

March-April 2013

Video Librarian

VOL. 28 THE VIDEO REVIEW MAGAZINE FOR LIBRARIES NO. 2



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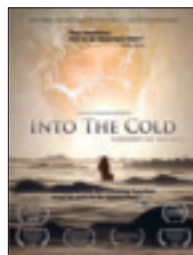
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Spotlight Review

Into the Cold

★★★★

(2010) 87 min. DVD: \$24.98 (avail. from most distributors, Apr. 9), \$199 w/PPR: public libraries, \$249 w/PPR: colleges & universities. Shelter Island (dist. by TDC Entertainment). ISBN: 978-1-934708-95-8.



Boldly going where few film crews have gone before, filmmaker Sebastian Copeland's extraordinary documentary was filmed using a handheld video camera as two men walked 400-plus miles through the Arctic Circle to the North Pole. Joining the exclusive club of expeditions that have successfully reached the top of the world on foot, photographer and environmental activist Copeland together with professional explorer Keith Heger give viewers an amazing gift in the form of spectacular daily footage of the ice desert the pair traversed. It is something to behold: drifting glaciers noisily forming pressure ridges as they push against one another; fantastic shapes of new natural ice sculptures versus

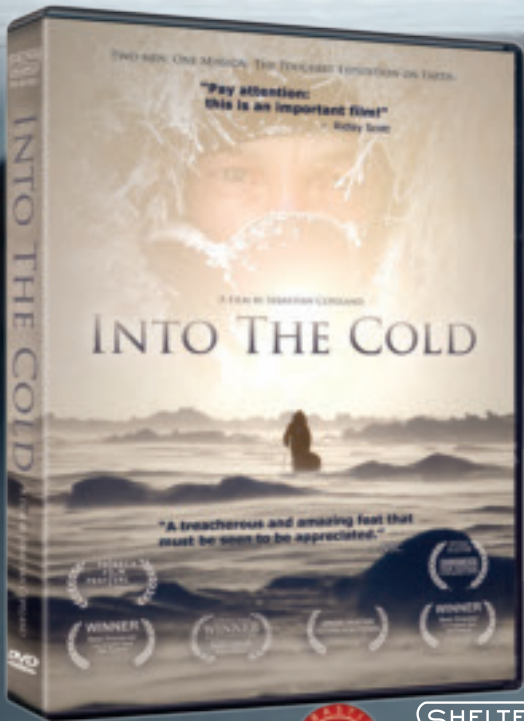
the lunar-like landscape of older ice (which is alarmingly decreasing, thanks to global warming); and transparent sheets of ice like a thin glass floor over a freezing ocean. The numerous difficulties the men encounter while trying to survive in this inhospitable environment (where temperatures plunge below -50 degrees) make for real drama, especially when Copeland falls through that aforementioned "floor" into the ocean. Before the expedition, we see the pair training in Duluth, MN, and Los Angeles, and take an informative peek at their supplies, which include an astonishing amount of high-calorie, high-fat foods necessary for survival under extreme conditions (imagine burning 12,000 calories in a single day!). DVD extras include a featurette on Copeland's photography book *Antarctica: The Global Warning*. Brimming with sights and sounds that not many have witnessed, this exciting chronicle of an incredible journey is highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

Cover photo credit: Sebastian Copeland,
 © www.sebastiancopeland.com

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TWO MEN. ONE MISSION. THE TOUGHEST EXPEDITION ON EARTH.



In the last century, fewer than 150 people have made it on foot to the North Pole. Now, for the first time, the incredible journey has been captured in High Definition.

For over 2 months, two men journey 400+ miles on foot facing harsh temperatures to -50 degrees. From their intensive training to the expedition's successful completion, *Into the Cold* is a bone-chilling story of true bravery, incredible courage and unrelenting determination.

Featuring award winning photographer, extreme outdoor adventurer and famed environmentalist and author Sebastian Copeland and Keith Heger, world-renowned professional expedition guide.

"A gripping and intimate look at what it takes to reach the top of the world... a mix of high adventure, low temperatures and a poignant warning" - HUFFINGTON POST

\$24.98 SRP / \$99.00 with PPR Secondary Schools / \$199.00 with PPR Universities
Item#: SHL -DV-083 / UPC#: 826262008390 / ISBN#: 9781934708958
NTSC Region Code: 0, Aspect Ratio: 16x9 / 1:78:1 / Sound: 5.1 Stereo Surround Sound
Original Language: English / Color / Run Time: 87 Mins. + Extras
File Under: Documentary / Extreme Adventure

ORDER TODAY / AVAILABLE APRIL 9, 2013

NEW FROM SHELTER ISLAND

"...the single greatest scandal in the history of American medical ethics."

- Nathaniel Raymond, Physicians for Human Rights

DOCTORS OF THE DARK SIDE exposes the scandal of how American physicians and psychologists facilitated and then covered up the torture of detainees in U.S.-controlled military prisons and CIA black sites. The first feature-length documentary on the subject, the film is a riveting exposé that portrays the impact and extent of these American doctors' betrayal of their oaths.

"A compelling documentary about a little-known aspect of America's worst human rights scandal in decades." - GEORGETOWN LAW WEEKLY

Item #: SHL-DV-089 / UPC: 826262008994 / ISBN: 978-1-934708-98-9 / NTSC / REGION 0

SRP: \$24.98 / \$99.00 with PPR Secondary Schools / \$199.00 with PPR Universities

73 Minutes + Extras / English / Color

File Under: Documentary (Other) / Aspect Ratio: 16x9



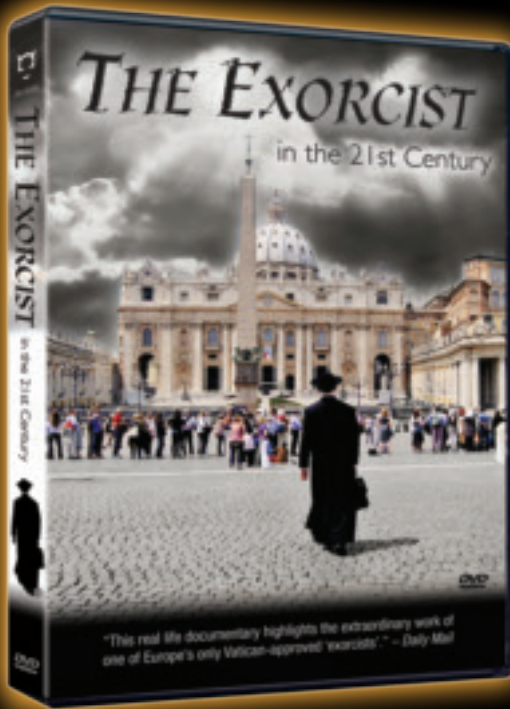
ORDER TODAY / AVAILABLE MAY 7, 2013



STEREO 2.0



"Vatican tested and approved." – MOVIES.COM



A chilling examination of the unknown and sinister world of exorcism in the Catholic Church.

Granted unprecedented access by the Catholic Church, and allowed to accompany one of the few Vatican approved exorcists, Father José Antonio Fortea, filmmaker Fredrik Horn Akselsen brings you into the secret world of Catholic exorcism. Captured in dramatic fashion, the on-camera casting out of demons is every bit as disturbing as anything Hollywood could conjure up. Includes 114 minutes of bonus material including a complete real-life exorcism and more.

"...capture[s] the powerful impact that faith has on people."
– HUFFINGTON POST

THE EXORCIST IN THE 21ST CENTURY (2013) TDC-DV-086

\$19.98 SRP / \$99.00 with PPR Secondary Schools / \$199.00 with PPR Universities

English + Spanish with English subtitles/Color/80 Mins + 114 Mins Extras

UPC: 826262008697 / ISBN: 978-1-934708-97-2 / File Under: Documentary (Other)



NR

Order today / Available May 7, 2013

new from Disinformation

"Long before anyone was paying attention, Lillie Paquette was listening." – CBC

Going beyond the headlines, this story – filmed in the fourteen months leading to the Revolution – highlights the years of mounting resentment against a U.S.-backed authoritarian government determined to stay in power. Embedded inside the turmoil, filmmaker Lillie Paquette followed key opposition figures and young democracy activists as they struggled against extraordinary odds and at great personal risk

"We Are Egypt is a film about the soul of a long suffering country" - Professor Tarek Masoud, Harvard University

SRP \$24.98 / \$99.00 with PPR Secondary Schools /
\$199.00 with PPR Universities

Item #: TDC-DV-090 / UPC #: 826262009090 / ISBN #: 978-1-934708-99-6 /
File Under: Documentary (Other) / Closed Captioned for the hearing impaired

Original Language: English and Arabic with English sub-titles

Color • Run Time: 85 mins + 82 mins of extras

ORDER TODAY / AVAILABLE APRIL 9, 2013





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TO THE CLASSROOM

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What is more important, water or oil? This doc explores the oil sands project and its impact on health and the environment.



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Overworked Public Defenders in the South Bronx fight for justice within a flawed system.



ENDING SILENCE, SHAME & STIGMA

Exploring the impact of HIV/AIDS in the African American family and community.



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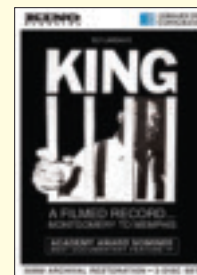
"Badlands," "The Blob" Blu-rays Debut on Criterion's March Slate

In March, Criterion will present a wide range of cinematic gems, kicking off with the March 12 Blu-ray debut of the slimy 1958 cult classic *The Blob* (Blu-ray: \$39.95), featuring Steve McQueen as a rebel battling the world's meanest pile of Jell-O. Also slated for March 12 is Fritz Lang's chilling 1944 wartime suspense drama *Ministry of Fear* (DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95), an adaptation of Graham Greene's novel that finds a former mental patient (Ray Milland) caught in the web of a sinister underworld when he stops at a seemingly innocent village fair. Coming March 19 is Terrence Malick's brilliant 1973 debut, *Badlands* (DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95), an impressionistic take on the notorious Charles Starkweather and Caril Ann Fugate killing spree of the late 1950s that stars Martin Sheen and Sissy Spacek. Also arriving March 19 is Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger's epic 1943 comedy-drama *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* (DVD: 2 discs, \$29.95; Blu-ray: \$39.95), a stirring masterpiece starring Roger Livesey as the indelible General Clive Candy, who barely survives four decades of tumultuous British history only to see the world change irrevocably before his eyes. Slated for March 26 is Robert Bresson's intense 1956 prison-break masterpiece *A Man Escaped* (DVD: 2 discs, \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95), a suspenseful drama based on the memoirs of an imprisoned French resistance leader that follows the fictional Fontaine's single-minded pursuit of freedom. Also coming on March 26 is Charlie Chaplin's devastatingly funny 1947 black comedy *Monsieur Verdoux* (DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95), in which the Little Tramp appears shockingly against type as a 20th-century pirate who goes to extreme lengths—including attempts to bump off a series of wealthy widows—to support his wife and child.

1970 Doc "King: A Filmed Record" Newly Re-Mastered from Kino Classics

From Kino Classics, the landmark documentary *King: A Filmed Record... Montgomery to Memphis* (DVD: 2 discs, \$34.95) follows Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. from 1955 to 1968, during his rise from regional activist to world-renowned leader of the Civil Rights movement. Newly restored by the Library of Congress, the

1970 documentary was produced for the Martin Luther King, Jr. Foundation by Ely Landau. *A Filmed Record* includes rare footage of King's speeches, protests, and arrests, interspersed with scenes of other high-profile supporters and opponents of the cause, punctuated by heartfelt testimonials by some of Hollywood's biggest stars. Both a history of the nonviolent Civil Rights movement and a portrait of the movement's inspiring leader, the film uses contemporary film/newsreel and video/television footage to convey the boiling indignation of an oppressed people and their revolutionary organizing. Juxtaposed over this footage are dramatic readings—co-directed by Sidney Lumet and Joseph L. Mankiewicz—by actors including Harry Belafonte, Ruby Dee, Charlton Heston, James Earl Jones, Paul Newman, Clarence Williams III, and Joanne Woodward. Selected for the National Film Registry in 1999, *King: A Filmed Record...Montgomery to Memphis* premiered as a special "one-time-only event" on March 24, 1970 in over 600 theaters throughout the U.S., and was nominated for an Academy Award in the Best Documentary Feature category (see review in VL-11/09).



Inception Media Group Bows "The Origins of Oz"

Inception Media Group's *The Origins of Oz* (DVD: \$14.98) explores author L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, an American classic that features some of children's fiction's most beloved characters and served as inspiration for the 1939 film (featuring pop culture's most iconic pair of shoes, now preserved at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History). Pulling the curtain back on Baum and how the events and people in his life figured in his work, *The Origins of Oz* examines who Dorothy was modeled after, looks at why a scarecrow and a tin man served as main characters, describes how the 1893 Chicago World's Fair sparked the conception of Emerald City, and much more. Filmed at locations that inspired the Land of Oz and featuring interviews with authors, artists, fans, and members of Baum's family, this biography tells the story of how this wildly popular book was written by a man with heart, brains, and courage.



COMING TO DVD IN MARCH & APRIL



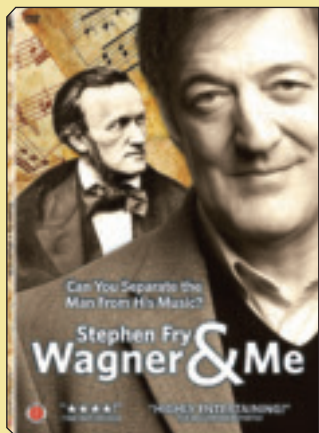
ORCHESTRA OF EXILES

85 minutes, color, SRP: \$27.95, FRF 915359D
STREET DATE: APRIL 9

From the Academy Award® nominated director of *Sound and Fury*, this is the story of how one man rescued Europe's premiere Jewish musicians from the Nazis and guaranteed the survival of Europe's musical heritage.

"Richly researched and partly told by some of today's top-flight musicians, 'Orchestra of Exiles' aspires to a level of primary research that other historical documentaries could take a page from." -The New York Times

"Inspiring...fascinating." -Film Journal



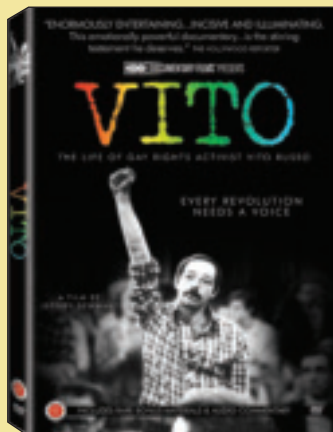
WAGNER & ME

88 minutes, color, SRP: \$27.95, FRF 915465D
STREET DATE: APRIL 30

Can we (and should we) salvage Richard Wagner's spectacular music from its embrace by Adolf Hitler? English actor and raconteur Stephen Fry attempts to answer this question while exploring his own passion for history's most controversial composer. With the witty and charming Fry as our guide, this surprising film is a provocative yet enjoyable look at Wagner's life - and his 'stained' legacy.

"Highly entertaining!" -The Hollywood Reporter

"Any time spent with Fry is a pleasure!"
-Seattle Times



VITO

93 minutes, color, SRP: \$27.95, FRF 915373D
STREET DATE: APRIL 30

A definite portrait of the gay author and activist Vito Russo, whose book *The Celluloid Closet* was the first book to critique Hollywood's portrayals of gays on screen.

"I highly recommend it to anyone interested in pop culture, in civil rights, or in how the two are deeply connected. Through his story, 'Vito' becomes not just a biography but a history of his times, as a fight against discrimination became a fight for life."

-James Poniewozik, Time Magazine



GOTTFRIED HELNWEIN AND THE DREAMING CHILD

72 minutes, color, SRP: \$27.95, FRF 915366D
STREET DATE: MARCH 19

A fascinating look at the creative process, this documentary explores what happens when the artist Gottfried Helnwein takes on the role of Production Designer for a never-before-seen opera written by Israel's most famous playwright, Hanoch Levin.

"A visual feast and landmark union of two artistic titans."
-Atlanta Jewish Film Festival

"A wonderful look at a stunning contemporary artist" -Film Threat



ERROLL GARNER: NO ONE CAN HEAR YOU READ

53 minutes, color, SRP: \$24.95, FRF 915458D
STREET DATE: APRIL 9

In a triumphant career that lasted forty years Erroll Garner pushed the playability of the piano to its limits, developed an international reputation, and made an indelible mark on the jazz world. And yet, his story has never been told. Until now.

"I don't think there is a jazz pianist, young or old, who hasn't been influenced by Erroll Garner."

-Jimmy Rowles, Jazz Pianist & Composer



THE LAST FLIGHT OF PETR GINZ

66 minutes, color, SRP: \$24.95, FRF 915434D
STREET DATE: APRIL 9

By 14 he had written five novels and penned a diary about the Nazi occupation of Prague. By 16 he had produced 170 drawings and paintings, edited an underground magazine in the Jewish ghetto, written short stories and walked to the gas chamber at Auschwitz. This deeply affecting film tells his story.

"This astonishing documentary resurrects the life and work of an Auschwitz victim whose imagination knew few bounds. Exhilarating and moving." -Atlanta Jewish Film Festival



NURSES: IF FLORENCE COULD SEE US NOW

92 minutes, color, SRP: \$24.95, FRF 915533D
STREET DATE: APRIL 30

It is hard to find a person whose life has not been touched by a nurse, yet how much do we know about these people we let into some of the most intimate, joyful and difficult moments of the human experience?

Over 100 nurses from across the country were interviewed for this film. Their stories will move you to laughter and to tears.

"The most incredible depiction of nursing that I've ever seen." -Paula Dycus, DNP, RN

"It made me proud." -Barbara Brewer, PhD, RN



FATHERLAND

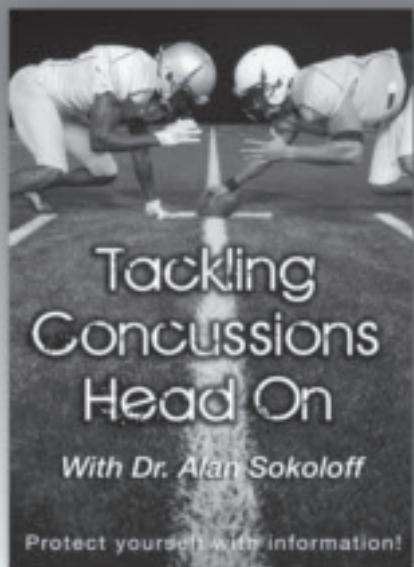
100 minutes, color, SRP: \$24.95, FRF 915427D
STREET DATE: MARCH 19

This rigorously structured and visually engrossing film explores Argentina's fractious modern history through the words of writers - both founding fathers and oppositional voices such as Eva Peron - who lay buried in Buenos Aires' famed Recoleta Cemetery.

"Arresting...original...most effective. One of the real highlights of the 2012 Toronto International Film Festival."

-Senses of Cinema

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Books Into Movies

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

Coming in March

Oz: The Great and Powerful (Mar. 8), directed by Sam Raimi, is inspired by L. Frank Baum's 1900 classic *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. A prequel to both the book and the 1939 movie, the fantasy adventure stars James Franco as the titular magician, along with Mila Kunis, Michelle Williams, Rachel Weisz, and Zach Braff.



Admission (Mar. 22) is based on the 2009 Princeton-set novel by Jean Hanff Korelitz. Directed by Paul Weitz, the college-themed comedy stars Tina Fey, Paul Rudd, Michael Sheen, Lily Tomlin, Wallace Shawn, and Nat Wolff.



The Host (Mar. 29) is based on *Twilight* author Stephenie Meyer's 2008 sci-fi romance novel. A story of aliens taking over human bodies, director Andrew Niccol's adaptation stars Saoirse Ronan, Diane Kruger, Max Irons, Frances Fisher, William Hurt, and Bokeem Woodbine.



Coming in April

The Company You Keep (Apr. 5, in limited release) is based on Neil Gordon's 2003 novel. Directed by Robert Redford, the political action thriller stars Redford, Shia LaBeouf, Julie Christie, Sam Elliott, Susan Sarandon, Terrence Howard, and Brendan Gleeson.



Odd Thomas (Apr. 5) is adapted from the debut 2003 novel in author Dean Koontz's *New York Times* bestselling thriller series' following the super-

natural experiences of a twentysomething short-order cook. Directed by Stephen Sommers, the film features Willem Dafoe, Patton Oswalt, and Anton Yelchin as Odd Thomas.

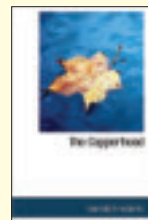


Looking Ahead

Slated for May is **The Great Gatsby**, adapted from F. Scott Fitzgerald's 1925 classic novel. Directed by Baz Luhrmann, the film stars Leonardo DiCaprio, Jason Clarke, Carey Mulligan, Isla Fisher, and Tobey Maguire.



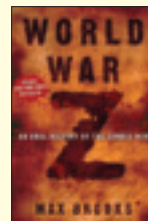
Coming in June is **Copperhead**, based on Harold Frederic's 1893 novella *The Copperhead*. Directed by Ronald F. Maxwell, the drama stars Billy Campbell, Angus Macfadyen, and Peter Fonda.



Also slated for June is **Much Ado About Nothing**, based on William Shakespeare's 16th-century romantic comedy play. Directed by Joss Whedon, the film stars Amy Acker, Alexis Denisof, Fran Kranz, and Jillian Morgese.



Also coming in June is **World War Z**, based on Max Brooks' 2006 horror novel, subtitled "An Oral History of the Zombie War." Directed by Marc Forster, the post-apocalyptic action drama stars Brad Pitt, Matthew Fox, Eric West, and David Morse.



Originally slated for March, the third adaptation of Stephen King's 1974 debut novel, **Carrie**, has now been moved to October. Directed by Kimberly Peirce, the classic horror story stars Chloë Grace Moretz, Julianne Moore, Judy Greer, and Gabriella Wilde.



World Newsreels Online, 1929–1967



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ABOUT THE COLLECTION

Alexander Street Press's newest history collection brings to life the experiences of movie-goers from Tokyo to Amsterdam and New York City to Paris during the World War II era.

The collection features more than **500 hours** of original newsreels, and will grow to include 8,000 meticulously transcribed and indexed reels. *World Newsreels Online, 1929–1967* contains nine unique newsreel series, including:

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- **France Libre Actualités**—1944–1945 segments from an offshoot of the French Resistance.
- **The March of Time**™—The full run of the American series that aired from 1929 to 1966.
- **Nippon News**—Original 1940–1948 footage from Japan's only WWII newsreel.
- **Polgygoon-Profliti**—1939–1945 Dutch film clips illustrating how propaganda was presented to occupied countries.
- **United Newsreel**—A 1942–1946 American weekly newsreel produced by the US Office of War Information.

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

Video Games

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

March 3—March 9

MLB 13: The Show (Sony, PS3: \$59.99, Rated: E). This update to the popular Major League Baseball series includes improvements to “Diamond Dynasty,” “Franchise” and “Road to the Show” modes for more realistic sports action.

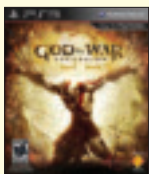
MLB 2K13 (2K Sports, PS3/X360: \$59.99, Rated: E). Delivering an authentic baseball environment, this latest entry in the popular MLB franchise lets players develop winners in “My Player,” “Franchise,” and “Postseason” modes.

Tomb Raider (Square Enix, PS3/X360: \$59.99, Rated: M). This third-person origin story of action heroine Lara Croft features a blend of survival, stealth, exploration, and melee and ranged combat gameplay as Croft unravels the dark history of a forgotten island.



March 10—March 16

God of War: Ascension (Sony, PS3: \$59.99, Rated: M). In this third-person action game—a prequel to the *God of War* trilogy—Kratos is sentenced to be chained for an eternity, and must seek freedom and redemption for his sins while preparing to avenge his family.



Sniper: Ghost Warrior 2 (City Interactive, PS3/X360: \$59.99, Rated: M). Players suit up as a special ops sniper in this realistic first-person shooter sequel that ranges from Bosnia to the Himalayas.

March 17—March 23

Gears of War: Judgment (Microsoft, X360: \$59.99, Rated: M). In this third-person action game set prior to the previous *Gears of War* trilogy, players control a troop of soldiers led by Damon Baird and Augustus “The Cole Train” Cole as they attempt to save the besieged city of Halvo Bay from a terrible new enemy.



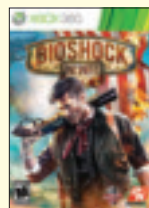
LEGO City Undercover (Nintendo, WiiU: \$49.99, Rated: E10+). In this third-person action game, players take on the role of Chase McCain, an undercover officer armed with clever disguises (each with its own special abilities), who tries to put a stop to the villain Rex Fury’s crime wave in LEGO City.

The Walking Dead: Survival Instinct (Activision, PS3/X360: \$49.99, Rated: M). Based on the AMC Emmy award-winning TV show, this first-person action game finds players stepping into the role of the mysterious, crossbow-wielding survivor Daryl Dixon as he makes his dangerous way across Georgia toward the supposed safety of Atlanta.

March 24—March 30

Army of Two: The Devil’s Cartel (EA, PS3/X360: \$59.99, Rated: M). In this third game from the popular third-person co-op action shooter series, players take on the roles of two mercenaries working for Trans World Operations, tasked with protecting a local politician in Mexico from drug cartels.

BioShock Infinite (2K Games, PS3/X360: \$59.99, Rated: M). Set in 1912, the latest entry in the acclaimed first-person shooter franchise finds players in the role of Booker DeWitt, a former Pinkerton agent putting his life on the line to rescue the mysterious Elizabeth from the sky city of Columbia.



Tiger Woods PGA Tour 14 (EA, PS3/X360: \$59.99, Rated: E). Players take to the links with modern day pros including Tiger Woods, Bubba Watson, and Dustin Johnson—as well as legends such as Arnold Palmer and Jack Nicklaus—to compete on over 25 championship courses under dynamic weather conditions.

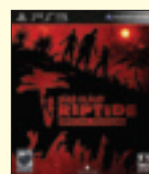
April 14—April 20

Injustice: Gods Among Us (Warner, PS3/WiiU/X360: \$59.99, Rated: T). This fighting game from the creators of *Mortal Kombat* pits DC Comics characters against each other, including Batman, Superman, Wonder Woman, The Flash, and others.

Painkiller: Hell & Damnation (Nordic Games, PS3/X360: \$29.99, Rated: M). In this remake of the classic first-person shooter PC game, players take on the role of Daniel Garner, tasked with fighting his way past hordes of demons and fiends.

April 21—April 27

Dead Island: Riptide (Deep Silver, PS3/X360: \$49.99, Rated: M). In the original *Dead Island*, human survivors escaped in a helicopter to the safety of a military ship, but when a furious storm strikes, the virus that launched the initial zombie plague suddenly spreads throughout the crew in this first-person horror game sequel.



Dragon’s Dogma: Dark Arisen (Capcom, PS3/X360: \$39.99, Rated: M). In this expanded version of the original third-person action RPG, players embark on an all-new quest set in the dark depths on a cursed isle.

Star Trek (Namco Bandai, PS3/X360: \$59.99, Rated: T). Players are cast as Captain James T. Kirk and Spock in this original co-op cover-based third-person shooter that pits them against the Gorn, and features the voices of rebooted *Star Trek* actors Chris Pine and Zachary Quinto.



TV on DVD/Blu-ray

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The Client List: The Complete First Season (Sony, DVD: 3 discs, \$45.99). A small-town Texas single mother leads a double life as a prostitute in this 2012 first season based on the 2010 TV movie and starring Jennifer Love Hewitt, Cybill Shepherd, and Loretta Devine.

Cougar Town: The Complete Third Season (Lionsgate, DVD: 2 discs, \$19.98).

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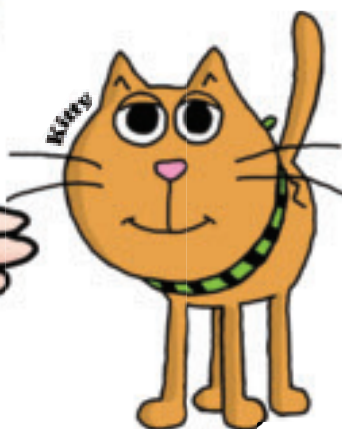
- Episode 109 Tickets Please! • Have You Got The Time?
- Episode 110 Growing, Growing, Gone • The Treasure Of Sierra Betsy
- Episode 111 Introducing The Post Office • A Berry Sore Stomach
- Episode 112 Lyrtle The Turtle • The Great Gingerbread Man Mystery



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- Episode 121 Manners Please • Mystery at Lakeshore Farms
- Episode 122 Big and Little • Computer Fun
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A fortysomething divorcee steps back into the dating world—with much-younger men—in this 2012 third season from the Golden Globe-nominated series starring Courteney Cox, Josh Hopkins, and Busy Philipps.

Game of Thrones: The Complete Second Season (HBO, DVD: 5 discs, \$59.99; Blu-ray/DVD Combo: 7 discs, \$79.98). Based on George R.R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* fantasy novel series, this 2012 Emmy-winning sophomore season stars Emilia Clarke, Peter Dinklage, and Kit Harington.



Road to Avonlea: The Complete Seventh Season (Sullivan, DVD: 4 discs, \$69.98). Featuring guest appearances by Ryan Gosling, Eugene Levy, and Dianne Wiest, this set includes the 1996 seventh and final season of executive producer Kevin Sullivan's spin-off series from the popular books by Lucy Maud Montgomery.

The Six Million Dollar Man: Season 3 (Universal, DVD: 6 discs, \$39.98). Starring Lee Majors as an agent with nuclear-powered appendages, this 1975-76 third season of the action series features guest appearances by Sonny Bono, Farrah Fawcett, Erik Estrada, Lou Gossett Jr., and André the Giant.

March 5

Dalziel & Pascoe: Season 7 (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$34.98). Grouchy copper Andy Dalziel and his courteous partner Peter Pascoe (Warren Clarke and Colin Buchanan) are back in this 2002 seventh season of the long-running mystery series, winner of an Edgar Allan Poe award.



Duck Dynasty: Season 2, Volume 1 (Lionsgate, DVD: 2 discs, \$19.98). This first volume from the 2012 sophomore season of the A&E reality series follows the Robertson family of Louisiana as they run their successful duck call business in the bayou.

Hidden (BFS, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.98). Set in London and Paris, this four-part 2011 crime-thriller miniseries stars Philip Glenister, Thekla Reuten, Anna Chancellor, and David Suchet.

Hit & Miss (BFS, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98). Chloë Sevigny stars as a transgender contract killer in this 2012 six-part British-produced drama series, nominated for a GLAAD Media Award.



Murdoch Mysteries: Season 5 (Acorn, DVD: 4 discs, \$59.99; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$59.99). Yannick Bisson stars as Detective William Murdoch in this 2012 fifth season of the Victorian-era Toronto-set series that spotlights scientific advances—such as ballistics and profiling—used to solve crimes.

My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding: Seasons 1 & 2 + Specials (New Video, DVD: 4 discs, \$29.99). Spotlighting the nuptial preparations of various brides within gypsy culture, this compilation includes 12 episodes and specials from the 2011-12 seasons of the TLC-aired series.



Regular Show: Party Pack (Warner, DVD: \$19.95). Aired on the Cartoon Network, this set features 16 episodes from various seasons of the Emmy-nominated series following a blue jay named Mordecai and a raccoon called Rigby who work as twentysomething groundskeepers.

Thorne: Sleepyhead / Scaredy Cat (Anchor Bay, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.98). Starring David Morrissey as savvy Detective Inspector Tom Thorne, this compilation of episodes from the mystery series based on the novels by Mark Billingham includes 2010's *Sleepyhead* and *Scaredy Cat*, also starring Sandra Oh and Natascha McElhone.

Tyler Perry's House of Payne, Volume Ten (Lionsgate, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.98). Starring LaVan Davis, Allen Payne, and Cassi Davis, this 10th compilation from the popular TBS series includes 20 episodes (193-212).

Wagon Train: The Complete Season Six (Timeless, DVD: 10 discs, \$59.99). Guest stars for this 1962-63 sixth season of the Emmy-nominated Western drama include Jane Wyman, Beau Bridges, and Joan Fontaine.

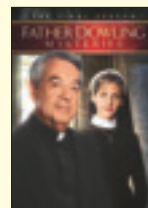
March 12

The 10th Kingdom (Mill Creek, DVD: 3 discs, \$9.98). This Emmy-winning 2000

fantasy miniseries stars Kimberly Williams-Paisley, John Larroquette, Dianne Wiest, Ed O'Neill, and Ann-Margret.

Doctor Who: The Ark in Space—Special Edition (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$34.99). The Doctor (Tom Baker) stumbles across a space station where Earth survivors lie in cryogenic suspension in this four-part story arc from the 1974-75 12th season of the popular sci-fi series. Also newly available is **Doctor Who: The Aztecs—Special Edition** (DVD: 2 discs, \$34.99), starring William Hartnell as the Doctor.

Father Dowling Mysteries: The Final Season (Paramount, DVD: 5 discs, \$59.98). Tom Bosley stars as the titular Chicago priest turned detective in this 1990-91 third and final season of the Emmy-nominated crime-drama series, also featuring Mary Wickes and Tracy Nelson.



Hercules: The Legendary Journeys—Season Four (Universal, DVD: 5 discs, \$26.98). Mighty protagonist Hercules goes up against a variety of immortals, demons, armies, and monsters in this 1997-98 fourth season of the fantasy adventure series starring Kevin Sorbo as the Greek hero.

Jersey Shore: Season Six (Paramount, DVD: 4 discs, \$29.99). Featuring a pregnant Snooki and a sober Situation, this sixth and final 2012 season of the MTV-aired reality series is a bit more relaxed than earlier wild escapades in Seaside Heights, NJ.

Law & Order: Criminal Intent—The Final Year (Shout! Factory, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.99). Stars Vincent D'Onofrio and Kathryn Erbe return to the squad in this 2011 10th and final season of the crime series, which includes guest appearances by Cynthia Nixon, Patti Smith, and James Van Der Beek.



The Life and Legend of Wyatt Earp: The Complete Season Two (Inception, DVD: 5 discs, \$24.98). Hugh O'Brian stars as the legendary Wild West hero in this 1956-57 sophomore season of the Emmy-nominated adventure series.

The Mob Doctor: The Complete Series (Sony, DVD: 3 discs, \$35.99). Starring Jordana Spiro as a surgical resident who

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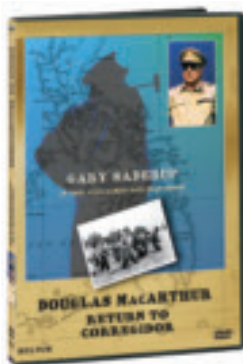
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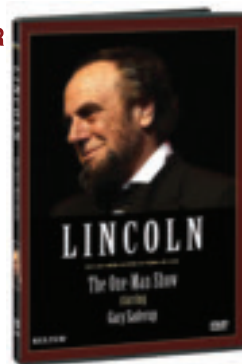
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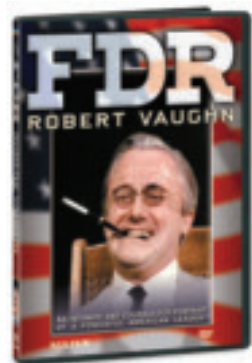
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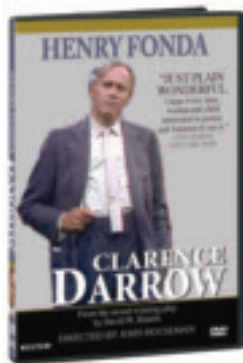
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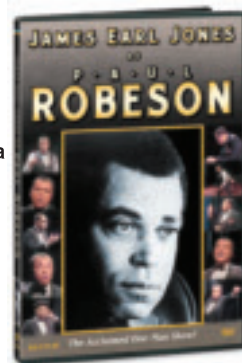
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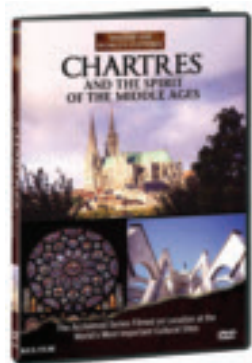
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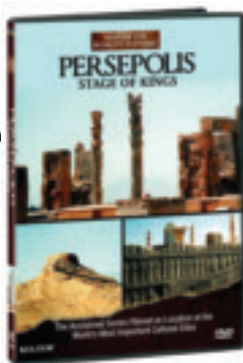
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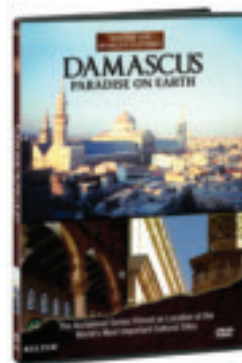
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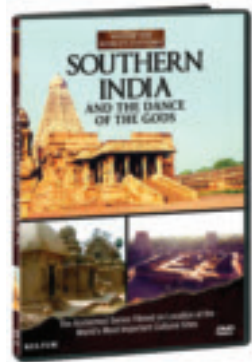
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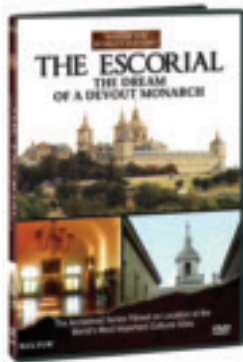
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trades her medical expertise to a mafia boss in order to protect her brother, this compilation includes the entire short-lived 2012-13 series.

Pioneers of Television: Season 3 (PBS, DVD: 2 discs, \$24.99). Narrated by Kelsey Grammer, this 2013 third season of the documentary chronicling the evolution of popular television genres features four episodes that focus on funny ladies, prime-time soaps, superheroes, and miniseries.

Ripper Street (BBC, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$34.98). Inspector Edmund Reid (Matthew Macfadyen) runs the tough H Division police force under the cloud of the uncaught murderer Jack the Ripper in this 2013 first season of the Victorian-era mystery series.

Saving the Ocean with Carl Safina: Season 1 (PBS, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.99). Marine biologist and Blue Ocean Institute founder Carl Safina hosts this 2012 first season of the PBS-aired series focusing on solutions to sea problems such as pollution and overfishing.

Timothy Spall: Somewhere at Sea—The Complete Series (BFS, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.99). Broadcast from 2010-12, this compilation of three BBC Four travel series' features actor Timothy Spall and his wife Shane as they travel around the British Coast in a Dutch barge.

Xena—Warrior Princess: Season Four (Universal, DVD: 5 discs, \$26.99). Set in ancient Greece, female fighter Xena (Lucy Lawless) defends people in need in this 1998-99 fourth season of the Emmy-winning action-adventure series.



March 19

Chance in a Million: Complete Collection (Acorn, DVD: 3 discs, \$59.99). A man's life is marked by major coincidences in this 1984-86 comedy series that stars Simon Callow and Brenda Blethyn.

Ghost Hunters: Season Eight, Part 1 (Image, DVD: 4 discs, \$24.98). The Atlantic Paranormal Society team of supernatural investigators returns in this first set of

episodes from the 2012 eighth season of the Syfy series.

A Mind to Kill: Complete Collection (Acorn, DVD: 11 discs, \$79.99). This compilation includes the complete run of the 1994-2002 Welsh detective drama starring Philip Madoc as DCI Noel Bain.



No Job for a Lady: The Complete Collection (Acorn, DVD: 3 discs, \$59.99). Starring Penelope Keith as a newly-elected member of Parliament, this 1990-92 Britcom also features George Baker and Mark Kingdon.

Quincy, M.E.: Season 5 (Shout! Factory, DVD: 6 discs, \$39.98). Featuring Jack Klugman as the titular coroner who takes an active role in crime investigations, this 1979-80 fifth season of the Emmy-nominated series includes guest appearances by Robert Loggia, Dennis Haysbert, and Melora Hardin.

March 26

The Borgias: The Second Season (Paramount, DVD: 3 discs, \$54.99; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$65.99). Showcasing the rise to power of Pope Alexander VI and his family, this 2012 sophomore season of the Emmy and Gemini award-winning series stars Jeremy Irons, Holliday Grainger, and Colm Feore.



The Carol Burnett Show: This Time Together (Time Life, DVD: 6 discs, \$59.95). This compilation from the 1967-78 variety series features 17 episodes.

Continuum: Season One (Universal, DVD: 2 discs, \$44.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$49.98). Rachel Nichols stars as a futuristic cop who is forced by a terrorist group to time travel back to 2012 from the year 2077 in this 2012 first season of the Syfy-aired series.

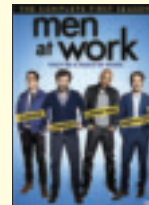
Johnny Sokko and His Flying Robot: The Complete Series (Shout! Factory, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.99). Young Johnny Sokko (Bobbie Byers) uses his voice to control his flying giant robot against monsters in this 1967-68 adventure series.

Lawbreaker: The Complete Television Series (Shout! Factory, DVD: 4 discs,

\$29.95). Presented and narrated by Lee Marvin, this 1963-64 series showcases dramatic re-creations of real-life crime cases.

MADtv: The Complete Second Season (Shout! Factory, DVD: 4 discs, \$29.95). Developed in the humorous style of the titular magazine, this 1996-97 second season of the late-night sketch comedy series stars Debra Wilson, Artie Lange, Nicole Sullivan, and Bryan Callen.

Men at Work: The Complete First Season (Sony, DVD: 2 discs, \$35.99). A group of friends balance dating adventures with their jobs at a magazine in this 2012 first season of the TBS comedy series starring Danny Masterson and Michael Cassidy.



Midsomer Murders: Tom Barnaby's Last Cases (Acorn, DVD: 15 discs, \$149.99). This compilation from the long-running mystery series based on the novels by Caroline Graham features the final stories starring John Nettles as DCI Tom Barnaby.

Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries: Series 1 (Acorn, DVD: 4 discs, \$59.99; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$59.99). Starring Essie Davis as 1920s Melbourne sleuth Phryne Fisher, this 2012 first series is based on the novels by Kerry Greenwood.

Mystery Science Theater 3000 XXVI (Shout! Factory, DVD: 4 discs, \$59.98). The MST3K gang picks apart sci-fi films including *The Magic Sword*, *Alien from L.A.*, *Danger! Death Ray*, and *The Mole People* in this most recent 26th volume from the snark-filled series.

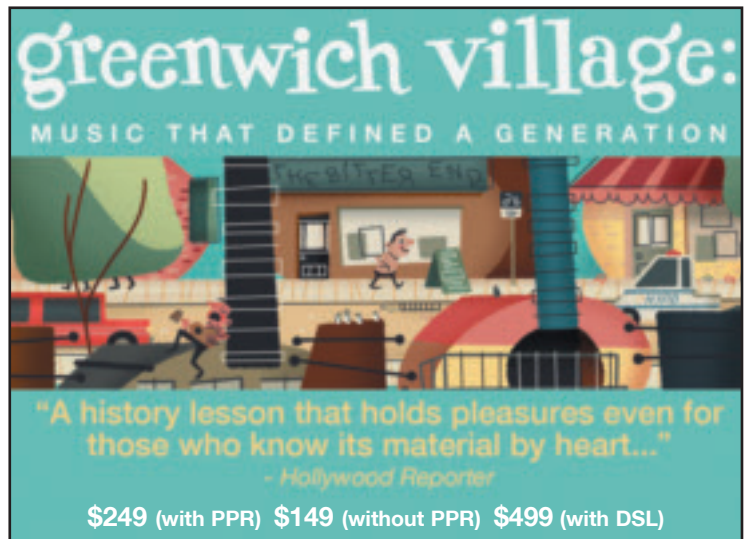
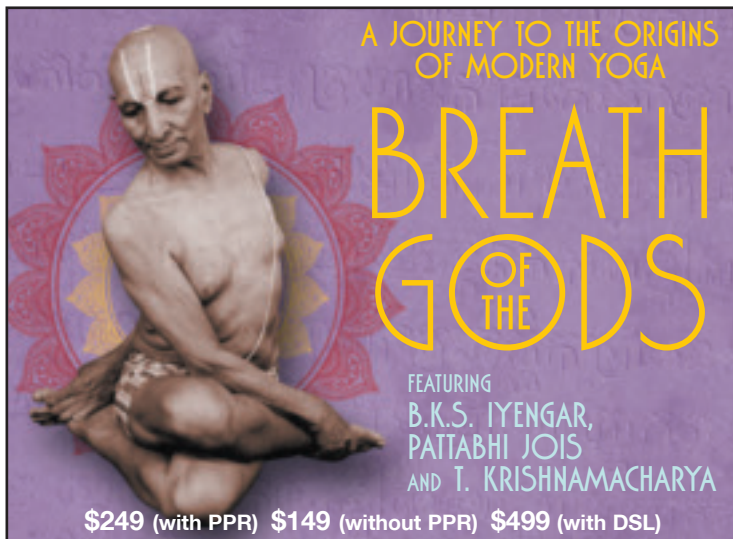
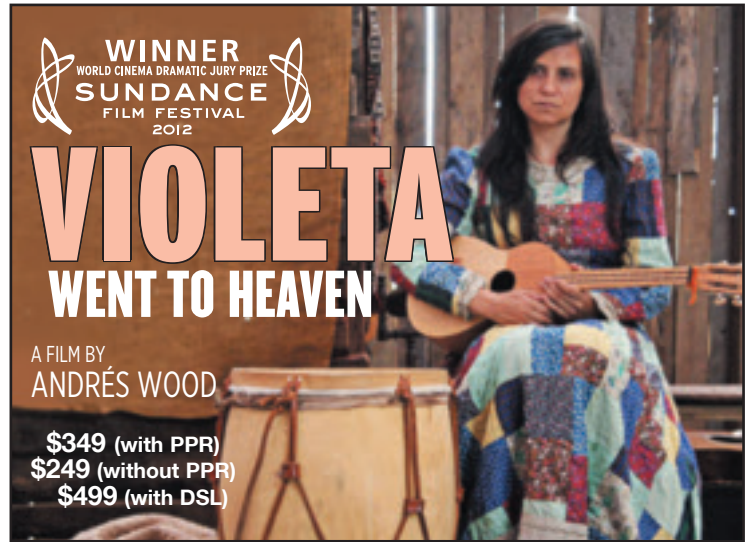
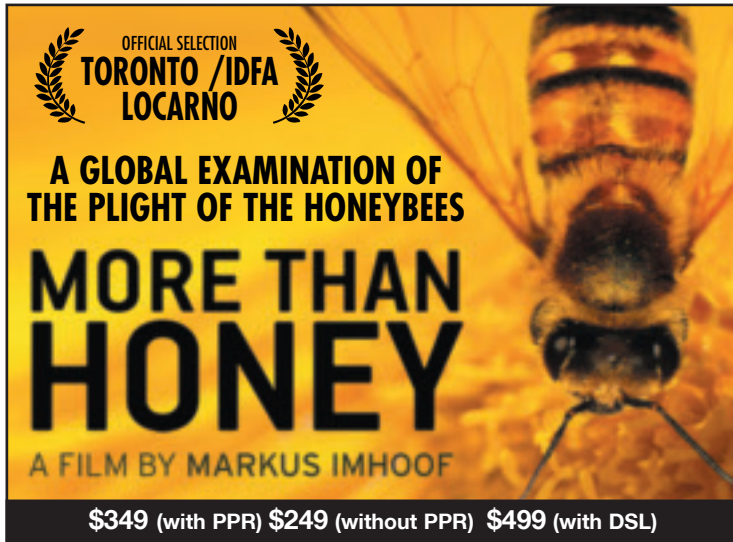
Veep: The Complete First Season (HBO, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray/DVD Combo: 3 discs, \$49.99). Julia Louis-Dreyfus stars as a former senator who becomes second-in-command at the White House in this 2012 debut season of the HBO series that also features Anna Chlumsky, Tony Hale, and Matt Walsh.



April 2

Dirk Gently (Acorn, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99). Based on the books by Douglas Adams, this 2010-12 comedy crime series follows the cases of the Holistic Detective

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Agency, and stars Stephen Mangan, Darren Boyd, and Helen Baxendale.

Route 66: The Complete Fourth Season (Shout! Factory, DVD: 5 discs, \$29.95). Martin Milner and Glenn Corbett are back in this 1963-64 fourth and final season of the road adventure series, featuring guest stars such as Joan Crawford, Lon Chaney Jr., William Shatner, and James Coburn.

Tombstone Territory: The Complete First Season (Timeless, DVD: 4 discs, \$29.95). Pat Conway stars as a sheriff in this 1957-58 debut season of the Western action series.

April 9

Boss: Season Two (Lionsgate, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$39.98). Chicago Mayor Tom Kane (Kelsey Grammer in an Emmy-winning role) attempts to hide a secret illness and prepares for an election in this 2012 second and final season of the Starz-aired series.

The Dick Van Dyke Show: The Complete First Season (Image, Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$59.98). The 1961-62 first season of the family comedy series is newly available on high-definition Blu-ray.



Family Ties: The Sixth Season (Paramount, DVD: 4 discs, \$45.98). Starring Michael J. Fox, Michael Gross, and Meredith Baxter, this 1987-88 sixth season of the sitcom features guest stars Courteney Cox and Julia Louis-Dreyfus.

Inside Men (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.99). Three colleagues at a cash-counting facility plan a dangerous heist in this 2012 crime drama that stars Steven Mackintosh, Ashley Walters, and Warren Brown.



Merlin: The Complete Fifth Season (BBC, DVD: 4 discs, \$49.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$59.98). Set in the realm of Camelot, this 2012 fifth season of the BAFTA-nominated medieval fantasy series follows the destiny of the iconic sorcerer (played by Colin Morgan).

April 16

Last of the Summer Wine: Vintage 1998 (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$34.99). Peter

Sallis and Bill Owen are back—with Frank Thornton joining the cast—in this compilation of episodes from the 1998 19th season of the long-running comedy series revolving around the escapades of an elderly trio.

Parade's End (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$24.98). Based on the tetralogy by Ford Madox Ford, this *Theatre 625*-aired four-part 1964 WWI-era mini-series starring Judi Dench and Ronald Hines features "Some Do Not..." "No More Parades," "A Man Could Stand Up," and "Last Post."



Spies of Warsaw (BBC, DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$24.98). Based on the spy novel by Alan Furst, this 2013 action-adventure two-part drama set in pre-WWII Europe stars David Tennant, Janet Montgomery, and Julian Glover.

Stoney Burke: The Complete Television Series (Timeless, DVD: 6 discs, \$39.99). Rodeo rider Stoney Burke (Jack Lord) strives to be a champion in this 32-episode 1962-63 Western series, featuring guest appearances by Leonard Nimoy, Harry Dean Stanton, Cloris Leachman, and Dyan Cannon.

Sugartown (Acorn, DVD: \$29.99). A struggling seaside candy factory is at the center of this 2011 Scottish comedy series starring Shaun Dooley, Tom Ellis, and Miranda Raison.

Women in Love (BBC, DVD: \$24.98). Adapted from D.H. Lawrence's novels *The Rainbow* (1915) and *Women in Love* (1920), this 2011 dramatic miniseries stars Rachael Stirling, Rosamund Pike, Rory Kinnear, and Joseph Mawle.

April 23

Maverick: The Complete Second Season (Warner, DVD: 6 discs, \$39.99). James Garner stars in this Emmy-winning Western action series' 1958-59 sophomore season, with guest appearances by Martin Landau, Slim Pickens, and Roger Moore.

Mr. Selfridge (PBS, DVD: 3 discs, \$49.99; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$54.99). Based on the biographical book *Shopping, Seduction and Mr. Selfridge* by Lindy Woodhead, this 2013 series stars Jeremy Piven as Wisconsin-born London department store magnate Harry Gordon Selfridge.

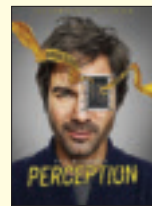


The Restless Gun: The Complete Series (Timeless, DVD: 8 discs, \$59.99). A drifting retired gunfighter finds adventure in the American Southwest in this 1957-59 series starring John Payne.

Touched By An Angel: The Seventh Season (Paramount, DVD: 7 discs, \$59.98). A triumvirate of angels (Roma Downey, Della Reese, John Dye) help inspire people on Earth in this 2000-01 seventh season that features guest appearances by Ray Walston, Marla Gibbs, and Patti LuPone.

Looking Ahead

Coming in May is the debut season of **Perception**, third season of **Rizzoli & Isles**, fifth seasons of **Flashpoint** and **Fringe**, sixth seasons of **Have Gun—Will Travel** and **Private Practice**, eighth season of **Gunsmoke**, and the complete series' of **Beetlejuice** and the *Doctor Who* spin-off **K-9**. Slated for June is the first season of **The Newsroom**.



Re-priced or New to DVD/Blu-ray

Missy Mila Twisted Tales, Volume 1 and Volume 2 (Organa, DVD: \$19.95 each, web: organa.com). Featuring imaginative stories told by 8-year-old tomboy Mila, these 2007 volumes from the animated series include twisted fairy tale episodes such as "The Houses of the Pig Brothers" and "Toadette, the Frog."



Philosophers: Debates and Dialogues (Icarus Films, DVD: 4 discs, \$498, web: icarusfilms.com). Compiling a series of one-on-one debates as part of the 1971 Dutch initiative known as the International Philosophers Project, this collection includes conversations between Noam Chomsky and Michel Foucault, Alfred Ayer and Arne Naess, Karl Popper and John Eccles, and Leszek Kolakowski and Henri Lefebvre.

Undersea Edens (Inception, DVD: \$24.98). Produced by the Smithsonian Channel, this 2008 six-part series on southern oceans around New Guinea, Australia, South Georgia Island, and beyond includes "Coral Kingdoms," "Desert to Reef," "The Frozen Isle," "The Majestic South," "Predators Paradise," and "Rainforest to Reef."

COMPELLING NEW DVDS FROM VISION VIDEO



NEW!

For the Glory

The true-life story of professional soccer player Kurt Kuykendall is told in this riveting drama starring Jason Burkey of *October Baby*. 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.

DVD - #501498D, \$19.99, UPC 7 27985 01498 2



Proof Through the Night

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

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



NEW!

The Calling

The Calling reveals candid portraits of three people drawn to ministry in a foreign land. Orlando Castillo is a young man from a prosperous family who wishes to 'live simply' and serve the poor despite his parents' reservations. Mother Mary Elizabeth is a woman torn between her call and the emotional needs of her family. Father Phillip Scott is a priest striving to establish a fledgling mission in Peru. As their stories unfold, we see the blessings as well as the challenges that their ministries entail. This is a film about commitment to God, loyalty to family, and the faith to discover God's will. Documentary, 77 minutes.

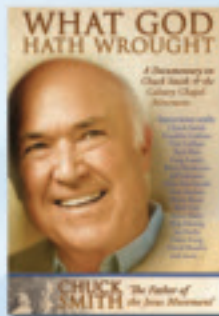
DVD - #501502D, \$19.99, UPC 7 27985 01502 6



Captivated

Everywhere we go, we are surrounded by screens. Most would agree that we are a media saturated society, but what effect is all this media having on us individually and culturally? People of all ages are reporting that their unchecked media consumption has led to disconnection, discontentment and captivity. *Captivated* features insights from media experts, as well as personal stories from individuals and families who have escaped media addiction and learned to make discerning choices about their use of media technology. Documentary, 107 minutes.

DVD - #501496D, \$19.99, UPC 7 27985 01496 8



What God Hath Wrought

The "Jesus Movement" of the late 1960's and early 1970's is considered one of the greatest spiritual revivals in American history. Its epicenter was a church in Costa Mesa, California, called Calvary Chapel, pastored by Chuck Smith. This historical documentary tells the story of Calvary Chapel and the Jesus Movement and traces its impact on Christianity in the U.S. The DVD includes archival footage of that era as well as interviews with Chuck Smith, Franklin Graham, "Jesus Music" band members, and others who talk about their experiences in the "Movement." We also hear from members of Chuck Smith's family. Documentary, 105 minutes.

DVD - #501490D, \$19.99, UPC 7 27985 01490 6



NEW!

The Third Day

What proof do we have that the resurrection really happened? This intriguing documentary digs deep into the biblical and historical accounts and explores the main theories: Did the disciples steal the body? Did they hallucinate and only imagine they had met the risen Jesus, or did they create a myth in order to keep the movement going? Scholars take a hard look and offer honest, thought-provoking answers. *The Third Day* is an excellent resource for both skeptics and believers alike. Documentary, 85 minutes.

DVD - #501501D, \$19.99, UPC 7 27985 01501 9



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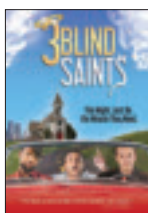
This section features reviews of studio, independent, and foreign feature films. Each review includes pricing information, as well as running time, rating, subtitling information, and street dates for yet-to-be-released titles. Most titles reviewed here are widely available through most distributors.

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

3 Blind Saints ★★★

FilmWorks, 89 min., PG, DVD: \$19.98

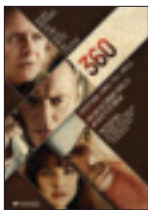
If Moe, Larry, and Curly had made a Christian comedy, the result might have looked like *3 Blind Saints*, a kooky and occasionally poignant story of three middle-aged pals who are arrested while passing through a hick town called Rocky Road. After a judge puts Sam (Richard Speight, Jr.), Jamal (Elijah Rock), and Frankie (Stelio Savante) into the custody of the manipulative Rusty Pickens (Barry Corbin), the trio find themselves forced to do "community service" by playing the new ministers of Rocky Road's only church. Rusty's plan is to have the men keep church services going so he can steal money from Sunday collections. When—against all odds—the guys prove a success at drawing in the generous faithful, the arrangement looks like a win-win. The only problem: Sam falls for a Christian woman (Audrey Matos) and feels terrible both about lying to her and having no faith of his own. Filmmaker John Eschenbaum nicely balances the relationship drama with the funnier side of the ministry business (oddball parishioners, etc.), along with plenty of slapstick antics involving the principals (the most outrageous of which involves an encounter with God in a *Teletubbies*-like pastoral heaven). Likely to appeal to Christian audiences, this indie effort is recommended. (T. Keogh)



360 ★★★

Magnolia, 110 min., R, DVD: \$26.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98

Although the title might recall *La Ronde*—Arthur Schnitzler's play (filmed by Max Ophüls in 1950) about a romantically interconnected circle of couples—it's not always love that makes the world go round in director Fernando Meirelles' much darker *360*. The interlocking tales of disparate characters

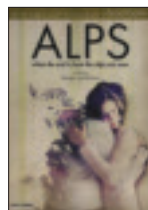


promise some great overarching revelation, but in the end merely suggest that life is made up of decisions—or, as one character advises, "when you come to a fork in the road, take it"—hardly a profound observation. *360* begins with an Eastern European refugee who becomes a Viennese prostitute, hired by a British businessman while his own wife is ending an affair. The girlfriend of the wife's ex-lover decides to return home to Brazil, but meets a sex offender along the way, as well as a troubled Brit traveling to identify the body of a girl who might be his estranged daughter. A Russian who is the driver for a mob boss and his unhappy wife are also tossed into the mix. Unfortunately, the characters here are barely sketches, and even fine actors like Anthony Hopkins, Jude Law, Rachel Weisz, and Ben Foster cannot bring them to life. Considering its lofty pedigree, *360* is a huge disappointment. Not recommended. (F. Swietek)

Alps ★★1/2

Kino Lorber, 93 min., in Greek w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95

A surrealistic story told in an incongruously realistic style, Greek filmmaker Yorgos Lanthimos's *Alps* involves an intense quartet—a paramedic (Aris Servetelis), a nurse (Aggeliki Papoulia), a gymnast (Ariane Labed), and her coach (Johnny Vekris)—who perform an unusual service for the recently bereaved. They pretend to be the departed, having memorized facts and bits of remembered dialogue that they recite in short scenes, which they perform along with the mourners. A crisis occurs in this oddball outfit (all are nicknamed after peaks in the Alps) when the nurse becomes so obsessed with taking over the life of a severely injured tennis player that she lies to her colleagues, telling them that the girl has died and insisting on impersonating her despite the fact that she's still alive. She also finds the relationship with her own father deteriorating (unless, of course, the scenes between them are actually encounters with just another client). From a literal standpoint the premise of *Alps* is preposterous, but Lanthimos uses it simply to raise questions about life and death, reality and illusion—although the answers, of course, remain ambiguous at the close. Intriguing if not altogether satisfying, this is a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)



Anna Karenina ★★

Universal, 130 min., R, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$34.98

Based on Leo Tolstoy's epic 1877 novel set in Imperial Russia, *Anna Karenina* opens with the titular character (Keira Knightley) arriving in Moscow from St. Petersburg to comfort distraught sister-in-law Dolly (Kelly Macdonald) after Anna's brother, Oblonsky

(Matthew Macfadyan), has been blatantly unfaithful. On the train, Anna meets Countess Vronsky (Olivia Williams), and sparks fly when she encounters the Countess's son, strutting cavalry officer Count Vronsky (Aaron Taylor-Johnson). Soon, even her staid, influential husband, Alexei Karenin (Jude Law), is aware of their scandalous flirtation. Risking not only her aristocratic reputation in society but access to her beloved, 8-year-old son, Anna impetuously embarks on a dangerous liaison that results in her pregnancy. Meanwhile, Oblonsky's best friend, a gentleman farmer named Levin (Domhnall Gleeson), is smitten with Dolly's younger sister, vacuous Princess Kitty (Alicia Vikander), who only has eyes for the philandering Vronsky. In this overwrought, superficially intellectual, highly stylized version, adapted by Tom Stoppard and directed by Joe Wright, much of the tragedy unfolds in a huge, magnificent theater where the various self-consciously aware players fall in and out of love onstage, backstage, and on catwalks. The spectacular ballroom dance numbers are intricately choreographed and dazzlingly costumed, yet the hollow artifice at the center of the film makes it difficult to make any emotional connection with the characters' indiscretions. *Anna Karenina* is an opulent film (nabbing Oscar nominations for cinematography, production design, and costume design) that provides a feast for the eyes but starves the soul. Optional. (S. Granger)



Any Day Now ★★★

Music Box, 97 min., R, DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95, Apr. 23

Alan Cumming's flamboyant central performance elevates what might have been a typical socially conscious message movie into a touching human drama. Cumming stars as Rudy, the headliner in a drag act at a '70s Los Angeles gay bar. Tough-talking but sensitive, Rudy picks up Paul (Garret Dillahunt), a sad-sack patron who turns out to be a closeted assistant district attorney, and the pair become friends. When his drug-addict neighbor is arrested, her son—who has Down's syndrome—escapes his social worker and takes refuge with Rudy, leading him to seek Paul's help in securing custody of the boy. For a time the trio form an unconventional family, although the men must conceal their sexual preferences in order to remain an appropriate foster couple. Eventually, however, their secret comes out, and their chance of staying together becomes a very long shot, given the prejudices of the judicial system represented by a hard-line judge, a merciless prosecutor, and Paul's conniving boss. *Any Day Now*



could easily have opted for bathos, but it's rescued by Cumming's fearless, ferocious turn, and by the sure hand of director Travis Fine, who sets the story against a gritty, subdued backdrop that keeps it grounded in reality. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

Argo ★★★★★

Warner, 120 min., R, DVD: \$28.98, Blu-ray: \$35.99

Director and star Ben Affleck adroitly combines a compelling, true-life story with relevant, politically-charged suspense and strategically placed humor in this intense and exceptionally intelligent thriller. During the 1979 Iran hostage crisis, six besieged American embassy workers in Tehran seek refuge in the home of the Canadian Ambassador, Ken Taylor (Victor Garber). Knowing the workers will be executed if found by militant Iranians—along with the Ambassador and his wife—the Canadian and American governments, under the direction of then-President Jimmy Carter, turn to a CIA espionage advisor (Bryan Cranston), who calls in covert extraction operative Tony Mendez (Affleck). Realizing the worldwide appeal of the motion picture industry, Mendez inventively enlists the help of Hollywood makeup artist John Chambers (John Goodman), who recruits flamboyant producer Lester Siegel (Alan Arkin). Forming Studio Six Productions, they pretend to be scouting desert locations for an upcoming sci-fi adventure film. Mendez then has to convince the terrified and bewildered Americans (Tate Donovan, Clea DuVall, Scoot McNairy, Rory Cochrane, Christopher Denham, and Kerry Bishe) to assume new Canadian aliases and "showbiz" crew identities, as director, producer, screenwriter, cameraman, etc. Will capricious Iranian officials and suspicious Revolutionary Guards at the airport really fall for this bizarre, farfetched charade? One of the year's best, this multiple-Oscar nominee is highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** (S. Granger)



Breathing ★★★★★

Kino Lorber, 94 min., in German w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95

Veteran Austrian actor Karl Markovics wrote and directed this sensitive, emotionally moving portrait of a teenager struggling to rise above his tragic past. Nineteen-year-old Roman Kogler (Thomas Schubert) has endured a lifetime of disadvantage: charged with murder (for an accident) and halfway through his sentence in a juvenile detention center, Roman awaits his next probation hearing with little hope of release after being denied probation in previous hearings. Because Roman has no family—and ongoing difficulty adjusting



to real-world responsibilities—winning his freedom seems perpetually unlikely. But he finally takes an encouraging step forward after earning a probationary job at the city morgue of Vienna, helping to transport corpses and preparing them for open casket viewing, burial, and cremation. One day, Roman sees a female corpse in a body bag bearing the name "Kogler," and wonders if she could be his mother, who abandoned him to state care shortly after he was born. Roman is relieved when he discovers that he is not related to the dead woman, but this only prompts him to investigate his past and search for his real mother. A remarkable tale of family relations with an understated focus on deep-rooted pain, regret, and the question of forgiveness, this is highly recommended. (J. Shannon)

Brooklyn Brothers Beat the Best ★★½

Oscilloscope, 97 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.98

In the era of Judd Apatow buddy comedies about misfit boy-men, *Brooklyn Brothers Beat the Best*—written, directed by, and co-starring Ryan O'Nan—is a lower-key entry in the genre. O'Nan plays Alex, a struggling singer-songwriter whose dark, moody songs get him kicked out of a program for mentally challenged public school kids. At his nadir, Alex teams up with Jim (Michael Weston), a weird, experimental musician who lives with his ornery grandfather and boasts a vast collection of keyboard instruments made for children. Strangers to one another, the two men embark on a road tour in an ancient hatchback, proving a success at club dates—despite all odds—as they combine Alex's guitar-driven tunes with Jim's electronic noodling. The duo are soon joined by Cassidy (Arielle Kebbel), who not only likes their sound but also begins to handle the guys' rudimentary marketing—and enters into a relationship with the resistant Alex, bringing tension to the arrangement. O'Nan directs with an eye toward a strong visual joke while also sprinkling his dialogue with some hilarious lines (one very effective scene revolves around a club owner who expects the Brooklyn Brothers to be joined by a rock superstar). But the film also suffers from some lengthy exposition and numbing back stories about the characters. Still, O'Nan and the rest of the cast often serve up lively entertainment, making this indie film a strong optional purchase. (T. Keogh)



California Solo ★★★★★

Strand, 95 min., not rated, DVD: \$27.99, Mar. 5

Scottish actor Robert Carlyle is the virtuoso star of *California Solo*, an American indie film written and directed by Marshall Lewy. Shot in and around L.A., the story follows Lachlan

(Carlyle), a onetime U.K. pop star who retired from music and has been living in Southern California for years. Working on a farm owned by the dignified Warren (A Martinez), Lachlan is a personable, seemingly happy laborer whose bright smile draws customers on farmers' market days. But a DUI arrest threatens both Lachlan's freedom and his immigration status, overturning his life and opening old wounds with an ex-wife (Kathleen Wilhoite), a teenage daughter he barely knows (Savannah Lathem), and unfinished business tied to the death of his brother. Carlyle's fans will be happy to see him in a starring role, especially in a film boasting a smart, nuanced narrative. Recommended. (T. Keogh)



Chasing Mavericks ★★

Fox, 117 min., PG, DVD: \$22.98, Blu-ray: \$29.99

"We all come from the sea, but we are not all of the sea," intones Gerard Butler, introducing the tragic true story of Jay Moriarity, an intrepid surfer who survived a 1994 wipe-out that landed him on the cover of *Surfer* magazine, only to die in 2001 in a free-diving accident in the Maldives, one day before his 23rd birthday. The blustery Butler plays rugged California surfing daredevil Rick "Frosty" Hesson, who reluctantly agrees to train and mentor (in only 12 weeks) his determined, wave-riding 15-year-old Santa Cruz neighbor, Moriarity (newcomer Jonny Weston), to ride some of the most gigantic waves on Earth: the monster, mythic Mavericks at Half Moon Bay during El Niño. Filmmaker Michael Apted, who took over from director Curtis Hanson when the latter fell ill during shooting, utilizes the ample skills of cinematographer Bill Pope—as well as a group of fearless stunt doubles—to capture spectacular open-ocean footage, but no one can rise above the generic, formulaic script: an overly-reverential treatment that touches on but never delves into perseverant Moriarity's relationships with an absentee father, perpetually stressed-out/alcoholic single mom (Elisabeth Shue), best buddy (Devin Crittenden), attractive fiancée/wife (Leven Rambin), and wealthy bully/drug dealer (Taylor Handley). Bland and uninspiring, this is an optional purchase, at best. (S. Granger)



Chicken with Plums ★★★★★

Sony, 91 min., in French w/English subtitles, PG-13, DVD: \$30.99

Directors Marjane Satrapi and Vincent Paronnaud, both graphic novelists, reunite for a second story drawn from Satrapi's family history, switching from *Persepolis*'s black-and-white animation to live-action. In

pre-Revolutionary Tehran, Nasser Ali Khan (Mathieu Amalric) seems to be a curmudgeon who cares more about his career than his family, but there is more to this musician than meets the eye. With his son's help, Nasser sets out to replace his beloved broken violin, leading to adventures with a mysterious woman (Golshifteh Farahani) and a magical merchant (Jamel Debbouze). But when no suitable instrument can be found, Nasser announces his plan to die. As he lies in bed, waiting to expire, Nasser reflects on incidents involving a judgmental clockmaker (Serge Avedikian) and his headstrong mother (Isabella Rossellini). But then he is visited by the Angel of Death (narrator Edouard Baer), who gives him a glimpse of the fates that await his loved ones, much as in *A Christmas Carol*. Meanwhile, his wife (Maria De Medeiros) plies him with delicacies, like chicken with plums, even though Nasser insists that death is the only solution. On the face of it, *Chicken with Plums* might sound like a grim affair, but Satrapi and Paronnaud find the humor in the story and beauty in the milieu, combining stylized sets with hand-drawn backdrops. And while Amalric never strives to make Nasser likable, he succeeds in making this stubborn man understandable. Recommended. (K. Fennessy)



Citadel ★★★

New Video, 84 min., R, DVD: \$26.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95

Although billed as a horror film, Irish writer-director Ciaran Foy's *Citadel* is actually more of a psychological thriller, and a quite effective one at that. The linchpin is the agoraphobia suffered by young widower Tommy Cowley (Aneurin Barnard) after he witnesses his pregnant wife being brutally assaulted by a gang of feral children when the couple are moving out of a dilapidated public housing high-rise. While Cowley's wife delivers the child, she also dies from her injuries, leaving him a single father with an infant to care for, terrified to venture outside. At his wife's funeral, Cowley encounters an obsessive priest (James Cosmo), who not only suggests that the youths who attacked his wife are not exactly human, but also tries to enlist him in a scheme to blow up the building they've taken over. Cowley is initially reluctant to become involved, but when the brood kills a kind, socially conscious nurse who befriended him, and then kidnaps his own daughter, he must overcome his fear to embark on a quest to find his child, which leads him through dark corridors and grim basements, accompanied by a blind boy in the priest's care. How much of the story is real and how much is happening in Cowley's mind is un-



certain in this atmospheric and suspenseful film that benefits from Barnard's deeply felt performance as the frightened young father. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

The Day He Arrives

★★★★1/2

Cinema Guild, 79 min., in Korean w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95

In Korean filmmaker Hong Sang-soo's unusual comedy, Yu Jun-Sang stars as Seongjun, a filmmaker who abruptly left the Seoul film scene—just as his career was rising—to take a job as a professor at a minor college in a provincial town. After a long absence, Seongjun returns to Seoul to visit a film critic friend, but cannot find his former comrade. Wandering the streets, Seongjun is recognized by a would-be actress and a group of film students, but is ultimately unhappy over losing his anonymity. Seongjun also reconnects with an ex-girlfriend, only to leave her after they spend the night together. Seongjun eventually locates his film critic pal and falls into a brief affair with an attractive bar owner. Other film industry folks also spot him, but Seongjun prefers not to renew their acquaintance. The twist is that—as it progresses—the film drifts into a *Groundhog Day*-style of storytelling, as scenes and situations appear to be repeated, albeit with slight changes in set-up and outcome. Shot in artsy black-and-white, *The Day He Arrives* ultimately emerges as a vibrantly original work of art that benefits from Yu Jun-Sang's wonderfully droll and thoroughly unpredictable lead performance. Highly recommended. (P. Hall)



Deadfall ★★★1/2

Magnolia, 95 min., R, DVD: \$26.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98

Speeding into an oncoming Upper Michigan blizzard after pulling a casino heist, brother-and-sister Addison (Eric Bana) and Liza (Olivia Wilde) are heading toward the Canadian border with sacks of cash when their car hits a deer and spins out of control. After a state trooper happens along, psychotic, trigger-happy Addison shoots him, compounding the crime—so the siblings split up and tramp north separately through the desolate, snow-laden wilderness, promising to meet up later. Meanwhile, in Detroit, Jay (Charlie Hunnam), an ex-con/former Olympic boxer, accidentally kills his trainer en route to Thanksgiving dinner at the isolated farmhouse belonging to his parents (Sissy Spacek, Kris Kristofferson). Along the way, Jay picks up half-frozen yet seductive Liza and with the roads closed due to a storm, the pair spend a steamy night in a motel. Surreptitiously, Liza calls Addison, telling him Jay's parents' address, so he can



join her there, not realizing that they're being tracked on snowmobiles by Sheriff Becker (Treat Williams) and his deputy daughter, Hanna (Kate Mara). If the concept sounds familiar, it is—recalling John Frankenheimer's ill-fated 2000 film *Reindeer Games*. Director Stefan Ruzowitzky's *Deadfall* concentrates far more on atmosphere than plotting, dialogue, or character development—aside from the morose siblings' obvious incestuous relationship—in a somewhat contrived caper. Optional. (S. Granger)

Diana Vreeland: The Eye Has to Travel ★★★

eOne, 86 min., PG-13, DVD: \$24.98

Diana Vreeland (1903-1989) was the high priestess of fashion through much of the 20th century, a claim persuasively demonstrated in this documentary from co-directors Lisa Immordino Vreeland (Vreeland's granddaughter-in-law), Bent-Jorgen Perlmutt, and Frédéric Tcheng, which offers both a biographical sketch and an unrestrained celebration of Vreeland's plus-sized personality and impact on the world of haute couture. The vibrant, fast-moving portrait effectively combines archival material with interviews (mostly positive), including substantial excerpts from Vreeland's reminiscences with George Plimpton in preparation for a written autobiography (recreated here by actress Annette Miller). Vreeland emerges as a woman who was driven, imperious, supremely self-confident, and enormously successful but also manipulative and single-minded. As fashion editor to *Harper's Bazaar* (1939-62) and managing editor of the American version of *Vogue* (1963-71), Vreeland was a tastemaker without peer, and later as consultant to the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute she transformed fashion exhibitions from dusty historical affairs to cultural happenings. She seems to have absolutely believed that—as she puts it here—life is artifice and style everything. That attitude, along with her habit of name-dropping with abandon, makes her less attractive than the gorgeous magazine spreads she presided over. Still, those interested in the history of fashion and willing to spend time with a woman who viewed everything from an Olympian height of privilege will find this documentary to be an excellent introduction to both Vreeland and the rarefied world in which she excelled. Recommended. (F. Swietek)



The Do-Deca-Pentathlon ★★★

Fox, 76 min., R, DVD: \$22.98, Blu-ray: \$29.99

Jay and Mark Duplass have been making eccentric comedies since establishing their "mumblecore" indie-cred with 2005's *The Puffy Chair*, confidently returning here to their low-budget roots with a tale of sibling



IN SEARCH OF MEMORY

A film by Petra Seeger
DVD / 95 min. / Color / 2008 / 16:9 / CC
UPC # 8-54565-00154-1 / SRP: \$24.98

The life and work of one of the most important neuroscientists of the 20th century, Nobel Prize winner Eric Kandel.

"An engrossing portrait."
—The New York Times

"Mentally stimulating and emotionally affecting."
—The Chicago Tribune

STREET DATE: MARCH 5th

"Beautifully crafted." —Variety



LAST SUMMER WON'T HAPPEN

A film by Peter Gessner & Tom Hurwitz
DVD / 58 min. / 1968 / Color
UPC # 8-54565-00155-8 / SRP: \$29.98

Shot in 1968, one year after the Summer of Love, this is a critical yet sympathetic examination of the anti-war movement in New York City.

BONUS FILM:
TIME OF THE LOCUST
(13 min. / B&W / 1966)

"A useful counterbalance to the sentimental view of hippies given by the commercial cinema"
—The Daily Telegraph

STREET DATE: APRIL 23rd

"Fascinating!" —Newsweek



DECASIA

A film by Bill Morrison
Music by Michael Gordon
Blu-ray / 67 min. / BW / 2002 / 4x3 /
Audio: 5.1 Surround or 2.1 Stereo
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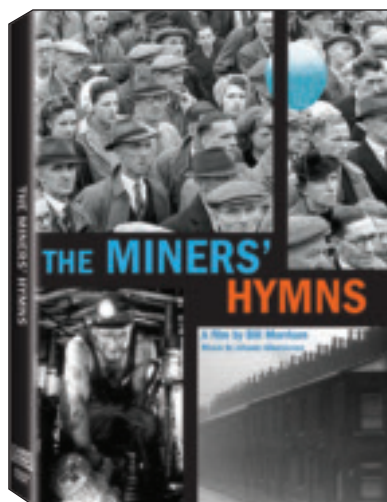
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rivalry run amuck. Inspired by real brothers Mark and Anton Solak, former neighbors of the Duplasses, the tale begins when thirty-something Mark (Steve Zissis) returns to his native New Orleans with his wife, Stephanie (Jennifer Lafleur), for a birthday party planned by his mom (Julie Vorus). For reasons that soon become apparent, brother Jeremy (Mark Kelly) wasn't invited, but the latter abandons his latest high-stakes poker game and shows up anyway. Before long, simmering tensions flare up and the brothers decide to repeat a 25-event sports tournament (the Do-Deca-Pentathlon) that they invented as teenagers in 1990. That inaugural event controversially ended in a parentally-decreed tie; now, two decades later, the brothers are dysfunctionally eager for a rematch. With wrestling, go-karting, ping-pong, arm wrestling, and even laser-tag on the event schedule, the brothers become so intensely embattled that Stephanie fears her out-of-shape husband could suffer a heart attack. It's all handled with ample humor and universal appeal in this winning comedy-drama that will surely resonate with competitive siblings. Recommended. (J. Shannon)

Doomsday Book ★★1/2

Well Go USA, 115 min., in Korean w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98

A tripartite anthology of Korean horror shorts from two notable directors, the overarching theme of *Doomsday Book*—as one might guess from the title—is apocalyptic. Easily the best of the trio, Kim Jee-woon's "Heavenly Creature" is about a robot employed by a Buddhist monastic community to handle its administrative affairs. But the machine has itself achieved enlightenment—a development that represents a danger to humanity's uniqueness—so the manufacturer is determined to destroy the machine in order to save man's dominion over the world. However, the robot also has supporters and—as it turns out—the power to resist termination. Deliberately paced but serenely elegant, this centerpiece tale is an exquisite gem. Less successful are the bookend shorts by Yim Pil-sung. The opener, "Brave New World," is a gory comedy in which a goofy young man finds romance while also instigating a zombie takeover of humanity, and the finale, "Happy Birthday," is a raucous farce in which a young girl's Internet order of a magic 8-ball leads—a decade later—to the imminent destruction of the planet by an asteroid-sized billiard ball. But even while neither of these shorts equal "Heavenly Creature" in terms of either story or style, both have their inspired moments. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)



Flying Swords of Dragon Gate ★★1/2

Indomina, 122 min., in Mandarin w/English subtitles, R, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99

Made by one of the acknowledged masters of stylized swordplay thrillers, Tsui Hark's *Flying Swords of Dragon Gate* is actually the director's second remake of King Hu's 1967 martial-arts classic *Dragon Gate Inn* (Tsui produced the 1992 remake *New Dragon Gate Inn*). It's also the first Chinese film shot in the stereoscopic IMAX 3D format (the Blu-ray release includes both 3D and 2D versions). Although it received a limited theatrical release in the U.S., the film—not surprisingly—failed to catch on at the box office: unlike such global hits as *Hero*, *House of Flying Daggers*, and the landmark *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, this wanna-be wuxia classic becomes mired down in personal and political clashes between thinly-drawn characters who fail to make much dramatic impression. Global action superstar Jet Li is top-billed as a Ming Dynasty freedom fighter (but he spends most of the film off-screen) in this convoluted tale that focuses on the Dragon Inn, located in a remote desert where a confusing thicket of characters are hoping that hidden treasure will be revealed during a sandstorm that occurs only once every 60 years. In a narrative sense, none of this is very involving, but the film's abundant action scenes are impressive—combining traditional wire-work stunts with all-digital characters who defy gravity as they leap, fly, float, and spin in mid-air. It's too bad there isn't a better story to match the film's extravagant production values. An optional purchase. (J. Shannon)



Found Memories ★★★

Film Movement, 97 min., in Portuguese w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95

With its low-key wit and simmering poignancy, *Found Memories* is a lovely feature film about kick-starting life in a ghostly Brazilian village. Filmmaker Julia Murat deftly depicts the maddeningly slow pulse of Jotuomba, a community surrounded by dense forest and seemingly occupied by no one under the age of 60. Stuck in a collective rut and locked into some long-held traditions—the town cemetery is locked for some reason, but no one knows (or remembers) why—Jotuomba receives a little jolt when young photographer Rita (Lisa Fávero) shows up with a curious eye and a few mysteries of her own. Renting a room in the home of the elderly, stiff-limbed Madalena (Sonia Guedes), the laconic Rita gradually opens up to her hostess while observing the village's daily laidback routines. Murat nicely milks some comic mileage from the latter, such as



Madalena's redundant morning arguments with shop owner Antonio (Luiz Serra) over where her fresh rolls should be displayed. A warm, nostalgic, and beautifully lensed slice-of-life portrait, this is recommended. (T. Keogh)

Fred & Vinnie ★★★

Horizon, 91 min., not rated, DVD: \$26.95

Character actor Fred Stoller wrote this bitter-sweet, autobiographical comedy, and plays himself as a well-intended schnook regretting his friendly outreach to an old friend. Living in Los Angeles, where his days are filled with auditions (and landing the occasional movie role), Fred invites oddball pal Vinnie (Angelo Tsarouchas)—an obese recluse living in a rent-free basement in New York—to stay with him. The idea is that Vinnie will reinvent himself into a Hollywood extra for films and television, but when Fred's candy-hoarding visitor arrives, the arrangement soon falls apart. Lacking money, contacts, resources, or the will to do what's necessary to change his life, Vinnie retreats into his familiar shell, smoking on Fred's roof, studying vintage baseball cards, and resisting ideas about how to succeed. In short order, Fred's goodwill evaporates and his days become full of tension and sleeplessness (Vinnie is a champion snorer). Inspired by Stoller's personal misadventures with a real-life Vinnie, *Fred & Vinnie* is an interesting relationship dramedy that also features plenty of funny anecdotes about the hazards of being a semi-familiar actor on Hollywood's fringes. Recommended. (T. Keogh)



Fun Size ★1/2

Paramount, 86 min., PG-13, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray: \$37.99

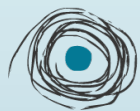
Obviously striving for a John Hughes vibe, the plot of this Nickelodeon-produced teen movie revolves around a familiar "crazy night" escapade, here set on Halloween. High schoolers Wren (Victoria Justice) and best buddy April (Jane Levy) have been invited to a party by the campus stud, but Wren's mom—who is trying to recapture her youth by dating a much younger man—orders her daughter to take her little brother out trick-or-treating instead. Naturally, Wren loses the lad and spends the night searching for him, helped by April and two nerdy friends. Meanwhile, the kid falls in with a goofy convenience-store clerk on a mission to humiliate the girlfriend who dumped him. Tonally, director Josh Schwartz's film is a mess, with several sexually suggestive bits inserted into what otherwise appears to be kiddie fare (even worse, one plot thread uses the misperception of child molestation



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as a source of amusement). A predictably moral wrap-up—Wren learns responsibility and finds romance—comes across as nothing more than manipulative schmaltz. But even apart from the appallingly misjudged elements, the movie simply isn't that funny—hampered by lame dialogue, forced situations, one-dimensional characters, and uneven direction. Early on, Wren says to her friend, "This is bad, April. This is very, very bad." Truer words have never been spoken, April. Not recommended. (F. Swietek)

Game Change ★★★

HBO, 117 min., TV-MA, DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$24.99

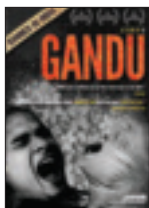
Director Jay Roach's Emmy-winning original HBO drama looks at the "game changing" pick of Sarah Palin by John McCain as his vice presidential running mate in the 2008 election. Golden Globe winner Julianne Moore stars as Palin and Ed Harris plays McCain in a stranger-than-fiction tale that straddles the line between drama and political satire. Based on the book by Mark Halperin and John Heilemann, this multiple award winner presents Palin as a likable media figure in public, but a bit petulant, immature, and borderline manic-depressive behind the scenes, while McCain comes across as a national hero trying to maintain his honor and dignity in the face of a hardball campaign. *Game Change* is hardly a favorable portrait of Palin, making the case that she was utterly out of her league on the national political stage and sorely uninformed on issues of state and world affairs, while also suggesting that she was more interested in promoting her own political identity than serving the campaign. But the film does show that she struggled hard to rise to the challenge. Likely to be seen as unduly hostile by some, and embraced by others, this is recommended. (S. Axmaker)



Gandu ★★1/2

Artploitation, 85 min., in Bengali w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99

Banned in India for its very explicit sex scenes and boasting plenty of dialogue and lyrics that might make viewers blush (even the title is a slang term translated as "asshole"), this Bengali film by a director calling himself simply Q (aka Kaushik Mukherjee) is about as anti-Bollywood as could be imagined. Shot in black-and-white except for some of the hardcore sex sequences, which are presented in lurid color, *Gandu* begins as a grubby portrait of the titular young man (Anubrata Basu), who wastes his life buying lottery tickets and dreaming of becoming a famous rapper and getting laid (while stealing cash from his



mother's sleazy boyfriend). But even from the start, *Gandu* pumps up the narrative volume with rapid-fire editing, mini-music videos, split-screen sequences, and printed text overlaying the visuals. After Gandu teams up with a rickshaw driver who fancies himself the new Bruce Lee, the film grows ever more manic and technically experimental as our antihero's desires are either fulfilled in reality or at least appear to be as a result of drug-induced hallucinations. Designed to shock, the nihilistic, sexually graphic *Gandu* is a visual and aural assault on the senses, a slice of cutting-edge Indian filmmaking that is definitely not for everyone. A strong optional purchase for only the most adventurous collections. (F. Swietek)

Gayby ★★★

Wolfe, 89 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95

A well-received short film expanded into a feature, Jonathan Lisecki's *Gayby* centers on a Manhattan yoga instructor named Jenn (Jenn Harris) who is unlucky in love, but so eager to have a baby that she recruits gay best friend Matt (Matthew Wilkas) to become the father. Rather than go through an artificial insemination procedure, however, Jenn insists that they go about baby-making the old-fashioned way, which naturally creates endless dilemmas, considering their longtime platonic friendship and Matt's lack of interest in the opposite sex. Complicating matters, Matt pines for his ex-boyfriend and Jenn decides to take an herbal supplement that winds up over-stimulating her sex drive and putting her into the arms of a studly housepainter who doesn't believe in condoms. Although Harris and Wilkas sport a pleasant charm together and have a talent for delivering broad comedy, *Gayby* nevertheless quickly wears out its welcome due to a surplus of crass stereotypes and anvil humor. Not a necessary purchase. (P. Hall)



Hara-Kiri: Death of a Samurai ★★1/2

New Video, 126 min., in Japanese w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$26.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95

Although Japanese director Takashi Miike has built a loyal following for his films indulging in extremes of gore and bloodshed, *Hara-Kiri: Death of a Samurai* marks a surprisingly restrained and elegant shift. Spanning decades, the film's epic tale of revenge and samurai honor takes place in 17th-century Japan, beginning with a mysterious, master-less ronin named Tsugumo (Ebizô Ichikawa) arriving at the castle of a feudal lord (Kôji Yakusho) and requesting to commit seppuku (ritual suicide) in the courtyard. Suspecting



a "suicide bluff," the feudal lord relates the story of another samurai who recently sought to commit seppuku in the same courtyard, only to beg for money or work. Told in an epic flashback, the narrative comes full circle when Tsugumo reveals his own hidden motivations, leading to a gloriously stylized, one-man-against-many showdown taking place in and around gently falling snow. A superb remake of director Masaki Kobayashi's original 1962 classic, *Hara-Kiri* is a powerful study of oppressive leadership and individual honor, one that further catapults Miike into the upper ranks of world-class filmmakers. Highly recommended. (J. Shannon)

Hipsters ★★★

Kino Lorber, 89 min., in Russian w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95

A colorful Russian film set in the youth culture of 1955 Moscow, director Valery Todorovsky's 2008 *Hipsters* is an old-fashioned musical, coming-of-age tale, and adventure in youthful rebellion. In the conformist society of Soviet Russia, loyal young communist Mels (Anton Shagin) falls in love with Polya (Oksana Akinshina), a member of a group of self-defined "hipsters" who parade about in peacock fashions, and dance to swing and small combo dance bands from World War II-era America in underground clubs. It's a bright blast of dissident culture in a society where rebels are regularly jailed for much less. The eye-gouging color, flamboyant dress, and appropriated style is not just a fashion statement, but also a cry of individualism and freedom in a country where "kowtowing to Western ideology is punishable by up to 10 years" and "a saxophone is considered a concealed weapon." It's also a warped mirror reflection of what these Soviet youths imagine that American culture is like from the snatched glimpses and slivers of artifacts seen between the cracks of the Iron Curtain—not only a decade out of date but also exaggerated to hyperbolic extremes. The drama itself is much more conventional, with the kids forced to choose between their rebel identities and donning the costume of conformity for advancement, marriage, parenthood, and responsibility. But what's most interesting here is the heady combination of realistic detail and expressionist song-and-dance sequences, offering a rare glimpse into a Russian subculture that Americans have not seen dramatized before. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



Hitchcock ★★★

Fox, 98 min., PG-13, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99, Mar. 12

After the success of *North by Northwest*, eccentric 60-year-old director Alfred Hitchcock (Anthony Hopkins) turned his creative attention to Robert Bloch's novel *Psycho*, deter-

mined to make something entirely different. Inspired by the brutal serial murders committed by psychopath Ed Gein, *Psycho* was an unconventional property that no one was willing to bank on, including Paramount Pictures. So Hitch mortgaged his house and funded the film himself, taking a financial risk that infuriated his collaborative writer/film editor wife, Alma Reville (Helen Mirren), who in turn embarked on her own project with an ambitious young screenwriter, Whitfield Cook (Danny Huston), which aroused her husband's jealousy. Propelling the Hitchcocks' marital strife was his obsessive infatuation with a succession of svelte, blonde leading ladies, including Grace Kelly, Kim Novak, Eva Marie Saint, Tippi Hedren, Vera Miles and, now, Janet Leigh (Scarlett Johansson). Adapting Stephen Rebello's *Alfred Hitchcock and the Making of Psycho*, director Sacha Gervasi's *Hitchcock* chronicles the birth of the complex and controversial horror classic *Psycho*, up through its 1960 premiere. Hopkins brilliantly captures Hitchcock's distinctive look (the film scored an Oscar nomination for Best Makeup) and dry, droll manner, while Golden Globe nominee Mirren adroitly encapsulates the inner conflict of the intensely creative woman who was constantly relegated to a supportive role. Recommended. (S. Granger)



The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey

★★★
New Line, 170 min., PG-13,
DVD: \$28.98, Blu-ray: \$35.99,
Mar. 19

In *Lord of the Rings* director Peter Jackson's sometimes slow-moving opening film of a three-part adaptation of J.R.R. Tolkien's beloved Middle-earth fantasy, narrative occasionally takes a backseat to special effects. Long before his nephew Frodo was born, reluctant Bilbo Baggins (Martin Freeman) is persuaded by the Wizard Gandalf (Ian McKellen) to leave his comfortably cozy hobbit home in the Shire to join 13 dwarves who are determined to reclaim their ancestral mountain home of Erebor, which was appropriated by the dragon Smaug. After pillaging Baggins' pantry, the rowdy dwarves, led by brave warrior Thorin Oakenshield (Richard Armitage), embark on a treacherous quest during which they encounter savage orcs, goblins, trolls, and wargs, as well as the elves Galandriel (Cate Blanchett) and Elrond (Hugo Weaving), and a mysterious figure known as the Necromancer. Humble Bilbo exchanges riddles with the tricky creature Gollum (embodied by Andy Serkis) and acquires that fabled, "precious" gold ring. Although the expository mythology here is occasionally numb-

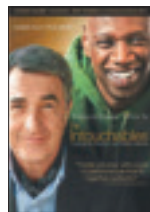


ing, the spectacular visuals are often truly breathtaking. Jackson filmed this and the two subsequent installments back-to-back in New Zealand; hopefully, the next two films will be a bit more engrossing. Recommended. (S. Granger)

The Intouchables ★★★

Weinstein, 112 min., in French w/English subtitles, R, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray: \$35.99, Mar. 5

This charming odd-couple comedy begins with a black motorist careening through Paris in an expensive sports car with a white passenger as Kool & the Gang booms on the stereo. When he's stopped by the police, the driver claims that he is rushing a quadriplegic who is suffering a seizure to the hospital. After being sent on their way, the two men convulse in laughter and share a cigarette. Several months earlier, wealthy, worldly widower Philippe (François Cluzet) was paralyzed in a paragliding accident, and needed a caregiver. Just out of prison, troubled, pot-smoking Driss (Omar Sy) applies for the job, mainly so he can qualify for welfare benefits. Despite the misgivings of his staff, open-minded Philippe hires him—attracted to Driss's crass cockiness and unwavering candor. While Driss's caregiving skills may be lacking and the pair are worlds apart on the socioeconomic scale, Philippe senses that Driss's friendship is real. And both share an addiction to the adrenaline rush of risk-taking and an appreciation for women. Inspired by real events, directors Olivier Nakache and Eric Toledano's *The Intouchables* benefits from an irresistibly subversive performance by Sy, who became the first black performer to win France's prestigious César award for Best Actor (beating *The Artist*'s Jean Dujardin). Recommended. (S. Granger)



Kati with an I ★★★

Icarus Films, 86 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.98

Filmmaker Robert Greene takes a slow-brewing approach in this documentary about his younger half-sister, 18-year-old Kati Genthner, filmed during a period of Kati's murky transition from high school graduation to the threshold of adulthood. The opening scenes offer little specificity about what we're watching, largely consisting of moments that capture a blur of teenage activity leading up to a graduation ceremony in a small Alabama town. Earlier footage of Kati as an imaginative little girl full of promise and delightful observation offers some perspective on her spirit and who she has become as a young woman—someone full of determination despite having little power to realize her goals. In time, Kati's world begins to fall into place as we meet her slacker boyfriend and



discover the somewhat bizarre circumstances surrounding her recent life. Although we see Kati receive her diploma, her life plans suddenly crumble, leaving her future quite ambiguous. *Kati with an I* is a film that will get under the skin of patient viewers, made by a capable storyteller who has a knack for drawing poignancy from the ordinary, capturing sometimes melancholy images—a close-up of an ear, a gauzy shot of a house, a setting sun dimming the skies over a football field—with an overriding sense of quiet beauty. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

Lapland Odyssey ★★1/2

Artsploitation, 96 min., in Finnish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99

A comedy of frustration with distinctly dark undercurrents, Dome Karukoski's *Lapland Odyssey* starts with a premise reminiscent of Hollywood's frat-boy farces. Beautiful, hardworking Inari (Pamela Tola) gives her likable slacker boyfriend Janne (Jussi Vatanen) money to buy a digital TV converter so the couple can enjoy a romantic evening watching *Titanic* after she comes home. After Janne wastes the dough with his drinking buddies—cynical Kapu (Jasper Pääkkönen) and desperate-to-get-laid loser Riihinen (Timo Lavikainen)—and returns home empty-handed, Inari announces that she is moving out unless he can somehow secure the converter before midnight. That sets the hapless male trio off on a journey marked by one disaster after another, including harassment by unfriendly cops, a run-in with some Russian mobsters, a wild swim with some very physical girls, and encounters with uncooperative shopkeepers. And while they're away, Inari's smarmy ex-boyfriend shows up to help her pack—and tries to get her into bed. While the lustrous widescreen cinematography offers some stunning views of the frigid climes of northern Finland, the characters are as cold as the temperature, despite a revelation midway through that is supposed to add emotional depth. So while *Lapland Odyssey* deserves credit for tweaking a familiar formula, it is hobbled by an uneasy tone and generally lax air. Optional. (F. Swietek)



Les Misérables ★★1/2

Universal, 158 min., PG-13,
DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$34.98,
Mar. 22

Based on Victor Hugo's classic novel, this epic, Oscar-nominated cinematic adaptation should attract fans of the Broadway musical. Set in squalid 19th-century France, the story opens with emaciated Jean Valjean (Hugh Jackman)—just finishing up 19 years of hard labor for stealing a loaf of bread—toiling under the watchful



eye of implacable Inspector Javert (Russell Crowe). Paroled but also condemned as an ex-convict, Valjean is given food and shelter by the sympathetic Bishop of Digne (Colm Wilkinson); in return, Valjean steals the church's silver. When he's caught, the Bishop tells the authorities that the booty belongs to Valjean, instructing Valjean to use it to make a better life. Within eight years, Valjean becomes a wealthy factory owner under an assumed name. Valjean takes pity on single mother-turned-prostitute Fantine (Anne Hathaway), vowing to protect her daughter, Cosette, by paying off a couple who have custody of her—a pair of disreputable innkeepers (Helena Bonham Carter and Sacha Baron Cohen, serving as comic relief). Years later, with Valjean as her guardian/adoptive father, now-grown Cosette (Amanda Seyfried) falls in love with rebellious Marius (Eddie Redmayne) during the 1832 Paris Uprising. Director Tom Hooper retains the pop opera structure with only minimal spoken dialogue but also takes a daring step by having the actors sing "live" on the set, as opposed to recording with an orchestra beforehand. As for the music, Oscar-nominee Jackman nails Valjean's "Soliloquy," "Bring Him Home," and "Who Am I?" with every emotion magnified in close-ups, while fellow nominee Hathaway's "I Dreamed a Dream" is wrenching. An anguished, unrestrained extravaganza, this is highly recommended. (S. Granger)

The Man with the Iron Fists ★★

Universal, 96 min., R, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$34.98

Rapper RZA of hip-hop's Wu-Tang Clan is a triple threat as actor-writer-director for this campy and ferocious martial-arts action-adventure flick. Set in 19th-century feudal China, the somewhat incomprehensible story follows a shipwrecked American slave-turned-blacksmith (RZA) who after being saved by the Emperor's hedonistic emissary (Russell Crowe) uses his metallurgic skill to recover a stolen shipment of the Governor's gold. The brave blacksmith adores a pretty prostitute, Lady Silk (Jamie Chung), who works for the Madam (Lucy Liu)—an influential force, especially since anything of importance in Jungle Village seems to occur in her Pink Blossom brothel. "Men have always held the power," she tells her lethal lovelies, "but power is a flexible mistress." Meanwhile, the local clans are at war: villainous Silver Lion (Byron Mann) and his formidable henchman (Cung Le) are on the rampage, along with duplicitous Poison Dagger (Daniel Wu) and impervious Brass Body (WWE's Dave Bautista). Filled with adroitly choreographed kung-fu, wire-work, and hand-to-hand combat, this vanity project is obviously inspired by the corny Shaw Brothers' movies of yesteryear (Pam Grier,



star of '70s blaxploitation films, appears as the blacksmith's mother in a flashback). A fitfully entertaining mess, this is an optional purchase. (S. Granger)

Mansome ★★

MPI, 88 min., PG-13, DVD: \$24.98

Morgan Spurlock's latest docu-essay offers a lighthearted take on male grooming, with emphasis on individual preferences for being clean-shaven vs. sporting beards and moustaches. *Mansome* is mostly comprised of interviews, some of which are flat improvisational sketches with celebrities, such as two of the executive producers—Jason Bateman and Will Arnett—who periodically reappear to offer brutally unfunny observations about themselves. Others are more direct conversations, like those with Zach Galifianakis and Paul Rudd, who are self-deprecatory, or John Waters, who comments on his own moustache "design" and how choices in style can go awry. *Mansome* also features sequences with hair stylists and their customers (some see the barbershop as one of the few places left where men can still be men). One substantial section focuses on Jack Passion, an obsessive whose long beard takes him to competitions, including one in Europe where his straight, yardstick-long growth is pitted against the hirsute efforts of other would-be champions. Spurlock's film seems to want to say something about masculinity, or at least about modern-day conceptions of masculinity, but its scattershot approach and frat-boy tone make it seem superficial and jejune. And those looking for laughs should note that the humor here is thinner than the hair on a bald man's scalp. Not a necessary purchase. (F. Swietek)



The Master ★★★

Anchor Bay, 144 min., R, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$39.99

Paul Thomas Anderson's audacious character study begins in the South Pacific at the conclusion of WWII, with Navy seaman Freddie Quell (Joaquin Phoenix) indulging his quirky psychosexual obsession, masturbating to a huge female torso sculpted in the wet sand. Freddie is a volatile, demented drunkard, drifting from job to job, until he manages to stumble aboard an elegant yacht bound for New York from San Francisco via the Panama Canal. Here he meets Lancaster Dodd (Philip Seymour Hoffman), a charismatic charlatan who presents himself as an erudite philosopher/guru. Dodd is the leader of a cult named The Cause, which uses a manipulative hypnosis "processing" technique to purge troubling memories so that members can theoretically gain control



over self-destructive impulses, cure physical ailments, and purify their immortal souls. Quell becomes a devoted follower but harbors such anguish—and anger—that he eventually alienates everyone in the close-knit community, even Dodd's empathetic wife (Amy Adams). Anderson has meticulously crafted this visually stunning, intellectually provocative, yet often plodding period piece that is obviously inspired by L. Ron Hubbard and his Church of Scientology (although many spiritual and religious movements exploring the human potential took root during the post-war 1950s). Punctuated by a discordant score from Jonny Greenwood of Radiohead, *The Master* is an uneven film that benefits from its three Oscar-nominated performances by Phoenix, Hoffman, and Adams. Recommended. (S. Granger)

Nobody Walks ★★1/2

Magnolia, 82 min., R, DVD: \$26.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98

Ry Russo-Young's drama depicting adultery among the beautiful people is set in the home studio of a freelance Hollywood sound-effects specialist dwelling in the affluent Silver Lake suburb. In between projects, L.A. audio tech Peter (John Krasinsky) commits to helping Martine (Olivia Thirlby), a young visual artist from New York City, create her film-loop installation focusing on insects and arachnids. Peter's assistant attempts to start a relationship with Martine, but instead the chic houseguest and Peter succumb to mutual fascination for each other, despite his marriage and children. Peter's wife must weigh the betrayal against her own loyalties (and her own extramarital suitors, including a musician ex-husband). Is boho-girl Martine an innocent or a provocateur in the way she arouses desire in men? Meanwhile, Peter's daughter's dawning sexuality emerges in an unhealthy schoolgirl crush on a male tutor. It remains for the viewer to sort out victims and villains, but while the domestic angst here breaks little new ground, setting it amidst the small-print names in movie credits makes for a slightly offbeat-while-still-Tinseltown ambiance. A strong optional purchase. (C. Cassidy)



The Other Son ★★★

Cohen, 105 min., in French w/English subtitles, PG-13, DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$24.98, Mar. 19

In *The Other Son*, French-Jewish filmmaker Lorraine Levy adds a compelling twist to the babies-switched-at-birth plot: namely, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In Tel Aviv, 18-year-old musician Joseph Silbur (Jules Sitruk) enlists in an elite Army unit, undergoing a requisite physical



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The Goodlows are a typical American family, complete with atypical secrets. When Bob proposes to his girlfriend Jenny and his "too cool" cousin George hatches a get-rich-quick scheme, a series of events unfolds which changes their lives forever.

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DRAMA | STREET DATE: 3/26/13



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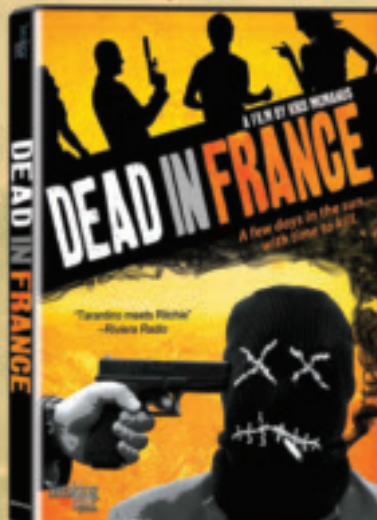


OUR PARADISE

Vassili finds a young, unconscious man in a notorious Parisian cruising ground and takes him home. They work together and take up the habit of fleecing their clients. But, little by little, the net tightens around them as Vassili's violent past comes back to haunt him.

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Cosmopolis Paulo Branco

"Fascinating"
-*Out Magazine*

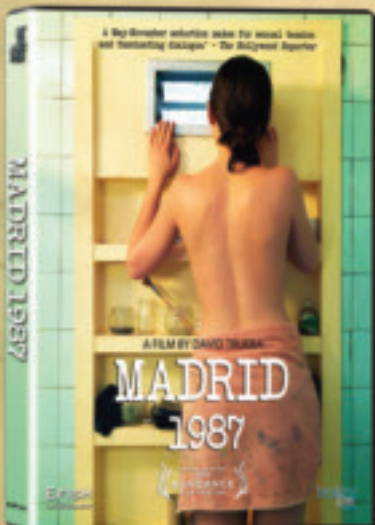


DEAD IN FRANCE

Hitman Charles would like to retire with a yacht and a woman in tow. The only problem is he has absolutely no experience with either...at least until he meets his newly-hired cleaning woman. Lisa is as beautiful as she is conniving and her boyfriend Denny is even worse. Charles doesn't account for Denny and his cohorts stealing two million pounds from his car. Follow Charles along his hunt for the trio down the Côte d'Azur.

"Gore-Drenched Black Comedy"
-*Hollywood Reporter*

88 MINS. | COLOR | SRP \$24.99 | BGP354
CRIME/COMEDY | STREET DATE: 3/26/13



MADRID, 1987

Chance events force Miguel (José Sacristán), a feared and respected journalist, and Ángela (María Valverde), a young journalism student, together for more time than they would have chosen: locked in a bathroom, naked, without the possibility of escape.

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K-11

Music executive Ray Saxx, Jr. is trapped in K-11, a unique section of the Los Angeles County Prison System for gay and transgender inmates. He was out cold when he arrived and he has no idea how he got there - just that he needs to get the hell out...alive and intact.

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of *The Shawshank Redemption*"
-*Hollywood Reporter*

88 MINS. | COLOR | SRP \$24.99 | BGP348
THRILLER | STREET DATE: 4/23/13

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exam with a blood test that reveals he cannot possibly be the biological son of his high-ranking Israeli soldier father (Pascal Elbé) and French-born physician mother (Emmanuelle Devos). Apparently, just after he was born during the 1991 Gulf War, a hospital evacuation resulted in Joseph being inadvertently switched with Yacine (Mehdi Dehbi), the newborn son of a Palestinian engineer/auto mechanic (Khalifa Natour) and a West Bank housewife (Areen Omari). This sensitive family drama delves into how the teenagers and their families react to the news. Although both fathers quickly enter into denial, the warm-hearted mothers eventually arrange a socially awkward meeting, as curiosity about their "other" son triumphs over historical resentment. Educated in Paris and ready for medical school, Yacine adjusts the best, although his virulently anti-Semitic brother (Mahmood Shalabi) is furious that their family has been unwittingly nurturing a Jew. Joseph is stunned and deeply hurt when his rabbi informs him that he's not Jewish unless he goes through a complicated conversion process. Yet, showing remarkable maturity, Joseph realizes that his talent and passion for music are inherited from his Arabic father. The performances are touching and convincing, as the multinational cast gently and subtly conveys an upbeat, optimistic message that adroitly skirts sentimentality while exploring many facets of self-identity. Recommended. (S. Granger)

Paranormal Activity 4 ★

Paramount, 96 min., R, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray: \$37.99



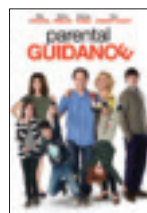
This fourth installment in the highly-profitable, found-footage horror franchise begins with another gimmicky flashback to 2006, when a toddler is abducted by his Aunt Katie (Katie Featherston), who murdered her sister Kristi. Returning to November 2011, *Paranormal Activity 4* follows a suburban Nevada family caring for a creepy 6-year-old neighbor, Robbie (Brady Allen), whose single mother is suddenly hospitalized. Bickering Doug (Stephen Dunham) and Holly (Alexandra Lee) have two children: Wyatt (Aiden Lovekamp), also six, and his 15-year-old sister, Alex (Kathryn Newton). Brooding Robbie has a malevolent friend with whom he constantly converses—the invisible demon Toby, a supernatural presence that Wyatt follows around the house while riding his Big Wheel. Meanwhile, computer-compulsive Alex and her tech-savvy, Skype-chatting boyfriend (Matt Shively) set up motion-sensing webcams all over the house to ultimately acquire the bizarre found-footage that propels the film. Directors Henry Joost and Ariel Schulman (who collaborated on the previous installment) utilize far too many generic shots of inexplicably opening and/or slamming doors,

dark hallways, and distant noises, along with shots of the family cat ominously scampering past the camera. In fact, the only cinematic innovation introduced in this stale, derivative, low-budget sequel is the use of the Xbox Kinect video game system. Viewers can expect to see lots of menacing surveillance footage—very little of which has any significance and is sometimes unintentionally funny—while the storyline potential of a neighborhood coven of witches is never fully explored. Not recommended. (S. Granger)

Parental Guidance

★★★1/2

Fox, 105 min., PG, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$39.99, Mar. 26



Minor-league baseball announcer Artie Decker (Billy Crystal) is bereft after losing his job as the voice of the Fresno Grizzlies. So when his daughter, Alice (Marisa Tomei), and son-in-law, Phil (Tom Everett Scott), have to leave town on a business trip, Artie's devoted wife, Diane (Bette Midler), says they'd love to stay with their seldom-seen grandchildren, ignoring Artie's curmudgeonly protests. "We're the other grandparents," Diane wistfully observes. "This is our chance!" But uptight Alice and techno-geek Phil live in a so-called "smart house" in which everything is automated and computerized. Not surprisingly, their children's lives are strictly scheduled and dutifully monitored. Regimented 12-year-old Harper (Bailee Madison) is determined to ace an audition that will get her into a prestigious music school in order to prepare her to play violin with a world-famous orchestra. Her stressed younger brother, Turner (Joshua Rush), has a stuttering problem, while mischievous Barker (Kyle Harrison Breitkopf), talks to an imaginary kangaroo friend named Carl. To call Alice and Phil overprotective and indulgent is an understatement; they define "helicopter parents." Technology-challenged Artie and Diane, however, come from a different generation, one that raised children by old-fashioned, common-sense rules—and bribery. The ensuing colossal culture clash is inevitable. Crystal is in his comedic element here, while Midler is tart, touching, and tender, but the script vacillates—somewhat disconcertingly—between astute, sophisticated observations and juvenile toilet humor, making this a hit-and-miss effort. A strong optional purchase. (S. Granger)

Playing for Keeps ★★

Sony, 106 min., PG-13, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray: \$35.99, Mar. 5

Gabriele Muccino's *Playing for Keeps*, an awkward mix of sports and suds, exists primarily to keep Scottish actor Gerard Butler's fan club happy. While he once enjoyed a successful soccer career, Butler's George—

who dreams of becoming a sportscaster—now struggles to make ends meet. Moving to Virginia to reconnect with his son, Lewis (Noah Lomax), George ultimately hopes to reunite with his ex-wife, Stacie (Jessica Biel)—except she's engaged, and still bitter about his past indiscretions. When George catches Lewis's soccer coach slacking off, he steps in, and wins over players and parents alike. Unfortunately, too much so: the way that talented actresses like Judy Greer, Uma Thurman, and Catherine Zeta-Jones throw themselves at George registers as more pathetic than amusing. The real heavy in the film turns out not to be Stacie's nice-guy fiancé (James Tupper), but rather the insanely jealous millionaire (Dennis Quaid) with the lonely wife (Thurman). The male-female machinations here are both familiar and forced, and the film only comes alive whenever George spends time with the kids, an outspoken group who recall the *Bad News Bears* wisecracks. Optional, at best. (K. Fennessy)



Red Hook Summer

★★★1/2

Image, 121 min., R, DVD: \$27.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98



Until it takes a challenging turn in the third act, Spike Lee's *Red Hook Summer* recalls his underrated 1994 film *Crooklyn*. After his father's death in Afghanistan, cynical adolescent Silas (Jules Brown)—aka "Flik" due to his obsessive photography and digital-videomaking on his iPad—must leave Atlanta to spend the summer in predominantly black Red Hook, Brooklyn, living with his grandfather, Enoch (Clarke Peters), a Baptist preacher of the old school. Their culture-clash is inevitable: tech-savvy Silas maintains an angry disbelief in God and an affinity (at first) for gangstas and troublemakers in the Hook housing projects, while Enoch's archaic, rock-steady faith and religiosity comes across as both irritating and courageous. Much time is spent on fiery church sermons and Gospel-play-like dialogue, during which Lee and scriptwriter James McBride argue their main characters' contrasting points-of-view while also exhibiting a sense of disillusionment over the fact that Obama's promised "hope" and "change" have not reached the lower classes. And then comes an especially shocking church service and act of 'hood justice that stirs a moral hornet's nest while also proving that ethics in the mean streets do not break down to a simple good guy/bad guy mindset. Although the performances are uneven among a cast of largely unknowns, Lee's typical vibrant colors, street-smart dialogue, and pervasive music soundtrack (gospel interspersed with music by Bruce Hornsby) make this one of

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his strongest films in recent years. Highly recommended. (C. Cassady)

Rise of the Guardians

★★★

DreamWorks, 97 min., PG, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99, Mar. 12



Hundreds of years ago—as the story goes in this animated feature—the Man in the Moon appointed Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny, the Tooth Fairy, and the Sandman as Guardians, to serve as protectors of innocence and wonder. Their sinister adversary is the Boogeyman, who is determined to destroy children's naïve belief in these magical icons. Playful, yet lonely, water sprite Jack Frost (voiced by Chris Pine) is thrust into the fray, much to the dismay of the other Guardians, who are skeptical about this slippery, invisible outsider able to turn water into ice. Known as North, Santa (Alec Baldwin) talks like a Russian, sports tattoos and a thumb ring, and is tended by manic elves and hard-working yetis. Bunnymund (Hugh Jackman in native Australian mode) is joined by fleet-footed, faceless eggs, while the flitting forces of Tooth (Isla Fisher) not only faithfully bestow her under-the-pillow coins but save the teeth they gather. Lastly, the snoozing Sandman silently spins his pixie dust through children's windows at night, begetting the sweet dreams that the Boogeyman, called Pitch Black (Jude Law), is determined to turn into dark, despairing nightmares. Their battle for youthful minds and hearts is waged around two New England tykes: Jamie (Dakota Goyo) and his little sister, Sophie (Georgie Grieve), who stumbles into the portal linking Earth with the Guardians. Amusingly adapted from William Joyce's *The Guardians of Childhood* book series, filmmaker Peter Ramsey's fairy tale is a bit frenetic, yet beautiful to behold. Recommended. (S. Granger)

A Royal Affair

★★★1/2
Magnolia, 137 min., in Danish w/English subtitles, R, DVD: \$26.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98, Mar. 26

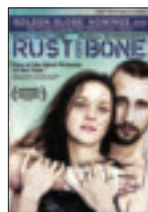


Given that most Americans are relatively unfamiliar with Scandinavian history, the name Johann Friedrich Struensee may not ring a bell. But the Danes credit this idealistic 18th-century German physician for bringing the Enlightenment to their country. In 1766, naïve 15-year-old British princess Caroline Mathilde (Alicia Vikander)—a sister of King George III—is betrothed to her cousin, the King of Denmark. When she arrives in Copenhagen, Caroline discovers to her dismay that His Majesty Christian VII (Mikkel Boe Følsgaard) is an infantile idiot. The tortuous tedium of

palace life is only relieved when ambitious, intelligent Struensee (Mads Mikkelsen) is recruited by the nobility to accompany Caroline's volatile, mentally unbalanced husband on a European tour. Returning to the Danish court as royal doctor, tutor, and advisor, Struensee introduces a set of radical sociopolitical reforms, including inoculation against smallpox, and the repeal of censorship, which infuriates the elitist, faith-based ruling council. Struensee also indulges in a dangerous extramarital relationship with the Queen, a treasonous betrayal that doesn't escape the notice of scheming Dowager Queen Juliane (Trine Dyrholm). Based on historical fact, filmmaker Nikolaj Arcel's Oscar-nominated *A Royal Affair* boasts wonderfully naturalistic performances and sumptuous cinematography that elevate it well above the usual costume drama. Highly recommended. (S. Granger)

Rust and Bone

★★★1/2
Sony, 122 min., in French w/English subtitles, R, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray: \$35.99, Mar. 19



French writer-director Jacques Audiard's *Rust and Bone*, which draws from a short-story collection by Canadian author Craig Davidson, presents a pair of individuals with a unique set of challenges. Ali (Matthias Schoenaerts) arrives in coastal Antibes from Belgium with no money, no wife, and a 5-year-old son, so he goes to stay with his estranged sister and her wary husband. After securing a job as a bouncer, the former boxer extracts orca trainer Stéphanie (Marion Cotillard) from a fracas at a nightclub. Hoping to pursue a relationship, Ali gives Stéphanie his phone number, although she isn't available. But then a routine at the marine park goes horribly awry, and Stéphanie suffers a devastating injury; after being released from the hospital, she gives Ali a call. Seeing her again, Ali expresses no surprise or disappointment regarding her altered physical state, and his lack of judgment lifts her out of despair. Just as Ali starts to fight professionally again, Stéphanie returns to the water to begin a rebuilding process. In the months ahead, Stéphanie becomes even more independent, but fears that her life as a woman will never be the same—and it isn't, but Audiard turns this couple's unlikely romance into something truly touching. Highly recommended. (K. Femmessy)

Samsara

★★★1/2
MPI, 102 min., PG-13, DVD: \$27.98, Blu-ray: \$34.98

Ron Fricke has spent his career making non-narrative visual essays exploring themes contrasting the alienation of modern life with the serenity of spiritual existence. Shot over the course of nearly five years across five

continents on 70mm film, *Samsara* recalls a touchstone in the genre, 1982's *Koyannisqatsi*, which Fricke himself photographed. Similarly, *Samsara* (the title is a Tibetan word meaning “the wheel of life”) features



no narration or story, merely a succession of images of contemplation and natural beauty set against snapshots of urban culture, all backed by hypnotic, cyclical music. Scenes in a Buddhist monastery and shots capturing the elemental power of an erupting volcano are juxtaposed with looks at the mechanization of food preparation and the impersonal rush of urban crowds and city streets at night. It's a stunning film—like a new age travelogue with majestic landscapes and awesome images of human activity—that makes for an impressive spectacle on the big screen, but on video plays more like a coffee table book in motion, a visual symphony that features some of the most amazing movie images caught on film while presenting a rather simpleminded perspective on life in balance and a soft new age spiritualism. Likely to appeal to fans of non-narrative cinema, this is a strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

Sinister

★★★
Summit, 110 min., R, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.99



This supernatural thriller blends *Blair Witch*-style found-footage, a search for a serial killer, and a haunted house. The opening scene shows a suburban family standing beneath a tree, hoods over their faces and nooses around their necks, just before they're hoisted into the air, writhing and struggling. Months later, true-crime writer Ellison Oswalt (Ethan Hawke)—desperate to repeat his earlier writing success—decides to move his loyal, long-suffering wife (Juliet Rylance) and children (Michael Hall D'Addario, Clare Foley) into that same creepy house, hoping to both solve the mystery of what happened and write a new bestseller (supposedly, the family had another child who went missing after the murders). In the attic, whiskey-swilling Oswalt discovers a box containing a movie projector and five reels of Super 8 footage depicting families slaughtered in macabre ways. Noting a dark figure with a demonic face who keeps re-appearing along with a strange symbol, obsessed Oswalt consults via Skype with an expert in the occult (Vincent D'Onofrio), who identifies the mystery figure as a diabolical pagan deity, believed to consume the souls of children. As the plot thickens, so does the carnage, as the bloodthirsty supernatural villain moves into the mortal realm, posing undeniable danger to tortured Ellison and his unwitting family if they remain in that cursed house. A

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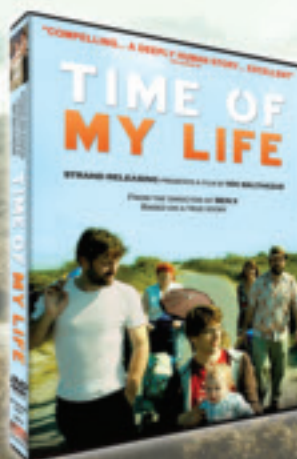
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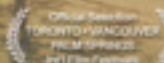
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formulaic and predictable film directed with a heavy hand by Scott Derrickson, this is an optional purchase, at best. (S. Granger)

Skyfall ★★★★★

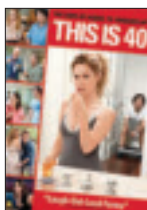
MGM, 143 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$39.99



James Bond celebrates his 50th cinematic birthday in grand style, with Daniel Craig embarking on his third exotic action-adventure, delivering a compelling performance as Ian Fleming's iconic secret agent. In the spectacular prologue, Bond chases a thief across rooftops in Istanbul's Grand Bazaar on a motorcycle, pursuing the man onto the top of a speeding train, and almost being killed in the process by fellow field agent Eve (Naomie Harris). What's been stolen is a device containing the real names of every British Secret Service agent embedded within terrorist organizations around the world. One-by-one, the agents are being assassinated, plus the new London headquarters of MI6 is blown up in a cyber-terrorist attack. This breach infuriates Intelligence and Security Chairman Gareth Mallory (Ralph Fiennes), who wants to retire M (Judi Dench). M remains, although MI6 is quite different after headquarters is moved underground to Churchill's old war bunker. Here, geeky, new weapons-and-technology guru Q (Ben Whishaw) arms 007 with only a Walther PPK and a tiny tracking device (no more exploding pens and other outlandish devices). Bond is off to Shanghai and Macau, where he's enticed by sexy Severine (Bérénice Marlohe), who leads him to flamboyantly ruthless Silva (Javier Bardem), one of the most deviously shrewd and dangerous of all Bond villains. Bond will ultimately rev up the Aston Martin DB5 and take off for Skyfall, his old Scottish manor house, which is presided over by its grizzled caretaker (Albert Finney). Under Sam Mendes' direction, *Skyfall* achieves a droll, deft balancing of the franchise's traditional espionage with a timely and thrilling sociopolitical twist. One of the best Bonds ever, this is highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** (S. Granger)

This Is 40 ★★

Universal, 134 min., R, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$34.98, Mar. 22



Reprising their *Knocked Up* supporting roles, Paul Rudd and Leslie Mann have morphed from *Lifestyles of the Rich, Ribald, and Rowdy* into *Lifestyles of the Selfish, Spoiled, and Stressed* in writer-director Judd Apatow's quasi-autobiographical *This Is 40*. In suburban Los Angeles, Pete (Rudd) and Debbie (Mann) are handling their respective 40th birthdays quite differently. Cupcake-loving Pete is celebrating, while Debbie, an angst-ridden sneaky-smoker/

health-food addict, is into denial. Not that Pete has much to rejoice about, however: his record label is in financial ruin (despite heroic efforts to make '70s star Graham Parker relevant again). And, unbeknownst to Debbie, Pete has been secretly slipping money to his spendthrift father (Albert Brooks), who has a young wife and identical triplet toddlers. Meanwhile, Debbie realizes that her trendy clothing boutique is losing money; in fact, thousands of dollars are missing and suspicion falls on her employees (Megan Fox, Charlyne Yi). Plus, Debbie is coping with a tense reconciliation with her estranged father (John Lithgow), who has re-married and started a second family. To call Pete and Debbie's biting, bickering relationship dysfunctional is a gross understatement (many of their intimate marital squabbles take place in the bathroom, where Pete hides to play games on his iPad). Mann is Apatow's real-life wife and their children appear as Pete and Debbie's overindulged offspring, with Jason Segel, Chris O'Dowd, Lena Dunham, and Melissa McCarthy lending support. A foul-mouthed, forced comedy that simply isn't funny, this is optional, at best. (S. Granger)

This Must Be the Place

★★★★1/2

Anchor Bay, 118 min., R, DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99, Mar. 12



Writer-director Paolo Sorrentino's *This Must Be the Place* successfully combines many elements—a tale of fathers and sons, a road movie, the continuing nightmare of the Holocaust—into a charming, touching, and visually ravishing film. Sean Penn is remarkable as Cheyenne, a reclusive one-time rock icon with a high-pitched voice and childlike way of speaking. Stooped over, with long, stringy hair that he keeps blowing away from his eyes, Cheyenne leaves his Dublin estate to cross the Atlantic in order to see his dying father. Arriving too late, Cheyenne takes up the old man's crusade to track down the Auschwitz guard who humiliated him while he was a prisoner, a mission that turns into a picaresque road trip, taking Cheyenne to Michigan, New Mexico, and Utah—towards a kind of personal redemption. Also featuring Frances McDormand and Judd Hirsch, this imaginative, sly, funny, and ultimately profound film is highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

Time of My Life ★★★★★1/2

Strand, 121 min., in Dutch w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99, Mar. 19

Filmmaker Nic Balthazar's striking, fact-based Belgian film stars Koen De Graeve as Milan "Mario" Verstraete, a 40-year-old man afflicted with multiple sclerosis, who campaigned for his government to legalize assisted suicide (as had

been won in neighboring Holland). We see Verstraete as a youthful anti-Cold War protester (and partner in a fleeting ménage-à-trois) with lifelong friend Thomas Dhondt (Geert Van Rampelberg). While Verstraete enters politics, Dhondt becomes a doctor; in fact, it is he who initially recognizes Verstraete's double-vision problems as the early onset of particularly aggressive MS. As his body fails him in the late 1990s, Verstraete editorializes in the media for "death with dignity," despite much controversy. The film does not minimize the pain that Verstraete's death wish causes for his family (especially his loving and religious parents), but there are also elements of humor and affirmation in what might otherwise be a very depressing story. A powerful, timely drama that touches on medical ethics and critical-care issues, this is highly recommended. (C. Cassidy)



The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn, Part 2

★★★

Summit, 115 min., PG-13, DVD: \$30.98, Blu-ray: \$39.99, Mar. 2



Proclaiming this syrupy, suspenseful, surreal final segment as the *Twilight* franchise's best may be a case of damning with faint praise. Birthed in Stephenie Meyer's YA fiction, the tormented central duo—brooding, chivalrous Edward Cullen (Robert Pattinson) and the formerly awkward and uncertain Bella Swan (Kristen Stewart)—are now the parents of a half-vampire/half-human daughter, Renesmee (Mackenzie Foy), who is constantly accompanied by protective werewolf Jacob Black (Taylor Lautner). Black imprinted on her at birth, claiming the infant as his soul mate, and nicknaming her Nessie. "Nessie?" Bella says indignantly. "You nicknamed my daughter after the Loch Ness monster?" Not surprisingly, trouble lies ahead for the Cullen clan as the contemptuous Volturi—led by devious Aro (Michael Sheen)—travel from Italy to the snowy Pacific Northwest to examine the half-immortal child and decide if a punishable crime of miscegenation has been committed. To bolster their ranks, the Cullens recruit undead comrades from around the world, including a revenge-seeking Transylvanian duo (Guri Weinberg, Noel Fisher) and an outspoken bohemian (Lee Pace). Director Bill Condon, who shot this film concurrently with *Part 1*, serves up plenty of outrageously campy CGI vampirism, with supernaturally formidable, butt-kicking vampire Bella getting seriously bloodthirsty during this ferocious final fantasy showdown. Recommended. (S. Granger)

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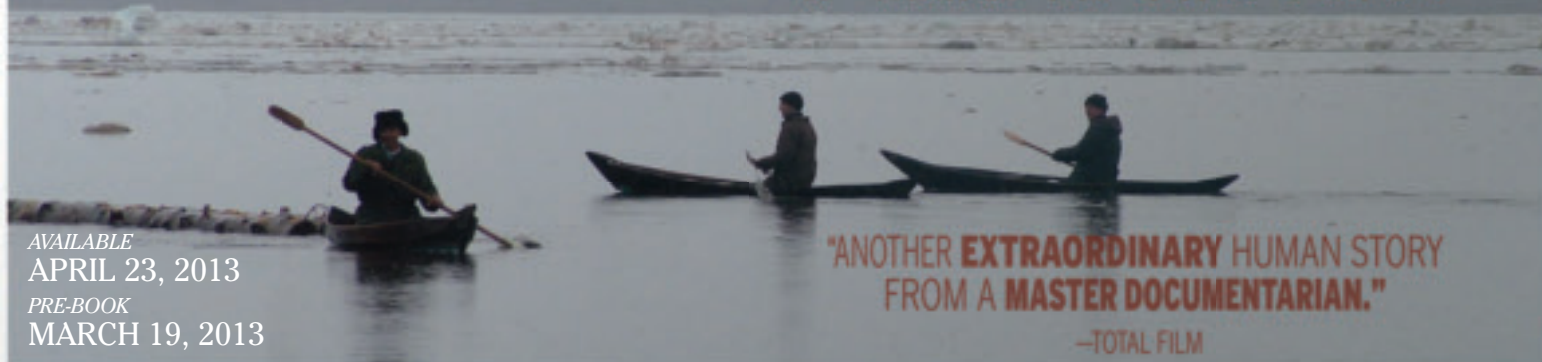
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White Elephant ★★1/2

Strand, 109 min., in Spanish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$27.99, Apr. 2

The title of filmmaker Pablo Trapero's drama refers to a large, unfinished hospital project—dating back to the Peron era in Argentina—on the border of a big-city slum. It has become the headquarters of crusading “slum priest” Father Julián (Ricardo Darín), who ministers to the city's worst barrio. When Father Julián discovers that he is terminally ill, he recruits a possible successor, Belgian Father Nicolás (Jérémie Renier), a self-doubting man traumatized by the fact that he survived a massacre in his village parish by death squads. The two renegade priests mediate turf wars between drug dealers and try to shield at-risk youth from murder by the brutal police—efforts not enthusiastically supported by the powerful Catholic hierarchy, which is focused on putting a hero-of-the-people priest, slain in the 1970s, into the process for Vatican-approved sainthood. *White Elephant* is less a spiritual drama than a social one, so viewers may not be particularly surprised when matinee-idol handsome Nicolás has a steamy topless sex scene with resident model-pretty activist Luciana (Martina Gusman). Still, the film vividly conveys an environment where unsparing violence can break out at any moment, and the sense of tragedy and entrenched injustice mostly overcomes the melodramatics and contrivance. A strong optional purchase. (C. Cassady)



The White Meadows

★★★1/2

Global Film Initiative, 93 min., in Farsi w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95

Iranian director Mohammad Rasoulof delivers a stinging critique of the oppressive, authoritarian culture of contemporary Iran in this bitter satire set on a metaphorical string of islands in a misty salt marsh. The “white meadows” refer to the bleached white beaches, coated by salt that has left them barren and dead, much like the local society: medieval cultures existing in isolated pockets. It's like an Iranian *Gulliver's Travels* exploring political and religious culture as seen through the eyes of a “tear collector,” a boatman from the mainland who comes to hear their woes and take away their sorrows by collecting their tears in a glass vial. Brutal rituals (such as human sacrifice, politely referred to as a “marriage” and treated as a holy honor by all but the virgin bride) and punishments abound amidst a culture of conformity and intolerance that is maintained by blind unquestioned obedience to patriarchy. Rebels, whether they are runaways, heroes, or artists with individual visions, don't survive



the smothering culture. Unfortunately, that isn't just metaphor: Rasoulof is currently serving time for his artistic “crimes” (along with other Iranian filmmakers), making this both a timely commentary on Iran and a timeless portrait of a barbaric culture that justifies its brutality with religion and tradition. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

The Wise Kids ★★1/2

Wolfe, 95 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95

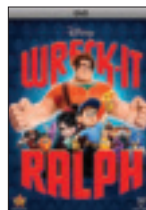
An award-winning favorite on the LGBT film festival circuit, writer-director Stephen Cone's warm, intelligent drama set in Charleston, SC, focuses on three teenage best friends—Tim (Tyler Ross), Brea (Molly Kunz), and Laura (Allison Torem)—who have just graduated from high school. All three belong to the same Baptist church, but only Laura seems to fully embrace religion. Brea is the pastor's daughter, but she is having a crisis of faith, while Tim is flummoxed about coming to terms with being gay. Cone wisely dials down the potential dramatic decibel level to allow the multiple stories to unfold in a quiet and sensitive manner that is both moving and surprising. As a result, the thorny issues of coming out, coming-of-age, and coming to terms with one's religious principles are blended into a subtle narrative that is both mature and laced with gentle humor. The three young actors at the story's core serve up marvelous performances—especially Torem, who takes what could have been a shrill stereotypical role and offers a thoughtful exploration of a religion-driven young person trying to cope with her friend's homosexuality. Highly recommended. (P. Hall)



Wreck-It Ralph ★★

Walt Disney, 108 min., PG, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99, Mar. 5

Video arcade characters come to life in Rich Moore's animated Disney charmer *Wreck-It Ralph*. At Litwak's Arcade, Ralph (voiced by John C. Reilly)—a demolition-expert villain in the game *Fix-It Felix, Jr.*—dreams of gaining respect and acceptance...like the game's titular good-guy with a magic hammer (Jack McBrayer), whose repair skills make him a hero to the in-game Nicelanders. A smashing bad guy for 30 years, Ralph confesses his secret at his weekly “Bad-Anon” 12-step support group. But Ralph's aspirations are thwarted until he visits Game Central Station, a huge surge-protector terminal, where he embarks on a personal quest that takes him through multiple digital gaming generations as he tries to prove that just because he was programmed to be evil it doesn't mean he can't become what he really desires. This inventive,



computer-animated feature recalls many video games of yesteryear as Ralph befriends nine year-old Vanellope von Schweetz (Sarah Silverman), a feisty girly “glitch” from the candy-colored, anime-influenced cart-racing game *Sugar Rush Speedway*, and grapples with fearless Sgt. Calhoun (Jane Lynch), who leads her squad against extraterrestrial computer viruses known as Cy-Bugs in the hi-def, hyper-violent *Hero's Duty*. Unfortunately, hot-tempered Ralph accidentally hatches a rogue Cy-Bug invader that clings to him as he escapes from one game to another and threatens to obliterate the entire Arcade. Gamers will appreciate the nostalgic insider jokes, while others will simply enjoy the fun story of this Oscar-nominated family film. Recommended. (S. Granger)

Zero Dark Thirty

★★★★

Sony, 157 min., R, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray: \$40.99, Mar. 19

Director Kathryn Bigelow traces the long hunt for Osama Bin Laden in this Oscar-nominated true-life thriller, concentrating on the arduous and often frustrating process of tracking down the elusive orchestrator of the 9/11 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center. Beginning with a dark screen and emotional sound-bites of phone calls from terrified people trapped in the Twin Towers on that terrible morning, *Zero Dark Thirty* segues two years ahead to Pakistan, where a captured prisoner is brutally interrogated and sexually humiliated. Single-minded CIA analyst Maya (Oscar nominee Jessica Chastain) is patiently gathering and diligently collating scraps of information from various sources. Over a long period, she gradually becomes convinced that, contrary to the opinion of the dismissive men who outrank her, Bin Laden is not hiding in a cave somewhere in the hills, but instead has taken refuge in a suburban compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan, where he continues to mastermind Al Qaeda operations. Although no one else is as sure as she is—including top-level Washington operatives—Maya's unwavering determination prevails in the decision-making process. The title is military jargon for 12:30 a.m., when Navy SEALs raided the compound on May 2, 2011. Highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** (S. Granger)



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Anger Management: Season One ★★★

Lionsgate, 2 discs, 220 min., not rated, DVD or Blu-ray: \$29.98



Charlie Sheen began his return to sitcoms—following a public meltdown that ended his reign at *Two and a Half Men*—with this direct (and very funny) shot at the media circus, in which the actor still boasts the easy presence, self-effacing attitude, deadpan reactions, and stealth timing that made him a superstar. In this FX-aired production, Sheen plays Charlie Goodson, a former pro ball-player and reformed rage-aholic, who is now an anger management counselor. Although effective on his job, Charlie's private life is a cascade of bad decisions, including sleeping with his own therapist, Kate (Selma Blair). But he has a surprisingly mature détente with his ex-wife, Jennifer (Shawnee Smith), and wants to be a good dad to his daughter, Sam (Daniela Bobadilla), easily the healthiest and most aware character in the show. Along with a supporting cast that includes Brett Butler (as the local bartender), Michael Boatman (Charlie's sardonic neighbor), and Barry Corbin (the obligatory crotchety old man in his weekly group), real-life pop Martin Sheen makes a guest appearance as Charlie's dad. Balancing raunchy jokes with heartwarming lessons, Sheen once again seems right at home. Compiling all 10 episodes from the 2012 debut season, extras include an interview with Sheen, a behind-the-scenes featurette, and a gag reel. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Being Human: The Complete Second Season ★★★

eOne, 4 discs, 572 min., not rated, DVD or Blu-ray: \$39.98

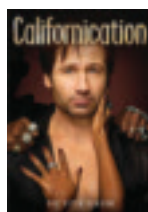


This Syfy-aired American incarnation of the original British series—about a vampire, a werewolf, and a ghost who become roommates—holds its own just fine as it continues to stake out a separate identity. After establishing the premise in the first season—three former humans attempting to live normal lives—the Boston-based show presents the characters with even greater challenges. Bloodsucking Aidan (Sam Witwer) is lured back into the schemes of the ruling undead monarchy, forcing him to kill once again; the feral Josh (Sam Huntington) passes his curse on to a woman and puts himself on the line to cure her; and the spectral Sally (Meaghan Rath) gives in to her dark side in her desire to interact with the material world. Together, the trio not only leave behind a lot of victims, but also lose the support they used to provide one another; as a result, they spiral into their respective destructive instincts. *Being Human* pulls out the stops during the season finale,

which sends all three characters into a limbo that leaves everything precariously on edge. Compiling all 13 episodes from the 2012 second season, extras include a “making-of” featurette, an interview, and footage from the 2012 San Diego Comic-Con. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Californication: The Fifth Season ★★

Paramount, 2 discs, 342 min., not rated, DVD: \$45.98



Showtime has a knack for making shows built around screwed-up, self-destructive characters who manage to be funny, sexy, and even likable while giving in to their worst impulses (and rarely considering how this will affect family and friends). One of the most entertaining is David Duchovny's Hank Moody, a novelist, screenwriter, and full-time hedonist who has—in seasons past—slept with hookers, students, and the teenage daughter of his former spouse's new boyfriend. This fifth season finds Hank flying from his New York City home base to Los Angeles in order to rewrite a screenplay. Here, Hank finds his ex-wife, Karen (Natascha McElhone), now remarried, and his daughter, Becca (Madeleine Martin), in love with Tyler (Scott Michael Foster), a smug, cheating jerk of a boyfriend (essentially a young Hank). Meanwhile, Hank develops a contentious relationship with rapper-turned-movie-star Samurai Apocalypse (RZA). This time around, Hank is relatively responsible and restrained, but he's still unable to actually commit to anyone, which brings out the ire and vengefulness of New York girlfriend Carrie (Natalie Zea). Unfortunately, while *Californication* can be engaging, it's mostly due to Duchovny's easygoing charm and chemistry with the other characters, not because of any life lessons discovered while routinely diving into excessive behavior. Compiling all 12 episodes from the 2012 fifth season, this is an optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

Dallas: The Complete First Season ★★★

Warner, 3 discs, 438 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.98



Daytime soap operas are an endangered species, but the nighttime variety is enjoying a resurgence—witness this TNT reboot of the CBS hit series *Dallas* (an international craze that ran for 14 seasons before expiring in 1991). The new series introduces a fresh generation of Southfork Ranch Ewings—J.R.'s bad-boy son, John Ross (Josh Henderson), and Bobby's goody two-shoes adopted son, Christopher (Jesse Metcalfe), who spar over the ranch, the family business, and Elena (Jordana Brewster), the woman they both love. But the real lure is the return of stars from the original—Patrick

Duffy as Bobby, Linda Gray as Sue Ellen, and especially Larry Hagman as that ultimate villain, J.R., the scheming, Stetson-wearing oil man who returns from a hospital stay determined to get back what he believes is his rightful inheritance, and willing to manipulate even his own offspring in order to achieve his ends (of course, John Ross proves to be as duplicitous as his old man, although not as adept). Even with Hagman on board, the new *Dallas* doesn't carry the same wacky fascination of its predecessor, and his death after filming the first half of the second season casts doubt over the series' future. But as the swan song of an engaging ham in his iconic role, this is a guilty pleasure. Compiling all 10 episodes from the 2012 first season, DVD extras include audio commentary on the pilot, behind-the-scenes featurettes, and deleted scenes. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

Deathtrap ★★★

Warner, 116 min., PG, Blu-ray: \$21.99



Based on Ira Levin's ingeniously plotted Broadway hit, 1982's *Deathtrap* is a witty and clever murder mystery built around four characters: Broadway playwright Sidney Bruhl (Michael Caine), whose career is sliding downhill; Myra (Dyan Cannon), his nervous wife; Helga (Irene Worth), the psychic next door; and Clifford (Christopher Reeve), a precocious student from one of Sidney's workshops who has written what looks to be a sure-fire stage hit called *Deathtrap*. In the first act, Sidney concocts a scheme to kill Clifford and steal his play, after which the story twists and turns and twists again. The majority of the action takes place in the Bruhls' home, and while director Sidney Lumet doesn't quite overcome the source's stagey quality, he deftly moves characters in and out of this tale that is more about concept and cleverness than story and character. In this battle of wits, Caine sinks his teeth into the role of a fading writer who pens a better plot for his own machinations than his theatrical works, while Reeve matches him as a cagey young man with a savage intelligence and a driving self-interest. Making its Blu-ray debut, this is recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Downton Abbey: Season 3 ★★★1/2

PBS, 3 discs, 495 min., not rated, DVD: \$49.99, Blu-ray: \$54.99

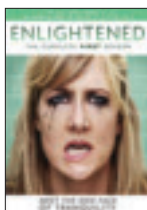


The third season of this lavish British costume drama, which has won a huge American audience during its PBS *Masterpiece Classic* airing, eases into the 1920s with weddings and funerals, births and deaths, and an aristocracy cherishing the past but reluctantly dragged into the present. While patriarch

Robert Crawley, Earl of Grantham (Hugh Bonneville), desperately looks for funds to keep his manor solvent after losing a fortune, he and his wife, Cora (Elizabeth McGovern), welcome her American mother, Martha (Shirley MacLaine), who arrives for the wedding of granddaughter Mary (Michelle Dockery) to Matthew Crawley (Dan Stevens). Martha brings her tart personality and modern ideas into a lively (and often affectionate) clash with Maggie Smith's Dowager Countess (their exchanges are highlights of the early episodes). But there's plenty more melodrama among the titled lords and ladies—as well as the servants, who have their own inviolate hierarchy, with butler Carson (Jim Carter) presiding at the top. Creator-writer Julian Fellowes' *Downton Abbey* continues to smartly mix a wistful idealization of this world of privilege and ritual with a wily critique of the aristocracy. Presenting the uncut U.K. versions of all eight regular episodes, originally broadcast in the U.S. in 2013, plus the special "A Journey to the Highlands" finale, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Enlightened: The Complete First Season

★★★
HBO, 2 discs, 300 min., TV-MA, DVD: \$34.98, Blu-ray: \$39.98



Actress Laura Dern and writer Mike White teamed up to create this offbeat and quite compelling original series for HBO, a mix of social satire and character drama starring Dern as corporate executive Amy Jellicoe, who returns to work following a very public breakdown and a subsequent holistic treatment program. Amy vows to live a more centered, peaceful, helpful existence—"I will change and I will be an agent of change" is her mantra—but that's not easy, especially after she's demoted to the basement with the rest of the firm's washouts and losers. Even as Amy tries to come to terms with her ex-husband, Levi (Luke Wilson), and connect with her emotionally distant mother, Helen (Diane Ladd, Dern's real-life mother), she hasn't managed to conquer her own anger and solipsism. Amy is concerned with other people in an abstract sense (she's on a campaign to make the company more environmentally and socially responsible) but she fails to see how her behavior actually impacts those around her. Despite the cutting satire, *Enlightened* also offers a compassionate portrait of an individual who really wants to be better but doesn't know how. Granted, the show doesn't shy away from Amy's failures or contradictions, but it also doesn't ridicule or criticize; instead, the series is more interested in watching Amy figure things out and slowly progress toward becoming the person she imagines she is. Compiling all 10 episodes from 2011, extras include audio commen-

taries and intros by White. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Girls: The Complete First Season

★★★
HBO, 300 min., TV-MA, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99; Blu-ray/DVD Combo: 3 discs, \$49.99



Creator-writer-star Lena Dunham offers a very different perspective on life in the Big Apple than HBO's previous femme-centric comedy series, *Sex and the City*, focusing on four educated young women from middle-class backgrounds—aspiring writer Hannah (Dunham), art gallery assistant Marnie (Allison Williams), and cousins Jessa (Jemima Kirke) and Shoshanna (Zosia Mamet)—who are measuring the distance between their aspirations and their realities, with frank and sometimes discomfiting humor. Dunham assigns most of the humiliations to her own character, who puts up with a self-absorbed boyfriend named Adam (Adam Driver) and wants her parents' financial support so she doesn't have to quit her (unpaid) internship and get a job while she continues to not write her novel. *Girls* isn't much like its sister shows—the sex here is awkward, the romance is uncomfortable rather than cute, and there's a lot of settling for the status quo rather than insisting on something better. As the Golden Globe-winning first season progresses, the four main characters—and the men in their lives—gradually become more interesting. Compiling all 10 episodes from the 2012 debut run, extras include audio commentaries, interviews, and a behind-the-scenes featurette. The Blu-ray release adds audition footage, deleted scenes, and bonus DVD and digital copies. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Gypsy

★★★
Warner, 143 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$21.99



Based on the memoirs of stripper Gypsy Rose Lee, this movie musical based on the hit stage play is as much the story of Rose (Rosalind Russell), a domineering mother who pushes her two daughters into an itinerant existence on the vaudeville circuit, as it is of Louise (Natalie Wood), the wallflower daughter who becomes the legendary burlesque queen. Most of the film focuses on the early years, when Louise exists happily in the shadow of "Dainty June" (Ann Jillian), her outgoing, naturally talented younger sister. Until Louise is ultimately shoved into the spotlight, Wood plays the role as an easygoing tomboy who wants to please but would rather see mama pull back and just get married to her potential fourth husband, the impossibly patient Herbie (Karl Malden). Russell's Rose, meanwhile, is big and brassy, blasting her signature numbers

("Some People," "Everything's Coming Up Roses," "Rose's Turn") with such gusto that it's clear she's living her own show business dreams through her children. The burlesque scenes are played with a wink and a nod, making this a surprisingly family-friendly (given the storyline) musical. Made in 1962, *Gypsy* feels like an old-fashioned affair, with big musical numbers, colorful sets, flamboyant costumes, and outsized performances. Despite being a bit long and occasionally lumbering, the film remains a fan favorite. Making a welcome debut on Blu-ray, extras include two musical numbers cut from the movie. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Hannah and Her Sisters

★★★1/2
Fox, 107 min., PG-13, Blu-ray: \$24.99



Woody Allen's 1986 *Hannah and Her Sisters*—his biggest success since *Annie Hall*—finds the writer-director returning to the same general subject matter of modern life and the challenges of sustaining romantic relationships, but this time within the context of family. Siblings Hannah (Mia Farrow), Lee (Barbara Hershey), and Holly (Dianne Wiest) are part of a tightly-knit clan presided over by their often bickering parents, Norma and Evan (Maureen O'Sullivan, Farrow's real-life mother, and Lloyd Nolan). Over the course of two years (marked by three Thanksgiving celebrations), Hannah's husband, Elliot (Michael Caine), falls in love with Lee, who is involved with tortured Soho artist Frederick (Max von Sydow). Meanwhile, Hannah's ex-spouse, Mickey (Allen), renews a relationship with struggling actress Holly. Like most of Allen's characters, all are affluent and intellectually and artistically inclined, and the bittersweet story superbly balances human drama with neurotic comedy (most of it supplied by Mickey, who searches for God through various religions), while displaying a warmth not always seen in Allen's films. Playful, affectionate, and very funny, the film is a lovely celebration of true romance and Allen's belief that the power of laughter can save the human soul. Nominated for Best Picture and Best Director, Caine and Wiest won Academy Awards for their supporting performances, while Allen took home the Oscar for Original Screenplay. Also featuring Lewis Black, Carrie Fisher, Julie Kavner, and Julia Louis-Dreyfus, *Hannah and Her Sisters* makes a welcome debut on Blu-ray. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

The Hour 2

★★★1/2
BBC, 2 discs, 360 min., not rated, DVD: \$34.98, Blu-ray: \$39.98

Upping the ante on the first season, this superb British series about a BBC news show set during the 1950s stars Romola Garai as ambitious and dedicated producer Bel Rowley,

Ben Whishaw as fearless (and somewhat reckless) investigative reporter Freddie Lyon, and Dominic West as on-camera host Hector Madden, a high-living celebrity whose ego and womanizing are a cover for his self-doubt.



Newsworthy this season are rumblings of a government conspiracy behind the decision to put U.S. nuclear missiles on British soil; a scandal that hits a member of the team; and a new boss in the form of Randall Brown (Peter Capaldi), a seemingly dour, old-school veteran who arrives as head of news and turns out to be sharper and more dedicated than any of them initially realize. The writing is excellent, offering interesting personal stories set against the late '50s culture—a time of more pronounced racism and sexism—while exploring a dark tale of political corruption and blackmail wrapped up in Cold War anxiety. Compiling all six 2012 episodes, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

House of Cards Trilogy ★★½

BBC, 617 min., not rated, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$49.99

Adapted by acclaimed scripter Andrew Davies from the novels by Michael Dobbs, this

compilation of three BBC miniseries' (which aired in the U.S. on *Masterpiece Theatre*) serves up a ferocious political satire. In all three, Ian Richardson stars as Francis Urquhart (F.U. to his friends), the Machiavellian Chief Whip of Britain's Conservative Party—a most seductively ruthless politician who entertainingly claws his way to the top. In *House of Cards* (1990), Urquhart declares war on everyone who stands in his way, using deceit, blackmail, murder, and even a lovely young journalist (Susannah Harker) until she becomes a liability. Having reached the pinnacle of power in *To Play the King* (1993), Urquhart takes on an idealistic monarch (Michael Kitchen) who is using his symbolic office to curb Urquhart's corrupt and abusive behavior. And just as Urquhart is ready to retire with his reputation and fortune assured, he finds himself the pawn in another political game in *The Final Cut* (1995), the juicy conclusion to the rocket rise and fitting fall of this despicably fascinating political devil. Adding to the fun is the conceit of Richardson turning to the camera for intimate asides that make viewers not just privy to his maneuverings, but practically accessories to his crimes. Released to coincide with the

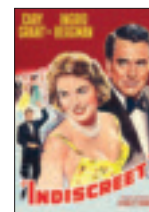


American remake starring Kevin Spacey now appearing on Netflix, *House of Cards Trilogy* is remastered for DVD and bows on Blu-ray. Extras include episode audio commentaries, and behind-the-scenes featurettes. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Indiscreet ★★★

Olive, 100 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95

Directed by Stanley Donen, this 1958 American romance with a continental attitude was adapted by Norman Krasna from his Broadway play *Kind Sir* and cagily re-titled to cash in on the cast, which reunites *Notorious* stars Cary Grant and Ingrid Bergman. The latter plays Anna Kalman, a famous London-based stage actress introduced to charming NATO economic expert Philip Adams (Grant) by her sister Margaret (Phyllis Calvert) and brother-in-law Alfred (Cecil Parker), who are eager to break the melancholy Anna out of her funk. The attraction is immediate, but Philip is married, which does not stop them from engaging in a passionate liaison when he's posted to Paris. Donen directs with a deft touch, conjuring up a delicately discreet drama during the first two acts before a comic twist sends the film into broad comedy. Ulti-



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mately, however, the plot is fairly thin, and while sustained by the charm, grace, and chemistry of Grant and Bergman, *Indiscreet* never really breaks free of its stage origins (playing out largely in Anna's lavish apartment). Still, this is quite entertaining and sure to please fans of Grant and Bergman, although hardly the best from the director or the stars (Donen and Grant would team up again a few years later for the effervescent *Charade*). Recommended. (S. Axmayer)

Jackson Five: The Complete Animated Series ★★

Classic Media, 506 min., not rated, DVD: 2 discs, \$32.99; Blu-ray: 4 discs, \$39.99



In 1971, beloved family pop group the Jackson Five hit Saturday morning TV in animated form for a cartoon series produced by Rankin/Bass. Serving up a mix of comedy, light-hearted adventure, and music, the show featured voice actors (Joel Cooper as Jermaine, Donald Fullilove as Michael, Mike Martinez as Tito, Edmund Sylvers as Marlon, and Craig Grandy as Jackie), and each episode included two complete songs by the actual Jackson Five, such as "ABC," "I'll Be There," "I Want You Back," and "Never Can Say Goodbye." The Jackson Five are all cute, fun-loving lads, traveling to concerts in a family jalopy (when not flying coach), detouring on comic adventures (accidentally getting drafted, being mistaken for outlaws in the Wild West, crash landing on a desert island), and being aided by Michael's pet snake, Rosie, and a pair of mice named Ray and Charles. Diana Ross reportedly voices herself in the pilot (a storybook rewrite of the group's discovery), and Paul Frees takes on an entire supporting cast of male characters. Overall, this is, like, pretty groovy, with the funky music-video breaks sporting images and strobing rainbow colors right out of Peter Max posters. More likely to appeal to nostalgic adults than contemporary kids, this compilation presenting all 23 episodes from 1971-72 is recommended. (S. Axmayer)

Justified: The Complete Third Season ★★

Sony, 3 discs, 541 min., not rated, DVD: \$55.99, Blu-ray: \$65.99



One of the better cable dramas on TV, this FX-aired crime show is based on a story (and later novel) by Elmore Leonard, maintaining the flavor of the author's work in its tale of U.S. Marshall Raylan Givens (Timothy Olyphant), a cowboy of a lawman punitively assigned to his home state of Kentucky (and the Southern crime culture he thought he had escaped). As in previous seasons, this one is built around a self-con-

tained narrative arc while also following the rocky roads of the core characters. Here, Givens finds himself pitted against a pair of villains: Chicago mob operator Robert Quarles (Neal McDonough)—essentially a carpetbagger who comes to Kentucky to establish a drug empire in Givens' backyard—and a backwoods godfather named Ellstin Limehouse (Mykelti Williamson), who conducts his shifty business from a barbecue shack. *Justified* features an almost instinctively self-destructive hero in Givens (who sabotages any hope of reconciliation with his ex-wife this season), vivid supporting players (especially Walton Goggins as philosophical crime boss Boyd Crowder), and smart screenwriting in a pulp-fiction format. Compiling all 13 episodes from the 2012 third season, extras include audio commentaries, behind-the-scenes featurettes, deleted scenes, and outtakes. The Blu-ray edition also features an interview with Olyphant and Goggins. Recommended. (S. Axmayer)

Kit Carson ★★½

Hen's Tooth, 97 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.95



This 1940 Western stars athletic B-movie leading man Jon Hall (famed for his later Technicolor sword-and-sandal films) as famous scout Kit Carson, with Dana Andrews as Capt. John C. Fremont—a stiff, cultured cavalry officer and Carson's rival for the affections of spirited settler Dolores Murphy (Lynn Bari). The classic tale portrays Carson as a freedom-loving explorer and trapper, traveling through the wide-open frontier with Ape (Ward Bond), his buddy (and conscience), who pushes Carson to help the pioneers, and draws the loner into considering the idea of marriage and social living. While Carson is drafted into aiding Fremont and his troops in guiding a wagon train to California, the Mexican government (which controlled the territory at the time) sends guns to the plains Indians to declare war on the migrating Americans. The script is unadventurous and episodic, while the racial politics are era-specific primitive: the Mexican officials are corrupt schemers and the Native Americans are bloodthirsty savages. But George B. Seitz, a studio vet who helmed almost every Andy Hardy movie, is a decent action director who makes effective use of Monument Valley locations to give the film an epic scope. Despite historical inaccuracies, this is ultimately a solid piece of filmmaking that should satisfy genre fans, making it a strong optional purchase. (S. Axmayer)

Luck: The Complete First Season

★★★½

HBO, 3 discs, 550 min., TV-MA, DVD: \$59.99, Blu-ray: \$79.99

The first and only season of this mag-

nificent HBO original series about thoroughbred horse racing culture was created and written by David Milch (of *Deadwood* fame).

A marvel of character and storytelling, with a chemistry, rhythm, and sensibility unlike anything else on TV, *Luck* features Dustin Hoffman as Ace, a mobster fresh out of prison who is determined to make his mark with a gambling empire, using a California track as his base. But much of the color comes from the local denizens, including horse owner Walter (Nick Nolte), Peruvian trainer Turo (John Ortiz), jockeys Rosie (Kerry Condon) and Leon (Tom Payne), veterinarian Jo (Jill Hennessy), driver Gus (a marvelously loose and easy Dennis Farina), and an oddly comic quartet of gamblers—Jerry (Jason Gedrick), Marcus (Kevin Dunn), Lonnie (Ian Hart), and Renzo (Ritchie Coster)—who live in adjoining rooms in a seedy motel and pitch in to buy a horse of their own. Unfortunately, *Luck* will never see a second season; the show was shut down after the accidental death of three horses. Collecting all nine episodes from 2011-12, extras include audio commentaries and behind-the-scenes featurettes. An amazing series full of unexpected character journeys, surprising friendships, thrilling races, and heartbreaking losses, this is highly recommended. (S. Axmayer)



A Man Vanishes

★★★½

Icarus Films, 4 discs, 130 min., in Japanese w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$44.98



Japanese director Shohei Imamura's (1926-2006) riveting 1967 documentary (or, more properly, quasi-documentary) follows the investigation of the disappearance of a salesman named Tadashi Oshima shortly before his planned marriage. Tadashi's fiancée, Yoshie Hayakawa, joins the search, and over the course of the film—which includes interviews with co-workers, relatives, and chance witnesses—Yoshie not only becomes attracted to the head investigator but also comes to suspect that her sister was having an affair with Tadashi (and might have killed him). The unsettling character of the narrative is enhanced by grainy images, overlapping sound that is often at odds with the visuals, and periodic cuts to a psychic whom Tadashi's mother consults for news of her son. In one astonishing sequence, Yoshie breaks the fourth wall by turning to Imamura himself, who not only admits that he doesn't know how or why Tadashi disappeared, but abruptly orders the set on which the scene is being filmed to be struck. A work of stunning originality, *A Man Vanishes* marked the beginning of Imamura's embrace of nonfiction film, and this set includes five

examples of his later works: *In Search of the Unreturned Soldiers in Thailand* and *In Search of the Unreturned Soldiers in Malaysia* (both from 1971), *The Pirates of Bubuan* (1972), *Outlaw-Matsu Comes Home* (1973), and *Karayuki-san, the Making of a Prostitute* (1975). An essential set for any foreign cinema collection, this is highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

Pan Am: The Complete Series ★★1/2

Sony, 3 discs, 591 min., not rated, DVD: \$30.99



Following the lead of *Mad Men*, this short-lived big-budget network drama recreates the early 1960s world of a quartet of young stewardesses who find a freedom that other careers simply don't offer women. The ostensible star is Christina Ricci as Maggie, a smart, tart, rebellious young woman who likes to push the boundaries of proper feminine behavior in an unforgiving corporate culture where appearances are everything; but the more interesting storylines go to costars Kelli Garner as Kate, a toughened pro recruited by the CIA; Margot Robbie as Laura, an idealistic Marilyn-esque beauty who ends up in the New York art scene; and Karine Vanasse, who brings a cosmopolitan air as Colette, a sweet and worldly French flight attendant. Naturally, *Pan Am* also features some pilots (Michael Mosley and Mike Vogel) and love interests (including Goran Visnjic as a Soviet-bloc activist), but the women's stories remain the focus. Unfortunately, while the world-traveling plots bring viewers to some gorgeous locations, and the evocation of the era is terrific (including the period fashions), the writing never quite rises above nighttime soap opera, tipping too frequently into romantic wooziness and spy-movie complications. Compiling all 14 episodes from its single 2011-12 season, extras include an interview with former Pan Am stewardess and executive producer Nancy Hult Ganis, and behind-the-scenes featurettes. An optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

Pier Paolo Pasolini's Trilogy of Life ★★1/2

Criterion, 352 min., in Italian w/English subtitles, R/NC-17, DVD: 4 discs, \$79.95; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$79.95



In the early 1970s, Pier Paolo Pasolini—an Italian gay radical author and filmmaker who shocked and fascinated the European intelligentsia—attracted a larger international audience with this gleefully lusty trilogy: *The Decameron* (1971), *The Canterbury Tales* (1972), and *Arabian Nights* (1974), all of which celebrated the pleasures of the flesh by retelling bawdy tales drawn from Boccaccio, Chaucer, and the legendary *Thousand and One Nights*. Pasolini cast these stories in

graphically comic, erotic terms, emphasizing the muck of the environment and the purely sensual desires that drive men and women to acts of greed and carnal indulgence. While plenty of skin is on display here, the nudity is always presented in warts-and-all fashion (mostly featuring amateurs chosen for their non-movie-star looks) and earthy surroundings. Pasolini himself appears as an assistant to the painter Giotto to reflect on the inferiority of a completed artwork compared with one's dream of what it might have been, a hint—perhaps—of the filmmaker's later disenchantment, which led him to repudiate the trilogy. All three films feature stylishly evocative and often astonishing imagery (such as the surrealistic vision of hell in *The Canterbury Tales*)—that shines in the new transfers here. Presented on remastered DVD and debuting on Blu-ray, the set's abundant extras include visual essays on *The Decameron* and *Arabian Nights*; documentaries on *The Canterbury Tales* and *The Decameron*; deleted scenes from *Arabian Nights*; the 2005 TV documentary *Via Pasolini* on the filmmaker; interviews with composer Ennio Morricone and production designer Dante Ferretti; archival footage of Pasolini at the Berlin Film Festival; and an illustrated booklet of critical essays, along with a translation of Pasolini's "rejection" of the trilogy. Clearly designed for adult audiences—*The Canterbury Tales* and *Arabian Nights* both carry NC-17 ratings—this is highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

The Qatsi Trilogy

★★★1/2

Criterion, 3 discs, 274 min., PG, DVD or Blu-ray: \$79.95



Non-narrative film lovers will certainly welcome *The Qatsi Trilogy*, which compiles all three dialogue-free visual essays directed by Godfrey Reggio and memorably scored by Philip Glass. 1983's *Koyaanisqatsi* (a Hopi word, roughly translating as "life out of balance") is thematically the strongest of the trio, as the camera moves from the austere majestic landscapes of the American West to the metropolis, where time-lapse photography and slow-motion sequences capture the joy, sadness, and monotony of factory work and city life. 1988's *Powaqqatsi* ("life in transition") shifts the attention from industrial America to the Third World—Brazil, Egypt, Kenya, Peru, and Nepal. During the first half of the film, we see a lot of feet, hands, and backs: people working the earth (in one wonderful overhead-shot sequence, a woman tosses wheat toward the sky while others rhythmically wave hand fans to blow away the chaff—a beautiful scene, reminiscent of a Busby Berkeley routine, except that the choreography here is totally natural). In the second half, the spotlight is on the cities, as we watch wave after wave of sometimes shuffling, sometimes bustling humanity. 2002's

Naqoyqatsi ("life in conflict") is not quite in the same league: heavily focused on war, the film bombards the viewer with hypnotic and disturbing visuals of marching troops, military action, and half-destroyed buildings, but doesn't say much about the horror of war beyond the fact that it is horrible. Somewhat paradoxically, *The Qatsi Trilogy* points a critical finger at encroaching technology, yet also manages to find the beauty inherent in some of the most dehumanizing of environments. Remastered for DVD and debuting on Blu-ray, the set features extras including Reggio's 1992 documentary short *Anima Mundi*, a demo version of *Koyaanisqatsi* (with a soundtrack featuring poet Allen Ginsberg), behind-the-scenes featurettes, interviews, a new video afterward by Reggio, a 2003 panel discussion on *Naqoyqatsi*, and a booklet with essays. Highly recommended. (R. Pitman)

Schizo ★★1/2

Kino Lorber, 109 min., R, DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$24.95



This 1976 offering from British director Pete Walker—who, like Roger Corman and William Castle, made exploitation movies in the 1960s and 1970s that mixed sex and shocks—boasts a title that is obviously intended to remind potential ticket-buyers of *Psycho*. But, like virtually all attempts to imitate Hitchcock's original, it falls considerably short. An announcement of star ice skater Samantha's (Lynne Frederick) impending wedding brings back an unwelcome stalker named William Haskin (Jack Watson)—a brooding man whom Samantha blames for the brutal murder of her mother. Soon Samantha's friends begin to be killed off in horrendous fashion (along with others, such as a psychic Samantha approaches for help)—and Haskin threatens to come after her as well (once while she's in the shower, of course). Walker tries to keep viewers in suspense before delivering what's meant to be a big final twist (which is loudly telegraphed by the title itself) in this gritty, low-budget production. Remastered for DVD and bowing on Blu-ray, extras include an interview with the director. Likely to be of interest to genre fans, this is a strong optional purchase. [Note: *Schizo* is also included in the newly released *The Pete Walker Collection*, along with the director's *House of Whipcord*, *The Comeback* and *Die Screaming, Marianne*.] (F. Swietek)

The Seven-Per-Cent Solution ★★★

Shout! Factory, 113 min., PG, DVD/Blu-ray Combo: \$26.99



Based on the same-titled novel by Nicholas Meyer, this 1976 film imagines a meeting between Sherlock Holmes (Nicol Williamson) and Sigmund Freud (Alan Arkin),

as engineered by Dr. Watson (Robert Duvall) and Holmes' older brother, Mycroft (Charles Gray). Worried about Holmes' cocaine addiction (the title refers to his preferred mix of 7 percent cocaine and 93 percent water), the well-meaning conspirators plant fake clues to rouse Holmes from depression and lead him to Austria. His subsequent introduction to Freud develops into a collaboration on a case when one of Freud's patients, former drug addict Lola Deveraux (Vanessa Redgrave), is kidnapped by a Turkish pasha. The ensuing chase leads to a washbuckling encounter on an express train through Europe. Meanwhile, Freud investigates the roots of Holmes' addiction and his obsession with James Moriarty (played as a mousy little man by Laurence Olivier). Williamson seems overly mannered as Holmes, and Duvall is awkwardly miscast as the stalwart Watson; but Arkin's Freud is a witty match for Holmes' logic and intellect, and Redgrave manages to be both fragile and forceful. Meyer's book is one of the best of the Holmes mysteries to take on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's famous sleuth, and director Herbert Ross here demonstrates an appreciation for the era and the characters. Extras include an interview with Meyer. A timely DVD/Blu-ray Combo release that nicely complements the resurgence of interest in Holmes (as evidenced in the two popular series' *Sherlock* and *Elementary*), this is recommended. (S. Axmayer)

Shameless: The Complete Second Season

★★★

Warner, 630 min., not rated, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.99; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$49.99



The second season of the American incarnation of the British dramedy about an unconventionally functional dysfunctional family—relocated from Manchester to South Chicago—finds the Gallagher clan still getting by without any help from their reprobate single father, Frank (William H. Macy). Eldest daughter Fiona (Emmy Rossum) keeps watch over her five siblings while hustling for jobs and trying to get ahead in the world. Plenty of drama takes place in this crazy household: Lip (Jeremy Allen White), the family genius, drops out of high school to help his pregnant girlfriend; younger brother Ian (Cameron Monaghan) tries to enlist in West Point; and Grandma Peg (guest star Louise Fletcher) comes to stay...after being released from prison. But life grows really complicated when the kids' bipolar mom (Chloe Webb) sweeps in with her particular brand of reckless chaos. And just when Fiona seems to be settled in to the new status quo, boyfriend Steve (Justin Chatwin) is back, with a hot new (and unwanted) Brazilian wife—a marriage not just of convenience but of survival after a run-in with a drug lord. True to its name, *Shameless* features loads of bad behavior,

black comedy, and messed-up people, but family loyalty and the support of a few good friends keep this clan on track. Presenting all 12 episodes from the 2012 second season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes, cast interviews, deleted scenes, and a music video. Recommended. (S. Axmayer)

The Simpsons: The Fifteenth Season

Fox, 484 min., not rated, DVD: 4 discs, \$49.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$59.99



Featuring burn-out metal-loving bus driver Otto on the cover, this 22-episode 2003-04 15th season of Matt Groening's iconic animated series boasts a bevy of gems. The set kicks off with the annual "Treehouse of Horror" Halloween show, an Emmy-nominated three-parter that finds Homer accidentally taking over the role of Death, nerdy Professor Frink's father being brought back to life, and Bart and Milhouse using a magical stopwatch to play pranks. Other episodes feature guest stars such as Glenn Close, back as Homer's mother ("My Mother the Carjacker"); Isabel Sanford and William Daniels in "Milhouse Doesn't Live Here Anymore"; Jon Lovitz returning as Marge's high school flame in "The Ziff Who Came to Dinner"; and Sarah Michelle Gellar as a rough 'tween Bart meets in juvie. The best stories here are "Catch 'Em If You Can," in which the kids track Marge and Homer across the country on a missed-out vacation, and the hilarious U.K.-set "The Regina Monologues," with Tony Blair, Ian McKellen, and J.K. Rowling, who sarcastically answers Lisa's request concerning the fate of Harry Potter, "He grows up and marries you. Is that what you want to hear?" Extras include episode audio commentaries, an intro by Groening, a behind-the-scenes featurette, deleted scenes, and sketch galleries. Exclusive to the Blu-ray release are bonus episodes (from earlier seasons). Recommended. (J. Williams-Wood)

Smash: Season One

★★★1/2

Universal, 4 discs, 649 min., not rated, DVD: \$44.98



A backstage-musical drama set around the creation of a (wholly fictional) Broadway production, the big-budget NBC series *Smash* earns high marks for its original show tunes (thanks to the veteran songwriting team of Marc Shaiman and Scott Wittman) and a cast that features stage-seasoned performers such as Megan Hilty and Christian Borle, along with some TV vets. Unfortunately, the show also wobbles between contrived drama and soap opera silliness. *American Idol* sweetheart Katharine McPhee stars as small-town girl Karen Cartwright, who competes for the

lead with experienced pro Ivy Lynn (Hilty), while Debra Messing is author and lyricist Julia Houston and Borle is Tom Levitt, her sassy composing partner. Jack Davenport and Anjelica Huston costar, and Uma Thurman fills a guest slot as a movie star who is cast to ramp up box-office appeal. Filled with divas and backstabbers, affairs and betrayals, hard lessons and double-crosses, *Smash* is a glitzy affair with impressive musical numbers and melodramatic clichés big enough to play to the cheap seats (such as a sabotage attempt involving a peanut allergy). Compiling all 15 episodes from 2012's first season, extras include extended musical numbers, behind-the-scenes featurettes, deleted scenes, and a gag reel. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmayer)

Sometimes a Great Notion

Shout! Factory, 114 min., PG, Blu-ray: \$19.98



Based on the novel by Ken Kesey, 1970's *Sometimes a Great Notion* tells the story of a family of rugged individualists living in Oregon lumber country. Flinty patriarch Henry Stamper (Henry Fonda) and his eldest son, Hank (Paul Newman), share a confrontational relationship with the world, which comes to a head during a logging strike. The Stampers continue to fulfill a timber contract, bringing them into direct conflict with the local community. Michael Sarrazin costars as Hank's younger half-brother, Leeland, who returns home after an extended absence, sporting long hair and maverick ideas about personal responsibility and equality, while Lee Remick is Hank's frustrated wife, Viv. Newman directs with a focus on the physicality of the Stampers' lives, from the hard work of logging in the Oregon hills to the rough-and-tumble play that often leads to brawling. The Stampers are not necessarily heroes—Henry seems to stir the pot for his own amusement (he's either the last of the frontier mavericks or an ornery old crank who rails against anyone telling him what to do)—but the tension between the Stampers' individualism and a sense of communal responsibility feels just as relevant today. Highlighting the rugged beauty of the Pacific Northwest, this low-key drama about a vanishing way of life—making its Blu-ray debut—is recommended. (S. Axmayer)

Stalingrad

★★★
Hen's Tooth, 138 min., in German w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95



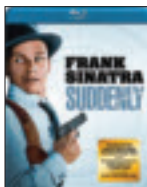
Joseph Vilsmaier's sweeping WWII epic *Stalingrad* (1993) follows a happy-go-lucky band of German soldiers who are sent into hell: Russia, circa 1942. One of Hitler's less intelligent military moves

led to a second-front war that would become mired in protracted fighting as the German Blitzkrieg met its match in the Russian winter. The story focuses, in particular, on a group of soldiers—including Rollo (Jochen Nickel), Otto (Sylvester Groth), Fritz (Dominique Horwitz), and Müller (Sebastian Rudolph)—under the command of a green lieutenant, Hans von Witzland (Thomas Kretschmann), whose initial high spirits are dashed by the relentless brutality of war as the Battle of Stalingrad grinds on. Gradually, the men come to realize that Hitler is a meaningless concept on the Russian steppes—where survival takes priority. Heroism turns out to be not taking the enemy's position at all costs, but rather looking out for one's companions in a world where madness has become the norm. A haunting film that features spectacular battle sequences, *Stalingrad* reminds us that war unceasingly takes while giving very little in return. Re-released on DVD and debuting on Blu-ray, extras include a "making-of" featurette. Recommended. (R. Pitman)

Suddenly ★★1/2

Image, 76 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$19.99

In 1954, just as his career was moving into a new, mature phase, Frank Sinatra starred in this low-budget thriller that cast the affable screen performer as the vicious would-be presidential assassin John Baron. Most of the film takes place in a suburban house overlooking a train station in the normally quiet American town of Suddenly, where the president is scheduled to make a stopover. The ensuing story is more about tension and psychological sparring than action as Baron and his confederates take a family hostage, along with wounded Sheriff Tod Shaw (Sterling Hayden), who uses psychology in a desperate attempt to distract and engage Baron. Sinatra turns out to be very good at playing a cold-blooded psycho under a cool façade of easy banter and amoral philosophy. Richard Sale's script, meanwhile, hammers out a message of vigilance and military might in the face of threats against democracy, making *Suddenly* very much a piece of Cold War propaganda. Directed by Lewis Allen, the film became something of a cult item when it was revealed that Lee Harvey Oswald watched it a few days before assassinating President John F. Kennedy (Sinatra subsequently had it pulled from circulation). Although *Suddenly* sports some blemishes (and one brief moment of severe damage), the film is well-mastered, overall, from a sharp and vivid print. Blu-ray extras include two new audio commentaries (one by Frank Sinatra Jr.; the other by film historian Dr. Drew Casper), Francis Thompson's impressionistic 1957 short "N.Y., N.Y.," and an image gallery. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)



White Zombie ★★★

Kino, 67 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95

The Halperin brothers (producer Edward and director Victor) effectively re-create the gothic mood of the Universal horror classics of the day on a B-movie budget for this 1932 film, in which Bela Lugosi sinks his teeth into his best role since Dracula, playing languorous hypnotist and voodoo master "Murder" Legendre. The story begins with the nighttime arrival of Madeline Short (Madge Bellamy) and her fiancé, Neil (John Harron), to Haiti, where they witness a mysterious burial and come face to face with the searing-eyed and goateed Legendre, a menacing and ferociously vindictive figure who supplies the local mills with zombie laborers and turns his enemies into personal servants. Plantation owner Charles Beaumont (Robert Frazer) wants to marry the engaged Madeline himself, and her refusal leads him to enlist the services of Legendre, which brings unanticipated consequences. While the supporting players are a bit stiff, Lugosi is mesmerizing, and the oppressive atmosphere of fear and almost perpetual darkness inhabited by the hollow-eyed walking dead makes this an effectively chilling watch. An overlooked classic of early American horror and the first true zombie movie, *White Zombie* is presented here in both digitally remastered and unrestored versions, with extras including audio commentary by film historian Frank Thompson, an interview with Lugosi, and a stills gallery. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



World Without End ★★★

Sony, 2 discs, 389 min., not rated, DVD: \$65.99, Blu-ray: \$75.99

Technically a sequel to *The Pillars of the Earth*, this made-for-cable miniseries (once again based on a Ken Follett novel) takes place in the same town of Kingsbridge some 150 years later—in the mid-1300s at the start of the Hundred Years' War—with a whole new cast of characters. Top billing goes to Cynthia Nixon as Petranilla, a ferociously ambitious mother bent on furthering the ascent of her son, Godwyn (Rupert Evans)—a sanctimonious, sexually repressed friar—through the religious hierarchy. Ben Chaplin costars as Sir Thomas Langley, a soldier with a past shrouded in mystery who trades his sword for a life of service in the church. But this is really more of an ensemble piece, and contributing admirably to the effort are Charlotte Riley as Caris, a healer framed for murder and tried as a witch who escapes hanging by joining the cloister; Nora von Waldstätten as Gwenda, a peasant who stands up to injustice; and Miranda Richardson as Mother Cecilia,



a progressive abbess who challenges the greed of the monastery. Shot on location in Hungary, Austria, and Czechoslovakia, *World Without End* is a handsome production with some impressive set pieces. In addition to the compelling human drama, the miniseries offers an interesting perspective on the Middle Ages, the power of the church and the crown, and life during the Black Plague. Presenting all eight episodes originally broadcast in 2012, extras include a "making-of" featurette. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

More Boxed Sets

Hats Off to Dr. Seuss:

Collector's Edition (Warner, DVD: 5 discs, \$44.98; Blu-ray: 5 discs, \$59.99).

In tribute to the 75th anniversary of Dr. Seuss's 1938 children's story "The 500 Hats of Bartholomew Cubbins," this set includes the classic animated TV specials *The Cat in the Hat*, *Green Eggs and Ham* and *Other Stories*, *The Lorax*, *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, and *Horton Hears a Who!* Extras include a sing-along, bonus shorts, interactive puzzles, the documentary "In Search of Dr. Seuss," a booklet, and more.



Maigret: Complete

Collection (Acorn, DVD:

4 discs, \$59.99). Based on Georges Simenon's novels featuring famous sleuth Inspector Jules Maigret, this 12-episode 1992-93 series from England's Granada Television stars Sir Michael Gambon.



Rocko's Modern Life: The Complete Series

(Shout! Factory, DVD: 8 discs, \$29.99). Compiling all 52 episodes of the four-season 1993-1996 Nickelodeon-aired animated series, this collection showcasing the escapades of the titular Australian wallaby and his buddies features the voices of Carlos Alazraqui and Tom "SpongeBob" Kenny. Extras include a "Wacky Delly" 2012 script-read and Q&A with creator Joe Murray and the cast, character shorts, and the original pilot.



Video Librarian Online

Visit Video Librarian Online (www.videolibrarian.com) for more reviews during March and April, including: *Angry Boys*, *Following*, *The Goode Family: The Complete Series*, *House of Lies: The First Season*, *The House That Dripped Blood*, *Red Dwarf X*, and much more!

Ordering information for the titles reviewed in this section can be found in the "Distributor Addresses" listings at the back of the magazine.

★★★★ = Excellent

★★★ = Good

★★ = Fair

★ = Poor

PPR = Public Performance Rights

DD = Digital Download

Aud = Audience

K = Preschool-Kindergarten

E = Elementary (grades 1-3)

I = Intermediate (grades 4-6)

J = Jr. High (grades 7-8)

H = High School (grades 9-12)

C = Colleges & Universities

P = Public Libraries

CHILDREN'S

The Amazing World of Gumball: The Mystery ★★½

(2012) 132 min. DVD: \$14.98. Warner Home Video (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-6222-4818-6.

This collection of award-winning episodes from Cartoon Network's hit series *The Amazing World of Gumball* is as hilarious as it is artistically clever and unique. Combining 2D and 3D animation with cheesy-looking, live-action settings, *Gumball* finds its titular hero—a schoolboy with a penchant for misadventures—getting into all kinds of scrapes. In "The Mystery," Gumball attempts to deduce how Principal Brown ended up hairless, wrapped in toilet paper, and shoved into a locker. Exploring theories while trying to determine the identity of the perpetrator, Gumball stumbles in his logic until the unexpected truth emerges. In "The Responsible," Gumball and his brother Darwin become babysitters for their little sister, only to make a mess of everything. "The Car" finds the siblings doing chores for their cranky neighbor, but destroying his car—or at least they assume they did. In "The Spoon," Gumball and Darwin go to a gas station with \$20 in search of a birthday present and are duped into helping a thief. If there's a masterpiece in this set, it's "The Microwave," in which a jar full of gross stuff comes to life and

rapidly grows into a hulking monster. Series creator Ben Bocquelet and director Mic Graves have invented a hybrid universe of the mundane and the freakish—including talking cacti, dinosaurs, a monkey teacher, and a doughnut cop. Featuring fast and funny dialogue, and wonderfully inspired characters, this is highly recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

Chowder ★★★

(2012) 12 min. DVD: \$49.95 (study guide included). Nutmeg Media. PPR. ISBN: 1-933938-91-9.

Narrated by Dave Calabrese, this iconographic-animated adaptation of Peter Brown's acrylic-and-pencil 2006 picture book revolves around the titular adorable bulldog. Chowder is not like the other dogs (who think he's weird), but owners Madge and Bernie Wubington embrace their toilet-trained fur-kid's quirks—including being carried in a Snuggli, wearing sunglasses and headphones, and browsing the computer. One day, Chowder spies through his Stellarscope a new billboard for a local grocery store advertising a "Critter Corral," where he thinks he might find friends more like himself. Gently suggesting that the Wubingtons make a food run (by eating them out of supplies), Chowder meets the petting zoo Corral creatures, but instantly becomes unpopular when he accidentally sends the group's kickball into a tree. Luckily, while on a bathroom break, plucky Chowder comes up with an idea to get things back on track. Also featuring a "Sharing My Story" segment with Brown, this cute tale is easily recommended. Aud: K, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Critter Sitter & Lulu's Magic Wand

★★★

(2012) 27 min. DVD: \$69.95 (study guide included). Nutmeg Media. PPR. ISBN: 1-933938-89-7.

Author and illustrator Chuck Richards is spotlighted in this two-fer collection of iconographic-animated adaptations, both narrated by Mike Pongracz. First up is 2008's *Critter Sitter*, which follows young Henry—the titular animal wrangler—one day when he takes on the Mahoney family's menagerie, including a dog, cat, boa constrictor, goldfish, cockatiel, tree frog, goldfish, and crickets. Mischievous canine Slobberchops causes a domino effect of havoc, getting out of the laundry room and tracking blue detergent, knocking over boa Slinky's aquarium, and digging holes near the creepy neighbor's house on the hill. Scared of animal neglect charges, Henry struggles to bring things under control by the time the family returns. In 2012's *Lulu's Magic Wand*, the main character is a pigtailed toddler, whose trip to an amusement park with her family turns into an assortment of mishaps when a wizard's magic wand carnival prize falls into the wrong hands. Backed by colorful detailed visuals and apt sound effects, extras include a "Sharing My Story" with Richards. Recommended. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Hi! Fly Guy ★★★

(2012) 7 min. DVD: \$59.95 (study guide included). Weston Woods Studios. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 0-545-47807-3.

Animated by Soup2Nuts, this adaptation of author and illustrator Tedd Arnold's ALA Notable and Theodor Seuss Geisel Honor



Families of Italy ★★★

(2012) 30 min. DVD: \$29.95 (teacher's guide included). Master Communications. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60480-155-2.

This latest title in the *Families of the World* cultural series is best watched after lunch, as both sets of relatives of the two Italian young people featured here work in the food business. First, viewers are introduced to 14-year-old Veronica, who lives on a picaresque rural sheep farm with her siblings and parents. Veronica's parents milk sheep and make cheese (viewers get an in-depth look at the process); afterwards, the teen goes to a store to sell the product and later helps layer a tiramisu dessert.

The rest of Veronica's time is spent in activities not too different from what you might find in the U.S. (she eats Cocoa Puffs, helps dress her little sister, and surfs Facebook), but the family does enjoy a visit to a holiday light display in Solerno, and looks at Greco-Roman carvings in Paestum and the ruins of Pompeii. Living in the city of Olevano sul Tusciano, 10-year-old Luigi's home is attached to the family business: an olive oil factory. Mom takes Luigi (whose broken ankle leads to a mention of Italy's great free healthcare) to his fourth grade class, before heading home for harvesting and working the oil press. We also see the family at the large midday meal (including broccoli rabé, cheese pie, and homemade wine), and take a look around the farm to see the various fruits being grown. Luigi also attends a musical group dress rehearsal and visits the family tomb on Day of the Dead. Jam-packed with small details about daily life, this addition to the popular series is recommended. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

2005 picture book features music by Jack Sundrud and Rusty Young, and exuberant narration by MacLeod Andrews. A fly with bulging eyes is in search of a smelly, slimy snack when he is captured by a boy equipped with a net, hook, and cage: tools needed to snag a creature to enter in an upcoming pet show. Although initially angry, the fly comes to like the boy—young Buzz, who is surprised that the insect “knows” his name. Wielding a flyswatter, Buzz’s skeptical parents see the fly as more pest than pet, but they too are amazed that the bug recognizes their son’s name. After calling him Fly Guy, Buzz solidifies the friendship with a hot dog treat for his new pet, and the duo do their best to impress the skeptical contest judges with tricks in hopes of winning a prize. Also featuring a read-along option and an interview with Arnold (who cites Dr. Seuss as an influence), this 2013 ALA-ALSC Notable Children’s Video selection is recommended. Aud: K, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Power Rangers Super Samurai: The Complete Season ★★1/2

(2012) 3 discs. 460 min. DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$39.98. Lionsgate (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

The seemingly indestructible, candy-colored Japanese-American co-produced

kid-kitsch Power Rangers continue on in this iteration that finds grotesque monsters called Nighlok being fought by the teen descendants of elite mystic samurai warriors. Despite the samurai angle, most of the multi-ethnic kids playing Rangers are decidedly non-Asian, assembling in each ritualistic episode to battle a particularly grotesque Nighlok. These fights are the centerpieces in a loose storyline in which shipboard monster Master Xandred is

sending infernal invaders out to make the human world suffer, although the formula is fairly standard: namely, a guest Nighlok with weird powers (gluing people together; duplicating itself; causing others to eat uncontrollably) temporarily stymies the Power Rangers, until they fight back with “BullZord” or “LightZord” or some kind of ultimate weapon (which looks suspiciously like it might be selling now at toy stores).

(cont. on pg. 47)

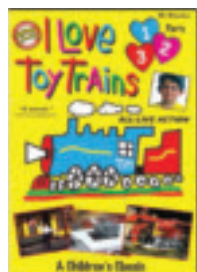


Goodnight, Goodnight, Construction Site ★★1/2

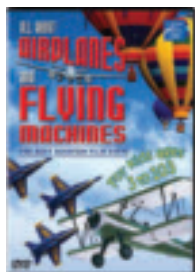
(2012) 9 min. DVD: \$59.95 (study guide included). Weston Woods Studios. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 0-545-50221-7.

Authored by Sherri Duskey Rinker and illustrated by Tom Lichtenheld, this adaptation of the ALA Notable and *New York Times* bestselling 2011 picture book is animated by Soup2Nuts. Narrated by the burly-voiced Dion Graham—with music by Jon Carroll that nicely matches the action—the rhyming *Goodnight, Goodnight, Construction Site* features a variety of tough machines who work all day but relax afterwards amidst neat-looking sparkly sunsets and dusky evening shades. Sporting facial features, the big city equipment vehicles are showcased with vignettes that show the crane truck swinging beams and being tucked in with a teddy bear, a whirling cement mixer that takes a bath before bed, a snoring dump truck, a roaring bladed bulldozer, and more—delivering the message that even hard workers need to turn off their engines and get some rest. Also featuring read-along subtitles and an interview with Rinker, this appealing bedtime story is highly recommended. Aud: K, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

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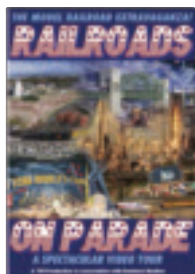
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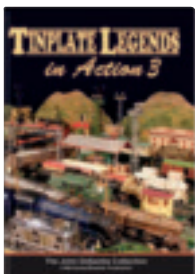
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ALA-ALSC Notable Videos 2013

ALA's Association for Library Services to Children (ALSC) has selected its 2013 list of Notable Children's Videos, which includes DVDs for children 14 years of age and younger. Unless otherwise noted, titles are available from most distributors or the companies are listed in the "Distributor Addresses" on page 78.

55 Socks (National Film Board of Canada, 9 min., DVD: \$129). Based on a poem by Marie Jacobs, Oscar-winning filmmaker Co Hoedeman's WWII-era-set animated short focuses on a group of women in occupied Holland who repurpose a beautiful bedspread so they can knit socks to trade for food. (See upcoming review in VL-5/13)

Anna, Emma and the Condors (Green Planet Films, 20 min., DVD: K-12 schools & public libraries: \$49; colleges & universities: \$89). Winner of the 2013 Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Children's Video, director Katja Torneman's live-action film explores the story of titular sisters Anna and Emma Parish, who along with their parents (Chris, the director of the Condor Project for the Peregrine Fund at Vermillion Cliffs, and Ellen, a leader for Jane Goodall's Roots and Shoots organization) join the effort to reintroduce California condors back into the wild. (See upcoming review in VL-5/13)

Are YOU a Bully? Test (Human Relations Media, 23 min., DVD: \$149.95). Also including a digital resource book for teachers and student handouts, this live-action production challenges students to examine their own possible bullying behaviors, while also featuring stories from teens who have been on both sides of harassment.

Big Drive (National Film Board of Canada, 9 min., DVD: \$129). Anita Lebeau's short juxtaposes old-style, hand-drawn

animation with computer-generated images that resemble photographic stills to tell a "road" vignette about four sisters who amuse themselves in the backseat of the family car. (VL-11/12)

Bink & Gollie (Weston Woods, 14 min., DVD: \$59.95). Based on the 2010 ALA Notable picture book by Kate DiCamillo and Alison McGhee, this animated adaptation features the mainly black-and-white illustrations of Tony Fucile in three vignettes about friends Bink, who is a tiny wild-haired exuberant blonde, and prissier, taller, and more well-kempt brunette Gollie. (VL-9/12)

Edwina: The Dinosaur Who Didn't Know She Was Extinct (Weston Woods, 7 min., DVD: \$59.95). Adapted from the 2006 picture book by prolific children's author and illustrator Mo Willems, this animated short—narrated by Willems' wife, Cher—follows a dino heroine who is loved by everyone in town...except for a crotchety young student who is irritated that Edwina doesn't seem to realize that her species is extinct. (VL-1/13)

Hi! Fly Guy (Weston Woods, 7 min., DVD: \$59.95). Animated by Soup2Nuts, this adaptation of author and illustrator Tedd Arnold's ALA Notable and Theodor Seuss Geisel Honor 2005 picture book centers on a boy name Buzz, who needs a creature in order to enter an upcoming pet show, and is excited when a fly "knows" his name. (See review on page 42)

Kali the Little Vampire (National Film Board of Canada, 10 min., DVD: \$89). Narrated by Oscar-winner Christopher Plummer, this animated tale from filmmaker Regina Pessoa revolves around a young vampire who eventually makes peace with his shadowy existence.

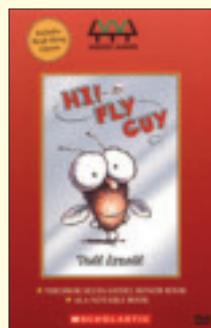
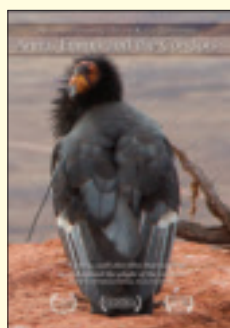
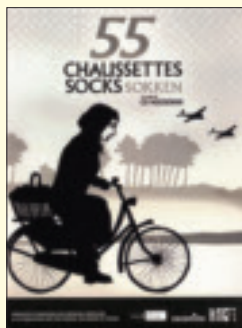
Knuffle Bunny Free: An Unexpected Diversion (Weston Woods, 13 min., DVD: \$59.95). The final story in author and illustrator Mo Willems' *Knuffle Bunny* trilogy, this adaptation of the 2010 picture book features the voices of Willems, wife Cher, and young daughter Trixie, who embark on a visit to Oma and Opa in Holland, where they suddenly realize that the titular beloved toy is missing. (VL-11/12)

The Other Side (Weston Woods, 8 min., DVD: \$59.95). Based on the 2001 watercolor picture book by author Jacqueline Woodson and illustrator E.B. Lewis, this iconographic-animated adaptation tells the story of a young black girl named Clover, who—despite being cautioned not to climb a fence dividing their land from white neighbors—ultimately makes a new friend. (VL-11/12)

Scaredy Squirrel Makes a Friend (Weston Woods, 12 min., DVD: \$59.95). This adaptation of Mélanie Watt's 2007 picture book features the often-anxious titular rodent who is lonely and busily stretching his overactive imagination in the search for the perfect pal.

Show Way (Weston Woods, 15 min., DVD: \$59.95). Featuring illustrations by Hudson Talbott, author Jacqueline Woodson narrates this adaptation of her 2005 Newbery Honor Medal picture book, which tells the story of several generations of quilters from the days of slavery to contemporary times. (See upcoming review in VL-5/13)

A Sick Day for Amos McGee (Weston Woods, 10 min., DVD: \$59.95). A collaboration between author Philip C. Stead and his wife, illustrator Erin E. Stead, this animated adaptation of the 2010 Caldecott Medal-winning and ALA Notable book focuses on senior citizen zookeeper Amos McGee, whose morning routine with his animal friends is altered when he comes

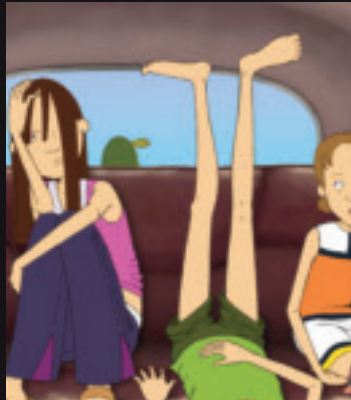


NOTABLE VIDEOS

FROM THE NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA

Big Drive

2013 Notable Children's Video



Squeezed into the back of the family car, four restless siblings find magic in a road trip across the prairies. This exuberant animated film beautifully captures the bond between sisters and the power of the imagination.

Kali the Little Vampire

2013 Notable Children's Video



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

55 Socks

2013 Notable Children's Video



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

How Does It Feel

2013 Notable Video for Adults



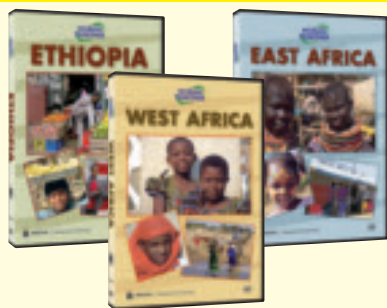
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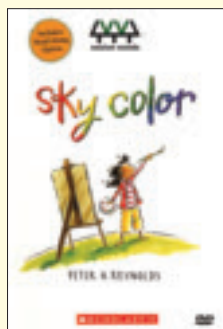
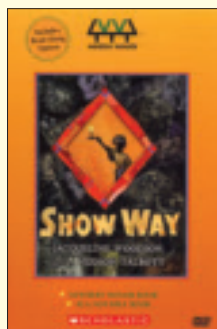
down with the sniffles and must stay in bed. (VL-9/12)

Sky Color (Weston Woods, 7 min., DVD: \$59.95). Author and illustrator Peter H. Reynolds' 2012 picture book was adapted into this animated program that finds young art aficionado Marisol searching for inspiration for a school library mural project. (See upcoming review in VL-5/13)

Wind Flyers (Nutmeg Media, 7 min., DVD: \$49.95). A young boy describes his great-great-uncle's life and times as a Tuskegee Airman in this iconic graphic-

animated adaptation of the 2007 picture book by author Angela Johnson and illustrator Loren Long. (See upcoming review in VL-5/13)

2013 Notable Children's Videos Committee: Chair, Maeve Visser Knoth, San Mateo County Library, CA; Marilyn Ackerman, Brooklyn Public Library, NY; Alan Bern, Berkeley Public Library, CA; Liz Deskins, Hilliard City School District, OH; Nancy A. Eames, Toledo Lucas County Public Library, OH; Susan Dove Lempke, Niles Public Library, IL; Gwen M. Taylor, Lewis-Clark State College, Lewiston, ID; Emily Ann Tichenor, Tulsa City-County Library, OK; and Rachel Wood, Arlington Public Library, VA.



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—Angela, Age 12; Los Angeles, CA

www.nevergiveupfilm.org

(cont. from pg. 43)

The saving grace is that nothing is taken very seriously, the violence is basically acrobatics, and puns spice up the rudimentary dialogue. When Antonio, the Gold Power Ranger, survives being changed into a dead fish (it's a long story) and afterwards suffers the equivalent of Power Rangers Traumatic Stress Syndrome, it's almost—unintentionally—a moment worthy of the satire *Robot Chicken*. Compiling all 20 episodes aired during 2012, extras include a music video, an exercise training segment, and footage from a licensing expo show. Sure to be popular, this is a strong optional purchase. Aud: P. (C. Cassidy)

Sesame Street—Preschool is Cool: Making Friends ★★★

(2012) 114 min. DVD: \$14.98. Warner Home Video (avail. from most distributors).

In this latest *Sesame Street* entry, Elmo helps Professor Grover get his preschool classroom ready for students. But Elmo is a little apprehensive about interacting with the other kids, which leads to various clips and vignettes about friendship. Grammy-winning songstress Erykah Badu makes friends with Elmo, Baby Bear, Rosita, and Zoe, even though they are initially skeptical about her customary large headdress (she reminds them that she hasn't been friends with furry monsters—and a bear—before either). Tully makes a new friend due to a shared enjoyment of triangle toys, and Zoe and Rosita are back in a segment featuring Abby Cadabby that deals with being left out (and touches on feelings and making up). Also featuring Staten Island's PS22 Chorus singing "Somebody Come and Play," Cookie Monster sharing his favorite treat, a "Traction Jackson" computer-animated segment in which the wheelchair-bound youngster's B-ball skills are grossly underestimated,

and a silly storyline featuring news anchor Brian Williams and Oscar the Grouch (suffering from a case of "Mine-itis"), extras include the bonus program "Ready for School." Recommended. Aud: K, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

StarShine Workshop: Healthy Touch, Good Boundaries, Safe Kids ★★★1/2

(2012) 30 min. DVD: \$49.95 (teacher's guide included). Rising Star Studios. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-9367-7057-1.

Featuring funky music and an upbeat tone, this program approaches the subject of dealing with inappropriate touch in a way that manages to communicate the gravity of the issue without frightening its young audience. Intended for second to fifth graders, the 13-minute classroom presentation is led by a cheerful male-female pair who begin by introducing the concept of good and bad touch to a group of elementary-age children seated at desks. Next, the group moves to a school gym, where the hosts use costumes and games to explain the idea of the three circles of comfort: strangers, helpers, and family or close friends. In the final segment, everyone heads outside to learn a "no, go, tell" method that kids can use to deal with uncomfortable situations. Three short dramatizations of related scenarios provide opportunities for students to practice the concepts they have learned. The program also features a parent/teacher segment that gives adults tips for preparing children to watch the program, while also providing statistics on sexual abuse, and pointing out signs that indicate abuse. DVD extras include three PDF documents: a teacher's guide, tips for parents, and a sample parent letter/permission form for classroom presentations. Highly recommended. Aud: E, I, P. (K. Cruver)



LeapFrog—Scout & Friends: The Magnificent Museum of Opposite Words ★★★1/2

(2012) 35 min. DVD: \$14.98. Lionsgate (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

This latest program from the *LeapFrog* educational entertainment series starts off with green puppy Scout, blue cat Eli, and a...well, some sort of hyper rodent thing named Penny enjoying a thesaurus-worthy game of "in other words" (Scout is called "caring"; in other words, he's "thoughtful," and so on). Suddenly, purple doggie Violet shows up with big news: the Magnificent Museum of Opposite Words is opening! But what *are* opposite words? The gang travels in the magic car named Axle to the museum, where they discover the answer...along with flustered Mr. Polecat, who is hard-pressed to finish setting up exhibits for the opening gala. Scout and the crew—along with the inept Beaver Brothers and robot assistant Fritz—work together using trial and error to figure out what needs to go where. Featuring songs and plenty of repetition to ensure retention for the target age group of 2-5, extras include sing-along and read-along segments. Highly recommended. [Note: also newly available at the same price is *LeapFrog—Scout & Friends: Adventures in Shapeville Park*.] Aud: K, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

PSYCHOLOGY & SELF-HELP

Care Farms of the Netherlands ★★★

(2012) 30 min. DVD: \$9.99; individuals; \$174.99 w/PPR: institutions. Aspectfilms.

David Heine's documentary offers an overview of an innovative program mixing agriculture with social services care. Since 1988 the government of the Netherlands has been financing a "care farm" program that enables individuals with developmental disabilities and mental health concerns to be employed on small farms. The rural environment, with its fresh air and abundance of domesticated animals, appears to have a therapeutic value, and the film shows how these farms encourage teamwork, build self-esteem, and develop skills that lead to both physical and emotional strengthening in participants, who range from young autistic children to elderly Alzheimer patients. Care farms also build a degree of agricultural self-reliance within the Netherlands, as farm owners are paid with funds previously designated for daycare centers that essentially warehoused people. The success of the Dutch example has been noticed across Europe, inspiring other countries on the continent to create their own programs. However, the film notes that the U.S. appears to be more focused on the development of pharmaceutical strategies, which often lead to more problems than solutions. Of course, there is also a significant cultural difference between the progressive Dutch government and its bureaucratic American counterparts, so it seems unlikely that Washington will quickly move to embrace this low-cost, farm-friendly program. Serving up an intriguing look at a promising approach to one aspect of healthcare, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Grieving the Sudden Death of a Loved One ★★★

(2012) 60 min. DVD: \$59.95. Paraclete Press. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-61261-241-6.

Hosted by Dr. Earl A. Grollman, a rabbi, counselor, and author of *Talking About Death: A Dialogue Between Parent and Child*; Dr. Heidi Horsley, a psychologist and executive director of the Open to Hope Foundation; and Gregory Floyd, leader of a Catholic covenant community and author of *A Grief Unveiled: One Father's Journey Through the Death of a Child*, this program focuses on various stages of bereavement after the sudden death of a loved one. Divided into sections corresponding to experiences ranging from shock and denial to disorientation, the film—via many testimonials—describes grief as a "tsunami" during which everything one believes is under question: faith, trust, values, and hope. Amidst all-consuming pain, coping seems nigh impossible, especially since no opportunity is left for closure with the lost

individual, no way for people to say the things they wanted to say. The consensus in this helpful program is that grief is a season with its own process and that letting it take hold of you is the best way to heal. Also featuring a special section on working with grieving children while being sensitive to their developmental needs, this is recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

Racing Thoughts (Ca Tourne Dans Ma Tete) ★★★

(2010) 73 min. DVD: \$225. National Film Board of Canada. PPR.

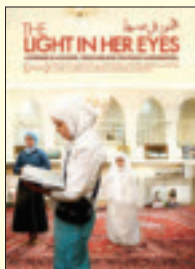
Canadian filmmaker Louiselle Noël was belatedly treated in her 40s for rapid-bipolar disorder, which had plagued her since childhood. Here, she channels her pain of decades of torment without medication into an emotional series of interviews with kids who are grappling with bipolar, schizoid-affective disorder, and other related childhood mental illnesses. While psychiatrists and doctors are thanked in the credits, Noël steers clear of lab-coated professionals, instead turning to children and their families for testimonies regarding uncontrollable tantrums, biting, self-mutilation, confinement in dungeon-like “quiet rooms,” and pleas for assisted suicide. One dad seems to crystallize the theme by faulting Canada’s universal healthcare establishment, arguing that the bureaucracy emphasizes “education” but delays diagnosis and treatment with medication because of timidity and stigma about dosing juveniles with psychotropics (the free-market U.S. medical system is better, he declares)—although potential life-threatening side effects of these drugs are mentioned in passing. Presented with both English and French versions, *Racing Thoughts* will be useful for families, schools, and vested viewers on both sides of the border struggling with issues related to mental illness. DVD extras include interviews with the director and Dr. Stan Kutcher. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

Captivated: Finding Freedom in a Media Captive Culture ★★★

(2011) 107 min. DVD: \$19.95. Media Talk 101 (dist. by Vision Video).

Video screens are a ubiquitous feature of modern society. What does that mean for humanity today? This Christian-based documentary makes a handful of compelling nondenominational points, while exploring topics such as the contemporary condition of being wired—sometimes 24/7—to the Internet and other types of media. Presenting interviews with media users, pastors, educators, doctors, and others, filmmakers Phillip Telfer and Colin Gunn argue that media is



The Light in Her Eyes ★★★

(2012) 86 min. DVD: 24.95. PBS Video.

Preacher Houda al-Habash, who founded one of the first Qur’an schools for girls in Damascus, is at the center of this enlightening documentary by co-directors Julia Meltzer and Laura Nix that follows Houda’s experiences as a religious educator, filming her in her apartment, in the mosque, in conversation with secular journalists, and on a retreat with her students. Since conservative Muslim clerics believe that women should pray at home, Houda’s actions appear to be somewhat radical, although she feels that she’s simply fulfilling her destiny. Living with her husband and two children, Houda believes that women should get an education and be able to work outside the home, even as she herself still cooks, cleans, and wears the hijab. With both her family and pupils, Houda is equally patient, strict, and supportive. She started her school 30 years ago at the age of 17, and her 20-year-old daughter, Enas, has expressed an interest in following a similar path. At the Al-Zahra Mosque, Houda, Enas, and other instructors help the girls to memorize, understand, and correctly pronounce every word in the Qur’an. Houda also acts as a consultant for other schools and presides over a hijab ceremony, which completes the process for participating girls, since Houda sees it as a requirement from God, although some students opt out, due to personal preferences or the wishes of their parents. The film’s lyrical cinematography nicely captures the beauty of the country and its people, providing a contrast to the heavier themes, and an end note offers an update on Houda in the wake of Syria’s 2011 uprising. Recommended. [Note: this is also available on DVD for \$99.95 w/PPR for public libraries, and \$295 w/PPR for colleges and universities from The Cinema Guild (www.cinemapguild.com).] Aud: C, P. (K. Femmessy)

deceitful, offering an illusion of connection that might only exist in the mind of the beholder. An avid Facebook user here talks about the false sense of community she felt as a participant, followed by the relief she experienced when giving it up cold turkey, although she adds that she won’t necessarily leave it behind forever—a conflicted viewpoint that may sum up how many people feel about social networking. Other forms of media are also considered, including TV shows and sports. As a faith-based program, one clear point made here concerns how “media addiction” distracts people from following God (an argument perhaps as old as media itself—excepting the Gutenberg Bible and other religious texts). The irony of using video to make a case against media is not lost on the viewer; in fact, it only enriches the debate that is sure to be sparked by this powerful and timely (if also a little long) documentary. Recommended. Aud: P. (C. Block)

The Incarnation: Keeping God in the Flesh ★★★

(2012) 110 min. DVD: \$19.99. Oblate Media (dist. by Videos With Values). PPR. ISBN: 978-193214282-1.

Father Ron Rolheiser, a Catholic priest who is president of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, as well as a columnist and author, continues his series of retreat-style lectures with this two-part presentation, based primarily on Scripture and such authoritative figures as Augustine, concerning the meaning and implications of the doctrine asserting that the faithful constitute the so-called Mystical Body of Christ. Like earlier releases

in his series—*Sacred Fire: An Anthropology and Spirituality of Sexuality* (VL-3/11) and *Dark Nights and Doubts in Our Lives: A Failure of Faith—Or Imagination?* (VL-3/12)—*The Incarnation* is very simply produced, with Rolheiser standing at a podium to deliver the lectures (backed only by superimposed pictures of quoted writers). Rolheiser is an amiable, knowledgeable, and articulate theologian, who analyzes the meaning of Christian community in terms comprehensible to the average layperson. His main subject also leads him into a discussion of other issues, including how prayer and reconciliation should be understood within the communal context. Recommended. [Note: Ron Rolheiser’s *Keeping Incarnate: The Paschal Mystery* is also newly available.] Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Re-Emerging: The Jews of Nigeria

★★★1/2

(2012) 90 min. DVD: \$18: individuals; \$295 w/PPR: institutions. Re-Emerging Films.

Jeff L. Lieberman’s documentary travels to southeast Nigeria to visit a somewhat controversial pocket of the Jewish diaspora. Within Nigeria’s Igbo land region is a community that has embraced Judaism, to the point of having Hebrew-language synagogue services. The Igbo group profiled here insists that their society is a remnant of ancient Israel, citing a number of social and cultural similarities between Igbo customs and Old Testament protocol. One charismatic young leader is eager to expand his religious education and become an ordained rabbi. While Igbo community members are enthusiastic in their commitment to Judaism, their euphoria is

not shared elsewhere: they are viewed with hostility by Nigeria's Christian and Muslim populations, and the Israeli government has been conspicuously unfriendly toward their claims of brotherhood. In addition to the religious examination, the film also offers a somber detour into the tragic chapters of Igbo history, including the deportation of large numbers of men and women during the peak of the transatlantic slave trade, and the brutal carnage that befell the region in the 1960s Biafran conflict. Ultimately, this documentary provides a remarkable view of a dedicated population's zeal to pursue religious freedom; it's hard not to be caught up in the sincerity and joy that these pious believers bring to their faith. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

What God Hath Wrought ★★½

(2012) 105 min. DVD: \$19.99. Screen Savers Entertainment (dist. by Vision Video).

The well-known line from Elton John's "Tiny Dancer" ("Jesus freaks—out in the street—handing tickets out for God") may have been influenced by California pastor Chuck Smith, whose mission to connect a generation of young people to God changed the very face of Christian evangelism. Smith, along with his wife Kay, began their ministry by simply going to southern California

beaches to pray for the people. Before long, Smith was teaching the bible to "hippies" at the water's edge—launching the "Jesus Movement" phenomenon that continues to this day (also known as the "Calvary Chapel Movement," centered in Costa Mesa, CA). Teaching at the beach, Smith would draw crowds that continued to grow. In an era of cultural crisis that included the "generation gap," Smith distinguished himself by accepting everyone—looking past long hair to see the value in each individual. Directed by Jurgen and Stacey Peretzki, *What God Hath Wrought* features many interviews with folks who laud Smith, but the best one is an extended interview with Smith himself. Smith—a surfer (and perhaps the original "soul surfer")—felt both a call to preach and a call to the water. Here, he comes across as a genuine, self-effacing man who appears to have the heart of a true servant. Highly recommended. Aud: P. (C. Block)

SOCIAL & POLITICAL ISSUES

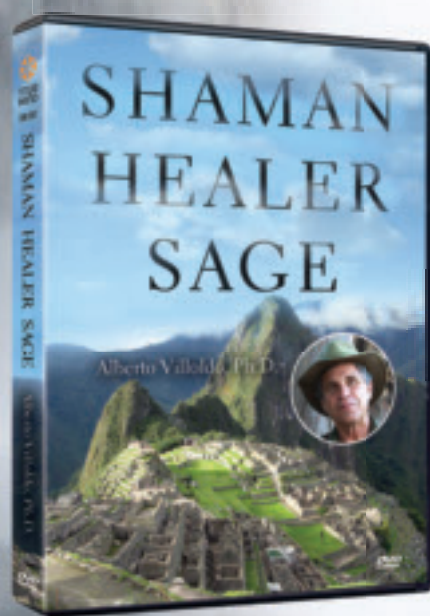
After Kony: Staging Hope ★★★

(2011) 99 min. In English & Luo w/English subtitles. DVD: \$24.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors).

Activist reporting combined with ordinary

news coverage has shone a spotlight on the brutal treatment that African warlord Joseph Kony's so-called Lord's Resistance Army has inflicted on the children of northern Uganda for years, turning them into brainwashed soldiers or sex slaves, and often killing their families. Director Bil Yoelin's *After Kony* sketches one modest effort to address the psychological trauma suffered by those who have escaped the tyrant's control. The American-developed program Voices in Harmony—which employs theater to help at-risk children express their feelings—takes its concept to a Ugandan refugee center, recruiting 14 teens to construct scenes and monologues based on their experiences, which they then perform, along with musical numbers, for the camp residents. Much of the documentary is devoted to the process of writing and rehearsing, culminating in excerpts from the final performance, which provides both entertainment and instruction for the audience while helping the youngsters confront their own demons. One can't help but be moved by the resilience and perseverance of the orphans, as well as by the bond that grows between the kids and the visitors who are determined to help. DVD extras include a study guide on Uganda and the project, a photo gallery, and text bios on the filmmaking crew. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

THE HEALING WISDOM OF THE AMAZON



SHAMAN, HEALER, SAGE tells the story of Alberto Villoldo, Ph.D., an extraordinary man who transitioned from a career in modern medical science to one possessing a deep knowledge of the ancient energy medicine of the legendary Inka and Q'ero shamans of South America.

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"The healing practices I learned and refined with my Indian mentor are ancient technologies that create sacred spaces where miracles can happen."— Alberto Villoldo

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NEW FROM True Mind

The Atomic States of America ★★★

(2012) 90 min. DVD: \$39.95; public libraries; \$89 w/PPR; high schools; \$295 w/PPR: colleges & universities. The Video Project. Closed captioned.

Apparently, *The Simpsons* gag stereotype of nuclear power plants as leaky accident vectors does not stray far from the truth—and that's not all that funny. Documentary filmmakers Don Argott and Sheena M. Joyce charge that nuclear fission benefited from deceptive PR and corporate-lobbyist makeovers during Obama's first administration (when the first nuclear power plant in 32 years was approved), being newly christened as "green" energy, despite disasters at Three Mile Island, Chernobyl, and Fukushima, Japan. This film was inspired by the book *Welcome to Shirley: Memoir From an Atomic Town* by Kelly McMasters, who describes growing up in a Long Island ringed by nuke plants, in which cancer was such a frequent occurrence that the young McMasters thought it was normal—until she attended college out of town. At abandoned Three Mile Island, sardonic Pennsylvania activist Ed Epstein recalls the days of panic and cover-ups during the 1979 reactor meltdown; today, he finds the site unguarded and poorly monitored. Longtime anti-nuclear campaigner Dr. Helen Caldicott talks about various levels and varieties of radiation and the pernicious poison of spent plutonium. Actor Alec Baldwin minces no words (and drops the F-bomb) in criticizing Brookhaven Lab's leaking lethal tritium into residential well water. Only former NJ governor Christine Todd Whitman briefly defends nuclear energy in this otherwise one-sided and negative indictment. Although it never even bothers to suggest alternatives, *The Atomic States of America* powerfully warns of the dangers of a nuclear renaissance. Featuring both the full-length film and a 70-minute abridged version, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassady)

The Boy Game ★★★

(2012) 16 min. DVD: \$75; public libraries; \$125; high schools; \$225: colleges & universities. New Day Films. PPR.

This documentary-style dramatic short aimed at preteens revolves around an eighth grader looking to fit in at a new school. At first Kenny (Kenny Sosnowski) hangs out with a soft-spoken cartoonist he knew in grade school, Noel (Alsharik Sejour). But when Noel has to leave town for an unspecified period of time due to a death in the family, Kenny lacks a social life, until he hits it off with ninth grader Reynaldo (Reynaldo Piniella). Soon, Kenny becomes part of Reynaldo's insulting crowd of skateboarders, who share a predilection for macho bluster and homophobic slurs. When Noel returns, Reynaldo makes fun of him, leaving Kenny in an awkward position, since he wants to maintain both friendships, so he encourages Noel to stand up for himself, but when things grow tense

between Noel and Reynaldo, Kenny doesn't intercede. Kenny starts to spend more time with Reynaldo's loud group than with his quiet friend (Kenny's new girlfriend is also part of Reynaldo's inner circle). As Reynaldo's bullying increases, Noel becomes more withdrawn, even from Kenny. Inner monologues from the characters serve to explain their feelings and actions, and while Reynaldo may be harder for viewers to relate to, his strained relationship with his father provides some explanation for his controlling behavior. Although the film ends on an inconclusive note, director Deirdre Fishel did so intentionally in order to spur discussion about what the three boys could or should do next. Featuring two versions of the film—one with mild profanity, the other without—extras include a study guide. Recommended. Aud: J, P. (K. Fennessy)

Cape Spin! An American Power Struggle

★★★★1/2

(2012) 86 min. DVD: \$89; high schools & public libraries; \$250: colleges & universities. The Video Project. PPR. Closed captioned.

Late in Robbie Gemmel and John Kirby's riotous feature, a rough cut of *Cape Spin* previews, and someone complains that a serious issue is made to look like a carnival. Well... duhhhhh! It seemed to be a bright, "green" idea in 2001 when energy tycoon Jim Gordon proposed a vast wind-power array in the Cape Cod shallows near Nantucket Sound, where the influential Kennedy Democrat dynasty are champions of the environment. But the idea instead stirred vigorous opposition, most visibly from those selfsame Kennedys and other super-rich, irate that the ocean wind towers would spoil their "quality of

life" (aka garden-party vistas and yachting). Conservatives here gleefully note the classic "limousine liberalism" (although Mitt Romney is paraphrased here, calling wind farms "ugly" and suitable only for poorer areas). Meanwhile, Greenpeace and other eco-activists fight for Gordon's "Cape Wind" scheme. Soon fishermen, labor unions, Native Americans, the Audubon Society, journalists, singers, engineers, global-warming alarmists, Appalachians, people dressed as animals or sheiks—seemingly every pressure group except GLAAD and the New Black Panthers—enter the fray, not necessarily taking the positions you would expect. And, more than once, opinion-leaders are secretly tainted by corporate ties and lobbying. An enjoyable (and depressing) look at local democracy turning into a special-interest circus, *Cape Spin* is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassady)

Doomsday Preppers: Season 1 ★★★

(2012) 3 discs. 495 min. DVD: \$29.98. National Geographic (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-4263-4428-2.

Worrying about the end of the world is not only a state of mind; for some it's a full-time occupation. This National Geographic series looks at world-doomsday "preppers," ordinary Americans and Canadians who try to stay alert and ready in order to survive under the radar, making provisions to support their family or community for as long as necessary. Their concerns are legion, including polar shifts, killer earthquakes, solar flares, food shortages, hyperinflation, and even the long dormant Yellowstone "super volcano." Popular activities include stockpiling food, running practice evacuation drills, and



Detropia ★★★1/2

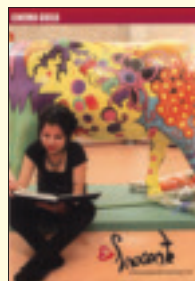
(2011) 91 min. DVD: \$29.95. Docurama (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4229-2289-8.

In *Detropia*, filmmakers Heidi Ewing and Rachel Grady depict the desuetude and decay of the once-mighty Motor City after much of its famed car-manufacturing and steel-assembly works have closed, moved overseas, or been severely cut back. At the time of filming in 2010, one family was fleeing Detroit every 20 minutes, and a broke city hall was embarking on a municipal scheme of "downsizing"—i.e., ending services in depopulated neighborhoods (where vacant land may be repurposed as urban farm pastures one day—an idealistic scheme that Detroiters greet with scorn and skepticism). Taking leisurely vérité ride-alongs amongst the deserted mills and empty streets, the film follows a United Auto Workers local president who is breaking the news to factory workers of management's latest lowball-salary offers; a former teacher opening an R&B music club; and amateur "scrappers" pulling down vacant buildings with their rudimentary gear for recyclable metal. The sense of loss, desperation, and poverty lightens a bit near the end, when the Obama administration bails out General Motors, and artsy young people start settling in the ghost-quiet city, but given the terrible malaise depicted here, it remains a little questionable as to exactly how "performance art" and the Detroit Opera will reverse the town's failing fortunes. DVD extras include deleted and extended scenes. Highly recommended. [Note: this is also available with public performance rights for \$295 from Bullfrog Films, www.bullfrogfilms.com.] Aud: C, P. (C. Cassady)

Inocente ★★★★★

(2012) 40 min. DVD: \$99.95; public libraries; \$295: colleges & universities. The Cinema Guild. PPR. ISBN: 0-7815-1414-2.

A 2012 Oscar-nominee, *Inocente* casts light on the plight of homeless and undocumented children in America through the story of the extraordinarily talented teenaged painter Inocente Izucar. At the time of filming Izucar was 15, and had lived with her mother and three young brothers in a series of shelters and temporary apartments—moving 30 times in nine years. Through the San Diego nonprofit program ARTS (A Reason To Survive), Izucar found an outlet for her talent, painting large canvases with striking, brightly colored creatures, abstract figures, and landscapes. Husband-and-wife filmmakers Sean Fine and Andrea Nix Fine follow the artist as she creates 30 new works for an ARTS exhibition, tracing her brush strokes with the camera while also showing the development of her creations from beginning to completion in fast-motion aerial views. In emotional sequences, we learn that Izucar once dissuaded her alcoholic mom from committing suicide, and that an incident of domestic abuse led to her father's deportation years earlier—a “mistake” for which she still blames herself. The story is told primarily through Inocente's words, in voiceovers, and as she faces the camera, her face painted (a daily habit) with abstract designs, talking easily about her family, her art, and her “silly dreams.” Presenting a beautiful and inspiring introduction to an amazing young artist, this 2013 ALA-VRT Notable Video selection is highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** Aud: H, C, P. (M. Puffer-Rothenberg)



learning the art of foraging and setting up of food, fuel, and medicine caches around the countryside. Of course, gun training is a necessity, as most of the subjects fully expect unprepared “marauders” to come after their supplies. Making one's house secure against incoming gunfire can also be a plus. Other topics include using alcoholic beverages to barter for food, living on the road using a big rig, underground bunkers, having a well-stocked “bug out” bag, and working out a backup plan if the first course of action fails. Each segment includes an “expert” assessment of the family's survival plan, an update, and the odds of whether the doomsday scenario may actually come to pass. Anxiety in the wake of the 2008 financial meltdown seems to be the key event shaping most preppers' worldview. Some of the details here may seem humorous (blessing the gun room, a young woman stocking up on condoms, etc.), but as one prepper says, we're all “nine meals from anarchy,” and the fear shown here seems real. DVD extras include the bonus program *American Doomsday*. Recommended. Aud: P. (S. Rees)

Follow the Leader ★★1/2

(2012) 74 min. DVD: \$179.95; public libraries & high schools; \$395: colleges & universities. Changeworx (avail. from www.changeworx.com). PPR.

Jonathan Goodman Levitt's documentary focuses on a trio of teenagers who share an obsession with politics. Shot over a three-year period that culminated with the 2008 presidential election, *Follow the Leader* illustrates how each of the three aggressively pursued his political mania. Massachusetts-based DJ. Beauregard is initially a staunch conserva-

tive, but realized he would have more career leverage in his state as a Democrat—thus, he happily switched sides and worked on Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign. Virginian Ben Trump keeps his conservative ideals in place, but finds that most of his peers abhor his brand of politics. And Pennsylvanian Nick Troiano drifts from his Republican beliefs to an Independent realm that grows fairly shaky in a divided partisan environment. To its credit, the film offers a rare glimpse into the relatively little-known world of political training camps for teenagers, where young people with presidential ambitions receive rigorous indoctrination into their party's line. There is even a jovial appearance by Michael Dukakis, who all but disappeared from the national spotlight after his disastrous 1988 presidential candidacy. Unfortunately, however, the three young men at the heart of the film quickly become tiresome, especially since their insatiable hunger for engaging in the political process comes across as self-aggrandizing monomania rather than a sincere desire to improve the nation. Optional. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

The Future is Now! ★★1/2

(2010) 91 min. DVD: \$195. National Film Board of Canada. PPR.

Gary Burns and Jim Brown's sprightly Canadian quasi-documentary is among a handful of (precious few) brainy movies (such as *Mindwalk* and *Sophie's World*) that invoke big ideas and lofty concepts within the framework of a scripted narrative that presents a series of dialogues and debates. In *The Future is Now!* (actually a remake/update of 1949's little-remembered *La Vie Commence Demain*), a person-on-the-street TV interviewer (Liane Balaban) meets a subject she

dubs the “Man of Today” (Paul Ahmarani), a cynical libertarian who harbors no particular hope or vision for the future, besides his own private pursuit of an ethical life. At her insistence, the Man of Today embarks on a fanciful worldwide quest to speak with international great minds—architect Shigeru Ban, philosopher Alain de Botton, novelist Rivka Galchen, painter Marlene Dumas, evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins—and he even enjoys a face-to-face encounter with a chain-smoking, hologram-like Jean-Paul Sartre (edited in from *La Vie Commence Demain* footage). Although it is sometimes unclear what “aha!” moments actually bring about a change in attitude in the Man of Today, this playful intellectual mystery tour serves up a charming and unconventional argument for optimism. Presented in both the English and French versions, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Grrrl Love and Revolution: Riot Grrrl NYC

★★1/2

(2011) 42 min. DVD: \$89; public libraries; \$250: colleges & universities. Women Make Movies. PPR.

Director Abby Moser compiles new and archival material for this sympathetic if somewhat unstructured profile of the New York chapter of the Olympia, WA-bred riot grrrl movement. Captions identify most performers, and the camerawork—capturing interviews and meetings from the 1990s—sports a non-professional look that seems to be in keeping with the D.I.Y. spirit of the genre. Sara Marcus (*Girls to the Front: The True Story of the Riot Grrrl Revolution*) explains that riot grrrl began as a response to the lack of female voices in punk, creating a space to speak about rape and sexual abuse in songs and fanzines. Marcus and other writers, including Evelyn McDonnell (*Mamarama: A Memoir of Sex, Kids and Rock 'n' Roll*) and Gayle Wald (who penned the essay *Smells Like Teen Spirit: Riot Grrrls, Revolution, and Independent Rock*), note that commercialization set in when the mainstream media took notice, leading to “girl power” acts such as the Spice Girls, who had little relation to the movement's guiding principles, such as self-distribution and free speech. *Grrrl Love and Revolution* makes a case for riot grrrl as a necessary sociopolitical phenomenon—essentially an extension of the feminism of the 1960s and 1970s—but the music sometimes works against the message in acts who prioritized self-expression over any other considerations, with the exception of top-tier outfits such as Bikini Kill, who could write actual songs. A strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (K. Femmessy)

Half the Sky ★★★

(2012) 2 discs. 232 min. DVD: \$29.95. Docurama (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4229-2227-8.

This two-part documentary—aired on

PBS's *Independent Lens*—is based on the bestselling book *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide* by married co-authors and *New York Times* reporters Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, which focuses on disadvantaged women in the process of overcoming or combating adversity. Along with representatives of aid organizations, the documentary incorporates comments from Hillary Clinton, Gloria Steinem, and George Clooney, who believes that “the celebrity involvement may be able to amplify the story.” Kristof accompanies six actresses to various countries: Eva Mendes (Sierra Leone), Meg Ryan (Cambodia), Gabrielle Union (Vietnam), Diane Lane (Somaliland), Olivia Wilde (Kenya), and America Ferrara (India). The film begins with Amie Kandeh, of the International Rescue Committee, which provides relief to rape victims (most fail to seek recourse, since the law isn’t on their side, but 14-year-old Fulamatu decides to prosecute her assailant). Other profiled subjects include Somaly Mam, who rescues girls from sex slavery; John Wood, who provides free education for female students; Edna Anan, who fights to reduce maternity mortality; Ingrid Munro, who helps women to start their own businesses through microfinancing; and Urmi Basu, who looks after the children of sex workers. While the Hollywood stars are initially distracting, these celebrities ultimately seem to be genuinely educated, concerned, and inspired. DVD extras include extended scenes and interviews, and a featurette on taking action. An informative, heartfelt look at women activists in the underdeveloped world, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Mr. Cao Goes to Washington ★★½
(2012) 72 min. DVD: \$24.95; individuals; \$95 w/PPR: public libraries & high schools; \$295 w/PPR: colleges & universities. New Day Films. ISBN: 978-1-57448-119-8.

S. Leo Chiang’s bittersweet political ride-along with a Washington rookie is a tale that has been told before (just read the title), but the main character here is an original. Joseph Cao, a Vietnamese refugee whose family settled in New Orleans, ran for the House of Representatives on a Republican ticket—partially because the Roman Catholic Cao was adamantly anti-abortion, but also because GOP donors supported him after an epic corruption case brought down the incumbent in an environment traditionally owned by scandal-ridden Democrats. Consistent with his ideals to do right by his constituents (poverty-racked districts still not recovered from Hurricane Katrina), Cao made history as the lone Republican supporting the Obama healthcare reform package... until he turned against it because of funding for pregnancy termination. By the time



YERT: Your Environmental Road Trip ★★½

(2012) 113 min. DVD: \$24.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors).

In this fast-moving, highly informative, and entertaining documentary, three eco-conscious friends—filmmakers Mark Dixon, Ben Evans, and Julie Evans—decide to spend a year traveling through all 50 states in the U.S. on a mission to find great examples of people and organizations combating climate change. *YERT* finds the committed but lighthearted trio visiting Centralia, PA, where a coal mine has been burning for decades (but is legally protected from commercial and environmentally hazardous exploitation); joining a street demonstration in Concord, NH, for sustainable energy policies; and meeting with a Chicago official in charge of funding the city’s many “living roofs.” The latter—expansive rooftops where plants are grown to absorb carbon and keep building interiors cool—is one of the film’s many impressive examples of creative and sensible local practices that could be adapted globally. More exotic are energy-efficient mud huts in Wellfleet, NE; and similarly smart “cave houses” made from rocks in Idaho. In Iowa, the travelers explore possibilities for extracting ethanol from grasses instead of corn, while further experiments with perennial (as opposed to seasonal) crops in Kansas have important implications. A drought in Georgia, compromised coastal ecosystems on the Gulf Coast, and the progressive handling of garbage in New Jersey are also covered. Throughout, the filmmakers walk their talk, keeping their own monthly trash stored in a shoebox-size container. DVD extras include audio commentary, deleted scenes, and outtakes. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

his two-year term came up for re-election, Cao found himself alienated from the vindictive Republican money machine and backstabbed by the entrenched Louisiana Democratic apparatus. In the end, he sadly concludes, congressional party politics and high-minded moral ideals don’t mix. Like Cao himself, this fascinating documentary has its feet in many camps: Asian and Asian-American studies, politics and civics, and Southern studies collections. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Rehearsal for a Sicilian Tragedy ★★★
(2009) 77 min. DVD: \$24.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors).

Actor John Turturro takes viewers on a journey to his ancestral homeland in this impressionistic documentary that is part personal nostalgia trip but mostly an effort to portray the “soul” of the Sicilian people. Co-written by Turturro and director Roman Paska, *Rehearsal for a Sicilian Tragedy* visits sites associated with Turturro’s family, such as his grandmother’s house, and more general venues, such as a stroll through Palermo’s outdoor market. And a particularly jovial sequence follows the actor as he’s welcomed into a convent whose nuns happily join him in song. But more footage is given over to interviews with local historians and artists, declamations of poetry and dramatic scenes, and conversations with master puppeteer Mimmo Cuticchio, custodian of a tradition that Turturro wants to learn about in preparation for a potential project. The film also features considerable coverage of the islanders’ celebration of the

Day of the Dead and related customs, with the overall purpose of suggesting that after a succession of invasions and occupations, the Sicilian self-identity has developed a dark, pessimistic side discernible in its culture and attitudes. Even in Turturro’s own individual story, the shadow of death briefly falls when he talks about his mother and tears up over her recent demise. All of this, along with the numerous allusions to literature and drama, speaks to the tragic element in Sicilian life that is highlighted by the title. While obviously not the average travelogue, this is a curiously moving film that many will find appealing. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Somewhere Between ★★★

(2012) 88 min. DVD: \$29.95. Docurama (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Filmmaker Linda Goldstein Knowlton appears (briefly) here to give a personal mission statement: namely, that as she has just adopted a baby girl from China, this film will later serve as a message to her daughter about her cross-cultural heritage. *Somewhere Between* focuses on four Chinese-American adolescent girls who were among the 80,000 Chinese babies who have become members of families in the United States since 1989. Over the course of its three-year-long narrative arc, the documentary gradually becomes an exposé, revealing that while on paper these children were “orphans,” many of them came from intact peasant families, where females are discarded in the search for a male heir (while also complying with Beijing’s one-child-per-household dictates).

The adoptees shown here—assimilated in affluent households from California to Tennessee—gravitate back towards China as they mature, to help out other abandoned infants, and (in a remarkably million-to-one case) a teen reunites with her biological parents. While this turn of events serves up an especially heartfelt emotional jolt, the questions of racial identity and pluralism in America begin to recede into the background as the story shifts to international adoption and child-welfare drama. Regardless, the quartet of “somewhere between” heroines followed here will not soon be forgotten by viewers of this often powerful documentary. DVD extras include interviews with adoption professionals, and deleted and extended scenes. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

We Are Not Ghosts ★★½

(2012) 52 min. DVD: \$250. Moving Images (dist. by Bullfrog Films). PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 1-93777-225-X.

Mark Dworkin and Melissa Young's provocative and invigorating documentary focuses on private microeconomic efforts made by residents to revitalize their blighted neighborhoods in Detroit, a once-vibrant, diverse, hard-working city that never truly recovered its footing after the

debilitating social upheaval of the 1960s or the equally traumatic loss of jobs after the collapse of the automobile industry. Unlike other urban areas that successfully reinvented themselves through gentrification and innovative economic initiatives, Detroit never found the formula to move forward, although some efforts are beginning to pay off. Abandoned lots have been transformed into organic gardens, small businesses have provided financial empowerment to enterprising individuals, and educational programs are instilling tomorrow's generation with lessons of self-worth and community pride. Larger problems, however, continue to haunt Detroit, including a glut of foreclosed housing, long-simmering distrust between African-American communities and the police, and the absence of industrial opportunities to fill the void left by the withdrawal of manufacturers. While there's plenty of blame to go around, the interviewees here—teachers, entrepreneurs, community leaders, and agricultural experts—are more focused on harnessing positive energy and working toward a better future. Indeed, that can-do attitude makes *We Are Not Ghosts* a powerful film that celebrates resiliency and exudes hope. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Before You Hook Up: Dating Rights and Responsibilities ★★★½

(2013) 22 min. DVD: \$149.95 (teacher's guide included). Human Relations Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-55548-572-6.

“If you are respected, you feel valued,” one interviewee notes in this brief but informative program that explores the ins and outs of healthy dating relationships. Comprised mainly of commentary by real teens combined with expert opinions, *Before You Hook Up* offers solid guidance about what constitutes a good relationship, including respecting boundaries, being treated as equals, accepting people for who they are, and finding a balance by sometimes agreeing to disagree. Noting that trust doesn't happen overnight, the program counsels viewers to be honest about feelings and needs, and to support each other's individuality and goals, which will help build a strong bond. The program also looks at the negative aspects of bad relationships, including control issues, manipulation, and the unhealthiness of fantasies like *Romeo and Juliet* (a role-play vignette notes that Romeo likely didn't know Juliet's favorite color,

Transgender TUESDAYS

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— Cecilia Chung
transgender advocate and
San Francisco Health Commissioner.

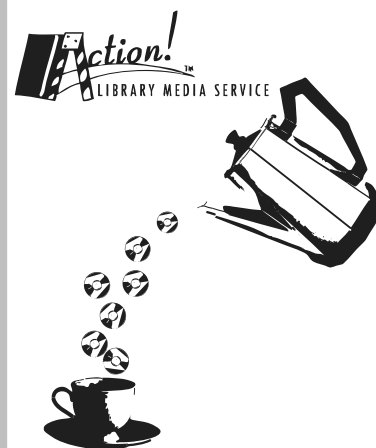
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Mark Freeman & Nathaniel Walters

The story of the country's first Public Health transgender clinic – started in San Francisco's notorious Tenderloin District at the height of the AIDS Epidemic – and 12 of its pioneering patients. Their remarkably warm narratives turn the harrowing places they have been into a testament of victory and hope. This breakthrough documentary is a must-see for students, healthcare providers, and allies to transgender people from every community.

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or anything important other than that she was cute). Also offering advice on how to recognize warning signs (a "Brittney's Story" segment details an abusive situation), and get help, this is highly recommended. Aud: J, H, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

EDUCATION

World Peace and Other Fourth-Grade Achievements ★★★

(2012) 56 min. DVD: \$150; public libraries; \$250; high schools, colleges & universities. Rosalia Films (dist. by The Martin Institute for Teaching Excellence). PPR.

Fourth grade might seem a little young to be studying Chinese general Sun Tzu's ancient text *The Art of War*, but innovative Charlottesville, VA, educator John Hunter—son of a schoolteacher—feels otherwise. Bored and restless, Hunter dropped out of college a few times in order to travel throughout Asia, but found his calling when he discovered experimental education, the subject in which he finally obtained his degree. Director Chris Farina follows Hunter's fourth-grade class as students participate in the interactive World Peace Game, a 28-year-old political-science exercise in which fictional countries must learn to get along. For one day a week over the course of two months, student leaders conduct their business around a large game board that simulates the globe, where those who become prime ministers receive a dossier and choose two to three officers. Game scenarios mix new crises (such as water shortages) and ongoing skirmishes, while complicating factors include religious practices, endangered species, and natural resources. Leaders can also reach out to external forces for assistance, including the United Nations and the World Bank. The game ends when the class has achieved world peace. While the kids can get pretty excitable when it comes to defending their turf, Hunter makes sure that no one goes too far in either their words or actions. One student, a slight boy with a surprisingly mature voice, looks both exhausted and exhilarated after a series of battles here, summarily stating, "I think it's kind of weird to be living what Sun Tzu said." Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

LAW & CRIME

Celebrity Trials in the Media ★★1/2

(2012) 83 min. DVD: \$19.95. Cinema Libre Studio (avail. from most distributors).

In America and other Western cultures, the media seems to delight in building up celebrities, and then tearing them down. Although celebrity journalism has been around at least since the days of William Randolph Hearst's "yellow journalism" (his descendant Patty

Hearst would ironically become a victim), the feeding frenzy came of age with the media circus surrounding O.J. Simpson's murder trial and Michael Jackson's child molesting charges. The modern celebrity trial—usually marked by outsized media coverage and eventual book deals—strikes many as wasteful and sleazy. Filmmaker Brian Malone's documentary focuses on one contemporary instance, the rape trial hearings of basketball superstar Kobe Bryant, noting that sex trials—boasting abundant speculation and salacious details—are easy to cover and a perfect fit for the 24/7 news cycle of cable television, as well as the new, profit-driven world of network TV news. Viewers see reporters (some hoping to make their career reputations) hovering around a Colorado courthouse, desperately hoping for a bit of news or to catch a glimpse of Bryant as he enters or leaves the building. Some at least retain their sense of humor in interviews here, although it would be funnier if serious allegations were not involved, and other important news wasn't being crowded out of air-time. After many weeks, a quiet, out-of-court settlement is reached, and the news people and their cameras disperse until the next big scandal. While the subject is timely, the documentary unfortunately doesn't have much to say that is either new or instructive. An optional purchase. Aud: P. (S. Rees)

Due Process: Understanding the U.S. Criminal Justice System ★★★

(2012) 3 discs. 94 min. DVD: \$299.95. Films Media Group. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62102-908-3.

The workings of the American criminal justice system—with a particular emphasis

on the effort to balance the constitutional rights of individuals with the security needs of society at large—are described clearly and succinctly in this three-part series (also available separately). The first installment, *Crime, Law, and Enforcement*, explains the legal classification of crimes, the investigation of crimes, and the interrogation of suspects. The second, *Evidence and Forensics*, deals with the collection and categorization of evidence, with special attention given to forensic techniques such as DNA analysis. The third title, *Court, Trials, and Sentencing*, focuses specifically on the judicial process, covering how trials are prepared and conducted, while also looking at the arrangements for plea bargains. The overall effect is of an illustrated introductory textbook on the subject, with sober narration accompanied by observations from police officers, prosecutors, judges, and academics, as well as occasional dramatizations. Offering a clear and straightforward overview of the subject, this series is a good fit for civics courses and pre-law students, while also serving general audiences as a welcome corrective to the simplistic portrayals often encountered in movies and on television. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (F. Swietek)

LANGUAGE ARTS

Worlds of English ★★★1/2

(2011) 3 discs. 80 min. DVD: \$389.85. Films Media Group. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62102-176-6.

Spread over three separate half-hour programs (also available separately), *Worlds of*



Crimes Against the Environment ★★★

(2012) 22 min. DVD: \$129.95. VEA (dist. by Films Media Group). PPR. Closed captioned.

Offering a concise explanation of the prosecution of so-called "green crimes," *Crimes Against the Environment* begins with an explanation of two kinds of emerging law: statutes targeting "primary" offenses (actual damage done directly to the environment) and those concerning "secondary" violations (harm done to people or property for the purpose of perpetuating activities that damage the environment—for example, French intelligence sinking a Greenpeace ship in 1985). Yet, as we learn from host

Dr. Steven Taylor and various interviewees, a divide exists between those routinely punished for infractions (individuals and small organizations) and those who are not (the multinational corporations that do most of the polluting). Industries that pollute without impunity and exploit without social consciousness drive the marketplace, and since capitalism feeds on consumption, companies must keep growing to sustain profits. So there is little economic reason for the system to stop and weigh the consequences for either the planet's health or for the billions of people with no clean drinking water or safe haven from industrial mishaps and catastrophe. Possible solutions? Some ideas here are drawn from sociology, such as the notion that peer influence could play a big part in getting people to change their consumer habits; others come from a close examination of the tenets of Karl Marx and Max Weber. The bottom line is that the environment will continue to lose ground until sufficient pressure is brought on corporations and developing (or developed) countries to change. Recommended. Aud: J, H, C, P. (T. Keogh)

English opens with *The Rise of English*, which traces the development of modern-day English from its origins in the 17th century to its current use around the globe. The second title, *A Global Language* looks at the language's growing dominance in commerce, government, journalism, television broadcasting, and among educated classes, as well as its impact on Chinese, Indian, Asian, and African society. Lastly, *Future of English* asks whether the language's influence will continue as people in far-flung locations adapt English and make it their own. All three titles feature interviews with college-age students and their teachers around the world (an Indian call-center trainer says her trainees want to translate word-for-word from Hindi, resulting in English phrases like "a cup of hot hot tea"; meanwhile, Chinese advertising students learn why they shouldn't market a dress as appropriate for "street walking"). Individuals from Australia, New Zealand, and parts of Great Britain talk about how confusing English usage can be, even among native speakers. *Worlds of English* also examines the political implications of English as a unifying—or dividing—factor in the European Parliament, and looks at South African efforts to prevent English from overriding local languages. An engaging, informative, and fun series, this is highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (M. Puffer-Rothenberg)

NATURE, MATH & SCIENCE

The Arabian Horse: A Gift from the Desert ★★

(2010) 60 min. DVD: \$24.95. SeaCastle Film (dist. by Janson Media). PPR. ISBN: 978-1-56839-475-6.

Shot in Saudi Arabia, Oman, Great Britain, Kentucky, and California, this lushly filmed documentary begins with a look at the Bedouins, the initial breeders of Arabian horses (they even keep them in their tents!), and traces the magnificent animals' history, including their role in the spread of Islam. The Arabian horse went to Spain with conquering Moors and to the New World with Columbus and other traders. Intelligent and flexible in battle, the animals were prized throughout Europe, and although they may look delicate, these creatures are extraordinarily sturdy and can go a long time without water. Most of today's Arabian stock can be traced to Ali Pasha Sherif's vast breeding operation in 19th-century Egypt, where at one time 300 camels were employed to provide milk as nourishment. With the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and ensuing poverty in the Mideast, the center of activity moved to the U.S. More recently, however, wealth from oil has led to a return to riding and breeding in the Mideast, especially in Saudi Arabia, where owners of sprawling farms seek the perfect balance between beauty and

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functionality. Increasingly, Arabian horses are also being used for dressage and show, and the filmmakers interview several young Saudi women who take part in jumping and endurance competitions. The final message of this film—which is narrated from an Arab point of view and includes interviews with various Saudi ministers—is that the Arabian horse, now found throughout the world, brings a message of peace from a history of war. Recommended. Aud: P. (F. Gardner)

Minds in the Water ★★1/2

(2012) 85 min. DVD: \$24.95. Saltwater Collective (avail. from www.mindsinthewater.com).

Dave Rastovich, aka “Rasta,” is a professional Australian surfer. Although a self-described “beach bum,” Rastovich is also concerned with the environment and water quality of the oceans. Directed by Justin Krumb, *Minds in the Water* follows the efforts of Rastovich and his fellow activists to save the habitat of whales and dolphins. Rastovich describes his feelings of “joy and gratitude” when he sees these seagoing mammals swim nearby while he surfs, even crediting dolphins with saving him from a shark attack. The documentary relates how the economy of Byron Bay, Australia, has gradually been transformed from its whale hunting roots to one supported by tourists who seek to watch whales in the wild. Threats to whales and dolphins include dolphin captivity at tourist aquariums, and baited hooks strung out in the ocean, which indiscriminately trap sharks, dolphins, and sea turtles, along with tuna. Viewers follow Rastovich to whaling conferences, the Galapagos Islands, America’s western coast (where he gathers Native American creation stories on the cultural value of whales and dolphins), and, finally, to a protest at Japan’s

infamous “cove,” (featured in the 2009 documentary *The Cove*), where dolphins are trapped and slaughtered by the hundreds. Unfortunately, in trying to tell three stories—about Rastovich’s love of surfing, his growing environmental concerns, and the role of oceans in our ecosystem—*Minds in the Water* doesn’t always successfully mesh its diffuse narratives. Still, this should be considered a strong optional purchase (with the caveat that scenes of dolphin slaughter may upset some viewers). Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)

Siberian Tiger Quest ★★★

(2012) 60 min. DVD: \$19.99 (\$42.95 w/PPR). PBS Video. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-796-0.

The forests of Russian Siberia are a remote and desolate locale, seemingly devoid of life. But this is the home of the rare, reclusive, and magnificent Siberian tiger, which has been hunted almost to extinction by poachers, and threatened by loss of habitat, forcing the animals to roam great distances in search of prey. Filmmakers Mike Birkhead and Joe Loncraine’s documentary, aired on PBS’s *Nature*, follows biologist Chris Morgan on a quest to find and document these wild tigers. Morgan meets Sooyong Park, a Korean filmmaker who filmed tiger families, often spending weeks nearly immobile in an underground “hide.” Park advises Morgan to “think like a tiger,” searching for easily overlooked clues, such as trees and bushes where tigers have marked their territory. Wild boars and deer are common food sources, thanks to the large number of trees that still support the ecosystem, in spite of excessive harvesting of timber. Sadly, some tigers are killed by rifle traps set by poachers, who seek to

sell animal parts to markets in Asia. Park’s footage offers remarkable, intimate footage of tigers he names “Hansel,” “Gretel,” and “Snow White.” Armed with Park’s inspiration and advice, Morgan sets out on his own, building a hide, and setting cameras along possible trails. While Morgan himself misses seeing a tiger, he does succeed in catching fleeting footage on one of his remote cameras—noting that the elusive nature of the beast may hold the key to its best chance for survival. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

The Whale ★★★★★

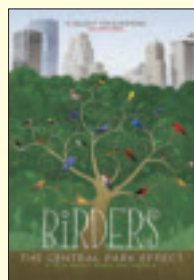
(2010) 85 min. DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$32.95. Docurama (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4229-2284-7 (dvd).

Narrated by Ryan Reynolds, this beautiful, bittersweet documentary examines four years in the life of Luna, the young killer whale who became separated from his pod off the west coast of Vancouver Island and took up residence, alone, in the Nootka Sound fjord. Like a child, Luna spent his time trying to forge relationships with local residents in boats and on docks. Most of the footage finds him engaging humans through gentle play, although he occasionally refused to let kayakers and people in small boats reach shore by pushing them back out to the water. For a long time, folks spoke to Luna, touched him, gave him toys, and developed a strong bond. Inevitably, however, a tug of war developed between different parties who each felt they knew what was best for Luna, including citizens, Canada’s Department of Fisheries, activists, and a First Nations tribe, which believed Luna was the reincarnation of a late chief. The situation continued unresolved for years, with various plans to reconnect Luna with his family repeatedly scuttled by one or another of the players in this drama. Co-directors Suzanne Chisholm and Michael Parfit eventually get into the act, crossing the line from objective witnesses to advocates. As heart-wrenching as *The Whale* can be, the film is also uplifting in its portrayal of a special and mysterious bond between humans and orcas. DVD extras include deleted scenes and a World Wildlife Fund PSA. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

Birders: The Central Park Effect ★★★★★

(2012) 60 min. DVD: \$19.95. Music Box Films (avail. from most distributors).

Besides serving as an offbeat nature documentary, *Birders* is one of the most joyful and uplifting recent portrayals of New York City, with director Jeffrey Kimball taking an affectionate look at Gotham’s convivial bird-watching community—folks of all races, genders, and backgrounds who come to Central Park with powerful optics and cameras to witness the 200 varieties migrating through the landscape each year. Divided into seasons, the film features interviews with a wide range of enthusiasts, including a trombone technician, a cancer patient who measures out her life in bird sightings, professional ornithologists and representatives from the Audubon Society, and writer Jonathan Franzen. While celebrating the richness of avian life on view, the documentary also makes the point that the seeming abundance tends to hide an alarming decline over time. The high-rise-dwelling hawk, dubbed Pale Male, who’s been the topic of various documentaries (including *Pale Male* [VL-9/04]) and books, makes a brief showing, but he’s just one of the many subjects flitting through (an “in-order-of-appearance” checklist runs over the closing credits). DVD extras include a field guide booklet, additional interviews with Franzen and others, and a “Birds of Central Park” video guide. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)



The Worm Hunters ★★★

(2011) 52 min. DVD: \$49: public libraries & high schools; \$89: colleges & universities. Green Planet Films. PPR.

Narrated and hosted by British taxonomist Emma Sherlock, filmmaker Randall Wood’s *The Worm Hunters* goes underground—literally—in search of earthworms, presenting a globetrotting research group of taxonomists on a mission to find and name as-yet unidentified species of these underappreciated subterranean deni-

zens. Backed by computer-generated images and an action-adventure soundtrack, this documentary follows dedicated scientists in their labs and in the field, as they share their enthusiasm for their work and detail its importance (for one expert in South Africa, the hunt involves grave danger: he goes into the wild and vigorously shovels soil while rifle-bearing guards form a protective circle to ward off predators). Viewers will learn that the number of known earthworm species is about 6,000, and that perhaps several thousand have yet to be identified. Furthermore, science has only recently been able to successfully assess the wriggly creatures' positive impact on the global ecosystem. Unfortunately, the researchers face a race against time thanks to reckless commercial overdevelopment that has already created environmental disasters around the world and threatens to imperil the survival of many kinds of earthworms. Wood makes this story quite compelling, presenting the information in a user-friendly manner that will be easily understood by those unfamiliar with the related ecological science. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (P. Hall)

HEALTH & FITNESS

Out on a Limb ★★½

(2012) 61 min. DVD: \$125; public libraries & high schools; \$295: colleges & universities. Under the Sign. PPR.

Daria Price's documentary takes an invigorating look at the significant advances being made in the design and manufacture of prosthetic limbs. For many years, crudely crafted devices were hastily assembled to meet the needs of injured war veterans. But the large number of military amputees returning from World War II required a dramatic reconsideration. Recently, the number of military amputees has substantially increased due to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, while civilian amputee rates are also on the rise from diseases such as diabetes. Fortunately, there have been remarkable breakthroughs in robotics and neuroscience, resulting in new prosthetic devices that are both more comfortable and more efficient. Indeed, some of the new technology is truly awe-inspiring, particularly a robotic hand that brilliantly mirrors the movements of a human one. Even more fascinating is the progress made in pediatric prosthetic design, enabling children with lost limbs to enjoy healthy and active lives. If there is a sour note here, it comes from the U.S. health insurance industry—according to the film, too many insurance companies stubbornly insist that one prosthetic can last a lifetime and, thus, refuse to offer proper compensation



Escape Fire: The Fight to Rescue American Healthcare

★★★½

(2012) 99 min. DVD: \$27.98. Lionsgate (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

If you thought last year's Supreme Court 5-4 ruling affirming Obamacare was the last word on the subject of American healthcare, you will be in for a surprise watching Matthew Heineman and Susan Froemke's documentary. According to *Escape Fire*, the U.S. spent \$2.7 trillion on healthcare in 2011, and spending levels are expected to only increase this year. The problem, according to the filmmakers, is grossly misplaced priorities, particularly in federal spending programs that emphasize the quantity of patients being treated over the quality of care. Holistic health leader Dr. Andrew Weil, prominently featured here, cogently observes, "We don't have a healthcare system in this country. We have a disease management system." Some of the arguments presented—the suffocating control of the pharmaceutical industry on the healthcare debate, the reluctance of insurance providers to embrace so-called alternative treatments—have been covered in similar documentaries. However, hearing a condemnation of the system by Donald Berwick, President Obama's Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services from 2010 to 2011, is surprising, and certainly not an endorsement for Obamacare as the cure-all prescription. DVD extras include audio commentary by the directors, behind-the-scenes featurettes, and deleted and extended scenes. A provocative, often disturbing film that is sure to spark debate, this is highly recommended. [Note: this is also available for \$95 w/PPR for public libraries, and \$295 w/PPR for colleges and universities from Ro*co Films Educational (www.rocoeducational.com).] Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

for clients who require upgrades on their artificial limbs. Offering an inspiring overview of life-changing advances in the field, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Pass (on) the Salt: Shaking the Habit

★★★

(2012) 20 min. DVD: \$89 (educator's guide included). Learning Seed. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-55740-618-7.

Pass (on) the Salt addresses the health hazards of eating too much salty food, while also looking at ways to reduce overconsumption of salt. A female narrator explains that the human body needs sodium to function properly; however, while most foods contain sodium, Americans take in too much of it daily, primarily from processed or prepared items. Manufacturers and restaurants use sodium as a preservative, or to enhance taste, and consumers have become accustomed to the result. But as this guidance program notes, people can cut back and reverse their tolerance by consuming fresh and whole foods, preparing their own meals, and buying low-sodium or salt-free products. Still images, simple animations of veins and blood cells, and scenes of college-age men and women selecting, preparing, or eating healthy or unhealthy foods reinforce the concepts presented here. Citing the longstanding (but disputed) nutritional maxim that high salt intake leads to hypertension, this program delivers sound advice on eating well and generally pursuing a healthy

lifestyle. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (M. Puffer-Rothenberg)

Programmed to Be Fat? ★★½

(2012) 45 min. DVD: \$295. Dreamfilm Productions (dist. by Bullfrog Films). PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 1-93777-216-0.

A hefty thesis underscores this Canadian-made scientific detective story documentary. While proper diet and exercise are unquestionably good, what if the root causes underlying the Western world's obesity epidemic have nothing to do with sedentary living or overeating? Several international scientists—noting that even lab animals, raised in controlled conditions, are becoming abnormally larger—have begun to look at "obesogens," a class of chemicals often used in industry (suspects include nicotine, lead, bisphenols, tributyltin, atrazine, and dioxin) that trigger the rapid production of fat cells. Entering the food chain and infiltrating the human cycle early via mothers' breast milk, these substances can have epigenetic effects, passing fat genes onto the developing fetus. Quite insidiously, small doses of the suspect chemicals have more severe consequences than large ones (which is partially why they went unnoticed for so long) in this theory that rewrites basic assumptions about being overweight. Narrated by David Suzuki (CBC's *The Nature of Things*, serving here as co-producer), filmmaker Bruce Mohun's provocative *Programmed to Be Fat?* deftly interweaves interviews, animation, and live-action to present an interesting concept. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

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10 Minute Solution: Tighten & Tone Pilates ★★★

(2012) 57 min. DVD:
\$16.98. Anchor Bay
Entertainment (avail. from
most distributors). Closed
captioned.



Instructor Laura Hudson leads a series of five 10-minute Pilates workouts that can be mixed and matched into a customized routine, focusing on building strength in a specific part of the body, and moving from the easygoing lean stretch, to more demanding tightened and toned core combinations. Hudson uses a latex resistance band throughout, which is useful for maintaining balance and holding positions, while also making the moves more challenging. Individual routines are performed standing, kneeling, or lying on the floor, and while some exercises may appear simple, many require considerable strength and balance, and may not be suitable for beginners. While the accompanying resistance band presents a problem for libraries (patrons would have to supply their own), this is an intense workout. Recommended. Aud: P. (K. Cruver)

Dance Off the Inches: Latin Cardio Party ★★★

(2012) 44 min. DVD:
\$14.98. Anchor Bay
Entertainment (avail. from
most distributors). Closed
captioned.



New York-based fitness instructor Emily Naim presents a fast-paced, intense dance workout, serving up three Latin routines that can be played separately, or together for an hour-long workout. A "step" guide offers thorough instruction on some of the more complex moves and combinations, such as the slinky, cumbia, and samba. Naim breaks down these movements for feet and arms, while demonstrating the finer points of each motion, enabling viewers to add a little spice to their exercises once they have mastered the technical elements. With her bright red cargo pants and hoop earrings, Naim boasts a sassy, street-smart persona that lends the proceedings an extra shot of fun, while two back-up dancers help pump up the energy level with their enthusiastic modified versions and occasional spirited shout-outs. Recommended. Aud: P. (K. Cruver)

Dr. Lisa: Yoga Blast

★★★

(2012) 63 min. DVD:
\$16.99. Acacia (avail. from
most distributors). ISBN:
978-1-59828-948-0.



The emphasis is often on the "blast" in this series of yoga-infused exercises presented by television personality Dr. Lisa Masterson. Although the program offers a slower-paced section with a more traditional yoga routine, the main feature here is a yoga workout that includes stretches, dance steps, and a generally brisk pace, moving from a swiftly-paced dance segment through ballet-inspired stretches to a yoga cool-down. Dr. Lisa partners with health and wellness instructor Elise Joan on all three routines, serving up light, inspirational banter and constant words of encouragement. In the cardio segment, the bright flowers and plants in the garden background can distract the eye during the more complex moves, but the less busy background in an outdoor pavilion during the strength and power stretch sections makes it easier to focus on the instructors. Recommended. Aud: P. (K. Cruver)

Element: Intro to Yoga

★★★

(2012) 75 min. DVD:
\$14.98. Anchor Bay
Entertainment (avail. from
most distributors). Closed
captioned.



Tamal Dodge moves through yoga poses in a lovely outdoor setting, presenting sequences in real time, except for an abbreviated shavasana (or corpse pose). With a relaxing voice, Dodge clearly explains the various positions, describing how they affect the body, while also pointing out which muscles are being exercised. Breathing instruction is enhanced with the sound of breath and formless music. Dodge expects effort but discourages obsession, noting that "there's no need to ever rush." The beginning exercises are easier, with optional instructions for using blocks (Dodge demonstrates an entire sequence on the right side of the body, followed by the same one on the left). The second part of the program, set at a more intermediate level, adds some more difficult movements, including challenging balance postures that require additional strength and flexibility. Recommended. Aud: P. (F. Gardner)

Gentle Yoga for Every Body ★★★

(2012) 60 min. DVD: \$29.95. YogaJP (dist. by
The AV Cafe). PPR.

As a veteran of back pain and spinal

surgeries, Marjorie Old has a deep understanding of how to adapt yoga to fit the constraints of age, weight, stiffness, or disability. Offering clear and precise directions, Old demonstrates here some poses that can be done in an office chair, noting that even easy moves will stretch muscles and help with flexibility. In a series of segments ("Upper Body Stretches and Twists," "Strengthen and Lengthen," "Strong Foundation," and "Supporting Your Center"), Old continually encourages participants to breathe and to work with what their body can handle at any particular moment. Although she doesn't name most of the standard postures, labels such as "cactus arms" and "windshield wiper knees" make these movements both clear and memorable. As the program progresses, the exercises become more complex and challenging, with some performed on the floor or requiring greater balance, but Old and a plus-size assistant also demonstrate adaptations meant to accommodate certain physical restrictions. Recommended. Aud: P. (F. Gardner)



Hip Hop Walk ★★★

(2012) 60 min. DVD: \$19.99. BayView Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



Fitness professional Amy Bento Ross performs solo in this high-energy workout that features hip-hop moves backed by a thumping soundtrack in which the tempo is directly correlated to the activity. Kicking off with a warm-up, *Hip Hop Walk* consists of various combos of marching, toe-taps, shrugs, claps, leg lifts, and bounces, as well as step-touch, grapevine, and other exaggerations of movement geared towards engaging the torso and promoting strenuous arm work, ending with cool-down stretches. Ross is in hyper form, chatting the viewer up with encouragement along the way to "bring it" and "feel those break beats," providing ample inspiration to keep up with the pumping, continuous routine. And for those new to hip-hop, as the host says, "...if you're not funky, don't worry—you're fine." Recommended. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Stronger Seniors Workout Program: Stretch & Strength ★★★

(2012) 60 min. DVD: \$29.99. BayView Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).

Fitness instructor Anne Pringle Bur-

nell produced this compilation that includes two separate workouts designed specifically for senior citizens. Focusing on functional training for daily life (which can be handy when playing with grandkids), *Stronger Seniors Workout* features a variety of moves mostly performed while sitting. "Stretch" includes shoulder raises, toe-taps, arm stretches, leg lifts, back rotations, and gentle sliding abs work, with descriptions such as "pull the curtain closed" or "hula dancer." For the higher-impact "Strength," Burnell notes that viewers can use small hand weights (although not recommended for beginners) for this set—with some standing moves—that features shoulder lifts, aerobic tap-and-reach combos, punches, dribbling, hip-shaking, and lunges. The participating seniors shown here follow along easily enough, and appear to be having a good time. Recommended. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)



Ultimate Kettlebell Workouts for Beginners ★★★

(2012) 79 min. DVD: \$16.99. Acacia (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-59828-949-7.



With a strong focus on safety and proper form, this easygoing introduction to working out with a kettlebell features instructor Paul Katami, who begins (with an assistant) by demonstrating proper equipment weight, positioning, and warm up exercises (primarily designed to prepare wrists, ankles, and joints for the extra stress of the heavy kettlebells). To help beginners avoid injury, Katami also explains common pitfalls and errors in form. In the second segment, Katami leads a workout dedicated to drills and combinations, while the final section is devoted to core-strengthening exercises. All three sections can be played individually or as one long workout. "Drills and Combinations" consists of several standing swings, lifts, and stretches, while most of "Core Strengthening" is floor exercises, with the bell being used to stabilize the body. Set outdoors, with pleasant greenery and flowers, the pace is steady, but laidback enough for beginners to quickly get up to speed. DVD extras include a text bio of Katami. Recommended. Aud: P. (K. Cruver)

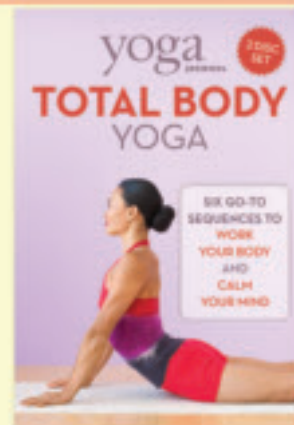
DVD PICKS

Sponsored by BayView Entertainment



DISCOVER TAI CHI FOR FITNESS BAY384, \$14.99

Designed in five sections to be done individually or collectively depending on fitness level, the brand-new **Discover Tai Chi for Fitness** DVD guides you through Balance, Strength, Mobility, Flexibility, and Stress-reduction sections plus three bonus routines. Instructor Scott Cole brings Tai Chi to life with this effective, easy-to-follow workout that celebrates his 10th year at the helm of the top-selling and top-rated Discover Tai Chi DVD series.



TOTAL BODY YOGA BV2548, \$24.99

From the most trusted name in yoga worldwide – *Yoga Journal* – comes the new **Total Body Yoga** two-DVD set, featuring six go-to sequences to work your body and calm your mind. This comprehensive set of sequences covers a wide variety of poses, helping you build the foundation for a strong practice that will stretch and strengthen your body, reduce stress, and boost your confidence. You'll learn to increase your energy with twists, build strength with arm balances, release tension with hip openers, and much more.



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WWW.BAYVIEWENTERTAINMENT.COM

CHILDBIRTH & PARENTING

Prenatal & Early Childhood Nutrition

★★★

(2012) 25 min. DVD: \$79.95 (downloadable teacher's guide available). Learning Zone Express. PPR. Closed captioned.

Dietician Melissa Halas-Liang serves as the main expert for this primer on proper nutrition guidelines for pregnant or breast-feeding women. Combining onscreen lists with personal stories, *Prenatal & Early Childhood Nutrition* explains that extra calories are needed for mothers during different trimesters—citing the MyPlate government sanctioned nutrition guide as helpful in developing a meal plan. Offering different snack ideas to cover various food groups, the program also addresses issues such as morning sickness and cravings, and explores ways to avoid problems such as Listeria (a bacterial food infection), mercury from fish, and not getting enough vitamins or hydration. As one participant sagely notes, “I don’t think you can ever be fully prepared, but you just try your best.” A solid overview that offers healthy tips and advice for mother and baby, while also fostering good future habits for the whole family, this is recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

FOOD & SPIRITS

Three Stars ★★★1/2

(2010) 94 min. In English, German, Dutch, Japanese, Italian, Spanish & French w/English subtitles. DVD: \$27.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors).

This captivating documentary focuses on the impact of Michelin ratings on a number of world-class chefs who either crave the international guide’s elusive three stars or have turned their backs on related pressure. The first half of the film introduces 10 chefs whose restaurants—in locales ranging from New York to Europe to Japan—are widely revered. Filmmaker Lutz Hachmeister provides a useful profile of each culinary artist: backgrounds, food experiments, kitchen philosophy, and more. We meet Jean-Georges Vongerichten, who operates several restaurants around the world from a base in the Trump Tower; Rene Redzepi, considered by many to be the best chef in the world, with a focus on Scandinavian cuisine (but who only has two stars to date); and father-and-daughter team Juan Mari and Elena Arzak, who use a machine for capturing and converting flavors into powdered seasoning. Most intriguing are two chefs largely unconcerned with ratings: Tokyo’s Hideki Ishikawa, whose eatery has three stars that he considers mostly irrelevant; and the fascinating Olivier Roellinger,

a former chemist who closed his celebrated restaurant after surviving a violent crime. Hachmeister interviews Michelin’s head, learning about the organization’s use of unidentified testers who determine ratings. But far more interesting are the glimpses into the inner workings of the chefs’ establishments, from staff meetings to kitchen dynamics to after-hours planning for the next day. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

RELATIONSHIPS & SEXUALITY

(A)Sexual: A Minority No Longer Silent

★★★

(2012) 74 min. DVD: \$350. Filmmakers Library. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-4631-1571-5.

Angela Tucker’s non-judgmental documentary considers the possibility that asexuality may be a sexual orientation like heterosexuality or homosexuality, rather than a choice, such as celibacy. Dr. Anthony Bogaert, a Brock University psychology professor, says that previous studies focused only on sexual attraction to men and women, so he offered “neither” as an option on a survey, which was selected by 1% of the respondents—a statistically notable proportion. Of the asexual subjects profiled here, some have had sex, and some haven’t, but none have enjoyed it. David Jay, a San Francisco activist, says he’s never felt sexual desire, and sees no reason to keep his nature a secret, although his use of the phrase “I came out to my parents” (as asexual) sounds a bit strange. During the two-year film shoot, Jay organizes a group to march in the city’s annual pride parade, a move that

sex columnist Dan Savage finds pointless. Swank Ivy, who has posted a series of videos to YouTube, shares Jay’s lack of sexual interest, and agrees that publicity can only help to de-stigmatize their situation. Other asexuals wonder about the link between autism and asexuality. Throughout, Tucker works in clips from vintage educational films and celebrity interviewees, such as Morrissey, who opts for the word “celibate” over “asexual.” As for Jay, the film’s primary subject, his situation turns out to be more complicated, since he longs for children and emotional intimacy, but struggles with finding a path to accomplish these goals. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

BEAUTY & FASHION

Do You Have What It Takes? Fashion Design Careers ★★★

(2012) 22 min. DVD: \$79.95 (downloadable teacher's guide available). Learning Zone Express. PPR. Closed captioned.

Sporting nice production values, this fast-paced program focuses on the world of fashion design. *Do You Have What It Takes?* includes commentary from up-and-comers including *Project Runway* contestants Christopher Straub and Danielle Everine, and former NFL Washington Redskins turned designer Gibran Hamdan, among others, who explore the traits best suited to design careers, such as a strong sense of individuality, persistence, and flexibility, as well as the ability to search for inspiration in all aspects of life. Other key skills include quickly adapting to technical



Whores' Glory ★★★1/2

(2012) 119 min. In Bengali, Spanish, Thai, German, French & Japanese w/English subtitles. DVD: \$29.95 (avail. from most distributors), \$249 w/PPR (avail. from www.kinolorberedu.com). Kino Lorber.

One of the boldest documentary treatments of the skin trade since the Hughes Brothers’ attitudinal *American Pimp*, director Michael Glawogger’s *Whores’ Glory* worms its way inside brothels in Bangkok, Thailand; Reynosa, Mexico; and Bangladesh to offer up an unrelenting—and sometimes sexually explicit—fly-on-the-wall perspective of these houses of ill repute. Glawogger’s camera captures fascinatingly (and disturbingly) different sides of the same profession: from the relatively orderly quotidian showcasing of the working women on display like porcelain dolls behind huge glass windows in Bangkok, to the more hellish hole-in-the-wall environment in which prostitutes in Bangladesh and Reynosa ply their trade. In Reynosa, the conditions are exceptionally bleak and the prostitutes crack-addicted, but the toughest and saddest truths come during the segment on Faridpur, Bangladesh: here, the one-on-one confessional interviews with some of the anguished prostitutes are heartbreakingly sad, becoming almost poetic laments over the appalling conditions they endure and the ruthless fate to which they are resigned. Perhaps the greatest strength of *Whores’ Glory* is its humanizing aspect: most of the women interviewed here are intelligent, reflective, thoughtful human beings driven to sell their bodies in backward economies that still offer few viable working opportunities for women. DVD extras include a stills gallery. With the caveat about some graphic content, this is highly recommended for more adventurous collections. Aud: C, P. (M. Sandlin)

advances, solid time-management, and working well with others. The program's participants also mention various education degrees pertinent to their craft. In the end, designers enjoy the satisfaction of being able to show their unique personalities to the world through finished products. Recommended. Aud: J, H, C, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

BUSINESS & ECONOMICS

We're Not Broke ★★★

(2012) 81 min. DVD: \$95; high schools & public libraries; \$295: colleges & universities. Ro*co Films Educational. PPR.

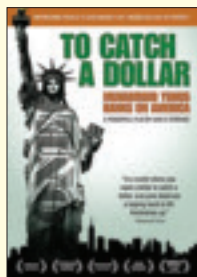
Filmmakers Karin Hayes and Victoria Bruce argue that depleted municipal budgets, shuttered schools, and social-services cutbacks need not be commonplace in America—if only big, greedy corporations yielded the billions they rightfully owe in federal income tax. Instead, giant companies such as General Electric, Cisco Systems, Microsoft, Google—and even the much-admired Apple—pay little or no taxes, thanks in part to off-shore shelters, especially in Bermuda and the Caymans (Mitt Romney cameos here), that exploit legal loopholes in the 72,000-page tax code. Meanwhile, corporate lobbyists continue to campaign for cuts in their employer's tax rates, a move backed by politicians despite little evidence that anyone would benefit, aside from CEOs and the super-richest. Supportive interviewees run the gamut—from business authors and economic journalists (from *Tax Notes*, *Tax Analysts*, and *Bloomberg News*) to young anti-corporate activist Carl Gibson, who founded the protest group US Uncut in imitation of a similar grassroots U.K. organization, and is proud to back Occupy Wall Street. Although sometimes guilty of oversimplification (did being a corporate tax-haven sellout really collapse Ireland's "economic miracle?"), this powerful documentary is non-partisan—making Democrats look as bad as Republicans when it comes to greed and pandering. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

SPORTS, GAMES & RECREATION

China Heavyweight ★★★

(2012) 89 min. In Chinese & Sichuanese w/English subtitles. DVD: \$29.99. Zeitgeist Films (avail. from most distributors).

Late in *China Heavyweight*, a documentary shot over a couple of years in rural Sichuan province, a big crowd gathers in a town square to hear ceremonial talk about the 90th anniversary of Chinese communism. One of the speakers says that social-



To Catch a Dollar: Muhammad Yunus Banks on America

★★★1/2

(2013) 85 min. DVD: \$19.95. Shout! Factory (avail. from most distributors).

Gayle Ferraro's outstanding documentary follows the creation of the nonprofit organization Grameen America, starting with its rocky beginnings in Queens, NY, prior to and during America's financial collapse in 2009. An extension of the microfinance work of Nobel Peace Prize recipient Muhammad Yunus—who began Grameen in Bangladesh during that country's terrible 1970s famine—Grameen America is based on Yunus's unrelenting belief that micro-loans for poor women who are organized into peer support groups can open opportunities for families, lift entire communities, and foster cultural connections. Grameen has had tremendous success with its self-sustaining program all over the world, but *To Catch a Dollar* looks at specific obstacles in America, where the core idea has trouble taking hold (some potential customers, for instance, assume it's a front for the Mafia). The filmmakers follow the work of young managers who meet with women, chart their success, and witness lives changing for the better. Yet some loan clients have trouble keeping their support groups intact or face immediate economic disaster after being deserted by the fathers of their children. Combining compelling real-life drama with an insightful primer on the work of Yunus and Grameen, *To Catch a Dollar* deftly explains how and why microfinancing can work in the banking industry, which traditionally rejects poor people. DVD extras include Ferraro's related 2000 documentary *Sixteen Decisions* (along with an update featurette for that film). Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

ism remains the best hope for the future of the country. But that's certainly not what's on the minds of the young Chinese boxers who are followed here by Sino-Canadian filmmaker Yung Chang. Pursuing a self-determined path toward dreams of athletic glory, the teen pugilists profiled (in remarkably revealing and touching ways) literally walk away from traditional, hardscrabble family obligations in order to pursue their own goals. Moreover, they eschew taking an official route to success, rejecting government-led pressure to bring honor as fighters to their hometowns, Sichuan province, and ultimately China itself. Much of the film focuses on the restless Miao Yunfei, a 19-year-old who idolizes Mike Tyson and embraces the individualistic spirit of a brutal Western sport. But the most compelling figure here is boxing coach Qi Moxiang (whose speed and strength in the ring is seen in archival footage), a man committed to training Miao and others. Qi looks haunted when he dares ponder a comeback and the wisdom of doing something for himself. Yung has a remarkably fluid style, delivering an unexpectedly tender film about the price of coming into one's own. DVD extras include deleted scenes. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

Strong! ★★★

(2012) 75 min. DVD: \$125; high schools & public libraries; \$275: colleges & universities. Sarafina Productions (dist. by Transit Media). PPR.

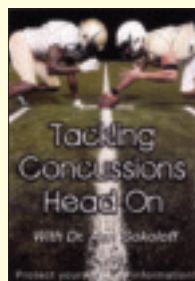
Weightlifter Cheryl Haworth, the subject of filmmaker Julie Wyman's documentary (which aired on PBS's *Independent Lens*),

challenges conventional notions of athleticism and body image. The Georgia native became a national champion as a teenager and went on to compete in three Olympic games. A large woman, she takes pride in her size, which has allowed her to prevail in a male-dominated sport, citing the added physical leverage that is made possible with a larger frame. She also has a sense of humor, noting that due to her size, "breaking furniture" comes with the territory. Wyman concentrates on Haworth's career after her bronze win in 2000. Haworth feels she has found her calling, but suffers a blow when an injury slows her down, although she recovers in time to train for the world championships in Taiwan and the Olympics in Beijing. After graduating from art school, Haworth moves to Colorado Springs to work out at the Olympic Training Center. While she can lift over 350 pounds, she trains with men who can lift over 600 and she competes against other women who can lift almost 400. After a second injury, Haworth begins to ponder life after weightlifting, but her size precludes her entry into some careers, such as the Coast Guard, which has strict requirements about weight. Haworth goes on to compete in 2008, but walks off into an uncertain future, although it's hard to imagine that she won't find another field in which to make her mark. Aside from Haworth, other female weightlifters here also offer their thoughts about the sport. DVD extras include an audio commentary by Haworth, Wyman, and cinematographer Anne Etheridge, a behind-the-scenes featurette, and deleted scenes. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Tackling Concussions Head On ★★★★★

(2012) 28 min. DVD: \$24.95. Library Video Network. PPR. ISBN: 1-56641-126-2.

While unquestionably exciting, contact sports such as football carry a greater potential for dangerous concussions, the subject of this instructive program that defines symptoms and provides useful directions for those working with athletes. Once upon a time, players were encouraged to “walk it off,” but these days, coaches, officials, and parents are increasingly looking for telltale signs following sporting mishaps and trying to take the right steps to prevent permanent harm. Of the 22 possible indicators, at the top of the list are headaches, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, and difficulty thinking or remembering (loss of consciousness is not a requisite). So what should a person do in a case of suspected concussion? The first step is to immediately take the injured individual out of the game for a thorough evaluation from a medical professional. Of course, players often don’t want to miss play time (or let their teams, coaches, or parents down), and might shrug off assistance even though a problem exists. An impressive lineup of physicians, sports officials, and NFL notables here share real-life experiences, while also stressing that intervention is crucial. Interesting fact: although many of us immediately think of football or soccer in relation to concussions, one of the most dangerous activities is actually synchronized swimming! Informative and timely, this valuable program is highly recommended. **Editor’s Choice.** Aud: J, H, C, P. (C. Block)



Tales of Masked Men ★★★★★

(2012) 55 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.95 w/PPR). PBS Video. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-780-9.

A colorful attraction—part sport, part theater—thrives in Mexico City and smaller arenas scattered throughout Mexico. Known as Lucha Libre, or “free fight” or struggle, the sports involves masked men who circle each other before engaging in acrobatic wrestling takedowns in front of enthusiastic audiences. Although the contest is best known to Americans through the parody film *Nacho Libre*, starring Jack Black, the sport is taken seriously in Mexico and is a big business. Directed by Carlos Avila, this PBS-aired documentary describes the origin and growth of Lucha Libre, characterized by some as a “false sport” and others as a distinctly good vs. evil morality play that speaks to the Mexican soul. Born during the 1930s, the sport has become a family event and favorite of working class fans (and wrestlers even wear their masks outside the ring), producing celebrity wrestlers such as “El Santo” (“the saint”), who performed for decades, acquiring a following by starring in comic books and films. A very physical sport, Lucha Libre requires rigorous training, and sometimes leads to serious injuries. In an unusual feature of the sport, wrestling “little persons” are both popular and accorded full respect. Masked wrestlers and cultural anthropologists also describe the symbolic importance of the mask in Mexican culture; indeed, fathers pass the legacy on to their sons in a process known as “earning the mask.” Shedding some fascinating light on a major cultural phenomenon little known in the United States, this engaging documentary is recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)

Victorious Vettel: The Official Review of the 2012 FIA Formula One World Championship ★★★★★

(2012) 2 discs. 317 min. DVD: \$29.99. SRO (dist. by Kultur International Films). ISBN: 978-0-7697-5000-2.

Running more than five hours, this is the exciting official record of the 2012 international races comprising the FIA’s 2012 Formula One World Championship season. Small cameras mounted on the fronts and backs of Formula One racing vehicles tell the story of these races, from Australia in March to Brazil in November, capturing the triumphs—as well as the mishaps, breakdowns, and running off-track—with a driver’s point-of-view intensity. While the ultimate outcome is well-known to racing fans (Sebastian Vettel claimed a briefly-contested victory), the season’s many mini-dramas are certain to be riveting to Formula One followers, including the absence of a clear leader in the championship’s first seven rounds; nasty collisions and entanglements; changes in team drivers; and a return of the United States Grand Prix after a year off. This head-spinning, superfast (in every sense) set’s highlights include Michael Schumacher’s up-and-down season (the past champion suffered a hydraulics failure in Canada and retired after Brazil); Fernando Alonso’s two wins at the European Grand Prix; Vettel’s near-disaster with tire failure in Korea; and comeback kid Kimi Räikkönen’s victory in Abu Dhabi. Interviews with drivers, a look at the work of officials, and plenty of pit action nicely complement all of the high-octane circuit thrills. Highly recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

THE ARTS

First Position ★★★★★

(2011) 94 min. DVD: \$24.98. MPI Media Group (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 0-7886-1603-X.

Filmmaker Bess Kargman (who herself studied ballet) delivers a beautiful dance documentary in *First Position*, which follows a group of likeable multi-ethnic kids striving in a mighty performance competition. The contest here is the Youth America Grand Prix, a world-traveling exhibition of both classical and modern dance that serves as a route to school scholarships and (increasingly rare, in the downsize era) job slots in professional troupes. The contenders in Kargman’s spotlight (who all have supportive families) include Michaela, an adoptee from war in Sierra Leone (her struggles as a rare African in ballet is a story all in itself); Miko and Jules, a brother/sister act of Anglo-Japanese ancestry; Joan, living far from his family in Columbia; and Rebecca, a pink-clad all-American girl (with a refreshing lack of ego or attitude). The dancers’ assorted routines are presented uncut in the disc extras, and while it’s hard to pick a standout, Gaya Bommer Yemini’s “Cartoon Girl” (created and choreographed by her mom) is not soon forgotten. Other extras include audio commentary by the director, and training and rehearsal footage. An inspiring documentary, this is highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (C. Cassidy)

The Flying House Project ★★

(2012) 120 min. DVD: \$19.99. Microcinema International. PPR.

Oscar-nominated animator and beloved iconoclast Bill Plympton decided to remaster Winsor McCay’s 1921 animated short *The Flying House*. Part of a series based on McCay’s comic strip “Dream of a Rarebit Fiend,” the short focuses on a woman who goes to bed after a Welsh rarebit dinner and dreams that her overweight husband has rebelled against paying their mortgage by turning their house into a giant airplane—complete with a propeller. The couple fly their home through various locations, knocking over a water tower and wrecking an arboretum before taking off into space and landing on the moon, where an unfriendly giant tries to crush them with a fly swatter. While McCay’s animation is subversively inventive, Plympton takes the restoration process a little too far, as the silent, black-and-white original is colorized and saddled with a new dialogue track featuring Matthew Modine and Patricia Clarkson as the airborne duo. Even worse, Plympton re-edited the whole thing by removing the comic strip-style dialogue balloons used by McCay to compensate for the lack of sound recording. In doing so, Plympton completely transforms the source work’s distinctively

goofy style (and, quite frankly, the dialogue balloons are more enchanting than Modine and Clarkson's hammy voice performances). DVD extras include a pre-restored original version of McCay's short, a "making-of" featurette, and interviews with animation historians. A strange endeavor, overall, this is an optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

George Lopez: It's Not Me, It's You

★★★

(2012) 56 min. DVD: \$19.98. HBO Home Entertainment (avail from most distributors). Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-6240-4197-6.

George Lopez is front and center in this HBO live comedy special featuring the comedian alternating between English

and (non-subtitled) Spanish before an enthusiastic audience. The show opens in clever fashion with Lopez driving through L.A. and greeting the likes of Cheech and Chong, Ray Romano, and Sarah Silverman from the driving seat of a beat-up, low-rider car spewing toxins. This Latino stereotype joke is followed by many more during Lopez's stage act, which is largely about contrasting Latino family life and culture in America with that of whites and African-Americans. The bottom line in most of Lopez's jokes is that Latinos don't coddle anyone: not strangers, not spouses, not children, and especially not politicians, ignoring them and exploiting immigration issues. "Latinos know the difference between a wet floor and a dry floor," Lopez says of public bathrooms. They don't need a sign." Latinos, apparently, don't mince words either. "She's not my cup of tea," goes Lopez's impression of the dainty way whites politely express disapproval, with the Latino alternative being, "I don't want her in my fucking house." Eventually, Lopez moves on to political topics, noting the gathering strength of Latino voters to make or break elections, and recalling his three visits to the White House as a guest of President Obama. "Obama is the closest thing we have to a Latino," Lopez says. "Everybody wants

All's Well That Ends Well ★★★1/2

(2011) 2 discs. 138 min. DVD: \$29.99. Kultur International Films (avail from most distributors). ISBN: 978-0-7697-9243-9.

Filmed live at London's rebuilt Globe Theatre, this 2011 performance of *All's Well That Ends Well*—considered one of Shakespeare's "problem plays"—mostly shines. John Dove's staging is quite simple, with designer Michael Taylor relying on traditional costumes and spare settings. Sam Crane brings to the role of Bertram—the young count who disdains to marry Helena, the physician's daughter who pines for him—a sense of immaturity that offsets the character's snobbery, while Ellie Piercy skillfully captures Helena's combination of feistiness and reticence. The older figures are also handled well by Janie Dee as Bertram's mother and Sam Cox as the imperious French king, while in the able hands of James Garnon and Colin Hurley, the comic duets between the cowardly Parolles and the dismissive Lavatch are played with a nice degree of subtlety. If there is any drawback here, it's the audience, which guffaws so loudly at the slightest provocation—even when the text doesn't really invite such reaction—that they become somewhat intrusive. But this is truly a minor quibble in this otherwise fine production. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (F. Swietek)



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to see his birth certificate, too." DVD extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette. Recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

Measuring Methods for Artists

★★★★1/2

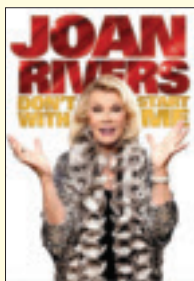
(2012) 50 min. DVD: \$16.95. On Air Video. PPR.

In *Measuring Methods for Artists*, Larry Withers—a veteran of how-to videos on topics such as drawing, framing, and perspective—focuses on measuring techniques that add “greater realism” and accuracy to a finished work. After running through necessary materials and tools (a list is also separately available on the disc), Withers introduces three methods: comparative measuring, sight-size measuring, and triangulation. As he demonstrates each one, an animated pencil moves over the image, repeating his actions. The approaches are useful but involve time and effort, especially sight-size (a painstaking but accurate way of drawing to scale that Winters says was employed by the great painters of the past), and the demonstrations are detailed as he works out the entire example each time. As he says, “The more deliberate you are, the more accurate your drawing will be.” Sprinkled throughout are “try this” hints, such as how to transfer an image if the paper is damaged or how to use an imaginary clock face for plotting points in a drawing. Withers’ parting advice is that while method is never a substitute for artistic judgment, knowing skills such as the ones demonstrated here will make the final work better. A useful tool for artists, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Gardner)

Poetry of Resilience ★★★

(2011) 40 min. DVD: \$89; public libraries; \$250: colleges & universities. *Women Make Movies*. PPR.

Katja Esson’s documentary showcases a gathering of 27 poets who share the bond of having survived some of the most horrifying political atrocities of the 20th century, focusing on six who lived through the Hiroshima bombing, the Holocaust, the Cultural Revolution in China, the genocides in Rwanda and in the Kurdish areas of Iraq, and the Iranian Revolution. Holocaust survivor Lillian Boraks-Nemetz returns to her native Poland, where she recalls the people and places in her harrowing escape from the Warsaw Ghetto, while Hiroshima survivor Yasuhiko Shigemoto wanders through the modern city in search of reminders of the 1945 annihilation. A few of the subjects physically escaped the full brunt of their national tragedies while they were small children, but came of age in an emotionally challenging exile that frayed their family structure and left them feeling like permanent strangers in their adopted countries. Despite their geographical differences, each individual expresses a cogent observation of the worst of human nature while demonstrating an artistic strength



Joan Rivers: Don't Start with Me ★★★

(2012) 69 min. DVD: \$19.98. eOne Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4172-3748-1.

This ribald Joan Rivers standup performance from Chicago aired on Showtime in November 2012. In her opening narration, the 78-year-old Rivers talks about the Second City, which she describes as “a really good test of America,” since it lies between the Coasts. Wearing a black dress and a floor-sweeping jacket, Rivers is as sparkly and profane as ever, starting off with jokes about Michael Jackson and the Catholic Church that set the tone for the politically incorrect evening to come. A remark about

Mexico’s unattractive populace seems particularly mean-spirited, but she combines it with a crack about Jewish women, like herself, proving that everyone is fair game. Never one to deny an obsession with appearance, she also jokes about ugly babies and Chaz Bono, whom she considers unattractive in either gender. Other targets include the overweight, the blind, the deaf, and the aged, although it’s clear from her phrasing that she also has compassion. Of course, Rivers can also be hypocritical: she and her daughter, Melissa, have benefited from reality television, but that doesn’t stop her from taking jabs at similar beneficiaries like Snooki and the Kardashians, although Rivers has worked a lot harder—and a lot longer—for her fame and fortune. Rivers also dishes about celebrity friends and associates, including Barbra Streisand, Cher, and Kathy Griffin, and even serves up a little physical comedy as she mimes what she would do for a multi-million dollar inheritance. Those who enjoyed the entertaining biographical documentary *Joan Rivers: A Piece of Work* (VL-11/10) will surely appreciate this. Recommended. Aud: P. (K. Fennessy)

that celebrates survival. The film’s 40-minute running time prevents a fuller appreciation of each poet’s personal history and writing (very little screen time is afforded to Vietnam’s Nguyen Chi Thien, for example, whose work received international acclaim and won the Rotterdam International Poetry Prize while he was imprisoned by Hanoi’s communist government), but poetry lovers will surely appreciate this invigorating celebration of life triumphing over evil. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Showing Up ★★★

(2012) 2 discs. 83 min. DVD: \$250. Firewood Films (dist. by Fireweed, Inc.). PPR. ISBN: 978-0-9758596-1-9.

Being a working actor requires not only creativity but a lot of hard work while taking body blows to the ego. For all but the most established actors, a common activity is the audition or cattle call. In Riad Galayini and James Morrison’s documentary, Christopher Meloni (*Law & Order SVU*), Kristin Chenoweth (*Wicked*), Nathan Lane, Janeane Garofalo, the late Pat Hingle, and many others familiar to movie and television audiences explain what it’s like to audition for a part. The audition is usually a waiting game, followed by a brief, nerve-wracking run-through in front of playwrights, producers, directors, or casting directors, any of whom can be talking on the phone, texting, or eating while supposedly watching the actor. Staying fresh while waiting, or dealing with distractions—plus coping with real or perceived lack of producer empathy—is always a challenge. Each actor has a different take on dealing with other actors in the same room competing for the same part.

Some actors actually enjoy the process, while many others do not, and they disagree about whether nerves help or hinder the audition. Actors have a notorious need to be accepted and loved, but the interviewees here argue that it’s still important to have a strong sense of one’s own value and carry that into the room. Although a tone of resentment runs through many of the comments here, there is much helpful advice on maintaining pride, dignity, and a sense of humor. And one actor reminds viewers that we all audition in life, regardless of our professions. This is basically a “talking heads” documentary, but the talk exhibits hard-won experience and lots of wit, and should prove useful to aspiring actors. A bonus disc features 100 minutes of extended interviews. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)

The Walt Disney Concert Hall Organ

★★★

(2012) 47 min. DVD: \$29.99 (audio CD included). Kultur International Films (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-0-7697-5001-9.

One of the most unusual aspects of the Los Angeles Philharmonic’s striking headquarters is its concert organ, which was designed—as was the whole building—by architect Frank Gehry in collaboration with sound consultant Manuel Rosales. The instrument sports a façade very different from other organs in that some of the metal pipes push out from the console in a spray pattern, accentuated by larger, curved wooden ones. Constructed according to Gehry and Rosales’ specifications by German organ builder Caspar Glatte-Götz, the organ was installed while the building was still under

construction and had its public debut in September 2004. Raoul Peter Mongilardi's documentary offers a historical sketch of the organ's creation and appreciation of its capabilities, supplemented by interviews with Glatter-Götz and Gehry (the latter's conducted by phone), observations from musicians who have played the instrument, footage of the construction of the organ in Germany and subsequent installation in L.A., and brief musical excerpts. An accompanying CD compiles 13 short pieces—from Bach to transcriptions of Tchaikovsky, Debussy, and Prokofiev—played by a half dozen organists. Presented in Dolby Digital stereo, this off-the-beaten-path music documentary is recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

HISTORY & CURRENT EVENTS

900 Days ★★½

(2011) 77 min. DVD: \$398. Icarus Films. PPR.

Jessica Gorter's piercing documentary about the German siege of Leningrad—lasting from 1941 to 1943 and claiming a million lives—opens with a sequence showcasing the official glorification of the city's staunch resistance in the face of unimaginable deprivation, presenting it as a nationalist triumph. Russian President Dmitri Medvedev (now prime minister) praises survivors of the ordeal as heroes of the fatherland while they march past him accompanied by a display of military might. But that footage—along with clips from a visit by schoolboys to a museum commemorating the tragedy—serves as a mere backdrop to a series of interviews with people who experienced the horrors. Some

of these aged, infirm pensioners still accept the old party line and look upon Stalin as a great leader who fended off the Nazi threat; but others view the government account as a fraud designed to conceal the ineptitude—or sheer callousness—of the Soviet regime in failing to provide needed assistance to the trapped population. Archival footage of life in Leningrad during the blockade coupled with a recitation of statistics about civilian deaths and instances of cannibalism are powerful enough, but even these are trumped by the interviewees' powerful recollections, such as the wrenching account that one woman gives of her sister's and mother's starvation, and what she herself did to survive. Filled with haunting images, *900 Days* offers a grim reminder of the suffering that humans are capable of inflicting on one another and of the gross distortion that governments will indulge in to protect their image. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Have You Heard from Johannesburg: The Complete Series ★★½

(2010) 7 discs. 527 min. DVD: \$149: individuals; \$345: public libraries & high schools; \$695: colleges & universities. Clarity Films. PPR.

Broadcast on PBS, Connie Field's seven-part documentary is an extremely ambitious depiction of the rise and fall of South Africa's apartheid policy, drawing on news footage and other archival material to celebrate both local activists who helped bring down the system of racial oppression, and supporters abroad who kept the pressure on the reigning white regime. The initial episode, "Road to Resistance," recounts the establishment of apartheid following World War II, the creation of the African National

Congress (ANC) in order to mount nonviolent resistance, and the government's forceful response. The following five segments focus on particular aspects of the anti-apartheid campaign, including the efforts of exiled ANC leader Oliver Tambo to secure Western support; the impact of international sports boycotts, economic sanctions, and corporate divestitures; the growth of grassroots efforts in other countries to urge their governments to action; and the rise of a movement devoted to violent resistance within the ANC itself. The series returns to a chronological approach in the final chapter, "Free at Last," which covers the end of the apartheid regime (while also detailing how Nelson Mandela was transformed from a fairly obscure figure into the face of the movement). Interspersed throughout the narrative are recollections by some of those who helped to shape events. Presenting a comprehensive, passionate overview of a long struggle, *Have You Heard From Johannesburg* is a potent portrait of an important part of 20th-century history. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Henry Clay and the Struggle for the Union: The Missouri Compromise of 1820 to the Tariff Compromise of 1833 ★★½

(2011) 20 min. DVD: \$69.95. TMW Media Group. PPR.

This second installment in a series about Henry Clay—the 19th-century Kentucky senator, secretary of state, three-time-presidential candidate, and political idol of a young Abraham Lincoln—underscores Clay's essential role in keeping the United States from falling into civil war earlier through his formulation of the 1820 Missouri Compromise and the 1833 Tariff Compromise. Fast-paced and brief, the documentary deftly portrays the rising tensions between North and South over the nation's westward expansion. Supplemented by period photographs and art, dramatic re-enactments, maps, and footage of the Old Senate Chamber in the U.S. Capitol, writer-host Kent Masterson Brown presents a synopsis of the first crisis, centered on Missouri's application to join the Union as a slave-owning state, which would throw congressional control to the South. Clay was deeply influential in forging a complicated agreement in 1820 that no one liked but still kept the country together. In 1833, South Carolina refused to collect federal tariffs on imported goods, prompting President Andrew Jackson to threaten the state with charges of treason. Again, Clay (who vigorously supported tariffs as a means to develop America's economic infrastructure) had a major hand in finding a solution. Other topics touched on include Clay's political ambitions and his work with other senators—especially Daniel Webster and John C. Calhoun—in trying to keep

Born Fighting: How the Scots-Irish Shaped America ★★

(2010) 92 min. DVD: \$19.98. BFS Entertainment & Multimedia (avail. from most distributors).

Hosted by James Webb, former U.S. Senator and Secretary of the Navy, *Born Fighting* (based on Webb's titular 2004 book) traces the emergence of the Scots-Irish over centuries, recounting their spirit of independence all the way from Scotland's 13th-century rebellion against the British to their important role in making America a sovereign nation. This two-part production explains how Scotland's cultural and political identity emerged after the country was cut off from Roman-occupied Britain by Hadrian's Wall in 122 A.D. As centuries passed, Scotland not only sought and fought for self-rule, but also forged a bond with Ireland, with whom it shared Celtic ties. Two-way migration and trade became commonplace, but when King James encouraged and supported the relocation of Protestant Scots to Ireland's largely Catholic Ulster, the stage was set for years of conflict and tragedy, as dispossession, violence, and reprisals between the two groups became the norm. The attempt by King Charles in the 17th century to impose a new church hierarchy on all Scots led to a massacre in 1641, and continuing repression motivated many Scots-Irish to migrate to the New World. The second half of *Born Fighting* focuses on the Scots-Irish influence on America's revolutionary spirit in the late-18th century, and on the new nation's military, government, and culture. Along the way, several descendants of early immigrants are highlighted, ranging from Andrew Jackson to Neil Armstrong. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (T. Keogh)



the Union together. The other titles in the *Henry Clay and the Struggle for the Union* series are: *The Formation of the Union and its Early Challenges* and *The Compromise of 1850 to the Civil War*. Highly recommended. Aud: J, H, P. (T. Keogh)

Here I Learned to Love ★★½

(2011) 54 min. In Hebrew w/English subtitles. DVD: \$29.90: individuals; \$115: public libraries; \$300: colleges & universities. Ruth Diskin Films (web: www.ruthfilms.com). PPR.

Israeli filmmaker Avi Angel helmed this moving documentary about septuagenarian brothers Avner Kerem and Itzik Weinberg, who retrace their childhood in Holocaust-ravaged Europe and uncover the heroic stories of three women responsible for saving their lives. The first was their mother, who managed to spirit the boys out of harm's way as their family was being deported in 1942 from Krakow, Poland, to the Nazi death camps—Avner was three years old and Itzik was four; they would never see their parents again. The second woman was their aunt Malka, who was given the responsibility of hiding the boys and, later, escaped from the Nazis with them into Hungary. Two years later, the boys were passengers on a refugee train that was supposed to head to safety in Spain, but the train was stopped by the Nazis and the passengers were sent to Bergen-Belsen. Here, a third woman, a 20-year-old Hungarian named Naomi Mayer, unofficially adopted the brothers and served as their protector until the concentration camp's liberation. Avner and Itzik conduct their search through a series of cramped apartments and isolated farms with a mix of solemnity and wonder, occasionally pausing to display a wry sense of humor (they "toast" each other with pill bottles). *Here I Learned to Love* is a moving and ultimately heartbreaking tribute to bravery and perseverance under the most horrifying conditions imaginable. An excellent addition to the canon of Holocaust-related nonfiction filmmaking, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Kapitalism: Our Secret Recipe ★★

(2010) 55 min. DVD: \$390. Icarus Films. PPR.

Romanian expatriate Alexandru Solomon's documentary offers a satirical look at how miserably his homeland has fared in the post-communist era. Manipulating archival footage, Solomon frames his film around a cheeky premise in which the ghostly presence of dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu, who was executed in 1989, returns to his country after two decades. Although horrified by the subsequent westernization, Ceaușescu is grimly pleased that former members of his regime have prospered from using their positions at the time of the revolution as springboards to wealth and power in a system that has continued (and even worsened) the old divide between haves and have-nots under

the rubric of laissez-faire capitalism. Solomon employs primitive claymation/stop-motion animation to humorously depict the ways in which state-controlled resources were usurped by members of the old *nomenklatura*, and also interviews a representative sample of the new Romanian millionaire's club, as well as ordinary citizens who have benefited little, if at all, from the change to democracy and free enterprise. Of course, these developments are hardly unique to Romania: one can see this crude form of crony capitalism operating in many regions of the old Soviet empire, including Russia itself, and in China, as well. But Romania serves as a telling paradigm of what has happened in numerous places after communism's collapse, and Solomon's approach—a mixture of seriousness and humor similar to that of Michael Moore or Morgan Spurlock—makes for a film that is both enlightening and engaging. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Love and Valor ★★

(2012) 85 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.95 w/PPR). PBS Video. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-771-7.

The American Civil War was defined by big issues, events, and battles, but what often brings a sense of rich emotion and enduring interest to this tragic conflict are the small personal stories. Narrated by Brian Dennehy, filmmaker Charles F. Larimer's PBS-aired documentary is based on the Civil War letters of Jacob and Emeline Ritner, a married couple who ran a family farm in Iowa. While Emeline kept the farm and her brood of children together, Jacob was a Union officer who served in the Vicksburg Campaign, the Battle of Lookout Mountain near Chattanooga, TN, and marched with Sherman on Atlanta and Savannah. Writing to his "dear little wife at home," Jacob describes other Union officers

as "big bugs" who drink, swear, and gamble, in contrast to the author, who longs to do his duty then return to his family. Between battles he notes the common humanity of soldiers from both sides, who sometimes exchange banter across the lines, later followed by deadly gunfire. Emeline recounts home front news, including children's illnesses, local disdain for "Copperheads" who oppose the war effort, and fears about rumored Confederate guerrilla raids into Iowa. The human toll includes the death of Jacob's brother in combat, as well as Jacob's own wounding and debilitation from malaria, which would eventually shorten his life after the war. In addition to the war's drama, the documentary also chronicles the discovery of Jacob's letters and a time-consuming search for Emeline's correspondence, which together present a vivid picture of the war as being a nation's "baptism of blood" while also bringing misery to civilians caught in the crossfire. Combining readings, dramatic re-enactments, and comments from Larimer—a family descendant—who also visits the graves of some of the people mentioned in the letters, this eloquent documentary will make a fine addition to most Civil War history collections. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

Mankind: The Story of All of Us ★★½

(2011) 3 discs. 552 min. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. A&E Home Video (avail. from most distributors). PPR.

History, as the old History Channel is now known, made a splash with the miniseries *America: The Story of Us* (VL-11/10), a slick but superficial overview of North America, and the U.S. in particular, from the founding of Jamestown in the early 17th century to the 2008 election. Now it offers a 12-part prequel of sorts that reaches back to the evolution



Never Give Up! ★★½

(2012) 28 min. DVD: Free. Kesa Kivel (avail. from www.nevergiveupfilm.org). PPR.

Writer-director Kesa Kivel's ambitious interactive school project on the Underground Railroad is chronicled in this program featuring middle school girls involved with the Santa Monica YWCA, along with staff, and other volunteers. At the center is Kivel's portrayal of the titular story concerning 13-year-old Ama, who is stolen from her family in Africa in 1847, endures a treacherous voyage on the Middle Passage, suffers life as a slave, and finally escapes to Canada along with love interest Ben. The participating girls travel along Ama's path: wearing wristbands to signify chains, confined in a small room to represent the ship, being yelled at, listening to a slave-owner talk about being respected by his community, and moving along with an Underground Railroad conductor—all the way to the homes of abolitionists "Lucretia Mott" and "Catherine (Dickens) Harris." Combining archival photos, drawings, music, and sound effects to back up the historical information (including disturbing aspects such as sexual abuse), the program also features a "Part 2" discussion that touches on contemporary diversity issues, and includes a behind-the-scenes look at focus group meetings. Sure to spur conversation, this interesting and insightful title—available for free, with a downloadable curriculum—is highly recommended. Aud: J, H, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

of the species, chronicles the adoption of farming and the domestication of animals, and continues with humankind's story into the 21st century. *Mankind* mixes narration by Josh Brolin, dramatic re-enactments, loads of CGI work, and occasional observations from academics (most notably, Henry Louis Gates Jr.) and celebrities such as chef Anthony Bourdain and newscaster Brian Williams. Not surprisingly, the coverage is extremely selective (and despite the all-embracing though oddly patriarchal title, largely Eurocentric), but an attempt is made to provide a guiding thread by emphasizing science and technology as the agents of change. Unfortunately, that is mostly expressed through an overemphasis on war, ostensibly because of the often reciprocal effect between military matters and technical innovation, but actually because depictions of battles make for more visceral visual excitement. Still, while any historian would rightly complain about omissions and oversimplification, *Mankind* can still serve as a spur to further study in classrooms (especially since it moves through the centuries quickly enough to hold students' interest) or on the part of general viewers. DVD extras include additional footage. A strong optional purchase. Aud: J, H, C, P. (F. Swietek)

She-Wolves: England's Early Queens

★★★

(2012) 185 min. DVD: \$34.99. Athena (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-59828-767-7.

In this three-part BBC-aired series, Cambridge historian Helen Castor presents biographical sketches—based on her own 2010 book, *She-Wolves*—of seven women who played notable roles in England's political affairs during the medieval and early modern periods. The first episode focuses on Matilda, daughter of William the Conqueror's son King Henry I, whose attempt to succeed her father led to nearly two decades of civil war; and Eleanor of Aquitaine, wife of Matilda's son, King Henry II, who served as virtual regent during her own son Richard's absence on crusade. The second segment looks at Isabella, wife of King Edward II, who conspired with a lover to depose her husband and effectively rule the realm herself; and Margaret of Anjou, wife of King Henry VI, who took charge of the Lancastrian cause in the Wars of the Roses. The third installment moves to the Tudor period, covering Lady Jane Grey, whose noble family attempted to impose her on the kingdom following the untimely death of King Henry VIII's son, Edward VI; and Henry's daughters Mary and Elizabeth, who became the first women to ascend to the English throne in their own right without substantial opposition. Nicely illustrated with artwork and modern location footage, the series certainly proves what a long, arduous struggle it was for women of



Putin's Kiss ★★★

(2012) 85 min. In Russian w/English subtitles. DVD: \$29.95 (avail. from most distributors), \$249 w/PPR (avail. from www.kinolorberedu.com). Kino Lorber.

Danish documentarian Lise Birk Pedersen examines a slice of contemporary Russian politics from the perspective of a young woman caught up in the rise of a popular youth movement called Nashi that is essentially a personality cult for long-term ruler Vladimir Putin. The narrative focuses on Nashi loyalist and media star Masha Drokova, a well-spoken 19-year-old who affirms her admiration for Putin and for Nashi's positive achievements in putting post-Soviet society in order (the title comes from Masha's receiving a kiss from Putin during a photo op). But Nashi also sports a record of less-than-admirable activities—demonizing the Russian leader's opponents, burning books, stifling open debate, and engaging in *Jackass*-level hoodlum acts, including creating flash mobs and engaging in public defecation. When Masha begins to befriend some of Putin's critics, including a group of journalists—an act unthinkable among Nashi youth—she becomes alarmed and disenchanted with the organization's bullying tactics. Pedersen's own biases are evident: Nashi bigwig Anton Smirnov is lit like a movie villain (alas, he also tends to talk like one), and viewers need freeze-frame to read the Nashi response to the film's accusations—a statement that flashes by after the closing credits. Despite obvious emotional manipulation and staged-looking scenes, however, *Putin's Kiss* humanizes and highlights important issues in today's Russia. DVD extras include a stills gallery. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

ambition and ability to escape from male domination and claim their right to the crown. DVD extras include a bio of Castor, and an accompanying viewer's guide. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

TRAVEL & GEOGRAPHY

Discoveries...America's National Parks: Hawaii ★★★1/2

(2012) 54 min. DVD or Blu-ray: \$24.95. Bennett-Watt HD Productions. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-60490-163-4 (dvd).

This new entry in Jim and Kelly Watt's visually stunning series highlights the 50th state, with eye-popping vistas of volcanic landscapes, subtropical rainforests, stunning beaches, and other sites taking a starring role. Kilauea is the main attraction at Volcanoes National Park on the Big Island, where its eruptions over the past 30 years have added about 500 acres of land to the southern shore (the spewing of red-hot magma in high-definition is a powerful image). A stop at the visitor's center finds people exploring 3D displays that illustrate the topography both above and below the water. On Maui, the film crew goes to Haleakala National Park (a favorite spot for tourists to catch the sunrise) and then travels up the coast-hugging Hana Highway—with its hundreds of curves, 50-plus bridges, and beautiful waterfalls—to see the gravesite of aviator Charles Lindbergh. Also on the itinerary is the sobering tribute to fallen American servicemen and civilians at the USS Arizona Memorial in Pearl Harbor on Oahu. Rounding out the program are

segments on popular activities including whale watching, snorkeling, and windsurfing. Sure to appeal to armchair travelers and those planning trips, this is highly recommended. Aud: P. (C. Block)

Travel with Kids: Wales ★★★

(2012) 84 min. DVD: \$14.95. Equator Creative Media (dist. by Janson Media). ISBN: 978-1-56839-431-4.

In this entry from the *Travel with Kids* series, the Roberts family of four—who travel the globe in kid-friendly fashion—visit Wales in three near-half-hour episodes, starting with “Cardiff & Brecon Beacons,” in which the parents and two young boys take in the city of Cardiff and look at the nearby Brecon Beacons mountain range. As always, the program serves up plenty of helpful tips (adopt local time as quickly as possible to avoid jet lag, etc.) and strategies for sightseeing with youngsters (“let’s take a tour of Cardiff Bay on an awesome boat!”). Castles are a huge draw for kids, thanks to their seemingly endless stone passageways and steps, challenging both the legs and the imagination (one mansion on castle grounds here is considered more modern—having been constructed in the 18th century!). Many of the historic buildings also feature mini-museums with artifacts, including swords and knight’s armor (and some venues provide a “scavenger hunt” sheet for kids to find interesting features). Also including segments devoted to “Pembrokeshire & King Arthur” and “Snowdonia & Llangollen,” DVD extras include a trip planner, a “Wales at Home” section (with recipes and crafts), and a list of resources. Recommended. Aud: P. (C. Block)

BIOGRAPHY

Beauty Is Embarrassing ★★★1/2

(2012) 88 min. DVD: \$29.95. Docurama (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4229-2290-1.

Tennessee-born cartoonist and artist Wayne White is profiled in this documentary from director Neil Berkeley. White is probably best known for his Emmy Award-winning set design on the Saturday-morning psychedelic rampage that was *Pee Wee's Playhouse*, which ran from 1986-1990. White's goofy but introspective personality dominates here—an easygoing southern charm that mixes swimmingly with bohemian hippie defiance and absurdist sense of humor, all of which is reflected in his artwork. Although White enjoyed significant early success in music videos for rock stars like Peter Dinklage and Smashing Pumpkins—and had a crazy stint in Hollywood as an overworked art director and animator—his real quest is to fulfill his dream job of sitting alone in a room making art. With the help of big-time designer Todd Oldham, White manages—late in his career—to achieve conceptual prominence in the usually humorless, antiseptic art world. Using crappy thrift-store landscape art as a backdrop for his 3D “word paintings,” White makes a name for himself with art that combines his ribald barroom sense of humor and real talent for illustration. White himself is such a force of nature that the gushing talking-head praise here from luminaries like Matt Groening, Mark Mothersbaugh,

and Paul Reubens seems almost redundant. The abundant DVD extras include audio commentary by Berkeley and White, deleted scenes, a slideshow of White's artwork, and a music video. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (M. Sandlin)

I Am Bruce Lee ★★★

(2012) 94 min. DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$26.98. Shout! Factory (avail. from most distributors).

The family of martial-arts-action movie legend Bruce Lee produced this made-for-TV nonfiction portrait claiming to be “the first film to truly tell Bruce Lee's story in his own words.” An eclectic group of insiders/admirers—daughter Shannon, basketball's Kobe Bryant, musician Taboo, actor Mickey Rourke, sitcom regular Ed O'Neill (who earned a black belt), and fighters Ray Mancini, Gina Carano, and Gene LeBell, among others—expound upon Lee's career and appeal and discuss why he became a cross-cultural, pan-disciplinary icon, on a par with Muhammad Ali (aggrieved blacks in the 1970s especially seemed to relate to Lee's ethnic-outsider status). Lee's own voice is also heard at length, via a famous interview that the star did for Hong Kong TV. Director Pete McCormack's mythologized approach illustrates Lee's life with material drawn from family archives, as well as movie-role clips, blurring the line between celluloid hero and real man. Lee's elegant widow, Linda (in some ways the real scene-stealer here), sensibly denies any conspiracies related to her husband's sudden, shocking 1973 death (a month before his

hit *Enter the Dragon* would premiere). Extras include a series of training films showing Lee's famous private martial arts lessons (clients included James Coburn and Steve McQueen), with commentary from Linda; as well as a few featurettes, including one with footage of Lee auditioning for a TV role. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

I'm Carolyn Parker: The Good, the Mad, and the Beautiful ★★★1/2

(2012) 90 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.95 w/PPR). PBS Video. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-767-0.

In New Orleans' Lower Ninth Ward, respected community activist and larger-than-life character Carolyn Parker is known as a “lady of action.” When her house and neighborhood were ravaged by Hurricane Katrina, Parker wouldn't leave or give in. Director Jonathan Demme follows Parker in her five-year struggle to move out of her FEMA supplied trailer, back to the home she loves. At the same time, she fights to keep her local Catholic church from closing its doors. The sixtiesomething Parker is a veteran of past civil rights protests against segregation. Retired from her position as a cook and crippled by knee problems, Parker speaks out against government bureaucrats, and lobbies for a community plagued by theft, vandalism, and fly-by-night contractors. Faith, humor, and a lot of good down-home New Orleans cooking sustain Parker and her grown daughter. Demme periodically drops in on Parker, chronicling her victories and setbacks, which include a health crisis following knee surgery. Parker is a colorful and eloquent subject, surrounded by an interesting assortment of neighborhood friends in this PBS-aired documentary that reminds us how true heroes are often the unrecognized people around us. DVD extras include an interview with Demme. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)

Ai Weiwei: Never Sorry ★★★

(2011) 91 min. DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98. MPI Home Video (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 0-7886-1605-6 (dvd), 0-7886-1634-X (blu-ray).

The oversized personality of unconventional Chinese artist and dissident Ai Weiwei is at the center of Alison Klayman's somewhat disjointed but ultimately engrossing documentary. While not ignoring his creative endeavors and domestic relationships, the film focuses on Weiwei's Internet-based campaign for enhanced democracy and individual freedom—often conveyed via playful means, as Klayman eschews a purely chronological approach.

Weiwei is introduced as someone whose international renown in the art world is matched by a cheekily subversive streak: he designed Beijing's striking “Bird's Nest” stadium for the 2008 Olympics but then denounced the games as a propaganda exercise, and he has spearheaded a drive to disclose the identities of children killed when an earthquake leveled their poorly constructed schools. Only later does the filmmaker backtrack to discuss Weiwei's father, a poet victimized during Mao's Cultural Revolution, as well as Weiwei's decade-long residency in the U.S., his return to China following the Tiananmen Square incident, and his central role in assembling an underground movement of Chinese artists to challenge the Communist party line. Klayman taps Ai's own treasury of video footage and stills (including excerpts from his activist documentaries) and includes interviews with him and his family and colleagues, as well as scenes of his altercations with authorities. Although it could have been better organized, *Never Sorry* presents a revealing portrait of a courageous provocateur with a gift for slyly ridiculing the communist regime and its drive to undermine China's traditions in the name of progress. DVD extras include audio commentary by Klayman, deleted scenes, and additional interviews. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)



Jason Becker: Not Dead Yet ★★★

(2012) 87 min. DVD: \$26.95. Kino Lorber (avail. from most distributors).

In this moving profile, filmmaker Jesse Vile profiles Bay Area musician Jason Becker, whose career would ultimately follow two paths. Becker's mother, Pat, recalls that Jason was born in a rush: eager to walk and talk, and frustrated when he couldn't do what he wanted. From an early age, Becker set his sights on playing guitar. Instead of music school, he studied the records of Eric Clapton and Van Halen (home-movie footage reveals a physical, theatrical player). After Mike Varney of Shrapnel Records heard young Becker's demo, he encouraged the musician to join forces with Marty Friedman, and the pair formed Cacophony. Becker graduated from high school early and hit the road, but wasn't interested in

Joe Frazier: When the Smoke Clears ★★½

(2012) 71 min. DVD: \$19.99. SRO (dist. by Kultur International Films). ISBN: 978-0-7697-9249-1.

Filmmaker Mike Todd's *Joe Frazier: When the Smoke Clears* is a biographical portrait of the legendary heavyweight boxer and former champion, made shortly before Frazier died of cancer in late 2011. Todd follows Frazier to London, where the latter talks about his life and times, achievements and disappointments, sharing along the way his wisdom not only about boxing but also about community, relationships, and the perspective of time on one's view of what is important. While most of the documentary concerns the past—Frazier's childhood in racist South Carolina, his family's move to Philadelphia, a hardscrabble youth alleviated somewhat by his passion for fighting, his amazing career in the ring—all roads eventually lead to Joe Frazier's Gym, which is in a tough, impoverished, contemporary Philly neighborhood. Here, an ailing Frazier reflects on the gym as an institution and community anchor, giving young people a sense of accomplishment and direction. Frazier's son Marvis runs the gym, gives inspirational talks, visits (in his capacity as a minister) young men in prison, and holds up his father as an underappreciated catalyst for positive change. Other interviewees include old friends and family members, along with boxing greats Larry Holmes and George Foreman, and various journalists, managers, and trainers. Some of these witnesses also reflect on the complications of Frazier's legendary rivalry with Muhammad Ali, especially the unfortunate perception that Frazier was not only apolitical (in contrast to Ali), but even a tool of the white establishment. With all of that behind him, the late Frazier here just seems to be a good man trying to make the world a better place. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)



partying—only playing—making such a name for himself that David Lee Roth came calling. After Cacophony broke up at the tail end of the '80s and Steve Vai left Roth's band, Becker stepped in, but then he developed a limp, which led to a diagnosis of ALS, a degenerative nerve disorder; doctors gave him two to five years to live. Becker played on one record before telling Roth, and then quit the business, eventually losing all mobility, but then associates developed programs that would allow Becker to compose again, thus leading to a whole new life. Today, Becker attributes his longevity to his caretakers and his parents, who never gave up on him, although they worry about a future in which they may not be around to help. DVD extras include archival performances by Becker, and extended interviews with Friedman, Vai, and Joe Satriani. A powerful and inspiring portrait of a musical artist, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Mama C: Urban Warrior in the African Bush ★★★

(2012) 54 min. DVD: \$80: high schools & public libraries; \$250: colleges & universities. Perennial Films (dist. by New Day Films). PPR. ISBN: 978-1-57448-111-2.

Filmmaker Joanne Hershfield's *Mama C* serves up a portrait of Charlotte Hill O'Neal. An author, artist, and activist, Mama C grew up in Kansas City during the pre-civil rights era, moving to Africa in 1971. She recalls that while she hoped to fit in as an African rather than as an African-American, she tried too

hard and "almost lost myself." Growing up, Mama C had no contact with white people until her junior high years, when she was bused to a school outside her black neighborhood. Her experiences drew her to the Black Panther Party, where she met Brother Pete. Although the pair initially clashed—due to Mama C's outspoken nature—irritation gave way to affection, leading to a marriage that continues to this day. When the couple left the country in 1969, they first lived in Algiers with Eldridge Cleaver and other party exiles before settling in Tanzania, where they felt at home and established the United African Alliance Community Center, which houses orphans and provides other services. A woman of many talents, Mama C talks about her art, poetry, music, and perspectives on race and culture. DVD extras include three poems read by Mama C. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

A Man's Story ★★½

(2012) 98 min. DVD: \$19.99. Virgil Films (avail. from most distributors).

Ozwald Boateng has enjoyed a heady rise to the top of the fashion world. The son of Ghanaian immigrants, Boateng owned his own shop at an early age on London's famed Savile Row, was creative director of menswear at Givenchy, and recently has been the dresser to top Hollywood male stars including Will Smith and Jamie Foxx. He's been called the fashion world's "best kept secret," a man who designs clothes to "make you look better than you really are."

Choices

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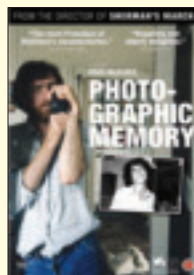
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choicesvideo.net

Photographic Memory ★★½

(2012) 87 min. DVD: \$27.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors).



In his first documentary since 2008's *In Paraguay*, renowned American docu-memoirist and Harvard professor Ross McElwee crosses the Atlantic to muse upon life, family, fatherhood, and remembrances of time past. Although McElwee's son Adrian has an interest in filmmaking (mostly extreme-sports stunts via social media), teenage rebellion has left the once-personable boy sulky and argumentative. McElwee recalls his own young manhood as a vagabond photographer in 1970s France, a path that dismayed his surgeon father. Here, McElwee decides to revisit the village in Brittany where he apprenticed with a jazz- and philosophy-loving French shutterbug (who fired him under mysterious circumstances), while also seeking to reunite with a former lover—captivating in photos—whose surname he doesn't even remember. Viewers who have followed McElwee's canon throughout the years may be disappointed that he has abandoned his customary 16mm camera for more easily portable digital-video and laptop equipment (although he still loves the tactile quality of film and chemical photography—and mistrusts memory-chip cards). But aside from this minor change, *Photographic Memory* is another compelling personal odyssey from one of nonfiction cinema's most self-effacing and thoughtful name-brand stars. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Directed by Varon Bonicos, *A Man's Story* follows Boateng's hectic career from 1998 to 2010, enjoying seemingly unrestricted access to the celebrated stylist, designer, and tailor. Boateng's clothes promise an "elegance that comes from within," and the man himself comes off as supremely confident, whether supervising a shoot in China or planning a landmark fashion show in Ghana. Boateng seems to be living everyone's fantasy life, with a beautiful wife and children, jetting around the world, and even receiving an award from Queen Elizabeth II at Buckingham Palace. However, the portrait here is not always flattering: Boateng frequently comes across as short tempered and unhappy, and in the end, his marriage falls apart in acrimony, although he scores a triumph in 2010, staging the largest men's fashion show in London's history. Surprisingly, however, the film provides few insights into the wellsprings of Boateng's talent, his working methods, or his contributions to fashion. Moreover, the sound is frequently muffled, making some dialogue hard to hear. Fashion and design schools will likely be interested in this profile, but it is optional elsewhere. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)

Method to the Madness of Jerry Lewis

★★★

(2011) 116 min. DVD: \$19.98. Anchor Bay Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Originally broadcast on Encore in 2011, Gregg Barson's documentary offers an all-smiles tribute to the career of zany funnyman Jerry Lewis, filming the 85-year-old Lewis performing in Las Vegas, where he mixes a watered-down version of his

trademark shtick with extended nostalgic recollections of his peak years, and also following him to the Cannes Film Festival for a confirmation of the French love affair with the comic. Many classic Lewis clips from his 10-year partnership with Dean Martin and his own solo films are interwoven, along with consideration of his work as a director—including insights into his creation of video assist technology that became standard equipment in film production. A number of A-list Lewis fans—including Quentin Tarantino, Steven Spielberg, Jerry Seinfeld, Billy Crystal, Carol Burnett, and Eddie Murphy—also offer glowing praise. Ultimately, however, this is hagiography, accentuating the positive while completely eliminating the negative: viewers will find no explanation of the circumstances that resulted in the Martin and Lewis break-up in 1956 or the subsequent years of icy silence between the former partners, nor is there any look at Lewis's intriguing flops, including his expensive 1963 TV variety show (cancelled after 13 episodes) and his still unfinished Holocaust drama *The Day the Clown Cried*. Nonetheless, anyone who can still crack a laugh over the 50 millionth cry of "Hey, laaaady!" will definitely appreciate this celebration of Lewis and his distinctive brand of comedy. Recommended. Aud: P. (P. Hall)

Olmsted and America's Urban Parks

★★★½

(2010) 57 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.95 w/PPR). PBS Video. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-769-4.

In early 19th-century America, big cities were rapidly filling up with mills and sweatshops, with open spaces giving way to ever

larger office buildings and tenements that offered little escape from poverty, disease, and squalor. In Europe, parks and open areas were generally reserved for the wealthy or royalty, off limits to commoners. Frederick Law Olmsted had a different vision for a young, growing America. Co-directed by Rebecca Messner, George DeGolian, and Michael White, this PBS-aired documentary examines the life and legacy of Olmsted, a visionary best known for spearheading the creation of New York City's Central Park, a "people's garden" designed to provide an escape from the "bustle and jar" of the city. Olmsted envisioned a large, rocky, swampy area then occupied by squatters being replaced by what would become Central Park. Olmsted tried to counteract the monotonous regularity of city streets by introducing scenic variety, open meadows, and winding paths through the park. Fighting exhaustion and periodic bouts of depression, Olmsted overcame city penny pinching and patronage, employing hundreds of workers and moving millions of cubic feet of soil in the process. The documentary also explores other works, ranging from Brooklyn's Prospect Park to sites in Buffalo, New York, Chicago, and Boston (famed for its "Emerald Necklace" system of interconnected parks that grew and strengthened neighborhoods), as well as the massive Biltmore Estate, still a major North Carolina tourist attraction. Although Olmsted eventually succumbed to dementia and depression—dying in 1903—his descendants continued his firm until 1979. Kevin Kline provides the voice of Olmsted in this excellent documentary that salutes a pioneer who helped change the face of America. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

Proof Through the Night ★★½

(2012) 56 min. DVD: \$19.99. Cartasian Coordinates (dist. by Vision Video).

Most Americans know that "The Star Spangled Banner" was written by Francis Scott Key, but few are aware of the circumstances under which Key penned what would eventually become America's national anthem, and even fewer know much about Key's larger historical place, later accomplishments, or the substance of his character. Born on his parents' Maryland plantation, Key became a lawyer, poet, and man of calm and capable influence. The facts surrounding the creation of "The Star Spangled Banner" are riveting, especially considering the enormous personal risk that Key took in approaching British troops—who had already burned down Washington, D.C., in September 1814 and were advancing on Baltimore—to negotiate a prisoner release. *Proof Through the Night* brings to life the long night that birthed our national anthem, as Key—imprisoned aboard a British vessel—helplessly watched the battle between shipboard Brits and Americans stationed at Fort McHenry. But that story

ALA-VRT Notable Videos 2013

The American Library Association (ALA) Video Round Table Notable Videos for Adults Committee has compiled its 2013 list of Notable Videos for Adults, a list of 15 outstanding programs released on video within the past two years. Unless otherwise noted, titles are available from most distributors, or companies listed in the "Distributor Addresses" section on page 78.

Benda Bilili! (National Geographic, 85 min., DVD: \$19.98). Directors Florent de la Tullaye and Renaud Barret's documentary profiles the band Staff Benda Bilili—comprised of four paraplegics and three able-bodied men—who work in the capital of the war-torn Democratic Republic of Congo.

Girl Model (First Run Features, 77 min., DVD: \$27.95 [\$250 w/PPR from Carnivalesque Films, web: carnivalesquefilms.com]). An American modeling scout travels to Siberia to secure models for the Japanese market in this PBS-aired POV documentary from filmmakers David Redmon and Ashley Sabin that focuses on 13-year-old model Nadya. (VL-9/12)

How Does It Feel (National Film Board of Canada, 34 min., DVD: \$150). Director Lawrence Jackman's inspirational documentary shines a spotlight on 58-year-old Kazumi Tsuruoka, a man with cerebral palsy who took singing lessons and began performing songs in public.

Inocente (The Cinema Guild, 40 min., DVD: \$99.95: public libraries; \$295: colleges & universities). Sean Fine and Andrea Nix Fine's Oscar-nominated documentary follows talented teenaged painter Inocente Izucar—who moved 30 times in nine years through shelters and temporary apartments—as she creates a new exhibition. (See review on page 51)

Into Eternity (The Video Project, 75 min., DVD: \$89: public libraries; \$295: colleges & universities). Filmmaker Michael

Madsen's documentary raises questions about a permanent nuclear waste storage facility being constructed in Finland, asking how it might affect people in an environmental future that we cannot predict.

The Light in Her Eyes (PBS Video, 86 min., DVD: \$24.95 [\$99.95 w/PPR: public libraries; \$295 w/PPR: colleges & universities, from The Cinema Guild]). Co-directors Julia Meltzer and Laura Nix's PBS-aired POV documentary follows Islamic female preacher Houda al-Habash, who founded one of the first Qur'an schools for girls in Damascus. (See review on page 48)

The Loving Story (Icarus Films, 77 min., DVD: \$150: public libraries; \$298: colleges & universities). Nancy Buirski's HBO-aired documentary on the 1967 Supreme Court case that struck down laws prohibiting interracial unions tells the story of Virginia couple Richard and Mildred Loving. (VL-7/12)

Pink Ribbons, Inc. (First Run Features, 98 min., DVD: \$27.95 [\$295 w/PPR]). Filmmaker Léa Pool questions the corporate culture surrounding breast cancer research in this documentary inspired by Dr. Samantha King's 2006 book. (VL-11/12)

The Pruitt-Igoe Myth (First Run Features, 83 min., DVD: \$27.95 [\$95 w/PPR: public libraries; \$295 w/PPR: colleges & universities]). Chad Freidrichs' documentary raises questions about U.S. public housing policy, focusing on St. Louis's Pruitt-Igoe project—hailed as a sterling model in 1956 but later plagued by crime and poverty. (VL-7/12)

Scenes of a Crime (New Box Productions, 88 min., DVD: \$295, web: scenesofacrime.com). Blue Hadaegh and Grover Babcock's documentary explores the trial of a New York man subjected to an aggressive near-10-hour police interrogation that led him to confess—wrongly—to hurting his four-month-old brain-dead child.

Semper Fi: Always Faithful (Passion River, 76 min., DVD: \$29.99 [\$295 w/PPR from Bullfrog Films]). Filmmakers Rachel Libert and Tony Hardmon's documentary follows the determined quest of U.S. Marine Master Sergeant Jerry Ensminger, who—after his daughter died from a rare form of leukemia—discovered cancer clusters among other personnel stationed at Camp Lejeune, NC. (VL-9/12)

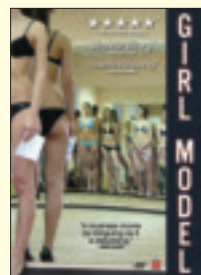
Sing Your Song (Docurama, 104 min., DVD: \$29.95). Filmmaker Susanne Rostock's biographical documentary showcases the trials and triumphs of groundbreaking singer and civil arts activist Harry Belafonte. (VL-7/12)

We Were Here (Docurama, 90 min., DVD: \$29.95). Filmmakers David Weismann and Bill Weber's documentary about the emergence of the AIDS crisis is told from the viewpoint of five individuals who witnessed the onslaught of the disease in San Francisco's gay community. (VL-7/12)

Where Soldiers Come From (New Day Films, 91 min., DVD: \$75: public libraries & high schools; \$299: colleges & universities). Filmmaker Heather Courtney's documentary follows young men from Michigan's Upper Peninsula to the battlefields of Afghanistan and back home, where they nurse physical and psychological scars. (VL-1/13)

You've Been Trumped (Docurama, 95 min., DVD: \$29.95 [\$295 w/PPR from Bullfrog Films]). Director Anthony Baxter's David and Goliath tale follows local residents of a Scottish coastal town who oppose a proposed golf course deal by billionaire tycoon Donald Trump.

Members of the 2012-13 committee are Chair, Mary Hanlin, Tidewater Community College, VA; Julia Churchill, Oak Lawn Public Library, IL; Tom Ipri, Drexel University, PA; Laura Jenemann, George Mason University, DC; Tracy Montri, Toledo-Lucas County Public Library, OH; Sam Readman, Miami-Dade Public Library, FL; Joan Skowronski, Hillsborough County Library, FL; and Maureen Tripp, Emerson College, MA.



is just one chapter in Key's life, examined here through voiceover narration, dramatic re-enactments, archival eyewitness accounts, and illustrations. Viewers will learn about Key's famous prosecution of an abolitionist (although Key himself freed his slaves), his defense of Sam Houston on an assault charge, and his crucial role in helping avert a crisis between the federal government and the state of South Carolina over a tariff conflict. DVD extras include related featurettes, extended interviews, and a dramatic reading of the complete "Star-Spangled Banner." Highly recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

Sholem Aleichem: Laughing in the Darkness ★★★

(2011) 93 min. DVD: \$350. Filmmakers Library. PPR.

Combining stills, archival film footage, and artwork, alternating with excerpts from interviews with scholars and others (including the subject's 100-year-old granddaughter, author Bella Kaufman)—Joseph Dorman's biographical documentary about the famed Jewish writer whose tales of shtetl life in czarist Russia made him famous in Eastern Europe (and inspired *Fiddler on the Roof*) is an engaging portrait. Solomon Rabinowitz (1859–1916), whose pen name can be translated as "Hello again," wrote his popular stories in Yiddish rather than Russian, chronicling a way of life that was fast disappearing (not least due to the rampant anti-Semitism that forced many Russian Jews, including Rabinowitz, to flee to Western Europe or the United States). And while the author's later work for the Yiddish theater in New York proved too old-fashioned for the local immigrant community, his funeral cortège drew a huge throng of mourners as it wended its way through the ethnic neighborhoods. Dorman pays equal attention to Rabinowitz's personal and professional life, adding flavor by employing half a dozen actors, including Peter Riegert, to both deliver the narration and also act as characters in periodic excerpts from stories about such beloved figures as Tevye and Menachem Mendel. *Sholem Aleichem* will certainly interest students of Yiddish literature and cultural historians of the late-19th and early-20th centuries, but the viewer need not be academically inclined to appreciate Dorman's well-crafted, revealing profile of a significant transitional figure in modern Jewish literary history. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Video Librarian Online

Visit Video Librarian Online (www.videolibrarian.com) for more reviews during March and April, including: *Beijing Punk*, *Music from the Big House*, *Skydancer*, and *Spend Well, Live Rich with Michelle Singletary*, plus 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.

Lionsgate has released the latest collection featuring the PBS Kids animated stories starring the colossal titular canine: the seven-episode **Celebrate with Clifford** (77 min., DVD: 2 discs, \$14.98), inspired by the beloved tales by Norman Bridwell, which also includes five extra episodes and the bonus disc *Happy Birthday, Clifford!* See review of *Clifford the Big Red Dog: Rock N' Roll Clifford! and Team Clifford!* in VL Online-6/04.



The newest title in Paramount Home Entertainment's popular Nickelodeon cartoon series set in the underwater town of Bikini Bottom is **SpongeBob SquarePants: Extreme Kah-Rah-Tay** (88 min., DVD: \$14.99), which includes eight episodes. See review of *SpongeBob SquarePants: Tide and Seek* in VL-9/03.

Newly available from Shout! Factory is **The Adventures of Chuck & Friends: When Trucks Fly** (110 min., DVD: \$12.99), featuring Chuck the truck and his junkyard pals Digger, Boomer, Rowdy, and Handy, who use their imaginations in this 10-story set. See review of *The Adventures of Chuck & Friends: Monster Rally* in VL-11/12.

Also newly available from Paramount is the Nickelodeon-aided six-episode **Bubble Guppies: On the Job!** (138 min., DVD: \$16.99), spotlighting the underwater escapades of the fun-loving Bubble Guppies kids as they test out jobs in fields such as doctor, firefighter, waiter, and zookeeper. See review of *Bubble Guppies* in VL-7/12.

Pint-sized traveler Dora and her friends are back in the latest entry from Paramount Home Entertainment and Nickelodeon's popular animated interactive preschool series: **Dora the Explorer: Dora's Butterfly Ball** (69 min., DVD: \$14.99), which includes the special titular gala tale, and two bonus adventures. See review of *Dora the Explorer: Big Sister Dora* in VL-5/05.



Airing on PBS Kids, the most recent title in the *Wild Kratts* series from PBS Distribution is **Wild Kratts: Lost at Sea** (55 min., DVD: \$9.99), which combines live-action and animation while showcasing zoologists Martin and Chris Kratt in the episodes "Speaking Dolphinese" and "Blowfish Blowout." See review of *Wild Kratts: Creature Adventures* in VL-7/11.



Also from PBS Distribution, **Breakfast Special 2: Revenge of the Omelets** (60 min., DVD: \$24.99) is filmmaker Rick Sebak's PBS-aided follow-up to his 2010 original documentary, which checks out various morning meals served in restaurants across America, discovering tasty treats ranging from homemade biscuits in North Carolina to salmon cakes in Detroit and loco moco in Hawaii. See review of *Breakfast Special* in VL-1/11.



The latest compilation featuring HIT Entertainment and Lionsgate's friendly purple dinosaur is **Barney Loves You** (144 min., DVD: 3 discs, \$19.98), which includes three programs: *We Love Our Family*, *I Love My Friends*, and *You Can Be Anything!* See review of *Barney's Beach Party* in VL-5/02.

Also recently released from Lionsgate and HIT is **Thomas & Friends: Full Steam Ahead** (140 min., DVD: 3 discs, \$24.98), featuring the Rev. W. Awdry's talking train engines on the island of Sodor in a trio of programs: *Railway Friends*, *Wobbly Wheels & Whistles*, and *Team Up with Thomas*. See review of *Thomas and Friends: Salty's Secret* in VL-11/02.

Compiled by the A/V Geeks Film Library, **Classic Educational Shorts, Volume 5: Rules for School** (125 min., DVD: \$19.95) and **Classic Educational Shorts, Volume 6: Troubled Teens** (139 min., DVD: \$19.95) are the most recent volumes in Kino International's quirky educational series that features archival 16mm "awareness" short films from yesteryear. See review of *How to Be a Man, Volume 1* in VL-11/09.



Children Who Chase Lost Voices ★★★

(2012) 116 min. DVD: 2 discs, \$29.98; Blu-ray: \$39.98. Sentai Filmworks (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-6161-5234-5 (dvd), 978-1-6161-5235-2 (blu-ray).



Makoto Shinkai's dreamy anime revolves around Asuna, a studious and self-sufficient young girl—living with her widowed mother and a tiny cat—who enjoys going to her favorite hideaway, a high ledge overlooking her rural village, where she listens to strange music and voices coming from a radio receiver her deceased father left behind. One day Asuna encounters a fearsome bear-like creature, and a mysterious young man named Shun swoops in to save her from this “gatekeeper,” while also warning her to stay away from the promontory. After revealing he’s from the underworld of Agartha, Shun disappears, and Asuna becomes determined to find him. Her teacher, Mr. Morisaki, tells Asuna about Agartha (like her, he hopes to resurrect someone from the dead), and aided by Shun’s brother, the two join forces to explore the world below. Little do they realize that their presence threatens the survival of the hidden land, as more creatures appear and revelations ensue. Presented in a dual-language release, rated TV-PG, extras include audio commentary, a “making-of” featurette, and cast and crew interviews. Recommended. (K. Fennessy)

King of Thorn ★★★

(2009) 2 discs. 110 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$24.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4210-2398-9.



Adapted from a serialized Japanese graphic novel, the feature-length 2009 anime *King of Thorn* serves up a bloody, apocalyptic sci-fi spin on *Sleeping Beauty*, with a twist of *Alien*. In 2012, the contagious and fatal Acquired Cellular Induration Syndrome—also called the Medousa Virus—strikes, turning victims to stone and setting off a global panic. A biotech giant (suspected of creating Medousa to fulfill Christian end-times prophecy) retrofits a Gothic Scottish castle as a high-tech hibernation center to house an international selection of patients, who will be revived in the future when a cure is found. But something goes wrong, and the sleepers awaken to a nightmare of ravenous monsters and giant brambles throughout the ruined complex. Solving the enigma of Medousa (in between monster battles) turns out to be a mind-bending sort of everything-is-connected-to-everything-else metaphysical whirl that can become somewhat confounding, although the superb CGI graphics make for a visually mesmerizing watch. Presented in a dual-language release, rated TV-MA, extras include an interview with director Kazuyoshi Kata-

yama. Recommended. (C. Cassidy)

Mass Effect: Paragon Lost ★★★

(2012) 2 discs. 95 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4210-2499-3.



Talk to a video gamer and he (or she) will be able to explain this Japanese-outsourced cartoon feature that fills in a gap in the story arc and “universe” of the popular third-person action-shooter series *Mass Effect*. For the uninitiated, however, *Mass Effect: Paragon Lost* comes across as a series of military skirmishes, escapes, and BIG explosions, involving humans and aliens—largely indistinguishable from similar spin-offs of *Starship Troopers* or *Wing Commander*. After defending space colonies from the Klingon-ish reptilian Krogans, Marine James Vega (voiced by Freddie Prinze Jr.) learns that another menace is kidnapping entire settlements. The perpetrators turn out to be Collectors, an empire of intelligent, interstellar insects with particularly evil uses for captives—presenting a threat that prompts a brief alliance-of-convenience between humans and Krogans. Serving up an astronomical body count that leads toward a finale heavy on the themes of epic tragedy and loss, the ‘toon-ish animation here is weak compared to the *Mass Effect* games’ photo-realistic CGI. Presented in an English-only edition, rated TV-MA, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes. Optional for all but hardcore game fans. (C. Cassidy)

Ristorante Paradiso ★★★

(2009) 3 discs. 275 min. DVD: \$39.99. The Right Stuff International (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-57032-718-1.



On a back street in Rome lies an unassuming restaurant that serves delicious food, but is better known for its gentlemanly waitstaff. Here, 21-year-old Nicoletta arrives in search of her estranged mother (who receives her with wariness and warmth) and then stays on as a sous chef, becoming smitten with middle-aged single server Claudio, who still wears his old wedding ring. Over the course of the 11-episode series, viewers learn why all of the male staff wear glasses, what secret Nicoletta holds over her mother’s head, and whether or not Claudio can get over his ex-wife. *Ristorante Paradiso* favors a slow narrative arc over flashy excitement, reveling in the everyday life of the Casetta dell’Orso restaurant and the people who work there. Lovingly illustrated, this is an uncharacteristic anime offering that is solely focused on relationships and love. Based on the manga by Ono Natsume, this 2009 series is presented in Japanese with English subtitles, rated 13-up, and features

extras including a guide to Rome, and art galleries. Recommended. (L. Martincik)

Tenchi Muyo! Tenchi Universe: The Complete Series ★★★

(2000) 4 discs. 650 min. DVD: \$39.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4210-2029-7.



Although *Tenchi Muyo!* has never been accused of being profound, anime fans hold it dear. In this series reboot, ordinary 17-year-old schoolboy Tenchi Musaki is living with his widowed dad and granddad in the countryside when a succession of alien girls drop in on the household in bizarre bio-mechanical space-battlecruisers that phase back and forth into cute furry animals. Tenchi swiftly becomes a love object, torn between imperious space princess Ayeka and her childhood frenemy, Ryoko, a busty, lusty (and part cat) interstellar outlaw. Other extraordinary females also come into Tenchi’s orbit, such as mismatch-partnered space policewomen, an interplanetary bounty-hunter, and a diminutive pink-haired lady who happens to be the galaxy’s most notorious mad scientist. A long-popular, manga-derived fantasy, the *Tenchi Muyo!* story feels more elaborate in this 26 episode retelling (airing as *Tenchi Universe* in the U.S. in 2000). The hand-drawn art from 1995 hearkens back to pre-CGI anime (as do the karaoke-craze jokes). Presented in a dual-language set, rated TV-14, this is recommended. [Note: *Tenchi Muyo! Tenchi in Tokyo: The Complete Series* is also newly available.] (C. Cassidy)

Un-Go: Complete Collection ★★★1/2

(2011) 325 min. DVD: 3 discs, \$59.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$69.98. Sentai Filmworks (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-6161-5292-5 (dvd), 978-1-6161-5293-2 (blu-ray).



Set in a dyspeptic future, *Un-Go* focuses on private eye Shinjuro Yuuki, who is accompanied by Inga—a shape-shifting young woman with unusual talents—on an extended adventure that features artificial intelligence, hacking, dangerous corporations, and hitherto unknown deities. Marked by clever writing, this series serves up a strange mix of traditional mysteries and off-the-wall sci-fi shenanigans. Even when the story seems to detour into hopelessly bizarre territory—most notably in a subplot about Shinjuro being trapped in a fantasy scenario involving the creation of a war documentary—the kinetic energy and stylish production design keeps viewers involved. Presenting all 11 episodes from 2011 in a dual language set, rated TV-14, extras include a prequel episode, several Inga-related shorts, and a featurette on novelist Ango Sakaguchi, whose writing inspired the series. Highly recommended. (P. Hall)

Attila ★★★1/2

(2010) 118 min. In Italian w/English subtitles. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Unittel Classica (dist. by Naxos of America).



The ninth release in Unittel's chronological series of all of Verdi's operas is his 1846 "lyrical drama" about the titular ferocious Hun warlord who marched on Rome in the mid-5th century. In a bit of what passes here for history, *Attila* features the intervention of Pope Leo I, who supposedly persuaded the king to abandon his attack on the city. But that incident is just the backdrop to a romantic triangle in which Attila's beautiful prisoner, Odabella (whom he plans to marry), conspires with her lover, Foresto, to kill the barbarian and avenge her father's death at his hands. Like earlier releases in the series, this 2010 production employs the resources of the Teatro Regio di Parma, with the company orchestra delivering a stirring rendition of the score under the baton of Andrea Battistoni. The vocalism is also excellent, with soprano Susanna Branchini (Odabella), bass Giovanni Battista Parodi (Attila), and tenor Roberto de Biasio (Foresto) giving commanding performances. The only drawback is that the opera was mounted at the Teatro Verdi di Busseto, and the tiny stage makes for cramped, static direction by Pierfrancesco Maestrini, who tries to compensate with rear projections that cannot entirely make up for the modest sets. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray version) and PCM stereo, extras include an intro to the opera. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg ★★★1/2

(2011) 2 discs. 280 min. In German w/English subtitles. DVD or Blu-ray: \$29.99. Opus Arte (dist. by Naxos of America).



England's Glyndebourne Festival isn't exactly noted for Wagner productions, but director David McVicar uses the site's smallish stage deftly in his 2011 mounting of the composer's warmest, most humane opera, which recounts how wise cobbler Hans Sachs intervenes to ensure that the young knight Walther wins the hand of the lovely Eva in a singing contest in which Walther is pitted against the obnoxious Beckmesser. This 1868 opera emerges as both a genial paean to true love and a song of praise to the innovative artist (a role that Wagner clearly felt described him perfectly) in McVicar's staging, which updates the action from the 16th century to the early 19th and features attractive sets and costumes while otherwise adopting a traditional approach. Conductor Vladimir Jurowski emphasizes clarity and swiftness over majesty and lushness in the performance he draws from the London

Philharmonic, and Marco Jentzsch (Walther) and Anna Gabler (Eva) are somewhat raw in their singing. But Gerald Finley is an absolutely splendid Sachs both vocally and dramatically, and Johannes Martin Kränzle makes Beckmesser a pathetic fool. Fine supporting turns from Topi Lehtipuu as Sachs's apprentice, David, and Alastair Miles as Eva's father, Pogner, further enhance the production. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray version) and LPCM stereo, extras include a cast gallery, a behind-the-scenes featurette on the production, and a look at the "baggage" carried by the opera—which was, after all, Hitler's favorite. Far preferable to the misguided 2008 Bayreuth production (VL-7/11), this is highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

FCA! 35 Tour: An Evening with Peter Frampton

★★★★1/2
(2012) 166 min. DVD or Blu-ray: \$19.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



FCA! 35 Tour actually features two evenings with Peter Frampton, the former Humble Pie guitarist who went solo in 1971, releasing four lukewarm-selling albums before striking gold (and multi-platinum) with 1976's *Frampton Comes Alive!* double LP—for many years the bestselling live record of all time. In the first of two shows from February 2012, Frampton and his band (including original bass player Stanley Sheldon) perform *FCA!* in its entirety before an appreciative audience at Milwaukee's Pabst Theater. Backed by Rob Arthur on keyboards/guitar, Adam Lester on guitar, and Dan Wojciechowski on drums, Frampton rocks his beloved long-lost-and-recently-recovered Les Paul guitar—nicknamed the Phoenix—during the 14-song set that includes the megahits "Show Me the Way," "Baby, I Love Your Way," and the anthem "Do You Feel Like We Do" (featuring the famous "talk box" tube that mixes the guitar's sound with Frampton's voice). Frampton, who was never a distinctive singer, is no great shakes on the mic here, but his nimble fingers fly on "Lines on My Face," "(I Wanna) Go to the Sun," and the rousing cover of "Jumpin' Jack Flash." A 12-song second set filmed at New York City's Beacon Theatre draws primarily from Frampton's 2006 Grammy-winning CD *Fingerprints* (including "Double Nickels," "Float," and a cover of Soundgarden's "Black Hole Sun") and 2010's *Thank You Mr. Churchill* (including the lovely autobiographical "Vaudeville Nanna and the Banjolele," "Restraint," and "Road to the Sun," featuring Frampton's son Julian on vocals), closing out with a stirring encore performance of George Harrison's "While My Guitar Gently Weeps." 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 featurette on Frampton's reunion with his Phoenix guitar. A wonderful stroll down memory lane for *FCA!* fans and welcome introduction to contemporary Frampton, this is highly recommended. (R. Pitman)

From Dust to Dreams: Opening Night at the Smith Center for Performing Arts ★★★

(2012) 120 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.95 w/PPR). PBS Video. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-766-3.



Actor and stage performer Neil Patrick Harris hosts this PBS-aired filming of the opening night festivities at Las Vegas's Smith Center for the Performing Arts. Performing on an art deco-style stage, the artists hail from a wide array of genres, including jazz (trumpeter Arturo Sandoval), country (Martina McBride), pop (Jennifer Hudson, Carole King), rock (John Fogerty), R&B (Mavis Staples), classical (violinist Joshua Bell), dance (a Twyla Tharp-Frank Sinatra suite), and musical theater (14 show tunes). Among the theater stars, Brian Stokes Mitchell makes the biggest impression with an impassioned version of "Impossible Dream" from *Man of La Mancha*. Other Broadway notables include Cheyenne Jackson, Benjamin Walker, and Sherie Rene Scott, who perform songs from *West Side Story*, *Sweet Charity*, *Guys and Dolls*, and other popular musicals. Aside from the solo performances, several artists also perform together: McBride duets with Pat Monahan from Train, while Willie Nelson and Merle Haggard team up (and share the stage with Emmylou Harris). Of the non-Broadway performers, McBride and Hudson exhibit the strongest singing, while Staples and Haggard understandably appear to have lost a bit of vocal power over the decades, although they maintain their singular styles. The fancy dress crowd here is pretty sedate for most of the evening until Fogerty inspires a little dancing with a rousing rendition of "Proud Mary," but they save their standing ovations for Hudson and Bell. Presented in 5.1 surround sound and stereo, this is recommended. (K. Fennessy)

Gary Moore: Blues for Jimi ★★★

(2012) 74 min. DVD: \$14.98, Blu-ray: \$19.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



Belfast-born blues-rocker Gary Moore performs his favorite Jimi Hendrix selections in this 12-song set at London's Hippodrome from October 2007 that offers few surprises. Just as Hendrix formed a trio with Mitch Mitchell and Noel Redding as the Jimi Hendrix Experience, two sidemen here join Moore: Darrin Mooney (Primal Scream) on drums and

Dave Bronze (Eric Clapton, Art of Noise) on bass. The players are as adept as their leader, though Mooney's playing on the fast-paced "Fire" seems a little sluggish. As a singer, Moore lacks a voice that is as distinctive as Hendrix's (or even fellow Irishman Phil Lynott, with whom Moore played in Thin Lizzy), but there's nothing too painful here. That said, Moore handles the rockers better than ballads like "My Angel," which would have benefited from a more gentle touch (for this track, he also switches from a Fender Stratocaster to a Gibson Flying V). During three of the last four numbers, Moore brings Mitchell and Billy Cox from Hendrix's Band of Gypsies onstage to join him, handing the microphone to Cox for "Red House" and "Stone Free," while the show ends with an expansive take on "Voodoo Child (Slight Return)" with the first line-up. *Blues for Jimi* essentially serves as a showcase for Moore's prowess on electric guitar, which should please his devoted following. Sadly, both Moore (1952-2011) and Mitchell (1947-2008) have since passed away. Presented in DTS 5.1 and Dolby Digital stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, this is recommended. (K. Fennessy)

Giovanna d'Arco ★★★

(2012) 128 min. In Italian w/ English subtitles. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Unilet Classica (dist. by Naxos of America).



The seventh release in the *Tutto Verdi* series from Parma's Teatro Regio, compiling all of Verdi's operas, offers another rarity—a mounting of the composer's 1845 opera about Joan of Arc (here, Giovanna), which turns the martyr's life into a romance in which she's torn between her divinely inspired duty and her worldly love for France's King Carlo (Charles VII), whose throne she saves from the English. The third major character in the plot is Giacomo, Giovanna's father, who accuses his own daughter of witchcraft but saves her from execution when he hears her at prayer, allowing her to lead the French army to their final victory, although she is mortally wounded in the process. Historically, this is nonsense, of course, but Verdi's score is lovely, effective, and well conducted by Bruno Bartoletti, who draws both vigorous and sensitive playing from the company orchestra. Shining in the major roles are Svetla Vassileva (Giovanna), who exhibits a strong soprano, and Evan Bowers (Carlo), a ringing tenor. The sole drawback is veteran Renato Bruson's rather wobbly vocalism as Giacomo. Gabriele Lavia's production—featuring period sets and costumes—is highly traditional, and while the staging is a bit static at times, overall this is pleasant to the eye. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray version) and PCM stereo, the sole extra here is a brief introduction to the opera. Both for those collecting the entire

set and those wanting to fill a lacuna in their Verdi collections, this is recommended. (F. Swietek)

I Am: SMTOWN Live World Tour in Madison Square Garden ★★★

(2011) 125 min. DVD: 4 discs, \$24.99; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$39.99. CJ Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



Combining a concert performance with interwoven documentary footage, *I Am* presents seven K-pop (Korean pop) acts at Madison Square Garden in 2011 as part of the SMTOWN Live World Tour. Smooth moves, trendy apparel, and breezy harmonies rank high among the bands' priorities, aligning them with the Western variant of manufactured pop outfits from *NSYNC to One Direction, although these singers seem less reliant on Auto-Tune (behind-the-scenes a cappella numbers reveal several strong singers). As influences, the performers mention Madonna, Michael Jackson, and Justin Timberlake. The women of the five-member f(x) and nine-member Girls' Generation perform hip-hop-influenced tracks that combine English and Korean lyrics, while the nine-member Super Junior and two-member TVXQ! offer an acrobatic brand of boy-band pop—the latter entering the stage suspended on wires and hidden harnesses. Other acts, including the solo artists KANGTA and BoA, incorporate metal and techno into their musical mix. Between performances, the entertainers talk about their stage names and personas; since K-pop appears to thrive on artifice, the singers have no problem admitting that they are, at least in some cases, playing roles. Fans will find the audition and rehearsal footage of special interest, since some participants were quite young when they joined the SMTOWN family; Yuri from Girls' Generation, for instance, says that she became a trainee when she was in fifth grade and joined the group six years later, indicating the degree to which SM Entertainment mirrors Hollywood's old-fashioned star-making machinery. Bundling the feature-length title documentary with the full-length concert, extras include backstage footage and a music video. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 on DVD and Blu-ray, this is recommended for larger music collections. (K. Fennessy)

Ike & Tina: On the Road 1971-72 ★★★

(1972) 81 min. DVD: \$19.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).



On the Road provides an off-the-cuff look at R&B performers Ike and Tina Turner at home, in rehearsal, and on tour. Rather than making a formal documentary,

rock 'n' roll photographer Bob Gruen and his wife, Nadya Beck, stitched together grainy (but functional) footage, alternating between color and black-and-white. The film also features a clip from *The Tonight Show* in which Ike and Tina performed with their backing band along with the singing and dancing Ikettes. Unfortunately, no onscreen text specifies where the other shows took place (except for a sign indicating the University of North Dakota), although the accompanying booklet—featuring photographs and liner notes by Gruen—fills in a few gaps. Off the road, Tina cooks for the kids, washes dishes, and talks to Nadya—who occasionally appears onscreen—about her image and her desire to write more songs. While the monaural sound can be muddy and the camerawork shaky, the performances of the full-throated Tina and live-wire Ikettes are consistently riveting, and this disc offers up 19 selections from the group's repertoire, including the signature numbers "River Deep, Mountain High" and "Proud Mary," although not all are played in their entirety. Gruen and Beck concentrate most of their attention on Tina, but Ike contributes a lengthy, psychedelic guitar solo during an intense, slow-burning version of the blues standard "I Smell Trouble." DVD extras include a slideshow. Fans are sure to welcome this release, which is recommended, overall. (K. Fennessy)

John Cage: Journeys in Sound ★★★

(2012) 61 min. DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Accentus Music (avail. from most distributors).



Co-directors Paul Smaczny and Allan Miller handily make the case here that experimental composer John Cage (1912-1992) built his career around sound in all its forms. In an archival interview, Cage explains that his goal was to "open the eyes and ears" to the beauty of noise and other phenomena that don't normally qualify as music. Other interviews and performances feature John Lennon and Yoko Ono, composer Christian Wolff, and Cage's partner, choreographer Merce Cunningham. Several of Cage's pieces, played by various artists and ensembles, are interspersed throughout the film to illustrate Cage's concepts, such as chance operations, which took inspiration from the *I Ching* (in addition to his compositional skills, Cage was a Zen Buddhist, a mycologist, and a painter). *New Yorker* critic Calvin Tomkins credits Cage for freeing other composers to look beyond received wisdom about the primacy of traditional instruments. A representative from Cage's longtime publisher, C.F. Peters, even uses the word "instructions" in reference to the composer's music, since many of his compositions read like short plays or stage directions (an example being that the performer should hold a note for as long as

possible instead of a specific amount of time). "Water Music," which incorporates a duck whistle, a radio, and a prepared piano, serves as a particularly vivid example. Although scant on biographical details, *Journeys in Sound* offers a well-rounded examination of Cage's creative process. Extras include four additional performances and an interview with Cage, Cunningham, and artist Robert Rauschenberg on their collaborative process. Presented in DTS 5.1 and Dolby Digital stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and PCM stereo on Blu-ray, this is recommended. (K. Fennessy)

La Bohème ★★½

(2012) 127 min. In Italian w/ English subtitles. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Electric Picture (dist. by Naxos of America).



Anyone looking for a very nontraditional production of Puccini's popular opera about the doomed romance of Rodolfo and Mimi will want to check out this 2012 production from the Norwegian National Opera. The original, of course, is set in Paris's Latin Quarter around 1830, and the couple's ardent love ends—spoiler alert!—in Mimi's death from consumption and Rodolfo sobbing over her corpse. Stefan Herheim's staging, however, opens in a modern ICU where the heroine—bald from chemotherapy—expires, and the rest of the story is told in flashback. Although the hospital setting is maintained, bits and pieces of period costuming and décor are periodically inserted, sometimes to rather jarring effect. Still, Heike Scheele's set design nicely serves Herheim's concept, and Diego Torre stands out as Rodolfo, while Marita Sølberg's Mimi is solid (although Jennifer Rowley's Musetta isn't much more than adequate). Offering able support throughout is the company orchestra and chorus, led by Eivind Gullberg Jensen. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray version) and LPCM stereo, extras include brief backstage interviews, and a cast gallery. While a less radical version—such as the recent Opera Australia mounting (VL-9/12)—would be a safer choice, this should still be considered a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Lady Antebellum: Own the Night World Tour ★★★

(2012) 124 min. DVD: \$14.98, Blu-ray: \$19.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



Mostly filmed during a 2012 performance in Little Rock, AR, this concert film captures Nashville trio Lady Antebellum while on a world tour in support of their third album, 2011's *Own the Night*. Between performances from the 13-song set and behind-the-scenes footage, the Grammy winners talk about their origins, citing Loretta

Lynn, James Taylor, and Kris Kristofferson as significant influences. Offstage, they play golf and ping-pong, work out, and attend meet and greets. Onstage, Charles Kelley and Hillary Scott do most of the singing, while Dave Haywood provides guitar, mandolin, piano, and backing vocals. A five-piece band fills out their sound, which incorporates pop hooks and rock licks. The threesome don't exactly write the most distinctive material—which includes titles such as "I Run to You" and "Need You Now"—but all are competent performers, and audience members express their appreciation by cheering and singing along with the upbeat numbers, and slow-dancing to the ballads. From both a vocal and visual standpoint, Kelley takes center stage more often than not, as he appears to be more of an extrovert than his band mates. After the show, the band invites several friends and fans to jam with them, including *Modern Family*'s Eric Stonestreet. Presented in DTS 5.1 and Dolby Digital stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 on Blu-ray and LPCM stereo, extras include a pair of behind-the-scenes featurettes, and five additional songs. Sure to appeal to the band's legion of fans, this is recommended. (K. Fennessy)

Let the Music Play: The Story of the Doobie Brothers ★★★

(2012) 148 min. DVD: \$14.98, Blu-ray: \$19.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



In Barry Ehrmann's documentary profile, the Doobie Brothers (along with producer Ted Templeman and longtime manager Bruce Cohn) tell their own story, tracing the band's long history starting with their early roots in the Bay Area. The group was already starting to land gigs in 1970 when they realized that they needed a name. Guitarist Patrick Simmons admits that "Doobie Brothers," which began as a joke, was stupid, but it stuck. Label attention came early, but their Warner Brothers debut made little impact, so the band added a second drummer to their three-guitar line-up and released the single "Listen to the Music" from 1972's *Toulouse Street*, which became a big hit. "By '74," remembers singer-guitarist and primary songwriter Tom Johnston, "we had a Doobielineer": i.e., a nonstop party plane. In short order, the group topped the charts with "Black Water" and added former Steely Dan guitarist Jeff "Skunk" Baxter, but then Johnston developed a bleeding ulcer. While he took time off, Michael McDonald stepped in as a backup singer and keyboard player, impressing the other members so much that he was able to take over on lead vocals. McDonald's songwriting skills also brought more hits, including "Takin' It to the Streets" and "It Keeps You Runnin'." Unhappy with the band's new direction, Johnston left

in 1977. After several more lineup changes, the Doobie Brothers embarked on a farewell tour in 1982, although they would still get together for annual benefit gigs, and five years later decided to reform. Towards the end of the documentary, the band members' wives and kids weigh in with their thoughts, adding a welcome dimension. Presented in DTS 5.1 and Dolby Digital stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 on Blu-ray and LPCM stereo, extras include nine bonus songs performed live. Recommended. (K. Fennessy)

Merce Cunningham Dance Company: Park Avenue Armory Event ★★★½

(2012) 3 discs. 279 min. DVD: \$60. Microcinema International. PPR.



After Merce Cunningham—a cutting-edge figure in the world of modern dance—died in 2009, the company he founded in 1953 undertook several commemorative projects, including a major event held at the Park Avenue Armory in New York on the last three nights of 2011 as a farewell to the company (which disbanded on New Year's Day). Presenting excerpts from the troupe's repertory (often performed simultaneously across three stages), the selections—chosen by the dancers, along with some ensemble pieces—were arranged by Robert Swinston. The first disc of this set offers a collage of pieces from the varied venues, shot from different angles, while the second disc contains complete performances from each of the three stages shown from a single, unchanging perspective. The final disc serves up a retrospective of Cunningham's career, featuring excerpts from 17 works he choreographed that were included on the company's "Legacy Tour" of 2010–11 (an accompanying booklet features full data on each one). Spanning the years from 1956 to 2009, the clips are drawn from films in the Merce Cunningham Archive and vary in terms of sound and picture quality. But along with earlier releases—*Split Sides: Merce Cunningham Dance Company* (VL Online-8/09) and *Merce Cunningham Dance Company: Robert Rauschenberg Collaborations* (VL-5/11)—this set provides an outstanding overview of the achievements of one of America's most important choreographers. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Neil Sedaka in Concert ★★★½

(1991) 95 min. DVD: \$19.99. SRO (dist. by Kultur International Films). ISBN: 978-0-7697-9247-7.



This delightful August 1991 live performance by Neil Sedaka was shot in Birmingham, England, before an adoring audience happy to

hear the master showman perform both his early, Brill Building hits (“Oh Carol,” “Happy Birthday Sweet Sixteen”) and the more mature songs of his 1970s comeback period (such as “Laughter In the Rain,” performed here with daughter Dara Sedaka). In a nice preface to the concert, Sedaka talks about the old days, when rock ‘n’ roll was new and he was—quite literally—writing pop classics alongside the likes of Carole King, Barry Mann, and Neil Diamond in a New York office. Sedaka also talks about his own stardom, his return to the stage after some fallow years, and how he found (and maintains) a strong relationship with British fans. The 20-plus song set features a number of highlights, including Sedaka doing a bit of dancing during “Calendar Girl,” and abandoning his piano altogether for expansive numbers such as “Good Times, Good Music, Good Friends.” The one sour note is that more than a third of the show, technically, consists of a series of encores, since Sedaka leaves the stage after a mere 12 songs, so the final nine songs are by audience demand. One can’t help but groan at such hucksterism, especially since Sedaka already has the audience wrapped around his finger with both versions of “Breaking Up Is Hard to Do” (fast and slow) and the sweet “My Son and I.” The best thing here is Sedaka’s take on “Solitaire,” a soaring ballad he co-wrote about self-induced loneliness that never sounded right in the sappy versions by the Carpenters and Andy Williams. Presented in Dolby Digital stereo, this blast from the early days of rock ‘n’ roll past is highly recommended. (T. Keogh)

Paco de Lucía & Group: Jazz ★★★

(1996) 80 min. DVD: \$24.99. Arthaus Musik (dist. by Naxos of America).



Spanish guitarist Paco de Lucía (born Francisco Sánchez Gómez) plays his nimble brand of flamenco-flavored jazz in this live performance from Germany’s Germeringer Jazztage. Although several accompanists join in, de Lucía spends most of the time with his legs crossed and eyes closed for this 1996 six-song set featuring “Playa del Carmen,” a piece originally recorded with pianist Chick Corea. To the rhythms of the opening number, “Mi Niño Curro,” two band mates add gentle claps and foot taps. For “El Pañuelo,” the rest of the seven-member ensemble fills out his sound with flute (Jorge Pardo), vocals (Pepe de Lucía), and additional guitar (Ramón de Algeciras and Juan Manuel Canizares). De Lucía’s brother, Pepe, brings to mind the devotional Qawwali singing of the late Pakistani vocalist Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, while Pardo recalls a more Latin-oriented Herbie Mann. Other musicians include bass player Carlos Benavent, percussionist Rubem Dantas, and dancer Joaquin Grilo, who adds visual

interest by contributing tap steps to several numbers. De Lucía finally seems to snap out of his trance during the last song, “Buana, Buana, King Kong” (and while watching Pardo play the soprano saxophone, de Lucía breaks into his one and only smile). Presented in DTS 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1, and PCM stereo, this is recommended. (K. Fennessy)

Patti Smith: Live at Montreux 2005 ★★★

(2005) 83 min. DVD: \$14.98, Blu-ray: \$19.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



On tour at the time in support of 2004’s *Trampin’*, poet-musician Patti Smith performs in this satisfying 2005 engagement from Switzerland’s Montreux Jazz Festival, backed by three longtime collaborators—guitarist Lenny Kaye and drummer Jay Dee Daugherty (Patti Smith Group) and Tom Verlaine (Television)—as well as Tony Shanahan on bass and keyboards. Although Smith sprinkles new tracks throughout the set, she spends more time on 1970s classics, like “Dancing Barefoot” and the Bruce Springsteen co-written smash hit “Because the Night.” Smith also trades vocals with Kaye on a forthright cover of Bob Dylan’s “Like a Rolling Stone,” which isn’t bad, although her rollicking take on Buddy Holly’s “Not Fade Away” works better, not least because vocal partner Shanahan is a stronger singer than Kaye. Thirty years down the line, Smith and her band mates still sound vital and energized, and while Smith primarily concentrates on the delivery of her words and lyrics, she picks up an electric guitar for “25th Floor” and an acoustic one for “Beneath the Southern Cross,” which features a Byrds-inspired instrumental interlude. And towards the end of the 12-song set she adds clarinet to the stately, mournful “Seven Ways of Going,” which she dedicates to free-jazz pioneer Ornette Coleman. Presented in DTS-5.1 and Dolby Digital stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, this is recommended. (K. Fennessy)

Paul McCartney: Live Kisses ★★★

(2012) 75 min. DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$34.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



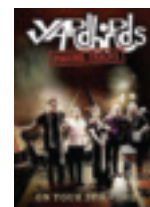
Filmed live at Capitol Studios in Hollywood in February 2012, Sir Paul McCartney performs all 13 songs from his most recent release, *Kisses on the Bottom*—Macca’s love letter to the American Songbook. Directed by Jonas Åkerlund in atmospheric black-and-white, *Live Kisses* alternates between the songs—which include classics such as “It’s Only a Paper Moon,” “Ac-Cen-Tchu-Ate the Positive,” “Always,” “Bye Bye Blackbird,” and “We Three” (from

the stage version—but not the movie—of *Guys and Dolls*)—and interview clips featuring a lot of kisses-on-the-bottom accolades directed at the former Beatle from Stevie Wonder, Eric Clapton, Joe Walsh, and Diana Krall. Guitarist Walsh plays on a couple tunes (including the one McCartney original, “My Valentine”), while pianist Krall performs on all, and nearly has as much screen time as McCartney during the concert segments. On the cusp of 70 during filming, McCartney no longer sports the pipes to really do these songs justice (and couldn’t compete with the crooners who made them famous anyway, including Nat King Cole, Frank Sinatra, and Bing Crosby), but he is backed by such solid studio musicians, including John Clayton on bass, John Pizzarelli on guitar, and Karriem Riggins on drums, that the whole thing just kind of grows on you, so by the time Fats Waller’s “My Very Good Friend the Milkman” rolls around, it’s hard not to smile, nod your head, and tap your foot. Presented in DTS 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1, and PCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include six different music video takes on “My Valentine,” photo shoot footage, an interview with McCartney and producer Tommy LiPuma, and a booklet. Recommended. (R. Pitman)

Yardbirds: Making Tracks

★★

(2012) 2 discs. 127 min. DVD: \$19.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).



Few legendary rock bands have undergone as many radical personnel changes over 50 years as the Yardbirds, the British blues-rock ensemble that yielded three legendary guitarists (Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck, and Jimmy Page) and at one point contained all of the members of Led Zeppelin. After breaking up in 1968, the band stayed dormant until 1992, when co-founders Jim McCarty (drums) and Chris Dreja (rhythm guitar) put together a new lineup that has changed frequently ever since. *Yardbirds: Making Tracks* is an unimpressive—depressing, actually—performance showcase for the contemporary Yardbirds, basically two old guys (Dreja and McCarty) and three young fresh fellows with nary a grey hair or hint of inspiration between them. Not even a cohesive concert, the 15-song *Making Tracks* is culled from multiple 2012 shows, although all exhibit a bar-band level of craftsmanship. If you’re familiar (and still in love) with such Yardbirds classics as “Heart Full of Soul” and the glorious “Shapes of Things,” prepare to be heartbroken by the renditions here. A bonus disc features extras including a behind-the-scenes documentary, brief interviews with McCarty and Dreja, and a pair of performances by the Jim McCarty Band. Not a necessary purchase. (T. Keogh)

Contact information for distributors of titles reviewed in this issue are listed below. Some titles must be ordered direct, while others are available from a wide variety of distributors.

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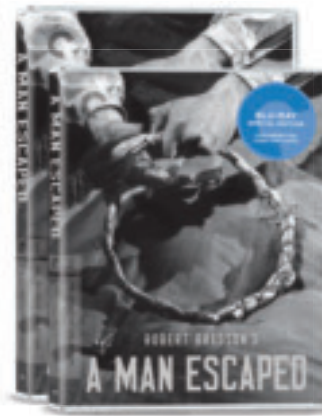
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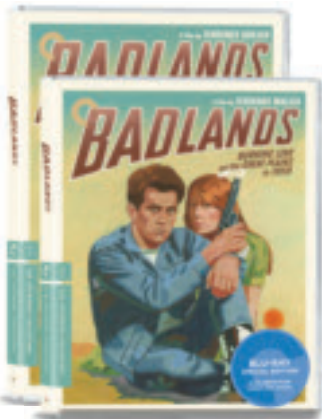
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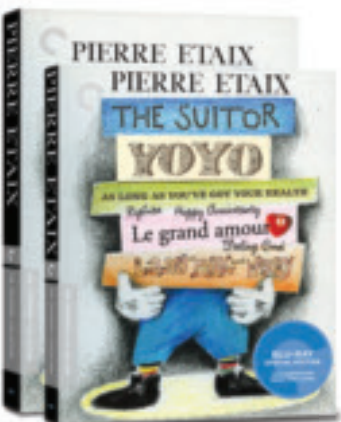
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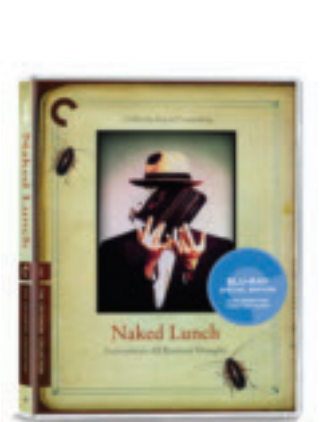
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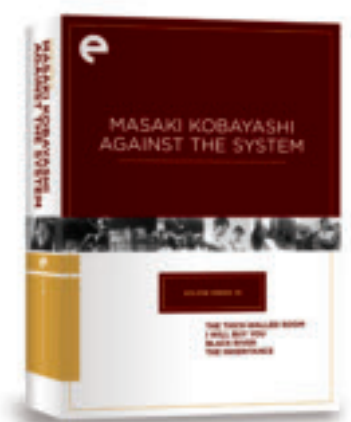
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You've Got Mail

I wrote my first editorial about public performance rights over a quarter-century ago.

At that time, various filmmakers and distributors were claiming that libraries could not buy "home video" versions of titles that were also available in an educational version.

That wasn't true then and isn't true today, but this is a myth that simply refuses to die.

Here's an excerpt from a letter recently sent to a college library:

"Dear _____,

We recently noticed that you have a copy of *My Perestroika* in your library's collection.... According to our records, it seems that your library may have inadvertently purchased the copy of *My Perestroika* distributed by New Video/Docurama. Unfortunately, this version is for home use only. The only version of *My Perestroika* that is legally licensed for educational use is distributed by New Day Films. In order for independent films such as *My Perestroika* to exist for use in teaching, and so they can continue to be

made in the future by non-profit filmmakers...it is critical that institutions purchase the appropriate version." The letter writer concludes with an offer to purchase *My Perestroika* at a one-time discount price of \$150, before asking that the library "please remove the home video DVD (New Video/Docurama) version from your library catalogue immediately."

One could debate the ethical aspects of whether libraries should purchase the more expensive educational version—and I've seen good arguments made by people I respect on both sides of the question—but opinion does not amount to law.

The above letter claims incorrectly that "the only version of *My Perestroika* that is legally licensed for educational use is distributed by New Day Films."

The fact is that while public libraries cannot show films in the library without public performance rights (which may be included in a home-video-priced version or may not—depending on the rights holder), the First Sale Doctrine gives them the right to circulate any legally acquired DVD or Blu-ray title to patrons, including home video editions, without any further permission required.

Educational institutions have the exact same rights as public libraries when it

comes to adding a DVD or Blu-ray title to their libraries for circulation. The major difference is that an educational institution can also legally show a title in a classroom setting thanks to the "face-to-face teaching exemption," which allows for screenings in a face-to-face teaching situation as long as the title is related to the curriculum.

Of course, filmmakers and distributors can choose to only sell titles to the institutional market at whatever price they set—and many have been doing exactly that for decades. The question of appropriate use arises only when—as in the case of *My Perestroika*—a title is made available on home video where it is being sold by a wide variety of wholesalers and retailers such as Amazon and Best Buy.

The lesson here is simple and hasn't changed a bit in over 25 years. If you control distribution, you control the terms of the transaction. If you release a title into the general marketplace, you not only lose that control, but you are also subject to the existing law.

Longtime video librarians know all of this, of course, but it's occasionally worth repeating for those newcomers to the profession who may one day find a similar letter in the mail.

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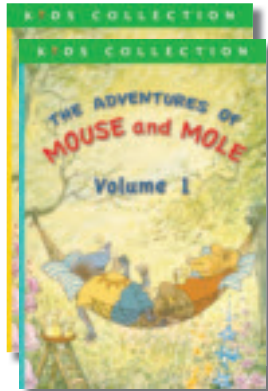
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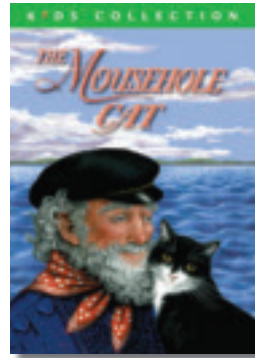
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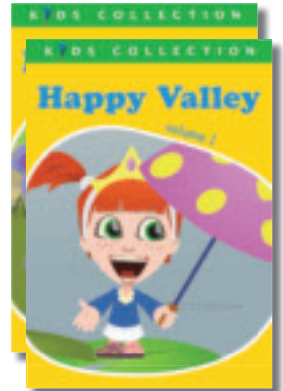
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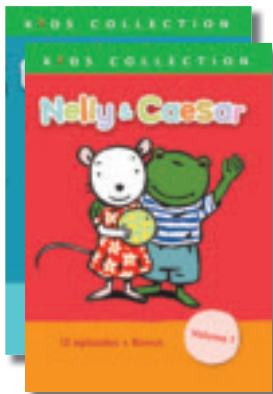
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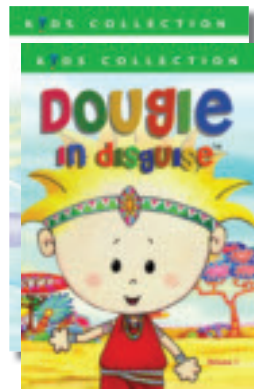
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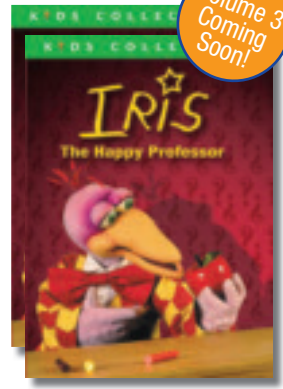
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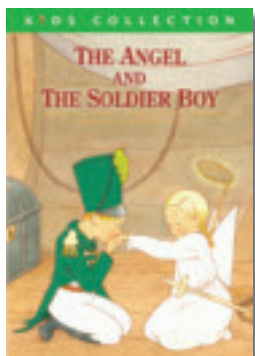
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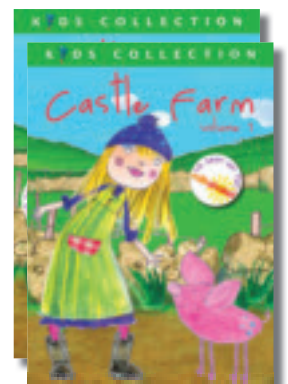
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