Mari's grades improve, Yolanda's decline enough to cause her parents concern (they are convinced that she's seeing a boy). When Mari tells Mosquita, "It's me and you for life," further complications seem inevitable. Writer-director Aurora Guerrero's *Mosquita & Mari*—a Sundance entry—is an engaging coming-of-age film that benefits from believable chemistry, sensitive direction, and warm cinematography. Recommended. (K. Fennessy)

Now You See Me ★★★

Summit, 115 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99, Sept. 3

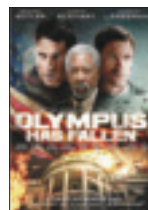
An intriguing escapade film revolving around deliberate misdirection, *Now You See Me* opens with an unusual quartet being drawn into a partnership: a hypnotist/mentalalist (Woody Harrelson), a card shark (Jesse Eisenberg), a pickpocket/safecracker (Dave Franco) and an escape artist (Isla Fisher). Each receives a cryptic tarot card, setting up a mysterious meeting at a Manhattan apartment where they are given a holographic blueprint for an incredible magic act. Within a year, the group, known as The Four Horsemen, is performing in Las Vegas—bankrolled by a millionaire (Michael Caine)—where they teleport an audience member into the vault of a Paris bank and send three million Euros fluttering down on the audience. After being arrested by a frustrated FBI agent (Mark Ruffalo) and his Interpol partner (Mélanie Laurent)—who are unable to prove the quartet guilty of the theft—they pull off another brazen robbery in New Orleans, distributing millions to hurricane victims. Observing their spectacular stunts is a cynical debunker (Morgan Freeman), who's built his reputation by exposing magicians' secrets. What the Horsemen are ultimately up to and why propels the suspense in director Louis Leterrier's fast-paced (if also far-fetched) flick, although it's a shame that more screen time isn't devoted to the magicians, whose astonishing antics are far more interesting than FBI/Interpol jurisdictional bickering or cops 'n' robbers chase scenes. In any case, it's easy to be swept up in the abracadabra if you're willing to suspend disbelief. Recommended. (S. Granger)



Olympus Has Fallen ★★★

Sony, 119 min., R, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$40.99

Think of Antoine Fuqua's suspenseful action-thriller as *Die Hard in the White House* in its tale of a former Presidential guard who redeems himself from shame and disgrace



by singlehandedly saving the United States. Mike Banning's (Gerard Butler) travails begin when a horrific accident near Camp David results in the death of the First Lady (Ashley Judd). Although the tragedy was not his fault, Banning is banished from White House detail and demoted to desk duty. Eighteen months later, South Korean diplomats are welcomed by President Benjamin Asher (Aaron Eckhart) at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. At the same time, a mysterious C-130 enters D.C. air space and launches a ferocious attack on the city (half of the Washington Monument crumbles), while Olympus (the Secret Service code name for the White House) is invaded by trained commandos, led by a diabolical North Korean terrorist (Rick Yune). Following protocol, the President, Vice-President, and Secretary of Defense are secured in an underground bunker (but treachery soon rears its ugly head), while the Secret Service director (Angela Bassett) summons the Speaker of the House (Morgan Freeman) to take over as acting President. Meanwhile, rushing to rescue POTUS and his young son (Finley Jacobsen) is brawny, ex-Special Forces pro Banning, who manages to outwit, outmaneuver, and outfight every gunman in his path. Yes, it's a formulaic story about a guilt-ridden hero facing his inner demons while trying to fight the enemy, but the CGI images of chaos and destruction in our nation's capital are both indelible and terrifying. Recommended. (S. Granger)

Pain & Gain ★★★

Paramount, 129 min., R, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99

Inspired by self-help guru Johnny Wu (Ken Jeong), Daniel Lugo (Mark Wahlberg)—a personal trainer at Miami Lakes' Sun Gym—is determined to carve himself a chunk of the American Dream...even if he has to steal it. When multimillionaire Victor Kershaw (Tony Shalhoub) becomes a new client, Lugo decides to kidnap the man and usurp all of his South Beach business interests. Lugo recruits two misguided accomplices: Adrian Doorbal (Anthony Mackie), a bodybuilding co-worker suffering from impotence caused by steroids, and Attica ex-con Paul Doyle (Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson), a devout, born-again Christian with cocaine-abuse issues. But after the ambitious muscle-bound trio abduct and torture Kershaw over a period of 30 days—forcing him to sign over his assets, including cars, a deli franchise, and a huge McMansion in an exclusive community—the combative Kershaw hires retired cop/private detective Ed DuBois (Ed Harris), to track the perpetrators down and also try to convince the incompetent Dade County police that a heinous crime has actually been committed. Based on Pete Collins' 1999 *Miami New Times*





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articles about the Sun Gym gang, director Michael Bay re-interprets this true crime story as a quirky, chaotic, dunderhead comedy caper loaded with viciously graphic violence and rampant misogyny. Entertainment-wise, this is more pain than gain. Optional. (S. Granger)

Paradise: Faith ★★★

Strand, 113 min., in German & Arabic w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$27.99, Oct. 22



The second film in Austrian filmmaker Ulrich Seidl's *Paradise* trilogy, *Faith* follows a minor character from the opener *Paradise: Love* (reviewed below). As Seidl has pointed out, each of the films can stand on its own, despite constants in the filmmaking style (featuring static long and medium shots, and no close-ups or mood music), an improvisational blend of actors and non-actors, and a focus on extreme, raw emotions. In *Faith*, a celibate, middle-aged Austrian woman named Anna Maria (Maria Hofstätter) belongs to a Catholic religious sect with Jehovah's Witnesses-like attributes. Between prayer meetings, she parades a statue of the Holy Virgin from one residence to another, trying to bring piety to the nation. The people who actually invite Anna Maria inside (a strung-out Russian prostitute, for instance) are often worse than the sinners who simply refuse to open their doors to her. But the real test of Anna Maria's zeal is at home, where her estranged husband (Nabil Saleh) returns. A Muslim Egyptian confined to a wheelchair, he alternatively cajoles her for sex (about which Anna Maria seems to have enough neuroses already) or denigrates her religion and berates her for being a "whore." Although occasionally shocking, Seidl's film powerfully dramatizes the agonies (which are more evident here than the ecstasies) of living as a devout Christian missionary. A provocative drama, this is recommended. (C. Cassady)

Paradise: Love ★★★

Strand, 121 min., in German, English & Swahili w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$27.99



The African catchphrase "Hakuna matata" arises in shockingly non-Disney context in Ulrich Seidl's feature, which—if rated—would earn an NC-17 for its explicit nudity and sexual content. Heavyside 50-year-old Austrian single mom Teresa (Margarete Tiesel) is vacationing in beachside Kenya, where she meets a trio of similar Teutonic women who are on an idyll to enjoy sun, sand, and sex with strapping young African men. And there seems to be no shortage of German- (and English) speaking Kenyan guys, wanting to sell visitors anything they can, including themselves. Initially hesitant,

Teresa is won over by Munga (Peter Kazungu), a seeming gallant who becomes her lover and asks for no payment, happily introducing Teresa to Kenyan life outside of the tourist havens. Before long, however, Teresa starts donating to Munga's suffering relatives, and the relationship turns exploitative after all. *Paradise: Love* offers a bleak view of very modern colonialism from both sides—the parasitic gigolos and the lascivious sex-tourist females, who take advantage of each other (only Teresa makes the mistake of believing she has found something genuine). Seidl adopts an unadorned documentary-like style for this first film in his *Paradise* trilogy. Recommended for more adventurous collections. (C. Cassady)

Post Tenebras Lux

★★★1/2

Strand, 115 min., in Spanish, French & English w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$27.99



Mexican writer-director Carlos Reygadas has built a small but devoted reputation as a cinematic auteur, but his willfully obscure latest film will likely try most viewers' patience. The Latin title translates as "after darkness, light," although Reygadas sheds little of the latter during this puzzling film that centers on a family—Juan (Adolfo Jiménez Castro), Natalia (Nathalia Acevedo), and their young children Eleazar and Rut—living in a large house in the countryside. Scenes from their lives—beginning with a protracted sequence of toddler Rut running around a waterlogged field, shouting out the names of the animals she encounters, and continuing through the brutal beating of a dog (which many viewers will find utterly repulsive), an elaborate family reunion, a visit to a sex emporium, and what appears to be a deathbed watch—are interspersed with sequences focusing on their less prosperous neighbors, particularly a fellow called Seven who is employed by Juan as a handyman (but is also seen cutting down trees in the adjacent forest—some environmental message?). The various scenes—whether real or hallucinatory—are chronologically shuffled, with a surrealistic depiction of a flaming animated red devil sporting a long dangling penis and carrying a toolbox into the family's home serving as a bookend, presumably to portray the entrance of evil into this pristine Eden. *Post Tenebras Lux* boasts some striking images—not to mention possibly unsimulated sex—and the director's use of a modified fish-eye lens to distort the edges of the frame adds to their shimmering beauty. But ultimately one is left with the nagging suspicion that it's simply not worth the effort trying to extract some enlightenment from this opaque, pretentious film. Still, Reygadas won a Best Director prize at Cannes, where the film itself

also picked up the prestigious Palme d'Or, making this a strong optional purchase for more adventurous collections. (F. Swietek)

The Rambler ★★

Anchor Bay, 99 min., R, DVD: \$22.98, Blu-ray: \$24.99



Clearly aspiring to cult-movie status, this straight-to-video effort stars Dermot Mulroney as the titular unnamed character, a man who wears cowboy boots, a weathered Stetson hat, and aviator sunglasses that he leaves on even during a brutal boxing match. Granted early parole from a prison located somewhere in sun-baked New Mexico, the Rambler heads for his brother's pony ranch in Oregon on a surreal road trip that is really just a loose-knit series of episodes that involve plenty of exploding heads (and other body parts), gallons of yellow vomit, unexplained lights in the sky, and a damsel in distress played by Lindsay Pulsipher, who deserves a medal for screaming louder and longer than any other ill-fated woman in the history of horror. Did I mention the batty old scientist (James Cady) who has invented a machine that can record dreams onto VHS tapes? Or Natasha Lyonne? (I still can't figure out what her role is about.). Writer-director Calvin Lee Reeder tries to channel David Lynch, Quentin Tarantino, and Rob Zombie, but *The Rambler* ultimately comes across as a confusing mash-up with an identity crisis. Not a necessary purchase. (J. Shannon)

Reality ★★★

Oscilloscope, 123 min., in Italian w/English subtitles, R, DVD: \$32.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99



Matteo Garrone's sardonic Italian comedy marks a major genre switch from his acclaimed crime drama *Gomorra*. Here, outgoing Naples fish-seller Luciano (Aniello Arena) meets a man who became locally famous from his participation on *Grande Fratello*, Italy's version of the voyeuristic "reality" TV hit *Big Brother*, in which good-looking strangers cohabit in a house filled with eavesdropping cameras. Luciano attends open auditions for the upcoming season, and gradually becomes obsessed with the notion of appearing on the show himself (he suspects that undercover talent scouts are spying on him to evaluate his potential). Before long, Luciano quits his job, gives away his household possessions, and looks for mystic omens confirming that he is, indeed, fated to go to Rome to appear in the series. Meanwhile, his wife and extended family are left to cope with this madness. A comedy of media-celebrity monomania, *Reality* benefits from Garrone's exceptionally handsome filmmaking style, which incorporates several impressively

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ELECTRIC MAN

"Indie film of the year" - *Flicker Magazine*

"Destined for cult classic status" - *Front Row Reviews*

Jazz and Wolf run Deadhead Comics. They owe their landlord £5,000, but they don't have it and it seems the shop is doomed. But when Issue No 1 of *Electric Man* mysteriously appears in the shop, it seems their problems are solved. Worth £100,000, the comic is being sought by a number of people who'll stop at nothing to get it for themselves - the strange and alluring Lauren McCall, *Electric Man* obsessive Edison Bolt and Lauren's Uncle Jimmy, a violent thug. Add to the mix, the return of Wolf's girlfriend Victoria and you have all the elements for what's been described as 'The Maltese Falcon' meets 'Clerks.'

Comedy/Thriller | 100 minutes | Color | \$19.99 | PRDVD2130

choreographed continuous-take sequences. An oddball film on a major contemporary cultural theme, this is recommended. (C. Cassidy)

Ring of Fire ★★1/2

Lionsgate, 90 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.98



Allison Anders draws from the June Carter Cash biography *Anchored in Love* for this Lifetime original movie, which starts with June Carter's days as a singer in the Carter Family, where she became a fan favorite (John Doe of the punk band X plays her uncle). By the 1950s, June is a solo performer (now played by singer Jewel Kilcher). June worries that her fiancé, Carl, won't stay faithful after they are married, and he proves her right. While performing at the Grand Ol Opry, she meets Johnny Cash (Matt Ross), who's also wed. Years later, when she's married to a stock car racer named Rip, Carter and Cash go on tour together, and Johnny bonds with June's mother, Maybelle (Frances Conroy). As the years pass, Johnny's drugging grows worse; nonetheless, the two principals marry once they're both single again—and after Johnny gets sober (although that won't last). June tells him that she didn't write "Ring of Fire" for him, but *about* him. The couple have a son, and June goes on to participate in Johnny's variety show, but his prescription drug abuse continues to cause problems until he finally quits for good. If Kilcher's Virginia accent comes and goes, she still delivers a solid performance, although Reese Witherspoon put a more forceful stamp on the role in her Oscar-winning turn in *I Walk the Line*. *Ring of Fire* isn't as distinctive as Anders' previous music films (such as *Grace of My Heart*), and June's faith receives short shrift here, but this is a decent made-for-TV biopic. A strong optional purchase. (K. Fennessy)

Room 514 ★★★

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



The impact of the occupation of Palestinian territory on the Israeli psyche is examined obliquely by writer-director Sharon Bar-Ziv in this small but intense film, set at a military interrogation center where a female investigator questions members of an army unit about charges that they mistreated an Arab civilian at a checkpoint. Although Anna (Asia Naifeld) is warned by her superior (and sometime lover) that she should drop the case due to political ramifications that could damage her future prospects in the law, she pushes ahead, eventually persuading a sergeant to reveal abusive conduct by the arrogant company commander, who—when pressed—argues

that it is sometimes necessary to violate the civil rights of individuals in order to protect the larger community. Making a virtue of low-budget necessity, Bar-Ziv stresses the claustrophobia of the interrogation room through jittery handheld camerawork and extreme but often off-center close-ups, while employing hallucinatory montages to reflect the heroine's inner turmoil. *Room 514* effectively explores the issue of balancing justice and security in a dangerous world—a dilemma that confronts not only Israel, but other nations as well. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

Shadow Dancer ★★★

Magnolia, 102 min., R, DVD: \$26.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98



Set in 1993, *Shadow Dancer* stars Andrea Riseborough as Irish Republican Army (IRA) member Collette, who is arrested by MI5 agents after planting a bomb in a London underground station. Collette's fate is suddenly delivered into her own hands when an officer named Mac (Clive Owen) gives her an impossible ultimatum: accept the possibility of 25 years in prison or return to Belfast and become a British government informer. Mac further tempts Collette with evidence that one of her brothers was killed 20 years earlier by an IRA sniper—not by a British soldier, which had originally fueled her anti-Brit sentiments. Collette's assignment as an informant is complicated by the fact that she must spy on two of her brothers, who live with their mother. Under the vigorous direction of James Marsh, this is a taut and complex tale of loyalty, self-respect, and paranoid intrigue. While Owen and Gillian Anderson (playing Mac's icy boss) are familiar to American audiences, the breakout star here is the relatively little-known Riseborough, who invests a remarkable mix of stoicism and charisma into her role, creating a genuinely original character that keeps the audience guessing during the film's numerous twists and turns. Recommended. (P. Hall)

Shun Li and the Poet ★★★

Film Movement, 98 min., in Italian & Mandarin w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95



Shun Li (Zhao Tao) is a Chinese immigrant who is working to pay off her debt to the organization that funded her passage to Italy. Ordered to take on one labor-intensive job after another in different Italian towns, Li has little choice but to put up with the arrangement and await the day her 8-year-old son will be sent to her from back home. Newly placed in a café in an island town, Li finds a friend in a grizzled old fisherman and poet, Bepi

(Rade Serbedzija), who treats her with great tenderness and affection. Their relationship doesn't sit well, however, with the locals, and Li's Chinese boss orders her to end her ties with Bepi or jeopardize her son's arrival. Tao and Serbedzija are wonderful as the leads in co-writer/director Andrea Segre's somber yet touching movie, a handsome film that wisely treats the story's location as another protagonist, with moody shadows, mysterious alleys, and streets that fill periodically with the rising ocean. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

Star Trek Into Darkness

★★★

Paramount, 131 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99, Sept. 10



In the peril-propelled opening sequence of this swashbuckling sci-fi adventure, impetuous Capt. James T. Kirk (Chris Pine) rebels against the Federation's Prime Directive that prohibits interference with alien civilizations. This breach of military discipline is duly reported by half-human/half-Vulcan First Officer Spock (Zachary Quinto), setting the pair in conflict. But soon the crew—including Zoe Saldana as Lt. Uhura, Karl Urban as Dr. Leonard "Bones" McCoy, Simon Pegg as Chief Engineer Scotty, Anton Yelchin as Chekov, John Cho as Sulu, and introducing Alice Eve as weapons expert Carol Marcus—are reunited aboard the starship *Enterprise*, proceeding at warp speed into Klingon space in pursuit of a mysteriously malevolent, super-powered, intergalactic villain (Benedict Cumberbatch), who is determined to destroy Starfleet. Bruce Greenwood scores as Admiral Pike and Peter Weller as Admiral Marcus, but it's British star Cumberbatch who steals the show, delivering an icily cunning performance. Director J.J. Abrams continues his reboot of Gene Roddenberry's iconic franchise, serving up a sprawling, high-tech, high-tension spectacle, adroitly revealing one layer of deception after another with a breathless sense of pace and tempo. The upbeat and lighthearted bantering humor of the original series has been almost discarded in favor of sinister, convoluted global conspiracies, challenging moral ambiguities, and a myriad of graphic effects and set-pieces. But die-hard Trekkies will appreciate a few fan-oriented surprises here. Recommended. (S. Granger)

Supporting Characters

★★1/2

New Video, 87 min., not rated, DVD: \$26.95



Daniel Schechter's talky film focuses on two New York film editors, Nick (Alex Karpovsky) and Dar-ryl (Tarik Lowe). If the men, who argue often, act like a married couple at work, they spend

just as much time arguing with their significant others. At a dinner party, Nick's fiancée, Amy (Sophia Takal), confesses, "I hate that you guys have a more romantic story than us" (the couple met on the Internet). Darryl hasn't known his girlfriend, Liana (Melonie Diaz), as long, but he's already considering marriage. Nick and Darryl spend their days working on a romantic comedy by depressed director Adrian (Kevin Corrigan), who rarely shows up, so they sometimes take narrative matters into their own hands. During the course of the project, Nick hits it off with lead actress Jamie (Arielle Kebbel), who has an on-and-off boyfriend, although she finds it easier to talk to Nick, which jeopardizes his relationship with Amy. When Nick gets the chance to work on another film, he has to break the news to Darryl that there is no room in the budget for two editors, even though they prefer to work as a duo. By the time the credits roll, some relationships have been salvaged, but not others. The actors enjoy a comfortable chemistry, but the dialogue, which feels improvised, is rarely as funny as intended. A strong optional purchase. (K. Femmessy)

The Taste of Money ★★

MPI, 115 min., in Korean w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.98

South Korean filmmaker Im Sang-soo's *The Taste of Money* is an overheated tale of wealth, class distinctions, sex, and emotional power. Handsome and hunky Young-jak (Kim Kang-woo) lands a job as personal secretary to business tycoon Yoon (Baek Yoon-sik), but quickly learns that Yoon's wife Keu-mok (Youn Yuh-jung) is the genuine power broker in the family. When Keu-mok discovers her husband's infidelities, she immediately zeroes in on handsome Young-jak, deciding that he will be her lover. While Young-jak embraces Keu-mok's advances, he also finds himself attracted to her daughter Nami (Kim Hyo-jin). Interwoven is a subplot concerning some dubious financial shenanigans involving an American entity. *The Taste of Money* certainly lives up to its rich title, offering endless displays of sumptuous surroundings and an expensively dressed ensemble enjoying the best that South Korean money can buy. And the film keeps the emotional heat dialed to the higher end of the cinematic thermostat, especially during Keu-mok's unapologetic cougar activity with Young-jak. But, ultimately, it all seems a little silly, so while this might appeal to fans of trashy soap operas, it will likely disappoint serious lovers of Korean cinema. Optional. (P. Hall)

This Is the End ★★

Sony, 107 min., R, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$40.99, Oct. 1

This crass, raunchy, ribald comedy featur-

ing actors playing "themselves" begins with Seth Rogen picking up longtime friend Jay Baruchel at Los Angeles International Airport. Despite Baruchel's reluctance, they head for James Franco's housewarming party, where they mix and mingle with Michael Cera, Paul Rudd, Kevin Hart, Christopher Mintz-Plasse, Jason Segel, and Aziz Ansari—at least until the cataclysmic biblical apocalypse described in the Book of Revelation hits, creating an earthquake followed by a sinkhole. Not surprisingly, many perish, leaving Rogen, Baruchel, Jonah Hill, Craig Robinson, and uninvited Danny McBride trapped inside Franco's fortress-like mansion, while demons and zombies roam the acrid Hollywood Hills and True Believers ascend into Heaven in the Rapture. The survivors turn out to be exaggerated sociological archetypes of any group of male friends, even when their caricatured conversation delves into topics including selfishness, stoner excess, selling out, and entitlement in our contemporary celebrity culture. Unevenly written and indulgently directed by Rogen and Evan Goldberg, *This Is the End* is essentially a sustained series of sketches of boorish frat-pack lunacy, with Rihanna, Mindy Kaling, and axe-wielding Emma Watson as token females. Reportedly, the filmmakers expected to get an NC-17 rating—not only because of vulgar profanity and drug use but due to the perverted sex scenes (including one between a human and a satanic beast with a giant phallus). To their amazement, the film received an R rating. A self-deprecating, sexist, horror zonk-fest, this is an optional purchase. (S. Granger)



Two Years at Sea ★★1/2

Cinema Guild, 92 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.95

This first feature by experimental filmmaker Ben Rivers is a follow-up to his 2006 short "This Is My Land," about a Scotsman named Jake Williams who served as a sailor for two years to realize a lifelong ambition: to live an independent, isolated existence in a forest. *Two Years at Sea* is a stark, artistic, fly-on-the-wall documentary in which Rivers captures Williams' life and world, from morning ablutions to pulling down trees, building a stone wall, clearing out an old trailer, reading, sleeping, and resting on a bed of moss and grasses. There are hints of Williams' past life and personal history in glimpses of old photographs, a small stack of letters, a postcard, and the music he plays. But there is no real narrative here, and Rivers' film turns out to be less a portrait of a man who has chosen the path of Thoreau than a visual study of the textures, light, shadow, and other details of a place and way of life that most of us will never



know. Rivers is more interested in composition—e.g., a wide shot of a straight horizon with wispy clouds edging in—than story, and after a while, the viewer accepts that nature is the main attraction here, making Williams, somewhat disappointingly, a remote subject. Still, thanks to arresting imagery—shot on 16mm cameras—this should be considered a strong optional purchase. (T. Keogh)

Unfinished Song ★★1/2

Anchor Bay, 94 min., PG-13, DVD: \$24.98, Sept. 24

While filmmaker Paul Andrew Williams' *Unfinished Song* is essentially sentimental blarney, it's elevated by the performances of two veteran stars. Terence Stamp plays Arthur, a crusty old retiree at odds with the world—including his estranged son, James (Christopher Eccleston), whom he ignored as a child. But Arthur is devoted to his terminally-ill wife, Marion (Vanessa Redgrave), who maintains her dignity even while her body fails, and he reluctantly escorts her to rehearsals of the Old Age Pensioners, a choral group of exuberant seniors led by ebullient young director Elizabeth (Gemma Arterton). After Marion serenades Arthur in a solo of Cyndi Lauper's "True Colors" at an outdoor concert, she dies, leaving Arthur a broken, grieving man. Hesitantly, he later joins the OAP singers himself, exhibiting a voice that ultimately lands him a solo at a national competition. This is a mawkish tale, which treats the other elders in the chorus as crude comic caricatures, but Stamp and Redgrave bring such a wealth of skill and expert timing to their weakly-written characters that they almost overcome the script's saccharine contrivances (her ethereal fragility contrasts beautifully with his taciturn gruffness). As a drama, *Unfinished Song* is a trite, manipulative tearjerker, but it offers a remarkable lesson in acting. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)



Upside Down ★★1/2

Millennium, 107 min., PG-13, DVD: \$28.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.99

In this sci-fi romance—which shares cinematic DNA with *Gattaca* and *Dark City*—the actors are live-action but the deeply-saturated backdrops combine Montreal sets and locations with matte effects. Adam (Jim Sturgess) and Eden (Kirsten Dunst) hail from twin planets in a solar system featuring double gravity. In his awestruck voiceover, Adam explains that Up Top (which recalls Tokyo) thrives by exploiting the more Dickensian Down Below. An orphan, Adam grows up with his aunt, who encourages his desire for exploration (and introduces him to an anti-gravity powder).



One day he sends a message that reaches Eden, initiating a forbidden relationship. But it's a strange one, since she can only visit him if they meet atop inverted mountain peaks and he tosses up a rope to pull her down. Unfortunately, their fun ends when they are discovered by the authorities. Ten years pass, after which inventor Adam finds out that Eden works for TransWorld Enterprises, whose headquarters connect the planets, so he takes a job there in order to track her down. At TransWorld, the opposing groups work together—although divided by gravity—and Adam forms a friendship with Bob (Timothy Spall), a disgruntled Up Topper who helps him construct an anti-gravitational vest to reconnect with Eden, except that an accident claimed part of her memory, so Adam must start from scratch. Although the film itself is uneven, Argentinian filmmaker Juan Solanas deserves credit for conjuring up a unique scenario. A strong optional purchase. (K. Fennessy)

Venus and Serena

★★★1/2

Magnolia, 100 min., PG-13, DVD: \$26.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98



Set to a Wyclef Jean soundtrack, filmmakers Maikin Baird and Michelle Major's *Venus and Serena* follows pro tennis siblings Venus and Serena Williams during a fateful 2011 season. Ultimately transcending the jockumentary genre, this is an excellent portrait of two remarkable young women and their family. Flashback footage captures the girls' uncompromising father Richard Williams (still scarred from an incident in which local racists pounded a nail into his leg in his native Shreveport) grooming the pair during their adolescent years in the 1990s to become the best tennis players in the world. January 2011 finds Serena hospitalized for a pulmonary embolism, while Venus competes in the Australian Open, although her own health problems will compel a hiatus from the game that (along with her love for her sister) defines her life. Both girls take up karaoke—or pole dancing—to unwind. At the U.S. Open, Serena's flashes of temper at bad refereeing (famously short-fused athlete-commentator John McEnroe defends her) earns her some bad PR. And, tragically, a random act of Compton street violence kills their half-sister. Besides the titular duo, who display remarkable resilience and devotion to each other, the unsung heroine here is their mother, Oracene Price, a witty, classy, and supportive woman (although divorced now from the ultra-controlling Richard). Interviews with fans—ranging from Bill Clinton to Chris Rock to Anna Wintour—emphasize that the Venus/Serena combo is a never-before (and perhaps never-again) seen cultural phenomenon—a

landmark sister act. Highly recommended. (C. Cassady)

West of Memphis ★★★

Sony, 147 min., R, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray: \$35.99



Joe Berlinger and Bruce Sinofsky's HBO-aired *Paradise Lost* documentary trilogy offered an incredibly potent commentary on the American justice system, not only casting doubt on the 1994 conviction of a trio of teenagers charged with murdering three young boys in their Arkansas hometown (supposedly as part of a Satanic ritual), but also spawning an international campaign to have the case reopened, culminating in the 2011 release of the alleged killers from prison under a little-used provision of state law that required them to agree to a guilty plea while still maintaining their innocence—a move that allowed Arkansas to avoid litigation for damages and effectively closed the matter legally. Filmmaker Amy Berg's *West of Memphis*—co-produced by *Lord of the Rings* filmmaking team Peter Jackson and Fran Walsh, who were longtime supporters of the wrongly convicted men—rehearses the facts of the case in summary form while also making some important additions. The documentary features a wealth of new interviews, including comments from Damien Echols, the only one of the three accused who was sentenced to death, and his wife Lorri Davis, who spearheaded release efforts on his behalf and married him in a prison ceremony. The film also presents a compelling mass of evidence—admittedly circumstantial, but significant—that points toward the stepfather of one of the victims as the actual perpetrator. *West of Memphis* shines a valuable spotlight on an egregious miscarriage of justice, while also offering post-prison portraits of the three released (although not exonerated) men that dramatizes the enormous human cost involved. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

What Maisie Knew

★★★1/2

Millennium, 99 min., R, DVD: \$28.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$29.99



Henry James' 1897 novel about a child shuttled between warring parents has been transposed to contemporary New York City in co-directors Scott McGehee and David Siegel's *What Maisie Knew*, which retains the original source material's technique of telling the story from the perspective of the titular girl, with the surrounding adults glimpsed only in bits and pieces. This tactic works as well on the screen as it does on the page, conveying the uncertainty that a youngster would feel when the people who are supposedly devoted to her welfare act in

irresponsible ways. Onata Aprile—sporting wide eyes and a subtly expressive face—is wonderfully natural as Maisie, while Julianne Moore is fiercely compelling as her musician mother and Steve Coogan equally convincing as her businessman father, both of whom treat Maisie more as a possession than an object of affection. As the new spouses whom Maisie's parents wed after their divorce, Joanna Vanderham and Alexander Skarsgård are persuasive as soothing if not always reliable alternate caregivers. *What Maisie Knew* could have easily descended into bathos and preaching, but the treatment here remains surprisingly subtle, closing (as does James' book) on a hopeful but decidedly ambiguous note. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

White Frog ★★1/2

Wolfe, 93 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95



With a highly-recognizable cast—including stars from the *Twilight* series, plus television's *Glee*, *Teen Wolf* and *Law and Order: Special Victims Unit*, as well as actress Joan Chen—*White Frog* should have been a more accomplished film. Nick (Booboo Stewart) is the autistic younger brother of Chaz (Harry Shum Jr.) in a well-to-do Asian-American family in Beverly Hills. When protective Chaz is killed, Nick and his parents go into a tailspin, with Nick seeking clues to Chaz's secret life, which involved a group of poker buddies, and his work as a volunteer and cash supporter of a threadbare community center for needy kids. Chaz also was gay, and mostly kept it to himself. Nick's odyssey to uncover the truth collides with the controlling impulse of his parents (Chen and BD Wong), but ultimately softens the seeming disinterest of one of Chaz's closest friends (Gregg Sulkin). Unfortunately, there's just a little too much going on in director Quentin Lee's ever-shifting story, making it hard for a viewer to latch on emotionally, although the strong performances help offset the narrative drawbacks. A strong optional purchase. (T. Keogh)

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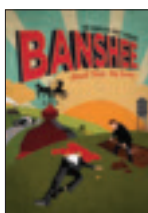
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Banshee: The Complete First Season ★★ ★

HBO, 4 discs, 600 min., TV-MA, DVD: \$39.98, Blu-ray: \$49.99



This Cinemax original centering on career criminal Lucas Hood (Antony Starr), who takes on the identity of a dead lawman and becomes the sheriff of a small Pennsylvania town called Banshee, is cable TV at its pulpiest. No one checks Lucas's credentials or questions his thoroughly unconventional tactics, but then again he's the first law enforcement officer to stand up to local crime lord, Amish outcast, and town butcher (literally and figuratively) Kai Proctor (Ulrich Thomsen). Lucas is a bad guy who seems to enjoy using his skills to do good, but while he zealously protects his adopted home, he carries on brutal criminal escapades in surrounding communities with a small gang of partners. Meanwhile, his former girlfriend and accomplice, Ana (Ivana Milicevic), has assumed a new identity as Carrie Hopewell, wife of the local D.A. and mother of two children; and Mr. Rabbit (Ben Cross), the Ukrainian gangster the pair betrayed 15 years ago (who also happens to be Ana's father), is still out for revenge. Creators David Schickler and novelist Jonathan Tropper fill *Banshee* with complicated, contradictory characters who have unusual backstories and outsized motivations, placing them in extreme situations requiring over-the-top solutions in this highly entertaining series. Compiling all 10 episodes from the 2013 debut run, extras include audio commentaries, behind-the-scenes featurettes, and deleted scenes. Recommended. (S. Axmayer)

Black Sabbath ★★ ★

Kino, 92 min., in Italian w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$24.95



Mario Bava is considered the godfather of Italian horror, and his 1963 anthology film is one of the eeriest and most stylish of the genre—as well as the director's personal favorite. *Black Sabbath* opens with the ornate giallo thriller "The Telephone," a nearly one-woman show played in a stylish apartment, with Michele Mercier as a call girl terrified by threatening phone calls. Next up is the gorgeous and haunting vampire tale "The Wurdalak," with Boris Karloff as a demonic patriarch systematically sucking the life from his family—one person at a time. Rounding out the trio is the chilling ghost story "A Drop of Water," a masterpiece of shiver-inducing imagery involving a nurse (Jacqueline Pierreux) haunted by the piercing eyes of a restless corpse from which she's taken a sapphire ring while preparing the body for burial. And just before sending viewers on their way, Bava tosses in a playful coda to

remind everyone that it's only a movie. *Black Sabbath* was trimmed, toned down, rescored, and rearranged for its initial U.S. release, but was restored to its original Italian cut a decade ago and it is this superior version that Kino has remastered from a 35mm negative. As with the best horror pictures of its era, *Black Sabbath* underscores the fact that the most unsettling terrors are a matter of disturbing imagery and suggestion. Arriving on DVD and Blu-ray, extras include a gallery of Bava film trailers. Recommended. (S. Axmayer)

Blood of the Vine: Season 1 ★★ ★

MHz, 2 discs, 371 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$39.95



Among the army of small-screen detectives with unusual deductive powers, Benjamin Lebel is certainly one of the most peculiar. Lebel is a famous oenologist who demonstrates an ability to sniff out not only the provenance of the rarest vintages but also the culprits behind mysterious deaths in the French wine country. As played by Pierre Arditi, he's a caustic, mischievous figure with plenty of affairs in his past and a habit of bantering with police inspectors (who seek him for expert assistance) and with his young aides, who accompany Lebel on forays to collect information for the guides he writes for enthusiasts—endeavors that invariably lead to new cases to solve. Based on novels by Jean-Pierre Alaux and Noël Balen, the scripts for this quartet of episodes tend to pile up complications and coincidences; but the plots are generally intriguing (the first evolves into a revenge tale dating back to World War II, the second concerns a feud within a family of vintners, the third starts with the suspicious death of the fiancé of Lebel's daughter, and the fourth investigates the contamination of the wine cellar of his former assistant). And the cast is excellent, both the regulars and guest stars who include Marisa Berenson and Judith Magre. Compiling all four episodes from 2011–12, this set is recommended. [Note: *Blood of the Vine: Season 2* is also newly available.] (F. Swietek)

Bonanza: The Official Sixth Season, Volume 1 ★★ ★ 1/2

Paramount, 5 discs, 912 min., not rated, DVD: \$45.98



The years 1964–65 marked the point at which NBC's powerhouse Western reached the top of the Nielsen ratings (where it remained for three years) and was also the final run for Pernel Roberts as Adam, the eldest Cartwright son. The plots traditionally offer a mix of drama and comedy, with some of the most memorable moments coming in "Old Sheba," in which Joe (Michael Landon)

and Hoss (Dan Blocker) take an elephant as payment from a circus, much to the distress of their father, Ben (Lorne Greene). Also notable is "A Knight to Remember," in which Henry Jones plays a man who claims to be King Arthur and winds up rescuing Adam time and again. And Landon has an opportunity to flex his dramatic muscles in "Between Heaven and Earth," which finds Joe struggling to overcome his fear of heights. Overall, the scripts are strong, and they offer stellar opportunities for a raft of guest stars, including Rory Calhoun, Dan Duryea, George Kennedy, Bruce Cabot, James Gregory, and Charles Bronson—to name a few. Presenting the first 18 episodes from the sixth season, extras include audio commentaries, guest appearances by Greene and Landon on variety shows, rare promos, and photo galleries. Highly recommended. [Note: *Bonanza: The Official Sixth Season, Volume 2* is also available.] (F. Swietek)

Breaking Bad: The Fifth Season ★★ ★ 1/2

Sony, 375 min., not rated, DVD: 3 discs, \$55.99; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$65.99



The fourth season of AMC's *Breaking Bad* ended with Walter White (Bryan Cranston) killing Gus Fring, the drug kingpin of the American Southwest, thereby clearing the decks for his own uncontested rule of the meth trade. This fifth set (actually a half-season) in many ways completes Walt's brutal evolution from desperate cancer victim to superstar meth cook to cunning, cruel drug lord so driven to succeed that he has long forgotten the "modest" goals he set for himself back when the series began. Cranston won the Emmy for Outstanding Lead Actor in a Drama Series three years running for his performance; well-deserved acclaim, as he has created the most quietly intimidating character on TV. Every moral line Walt has crossed costs him a little bit more of his humanity, but even more damning has been the effect on those around him, including wife Skyler (Anna Gunn) and partner and former addict Jesse (Aaron Paul). Each is either pushed beyond the limits of conscience or suffocated by Walt's power over them, and fracturing relationships here take precedence over explosive action. Presenting the first eight episodes of the 2012–13 final season, extras include cast and crew audio commentaries, uncensored episodes, behind-the-scenes featurettes, deleted and extended scenes, a gag reel, and a new exclusive scene entitled "Chicks 'n' Guns." Highly recommended. (S. Axmayer)

Call the Midwife: Season Two ★★ ★

BBC, 555 min., not rated, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$44.98

East London in the late 1950s wouldn't be

the same without the nuns and nurses of Nonnatus House, who populate this BBC hit adaptation of the partly fictionalized memoirs of midwife Jennifer Worth. As narrator Vanessa Redgrave (serving as the voice of the older Jenny Lee) puts it, "We were part of the fabric of the district." The second season begins with the Christmas special, in which help is provided to two women isolated from their families in different ways. For all the lives saved, however, losses are inevitable, and when it is suggested that Cynthia (Bryony Hannah) may have been responsible for a newborn's death, she suffers a crisis of faith. As the year continues, Jenny (Jessica Raine) works a surgical routine with the stern Dr. Turner (Stephen McGann), while struggling with her feelings for her friend Jimmy (George Rainsford); Sisters Julianne (Jenny Agutter) and Evangelina (Pam Ferris) try to keep the foggy-minded Monica Joan (Judy Parfitt) occupied; and Chummy (Miranda Hart) takes a job as a missionary, with Jane (Dorothy Atkinson) stepping into her place. A talkative vicar, the Rev. Applebee-Thornton (Jason Watkins), establishes a bond with Jane, and a parallel relationship develops between Dr. Turner, a widower, and Sister Bernadette (Laura Main), causing the latter to question her vocation. Other developments include a tuberculosis outbreak, a baby with spina bifida, and an overburdened mother desperate to terminate a pregnancy. Compiling eight episodes from 2012, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette. Often sentimental, but solidly raising resonant questions about social issues and the benefits of community, this popular series is recommended. (K. Fennessy)



Come in Spinner ★★

BFS, 2 discs, 217 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.98

Based on the classic 1951 novel by Dymphna Cusack and Florence James, this 1990 Australian TV production follows three employees (and their respective woes) of a posh Sydney beauty salon during World War II. Claire (Lisa Harrow) is newly pregnant and dealing with a boyfriend who has yet to jettison his spouse; Deb (Kerry Armstrong) has an older lover who wants to marry her despite the fact she's a wife and mother; and Guinea (Rebecca Gibney) is a free spirit who is bothered by a persistent ex-beau. The drama is overripe with conflict, including the harsh division between the privileged and the struggling working class, the tensions between Australian servicemen and their boisterous American counterparts in Sydney's nightlife, women's new assertiveness, and the constant state of turmoil and loss created by



wartime. However, the miniseries lacks the power of the novel (which created major controversy in its day), diluting the source's emotional maelstrom into a tepid swirl of soapy, often predictable melodrama. On top of that, the ensemble cast sometimes seem to be playing the material as a tongue-in-cheek lark instead of a serious consideration of Sydney's moral climate in that era. To its credit, however, *Come in Spinner* does boast handsome production design. Optional, at best. (P. Hall)

Detective De Luca

★★★1/2

MHz, 2 discs, 430 min., in Italian w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$39.95

Comprising four feature-length episodes, this compilation of the engaging Italian RAI-TV series (broadcast in Italy in 2008) is based on mystery novels and characters created by reporter/author Carlo Lucarelli. Detective De Luca (Alessandro Preziosi) is a no-nonsense, bicycle-riding, top-cop type (his dad was a police officer killed in the line of duty) who is seen on the beat for a 10-year narrative span (1938–48) falling during and after the reign of Mussolini and World War II. Although he is avowedly apolitical (only interested in solving cases), De Luca is repeatedly drawn into war-related violence and power plays among fascists, communists, and Christian Democratic Party members. At one point he even saves Il Duce's life, making De Luca an accidental national hero to some and a target for partisans (including a provisional constable who spares De Luca in exchange for expert help in solving the slaying of a popular village elder). De Luca also gets to romantically frolic with a number of enticing femme fatales (and the nudity here is fairly frank). The mysteries, which take place in Bologna and along the Adriatic coast, often seem to be on the murky side (especially the finale), but usually turn out to be basic crimes of passion and greed that due to the dangerous backdrop only wind up resembling depredations of the Nazis, Black Shirts, and their opponents. A welcome international TV drama, this is highly recommended. (C. Cassidy)



Drop Dead Diva: The Complete Fourth Season

★★★

Sony, 3 discs, 563 min., not rated, DVD: \$30.99

The fourth season of Lifetime's legal dramedy revolves around romances both old and new. Jane (Brooke Elliott)—the plus-sized attorney whose body houses the spirit of a deceased aspiring model named Deb—returns to Los Angeles after a trip to



Italy with beau Owen (Lex Medlin) only to find that co-worker Kim (Kate Levering) took over the law firm; guardian angel Fred (Ben Feldman), who'd been dating Jane's best friend, Stacy (April Bowlby), met someone new; and Grayson (Jackson Hurst), who was Deb's boyfriend, developed feelings for Jane while she was away. Senior partner Jay (Josh Stamberg) returns with new creditor Luke (Carter MacIntyre), who doubles as Fred's replacement. After Stacy's new friend Nikki (wooden guest star Kim Kardashian) turns out to be an unreliable business partner, Stacy turns to Teri (Margaret Cho) for help setting up her pastry shop. On the legal front, cases involve a feisty salesclerk (Patty Duke), an underage CEO (Jake T. Austin, with Steven Culp playing his father), and a dispute between two women (Ever Carradine and Anne Ramsay) over a reincarnated rat. Other notable guests include Valerie Harper and Bruce Davison as judges, Joan Rivers as Jane's therapist, and John Ratzenberger as Kim's ne'er-do-well father. A cliffhanger points to a new supernatural wrinkle for the fifth season. Compiling all 13 episodes from the 2012 fourth season, extras include deleted scenes and outtakes. A fun show with a devoted fan base, this is recommended. (K. Fennessy)

Falling Skies: The Complete Second Season

★★★

Warner, 440 min., TV-14, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.99; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$49.99

The second season of this TNT original series focusing on human resistance to an alien invasion of Earth offers larger scope and more details on the nature of the invaders, known as Skitters. Noah Wyle stars as Tom Mason, a single father of three sons, and a former history professor who is also a dedicated member of the 2nd Mass, a militia comprised of guerilla soldiers and civilians. Will Patton plays Capt. Weaver, the hard-bitten leader who's come to respect Tom's strength and tactical ideas, as well as his standing among the civilians. The action picks up three months after Tom has escaped from a Skitter spaceship, where his teenage son Ben (Connor Jessup) had been held. Tom isn't sure what may have transpired onboard, and there are questions about Ben, who still has bolts in his neck from the harness placed on him by the Skitters. Executive produced by Steven Spielberg, *Falling Skies* spends its budget judiciously and intelligently, creating a down-and-dirty visual aesthetic while saving the impressive visual effects for the major conflicts and most dramatic missions. While the show hasn't risen to the storytelling power of *Battlestar Galactica* at its best, it's staking out similar territory, building a loyal audience as it finds compelling stories amidst the pulp drama of mankind's last stand. Compiling all 10 episodes from 2012,



extras include audio commentaries and behind-the-scenes featurettes. Recommended. (S. Axmayer)

Father Goose ★★★

Olive, 118 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95

Cary Grant's penultimate film, released in 1964 when the iconic actor was 60, is a cute action-comedy set in the Pacific during World War II. Grant atypically plays a less-than-dashing hero—a grizzled rascal named Walter, who has abandoned the civilized world to live on a boat and abscond with as much fuel and supplies as possible from the British navy. A bemused but weary ship's captain, Houghton (Trevor Howard), turns to extortion to force Walter to give something back by manning one of the many small island posts in the region and reporting any sightings of Japanese warplanes or ships. Grant has a grand time playing a character who wants nothing to do with such responsibilities but is forced to be a patriot in a difficult situation, rewarded for his efforts with directions to hidden bottles of Scotch whiskey. The story takes a huge twist when French diplomat Catherine (Leslie Caron) arrives with a group of schoolgirls, who have all escaped a near brush with the enemy. Suddenly Walter has to be host and father figure—roles he does not relish—and finds himself in a battle of wits with Catherine that naturally turns into love. Director Ralph Nelson brings just enough gloss to the proceedings to give Grant a classic star vehicle, while Grant himself demonstrates what a master actor can do with rather lightweight material. Re-released on DVD and bowing on Blu-ray, this is recommended. (T. Keogh)



Femme Fatales: The Complete Second Season ★★1/2

eOne, 3 discs, 392 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.98

Viewers who enjoyed the first season of this Cinemax After Dark anthology series—a campy mixture of very soft-core erotica and film noir narrative—will find more of the same in this second season set. The recipe is predictable: spin a luridly pulpy yarn involving characters with a decidedly undeveloped moral sense (each tale sports a different cast), and make sure the stories leave room for some steamy sex scenes and a bit of nudity—the more gratuitous the better. To add to the fun, each installment is introduced by sultry hostess Lilith (Tanit Phoenix), whose remarks inevitably include some wink-wink double entendres. Within this formula, the plots boast some variety, ranging from domestic situations to criminal deeds gone awry, and—naturally—a couple



of women-behind-bars entries. The tone here is sometimes farcical and sometimes bitterly sardonic; one episode ("Bad Science") even goes the sci-fi route. *Femme Fatales* will win no awards for writing, acting, or production values, but the stories feature some recognizable guest stars (including Eric Roberts, Casper Van Dien, and Vivica A. Fox). Compiling all 12 episodes from 2012, extras include audio commentaries, behind-the-scenes featurettes, alternate episode versions, and deleted scenes. While hardly must-see TV, this is a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

The File on Thelma Jordan ★★★

Olive, 100 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95

Robert Siodmak's 1950 drama stars Barbara Stanwyck as gentle seductress Thelma Jordan, who targets bitter assistant D.A. and married man Cleve Marshall (Wendell Corey), surely one of the most weak-willed and deluded patsies in the history of film noir. When Thelma becomes the prime suspect in the murder of her high-society aunt—after she's named in the matron's will—the self-pitying Cleve doesn't just miss the signs that she's playing him, he blatantly ignores them to cover up incriminating evidence. Interestingly, Siodmak generates more sympathy for Thelma—the poor cousin pressured into criminal behavior by her predatory crook of a boyfriend (Richard Rober)—than for Cleve. While Thelma comes off as victim as much as victimizer, Cleve can never quite justify his corruption apart from his romantic obsession. In fact, Cleve is not let off the hook for his betrayals and misdeeds: there's a price to pay in his life and career for every decision and action. One of the era's most low-key film-noir offerings—slower and more subdued than such classics as *The Maltese Falcon* or Siodmak's own *The Killers*—this is an elegant and compelling movie in its own right, largely because of a superb performance by Stanwyck. Bowing on DVD and Blu-ray, this is recommended. (S. Axmayer)



George Lopez: The Complete 3rd Season ★★1/2

Warner, 3 discs, 598 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.98

Comedian and former talk show host George Lopez is back with this 2003-04 third season of his eponymous sitcom. Starring the Latino funnyman as the patriarch in a family that features his wife Angie (Constance Marie), spirited daughter Carmen (Masiela Lusha), everyboy son Max (Luis Armando Garcia), and live-in busybody mother Benny (Belita Moreno), this set kicks off with the two-part season opener "Dubya, Dad &



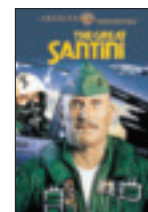
Dating," in which airplane parts manager George is embarrassed after President Bush's visit to the plant is disrupted by Carmen's heckling and other comic monkey wrenches. Balancing the silly with the serious, the episodes here revolve around George's work (Benny is also employed at the plant), health (allusions are made to Lopez's real-life issues with kidney problems in "Would You Like a Drumstick or a Kidney?" and "Mementos"), and the domestic dynamic (including the holiday episodes "No One Gets Out Alive" and the laugh-out-loud "Christmas Punch"). Much of the comic fireworks here are between George and the abusive, alcoholic, abrasive Benny, whose bawdy commentary still brings the funny (on Carmen's new boyfriend: "If I was 35 years younger, he would have been your Daddy!"). Also, George and precocious teen Carmen often butt heads and she even runs away in the season finale. Featuring guest appearances by executive producer Sandra Bullock, the Commodores, Jimmie Walker, and Lou Diamond Phillips, this series—while hardly must-see-TV—does boast some good laughs. Compiling all 28 episodes, this is a strong optional purchase. (J. Williams-Wood)

The Great Santini

★★★1/2

Warner, 116 min., PG, DVD: \$21.99

Robert Duvall gives one of his most memorable performances in the title role of this 1979 drama about a hardcore Marine lieutenant named "Bull" Meechum, a fighter ace who calls himself "The Great Santini." Bull compensates for peacetime inactivity by waging war on his intimidated children. His wife, Lillian (Blythe Danner), lovingly tolerates his behavior, but his 18-year-old son Ben (Michael O'Keefe) is working up the courage to defy his domineering dad, whose need for competition borders on maniacal. When push comes to shove (and shove they certainly do), the son ultimately earns his father's begrudging respect. Military brats may well recognize their own experiences in this comedic drama, but anyone can relate to the Meechum family's patriarchal dysfunction. Writer-director Lewis John Carlino (adapting the novel by Pat Conroy) does a fine job of balancing humor with the kind of stressful anxiety that can either strengthen a family or tear it apart. Both Duvall and O'Keefe were deservedly nominated for Academy Awards. Re-released on DVD-R as part of the Warner Archive Collection, this is highly recommended. (J. Shannon)



Greystoke: The Legend of Tarzan, Lord of the Apes ★★★

Warner, 137 min., PG, Blu-ray: \$21.99

Grandly conceived, Hugh Hudson's 1984 origin story is split between two very different

worlds, much like its hero, John Clayton, 19th-century heir to an enormous British estate. Born in the wilds of Africa and orphaned after his parents are lost in a shipwreck, John (Christopher Lambert) is not only raised by apes but also assumes that he is simian himself. In time, John realizes that he's different and begins to assert leadership, becoming the titular lord over his community. Destiny takes a turn when a party of naturalists arrives on an exploratory mission and only one man—a scientist named D'Arnot (Ian Holm)—survives an attack by a human tribe. John bonds with D'Arnot, and together they make a perilous journey to England, where a thrilled Earl of Greystoke (Ralph Richardson) welcomes the grandson he never knew existed. The screenplay then shifts focus to John's problems reconciling with British society, as well as the casual cruelty to animals he witnesses in this strange new world. *Greystoke* might have been a masterpiece save for the occasional awkward handling of certain key scenes; still, there is much to admire here, including the stunning African locations, amazing scenes of life among the apes, Lambert's inspired performance, and solid support from Holm, Richardson, Andie MacDowell (whose voice was dubbed by Glenn Close), and James Fox. Boasting a gorgeous transfer for its Blu-ray debut, extras include audio commentary by Hudson and associate producer Garth Thomas. Recommended. (T. Keogh)



Hells Angels on Wheels

★★
Hen's Tooth, 95 min., not rated,
Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$29.95

Before achieving fame in *Easy Rider*, Jack Nicholson played a moody and restless cycle-riding gas station attendant named Poet in this 1967 film directed by Richard Rush. Poet is adopted by biker king Buddy (Adam Roarke) after jumping into a friendly brawl, and he walks out on his job to join Buddy's gang. This episodic, somewhat rambling tale of cheap thrills, easy sex, bar fights, and turf wars ultimately comes across as a buddy film about rootless rebels without a life. Poet's scrappy energy impresses Buddy but eventually leads the newfound friends into an inevitable showdown when Poet challenges Buddy's despotic leadership. While the film's climax is more dramatically potent than cinematically convincing, Rush neatly carves a portrait here of hollow activity passing for freedom. The era saw a lot of cheaply made movies in this genre, and while *Hells Angels on Wheels* is one of the better examples, it's still a minor effort that is mainly of interest because of Nicholson, director Rush (who went on to make *The Stunt*



Man), and legendary cinematographer Laszlo Kovacs. Presented in a Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, extras include audio commentary by Rush. An optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

House of Cards: The Complete First Season

★★★
Sony, 4 discs, 674 min., not
rated, DVD: \$55.99, Blu-ray:
\$65.99

Netflix's dark satirical drama, an adaptation of the original acclaimed British miniseries that aired during the 1990s, is not the first series to be made directly for streaming video, but it is the most expensive and ambitious, and it debuted to strong reviews. Kevin Spacey stars as Francis Underwood, a savagely Machiavellian congressman who takes a slash-and-burn approach to stepping up the political ladder after he's passed over for a promised appointment. Spacey smiles his way through a campaign of subterfuge, media manipulation, and personal vengeance, while Robin Wright is equally good as his wife, Claire, who runs a charitable foundation with all the compassion of Lady Macbeth. The visual style is elegant and cinematic, while the scripts present politics as a dirty business where rivals are humiliated, sabotaged—even murdered—and power always trumps policy. Although not necessarily more cynical than shows such as *24* or *Scandal*, *House of Cards* stands out thanks to Spacey's easy touch and smooth charm as the heavyweight politico posing as a loyal party man. The superb supporting cast includes Kate Mara as ruthless young reporter Zoe Barnes, Corey Stoll as fellow lawmaker Peter Russo, and Michael Kelly as top aide and loyal henchman Doug Stamper. Nominated for nine Emmys, *House of Cards* was released exclusively on Netflix, so many potential viewers have not had a chance to see it, and interest may be high. Presenting all 13 episodes from 2013, this is recommended. (S. Axmaker)



How the West Was Won: The Complete First Season

★★★
Warner, 2 discs, 279 min., not
rated, DVD: \$19.98

Bowing in 1977, this ABC series was loosely based on the Oscar-winning 1962 film of the same name, but directly inspired by a 1976 made-for-TV movie called *The Macahans*, which is included here. In *The Macahans*, frontier patriarch Zeb Macahan (James Arness) helps relocate his brother's family to Oregon in early 1861, thereby keeping the latter's young sons away from the inevitable Civil War that is spreading across the country. The three feature-length episodes from the first season of the TV show find Zeb search-



ing for his nephew, Luke (Bruce Boxleitner), who has deserted from the Union Army and is living among a non-violent religious sect called the Simonites (the Army is also in furious pursuit of Luke). Also featured is a subplot about an Indian tribe being agitated into conflict against the white settlers. Unfortunately, the writing here is formulaic, the direction is flat, and the actors bring little vibrancy to the proceedings. Eva Marie Saint costars as Zeb's sister-in-law, Kate, but the biggest disappointment is Arness, who fails to display any of the charisma and versatility from his *Gunslinger* years. Optional, at best. (P. Hall)

Ishtar

★★
Sony, 105 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$19.99

Elaine May's 1987 film, starring Warren Beatty and Dustin Hoffman as struggling (and largely untalented) New York singer/songwriters caught between CIA machinations and revolutionary fighters in a fictional North African country, suffered from a runaway budget and creative ego clashes. A notorious commercial flop, *Ishtar* was pounded by critics, and unfairly branded as one of the worst films ever made. Never as clever as it should be, but funnier than its reputation suggests, the film is a spoof of American masculinity and foreign policy that is served up as a farcical "road" movie. Beatty and Hoffman play the Hope and Crosby parts as sensitive new-age guys and best buddies Lyle Rogers and Chuck Clarke, who, after being dumped by their respective girlfriends, leave New York City for a gig at a nightclub in Morocco. French actress Isabelle Adjani is their Dorothy Lamour, as Arab activist Shirra, who is part of a group fighting a CIA-backed despot. The plot involves an ancient map that could spark a revolution, but that's just a gimmick to drop Lyle and Chuck into the middle of conspiracies while Charles Grodin, costarring as local CIA chief Jim Harrison (with hilarious understatement), recruits them as spies, shadows their movements, and targets them for elimination. May co-wrote the songs with Paul Williams, and they're some of the greatest bad songs ever sung in a movie since *Kiss Me, Stupid*. While *Ishtar* is still a minor film, its reputation may attract interest. Bowing on Blu-ray in a director's cut (which actually runs two minutes shorter than the theatrical version), this is an optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

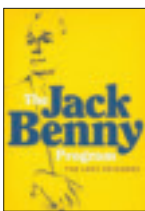


The Jack Benny Program: The Lost Episodes

★★★1/2
Shout! Factory, 3 discs, 540 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.99

Many comedians consider Jack Benny to be the greatest funnyman of all time, a verdict upheld by this anthology of 18 episodes from his classic TV show, not seen since their

initial broadcasts in the late 1950s and early 1960s. *The Jack Benny Program* brilliantly plumbed the comic's beloved persona of the vain skinflint who is endlessly exasperated by a boisterous world. Benny's zany stock company—Eddie “Rochester” Anderson, Don Wilson, Dennis Day, Mel Blanc, and Frank Nelson—keep him in a state of near-constant aggravation with their putdowns of his alleged cheapness and terrible violin playing, while Hollywood royalty including Gary Cooper, John Wayne, Rock Hudson, and Natalie Wood add glossy star power to the fun. Several genuine surprises turn up here: Benny's visit to Independence, MO, with Harry S. Truman at the latter's presidential library; Billy Graham engaging in light banter with Benny (the evangelist claims he has larger audiences than Benny because he has “better writers”); and a brilliantly wicked parody of Jack Paar's *Tonight Show*, with Benny offering a flawless imitation of Paar's fidgety gestures and emotional delivery. While the visual quality varies—the shows were preserved on 16mm kinescopes—the extraordinary level of comedy is consistent throughout. DVD extras include bits from late-career TV specials that Benny hosted, interviews, newsreel appearances, and interviews with director Norman Abbott, secretary Dorothy Ohman, and Harry Shearer (who appeared as a child actor on Benny's show). Highly recommended. (P. Hall)



Jack Taylor: Set 1

★★★

Acorn, 3 discs, 273 min., not rated, DVD: \$49.99

Iain Glen (Jorah Mormont in *Game of Thrones*) stars as the titular hard-drinking ex-cop turned private detective in this new mystery series produced by Ireland's TV3, based on Ken Bruen's novels and set in the rough-and-tumble streets of Galway. First up in this three-feature set is *The Guards* (2010), which finds Jack losing his job in what appears to be a mix of pig-headed contrarianism and purposeful career suicide, after which he hits the streets as a likeably gruff guy—the Irish equivalent of a '40s film-noir P.I.—in a culture just as packed with shady characters, career criminals, corrupt officials, and a working class with little faith in the cops. With *The Pikemen* (2011), Jack gets himself a junior partner: Cody (Killian Scott), an energetic young man who idealizes the work and makes himself useful, despite being ignored by Jack throughout the investigation of a vigilante crew. The third chapter, *The Magdalen Martyrs* (2011), is tied to a shameful period of Ireland's



history, during which the Catholic church all but imprisoned girls for their “sins” of being sexually active and defiant of ecclesiastical authority. The Irish settings lend the series a distinctive identity, while Glen carves a great character out of the role, and Nora-Jane Noone is a solid costar as fellow officer Kate Noonan, who has a fondness for her crusty colleague. Extras include photo galleries. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Last Resort: The Complete Series ★★

Sony, 3 discs, 558 min., not rated, DVD: \$38.99

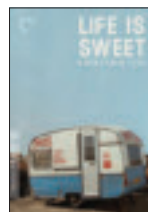
This high-concept 2012-13 TV series about an American submarine crew that refuses to unleash nuclear war—instead taking refuge on a tropical island—was cancelled early, but the dense mix of political conspiracy, military duty, and patriotic responsibility drew its share of fans. Created by Shawn Ryan (*The Shield*), *Last Resort* stars Andre Braugher as Capt. Marcus Chaplin, fearless commander of an experimental vessel, and Scott Speedman as loyal executive officer Sam Kendal—partners in a struggle to keep their conflicted team together after being attacked by their own side and going rogue with their cache of missiles in a very public confrontation with the U.S. government. The drama reaches back to D.C. as the series zigs and zags between undercover experiments, secret missions, attempted coups (both on the island and in the White House), and psychological warfare. Serving up lots of action, dense plotting, and complicated conflicts, the show benefited from ABC putting a lot of resources behind it (including shooting in Hawaii). Although it ended prematurely, the producers tacked on a finale for a sense of closure, but it's more gesture than satisfying storytelling. Compiling all 13 episodes, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes. Optional. (S. Axmaker)



Life Is Sweet ★★★★★

Criterion, 103 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95

A perfect blend of comedy and poignant drama, 1990's *Life Is Sweet* was British director Mike Leigh's breakout international hit, showcasing the filmmaker's singular skill at orchestrating ensemble casts using a mostly improvised screenplay. Set just north of London, *Life Is Sweet* introduces us to a “typical” working-class family. Mum Wendy (Alison Steadman) is a cheerful and pragmatic store clerk who also teaches yoga, and her chef husband, Andy (Jim Broadbent), is similarly upbeat, despite an inability to follow through on just about anything, especially the di-



lapidated lunch wagon he just bought with friend Patsy (Stephen Rea). The couple's adult twins couldn't be less alike: Natalie (Claire Skinner) is a bookish and generally genial plumber, while her perpetually unhappy sister, Nicola (Jane Horrocks), smokes too much, suffers from bulimia and low self-esteem, and indulges a chocolate fetish with her occasional boyfriend (David Thewlis). Each of these individuals (and a wannabe restaurateur, hilariously played by Timothy Spall) is beautifully developed, especially as Leigh skewers the comedy toward drama with deft subtlety (the climactic scene between Steadman and Horrocks is one of the great acting highlights in the history of British cinema). Ultimately, this is a bittersweet film about a group of unique yet all-too-average characters yearning to find their place in the simple rhythms of ordinary life. Bowing on DVD and Blu-ray, extras include audio commentary by Leigh; a 1991 radio interview with Leigh, all five of Leigh's previously unseen “Five-Minute Films” for a proposed TV series, and a booklet featuring an essay by film critic David Sterritt. Highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** (J. Shannon)

Longmire: The Complete First Season ★★½

Warner, 2 discs, 443 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.98

Drawn from Craig Johnson's Wyoming-based mystery novels featuring the titular sleuth, *Longmire* is a cop show with a modern frontier twist. Australian actor Robert Taylor adopts an American growl as Walt Longmire, a hard-bitten sheriff with cowboy sensibility: short on talk, long on hunches, careful to keep confrontations from escalating, but quick on the draw when it becomes necessary. The cultural milieu here is one of rugged individualists, suspicious of any kind of authority figure coming on to their land, and the first episode makes that point clearly, illustrating the tension between the local law and reservation cops, a situation that obviously has a deep history. The setting lends itself to an austere style, with a few characters playing against the backdrop of a stark landscape or a small-town barroom, and the stories have a pace and tone to match. Katee Sackhoff costars as former Chicago homicide cop Victoria “Vic” Moretti, a deputy who isn't fond of small-town ways but is protective of her boss, and the cast also includes Bailey Chase, Adam Bartley, Cassidy Freeman, and Lou Diamond Phillips. *Longmire* is one of the best new mystery shows of recent years, sure to be appreciated by Johnson's fans, and waiting to be discovered by crime fiction aficionados hungry for a distinctive alternative to the usual procedurals. Compiling all 10 episodes from 2012, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)



Mad Max Trilogy ★★★

Warner, 3 discs, 295 min., PG-13/R, Blu-ray: \$49.99

All three of filmmaker George Miller's desert apocalypse films starring Mel Gibson as the vengeful Max are collected in this set, which features the Blu-ray debut of *Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome* (1985). The original low-budget *Mad Max* (1979) introduced a grimy, gritty social milieu on the verge of collapse, revving it up with careening car chases and savage wrecks. An impossibly baby-faced Mel Gibson plays both rebel and reliable family man—a cool cop in black leather and a souped-up V8, driven to seek revenge after his wife and son are murdered. By the time *The Road Warrior* (1981) rolled out, Max was all scar tissue and survival instinct, a dark loner in the harsh Australian outback. Here, Miller carves out a defining production aesthetic of scavenger style and guerilla attitude, while his action scenes combine comic book mythos with a visceral punch. *Beyond Thunderdome* never rises to the heights of *The Road Warrior*, turning Max into a savior of lost children, but Tina Turner offers a memorable turn as Auntie Entity, the rock star MC of the Thunderdome death-matches. Extras include audio commentaries, a behind-the-scenes featurette, and an intro by Leonard Maltin for *The Road Warrior*. If you already own the first two films on Blu-ray, *Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome* is also available separately on Blu-ray for \$19.98. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis: The Complete Series ★★★

Shout! Factory, 21 discs, 3,600 min., not rated, DVD: \$139.99

What price Baby Boomer nostalgia? The \$139.99 tag here may seem a tad steep, but there is much to love about this definitive boxed set collecting the entire run of the 1959-1963 series *The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis*, which offered a typical American teen's (Dwayne Hickman) perspective on life, love, and the pursuit of girls ("One lousy girl," he cries). The "before they were stars" factor is high here. Warren Beatty appears in the first season as Dobie's upper class rival, Milton Armitage, with the luscious Tuesday Weld as Dobie's dream girl, money-hungry Thalia Menninger. A pre-Gilligan's Island Bob Denver steals the show as beatnik and proto-slacker Maynard G. Krebs. Other familiar faces that pop up include Sally Kellerman, Yvonne "Batgirl" Craig, a pre-*Andy Griffith Show* Ron Howard, and Michael J. Pollard as Maynard's cousin Jerome. Memorable characters include Sheila Kuehl as Zelda, who has an unrequited crush on Dobie; Frank Faylen as Dobie's exasperated grocer father ("I'm gonna kill that boy"); and Steve Franken as Milton's equally



snooty cousin, Chatsworth. The first season, which hews closest to the spirit of creator Max Shulman's original short stories, is best. Each episode opens with Dobie channeling Rodin's iconic sculpture of the Thinker, pondering the mysteries of the teenage universe. In season two, Dobie and Maynard enlist in the army, while in the third and fourth seasons, the pair attend junior college. Compiling all 147 episodes, extras include episodes of Hickman's previous series *Love That Bob*, an interview with Hickman, rare footage from the original pilot episode, character appearances on TV specials, and PDF scripts. Recommended. (D. Liebenzon)

McLintock! ★★★

Olive, 127 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95

By no means one of John Wayne's best films, *McLintock!* remains one of the Duke's most beloved. While time has not been kind to the gender politics in this 1963 effort from director Andrew McLaglen, it still offers rollicking and raucous entertainment that easily earns that exclamation point in the title. John Wayne and Maureen O'Hara's palpable chemistry is well served by this frontier adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, with Wayne as cattle baron George Washington McIntock and O'Hara as wife Kate, who wants both a divorce and to take their daughter back East. In the battle of the sexes, you couldn't ask for better sparring partners who stand toe-to-toe and give as good as they get (although Wayne gets the upper hand in a drawn-out, cringe-worthy climactic brouhaha). *McLintock!* does boast perhaps the quintessential John Wayne scene, in which he puts a troublesome "Pilgrim" in his place ("Somebody ought to belt you right in the mouth. But I won't...the hell I won't"). For years, this was unavailable on home video—adding to its cult cachet—but now after numerous substandard public domain DVD releases, it's great to have these new DVD and dazzling Blu-ray editions. Recommended. (D. Liebenzon)



The Newsroom: The Complete First Season ★★★

HBO, 610 min., TV-MA, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.99; Blu-ray/DVD Combo: 6 discs, \$49.99

The *West Wing* creator Aaron Sorkin sets his new HBO original series at a cable news channel peopled by eccentric but idealistic and brilliant professionals with sharp political instincts and poor impulse control. Jeff Daniels plays veteran news anchor Will McAvoy, a self-described Republican who's jolted out of his malaise by the rise of the Tea Party, which he sees as a threat to the



soul of true Republican principles. Sorkin's shows have always celebrated intelligence, ingenuity, and professionalism, so it's especially frustrating when his smart characters here repeatedly act impulsively on their emotions, as if they have zero self-control. Exhibit A is MacKenzie McHale (Emily Mortimer), Will's veteran producer, a respected foreign correspondent who's reduced to blithering idiocy whenever her feelings rise to the surface. Still, Sorkin's affection for these flawed personalities is hard to resist, and for all the sanctimonious political posturing and stupid screwball complications, he spikes the scripts with wit and intelligence and offers a telling critique of modern TV news as a sideshow that favors controversy and opinion over investigation and analysis. Sam Waterston, Olivia Munn, Alison Pill, and Dev Patel costar, while Jane Fonda makes a memorable guest appearance. Presenting all 10 episodes from the 2012 first season, extras include audio commentaries, behind-the-scenes featurettes, and deleted scenes. The Blu-ray release also includes the entire season on two double-sided DVDs. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Orphan Black: Season One ★★★1/2

BBC, 450 min., not rated, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$39.98

In the opening episode of *Orphan Black*, street-smart hustler Sarah Manning (Tatiana Maslany) watches her identical double commit suicide, and then instinctively takes the deceased's identity, only to discover that she's actually the product of a cloning experiment. This lone wolf learns that she's one of at least eight clones, each being monitored and, apparently, murdered by a hidden assassin. As Sarah becomes involved with this community of lookalikes, she learns the truth about her murky past, all while trying to reclaim guardianship of her young daughter, Kira (Skyler Wexler). A sci-fi-ish thriller, this new BBC America original drama is actually a Canadian co-production set in an unidentified (but clearly not American) city, with Canadian actress Maslany playing multiple roles (often interacting with herself in the same shot thanks to digital trickery). While a conspiracy undergirds the plot, the character drama is the draw, and the mesmerizing Maslany makes it work, creating distinctive personalities and lives for her various personas, right down to their differing body language. The layers here add up to quite a psychological soup of instincts, assumptions, and anxieties to create a compelling drama. Compiling all 10 episodes from the 2013 debut season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes, and an interview with Maslany. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)



Perfect Understanding

★★

Cohen, 85 min., not rated,
DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray: \$34.98

Gloria Swanson traveled to Britain to make this Noel Coward-esque romantic comedy in 1933, playing Judy, a young American bride, opposite a youthful Laurence Olivier as her high-society husband, Nicholas. The “perfect understanding” of the title is the couple’s ideal of maintaining complete honesty—which, of course, sends them spiraling into jealousy, mistrust, and divorce proceedings after Nicholas sets off for his own private holiday and engages in an affair. While the script addresses adult themes with a sophistication and maturity reminiscent of the drawing-room comedies and stage dramas of the era (all conveyed via suggestion and coded language), it also lacks their wit and bite, and the characters sport little depth or personality—which is unfortunate, since the performances are fine, and Cyril Gardner directs with a brisk, snappy pace. As Ms. Swanson remarked in *Sunset Boulevard*, “We had faces then,” and indeed she did; her onscreen dynamism here provides an interesting contrast to Olivier’s understatement. Michael Powell receives prominent billing on the disc as a co-writer, although his contribution is completely uncredited on the film itself. Never before released on home video in the U.S., *Perfect Understanding* debuts on DVD and Blu-ray in fine editions, with extras including two 1933 comedy shorts (“Husband’s Reunion” and “Dream Stuff,” both produced by Mack Sennett). Except for fans of ’30s movies and all things British, this is an optional purchase. (S. Axmayer)



Red Widow: The Complete First Season

★★★

Buena Vista, 2 discs, 344 min.,
TV-PG, DVD: \$29.99

An affluent soccer mom receives a crash course in how to become a gangland figure in ABC’s remake of the Netherlands small-screen melodrama *Penoza*, transplanted here to northern California. Marina owner Marta Walraven (Radha Mitchell) grew up in a Russian-American mafia clan and culture, but she thought that her husband, Evan (Anson Mount), was an honestly reformed hood. Turns out that Evan was still involved in shady dealings, and he’s gunned down in the aftermath of the theft of millions of dollars worth of cocaine from mob titan Nicolae Schiller (Goran Visnjic). When the innocent widow is told that she’s responsible by default for the debt, she starts along the path of resolving the matter by becoming a reluctant (but surprisingly competent) under-



ling for the sinister Schiller. Meanwhile, she continues to try to locate the missing drugs and solve the mystery of who murdered Evan and why, while also struggling to keep her kids—especially teenager Gabriel (Sterling Beaumon)—from being seduced by the thug life. Kind of a domestic noir, *Red Widow* is an effective enough suspense series, if the viewer can buy into the notion that just about every male in Marta’s life is duplicitous and dangerous. Compiling all eight episodes from the 2013 debut season, DVD extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette, deleted scenes, and bloopers. Recommended. (C. Cassidy)

Rizzoli & Isles: The Complete Third Season

★★★

Warner, 3 discs, 631 min., not
rated, DVD: \$39.98

The third season of this female-centered TNT-aided police procedural based on the bestselling novels by Tess Gerritsen continues to follow the intertwined personal and professional lives of blue-collar Boston homicide detective Jane Rizzoli (Angie Harmon) and her best friend, Maura Isles (Sasha Alexander), a brainy but socially awkward medical examiner. Some of the weekly homicide cases here are pretty bizarre—one killer dresses his victims as dolls, while another encases his in statues—and the investigations periodically wind up putting one of the leading ladies in jeopardy. But the crime-work is secondary to the duo’s off-duty lives, which are full of incident, thanks to their colorful families. After patching up the differences stemming from last season’s cliffhanger—when Rizzoli shot Isles’ biological father (an Irish mobster, no less)—Maura encounters her real mother (Sharon Lawrence) and a half-sister (Emilee Wallace) who needs a kidney transplant. Meanwhile Chazz Palminteri returns as Rizzoli’s dad, whose request for an annulment of his marriage to Jane’s high-strung mom (Lorraine Bracco)—so he can remarry “in the church”—has tumultuous ramifications, even for Jane’s new-to-the-force brother (Colin Egglesfield). Squad-room colleagues and romantic partners add to this fairly crowded ensemble, but the writers juggle the plot strands satisfactorily and close with a collapsing-building event that paves the way for the next season. Compiling all 15 episodes from the 2012 third season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes, deleted scenes, and a gag reel. Recommended. (F. Swietek)



Roadie ★★★

Shout! Factory, 106 min., PG,
Blu-ray: \$19.98

Actor/rock star Meat Loaf stars in this oddball 1980 rock ‘n’ roll comedy as Travis W. Redfish, a wunderkind



Texas boy who falls in love at first sight with Lola Bouilliabase (Kaki Hunter), a giddy 16-year-old groupie obsessed with Alice Cooper, and becomes a roadie legend in order to win her heart. Cooper is just one of the musical guest stars here. Meat Loaf singlehandedly saves concerts by Hank Williams Jr. and Roy Orbison (who duet on “Eyes of Texas”), as well as Blondie (who crank up “Ring of Fire”). Directed by Alan Rudolph, this high-energy cinematic jam is a raucous, disjointed goof-off with varying mileage. The cast (which also features Art Carney, Joe Spano, and *Soul Train* impresario Don Cornelius) seems to be having a good time and the musical numbers are marvelous, but the knockabout comedy is shrill and clumsy, so the only real draw here is the music. Making its Blu-ray debut, extras include an audio commentary featuring screenwriter James Big Boy Medlin (the “real” Travis Redfish). An optional purchase. (S. Axmayer)

Safety Last! ★★★1/2

Criterion, 73 min., not rated,
DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95

With its iconic image of Harold Lloyd hanging from a clock above the streets of Los Angeles, *Safety Last!* is one of the most recognizable silent comedies of all time and the first of actor/producer/director Lloyd’s “thrill pictures.” Often overshadowed by Chaplin and Keaton, in his day Lloyd was just as popular and even more financially successful, possibly because he was easy to relate to: the most modern of the big three, Lloyd came across as a bright young man of the Jazz Age who was trying to carve out his piece of the American Dream. Daring stunts aside (and the climb up the side of a building is mind-boggling, thanks to a mix of ingenious filmmaking and impressive physical comedy), this funny urban farce finds Lloyd playing “The Boy” from the sticks who poses as a savvy big shot while toiling away in a department store. He’s both the hard-working Horatio Alger and the smart-aleck guy whose shortcuts and sneaky moves make him something of a blowhard. Some of Lloyd’s clever ideas are truly magical, turning cultural clichés into witty visual gags, but he also occasionally falls back on tired racial stereotypes (thankfully, those instances are few and far between). Mostly, this is a hilarious tale of an ambitious young man stumbling over his own hubris. Beautifully restored and remastered for DVD and Blu-ray, extras include a choice of two musical scores, audio commentary by critic Leonard Maltin and Lloyd archivist Richard Correll, the superb 1989 documentary *Harold Lloyd: The Third Genius*, three Lloyd shorts, a retrospective featurette, an interview with composer Carl Davis, and more. A landmark film, this is highly recommended. (S. Axmayer)



Suits: Season Two

★★★

Universal, 4 discs, 695 min., not rated, DVD: \$44.98

This offbeat legal drama created for the USA Network is arguably their most interesting show, with a premise that puts an edge on viewers' allegiances right from the start: Harvey Specter (Gabriel Macht), the superstar closer in a powerful New York law firm and one of the most charmingly arrogant characters on TV, hires Mike Ross (Patrick J. Adams), a scruffy young genius with a photographic memory, as his assistant, despite the fact that Mike never graduated from law school or passed the bar—at least not under his own name. This alone puts the practice in a compromising position, but Harvey is also the type of guy who takes on legal challenges like a poker player in a high-stakes game (in one episode, quite literally). The second season plunges the principals into a power play when a former partner returns with ambitions to take over. Harvey is also put on the spot when the firm is sued, and both he and Mike hit a downward spiral. *Suits* isn't a courtroom show—most matters here are settled in boardroom negotiations and showdowns—and the stories are as much about corporate politics and personal-clashes as legalistic ploys. What makes it consistently work are the creative approach to compromised characters and conflicted loyalties, the offbeat humor underlying the drama, and the regular shake-ups to the usual genre conventions. Compiling all 16 episodes from 2012–13, extras include audio commentaries, webisodes, behind-the-scenes featurettes, deleted scenes, and a gag reel. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



Unforgettable: The First Season ★★1/2

Paramount, 6 discs, 930 min., not rated, DVD: \$61.99

No stranger to NYC-set crime-drama series, former *Without a Trace* mainstay Poppy Montgomery takes center stage for this 2011-12 debut season of *Unforgettable*, inspired by a 2008 short story by J. Robert Lennon. Montgomery is thirty-something former detective Carrie Wells, who has a rare medical condition called hyperthymesia, which gives her highly superior memory. Sometimes this comes in handy; at other times, it can be a nightmare (especially regarding the unsolved killing of Carrie's sister when they were young). In the pilot, Carrie's discovery of the brutal murder of a passing acquaintance neighbor leads her to offer eyewitness testimony to her ex-boyfriend, Al Burns (Dylan Walsh), a Queens detective who remembers how valuable Carrie's gift is and uses her as a consultant



for the case (and later, as part of the team). Although *Unforgettable* features the always über-cool Boroughs backdrop, it also suffers from numerous genre clichés, and viewers will see plenty of scenes of Carrie standing around looking intense as she uses her expert recall to piece together crime information. The rest of the cast is fairly unmemorable, although bigger names include guest star and consultant Marilu Henner (who actually has a real-life form of the memory condition) and Jane Curtin as a brusque medical examiner. A mildly interesting story arc finds a serial killer taunting our heroine into a tangled web that pushes her into jeopardy as a suspect, while also offering up tidbits about her sister's murder. Compiling all 22 episodes, extras include episode commentaries, behind-the-scenes featurettes, and a gag reel. A strong optional purchase. (J. Williams-Wood)

Web Therapy: The Complete Second Season ★★★

eOne, 2 discs, 325 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.98

Web Therapy does not really lend itself to binge viewing. A little cringe-worthy comedy goes a long way, and this Showtime series (expanded from the award-winning webisodes) is discomfort television at its cringiest, with a main character who is by all accounts "unsympathetic," "unlikeable," and "black-hearted." Add to that delusional and supremely unqualified. And yet Lisa Kudrow somehow manages to make unaccredited therapist Fiona Wallace oddly compelling, and it's hard not to wonder what could possibly happen next, whether it's Fiona's Republican congressional candidate husband (Victor Garber) being shipped off to undergo gay aversion therapy, Fiona losing creative control of her own book, or having her life story co-opted by Hollywood. Fiona's (and the series') saving grace is that the majority of folks with whom she interacts (via Skype) are worse than her, including a black-mailer who's got the goods (and the video) on Fiona's husband, and her own mother (Lily Tomlin), a psyche-scarring terror. There is no real character development here (and less therapy), and the sophomore season shows some strain in the improvised dialogue; to wit, are we really to believe that Fiona has never heard of guest star Conan O'Brien? In addition to Conan, season two ups the ante with several celebrity turns, including a very game and very funny Meryl Streep, old *Friends* costar David Schwimmer, Julia Louis-Dreyfus, and Minnie Driver. Compiling all 12 episodes from the 2012 second season, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette, deleted scenes, and a gag reel. Despite a bit of a sophomore slump, this is still recommended. (D. Liebenson)



More Boxed Sets

Bruce Lee: The Legacy Collection

(Shout! Factory, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: 11 discs, \$119.99). Martial arts action icon Bruce Lee (1940-73) is showcased in this deluxe boxed set that features the high-definition Blu-ray debuts of *The Big Boss*, *Fist of Fury*, *The Way of the Dragon*, and *Game of Death* (the last two were reviewed as a double feature in VL-7/13 ★★★). Packaged in a 68-page book, bonus features include audio commentaries, interviews, documentaries, behind-the-scenes featurettes, still galleries, deleted scenes, alternate openings and endings, outtakes, and more.



The Henry Fonda Film Collection

(Fox, DVD: 10 discs, \$49.98). Oscar-winning silver screen star Henry Fonda (1905-82) is spotlighted in this two-volume compilation that includes *Jesse James*, *Drums Along the Mohawk* (VL-7/05 ★★★), *The Grapes of Wrath* (VL Online-6/04 ★★★1/2), *The Return of Frank James*, *Immortal Sergeant*, *The Ox-Bow Incident* (VL-1/04 ★★★★★), *My Darling Clementine* (VL Online-3/04 ★★★★★), *Daisy Kenyon*, *The Longest Day*, and *The Boston Strangler*.



Prime Suspect: The Complete Collection

(Acorn, Blu-ray: 7 discs, \$119.99). Detective Jane Tennison (Helen Mirren) rises through the ranks of Britain's Metropolitan Police in this acclaimed 1991-2006 series (*Prime Suspect 1* was reviewed in VL-3/04 ★★1/2)—winner of Peabody, BAFTA, Emmy, and Golden Globe awards—that is newly available on high-definition Blu-ray. Bonus features include a behind-the-scenes special, a featurette on the sixth series, and a photo gallery.



VideoLibrarianOnline

Visit Video Librarian Online (www.videolibrarian.com) for more reviews during September and October, including: *China Beach: The Complete Collection*, *The Enforcer*, *Gate of Hell*, *The Grass is Greener*, *In Old Arizona*, *The Life of Oharu*, *Marketa Lazarova*, *Major Crimes: The Complete First Season*, *Mountain Men: Season 1*, *Teen Wolf: Season 2*, *Things to Come*, *The Wild West*, and much more!

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How Hitler Lost The War

Most history buffs believe that the Allies won World War II. This TV special follows Hitler & shows how he & his strategists LOST the war. It chronicles decisions that could have changed the course of human history. Top Nazi & English soldiers, sailors & airmen reveal what they saw. 60 min.

Price \$99 - PPR - \$199

Video Librarian ★★ ★ 1/2

"first person gripping accounts reveal the impact of Hitler's miscalculations. Highly recommended."



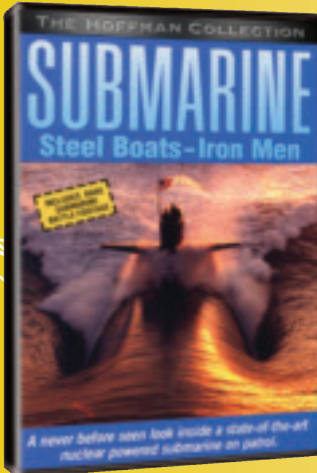
Wings Over Water – The History Of Naval Aviation

Tells the story of the critical role naval aviation played in making the USA the world power it is today. Combines newly found footage from the biggest naval battles with first hand interviews by veterans who were there. 90 min.

Price \$99 - PPR - \$199

New York Times

"A spectacular film. Provocatively looks at American history through the affect of naval aviation on American power."



Steel Boats Iron Men American Submariners At Sea

Submariners go below the waves for months. The Navy allowed Hoffman to go down with them and capture what these men experienced and how they live confined in a steel tube surrounded by a hostile environment in constant danger. Special appearance by Tom Clancy. 90 min.

Price \$99 - PPR - \$199

Video Review Magazine

"Powerfully conveys the confinement and the brotherhood as the crew participates in stressful attack drills... This production fascinates and informs."



Following Amelia Earhart

Adventure pilot Linda Finch who completed a replica around-the-world flight attempted first by Earhart leads viewers to explore the person as well as her final flight. Finch gives a woman aviator's perspective of Amelia. 30 mi

Price \$59 - PPR - \$99

Video Librarian ★★ ★ 1/2

"This is a superb program that will inspire male and female aviation fans as well as children. Highly recommended."



First Platoon - With the U.S. Marines in Snow Country

American Film Festival Blue Ribbon Winner

To become a Marine, you must learn to fight in extreme weather conditions, including in extreme cold. This PBS special follows a platoon as they dig into the snow. It also digs into the characters of these men as they engage with the famous White Death Ski Troops of Norway. 60 min.

Price \$69 - PPR - \$99

Comment on the YouTube clip

GlennRobert71

"This shows the rules and regulations very important in the making of a man or woman US Marine. To become a man is more than reaching a certain age. It's seeing that you are part of something bigger than yourself. Thank you for this PBS."



An Astronaut's Prayer

San Francisco Film Festival: Best of Show
A National Air & Space Imax Film

Astronaut Rusty Schweickert floated out of his Apollo 9 spacecraft for just 5 minutes but those minutes changed his life. This film presents Schweickert's recollections spoken shortly after. As the earth passes below, he lets himself go – and he feels "no limits, no frames, no boundaries. I am a piece of a total life - up here as a sensing element for man..." 20 min.

Price \$69 - PPR - \$99

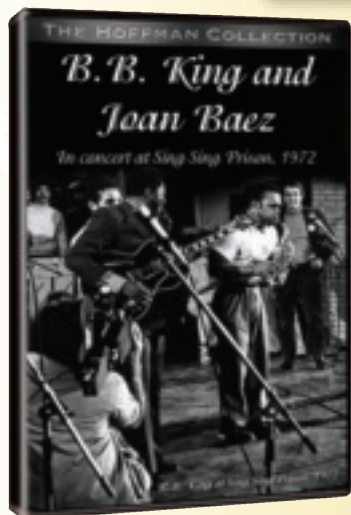
Filmmakers Newsletter

"Schweickert takes viewers on a magnificent ride to 'the womb of earth, the atmosphere'.... A beautiful ride it is."

Buy all 6 films: \$399

PBS Primetime Specials now Available To Libraries

MUSIC



BB King At Sing Sing Prison

New York's Daily News called this one of the greatest concert moments ever recorded. On a Thanksgiving day in New York's most famous prison BB King & Joan Baez spent time with the inmates & performed on their stage.

B.B. King said that this was the best live performance he ever gave.

Selected for special screenings at the Chicago International Film Festival, the New York Film Festival and the London Film Festival. **90 min.**

Price: \$129 PPR: \$299

Jerry Oster, Reviewer- New York Daily News

"There was a riot at Sing Sing prison - a riot of incredible music, emotion, & enthusiasm. You must see this film"

This film's YouTube Clips Have A Huge Fan base

Texasjohnnyboy

"Not only does this capture a stellar BB King performance but it captures the moments where the inmates get a taste of freedom. BB is layin' the blues on the line & the inmates are living a form of blues. Both shades of blue connect."

Gawagney

"I had tingles all through it."

Brendon Van der Walt

"This is my favorite concert video clip on all of Youtube"

LenjiaSep

"Every hair on my body is standing on end."

firew123

"This film contains one of the most powerful live performances I've ever witnessed."

swiftbanderia

"This is one of the most moving films I've ever seen. Tough and funny and beautiful and tear-jerking, all at the same time."



Bluegrass Roots—Produced in 1964

The 1st Network Television Bluegrass Music Documentary

In 1964 young filmmaker David Hoffman went down to the Appalachian Mountains with his newly invented 16mm hand held camera to spend weeks driving the backcountry looking for great talent with the 82 year old singer, picker, dancer & founder of the Asheville Music & Dance Festival, Bascom Lamar Lunsford. This film lets you experience the mountain people - their music and stories. **60 min.**

Price: \$129 PPR: \$259

The News and Observer, Raleigh North Carolina

"This classic is a must-see for all Bluegrass music lovers. It's like you were there with Hoffman when he shot this masterpiece."

Don Talley – blackmountainmusicscene.com

"A priceless film that includes buck dancing at home, visits with musicians on their porches, husbands, wives and their children singing together. A beautiful time it was."



Bascom Lunsford - Fighting For Respect For The People Of the Southern Mountains

Chicago International Film Festival: Gold Hugo

Bascom Lamar Lunsford was a warrior for Appalachian music, musicians & dancers. He founded America's first Mountain Music & Dance festival in Asheville NC. This TV Special presents how he did it, who he did it with, and why he fought so hard to gain America's respect for his mountain people and their ways. Includes the classic song Mountain Dew (which Lunsford wrote), clog and buck dancing as well as Bluegrass and Mountain music legends Obay Ramsey (banjo), Artus Moser, Mike Seeger, Alan Lomax, Tommy Hunter (fiddle), Roger Sprung (bango), "Red" Raper, Ray Lunsford plus many others. **60 min.**

Price: \$129 PPR: \$199

Andrew Sarris, The New York Times.

"The best musicians & clog dancers are here performing like they know that they are putting it down for future generations to enjoy."

Buy all 3 films: \$299

Who is David Hoffman

Some people go to the library not to find the latest movie, but because they have a special interest or issue that concerns them. For 50 years, documentary filmmaker David Hoffman has created feature docs, television series and specials, educational films, and personal portraits that express life's beautiful moments and/or help people deal with life's most pressing challenges. His films have won every major national and international documentary award.

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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

And Then It's Spring ★★½

(2013) 8 min. DVD: \$59.95 (study guide included). Weston Woods Studios. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 0-545-57133-2.

Written by Julie Fogliano and illustrated by Erin E. Stead, this adaptation of the 2012 picture book is animated by Cha-Pow! and features music by Ernest Troost. A bespectacled young boy and his pet companions (including a faithful dog, bunny, and turtle) work on garden projects and anticipate turning the barren ground into a spring bounty: tracking the progress of a sprinkling of seeds labeled with signs, wishing for rain, and using a magnifying glass to search for a spot of green in a "hopeful, very possible, sort of brown." *And Then It's Spring* is a very simple story—I suspect the *Booklist*, *Kirkus*, and *School Library Journal* starred book comes across better in print form—with muted colors and not much action. DVD extras include read-along subtitles and an interview with Fogliano. A strong optional purchase. Aud: K, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Big Mouth ★★★

(2012) 8 min. DVD: \$99. National Film Board of Canada. PPR.

Narrated by Tim Crabtree, writer-director-animater Andrea Dorfman's *Big Mouth* employs time-lapse photography, hand-drawn puppets (mainly in blues and reds), and pixilated imagery to tell the story of a young

girl who has an overzealous way with words. Smiley baby Trudy has plenty to say from the very beginning, commenting on Daddy's big nose and Mommy's gray hairs...observations that—while true—still cause hurt feelings. Although her family is resigned to the fact that Trudy makes honestly rude remarks, when she becomes school-aged and tries to make friends, she instead causes the other children to cry with her insulting but innocent comments, which results in many notes to parents sent home (pinned to Trudy's dress). Trudy ultimately learns how to give compliments after a (bit weird) conversation with a big-eyeballed stranger. Backed by a plucky soundtrack from Mike O'Neill that features the glockenspiel, DVD extras include three "making-of" featurettes. Recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Kung Fu Panda: Legends of Awesomeness—Good Croc, Bad Croc

★★★

(2012) 154 min. DVD: \$14.98. Fox Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

The DreamWorks *Kung Fu Panda* franchise of CGI-animated movies and direct-to-video spin-offs eventually spawned a Nickelodeon TV series, and this compilation features seven episodes from the 2011-12 debut season. For those who are *Kung Fu Panda*-illiterate, title character Po is a portly, fun-loving young panda bear who, despite his lack of discipline and penchant for trouble, has cultivated his "dragon warrior" martial-arts skills enough to join the Furious Five, an all-animal team of avengers in old China. Jack Black voiced Po in the *Kung Fu Panda* big-screen outings; here it is sound-alike Mick Wingert (who sings as well), with other guest cast members

including original stars Lucy Liu and James Hong. Plotlines involve Po befriending a friendly-enemy crocodile bandit (who is just as much a screw-up among his posse as is Po with the Furious Five), getting fooled (Po is fooled a lot) by the con-man father of his kung-fu master, and escorting a spoiled pig (literally, a pig). Po is an appealing doofus ("Why are things so hard?") and the cartoon violence here is mild, making it a solid and entertaining children's title. Recommended. Aud: P. (C. Cassidy)

The Legend of Korra—Book One: Air

★★★½

(2012) 2 discs. 289 min. DVD: \$14.99. Paramount Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned. ISBN: 1-4157-7003-4.

Nickelodeon follows up its popular *Avatar: The Last Airbender* quasi-anime fantasy multi-volume series with this next-generation successor, visually rendered by South Korean artists with Japanese-style cartoon brio. The setting moves from the feudal-style era of the now-deceased hero-mage Avatar Aang to a city location (think magical Hong Kong or Shanghai) with 1930s-level technology. Korra, a headstrong teenage girl from a mystic tribe, is a prodigious "bender," having superpowers that enable her to manipulate earth, fire, and water (she also sports some impressive martial-arts moves). Although impulsive and undisciplined, Korra inherits the protective role of "Avatar" of the sprawling Republic City. But a strong anti-superpower political-movement-cum-cult is rising, led by a seemingly invulnerable masked villain. An especially nice touch here is the fast-talking narrator, who tells the story in the retro manner of vintage cliffhanger serials and radio shows. Available on DVD and Blu-ray, extras include



Drawing with Mark: We All Scream For Ice Cream/Happy Tails ★★★

(2013) 60 min. DVD: \$14.98. Shelter Island (avail. from most distributors, Oct. 8). ISBN: 978-1-934708-96-5.

Massachusetts-based artist Mark Marderosian shows kids how to draw in these two episodes from his public access television program. Each begins with a visit to a location related to the theme of that week's drawings. In "Happy Tails," Mark heads to an animal shelter, where viewers learn a few facts about pets, while "We All Scream for Ice Cream" begins in a local ice cream parlor. Afterwards, Mark goes to his studio—the "magical attic"—where he teaches against an animated backdrop that features silent winged characters with names like Crystal Cat and Eclipse Doggy, figures who hover about and watch the images evolve. Sketching lightly with a pencil, Mark explains how to master each step as he works. The lessons are filmed from overhead, with an occasional pop-up box providing further explanation on which shapes to use or how to perfect a certain technique. Each lesson contains two parts: the first concludes with a fairly simple rendition, while the second takes a more detailed and challenging approach. DVD extras include a more advanced bonus lesson. Thanks to an upbeat host and thorough step-by-step instruction, *Drawing with Mark* (the companion volume *Drawing with Mark: Dinosaurs/Space* is also newly available) is an engaging and inspiring tool for young artists. Recommended. Aud: K, E, I, P. (K. Cruver)

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Retail: \$12.95 Genre: Kids/Family; Run Time: 43 minutes



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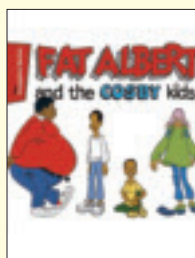
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Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids: The Complete Series

★★★★

(2013) 15 discs. 2,340 min. DVD: \$119.95. Shout! Factory (avail. from most distributors).

Running from 1972 to 1984, Bill Cosby's classic Emmy-winning cartoon series—inspired by his popular standup comedy monologues, which were based on his 1940s boyhood in Philadelphia—was a singular achievement in Saturday-morning animation, presenting young viewers with funny but non-stereotypical multicultural characters in a realistic urban environment, while also occasionally addressing harsh issues (the compassionate, level-headed Fat Albert sometimes comes across more like a social worker than just a Philly kid). Topics in the compilation range from homework to respecting police officers, and some episodes touch on cigarettes, drugs, and sexually transmitted diseases. Cosby, who is seen in live filmed intros, warns young viewers especially about one episode that features a takeoff on the *Scared Straight!* formula (with an acknowledgment of predatory homosexual relationships in jail). Only one controversial issue was kept at a distance, as per Cosby: racism. Also conspicuously absent from this hefty boxed set is the original 1969 pilot "Hey Hey Hey—It's Fat Albert," an NBC prime-time TV special that is slightly different in style from Filmation's long-running CBS show. But the DVD set does include a solid retrospective documentary, in which Cosby talks about his motivations and the principles behind the show (also noting that the hero's catchphrase "Hey, hey, hey!" was a salute to the backing vocals of the Temptations). Highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** Aud: P. (C. Cassidy)

a "making-of" featurette starring hand puppets (exclusive to the Blu-ray release are audio commentaries and animatics). Sure to appeal to fans of the original *Avatar* series, this is highly recommended. Aud: P. (C. Cassidy)

LEGO Batman: The Movie—DC Superheroes Unite ★★1/2

(2013) 71 min. DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$24.98. Warner Home Video (avail. from most distributors).

This CGI-animated feature film pushes the limits of marketing, being a movie spin-off of a video game spin-off of a toy spin-off of a superhero-comics spin-off. Based most directly on the LEGO/DC Comics video game franchise, the story takes place in a digitally-animated version of the familiar Gotham City, where everything is based on LEGO designs and concepts, right down to the Fisher Price-looking iconic characters. Presidential contender Lex Luthor unwisely decides to bust Joker out of Arkham Asylum (additional Gotham villains—or rather, their toy likenesses—make guest appearances) on the eve of election, in order to show off some new ultimate weapons in a joint attack against Batman, Robin, and Superman. Ultimately, the entire Justice League appears, and while the tale boasts at least one really good plot twist, this still feels like a super-commercial for LEGO toys (and/or related video games). For grownup fans there is an amusing portrayal of a surprisingly grumpy Batman, ever ticked that he must be rescued from time to time by Superman. Extras include a featurette on Batman, a trio of DC Comics TV cartoons, and winning shorts from a LEGO/DC Comics superhero stop-

motion animation contest. A strong optional purchase. Aud: P. (C. Cassidy)

Marsh Mud Madness ★★★

(2013) 52 min. DVD: \$15. Roger Day Productions. PPR.

Filmed at the Savannah Music Festival, this rousing live performance of family music finds artist Roger Day employing catchy tunes to teach young people about the fragile ecosystem of the Georgia Coast, and Sapelo Island in particular. Backed by a five-piece band, the Nashville-based guitarist, vocalist, and composer performs 12 songs—titles include "I Love to Study Mud!", "Alligator in My Refrigerator," and "Mosquito Burrito"—before a packed house of kids and their parents. The musical numbers are interspersed with quick clips of Day on location in the saltwater marsh, where he spent a week with marine biologists at the Georgia Marine Institute, encountering the animals, plants, and gooey muck that inspired his creative interpretations. His odes to ghost crabs and vulture vomit are enthusiastically received by the youngsters, who welcome any opportunity for audience participation. Offering an engaging science lesson with a toe-tapping beat, this is recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (K. Cruver)

Meet the Small Potatoes ★★1/2

(2013) 70 min. DVD: \$5.98. Universal Studios Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned.

Featuring a primarily British voice cast, this cutesy animated program offers a retrospective of sorts (à la *Behind the Music*) on the fictional titular group of singing russets,

based on the CBeebies U.K. preschool series. *Meet the Small Potatoes* mixes CGI animation with real-life backgrounds, as interviews with band members Olaf (the profound overweight one), Ruby (the dancing diva), Nate (cool and serious), and Chip (the shy one)—as well as fans, and manager Lester Koop (Malcolm McDowell)—outline the group's history from their Idaho roots to concert tour stops on Broadway, and in Las Vegas, India, and elsewhere. Offering a tongue-in-cheek look at the Small Potatoes' issues with genre identity crisis, a bad breakup—with Ruby behaving outrageously after embarking on a solo career (throwing a cell phone at a waiter)—and subsequent reemergence, the story is peppered throughout with short and catchy music video-style song segments showcasing the spuds in their glory. DVD extras include bonus animated shorts. Although a bit strange, this bargain-priced effort from *Wonder Pets* creator and writer-director Josh Selig is still a strong optional purchase. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Roar of the Rails ★★½

(2013) 42 min. DVD: \$12.99. TM Books & Video (avail. from most distributors). PPR. ISBN: 978-1-936890-24-8.

This latest addition to the *I Love Toy Trains* series—celebrating its 20th anniversary—

My Garden ★★½

(2013) 10 min. DVD: \$59.95 (study guide included). Weston Woods Studios. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 0-545-57129-4.

Buoyantly narrated by Cassandra Morris, this adaptation of author/illustrator Kevin Henkes' 2010 line-and-watercolor picture book follows a child who diligently helps out in her mother's garden. Watering, weeding, and chasing rabbits from the lettuce are important tasks, but the young straw-hat-clad assistant finds herself daydreaming about the imaginative ways that things would be in her very own garden. From color-changing flowers to self-replenishing crops such as seashells and jellybeans, the little sprite comes up with creative ideas for her garden, which would be filled with birds and butterflies ("so that the air was humming with wings"), invisible carrots (invisible because she doesn't like them), and nighttime blooms that glow incandescent like lanterns. DVD extras include a read-along option. Sweet and whimsical, this delightful program is highly recommended. Aud: K, P. (J. Williams-Wood)



combines rousing live-action, entertaining special effects (including Disney characters riding a handcar on the moon), and signature upbeat songs from singer/songwriter Jim Coffey. A number of different scale-model train sets are filmed from an ant's-eye perspective to make them seem as real as a modern Amtrak Zephyr. In the story "Vinny's Dreams" (Vinny being a ventriloquist's doll dressed as an engineer), green-screen techniques are

employed to show the line of cars rolling past landmarks around the world, including the Grand Canyon, San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge, and the Eiffel Tower. All the while, Vinny shares historical details about the locales. Youngsters also visit the Great Barrier Reef via a Lionel submarine, and zoom under the Brooklyn Bridge in a Lionel bi-plane. A second story follows up on the alien narrative featured in the earlier *I Love*

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Toy Trains: All Aboard! (VL-9/11), while a third demonstrates that girls, as well as boys, are enthusiastic fans. Mixing education with entertainment, this newest title from the popular series is highly recommended. Aud P. (C. Block)

Saige Paints the Sky ★★

(2013) 100 min. DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$26.98. Universal Studios Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).

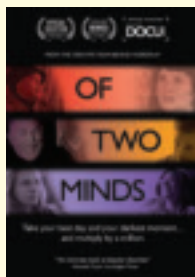
Aired on NBC, this *American Girl* feature-length film set in the Southwest (with an abundance of turquoise jewelry and Native American art) follows 9-year-old Saige (Sydney Fullmer), who lives to paint and ride horses. Scheduled to start fourth grade in the fall, Saige learns that she'll have to make do without art class due to budget cuts. Meanwhile, best friend Tessa (Alex Peters) has met a boy named Dylan (Mika Abdalla) at music camp, which leaves Saige feeling like a third wheel until she meets the artistic Gabi (Alana Gordillo)—a fan of Saige's artist grandmother, Mimi (Jane Seymour)—who encourages her to try new techniques and speak up for the things she believes in (Saige also has a horse named Picasso and a dog named Rembrandt—both available as toy accessories, naturally). "Artists never give up," Mimi tells Saige, so the latter organizes a Day of Beige protest against the elimination of art instruction. With their principal's encouragement, the girls attempt to raise funds for a part-time teacher, but working separately leads to infighting. Adults may appreciate the messages here about creativity and cooperation, but this is a fairly lackluster effort with mediocre acting from the younger cast members and subpar special effects, especially since Winnipeg unconvincingly stands in for Albuquerque. An optional purchase. Aud: P. (K. Fennessy)

PSYCHOLOGY & SELF-HELP

Children and Grief: Children Teaching Children About Grief ★★½

(2013) 40 min. DVD: \$34.99. Professor Child. PPR.

This video features 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. The program is divided into 10 sections, with each child speaking briefly about subjects such as worries and challenges related to grief, and strategies for coping. Their stories cover a wide range of feelings: one boy talks about how he worried that he wouldn't get new clothes anymore because his mom used to buy them for him, while a toddler remembers having fun putting clips in her daddy's hair. The kids offer advice and thoughts about their own experiences adjusting to life without



Of Two Minds ★★★

(2013) 89 min. DVD: \$29.95. Docurama (avail. from most distributors).

Co-directors Lisa Klein and Doug Blush's *Of Two Minds* focuses on three people with bipolar disorder, offering insight into their worlds of exhilarating highs and crushing lows. Between interviews, the filmmakers incorporate comments from authors, activists, and psychiatrists (a segment about a shop that sells "psycho" donuts adds levity, but doesn't really fit). Cheri, a Los Angeles makeup artist, experienced hallucinations for the first time when she was eight years old, but didn't receive a diagnosis until she was 31, by which time she had attempted suicide, divorced, and moved 37 times. Cheri, who is involved with a bipolar man, can't find an insurance company willing to take her on, and spends hundreds of dollars a month on medications and therapy. Liz, a Philadelphia writer, was in college when she experienced her first hallucination. After a psychotic episode, Liz found out the reason behind her severe mood swings, which she would later write about in a column for *The Philadelphia Weekly*. Carlton, a 65-year-old Pasadena architectural artist, also attempted suicide and fell prey to crack addiction. For much of his life, he had trouble holding down jobs and blamed his traumatic childhood. For both Liz and Carlton, sexual assault exacerbated their symptoms. Blush and Klein (who lost her bipolar sister to suicide) also speak with the family and friends of Miya, who took her life when she could no longer stand the pain. Two other subjects, Petey and Jenifer, receive less attention, but still add valuable commentary. DVD extras include interviews with experts and a short film about Toronto's Mad Parade. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

someone they love. Most of the subjects here have lost family members—particularly parents—to illness. Interviews with a boy whose brother died in a traffic accident and a girl who talks about a grandfather who passed away from natural causes offer useful perspectives on significantly different situations. All of the kids share a photo of the person they are discussing, personal details about how they celebrate the memory of that individual, and comments about their own dreams for the future. A powerful program that could help encourage hope and healing in other youngsters suffering from loss and sadness, this is highly recommended. Aud: P. (K. Cruver)

The Dream Share Project ★★½

(2013) 63 min. DVD: \$24.95. Passion River (avail. from most distributors).

"How do you discover your passion?" asks Anne Headley, a career counselor interviewed for the quirky documentary *The Dream Share Project*. Filmmakers Alexis Irvin and Chip Hiden decide to find out how by quitting their jobs and—aided by Kickstarter funds and a borrowed car—taking a road trip. Armed with a cheap video camera, the pair head west, stopping to talk with life coaches, psychologists, authors, a law professor, an Olympic skier, a man who imports flip-flops from Thailand—and each other—about their thoughts and impressions. The intentionally amateurish camerawork includes a lot of shaky handheld action, with the couple mugging in front of the lens, posing before Mount Rushmore, and goofing off with seaweed on a California beach. Coming back through the South, they run out of money and so speed

home, where they start writing a book titled *Build Your Dreams: How to Make a Living Doing What You Love*. While Irvin's and Hiden's enthusiasm is appealing, the concept is not particularly fresh. Indeed, the best thing here may be the DVD extras, which include interviews with astronaut Paul Richards, who emphasizes the value of persistence; designer, graphic artist, and event planner Sugar Taylor, who lays out a set of year-by-year goals she used to get her business rolling; and Heather Smith, head of Rock the Vote, who asserts that "so much of life is showing up." A strong optional purchase. Aud: P. (F. Gardner)

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

Divorcing God: Secularism and the Republic ★½

(2011) 30 min. DVD: \$14.95. Bridgestone Multimedia Group (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-0-7403-2757-5.

A thoughtful case could perhaps be made for the proposition that expressions of religious belief in American public life are too circumscribed on constitutional grounds, but Ed Vitagliano's *Divorcing God*—executive produced by Tim Wildmon of the American Family Association—doesn't make it. Exhibiting all the depth of a late-night infomercial, the short documentary combines a string of carefully selected pro-religion quotations from the nation's founders (extended in this instance to include Abraham Lincoln) with statements by conservative academics, think-tank members, and clergymen, who contend that the republic was founded on

Judeo-Christian principles, which secular humanists have been largely successful in driving from the public square (all of this accompanied by patriotic graphics and artwork). According to the film, this has directly resulted in a lack of morality embodied in the kind of culture of sexual promiscuity that has destroyed past civilizations and now threatens the very existence of the United States (a situation epitomized in photos of pro-gay rallies and a clip from what is described as a shameful performance by Rihanna and Britney Spears at the 2011 Billboard Music Awards, which was broadcast nationwide on the ABC Network—"Disney-owned," as the narrator emphasizes). The mixture of one-note proselytizing and apocalyptic prophecy ensures that *Divorcing God* will appeal to no one except those who already agree with its point of view. An intelligent discussion of the separation of church and state would be welcome, but this program merely preaches to the fundamentalist choir. Not recommended. Aud: P. (F. Swietek)

Introducing the Transcendentalists

★★★1/2

(2012) 50 min. DVD: \$169.95. Films Media Group. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62290-228-6.

Although the title of this documentary hosted by James H. Bride leads viewers to expect an examination of the titular religious and philosophical movement that flowered in New England in the mid-19th century, this film is actually a curious hybrid, serving up short and disparate biographies of transcendentalism's most famous exponents: Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau.

The first half, devoted to Emerson, presents a conventional sketch, mixing archival photos, new footage, and expository narration coupled with commentary on the writer's individual works by academic experts. The second section, on Thoreau, is largely comprised of dramatic re-enactment, with Richard Smith portraying the author and reciting portions of his writings. This is followed by an entirely separate short production, "In the Footsteps of Henry David Thoreau," which depicts Thoreau padding about the snow-covered area of Walden Pond in wintertime. *Introducing the Transcendentalists* successfully conveys the pantheistic tendencies of transcendentalist thought—characterized by the inclination to see the divine in nature—while also pointing to the essential issues that Emerson and Thoreau tried to engage in their own often turbulent lives. But especially in the extensive remarks by Richard H. Baker, a teacher at Noble and Greenough School in Dedham, MA, the program often becomes a discussion of how best to bring those issues to life for contemporary students (even describing classroom exercises with that goal in mind), so ultimately this might prove more useful to instructors than students. A strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Our Fascinating Universe: A Journey Through God's Creation ★★★1/2

(2012) 55 min. DVD: \$19.99. Institut für Glaube und Wissenschaft (dist. by Vision Video).

Our Fascinating Universe makes the case that the universe was created by God through intelligent design, but this faith-based documentary offers a lot of redundant information before arriving at its religious message. The

handful of expert astronomers, cosmologists, and theologians here—including King's College theology professor Alister McGrath and Oxford math professor John C. Lennox—aren't identified as being predisposed to believing in intelligent design until very late in the proceedings. Despite these caveats, *Our Fascinating Universe* does provide a broad overview of what we know about the cosmos and especially what has been learned (or embraced) in the last 100 years, including the Big Bang Theory and scientific evidence that the universe is indeed expanding. This cosmological primer—illustrated with stunning space-telescope images—ultimately leads to the argument that because the Earth is so finely attuned to support life, this strongly suggests the hand of God in creation. Whatever one's position on that particular hypothesis, it's still fun to hear academics speak of "other Earths" and "the multiverse," among other mind-blowing concepts. DVD extras include additional interviews. A strong optional purchase. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

When the Iron Bird Flies ★★★

(2012) 96 min. DVD: \$129 (\$229 w/PPR). Kino Lorber Edu.

The subject of Victress Hitchcock and Amber Bemak's documentary—which takes its title from an ancient prophecy—is how Tibetan Buddhism spread to the rest of the globe, particularly the United States. Archival footage is employed to depict the Chinese invasion of Tibet in 1950 and the Dalai Lama's flight to exile in India—nine years later—along with thousands of followers. Ironically, that political disaster enabled Tibetan masters to carry their teachings to the wider world just as social changes in the West were instilling in many people a longing for spiritual fulfillment that they found lacking in other religious systems. *When the Iron Bird Flies* follows that development while also offering insight into the Buddhist view of human existence. The film's strongest elements are the personal testimonies of some adherents—not so much celebrities like Richard Gere, who appears briefly, but rather lesser-known subjects who recount their experiences in detail. Perhaps the most intriguing case involves a man who was drawn to Buddhism while engaging in financial practices that led to a prison term and wound up using his incarceration to teach other inmates about the Buddhist worldview, remaining committed after his release. Another, featuring a woman who joined a Buddhist monastic community, introduces a self-critical element, noting that some Buddhist teachings and accompanying social attitudes are sometimes inimical to Western cultural norms. Despite a strong proselytizing element, this documentary offers a good introduction to Tibetan Buddhism within a historical context. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)



Scientology: The Science of Truth or the Art of Deception

★★★1/2

(2013) 60 min. DVD: \$19.99. Matthias Film gGmbH (dist. by Vision Video).

This documentary by Dr. Rainer Fromm examines facts, claims, and assumptions concerning the cult religion of Scientology, which is most famous in the U.S. for having such celebrity members as Tom Cruise and John Travolta. Featuring interviews with Scientology leaders in America and Europe (especially Germany, where a large following exists), along with well-known ex-members and detractors, the documentary begins with a brief history of founder L. Ron Hubbard. Viewers learn some of the details about Hubbard's life, but the major emphasis here is on the science-fiction-ish underpinnings of Scientology's belief system, such as the assertion that humans are reincarnated from an ancient race of aliens—abandoned here and left to struggle, over many lifetimes, to attain spiritual superiority. The core of Scientology's practices—so-called "auditing" to identify burdens in our past lives—is examined, with some former adherents claiming that the process is no more than an exploration of false memories. Fromm also looks at a side operation of the church: Youth for Human Rights International, which helps lend respectability to the organization. Highlighting Scientology's caste system and on-the-record desire to eliminate opposing views, while also detailing stories of departing followers who were subject to harsh reprisals, this documentary offers a revealing and compelling look at a controversial quasi-religion. Highly recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

A Woman Named Mary: The Miracle of Lourdes ★★1/2

(2011) 81 min. DVD: \$19.99. Kultur International Films (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-0-7697-5025-5.

Faithful Catholics of a traditional bent represent the most likely audience for this program, which captures a pageant enacted before a crowd of pilgrims in the courtyard of the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary at Lourdes, on August 13, 2011. Lourdes is the village in southwestern France where Mary, the mother of Jesus, is believed to have miraculously appeared to the peasant girl Bernadette Soubirous over several months during 1858, attracting increasing attention as the visions progressed, resulting in the erection of a sanctuary that has become the most popular Marian shrine in the world (Soubirous's story was Hollywood-ized in the beloved 1943 tearjerker *The Song of Bernadette*). Despite the title, however, the pageant staged here by Robert Hossein is not a retelling of Bernadette's story. Although it is preceded by a prologue in which Bernadette (Manon Le Moal) and Mary (Séverine Berthelot) briefly converse, the presentation quickly becomes a Gospel-based account of the public ministry of Jesus (Pierre-Laurent Barneron), from his baptism by John up through the Crucifixion and Resurrection. As the actors perform on a large stage in successive tableaux, others read dialogue through an amplified sound system, accompanied by snatches of an eclectic assemblage of music, including snippets from Mahler and Tchaikovsky. Hossein occasionally indulges his inner Cecil B. DeMille—including Salome's Dance of the Seven Veils among the episodes—but by and large the selections here are intended to inspire and uplift. A strong optional purchase. Aud: P. (F. Swietek)

SOCIAL & POLITICAL ISSUES

Bidder 70 ★★1/2

(2013) 73 min. DVD: \$24.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Opening with a quotation from Martin Luther King, Jr., filmmakers Beth and George Gage's *Bidder 70* follows the story of an act of nonviolent eco-resistance. In 2008, the Bush administration allowed a controversial auction of Utah wilderness to mining and energy concerns. After activists failed to halt the sale, Utah college student Tim DeChristopher—who attended—was mistaken for a bidder and given an identifying paddle, Number 70. DeChristopher decided—on the spur of the moment—to thwart the deal, “buying” all of the properties himself (with \$1.7 million that he, of course, did not have). As a court date nears, VIP guests such as Robert Redford and Nobel Prize-winner Terry Root voice their approval of DeChristopher's act of



A Girl & a Gun ★★1/2

(2012) 76 min. DVD: \$24.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors, Sept. 17). Closed captioned.

Filmmaker Cathryne Czubek examines the relationship between American women and firearms in *A Girl & a Gun*, combining interviews with mini-profiles of both enthusiasts and those who have experienced tragedy in their lives because of guns. Czubek devotes more time to the former, including a Tai Chi trainer with a violent ex-boyfriend, a young champion skeet shooter, and a writer who feels ownership is a choice between “target and non-target” status. On the other side are an African American mom whose daughter is a paraplegic after being shot as an innocent bystander, and a prison inmate serving time for killing her girlfriend with a shotgun. Viewers also meet a New York City nurse who finds relaxation at the shooting range but never exposes her children to guns at home, and an Alabama mother who takes her kids into “the boondocks” to shoot rifles for fun. The interviewees articulately voice the reasons behind their choices, and their stories bring up issues related to empowerment, violence, gender roles, and protection. Along the way, authors Mary Zeiss Strange, Laura Browder, and Katharine Gates help provide perspective, linking the topic to the history of American crime, the creation of advertising designed to instill fear, and the entertainment industry's role in promoting alluring imagery. And a visit to an exposition featuring pink guns and accessories highlights changes in the marketplace that many find unnerving. Serving up a provocative examination of a complex subject, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. [Note: this is also available with public performance rights for \$200 for public libraries and \$350 for colleges and universities from Collective Eye Films, www.collectiveeye.org.] (M. Puffer-Rothenberg)

monkey-wrenching (his detractors, especially in the present Department of the Interior, declined to be interviewed). *Bidder 70* is not about future development plans for the state of Utah; rather, the emphasis is placed on the expressive DeChristopher and his young peers in the group Peaceful Uprising, who vow to fight global warming with creative acts of civil disobedience and...performance art. Granted, street-theater antics look strange out of context, but the point is well made that earlier environmentalists failed to curb mega-corporate influence when they tried to work proper channels within the system. Now DeChristopher and a new generation are ready to break the rules in innovative ways. Extras include a Q&A with DeChristopher. A thought-provoking documentary about the growing field of eco-activism, this is highly recommended. [Note: this is also available with public performance rights for \$295 from Bullfrog Films at www.bullfrogfilms.com.] Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

A Girl Like Her ★★1/2

(2011) 47 min. DVD: \$89; public libraries; \$295; colleges & universities. Women Make Movies. PPR.

In *A Girl Like Her*, writer-director Ann Fessler collects several disturbing first-person accounts of teenage pregnancy during the 1950s and '60s. None of the women appear on camera, but their interspersed narratives play over scenes from contemporary films and newsreels showing idealized depictions of romance, marriage, and domestic life. The subjects recall their parents' silence about sex, menstruation, and birth control, as well as the uniformly condemning reactions they faced

when revealing their pregnancies. Generally treated with indifference during childbirth, they were blindsided by the emotions they felt toward infants whom they were discouraged from even holding—and all gave up their babies for adoption in anguish, signing papers that identified the children as abandoned and the fathers as unknown, believing they had no legal options, while facing crushing familial and social disapproval. All of the women assert that the trauma affects them deeply to the present day, coloring life choices and ambitions in spite of popular notions that one simply “moves on” (an on-screen statistic notes that of the 100 women interviewed, 30 never had another child). The movie footage here punches up the personal accounts, creating a jaw-dropping picture of “ideal” womanhood in an America that existed only 50 years ago. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (M. Puffer-Rothenberg)

Greenwich Village: Music That Defined a Generation ★★★

(2012) 92 min. DVD: \$149 (\$249 w/PPR). Kino Lorber Edu.

Narrator Susan Sarandon reading from the late Suze Rotolo's memoir *A Freewheelin' Time* serves as the opening for this nostalgic scrapbook tribute to the folk-protest and coffeehouse-music scene in New York's Greenwich Village during the 1950s and '60s. The community was a hotbed of left-progressive arts and music, heralding the upcoming counterculture and generation-gap upheavals (a watershed event was a 1961 protest against a city ban on Sunday music in Washington Square Park). Along the way, filmmaker Laura

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THEY THINK I'M CHINESE!

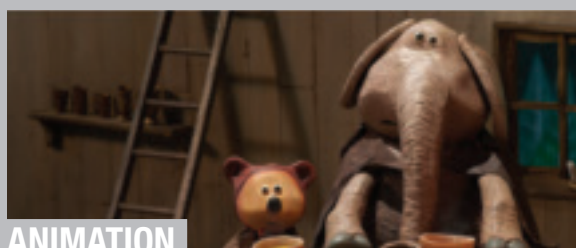
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Archibald draws a direct (and approving) line from yesterday's Village tunesmiths to the Occupy Wall Street movement. Interviewees include Judy Collins, Buffy Sainte-Marie, Don McLean, John Sebastian, Kris Kristofferson, Carly Simon, and many other familiar singer-songwriters. Bob Dylan is not present, but much discussed, and over the closing credits, nonagenarian Pete Seeger offers details on the accepted lore that he tried to cut Dylan's amp cables at the Newport Folk Festival. One of the more interesting recollections: the commercial coffeehouse Café Bizarre catered to gawking tourists as a "beatnik" hangout, creating stereotypes of the Village—but also became a venue for what would become the Lovin' Spoonful. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Herman's House ★★½

(2012) 81 min. DVD: \$24.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

This remarkable documentary focuses on an unlikely yet beautiful friendship between New York artist Jackie Sumell and Herman Wallace, quite possibly the longest-serving prisoner in solitary confinement. Sentenced in 1967 to Louisiana's Angola prison for a robbery, Wallace eventually joined the Black Panthers, participating in efforts to change the prison's violent, racist culture. In 1972, however, Wallace and two other Panther members were found guilty of killing a white guard, despite no physical evidence linking them to the murder. Today, Wallace remains one of two of those convicted who are still in solitary confinement: 23 hours a day for 40 years. Filmmaker Angad Singh Bhalla's *Herman's House* focuses on Sumell's creative activism on Wallace's behalf. Learning of his plight, the compassionate sculptor wrote him a letter and the two forged a connection that has lasted more than a decade, partially built on Sumell's touring art exhibit, which includes Wallace's imagined dream home. Sumell's larger mission is to build an actual house based on Wallace's fantasies, set in New Orleans. But that goal proves to be as elusive as the greater freedom Wallace seeks in his legal battles to be released from his 6-by-9-foot cell. Viewers get to know both individuals in contrasting ways: Sumell through an ever-present camera following her studio work and her move to New Orleans; Wallace as a disembodied voice on the telephone, sounding extraordinarily sane despite his oppressive prison conditions. DVD extras include an interview with the director, and deleted scenes. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

La Source ★★

(2012) 71 min. DVD: \$95: high schools & public libraries; \$295 w/PPR: colleges & universities. Ro*co Films Educational.

Don Chedale narrates this inspirational documentary that focuses on a plan to bring

running water to the titular poverty-stricken Haitian village. Josue Lajeunesse, a single father who has worked as a maintenance technician at Princeton University for 16 years, drives a cab at night in order to support his four children, sending money to the family in La Source. For Josue's relatives, traditional water collection is a treacherous business, since the mountain path is long and narrow, and the nearby river is contaminated. Josue and his brother, Chrismedonne, have been trying to solve this problem for years, but political roadblocks and other obstacles have foiled their plans. Director Patrick Shen divides his time between Josue and Chrismedonne, the latter a bricklayer with seven children. Along with a lack of running water, the citizens of La Source also must make do without electricity and medical care. The situation worsens after the 2010 earthquake, as cholera spreads, but when a story about Josue runs on the Princeton website, students rally to help, donating time, sharing connections, and engaging in fundraising efforts. Josue travels to Haiti to assess the situation, accompanied by student and producer Jordan Wagner, and David Darg, an NGO representative. Once the trio have a blueprint in hand, they enlist the townspeople to provide the physical labor, and a long deferred dream starts to become a reality. A stirring story of a small group of people working together to make meaningful change, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennesy)

Meet the Frackers: Energy Independence or Environmental Nightmare ★★

(2012) 27 min. DVD: \$129.95. Films Media Group. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62290-632-1.

Originally aired on the Australian news

series *Foreign Correspondent*, this short documentary looks at the controversy over the North American fuel industry's game-changing new gambit: shale-oil extraction, aka "fracking," a method of removing vast petroleum reserves from underground mineral deposits. The pros: U.S. energy independence and the creation of boomtowns that could help reverse the recession's chronic joblessness. The cons: fracking can release a cauldron of toxic chemicals into the ecosystem. Much oil-rich shale underlies affluent suburbs in Texas, home to many children and worried parents. One affected interviewee, a Democrat landowner who defines herself as an environmentalist, is in favor of fracking. Does she know something the alarmists don't, or is she merely looking for lots of money? Viewers will also see footage from filmmaker Josh Fox's now-famous anti-fracking documentary *Gasland* (VL-11/11), with its alarming imagery of drinking water igniting into flame straight out of the kitchen faucet (*Gasland 2* was recently released in theaters). Offering a more or less impartial journalistic examination of a literally burning issue, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Nothing Like Chocolate ★★

(2013) 68 min. DVD: \$295. Mirror and Hammer Films (dist. by Bullfrog Films). PPR. SDH captioned. ISBN: 1-93777-246-2.

Kum-Kum Bhavnani's documentary presents two views of how cocoa is harvested in order to satisfy the seemingly insatiable demand for chocolate. One focuses on the harsh labor conditions in the West African nation of Ivory Coast, the world's largest producer of cacao beans, where child labor (which the filmmaker defines as modern-day slavery) is employed, with nary a peep of concern from



Lost Angels: Skid Row is My Home ★★½

(2012) 75 min. DVD: \$24.95. Cinema Libre Studio (avail. from most distributors).

The Skid Row section of Los Angeles is roughly four square miles that contains thousands of homeless men and women. Narrated by Catherine Keener, Thomas Q. Napper's documentary introduces the viewer to eight individuals who struggle to survive within this extraordinary environment. Included here are Danny Harris, a former Olympic silver medalist sprinter whose life was destroyed by drug addiction; an ex-boxer who calls himself KK.; and Lee Anne Leven, a self-styled "cat lady" whose mission is to feed the area's feral feline population. Lee Anne witnessed the blurring of real-life and reel-life when she worked as an extra in the Robert Downey Jr.—Jamie Foxx film *The Soloist*, which was filmed on location at Skid Row (Napper was the second-unit director). *Lost Angels* also highlights the outreach work of the nonprofits Los Angeles Community Action Network and The Midnight Mission, which work with the area's residents—many of whom struggle with mental illnesses and addiction issues. While the documentary offers hope that residence on Skid Row does not necessarily become the proverbial last stop on the line (Harris managed to complete his undergraduate degree studies and become part of The Midnight Mission staff after filming was completed), the imagery of human misery located at the center of one of America's most vibrant metropolitan regions is hard to forget. A powerful and timely portrait of the down and out, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

War on Whistleblowers ★★½

(2013) 66 min. In English & Spanish w/English subtitles. DVD: \$19.98. *The Disinformation Company* (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-939517-06-7.



Filmmaker Robert Greenwald's timely documentary looks at the experiences of four American whistleblowers whose involvement with U.S. government programs led them to reveal disturbing facts through the press. Greenwald's first subject, Franz Gayl, was an advisor at the Pentagon at the start of the Iraq War when he tried to draw attention to the inadequacy of Humvees that were easily blown apart by roadside bombs. Thomas Drake, a senior executive at the National Security Agency, was responsible, post-9/11, for creating surveillance programs to root out terrorists, but he objected to warrantless wiretapping of Americans and took his case to reporters. Similar tales from the Department of Justice and government contractor Deepwater Horizon are presented here, with the common denominator being a subsequent overreach by officials—who have even invoked the 1917 Espionage Act in prosecuting those whom they deemed offenders (despite a lack of actual espionage). Greenwald speaks to a number of esteemed journalists (including the *New York Times*' Bill Keller and David Carr, and investigative reporter Seymour Hersh) who discuss how Barack Obama promised transparency during his administration, but has actually gone after more whistleblowers than any U.S. president in history. Greenwald concludes that America has become a "secrecy state," with citizens deliberately kept in the dark about national policy issues that affect their lives. DVD extras include audio commentary by Greenwald and extended interviews. Compelling, provocative, and ultimately disturbing, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

the manufacturers and financial traders at the center of the industry. A more benevolent approach is exemplified by the Grenada Chocolate Company, a Caribbean-based cooperative founded by an American named Mott Green (who sadly died in June at the age of 47) that emphasizes organic agricultural methods. The film argues that Green's model of artisanal production helps to inspire a self-sufficient economy and individual self-determination—a point reinforced with footage of smiling Grenadan farmers and workers, some of whom offer their commentary, along with the likes of Michael Pollan and assorted activists, scientists, and conscientious purveyors of delectable bonbons. Green balks, however, at having "fair trade" certification, which he defines as misleading to consumers and too costly for his smaller-scale approach. While his company is not flush with profits, Green appears to have reveled in his work, happy to be making a significant improvement in Grenada's way of life. Featuring both the full-length film and a 55-minute abridged version, this challenging documentary may make chocolate lovers think twice about their passion. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Videomappings: Aida, Palestine ★★

(2009) 46 min. In Arabic w/English subtitles. DVD: \$45: individuals; \$175: institutions. Lowave (dist. by Action! Library Media Service). PPR.

Life for the Palestinian residents of the Aida refugee camp is explored from an unusual perspective in artist Till Roeskens' documentary, in which a half-dozen interviewees draw simple maps of where they live, while describing—in off-screen voices—the locale, restrictions placed on them, and circum-

stances (often poignant) that brought them there. Each of the six segments presents a powerful indictment of the continuing day-to-day indignities suffered by the refugees. One young girl points out what rooms in her house provide the best shelter during army searches. A man recalls how he worked for years to earn enough money to buy a small farm, only to have it seized and bulldozed over in a single day while he and his father were being questioned by soldiers. A woman mournfully recounts the humiliation of having to pass through Israeli checkpoints, which can be especially daunting in the case of a medical emergency, while another describes how the construction of the Israeli security wall literally cut off her family's home—and its business—from the rest of the neighborhood, bringing financial ruin. *Videomappings: Aida, Palestine* makes its telling points quietly, by simply recording the muted anger and air of resignation in the subjects' voices. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Vivan las Antipodas ★★½

(2011) 108 min. In English, Spanish, Shanghaiese & Tswana w/English subtitles. DVD: \$29.95. Docurama (avail. from most distributors).

Russian filmmaker Victor Kossakovsky's documentary *Vivan las Antipodas* is built from an interesting concept, offering a comparison of cultures located on directly opposite sides of the planet. A quartet of antipodes was chosen for this compare/contrast experiment: Entre Rios in Argentina is matched against Shanghai; Patagonia in Chile is set against Russia's Lake Baikal; Botswana in southern Africa finds a mate in Hawaii's Big Island; and Miraflores in Spain

is diametrically opposite to New Zealand's Castle Point. In many respects, the locations have almost nothing in common, especially in the case of the sleepy rural peacefulness of Entre Rios and its chaotic cousin across the globe in overcrowded Shanghai. But in other ways, each locale shares the common link of a fragile connection with the surrounding world. Sometimes, nature offers nasty surprises—most notably with the startling presence of a beached whale at Castle Point—but for the most part, the ebb and flow of life is safely predictable. Unfortunately, once the initial novelty of comparing cultures begins to wear off, the film—which combines beautiful cinematography (some displayed upside-down!) with a rousing score by Alexander Popov—becomes little more than a picturesque travelogue offering a respectful view of various peoples around the world. A winner of the Cinematic Vision Award at AFI's Silverdocs festival, this is a strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

TEEN ISSUES

My Changing Life: Changes with Money & Finance ★★

(2013) 15 min. DVD: \$175. Film Ideas. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60572-720-2.

This brief episode from the six-part *My Changing Life* advice series for 'tweens and teens offers tips on making, managing, and saving money. A narrator shares ideas for handling finances (while shots of the items and activities that hard-earned dollars can buy appear onscreen), and kids express their feelings and offer advice in brief interview clips. Interjected throughout are several short vignettes—somewhat awkwardly acted by amateur juvenile performers—that further elaborate on the material that is presented here, which includes segments on "Budgeting and Saving," "Allowances and Chores," and "Having and Spending Money." Short but informative, this is a welcome primer on an important subject that can help young people mature into fiscally responsible adults. Other titles in the series include *Changes with School*, *Changes with Family*, *Social Changes*, *Changes for Boys (The Complete Guide to Puberty)*, and *Changes for Girls (The Complete Guide to Puberty)*. Recommended. Aud: I, J, P. (K. Cruver)

EDUCATION

Education Under Arrest ★★

(2013) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.95 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-882-0.

Life is tough in America's cities, where too many young people—hailing from

180 Days: A Year Inside an American High School

★★★1/2

(2013) 240 min. DVD: 2 discs, \$29.99 (\$59.95 w/PPR). PBS Home Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-885-1.

Produced by Black Public Media, this PBS-aired series offers an insider's look at a full school year for students at metal-detector-greeting Washington Metropolitan High School, aka DC Met. Divided over four hour-long segments, *180 Days* is told from the perspective of dedicated staff—including staunch and energetic Principal Tanishia Williams Minor—and five captivating seniors who hope to be part of the alternative school's first graduating class, where 97 percent of the students are economically disadvantaged. The documentary looks at numerous struggles, including trying to boost enrollment (more students = more much-needed funding), combating truancy, the widespread absence of foundational skills (such as reading or basic math), troubled home lives, behavioral problems, and studying for the dreaded CAS (Comprehensive Assessment System) testing—the results of which threaten jobs. However, *180 Days* also spotlights the lighter side of the high school experience, such as basketball and cheerleading squads, college applications and acceptance, parent night, prom, and a special graduation event at Union Station. Also serving up relevant statistics and newspaper quotes, DVD extras include PDF discussion guides. An informative, thought-provoking, and poignant slice-of-life glimpse into education in our nation's capital, this is highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (J. Williams-Wood)



troubled or broken homes—don't consider school a priority, preferring instead to "run the streets," before eventually joining the "school to prison pipeline," where they learn the wrong lessons in lockup. This episode from the PBS-aired *Tavis Smiley Reports* series looks at the "high risk game" of criminalizing children who are caught in the "zero tolerance net." Interviewing probation officers, justices, corrections staff, and the offenders themselves, Smiley draws a picture of kids suffering from rage, addiction issues, and neglect: fighting and dropping out of school almost seems like a natural response. A few adults choose to step up to "support rather than punish." For example, a Missouri judge handling juvenile justice cases, tired of seeing the same faces in his courtroom, has started the Innovative Concepts Academy, seeking to establish hope, discipline, and goals for young offenders. Smiley meets teens in corrections facilities trying to turn their lives around, despite repeat visits to lockup. He also talks to youth advocates and truancy boards, and visits alternative schools. Smiley isn't naïve, but he is passionate, arguing that a "total reset is needed," while also noting the high human and financial cost of doing nothing. A timely, provocative documentary that should spark needed debate, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)

Private Tutor: Your Complete SAT Critical Reading Prep Course with Amy Lucas, DVD 1 ★★★1/2

(2012) 120 min. DVD: \$29.95. Private Tutor. PPR.

Host Amy Lucas is the titular "private tutor," who shares strategies for tackling the critical-reading portion of the SAT while seated on a couch in a cozy domestic setting.

Lucas covers several aspects of the subject, from providing an overview of the test structure and suggesting techniques for improving memory, to walking students through sample questions. Lucas uses lively vocal inflection and a conversational tone to engage her audience, with key points frequently flashed onscreen in brightly colored text, helping to underscore important material. Lucas talks about what types of questions to expect and offers tips on specific ways to approach them. She also presents study pointers, pacing tips for test day, and information on what to expect from the exam based on statistics. Individual sections cover vocabulary, sentence completion, and reading comprehension. The disc also includes two supplementary PDFs: one with sentence-completion drills, and the other offering a sample essay that demonstrates how to tackle a reading comprehension passage. Other titles in the series include *Your Complete SAT Critical Reading Prep Course with Amy Lucas, DVD 2*; *Your Complete SAT Math Prep Course with Amy Lucas, DVD 1-4*; and *Your Complete SAT Writing Prep Course with Amy Lucas, DVD 1-2*. Thorough, informative, and likely to help take some of the anxiety out of the testing experience, this is highly recommended. Aud: H, P. (K. Cruver)

LAW & CRIME

Khmer Rouge: A Simple Matter of Justice ★★★

(2011) 79 min. DVD: \$348. Icarus Films. PPR.

In 2006, the Cambodian government and the United Nations established the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia

(ECCC), a judicial body tasked with bringing to trial the surviving members of the Khmer Rouge leadership. This documentary by Rémi Lainé and Jean Reynaud follows the work of the ECCC's co-investigating judges—Marcel Lemonde of France and You Bunleng of Cambodia—in their pursuit of Kang Kek Iew, also known as "Comrade Duch," who oversaw the infamous S-21 prison. But despite the extraordinary carnage inflicted on Cambodia during the Khmer Rouge years—one-third of the population perished—the nation is mostly uncomfortable with raking up its deadly past. Survivors of the Khmer Rouge regime prefer not to speak about what occurred, while two out of three Cambodians were born after the 1979 overthrow of the Khmer Rouge and thus have no firsthand knowledge of the atrocities. Even more challenging are the conflicting approaches advocated by Lemonde and You, particularly in regard to the judicial concept of genocidal crimes. Nonetheless, the two methodically pursue Kang and other Khmer Rouge officials, including former foreign minister Khieu Samphan and Nuon Chea, the latter informally known as "Brother Number Two" to dictator Pol Pot. Offering fascinating insights into the challenges of bringing the elusive perpetrators of modern war crimes to justice, this is recommended. [Note: see also the review of *Duch: Master of the Forges of Hell* on pg. 78] Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Mind of a Rampage Killer ★★★1/2

(2013) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.95 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-877-6.

The 2012 mass shootings at a movie theater in Aurora, CO, and at Connecticut's Sandy Hook Elementary School have reignited the controversy over the mindset of rampage killers, who seemingly transform without warning from average people into cold-blooded murderers. This PBS-aired NOVA documentary is part of a series quickly put together with an aim toward detecting and preventing similar future crimes. Reporter/director Miles O'Brien seeks to discover whether killers are born or made, and if they are primarily motivated by a wish to kill or to die, either by their own hand, or "suicide by cop." The 1966 Austin, TX, sniper shootings by Charles Whitman, a clean-cut young man who went on a sudden, deadly killing spree, would set the pattern. At the time, speculation centered around a tumor or abnormality found in Whitman's brain, which might have altered the circuitry and thinking of a normal, well-adjusted person. Recent research points to more complex causes, including the roles of stress, anxiety, hormones, and parental abuse and neglect. Most killers are male, many in their teenage years (when the brain is not yet fully formed), and have been subject to bullying, peer pressure, and the all-important need to "fit in" and be accepted. Columbine killer Dylan Klebold

was consumed by despair and a wish to die; hiding his feelings, he confided to his diary instead of parents, teachers, or friends. O'Brien interviews a mother who hides household knives from a son known for sudden rages, and a California school shooter who went from a "kind kid" and "class clown" to a murderer. Rampage shooters often die with the belief that it's "better to be infamous than invisible." Since human behavior doesn't change all that much over the decades, more coverage should have been given here to the role of high-powered weaponry and Internet social media in magnifying these crimes. As the documentary notes, predicting who will kill is like predicting the strength and track of a developing hurricane. An incomplete but unquestionably timely documentary, this is ultimately recommended, with reservations. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)

Mumia: Long Distance Revolutionary

★★★★

(2013) 120 min. DVD: \$24.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors).

Mumia Abu-Jamal haters and supporters both speak in Stephen Vittoria's docu-manifesto. And while anti-Mumia types are typically Fox blowhards and right-wingers as expected, the prison inmate's defenders also often live down to stereotypes of tenured-professor coffeehouse-Marxist liberalism, championing their soft-spoken hero in slam-poet recitations, whilst condemning the USA as—no kidding—the source of all evil in the modern world. Between sidebars

about American (especially, Philadelphian) racism, Abu-Jamal's own bio comes across in fragments. Born Wesley Cook in 1954 (his own mother disliked it when he took a new quasi-Swahili name), the bookish youth, radicalized by Black Panther literature, became a respected multimedia journalist, albeit one heavily skewed to Afrocentric politics. His profile allegedly got him targeted by J. Edgar Hoover's FBI and Philadelphia's brutal police establishment under mayor Frank Rizzo. He was convicted of murder in a 1981 shootout that left Abu-Jamal wounded and a city patrolman dead. From a death row cell, Abu-Jamal has produced books of prose, politics, and poetry, and recorded radio commentaries. Although prominent authors interviewed here include Cornel West, Alice Walker, and Dick Gregory, other scribes have blasted Abu-Jamal as a leftist thug with savvy PR. Both sides might agree, however, that this documentary illustrates the incendiary politics of race and stains of bigotry that led to the shots fired and the Mumia-as-POW mystique. Extras include a featurette on Abu-Jamal's court case. Considerably updating 1996's *Mumia Abu-Jamal: A Case for Reasonable Doubt?* (VL-7/97), this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Superthief: Inside America's Biggest Bank Score

★★★★

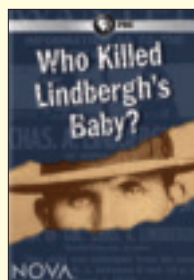
(2013) 83 min. DVD: \$16.98. Osiris Entertainment (avail. from Midwest Tape).

In the realm of bank robberies, the \$30 million heist at the United California

Who Killed Lindbergh's Baby? ★★★★★1/2

(2013) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.95 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-867-7.

On March 1, 1932, Depression-era America was shocked by the kidnapping of aviation hero Charles Lindbergh's baby son from the family's rural home in East Amwell, NJ (the abductors used a ladder to gain entry to a second story window). The discovery of the murdered boy's body two weeks later was termed the "crime of the century," setting in motion a chain of events that is still relevant today, raising familiar concerns about justice, media responsibility, and the expanding role of the federal government to conduct crime investigations in cases that cross state lines. Filmmaker Larry Klein's PBS-aided NOVA documentary examines old evidence while raising new theories, asking whether the right man was convicted and if he was part of a larger conspiracy plot. After a lengthy dragnet, an illegal German immigrant and petty criminal named Bruno Richard Hauptmann was arrested. Some of the ransom money was traced to Hauptmann, and wooden slats used to construct the kidnap ladder matched wood found in the attic of Hauptmann's home in the Bronx, NY. The manhunt and trial were bizarre by today's standards, including a self promoting go-between who delivered ransom money to a shadowy figure dubbed "Cemetery John." The stubborn Lindbergh didn't trust the police, often ignoring advice or interfering with the investigation, and the trial was a media circus, resembling an inquisition more than a search for justice. Hauptmann stoutly maintained his innocence, but was eventually convicted and executed. Experts interviewed here agree on Hauptmann's guilt, but believe that others were involved, although at this point the full story will probably never be known. Exploring one of American history's most fascinating cases, this well-researched documentary will be appreciated by true crime buffs. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)



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Bank in Orange County, CA, in March 1972, was (pardon the expression) the gold standard—a flawlessly executed action that yielded absolutely no clues to the police investigating the crime scene. This heist would have remained the greatest unsolved burglary in U.S. history if the perpetrators had not made the lethal mistake of repeating their actions a few months later at an Ohio bank—after which law enforcement officials added two and two together and ended up apprehending the gangsters. One of the thieves was Phil Christopher, a minor Ohio-based career criminal with a genius for disabling alarm systems. Filmmaker Tommy Reid's documentary explains how Christopher gained his unusual expertise and how he put his skills to use in the California job. Christopher is interviewed at length, offering a remarkably frank review of his lawless life. Christopher's family members and friends also weigh in, along with a number of FBI agents and other investigators who worked diligently to close the case. Although it could have been more tightly edited, this is an interesting film that is sure to appeal to true-crime aficionados. Recommended. Aud: P. (P. Hall)

HEALTH & FITNESS

support our circulation, our breath, and our digestion." During three sequences, Yee works on a dais set in a birch grove, where the breeze moves through the grass and ruffles his ponytail, emphasizing—as does the absence of music—the stillness of the routines. "It's essential for us to learn how to rest," Yee explains. Most of the poses (many of which are unconventional) are performed sitting or lying down, although a few still challenge flexibility or balance. The narration is calm, almost dreamlike, as when Yee—lying on his right side, legs drawn up—advises followers to "drape your inner organs to the earth. Feel the water of your belly, the earth of your legs, the fire of your solar plexus, the air of your breath, the spaciousness of your mind." The second and third segments build on the preceding routine, each quieter and more contemplative than the one before (in fact, there are long periods with no sound at all). DVD extras include a routine with more standard yoga poses (and music in the background). Offering something a bit out of the ordinary, this is highly recommended. Aud: P. (F. Gardner)

The Waiting Room ★★★1/2

(2012) 82 min. DVD: \$295. Moving Images (dist. by Bullfrog Films). PPR. SDH captioned. ISBN: 1-93777-249-7.

Anyone who has ever wound up in the emergency room of an urban hospital will surely recognize the human drama on display in Peter Nicks' award-winning documentary. The setting is Highland Hospital in Oakland, CA, a public institution overloaded with admissions, most of whom have no health insurance. The stunningly overcrowded waiting area requires more than a little patience—adults and children in various degrees of discomfort muster as much stoicism as possible during the extraordinarily lengthy period they must endure before they can see a physician. The ebb and flow of emergency trauma cases inevitably delays the processing of patients, and the relatively small medical staff is constantly overwhelmed by the number of people seeking help—including many who cannot speak English. While Nicks carefully avoids making obvious sociopolitical statements, the quiet complaints of individuals about inadequate medical care and the rising expenses of procedures and medications provide ample evidence that the system is in drastic need of overhaul (needless to say, this hospital visit will sicken viewers upset over the state of American healthcare). Featuring both the full-length documentary (which was shortlisted for the Oscar for Best Documentary) and an abridged 62-minute version, DVD extras include seven brief case studies from a patient-based "storytelling project" coordinated during the film's production. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

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Midwest Book Review, Dec 2012

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Nutrition Labels: Reading Between the Lines ★★★

(2012) 21 min. DVD: \$89 (educator's guide included). Learning Seed. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-55740-619-4.

This informative primer about the nutritional guideline labels on foods—regulated by the Food and Drug Administration—uses clear examples and vignettes ("there's no way I'm gonna eat [only] half a can of soup!") to deliver its healthy message. *Nutrition Labels: Reading Between the Lines* features explanations of serving size, calories, nutrients, ingredients, saturated and unsaturated fats, percentage of daily values, and more. Teaching viewers how to read a label and make smart food and drink choices that are based on personal caloric needs, the program features onscreen comparisons; notes on avoiding sodium, cholesterol, and preservatives; and guidelines for looking beyond misleading pictures and claims from corporations that essentially only want your money. Recommended. Aud: J, H, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Rodney Yee's Yoga for Energy & Stress Relief ★★★1/2

(2013) 95 min. DVD: \$14.98. Gaiam (available from most distributors).

This exercise program takes an unusual tack for yoga videos, concentrating on restorative moves that narrator and presenter Rodney Yee describes as "special poses that

NATURE, MATH & SCIENCE

Earth From Space ★★☆☆1/2

(2013) 120 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.95 w/PPR), Blu-ray: \$29.99 (\$54.95 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-845-5 (dvd), 978-1-60883-846-2 (blu-ray).

Filmmaker Iain Riddick's PBS-aided NOVA documentary benefits from the fact that our delicate home planet is surrounded by so many technologically sophisticated satellites that we are now literally able to see Earth—in its entirety—as a living, breathing array of interrelated systems that is driven, primarily, by the heat of the sun. Translating this data into state-of-the-art, computer-generated animation, *Earth From Space* depicts a dynamic planet in a perpetual state of flux, demonstrating (for example) how a dust storm in the Sahara Desert can fertilize the Amazon rainforest, or how the heat in swirling funnels of water vapor can drive storm clouds miles high, which allows the Earth's rotation to spin them into giant, potentially deadly hurricanes. In collaboration with NASA scientists (many appearing here as interviewees), this documentary surveys the surveyors, focusing on several satellites and their specific functions, including NASA's flagship satellite, Aqua, which orbits Earth's poles and monitors water vapor, looking for the tell-tale "hook" in clouds that signals the birth of a hurricane. Other satellites specialize in studying different sections of the visual and non-visual spectrum of light: x-rays, microwaves, etc., each calibrated to provide a broader understanding of natural forces like the annual "bloom" of plankton along the Amazon delta, which generates a striking majority of the planet's oxygen.

From an astronaut's viewpoint, we see lightning striking everywhere—40 times per second—creating nitrates vital to the replenishing of forests. Abundant proof of global warming is also examined here (most alarmingly, the shrinking polar ice caps), underlining the urgent need to maintain these satellites on an ongoing basis. In the aggregate, they give us the information we need to prepare for our future and care for our planet. A visually dazzling (especially the Blu-ray version) and thought-provoking film, this is highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (J. Shannon)

The Hungry Tide ★★☆☆1/2

(2012) 53 min. DVD: \$89: high schools & public libraries; \$195: colleges & universities. The Video Project. PPR. Closed captioned.

Imagine losing your country (literally having it disappear), forcing you to live somewhere else. This scenario is a looming reality for several islands in the central Pacific, including Kiribati, the focus of *The Hungry Tide*. This nation of 105,000 inhabitants located northeast of Australia spans 33 coral atolls that average two feet above sea level. Because of climate change, the water is rising, and many homes are already flooding at high tide, with the saltwater ruining farmland and compromising drinking water. The documentary follows activist Maria Tiimon, a Kiribati native who lives in Australia. With high expectations, she attends the Copenhagen conference on global warming in 2009, where 132 nations initially support a commitment to keep temperatures from rising more than 1.5 degrees C (2.7 degrees F). But hopes for Kiribati and 40 other low-lying countries are dashed when Australia withdraws its support. As Tiimon says bitterly, "The people we have been talking to are deaf." Filmmaker Tom Zu-

Earth Science Superpack ★★★★★

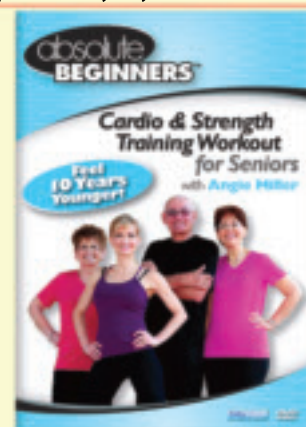
(2012) 9 discs. 208 min. DVD: \$359.98 (digital workbook included). Cerebellum Corporation. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-61867-300-8.

Designed for middle-school/junior-high-aged audiences, this lively addition to the acclaimed *Standard Deviants* teaching systems series opens with a hilarious bit, as a cartoon planet barfs up magma...and lots of facts. The first program, "Earth's Place in the Universe," touches on numerous topics, including the Big Bang theory, the speed of light, different types of galaxies, the lifecycles of stars, the formation of our solar system, and a "word on Pluto" about the redefinition of the former planet. Featuring a dramatization of Newton's a-ha moment with a falling apple, this initial installment also looks at the changing seasons, ocean tides, and latitude and longitude—employing peppy, instructive vignettes (featuring a comedic cast), combined with animation, puppets, and imaginative analogies that will help viewers draw connections to key ideas and terms. Also including the programs "Investigating Earth's Past," "Restless Earth," "Mountains, Volcanoes, and Earthquakes," "Earth's Changing Surface," "Energetic Earth," "Atmosphere and Oceans," and "Earth Systems"—all available separately for \$49.98 each—this set features a bonus disc with a digital workbook for the complete series. Highly recommended. Editor's Choice. Aud: I, J, P. (J. Williams-Wood)



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Journey to the Sea of Cortez ★★½

(2012) 60 min. DVD: \$24.95. Thomas Lucas Productions (dist. by Janson Media). ISBN: 978-1-56839-450-0.

Thomas Lucas's documentary tells the story of an historic partnership between novelist John Steinbeck and marine biologist Ed Ricketts to study the Sea of Cortez in 1940. A year after the publication of Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*—which in part concerned Dust Bowl conditions on American prairies in the 1930s (the result of shortsighted farming practices and La Niña weather conditions)—the writer and Ricketts sailed down the thriving coastal environment of California and Mexico. In the Sea of Cortez, the pair brought the new science of ecosystem study to a remarkably diverse natural world, navigating a difficult course past islands and outcroppings to find and document a melting pot of marine life. Their aim was to explain the roles of individual life forms in the broad, interdependent system, but the book they produced—*The Log from the Sea of Cortez*—ultimately turned out to be less scientific and more thrillingly mystical, offering a holistic vision of life. Set against this sense of wonder is a bleak account of present-day conditions in the Sea of Cortez and similar locales, where overfishing, tourism, and other types of callous exploitation have decimated many natural habitats and species, creating an enormous and destructive imbalance. Glimmers of hope exist, but the climb towards restoration is uphill. Combining voiceover narration with archival and contemporary footage, this intriguing documentary—a melding of literary, historical, and environmental topics—is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)



well as cleaning up (and storing all those little pieces). Diller's recommendations for classroom management and organization are especially useful and would apply even in other non-math contexts. Also included here is a CD-ROM containing a PDF guide that features instructions, discussion questions, and activities for using the program in an in-service workshop. Highly recommended. Aud: C. (M. Puffer-Rothenberg)

The Private Life of Deer ★★★

(2013) 60 min. DVD: \$19.99 (\$42.95 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-911-7.

In most of America, the white-tailed deer is an always present, highly visible, and sometimes unwelcome visitor to backyards and gardens. Unfortunately, they can also become roadkill—a dangerous and costly consequence of their proximity to humans. This PBS-aided *Nature* episode studies the common but little understood American white-tailed deer, which has been around for millions of years, but has thrived in the last hundred years, thanks to the clearing of forests, which has created a perfect habitat for the deer, as they best exist in the margins between farm and forest, backyards, and back woods. Skittish around humans, deer overcome their poor eyesight with sharp hearing and smell senses, responding to detected movement rather than shapes. Deer are sociable creatures who alert fellow deer to approaching danger by stomping the ground or lifting their distinctive white tails. Highly adaptable, deer are happy to munch on nearly 600 species of plants, and can decimate a carefully cultivated garden. In "rutting" or mating season, male bucks with impressive antlers become aggressive, marking territory and fighting rivals. Interestingly, the famous "deer in the headlights" effect occurs because the light overstimulates a deer's visual cortex, temporarily shutting down the brain. *The Private Life of Deer* also describes the diminutive and endangered "Key deer," located in the Florida Keys, and the elusive white "ghost deer," a rare sight in America's north woods. Sometimes cute and loveable, deer are still definitely wild creatures, bringing nature to suburbs and even cities for easy observation. An engaging profile of these "creatures of the shadows" (deer are most active in the early morning or late afternoon), this is recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

Sexual and Asexual Reproduction

★★★

(2012) 16 min. DVD: \$129.95. VEA (dist. by Films Media Group). PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-61753-741-7.

This brief Australian production introduces students to the differences between asexual and sexual reproduction. In the former, organisms produce offspring identical to the parent, while the latter involves the sexual union of two cells with female

brycki notes that after a year of filming puny efforts by shovel-wielding islanders—who try to strengthen sea walls with sandbags—there is finally some heavy equipment in place, but the aid falls far short of what was promised in Copenhagen. Like the similarly-themed *The Island President* (VL-1/13), this is a sobering look at the human side of a compelling environmental issue. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Gardner)

Leviathan ★★½

(2013) 87 min. DVD: \$99.95; public libraries; \$395; colleges & universities. The Cinema Guild. PPR.

Made under the auspices of Harvard's Sensory Ethnographic Lab, filmmakers Lucian Castaing-Taylor and Verena Paravel's *Leviathan* is a non-narrative documentary set in the controlled chaos of a fishing trawler at work in the roiling seas off New Bedford, MA. Not that the viewer is cued to the location, ship's name, or much of anything about the crew; rather, the filmmakers deployed automated digital cameras on deck, with some passed from crewman to crewman, others floating in the surf, and more affixed to the hull, etc., in order to capture churning imagery that borders on pure abstraction. Sans narration, subtitles, or mood music, one plunges into a tempestuous universe of anchor chains and ill-glimpsed men in rain slickers shouting orders, as the ocean harvest is dredged and netted from the depths. We literally don't know day from night or which end is topside, as the cameras show ever-present seagulls—which accompany the big boat looking for handouts—from every angle; birds that are practically indistinguishable from the fractal roilings of Atlantic sea foam.

Nets dump numerous fish and marine organisms, dead and dying, into a hold where men stoically sort, gut, and fillet (one stereotype is confirmed: today's sailors still have mermaid tattoos). Audiences may find that a little of this goes a long way, but it's the next best thing to being there without risking an epic case of seasickness and might be interesting to fans of *cinéma vérité*...or *The Deadliest Catch*. A strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Moving into Math Stations ★★½

(2013) 84 min. DVD: \$225. Stenhouse Publishers. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-57110-962-0.

In this instructional film for teachers, Debbie Diller, author of *Math Work Stations: Independent Learning You Can Count On, K-2*, works with first- and second-grade teachers Sage Carnahan and Asma Ahmed, who use math stations—which feature portable activities, including materials and instructions, so that students can work in pairs—in their Title I school. Diller, Carnahan, and Ahmed show how the set-up is organized, using storage containers and display boards with clear instructions and labels, in both a fixed and a temporary classroom. They talk about several issues in using the approach, such as making class time available for this instructional method, employing a pocket-chart "management board" to assign partners and stations, pairing students who will work well together, and efficiently moving kids into place. Diller demonstrates how she guides youngsters to use "math talk" and verbally express academic concepts. A chapter on using math manipulatives covers whole-group and stations practice, as

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Susan Eisenhower–President Eisenhower's granddaughter

Daniel Shorr - CBS news

Homer Hickam–author of "October Sky"

Richard Rhodes–atomic bomb expert

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Variety Review

"Virtually everyone of a certain age remembers the moment Sputnik shot into orbit—but most have forgotten how quickly that all turned to shock as politicians & journalists scared the bejeezus out of initially admiring Americans. Filmmaker Hoffman (PBS "Making Sense of the Sixties") makes this story pure drama from start to finish. Amazing archival footage, fresh interviews, reenactments, and campy artifacts, make this a winner."

TV Guide Review by Ken Fox

"Hoffman's sharp doc recaptures Sputnik's impact, the panic that ensued and dawning realization that whatever the Soviets had used to launch that shiny silver ball could also be used to lob a ICBM at the U.S. And while "Mania" takes a look at satellite-inspired hairdos & rocket-billy rock-&-roll, his film avoids Cold War kitsch in favor of a serious look one of the most important moments in human history."

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and male fertilization. The program employs diagrams and other visuals—combined with definitions of related vocabulary—to examine the myriad processes involved, including fragmentation, cultivation, meiosis, and mitosis. One example—the jellyfish—is used to show how a creature can utilize both forms of reproduction. Detailing the biological benefits of both sexual and asexual reproduction, this primer also features a helpful summary at the end. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Space Shuttle Columbia: Mission of Hope ★★★

(2012) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.95 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-862-2.

On February 1, 2003, the American space shuttle *Columbia* disintegrated during re-entry over east Texas, killing seven astronauts—six Americans and one Israeli. Filmmaker Daniel Cohen's PBS-aired documentary concentrates on the latter: Ilan Ramon—son of a Holocaust survivor—who was passionately devoted to Israel's existence and security, becoming an expert fighter pilot, and even participating in the 1981 bombing of a nuclear facility in Iraq. Ramon, who was also dedicated to the spirit of hope and scientific inquiry (both for the benefit of Israel and the rest of the world), joined the diverse, multi-ethnic crew in training for the 2003 mission. Coping with delays, the rigors of training, separations from family, and the language difference, Ramon overcame all of these barriers, making his end even more tragic. Considerable footage is devoted to a miniature Torah that Ramon acquired from a survivor of the Bergen-Belsen death camp, which he took with him into

space as a symbol of Jewish pride, survival, and hope (sadly, the small Torah was never recovered from the disaster wreckage). Ramon's widow, surviving colleagues, Israeli officials, family members, and friends here remember the astronaut's infectious enthusiasm for life and his work. Although somewhat misleadingly titled—since less coverage is given to the cause of the disaster, or the lives of the other members of *Columbia's* crew—this inspiring title combining Jewish and space exploration history is recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

RELATIONSHIPS & SEXUALITY

American Courtesans ★★★

(2012) 87 min. DVD: \$12.99, Blu-ray: \$19.99. Centex Enterprises.

Director James Johnson presents dialogues with women presently or formerly in the American "sex worker" industry, chiefly prostitutes/strippers/masseuses/escorts (there appears to be much overlap in job descriptions). Some purport to hail from all-American backgrounds, others came from disadvantaged households, and more than one seemed damned from the get-go by parents and grandparents steeped in hysteria-level religious repression. Subjects talk about rape, exploitation, and harrowing threats from pimps in a cultural climate where police supposedly code-name murdered hookers as "N.H.I."—no humans involved. But there is also rather romantic commentary here about the sisterhood of the "street girls." In contrast to the expected pseudo-feminist man-bashing, a sequence of interviews about and with johns (the men shown only

in silhouette, with altered voices) points out that many call-girl customers are not intrinsically bad guys, and nurturing/compassionate relationships can result (especially with the disabled). The women here are seen speaking to each other in encounter-group fashion, while some escorts' husbands and sons also offer observations. The intent (for the most part) seems less to glamorize sex work than to plea for legalization and acceptance of the industry. That said (faint-hearted collections be warned), executive producer and escort Kristie Di Angelo and others appear clad in lingerie for gauzy softcore/cheesecake inserts now and again, conveying a mixed message to say the least. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

FOOD & SPIRITS

Boom Varietal: The Rise of Argentine Malbec ★★★

(2011) 72 min. In English & Spanish w/English subtitles. DVD: \$24.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors).

Filmmaker Sky Pinnick's sunny documentary chronicles the growing success and popularity of Malbec wines, a varietal that thrives under particular climactic conditions ideally found today in Argentina. The Malbec grape—grown on a hardy plant that does well in different soils (thus creating different Malbec wine tastes)—is particularly rich and rapidly becoming a favorite among wine enthusiasts worldwide. As with many ostensibly simple things, the story of Malbec offers a window on history, especially Argentina's, where wine production has had its ups and downs over the years. Viewers will learn that when the government bought up vineyards during the 20th century—effectively controlling the market—production was subsequently mishandled and the industry could not compete against far better wines from other countries. Argentine vineyards—eventually sold off to private owners—languished. But after a concerted effort to bring in new technology and methods to grow a better grape and make a superior wine, Malbec began to take off. *Boom Varietal* tells the tale of what followed: Argentina's attraction to vintners from America and elsewhere, the cooperation between owners to strengthen an industry, the social and economic phenomenon of family-owned wineries, and the campaign to draw "wine geeks" to Argentina to help spread the word. DVD extras include behind-the-scenes footage and a music video. A treat for oenophiles, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

Wine, Women & Friends ★★★

(2012) 57 min. In French w/English subtitles. DVD: \$19.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors).

A French-Canadian wine-making couple

What Plants Talk About ★★★

(2013) 60 min. DVD: \$19.99 (\$42.95 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-892-9.

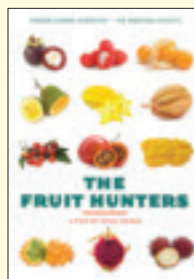
Lacking eyes, ears, and a brain, plants should—in theory—have no inner life or social side. However, recent research indicates that plants do indeed exhibit elaborate behavior, both above and below ground. Like the rest of us, plants have a constant need for food and nutrients, or they cannot survive. Filmmaker Erna Buffie's PBS-aired *Nature* documentary sheds light on the little understood world of plants. Plants can engage in foraging activities, putting out scents to attract pollinators, and even emitting "cries" for help, using scents to attract "insect mercenaries" to attack other invading insects (one particularly cunning plant offers an "evil lollipop" that makes the bug smell). Many plants compete for food and territory, illustrated by the dodder vine that—seen in the lab—weaves about snake-like, as it makes its choice about which host plant it will target and attach to for its nutrients. Competition has real world consequences, as in Montana, where the beautiful but alien knapweed is crowding out native grasses, depriving cattle of food, and threatening the livelihood of ranchers. Scientists have also found that plants are capable of "kin recognition": in Canada the ancient Douglas fir acts as a "mother tree" (as in the film *Avatar*), nurturing younger trees in the forest by an underground network of roots and fungi. While more research needs to be done, the scientists here persuasively argue that plants are more intelligent than we give them credit for. Sure to be appreciated by armchair botanists and nature lovers, this is recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)



The Fruit Hunters ★★½

(2012) 95 min. DVD: \$29.95. Docurama (avail. from most distributors).

Adapting the titular 2008 book by Adam Leith Gollner, filmmaker/narrator Yung Chang's *The Fruit Hunters* opens with a juicy montage featuring exotic (and even erotic) fruit-bearing plants before following the globe-trotting eco-adventures of botanists, growers, and gourmands enamored with fruit—especially the undomesticated, vanishing, and heirloom fruits that are never found in the homogenized grocery-store produce section. In Los Angeles, actor Bill Pullman helps lead a quixotic neighborhood movement to open a community orchard. In Italy, a “fruit detective” travels to monasteries and their centuries-old monk-maintained fields in search of rarities pictured in Renaissance-medieval paintings. In Costa Rica, an entrepreneur seeks a sustainable alternative to the omnipresent “Cavendish” banana, a monoculture now potentially endangered by blight. Chang also serves up several imaginative dramatic tableaux re-enacting fruit’s impact on human progress and the rise and fall of nations (conspicuously absent: the United Fruit Co. and its questionable role in U.S. meddling and regime change in Central America). A lush and flavorful documentary sure to appeal to foodies, history buffs, and armchair travelers, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)



make and store the wine. The two also work at day jobs—Jo as a veterinary diagnostician and Carole as a home-care aid—which helps them cover costs (and neither has any intention of giving up their professions). Director Fiona Cunningham-Reid follows the harvest from September through May as the women supervise the picking of the syrah and grenache grapes, which then move through the stages of fermentation, decuvage (the rather messy pressing process), and bottling, before being packed in cases. Along the way, Cunningham also interviews their cellar owner, bottling supervisor, and a few other workers, who share their passion for the conviviality of making and drinking wine. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

COMPUTERS & TECHNOLOGY

Ancient Computer ★★★

(2012) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.95 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-798-4.

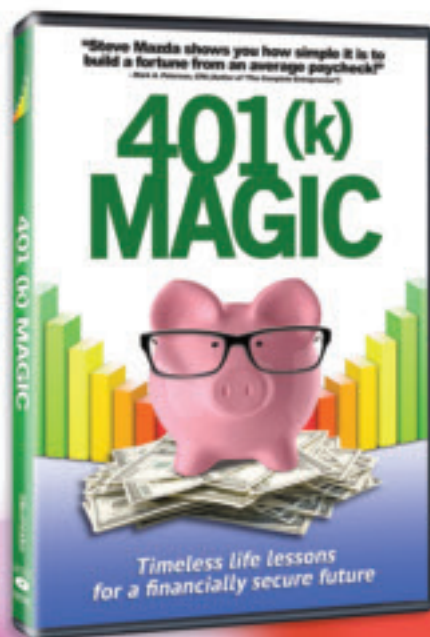
Around 1901, sponge divers discovered a shipwreck off the rocky Greek island of Antikythera. Among its treasures of bronze statues, they also found a strange, corroded bronze artifact with wheels and gears of different sizes, which came to be known as

open up about their personal and professional lives in this warm documentary. Carole LeBlanc and Jo Béfort, domestic partners for 19 years, might not have chosen this career path if they had known how much sheer physical work it would entail, although according to Jo's mother, Nicole, wine-making runs in their family. Nicole describes Carole as “the

tall Canadian” and Jo as “the little Alsatian.” The women, who live in the south of France, got their start by taking oenology classes and working in vineyards before launching their Les Cabotines wine label six years ago. With experience, the pair have developed a system in which Jo manages the vineyard and Carole takes care of the nearby cellar where they

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the Antikythera mechanism. In the 1970s, a diving expedition led by Jacques Cousteau brought up coins and other objects that helped date the wreck to the first century before Christ—most likely a large, overloaded Roman trading vessel heading back to Rome from Asia Minor. Filmmaker Mike Beckham's PBS-aired NOVA documentary examines the history, structure, and significance of this mechanism, arguing that it could be the world's first computer. The ancient Greeks were renowned for their mastery of mathematics and astronomy; keen observers of the sky, they believed that the phases of the moon were important for planning crop planting and religious festivals. Modern scientists, mathematicians, and historians here x-ray and study the mechanism's remains, even working up a model of the original, which fit into a wooden box no bigger than a laptop computer. Using our knowledge of math while also decoding hard-to-decipher inscriptions, they conclude that the mechanism was an advanced, complex device meant to look into the future, predicting lunar and solar eclipses, with gear wheels tracing the repeating cycles of the moon. The documentary speculates that Archimedes may have developed a forerunner of the object, which now rests in a Greek museum. While the decline of the Greek and Roman empires stymied any further technological advancement, much ancient knowledge is believed to have passed to Arab scholars, and thereby later kept alive in Europe, where it helped spark the Renaissance. Serving up an interesting and intriguing math and history detective mystery tale, this is recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

The Typewriter in the 21st Century

★★★

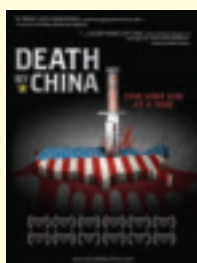
(2013) 60 min. DVD: \$24.95. Christopher Lockett & Gary Nicholson (dist. by Janson Media). ISBN: 1-56839-456-X.

This largely fascinating documentary on the state of the typewriter in the computer age—a story of people passionately attached to relics—begins with a partial history, acknowledging American inventor Christopher Latham Sholes of Milwaukee, whose patent found its way to mass production by Remington. After a bit of discussion about how the clacking machines revolutionized office technology, brought women into the workforce, and even raised sexual tension on the job, directors Christopher Lockett and Gary Nicholson arrive at their main subject: those who still use, collect, or repair typewriters today. In the U.S., certain bureaucracies (police stations, prisons) rely on typewriters, it turns out, which are also still common in developing countries. Various American authors continue to write on the workhorses they've had for decades: historians Robert Caro and David McCullough, for instance, talk about how essential their typewriters are to the

writing process. Showing off their vintage models are several collectors, including Steve Soboroff, who owns John Lennon's, as well as those of Ray Bradbury, Ernest Hemingway, and George Bernard Shaw, among other literary luminaries. Viewers also meet several repair technicians (who claim there is no end

to their restoration work for enthusiasts), and hear from artists and innovators who have found new and creative purposes for the once ubiquitous Smith-Coronas, Remingtons, Royals, and Underwoods. An entertaining portrait of the typewriter's continuing legacy, this is recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

BUSINESS & ECONOMICS



Death by China ★★★1/2

(2013) 79 min. DVD: \$13.99. DBC Productions (avail. from www.deathbychina.com). Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-0-9858596-4-0.

This economic horror story builds from an interesting premise: namely, that allowing China into the World Trade Organization in 2001 was akin to letting foxes into America's manufacturing henhouse. Filmmaker Peter Navarro, a business professor and regular contributor to CNN and CNBC, methodically lays out the subsequent consequences: scores of American businesses sent their manufacturing operations to China, and with them millions of jobs (in some cases, American workers were asked to show their Chinese counterparts how to use machines that were literally unbolted from U.S. factory floors and sent overseas). In the process, hundreds of other companies whose services had been tied to these newly decimated industries also disappeared. Not only did this result in massive unemployment and a hollowed-out middle class, but young people getting out of school now have fewer options to start their adult lives. But the bigger picture, Navarro tells us, is even bleaker: China takes advantage of unrestricted importing to the U.S., resulting in a tremendous trade imbalance, a problem that is further complicated by Chinese currency manipulation, which subsidizes cheap manufacturing and exporting of products to America. In addition, Chinese laborers are abused and poorly paid, China's air and water quality is a nightmare (given lax environmental legislation), and intellectual property theft is rampant. Narrated by Martin Sheen, *Death by China* asks why America fought for China's inclusion in the WTO, while also examining our \$3 billion debt to that nation. DVD extras include a director's audio commentary, the short film "Death by Chinese Junk," and a music video. A powerful, thought-provoking documentary, this is highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (T. Keogh)

SPORTS, GAMES & RECREATION

The Big Swell ★★★

(2004) 51 min. DVD: \$19.98. FilmWorks Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Among the millions of surfers in the world, only a few hundred are drawn to the power and danger of Earth's biggest waves. Waves, for example, that begin with a storm in the Gulf of Alaska and build into an enormous surge that destroys beachfront property on a distant shore. Filmmaker David Pearce's *The Big Swell* (which is decidedly not one of those mellow surf docs in the vein of *Endless Summer*) focuses on massive ocean storms, which serve as the source for colossal waves. Such storms are sought, with increasing scientific sophistication, by determined surfers who employ everything from satellite technology to government data to eyewitness reporting in order to track extreme weather and predict where a resulting big wave will hit, far away. Although the quest for big waves

began on Oahu's North Shore in the 1950s, today's globe-hopping surfer hooked on a life-or-death challenge is a relatively recent phenomenon. So, what's the attraction? The surfers interviewed here talk about the thrill of being caught in a moment where they have no choice but to either ride out so much power or die surrendering to it. DVD extras include a bonus interview and a photo gallery. Offering an often fascinating look at the lengths that extreme sports enthusiasts will go to, this is recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

Brooklyn Castle ★★★

(2012) 90 min. DVD: \$19.99. Millennium Media (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-61666-194-6.

Something of a hybrid between *Spellbound* (VL-1/04) and *Waiting for Superman* (VL-3/11), Katie Dellamaggiore's engaging documentary presents a portrait of Brooklyn Intermediate School 318, whose students—most from impoverished backgrounds—have been winning chess championships for years. The film is at once a

celebration of the youngsters, several of whom Dellamaggiore follows closely as they balance their training, schoolwork, and home lives; of their parents, who struggle to make ends meet while supporting their children's aspirations; and of the teachers and administrators whose commitment is every bit as passionate as that of coaches in other schools' sports programs. We meet Rochelle, on her way to becoming the first black American female chess master; Pobo, the son of African immigrants, who is a candidate for class president; and Justus and Patrick, who are a little less sure of themselves. The tension that arises from the players' worries over their national rankings and individual matches is exacerbated by budget cuts that threaten the program. But true to the traditional arc in similar documentaries, the students overcome these obstacles and learn that hard work, even in the face of adversity, can pay rich dividends. *Brooklyn Castle* offers the welcome suggestion that activities of the mind can win as much campus support as football and basketball. DVD extras include deleted scenes. [Note: this is also available in an educational version—with PDF-files explaining more about the game and how to establish a student society—for \$60 from First Run Features,

www.firstrunfeatures.com.] Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (F. Swietek)

Charge ★★★½

(2011) 90 min. DVD: \$29.95. Docurama (avail. from most distributors).

Narrator-actor Ewan McGregor and director Mark Neale—who teamed up for the similarly-themed motorcycle-racing documentaries *Faster* (VL Online-2/05) and *Fastest* (VL-9/12)—here examine a subculture in two-wheel motor racing that boasts “green” appeal beyond spectator sports. In 2009, the illustrious Isle of Man TT—a grand prix for cycling—initiated a “zero emission” component for quietly whirring, high-performance all-electric bikes. Although drawing sneers from the gas- and piston-powered crowd, the race attracts an eccentric group of entrants and innovators. Everyone is an underdog, even the showy American contender, Portland-based Michael Czyst (whose MotoCzyst team runs into endless troubles, leading Czyst to wonder if he should have paid proper tribute to the island’s fairy folk). And right out of *Wallace and Gromit’s World of Invention* is Britain’s Cedric Lynch, a self-taught creator of industry-standard electric motors, who now works for Agni Motors, a joint India-U.K. venture. The race entrants—including student groups and DIY types—struggle through

the qualification process amidst engine meltdowns (the ever-helpful Lynch displays exceptional sportsmanship—offering spare motors to competitors). Ultimately, electric vehicles and their low carbon footprints (or tire tracks) win respect here from diehard fans, and the viewer enjoys a sense of having been present at a technological turning point. DVD extras include bonus footage from the 2011 and 2012 races, extended interviews, and deleted scenes. Highly recommended. Aud: P. (C. Cassidy)

CRAFTS, ARTS & HOBBIES

Lee Hendrickson’s Creative Travel

Photography ★★★½

(2012) 2 discs. 41 min. DVD: \$39. Side Street Photographics. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-4675-5505-0.

Using travel photography for the novice as a focal point, photographer-instructor Lee Hendrickson’s guiding principle here is that “great photos have the element of story.” In the first disc of this double-DVD set, Hendrickson teaches viewers his TRAVELS system: TR for technical readiness, A for artistic approach, V for unique viewpoints, E for exploring subjects off the beaten path, L for lighting (a critical element), and S for story.

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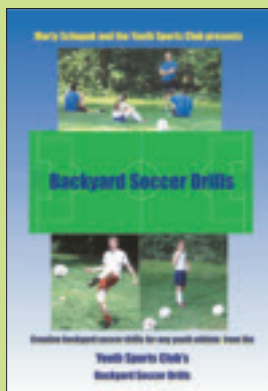


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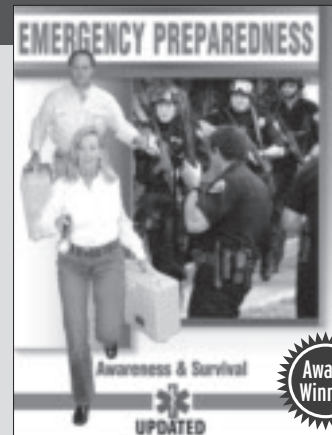
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The second disc applies the TRAVELS concept to multiple case studies from Hendrickson's own experience. Although slideshows-to-video presentations are often hit-and-miss, I cannot think of a better way to cover this material, as the format allows the eye to linger on Hendrickson's illustrative—and gorgeous—examples. The only aspect that Hendrickson doesn't tackle is the gift of having a natural eye for a good shot, but his gentle, clear, and encouraging approach will undoubtedly rouse latent artists who just need a few inspiring words and examples to discover their own inherent talents. Highly recommended. Aud: P. (C. Block)

THE ARTS

The Cardboard Bernini ★★★

(2013) 76 min. DVD: \$24.95 (\$150 w/PPR). Microcinema International.

Filmmaker Olympia Stone's documentary incorporates a biography of New York 3D-modelling artist and sculptor James Grashow into a chronicle of the creation—from 2007-2010—of his "Corrugated Fountain" project. Inspired by the Trevi Fountain in Rome and the works of Bernini, Grashow fashions a sprawling, larger-than-life heroic display of Greco-Roman gods and creatures—all from common, unpainted corrugated-box cardboard. After touring, Grashow's ultimate mission is to have the work be an outdoor exhibition, falling naturally into decay in the open air, as part of the artist's personal exploration of impermanence and mortality (Grashow is described, perhaps ironically, as "a tortured soul"). Despite a long supportive marriage, solid career, great kids, and regular publication as an illustrator in the *New York Times*, Grashow remains obsessed with death and his artistic legacy (his wife worries that "Corrugated Fountain" is meant to be some kind of symbolic demise). But the exhibition does Grashow a world of good (on camera, at least), as he pronounces the work a success, and museum-goers of all ages in Connecticut apparently "get it," when the piece is unveiled at its final stop, where it is celebrated...and then falls to pieces (seen in time-lapse photography). An entertaining bonbon for art aficionados, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Dirt Road to Psychedelia: Austin, TX, During the 1960s ★★★

(2008) 72 min. DVD: \$19.99. Scott Conn (avail. from www.dirtroadtopsyched.com). PPR.

Drawing on a wealth of audio and visual material, director Scott Conn traces the musical evolution in Austin, TX, from blues, folk, and country to psychedelia, as recalled by artists, musicians, and journalists. In the early-1960s, the central players weren't quite beatniks nor were they hippies. Many were

students at the University of Texas, such as illustrator Gilbert Shelton, who edited the humor magazine *The Texas Ranger*, which hosted social gatherings that attracted singers such as Janis Joplin. By mid-decade, area bands seemed to be playing out just as psychedelic drugs arrived. Jug player Tom Hall, who founded the 13th Floor Elevators, was a particularly enthusiastic proponent. Once Roky Erickson left the Spades and joined his group, the lineup was complete. Joplin and the Elevators moved to the Bay Area to take advantage of a more permissive cultural and political environment, but the latter would eventually return. Conn also profiles Conqueroo, Shiva's Headband, and the Vulcan Gas Company, a venue that combined elements of the Fillmore West with Andy Warhol's Factory (before also relocating to San Francisco, Shelton provided much of the poster art). By 1970, the club would close and the movement would disperse. Some artists are missing here (like Bubble Puppy), but this is an otherwise engaging musical history of '60s Austin, a place that would eventually become a major music hotspot and home to the acclaimed SXSW festival. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Great Authors of the British Isles ★★★

(2013) 4 discs. 232 min. DVD: \$199.99 (teacher's guide included). Ambrose Video Publishing. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 1-58281-379-5.

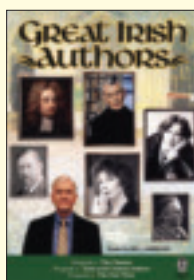
This eight-part series presents a survey of Britain's literary history through thumbnail sketches of authors ranging from the unknown composer of *Beowulf* through 20th-century poets, playwrights, and novelists.

Hosted by actor Jonathan Cake, each of the half-hour segments incorporates a number of short profiles of writers, backed with illustrative artwork and photos (as well as some clips from film adaptations or excerpts from recordings of the authors reading from their work). With a few longer exceptions—Chaucer, Shakespeare, Dickens, Austen—most of the individual entries run four to five minutes and are arranged chronologically within literary categories. Some programs are also oriented to specific genres, such as one devoted to children's literature, which naturally ends with an encomium to the *Harry Potter* books, or another on innovators in various types of popular fiction (horror, science fiction, detective stories, and spy thrillers). *Great Authors of the British Isles* offers a taste of the variety and richness of English literature, serving up a primer for students, while also encouraging general readers to sample the writing of some of its illustrious subjects. DVD extras include an educator's guide, timeline, and reading list. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (F. Swietek)

King Lear ★★★

(1999) 192 min. DVD: \$24.99. Kultur International Films (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-0-7697-5022-4.

This disappointing 1999 production of *King Lear*, starring and co-directed (with Tony Rotherham) by beloved British actor Brian Blessed, opens one of Shakespeare's most admired plays with random scenes from a Druidic ritual occurring beneath a lunar eclipse. The formidable Blessed, ordinarily a larger-than-life figure onscreen, here por-



Great Irish Authors ★★★1/2

(2013) 87 min. DVD: \$49.99 (teacher's guide included). Ambrose Video Publishing. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 1-58281-380-9.

Offering an introduction to influential Irish writers from the early 18th century forward, the three-part *Great Irish Authors*—filmed in Ireland—reminds viewers of the deep literary history associated with the island nation. Host William Ambrose begins with a look at ancient times, noting the peoples who dominated Ireland until the coming of the Celts from continental Europe, before covering St. Patrick's crucial influence in converting the nation to Christianity, devastating Viking raids, and living under English domination. When the latter somewhat subsided in the 16th century, a rise in homegrown Irish authorship emerged. *Great Irish Authors* presents a chronological series of short literary biographies and analyses, beginning with Jonathan Swift, the satirist whose 1726 *Gulliver's Travels* made him the first Irish scribe to gain international attention. In succession, viewers also meet novelist Oliver Goldsmith (*The Vicar of Wakefield*); Oscar Wilde, the hugely successful playwright, essayist, and novelist imprisoned for his homosexuality; and Bram Stoker, whose 1897 *Dracula* introduced both a sexually-charged horror novel and an iconic monster. Parts 2 and 3 cover playwright George Bernard Shaw (*Pygmalion*, *Saint Joan*); William Butler Yeats, father of the Irish literary revival in the early 20th century; and James Joyce, whose iconic *Ulysses* is discussed; along with Seán O'Casey, Liam O'Flaherty, Samuel Beckett, Iris Murdoch, C.S. Lewis, Brendan Behan, Edna O'Brien, and Frank McCourt. The series ends with Seamus Heaney reading his poem "Digging," an example of the continuing strong Irish literary tradition. DVD extras include an educator's guide, timeline, and reading list. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (T. Keogh)

trays the senile, desperate king as a man of compressed emotional violence, playing everything small—including, unfortunately, Lear's famous encounter with an epic storm. Blessed seems to have embraced the idea that a camera's ability to capture drama on an intimate scale means that the play's inherent power will be apparent in close-ups and hushed voices. But this strategy only diminishes the production, with Lear's daughters—Phillipa Peak as Cordelia, Claire Laurie as Regan, and Caroline Lennon as Goneril—all seeming thin, and Jason Riddington also coming across too lightly as Edmund, the illegitimate son of another ill-fated father (although Blessed's wife, Hildegard Neil, fares much better as a slightly alien version of Lear's beloved Fool). Most scenes are shot in authentic-looking castle interiors, although nearly all of the exterior action shots look either muddled or silly. Shakespeare completists may want to add, but this is optional elsewhere. [Note: also newly available from Kultur is a 2003 mounting of *Hamlet*, starring Will Houston as the brooding Danish prince.] Aud: H, C, P. (T. Keogh)

Last Shop Standing ★★½

(2012) 124 min. DVD: \$19.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).

Inspired by Graham Jones's titular book, and told in three acts (the subtitle—"The Rise, Fall and Rebirth of the Independent Record Store"—says it all), Pip Piper's documentary is a love letter to the music lover's cathedral: the record store. A small group of longstanding U.K. outlets are profiled here, whose owners often share fascinating stories. One recalls her mother's initial reaction to Elvis's "Heartbreak Hotel" ("that will never sell"), while others remember the surprise of scruffy local youths like the Beatles and Rolling Stones rising from punk kids to international superstars. The decline of vinyl is explored (a plot, the owners say, of the record companies to undermine the quality of records, using substandard materials and manufacturing processes to promote sales of the then-new compact disc), as are the scandalous tactics employed by jobbers to juice sales when Nielsen's "SoundScan" (a new way of centrally tracking and reporting sales in shops) came on the scene. Of course, vinyl has actually turned out to be a hardy medium (I'm writing this review sitting in a hotel in Dayton, OH, where not just one but two mom and pop music stores feature vinyl, including new releases). Vinyl is no longer the dominant consumer medium, but it's also never quite gone away. DVD extras include extended interviews with musicians and record shop lovers, including Johnny Marr, Paul Weller, Billy Bragg, and others. Highly recommended. Aud: P. (C. Block)

Latinos Beyond Reel ★★★

(2012) 84 min. DVD: \$34.95: public libraries; \$150: community colleges; \$275: colleges & universities. Media Education Foundation. PPR. ISBN: 1-932869-70-0.

Miguel Picker and Chyng Sun's documentary offers a historic overview of the unflattering stereotypes of Hispanics—who make up the fastest-growing minority in the United States—presented by the entertainment industry and the media during the past century. Clips from movies, cartoons, and TV (newscasts, dramas, and comedies) are interspersed with interviews of various Hispanic professionals—along with testimonials from children and adults who describe the feelings generated by these images. Mexicans,

in particular, have been on the receiving end of atrocious misrepresentation, with the men almost always portrayed as slovenly and vicious bandits (Wallace Beery in *Viva Villa!* is shown as a nadir of stereotyping), and women as oversexed spitfires. In the past few decades, Latin American immigrants have been largely portrayed as either violent drug gangsters or passive domestic employees. Even animated characters perpetuate stereotypes, via the Speedy Gonzales shorts or the once-popular commercials featuring the Frito Bandito. The film notes some positive recent examples, most notably on television with *Dora the Explorer*, George Lopez's sitcom, and *Ugly Betty*; but it insists that TV's highest-profile Hispanic star, Sofia Vergara of *Modern*

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Family, is still playing an overripe stereotype. The research presented here is occasionally off-target, as in the statement that the media have never shown Mexican men as heroes—a claim that ignores the popularity of the Zorro and Cisco Kid characters—but overall this is a disturbing portrayal of intolerance in the guise of entertainment. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

The Paper Mirror ★★★

(2012) 34 min. DVD: \$25; individuals; \$50; public libraries; \$75; colleges & universities. Frameline Distribution. PPR.

Filmmaker Charissa King-O'Brien's *The Paper Mirror* tells the story of a cross-country collaboration between two artists who are both in a process of transition. Chicago-based Riva Lehrer came to prominence through her portraits of disabled subjects seen in a variety of fanciful scenarios, while East Coast-based Alison Bechdel originally made her mark with the decade-long comic strip *Dykes to Watch Out For*. In recent years, Lehrer, who has spina bifida, has switched to non-disabled subjects, while Bechdel has since segued into writing graphic memoirs centering on her parents. Crediting Bechdel for facilitating her coming out, Lehrer teams up with Bechdel to create a new work—photographs of Bechdel that depict the writer's mother as her shadow, a reflection of the book Bechdel is working on, *Are You My Mother?*, the follow-up to her

award-winning *Fun Home* (2006). Lehrer thinks Bechdel is "extremely beautiful," although her subject begs to differ. When Lehrer shows the finished piece to Bechdel in 2011, the photographer describes it as "transitional." And while the experience doesn't appear to have transformed Bechdel in any obvious way, it did allow the women to work together in a truly collaborative manner, and freed Lehrer to chart a new path in her work. Sure to be appreciated by Bechdel's legion of fans, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Sommere: Chandelier Status ★★★

(2012) 76 min. DVD: \$14.98. eOne Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned. ISBN: 1-4172-4002-4.

Standup comedian Sommore (born Lori Rambough) takes the chandelier as a symbol of her status, since she sees herself more like a steady fixture than a star. During her introduction to this Showtime-aired special filmed in Miami, Sommore says that she started out as a substitute teacher but has now been working in comedy for 20 years, and couldn't be happier with her career choice. She proceeds to riff on the perennially hot topics of race, sex, and money, using the word "bitch" to refer to women, while employing stronger words for most everyone else—although her style is more uptown than downtown. Sommore remembers that her Trenton fam-



Trek Nation ★★★

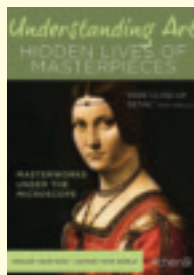
(2011) 2 discs. 82 min. DVD: \$24.98. MPI Home Video (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 0-7886-1674-9.

While *Trek Nation* qualifies as must-see viewing for *Star Trek* fans, even non-Trekkies might appreciate the film's "untold story" perspective on the history of *Star Trek* and, more particularly, the life of its creator, Gene Roddenberry. Roddenberry's son, Eugene "Rod" Roddenberry, Jr., was not much of a fan himself: growing up in Hollywood, Rod was almost oblivious to his father's work and never fully understood or appreciated the impact of *Star Trek* and the subsequent series and movies in Paramount Studios' most lucrative and long-running franchise. Instead, he was a somewhat spoiled, self-centered kid with a rebellious streak, poised to inherit a fortune. Later, as a more mature adult, Rod began a multi-year project to document the phenomenon that he initially ignored, making a belated effort to learn more about the workaholic father he never really knew. Filmmaker Scott Colthorp's *Trek Nation* offers a somewhat haphazard mishmash of this history that is as noteworthy for the interviewees featured (George Lucas, J.J. Abrams, Seth MacFarlane) as for the ones missing (nearly every cast member of the original *Star Trek*). As Roddenberry, Jr. continues to investigate his late father's life (Gene died in 1991, when Rod was 17), his quest becomes a well-meaning act of contrition from a formerly disconnected son toward his now-deceased father. As an exploration of Rod's own dysfunctional family, the film doesn't shy away from uncomfortable truths (including the fact that Gene was a philandering husband), and in a brief, awkward interview segment, Rod's mother, Majel Barrett Roddenberry (*Star Trek*'s "Nurse Chapel") is clearly uninterested in discussing family matters. Still, this is a mostly heartfelt addition to Gene Roddenberry's legacy, packed with rare film clips from the earliest days of *Star Trek* and the phenomenal fandom it inspired. Extras include audio commentary by Rod and co-producer Trevor Roth, extended interviews, featurettes on Trekkie fandom and the origins of the original series, archival footage of Gene receiving his star on Hollywood's Walk of Fame, and home movies. Recommended. Aud: P. (J. Shannon)

Understanding Art: Hidden Lives of Masterpieces ★★½

(2012) 2 discs. 259 min. DVD: \$49.99. Athena (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-59828-935-0.

A different perspective on art history is provided in this five-part series made for French television by filmmakers Juliette Garcias and Stan Neumann, which concentrates on the so-called “study days” at the Louvre, when paintings of a single artist are collected and removed from their frames to be studied more closely by specialists from around the globe. Thanks to the cameras that prowl the hallways catching fragments of conversation, we overhear different viewpoints about particular works, especially concerning attribution, which is often a contentious subject. Along the way, much attention is given to how the artists worked and how their paintings have survived over time—often clipped to fit frames, reworked by those who thought they were making improvements, or restored in ways that often don’t maintain fidelity to the original. Clever animation is employed to make the concepts discussed by scholars accessible to lay viewers. Four of the episodes—on Raphael, Rembrandt, Watteau, and Leonardo da Vinci—were filmed at the Louvre, while the fifth, on the 17th-century French painter Poussin, was shot in Lyon and concentrates on the single work *The Flight into Egypt*, which was recently rediscovered and became the focus of a lengthy court case over ownership that concluded in a highly debatable judicial decision. DVD extras include text artist bios, and an informative booklet. A fascinating series, told in an engaging fly-on-the-wall style that makes a fairly recondite subject intelligible to non-experts, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)



ily was so poor that the kids brought sack lunches to the movies. Although she had white friends, Sommore says she never felt like she was part of their world, which leads to a discussion about cultural differences. To Sommore, black women want to keep their men, while white women want to keep their men happy. Taking pride in her race, but expressing frustration with black on black crime, Sommore also touches on various celebrities, including Whitney Houston, Nicki Minaj, Aretha Franklin, and Tiger Woods. DVD extras include an interview in which Sommore goes into more detail about her unique path to comedy. Serving up sassy, sexy humor, this is recommended. Aud: P. (K. Fennessy)

HISTORY & CURRENT EVENTS

Edwardian Farm ★★★

(2011) 4 discs. 720 min. DVD: \$39.98. BFS Entertainment & Multimedia (avail. from most distributors).

In this 12-hour BBC documentary mini-series, archeologists Alex Langlands and Peter Ginn and historian Ruth Goodman abandon their modern lives, don old-style clothes, and try to survive as their Edwardian ancestors did prior to World War I, growing crops with pre-industrial tools while learning age-old tricks in order to protect the livestock and keep the household running during spates of bad weather and reduced income. With each episode devoted to the activities of a single month (although one amounts to a “day in the life” special), the program dramatizes not only the constant,

back-breaking labor that people endured but also the fact that they were often forced to take seasonal employment in mining, fishing, and housekeeping just to make ends meet. Attention is also paid to changes that would revolutionize the countryside during the early 20th century—such as the introduction of railways—transforming rural life into something less provincial. While there is inevitably an element of dress-up play in these kinds of re-creations—with local characters ranging from real estate agents and stoneworkers to salesmen and grocers popping up in period garb—the running commentary by the three hosts, covering matters from cooking to scavenging for copper in the hills, is consistently genial and informative. Both students and armchair historians will likely learn a lot from watching this engaging series. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (F. Swietek)

Makers: Women Who Make America

★★★½

(2013) 180 min. DVD: \$29.99 (\$59.95 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-873-8.

Meryl Streep narrates this PBS-aided three-part history of the mid-20th-century women’s movement. The first segment, “Awakening,” begins with the story of Kathrine Switzer, who crashed the all-male Boston Marathon in 1967 (she was nearly ejected when the race director tried to snatch her number before he was knocked aside by her boyfriend, who was running beside her). Icons of the movement such as Betty Friedan, Gloria Steinem, and Bella Abzug are remembered or interviewed, as are many others whose lives were changed, including author Judy Blume and former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O’Connor.



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Those were the days when feminists took to the streets, staged a sit-in at the office of the publisher of *Ladies' Home Journal*, and founded *Ms. magazine*. In the second segment, "Changing the World," we see Marlo Thomas and Mary Tyler Moore bringing single-women characters to television, Billie Jean King beating Bobby Riggs at tennis, and sexual mores changed by the birth control pill. As the 1970s turn into the '80s, a backlash emerges, led by Phyllis Schlafly's opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and anger over the 1972 Supreme Court ruling on abortion. The third segment, "Charting a New Course," examines the work force, including controversy over stay-at-home moms and child-rearing. Deftly interweaving interview clips and film footage, this intelligently conceived and executed series will jog older viewers' memories and introduce younger ones to the issues and personalities that brought women to the forefront of the American experience over the past 45 years. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (P. Gardner)

Mao's Great Famine ★★½

(2012) 52 min. DVD: \$295. *Filmakers Library* (dist. by Alexander Street Press). PPR. ISBN: 978-1-4631-1627-9.

Patrick Cabouat's documentary offers a jolting examination of the disastrous planning and violent implementation of the so-called Great Leap Forward—the attempt by Mao Zedong's Communist government to modernize China and transform it from a primarily agrarian economy into a modern superpower through an aggressive process of collectivization and industrialization. These efforts—implemented from 1958 to 1962—

resulted in an unprecedented disruption to traditional Chinese society, as well as one of the greatest humanitarian catastrophes of the post-World War II era: a famine that led to the deaths of tens of millions. The most astonishing aspect was the decision that was made by the authorities to maintain full grain stores while the country's population was left to starve; and even when news of the tragedy filtered into the outside world, the Chinese leadership lied about it. Cabouat presents rare film footage coupled with the testimony of survivors to illustrate the deprivations and chaos created in the Great Leap Forward. Well-researched and handsomely produced, this is a powerful documentary that shines a light on a shameful chapter in 20th-century Chinese history. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Refuge: Stories of the Selfhelp Home

★★★½

(2012) 60 min. DVD: \$25: *individuals*; \$125: *institutions*. *Bensinger Global Media*. PPR. ISBN: 978-0-615-66288-6.

Ethan Bensinger's award-winning documentary presents the personal testimonies of six Holocaust survivors living at Chicago's Selfhelp Home, a residence for senior citizens. All of the subjects came of age during the rise of Nazism and the outbreak of World War II, and each was an eyewitness to a distinctive aspect of this tragic era, which saw the disenfranchisement of German Jews via the Nuremberg Laws, the violence of Kristallnacht, the unlikely refuge offered to Jews in Japanese-occupied Shanghai, the concentration camps at Theresienstadt and Auschwitz, and the ultimate liberation by the Allied forces. Some of those interviewed

were fortunate enough to arrive in America before the war began—one of the men served as a German-language interrogator in the U.S. Army during the 1940s—while others were able to emigrate from Europe only years after the conflict ended. Historic still photography and newsreel footage—including very rare color film of a predominantly Jewish neighborhood in pre-war Poland—illustrates each survivor's story. An invaluable video record of distinctive personal histories delivered by the last generation of survivors of this terrible 20th-century tragedy, this poignant film that celebrates the will to survive is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Syria Behind the Lines ★★★

(2013) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.95 w/PPR). *PBS Video*. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-912-4.

Airing on PBS's *Frontline* series, filmmaker Olly Lambert's documentary—set in Syria's Orontes River Valley—provides uncommon access to both sides of that nation's increasingly vicious civil war, focusing primarily on two men: a 20-year-old former policeman who defected to the rebel fighters, and an Army officer who has pledged undying loyalty to the ruling Assad regime. The pair have nothing in common except the unwavering desire to see their opponents crushed in defeat. Indeed, when a United Nations-brokered truce is announced via radio, both parties are aghast that foreign interlopers have dared to meddle in their fighting. Lambert captures the inevitable human tragedies, with anguished family members crying over the bloodied corpses of their loved ones, and hastily improvised funerals for those killed in the seemingly endless rain of gunfire and shelling. One of the most harrowing scenes features an interview with teenagers at a school in the pro-Assad territory—where a number of students happily boast of their eagerness to go into military service and continue the battle against those seeking the overthrow of the regime. *Syria Behind the Lines* sadly suggests that any attempt to bring Syrians together in a peaceful resolution will likely fail. Offering a sobering look at an intractable situation, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Welcome to Hebron ★★★½

(2010) 55 min. DVD: \$149.95. *Choices, Inc.* PPR. ISBN: 978-1-933724-41-2.

Although there are supposedly two sides to every story, *Welcome to Hebron* is very much a one-sided documentary, filled with astonishing images of official (and unofficial) cruelty and humiliation aimed at Palestinians in the city of Hebron. Putatively the story of 17-year-old Leila Sarsour—a Muslim teen who attends an all-girl school and speaks fluent English—Terje Carlsson's film, which was shot over the course of three years, offers a street-level view of daily life for Palestinians who are the majority population in Hebron,

London: The Modern Babylon ★★★½

(2012) 125 min. DVD: \$29.95. *Docurama* (avail. from most distributors).

Veteran U.K. director Julien Temple (*The Filth and the Fury*) creates an extraordinary portrait of London over the course of the 20th century, sculpted out of a mosaic of vintage clips, newsreels, British movie excerpts (especially *Peeping Tom* and Temple's own *Absolute Beginners*), and sound bytes from the likes of genuine East Ender Hetty Bowers (age 106), politician Tony Benn, 1950s jazz musicians George Melly and Psycho Gordon, and (in a stock clip) author Barbara Cartland. Their comments cover the evolution/transformation of the great world capital, from the Victorian-era seat of a global empire to a bomb-cratered target of the WWII Blitz; from a throne of royalty to a nexus of youth culture and artistic trendiness. Temple spends most of the running time on the last 40 years, zeroing in on the pendulum of banking boom and recent economic bust, periodic riots, and the arrival of waves of immigrants who have experienced success, exclusion, and poverty in the city. Given Temple's background in rock-and-roll rebellion, it should come as no surprise that the soundtrack pulses with life and anger (punk rock accompanies silent-era suffragette footage and the 1936 Battle of Cable Street, during which Londoners rose up against Oswald Mosley and his homegrown fascist political movement). The film ultimately argues that London's current ethnic diversity (300 separate languages are spoken) is not only a strength but also nothing new (and don't let the Tories and upper classes tell you different). Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)



The Ultimate Guide to the Presidents ★★1/2

(2012) 3 discs. 360 min. DVD: \$24.98. Lionsgate (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

This eight-episode *History*-aired miniseries features a sublimely simple but brilliant concept, tracing U.S. history through a timeline of all 43 presidents since George Washington, with input from authors, historians, and academics (H.W. Brands, Jonathan Alter, Libby O'Connell, Barry Parris), Capital historians (Richard Norton Smith, Kenneth Kato), journalist-witnesses (Nancy Gibbs, John Seigenthaler), and descendants (Clifton Truman Daniel, Lynda Johnson Robb). Addressing the faults as well as the glories of each man, the script makes perceptive, time-hopping ties between James Monroe and Dwight D. Eisenhower, Harry S. Truman and George W. Bush, and Calvin Coolidge and Ronald Reagan (the Great Communicator idolized Silent Cal). Some luster is restored here to the hardworking but uncharismatic James Polk (whose wife originated "Hail to the Chief") and the strong civil rights and social-advancement agenda of Lyndon Baines Johnson, a rare president born into poverty. The last four presidents are breezed over (Obama media love-fest and all), as if the filmmakers felt that recent history must wait a while for a proper perspective. A running sidebar relates how the White House itself underwent transformations over the years. Extras include bonus footage with additional trivia, such as the fact that the slang term "O.K." was tied to President Martin Van Buren, who was nicknamed "Old Kinderhook," a nod to his New York hometown. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (C. Cassidy)



where a few hundred Israeli settlers live in a tight-knit and well-guarded community. Carlsson captures horrifying scenes of Israelis—including children—chanting hate slogans and pelting Palestinian women and youngsters with rocks while the victims walk home; of Israelis obscenely harassing longtime residents in the latter's unprotected houses; and of Palestinians being forbidden by soldiers to pick olives from trees or to keep their businesses open. The impression conveyed is that this occupation seems intent on dehumanizing an entire people to justify their mistreatment. *Welcome to Hebron* makes no claim to traditional journalistic balance; indeed, it is a raw production shot from a center of constant violence. But whatever its bias, the documentary is also a shocking portrait of orchestrated hate. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

TRAVEL & GEOGRAPHY

Discoveries...America National Parks: Yosemite ★★1/2

(2013) 50 min. DVD or Blu-ray: \$24.95. Bennett-Watt HD Productions. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-60490-166-5 (dvd), 978-1-60490-189-4 (blu-ray).

The latest entry in Bennett-Watt's excellent series of high-def video travelogues focuses on several of California's National Parks and Monuments—namely Yosemite, Sequoia, King's Canyon, Devil's Postpile, and Carrizo Plain. Yosemite is renowned for Yosemite Falls, among other sights, which boasts a vertical drop of more than 2,400 feet, making it one of the biggest waterfalls in North America and among the top five in the world. Viewers will also see the last natural

stand of Sequoia trees in Sequoia National Park, including the General Sherman, which is more than 2,000 years old and has a base measuring 109 feet around. And the Devil's Postpile National Monument features striking columnar formations of basalt that reach heights of 60 feet. Sure to appeal to armchair travelers, this is highly recommended. Aud: P. (C. Block)

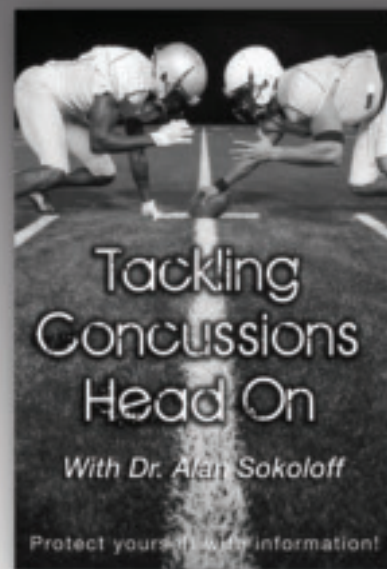
BIOGRAPHY

André Gregory: Before and After Dinner ★★1/2

(2012) 108 min. DVD: \$99.95: public libraries; \$350: colleges & universities. The Cinema Guild. PPR.

Boasting truly intimate access, filmmaker Cindy Kleine profiles her own husband: the patrician-like but passionate actor-playwright-artist André Gregory, a luminary in avant-garde American theater since the 1960s. Comparisons with Louis Malle's hit *My Dinner With André* are inevitable, especially with the appearance here of longtime pal/collaborator Wallace Shawn, who is being directed by Gregory in a new staging of Ibsen's *The Master Builder*—a production that has been some 15 years in preparation (about as long as the Kleine-Gregory marriage itself). Shawn gently apologizes that he wants to keep his personal life private; Gregory, meanwhile, speaks of his emotionally cold, aristocratic European family, who hid their Jewish origins—perhaps due to charges that they collaborated in Hitler's economic schemes (this possibility obsesses Gregory and drives him to tears). Kleine similarly chose the arts as an act of rebellion

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against her middle-class Long Island Jewish upbringing; she wonders if mutual family angst cemented the relationship with her much-older groom (they met after André's longtime first wife had died). Priceless tales of stage, screen, and family are presented here, although in a late development, Kleine fact-checks and catches Gregory in a bald lie (or, perhaps he's simply living life as performance and re-inventing through storytelling). Sure to be appreciated by fans of Malle's beloved film, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceausescu ★★1/2

(2010) 180 min. In Romanian w/English subtitles. DVD: \$29.95 (avail. from most distributors), \$249 w/PPR (avail. from www.kinolorberedu.com). Kino Lorber.

Filmmaker Andrei Ujica's documentary about the titular Communist leader who ruled Romania from 1965 until he was deposed—and executed, along with his wife—during the 1989 uprisings is a fascinating but ultimately frustrating work. A three-hour compilation of excerpts from the massive amounts of footage found in the official government archives, *The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceausescu* is arranged in roughly chronological sequence, starting from the funeral of previous party secretary Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej in 1965 up to Ceausescu's impromptu interrogation by the rebel lead-

ership. Some of this material features an accompanying soundtrack, but much is silent, and most in black-and-white. No narration is offered to provide context, and even the subtitling is erratic in sequences that mostly capture party congresses, banal speeches by Ceausescu, and newsreel-style shots of visits from other national leaders (Vice President Richard Nixon, President Charles de Gaulle) to Bucharest, as well as official journeys to other countries by the peripatetic Ceausescu, who became a darling to the West due to his occasional divergences from Soviet policy. An overall pattern emerges as Ceausescu gradually accumulates absolute power and becomes ever more isolated and oblivious to reality as his regime starts to stagnate and crumble. But Ujica's approach essentially leaves it up to the viewer to bring shape to what many will consider a fairly random assemblage of archival clips. Extras include a helpful DVD-ROM accessible "Who's Who" guide. Given the historical significance of the material presented here, this should be considered a strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Bert Stern: Original Mad Man ★★★

(2012) 89 min. DVD: \$27.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors).

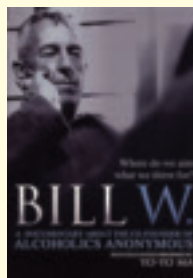
Viewers looking for a straightforward *Biography* or *American Masters*-like documentary about the late, great photographer Bert Stern (who died in June 2013) may be disappointed

in this first-time effort from Shannah Laumeister, Stern's muse, lover, and eventual wife. *Bert Stern: Original Mad Man* presents a somewhat disjointed, non-linear exploration of Stern's life and work, jumping around to cover various highlights and milestones, but it ultimately feels oddly incomplete as a biographical portrait. On the other hand, only Laumeister had so much insight and access into the private life of a man who preferred to let his work speak for itself. All of which makes this film both fascinating and frustrating, with its revealing intimacy compensating for conspicuous gaps in biographical detail. What is clear is that Stern really was the original "Mad Man," dazzling Madison Avenue with his innovative images and revolutionizing the art of commercial photography from the 1960s through the '80's. Like Andy Warhol, Stern was a magnet for the famous—especially the world's most beautiful women—leading what seemed to be a charmed life as the fashion photographer for *Vogue* magazine and creating many of the most iconic Hollywood portraits. His legendary "Last Sitting" photos of Marilyn Monroe are heavily emphasized, along with other classics such as the infamous "lollipop" photos of young actress Sue Lyon for the poster art of Stanley Kubrick's *Lolita*, and—more recently—the Marilyn-homage nudes by Lindsay Lohan. The documentary serves up a smorgasbord of glamour shots (Liz Taylor, Audrey Hepburn, Twiggy, Kate Moss, Scarlett Johansson, and many more), but details about Stern's precipitous "fall from grace" due to alcohol and drug abuse are cursory. For all of his astonishing talent and success among society's elite, the Bert Stern revealed here—a kindhearted lover of women (countless women!)—never achieved any real degree of happiness. Extras include a portrait gallery and a director's bio. Although uneven, this one and only documentary about Stern's amazing life and career is easily recommended. Aud: P. (J. Shannon)

Bill W. ★★★1/2

(2013) 103 min. DVD: \$19.99 (\$169.99 w/PPR). Page 124 Productions.

As the founder and driving figure of Alcoholics Anonymous for almost four decades, Bill Wilson (called simply "Bill W") has been hailed for his role in promoting sobriety. However, Wilson calls himself a "stinking rotten drunk," ruled by an obsessive thirst for alcohol. Directed by Kevin Hanlon and Dan Carracino, *Bill W.* portrays Wilson as the product of a broken home and lonely childhood, which led the young man to begin drinking at social functions while he was a soldier in World War I, mostly as a way of masking his awkwardness. Always something of an entrepreneur, Wilson moved to New York City with his new wife, Lois, but continued to drink heavily with clients and on road trips, a possible byproduct of his lifelong struggle with depression. Lois thought she could change him, but nothing seemed to work. After periods of sobriety alternating with relapses and hospitalizations, Wilson realized that by yielding to a higher authority ("God as we understand him"), doing an "internal housecleaning" and "moral inventory," and maintaining a focus on one individual helping and supporting another, he could formulate a path to an alcohol-free life. Wilson always walked a fine line, knowing his personal story would inspire others while respecting AA's principle of anonymity. The documentary recounts Wilson's articulation of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, his precept of putting "people before principles" (which meant avoidance of political or religious affiliations), his constant struggle to earn a living while working with AA, and his surprising later experimentation with LSD. From its early struggles to maintain a few chapters, AA now boasts two million members worldwide. Drawing on Wilson's speeches (which provide often humorous and salty testimony), as well as comments from alcoholics who knew Bill (in respect of their anonymity, they appear in shadow), *Bill W.* serves up an honest portrait of a major social figure—flaws and all—whose difficult journey launched a lasting movement. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)



Dangerous Edge: A Life of Graham Greene ★★★1/2

(2012) 70 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.95 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-890-5.

A manic-depressive doubting Catholic who was restless and easily bored, writer Graham Greene seemed to be the perfect chronicler for an age of anxiety and divided loyalties. Narrated by Derek Jacobi, filmmaker Thomas P. O'Connor's PBS-aided documentary examines Greene's life and career, which was as eventful and interesting as that of any of his characters. Born into an academic world, Greene always strove to escape conformity, rushing to embrace danger and adventure. After struggling to get his work published, Greene finally found security with his more cinematic tales, which seemed to be a perfect fit for film adaptations. (Indeed, Greene wrote film criticism



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for a time, but was ultimately sued for libel when he made inappropriate remarks about Shirley Temple.) Never cut out to be a loyal husband, Greene escaped into wartime intelligence work, where he met British master spy and double agent Kim Philby. *Dangerous Edge* looks at how Greene's beliefs about religion, personal loyalty, and betrayal were portrayed in film classics based on his books, such as John Ford's *The Fugitive*, as well as *The Fallen Idol*, *Brighton Rock*, and, of course, *The Third Man*. After WWII, Greene's novel *The Quiet American* seemed to be eerily prophetic about America's growing involvement in Vietnam. Although Greene's political beliefs were sometimes shrill and contradictory, he always had sympathy for the underdog. Much of the commentary here comes from recorded interviews with Greene, supplemented by recollections from his widow, Vivien, along with appreciations from writers John Mortimer and John Le Carré. Offering valuable insights into the mind of a literary master, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)

Duch: Master of the Forges of Hell

★★★

(2011) 103 min. DVD: \$24.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors).

Filmmaker Rithy Panh's follow-up to *S-21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine* (VL-3/04) is built around a long interview with a monster: Kaing Guek Eav (or Kang Keck Iew), also known as Duch, who ran a prison housing the victims of Cambodia's Khmer Rouge party in the 1970s. With his rotting teeth and black irises, Duch not only looks like a vampire but also displays few human qualities over the course of this documentary, other than one: self-pity. Personally responsible for over 12,000 deaths at two prisons, Duch's reign at S-21 (which he calls a "slaughterhouse") is the main subject here. Calmly sitting at a table and looking over stacks of archival photographs of prisoners and interrogators, Duch recalls brutal stories of torture, the ill-educated boys and girls he personally trained to assault prisoners, and the administrative problems he had to solve to achieve greater efficiency. Wheeling out the classic excuse of war criminals and human rights abusers who are cogs in the large wheel of genocide, Duch argues that he had to do what he was told or risk being arrested for "individualistic" thinking. He also claims to have experienced sensitivity to the pain of prisoners crushed under his command, which included his own former schoolteacher. But other witnesses—including interrogators, prison guards, and S-21 survivors—tell numerous accounts of Duch's personal involvement in interrogations, tales that Duch literally laughs off. A difficult film to watch given the subject matter, *Duch* serves up plenty of historical detail on the Cambodian killing fields while also presenting a chilling portrait of organized depravity.



Kind Hearted Woman ★★★★★

(2013) 2 discs. 300 min. DVD: \$34.99 (\$64.95 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-891-2.

Documentarian David Sutherland, renowned for his intimate documentaries focusing on rural Americans (including the *Video Librarian* "Best Docs" selection *Country Boys* [VL-9/06]), here follows three tumultuous years in the life of 32-year-old Robin Charboneau, a member of North Dakota's Oglala Sioux nation. Despite a solid employment history with the Bureau of Indian Affairs and interests in psychology and social work, Robin (whose Lakota name translates as "kind-hearted woman") struggled with a dysfunctional upbringing at the hands of two alcoholic parents that also included numerous abusive foster homes. Only tenuously sober herself, Robin divorced a husband she believes molested their daughter. Robin fights a protracted custodial/justice battle over her two children, against what appears to be a patriarchal and unsympathetic tribal court. Leaving her Spirit Lake reservation, she tries to juggle AA, money woes, college in Minnesota, parenting two troubled kids, an achy-breaky on-off relationship with a nice (but neurotically insecure) Canadian guy, and her ferociously personal mission to campaign against abuse. As in his masterful *The Farmer's Wife* (VL-5/99), Sutherland has discovered a transfixing subject—brave yet all too human—and renders her story in classic fly-on-the-wall cinéma-vérité style. Aired on PBS, this co-production from *Frontline* and *Independent Lens* serves up a powerful and compelling real-life drama. Extras include an interview with Sutherland and updates on Robin and her family. Highly recommended. Editor's Choice. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Recommended. [Note: see also the review of *Khmer Rouge: A Simple Matter of Justice* on pg. 60.] Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

Ethel ★★★★★

(2013) 97 min. DVD: \$19.98. HBO Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).

A new documentary on the Kennedy dynasty that actually upholds and cherishes the "Camelot" image might seem quaint—especially considering that the filmmaker is Rory Kennedy, youngest daughter of Robert, the 11th and last child born to effusive matriarch Ethel, who discovered she was pregnant with Rory only after her husband's 1968 assassination. Granting her daughter what is said to be her first interview in 30 years, Ethel Kennedy here is self-effacing and incorrigibly proper and decent, as she describes (with occasional reticence—although her now-adult sons and daughters fill in the gaps) an idyllic, active upbringing in the prosperous (but not Kennedy-wealthy) Skakel family, solid Republicans who viewed the Democratic Kennedys as "Communists." Nonetheless, Ethel crossed the aisle, politically-speaking, to marry Robert, who is described with JFK as the most remarkable brother combo in U.S. political history. It's a challenge to keep Ethel as the film's focus when looking at epochal touchstones like the Cuban Missile Crisis, the JFK and Martin Luther King, Jr. assassinations, and Robert's own tragically short run for the White House on an anti-Vietnam War platform. But Rory underscores the fact that Ethel's tireless support, intense Catholic faith, and commitment to liberal-progressive causes and social justice were a hidden strength of the family. Featuring abundant

home-movie footage, this HBO-aired biography is sure to be appreciated by Kennedy followers. DVD extras include an interview with the filmmaker. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Ferlinghetti: A Rebirth of Wonder

★★★★1/2

(2010) 79 min. DVD: \$24.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors).

Filmmaker Christopher Felver pays homage to iconic San Francisco poet-publisher-translator-painter and cultural bellwether Lawrence Ferlinghetti (born 1919), whose long life intertwines with the leading lights of the Beat generation and their impact. A hip documentary—featuring jazz music, snappy editing, and scraps of weird avant-garde movies—*Ferlinghetti* serves up a fascinating recap of the artist's fertile career. Ferlinghetti's upbringing was fraught with early tragedy: his Italian father died before he was born and his mother suffered a mental breakdown. The unstable woman Ferlinghetti thought was his mother was actually his French aunt, and she soon disappeared, after which the worldly youngster was adopted into an affluent family with a love for poetry. Ferlinghetti seized on Thomas Wolfe as an early role model (although he laments that he didn't write like Wolfe). When he co-founded the legendary City Lights bookstore in San Francisco in 1953, Ferlinghetti also started an imprint that brought into the marketplace such taboo volumes as D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, William S. Burroughs' *Naked Lunch*, Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*, and Allen Ginsberg's *Howl*, which triggered a landmark obscenity trial, placing

publisher Ferlinghetti in court to face the heat while poet Ginsburg rode out the controversy traveling abroad. Ferlinghetti also authored volume after volume of writings and poems (including *A Coney Island of the Mind*). Radicalized by seeing the ruins of Nagasaki as a G.I., Ferlinghetti also advocated leftist and socialist causes, preached mistrust of government and big business, and—to avoid being politically compromised—refused support from the National Endowment of the Arts. Additional interviewees here include Billy Collins, Amiri Baraka, and Dennis Hopper. DVD extras include Ferlinghetti's recitation of his poem "History of the Airplane." Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Flower in Otomi ★★

(2012) 86 min. DVD: \$398. Icarus Films. PPR.

Luisa Riley's documentary looks back at the short life of Mexican revolutionary Dení Prieto Stock (Dení means "flower" in the Otomi language), who fought for a socialist state, combining interviews with photographs and passages from Dení's letters and journal entries. Born in 1954 to Mexican Catholic and Russian Jewish parents (and raised in Mexico City and New York), the petite Dení felt self-conscious about her small hands and feet, recalls her sister, Ayari, who describes her younger sibling as a rebel, a sign of things to come. Steeped in the teachings of Communism from an early age, both sisters admired Che Guevara and Fidel Castro. Male and female associates alike remember her as intelligent, flirtatious, and even "queenly" at times. In the 1970s, she joined the FLN—or Fuerzas de Liberación—where she used the code name Maria Luisa. Her colleague, Elisa, describes their time together in the organization, where women took part in the armed struggle, but also still did the cooking, cleaning, and washing. In 1974, police surrounded the Big House—the communal Napatla home where Dení had been living—and conducted a siege with guns and grenades, killing 19-year-old Dení and four others. Presenting a sad chapter in Mexican history, this affecting portrait is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Legend of a Warrior ★★

(2012) 78 min. DVD: \$195. National Film Board of Canada. PPR.

Canadian filmmaker Corey Lee points his camera at his own family in this feature-length documentary that serves as a belated exercise in paternal bonding. Lee is the son of Frank Lee, a prominent Chinese-born martial arts coach who became famous for his mastery of white crane kung fu. In the early 1980s, the elder Lee left his wife and a young Corey to head for Hong Kong to work as a coach/manager for martial arts champion Billy Chau. In *Legend of a Warrior*, now fortysomething Corey temporarily leaves his spouse and children to train at his

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father's martial arts center—where the elder Lee appears to give his aspiring fighters a level of fatherly support that Corey did not experience while growing up. Along the way, Corey also seeks out a greater understanding of Frank's Chinese heritage (Corey's mother is white). Corey Lee clearly enjoys being on camera (the production often seems to be little more than a vehicle designed to call attention to his athletic prowess), while Frank seems to be patient and cordial regarding the whole matter—the true feat of strength in this home movie. Featuring both English and French-language versions on the disc, this is an optional purchase, at best. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Love Under Fire: The Story of Bertha and Potter Palmer ★★1/2

(2013) 30 min. DVD: \$19.99; individuals; \$99: institutions. Corn Bred Films (avail. from www.cornbredfilms.com). PPR.

This brief, narrowly focused biography traces the history of Potter Palmer, a mogul who lost a fortune during Chicago's Great Fire of 1871, and his wife, Bertha, a society grand dame and social activist. Potter had gained his wealth in the dry goods business, introducing concepts such as customer service, the bargain basement, and a liberal return policy before selling it all to Marshall Field and investing the proceeds in real estate. As a wedding gift for their 1870 marriage, he built the Palmer House Hotel, finished just 13 days before the conflagration that destroyed it and 31 other buildings Palmer owned. At Bertha's urging, he took out a \$1.7 million loan, the largest ever granted to a single person at the time, to replace the structure with a fireproof version. Along with entertaining royalty and dressing in the highest fashion, Bertha worked for equal rights for women and poor children. Additionally, 36 Impressionist paintings donated by the Palmers form the backbone of the Chicago Art Institute's collection. Writer-director Amelia Dellos traces the Palmers' lives with the usual panning of old photographs, interspersed with interviews of historians and descendants. Recommended for regional libraries in Illinois, this is a strong optional purchase elsewhere. Aud: P. (F. Gardner)

Video Librarian Online

Visit Video Librarian Online (www.videolibrarian.com) for more reviews during September and October, including: *Christian Family: Caregivers*, *The Ghost Army*, *GrowthBusters*, *Legendary White Stallions*, *A Lot Like You*, *Maintaining a Healthy Heart*, *The New Great Game*, *Salma*, and much more!

Series Update

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

The Adventures of Chuck & Friends: Bumpers Up! (110 min., DVD: \$12.99) is the newest addition to Shout! Kids' compilations of episodes from the Hub-aired series following the escapades of titular dump truck Chuck and his talking vehicle friends—including Digger, Boomer, Handy, Rowdy, Biggs, and Flip. See review of *The Adventures of Chuck & Friends: Monster Rally* in VL-11/12.



Young mousling ballerina Angelina and friends enjoy activities including a dance-a-thon in **Angelina Ballerina: Mousical Medleys** (62 min., DVD: \$14.98), the latest compilation from HIT Entertainment and Lionsgate's popular computer-animated children's series. See review of *Angelina Ballerina: Rose Fairy Princess* in VL-7/02.

Also newly available from Lionsgate and HIT is **Barney: Imagine with Barney** (88 min., DVD: \$14.98), including four episodes emphasizing imagination and teamwork featuring the purple dinosaur and his pals, who explore their creativity through drawing, song, and dance. See review of *Barney's Round and Round We Go* in VL-11/02.

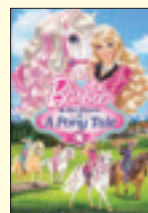
The most recent compilation from PBS Home Video's long-running food prep program is **America's Test Kitchen: Season Thirteen** (780 min., DVD: 4 discs, \$39.95), which compiles 26 episodes from the Daytime Emmy-nominated culinary series hosted by Christopher Kimball, and features 52 scrumptious recipes for dishes ranging from "Farmhouse Vegetable and Barley Soup" to "French Apple Cake." See review of *The Best of America's Test Kitchen* in VL-3/08.

Newly available from Athena is the latest program in the Military Channel-aired *Missions That Changed the War* documentary series, **Missions That Changed the War: Germany's Last Ace** (180 min., DVD: 2 discs, \$49.99). Narrated by Gary Sinise, this entry focuses on three men who played decisive roles



in the aerial battles over Germany. See review of *Missions That Changed the War: The Doolittle Raid* in VL-5/13.

The latest entry in Universal Studios Home Entertainment popular computer-animated movies based on the bestselling plastic doll, **Barbie & Her Sisters in A Pony Tale** (75 min., DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$26.98, avail. Oct. 22) finds Barbie setting off on a Swiss adventure to the majestic Alps, where she will spend the summer at a riding academy. See review of *Barbie: The Princess & the Popstar* in VL-11/12.



Care Bears: A Belly Badge for Wonderheart (65 min., DVD: \$14.98) is the most recent movie from Lionsgate's computer-animated series, following young cub Wonderheart as she experiences a lesson-filled adventure after attempting to fake her Belly Badge powers and ending up in the Moody Mountains. See review of *Care Bears: Kingdom of Caring* in VL-5/04.

Based on Marc Brown's bestselling children's books, **Arthur Stands Up to Bullying** (56 min., DVD: \$9.99) is the latest compilation from the PBS Kids series starring Arthur the aardvark. See review of *Arthur Gets Spooked* in VL Online-10/03. Also newly available at the same price is **Super Why! Hansel & Gretel: A Healthy Adventure**.

Also recently released by PBS is **Jim Henson's Dinosaur Train: Nature Trackers** (100 min., DVD: \$9.99), featuring several episodes from the Jim Henson Company series focusing on life science, natural history, and paleontology. See review of *Jim Henson's Dinosaur Train: Dinosaurs Under the Sea* in VL-1/11. Also newly available at the same price is **Caillou: Big Kid Caillou**.

Secrets of the Dead: Bones of the Buddha, **Secrets of the Dead: Caveman Cold Case** (60 min. each, DVD: \$24.99 each), and **Secrets of the Dead: Ultimate Tut** (120 min., DVD: \$24.99) are the three newest volumes in PBS Distribution's real-life historical mystery series, narrated by Jay O. Sanders. See review of *Secrets of the Dead: Executed in Error* in VL-5/09.



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Appleseed XIII: The Complete Series ★★

(2011) 5 discs. 325 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$64.98. *Funimation* (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4210-2685-6.



This 13-part series continues the anime adaptations of Masamune Shirow's popular sci-fi manga franchise. Set in a dystopian future in the city of Olympus, which functions as the unofficial capital of what remains of the world after a non-nuclear global war, *Appleseed XIII* revolves around a pair of elite SWAT members—human Deunan Knute and her cyborg partner Briareos—who appear to be the only law enforcement authorities able to establish order in this chaotic environment. The novelty here is that each episode's plot is matched against the mythological Labors of Hercules as our heroes fight a mysterious terrorist group known as the Argonauts. While the love-hate relationship between Deunan and Briareos is fun, the 3D CGI animation here is oddly uninspiring and the narrative itself quickly becomes monotonous, with mindless violence offered in lieu of intelligent storytelling. One can debate whether this is a mere aberration or a sign of a well-oiled franchise losing steam, but the resulting effort is likely to be a major disappointment to *Appleseed* fans and a confusing introduction for those new to the series. Compiling all 13 episodes on a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, rated TV-14, extras include an extensive behind-the-scenes documentary, and episode commentaries. Completists will want to add, but this is not a necessary purchase elsewhere. (P. Hall)

A Certain Scientific Railgun, Part One ★★1/2

(2009) 2 discs. 300 min. DVD: \$59.98. *Funimation* (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4210-2660-0.

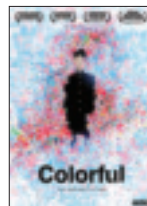


This series takes place in the same setting as (and shares some characters with) *A Certain Magical Index* (VL-5/13): namely, Academy City, a high-tech metropolis of schools (where almost no studying or classes are ever shown). Psychic superpowers are taken most seriously here, and there are millions of young "espers." The title references the nickname of adolescent Misaka, whose electro-shock bolts and magnetic-field mojo make her a key enforcer in Judgment, the student-level police and foe of rogue espers and other threatening phenomena. Over 12 episodes, they combat telekinetic bullies and bandits, track a black-market substance that boosts esper abilities, and uncover hints of a giant overarching conspiracy behind Academy City itself. The tone varies between perilous action and silly

shojo-schoolgirl stuff, with Misaka stoically tolerating the Sapphic crush of her diminutive "teleporter" roommate Kuroko, among other antics. Amusing (or grating, depending on one's tastes) subplots involve panties and lingerie, and the urban legend of the lurking "undressstress," supposedly a sultry teacher who uses any excuse to disrobe in public. Compiling the first 12 episodes from the 2009-10 series on a dual-language set, rated TV-14, DVD extras include audio commentaries. A strong optional purchase. [Note: *A Certain Scientific Railgun, Part Two* is also newly available.] (C. Cassidy)

Colorful: The Motion Picture ★★★

(2010) 126 min. DVD: \$29.98; Blu-ray: \$39.98. *Sentai Filmworks* (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-6161-5323-6 (dvd), 978-1-6161-5324-3 (blu-ray).



Serving up a handsomely animated variant on *Heaven Can Wait*'s fantasy premise, filmmaker Keiichi Hara's *Colorful* introduces a nameless soul in the melancholy-looking afterlife who committed an unknown (although severe) sin and is compelled to go back to Earth and live again, in order to possibly achieve redemption. Thus the amnesiac protagonist revives in the body of 14-year-old Makoto Kobayashi, an artistic schoolboy who winds up in the hospital after killing himself. Although a strangely sinister little spirit-guide lurks around to advise "Makoto," the revived boy (assumed by his dysfunctional family to have made a miracle recovery) is mostly on his own when it comes to piecing together for himself the household malaise of adultery and neglect—coupled with classroom drama—that led up to the suicide, and then somehow atone. The leisurely narrative (with a curious plot detour into...vintage trolley-car fancying?) may not appeal to audiences favoring anime action, although the forthright (but non-explicit) depictions of teen prostitution, bullying, and loneliness make this a more serious anime. Presented on DVD and Blu-ray on dual-language disc, rated TV-14, this winner of a Japanese Academy award for Excellence in Animation is recommended. (C. Cassidy)

Robotech: The Shadow Chronicles and Love Live Alive ★★1/2

(2013) 2 discs. 178 min. DVD: \$19.98. *Lionsgate* (avail. from most distributors).



The original *Robotech*—an import from the Japanese TV series (actually three separate serial epics redubbed and spliced together by the late Carl Macek)—is not only well-remembered by fans but also helped popularize anime in the West. After numerous comics, video games,

spin-offs, and aborted continuations, the generation-hopping franchise finally received an official sequel. This set includes *Love Live Alive*, a feature-length re-edit of the final third of the original 85 chapter (whew!) serial from 1985, which depicts how an Earth resistance movement (led by a cross-dressing pop idol!) fought an alien occupation force, using shape-changing military craft and mecha suits. That leads right into 2006's more CGI-style (but still line-drawn, by Korean animators in the Japanese style) *Shadow Chronicles*, in which a different and even more ruthless alien race has been waiting for the last bunch of invaders to exit—so they can take a turn fighting the humans. Mark Hamill is among the guest voices in *Shadow Chronicles* (joining veteran voiceover actors from the older series), which maintains a consistent tone with the original. Extras includes behind-the-scenes featurettes (including one with test footage for a photo-realistic digital *Robotech 3000* franchise that never launched), deleted scenes, outtakes, and photo galleries. Collections already carrying the *Robotech* series will want to add, but this is optional elsewhere. (C. Cassidy)

The Rose of Versailles, Part 1 ★★★★★

(1979) 4 discs. 480 min. DVD: \$39.99. *The Right Stuff International* (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-57032-748-3.



Based on a manga created by Riyoko Ikeda, *The Rose of Versailles*—originally airing on Japanese television in 1979–80—is an important early anime that influenced many subsequent productions, including *Revolutionary Girl Utena*. Set in France in the 1700s, the story centers on Oscar François de Jarjayes, a young woman whose father, having produced no male heir, raised her not only to be a man, but also a brave soul with a good and noble heart, loved by women, admired by other men, and hated by the villainous. While fictionalized, the series incorporates major historical events, with the first segments introducing a small cast of characters that include Marie Antoinette, who is leaving Austria to marry the Dauphin of France. As leader of the palace guards, Oscar observes Queen Marie firsthand, and thus grows increasingly aware of the court's extravagant spending—contrasted with the desperate poverty of the people. At the same time, Marie is presented not as a monster but rather as a lonely young woman distracting herself from a loveless life. Dripping with romanticized imagery and sparkly-eyed characters, *The Rose of Versailles* is also full of dramatic tension and is surprisingly compelling. Compiling the first 20 episodes—presented in Japanese with English subtitles, suitable for 13-up—this is highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** [Note: *The Rose of Versailles, Part 2* is also newly available.] (L. Martincik)

Aida ★★

(2012) 154 min. In Italian w/ English subtitles. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. C Major (dist. by Naxos of America).

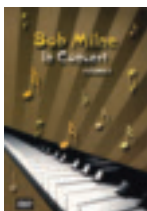
Overall, the Tutto Verdi series—comprising all of the composer's operas presented in recent Italian stagings (mostly from Parma) on both DVD and Blu-ray—has maintained a fairly high standard. But this 2012 production of the ever-popular 1871 masterpiece Verdi wrote—about Egyptian army commander Radamès' love for the titular enslaved Ethiopian princess, which elicits the wrath of Amneris, the jealous pharaoh's daughter—fails on virtually every level. Joseph Franconi Lee's direction is unimaginative, emphasizing dull static poses, while Mauro Carosi's sets and costumes strive for opulence but wind up looking chintzy in the bluish light here. The chorus and orchestra of the Teatro Regio do ragged work under Antonino Fogliani's baton, and the solo singing is unimpressive, with Susanna Branchini and Walter Fraccaro—as the doomed couple—sounding strained and coarse. Mariana Pentcheva as the vengeful Amneris comes off best, but even she's second-rate compared to the competition in rival versions (such as the 2003 Barcelona mounting reviewed in VL-11/04). It's no wonder that the audience response is tepid, with perfunctory applause during the curtain calls. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray release) and PCM stereo, extras include an intro to the opera. Aside from libraries collecting the entire series, this is not a necessary purchase. (F. Swietek)



Bob Milne in Concert: Volume 1 ★★★

(2013) 75 min. DVD: \$59. Echo Spark Films.

Detroit pianist Bob Milne, a music history instructor by day, plays ragtime and boogie-woogie songs while also telling the stories behind the music in this engaging concert, speaking slowly and quietly in a style that recalls Garrison Keillor. Some of the selections are likely to be familiar, such as Richard M. Jones's "Trouble in Mind" and Scott Joplin's "The Entertainer," which found new fans after being featured in *The Sting*, but others are more obscure. When Milne mentions specific songwriters, like Joe "King" Oliver ("Canal Street Blues") and James P. Johnson ("Steeplechase Rag"), illustrative photographs accompany his comments. As Milne notes about the Louisiana numbers, "New Orleans didn't invent the blues, but they sure played the heck out of them." When he introduces the traditional "Stack O' Lee Blues," he shares information about the title subject, a riverboat gambler (subsequent versions would shorten the name to Stagger Lee). Milne's gentle humor, which



stays on the right side of corny, enhances the entertainment aspect of this 16-song set that ends with a couple of New Orleans parade band tunes, notably an expansive rendition of "When the Saints Go Marchin' In." Recommended. (K. Fennessy)

Christopher Cross: A Night in Paris ★★★

(2012) 90 min. DVD: \$23.98 (2 audio CDs included). Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).

Nobody in Christopher Cross's band (including Cross) exactly breaks a sweat in this 17-song concert—filmed at Paris's Theatre Le Trianon in April 2012—featuring the singer-songwriter's mellow pop. But there's no question that the cascade of guitar hooks, sweet jazz, and sensual rhythms flowing here are pleasing, however light. Cross's music carries the feel of a breeze in one's sails, mixed with a certain amount of silky sexiness. "The Light Is On" features a catchy Calypso beat with a nice guitar break played by Cross, while "Leave It to Me" boasts a slightly exotic undertone. The major influence of Paul McCartney on Cross can be heard both in the dreamy, sweet romanticism of "Everything" and the witty "Walking in Avalon," while the smart, jazzy orchestration of "Never Be the Same" cuts against the lyrics' self-pity. Cross's take on his international hit "Sailing" is predictably and winningly velvet-smooth and meditative, while "Dreamers" ventures closest to actual rock-and-roll. Perhaps the show's highlight is a near-couplet of "November," a spare ballad that resembles a light rain of sadness, followed by "Arthur's Theme," which is still pretty and delightfully playful. Presented with 5.1 surround and stereo options, the DVD is accompanied by two audio CDs capturing the concert. Recommended. (T. Keogh)



The Colón Ring ★★

(2012) 489 min. In German w/English subtitles. DVD: 5 discs, \$134.99; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$119.99. C Major (dist. by Naxos of America).

Orchestras have been performing musical excerpts from Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* for over a century. But the four operas—*Das Rheingold*, *Die Walküre*, *Siegfried*, and *Götterdämmerung*—are generally staged separately, without cuts. *The Colón Ring* offers a rare exception—a shortened version of the entire *Ring*, refashioned by conductor Cord Garben for presentation over the course of a single day, with ample breaks for the audience and singers to catch their breath. This 2012 premiere staging from the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires proves to be a rather unimaginative reworking, musically speaking, simply jettisoning about half of the scores (along with some characters). While



true Wagnerites will certainly denounce Garben's fiddling with the master's work, even his seven-hour *Ring* needs stronger advocacy than the Buenos Aires forces are able to muster. Director Valentina Carrasco works from an intriguing concept, situating the action during the 1970s-era Argentinean military dictatorship and identifying the Rheingold with children who disappeared at the time. But the orchestral playing under Roberto Paternostro is mediocre, the singing is variable, and the sets and costumes are threadbare. Presented in DTS 5.0 (DTS-HD 5.0 on the Blu-ray version) and PCM stereo, extras include a feature-length "making-of" documentary by Hans Christoph von Bock that nicely details the chaotic creation of the production, during which the original director and conductor exited at the last moment. Under the circumstances, it's something of a miracle that the company managed to pull off this mounting at all. Regardless, this is a curio that cannot be recommended. (F. Swietek)

The Cunning Little Vixen ★★★

(2013) 97 min. In Czech w/ English subtitles. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Opus Arte (dist. by Naxos of America).

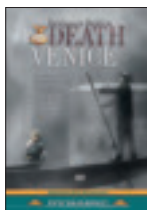
Leoš Janáček's marvelous 1924 beast-fable opera, juxtaposing the lives of rural villagers and animals while drawing a parallel between the change of seasons and the cycle of life, receives an uneven but largely successful reading in this 2012 production from Glyndebourne. Musically, the outstanding element is the playing of the London Philharmonic under the inspired leadership of Vladimir Jurowski, who rivals Charles Mackerras (VL-3/11) in his ability to convey the score's combination of delicacy and spikiness, as well as its folksy Eastern European flavor. The vocalism, by comparison, is good here but not remarkable, with Lucy Crowe singing decently in the lead role but without the sense of wildness called for by the character, and Sergei Leiferkus solid but bland as the forester who captures and tries to domesticate her. Emma Bell is more vivid as the fox who romances the vixen, and the other human figures are mostly well drawn. Tom Pye's staging—marked by a huge tree at the center—is magical, but Dinah Collin's costumes for the animals are disappointingly unimaginative, often consisting of a single element (like the title character's tail). Largely because of Jurowski, this mounting captures much of the light and shade of this charming but profound work, but it's not quite equal to the Mackerras version. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray release) and LPCM stereo, extras include a "making-of" featurette and a cast gallery. Recommended, overall. (F. Swietek)



Death in Venice

★★★1/2

(2008) 155 min. DVD: 2 discs, \$32.99; Blu-ray: \$42.99. Dynamic (dist. by Naxos of America).



Benjamin Britten's final opera—which offers a rumination on the disjuncture between the intellectual and passionate sides of the human psyche—is impressively staged in this 2008 production from La Fenice in Venice. Premiering in 1973, *Death in Venice* is an adaptation of Thomas Mann's titular novella about a famous author named Aschenbach, whose obsession over a beautiful boy he encounters during a trip to Venice causes him to remain in the city despite warnings of a cholera epidemic that eventually claims his life. Tadzio, the object of Aschenbach's affection, represents the emotional Dionysian impulse that the writer has traditionally repressed by looking at everything from analytical Apollonian heights. Britten nicely dramatizes the contrast musically by interspersing Aschenbach's long passages of sung introspection with entirely wordless ballet sequences for Tadzio. Director and costume/set designer Pier Luigi Pizzi creates an elegant physical production in grays, blacks, and silver-blues that cast a ghostly spell. Excellent performances are delivered by Marlin Miller as Aschenbach and Alessandro Riga as Tadzio, even if the former is a bit young (and the latter somewhat old) for the roles, with Scott Hendricks a solid presence who portrays a series of seven characters whom Aschenbach encounters, including a gondolier and a hotel manager. Bruno Bartoletti conducts the score with a softer-grained touch than is usual in performances of Britten. Presented in DTS-HD 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1, and PCM stereo, this Blu-ray debut of a generally enthralling production of this great modern opera is highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

Der Ring des Nibelungen

★★★1/2

(2006) 11 discs. 1,008 min. In German w/English subtitles. DVD: \$139.99. Opus Arte (dist. by Naxos of America).



In celebration of the 200th anniversary of Richard Wagner's birth, several new DVD and Blu-ray releases of the composer's monumental Norse-myth based tetralogy—chronicling the fall of Valhalla and the end of Wotan's rule—are hitting the market. This boxed set features a 1999 staging of the four operas—*Das Rheingold*, *Die Walküre*, *Siegfried*, and *Götterdämmerung*—by De Nederlandse Opera (originally released by Opus Arte in 2006), and like the 1991–92 Bayreuth production recently reissued by Kultur (VL-1/12), it is superb in virtually every respect. Hartmut Haenchen's conducting is inspired,

as he draws rich, full playing from the three orchestras (the Hague, Netherlands, and Rotterdam Philharmonics) that appear over the course of the cycle. Vocally, John Bröcheler is a masterful Wotan, Jeannine Altmeyer his equal as Brünnhilde, Kurt Rydl a magnificent Hunding and Hagen, and Graham Clark a perfect Mime. Only the tenors—John Keyes (Siegfried) and Heinz Kruse (Siegfried)—don't quite measure up. Pierre Audi's stagings are hardly traditional—the orchestra is visible mid-stage, the sets are minimalist, and the costumes are imaginatively modernistic—but they work well, overall. Presented in DTS 5.1 and LPCM stereo, DVD extras for each opera include introductions, illustrated synopses, and cast galleries. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

Dio: Finding the Sacred Heart—Live in Philly 1986

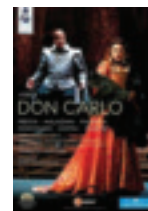
(1986) 142 min. DVD: \$14.98, Blu-ray: \$19.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



Metal howler Ronnie James Dio, who died in 2010, pulls out all the stops for this satisfying 1986 show at Philadelphia's Spectrum Arena, where the quintet was touring behind their third album, *Sacred Heart*. The red and green lights, castle turrets, and fire-breathing animatronic dragon (nicknamed “Dean”) all help lend a medieval flair to the proceedings, while audience members respond in kind with devil horns. Although Dio's silver-studded, black leather look hadn't changed much since the 1970s, his band mates reflect the 1980s with their big hair, and red, white, and gold-accented outfits. Drummer Vinny Appice and keyboard player Claude Schnell play atop vertiginous risers, while Dio, bassist Jimmy Bain, and guitarist Craig Goldy (replacing Vivian Campbell) roam across the king-sized stage. Appice, who delivers a long solo after “Last in Line/Children of the Sea/Holy Diver”—the highlight of this 16-song set—bangs the skins with laser-lit sticks on a gargantuan drum kit (Goldy and Schnell enjoy solos, as well). The band engages in a minimum of patter here, although Dio introduces a few numbers, such as “Don't Talk to Strangers” from their first album (*Holy Diver*), and “Hungry for Heaven,” from the movie *Vision Quest*. Other songs and medleys stem from Dio's years with Black Sabbath (“Heaven and Hell”) and Rainbow (“Rock 'n' Roll Children/Long Live Rock 'n' Roll/Man on the Silver Mountain”). Extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes, interviews with Dio and Goldy, and the music video for “Rock 'n' Roll Children.” Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, this is recommended. (K. Fennessy)

Don Carlo ★★1/2

(2012) 204 min. In Italian w/English subtitles. DVD: 2 discs, \$29.99; Blu-ray: \$39.99. C Major (dist. by Naxos of America).



The 23rd volume of the Tutto Verdi series offers a rather puny production of one of the grandest of grand operas, a five-act romantic tragedy involving King Philip II of Spain, his wife Elizabeth, and their son Carlos, set against a background of Protestant rebellion and inquisitorial repression. Originally written in 1864–65, *Don Carlo* is presented here—in a 2012 taping from the Teatro Comunale in Modena—in the composer's final version (created some 20 years later), translated into Italian, with the original Fontainebleau opening (which Verdi had omitted in earlier revisions) restored. Musically this is a decent performance, with orchestral playing that is spirited if not always elegant under the baton of Fabrizio Ventura, and singing from the principals (Mario Malagnini as Carlo, Cellia Costea as Elisabetta, and Giacomo Prestia as Filippo) that exhibits commitment and intensity (some of the supporting roles, such as Luciano Montanaro's wobbly Grand Inquisitor, don't come across as well). But visually the production is several sizes too small for such a grandiose piece: although the costumes are opulent, the stark set consists mostly of wooden trestles that resemble gigantic orange crates, to which large candelabras (along with a cardboard tomb in the final scene) are added. With several superior versions of *Don Carlo* available (see VL-3/06), this one should be of interest only to those collecting the complete Tutto Verdi set. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray release) and PCM stereo, extras include a brief introduction to the opera. Optional. (F. Swietek)

Eugene Onegin ★★

(2011) 150 min. In Russian w/English subtitles. DVD: 2 discs, \$29.99; Blu-ray: \$39.99. Kultur International Films (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-0-7697-9195-1 (dvd), 978-0-7697-9194-4 (blu-ray).



Tchaikovsky's 1879 opera—fashioned from Pushkin's verse novel—serves up a series of lyrical tableaux that can seem static, but in this 2011 production from Valencia's Palau de les Arts, conductor Omer Meir Wellber leads the orchestra in a vivid reading that is highlighted by quick tempos and passionate playing. Kristine Opolais is vibrant both vocally and dramatically as Tatyana, the young woman infatuated with the arrogant nobleman Onegin—only to be rebuffed by him until years later, when (now married) she rejects his advances. Opolais delivers the famous

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letter scene beautifully, and Artur Rucinski matches her well in the title role, while Dmitry Korchak is a sweet-voiced Lensky—Tatyana's sister's fiancé, whom Onegin kills in a duel. As with the recent performance from De Nederlandse Opera (VL-7/12), the drawback is the staging, here by Mariusz Trelinski. The overriding concept seems to be that Onegin is remembering everything many years later—which explains the ghostly figure named O*** (Emil Wesołowski) who appears throughout, wordlessly accompanying the principals around the stage. And it also explains why in some scenes the people around the main characters appear to be the walking dead—a conceit that is especially peculiar in the famous polonaise that opens Act III, which essentially becomes a zombie procession. Even so, this interpretation is less eccentric than Stefan Herheim's aforementioned Amsterdam rendition. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray release) and LPCM stereo, this is recommended. (F. Swietek)

Frank Zappa: A Token of His Extreme ★★★

(2012) 90 min. DVD: \$14.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



Frank Zappa and the Mothers of Invention bring their jazzed-out rock to this wild and wiggy August 1974 concert TV special. Zappa's band mates include Napoleon Murphy Brock (saxophone, flute), George Duke (keyboards), Ruth Underwood (percussion, xylophone), Tom Fowler (bass), and Chester Thompson (drums). His lyrics incorporate such offbeat phenomena as dental floss ("Montana"), crab cakes ("Florentine Pogen"), and feet ("Stink-Foot"). Although Zappa and Underwood sport casual attire, the other musicians look like Dr. Seuss characters in their red, long-sleeved t-shirts. If Zappa does most of the singing, the irrepressible Brock garners almost as much of the spotlight, and everybody gets in on the percussive action. When he isn't manning the keys, including an ARP Odyssey, Duke plays finger cymbals and tambourine and Brock picks up a cowbell. Early on, a man in a gorilla suit with a clock drops by to join in on the fun...disappearing just as quickly as he arrived. Quick cuts, montage effects, and inventive stop-motion excerpts contribute to the weirdness (Bruce Bickford, who worked on Zappa's *Baby Snakes*, did the animation). For Zappa fans, this 11-song set is essential viewing, despite the hyperactive editing (originally produced for American TV, it's not hard to see why most broadcasters passed on this show, which received more play in Europe). DVD extras include a 1976 appearance by Zappa on *The Mike Douglas Show*. Presented in PCM stereo, this is recommended. (K. Fennessy)

Garbage: One Mile High...Live ★★½

(2013) 116 min. DVD: \$14.98, Blu-ray: \$19.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



Modern rock quartet Garbage brings their hard-edged sound to Denver's Ogden Theatre in this energetic 2013 engagement. Scottish vocalist Shirley Manson is a charismatic presence who handles ballads and up-tempo tracks with ease, but there's a generic quality to their material that seems to keep them from achieving greatness. Manson describes the band as "a weird, motley crew," possibly a reference to their 2012 album, *Not Your Kind of People*. Serving as the group's focal point, Manson comes on like a gothic Batgirl in her black tights and diaphanous cape. The other players include guitarist and keyboard player Duke Erikson, Steve Marker on guitar, Butch Vig on drums, and touring member Eric Avery (Jane's Addiction) on bass. Highlights of the 20-song set include "Queer" and "Supervixen," and fans will enjoy the radio hits "I Think I'm Paranoid," "Only Happy When It Rains" and "Vow" (which sports a verse from Patti Smith's "Because the Night"). Considering Manson's strong vocals and stage presence, it's unfortunate that there are too many shots of the over-lit crowd, which distracts from the action on stage (especially when audience members raise their cameras to take pictures). Extras include behind-the-scene featurettes and music videos. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, this is a strong optional purchase. (K. Fennessy)

History of the Eagles ★★½

(2013) 3 discs. 233 min. DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$34.98. Capitol Records (avail. from most distributors).



"We made it, and it ate us," says singer-guitarist-pianist Glenn Frey, who along with fellow interviewee singer-drummer Don Henley comprised the backbone of the legendary Southern California rock band the Eagles, a group that flourished in the '70s, owned the airwaves in the '80s (thanks to the newly created "classic rock" stations), and returned in the '90s. Directed by Allison Ellwood (with Oscar-winning documentary filmmaker Alex Gibney serving as producer), the two-part Showtime-aired *History of the Eagles* charts the fascinating story of how Frey met Henley in 1970, formed a band together with Bernie Leadon on guitar/banjo and Randy Meisner on bass (all four worked together backing up Linda Ronstadt), and flew to England to record their eponymous 1972 debut, which featured two major hits—"Take It Easy" and "Peaceful Easy Feeling." The rest, as they say,

is history, and an interesting one at that. The country/bluegrass leaning Leadon would depart as the band moved more toward rock, followed by the non-confrontational Meisner (partially because he didn't want to perform "Take It to the Limit," with its voice-challenging high notes). Guitarist Don Felder (the man who wrote the haunting opening music for "Hotel California") would sign on, along with hotel-room-trasher extraordinaire Joe Walsh, and bass replacement Timothy B. Schmit. The hits would continue (in fact, the Eagles' greatest hits release would become the bestselling album of the 20th century), at least until Frey and Felder fought during a 1980 benefit concert for Senator Alan Cranston, which ultimately resulted in the group's break-up. Frey and Henley would launch solid solo careers (including Frey's "The Heat Is On" and Henley's "The Boys of Summer") before the band re-formed in 1994 for the aptly-titled tour and album *Hell Freezes Over*, later going on to record their Grammy-winning 2007 album *Long Road Out of Eden*. Although interviewing all of the principals, the documentary spends little time on personal relationships ("Eagles trumped everything" says Frey), but it does include some wonderful '70s tidbits (Jackson Browne lived in a basement apartment below Frey, who heard "Doctor My Eyes" as it was being written), tales of the long-running love-hate relationship with media mogul David Geffen, and loads of wonderful music. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 and PCM stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and PCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include a bonus disc featuring a 1977 concert of the Eagles at Maryland's Capital Centre. Highly recommended. (R. Pitman)

Il Trovatore ★★★

(2010) 140 min. In Italian w/ English subtitles. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Unitel Classica (dist. by Naxos of America).



The 17th release in the ongoing Tutto Verdi series presents the composer's 1853 warhorse opera in a 2010 production from the Teatro Regio de Parma, featuring a cast that is strong if not quite the equal of the starry ensemble of Von Karajan's recent Vienna mounting (VL-5/10). Marcelo Álvarez sings powerfully as Manrico, the titular troubadour who is also the rival (as well as the presumably dead brother) of the Count di Luna for the hand of the beautiful Leonora. Those roles are handled well by Claudio Sgura and Teresa Romano, with Mzia Nioradze equally fine as Azucena, the gypsy whom Manrico believes is his mother. All are supported by passionate playing from the company orchestra under Yuri Temirkanov, along with excellent choral work, and spare but elegant staging by Lorenzo Mariani. In terms of plot, *Il Trovatore* is admittedly even more contrived than most operatic melodra-

mas, but there is much more to the score than just the famous "Anvil Chorus." Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray release) and PCM stereo, extras include an introduction to the opera. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

La Forza del Destino

★★★1/2

(2011) 178 min. In Italian w/English subtitles. DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99; Blu-ray: \$39.99. C Major (dist. by Naxos of America).



The 22nd volume in the Tutto Verdi series, this 2011 mounting from the Teatro Regio di Parma features the standard 1869 revision of the composer's dark romantic 1862 drama, an absurdly complicated story in which Leonora and Alvaro's love is derailed by his accidental shooting of her disapproving father, leading her to take refuge in a hermitage. Meanwhile Alvaro, having joined the army, rescues Leonora's wounded brother, Carlo, who's sworn to take vengeance on the killer. After an inconclusive duel, Alvaro himself decides to enter a monastery that just happens to be near Leonora, and when Carlo pursues him, tragedy inevitably follows. This production is a mixed bag. Gianluigi Gelmetti's conducting shows the expertise one would expect of a veteran Verdi specialist, and the orchestra plays well, but the vocalism isn't first-rate. As Leonora, soprano Dimitra Theodossiou turns shrill and wobbly in the upper register, while tenor Aquiles Machado as Alvaro displays little luster. And although Vladimir Stoyanov is impressive as Carlo, the rest of the supporting cast is mediocre, at best. To make matters worse, Stefano Poda's staging is static, with drab sets and costumes. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray release) and LPCM stereo, extras include an intro to the opera. A better choice here would be Zubin Mehta's 2007 version (VL-5/09), although those collecting the Tutto Verdi series will want to consider this one, which is a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Lo Frate 'Nnamorato

★★★★1/2

(2012) 160 min. In Italian w/English subtitles. DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99; Blu-ray: \$39.99. Arthaus Musik (dist. by Naxos of America).



Among the most consistently pleasurable—and historically valuable—opera releases of recent years is the series of Pergolesi works from the composer's hometown of Jesi, which has provided generally excellent productions of the long-forgotten large-scale works of a man best known for his short comic intermezzos (see VL-7/12 for *Adriano in Siria*, VL-1/13 for *Il Prigionier Superbo*, and VL-5/13 for *La Salustia* and *Il Fla-*

minio). This latest issue showcases Pergolesi's 1732 second opera, which in many respects is an expanded version of the intermezzos, serving up a convoluted romantic farrago in which characters are besotted with others who don't return their yearnings—until last-act revelations about their real identities serendipitously match everyone up properly. And two maids are on hand to poke fun at their employers' ridiculous antics. Director Willy Landin updates the action to a 1950s-style Italian resort to good effect, with spiffy costumes and attractive sets depicting a café and a couple of villas (there's even a motorcycle onstage). The original-instrument band Europa Galante provides a fizzing account of the delectable score—grounded in baroque style, but with hints of incipient classicism—under the leadership of Fabio Biondi. None of the cast—including Nicola Alaimo, Elena Belfiore, and Patrizia Biccirè—are established stars, but they handle the vocal demands of arias and ensembles well, while successfully delivering the humor of the text. 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)

Mindless Behavior

★★★

(2013) 86 min. DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$28.99. Millennium Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-61666-190-8 (dvd).



Kicking off with footage from the group's 2012 Coca Cola Viewer's Choice surprise win at the BET Awards (against heavyweights such as Beyoncé and Chris Brown), this biographical profile of teen boy band Mindless Behavior is intercut with segments from their cross-country tour. All under driving age (I think; web info for the boys' real names and ages is spotty), the R&B hip-hop quartet includes Princeton (who at a young-er age appeared in a Gym Class Heroes video), Roc Royal (whose mom talks about the stroke she had when pregnant), Ray Ray (who wears his hair in plaits and earlier performed with popular L.A. children's entertainer Tommy the Clown), and Prodigy (whose dad noticed him grooving along to music in the car as a toddler—he proudly mentions the filthy 90s Next anthem "Too Close"). Looking at the group's formation, rehearsals (including being away from their parents for months), and stringent work ethic, the program combines home movie clips, songs, backstage footage, industry interviews, and segments of screeching adoring fans (as well as a surprise side trip to the Jackson 5's old house in Indiana). DVD extras include audio commentary with the band, deleted scenes, a music video, and more. Sure to be popular, this is recommended. (J. Williams-Wood)

Neil Cowley Trio ★★★

(2012) 105 min. DVD: \$14.98, Blu-ray: \$19.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



For this 2012 engagement, British pianist (and accompanist to Grammy-winning superstar Adele) Neil Cowley plays with six musicians—making the trio billing a little misleading, although the lineup does revolve around Cowley, drummer Evan Jenkins, and stand-up bass player Rex Horan, who were on tour in support of *The Face of Mount Molehill*. Playing the Montreux Jazz Festival represented the culmination of a five-year dream for Cowley, who begins with "Lament," a spare, Keith Jarrett-like solo that segues into "Rooster Was a Witness," at which point Jenkins and Horan come in, followed by the Mount Molehill Strings. After the first few numbers, the string players depart, with the exception of violinist Julian Ferraretto, leaving the trio for the center of the 15-song set, although the ensemble returns for the conclusion. If Cowley's music isn't pop, classical, or experimental, he successfully blends these genres into a modern jazz mix that is too dynamic to qualify as new age or ambient, but the ballads come close. More upbeat selections include *Molehill's* jaunty title track, the driving "Kenny Two Steps," and the swinging "Hug the Greyhound," which takes its inspiration from a long-limbed friend. "We tend to write songs about people we know," Cowley explains (another track, "Box Lily," references his 4-year-old daughter). Some pianists, regardless of the sound they produce, tend to seem balled-up with tension when playing, but Cowley gives off a decidedly more joyful vibe. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, this is recommended. (K. Fennessy)

Nova Rex: Ain't Easy Being Cheesy ★★

(2011) 70 min. DVD: \$19.99. Passion River (avail. from most distributors).



Of all the bands to emerge from the hair metal era, Nova Rex aren't exactly among the leading lights, so it's surprising that they merit their own "rockumentary" from director Dean Robinson, who got to know the group as the editor of a local Indianapolis metal magazine called *Hijinx*. After a quick trip through the band's past, Robinson catches up with the core duo in Florida in 2010 as they prepare for a comeback tour to support a greatest hits collection. Kenny Wilkerson (bass), who grew up in Indiana, and Canada-raised Italian J.P. Cervoni (guitar) are not as svelte as they used to be (and have wisely ditched the spandex), but they seem as eager to rock as ever (Cervoni cracks

that with their makeup and bleached hair they used to look like Morgan Fairchild). While preparing for the tour, the pair recall their days in L.A., just when hair metal was fading, and Indianapolis, where they built up a following. Although they never signed to a major label, Nova Rex did attract their share of female admirers. Unfortunately, vocalists tended to come and go (such as Kevin Tetz, who became a DJ), and by the 1990s—with grunge taking off—the band decided to pack it in. Other speakers here include artist manager Mark Wolfson and metal fan Desiree Chambers (although it isn't clear whether Chambers had any interest in Nova Rex since she speaks in general terms). Regional collections may want to consider, but this is optional elsewhere. (K. Fennessy)

OMD Live: Architecture & Morality & More

★★★

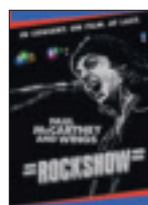
(2007) 136 min. Blu-ray: \$19.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



The popular '80s British electronic band Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark (or OMD) are captured live in this 2007 London concert before a standing room-only crowd at the Hammersmith Apollo, where they perform the entirety of 1981's *Architecture & Morality*, plus 13 other songs. The lineup consists of Andy McCluskey (vocals, guitar, keyboards), Paul Humphries (vocals, keyboards), Martin Cooper (keyboards, saxophone), and Malcolm Holmes (drums). If Kraftwerk and Brian Eno have always seemed likely influences, OMD integrates more pop and dance elements, positioning themselves somewhere between Gary Numan and Depeche Mode on the synth-pop spectrum. The blue lights trained on the quartet reflect the cool, controlled feel of their music, while background screens illustrate the lyrics, and also feature imagery ranging from black-and-white geometric designs to colorful stained glass windows. For "Joan of Arc," the band encourages the audience to clap along, which adds an additional layer of percussion to the doo wop-like melody. Other highlights include "Tesla Girls," "Forever (Live and Die)," and the *Pretty in Pink* favorite "If You Leave." Although they don't neglect any of their signature songs, some of the lesser known tracks here come across better than hits like "Enola Gay" and "Electricity," which feel a little rushed in comparison. Overall, this is a must for fans, with the 22-song set offering something for everyone. Bonus features include musician interviews, alternative edits of two numbers, and a featurette on the show's visual imagery. Presented in DTS-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, this is recommended. (K. Fennessy)

Paul McCartney and Wings: Rockshow ★★★

(1976) 139 min. DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$34.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).

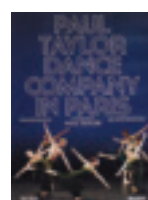


Filmed primarily at Seattle's Kingdome in 1976, Paul McCartney and Wings perform a generous two-hour-plus 28-song set mixing tunes from their then-new *Wings at the Speed of Sound* album ("Let 'Em In," "Silly Love Songs"), with earlier Wings hits ("Jet," "Band on the Run," "My Love"), Macca solo highlights ("Maybe I'm Amazed"), and Beatles classics ("The Long and Winding Road," "Lady Madonna"). Backed by a horn quartet, McCartney alternates between bass, guitar, and piano, joined by former Moody Blues member Denny Laine on guitar (and a multitude of other instruments, as well as lead vocals on a handful of songs), guitarist/bassist Jimmy McCullough, drummer Joe English, and, of course, Linda McCartney on keyboards. Viewers' proverbial mileage will certainly vary here (although Baby Boomers will likely feel the magic when McCartney does a solo acoustic guitar set featuring "Blackbird" and "Yesterday"), but there is really something here for everyone, including the delightful "You Gave Me the Answer" (dedicated to Fred Astaire), a cover of Simon & Garfunkel's "Richard Cory" (based on Edwin Arlington Robinson's haunting poem), and a pyrotechnics/strobe-lit rendition of Wings' James Bond anthem "Live and Let Die." Now for the bad news: the Internet is on fire with righteous indignation over the transfer's soft and grainy imagery, uneven sound mix, and occasional syncing issues. While *Rockshow* is guilty on all three counts, the complaints are somewhat overstated, and there's little doubt that many Beatles, Wings, and McCartney fans will love this. 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 a brief montage combining backstage scenes, home video footage, and comments from fans. Recommended. (R. Pitman)

Paul Taylor Dance Company in Paris

★★★★1/2

(2012) 55 min. DVD: \$24.99. Bel Air Classiques (dist. by Naxos of America).



Originally broadcast on PBS's *Great Performances* series, this program showcases the work of Paul Taylor, who for nearly 60 years has been at the forefront of American dance, while the company he founded in 1954 remains one of the most traveled—and respected—in the world. Superbly shot at the Théâtre National de Chaillot during the company's June 2012 stay at the eighth annual Festival Les Étés de

la Danse in Paris, the performance here spans two decades in the prolific choreographer's creative career, including one work from 1988 and another from 2008. The earlier *Brandenburgs*, a succession of solos and ensembles set to excerpts from Bach's Brandenburg Concerti 3 and 6, is an exuberant, carefree piece that celebrates the courtship ritual in a distinctively inventive fashion. The second, *Beloved Renegade*, is more dramatically intense, evoking the life and writings of Walt Whitman against excerpts from Francis Poulenc's luminous *Gloria*, following the poet as he's led by his muse—an angel—toward death, culminating in poignant but serene farewells to friends. Both pieces beautifully illustrate Taylor's imaginative yet tasteful marriage of music and movement, and are danced with enthusiasm and finesse by his hand-picked troupe, including the exceptionally fine Michael Trusnovec and Amy Young. DVD extras include the featurette "Paul Taylor: Architect of Energy," in which he discusses both works. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

Peter Grimes ★★★1/2

(2012) 154 min. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Opus Arte (dist. by Naxos of America).



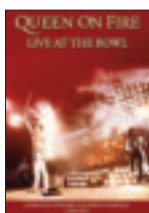
Benjamin Britten's first undisputed operatic masterpiece, this 1945 tale follows the titular fisherman, who is first ostracized by his fellow villagers and then persecuted after a young apprentice dies in his employ. *Peter Grimes* serves as an epitome of stories about outsiders oppressed by unsympathetic communities—a theme to which the composer, a pacifist and homosexual, was always drawn, and which he dramatized brilliantly here. This 2012 production hails from Milan's Teatro alla Scala, but the conductor, director, and virtually all of the singers are British. Musically, this is a superb performance, with Robin Ticciati leading the company orchestra in an intense, thoroughly idiomatic reading of the score. John Graham-Hall delivers an impassioned turn as the volatile Grimes, while Susan Gritton is equally compelling as Ellen, the schoolmistress who tries to stand up for Peter against the other townspeople. Some viewers may object to Richard Jones's updating of the work from the early-19th to the late-20th century, but the change works remarkably well, reflecting Britten's modernist musical style while maintaining the narrative's psychological power. 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 "making-of" featurette and a cast gallery. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

Queen on Fire: Live at the Bowl ★★★

(1982) 2 discs. 165 min. DVD: \$24.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).

Filmed live at England's Milton Keynes

Bowl in June 1982, rock superstars Queen perform a 25-song set (although some tunes, like "Flash," are severely truncated) while touring in support of their then-new release *Hot Space*, a funk-pop effort widely regarded as one of the band's worst (with the exception of the excellent closer, "Under Pressure," recorded with David Bowie). Fronted by charismatic lead singer Freddie Mercury (who would die of AIDS a decade later), with Brian May on guitar (and playing the *de rigueur* Queen stage show guitar solo), John Deacon on bass, and Roger Taylor on drums, the group mixes a thankfully small number of new tunes (forgettable songs such as "Back Chat" and "Staying Power") with a solid selection of hits, including "Save Me," "Somebody to Love," "Another One Bites the Dust," "Play the Game," "Bohemian Rhapsody," "Fat Bottomed Girls," and "Crazy Little Thing Called Love," as well as the signature closing trio of "We Will Rock You" (with Mercury sporting a huge black sombrero), "We Are the Champions," and "God Save the Queen." Overall, this is an impressive outing that captures Queen at the peak of their health and power, although it is marred somewhat by less than sterling technical qualities (shot on video in the standard 4:3 aspect ratio and featuring numerous light flare trails popping up in the image). Presented in DTS-5.1 and PCM stereo, extras include a bonus disc with band interviews, tour highlights from Japan and Austria, and a photo gallery. Although boasting fewer hit songs, *Hungarian Rhapsody: Queen—Live in Budapest* (VL-1/13) from 1986 is a better choice—audio-visually speaking—but this 1982 show will still be appreciated by fans. Recommended. (R. Pitman)



Romeo and Juliet

★★★★1/2

(2012) 158 min. DVD or Blu-ray: \$39.99. Opus Arte (dist. by Naxos of America).

Kenneth MacMillan's 1965 Royal Ballet staging of Prokofiev's ballet based on Shakespeare's tragedy of doomed young love has remained a company staple for nearly half a century—and has been filmed numerous times, occasionally featuring revised choreography. This 2012 Royal Ballet production stars Lauren Cuthbertson as Juliet and Federico Bonelli as Romeo, with Barry Wordsworth leading the orchestra at London's Royal Opera House. An excellent rendition, with Wordsworth favoring slower tempos and a softer-grained orchestral tone (which some listeners might find at odds with the score's natural spikiness), the sets and costumes here are pleasing, while the dancing by the entire cast and corps is spectacular. Of course, some viewers will



still prefer the 1966 film (VL-5/01) of the original production with the legendary Rudolf Nureyev and Dame Margot Fonteyn, despite its antiquated technical quality. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray release) and LPCM stereo, extras include featurettes on MacMillan's version of the ballet and the sword-fighting sequences, and a cast gallery. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

Simon Boccanegra

★★★

(2010) 137 min. In Italian w/ English subtitles. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. C Major (dist. by Naxos of America).

The Tutto Verdi project's 20th volume is this 2010 production from the Teatro Regio in Parma of the composer's 1857 "melodrama," presented here in the 1881 revision that has become the repertory standard. The title figure is a 14th-century corsair raised to rule Venice but haunted by an affair with a nobleman's daughter that ended in the woman's death and the disappearance of their child, Amelia. Twenty-five years later, the aged Boccanegra finds that Amelia is still alive and in love with one of his political enemies. Their touching reunion coincides with a plot against Boccanegra, which results in his succumbing to poison, but not before he defeats the conspirators and names Amelia's fiancé as his successor. While never one of Verdi's more popular operas, this somber work has fared surprisingly well on home video, most recently in a 2010 La Scala production (VL-7/12) conducted by Daniel Barenboim. In the lead role Leo Nucci is in excellent form, as are Tamar Iveri as Amelia and Francesco Meli as her lover, Gabriele. While the sets are minimalist, the period costumes are impressive. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray release) and PCM stereo, extras include an intro to the opera. Recommended. (F. Swietek)



Tosca

★★★★

(1992) 114 min. In Italian w/English subtitles. DVD or Blu-ray: \$29.99. Kultur International Films (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-0-7697-5023-1 (dvd); 978-0-7697-5024-8 (blu-ray).

Puccini's warhorse, one of the most popular of all operas, leaves the stage far behind in this 1992 performance, which was televised live in three segments from the very locations in Rome where the story is set, at the times when the action is supposed to occur. This was obviously a difficult project to pull off, with the orchestra conducted by Zubin Mehta playing in a separate venue while the singers listened over tiny receivers and kept to precisely choreographed routines



so the cameras and microphones could catch their voices and movements without intruding into the shots. The result is remarkably successful in both visual and musical senses. The locales—the interior of the Church of Sant'Andrea della Valle, the Palazzo Farnese, and the Castel Sant'Angelo—are magnificent, and between acts a helicopter trip transports us to each one. Catherine Malfitano is in strong voice and delivers a passionate performance as the diva in love with the painter Cavaradossi, whom she tries to save from execution at the hands of the evil police chief Scarpia. Plácido Domingo sings the former with his customary brio, while Ruggero Raimondi makes a splendidly malevolent villain. The only drawback is the orchestral sound; Mehta conducts vividly, but the Rome RAI Orchestra is a mite distant, sonically speaking. Still, this remains a special *Tosca*, not only for its technical virtuosity but also for the full-blooded performance and unique visuals. Presented in LPCM stereo, this is recommended. (F. Swietek)

Tribute to Ron Asheton

★★1/2

(2011) 114 min. DVD: \$16.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).

Presenting a Detroit concert held at the Michigan Theater in 2011 to honor the late Stooges guitarist and bassist Ron Asheton, who passed away in 2009 (proceeds benefit the Ron Asheton Foundation), this program begins with testimonials from guitar player Deniz Tek (Radio Birdman) and filmmaker Jim Jarmusch, who directed Iggy Pop in *Coffee and Cigarettes*. Host Henry Rollins introduces the show by praising the first three Stooges albums in a manner that is both heartfelt and hyperbolic, after which he performs "I Got a Right" with the Stooges, followed by a shirtless Iggy taking over on vocals for "Raw Power," and other 1970s classics. Iggy's band mates include Mike Watt (bass), James Williamson (guitar), Steve Mackay (saxophone), and Ron's brother, Scott Asheton (drums), in a loose but spirited set, during which Iggy enters the crowd to sing and surf, returns to his mates, douses himself with water, and keeps on rocking. Although it doesn't make much sense, a 12-piece orchestra joins the group for "I Wanna Be Your Dog" and other proto-punk numbers that would work better without the embellishment. Tek replaces Williamson for most of this material, but while he is proficient, his style also seems a little too busy for the primal Stooges. DVD extras include interviews and tracks from opening act the Space Age Toasters. Presented in stereo, this is a strong optional purchase. (K. Fennessy)



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Game Change?

On June 19, just as the July/August issue of *Video Librarian* was rolling off the press with an editorial blasting Microsoft for its restrictive Digital Rights Management (DRM) policies for the next-generation Xbox One gaming console, the company did a complete 180 degree reversal, abandoning the stipulation that disc-based games could not be loaned or rented. So, libraries with robust gaming collections will now be able to circulate Xbox One games.

Microsoft claimed that the flip-flop was in response to gamers' concerns, but while the outcry was indeed huge, it is far more likely that Microsoft's abrupt shift had more to do with 1) rival Sony's announcement that the PS4 would carry no DRM limitations, and 2) the fact that Amazon pre-orders for the Xbox One were lagging far behind those for the PS4.

But even though Microsoft has changed their position on DRM, the company's recent patent application for technology that will allow "content providers to regulate the presentation of content on a per-user-view basis" is still a concern. What makes this Orwellian sounding feature possible is the Xbox One's

Kinect accessory, a motion-and-voice-activated sensor that links directly to Microsoft's servers, and when "on" is able to watch and listen to all activity in the room (the Xbox One also has a built-in Blu-ray/DVD drive).

While the potential implications of this Big Brother technology are troubling, it's definitely heartening to see that consumers and libraries have won the first round in the Xbox One fight regarding ownership of disc-based physical media—a victory that upholds the First Sale Doctrine.

But the whole issue just reminds us of the dicey nature of digital collections.

Let's look at a few of the problems.

Huge media conglomerates are constantly engaging in urinating contests in order to wring the last penny from a deal; not surprisingly, the unhappy party sometimes takes their toys and goes home. Latest example: Time Warner Cable dropped CBS—which includes Showtime, TMC, and FLiX—from their cable offerings in several major markets after the two companies failed to reach an agreement.

Media moguls don't like to share, and they are always angling to cut out the middleperson, which is why we have so many different digital copy options—including the vanilla "Digital Copy" and specific-studio-backed UltraViolet—available with the purchase of

DVDs and Blu-rays, which allow movies to be played on PCs and mobile devices. Latest wrinkle: Disney has newly launched their own "Digital Copy Plus" service, and while no one knows what the "Plus" refers to, several consumers are ticked that some recent Blu-ray releases—including *The Sword in the Stone*—offer no option to redeem the digital copy code for iTunes. Meaning: people with their Disney movie collection set up to watch through Apple TV streaming boxes will now experience a "gap" for certain titles.

Which brings us to the third and most obvious drawback to digital collections: namely, that the rules can change at virtually any moment. Like magic, the collection can be here today and gone tomorrow.

The outcome of the Xbox One debacle reminds us that the whole DRM issue for media—whether print, video, audio, or games—cannot be solely decided by content providers, as long as consumers and libraries are willing to fight for a say.

But the fact that Microsoft was able to simply reverse policies overnight should also give us pause. This time it went our way; next time, maybe not.

Randy Pitman



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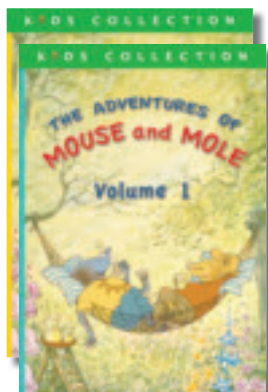
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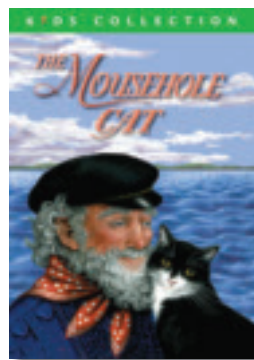
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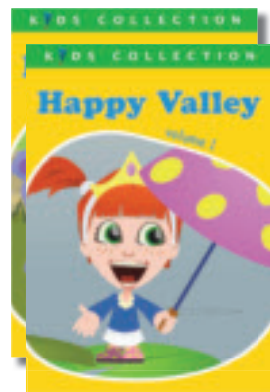
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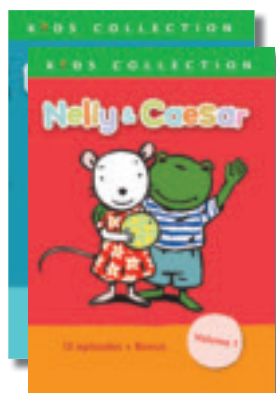
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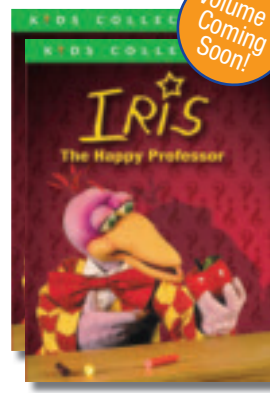
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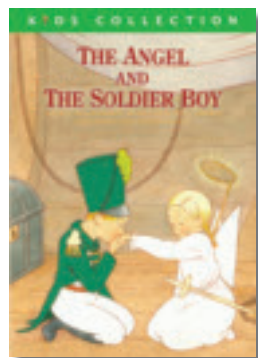
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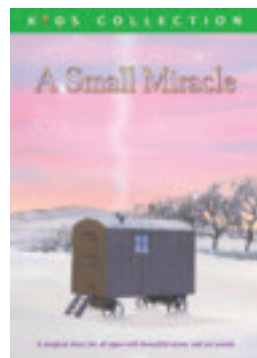
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