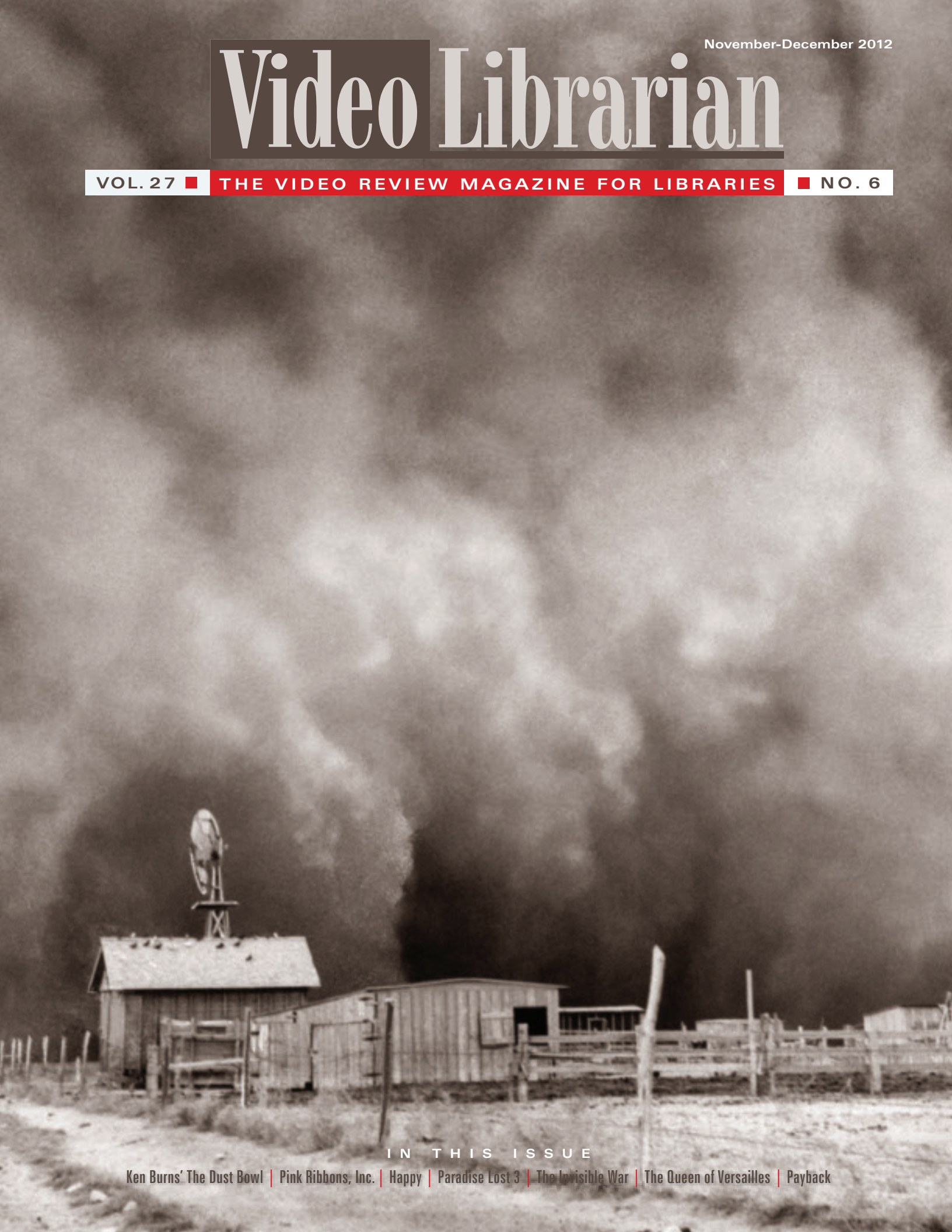


November-December 2012

Video Librarian

VOL. 27 ■ THE VIDEO REVIEW MAGAZINE FOR LIBRARIES ■ NO. 6




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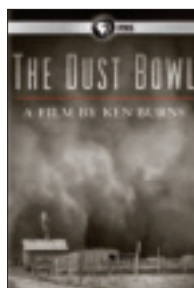
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Spotlight Review

The Dust Bowl

★★★1/2
 (2012) 2 discs. 227 min.
 DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.95
 w/PPR), Blu-ray: \$29.99
 (\$54.95 w/PPR). PBS
 Video. Closed captioned.
 ISBN: 978-1-60883-7182
 (dvd), 978-1-60883-7199
 (blu-ray).



"We lived in a brown world," says Dorothy Kleffman, one of several poignant, well-spoken interviewees in documentary filmmaker Ken Burns' latest visual opus, *The Dust Bowl*, which examines the causes and effects of the greatest manmade environmental disaster in American history. Part one, "The Great Plow-Up," traces the early years of the decade-long catastrophe, beginning in the late 1920s when "suitcase farmers"—taking advantage of an expanded Homestead Act—flocked to places like the Oklahoma Panhandle (dubbed "No Man's Land"), where they plowed-up the grasslands and planted acres and acres of golden wheat. The stock market crash of 1929, coupled with the arrival of a multi-year drought, acted as a potent one-two punch on the economy of the Great Plains region, turning it into an eroded desert where reduced crops sold for reduced prices. Most frightening were the "black blizzards," massive dust storms that collected the topsoil

into sky-high waves stretching as far as 200 miles and bringing dirt and grit all the way to President Roosevelt's desktop in Washington, D.C. One storm alone destroyed half of Oklahoma and Kansas's wheat crop and all of Nebraska's, carrying off—in a single day—as much dirt as was excavated while digging the Panama Canal over the course of a decade. Part two, "Reaping the Whirlwind," continues the chronicle of incredible hardships faced by families in the southern Plains, brought to the nation's attention through the haunting photographs of Dorothea Lange and the gut-wrenching story of "Okies" in John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*. In addition to the ecological devastation wrought by dirt and wind, the area would also suffer plagues of rabbits and grasshoppers, before a combination of New Deal programs, advanced farming techniques, and the eventual arrival of blessed rain would finally end the crisis—just as World War II was beginning. Narrated by Peter Coyote, *The Dust Bowl* smartly interweaves incredible archival photos and footage, excellent interviews of survivors, and insightful comments from authors and historians. Extras include bonus and extended scenes along with behind-the-scenes segments. Both a cautionary tale of the environmental perils of shortsighted capitalism and a paean to a quintessential example of the amazing resiliency of the American spirit, this is highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (R. Pitman)

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NUCLEAR NATION

96 minutes, color, \$295 w/PPR

A sensitive but penetrating chronicle of the aftermath of the Fukushima I Nuclear Power Plant reactor meltdown following the devastating impact of the Tohoku tsunami in March 2011. Since the 1960s, the people of Futaba in Fukushima, Japan had been promised prosperity with tax breaks and subsidies to compensate for the presence of the power plant. Now that they have lost their homeland, the town's people have been forced to question the real cost nuclear energy.

"Cuts to the heart of the matter...drive[s] home not only their hardship and fortitude, but the alarming implications of corporate/governmental indifference and ineptitude vis-a-vis Japan's nuclear policies." -VarietyPost



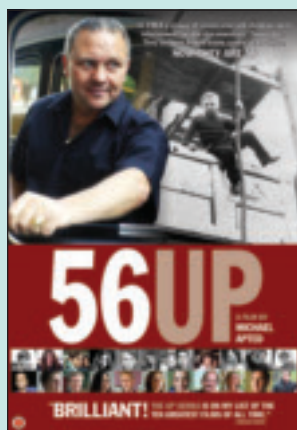
ORCHESTRA OF EXILES

85 minutes, color, \$195 w/PPR

This is Oscar-nominated Josh Aronson's meticulously crafted tale of the man who saved Europe's best Jewish musicians from the Nazis during WWII. As Hitler began firing Jewish musicians across Europe, he unwittingly created a unique opportunity – never before had so many top orchestra players been simultaneously jobless. Overcoming extraordinary obstacles, violinist Bronislaw Huberman moved these virtuosos to Palestine and formed a symphony that would become the great Israel Philharmonic.

"The seeds of culture that Huberman planted... we are reaping their rewards today."

-Zubin Mehta, Music Director,
Israel Philharmonic Orchestra



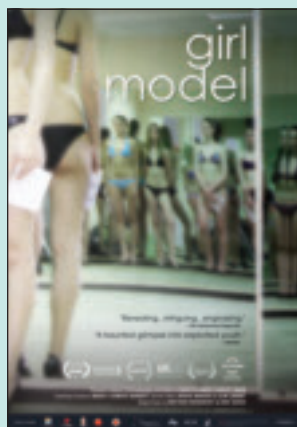
56 UP

139 minutes, color, \$195 w/PPR

"Give me the child until he is seven and I will give you the man."

The UP Series has explored this Jesuit maxim for over half a century. The original concept was to interview children from diverse backgrounds from all over England about their lives and their future dreams. Every seven years, renowned director Michael Apted has returned to talk to them, examining their progress. Now they are 56.

An extraordinary look at the unfolding of lives, *The UP Series* is, according to Roger Ebert, "an inspired, almost noble use of the film medium. Apted penetrates to the central mystery of life."



GIRL MODEL

77 minutes, color, \$250 w/PPR

A revealing glimpse into the world of modeling, *Girl Model* follows Ashley, a scout who searches Siberia for fresh faces to send to Japan, and one of her discoveries, Nadya, a 13 year-old plucked from her home and dropped into Tokyo. Nadya dreams of rescuing her family from poverty, but those aspirations contrast with Ashley's jaded outlook about the industry's corrosive influence.

"A haunted glimpse into exploited youth."

-Variety

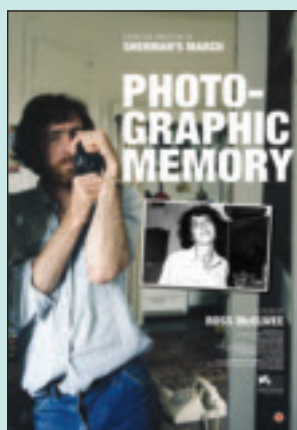
"The film illuminates and personalizes some details to which even fashion insiders may not be privy." -The New York Times



THE ISLAND PRESIDENT

30, 52 & 101 minutes, color, 2-Disc Educational Version: \$295 w/PPR; \$59.95 w/o PPR

After bringing democracy to the Maldives following thirty years of despotic rule, President Mohamed Nasheed is now faced with an even bigger challenge: as one of the most low-lying countries in the world, a rise of three feet in sea level would submerge the Maldives enough to make them uninhabitable. Despite the modest size of his country, Nasheed has become one of the leading international voices for urgent action on climate change.



PHOTOGRAPHIC MEMORY

87 minutes, color, \$295 w/PPR

Filmmaker Ross McElwee (*Sherman's March*, *Bright Leaves*) finds himself in frequent conflict with his son, a young adult who seems addicted to and distracted by the virtual worlds of the internet. To understand his fractured love for his son, McElwee travels back to St. Quay-Portrieux in Brittany for the first time in decades to retrace his own journey into adulthood. A meditation on the passing of time, the praxis of photography and film, and the digital versus analog divide.

"A sad, funny, homespun, often quite moving meditation on the passing of time and the evanescence of recorded memories."

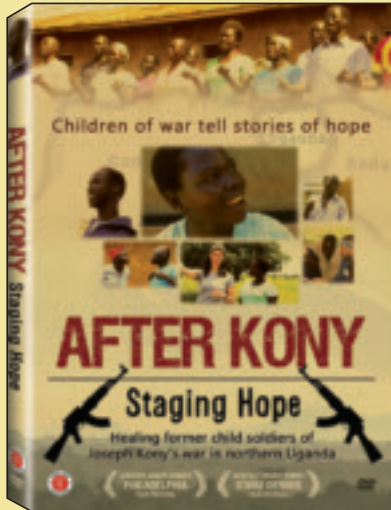
-Screen Daily

"The Island President expertly weaves Nasheed's extraordinary personal story together with the Maldives' breathtaking natural beauty and a Capra-esque tale of dogged idealism and political courage." -Ann Hornaday, The Washington Post

Educational version includes a second disc with the following bonus material:

- The Island President: 52 minute version
- The Island President: 30 minute version
- Clip: "Maldives Democracy Movement"
- Clip: "President Nasheed at The United Nations"
- Clip: "Climate Politics Strategy Meeting"
- Clip: "Underwater Cabinet Meeting"
- Clip: "Bilateral Meeting in India"
- Clip: "Behind the Scenes at The Copenhagen Climate Conference"
- Study Guide

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**AFTER KONY:
STAGING HOPE**
99 minutes, color, SRP: \$24.95
FRF 915311D
STREET DATE: DECEMBER 11



"The power of theater to connect human beings from different worlds is vividly revealed."
-Women In Film

After Kony follows a team of actors, playwrights, and activists who use theater to help Ugandan teens share their story of resilience through a childhood filled with terror caused by Joseph Kony and the Lord's Resistance Army.

Many of the teens were former child soldiers or sex slaves that escaped from their Lord's Resistance Army abductors. By dramatizing their stories, the teens are able to explore their traumatic past, as well as share their voices with the community and the world. The result is an epic film that reveals the vulnerable moments and powerful bonds that connect all of us as humans, no matter where we live or what we have gone through.



**JOHN TURTURRO in
REHEARSAL FOR A
SICILIAN TRAGEDY**
76 minutes, color, SRP: \$24.95,
FRF 914857D
STREET DATE: DECEMBER 11

"A rare and enchanting insider's glimpse of Sicily."
-About.com
"Fills the eye and stirs the heart." -Newcity (Chicago)
"A beautiful documentary."
-La Repubblica (Italy)

John Turturro takes audiences on a haunting, intimate journey to his maternal homeland of Sicily. There, while exploring the island's vanishing traditions, he is taken under the wing of one of the puppet theater's few remaining practitioners, Mimmo Cuticchio, who instructs him in the distinctively Sicilian art of puppetry.

Filmed during preparations for the Sicilian Day of the Dead, this evocative, magical-realist documentary was directed by Roman Paska, himself a world-renowned puppeteer. Both an homage to the art of storytelling and a portrait of a Sicily little known to the outside world, Paska's film brings viewers to an otherworldly place, lost in time.



**YERT - YOUR
ENVIRONMENTAL
ROAD TRIP**

113 minutes, color, SRP: \$24.95, FRF 915328D
STREET DATE: DECEMBER 11

Called to action by a planet in peril, three friends hit the road, traveling with hope, humor - and all of their garbage - to find out what Americans can do to save the planet.

"The road trip for our century - a roaring tour of some of the best solutions for a warming planet, spiked with funky humor and charming humility." -YES! Magazine



THE ISLAND PRESIDENT
101 minutes, color, SRP: \$27.95, FRF 915298D
STREET DATE: NOVEMBER 13

This riveting, uplifting film is about one man's mission to save his nation from being submerged by a rising sea.

The Maldives is a nation of 1200 islands off the southern coast of India. Its president, Mohamed Nasheed, ushered in democracy after decades of despotic rule. Now he faces an even greater challenge: a rise of three feet in sea level will submerge the islands and make them uninhabitable. This acclaimed film captures Nasheed's battle to stop global warming - and save his country.

"Wonderfully vivid and visually dazzling!"
-Washington Post



**CULINARY
MASTERPIECES**

280 minutes, color, SRP: \$59.95, FRF 915304D
STREET DATE: NOVEMBER 13

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by Sally Rowe

Le Cirque: A Table in Heaven

by Andrew Rossi

Guy Martin: Portrait of a Grand Chef
by Lionel Boisseau



**THE RAW AND
THE COOKED**

83 minutes, color, SRP: \$24.95, FRF 915281D
STREET DATE: NOVEMBER 13

Taiwan is known around the world as having one of the most diverse cuisines in Asia. THE RAW AND THE COOKED is a sumptuous exploration of the island's rich culinary traditions, and their relationship to the Taiwan's unique mix of cultures.

"Scrumptious! A cornucopia of regional cuisines, leaving the audience hungry for more." -Variety

"A dreamlike, seductive journey through an endangered culture." -Radio One (Germany)

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Video Newsbriefs

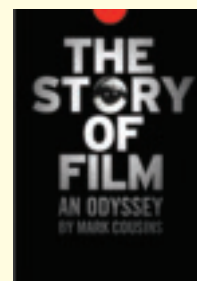
"Brazil" Blu-ray and "Qatsi Trilogy" Top December Criterion Collection Slate

Criterion's December slate kicks off December 4 with the Blu-ray edition of Terry Gilliam's beloved 1985 sci-fi epic *Brazil* (Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$49.95), a dystopic masterpiece starring Jonathan Pryce as a daydreaming Everyman who finds himself caught in the soul-crushing gears of a nightmarish bureaucracy. Also slated for December 4 is René Clément's French classic *Purple Noon* (DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95), a 1960 adaptation of novelist Patricia Highsmith's novel *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, starring Alain Delon as the gorgeous but depraved titular identity thief. Coming on December 11 is the visually and musically dazzling *Qatsi Trilogy* (DVD or Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$79.95 each), available in a major collector's "special edition." Directed by Godfrey Reggio and scored by Philip Glass, these nonfiction non-narrative films—1982's *Koyaanisqatsi*, 1988's *Powaqqatsi*, and 2002's *Naqoyqatsi*—serve up overwhelming sensory experiences that take on the warp speed of modern life, examining the often negative effects of our fascination with technology. Also slated for December 11 is filmmaker Christopher Nolan's twisty 1999 neo-noir debut, *Following* (DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95), a low-budget, black-and-white, 16 mm-shot tale of an unemployed young writer who trails strangers through London, hoping for inspiration.

"The Story of Film" Doc on Cinema History Available November 20 from Music Box Films

On November 20, Music Box Films will release Mark Cousins' 15-part documentary tribute *The Story of Film: An Odyssey* (DVD: 5 discs, \$69.95), which serves up a comprehensive history of cinema, beginning with the birth of motion pictures in the silent era up through the digital age. Featuring interviews with filmmakers and actors such as Gun Van Sant, Lars von Trier, Kyoko Kagawa, Wim Wenders, Claire Denis, Robert Towne, Jane Campion, Bernardo Bertolucci, Stanley Donen, and Abbas Kiarostami, this epic documentary series—filmed on four continents over six years—tells the story of innovation in the movies: from Thomas Edison's New Jersey laboratory to Hitchcock's London, from post-war Rome to the thriving industry of modern day Mumbai, all backed by glorious clips from some of the greatest

movies ever made. Premiering at the 2011 Toronto International Film Festival, the series went on to screen at the Telluride Film Festival, and the Berlin International Film Festival.



"Tarantino XX" Blu-ray Collection Bowing November 20 from Lionsgate and Miramax

Celebrating Quentin Tarantino's filmmaking career to date, Lionsgate and Miramax will release *Tarantino XX: 8-Film Collection* (Blu-ray: 10 discs, \$119.99) on November 20. Compiling eight films chosen by Tarantino from the last 20 years, the compilation includes *Reservoir Dogs*, *True Romance*, *Pulp Fiction*, *Jackie Brown*, *Kill Bill: Vol. 1*, *Kill Bill: Vol. 2*, *Death Proof* and *Inglourious Basterds*, with recurring appearances by celebrated actors including Uma Thurman, Samuel L. Jackson, Tim Roth, and Steve Buscemi, as well as performances by Brad Pitt, Pam Grier, and Robert Forster. Presented in high-definition, extras include five hours of all-new bonus features, highlighted by a critics' retrospective on Tarantino's groundbreaking catalog of films, and the documentary "20 Years of Filmmaking."

"Love and Valor" Civil War Letters Doc Now Available from PBS

Newly available from PBS Distribution, *Love and Valor* (DVD: \$24.99) is based on the acclaimed 2000 book, *Love and Valor: Intimate Civil War Letters Between Captain Jacob and Emeline Ritner*. Telling a moving story of a soldier and his wife during the Civil War, the documentary focuses on Jacob Ritner, a Union captain from Iowa who was a teacher, farmer, and abolitionist before the war. After he was called to duty, his wife Emeline was left behind to raise four small children and manage the family farm. Narrated by Tony award-winning actor Brian Dennehy, *Love and Valor* explores the couple's devotion to one another throughout their separation, chronicling their loneliness, anguish at the death of loved ones, and changing views on the South and slavery. Author and filmmaker Charles Larimer (Jacob and Emeline's great-great-grandson) also tells the compelling story of how he found the letters.

Black Studies in Video



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ABOUT THE COLLECTION

Black Studies in Video weaves together seminal documentaries, powerful interviews, and previously unavailable archival footage surveying the black experience. The collection will grow to five hundred hours of film covering African American history, politics, art and culture, family structure, gender relationships, and social and economic issues.

Featured artists, writers, musicians, playwrights, and performers include:

- | | | | |
|-------------------|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
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| • Langston Hughes | • Zora Neale Hurston | • August Wilson | • Amiri Baraka |
| • Huey P. Newton | • Richard Wright | • Bobby Seale | • Robert F. Williams |

Other key content includes:

- Films from California Newsreel, the US's oldest nonprofit social issue documentary film center.
- Exclusive access to the *SNCC Legacy Video Collection*, a series of more than fifty hours of formal addresses, panel discussions from the fiftieth anniversary conference.
- Films from notable filmmaker Marlon Riggs: *Color Adjustment*, *Black Is...Black Ain't*, and *Ethnic Notions*
- Materials from the Hatch-Billops Collection, a critically acclaimed archive of primary and secondary resource materials focused on black American art, drama, and literature.

WHY STREAMING?

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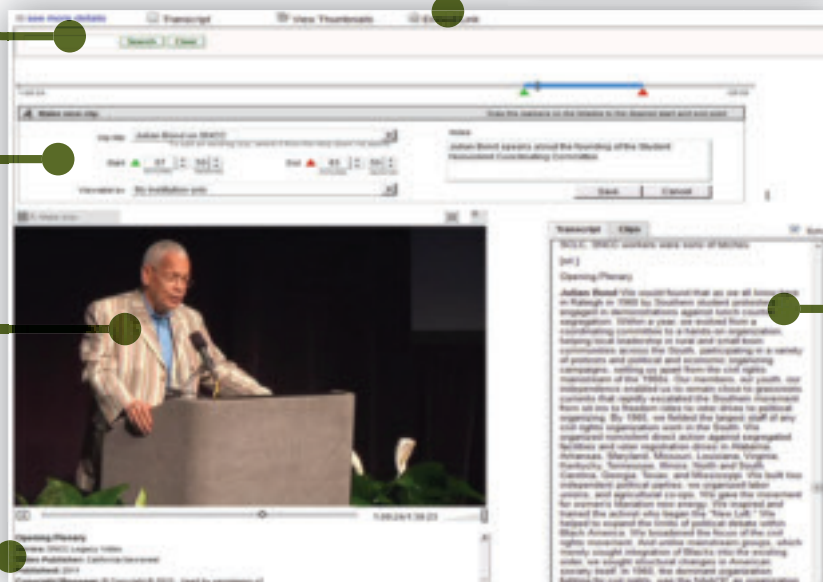
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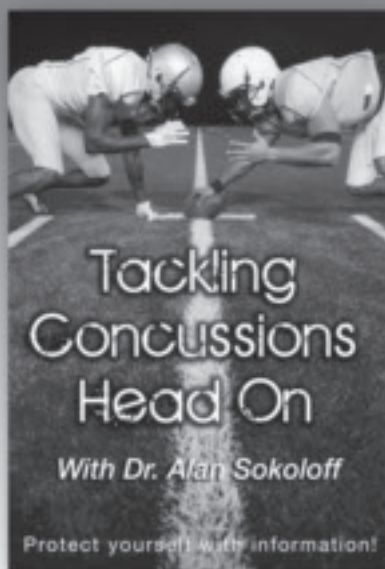


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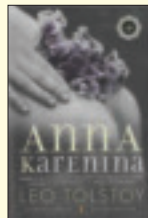
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The following films based on books are slated to open during November and December. Movie release dates are subject to change.

Coming in November

Anna Karenina (Nov. 16, in limited release) is an adaptation of Leo Tolstoy's classic 1877 novel of adultery among the Russian nobility. Directed by Joe Wright, the film stars Keira Knightley, Aaron Taylor-Johnson, Jude Law, and Olivia Williams.



Lincoln (Nov. 16) is based on Pulitzer Prize-winning biographer Doris Kearns Goodwin's 2005 book *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*. Directed by Steven Spielberg, the historical drama stars Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Tommy Lee Jones, Sally Field, Jackie Earle Haley, and Daniel Day-Lewis as the 16th President.



The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn, Part 2 (Nov. 16) is the final movie in the adaptation of Stephenie Meyer's 2008 last novel in the popular YA vampire series. Directed by Bill Condon, the film stars Robert Pattinson, Kristen Stewart, and Taylor Lautner.

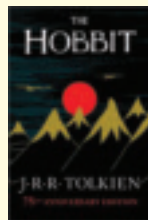


Killing Them Softly (Nov. 30) is based on George V. Higgins' 1974 crime novel *Cogan's Trade*. Directed by Andrew Dominik, the film stars Brad Pitt, Ray Liotta, James Gandolfini, and Ben Mendelsohn.



Coming in December

The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey (Dec. 14) marks the first entry in filmmaker Peter Jackson's projected trilogy adapted from J.R.R. Tolkien's 1937 fantasy novel. Set in the realm of Middle-earth, the film stars Martin



Freeman, Richard Armitage, and Benedict Cumberbatch, with Elijah Wood and others reprising their *Lord of the Rings* roles.

Jack Reacher (Dec. 21) is adapted from Lee Child's 2005 novel *One Shot*, the ninth book in the series featuring the titular former military officer and drifter. Directed by Christopher McQuarrie, the crime drama stars Robert Duvall, Rosamund Pike, Werner Herzog, and Tom Cruise as Reacher.



Les Misérables (Dec. 25) is based on Victor Hugo's revered 1862 French novel and the 1985 musical composed by Claude-Michel Schönberg. Directed by Tom Hooper, the film stars Anne Hathaway, Sacha Baron Cohen, and Hugh Jackman as Jean Valjean.



Thérèse Raquin (Dec. 28) is based on Émile Zola's classic 1867 novel and Neal Bell's 1998 play adaptation. Directed by Charlie Stratton, the romantic murder drama stars Elizabeth Olsen, Tom Felton, Jessica Lange, and Shirley Henderson.



Looking Ahead

Slated for January is **Parker**, adapted from Richard Stark's (aka Donald E. Westlake) 2000 crime novel *Flashfire*. Directed by Taylor Hackford, the thriller stars Jason Statham, Jennifer Lopez, Michael Chiklis, Nick Nolte, and Patti LuPone.



Coming in February is **Safe Haven**, adapted from the 2010 novel by Nicholas Sparks. Directed by Lasse Hallström, the romantic thriller stars Julianne Hough, Josh Duhamel, Cobie Smulders, and David Lyons.



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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

November 4—November 10

Halo 4 (Microsoft, X360: \$59.99, Rated: M). The popular first-person shooter franchise that re-defined video games kicks off a second trilogy titled "The Reclaimer Saga," as returning character Master Chief—shipwrecked on a mysterious world—faces new enemies and deadly technology.



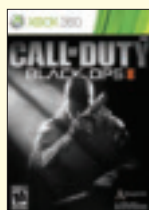
LittleBigPlanet Karting (Sony, PS3: \$59.99, Rated: E). Blending the franchise's creative platforming features with fast-paced karting, this racing game finds Sackboy embarking on an adventure to save the Craftworld universe.

Midway Arcade Origins (Warner, PS3/X360: \$29.99, Rated: T). This compilation of classic Midway arcade titles remastered in HD includes *Rampage*, *Joust*, *Spy Hunter*, *Defender*, *Marble Madness*, and more.

NASCAR the Game: Inside Line (Activision, PS3/Wii/X360: \$49.99-\$59.99, Rated: E). Players will experience heart-pounding, adrenaline-filled, world-famous NASCAR racing, driving officially licensed cars while speeding around authentic tracks.

November 11—November 17

Call of Duty: Black Ops II (Activision, PS3/X360: \$59.99, Rated: M). Featuring returning *Black Ops* characters Sgt. Frank Woods and Agent Alex Mason, this sequel spin-off from the flagship first-person shooter franchise propels players into the near-future of 21st century warfare, where they employ advanced weaponry.



LEGO: The Lord of the Rings (Warner, PS3/Wii/X360: \$39.99-\$49.99, Rated: E10+). This lighthearted third-person adventure game based on the feature film franchise puts players in the roles of LEGO versions of Frodo Baggins and members of

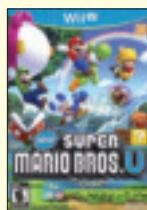
his unlikely fellowship as they set out on a perilous journey to destroy the One Ring and save Middle-earth.

November 18—November 24

Epic Mickey 2: The Power of Two (Disney, PS3/Wii/WiiU/X360: \$49.99-\$59.99, Rated: E). In this third-person action-adventure platforming sequel, players once again step into the shoes of magic paintbrush-wielding Mickey Mouse, who is joined by Oswald the Lucky Rabbit for another fun-and-music-filled journey through Wasteland.

Hitman: Absolution (Square Enix, PS3/X360: \$59.99, Rated: M). In the latest entry from this third-person stealth-shooter franchise, Agent 47 finds himself caught in the center of a dark conspiracy. Players don the suit (and trademark red tie) of this legendary assassin, becoming a deadly marksman with the abilities to blend in, kill, and fashion weapons from almost anything.

New Super Mario Bros. U (Nintendo, WiiU: \$59.99, Rated: E). A launch title for the new Wii U console, this all-new side-scrolling 2D adventure starring Nintendo's famous plumber Mario once again finds our hero on a quest to reach the castle in order to save Princess Peach.



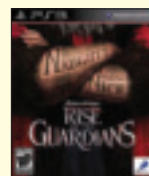
Nintendo Land (Nintendo, WiiU: \$59.99, Rated: E10+). Highlighting the abilities of the Wii U's new GamePad controller, this game features third-person adventures in Nintendo Land—a giant virtual theme park filled with attractions based on popular Nintendo game worlds.

PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale (Sony, PS3: \$59.99, Rated: T). Players battle it out with favorite PlayStation characters in this free-for-all fighting adventure featuring Kratos, Sly Cooper, Sweet Tooth, PaRappa the Rapper, and others.

Rabbids Land (Ubisoft, WiiU: \$49.99, Rated: E10+). In this mini-game collection for the new Wii U, the "Rabbids" take over an amusement park, wreaking havoc on over 20 attractions, including a princess castle, pirate boat, haunted house, tunnel of love, roller coaster, and more.



Rise of the Guardians (D3, PS3/Wii/WiiU/X360: \$29.99-\$39.99, Rated: E10+). In this third-person action-adventure game, players take on the role of one of five classic childhood figures—North (aka Santa Claus), Tooth (aka the Tooth Fairy), Bunnymund (aka the Easter Bunny), Sandman, and Jack Frost—to fight the evil spirit "Pitch" and his infectious nightmares.



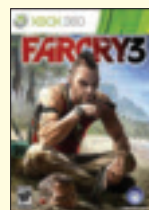
Scribblenauts Unlimited (Warner, WiiU: \$59.99, Rated: E10+). In the fourth title in the *Scribblenauts* series, players return as Maxwell in a side-scrolling 2D adventure, solving various puzzles along the way by using words to create any object, all in the hunt to collect Starites.

Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed (Sega, PS3/WiiU/X360: \$39.99, Rated: E10+). Sonic and the All-Stars cast line up on the starting grid once again to battle for supremacy in this racing game in which players compete across land, water, and air in transforming vehicles that change from cars to boats to planes mid-race.

Zombi U (Ubisoft, WiiU: \$59.99, Rated: M). In this first-person survival horror game a great plague has enveloped the city of London in a fog of death, ravaging humanity with infection as the diseased prowl through the streets waiting to prey on the player's living flesh at every turn.

December 2—December 8

Far Cry 3 (Ubisoft, PS3/X360: \$59.99, Rated: M). In this latest entry in the open world first-person shooter series, players find themselves struggling to survive, stranded on an island caught in a bloody conflict between psychotic warlords and indigenous rebels.



The Walking Dead (Telltale, PS3/X360: \$29.99, Rated: M). In this episodic point-and-click game—based on the hit comic book series—players control Lee Everett, as he experiences the true horror of being a survivor of the undead apocalypse.

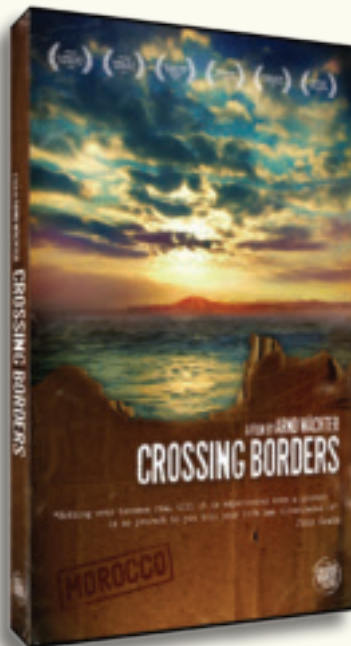
TV on DVD/Blu-ray

Available Now

Coma (Sony, DVD: \$38.99). A med student (Lauren Ambrose) wonders about

INSIGHTFUL TITLES FROM JANSON MEDIA

“★★★★ ...overall this is still a thought-provoking documentary on a timely subject.”
Recommended. - Video Librarian



At a time of world tensions four American and four Moroccan students travel and live together. Sharing experiences — encountering the “Other” — discovering themselves.

CROSSING BORDERS is a feature documentary that follows four Moroccan and four American university students as they travel together through Morocco and, in the process of discovering “The Other,” discover themselves.

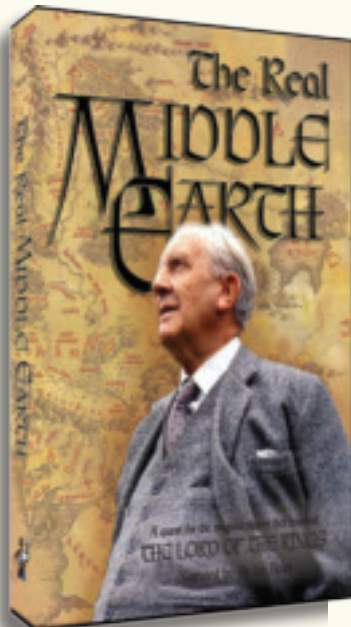
LENGTH: 72 Minutes • MSRP PRICE: \$24.95
CATALOG# 20485 • UPC# 6-4603204859-9

AVAILABLE ON:
AMAZON PRIME

“The film is designed to empower youth by deepening intercultural empathy and initiating student dialogues.” - Arnd Wächter, Director Crossing Borders

“This is a technically beautiful work. This very interesting, well-written, information-rich documentary would be a useful addition to a course on the works of Tolkien, or for a program during a meeting of the Tolkien Society or a fan group.” Recommended.

— Educational Media Reviews Online



AVAILABLE ON
iTUNES & AMAZON PRIME

This fascinating documentary takes us in Tolkien’s footsteps and investigates the landscapes and buildings, the places and names that helped shape Middle Earth.

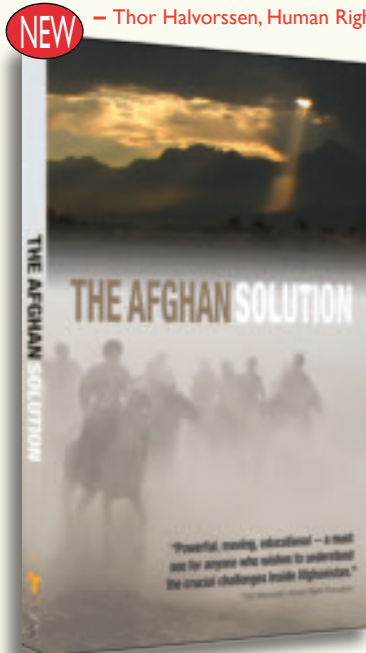
Sir Ian Holm (Bilbo Baggins in *The Fellowship of the Ring*) narrates this fascinating exploration into an imaginary world that seems so real we pore over its maps and contemplate its journeys and its quests. Is this because the foundations of Tolkien’s imagined world were inspired by very real places? Was there a real shire in the English countryside that inspired the Shire of Middle Earth? What influences shaped the darker and more troubled lands beyond its borders?

LENGTH: 58 Minutes • MSRP: \$24.95
CATALOG# 20336 • UPC# 6-4603203369-4

“The visuals on this DVD are stunning, the concepts lend great insight into the making of this classic world, and extra features include a profile of the official mapmaker of “Lord of the Rings” the team behind the epic film’s special effects, and extended interviews with Tolkien scholars.” - California Bookwatch

“Powerful, moving, educational - a must see for anyone who wishes to understand the crucial challenges inside Afghanistan.”

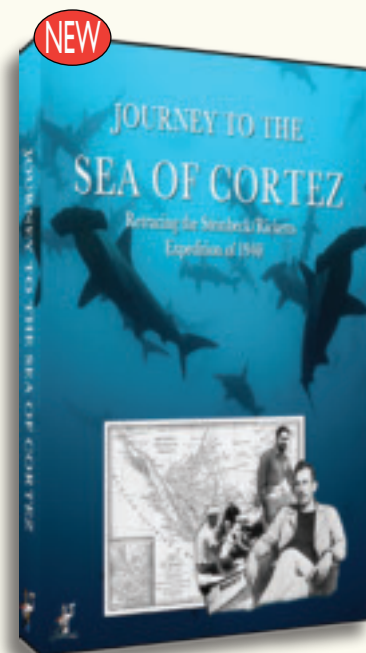
— Thor Halvorssen, Human Rights Foundation



The first film of its kind, **THE AFGHAN SOLUTION**, is the story of a people left behind by their newly minted government. Examining the history behind the current conflict in Afghanistan, it exposes the results of broken commitments and ever changing military strategies. It is a powerful and informative warning about the dangers of imposing a centralized authority on a complex and multi-ethnic nation. This film is a wake-up call: Afghanistan can either move toward a true democracy or once again fall into the clutches of the cruelest tyranny in its history — the Taliban and al Qaeda.

Told from the streets of Kabul, the mountains of the northern tribal regions, and halls of Congress, **THE AFGHAN SOLUTION** is the only film to investigate the conflict by talking to the people who have lived it. It is a story told by Afghan politicians, citizens, warlords, and tribal leaders, as well as American Special Forces, NATO’s ISAF brass, UN Mediators, and NGO personnel. This candid account of a fragile nation building experiment is essential viewing for everyone - from students and scholars to policy makers, veterans, and American voters.

LENGTH: 60 Minutes • MSRP: \$24.95
CATALOG# 20528 • UPC# 6-4603205289-3



In March 1940, the author John Steinbeck and his friend, marine biologist Ed Ricketts, sailed down the coast of California and Mexico to the Sea of Cortez. Their stated purpose was to document the creatures that inhabit shallow waters and tide pools on the margins of the Sea of Cortez. But it became much more.

In these mysterious, phosphorescent waters, they sought an understanding of mankind’s relationship to the natural world, and a wellspring of hope for a world headed toward war. Can the story of their journey inspire new efforts to preserve the Sea of Cortez?

LENGTH: 60 Minutes • MSRP: \$24.95
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strange goings on at her hospital in this 2012 A&E-aired miniseries—based on a Michael Crichton novel—that also features Geena Davis, Ellen Burstyn, James Woods, and Richard Dreyfuss.

Copper: Season One (BBC, DVD: 3 discs, \$49.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$59.98). Debuting in 2012, BBC America's 1860-set period drama follows NYC Irish-American detective Kevin Corcoran (Tom Weston-Jones) as he patrols the notorious Five Points.



Kingdom: Season One (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$34.99). Stephen Fry stars as kindly country solicitor Peter Kingdom in this six-episode compilation from the ITV dramedy series' 2007 first season.

Magic City: The Complete First Season (Starz, DVD: 3 discs, \$44.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$54.99). The mob life of Miami Beach circa 1959 is the setting for this 2012 debut season of the Emmy-nominated Starz crime-drama series starring Jeffrey Dean Morgan, Kelly Lynch, and Danny Huston.

Meet the Browns: Season 7 (Lionsgate, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.98). Featuring episodes 121-140, this seventh season of the sitcom created by Tyler Perry stars David Mann, Tamela J. Mann, and Lamman Rucker.



My Favorite Martian: The Complete Season Three (MPI, DVD: 5 discs, \$39.98). Starring Ray Walston, Bill Bixby, and Pamela Britton, this 1965-66 third and final season of the sci-fi sitcom follows the escapades of a reporter befriendng a Martian who crash-landed on Earth.

Upstairs Downstairs: Season Two (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$34.98). Fans of the quintessential *Masterpiece Theatre* series that ran for five lavish seasons during the 1970s will welcome this 2012 second season of the reboot, starring Keeley Hawes, Neil Jackson, Alex Kingston, and Claire Foy.

November 6

Aim High: The Complete First Season (Warner, DVD: \$14.99). Starring Jackson Rathbone as a high school student turned secret agent, this 2011 first season of the web-aired series also features Aimee Teegarden and Greg Germann.

Call the Midwife: Season One (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$34.98, Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$39.98). Based on the bestselling trilogy of memoirs by Jennifer Worth, this 2012 first season focusing on the duties of midwives in 1950s East London stars Jessica Raine, Vanessa Redgrave, and Jenny Agutter.

H2O: Just Add Water—The Complete Series (New Video, DVD: 12 discs, \$99.95). Three average Gold Coast teens become mermaids with special powers in this 2006-10 78-episode set from the live-action Australian family fantasy series.

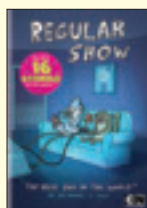
Law & Order: The Eleventh Year—2000-2001 Season (Universal, DVD: 5 discs, \$36.99). This 2000-01 11th season of Dick Wolf's longest-running crime series stars Jerry Orbach, Jesse L. Martin, Angie Harmon, and Dianne Wiest.



The Life and Times of Grizzly Adams: Season One (Shout! Factory, DVD: 4 discs, \$29.99). Dan Haggerty stars as the titular wrongly-accused mountain man who becomes friends with a bear named Ben in this 1977 first season of the Western adventure series that also features Denver Pyle.

Red vs. Blue: Season 10 (New Video, DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$24.95). Inspired by the popular *Halo* video game franchise, this set includes episodes from the 2012 10th season of the sci-fi web-aired parody series. Also newly available is **RVBX: Ten Years of Red vs. Blue** (DVD: 14 discs, \$139.95; Blu-ray: 14 discs, \$179.95).

Regular Show: The Best DVD in the World (Warner, DVD: \$19.95). Aired on the Cartoon Network, this set features 16 episodes from the 2011-12 second and third seasons of the Emmy-nominated series following a blue jay and a raccoon who work as groundskeepers.



Vera, Set 2 (Acorn, DVD: 4 discs, \$59.99). Disheveled but determined Detective Chief Inspector Vera Stanhope (Brenda Blethyn) is back in this second set of dramas based on the mysteries by Ann Cleeves that includes the 2012 episodes "The Ghost Position," "Silent Voices," "A Certain Samaritan," and "Sandancers."

Wolf Lake: The Complete Series (eOne, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.99). A police detective

searches for his missing girlfriend in her werewolf-filled Northwest small town in this 2001-02 short-lived horror series starring Lou Diamond Phillips, Tim Matheson, Paul Wesley, Mary Elizabeth Winstead, and Mia Kirshner.



November 13

Doctor Who: Series Seven, Part One (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$24.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$29.98). Matt Smith stars as the time-traveling Doctor in this first set of episodes from the 2012 seventh season of the latest incarnation of the popular sci-fi series. Also newly available is the classic **Doctor Who: The Claws of Axos—Special Edition** (DVD: 2 discs, \$34.98), starring Jon Pertwee.

History Detectives: Season 10 (PBS, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.99). Historians, appraisers, and other experts travel across the country to investigate local folklore and legends in this 2012 10th season of the PBS-aired series.



Storage Wars Texas: Season One (A&E, DVD: 2 discs, \$19.95). Compiling the 2011-12 first season, this A&E reality series takes the storage unit auction business to the Lone Star State.

November 20

Ancient Aliens: Season Four (A&E, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.95; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$39.95). Intermixing facts and theories, this 2012 fourth season of the History Channel-aired documentary series includes the episodes "The Mayan Conspiracy," "The Greys," "Aliens and Bigfoot," and "The Time Travelers."

Diff'rent Strokes: The Complete Fourth Season (Shout! Factory, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.99). Featuring 26 episodes, this 1981-82 fourth season of the sitcom revolving around the Manhattan escapades of a youngster (Gary Coleman) also stars Conrad Bain, Todd Bridges, and Dana Plato.

November 27

Hot in Cleveland: Season Three (Paramount, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.98). Starring Betty White and Valerie Bertinelli, this 2011-12 third season of the Emmy-winning Midwest-set sitcom features guest

Lincoln: The-One Man Show Starring Gary Saderup

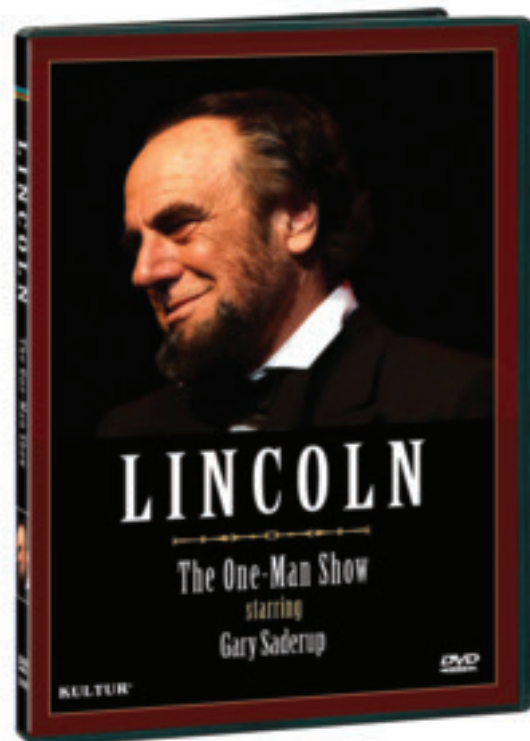
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appearances by Orson Bean, Joe Jonas, Susan Lucci, and Rhea Perlman.

Luck: The Complete First Season (HBO, DVD: 3 discs, \$59.99; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$79.98). Gambling expert Chester "Ace" Bernstein (Dustin Hoffman) emerges from prison with a plan in this 2012 first season of the horse-racing series, also featuring Dennis Farina, Jill Hennessy, and Nick Nolte.



Perry Mason: Season 8, Volume 1 (Paramount, DVD: 4 discs, \$55.98). Raymond Burr reprises his role as the iconic defense attorney in this first volume of episodes from the penultimate eighth season of the legal drama, with guest stars including June Lockhart, Werner Klemperer, and John Fiedler.

December 4

Angry Boys (HBO, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$39.98). Rated TV-MA, this 2011 Australian comedy series features Sydney-born comedian Chris Lilley in a variety of different roles.

The Donna Reed Show: Season 5 (MPI, DVD: 5 discs, \$39.99). Donna Reed, Carl Betz, and Shelley Fabares star in this 1962-63 fifth season of the Golden Globe-winning family comedy series.

Eastbound & Down: The Complete Third Season (HBO, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$39.98). Picking up a year after the sophomore season, this compilation of episodes from 2012 follows baseball closer Kenny Powers (Danny McBride) on personal and professional adventures in Myrtle Beach.

The Game: The Fifth Season (Paramount, DVD: 3 discs, \$36.99). Starring Tia Mowry-Hardrict, Pooch Hall, and Wendy Raquel Robinson, this 2012 fifth season continues to follow the highs and lows of pro football sports players and their relationships.



Hell's Kitchen 8 (First Look, DVD: 3 discs, \$19.99). Cantankerous chef Gordon Ramsay is featured in this 2010 eighth season of the culinary competition series that pits 16 contestants against each other for the prized position of head chef at L.A. Market restaurant.

The Life and Times of Tim: The Complete Third Season (HBO, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.99). The misadventures of awkward New Yorker Tim (Steve Dildarian) continue in this 2011-12 third season of the HBO-aired animated series.

Mannix: The Final Season (Paramount, DVD: 6 discs, \$49.99). Tough private detective Joe Mannix (Mike Connors) is back in this action-packed eighth and final 1974-75 season, with guest appearances by Rue McClanahan, Scatman Crothers, Dabney Coleman, Robert Loggia, and John Ritter.

Mystery Science Theater 3000 XXV (Shout! Factory, DVD: 4 discs, \$59.98). The MST3K gang picks apart sci-fi films including *Robot Holocaust*, *Operation Kid Brother*, *Kitten with a Whip*, and *Revenge of the Creature* in this most recent 25th volume from the snarky series.

The Simpsons: The Fifteenth Season (Fox, DVD: 4 discs, \$49.98; Blu-ray: 4 discs, \$59.99). Featuring 22 episodes from the 2003-04 15th season of Matt Groening's popular animated series, this compilation includes guest voices by Oscar De La Hoya, Glenn Close, J.K. Rowling, Mr. T, Thomas Pynchon, and Simon Cowell.



We Can Be Heroes (HBO, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.99). Created and written by Aussie comedian Chris Lilley, this 2005 mockumentary series spotlights the stories of five nominees (all portrayed by Lilley) up for Australian of the Year.

December 11

Futurama, Volume 7 (Fox, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$39.99). Compiling 13 episodes from the recently-resurrected animated sci-fi comedy series, this seventh volume features the voices of Billy West, Katey Sagal, John Di Maggio, and Tress MacNeille.

Girls: The Complete First Season (HBO, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray/DVD Combo: 3 discs, \$49.99). Creator and star Lena Dunham's Emmy-nominated 2012 debut series takes a comic look at the assorted humiliations and rare triumphs of a group of NYC girls in their early 20s.



Gunsmoke: The Seventh Season, Volume 1 (Paramount, DVD: 5 discs, \$36.98). Marshal Matt Dillon (James Arness) protects the citizens of Dodge City in this first volume from the 1961-62 seventh season of the long-running Western series, also starring Dennis Weaver, Amanda Blake, and Milburn Stone.

Hazel: The Complete Fourth Season (Shout! Factory, DVD: 4 discs, \$34.99). Shirley Booth stars as the titular wise-cracking housekeeper in this 1964-65 penultimate fourth season of the Golden Globe-nominated comedy series.

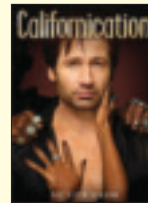


Law & Order—Criminal Intent: The Ninth Year '10 Season (Shout! Factory, DVD: 4 discs, \$44.99). Following the tumultuous exit of Captain Daniel Ross (Eric Bogosian) at the beginning of this 2010 ninth season of the crime-drama spin-off, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio and Saffron Burrows join the cast.

December 18

Army Wives: Season Six, Part Two (Buena Vista, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.99). Showcasing the stories of military families living in Fort Marshall, SC, this second set of episodes from the 2012 sixth season stars Kim Delaney, Sally Pressman, and Catherine Bell.

Californication: The Fifth Season (Paramount, DVD: 2 discs, \$43.99). David Duchovny stars as a novelist who muddles his personal life and career in this 2012 fifth season of the drama series, also featuring Natascha McElhone, Pamela Adlon, and Meagan Good.



Funny or Die Presents: The Complete Second Season (HBO, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.98). Executive produced by Will Ferrell and hosted by Steve Tom, this 2011 sophomore season of the HBO-aired sketch comedy series is based on the titular humor website.

Here's Lucy: Season Six (MPI, DVD: 4 discs, \$29.98). Comedy icon Lucille Ball stars in this 1973-74 sixth and final season of the Golden Globe-nominated sitcom, featuring guest appearances by Danny Thomas, O.J. Simpson, and Jackie Coogan.

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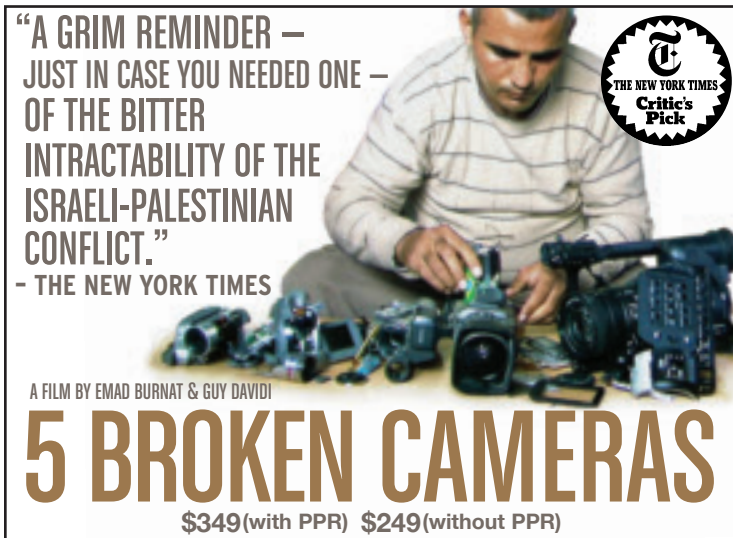


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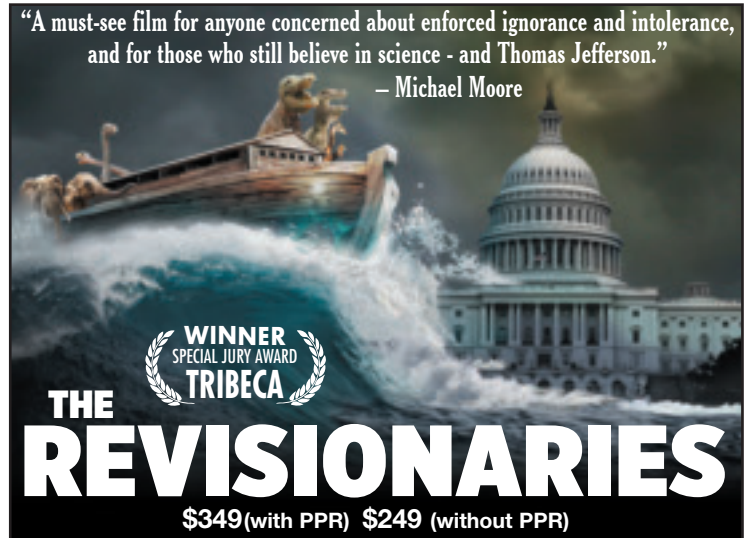
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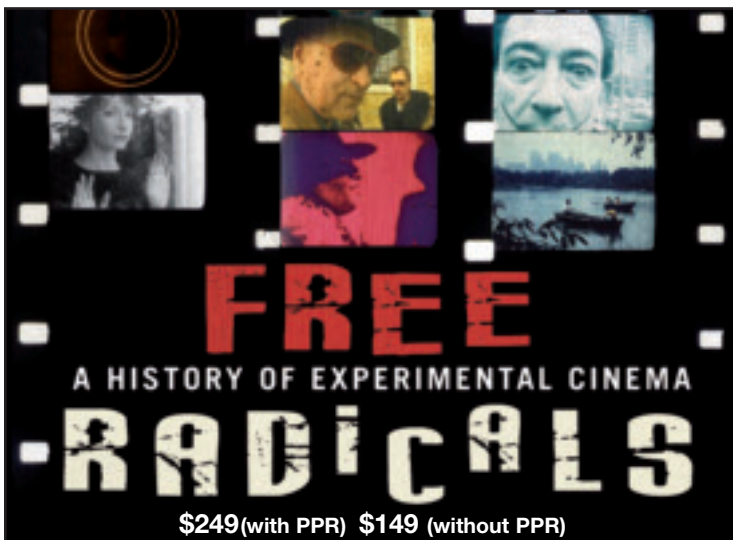
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House of Lies: The First Season (Showtime, DVD: 2 discs, \$45.98). Starring Don Cheadle, this 2012 debut season of the corporate consulting comedy also features Kristen Bell, Glynn Turman, and Griffin Dunne.



Quincy, M.E.: Season 4 (Shout! Factory, DVD: 6 discs, \$39.98). This 1978-79 fourth season of the Emmy-nominated series stars Jack Klugman as the titular coroner who takes an active role in police investigations.

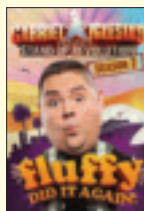
The Sarah Silverman Program: Season 3 (Shout! Factory, DVD: 2 discs, \$19.98). Previously available only as part of a complete box set, this 2010 third season of the Comedy Central series stars Sarah Silverman, Laura Silverman, and Brian Posehn.

Shameless: The Complete Second Season (Warner, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$49.99). A remake of Paul Abbott's popular U.K. series, this HBO-aired 2012 second season continues the wild scams and schemes of the dysfunctional Gallagher

family (including William H. Macy, Emmy Rossum, and Cameron Monaghan).

December 25

Gabriel Iglesias Presents: Stand-Up Revolution—Season 2 (Paramount, DVD: 2 discs, \$19.99). "Fluffy" comedian Gabriel Iglesias hosts this Comedy Central-aired series that showcases several comics.



Looking Ahead

In January, look for the first seasons of **Dallas**, **The Goode Family**, **Smash**, and **Top Guns**, the sophomore seasons of **Buck Rogers in the 25th Century** and **Men of a Certain Age**, the third season of **Downton Abbey**, the fourth seasons of **Being Human** and **Scarecrow and Mrs. King**, the sixth set of **Trial & Retribution**, and the complete series of **Twenty Twelve**.



Repriced or New to DVD/Blu-ray

Broadway: The American Musical (PBS, Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$39.99). Narrated by Julie Andrews, Michael Kantor's 2004 PBS-aired documentary series chronicling the evolution of the Broadway musical (VL-1/05 ★★★★★) is newly available on high-definition Blu-ray, and includes more than three hours of bonus interviews and the featurette "Wicked: The Road to Broadway."

Khodorkovsky (Kino Lorber, DVD: \$29.95). German documentarian Cyril Tuschke brings the intrigue of a John Le Carré thriller to this 2010 documentary (VL-7/12 ★★½)—new to home video—about fallen Russian oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky, who became one of the new breed of mega-capitalists after the collapse of the U.S.S.R.

The Lovers' Guide: The Essential Collection (True Mind, DVD: 5 discs, \$49.98). Producer Robert Page's update to his authoritative U.K.-aired sexually explicit instructional series—produced between 1999-2005—includes "Secrets of Sensational Sex," "What Women Really Want," "Sex Play," "Sexual Positions," and "Satisfaction Guaranteed." Also available is **The Lovers' Guide: The Original Collection** (DVD: 5 discs, \$49.98), and, separately, **The Lovers' Guide: Sexual Positions** (DVD: \$14.98).



The Pinochet Case (Icarus, DVD: \$24.99). A companion to his earlier *Chile, Obsolete Memory* (VL-1/99 ★★½), Patricio Guzmán's 2001 documentary exploring the crimes and 1998 arrest of ruthless Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet features testimony from victims and relatives of those who "disappeared."

Southern India and the Dance of the Gods (Kultur, DVD: \$19.99). Part of the "Sites of the World's Cultures" series, this hour-shy 1999 documentary looks at ancient Hindu myths and mysterious temples in Kumbakonam. Also newly available at the same price is **Tikal and the Maya Gods**.

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Ben Lee is an Australian singer-songwriter whose creative growth since his early adolescence has undergone almost relentless media scrutiny. This is a playful yet deeply intimate portrait of Lee, exploring his meteoric rise to pop stardom and the issues of celebrity and spirituality that arise when launched into the spotlight.

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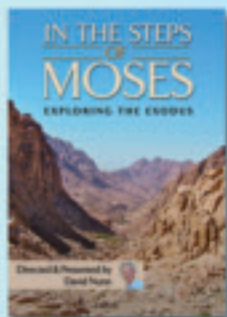
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Documentary, 48 minutes.

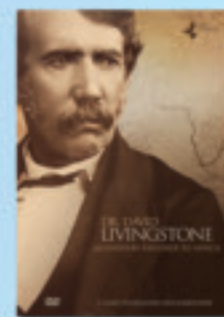
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Dr. David Livingstone: Missionary Explorer to Africa

Dr. David Livingstone went to Africa in the 1800s, when it was known as “the dark continent.” As a medical doctor he treated the sick, earning him the trust and respect of many Africans. Then he turned his attention to exploration. Facing danger and sickness, he forged routes deep into the African interior, sparking the imagination of many who would follow. Hailed as one of the greatest European explorers of all time, Livingstone’s commitment and eventual martyrdom helped bring an end to the slave trade and opened a continent for other missionaries. Documentary, 59 minutes.

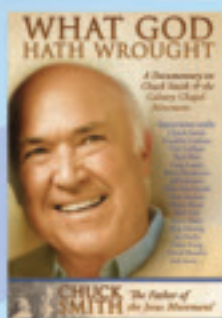
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What God Hath Wrought

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. 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



Maria Prean

The amazing story of missionary Maria Prean is told in this award-winning documentary. Maria was 60 years old when she decided to start a new life. She moved from Austria to Uganda, a country with more than two million orphans. Seeing the great need, she began caring for these children and building schools and orphanages. She started a children’s choir and toured Europe with them for three months. Despite great challenges, her strong faith and conviction helped her to change the lives of thousands of young Ugandans. Some segments in German with English subtitles. Documentary, 43 minutes.

DVD - #501480D, \$19.99, UPC 7 27985 01480 7



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

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

2 Days in New York ★★

Magnolia, 91 min., R, DVD: \$26.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98, Nov. 13

In this sequel to Julie Delpy's engaging 2007 debut romantic comedy *2 Days in Paris*, photographer Marion (writer-director Delpy) has broken up with boyfriend Jack (Adam Goldberg), and is now living in America with PBS talk show host and *Village Voice* writer Mingus (Chris Rock), along with her darling son by Jack. The almost nonexistent plot centers on a visit by Marion's father (Albert Delpy, the filmmaker's real father), sister Rose (Alexia Landeau), and Rose's boyfriend Manu (Alex Nahon), a slimy bum who happens to be an old flame of Marion's. Presumably, viewers are meant to be amused by the boisterous antics of these noisy and grating houseguests, but watching these inconsiderate visitors embarrass Marion and Mingus in public, argue among themselves (and with their hosts), make rude and thoughtless comments, and generally act like clueless oafs is not much fun. Delpy manages a few bright lines of dialogue, but for the most part the script here is a succession of badly conceived episodes that are even more poorly executed. A disappointing follow-up to the charming original, this is not a necessary purchase. (F. Swietek)



4.3.2.1 ★★1/2

Universal, 117 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$26.98

The title of this flashy thriller refers to four girlfriends, three days, two cities, and one chance. *4.3.2.1* opens with an apparent suicide before rewinding to present the same weekend from each girl's perspective. While extroverted sexpot Kerrys (Shanika Warren-Markland) is hanging out in a London eatery, a thief tries to steal her purse, so Kerrys takes a course of action that inadvertently involves her in a gang heist. That night, moody graffiti



artist Shannon (Ophelia Lovibond) receives some bad news, so she heads to a bar to drown her sorrows. Afterward, she ends up in a skirmish with hoodlums—until a black-clad woman sends them scattering and allows Shannon to change in her high-rise. Shannon thinks it's an act of kindness, but the woman is actually looking for stolen diamonds. The second city enters the picture when Cassandra (Tamsin Egerton), a virginal pianist, flies to New York to audition for music school and to share a night of passion with an online flame, but he steals her belongings (Kevin Smith and Eve play two locals who help her out). While Cassandra is away, Kerrys and her girlfriend stay in Cassandra's fancy flat, where her half-brother throws a raucous party after locking the pair in the panic room. The last friend is American-born Jo (Emma Roberts), who works in an all-night market, where the four story strands come together. Filmmakers Mike Davis and Noel Clarke's fractured narrative is a jigsaw puzzle full of coincidences, but it's often a fun ride. A strong optional purchase. (K. Fennesy)

Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter ★★★

Fox, 105 min., R, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$39.99

Before you dismiss the absurdity of the pulpy title, consider the fact that the 16th President of the United States was a strong, rail-splitting outdoorsman—surely quite capable of throwing an axe at the bloodsucking undead. According to Seth Grahame-Smith's screenplay (based on his bestselling comic novel), as a child Lincoln kept a secret journal, revealing that he and his father clashed with villainous slave owner Jack Barts (Marton Csokas), who killed Lincoln's mother. Years later, Lincoln (Benjamin Walker) learned about vampire assassination from Henry Sturges (Dominic Cooper). So by the time he's settled in Springfield, IL, Lincoln is adept at eliminating ghouls using an axe with a silver-tipped blade. Despite Sturges' warning not to become too attached to others, Lincoln woos and wins young Mary Todd (Mary Elizabeth Winstead) and is reunited with his childhood friend, former slave William Johnson (Anthony Mackie). But when Lincoln eventually slays Barts, he becomes the target of Southern vampires, led by New Orleans-based Adam (Rufus Sewell), who is politically aligned with the Confederacy during the Civil War because slavery enables vampires to legally purchase humans to satisfy their bloodlust. The slavery aspect of the plot is stupid and semi-offensive—not to mention metaphorically ineffective. Directed by Timur Bekmambetov, this relentlessly gruesome, idiotically revisionist action-horror flick is not a necessary purchase. (S. Granger)



The Amazing Spider-Man

★★★

Sony, 136 min., PG-13, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray: \$40.99, Nov. 9

This series reboot is decidedly different from Sam Raimi's previous Marvel Comics-based *Spider-Man* trilogy. While the basic story—revolving around a teenager who is bitten by a genetically modified spider and then develops incredible powers that inspire him to become a vigilante crime-fighter—remains intact, the characters here are more fleshed-out, delivering emotional truth to accompany the spectacular visual effects and awesome stunt-work. Played by Andrew Garfield, angry, rebellious Peter Parker wonders why his parents dropped him off with his aunt and uncle (Sally Field, Martin Sheen) one night when he was little, and then disappeared forever. After finding scientific papers in an old briefcase belonging to his dad (Campbell Scott), Parker diligently tracks down his father's former colleague, Dr. Curt Connors (Rhys Ifans), at Manhattan's OsCorp research center, where his savvy classmate, Gwen Stacy (Emma Stone), happens to be leading a guided tour. Invigorated by Parker's discovery of his father's formula involving cross-species limb regeneration, psychologically-pressured Connors injects himself—with monstrous results, and an eventual showdown with Parker's Spider-Man. As directed by Marc Webb, the awkward wistfulness of the Parker/Stacy relationship carries as much weight as the action, which draws on the French sport of *parkour* and reinvents how Spidey zips from building to building. Recommended. (S. Granger)



The Ballad of Genesis and Lady Jaye ★★1/2

New Yorker, 70 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.95

Filmmaker Marie Losier uses a jangly style borrowed from punk aesthetics (including Super 8 footage) to tell the story of one of the more interesting relationships in showbiz history—an emotional, artistic, and physical commitment between edgy arts-scene eccentrics. U.K.-born Genesis P-Orridge (born Neil Megson)—an outlandish pioneer in industrial music and sexually transgressive art—fronted the bands Throbbing Gristle and Psychic TV, while also enjoying the patronage of William S. Burroughs, Derek Jarman, and other alt-scenesters. Relocating to New York City, Genesis met nursing student "Lady Jaye" (aka Jacqueline Mary Breyer), an aspiring writer and uninhibited performance artist and professional dominatrix. The pair married on a Friday the 13th in 1993, with bride and groom each in role-reversal drag. Exemplifying a philosophy of "pandrogeny," the couple



underwent mutual surgical procedures in order to look more like each other (including matched breast implants). The tale is told by Genesis, mixed with archival clips (mostly nonspeaking) of Lady Jaye. Genesis, an articulate and upbeat interviewee (albeit with a startling body-altered appearance), describes a truly idyllic union, although one can't help but wish for additional narrative points-of-view to give a fuller dual bio (Genesis had two daughters when he met the love of his life, no details offered). Not for all tastes (the doc opens with a long series of rapidly-edited home movie clips), this is still a strong optional purchase. (C. Cassidy)

Batman: The Dark Knight Returns, Part 1 ★★★

Warner, 76 min., PG-13, DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$24.98

The latest DC Universe animated original movie tackles Frank Miller's landmark 1986 Batman graphic novel, which re-imagined the iconic superhero as an older retired man roused back to action in a Gotham City overrun by crime and spiraling into chaos. Peter Weller voices Batman as an angry, bitter, 55-year-old crime-fighter, with Ariel Winter as Carrie, the girl who becomes his Robin. A cartoon tale of

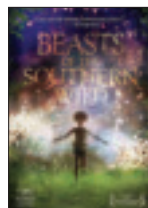


weak-willed liberals in a savage world right out of an Ayn Rand fantasy, *The Dark Knight Returns* finds Batman in the role of a self-righteous vigilante, pushing his aging body past its limits as he fights the vicious Mutants gang. While no conventionally animated film could capture the graphic edge or psychotic intensity of Miller's dystopian vision, director Jay Oliva gets a lot right in this first entry of a two-parter. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Beasts of the Southern Wild ★★★1/2

Fox, 94 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99, Dec. 4

A film festival favorite from Sundance to Cannes, writer-director Benh Zeitlin's enchanting story set in post-Hurricane Katrina Louisiana swampland revolves around an unruly, precocious 6-year-old African-American girl called Hushpuppy (Quvenzhané Wallis), who lives in a ramshackle hut connected by a long rope to the treehouse shack inhabited by her ailing, alcoholic father (Dwight Henry). (Apparently, her mother "swam away" years earlier.) Acutely aware of the concrete levee that separates dry land from the Bathtub—their tidal basin—Hushpuppy imagines a coming flood like an Arctic avalanche that releases

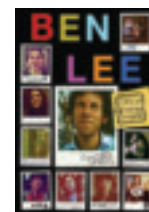


fantastic, prehistoric, boar-like creatures called aurochs. When the ferocious storm does hit, and she and her father wind up on a makeshift boat, Hushpuppy remains a relentlessly optimistic survivalist, firmly believing that balance is the natural order of the universe. Hushpuppy's poetic voiceover, combined with the film's magical realism, beautifully conveys her continuing sense of wonder about the brutal, primordial wilderness in which she lives. An evocative, contemporary allegorical folk tale that touches on subjects ranging from the innocence of childhood to the threat of global warming, this is highly recommended. (S. Granger)

Ben Lee: Catch My Disease ★★★

Strand, 86 min., not rated, DVD: \$21.99, Nov. 6

Amiel Courtin-Wilson's introspective documentary profiles Australian pop troubadour Ben Lee, beginning with his teenage tenure in the suburban band Noise Addict. Sonic Youth's Thurston Moore heard a tape, liked it, and released an album on the Ecstatic Peace label, explaining that he was drawn to their "primal punk-rock songs with a real sense of melody." After that, the Beastie Boys got on board and released Lee's



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first solo record on their Grand Royal label. By age 20, Lee had released five albums, and attracted other high-profile fans, including Winona Ryder—who introduced Lee to Claire Danes, with whom he embarked on a high-profile relationship. While living in New York, Lee also befriended Zooey Deschanel, Jason Schwartzman, and Michelle Williams. Archival interviews give the impression that Lee was getting a little full of himself—claiming that his goal was to become “the greatest songwriter of all time”—although Danes says that he was playing a role. Eventually, she and Lee would split up and his music sales would drop, at which point he did some acting and turned to Buddhism. In southern India, Lee found a guru and in Los Angeles discovered new love with Ione Skye. Aside from new interviews and award-show clips, Courtin-Wilson draws from home movies, family photographs, and conversations with Lee’s mother and grandmother, as well as Lee, who is forthcoming to a fault about fame and its various discontents (although he can’t seem to stay away from it). Recommended. (K. Fennessy)

Beverly Hills Chihuahua 3: Viva La Fiesta! ★★

Walt Disney, 89 min., G, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99

The third film in this now direct-to-video live-action franchise is the runt of the litter, albeit more kid-friendly. Bland humans Rachel (Erin Cahill) and Sam (Marcus Coloma) relocate from Sam’s aunt’s palatial Beverly Hills digs into a luxury hotel where he will work as a landscaper and she as a sous chef. But this movie, like the others, quickly goes to the dogs—specifically Papi (voiced by George Lopez) and Chloe (Odette Annable), along with their five adorable pups, who make themselves at home. The bad guy this time around is a rival hotelier bent on sabotage, while the requisite heartwarming subplot concerns youngest and least confident pup Rosa (Kay Panabaker), who prepares for her traditional quinceañera birthday party (at least the film has a welcome cultural component). Filmmaker Lev L. Spiro’s movie aims low (kids love dogs and especially doggie wisecracks and slapstick) and succeeds on that simplest of levels. Beyond some tame jokes about “pee-mail,” bodily function humor is kept to a blessed minimum, and for adults who stick around, there are mildly amusing pop culture references (auditioning party bands have names like Black Labbath, Bob Marley and Me, and Lady Gaga and the Tramp). Optional, at best. (D. Liebenson)



Beyond the Black Rainbow ★★

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

Writer-director Panos Cosmatos’ would-be

cult film is set in an alternative reality version of 1983, where at the Arboria Institute—a conspicuously under-populated medical facility—the somewhat off-kilter Dr. Barry Nyle (Michael Rogers) pays excessive attention to young patient Elena (Eva Allan), who may be held against her will. Video monitors display everything that takes place within the facility, while Elena’s effort to navigate an escape leads her to bizarre surroundings. *Beyond the Black Rainbow* works hard to create an environment of jarring images and haunting sounds (there’s even a weird black-and-white flashback to 1966, when Dr. Nyle supposedly first began to lose touch with reality). But while the film earns points for its striking production design and Jeremy Schmidt’s eerie synthesizer score, this is ultimately a triumph of style over substance. Granted, the full-throttle performances of Rogers and Allan help to disguise the flimsiness of the core story for a while, but—ultimately—incredulity sets in, quickly followed by disappointment. Not a necessary purchase. (P. Hall)



Black Butterflies

★★★★1/2

New Video, 96 min., not rated, DVD: \$26.95

Poet Ingrid Jonker, often called South Africa’s Sylvia Plath, is the subject of Paula van der Oest’s biographical film *Black Butterflies*, which carries a powerful emotional punch thanks to Carice van Houten’s vivid performance as the woman whom Nelson Mandela—reading one of her incendiary works in his first presidential speech to his country’s parliament—called “both an Afrikaner and an African” because of her outspoken criticism of the brutal apartheid system. Jonker’s stance was all the more remarkable given that her father, played sternly here by Rutger Hauer, was an official whose role in censoring dangerous art only exacerbated their already turbulent relationship. While the film doesn’t minimize the wider sociopolitical background to Jonker’s life, the focus here is on her personal demons, particularly her broken marriage, determination to raise her daughter alone, frequent lapses into alcoholism, and dalliances with a succession of men, most notably novelist Jack Cope (Liam Cunningham)—a tumultuous on-again, off-again affair that provides the framework for the script. A compelling portrait of a tortured and brilliant artist, this is highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

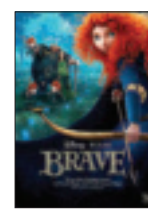


Brave ★★

Walt Disney, 95 min., PG, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99, Nov. 13

This sweet, spirited Pixar animated action

fantasy tale set in medieval Scotland introduces a spunky teenage princess named Merida. Willful Merida (voiced by Kelly Macdonald) has often found herself at odds with her prim-and-proper mother, Queen Elinor (Emma Thompson), but never more so than when she’s told she must prepare for marriage. Schooled in bow and arrow skills by her goofy, garrulous father, King Fergus (Billy Connolly), Merida rebelliously bests three bumbling suitors—scions of neighboring clans—in an archery tournament, jumps on her Clydesdale horse, and defiantly rides off into the Highlands. Following twinkling blue will-o’-the-wisp, she meets a devious, wood-carving witch (Julie Walters) and begs for a magical spell that will change her mother’s mind about traditional arranged weddings. But when the spell turns out to be an ill-fated curse, Merida is faced with the challenge of righting the mistake she made. Conceived for modern audiences, this mother/daughter story from directors Mark Andrews, Brenda Chapman, and Steve Purcell veers away from the standard European fairy tale mold of having a passive young woman wait around for a handsome prince. Instead, our Celtic heroine with cascades of curly red hair explores her own path, finding exciting adventures along the way. Recommended. (S. Granger)



Citizen Gangster ★★1/2

MPI, 105 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.98

Based on the true story of staid Canadian bus driver turned charismatic bank robber Edwin Boyd, filmmaker Nathan Morlando’s *Citizen Gangster* wants to be both an authentic period piece and a hip contemporary action thriller. The setting is the outskirts of post-war Toronto, where WWII vet, workaday bus driver, and wannabe actor Boyd (Scott Speedman) barely ekes out a living with his English wife. Frustrated with his lot, Boyd decides to rob a local bank using his wife’s makeup to create a ghostly white-face disguise. Before long his effortless robberies become more and more like a vaudeville act (accompanied by a raucous contemporary blues-rock soundtrack), but he’s finally caught and jailed, at which point a pall of grim reality begins to overtake the previously playful mood. Eventually, Boyd escapes with a posse of other bank robbers, and the ensuing bank jobs escalate into deadly criminal operations that he can no longer control. Although it’s clear that Boyd is supposed to be considered some sort of folk hero, he comes across as just another desperate fugitive on the run from the inevitable reach of the law. An optional purchase. (M. Sandlin)



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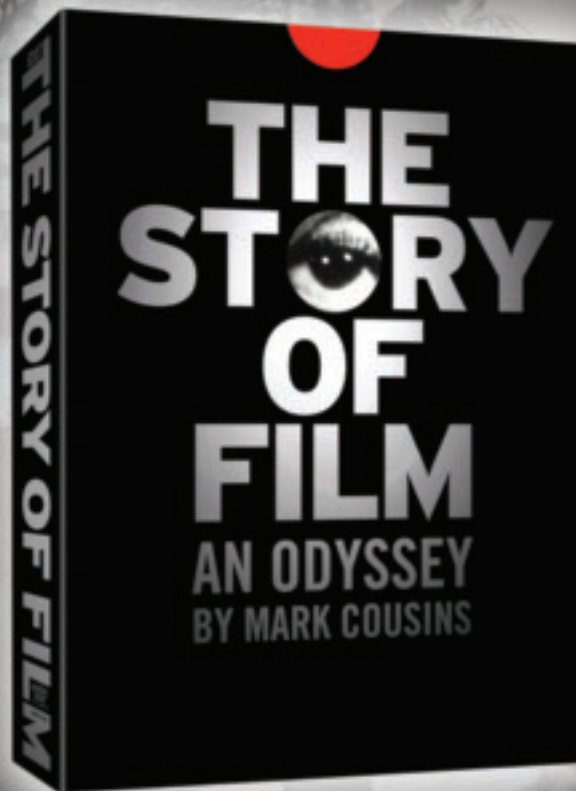
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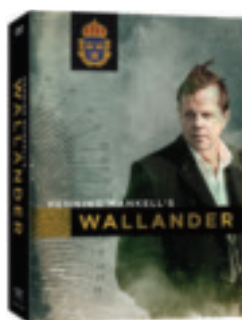
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Cleanskin ★★1/2

eOne, 107 min., not rated,
DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98



Writer-director Hadi Hajaig's film—about a British agent's pursuit of a homegrown terrorist without any criminal past or known ties to militant groups (the titular "cleanskin")—is a decent action thriller. Sean Bean's character, Ewan, is a stern, determined and, when needed, forceful hero, and Hajaig serves up some taut chases and violent confrontations, but the filmmaker also tries to get beneath the surface to examine why an ostensibly Westernized young man would turn jihadist. Towards that end, we see a series of earnest flashbacks depicting Ewan's quarry, Ash (Abhin Galey), being courted by an Islamic extremist while in college and losing his girlfriend in the process. Now, as Ash prepares for a bombing with some stolen plastic explosive that Ewan blames himself for not protecting, Ash's girlfriend comes back into his life, leading him to reconsider the path he's chosen. While trying to deepen what is a fairly conventional tale by adding an examination of the roots of terrorism is laudable, it also bogs down the pace with lots of talk and exposition. Still, this is a handsomely produced film that benefits from supporting performances by Charlotte Rampling and James Fox as intelligence bigwigs. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Comes a Bright Day

★★★

Strand, 91 min., not rated,
DVD: \$24.99, Nov. 13



An interesting character study in the form of a tense crime drama, filmmaker Simon About's *Comes a Bright Day* stars Craig Roberts as Sam, an assistant to the concierge of a luxury hotel in London. Sent on an errand to a jewelry store on behalf of a hotel guest, Sam stumbles into a disastrous heist that leaves one woman dead and ensnares him in a hostage situation. Taken captive, along with the shop owner (Timothy Spall) and the latter's comely employee (Imogen Poots), Sam struggles to survive the crisis and lessen the danger to others. Although the portrait of the main thief (Kevin McKidd) as a stuttering psychopath doesn't really add much of interest to the drama, the film presents an engaging character journey for Sam, a Sammy Glick type who seems to become more of an authentic human being the longer the holdup goes on. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

Crazy Eyes ★★1/2

Strand, 96 min., not rated, DVD: \$27.99

Co-writer/director Adam Sherman (through the voice of his stand-in, star Lukas Haas) says at the outset that his comi-tragic L.A. story

is mostly true and autobiographical, a kind of brave admission, considering that Zach (Haas)—a young divorced alcoholic with (inexplicably) lots of money—has a listless routine of bicoastal sexual conquests and pub crawls/fights with pals, and is only engaged by custodial visits with his young son. Then Zach meets Rebecca (Madeline Zima), aka "Crazy Eyes," a Bohemian bar-hopper who, pleading other boyfriends/relationships and alibis, refuses to have sex with Zach, even as she regularly sleeps naked by his side. Zach finds her fascinating (yet still grabs a one-night stand when he can) while doing everything short of date rape—they joke about it—to achieve carnal knowledge of Rebecca. Will their relationship evolve if/when they go all the way? Despite upscale environments, the tone here is not unlike the lowlife addiction-fiction of Charles Bukowski and Hubert Selby, Jr. Against all odds, bits of humanity occasionally surface in self-loathing and oft-loathsome anti-hero Zach, though they will be too few for some viewers' tastes. A strong optional purchase. (C. Cassidy)



Crooked Arrows ★★1/2

Fox, 105 min., PG-13, DVD:
\$22.98, Blu-ray: \$29.99



Uplifting sports movies are a dime a dozen, and this one follows the musty formula to a tee: wayward coach redeemed by the experience, ragtag group of kids molded into unlikely champions, hotshot player who learns the meaning of teamwork, etc. What sets *Crooked Arrows* apart is that it's about lacrosse—a sport largely neglected in cinema—and the story is tied to a revival of spirit among young Native Americans (whose culture invented lacrosse). Brandon Routh stars as Joe Logan, a member of New York's (fictional) Sunaquot tribe, who agrees to coach the tribal school's hapless team in order to secure land rights for the casino that his boss owns. Although initially just going through the motions, Logan gradually reconnects with his heritage—as well as with pretty teacher, Julie (Crystal Allen)—while encouraging his squad to excel on the field and off. *Crooked Arrows* is pure hokum, of course (and the inspirational speeches by a tribal elder and episodes involving sweat lodges and the summoning of animal spirits don't help), but its genial desire to please winds up making this more winning than the run-of-the-mill David and Goliath sports flick. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Dark Horse ★★★

Virgil, 88 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray:
\$34.99, Nov. 13

While writer-director Todd Solondz doesn't

abandon his characteristic harsh assessment of human nature in this edgy comedy, he does add a drop of sympathy (or pity) to the usual uncompromising bleakness. Abe (Jordan Gelber) is a pudgy, socially awkward thirtysomething man-child who lives with his parents—real estate manager Jackie (Christopher Walken) and doting enabler Phyllis (Mia Farrow). Abe has a job in Jackie's office, but spends most of his time shirking his duties and buying action figures online. Abe strives (ineptly) to be charming, but he's given to sudden fits of rage at what he perceives as the world's unfairness. A glimmer of hope appears in Miranda (Selma Blair), a gloomy young woman Abe meets at a wedding reception. Despite Abe's alternately pushy and needy nature, Miranda hesitantly accepts his blundering overtures. Meanwhile, Abe begins to suffer from hallucinations that are indistinguishable from reality (and the viewer shares Abe's inability to tell what is actually occurring from what is a figment of his rabid imaginings). Although it failed to attract much box office business beyond Solondz's cadre of followers, *Dark Horse* turns out to be a surprisingly moving, if characteristically odd, addition to the filmmaker's oeuvre. Recommended. (F. Swietek)



The Dark Knight Rises

★★★1/2

Warner, 165 min., PG-13,
DVD: \$28.98, Blu-ray: \$35.99,
Dec. 4

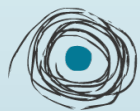


Christopher Nolan saved the best for last with this finale to his epic thrill-ogy (following *Batman Begins* and *The Dark Knight*) that re-imagines the iconic comic book hero. Opening with a spectacular sky-jacking of a CIA plane, the storyline picks up eight years after Batman (Christian Bale) was blamed for the death of popular District Attorney Harvey Dent and banished from Gotham City. Retreating to his mansion, Bruce Wayne has become a lonely recluse. "You're not living; you're just waiting," chides his faithful butler Alfred (Michael Caine). But when he discovers intrepid cat burglar Selina Kyle (Anne Hathaway) rifling through his safe, Wayne's curiosity is piqued. At the same time, terrorist/thug Bane (Tom Hardy) surfaces, wearing a mysterious, militaristic mask (not to conceal his identity but to anesthetize himself against agonizing pain, resulting from injuries he suffered in prison). When Commissioner Gordon (Gary Oldman) is hospitalized, he begs Batman to return, while also placing his trust in an idealistic young protégé, Officer John Blake (Joseph Gordon-Levitt). And wealthy philanthropist Miranda Tate (Marion Cotillard) turns into an influential ally when Wayne Enterprises,

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headed up by CEO/inventor Lucius Fox (Morgan Freeman), becomes the target of a hostile takeover. All of these threads tie together with delicious surprises in this tense, intriguing, and emotionally involving conclusion. Highly recommended. (S. Granger)

Dreams of a Life

★★★1/2

Strand, 95 min., not rated,
DVD: \$24.99, Dec. 11

U.K. filmmaker Carol Morley's haunting blend of re-enactment and witness interviews literally puts flesh on the bones of a 2006 tabloid tragedy from London, where authorities belatedly discovered the skeleton of a woman in her small apartment above a busy shopping complex. She had been dead three years—the decomposed remains (not shown) still sprawled before a flickering TV. Apart from the social-services scandal of why a body remained so long unnoticed in a bustling metropolis, the identity of the dead woman was also shocking. Joyce Vincent was no elderly recluse but rather an attractive 38-year-old, with three sisters, a series of former boyfriends and suitors, and erstwhile workmates and acquaintances, who remember her as a vivacious club-hopper. She looked like Whitney Houston, says one, and Vincent did indeed circulate on the fringes of music-industry stardom. But who was Joyce Vincent really? Morley alternates between the *Rashomon*-style contrasting testimonials, sequences with actress Zawe Ashton playing the tormented Vincent, and dramatization of cleanup crews trying to decontaminate the scene of what may or may not have been a battered-woman crime or a suicide. But the real tragedy here is the extreme isolation of the Eleanor Rigby-ish heroine, whether self-inflicted or not. Vincent is not here to explain herself, but she certainly fell through the cracks of society, much too easily and utterly. Highly recommended. (C. Cassidy)



Even the Rain ★★★

Image, 103 min., in Spanish,
Quechua & English w/English
subtitles, not rated, DVD:
\$27.98, Nov. 6

An interesting blend of historical commentary and contemporary political-economic diatribe, Icíar Bollain's *Even the Rain* draws parallels between 16th-century European imperialism and modern capitalism. A group of filmmakers—headed by intense director Sebastian (Gael García Bernal) and cost-conscious producer Costa (Luis Tosar)—travel to a remote site in Bolivia in order to make a movie about Columbus that also covers Friar Bartolomé de las Casas' protest against the brutal Spanish treatment of the Indians. Local man Daniel (Juan Carlos



Aduviri) is chosen to play a chieftain who resisted the Europeans and was executed as a result. But Daniel turns out to be an activist whose protests against the government's policy of privatizing the water supply lead to his arrest, endangering the filmmakers' ability to complete their project—leaving the outsiders torn between their own professional interests and larger ethical considerations. The juxtaposition of the exploitation of indigenous peoples half a millennium ago with similar treatment today (stemming from equally greedy motives) eventually becomes a bit heavy-handed, but Bollain's gritty film nevertheless deserves credit for raising provocative contemporary socioeconomic issues in a historically intelligent and dramatically effective way. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

Freak Dance ★★★1/2

Image, 97 min., not rated,
DVD: \$27.98

A parody of dance movies may not have been absolutely necessary, but better that the cult fave improvisational sketch comedy troupe Upright Citizens Brigade are behind it than the hacks who made *Epic Movie*, *Date Movie*, etc. Not as jokey as *Airplane*, filmmakers Matt Besser and Neil Mahoney's *Freak Dance* affectionately spoofs the conventions of such genre touchstones as *Save the Last Dance*, *You Got Served* and *Step Up*. Megan Heyn stars as Cocolonia, a naive rich girl who defies her mother (Amy Poehler, who makes the most of her brief screen time) to hook up with a well-chiseled hip hop dance crew. With the entire town against them ("I think you dancers are the source of most of this city's problems," they are told), the crew prepare to take on a rival troupe of real dirty dancers. A little unsteady on its feet by the end, *Freak Dance* nevertheless sports some good laughs (and you can dance to it!). I give it a 6. A strong optional purchase. (D. Liebenson)



Free Men ★★★1/2

Film Movement, 99 min., in
French w/English subtitles, not
rated, DVD: \$24.95

Filmmaker Ismaël Ferroukhi's *Free Men* admirably takes as its subject the little-known history of North African freedom fighters in occupied Paris during WWII, fashioning a sophisticated action film from this true history without resorting to the over-the-top clichés of the modern Hollywood thriller. Renowned young international star Tahar Rahim plays Younes, a semi-literate Algerian looking for work in Paris, who initially gets caught up in the dragnet of the Vichy government's anti-immigrant measures. Younes is hired by the authorities to spy on a local mosque, but—not being terribly stealthy—is quickly

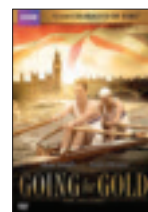


found out as a snitch by the mosque rector. Word gets back to the authorities, and Younes is promptly let go. However, his troubles are about to escalate, courtesy of the steadily increasing Nazi presence around the mosque, brought on by the suspicion that the rector is issuing fake IDs for local Jews. Ferroukhi's methodical buildup to the climactic action in the film allows him to flesh out some compelling secondary characters. And as the Nazis begin applying their python-like squeeze around the city and the mosque itself, the seemingly lost, somewhat bewildered-looking Younes soon stumbles into a well-suited vocation: French resistance fighter. Highly recommended. (M. Sandlin)

Going for Gold: The '48 Games ★★★

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

This BBC docudrama is set in postwar London, a time and place where money was so tight that the 1948 Olympics came to be known as the Austerity Games. The narrative focuses on Richard "Dickie" Burnell (Sam Hoare), an upper-crust journalist and council worker, and Bert Bushnell (Matt Smith), a working-class office clerk—two oarsmen who join together to compete for the gold in double sculls. Their first meeting—arranged by their trainer, Olympic champion Jack Beresford (James Frain)—goes poorly, but the pair will need to cooperate if they hope to make their mark, and they only have six weeks to accomplish that goal. As Jack warns the argumentative duo, "You don't win if you don't pull together!" Bert is particularly hostile towards Dickie about his Eton-and-Oxford education, and both men have meddling fathers, John Bushnell (Douglas Hodge) and Charles Burnell (Geoffrey Palmer). John, a boat builder who missed his shot at Olympic glory, even pressures his son's girlfriend to leave town for a spell, so that Bert can concentrate on the competition. Once the rowers put their differences aside, however, they come up with a game plan, but injuries and other obstructions threaten to block their way. *Going for Gold* interweaves their story with the backroom meetings of the Olympics planners who managed to pull off a world-class event with a minimum of capital. Although rather predictable, the cast is solid and the period details shine in this historical sports film. Recommended. (K. Fennessy)

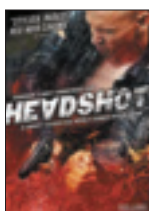


Headshot ★★★

Kino Lorber, 105 min., in Thai w/English subtitles,
not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95

Thailand filmmaker Pen-ek Ratanaruang—who made his reputation with a series of stylish, violent, and oddly contemplative crime thrillers—plays to his strengths with this self-styled "Buddhist film noir." Inter-

weaving crime movie conventions with philosophical musings ("Justice does not exist in nature," ponders our tormented hero), *Headshot* tells a twisty, puzzling tale about Tul (Nopachai Jayanama), a contract killer with a complicated backstory and a literally unique perspective. Thanks to a bullet in the head, Tul sees everything upside down, putting him at a real disadvantage during a getaway but not affecting the accuracy of his aim. The film shifts back and forth between flashbacks and enigmatic visions, often shuffled out of chronological order in order to keep the viewer guessing as to what is really happening to enigmatic and oddly personally assassinated Tul. Ultimately, *Headshot* can be taken as either a very violent Buddhist lesson, or an almost too-clever crime conspiracy of assassins and patsies—with numerous detours to contemplate what it all means, both literally and spiritually. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



Holy Flying Circus ★★

Acorn, 2 discs, 99 min., not rated, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.99

Following a controversial American premiere in August 1979, *Monty Python's Life*

of Brian opened in Britain in November, sparking an even more hysterical protest in which the film was banned by individual community councils—even after the government censors gave it a pass. In response, two members of the famously intellectual and provocative comedy group—John Cleese (Darren Boyd) and Michael Palin (Charles Edwards)—agreed to debate British satirist Malcolm Muggeridge and the Archbishop of York on a British talk show. Filmmaker Owen Harris's *Holy Flying Circus* tells this story, presenting it in the manner of a Python comedy, complete with animated interludes, comic detours, caricatured personalities, and plenty of satirical asides. The British TV movie adopts a cheeky approach while exploring the chemistry and conflicts within the comedy group, but it can't help but come across like a second-generation reread of the troupe's original material. The film finally plays it straight for the recreation of the debate, where the jokester Pythons took the issue seriously and defended their film against the establishment figures, who come across as cynical showmen playing for laughs. An obscure piece of cultural history for most Americans, this



uneven film is mainly for diehard Python fans. Optional. (S. Axmaker)

Hospitalité ★★★1/2

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

In this quietly absurdist Japanese comedy from director Koji Fukada, nothing is ever quite what it seems. The life of Kobayashi (Kenji Yamauchi), a garden-variety manager type who owns a small Tokyo printing shop, slowly comes unraveled when he meets the enigmatic Kagawa (Kanji Furutachi), who professes to be the son of the man who helped Kobayashi initially fund his business. Until Kagawa's unexpected arrival on the scene, Kobayashi has been living a humble lower-middle-class life with his attractive young wife (Kiki Sugino). But after Kagawa ingratiates himself—filling in on a printing press for a sick employee—he winds up rooming with the Kobayashis (along with his own "Brazilian wife," who is, in fact, neither). As the supremely manipulative but charismatic Kagawa craftily deepens his influence and control over Kobayashi's business, we eventually discover his ulterior motives for scamming his way into the lives of Kobayashi's family. Fukada's meticulous



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Newly restored on DVD, *Black Like Me*, the 1964 feature film version of the astonishing memoir of John Howard Griffin, chronicles Griffin's experiences after he medically altered his skin pigment and lived as an itinerant black writer navigating his way through the Jim Crow south. The film was fully restored from the negative for this release and includes a bonus disc containing *Uncommon Vision*, the biographical documentary of Griffin's truly remarkable life and times.

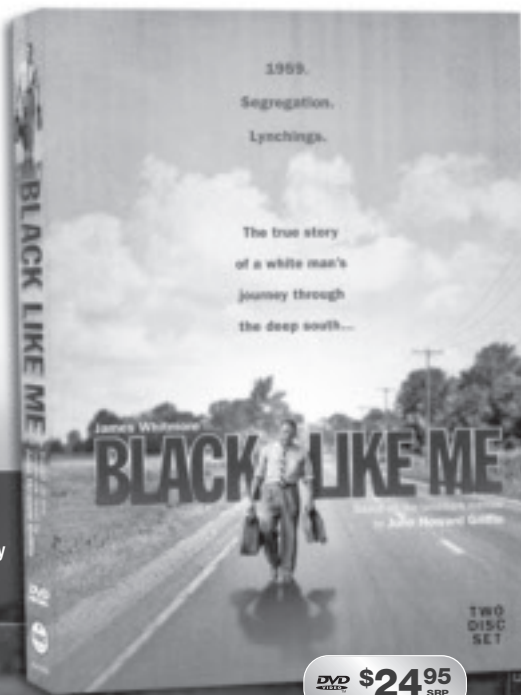
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guiding hand here moves the pace swiftly along, using a light but effective oddball comedic touch in making the essentially weak-willed Kobayashi a figure of fun but also of pathos. And the irony-laced conclusion is brought about with a near-perfect sense of controlled chaos. Highly recommended. (M. Sandlin)

The Invisible War

★★★1/2

New Video, 97 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.95

The American military's most shameful secret is that a female serving in Iraq or Afghanistan is more likely to be raped by a fellow soldier than killed by enemy fire. According to Department of Defense statistics, 22,800 violent sexual assaults took place in the armed forces during 2011. While it's estimated that 20% of female veterans were victimized while serving, few reported attacks, perhaps because prosecution rates for sexual predators are astoundingly low—with only a tiny fraction resulting in court-martial convictions because these heinous crimes are covered up by high-ranking commanders (recall the Tailhook, Aberdeen, and Air Force Academy scandals). Filmmaker Kirby Dick shines a light on this disgraceful behavior, focusing on proud, brave, once idealistic servicewomen who were betrayed by their comrades, such as Kori Cioca, whose jaw was damaged when she was beaten and raped by her Coast Guard supervisor. All suffered depression, PTSD, and some even attempted suicide. Most victims "suck it up," especially since in some cases the person whom they'd report a rape to is the predator. Not unlike the Catholic Church hierarchy, the male-dominated military here emerges as an insular, misogynist organization, refusing to investigate transgressions by its own members. Agonizing and infuriating, this powerful documentary is highly recommended. (S. Granger)



Juan of the Dead

★★★1/2
Focus, 96 min., in Spanish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$19.98

Although Alejandro Brugués' zombie comedy was clearly inspired by *Shaun of the Dead*, it doesn't quite measure up to the popular spoof starring Simon Pegg. Here, ne'er do-well Juan (Alexis Díaz de Villegas) and a small group of chums do battle against a horde of undead who have inexplicably taken over their city, enthusiastically dispatching the flesh-eaters by any means at hand. Essentially, that is the whole plot, and the humor is pretty spotty. What distinguishes the film is that the besieged city is Havana, so it can indulge in satirical swipes at the Castro regime along the way.



So, the initial news reports on the outbreak from official sources predictably portray it as yet another attempt to undermine the revolution engineered by the dastardly imperialists in the north. *Juan of the Dead* is technically pretty primitive, but the easygoing disdain it expresses for the government represents an act of political courage deserving of note. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Karate-Robo Zaborgar

★★★

Well Go USA, 114 min., in Japanese w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$24.98

Bam! Biff! Pow! In the manner of Hollywood's recent spoof-remakes of old TV shows such as *Starsky & Hutch*, *21 Jump Street* and *Dark Shadows*, filmmaker Noboru Iguchi presents this over-the-top campy take on a genre that would seem to be beyond parody: the live-action sci-fi karate-action superheroes of yesteryear's Japanese children's television. The neglected son of a scientist, martial-artist Yutaka Daimon (Yasuhisa Furuhashi) fights evil with his motorcycle, which converts into Zaborgar—a kung-fu robot. With the corrupt Japanese Prime Minister being kidnapped (repeatedly) by an evil, wheelchair-bound mad scientist in a floating castle, Yutaka and Zaborgar find themselves fighting many villains, including a number of scantily-clad cyborg girls who can launch missiles (and occasional dragons) from their breasts. Also thrown into the mix are an acid-spewing Diarrhea Robot and an unplanned cyborg pregnancy. Even viewers unfamiliar with the anime references and cultural roots of the *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* kitsch should get some big laughs here. And yes, there was a real *Zaborgar* series, on Fuji TV in the 1970s; its zany non-digital highlight footage unrolls over the closing credits here. Recommended. (C. Cassidy)



Katy Perry: Part of Me

★★★

Paramount, 93 min., PG, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99

While thousands of little girls dream of becoming pop stars, Katy Perry is one of the few who actually did it, reigning supreme as the only female artist to have five chart-topping singles from one album. Directors Dan Cutforth and Jane Lipsitz's sparkly, sequined—yet unfortunately superficial—documentary is essentially aimed at fanatic preteens, intercutting concert footage from Perry's *California Dreams* 2011 world tour with backstage scenes, vintage home videos, interviews, and glimpses of family and friends, including Perry's ex-husband, British actor/comedian Russell Brand, whom she divorced while this was being filmed.



Born on October 25, 1984 in Santa Barbara, CA, Katheryn Elizabeth Hudson and her siblings led a strictly sheltered life with their Pentecostal minister parents— forbidden access to *Alice in Wonderland* and *The Wizard of Oz*, which were considered "satanic," and not allowed to consume "pagan" Lucky Charms breakfast cereal or watch *The Smurfs*. While it's not surprising that Perry got her start as a Christian gospel singer, her ambitious transition from acoustic/hotel crooner to dazzling megastar is pretty amazing. Influenced by Alanis Morissette, Perry's first hit was the mildly scandalous "I Kissed a Girl," aptly reflecting adolescent bisexual curiosity. With Katy Perry, what you see is what you get: off-stage, she's still an attention-seeking kewpie doll, working hard to maintain her persona while allowing filmmakers to chronicle even her most tearful, melodramatic moments of marital despair. As she rises from a hole in the stage to perform before a packed stadium, Perry confesses: "This moment is my childhood dream come true." If only it were explored with a bit more depth. An optional purchase. (S. Granger)

Kill List

★★★
MPI, 95 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98

British writer-director Ben Wheatley's gangland drama centers on hot-tempered Jay (Neill Maskell), who is sensitive and caring with his young son but prone to engage in drawn-out screaming matches with his wife (MyAnna Buring). Jay also happens to be a mob hit-man, but has been lying low after botching an earlier assignment. Now, Jay's more affable partner, Gal (Michael Smiley), comes to him with an assignment from higher-ups to terminate three targets. Jay and Gal handle the first—a priest—with ease, but when it comes to the second, a librarian, the revelation that the man is a pervert sends Jay into a paroxysm of rage, and in a sequence of truly unsettling brutality he tortures the man with a hammer before bashing his head in. Clearly, Jay has become unhinged, and the film veers suddenly into a hallucinatory realm involving primitive fertility rites. But even if the ending is frustratingly opaque, the domestic scenes and murder-for-hire plot are so energetically delivered that *Kill List* ultimately impresses as a fascinatingly distinctive horror film. Recommended. (F. Swietek)



Last Ride

★★★
Music Box, 100 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.95

Actor Hugo Weaving (*The Matrix*, *Lord of the Rings*) steps out of the fantasy genre to play a criminal psychopath in the drama *Last Ride*. As Kev, Weaving brings a credible and unset-



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tling mix of danger and tenderness to his character, who is on the run for a killing, traversing the Australian countryside with his young son, Chook (Tom Russell). Adapted for the screen by director Glendyn Ivin and screenwriter Mac Gudgeon from a novel by Denise Young, this is a beautifully filmed tale of a father and son constantly on the move—stealing money, food, and cars—with Kev doing damage to innocent victims along the way (including Chook, who takes a lot of abuse). As the title suggests, the story here is really about waiting for little Chook to figure out that he can't live this way and finally take matters in his own hands. Although sometimes monotonous on a narrative level, *Weaving* is something of a revelation as a complicated, unpredictable monster. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

Let It Shine ★★

Walt Disney, 104 min., TV-G, DVD: \$26.99

A decent little drinking game could be devised from this Disney Channel movie. But since this is a Disney Channel movie, it should probably be an anti-drinking game. So: take a drink whenever a character rises above stereotype, you hear a piece of fresh dialogue, or a plot development takes a surprising turn. Trust me, you'll be stone sober by film's end. A cross between *Cyrano de Bergerac*, *8 Mile* and *The Jazz Singer*, filmmaker Paul Hoen's *Let it Shine* stars Tyler James Williams as Cyrus, a rap and hip-hop loving pastor's son ("Rap is the devil's music," his disapproving father thunders). Cyrus is a rhyming virtuoso who secretly works at the local hip-hop music club, but he lacks the self confidence to take the stage. When his song wins a competition mounted by unrequited crush Roxie (Coco Jones), Cyrus allows his best friend to take credit. And so on. The cast is game and the lip-synced production numbers are energetic, but this is the same old song. Optional, at best. (D. Liebenson)



Madagascar 3: Europe's Most Wanted ★★★

Paramount, 93 min., PG, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray: \$40.99

After the worldwide success of the previous two animated adventures, a third entry was inevitable. Citing inspiration from a famous Ralph Waldo Emerson quote—"Life is a journey, not a destination"—the story once again takes up with a quartet of anthropomorphic animals determined to make their way back to New York City's Central Park Zoo. Leaving the wilds of the African continent for the French Riviera, Alex the good-hearted lion leader (voiced by Ben Stiller), Marty the irrepressibly boisterous zebra (Chris Rock), Gloria the

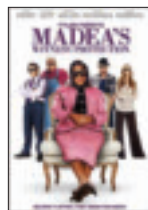


spirited hippo (Jada Pinkett Smith), and Melman the neurotic giraffe (David Schwimmer) are trying to find their primate and penguin friends, who are set on breaking into the bank at the casino in Monte Carlo in order to finance their trip home. Not surprisingly, the heist goes horribly wrong. Fleeing from fanatical animal control officer Captaine Chantel DuBois (Frances McDormand), who is dementedly committed to hanging Alex's head on her trophy wall, the fugitives find refuge with a decrepit traveling circus that might wind up touring the United States. Here, they join up with Vitaly the foul-tempered Siberian tiger boss (Bryan Cranston), Gia the sultry jaguar (Jessica Chastain), and Stefano the loquacious sea lion (Martin Short). Also re-appearing is Julien the lemur king (Sasha Baron Cohen). Co-directed by Eric Darnell, Tom McGrath, and Conrad Vernon, this is a frenetically paced and visually dazzling madcap adventure featuring scenic European stopovers in Monaco, London, and Rome. Recommended. (S. Granger)

Madea's Witness Protection ★★

Lionsgate, 115 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.99

In the latest installment in Tyler Perry's highly successful *Madea* comedy franchise featuring Perry as elderly matriarch Madea Simmons, Madea's federal prosecutor nephew needs a place to hide hapless George Needleman (Eugene Levy), a Wall Street CFO who didn't realize that his investment firm was running a mob-backed Ponzi scheme that has been laundering money and cheating charities for years, leaving George marked for death by a crime syndicate. So George, his yoga-loving second wife (Denise Richards), sullen teenage daughter (Danielle Campbell), hefty son (Devan Leos), and semi-senile mother (Doris Roberts) move into Madea's Atlanta home. Explaining their sudden presence to a neighbor, Madea identifies them as cousins who lost all skin pigmentation overnight. The plot later introduces Jake (Romeo Miller), a pastor's son who lost his church's \$114,000 mortgage fund after investing in George's firm but is unable to break the bad news to his father (John Amos). Versatile New Orleans native Perry not only plays many parts, but also writes, directs, and produces. Filled with throwaway gags (you can even glimpse Richards' ex-husband Charlie Sheen trying to grope Madea during the bloopers credits), this is hit-and-miss slapdash comedy that too often feels forced. Optional, at best. (S. Granger)



The Man from Beijing ★★★

Music Box, 180 min., in German w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95

Based on the novel by Henning Mankell

(author of the popular Wallander books), the German TV movie *The Man from Beijing* begins with the massacre of virtually all of the residents of a remote Swedish village—members of a single family—in an exceptionally bloody and savage attack. That horrific event brings the clan's sole survivor—judge Birgitta Roslin (Suzanne von Borsody)—to the site, where she initiates her own investigation into the slayings, as the police do not want her involved. Ultimately, Roslin ties the killings—as well as a similar slaughter of a related American family—to the building of the transcontinental railway in the United States during the 19th-century, as well as to a vendetta against her family by a powerful Chinese industrialist seeking to avenge wrongs done to ancestors who worked on the project. That discovery leads Roslin to China on a quest to track down the villain, a trip that puts her own life in jeopardy. Costarring Michael Nyqvist, this handsomely lensed production—shot in both Europe and Asia—is sure to appeal to thriller fans. Recommended. (F. Swietek)



Marina Abramović: The Artist is Present

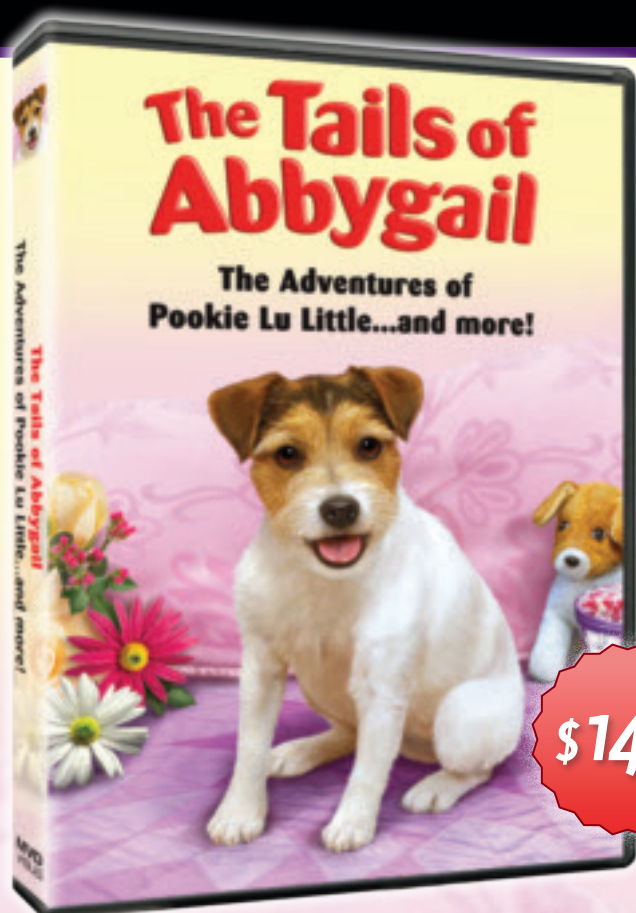
★★★1/2

Music Box, 106 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.95

For a three-month period during 2010, Serbian-born performance artist Marina Abramović sat on one of two facing chairs at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. During museum hours, the artist would gaze steadily at whoever sat in the opposite chair (any visitor to the exhibit was welcome to participate). Attracting over 750,000 attendees, the show also featured a career retrospective of the artist, with videos and live re-performances of five of her pieces by 30 young artists. Abramović's feat of endurance is the centerpiece of this documentary by Matthew Akers and Jeff Dupre, which explores her controversial body of work, along with the aesthetic and administrative challenges of preparing a major art show. Interviews with associates, friends, and art experts are interwoven with clips of several pieces from Abramović's nearly four decades as an active performer, many of which include self-harm and exhibitionism (in a typical piece, a nude Abramović runs repeatedly into a wall). German artist Ulay was Abramović's lover and creative partner for several years, and their early work, separation, and eventual reconciliation are used here to effectively bridge Abramović's past to the present. In the MoMA performance, Abramović is hypnotizing to her audience, moving many



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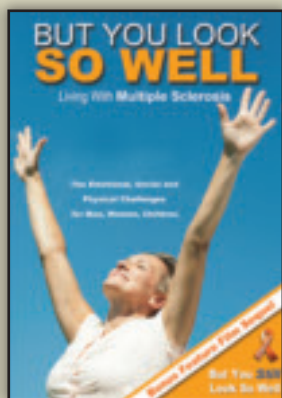
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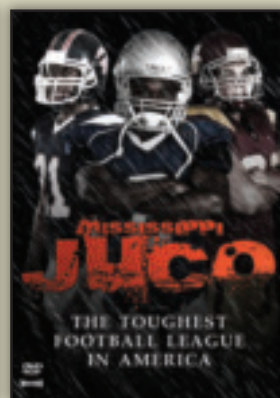
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participants to tears with her gaze; in fact, the intense emotional responses of these people are often as shocking and seductive as the artist herself. Highly recommended. (K. Cruver)

Men in Black 3 ★★★

Sony, 106 min., PG-13, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray: \$40.99, Nov. 30



Agents J (Will Smith) and K (Tommy Lee Jones) are back! And this time they are not only time-traveling in order to save the planet but also to discover uncanny revelations about their relationship. The story begins in Manhattan, where curious Agent J realizes how little he really knows about his taciturn partner, Agent K—a realization that coincides with the escape of a ferocious Boglodite alien, Boris the Animal (Jemaine Clement), whom K incarcerated 40 years earlier. When Boris time-travels back to wreak revenge on Agent K in 1969, Agent J must join him in the past. At first, it's not easy for smooth-talking Agent J to convince affable young Agent K (now played by Josh Brolin) that he is back from the future, but once he does, the pair are off on an incredible retro-adventure that takes them from Coney Island to a historic Mets' game at Shea Stadium to Cape Canaveral for the Apollo 11 moon launch. Also on hand are Michael Stuhlbarg as a soft-spoken, prophetic alien, visualizing multiple realities; Emma Thompson as the new MIB chief; Bill Hader as artist Andy Warhol; and cameos by Lady Gaga and Justin Bieber. Sharply directed by Barry Sonnenfeld, this engaging prequel is engrossing entertainment, serving up comedy, suspense, and intrigue. Recommended. (S. Granger)

My Sucky Teen Romance

★★★1/2

Dark Sky, 77 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98



The big selling point of this horror spoof about nerdy high school chums who face an outbreak of vampirism at a sci-fi convention is the fact that it was written and directed by then-18-year-old Emily Hagins of Austin, TX (and it's not even her debut effort). College-bound heroine Kate (Elaine Hurt) is psyched for geeky SpaceCON, where she suffers an accidental bite from Paul (Patrick Delgado), a supermarket clerk crushing on her. Unfortunately, Paul has been turned into a vampire by Vince (Devin Bonnie). Will the potential couple avoid the fate of blood drinkers? While the acting is amateurish (understandable, since the cast is composed of amateurs), at least the actors are the right age, instead of the usual bunch of thirtysomethings desperately trying to look like teens. And the script—which features a convention panel

discussion with *Ain't It Cool News* founder Harry Knowles that takes some amusing swipes at the *Twilight* phenomenon—throws some welcome curves into what might have been a purely formulaic story. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

ParaNorman ★★★

Focus, 93 min., PG, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$34.98, Nov. 27

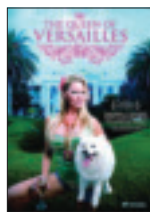


Eleven-year-old Norman Babcock sees dead people. When his mother tells him, "Your grandma is in a better place now," Norman has a different take: "She's right in the living room." This macabre, stop-motion animated feature revolves around an adolescent medium's morbid encounters with ghosts, ghouls, zombies, and other ectoplasms who have unfinished business. Voiced by Kodi Smit-McPhee, Norman—distinguished by his spiky, *Eraserhead*-like hair—is undoubtedly odd. Not only is he watched over by his deceased Grandma (Elaine Stritch) but he also has to cope with his incredulous mother (Leslie Mann), disapproving father (Jeff Garlin), and bubble-gum snapping teenage sister, Courtney (Anna Kendrick)—as well as a middle school bully (Christopher Mintz-Plasse). Inquisitive Norman researches the legend of a local New England witch who was killed 300 years ago. Norman knows that the witch's spirit is restless and, according to his deranged, psychic uncle (John Goodman), she's about to bring the dead back to life. But no one will believe Norman...until a bunch of decaying bodies begin to haunt the town, and only Norman can reverse the witch's curse. Chris Butler and Sam Fell's *ParaNorman* is a witty and spooky horror comedy. Recommended. (S. Granger)

The Queen of Versailles

★★★

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

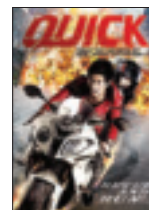


F. Scott Fitzgerald once said, "Let me tell you about the very rich. They are different from you and me." That observation is evident in filmmaker Lauren Greenfield's documentary about a billionaire family's financial challenges—including foreclosure—in the wake of the current economic crisis. Contemptibly irritable 73-year-old David A. Siegel made money selling subprime time-share mortgages to people who couldn't afford them and brags about how he got George W. Bush elected president in ways that were not necessarily legal. Clueless, 43-year-old blonde, Botoxed, and otherwise surgically enhanced Jackie acquired an engineering degree, modeled, and was crowned a beauty queen before becoming Mr. Siegel's trophy third wife. In 2007, they decided to build an

extravagant 90,000-square-foot mansion in Orlando, FL, modeled on the palace at Versailles, France. The biggest private residence in America, the Siegel home would boast 30 bedrooms, 23 Jacuzzi-equipped bathrooms, 10 kitchens, a ballroom, cavernous grand hall, theater, bowling alley, roller rink, two tennis courts, baseball field, separate wing for their seven children (plus a niece) and a grotto with three spas behind an 80-foot waterfall, along with his-and-her offices, formal gardens, and an underground 20-car garage (plus family portraits in royal robes). Out of the original 19 servants, 15 have been fired, prompting Jackie to candidly confess: "If I'd known I wasn't going to have nannies, I wouldn't have had so many kids." Since the film's release, David Siegel has filed restraining lawsuits, while others have questioned the ethics of Greenfield's shrewd editing techniques, but all in all this is a nonjudgmental story of one (albeit filthy rich) family's experiences during the collapse of the real estate market. Recommended. (S. Granger)

Quick ★★★

Shout! Factory, 111 min., in Korean w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$26.98



The Korean action comedy *Quick* is certifiably insane (and I mean that in a good way), as it is essentially *Speed* on motorcycles, with a simple, adrenaline-rush plot. Gi-su (Lee Min-ki) is a street-racing motorcycle gang member who wreaks havoc on the streets of Seoul. Jump forward three years: Gi-su is out of the crime biz, now working as a motorcycle courier who suddenly finds himself at the mercy of an unseen terrorist. He's been hired to transport perky little pop star A-rom (Kang Ye-won) to a TV appearance, but immediately after placing his spare helmet on her head, Gi-su's cell phone rings and he's informed that the helmet on A-rom's head is rigged to explode if the two riders are separated by more than 30 meters. As a timer ticks down on the helmet-bomb, the only way Gi-su can save their lives is by following orders to deliver explosive devices to specific locations throughout the city—a course of action that puts the police on his trail. Directed by Jo Bum-Gu, the action here is almost nonstop, serving up high-risk, high-speed stunts enhanced with CGI effects. While some viewers may grow tired of the frantic pace (not to mention Kang Ye-won's constant, high-pitched screaming), many will find *Quick* to be breathlessly entertaining. Recommended. (J. Shannon)

Safety Not Guaranteed ★★★

Sony, 86 min., R, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray: \$35.99

"WANTED: Someone to go back in time with me. This is not a joke... Must bring your own weapons. Safety not guaranteed..."

IMOGEN POOTS
(JANE EYRE, 28 WEEKS LATER)

KEVIN MCKIDD
(TRAINSPOTTING, TV SERIES GREY'S ANATOMY)

CRAIG ROBERTS
(SUBMARINE, JANE EYRE)

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From the critically acclaimed
director of *THE GIRL ON THE TRAIN*
and *THE WITNESSES*.

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in one of the busiest parts of London.
Her body was discovered
three years after her death....



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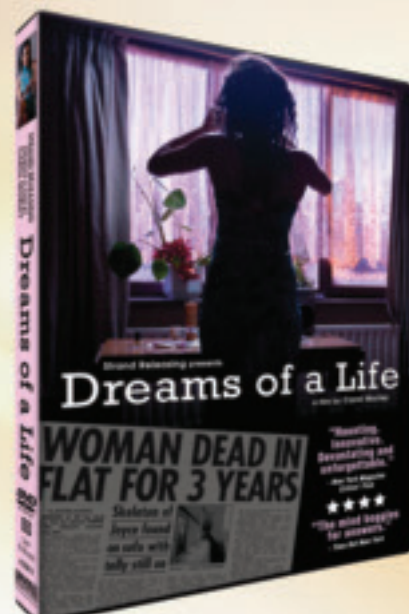
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93 minutes | Color | Widescreen | Not Rated
In English | Closed Captioned | 5.1 Surround Sound



A romantic thriller set against the
beautiful backdrop of Venice.

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112 minutes | Color | Widescreen | 5.1 Surround Sound
Not Rated | In French with English subtitles



An imaginative and multilayered quest to go
beyond the newspaper reports and solve the mystery.

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Pre-book: November 13, 2012

UPC: 7 12267 32082 0 | Product #: 3208-2 | SRP \$24.99
95 minutes | Color | Widescreen | Not Rated
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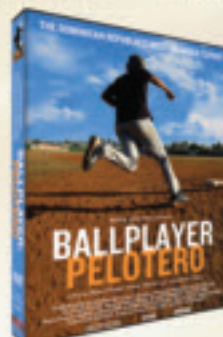
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Such reads the classified ad that inspires Jeff (Jake Johnson), a cynical *Seattle Magazine* staff writer, to drag two interns to the beachside community of Ocean View, WA. As soon as the trio arrive, cocky Jeff takes off to find an old high-school flame (Jenica Bergere), leaving Darius (Aubrey Plaza) and Arnau (Karan Soni) to track down the classified ad's author—an eccentric, suspiciously elusive grocery clerk named Kenneth (Mark Duplass). Posing as a prospective traveling partner willing to undergo rigorous training, Darius befriends paranoid loner Kenneth, who not only believes he can time-travel but is also convinced that he's being followed by secret agents. Which, it turns out, he is. An offbeat, uplifting, and even romantic tale, director Colin Trevorrow's film benefits from Duplass's earnestly beguiling performance, as well as Guster band member Ryan Miller's original soundtrack. Taking viewers on a fun-filled, feel-good journey, this is recommended. (S. Granger)



Seven Minutes in Heaven

★★★

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

A year after surviving a terrorist bombing that killed her lover and left her clinically dead for seven minutes, Galia (Reymond Amsalem), a Jerusalem woman with severe burns and partial memory loss, is still trying to piece her shattered life back together. Haunted by grief and visions of those killed in the attack, Galia receives her own scorched necklace in the mail and becomes determined to find witnesses or the medical worker who saved her life. Featuring a meta-physical twist involving souls who are not complete, filmmaker Omri Givon's superbly acted, ultimately moving, film festival award-winner is recommended. (D. Liebenson)



Shifty

Breaking Glass, 85 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99

This semiautobiographical BAFTA-nominated first film by Eran Creevy follows a day in the life of a drug dealer and his reform-minded friend on the outskirts of London. When Chris (Daniel Mays) pays a surprise visit to Shifty (Riz Ahmed)—after several years apart—the two former best mates renew their connection, but not without some tension, since Chris left the drug scene at the same time he pulled away from Shifty, leaving behind some wreckage (including a girlfriend who died horribly while stoned) for which Shifty took the blame. Now intent on



convincing Shifty to stop dealing and join mainstream life, Chris faces his own past mistakes and the hostility of his old community. Meanwhile, Shifty is dealing with a psychotic customer, the wrath of a violent boss, and the disapproval of his family. Not your traditional gangster film, the generally low-key *Shifty* focuses on small moments and intriguing relationships. Graced with a solid cast (with Jason Flemyng and Nitin Ganatra standouts in supporting roles), this indie effort is recommended. (T. Keogh)

Sleepless Night

★★★★1/2

New Video, 102 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$26.95

An exhaustingly frenetic French action film that manages to blow all of the elements of a drug-deal-gone-bad cop drama deliriously out of proportion while still avoiding unintentional parody, filmmaker Frédéric Jardin's *Sleepless Night*'s chain reaction of carnage and chaos is sparked when rogue cop Vincent (Tomer Sisley) and his partner pilfer a giant bag full of cocaine from local mob boss Marciano (Serge Riaboukine) and are caught in the act. Next thing you know, Marciano has kidnapped Vincent's son and threatens to waste him if Vincent doesn't return the stolen blow, pronto. Vincent's son is being held at Marciano's nightclub, which becomes the most exciting (and dangerous) place in town when a couple of seemingly non-corrupt cops descend on the club while tailing Vincent—making the job of retrieving his son much more complicated. By the time the film reaches its haywire conclusion, any distinctions between bad cops, good cops, and drug dealers have all been completely obliterated. Highly recommended. (M. Sandlin)



The Slut

Strand, 86 min., in Hebrew w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99

Israeli filmmaker Hagar Ben-Asher also stars as the titular character, Tamar, a comely mother of two, who runs a chicken farm and likes to sleep with her neighbors. Shai (Ishai Golan), a veterinarian who grew up in the area, returns to town after his mother's passing, figures out what's going on, and decides to pursue Tamar anyway. Ben-Asher presents Tamar's assignations as matter-of-fact rather than tawdry, although her encounters with Shai become more passionate, and he ultimately moves in with her—a development that disappoints three locals, including a bicycle repairman, with whom Tamar has been spending time. While Shai is a caring partner who also gets along well with her girls, Tamar regrets the fact that she can't (or shouldn't) continue to sleep with



her other admirers, especially when she finds out she's pregnant, so she begins to sabotage the relationship and neglect her children, whether intentionally or subconsciously. In either case, Shai expresses his frustration in a way that makes Tamar's behavior seem less pathological, although the filmmaker withholds judgment—suggesting that the real problem lies in unrealistic expectations and a lack of clear communication. Recommended. (K. Fennessy)

Small, Beautifully Moving Parts

Film Movement, 73 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95

Filmmakers Annie J. Howell and Lisa Robinson's *Small, Beautifully Moving Parts* focuses on alienated life in the technological age. Pregnant by her loving boyfriend, Sarah (Anna Margaret Hollyman) feels little connection with her unborn child. During a disastrous baby shower thrown by her sister, Emily (Sarah Rafferty), Sarah concludes that her problem originated in her mother's abandonment of the family. Although she hasn't spoken to her mother in years, Sarah decides to take a drive to visit her mom in a remote desert community. Along the way, she stops in to see her likable father, Henry (Richard Hoag)—currently engaged in a computer romance—as well as her boyfriend's history-obsessed sister. During the trip, tech-loving Sarah's GPS, phone, and even her electric toothbrush conk out, forcing her to increasingly depend on real human contact. While the message here is crushingly obvious, the cast is amiable, and the journey is entertaining. Recommended. (F. Swietek)



Snowman's Land

Music Box, 95 min., in German w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95

A small-time hit-man finds himself in deep trouble when he leaves the city for a job in the snowy countryside in Tomasz Thomson's *Snowman's Land*, a tale that combines low-key comedy with brutal violence. Shaggy-haired Walter (Jürgen Rissmann) is instructed to make himself scarce after botching an assignment, so he heads for a remote region in the Carpathian Mountains, where he's paired with wild-eyed Micky (Thomas Wodianka) to guard a resort owned by mob boss Berger (Reiner Schöne). When Berger's sultry wife shows up, she and Micky engage in rough sex that kills her, so the pair hide the body and claim ignorance. But Berger tries to beat the truth out of them until his Russian enforcer decides to take over the boss's empire for himself—thus initiating a game of cross and double-cross marked by plenty of bloody deadpan farce. Although





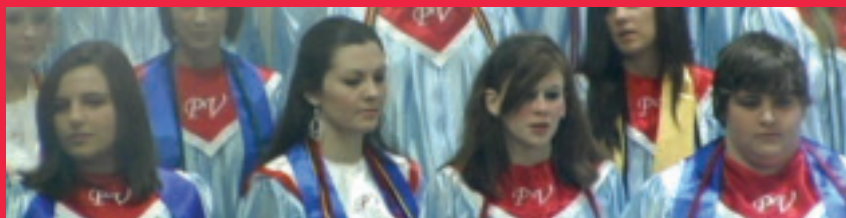
"CRITIC'S PICK! Beguiling, intimate, and poetic."

—NEW YORK MAGAZINE



"Achieves an un-self-conscious transcendence that can't be scripted...A lovingly personal observation of young people at a crossroads"

—JEANNETTE CATSOULIS, *THE NEW YORK TIMES*



A cinema vérité documentary portrait of a strong-headed teenage girl in Alabama on the verge of her high school graduation, the film captures three tumultuous days in which Kati's future is cast into doubt, offering "bittersweet glimpses of a young life in transition." (The Wall Street Journal)

BONUS FEATURES:

Interviews with Kati post-filming, the Red Jumpsuit Apparatus band, and director Robert Greene.

Kati With an i

A film by Robert Greene

86 min. / color / 16x9 / 2010

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UPC # 8-54565-00149-7 • SRP: \$29.98

"ENTHRALLING!"

Manohla Dargis, *THE NEW YORK TIMES*

"MORRISON IS SOMETHING OF A MAGICIAN..."

NEW YORK MAGAZINE

"An elegiac testament to the lost industrial culture."

SIGHT & SOUND

"A cinematic experience that casts an eerie spell."

THE WASHINGTON POST

The ill-fated coal mining communities in North East England are the subject of this inspired documentary by multimedia artist Bill Morrison (*Decasia*). Their story is told entirely using archival footage and without words, yet the film is far from silent: it features a remarkable original score by the Icelandic composer Jóhann Jóhannsson.



THE MINERS' HYMNS

A film by Bill Morrison | Music by Jóhann Jóhannsson

52 minutes / color+BW / 4x3 / 2011 / Audio: 5.1 Surround or 2.0 Stereo

© 2011 Bill Morrison / Hypnotic Pictures

UPC # 8-54565-00148-0 • SRP: \$29.98

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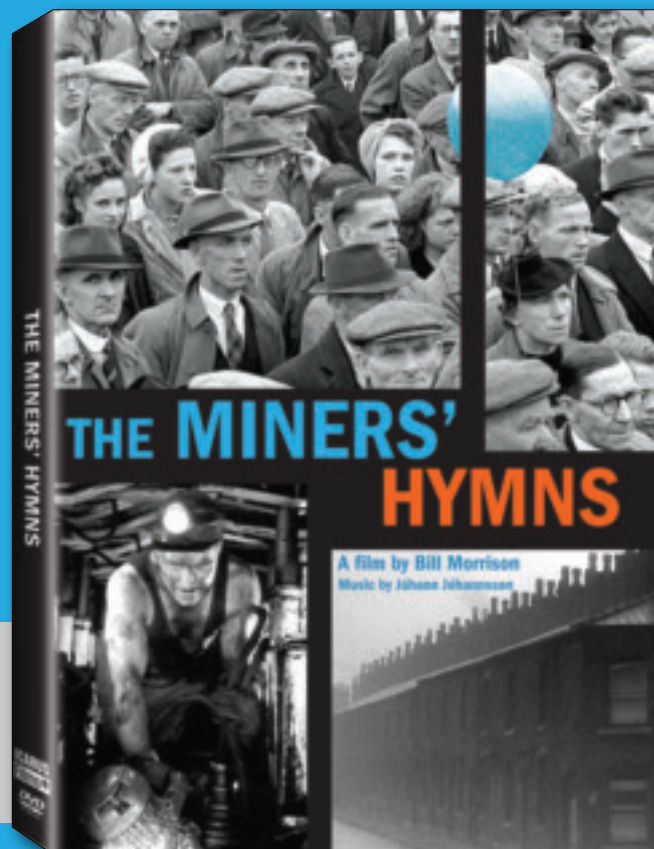
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the film suffers somewhat from too many long scenes of Walter and Micky trying to find ways of amusing themselves in Berger's sprawling, empty resort, Thomson demonstrates a solid knack for mixing goofiness and gore, and Rissmann adopts a suitably dour and grouchy persona as the hapless protagonist. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

Sparkle ★★★

Sony, 116 min., PG-13, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray: \$35.99, Nov. 30

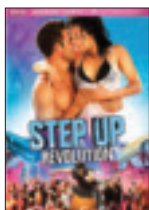
From the accomplished singing to the eye-catching apparel, director Salim Akil's Motor City remake of the 1976 Harlem melodrama boasts a charm and style all its own (while retaining Curtis Mayfield's original songs). *American Idol* winner Jordin Sparks puts her powerful pipes to work as Sparkle, a late-'60s songwriter who forms a Supremes-style trio with her siblings, Sister (Carmen Ejogo) and Dee (Tika Sumpter). Raised by their devout mother, Emma (Whitney Houston in her final film role), the new band attracts good-guy manager Stix (Derek Luke), who falls for the demure Sparkle, and bad-boy standup comic Satin (Mike Epps), who seduces the glamorous Sister with the promise of an irresistibly glittering lifestyle. Soon, Sister is doing coke lines and daubing makeup on her bruised face, endangering the girl group's chance at a record contract, not to mention her life. Comparisons to *Dreamgirls*, which featured another *Idol* alum (Oscar winner Jennifer Hudson), will be inevitable, but the original *Sparkle* with Irene Cara and Loretta McKee came first. Newcomer Sparks is solid here, and Houston ably blends dramatic disappointment with comic outrage, while also delivering a show-stopping rendition of the gospel standard "His Eye Is On the Sparrow"—a powerfully sad reminder of the late singer's amazing voice. Recommended (K. Fennessy)



Step Up Revolution ★★

Summit, 99 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.99, Nov. 27

In this fourth installment of the popular (albeit formulaic) franchise, Emily (Kathryn McCormick)—a Miami gal with aspirations of becoming a professional dancer—falls in love with Sean (Ryan Guzman), who along with his childhood buddy Eddy (Misha Gabriel) leads an underground dance crew in cutting-edge flash mob routines that are captured on video, competing for \$1 million in a YouTube contest. But when a ruthless real estate developer (Peter Gallagher)—who also happens to be Emily's father—threatens to turn their historic neighborhood into commercial property and displace thousands of residents,



Emily, Sean, and their friends turn their fleet-footed mob performance into protest art, risking their personal dreams to fight for a greater cause. First-time feature director Scott Speer's *Step Up Revolution* boasts some inventive, percussive urban dance sequences—including one in an art museum and another in a city council meeting—but suffers from a flaccid, derivative script and insipid acting. Optional, at best. (S. Granger)

The Tall Man ★★

Image, 106 min., R, DVD: \$27.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98

Pascal Laugier's *The Tall Man* starts out as a fairly obvious thriller, but delivers a major twist about halfway through before morphing into a strange sociological statement. Jessica Biel stars as Julia Denning, a widow and the sole nurse in Cold Rock, a decaying mining town in the Pacific Northwest where children are disappearing—snatched by the frightening titular figure. Julia copes with the residents' traumas as best she can until her own little boy is taken one night. Fortunately, Julia is able to catch up with the intruder, and in the film's major action sequence grapples with him—and his vicious dog—in a speeding truck while trying to rescue her son. But then Laugier throws a curve that undermines everything the script has laboriously laid out up until this point, slowing the narrative down to a crawl and transforming it into a weird commentary about the extraordinary measures that might be required to address domestic problems arising from socioeconomic collapse. While one can admire the effort to make something unconventional in a very tired genre, *The Tall Man* is a mostly listless affair, marked by highly mannered acting, woozy visuals, and an ending more likely to antagonize than satisfy viewers. Not recommended. (F. Swietek)



That's My Boy ★

Sony, 116 min., R, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray: \$35.99

An unremittingly raunchy, crude comedy that tries to wring laughs from child abuse at the start and incest at the close, director Sean Anders' *That's My Boy* stars Adam Sandler as Donny Brewster, a washed-up has-been who got his high school teacher pregnant decades earlier and rode a wave of adolescent notoriety to celebrity after she was sent to the slammer. Donny also raised—very badly—their son, who fled home at the age of 18 and disappeared. Now threatened with jail for tax evasion, Donny discovers that his boy, Todd (Andy Samberg), has become a rich investment wunderkind. So he crashes Todd's pre-nuptial festivities in order to manipulate him into visiting his mom in prison for a



reunion on a crass "reality" TV show that will bring Donny the cash he needs. Ultimately, of course, he will want to bond with the lad. With its endless stream of coarse sexual humor, numerous fat jokes, plentiful drug gags, and heaping helpings of slapstick violence, this is an ugly film at the bottom of the cinematic barrel. Not recommended. (F. Swietek)

This is Sodom ★★1/2

SISU, 89 min., in Hebrew w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95

And now for something completely different: an Israeli biblical comedy from the creators of that country's answer to *Saturday Night Live*, with added inspiration from Mel Brooks and Monty Python. You don't have to be Jewish to enjoy this irreverent take on the story of the downfall of Sodom, but it certainly helps (it also helps if you paid attention in Sunday school). The story is set in motion when "salesman" God tries to get Abraham to sign on for his new religion, promising the destruction of Sin City Sodom as proof of His omnipotent nature. But Abraham protests in favor of his nephew Lot, Sodom's one righteous citizen, who must be rescued before the city is obliterated. Filmmakers Adam Sanderson and Muli Segev's *This is Sodom* was a record-breaking box office blockbuster in Israel, but much of the humor is an uneven mix of sublime silliness (a barking guard sheep) and cringe-inducing gags. Still, for some, this might be welcome comic relief. A strong optional purchase. (D. Liebenson)



Tonight You're Mine

★★1/2

Sony, 80 min., R, DVD: \$22.99

Filmmaker David Mackenzie's low-budget quasi-documentary presents a fictional scenario set within an actual music festival. American musician Adam (Luke Treadaway) meets Brit rocker Morello (Natalia Tena) at Scotland's "T in the Park," where they clash from the start, encouraging—somewhat implausibly—a golf-cart driving preacher to handcuff the pair together (while saying it will do them good) and then take off. Adam's model girlfriend, Lake (Ruta Gedmintas), finds this weird development irritating, while Morello's banker boyfriend, Mark (the director's brother, Alistair), takes it in stride. While the duo search for a solution, Mackenzie serves up snapshots of the onstage activity (but rarely identifies the artists). With no help in sight, Morello performs with Adam by her side, and he hijacks her set to sing Gloria Jones' "Tainted Love" (his group performs the next day). Afterward, his band mate, Tyko (Mathew Baynton), secures a key, but Adam



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is having too much fun to tell Morello, so the two couples share the same bed, but Lake and Mark end up stomping out in frustration, opening the door for new romance to bloom. Unfortunately, *Tonight Your Mine* feels slight, although it's still more enjoyable than *Nine Songs*, Michael Winterbottom's turgid, if precedent-setting attempt to combine fictional characters with real musical performances. A strong optional purchase. (K. Fennessy)

Treasure Island ★★1/2

Vivendi, 183 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$29.95

Director Steve Barron's Syfy-aired adaptation of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* takes some liberties, both with the iconic characters and the ending, which radically departs from any previous screen incarnation, ranging from the beloved Disney classic to the Muppet version. Still, any adaptation sails or sinks with the quintessential pirate character of Long John Silver, and Eddie Izzard's interpretation joins the ranks as among the most memorable. The transvestite comedian cuts an indelible swashbuckling figure with a shaved head and a characterization reportedly inspired by, of all people, Winston Churchill. Toby Regbo is a decent Jim Hawkins, who possesses the map to the treasure that Silver covets. Donald Sutherland makes the most of his fleeting screen time as double-crosser Capt. Flint, although the less said about a miscast Elijah Wood (as castaway Ben Gunn) the better. A strong optional purchase. (D. Liebenson)

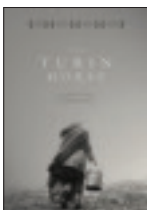


The Turin Horse

★★★1/2

Cinema Guild, 143 min., in Hungarian w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95

Hungarian director Béla Tarr's *The Turin Horse* is a challenging drama that is "an auteurist triumph" (in the words of *New York Times* critic Manohla Dargis)—bittersweet praise when you know that Tarr (at age 56) has said this will be his final film. Shot in crisp, hard-edged black-and-white and comprised of only 30 long-take scenes, *The Turin Horse* was inspired by a tragic incident in the life of philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. In 1889, while in Turin, Italy, Nietzsche witnessed a cab driver whipping his stubborn, unmoving horse. Nietzsche threw his arms around the beaten horse's neck. Afterwards—in a matter of days—Nietzsche lost consciousness and, ultimately, his mind. But this is not Nietzsche's story; instead, Tarr (with co-director and longtime partner Ágnes Hranitzky) follows the partially paralyzed driver and his recalcitrant horse home to the windswept plain where he and his daughter live in a state of bleak, stilted routine. Over the course of



six days, we witness (in the director's own words) "the unbearable heaviness of being." Although certainly not for all tastes, *The Turin Horse* is highly recommended. (J. Shannon)

Turn Me On, Dammit!

★★★1/2

New Yorker, 76 min., in Norwegian w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95

Filmmaker Jannicke Systad Jacobsen's adaptation of Olaug Nilssen's novel turns the horny teenage boy trope on its head, kicking off with 15-year-old Alma (Helene Bergsholm) pleasuring herself on the kitchen floor as the family dog watches. Alma also patronizes a phone-sex service, daydreams about her neighbor, Artur (Matias Myren), and drinks and complains about life in remote Skoddeheimen with her best friends: smoker Sara (Malin Bjørhovde), who wears black eyeliner, and longs to free Texas prisoners from death row, and Sara's lip gloss-addicted sister, Ingrid (Beate Støfring), who favors pink, and sings in the choir. Ingrid tells Artur something Alma said about him in private—namely, that Artur rubbed up against her—and soon, the whole school knows about this semi-sexual encounter, after which Alma becomes an outcast, even though she didn't do anything. Although the reaction might seem extreme, the film is making a valid point about double standards, since no one treats Artur any differently. But Alma also begins to think she must be abnormal, a view her single mother (Henriette Steenstrup) endorses. The situation goes from bad to worse when her mother sees their latest phone bill, which leads Alma to a grocery-store job in order to pay her back. While Alma can be rude and sulky, she still inspires sympathy, and her social life improves once she turns to a big-city friend (Julia Bache-Wiig) who's always been supportive. A charming tale of a frustrated, small-town teenager, this is highly recommended. (K. Fennessy)



Unforgivable

★★★1/2

Strand, 112 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$27.99, Dec. 4

In the hands of a lesser director, *Unforgivable* could have easily had the wordy, one-dimensional quality of a claustrophobic relationship movie like Woody Allen's *Interiors*. Luckily, under André Téchiné's deft direction, the many intertwining characters here—who have very different ways of dealing with life's curveballs—exhibit a depth and dimension all too rare in narrative film. Set in and around the enchanting city of Venice, the story focuses on Francis (André Dussollier), a once-successful but now blocked elderly writer looking for a house that might provide geographical inspiration for



his writing. Francis instantly falls in love with his real estate agent, fiftysomething former model Judith (still-stunning French actress Carole Bouquet). After the two are hastily married, Judith's mysterious pan-sexual past begins to weigh more and more heavily on Francis's unoccupied mind, leading to increasing suspicions concerning his wife's daily life away from home. This obsession sets in motion a series of unforeseen events that will eventually inspire his writing but also threaten his relationship with his wife and everyone else around him. Téchiné succeeds in pulling off unexpected but wholly satisfying character transformations through the subtle back-and-forth shifts in power we witness in Judith and Francis's odd relationship. Highly recommended. (M. Sandlin)

Warriors of the Rainbow: Seediq Bale

★★★1/2

Well Go USA, 150 min., in Aboriginal & Japanese w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99

Co-produced by Hong Kong action master John Woo, *Warriors of the Rainbow: Seediq Bale* is the most expensive Taiwanese film to date (with an approximate \$25 million budget). An authentic epic of brutal guerilla warfare, combining a little-known chapter of Taiwanese history with breathtaking, realistically violent battle scenes set in the lush mountain jungles of Taiwan, the action takes place in 1930, with the aboriginal tribes of Taiwan subdued under the power of Japanese colonial occupation. One tribe is the Seediq, led by imposing and charismatic warrior Mouna Rudo (Lin Ching-Tai). Forming a coalition with other tribal leaders, Mouna plots a rebellion, and initially their well-planned uprising appears to be triumphant, as 300 warriors kill thousands of Japanese soldiers. The victory is short-lived, however, and the Japanese retaliate in full force, climaxing with a final battle that pits tribal swords and rifles against Japanese machine gunners and biplanes dropping experimental gas-bombs. Directed by Wei Te-Sheng, the film unfortunately suffers from a chaotic succession of action-packed battles at the expense of character development. Optional. (J. Shannon)



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A film by
Vannicke Systad Jacobsen



Norway, 2011, 76 minutes, Color,
In Norwegian and English with optional
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Brazil, 2010,
128 minutes, Color/B&W,
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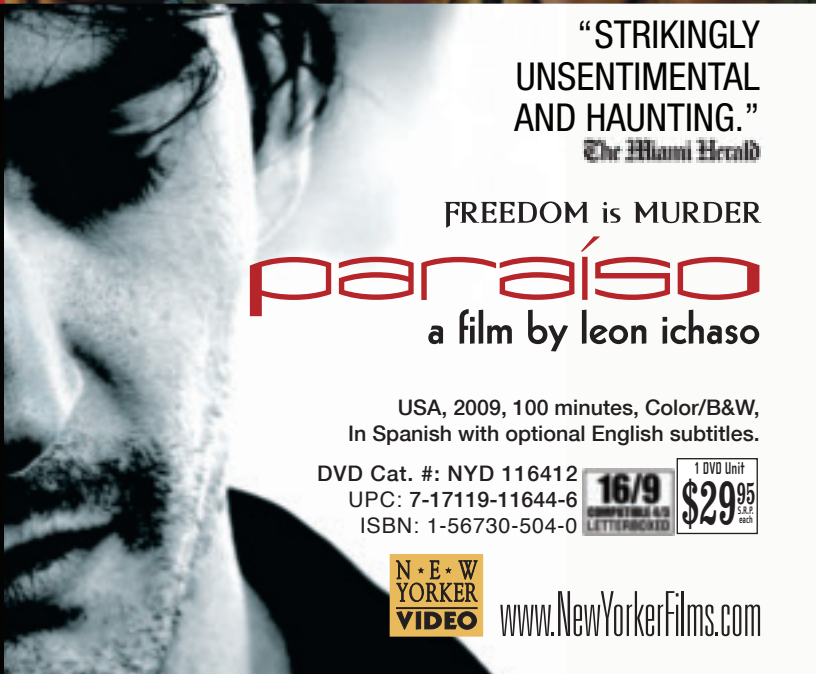
paraíso a film by leon ichaso

USA, 2009, 100 minutes, Color/B&W,
In Spanish with optional English subtitles.

DVD Cat. #: NYD 116412
UPC: 7-17119-11644-6
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30 Rock: Season 6

★★★1/2

Universal, 3 discs, 437 min., not rated, DVD: \$49.98

"Life is happening," Tina Fey's Liz Lemon proclaims near the end of *30 Rock's* multi-Emmy-nominated penultimate sixth season. Head writer and producer of a late-night variety TV show, Liz is in a stable, albeit goofy relationship with the amiable Criss (James Marsden) and seriously contemplating parenthood. Other character developments in season six include Kenneth (Jack McBrayer) leaving the page program for a "real job" within NBC, Master of the Universe Jack (Alec Baldwin) trying to get his mojo back in the wake of the network's takeover by KableTown (think: Comcast), and the introduction of a new page, Hazel Whatshtername (the charmingly loopy Kristen Schaal, channeling her stalker character from *Flight of the Conchords*). This season features a great live episode (the East Coast version is better than the West Coast episode, which is included as one of the bonus features), an hilarious episode of the mock reality series *Queen of Jordan*, a rematch between Jack and his ruthless and cunning high-school-age nemesis (an Emmy-worthy Chloë Grace Moretz), and a guest arc by Mary Steenburgen as the mother of Jack's wife (Elizabeth Banks)—the latter is still being held hostage in North Korea. *30 Rock's* ratings, never blockbuster, hit all-time lows during 2012 (like Brian Wilson, *30 Rock* just wasn't made for these times), but the faithful still love it. Compiling all 22 episodes, DVD extras include audio commentary, deleted scenes, and behind-the-scenes featurettes. Highly recommended. (D. Liebenson)



Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein

★★★1/2

Universal, 2 discs, 83 min., not rated, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$26.98

Bud Abbott and Lou Costello were one of the world's top comedy teams when they took on cinema's most famous monsters in this 1948 romp. Chick (Abbott) and Wilbur (Costello) are hapless shipping clerks tasked with delivering two large crates to a Florida House of Horrors. Hot on their trail is Lawrence Talbot (Lon Chaney Jr.), who knows that inside the containers lie the lifeless bodies of Count Dracula (Bela Lugosi) and Frankenstein's monster (Glenn Strange)—cargo Talbot wants to destroy for fear that the creatures will be revived. Astute horror fans will note that Talbot himself is a pretty scary guy: when the moon is full, he turns into the Wolf Man. Director Charles Barton wisely has Lugosi, Chaney, and Strange play their parts straight, while Costello characteristically sputters and whoops as



the sole witness to the creatures' revitalization and Abbott expresses incredulity at his partner's claims. Added to the mix are two glamorous women, Sandra (Lénoire Aubert) and Joan (Jane Randolph), whose baffling activities add entertaining elements to the plot. The funniest horror comedy of the classical era—mixing terror and slapstick humor without sacrificing either—*Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein* was added to the National Film Registry in 2001. Extras include audio commentary and a retrospective featurette. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Absolutely Fabulous: 20th Anniversary Specials ★★

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

These three half-hour specials—inexplicable to anyone not familiar with the original series—are not without their moments, and fans may relish the prospect of reuniting with the original Bad Girls Club, Eddy and Patsy (Jennifer Saunders and Joanna Lumley), but what was bracingly un-PC in 1992 is somewhat behind the times in 2012 (even a Kardashian joke strains for relevancy). Simply put, these characters today, with the exception of long-suffering daughter Saffron (Julia Sawalha) are either irredeemably nasty and unsympathetic or off-puttingly eccentric (Jane Horrocks' character Bubble). Of the three specials, the third, "Olympics," is an especially frustrating missed opportunity as Edina pathetically humiliates herself to gain the favor of designer Stella McCartney. The first, "Identity," finds Saffron, of all people, welcomed home after a stint in prison. The second, "Job," features appearances by Spice Girl Emma Bunton and Lulu of "To Sir With Love" fame. Sadly, the party is clearly over; Eddy and Patsy have worn out their welcome. DVD extras include the bonus sketch "Ab Fab Does Sport Relief," as well as a behind-the-scenes featurette. For completists only. (D. Liebenson)



Airport ★★★

Universal, 2 discs, 137 min., G, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$19.98

1970's *Airport* cleared the runway for a spate of disaster films. Decades later, it still flies high, thanks to an A-list ensemble cast, loads of hokey (in a good way) dialogue, and a gripping, page-turner of a story based on Arthur Hailey's bestselling novel. Burt Lancaster anchors the film as the unhappily married airport manager whose facility is beset by a blizzard. The venerable Helen Hayes landed an Oscar as a stowaway on an ill-fated flight. Dean Martin is the pilot whose girlfriend, stewardess Jacqueline Bisset, is pregnant. Van Heflin is a sad bomber. Stealing the show is George Kennedy as the cigar-



chomping airline mechanic ("That's the great thing about a 707; it can do everything but read"). Nominated for 10 Academy Awards, including Best Picture, *Airport* was, even 40-plus years ago, the type of film Hollywood hardly made anymore. DVD extras add to the nostalgia appeal with a pair of featurettes that pay tribute to Universal Studio's 1970s heyday and its tourist-trafficked studio lot. Recommended. (D. Liebenson)

Blue Bloods: The Second Season ★★★

Paramount, 6 discs, 926 min., not rated, DVD: \$55.98

The sophomore season of this CBS police procedural/family drama follows the formula that made the first a success, especially with older viewers. Tom Selleck again brings a tone of mild gruffness and understated integrity to Frank Reagan, the widowed ex-Marine who's risen through the ranks to become New York City police commissioner, a post previously occupied by his father, Henry (Len Cariou). Frank's children have all followed him into law enforcement—volatile detective Danny (Donnie Wahlberg), clean-cut rookie patrolman Jamie (Will Estes), and assistant D.A. Erin (Bridget Moynahan)—as had their sibling, Joe, who was killed on the job. The three alternately cooperate and butt heads on cases they're investigating or prosecuting, as Frank busies himself with troublesome policy matters and annoying public relations crises while worrying about his brood. But they all come together for big dinners, where they thrash out their differences, joke, and reminisce as Henry presides at the head of the table. Running plot threads this year include Jamie's undercover stint with a crime family, growing marital tension between Danny and wife Linda (Amy Carlson), and Frank's delicate relationship with a new boss, recently elected mayor Carter Poole (David Ramsey). But most of the chapters are self-contained and make for old-fashioned and undemanding but reasonably entertaining fare. Compiling all 22 episodes from 2011–12's second season, extras include five behind-the-scenes featurettes, including one focusing on an appearance by guest star Tony Bennett; deleted scenes; audio commentaries for two episodes; and a gag reel. A solid crime drama series, this is recommended. (F. Swietek)



Boardwalk Empire: The Complete Second Season ★★★

HBO, 720 min., TV-MA, DVD: 5 discs, \$59.99; Blu-ray: 7 discs, \$79.99

With every character on HBO's Prohibition-era-set *Boardwalk Empire* leading a double life, the second season revolves around making



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changes or facing the consequences. The central figure, Atlantic City treasurer Nucky Thompson (Steve Buscemi), aims to please all of his constituents but loses several supporters after African-American bootlegger Chalky White (Michael Kenneth Williams) kills a Klansman. Estranged from his brother, Eli (Shea Whigham), and his former assistant, Jimmy (Michael Pitt), Nucky and his common-law wife, Margaret (Kelly Macdonald), become more of a team. Meanwhile, FBI agent Nelson Van Alden (Michael Shannon) holes up with Nucky's pregnant ex-girlfriend, Lucy (Paz de la Huerta). With enemies like Commodore Louis Kaestner (Dabney Coleman) trying to remove him from office, Nucky hires an Irish lothario (Charlie Cox) who keeps the booze flowing while meting out the occasional head-butt. Other new arrivals include a brutal butcher (William Forsythe) and a persistent prosecutor (Julianne Nicholson) who wields more power than the other women combined, although Jimmy's mother (Gretchen Mol) becomes more Machiavellian by the minute. Nucky also joins forces with Arnold Rothstein (Michael Stuhlbarg), as Jimmy aligns with Al Capone (Stephen Graham) and Lucky Luciano (Vincent Piazza). Of course, it wouldn't be a gangster epic without casualties, so there's some spectacularly bloody business—including the murder of a major character. Compiling all 12 episodes from 2011, extras include audio commentaries, behind-the-scenes featurettes, a character dossier, and an interactive guide with historical facts. Recommended. (K. Fennessy)

Body of Proof: The Complete Second Season

★★★1/2

Buena Vista, 4 discs, 854 min., TV-14, DVD: \$39.99

The second season of the forensic crime series starring Dana Delaney as Philadelphia medical examiner Dr. Megan Hunt—a once-famous surgeon who lost none of her ego in her forced career change—improves upon the first, during which her arrogance verged on insufferable (*House* made it work; this series didn't). Here, the writers quite smartly turn the efforts to humanize Megan into part of the character's journey, as she continues to mend fences with her daughter, Lacey (Mary Mouser); her attorney ex-husband, Todd (Jeffrey Nordling); and her equally ambitious and headstrong mother, Joan (Joanna Cassidy), whose overbearing personality sheds a little light on Megan. Jeri Ryan is Dr. Kate Murphy, the boss who tends to cover for her star doctor, while the excellent John Carroll Lynch and Sonja Sohn are Bud and Samantha, a detective team who learn to put up with her sometimes abrasive attitude. The otherwise familiar formula brings in quirky assistants and third-act breakthroughs to solve the mystery, but the season ends with a surpris-



ing two-part terrorist bio-weapon attack that claims a team member, followed by a finale that pits Megan against a serial killer (guest star Peter Stormare) who she put behind bars years before. Compiling all 20 episodes from 2011–12, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes, bloopers, and webisodes. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

Captain Carey U.S.A.

★★★1/2

Olive, 83 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95

This 1950 thriller with a film noir flavor and a continental aura stars Alan Ladd as Capt. Webster Carey, a former U.S. intelligence operative during World War II, who returns to Italy to try to discover who betrayed his crew in 1944, which caused the deaths of fellow soldiers and Italian partisans at the hands of the Nazis. In the quiet lakeside village that served as his underground base, Carey is met with suspicion and hostility—the villagers blame him for the reprisals and resist his efforts to find the turncoat. Wanda Hendrix costars as his wartime sweetheart, Giulia (he Americanizes her name to "Julie"), now married to a very wary baron (Francis Lederer), and Joseph Calleia is the jovial Dr. Lunati. These three are among the suspects Carey considers while the police shadow his every move and hidden enemies attempt to kill him. *Captain Carey U.S.A.* is a decent example of the era's mainstream Hollywood filmmaking: a dramatic script full of loose ends; a dubious morality that selectively forgives some guilty parties out of sentimentality while holding others responsible; and a hero whose main attribute in pursuit of a goal is sheer doggedness. Although set in Italy, the film was shot almost entirely on Hollywood sets, but director Mitchell Leisen manages to give it a handsome style and a shadowy atmosphere of mistrust and paranoia. Fans of postwar classics and Ladd will enjoy this, but otherwise it's a fairly undistinguished film. Optional. (S. Axmaker)



The Carol Burnett Show: Carol's Favorites

★★★★

Time Life, 6 discs, 1,113 min., not rated, DVD: \$59.95

When *Saturday Night* (as it was initially called) debuted, it became hip to knock *The Carol Burnett Show* as hopelessly old-fashioned compared to Lorne Michaels' subversive upstart. But more than three decades later, the series remains the gold standard of TV variety shows. The 16 episodes compiled here—presented complete with the audience Q&A and production numbers that were later cut for syndication—hold up



remarkably well more than 30 years later. Taking a page from Sid Caesar's playbook, Carol and company (Harvey Korman, Tim Conway, Vicki Lawrence) appeared in sketches that explored the human comedy rather than relying on short-shelf-life topical references. These gifted clowns had no peers when it came to knock-down slapstick sketches. Fans and newcomers alike will enjoy some series benchmarks featured here, including the epic "Went with the Wind" and the very first "Family" sketch (along with several others, the best of which features a seamless flashback to Eunice and Ed's happier dating days). The extensive DVD extras include a cast reunion, a sketch from *The Garry Moore Show* in which Burnett (as Supergirl) first performs her signature Tarzan yell, a series retrospective, interviews with friends of the show Betty White and Carl Reiner, and more. Highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** (D. Liebenson)

The Closer: The Complete Seventh and Final Season

★★★1/2

Warner, 5 discs, 892 min., not rated, DVD: \$59.98

This TNT original series starring Kyra Sedgwick as Deputy Chief Brenda Leigh Johnson—head of LAPD's Major Crimes Division—is an odd bird. Brenda has a reckless disregard for procedure, command structure, and even the law at times, but her loyal crew has evolved into one of the most well-oiled detective squads on TV. Their brand of professionalism and camaraderie is all the more impressive because it's been forged under pressure—and Brenda's conduct leaves them open to all sorts of problems. The show's final season is haunted by two old cases, one involving a suspected rapist (Billy Burke) they could not convict, and the other revolving around Brenda's calculated disregard for a suspect that resulted in his death—and a civil suit brought against her. While she beats the criminal charges, Brenda still has to face up to the personal consequences of what has happened in the past, giving the final segments a dramatic resonance beyond the cases themselves. Mary McDonnell, a frequent guest as internal affairs officer Capt. Sharon Raydor, joins the cast in preparation for the spin-off *Major Crimes*, currently running on TNT. Compiling all 21 episodes from the 2011–12 final season, DVD extras include a roundtable discussion with cast and crew before a live audience, deleted scenes, and a gag reel. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)



Cloudstreet

★★★

Acorn, 3 discs, 365 min., not rated, DVD: \$49.99

Tim Winton adapted his titular 1991 novel (regarded as a classic in his native Australia) for this 2011 miniseries revolving around

the tragedies and occasional joys of two large and very dissimilar families—the Lambs and the Pickles—who share a ramshackle dwelling in Perth from 1943 to 1963, living through major historical events, including World War II. The narrative also features an undercurrent related to the country's mistreatment of the aborigines, a situation often referred to as Australia's original sin. But rather than being a gritty portrait of lower-class Aussies struggling to survive, *Cloudstreet* is full of magical realism, boasting beautiful imagery related to water and light, references to the house breathing like a living thing, bits of high-flown narration, and recurrent allusions to the conflict between religious faith and belief in the power of chance. Although the series interweaves the stories of numerous characters, the central thread follows a boy named Fish (Hugo Johnstone-Burt), who miraculously survives a near-drowning as a child but emerges from the experience mentally disabled and dependent on others. Very specific in time and place, Winton's work is unlikely to carry the same dramatic resonance for viewers outside Australia, but this expansive and handsome production certainly does the novel justice. DVD extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes, character profiles, and a text bio of Winton. Recommended. (F. Swietek)



Community: The Complete Third Season

★★★★½

Sony, 3 discs, 467 min., not rated, DVD: \$45.99



Although not a ratings powerhouse, NBC's *Community* enjoys critical acclaim and a dedicated fan base. During this third season, the show really gelled into one of TV's cleverest and most consistently creative sitcoms. An ensemble piece ostensibly centered around Jeff (Joel McHale)—nominal leader of a group of friends who met as a study group at a community college—the focus has shifted somewhat to the brilliant rapport between best buds and roommates Troy and Abed (Donald Glover and Danny Pudi), who live in their own fantasy world of role-playing and pop-culture immersion. The pair's dynamic serves as the springboard that launches the season's most memorable storyline involving a college-wide pillow-fight civil war directed in the manner of a Ken Burns documentary (complete with narration by Keith David). *Community* also lays waste to *Glee*, *Doctor Who*, *Law & Order*, the holo-deck of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, and other recognizable cultural icons. Ultimately, what makes the show hum is a combination of fine character chemistry and winning writing, with the zany comments

flying fast and furious through every study meeting and lunch gathering. Since this is the last run with brilliant creator/producer Dan Harmon at the helm, it's hard to know what the future may bring. Compiling all 22 episodes from the 2011–12 third season, DVD extras include audio commentaries, deleted scenes, behind-the-scenes featurettes, and gag reels. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

The Country Diary of an Edwardian Lady ★★★

BFS, 4 discs, 312 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.98



This 12-part 1984 BBC miniseries is based on the "nature journal" of artist Edith Blackwell Holden (1871–1920) for the year 1906, which later became the titular 1977 bestseller. But the script by Elaine Feinstein and Dirk Campbell goes beyond the book to cover the author's life from girlhood to death. Each episode—named after the months of the year—dramatizes Edith's (Pippa Guard) walks as recounted in the journal, with Edith proceeding through the countryside as she reads from the entries, interwoven with shots of Holden's watercolors and excerpts from poems. But each segment also depicts additional scenes from her life (mostly familial encounters), culminating in her marriage and the inquest that followed her drowning while on one of her strolls. Guard is fine as Holden, capturing both the writer's prim, controlled exterior and the subdued intensity beneath. Much of the series was filmed on location in Warwickshire, Dartmoor, and Scotland, but while the outdoor footage is lovely, the series doesn't appear to have undergone serious restoration (the colors are washed-out and the images often streaked and blurry). But even with these imperfections, this remains an evocative production certain to please fans of Holden's book. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

Cyrano de Bergerac

★★★★½

Olive, 113 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95



José Ferrer reprised his famed stage role as Cyrano de Bergerac—a poet, wit, military man, and self-proclaimed "greatest swordsman in Paris"—in this 1950 screen version of Edmond Rostand's play, directed by Michael Gordon. Cyrano doesn't gladly suffer fools and has a habit of making enemies in high places, thanks to his unfailing loyalty to his friends and his innate sense of justice. Cyrano's signature nose—a mighty proboscis—makes him both self-conscious and fearful of declaring his love for his beautiful cousin, Roxane (Mala Powers), so he provides the words for another to woo her—the handsome but witless soldier Christian (William Prince). Oscar-winner

Ferrer is appropriately theatrical as the flamboyant Cyrano, both in the way he declaims his lines and engages in duels. Shot entirely on handsome studio sets—including a stylized re-creation of cobblestone streets and shops—the production makes the most of its limited budget while moving the story along with superb swordplay (Ferrer fences with flair and confidence) and eloquent phrases. Rostand's play was reworked by Steve Martin in the popular 1987 romantic comedy *Roxanne*, but this version is more exciting and faithful to the original. Likely to delight both fans of theater and classic Hollywood filmmaking, this is highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Death Watch ★★★½

Shout! Factory, 2 discs, 128 min., R, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$19.95



The 1980 English-language debut of French director Bertrand Tavernier is a sci-fi film that anticipates the most exploitative dimensions of reality TV while taking a thoughtful, introspective approach. Romy Schneider stars as Katherine Mortenhoe, a bestselling author diagnosed with an incurable disease, and Harvey Keitel costars as Roddy, a TV cameraman who undergoes experimental surgery to have a camera implanted in his head, with his eye as the lens. Based on D.G. Compton's 1974 novel *The Continuous Katherine Mortenhoe*, the story serves up a rumination on privacy, intimacy, and voyeurism, with Katherine escaping the media spotlight to live her final days in peace and Roddy tagging along, connecting with her personally while (unbeknownst to her) sharing her intimate moments with a TV audience hungry for some kind of emotional connection in a decaying society. Sci-fi in concept but art house in execution, *Death Watch* is an interesting and at times moving contribution to the cinema about a dystopian future, but it's also long and slow and caught up in the kinds of philosophical contemplations and intellectual conversations that have become a cliché of self-important European filmmaking. Harry Dean Stanton is Keitel's boss, determined to get Katherine's story onscreen at all costs, while Max von Sydow is also on hand as a self-exiled artist. Optional. (S. Axmaker)

Dexter: The Sixth Season

★★★

Paramount, 618 min., not rated, DVD: 4 discs, \$54.99; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$65.99



Dexter Morgan (Michael C. Hall) is TV's favorite serial-killer hero, a blood-spatter specialist in the Miami PD forensics unit moonlighting as a vigilante who feeds his murderous impulses by targeting other murderers. This Showtime original's mix of

grisly mystery and dark wit has made it one of the cable network's most popular shows. The sixth season pits Dexter against a religious-psycho "Doomsday Killer" tag-team played by Edward James Olmos and Colin Hanks—a mentor and acolyte who stage ritual slayings steeped in biblical imagery in order to bring about the apocalypse. Meanwhile, Dexter's detective sister, Debra (Jennifer Carpenter), receives a promotion and shines as the new squad leader—a career move that makes things a little trickier between the adoptive siblings, whose relationship becomes more interesting after Deb starts seeing a therapist to deal with her stress. Dexter also replaces the cautionary mental ghost of his dead father (James Remar) with a "spirit guide" in the form of criminal-turned-preacher Brother Sam (Mos Def). Although this season is less stellar than earlier entries—the Olmos-Hanks partnership seems more contrived and less dramatically compelling than previous nemeses—the series does continue the strange odyssey of Dexter as the single father of an infant who may have inherited his dark impulses, while also offering plenty of gruesome criminality and black humor for fans. Compiling all 12 episodes from the 2011 sixth season, the DVD version includes bonus interviews (only available through the BD-Live feature on the Blu-ray release). Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Fringe: The Complete Fourth Season ★★

Warner, 957 min., not rated, DVD: 6 discs, \$59.98; Blu-ray: 4 discs, \$69.98

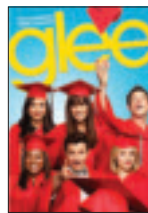


Although this clever science fiction series featuring parallel universes and dimension-hopping villains has never been a big network hit for Fox, passionate fans have kept it on the air. The fourth season throws another twist in the mind-bending storyline, sending it into a whole new alternate reality, where absent-minded professor Walter Bishop (John Noble) is a little less stable and his son, Peter (Joshua Jackson), never existed ... until Peter pushes his way back into reality and the life of partner, lover, and FBI agent Olivia (Anna Torv). The war between the dimensions rages as the team works to stop bad-guy David Robert Jones (Jared Harris) from opening the cracks between the worlds and destroying them both (the show also has fun with the alter-universe versions of the characters meeting up and learning a little bit about themselves through the distorted looking glass). In a hint of things to come, there is a flash-forward episode to a totalitarian future ruled by the "Observers," overlords who command the Earth like a supernatural mafia. While one of the best sci-fi shows on TV, the producers have already announced that the upcoming fifth season will be the last. Compiling all 22 episodes from

the 2011–12 fourth season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes, a gag reel, and a digital comic (the Blu-ray release adds exclusive bonus featurettes). Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Glee: The Complete Third Season ★★½

Fox, 961 min., not rated, DVD: 6 discs, \$59.98; Blu-ray: 4 discs, \$69.99



The glow faded pretty quickly for Fox's colorful musical comedy-drama about the triumphs and tribulations of the glee club at William McKinley High School in Lima, Ohio. The first season was greeted rapturously by critics and viewers alike, but reaction to the second was more muted, and this third installment, which takes the original student stars to graduation as well as a national championship, continues the downward slide. All the familiar ingredients remain in place: romantic, sexual, and social issues, along with rivalries among students and faculty—especially nice-guy club director Will Schuester (Matthew Morrison) and nasty cheerleading coach Sue Sylvester (Jane Lynch). And elaborately staged numbers, centered on the campus musical (*West Side Story*), a particular movie (like *Saturday Night Fever*), or the songs of specific superstars (like Michael Jackson and Whitney Houston) are inserted at every opportunity. Most of the cast continues, and the winners of the reality spinoff *The Glee Project*, Samuel Larsen and Damian McGinty, are introduced. But the formula already seems to be getting stale, with the humor conspicuously forced and the drama schmaltzy. By the time Lindsay Lohan and Perez Hilton show up as celebrity judges, the joke is on us. Hardcore fans will undoubtedly still embrace *Glee*, but this third run isn't likely to win many converts. Compiling all 22 episodes from 2011–12's third season, extras include several behind-the-scenes featurettes, deleted and extended scenes, and the *Glee Jukebox* function for each episode. Given the show's popularity, this is a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

The Good Wife: The Third Season ★★★

Paramount, 6 discs, 955 min., not rated, DVD: \$55.98



This CBS legal drama stars Julianna Margulies as Alicia Florrick, separated from her politician husband, Peter (Chris Noth), and working to establish herself as a litigator at a Chicago law firm. Continuing to mix the political with the personal, this 2011–12 third season brings challenges that include Peter's election to the office of district attorney, and disbarment proceedings

against Alicia's boss and one-time lover, Will Gardner (Josh Charles). The realities of a legal partnership, including the politics of choosing which cases to try (and why) add a layer of practical consideration to the familiar courtroom drama, while private lives and political factors only grow more complicated as Peter comes to terms with the separation and weighs the cost of his ambition, and Alicia begins to realize how much she misses her family, despite the meddling of mother-in-law Jackie (Mary Beth Peil). The superb cast also includes Christine Baranski as senior partner Diane Lockhart; Alan Cumming as Noth's campaign manager, Eli Gold; and Emmy-winning Archie Panjabi as cagey investigator Kalinda Sharma, whose past comes back to haunt her. An adult show in the best sense of the term, *The Good Wife* delivers mature stories about grown-up characters facing tough decisions. Compiling all 22 episodes, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes and deleted scenes. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Haven: The Complete Second Season ★★½

eOne, 4 discs, 572 min., not rated, DVD: \$44.98, Blu-ray: \$49.98



This Syfy original series—loosely based on the Stephen King novel *The Colorado Kid*—continues in the 2011 second season with the story of the titular small town in Maine where almost all the inhabitants have some kind of curse-like power. They call it "the troubles," and FBI agent Audrey Parker (Emily Rose), now a member of the Haven police department, works with partner Nathan (Lucas Bryant) and resident rogue/smuggler Duke (Eric Balfour) to figure out what's going on—including how Audrey's past may be connected to the community's mysterious ailment. This season expands the backstory with a conspiracy masterminded by a sinister priest known as the Rev (Stephen McHattie), and moves closer to answering some questions—while raising others. *Haven* takes a conventional approach to unconventional quasi-horror stories (think: a supernatural *X-Files* in an insular *Twin Peaks*-type town), but it's full of eccentric characters and dark tales of horrific afflictions and fatal threats that our heroes must deal with before the end of each episode. A number of new recurring figures are introduced, including Jason Priestley as Chris, an antisocial marine biologist who exudes charm despite his prickly personality; Vinessa Antoine as Evi, Duke's estranged wife; and WWE star Adam "Edge" Copeland as Dwight, a troubled activist working covertly with the Haven PD. Compiling 12 episodes, extras include a Christmas special, audio commentaries, behind-the-scenes featurettes, and a comic convention panel discussion. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

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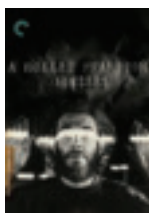
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A Hollis Frampton Odyssey ★★★

Criterion, 266 min., not rated, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.95; Blu-ray: \$39.95



Hollis Frampton (1936–1984) was one of the most notable of American avant-garde filmmakers. This compilation features 24 films (including portions of his major composite projects, *Hapax Legomena* and the unfinished *Magellan* cycle) spanning Frampton's career, beginning with early silent shorts from 1966 and ending with *The Death of Magellan* (1979). Stylistically, the entries—which include his best-known film, the hour-long *Zorns Lemma* (1970)—vary from static exercises such as *Lemon* (1969), a single seven-minute shot of light and shadow playing across the titular fruit, to the hyperkinetic montages that make up most of his '70s productions, including those from *Magellan* (envisioned as a 36-hour compendium to be viewed over the course of 371 days!). Frampton's highly experimental efforts—exploring what he called the “metahistory” of cinema—will not be for all tastes, but he was an influential figure in American film, and this handsome set provides a representative sampling of his work. Extras include nine brief audio comments by Frampton on specific titles, portions of a 1978 interview, a 1968 piece of performance art by Frampton (called a lecture on cinema), a gallery of his artwork, and a booklet in which some of Frampton's ardent admirers discourse on his method. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

Homeland: The Complete First Season ★★★½

Fox, 664 min., not rated, DVD: 4 discs, \$59.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$69.98



This acclaimed Showtime original series—winner of four 2012 Emmys, including Best Drama—stars Claire Danes as Carrie Mathison, a troubled CIA analyst, and Damian Lewis as Sgt. Nicholas Brody, a Marine captured by Al-Qaeda who was later discovered in captivity—eight years after being presumed dead. Carrie has reason to believe he's become a sleeper agent for the terrorists, while Brody struggles to reconnect with his family, his community, and a society that has moved on during his absence. While the perceptive but obsessive Carrie is convinced that Brody's secrets will lead back to Al-Qaeda, she has her own secret—an illness she conceals from the agency until events force it into the open. Adapted from an Israeli drama, the series is wrapped around the War on Terror and the American intelligence culture, but behind this realpolitik thriller lies the deeper story of the human toll of war. The twists suggest a 21st-century take on *The Manchurian Candidate*, but this smart series also touches on

patriotism, faith, and responsibility. Morena Baccarin costars as Brody's wife, Jessica, with Mandy Patinkin as Carrie's boss, Saul. Compiling all 12 episodes from the 2012 debut, extras include an audio commentary, deleted scenes, a behind-the-scenes featurette, and a prologue to the second season. A dense, challenging, intelligent series, this is highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

House: Season Eight ★★★

Universal, 5 discs, 965 min., not rated, DVD: \$59.98, Blu-ray: \$74.98



The eighth and final season of Fox's acclaimed medical mystery series opens with Dr. Gregory House (Hugh Laurie)—TV's most famous misanthropic genius—serving time for his actions at the end of the last season (specifically, driving his car into Dr. Lisa Cuddy's living room, and then fleeing the scene). But House is soon back in his old hospital post with a new pair of young doctors (Odette Annable and Charlyne Yi), a new boss (Omar Epps, his former intern), and an ankle monitor. The show takes its valedictory lap with return visits from almost every character who served on House's team or was a serious part of his life (including those who passed away), although Lisa Edelstein's Cuddy is glaringly absent (Edelstein left the show with some animosity), so there's no closure to that central relationship, just fallout. The main thread here involves Dr. Wilson (Robert Sean Leonard)—who cuts ties with a still unapologetic House after a last betrayal—and his battle with cancer, which means that House has to cope with a drama where he's not the center of attention. While the disease-of-the-week formula and House's bad behavior grew stale a few years back, it's still entertaining to watch the doctor execute his little rebellions against authority. Compiling all 22 episodes from the 2011–12 final season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Indiana Jones: The Complete Adventures ★★★½

Paramount, 5 discs, 481 min., PG/PG-13, Blu-ray: \$99.98



The original *Indiana Jones* trilogy has been one of the most highly anticipated Blu-ray releases since the debut of the format (the fourth film, *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*, bowed on Blu-ray back in 2008). Happily, Paramount has done it right: this five-disc set is the definitive home-video incarnation of filmmaker Steven Spielberg's long-running series starring Harrison Ford as globetrotting, whip-cracking archeologist-turned-adventurer Indiana Jones. Set in 1936, the original *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981) established the

tone of the series with a nostalgic nod to yesteryear thrills, serving up nonstop action and skin-of-the-teeth escapes, presented with a contemporary sense of humor. In *Raiders*, Indy hooks up with Marion Ravenwood (Karen Allen), daughter of his old mentor, as well as Egyptian friend Sallah (John Rhys-Davies), to find the lost Ark of the Covenant—with the Nazis hot on their trail as they travel from San Francisco to Nepal to Cairo. The more screwball *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* (1984) finds Indy paired with nightclub singer Willie Scott (Kate Capshaw) and pint-sized assistant Shorty (Ke Huy Quan) on a romp through China and India involving fabled diamonds, religious cults, and missing children. The epic *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* (1989) introduces Sean Connery as Indy's dad, Henry, whose disappearance while in pursuit of the Holy Grail ensnares the younger Jones in a desperate search that leads to the catacombs beneath Venice, among other locales. The one misfire is *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*, made when Ford was close to 70 and co-starring Ray Winstone as Indy's friend—and betrayer—Mac, with Cate Blanchett as KGB commander Irina Spalko. Set in 1957, it's a U.S.-versus-Russia tale that starts out in Nevada's secret Area 51 before linking Indy with a kid named Mutt (Shia LaBeouf) in an adventure that leads to a legendary city in Peru. Paramount made fresh 4K digital scans of each film, with superb results: the color pops, while the sound is punchy and full. Not all of the previous DVD supplements have been carried over, but what's left out is negligible, and added to the numerous behind-the-scenes featurettes are two Blu-ray exclusives: a new “making-of” featurette for *Raiders* and a previously unreleased 1981 made-for-TV special. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Les Misérables ★★★½

Worldwide Media, 2 discs, 181 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.95

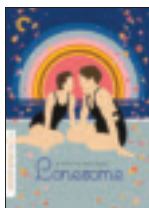


This 1982 French TV adaptation of the Victor Hugo classic—the story of a paroled prisoner in 19th-century France who seeks redemption and a new life in the face of persistent threats—suffers in this U.S. release, which not only deletes a half-hour from the original broadcast but is also awkwardly dubbed by American actors who seem to be cold-reading their lines. French cinema icon Lino Ventura leads the sprawling ensemble as Jean Valjean, the beleaguered yet indefatigable ex-convict who spent years in prison for stealing a loaf of bread, while Michel Bouquet projects the right degree of self-righteous malevolence as Inspector Javert, Valjean's brutal persecutor. Director Robert Hossein manages to keep the action moving at a crisp pace while staying relatively faithful to

Hugo's elaborate narrative (the sequence involving the storming of the barricades during a student uprising is imaginatively staged), although one could find fault with some elements of the production design (most of the ragged clothing on the poverty-stricken characters looks brand new, and carefully applied smudges of soot on the photogenic cast members' faces barely suggest a life of grime). Even with all of the drawbacks, however, this rare production—mostly unknown to American viewers—should be considered a strong optional purchase. (P. Hall)

Lonesome ★★★

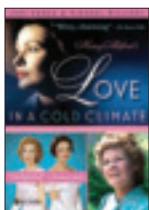
Criterion, 69 min., not rated, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.95; Blu-ray: \$39.95



Paul Fejos' *Lonesome* (1928) is a rare hybrid of silent and sound film, completed just as *The Jazz Singer* kicked off the rush to talkies. At heart, it's a simple, sweet romantic drama about two young working-class people—Jim (Glenn Tryon) and Mary (Barbara Kent)—living in the crush of New York City and looking for companionship, who find each other during a Fourth of July weekend. As the pair become acquainted during a playful day at Coney Island, Fejos observes their innocent courtship with a mix of poetic images and sophisticated filmmaking: the camera floats above them amidst the throngs, whooshes through carnival rides, and cross-cuts between the two when they are accidentally separated after a fire breaks out, capturing the panic along the crowded midway. The three brief dialogue sequences are static and somewhat awkward—although also a little endearing when seen as an attempt to address the turbulent changeover occurring in cinema—and the film features a lovely synchronized music and effects track that adds to the atmosphere of the metropolis at rush hour and the jovial mood of the famed amusement park. Bowing on DVD and Blu-ray in a beautifully restored and remastered edition, extras include two bonus Fejos films from 1929 (the silent *The Last Performance*, and a reconstructed sound version of the musical *Broadway*), audio commentary, archival interviews, and a booklet with notes and essays. Recommended. (S. Axmayer)

Love in a Cold Climate ★★★

Acorn, 3 discs, 405 min., not rated, DVD: \$59.99



This 1980 Thames Television adaptation of Nancy Mitford's novels *The Pursuit of Love* and *Love in a Cold Climate* revolves around three young upper-class British women during the 1920s and '30s, two of whom—Linda (Lucy Gutteridge) and Polly (Rosalyn Landor)—marry unwisely for

love. But the third—Fanny (Isabelle Amyes), who also narrates—makes a more levelheaded choice of mate. While the trio of actresses are perfectly fine, the more memorable performances here are by Judi Dench as Fanny's Aunt Sadie, Michael Aldridge as Sadie's hilariously blustering husband; Michael Williams as Fanny's easygoing hypochondriac Uncle Davey; and Jean-Pierre Cassel as a debonair French duke. This version of Mitford's cheeky portrait of British aristocratic life between the wars isn't superior to the same-titled 2001 adaptation (VL Online-1/06), but is engaging in its own right. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

Macbeth ★★★

Olive, 107 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95



This low-budget, highly stylized 1948 adaptation of Shakespeare's classic play was the last film that Orson Welles directed in Hollywood for 10 years. Working entirely with minimalist studio sets, Welles cast himself in the lead, playing Macbeth as a brutish, brooding medieval soldier in a barbarous Scots culture comprised of tribal kings in a harsh, barren world. While taking an unconventional approach to classic works is commonplace today, it was unheard of in 1940s Hollywood. Welles cast theater veterans (including Jeanette Nolan as Lady Macbeth and Dan O'Herlihy as Macduff), dressing them in heavy costumes of animal pelts and dark robes. The overall result is an almost primordial reading of the material—with the witches representing pagan forces of a pre-Christian world—but at the same time tuned to a post-World War II recognition of the tyranny that can arise from overly ambitious leaders, as it follows Macbeth's bloody path to power. Poorly received in the U.S. but praised in Europe for its boldness and invention, the film's reputation has grown over the years. While it won't help lazy students skip the original—Welles edited the text to fit his interpretation—this remains one of the most dynamic screen interpretations of *Macbeth*. Edited down and dubbed over for its theatrical release, this is the complete 107-minute version with the original soundtrack, restored in 1980 by UCLA and presented here with a handsome black-and-white remastering. Recommended. (S. Axmayer)

Mike & Molly: The Complete Second Season ★★1/2

Warner, 3 discs, 462 min., not rated, DVD: \$44.98



The first season of CBS's *Mike & Molly* ended with Officer Mike Biggs (Billy Gardell) proposing marriage to 4th-grade teacher Molly (Emmy award-winner Melissa McCarthy), while the second revolves around

wedding planning (and the couple's continued attempts to lose weight). Although Mike's misanthropic mother, Peggy (Rondi Reed), warns him that "rushing to move in with this woman is a horrible mistake," he does so anyway, which means sharing space with Molly's wine-guzzling mom, Joyce (Swoosie Kurtz), and her pothead sister, Victoria (Katy Mixon). Mike's cop partner, Carl (Reno Wilson), who lives with his grandmother (Cleo King), makes a similar life change, deciding to abandon his serial-dating ways after meeting Christina (Holly Robinson Peete). Other characters include Joyce's boorish boyfriend, Vince (Louis Mustillo); sarcastic waiter Samuel (Nyambi Nyambi); and Jim, Peggy's scene-stealing pooch. *Mike & Molly* is an old-fashioned, multi-camera sitcom that relies on a live audience, insult humor, and set-bound scenes, at a time when many contemporary comedies are incorporating location work. While Mike and Molly come across as sympathetic, their relatives monopolize the put-downs, which often fall into the too-much-information category. Compiling all 23 episodes from 2011–12, extras include "Mike & Molly's Wedding Video," and a gag reel. Optional. (K. Fennessy)

Modern Family: The Complete Third Season ★★★

Fox, 3 discs, 515 min., not rated, DVD: \$49.98, Blu-ray: \$59.99



ABC's contemporary reworking of the classic American family sitcom presents an extended clan that's nothing if not diverse. Patriarch Jay Pritchett (Ed O'Neill) is on his second marriage, this time to a younger woman, Gloria (Sofia Vergara), who has an adolescent son, Manny (Rico Rodriguez). Jay's grown daughter, Claire (Julie Bowen), is a suburban stay-at-home mom playing parent to her three kids and husband, Phil (Ty Burrell); and Jay's son, Mitchell (Jesse Tyler Ferguson), is a self-conscious, anxiety-ridden gay man with a flamboyant partner, Cameron (Eric Stonestreet), and an increasingly demanding adopted baby. The episodes deal with familiar situations (this season opens with a vacation at a western dude ranch and goes through celebrations of Halloween and Thanksgiving, as well as an unconventional Christmas), and routinely end with a heartwarming reflection on family life. But the Pritchetts' everyday challenges are as up-to-date as they are timeless, and the writing continually finds new comic twists on well-worn themes. Both a popular hit and a critical favorite, *Modern Family* won the Emmy for Outstanding Comedy Series twice and earned 14 nominations for this top-rated third season. Compiling 24 episodes from 2011–12, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes, deleted scenes, and a gag reel. Recommended. (S. Axmayer)

NCIS: Los Angeles—The Third Season ★★★

Paramount, 6 discs, 1,029 min., not rated, DVD: \$62.99



In this third season of the spin-off from military investigative procedural favorite *NCIS*, Chris O'Donnell and LL Cool J continue as stalwart team leader G. Callen and top field agent Sam Hanna, with Linda Hunt adding wry humor and dramatic heft as unit commander Hetty Lange. Most of the storylines here find Callen and Hanna working on cases involving the deaths of military personnel, or terrorist plots in the U.S. and abroad, but some highlight supporting unit members such as Deeks (Eric Christian Olsen) or Kensi Blye (Daniela Ruah), a pair who also share a seriocomic segment impersonating a married couple. Along the way, some rather dark secrets are revealed about characters' pasts, and this season adds some shocks about the fates of two semi-regulars (as well as some new ones, including Miguel Ferrer's *NCIS* assistant director), ending with a cliffhanger involving a master spy called the Chameleon (Christopher Lambert). Compiling all 24 episodes from 2011–12, extras include audio commentary, behind-the-scenes featurettes, deleted scenes, and a *Hawaii Five-O* crossover episode. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

A New Leaf ★★★

Olive, 102 min., G, DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95



Elaine May's 1971 directorial debut is a dark romantic comedy starring Walter Matthau as spoiled trust-fund beneficiary and blithely self-absorbed misanthrope Henry Graham, who burns through his inheritance and decides to marry into money. Matthau is superb, revealing his character's sense of privilege in hilariously dry comments dropped with practiced nonchalance—"I have no skills, no resources, no ambitions," he confesses in justification of his desire to remain among the idle rich. And May is sweetly naïve as Henrietta Lowell, the socially inept heiress who lives for botany and gives herself over to this con man with the same trust that has made her victim to corrupt lawyer Andy McPherson (Jack Weston) and a parasitic staff who rip her off while posing as servants. Even as the predatory Henry justifies his plot to murder her for her money ("Never have I seen one woman in whom every social grace was so lacking"), he looks after her with growing (and entirely unexpected) affection, which ultimately gives him pause when she opens herself up to all sorts of potential fatal accidents on a camping trip. May's initial cut was reportedly a longer, much darker film, with more murders and no happy ending, but it was recut at the studio's insistence. Regard-

less, the theatrical version is still very funny, mixing screwball elements, social satire, and black comedy, with pitch-perfect direction. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

The Office: Season Eight ★★★1/2

Universal, 5 discs, 530 min., not rated, DVD: \$49.98, Blu-ray: \$59.98



While *The Office* is at heart a group effort, the departure of Steve Carrell in the seventh season left the NBC series stumbling around looking for a new identity to replace the definitive example of ineffectual management embodied in Carrell's Michael Scott. Season eight promotes Andy (Ed Helms) to the private office and adds James Spader as enigmatic new CEO Robert California, who's much more effective at hiding his managerial incompetence from the staff. The show leans even more heavily on the terrific ensemble this time around—notably Rainn Wilson's Dwight, who brings a hardcore survivalist aesthetic to office politics, and John Krasinski and Jenna Fischer as office sweethearts turned doting parents, Jim and Pam. But while the plotlines veer here and there to create friction and comic conflict, they also never really map out a destination. The final segments set the stage for new management in the show's ninth and closing year. Compiling all 24 episodes from 2011–12, extras include two extended episodes, deleted scenes, a gag reel, and webisodes. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

Once Upon a Time: The Complete First Season ★★★

Buena Vista, 5 discs, 946 min., TV-PG, DVD: \$45.99, Blu-ray: \$79.99



This ABC series recasts classic tales of heroes, magic, witches, and curses in the template of small-town melodrama. The season begins with the evocatively named Emma Swan (Jennifer Morrison) finding a boy named Henry (Jared Gilmore) on her doorstep—claiming to be the son she gave up for adoption 10 years earlier. Henry shows her a strange book and insists that she's the only one who can undo a curse cast on his hometown of Storybrooke, ME. Dubious, Emma nonetheless accompanies Henry to Storybrooke, where she encounters manipulative mayor (and Henry's adoptive mom) Regina Mills (Lana Parrilla), who—revealed in flashbacks—is also the Evil Queen threatening Snow White, aka elementary school teacher Mary Margaret Blanchard (Ginnifer Goodwin). Emma quickly gets caught up in the travails of the assorted townsfolk who have forgotten their past fairy tale existences, and the series reworks familiar characters (Rumpelstiltskin, Little Red Riding

Hood, Beauty and the Beast, Pinocchio, and so on) into the mix. A clever, handsomely produced series, *Once Upon a Time* serves up familiar narratives that are rewritten with inventive tragic twists, while also providing powerful motivations for the iconic figures. Compiling all 22 episodes from the 2011–12 debut season, extras include audio commentaries, behind-the-scenes featurettes, deleted scenes, and bloopers (the Blu-ray release includes an additional featurette on the fairy tales behind the show). Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Parenthood: Season 3 ★★★

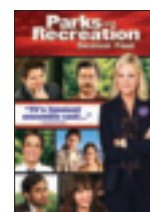
Universal, 4 discs, 775 min., not rated, DVD: \$59.99



In many respects, season three of NBC's *Parenthood*—tracking the ups and downs of the Braverman family—revolves around fresh starts. Adam (Peter Krause) and Kristina (Monica Potter) have their baby, and Adam looks for a job; Crosby (Dax Shepard) and Jasmine (Joy Bryant) pursue new relationships; Amber (Mae Whitman) strikes out on her own; and Julia (Erika Christensen) and Joel (Sam Jaeger) try to find a way to increase their family. These developments present opportunities as Adam and Crosby open a recording studio, Amber gets an apartment and a job with a political candidate (Jonathan Tucker), and Julia and Joel arrange an adoption with Zoe (Rosa Salazar), a young woman without the financial means to provide for a child. Side effects include sibling rivalry and some inappropriate employer-employee situations. Adam and Kristina also send Max (Max Burkholder), who has Asperger's syndrome, to public school, which presents challenges. Meanwhile, Sarah (Lauren Graham) remains in more of a holding pattern as she reunites with ex-boyfriend Mark (Jason Ritter). Although matriarch Camille (Bonnie Bedelia) continues to get short shrift, Sarah's son, Drew (Miles Heizer), becomes a more fully realized character as he prepares for college and embarks on a new romance. Despite some tough moments and a few tears, the year ends on a high note with a wedding and a new family member. Compiling all 18 episodes from 2011–12, extras include audio commentaries and deleted scenes. Recommended. (K. Femmessy)

Parks and Recreation: Season Four ★★★

Universal, 4 discs, 471 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.98



In the last few years this NBC series (created by the producers of *The Office* in the same mockumentary style) has become one of the smartest sitcoms on network TV. In this fourth season,



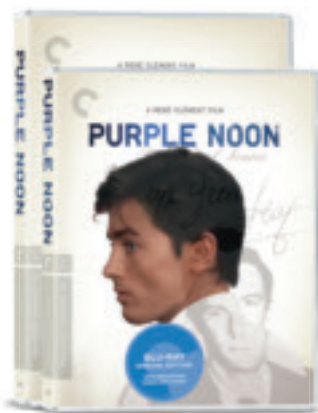
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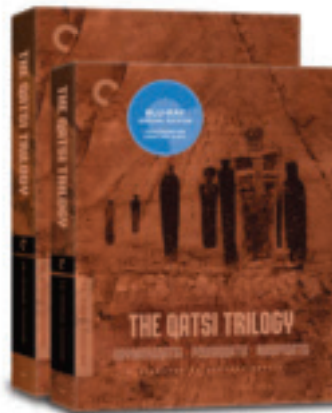
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dedicated civil servant Leslie Knope (Amy Poehler) hits the campaign trail to run for Pawnee City Council against Bobby Newport (guest star Paul Rudd), the lovable doofus son of the town's biggest employer. While she's the Energizer bunny in a department of underachievers, the entire staff rallies around her out of friendship and camaraderie, and she even finds love with co-worker Ben (Adam Scott), who resigns from his job to both romance her in the open (it's against the rules to date a colleague and Leslie's nothing if not a stickler for details) and to run her campaign. Rashida Jones (as Leslie's best friend, Ann), Nick Offerman (the gruffly paternal, defiantly libertarian boss, Ron), Aziz Ansari, Aubrey Plaza, Chris Pratt, Retta, Jim O'Heir, and Rob Lowe round out the cast (one of the funniest ensembles on TV), and the stories are inextricably wound around their personalities and relationships. Other guest stars include Patricia Clarkson and Megan Mullally as Ron's ex-wives, Louis CK as an old boyfriend of Leslie's, and a superb Kathryn Hahn as Bobby's high-powered campaign manager. Compiling all 22 episodes from 2011–12, extras include four extended episodes, deleted scenes, a gag reel, webisodes, a music video, and Knope campaign ads. Recommended. (S. Axmayer)

Person of Interest: The Complete First Season

★★★1/2

Warner, 1,008 min., not rated, DVD: 6 discs, \$59.98; Blu-ray/DVD Combo: 10 discs, \$69.98



One of the bona fide success stories of the 2011–12 TV season, CBS's new high-concept action thriller serves up a clever mix of conspiracy, freelance heroes, and mysterious puzzles in a modern world where Big Brother is indeed watching and a supercomputer is cross-referencing personal data. Jim Caviezel stars as fiercely driven ex-CIA special operative John Reese, roused to action by a computer genius named Finch (Michael Emerson), who uses a homeland security surveillance program to identify persons of interest—citizens who may be either potential victims or perpetrators. Part of the show's draw is that the pair has to discover which is which before they can stop the crime. Creator Jonathan Nolan co-wrote the recent *Batman* movies and he puts a bit of that Gotham City corruption into his vision of contemporary New York, where the rot travels all the way to the top of the NYPD, with Reese a kind of incognito superhero in civilian clothes. Taraji P. Henson and Kevin Chapman complete the team as Det. Joss Carter and Det. Lionel Fusco, cops kept in the dark about the machinations employed by Reese and Finch but working for the same end. Compiling all 23 episodes, extras include an extended pilot, audio commentary, a behind-the-scenes featurette, and a gag reel. Highly recommended. (S. Axmayer)

Rags & Riches: Mary Pickford Collection

★★★

Oscilloscope, 3 discs, 244 min., not rated, DVD: \$34.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95



Mary Pickford was "America's Sweetheart" during the early 20th century—Hollywood's first female superstar, and the darling of silent cinema. Centering on the titular theme, *Rags & Riches* compiles three films from Pickford's prime years featuring the actress playing characters at both ends of the economic scale, but always as little girls in a grown-up world. *The Poor Little Rich Girl* (1917) casts Pickford as Gwen—a sweet but neglected adolescent daughter of a workaholic father and social-climbing mother—who just wants her parents' attention and affection. Directed by Maurice Tourneur, the decidedly old-fashioned family drama features an imaginative dream sequence that anticipates *The Wizard of Oz*. Almost a decade later in director William Beaudine's *Sparrows* (1926), Pickford plays Molly, an orphan imprisoned on a work farm in the swamps, serving as both big sister and mother figure to a ragtag collection of other children turned into virtual slaves by a gnarled Simon Legree-type character. Molly is a model of courage as she leads her charges in a thrilling escape to the promised land through the dank, fetid, alligator-infested wetlands. In *The Hoodlum* (1919), helmed by Sidney Franklin, Pickford's Amy Burke is a well-to-do lass who winds up in the slums, making do through pluck—which, luckily, Pickford has in abundance. All three works are backed by original scores performed by small orchestras. Also featuring the early short drama *Ramona* (1910)—directed by D.W. Griffith and starring Pickford in the title role—extras include audio commentaries, outtakes, and a home movie. A fine showcase for a silent-movie icon, this is recommended. (S. Axmayer)

Revenge: The Complete First Season

★★★

Buena Vista, 5 discs, 924 min., TV-PG, DVD: \$45.99



ABC's juicy nighttime soap opera about righteous vengeance among the rich and beautiful in the Hamptons was one of the success stories of the 2011–12 season, thanks largely to the gleeful bad behavior and queen-bee commanding presence of Madeleine Stowe, who plays Victoria Grayson, the community's social monarch. Victoria is also the major nemesis of Emily Thorne (Emily VanCamp), a beautiful, well-to-do young woman who settles among the old-money stalwarts with the intent of exacting revenge on the people who destroyed her family. Part of the show's attraction is the contrast between Emily's pretty, seemingly

benign, society-girl exterior and her inner self—a ruthless, focused, brutally committed individual on a mission. Luckily for Emily, one of the youngest tech billionaires in the world, Nolan Ross (Gabriel Mann), becomes a trusted ally and volunteers to play sidekick. Added to the storyline is the familiar collision of the arrogant vacation crowd versus the working folk who live in the town year-round. *Revenge* is lavishly produced pure melodrama, delivering exactly what the premise promises: a takedown of the rich and powerful in a culture where bad behavior is standard social currency. Compiling all 22 episodes from the 2011–12 debut season, DVD extras include audio commentary, behind-the-scenes featurettes, deleted scenes, a blooper reel, and music videos. A guilty pleasure, this is recommended. (S. Axmayer)

Rizzoli & Isles: The Complete Second Season

★★★

Warner, 3 discs, 629 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.98



The second season of TNT's female buddy-cop series based on Tess Gerritsen's books finds Angie Harmon and Sasha Alexander returning as Jane Rizzoli, a tough-girl Irish-American homicide detective, and Maura Isles, the skilled, sophisticated Boston medical examiner who is both Jane's best friend and a professional colleague. The storyline picks up from the preceding season, with Jane suffering from depression after being wounded in a deadly shootout in the precinct, and reluctant to accept an award. Each of the remaining episodes focuses on a single major case, with the finale serving up another semi-cliffhanger, involving the shooting of Maura's father. Secondary plots feature other family members, such as Jane's troubled brother, Tommy (Colin Egglesfield), and the continuing supporting cast includes Bruce McGill as Jane's grizzled partner, and Lorraine Bracco as her somewhat spacey mom. Also on hand are occasional guest stars, with one episode showcasing Fox host Bill O'Reilly, playing himself. *Rizzoli & Isles* isn't blessed with great writing—the plots are fairly generic and the dialogue often strained—but as an up-to-date take on the *Cagney & Lacey* formula, the series is agreeable, thanks mostly to its game cast. Compiling all 15 episodes from the 2011 second season, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette, deleted scenes, and a blooper reel. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

Run for Cover

★★

Olive, 93 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95

James Cagney takes on a rare frontier role in this 1955 Western, playing Matt Dow, a cowboy with a past (he served time for a crime he didn't commit) and a sense of duty

to an orphaned young man named Davey Bishop (John Derek), who is crippled by a cowardly sheriff (shooting Davey before he gets all the facts). Cagney, better known for his street smarts and urban snap, is as tough as barbed wire and straight as an arrow, so the townsfolk make him their chief lawman, not merely as a way to apologize for his undeserved imprisonment but out of respect for his character and forthrightness. But alongside Dow's story, this is also a juvenile-delinquent drama with Davey as an angry young man, a self-pitying guy who is bitter about the hand that life has dealt him. Director Nicholas Ray's *Run for Cover* came out the same year as his other, better-known tale of misunderstood teens, *Rebel Without a Cause*, and it suffers in comparison. Derek has none of James Dean's anxious energy or expressiveness, and aside from a strong performance by Cagney this is otherwise a conventional example of the genre. Viveca Lindfors and Jean Hersholt costar as immigrant farmers, while Ernest Borgnine also has a small role. Optional, at best. (S. Axmaker)



The Secret Diaries of Miss Anne Lister ★★★ BBC, 91 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.98

This somewhat racy BBC docudrama profiles British diarist Anne Lister (Maxine Peake), who was born in West Yorkshire in 1791, preferred women to men, and had no desire to marry. Heartbreak comes early for Anne when her girlfriend, Mariana (Anna Madeley), marries Mr. Lawton (Michael Culkin) for reasons of financial security, although she and Anne remain in contact and Anne holds out hope that they can live together once the elderly widower passes away. Depressed over Mariana's marriage, Anne, who lives with her aunt and uncle (Gemma Jones, Alan David) plunges into writing and self-study. Best friend Tib (Susan Lynch) knows about Anne's sexual orientation and shares similar inclinations, which leads to jealousy when Anne continues to pine for Mariana. Neighbors mostly find Anne odd, although hints about the truth circulate through the community after she rejects a marriage proposal from a wealthy suitor. Although Anne's recklessness is intended to be read as bravery, her obsession with Mariana makes her seem adolescent; but she shows greater maturity after she decides to establish a coal-mining operation on part of her land—an opportunity that also provides a second chance at romance, this time with Ann Walker (Christine Bottomley), a neighbor who becomes her business partner. As opposed to a conventional literary biography, *The Secret Diaries of Miss Anne Lister*



plays more like a highbrow soap opera, with sex scenes that are fairly explicit for public television. DVD extras include a fascinating documentary about Anne's encoded diaries. Recommended. (K. Fennessy)

Sons of Anarchy: Season Four ★★★

Fox, 656 min., not rated, DVD: 4 discs, \$59.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$69.99

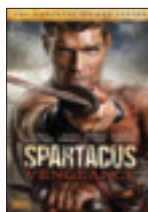
The 2011 fourth season of this addictive drama about motorcycle outlaws in the small Southern California town of Charming begins with the clannish group known as SAMCRO rebuilding after a prison stint. Before long, club president Clay (Ron Perlman) plunges the leather jacket brotherhood into the narcotics trade, the one area they had previously pledged to avoid. The new business brings renewed violence to the organization and the community, attracts the attention of a determined ATF agent, and tips the gang into a brutal fight over its soul that divides the members. The series was once all about family and commitment, but those ties are long forgotten in the volatility here, as the gang start killing their own. Charlie Hunnam is still the moral backbone as Jax, son of the founder and heir apparent to Clay, but torn between conflicting forces as everything begins to fall apart. But it's still aging lion Clay and fierce den mother Gemma (Katey Sagal)—once devoted partners, now split by the turmoil—who dominate and drive the series. Compiling all 13 episodes, extras include four extended episodes, audio commentaries, and behind-the-scenes featurettes. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



Spartacus: Vengeance ★★★

Anchor Bay, 3 discs, 572 min., not rated, DVD: \$49.98, Blu-ray: \$59.99

Serving up the second season of the splashy, trashy Starz original series *Spartacus* (the first was subtitled *Blood and Sand*), this sex-and-swordplay gladiator drama is very loosely based on the Stanley Kubrick classic (inspired by the Howard Fast novel). The show's original star, Andy Whitfield, sadly died of cancer after the first year, so Liam McIntyre steps into the role of Spartacus, the leader of the escaped slaves, now hiding in the wilds and hunted by the Romans. Meanwhile, Lucretia (Lucy Lawless) miraculously survives the previous season's massacre finale, returning wounded, dazed, and convinced that she speaks for the will of the gods. While *Vengeance* is over the top like its predecessor—full of soft-core nudity and loads of crimson CGI spatter and flying limbs—it's also a little more knowing in its balance of outrageousness and camp, as it



shifts from slave melodrama and arena spectacle to the righteous vengeance of tormented rebels. But let's not confuse this with history; it's still all sex and violence and mercenary schemes. Compiling all 10 episodes from 2012, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes, interviews, and bloopers (the Blu-ray release adds extended versions of nine episodes and audio commentaries). Optional, at best. (S. Axmaker)

Steve Martin: The Television Stuff ★★★

Shout! Factory, 3 discs, 390 min., not rated, DVD: \$34.95

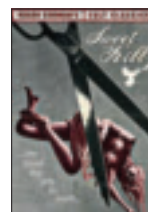
While Steve Martin's career took off—as he became one of the most popular standup comedians and a big-screen star of such hits as *The Jerk* and *Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid*—he also wrote and starred in a series of cable and network TV specials. Collecting all six, *Steve Martin: The Television Stuff* kicks off with 1976's *On Location with Steve Martin*, recorded live at the Troubadour in Los Angeles, and ends with 1984's *Homage to Steve*, featuring his Oscar-nominated short film *The Absent-Minded Waiter* (co-starring Buck Henry and Teri Garr) and a 1979 standup performance. The four NBC specials in between—*Steve Martin: A Wild and Crazy Guy* (1978), *Steve Martin: Comedy Is Not Pretty* (1980), *All Commercials...A Steve Martin Special* (1980), and *Steve Martin's Best Show Ever* (1981)—follow a variety-show format, filled with gags, skits, and wacky production numbers, with occasional nuggets of comedy gold, such as Marty Robbins' "El Paso," performed with a cast of monkeys and elephants. Also included are Martin's appearances on other programs—*The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson*, *Saturday Night Live*, *The Late Show with David Letterman*, and select awards shows—many unseen since their original broadcast. Shot on videotape, this looks about as good as can be expected from the era. Extras include a new interview with Martin, and a booklet. Presenting a snapshot of American pop culture—and Martin-mania at its height—this is a wonderful companion piece to Martin's movies and his memoir, *Born Standing Up*. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



Sweet Kill ★★1/2

Shout! Factory (exclusively avail. from www.shoutfactory.com), 85 min., R, DVD: \$19.99

Writer-director Curtis Hanson's (*L.A. Confidential*) 1973 debut is a moody low-budget thriller about impotent high school gym teacher Eddie Collins (onetime Hollywood heartthrob Tab Hunter), who can only be aroused by the corpses of young women (the result, flashbacks suggest, of painful memories of his promiscuous mother). Eddie sets off on a



killing spree that eventually includes not only those unlucky girls who enter his orbit but also those who suspect him for the crimes. The aging Hunter is surprisingly effective in a role that takes advantage of his craggy, if weathered, good looks while forcing him to plumb deeper emotional levels, but the rest of the cast is amateurish, and the film suffers from poverty-row production values. To make matters worse, producer Roger Corman inserted new footage, mostly featuring ludicrously gratuitous nudity, to make it more saleable as exploitation fare (it's this version—called *The Arousers*—that is actually on this DVD, although it is being advertised under Hanson's original title). A crudely-made, *Psycho*-inspired flick tailor-made for drive-ins during the '70s, *Sweet Kill* gave Hunter a welcome opportunity to prove that he could really act (though he's admittedly no Olivier, or Anthony Perkins), and marked the arrival of an important American director—even if Hanson was reportedly unhappy over what Corman did with his film. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

This is Cinerama ★★ ★

Flicker Alley, 2 discs, 127 min., not rated, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.95

The 1952 extravaganza *This is Cinerama* ushered in the modern era of wide-screen movie exhibition. Invented by Fred Waller, Cinerama cinematography employed three synchronized cameras sharing a single shutter, after which the images were projected from three synchronized projectors onto an oversized curved screen that stretched 146 degrees deep, backed by stereophonic sound that engulfed viewers. Produced by Merian C. Cooper and Robert L. Bendick—with narration by co-producer Lowell Thomas—this debut Cinerama feature is a plot-less assemblage of nonfiction episodes designed to showcase the system's audiovisual brilliance. Sequences shot from the front seat of a roller coaster and from an airplane zooming over the Grand Canyon created a visceral thrill for audiences 60 years ago. Needless to say, no small-screen viewing can re-create the original theater experience, and the segments here—including travelogue views of a Cypress Gardens waterskiing show, an aerial tour of Niagara Falls, and a sampling of European tourist offerings—can be seen as either quaint or dismally dated. However, this release is important because it preserves the historically significant production in a handsome digitally remastered version (presented on a Smilebox curved screen simulation). Bundled with an informative 28-page booklet, the substantial extras here include an audio commentary, a radio interview with Waller, and image galleries, as well as two fine featurettes—one on the laborious work that went into remastering the film, and another



offering tribute to the efforts of the New Neon Movies cinema in Dayton, OH, which helped revive Cinerama movies in the late 1990s. Recommended. (P Hall)

Thomas & Sarah ★★ ★

Acorn, 4 discs, 653 min., not rated, DVD: \$49.99

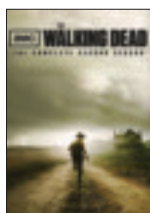
With *Downton*-mania at full steam, the time is opportune for the re-release of this 1979 13-episode *Upstairs, Downstairs* spin-off, in which real-life couple John Alderton and Pauline Collins re-create their popular characters, Thomas Watkins and Sarah Moffat. As the season opens, Sarah is a single mother and—as ever—“the most amiable of companions” to a sickly woman of means. Thomas, who initially refused to marry Sarah and was not present when the baby was born, is a struggling mechanic looking to make the leap to car salesman, and a wife and child would be “just the feathers” he needs “for my cap.” And that's just the beginning of this delightfully entertaining series that serves up misadventures and get rich schemes gone awry. Not as densely populated as *Upstairs, Downstairs* (and the cliffhanger ending setting up the scrapped season two is unfortunate), *Thomas & Sarah* has still aged well, and stands on its own. Recommended. (D. Liebenson)



The Walking Dead: The Complete Second Season ★★ ★

Anchor Bay, 4 discs, 578 min., not rated, DVD: \$59.99, Blu-ray: \$69.99

Season two of AMC's cult series—set in a bleak future where zombies walk the earth—struggled to find its way after the network fired creator Frank Darabont. The scope was whittled down, with former police officer Rick Grimes (Andrew Lincoln) and his gypsy group of survivors taking refuge near an isolated family farm headed up by wary patriarch Hershel Greene (Scott Wilson), an old-fashioned, God-fearing country doctor just protecting his own extended brood. The show almost stops dead in its tracks for this campout in the woods, with endless struggles over leadership, before rousing back to life at the halfway point as the suppressed conflicts become so volatile they finally erupt under pressure. After this, *The Walking Dead* finds its footing again in the characters' long, strange, sometimes fatal trip through the end of the world, and the season finale raises the threat level in a bloody battle with a literal stampede of undead cattle on a migratory sweep across the countryside. Compiling all 13 episodes from 2011–12, extras include episode commentaries, deleted scenes, behind-the-scenes featurettes, and webisodes. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



More Boxed Sets

All in the Family: The Complete Series (Shout! Factory, DVD: 28 discs, \$199.98). Featuring all 208 episodes (1971–79) of Norman Lear's classic sitcom revolving around the Bunker family, this compilation also includes bonus documentaries, pilots, and a booklet.



The Complete Red Green Show: High (Quality) Quantity Collection

(Acorn, DVD: 50 discs, \$299.99). Compiling all 15 seasons (1991–2006) from the Canadian series following handyman Red (Steve Smith) and the Possum Lodge gang, this boxed set also includes the specials *Red Green's We Can't Help It—We're Men*, *It's a Wonderful Red Green Christmas*, *Red Green D.V.D.—Duct Tape Virtuoso Deluxe*, *Hindsight Is 20/20*, and *The Red Green Story: We're All in This Together*, as well as loads of bonus features.

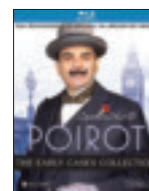


Downton Abbey: Seasons One & Two (PBS, DVD: 6 discs, \$59.99; Blu-ray: 5 discs, \$64.99). The Crawley family and their servants experience trials and triumphs in this 2010–11 compilation of the first two seasons of the BAFTA and Emmy-winning WWI-era period drama. Extras include bonus featurettes.



Poirot: The Early Cases Collection

(Acorn, DVD: 18 discs, \$199.99; Blu-ray: 13 discs, \$249.99). Starring David Suchet as Agatha Christie's debonair Belgian sleuth, this collection includes all 45 mysteries from series 1–6 (1989–2007), remastered and presented in the original U.K. broadcast order.



Video Librarian Online

Visit Video Librarian Online (www.videolibrarian.com) for more reviews during November and December, including: *2 Broke Girls: The Complete First Season*, *Bored to Death: The Complete Third Season*, *Dance Moms: Season One*, *The Dark Mirror*, *Exile*, *Get a Life: Complete Series*, *Magical Mystery Tour*, *Pursued*, *Terra Nova: The Complete Series*, *Vexed: Series 1*, *Waterloo Road: Series 1*, and much more!

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

★★★★ = Excellent

★★★ = Good

★★ = Fair

★ = Poor

PPR = Public Performance Rights

DD = Digital Download

Aud = Audience

K = Preschool-Kindergarten

E = Elementary (grades 1-3)

I = Intermediate (grades 4-6)

J = Jr. High (grades 7-8)

H = High School (grades 9-12)

C = Colleges & Universities

P = Public Libraries

CHILDREN'S

The Adventures of Chuck & Friends: Monster Rally ★★★

(2012) 110 min. DVD: \$12.99. Shout! Factory (avail. from most distributors).

In this animated series starring familiar Tonka truck toys from Hasbro, young dump truck Chuck and his friends Handy, Digger, Biggs, Rally, Soku, and Boomer—as well as Chuck's big brother, Rowdy—spend their days playing in a scrap yard, where they often (inadvertently) get into a little mischief. In "Where There's a Wheel," Chuck goes to dangerous lengths to attract some attention, taking a set of fat tires intended for the larger Rowdy and finding himself in trouble on the road. In "Hop, Skip & a Jump," Chuck gets it into his head that he and his crew should become circus acrobats, with near-disastrous consequences. "Daredevil Chuck" is a cautionary story for kids about the dangers of accepting dares, while "Attack of the 50-Foot Chuck"—the best and funniest episode here—finds the characters building their own giant monster truck out of scrap parts, and watching it quickly careen out of control. Compiling 10 episodes, this is an engaging series with winsome characters who learn to cooperate in order to solve problems. Bonus features include a sing-along song. Recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

Barbie: The Princess & the Popstar

★★★

(2012) 76 min. DVD: \$19.98. Universal Studios Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).

This latest computer-animated entry in the fluffy music-filled series based on the Mattel doll franchise features Barbie in a dual role in a loose adaptation of the Mark Twain classic *The Prince and the Pauper*. A celebration of the 500th anniversary of the kingdom of Meribella includes plans for a sparkly concert featuring hardworking purple-wigged pop singer Keira. When the songstress meets the mischievous and sweet Princess Tori, the nearly lookalike teens immediately connect, bonding over the different ups and downs in their lives, and discovering that each has a magic tool (hairbrush, microphone) they can use to transform into each other. While each girl takes on new responsibilities—with mixed results—conflicts arise in the form of Tori's snobby aunt and Keira's dastardly manager, who must be stopped when he sets his sights on the royal Diamond Gardenia. Peppered with bouncy songs (including a corny take on Cyndi Lauper with "Princesses Just Want to Have Fun"), cool outfits, and cute creatures, DVD extras include related webisodes, outtakes, and a music video. Sure to be popular, this feature-length film is recommended. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Big Drive (Sur la Route) ★★½

(2011) 9 min. DVD: \$129. National Film Board of Canada. PPR.

Anita Lebeau's short—presented in both English and French versions—boasts attractive animation but relatively little in the way of narrative. Essentially, it's a "road" vignette about four sisters who amuse themselves in the backseat of the family car (speeding home from a visit with their grandparents) while their parents up front largely ignore

their shenanigans. Like generations of kids in similar situations, the girls tussle and play games, all in good fun, to make the time pass more quickly. *Big Drive* can be taken as a simple celebration of sisterhood or as a tribute to the power of a child's imagination. And it certainly demonstrates Lebeau's skill in combining old-style, hand-drawn animation with computer-generated images that resemble photographic stills—a juxtaposition that can be striking. But while fitfully engaging and entertaining, this is a marginal acquisition, overall. Optional. Aud: P. (F. Swietek)

Big Time Movie/Rags ★★★

(2012) 156 min. DVD: \$14.99. Paramount Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned. ISBN: 1-4157-6763-7.

Originally broadcast on Nickelodeon to big time ratings, this double feature takes a page from the Disney musical playbook. *Big Time Movie*, a series spinoff, stars the members of boy band Big Time Rush (think: The Monkees) in a mildly amusing spy spoof (although the intended 'tween audience has seen this sort of thing done better and naughtier in the *Austin Powers* films). *Big Time Movie* is also something of a Beatles tribute, with the quartet—Kendall, James, Carlos, and Logan—performing Fab Four covers. Not as clever or as funny as *The Powerpuff Girls* cartoon, "Meet the Beat Alls," the film still boasts some clever bits of business, including a character called Maxwell with a silver hammer for a hand, and a teen spy named Penny Lane. The second feature, *Rags*—directed by Bille Woodruff—is a musical version of *Cinderella* with a gender switch (think: Jerry Lewis in *Cinderfella*). Here, put-upon orphan Charlie Prince (Max Schneider) is an aspiring singer-songwriter whose "Princess Charming" (Keke Palmer) is a rising singing sensation. A solid two-fer for 'tweens, this is recommended. Aud: P. (D. Liebenson)



Eating Baba Yaga: An Evening with Brian Rohr ★★★

(2011) 71 min. DVD: \$20. Brian Rohr (avail. from www.brianrohr.com). PPR.

Storyteller Brian Rohr presents two tales—"The Necklace Story" and "The Maiden Tzar"—in this no-frills stage presentation from Chicago's Elastic Arts Foundation. Wearing an embroidered cap and brocade vest, Rohr drums on a tabla while talk-singing about a beautiful girl in a small village, envied by the other young women, who also covet her powerful necklace, so they trick her into sacrificing it by claiming that they've all thrown their own into the bay. After the truth is revealed, the heroine dives to the

water's bottom, where she encounters an old woman who makes an unpleasant request. Rohr describes her as a Baba Yaga, a Russian term for something terrible that a person must face in order to move forward. Rohr's second tale concerns Ivan, who enjoys an idyllic life until his mother dies, his father goes away, and a jealous stepmother prevents him from finding the happiness that lies across the sea. During his *Princess Bride*-like travels, Ivan tangles with a trio of Baba Yagas before finding his destiny. The program ends with Rohr discussing the moral behind this Russian fable, which also features a firebird, a good witch, and 30 foster sisters. Especially given the relative dearth of engaging storyteller DVDs, this is recommended. Aud: E, P. (K. Fennessy)

The Cat in the Hat: Deluxe Edition

★★★

(1971) 25 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$24.98. Warner Home Video (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 0-7806-8638-1.

Animation icon Chuck Jones and Theodor "Dr. Seuss" Geisel produced this 1971 TV adaptation of the latter's beloved 1957 children's book, featuring song parodist Allan Sherman as the voice of the titular feline. A brother and

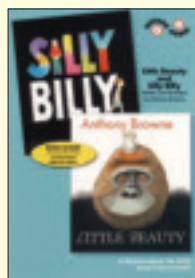
sister stuck inside on a dreary, rainy day are pulled out of the doldrums by the exuberant arrival of a rhyming, skateboarding, striped-hatted cat. Ignoring anthropomorphic family fish pet Karlos K. Krinkelbein—who tries to stop all the rambunctiousness—the Cat worms his way into the home with a tall tale about searching for his stolen "moss-covered three-handed family gradunza." Getting the children to join in the search, the Cat and the

siblings make a mess writing on household items, and the arrival of Cat's blue-haired creature pals Thing One and Thing Two only add to the chaos. Can the motley crew clean things up in time for Mother's return? This silly, song-filled short doesn't boast the greatest message (let a stranger in the house?), but still remains a classic some 40 years on, making a welcome debut on Blu-ray. Bonus features include a sing-along mode, and the additional Seuss stories "Daisy-Head Mayzie" and "The Hooper-Bloob Highway." Recommended. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Little Beauty and Silly Billy ★★★1/2

(2012) 13 min. DVD: \$69.95 (discussion guide included). Nutmeg Media. PPR. ISBN: 1-933938-86-2.

Featuring two tales from author and illustrator Anthony Browne, this iconographic-animated compilation includes 2008's *Little Beauty* and 2006's *Silly Billy*. Based on a story about real-life gorilla Koko, *Little Beauty* focuses on the friendship between the sign-language-proficient primate and a kitten named Beauty. The duo enjoy doing everything together (including their business, as we see a silly shot of the pair on the toilet and in the litter box) until a scary movie causes Koko to lash out in anger—a situation smoothed over with a funny twist. In *Silly Billy*, a young worrier who finds reasons to fear everything from shoes to giant birds learns a trick from his granny about channeling his anxiety into Guatemalan worry dolls (placed under the pillow at night). However, Billy—who named each doll—eventually grows concerned that he's being unfair in worrying *them*...with charming results. Also featuring a conversation with Browne, this colorfully drawn and engaging two-fer is highly recommended. Aud: K, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

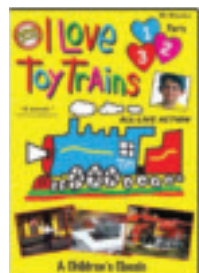


The Fresh Beat Band: The Wizard of Song ★★★1/2

(2011) 88 min. DVD: \$14.99. Paramount Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned. ISBN: 1-4157-6682-7.

There is little that is fresh about this empty-calorie Nick Jr. preschool series about a quartet of Stepford youth, who are always beaming, always upbeat, and always lip-syncing. In the headlining double-length episode, ensemble member Marina wants to take a cupcake break, but the band would rather keep rehearsing. Marina leaves and is swept up in a meta-free *Wizard of Oz* homage featuring her band mates as the Scarecrow, Tin Woods-Woman and Cowardly Lion. Sarah Chalke from *Scrubs* appears as Glinda, with

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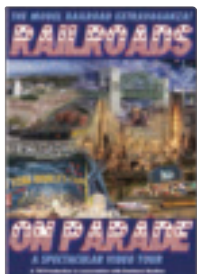
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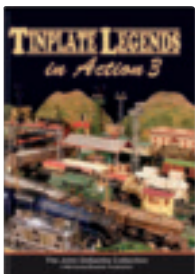
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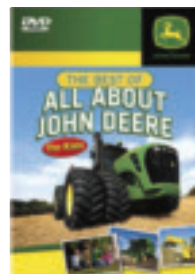
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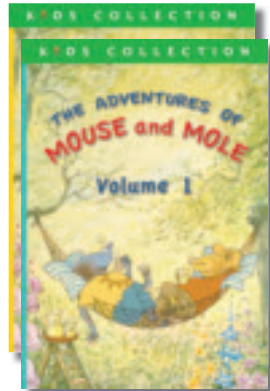
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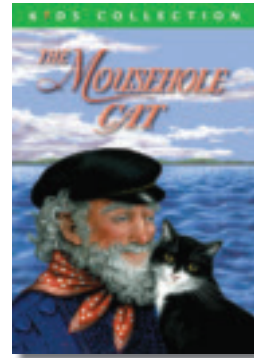
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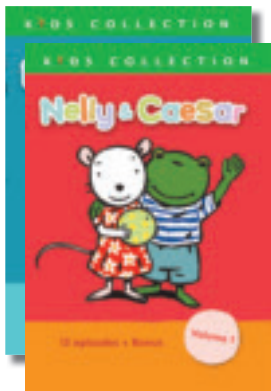
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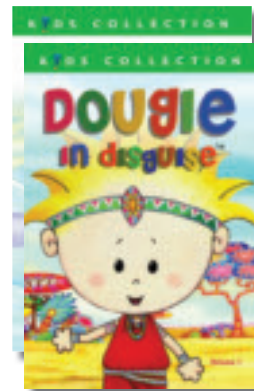
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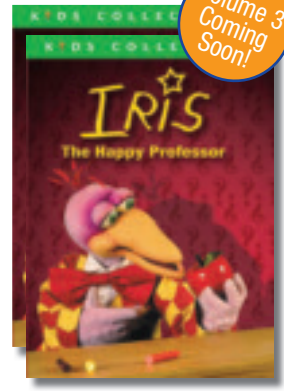
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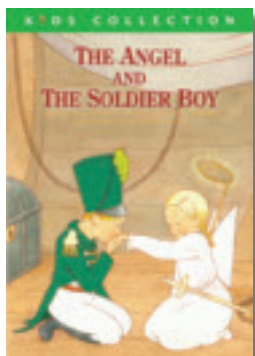
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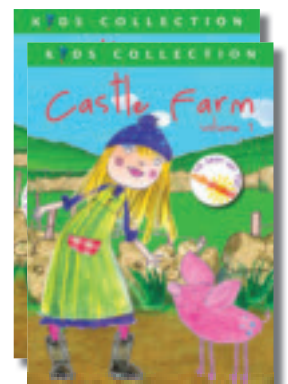
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Jason "I'm Yours" Mraz as the Wizard (and yes, he sings a reworked version of his biggest hit). Also included are two bonus episodes from the series: "Ghost Band" and "Chimps in Charge." Given the series' popularity, this should be considered a strong optional purchase. Aud: P. (D. Liebenson)

Knuffle Bunny Free: An Unexpected Diversion ★★★

(2012) 13 min. DVD: \$59.95 (study guide included). Weston Woods Studios. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 0-545-44753-4.

The final story in author and illustrator Mo Willems' trilogy (see reviews of *Knuffle Bunny* in VL-3/07 and *Knuffle Bunny Too* in VL-3/10), this adaptation of the 2010 picture book, backed by the music of Scotty Huff and Robert Reynolds, features the voices of Willems, wife Cher, and young daughter Trixie in roles based on themselves. Off on a family adventure to visit Oma and Opa in Holland, Trixie takes her titular beloved toy in a taxi to the airport, on the plane, and on a train to meet the grandfolks...until she notices that Knuffle Bunny is gone! While the adults attempt to distract Trixie with excursions to the park and a carnival (and even try to substitute with a flashy replacement), the girl comes to the realization that perhaps the lost Knuffle Bunny is making other children happy, and that she's old enough to move on. DVD extras include a read-along option and an interview with Willems. A winning end to a popular series, this is recommended. Aud: K, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Looney Tunes: Mouse Chronicles—The Chuck Jones Collection ★★★

(2012) 2 discs. 145 min. DVD: \$26.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99. Warner Home Video (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 0-7806-9599-2 (dvd), 0-7806-9616-6 (blu-ray).

The latest anthology of classic Looney Tunes theatrical shorts collects 19 cartoons featuring the lesser-known mouse heroes of Warner animation: Sniffles, a cute little child-like rodent, and the team of Hubie and Bertie, a pair of bantering pranksters. In the universe of Looney Tunes characters such as Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Porky Pig, Tweety and Sylvester, and Foghorn Leghorn, these guys are definitely minor stars, but all of the entries here are directed by Chuck Jones, arguably the greatest of the Looney Tunes directors. Launched in the 1930s, Sniffles was as an eager to please (and rather bland) character who evolved into a motormouth nuisance and well-meaning disaster before the series ended in 1946, a time during which Jones became a master of wiseguy humor and snappy timing. Debuting in 1943, Hubie and Bertie spent quality time tormenting poor Claude Cat (one of their favorite targets, although they also go after Porky Pig in another cartoon) in a short run of cartoons made with

The Other Side ★★★

(2012) 8 min. DVD: \$59.95 (study guide included). Weston Woods Studios. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 0-545-44754-2.

Based on the 2001 watercolor picture book by author Jacqueline Woodson and illustrator E.B. Lewis, this iconographic-animated adaptation features narration by Toshi Widoff-Woodson and music by Toshi Reagon. *The Other Side* tells the story of a young black girl named Clover, who has long been cautioned by her mother not to climb a fence dividing their land from white neighbors. One day, a white girl from the other side wants to play, but Clover's friends dissuade her. Conflicted, Clover often watches the girl as she amuses herself by splashing in puddles and the like, until the time the girl sits on the fence and Clover's curiosity gets the best of her. How easily Clover and new pal Annie make friends somewhat surprises them, and they come to wonder what might happen if "somebody knocks this old fence down." DVD extras include a read-along option and an interview with Woodson. A solid tale of friendship budding in an atmosphere of prejudice, this is recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)



more energy and crazy sight gags than the Sniffles shorts. Viewers should think of this anthology as an entertaining footnote to the superior *Gold Collection* volumes on DVD and *Platinum Collection* on Blu-ray—enjoyable but by no means essential contributions to animation history. Extras include a retrospective featurette, select audio commentaries, and 11 bonus mouse-themed cartoons (including one with Speedy Gonzales) from the Warner Bros. vaults. Optional. Aud: P. (S. Axmaker)

My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic—Royal Pony Wedding ★★★

(2012) 120 min. DVD: \$14.98. Shout! Factory (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60399-818-5.

The centerpiece of this compilation from the Hub-aired computer-animated children's series is the two-part episode "A Canterlot Wedding." Unicorn protagonist Twilight Sparkle and friends are invited to help with the upcoming nuptials of Equestria ruler Princess Celestia's niece Cadance to royal guard captain Shining Armor—who happens to be Twilight's older brother. Twilight is teary and miffed about being surprised by her bro's plans, but brightens when she learns that his bride is her beloved early "foal-sitter" (the pair even have a special hoof-clapping game together). But something seems a little off with Cadance, who doesn't seem to remember old pastimes and acts haughty and cruel. With Shining Armor busy protecting the realm with his special force field against an unknown threat, no one believes Twilight's warnings...until an evil plot emerges featuring changelings and underground caves. Peppered with catchy songs and vibrantly-colored action, other episodes featured here include the holiday episode "Hearts and Hooves Day," "Sweet & Elite," and "The Best Night Ever." Bonus features include sing-alongs and a printable coloring sheet. Recommended. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Pig Tales ★★★

(2012) 14 min. DVD: \$69.95 (discussion guide included). Nutmeg Media. PPR. ISBN: 1-933938-87-0.

This iconographic-animated collection includes a pair of 2011 picture book adaptations featuring pig protagonists. Prolific author and illustrator David McPhail's *Pig Returns* serves up the latest adventure from the titular pig series, as the young porker initially resists a road trip with his aunt and uncle but comes around quickly once he takes in some fun sights, including a house constructed from soda cans, and a three-legged chicken. Written and drawn by David Hyde Costello, *Little Pig Joins the Band* spotlights the youngest member of a pig clan, who whines about being too small to play most of Gramps' band instruments, but rises to the occasion when the makeshift family ensemble lacks order. Bonus features include interviews with the authors. A solid porcine double feature, this is recommended. Aud: K, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

R.L. Stine's The Haunting Hour—The Series, Volume One ★★★

(2012) 120 min. DVD: \$14.98. Shout! Factory (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-60399-841-3.

Based on works by YA horror author R.L. Stine (of *Goosebumps* fame), this initial volume from the 2011 first season of the Hub-aired series compiles five episodes, kicking off with the disturbingly entertaining two-parter "Really You." Spoiled 'tween Lilly (Bailee Madison) is super excited about the arrival of her life-sized doll from an *American Girl*-like company. Bratty Lilly shows off her new toy—lookalike "Lilly D."—to her jealous friends, mocking them for only having small, less-expensive dolls, but becomes enraged when one of the girls mentions that her own doll says that Lilly D. doesn't like Lilly. Following a tantrum, Lilly's mom (Alisen Down) not only takes the doll away,



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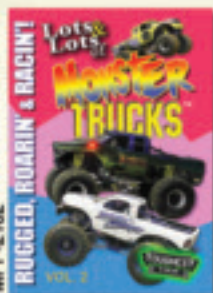
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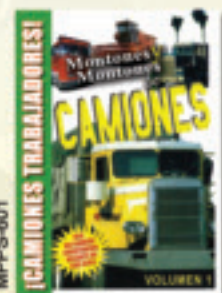
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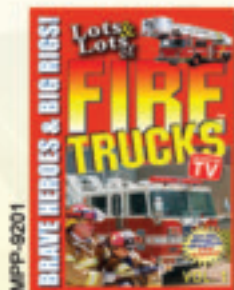
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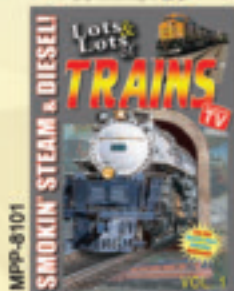
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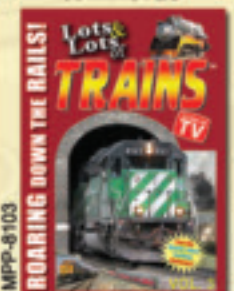
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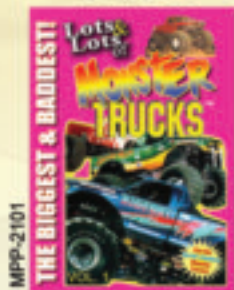
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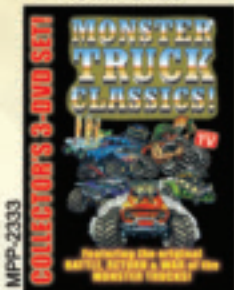
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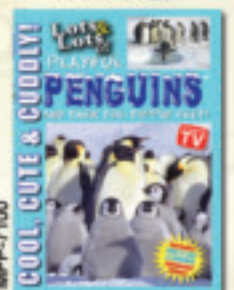
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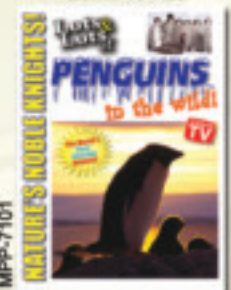
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but also adds disproportionate punishment (i.e., Lilly D. is served breakfast first). When Lilly witnesses the creepily mobile Lilly D. wrecking mom's laptop (among other vicious pranks), no one will believe her, although her older brother (Connor Price) becomes convinced of her innocence and sets out to discover the truth about the evil toy. Also featuring the bullying tale "The Dead Body," holiday episode "A Creature Was Stirring," and "Nightmare Inn," DVD extras include a "behind-the-screams" featurette. *R.L. Stine's The Haunting Hour—The Series, Volume Two* is also newly available. Recommended. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Tiny Toon Adventures: How I Spent My Vacation ★★½

(1992) 80 min. DVD: \$19.98. Warner Home Video (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 0-7806-9733-2.

A spin-off from the early '90s series—executive produced by Steven Spielberg—showcasing the escapades of a new generation of Looney Tunes characters, this 1992 direct-to-video animated film follows the stories of various Acme Looniversity students on summer vacation. Plucky Duck is desperate to go with Hamton J. Pig and his family to the Happy World Land amusement park, but is less than thrilled with the actual road trip (including sitting next to Uncle Stinky). Babs and Buster Bunny engage in a water gun fight that results in a downriver adventure (and a meeting with a *Deliverance*-styled possum family, among other silly strangers). Other characters include Valley Girl-ish Shirley the Loon, Dizzy Devil, lavender skunk Fifi La Fume, and animal-squeezing psycho Elmyra (who obliviously harasses creatures at a nature park). Combining pop culture references and inside jokes (including the finale "plot hole" in which Babs wonders "how those hack writers" are going to get out), this cartoon blast from the past is a strong optional purchase. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Winx Club: The Secret of the Lost Kingdom Movie ★★½

(2012) 2 discs. 86 min. DVD: \$19.99. Paramount Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned. ISBN: 1-4157-6478-6.

The Winx—six fairies from the Magic Dimension—go in search of Earth-raised fairy Bloom's parents in this CGI-animated movie inspired by the Italian TV series (translated for Nickelodeon). The Winx battle disembodied witches on Bloom's home planet between canoodling sessions with their boyfriends—collectively known as The Specialists—who always show up *en masse* to visit the teenage fairies. Each fairy boasts a special power, ranging from the ability to harness natural elements like plants and water, to making magic with music and technology. The girl-centric plot and female

empowerment slogans are admirable, but the fairies' sexy poses, midriff-baring tops, and miniskirts deliver a conflicting message. DVD extras include seven bonus episodes. With its familiar encouragements concerning "believing in yourself" and "trusting your heart," there's not much to distinguish *Winx Club* from similar fare, although due to the popularity of the franchise dolls, this is sure to be popular. Optional. Aud: P. (K. Cruver)

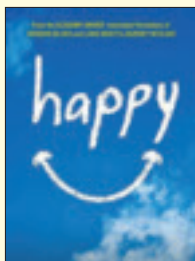
PSYCHOLOGY & SELF-HELP

Catfight: Why Women Fight ★★½

(2011) 60 min. DVD: \$99.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors). PPR.

Combining expert interviews and profiles, filmmakers Rina Barone and Patricia Ditillio's briskly-paced documentary explores the issues of emotional conflict and sabotage between women. Interviewees—ranging from school-age girls to adult women—describe their battles with each

other, while psychiatrists, a college professor, and one very patient high school counselor offer professional insights and statistics. Others featured include an adult, reformed "mean girl," and an artist who has been the victim of female sabotage. The documentary proposes several reasons for antagonistic relationships between women, including low self-esteem, desire for power, bonding with other tormenters, and the pursuit of excitement. Many of the girls profiled here do seem to be proud of their aggression (drawn by the sense of drama and the perceived respect it brings them). One expert makes the depressing suggestion that women are actually hardwired to fight with each other. By the end of the film, however, many of the young girls have either grown out of their catty behavior or are on the way to doing so. Unfortunately, it is not always clear how or why some interviewees here are perceived to be improving, weakening an otherwise effective examination of an interesting subject. A strong optional purchase. Aud: P. (K. Cruver)



Happy ★★★

(2011) 75 min. DVD: \$19.99. Passion River (avail. from most distributors).

The Declaration of Independence argued that American citizens had the right "to Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness." But what is happiness, and how do we acquire and keep it? Filmmaker Roko Belic's documentary examines one of our most prized but elusive emotional states. Many Americans equate material success with happiness, but *Happy* shows us an Indian rickshaw driver, a Louisiana Cajun bayou fisherman, and African Namibian tribe members who are all poor in wealth, but rich in happiness. Researchers point out that many happy people are nurtured by close family ties and communities, which encourage cooperation and service as members look out for each other. Some of the world's happiest places are visited, including the Kingdom of Bhutan, which measures "gross national happiness"; the Japanese island of Okinawa, home to a large number of the world's oldest folks; and Denmark, where "co-housing" communities enable residents to live and eat together in an extended family setting. The documentary describes how happiness produces longer, healthier lives, and helps us achieve larger goals or overcome adversity, illustrated here by a former beauty queen disfigured in an accident, who battled the long journey back to love, happiness, and self-acceptance. The human brain plays a key role in happiness—releasing dopamine to maximize pleasure—while also being stimulated by physical activity, the seeking out of new experiences, and the cultivation of care and compassion for others. *Happy* does not minimize the obstacles to happiness, but—backed by scholarly insights and specific examples—offers a solid, realistic look at the universal longing for joy. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

Holy Rollers ★★½

(2011) 91 min. DVD: \$24.95. Passion River (avail. from most distributors).

Documentarian Bryan Storkel's *Holy Rollers* could hardly be more high concept, reminiscent of the (loosely fact-based) Las Vegas thriller *21*—only with a major twist. The film

follows a conspiratorial team of card-counting blackjack players, all from geographically diverse Christian-evangelical churches (some are pastors themselves), who train for coordinated operations designed to win big at casino tables across the USA—for the greater glory of God. Winnings, we're told, will go right back to funding struggling ministries or other worthy causes. Some of these blackjack experts declare they actually hate gambling

(cont. on pg. 58)

'Tis the Season

Arthur Christmas

★★★★1/2

(2011) 97 min. DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray: \$40.99. Sony Pictures Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



Bright, witty, and delightfully off-kilter, this animated holiday film reflects the unique spirit of Britain's Aardman Animations, home of Wallace and Gromit. The clever script is inspired by questions that any intelligent child might ask about Santa Claus: namely, how can Santa's career have stretched over so many centuries, and how can the old gent possibly visit every house in a single night? The answers are that Santa (voiced by Jim Broadbent) is but the latest in a long family line of jolly red-suited gift-givers, and he's become a mere figurehead to a mechanized delivery operation directed with military precision by his eldest son and heir-apparent, Steve (Hugh Laurie). Via a huge red spaceship, the presents are placed beneath the proper trees by well-trained elves who rappel down to the ground on long lines like commandos. Unfortunately, one gift fails to be delivered, and Arthur (James McAvoy)—Santa's gangly, good-natured younger son—is determined to rectify the omission, setting off with his sassy grandpa (Bill Nighy) in the old reindeer-powered sleigh. Many misadventures occur along the way in this action-filled, heartwarming Christmas winner. Highly recommended. Aud: P. (F. Swietek)

The Dog Who Saved the Holidays ★★

(2012) 87 min. DVD: \$19.98. Anchor Bay Entertainment (avail. from most distributors on Dec. 4).



Following *The Dog Who Saved Christmas* (2009), *The Dog Who Saved Christmas Vacation* (2010), and *The Dog Who Saved Halloween* (2011), this latest entry in the middling holiday TV-movie franchise finds Elisa Donovan and Gary Valentine reprising their roles as Belinda and George Bannister, with Dean Cain returning as bumbling burglar Ted Stein. In this outing, the Connecticut-based Barristers, their children, and their lab retriever Zeus (previously voiced by Mario Lopez, now by Joey Lawrence) head west to spend the holidays at the Malibu mansion of wacky widowed Aunt Barbara (Shelley Long), who surprises her guests with a new puppy, Eve. Various plot threads

concern the threat of Ted and his sidekick (trying to steal a valuable trinket from the wealthy matriarch, and surprised to see the Barristers in town), the jealousy of Zeus due to Eve's new role in the family, and the fact that George doesn't seem to have any plans for the couple's upcoming wedding anniversary. Featuring slapsticky dialogue and puerile gags, this corny, unmemorable film is strictly optional. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Thomas & Friends: A Very Thomas Christmas

★★★

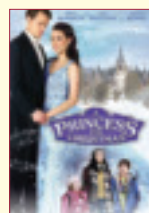
(2012) 49 min. DVD: \$14.98. Lionsgate (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.



Based on *The Railway Series* by Rev. W. Awdry, this sound effects-laden compilation from the popular computer-animated program includes four stories featuring friendly tank engine Thomas and his equipment buddies on the Island of Sodor. In "The Christmas Tree Express," Thomas gives Rheneas the idea to travel to nearby Misty Island to get a "winter holiday" tree in order to surprise the gang. Rheneas tries to rush timid tram Toby through the scary "shake shake" bridge and creepy mist in order to find the perfect tree, but after a visit from the Logging Locos trio he learns a lesson in better teamwork. Also including "Ho Ho Snowman" and "Salty's Surprise," the final episode—"Emily's Winter Party Special"—finds the female locomotive boasting about delivering toys to children as a reward for being the most helpful engine of the day, only to be embarrassed when she counts her chickens...errr...candy canes before they're unwrapped. Recommended. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

A Princess for Christmas ★★1/2

(2011) 90 min. DVD: \$14.98. Lionsgate (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.



Former soap star and singer Michael Damian directs this festive fairy tale TV movie. "Once upon a time in a land called Buffalo..." viewers meet Jules Daly (Katie McGrath), a twentysomething working in antiques who takes care of her messy young niece and naughty teen nephew (Leilah de Meza, Travis Turner), both of whom are still suffering from the recent deaths of their parents. When Jules loses her job, the holidays appear bleak, until a visit from a butler who works for the children's estranged grandfather

sends the small new family on a trip to the European estate of Gramps (Roger Moore), a cantankerous Duke who is slow to melt towards the newcomers, unlike his handsome adult son Prince Ashton (Sam Heughan), who—surprise!—discovers that he rather likes American Jules's attitude (self-professed as more "hot wings and Bud" than watercress). Jules and the kids must win over the patriarch and stiff royal staff in this sappy but well-produced holiday family film. A strong optional purchase. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

New on DVD/Blu-ray

An American Christmas Carol

(Shout! Factory, Blu-ray: \$29.99). Starring Henry Winkler as a Scrooge-like character, this 1979 TV movie offers a loose retelling of the classic tale by Charles Dickens.



A Christmas Story 2

(Warner, DVD: \$27.95, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$29.98). Based on the works of Jean Shepherd, this 2012 sequel to the 1983 classic holiday tale stars Daniel Stern as "The Old Man" and Braeden Lemasters as Ralphie.



The Nutcracker

(Kultur, Blu-ray: \$29.99). Newly available on high-definition Blu-ray, this 1977 PBS-aired perennial favorite performed by the American Ballet Theatre features legendary dancer Mikhail Baryshnikov as the Nutcracker Prince, with Gelsey Kirkland as Clara.



VeggieTales: The Ultimate Christmas Collection

(Big Idea, DVD: 2 discs, \$24.99). Featuring a variety of festive stories from the Christian children's series (as well as an audio CD), this holiday compilation includes "The Toy That Saved Christmas," "The Star of Christmas," "Saint Nicholas: A Story of Joyful Giving," "It's a Meaningful Life" and "The Little Drummer Boy."



(cont. from pg. 56)

on principle and want to punish the industry for its sinfulness. Despite that attitude (and the title), religious militancy here never hits a strident tone, as cameras (sometimes hidden) capture these mostly laidback Christians working the system in coast-to-coast casinos. Some find their gaming skills are not up to the task; others are known card counters who must adopt disguises in order to avoid being expelled by security. How long can such a potentially corrupting enterprise remain morally righteous, especially after profits inexplicably fall, raising the suspicion of a—dare we say?—Judas in their midst. An entertaining and ironic slice of weird American life, this is highly recommended. Aud: P. (C. Cassidy)

In the Steps of Moses ★★½

(2012) 48 min. DVD: \$19.99. Blue Skies Video Productions (dist. by Vision Video).

Using as a framework the iconic story told in the book of Exodus—in which God commissions Moses to free His people from slavery in Egypt—*In the Steps of Moses* combines historical documentary and travelogue, presenting biblical text and beautiful modern-day videography of Egypt. Host and director David Nunn has a contagious passion for his subject, reading passages with gusto and enthusiastically exploring possibilities. For instance, when Moses led the Exodus, did he take the southern route across the land, or the shorter northern alternative? Who among Moses' closest aides were at his side at the parting of the Red Sea? Would the composition of the sand support wagons and people? And what about the underwater shots

in the Red Sea showing curious coral formations—some resembling wagon wheels and axles? Where was the burning bush located? Where is the real Mount Sinai where God is said to have delivered the Ten Commandments? The backdrops for Nunn's questions are such popular tourist sites as the pyramids, monasteries dating to the Middle Ages, the massive depiction of Ramses II carved into the side of a mountain, and assorted ruins—monuments of stone blasted and buried by the desert sands. Offering an engaging contemporary look at an ancient story, this is recommended. Aud: P. (C. Block)

Kumaré ★★½

(2011) 84 min. DVD: \$149 (\$249 w/PPR). Kino Lorber Edu.

Comparisons with Sasha Baron Cohen's mockumentary characters (Ali G, Bruno, etc.) are apt for this playful, if also mildly discomfiting, first-person documentary by Vikram Gandhi, an assimilated Indian-American from New Jersey. Gandhi was bewildered by the fact that, even as he was outgrowing his Hindu religious heritage, Americans around him were embracing self-styled yogis, swamis, cult leaders, and "masters," who generally recruited at yoga-exercise classes. Originally, Gandhi's game plan was to make a docu-exposé interviewing fake fakirs. But then he decided to take a more direct (and Morgan Spurlockian) approach and become a sham holy man himself. Gandhi let his hair grow, learned yoga poses, acted cheery, and spoke in semi-nonsensical pidgin-English homilies in the role of Kumaré, the new guru on the Southwest mysticism circuit. Pulling off the feat was frighteningly easy—but then

it becomes a little disturbing to Gandhi (as well as the viewer), as Arizona disciples ask Kumaré for advice on ending marriages or getting sober. "There's nothing phony about him," comments one pilgrim. Since Gandhi's plan is to ultimately confess his imposture, what will happen when he reveals the hoax? Gandhi surprises himself by finding that maybe he does impart a spiritual (or at least positive-thinking) value even with his impish spoof of a trendy messiah. The presentation is so slick, and the seekers and suckers so sincere, one can't help but wonder if this wasn't itself reality-TV scripted—a counterfeit about a counterfeit. But it is apparently real, as Gandhi has appeared on *Nightline* among other publicity venues to discuss it. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Mightier Than the Sword ★★½

(2012) 24 min. DVD: \$14.99. Christian Television Association (dist. by Vision Video).

Filmed in Germany, Israel, and England, this docudrama explores the impact of William Tyndale's translation of the Bible into English in the 16th century; its subsequent dispersal among the people thanks to the revolutionary technology of Johannes Gutenberg's printing press; and the present-day effort to spread the Good Word by those who sometimes risk their own lives. Backed by maps, drawings, and dramatic re-creations, host Christopher Hawes recounts how the practice of putting Bibles in the hands of ordinary folk started with Tyndale, who was the first to translate the Scripture from Latin (the language of the powerful elite), an action that cost him his life in 1536. In speaking of biblical accuracy, *Mightier Than the Sword* notes that while the thoughts of Plato and Aristotle were first written in documents 1,200 to 1,400 years after their deaths (and fewer than 50 copies of the originals exist), the New Testament was penned 130 years after Christ died, with more than 24,000 copies in existence. Inspired by what they call the main theme of the Bible—the story of a God deeply in love with Creation—modern-day Tyndales continue their quest to spread the gospel around the globe. Recommended. Aud: P. (C. Block)

Cleanflix ★★½

(2009) 93 min. DVD: \$24.95. Passion River (avail. from most distributors).

Although the premise might sound movie-geek esoteric, *Cleanflix* turns out to be a thought-provoking examination of how Utah entrepreneurs—without Hollywood permission—made a cottage industry out of creating CleanFlicks DVDs of mainstream blockbusters. Company founder Ray Lines led a push for snipping anything offensive or R-rated for churchgoing Mormon viewers (sex, swearing, and tolerance for homosexuality were cut, although sometimes hideous violence was given the green flag). A fast-growing CleanFlicks business and distribution network (with surprisingly slick and sophisticated ads) suffered from internal discord, competitors, and the David/Goliath struggle against giant (angry) studios. But when Lines (whose clumsy deletions often turned scenes incoherent) reminds us that the movie industry routinely generates cleaner edits for airline and network-TV airings, he makes a point in this compelling look at questions of copyright, corporate strangleholds, and viewer-versus-artist freedom. Why can't Latter Day Saints (or Amish or Muslims, for that matter) have ready access to preferred versions of media if they want? Despite the sense that filmmakers Andrew James and Joshua Ligairi don't favor CleanFlicks, the well-spoken censors here actually come off as the underdogs (perspectives from Utah-based academics and others round out the presentation). The disc cheekily presents *Cleanflix* in two versions—one with the uncensored clips, and one "clean" via digital blurring and audio bleeping. DVD extras include an audio commentary and deleted scenes. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)



SOCIAL & POLITICAL ISSUES

Bitter Seeds ★★½

(2011) 88 min. DVD: \$295. Teddy Bear Films (dist. by Bullfrog Films). PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 1-93777-211-X.

The final installment of Micha X. Peled's "Globalization Trilogy" (the first two were 2001's *Store Wars* and 2005's *China Blue* [VL-1/07])—detailing the negative impact of modern industrialization—*Bitter Seeds* focuses on an alarming trend within India's agriculture: farmers are committing suicide

Inventing Our Life: The Kibbutz Experiment ★★

(2011) 80 min. In English & Hebrew w/English subtitles. DVD: \$27.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors).

A sense of regret, as well as simple nostalgia, permeates Toby Perl Freilich's affecting documentary about Israel's kibbutz movement—which now finds itself compelled to change with the times or fall by the wayside. The kibbutzim originated in Palestine in the early 20th century as small utopian communities that combined the ideals of socialism and Zionism, eventually coming to represent the Israeli spirit of national commitment and self-sacrifice after the country was founded—with the kibbutzniks playing a disproportionate role in Israel's defense. Over time, however, the prospect of a more varied, fulfilling, and prosperous life lured many of the younger residents away, and as the remaining members aged and financial circumstances became more precarious, the communities had to adapt by compromising their founding principles in order to survive amidst an increasingly diverse population and profit-oriented environment. Freilich sketches the entire history of the movement through archival footage of early settlements; descriptions of how their innovative methods revolutionized Israeli agriculture; interviews with first-, second-, and third-generation kibbutzniks (including many who left); and visits to present-day kibbutzim, some of which are engaged in vigorous internal debate about how to adopt needed changes without abandoning their essential character. The combination of personal reminiscence and broader context makes *Inventing Our Life* an evocative account of a noble experiment that is endangered by the realities of contemporary life in Israeli society. DVD extras include bonus scenes, an audio interview with Freilich, and a text director bio. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)



at a rate of one every 30 minutes. According to the film, the reason for this is because the World Trade Organization (at the insistence of the U.S. government) has forced India to allow the sale of genetically modified seeds for some major crops—seeds that require additional fertilizers and insecticides. Financially strapped farmers, barely able to afford these extra costs, find themselves hopelessly in debt and unable to support their families. The central figures here are a cotton farmer named Ram Krishna, who is struggling to keep his land, and his neighbor's teenage daughter Manjusha, a journalism student interviewing family members and other rural villagers about the local suicide crisis. Peled's indictment of the suppliers of genetically modified seeds as the sole cause of the misery is, quite frankly, much too broad. While the added seed costs certainly don't help the situation, poverty among the farmers was clearly entrenched long before. What *Bitter Seeds* does provide, however, is an eye-opening view of the rickety nature of India's agricultural sector, which—coupled with the lack of basic infrastructure in India's non-urban regions—raises doubts about the country's much-ballyhooed economic potential. A strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Family Portrait in Black and White

★★★

(2012) 85 min. DVD: \$49.95; public libraries; \$250; colleges & universities. Interfilm Productions. PPR. ISBN: 978-0-9784976-2-0.

Canadian director Julia Ivanova spent three years working on this alternately

inspiring and troubling documentary about Olga Nanya, a Ukrainian foster mother who oversees as many as 20-plus children at a time, most of Ukrainian-African descent. Many of her xenophobic neighbors believe that it's wrong for the races to intermix, while others claim that a non-white child can't be 100% Ukrainian, although the kids—mostly the offspring of visiting African students—don't see it that way. Unfortunately, the kids sometimes have prejudices of their own, like Sashka's dismissal of Arabs. Nanya's child-rearing operation—called Hope and Homes for Children—receives funding from the United Kingdom, but lacks basic amenities, such as a working toilet (they use an outhouse), although the kids have food, clothes, pets, a piano, room to roam, and plenty of company. A charity also sends them to homes in Italy and France each summer. A state inspector, who arrives unannounced during filming, declares, "The living conditions in the house are appalling," but middle-aged divorcee Nanya insists that she's doing the best she can. Furthermore, the kids smoke, drink, fight, and talk back, but they still consider Nanya their mother, even if she can be overly possessive: Nanya turns down Western couples who offer to adopt the kids, refuses to encourage Kiril's music studies or Roman's soccer talent, and shuns those who move away. According to Nanya, "Music doesn't put food on the table," and she believes that a working-class life should be sufficient, but this otherwise affectionate caretaker appears to have let her fears of abandonment and nostalgia for the Soviet regime cloud her judgment. An engaging family portrait, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)



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The Last Survivor ★★★

(2010) 84 min. DVD: \$59: public libraries; \$279 w/PPR: colleges & universities. Seventh Art Releasing.

Michael Pertnoy and Michael Kleiman's award-winning documentary focuses on four individuals who survived modern genocides, looking at their respective efforts to educate others on the importance of tolerance while also raising awareness of crimes against humanity. The eldest of the four is Auschwitz survivor Hédi Fried, who relocated to Sweden after losing most of her family during the Holocaust; her outreach effort began after her initial bafflement at contemporary Holocaust denial propaganda. The other three subjects hail from Africa: Justin Semahoro Kimenyera, a Banyamulenge tribal member who escaped the internecine conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and secured refugee asylum in the U.S.; Darfur survivor Adam Bashar, a Muslim who relocated to Israel; and Jacqueline Murekatete, who was 10 when she lost her entire family during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. Only Murekatete returned to her homeland to resume her life, although she has been a vibrant presence in addressing audiences around the world, including the United Nations General Assembly. Although each of the survivors has a unique life story, together they share a common ground of uncommon eloquence and an indefatigable quest to ensure that the tragedies of the past are neither forgotten nor repeated. Presenting a memorable reminder of the amazing power of the human spirit to not only survive unimaginable horror but also emerge without bitterness or rancor, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Last Will and Embezzlement ★★★1/2

(2012) 23 min. DVD: \$189. Terra Nova Films. PPR.

Deborah Louise Robinson's documentary short focuses on financial elder abuse, a significant problem that is growing with alarming speed. As a larger segment of the U.S. population moves into old age, a new wave of predators is targeting their savings. Many of the victims are afraid to report this exploitation because of fear of violent repercussions or simple embarrassment, while others are hesitant to sound the alarm because they are being preyed on by family members. But even reporting abuse carries no guarantee that the guilty will be apprehended. Among those who tell their stories here are filmmaker Pamela S.K. Glasner, who recalls how the police refused to arrest a man with no connection to her family who coerced her Alzheimer's-afflicted father into granting him power-of-attorney status. Also interviewed is movie legend Mickey Rooney, who speaks passionately (if somewhat vaguely) about his experience as a victim of financial theft. The film offers solid advice on how to spot warning signs that an

older adult is becoming the target of potential embezzlement, and details ways to prevent these early signals from developing into extensive financial transactions. A timely look at a serious social issue, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Life After Abortion ★★★

(2010) 2 discs. 106 min. DVD: \$19.95. New Liberty Videos.

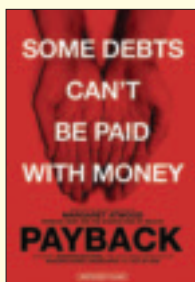
Abortion remains at the center of one of the emotionally-charged debates of our time. Filmmaker Brian Barkley's *Life After Abortion* is told from the perspective of women who either had abortions or made them possible—and now regret their actions. Most of the interviewees here were very young when they had abortions, and many felt they were lied to by those they trusted for advice. Some talk about the abortion experience itself and the resulting emotional aftermath, while others point to their happiness of having children later in life. One of the most chilling interviews is with former abortion clinic owner Carol Everett, who explores the business side of abortions, reporting that her clinic once performed 5,000 abortions in a single month. Determined to reach a goal of one million dollars in annual income, the clinic marketed their services to young women in schools through sex education programs that Everett claims were aimed at increasing sexual activity. Featured throughout are excerpts from a speech delivered by Jane Brennan (author of *Motherhood Interrupted*) during "Rose Day" at the Oklahoma State Capital. DVD extras include an hour-long abridged version, and extensive bonus segments. Bal-

anced collections will want to consider this hard-hitting Christian-based documentary. Recommended. Aud: P. (C. Block)

Our Summer in Tehran ★★★

(2011) 59 min. DVD: \$99.95: public libraries; \$295: colleges & universities. The Cinema Guild. PPR.

Jewish-American filmmaker Justine Shapiro builds her documentary around a trip to Iran to meet with other middle-class mothers like herself. Shapiro wants to see the country, she says, "before our sons meet on the battlefield." After a year of planning, Shapiro takes her 6-year-old son, Mateo, with her for six weeks of filming (Shapiro is divorced from his father). Her Iranian-American producer, Marjaneh Moghimi, puts her in contact with three families willing to speak on camera. Although Shapiro has official approval to film, she still has to dress accordingly (hijab and loose-fitting outfits) and expect visits from a government agent. Shapiro first meets with Leili Rashidi, a divorced actress, and her son, Sina. Mateo bonds with Sina over a shared love of soccer, but the young American cries when they miss a match due to the anniversary celebrations for the Ayatollah Khomeini. Next, Shapiro meets with the more conservative but gracious Torabi family, who have two daughters, Elaheh and Houra. Dr. Morteza Torabi works for the right-wing Revolutionary Guards, while Marjan is a pharmacist. Lastly, mother and son visit with Babak and Maryam Foroudian and their son, Daniel, who is studying English. Shapiro is surprised to find that many Iranian women work and that 60% of college students are



Payback ★★★

(2012) 86 min. In English, Spanish & Albanian w/English subtitles. DVD: \$29.99. Zeitgeist Films (avail. from most distributors).

Inspired by Margaret Atwood's 2008 nonfiction book *Payback: Debt and the Shadow Side of Wealth*, Jennifer Baichwal's intriguing documentary looks at indebtedness in various forms, as exemplified by five case studies. Two involve incarceration—wealthy Canadian Conrad Black, who served over three years for fraud, criticizes the justice system, while Paul Mohammed expresses regret for his repeated burglaries but can't shake the drug addiction that drives him to theft. A third focuses on British Petroleum's responsibility for dealing with the ecological damage—and human cost—of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf. The fourth concerns a drive for higher wages and improved working conditions mounted by Florida migrant workers against their agribusiness employer. And the fifth (and oddest) presents an Albanian family who—according to an ancient code of revenge—are literally imprisoned in their house because the father can be killed by his neighbor (whom he injured over a property dispute) if he emerges. Comments from scholars, activists, and legal observers are interspersed throughout, while fleeting references to a shuttered Pennsylvania penitentiary add a historical dimension to the central theme of how society should deal with wrongdoers. In addition, Atwood is periodically shown at her computer and heard in excerpts from public lectures. Beautifully photographed, *Payback* ultimately suggests that rational evenhandedness and a sense of forgiveness must replace hide-bound conceptions of repayment that are often driven by passion and resentment. DVD extras include a Q&A with Atwood and Baichwal, and additional scenes. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

female. Nonetheless, the country suffers from a serious "brain drain," since an estimated 150,000 to 180,000 students leave the country each year. She also winds up getting along so well with Marjan that the two remain in contact, despite their political and religious differences. An eye-opening look at Iranian middle-class life, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Raising Renee ★★★1/2

(2012) 81 min. DVD: \$150; high schools & public libraries; \$275: colleges & universities. West City Films (dist. by Transit Media). PPR. ISBN: 978-0-9858913-0-5.

Oscar-nominated filmmakers Jeanne Jordan and Steven Ascher followed artist Beverly McIver and her family for six years while McIver struggled to fulfill her promise to take care of her mentally disabled sister Renee after their mother's death. McIver's art career is just taking off when her mother succumbs to cancer in her hometown of Greensboro, NC. Beverly is reluctant to give up her solitary home routine in Phoenix, AZ, but brings Renee to live with her, after which the sisters fall into an uneasy, although mostly affectionate domestic partnership. Still, Beverly misses her freedom, while Renee is lonely when her sister leaves to teach art during the day at a local university. Eventually, Beverly and Renee return to Greensboro, where Beverly lands a new teaching job and now-50-year-old Renee agrees to try living alone for the first time, an effort supported by family and community members, who work together to help Renee adjust to her new independence. While Beverly is loyal to her family, there is a dark streak in her feelings, and she discusses these emotions with bracing honesty, becoming especially frank when talking about her misgivings concerning her sister, including the revelation that she was essentially pressured into caring for her. Still, Beverly clearly loves Renee and makes her the focus of much of her art. Beverly also shares her views on racism, poverty, and art, which lend greater clarity and emotional impact to her story. An effective portrait of both the artistic process and family relationships, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Cruver)

Reflections on Media Ethics ★★★

(2011) 25 min. DVD: \$229.95. Parallel Lines. PPR.

Annette Danto's short, interview-based documentary—geared towards educators and students, but likely to interest anyone involved in media studies—interviews six individuals about their approach to ethics in a world with a 24-hour news cycle and nonstop reality programming. Journalist Jon Alpert starts by discussing moments that may be too personal for directors to capture, citing an HBO project involving Arlington Cemetery, in which he thought it would be best to let mourners have some time alone. Ultimately, Alpert obtained the footage he

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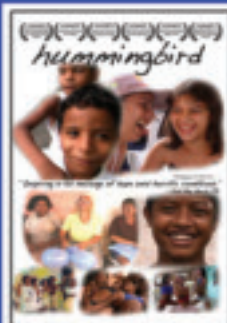


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Recommended K. Fennessy

vanishingbees.com

Rights & Wrongs: The Story of Women in Islam ★★½

(2011) 135 min. DVD: \$89; public libraries & high schools; \$295: colleges & universities. Women Make Movies. PPR.

This thoughtful and meticulous documentary tells the story of women in the history of Islam and in the Qur'an, including the state of affairs within present-day Islamic communities. Combining live footage, photographs, ancient artworks, original paintings, and images from Qur'anic texts, filmmaker Corine Huq describes the emergence of Islam through the Prophet Muhammad, detailing how the Qur'an was revealed to him over the years in suras (chapters) that gave females new protections and rights in matters such as owning property and keeping their earnings (in the eyes of Allah, the two genders were equal). Huq argues that over time the Qur'an was later translated and interpreted to support cultural and societal biases, and she examines specific suras that include the much-disputed word "daraba," often taken as permission to beat one's wife. *Rights & Wrongs* delves into the history of polygamy and of wearing the veil, the case of Pakistani rape victim Mukhtaran Mai, and the first Friday prayer led in public by a woman, as Huq examines political and cultural reasons for why Islamic women's rights have been expanded or curtailed—from the 6th through the 20th centuries—backed by commentary from an array of scholars and journalists. Ending on a hopeful note inspired by Islam's emphasis on justice and equality, this documentary is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (M. Puffer-Rothenberg)



needed, but chose to be selective in what he filmed. Veteran documentarian George Stoney believes that filmmakers should make their intentions clear to their subjects so that no one ends up feeling exploited or misled. Stoney feels particular disdain for those who lie to participants in order to elicit specific responses. Direct cinema pioneer Albert Maysles talks about trying to remain objective while shooting *Salesman* with his brother David; even though the sibling filmmakers didn't like the way door-to-door Bible sellers were manipulating poor people, they wanted to show how the salesmen were victims, too. Author and radio commentator Mary Warnock focuses on the ways in which editing comes into play, while linguist Noam Chomsky talks about journalists who won't entertain alternative viewpoints for fear of upsetting media owners and advertisers. Investigative reporter Amy Goodman, the founder of Democracy Now!, closes with comments about the importance of giving a voice to citizens who don't normally have one, something that independent media can more easily accomplish. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Surviving Progress ★★★

(2011) 87 min. DVD: \$27.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors).

Mathieu Roy's elegant documentary argues that the human brain has simply not evolved enough to keep pace with technological innovation—resulting in a world verging on catastrophe. Based on *A Short History of Progress* by Ronald Wright (one of many interviewees here, as well as Stephen Hawking, Margaret Atwood, and Jane Goodall), *Surviving Progress* argues that the 19th-century Industrial Revolution—while a remarkable achievement in many ways—has brought in its wake a host

of problems, including overpopulation, environmental degradation, and the increasing scarcity of resources that are more and more in demand by the growing economies of China, India, and other emerging nations. Unfortunately, humans still operate on the basis of instinctual drives that developed during prehistoric times, inhibiting our ability to embrace rational, long-term solutions instead of following our natural impulses towards self-interest and immediate gain. A fascinating work of engaged filmmaking, the documentary deftly assembles a collage of well-edited material—interviews, archival footage, and newly shot sequences (including a segment portraying how Congo has been plundered of its resources and burdened by financiers with debt it can never hope to repay)—in order to pose provocative questions. And while it offers a wee bit of hope for practical solutions to the dangers the West has created for the entire human race, *Surviving Progress* will also surely produce heated debate over the possibility that modern Western civilization, like many others before it, is poised for extinction. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (F. Swietek)

The Witches of Gambaga ★★★

(2011) 55 min. DVD: \$39.99 (\$125 w/PPR): public libraries; \$295 w/PPR: colleges & universities. Collective Eye.

Yaba Badoe, a Ghana-born filmmaker raised in Britain, returns to her home country to document a Gambaga refuge for accused witches. Badoe says she's been writing about witches for 14 years, but cannot understand why a country that prides itself on its human rights record would demonize thousands of citizens in this way. Many of the women she meets received beatings from family members for perceived transgressions before being cast

out. Given a choice between death or false confession, they chose the latter. Some appear to have been targeted due to their threat to the patriarchy because of their successes as independent businesspeople. Now they reside in a community (one woman has lived there for 25 years) led by a male chief, while a veteran inhabitant serves as their spokesperson. Even though Ghanaians believe that men can also practice witchcraft, they perceive the power wielded by males to be positive. As homeowners, men are also resistant to exile in a way that women aren't. In addition to the outcasts, Badoe interviews Simon Ngota and Gladys Lariba, who help a few women return to their villages through fees and animal sacrifice (a chicken's death position determines if the woman is "cleansed"). Back home, however, they still don't enjoy the benefits of full citizenship. Narrated and hosted by Badoe, this sad film sheds light on a terrible injustice that deserves greater attention. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

TEEN ISSUES

Confronting Sexual Harassment in School: What Every Student Needs to Know ★★★

(2012) 24 min. DVD: \$149.95 (teacher's guide included). Human Relations Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-55548-573-3.

Male and female hosts, along with teen sexuality expert Elisabeth Schroeder, offer facts and guidance regarding school sexual harassment in this informative program. Claiming that 80% of teens have experienced either verbal or physical sexual harassment, the program employs interviews to identify various forms of harassment, including invading someone's personal space, making suggestive remarks, spreading rumors, engaging in stereotyping (including gay bashing), and passing off comments as jokes. Touching on ways to better define the fine line between flirting and unwanted behavior, solutions presented here include learning to read subtle cues, becoming active bystanders, and ultimately reporting sexual harassment when the situation warrants. Noting that "whatever makes you feel uncomfortable...is what crosses the line," this sensible guidance program is recommended. Aud: J, H, C, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Girls and Bullying: Identify, Understand, Prevent ★★★

(2012) 21 min. DVD: \$129.95. VEA. PPR. Closed captioned.

Australian psychologist Dr. Michael Carr-Gregg is featured in this program that focuses on bullying between young females. Defining bullying as a repeated and deliberate oppres-

sion specifically intended to hurt (which is not the same as having an argument or simply not liking a person), *Girls and Bullying* examines various types of bullying, such as verbal, physical, psychological, and cyber. Also covered are topics including rivalry and rumors, underlying causes (such as having trouble at home and taking it out on others), various impacts of bullying (including mood disorders, self-harm, or turning to alcohol and drugs), and protective strategies, like telling an adult authority figure and seeking help. Combining illustrative vignettes with interviews of real-life teens, together with solid advice regarding standing up for one's self, this is recommended. Aud: I, J, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Lockers: A Teen Relationship Series

★★★

(2012) 52 min. DVD: \$189. MOSCA. PPR.

Serving up teen guidance lessons within a *Degrassi*-lite-style drama format, this five-part program produced by the Metropolitan Organization to Counter Sexual Assault (located in Kansas City, MO) follows the intertwining stories of about a dozen teens and their families and teachers. "Gender Stereotypes: To Be or Not to Be Me" focuses on a girl who steals money from her parents in order to help glamorize her image and impress a football jock, who himself is getting flack at home for failing to live up to his popular brother's legacy. "Sexual Harassment: Drawing the Line" centers on a boy who is bugged by girls who take—and show others—pictures of him bending over near his locker; "Dating Violence: Holding the Power" looks at a girl who shoves and hits her boyfriend in the face when she's angry; and "Media Safety: Tangled Web" finds that same girlfriend being embarrassed after naked pics she sent her boyfriend resurface publicly. The most disturbing segment is "Sexual Assault: Who's to Blame?" which presents a drunken party game gone terribly wrong and offers options on how to get help. Nicely produced and sure to spur discussion about difficult topics, this is recommended. Aud: J, H, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Responding to Diversity (and Respecting Differences) ★★★1/2

(2011) 27 min. DVD: \$109 (educator's guide included). Learning Seed. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 1-55740-593-X.

This well-produced program on tolerance notes that the world would be boringly predictable if we were all the same. Exploring various types of diversity—including cultural groups, race, ethnicity, religion, beliefs, and preferences—*Responding to Diversity* looks at categories both visible (characteristics including age, etc.) and invisible (learned or experienced behaviors, such as favorite music), examining how stereotypes, preju-

dice, and discrimination arise from negative assumptions or generalizations. Suggesting that "considerate curiosity" would yield better results (a vignette with a young man presuming that a black girl likes hip hop is employed), the program combines interviews with young people, vocabulary and onscreen definitions, illustrative photos, a panel discussion, and review segments. A fine guide to respecting and appreciating the value and needs of others, this is highly recommended. Aud: J, H, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

LAW & CRIME

Incendiary: The Willingham Case

★★★1/2

(2011) 102 min. DVD: \$19.99 (\$215 w/PPR). Yobel (avail. from www.incendiarymovie.com).

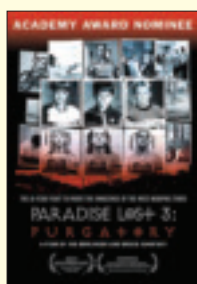
Cameron Todd Willingham was a Texas man who was convicted of setting a blaze in 1991 that killed his three young children, and later executed in 2004. Before he was put to death, questions were raised about whether the incident was arson or merely a terrible accident. Barry Scheck's Innocence Project became involved, as did international fire-science experts Gerald Hurst and John Lentini (all three are among those interviewed here), and the case went on to become a *cause célèbre*, challenging established methods of determining arson. Although *Incendiary* sketches Willingham's trial—even defense lawyer David Martin expresses absolute confidence in his client's guilt, despite significant doubts

raised about the legal proceedings—the documentary primarily deals with a special panel that Texas set up to investigate suspect convictions (after revelations of misconduct in the Houston crime lab) and the machinations of Governor Rick Perry to short-circuit the committee's work by replacing its chairman with a hard-nosed prosecutor. Whatever one's feelings about Willingham, the overarching issue—as Hurst emphasizes—is how scientific fact is often ignored in favor of baseless opinion even when a man's life is at stake. Directors Steve Mims and Joe Bailey Jr.—inspired by David Grann's 2009 article about Willingham in *The New Yorker*—don't reach a definitive conclusion, allowing those on both sides (including Willingham's wife, Stacy, who claims he confessed to the crime) to state their opinions. But they have fashioned a provocative, hard-hitting piece of activist filmmaking. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

The Real "CSI" ★★★

(2012) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.95 w/PPR). PBS Video. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-714-4.

Many TV viewers are hooked on *CSI* (and its numerous spin-offs), in which scientists and detectives use intricate forensic science methods (including DNA analysis) to crack crimes. This PBS-aired *Frontline* documentary, hosted by journalist Lowell Bergman, takes viewers inside the real world of crime scene investigation. The most well-known tool in the *CSI* arsenal is the science of fingerprint identification, long hailed by the FBI and prosecuting district attorneys as "infallible"



Paradise Lost 3: Purgatory ★★★1/2

(2011) 121 min. DVD: \$29.95. Docurama (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned. ISBN: 1-4229-1909-9.

Not since Errol Morris's *The Thin Blue Line* was instrumental in freeing a man from Texas death row has a documentary made such an impact on the American judicial system as Joe Berlinger and Bruce Sinofsky's HBO trilogy about the so-called West Memphis Three. A trio of teens, suspected of Satanic cult leanings because of their dark clothes and interest in heavy metal music, Damien Echols, Jason Baldwin, and Jessie Miskelley were convicted in 1994 of the brutal murder of three eight-year-old boys in their small Arkansas hometown. The original 1996 film *Paradise Lost* (VL-5/97) introduced the case and suggested that the teens were railroaded, spawning a campaign to free them that was documented in 2000's *Paradise Lost 2: Revelations* (VL Online-8/01), along with an account of their appeals process. The second film also pointed an accusatory finger at Mark Byers, the vengeance-seeking stepfather of one of the victims. *Paradise Lost 3: Purgatory* recaps the entire case, culminating in a weird bargain with the state that sets the trio free after 18 years in jail, but requires them to plead guilty while simultaneously allowing them to maintain their innocence. Along the way, a now-chastened Byers demands an investigation of Terry Hobbs, the stepfather of another victim, after newly-discovered evidence seems to exonerate the West Memphis Three while also suggesting that Hobbs might have been the real killer. DVD extras include additional scenes, excerpts from a panel discussion with the newly freed men and the filmmakers, brief interviews with the trio, and text bios of the filmmakers. A fascinating apparent finale to this now notorious true-crime tale, *Paradise Lost 3* raises fundamental questions about the American legal system. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

proof that places a criminal at the crime scene. But this certainty was recently shaken when a partial fingerprint found at the site of the deadly 2004 terrorist attacks in Madrid pointed to Brandon Mayfield, a Portland, OR, attorney who was accused and jailed, although he claimed he was never in Spain. Mayfield was eventually freed when further investigation pointed to another suspect. Critics also attack the reliability of forensic methods including hair and fiber analysis, ballistics, blood spatter patterns, and bite mark evidence. Examiners called to testify at trial are sometimes called the weak link—occasionally swayed by unconscious bias—although prosecutors and police counter that they need all the forensic tools available to solve crimes. The most damning material presented here concerns lax licensing requirements for forensic experts—often supported by for-profit “certification mills.” *The Real “CSI”* also features a detailed analysis of the notorious Casey Anthony murder trial, in which Anthony was accused of killing her young daughter. Anthony’s defense attorney slams allegedly flawed forensic evidence, particularly in the matter of body decomposition, and the so-called “smell of death” found in a family car. Forensic science is still evolving, with the ultimate goal not being pro defense or pro prosecution, but rather pro justice. Interviewing accused suspects, investigators, and police officials, this interesting examination gives a fair hearing to both sides of a contentious issue. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)

LANGUAGE ARTS

Speak ★★½

(2011) 89 min. DVD: \$29.99. *Tumbleweed Entertainment* (dist. by *Passion River*).

This absorbing documentary explores what many people identify as their number-one fear—public speaking—using the 2008 Toastmasters International World Championship as the central narrative framework. Filmmakers Paul Galichia and Brian Weidling spent two years shooting footage and interviewing communications professors, former Toastmaster champions, and well-known personalities (including political commentator Chris Matthews and sportscaster Brian Collins), ultimately traveling to Calgary, Alberta, site of the week-long competition. The focus is on six contestants who have won regional events and are now preparing seven-minute speeches for the competition, well aware that successful efforts often communicate a message of triumph over a challenge. They include a retired university professor who reunited with his high school sweetheart after 50 years and encourages everyone to make that call and reconnect; an African-American single mom who talks

about dealing with lupus (LaShunda Rundles, who sadly died recently), and an unemployed father of six who explains how amputation and a prosthetic leg changed his life for the better. Rehearsals, coaching sessions, pre-show nerves, and post-show jitters are all captured here as these engaging personalities tell their compelling personal stories and deliver inspiring orations. DVD extras include two full speeches. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (M. Puffer-Rothenberg)

NATURE, MATH & SCIENCE

Earth Songs ★★½

(2012) 82 min. DVD: \$19.98. *FilmWorks Entertainment* (avail. from most distributors).

Most relaxation videos combine beautiful images and a soothing voice to lead viewers into a state of meditative bliss, but filmmaker and body-mind-spirit healing expert Brian Luke Seaward’s *Earth Songs* is more focused on the healing power of nature. Actor Michael York warmly narrates as cameras travel around the planet—stopping at Greenland, Patagonia, Hawaii, Iceland, New Zealand, and other locales—to capture a wide variety of topographies, animals, and climates while making the case that our relationship with nature should be a spiritually nourishing one. Subtitled “Mountains, Water & the Healing Power of Nature,” the film’s dazzling imagery—backed by engaging music from Brian Keane and Michael Hoppé—nicely balances long-shot overviews and close-up detail of hummingbirds, glaciers, foxes, rivers, the wild meeting of sea and coast, and more. Also featuring a music-only option for meditation, DVD extras include deleted scenes. Recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

Hunting the Elements ★★★

(2012) 120 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.95 w/PPR), Blu-ray: \$29.99 (\$54.95 w/PPR). PBS Video. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-690-1 (dvd), 978-1-60883-691-8 (blu-ray).

The basic building blocks of life can be organized in a periodic table holding little more than 90 elements, but all of existence depends on them. In Chris Schmidt’s PBS-aired NOVA documentary, science writer and “tech guru” David Pogue explains why “matter matters.” One of our most prized and rare elements is gold, which is virtually indestructible, yet also soft and malleable. Pogue takes us to an American goldmine, showing how tiny gold flecks, almost invisible to the eye, must be extracted, crushed, and pulverized from enormous rocks. Copper is another valuable element—combined with tin it produces bronze, which was used for early tools and weapons, and was so important that an historical age was named for it. Pogue visits a factory where a time consuming process using bronze is employed to make bells. He explains how the combination of atoms can either produce a crack, as in the Liberty Bell, or make a perfect, reverberating ring. Beyond beauty, chemical compounds also create some “nasty stuff,” including a fertilizer bomb, which was deployed in the terrorist destruction of Oklahoma City’s Federal building. Among other topics covered are “noble” metals and gases, “rare earth” (which isn’t so rare), protons, electrons, neutrons, trace elements, the Big Bang’s role in chemistry, chemicals in the human body, and recent man-made elements that might help in areas such as climate change and energy. With unfailing humor, Pogue also visits the Corning Glass research lab in search of shatterproof glass, Gatorade’s Sports Science Institute where the quest is ongoing for the perfect



Gypsy Vanner Horse ★★½

(2009) 65 min. DVD: \$24.95. *In Motion Productions* (dist. by *Janson Media*). PPR. ISBN: 978-1-56839-449-7.

Filmmakers Jackie and Mark Barrett present a lovingly filmed introduction to a relatively new breed of horse—the Gypsy Vanner, developed by Gypsies in the British Isles in the 1900s and later gaining popularity in the United States. Temperamentally calm and sweet-natured, and related to draft stock such as Clydesdales, the compact, short-bodied, broad-chested creatures have flowing manes, long forelocks, and tails that touch the ground, as well as even more pronounced feathered hocks than their Clydesdale relatives. Gypsy Vanners, most of them piebald or clear gray, are still rare and can cost as much as \$50,000 apiece, but to see them running in a field, with manes and tails flowing, is to fall in love. In addition to interviews with enthusiastic breeders and owners in the U.K. and the U.S., as well as appealing scenes featuring the horses (in one, a group of children carefully wash a placid Gypsy Vanner; in another a foal is born), the documentary also presents a sketch of Britain’s “Traveling People.” Gypsy historian and folklorist Peter Ingram relates tales of his itinerant lifestyle in a “living wagon,” and the camera follows a Gypsy family in a caravan en route to the venerable Appleby Horse Fair, a cultural tradition dating back several centuries. DVD extras include an edited version showing only the horses, with background music. Charming and engaging, this is highly recommended. Aud: P. (F. Gardner)

body, and a shark tank for a demonstration of a repellent designed to save sharks from being snagged on fisherman's hooks. An entertaining and informative guide to the elements, this is recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

The White Lions ★★☆☆1/2

(2012) 60 min. DVD: \$19.99 (\$42.95 w/PPR), Blu-ray: \$24.99 (\$42.95 w/PPR). PBS Video. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-693-2 (dvd), 978-1-60883-694-9 (blu-ray).

Despite being king in the world of African predators, lions still face a daily struggle for food and survival. This is particularly true in the case of rare white lions, which—thanks to a genetic fluke—have a pale coat that makes them stand out to rivals or poachers. Filmmaker Joe Kennedy's *The White Lions*—aired on the PBS series *NATURE*—follows a pair of female white lion cubs being raised by a mother and sister lion in South Africa's Kruger National Park. The sisters, dubbed Matimba and Khanya, are also raising two tawny offspring. Since the male head of the small pride has disappeared or been killed, the cubs are helpless, particularly vulnerable to marauding male lions, who will kill them to bring adult females back into heat for breeding. White lions must live a "life in the shadows," and rarely survive to adulthood—the two adult lionesses here struggle to protect their young from predators and competitors, including hyenas, elephants, leopards, and water buffalo. Before maturity, the cubs must learn how to guard a kill (as well as when to yield), and ways to increase their odds of survival, which can include escaping the heat or climbing a tree. The suspense is palpable, as the pride is trailed by several nomadic males that are always alert to any sign of weakness. The cameras follow the young lions on the hunt or at play as they progress through the seasons toward adulthood. As with similar *NATURE* documentaries, this one does a fine job of following one particular family while also detailing the larger picture of a lion's often perilous life in the wild. Highly recommended. Aud: H, P. (S. Rees)

HEALTH & FITNESS

The Greater Good ★★☆☆

(2011) 84 min. DVD: \$24.95. BNP Pictures. PPR.

Directed by Kendall Nelson and Chris Pilaro, *The Greater Good* looks at the often highly emotional pro- and anti-vaccine movements, focusing heavily on activists and doctors who want stronger safety standards for vaccinations. The film serves up profiles of three families with children who were adversely affected by vaccinations: a cheerleader who becomes ill after an HPV vaccine; a boy who is autistic, supposedly due

to vaccinations; and a baby who dies after her second round of injections. Although these cases effectively raise questions about the safety of vaccines, the presentation occasionally feels emotionally manipulative. But this is offset somewhat by the wide-ranging opinions expressed in interviews with doctors, a vaccine education activist, and a drug company executive, all of whom agree that some sort of vaccination system is necessary in order to ward off once common diseases such as polio and to preserve so-called herd immunity. While the goal of the documentary is clearly to encourage more research in order to ensure that the vaccination process is safe for everyone, it does also consider the viewpoints of those who do not believe the system needs to change. Brief animated sequences and title cards featuring statistics about different aspects of vaccination help to provide context and greater clarity in this ultimately thought-provoking film. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Cruver)

Maya Fiennes' Yoga for Real Life ★★☆☆

(2012) 60 min. DVD: \$14.98. Gaia (avail. from most distributors).

London-based yoga teacher Maya Fiennes brings a calm and graceful presence to this stylish production, offering instruction and encouragement in a pleasant and engaging European-accented voice (she was born in Macedonia) as she moves through a Kundalini routine designed to tone the body and stimulate the chakras (or power centers) through movement, breathing techniques, and mantras. The overwhelming predominance of white—in her workout outfit, in the fabric covering the raised dais on which she performs, and in the background—creates the impression that Fiennes is floating in space (sometimes, when the camera angle changes, it takes a moment to visually register her position because her clothing seamlessly blends into the setting, leaving only her head, hands, and feet visible). Fiennes suggests choosing the poses that work best for the individual practitioner, offering several options for each chakra (as well as different postures), while also providing warnings for challenging positions or movements. Set to music with a light beat and gentle melody, this yoga workout is recommended. Aud: P. (F. Gardner)

The Power of Two ★★☆☆1/2

(2011) 94 min. DVD: \$24.95. Passion River (avail. from most distributors).

"Triumphant" may be an overused blurb, but it well suits director Marc Smolowitz's documentary inspired by the titular memoir by Ana and Isa Stenzel, twins who were born in Los Angeles in 1972 with cystic fibrosis—a seeming death sentence of progressive lung failure. The sisters were so often in and out of hospitals that they wrote and illustrated

DVD PICKS

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PRAY FOR JAPAN is a moving documentary about the aftermath of the devastating 2011 tsunami that focuses on the real-life heroes who fought on behalf of their loved ones and their hometown. This was a nationwide theatrical release in March 2012 and was greeted with sold-out shows and critical acclaim. A portion of the profits from this DVD/Blu-ray release will be donated to Japan Emergency NGO (JEN), a Japan-based charity that provides assistance to victims of natural disasters, wars, and internal conflicts. Also on Blu-ray: BV9322, \$24.99

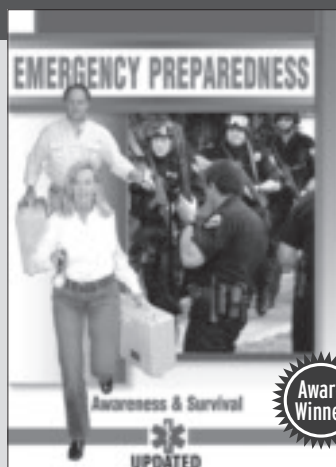


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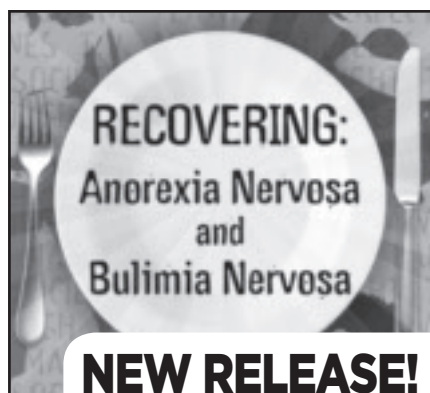
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"Featuring frank discussion from both sexes, the program provides solid hope for those suffering from an eating disorder."

Recommended ★★

Booklist Online Review July 2012

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their first book, a manual for CF patients, when they were adolescents. Aged 19 when the gene that causes CF was discovered, their only hope for long-term survival was the revolutionary double-lung transplant operation pioneered at Stanford University. Having both undergone the procedure (twice, in Ana's case), the "Miracle Twins" are now both advocates for and companions to fellow CF sufferers, as well as passionate proponents for organ donation. Sadly, cultural norms and taboos have made organ donations (and hence transplants) distressingly rare in the twins' ancestral Japan, and the pair here visit Tokyo to try to change long-held notions about illness, death, and radical surgery. The narratives of their individual fights for life are transfixing, while the emotional side of transplantation (including relationships with the families of the deceased donors) adds powerful drama to this engrossing documentary. Highly recommended. [Note: this is also available with public performance rights for \$150 for public libraries and \$350 for colleges and universities from Collective Eye Films, www.collectiveeye.org.] Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

The Sacred Science ★★½

(2011) 77 min. DVD: \$89; high schools & public libraries; \$250; colleges & universities. The Video Project. PPR. Closed captioned.

This fascinating documentary follows eight people with debilitating illnesses who travel to the upper Amazon jungle for 30 days of alternative medicine treat-

ment by indigenous healers. Filmmaker Nick Polizzi notes early on, "Five would come back with real results, two would come back disappointed, and one wouldn't come back at all." The afflicted arrive at a hospital run by Roman Hanis, who was cured of Crohn's disease in the rainforest and remained there to become a medicine man. His charges stay in huts—lying in hammocks, warding off various insects, and struggling with separation from the modern world—while receiving treatment and adapting to their surroundings (with varying degrees of optimism and testiness). The cameras follow shamans—who talk about their work—into the dense undergrowth in search of medicinal plants. Patients ritually ingest hallucinogenics in addition to drinking infusions and receiving counseling, and are periodically visited by a traditional doctor and nurse. One man with advanced cancer believes he's improving but dies; others suffering from diabetes, prostate cancer, Parkinson's disease, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), and alcoholism return home symptom-free or nearly so; only breast cancer and Crohn's disease resist treatment entirely. Hanis and the shamans tend to view physical maladies as manifestations of emotional or psychological trauma, as with the IBS sufferer who links her condition to childhood sexual abuse. An intriguing look at a controversial topic, this is highly recommended. [Note: this is also being sold on home video for \$19.99 directly from www.thesacredscience.com.] Aud: C, P. (M. Puffer-Rothenberg)

Pink Ribbons, Inc. ★★½

(2011) 98 min. DVD: \$27.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors).

Canadian filmmaker Léa Pool takes on the corporate culture that has been built up around breast cancer research, with a special focus here on Susan G. Komen for the Cure, a group that recently disassociated itself from Planned Parenthood. The title comes from a 2006 book by Dr. Samantha King about the "pink ribbon industry." When author Barbara Ehrenreich was undergoing treatment for the disease, she saw no real connection with her experience, and wondered, "What's with all these pink ribbons?"

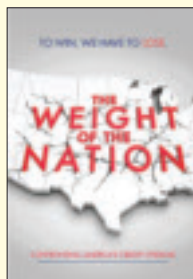
For companies like American Express, Yoplait, and the Ford Motor Company, however, this particular form of "cause marketing" has provided new opportunities to increase sales. But the size of these donations is often smaller than consumers realize; worse yet, some of the advertised products have a history of carcinogenic risk. Dr. Susan Love recommends that people do their research so they know where their contributions are going. Pool includes footage of Komen's Race for the Cure and Avon's Walk for Breast Cancer, while activists, medical professionals, and corporate spokespeople (including Komen CEO Nancy G. Brinker) talk about the increased incidence of breast cancer and the emphasis on cure over prevention, specifically in regards to environmental factors (Pool also speaks with Charlotte Haley, unheralded inventor of the pink ribbon). Most affectingly, members of a support group with stage IV breast cancer question terms like "battle" and "survivor," which imply that they haven't worked hard enough, since they haven't been able to keep cancer at bay. King terms the phenomenon the "tyranny of cheerfulness," which feeds into the corporate agenda while discouraging women from expressing their justifiable anger and frustration. A powerful, thought-provoking documentary, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)



The Weight of the Nation ★★½

(2011) 3 discs. 276 min. DVD: \$19.98. HBO Home Entertainment (avail from most distributors). Closed captioned. ISBN: 0-7806-9508-9.

Combining interviews with experts and ordinary citizens, this four-part HBO-aired series aims to objectively address the subject of obesity among Americans—a growing problem that has sparked widespread discussion. Made in conjunction with the Institute of Medicine, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the National Institutes of Health, *The Weight of the Nation* is—not surprisingly—hardly dispassionate, labeling the situation an “epidemic” that threatens the nation’s well-being, while also arguing for a concerted effort to deal with the crisis. The first episode, “Consequences,” looks at the genetic realities and lifestyle choices that have led to over half the population becoming clinically overweight, resulting in higher rates of diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease. “Choices” explores various means of weight loss—some good, others dangerous—ranging from diet and exercise to surgery. “Children in Crisis” focuses on the alarming increase in childhood obesity and the serious health conditions that follow in its wake. And the final episode, “Challenges,” offers suggestions for responses at the government, industry, and individual levels. *The Weight of the Nation* offers no simple solutions, but it does present a wealth of compelling data that will help viewers make responsible decisions. Accompanied by a dozen bonus related short films (running 100-plus minutes) and a 20-page booklet, this boxed set is somewhat like a super-sized meal—but one that’s good for you, and very reasonably priced. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (F. Swietek)



tips are also offered to help dads and other support members meaningfully participate during pregnancy. A truly comprehensive guide (much of the content is reinforced with onscreen lists and animations), *Understanding Pregnancy* will answer many questions while reassuring parents and pointing them in the right direction for dealing with a wide range of issues—from body image to constipation, from getting a tattoo (don’t!) to avoiding cat litter. DVD extras include a 34-minute condensed version of the presentation, as well as an animated “fetal development tour” featurette. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (M. Puffer-Rothenberg)

RELATIONSHIPS & SEXUALITY

Mississippi Queen: The GLBT Community and Ex-Gay Ministries in the South

★★½

(2010) 63 min. DVD: \$169.95. Films Media Group. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62102-624-2.

With *Mississippi Queen*, Paige Williams joins a growing list of filmmakers using a nonfiction documentary platform in order to vent personal issues. For Williams, a lesbian, the difficulties are grounded in her thorny relationship with her Mississippi-based parents, Judy and Jerry, devout Southern Baptists who founded a so-called “ex-gay ministry” after she left home (the film unfortunately skims over the question of how the enterprise operates). Williams attempts to draw her mother and father into expressing their differences with her, but this simply results in embarrassing exchanges between irritated adults engaged in perpetually parallel conversations. Williams also drags in her wife, who voices constant annoyance about the barely concealed contempt she feels from Judy and Jerry. When Williams mercifully turns the camera away from her domestic troubles, the documentary is much more effective, presenting sincere interviews with men and women who went through the ex-gay ministry regimen in an attempt to suppress their homosexuality. Detailing their experiences, these individuals eventually acknowledge that their efforts to convert left them closer to celibate asexuality than full-fledged heterosexuality. While these conversations are genuinely fascinating, the home-movie elements ultimately detract from the documentary’s value. An optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Tales of the Waria ★★★

(2011) 56 min. In Indonesian w/English subtitles. DVD: \$25; individuals; \$75 w/PPR: public libraries; \$295 w/PPR: institutions. Transit Media.

Kathy Huang’s sympathetic documentary gives voice to Indonesia’s *waria* community: i.e., men who live openly as women. Since the country is predominantly Muslim, *waria*

Song of the Soul: Stories of Hospice in South Africa ★★½

(2010) 40 min. DVD: \$248. Icarus Films. PPR.

When Janet Parrott arrived in South Africa in 2009 to shoot this profoundly moving documentary, an estimated 5.6 million residents were living with HIV and AIDS. Relying primarily on the first-person accounts of nurses, social workers, patients and their family members (including children), Parrott provides a glimpse of how the country’s urban and rural hospices are providing a lifeline for people who struggle to stay alive amidst crushing poverty and a continuing social stigma against those with the disease. Despite the odds, the caregivers push on with indefatigable spirit, and their energy empowers many individuals to find new courage and strength in dealing with their illness. *Song of the Soul* features tragic scenes, most notably during a visit with an elderly woman who must care for her six grandchildren because all of her own children have died from AIDS; in weak health herself, she cries that she can barely keep her family together on her meager savings. But the documentary also offers a stirring sense of hope for a better future, thanks to the South African government’s acknowledgment (albeit belatedly) of the crisis, and a commitment to improved education and wider availability of antiretroviral drugs. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Tai Chi: Discover the Ancient Art ★★★

(2012) 107 min. DVD: \$14.98. True Mind (avail from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-934708-88-0.

Filmed in a lovely statue garden in the French countryside, *Tai Chi: Discover the An-*

cient Art offers lessons in the ancient Chinese martial art and system of movement. Tai Chi Chuan (which literally means “supreme ultimate fist”) brings together opposing yin and yang energies, with the practitioner serving as a central axis for those energies to be put into balance through movement. Aside from brief comments on the history of Tai Chi (which was once for nobility and warriors only), the program offers extensively detailed instruction from Master Jian Liu Jun in both long and short form Tai Chi routines, backed with plenty of helpful tips. Also newly available is *Qi Jong: Discover the Ancient Art*, which also features Master Jian Liu Jun. Recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

CHILDBIRTH & PARENTING

Understanding Pregnancy: A Comprehensive Guide ★★½

(2012) 75 min. DVD: \$149.95: public libraries; \$279.95: high schools, colleges & universities. InJoy. PPR. Closed captioned.

InJoy’s latest guide to pregnancy covers fetal development, medical care and tests, the importance of good nutrition, related physical and emotional changes, and things to avoid. Eight ethnically and economically diverse moms are interviewed and shown eating right, exercising, coping with assorted discomforts, calling the doctor with questions, and just hanging out. An upbeat female narrator ties it all together, maintaining a cheerful tone even when she’s talking about heartburn (“A chewable antacid ... might be your new after-dinner mint!”). Partner

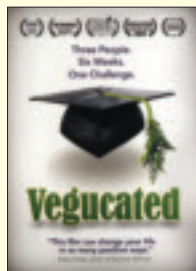
believe they must return to God as men, so reassignment surgery isn't an option, but since they also used to assist the king in pre-Islam times, waria have long been accepted as part of society. Huang begins in Makassar with a waria beauty pageant in which the participants go all out with feathers and sequins. Former contestant Mami Ria, who works in a beauty salon, says, "I never knew how to be a real boy," although she eschews makeup and maintains a short hairstyle. For 18 years, Ria has been involved with a married man, Pak Ansar, whose wife, Ely, says she doesn't mind. If anything, they all seem close, although Ria worries that Ansar is growing tired of her, because she's getting older. Suharni, who is HIV+, has a history of shared needles and unprotected sex, but now enjoys a committed relationship with Madi. Money is tight, however, so she leaves for a time to work in Bali, where the pay is better. If Ria and Suharni seem relatively happy with their lives, interviewee Firman says he regrets the time he spent as a waria, but even though he has put the past behind him in order to marry and have kids, Firman still hangs out with his waria friends (he and Suharni also work as hairstylists). Tiara, however, can't imagine living any other way, even though her boyfriend broke up with her because she would never be able to have children. Still, Tiara concludes, "Warias exist to make this life more beautiful." An interesting profile that is a natural for LGBT collections, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

FOOD & SPIRITS

Sushi: The Global Catch ★★★

(2011) 75 min. DVD: \$149 (\$249 w/PPR). Kino Lorber Edu.

Americans have grown accustomed to sushi in supermarkets and on conveyor belt-style operations, but it's doubtful they've given much thought to the food's origins. In this culinary-minded ecological documentary, filmmaker Mark S. Hall scrutinizes the state of today's bluefin tuna population, particularly in light of sushi's growing popularity (especially in China). Hall starts by profiling fourth-generation master chef Mamoru Sugiyama, who oversees Tokyo's Michelin-rated Sushiko Restaurant, a traditional sushi establishment founded in 1885. Sugiyama appreciates the praise he has received for his artistry, but sees himself as more of a craftsman. For the first three years, he explains, apprentice chefs wash the dishes and serve the food; only after seven years have they mastered the skills necessary to prepare the sushi. Sugiyama purchases his fish from Tsukiji, the world's largest seafood market, which busily ships their goods around the world (although even career fishermen in Japan worry that they're



Vegucated ★★★1/2

(2010) 77 min. DVD: \$11.99. Passion River.

Filmmaker Marisa Miller Wolfson grew up in Evansville, IN, eating meat and dairy products, but her growing outrage about how animals are treated and concerns over the environmental impact of animal culture wound up making her a vegan with a mission. For this film, she recruited three carnivorous New Yorkers—a college student from Queens, an aspiring actor from Manhattan, and a single mom and psychiatrist who lives in Brooklyn—to eat a vegan diet (no animal products—meat, dairy, eggs, or even honey) for six weeks and share their experiences. Their goals: lose weight, look good, and feel healthy. Besides cooking and eating often unfamiliar foods, the trio shop for clothes (no leather shoes or jackets) and groceries (who knew Oreos were vegan?). Despite some disturbing images of animal abuse, *Vegucated* is an entertaining, insightful, and informative documentary that makes a compelling argument for a vegan lifestyle (although the many handheld camera shots may induce vertigo in some viewers). DVD extras include a Q&A with nutritionist Dr. Joel Fuhrman and a standup comedy routine with the Brooklyn participant. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Gardner)

doing more harm than good by depleting this rapidly-diminishing species). Marine biologists speak about the crucial role of the bluefin tuna in the ocean ecosystem, and the documentary looks at Australia's farm-raised tuna industry as a possible alternative. Other speakers include activists, politicians, fish sellers, knife merchants, and restaurant workers in Austin, San Francisco, and Lodz (one entrepreneur even offers sushi on a stick). The advice here: don't avoid sushi, but do seek out the most sustainable options. Despite the cuisine-centric first act, *Sushi: The Global Catch* has more in common with impassioned eco-docs like *Sharkwater* (VL Online-7/08) and *The Cove* (VL-1/10). Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

BUSINESS & ECONOMICS

Biz Kid\$: Building Your Business Online

★★★★★

(2009) 28 min. DVD: \$89. Film Ideas. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60572-544-4.

This episode from the Emmy-winning *Biz Kid\$* series—aimed at providing young people with valuable information about financial matters—focuses on steps for creating a viable online business. In between relevant vignettes (including a *Matrix*-like scenario and Frankenstein skit), a group of teen hosts offer excellent tips on marketing a product on the Internet, including establishing a website and learning HTML code, doing online promotion, making the most of search engine optimization and visibility, using blogs and videos to help inform customers, and realizing the importance of networking. Featuring interviews with a variety of young entrepreneurs (including a graphic artist, a junk mail filter start-up, and MyYearbook—now known as MeetMe—social networking founders Dave

and Catherine Cook), *Building Your Business Online* underscores the benefits of web-based businesses for young people, ranging from setting your own hours to looking professional (even though you're not an adult). And, of course—earning money! Highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** Aud: J, H, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

The Callers ★★★

(2012) 89 min. DVD: \$24.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors).

A good country auctioneer combines salesmanship and performance art, employing a pattern of sing-song rhythms, humor, and nonstop patter, while remaining alert to every potential customer's wink, nod, scratch of the ear, or flick of the finger, as he tries to steer bids towards the highest price. Filmmaker Susan Sfarra's *The Callers* takes the viewer inside the world of country auctions, focusing on the Pennsylvania Dutch region—one of the best places to see an auctioneer in action. For many auctioneers, this is a close-knit world—often a family business descended through several generations. Auctioneers here talk about how they got started, the special skills needed to "read" people, the process of separating trash from treasure, and the all-important ability to keep an auction moving swiftly while sustaining buyer interest. Buyers interviewed describe the addictive thrill of the hunt as they sort through "rusty gold," from old wheelbarrows to claw foot bathtubs. Bidding is a learned skill, although strategy can fall by the wayside during heated bidding wars between neighbors and competitors. Auctioneers describe newfangled tools (like computers) used for conducting auctions, while also lamenting the declining volume of available antiques and the shortened attention span of today's buyers. In addition to estate auctions, the film looks at livestock and produce auctions. In spite of the challenges,

auctioneers say that the business gets “in the blood,” and there’s nothing else they would rather be doing. DVD extras include bonus scenes. Likely to appeal to fans of popular TV shows like *Storage Wars* and *American Pickers*, this is recommended. Aud: P. (S. Rees)

An Evening with John Bogle: From Wall Street to Your Street ★★★

(2011) 60 min. DVD: \$24.95. NETworth (dist. by Janson Media). PPR. ISBN: 978-1-56839-403-9.

Filmed at a Philadelphia public-TV station and guided by PBS’s *MoneyTrack* co-hosts Pam Krueger and Jack Gallagher, this program features John C. Bogle—respected founder of Vanguard Funds—who talks about the aftermath of the global financial crash of 2008. In the first half, Krueger interviews Bogle, while in the second part, Krueger and Bogle take questions from the audience and from “investors in the street” interviewed by Gallagher. Wall Street—at least the contemporary version, which Bogle calls more greed-mutated, self-serving, and untrustworthy than in the 1950s, when he started his career—comes in for a whipping as being responsible for the “great defeat” of capitalism, as middle-managers took advantage of clients’ money, trading and selling bad debts and gambling away peoples’ savings while grabbing the greatest cut for themselves, like croupiers in a casino (an Occupy protester could hardly have said it better). The only way to beat Wall Street (aside from abstaining altogether) is to have the most diversified portfolio possible (such as in indexed mutual funds like Vanguard), Bogle counsels, while also talking about his book *Enough: True Measures of Money, Business and Life*, which exhorts against mindless avarice and runaway consumption. Serving up solid basic investment principles and helpful counseling about fiscal responsibility, this is recommended. Aud: P. (C. Cassidy)

An Inconvenient Tax ★★★1/2

(2011) 74 min. DVD: \$59: public libraries; \$279 w/ PPR: colleges & universities. Seventh Art Releasing.

Vintage clips from monster movies abound in this lively exposé on the mutated monstrosity of paperwork and rules and exceptions of the federal income tax code. Ostensibly imposed to cover U.S. government expenses in national emergencies such as war, the American tax system became an entrenched part of civilian life and is now a mass of special-interest exemptions (in place chiefly due to lobbyists) and questionable formulas intended to foster economic growth. In a narrative that eschews left-versus-right grandstanding (even with Noam Chomsky, Herman Cain, Ron Paul, and Mike Huckabee among those commenting), Ronald Reagan is hailed for making tax reform a key political issue; but compromises and complications (including Reagan’s legacy of deficit spending and bigger government), along with deductions cynically peddled to voter blocs

(the child credit, for example) would ultimately thwart any attempt at simplifying the labyrinthine system (such as interviewee Steve Forbes’ famous flat-tax proposal). Filmmaker Christopher P. Marshall eventually notes that other countries have taxes much higher than in the U.S. in order to support free healthcare, welfare, and other social services that philosophically split Americans. Offering an informative look at a frustrating issue, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

SPORTS, GAMES & RECREATION

The Boxing Girls of Kabul ★★★

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

Ariel J. Nasr’s alternately inspiring and dispiriting National Film Board of Canada documentary profiles a female boxing club in Afghanistan. The participants—who take their training seriously—aim to compete in the 2012 Olympics, but don’t have the money for proper uniforms and equipment (the women work out in the national stadium where public executions used to take place). Nonetheless, their coach—Sabir Sharifi, who formed the group in 2007—expresses gratitude that the Taliban are no longer around to obstruct women’s efforts to pursue their athletic dreams. In his younger days, Sharifi looked forward to boxing at the Los Angeles Olympics, but then the Soviets invaded. Now he pins his hopes on a new team, which includes sisters Sadaf and Shabnam Rahimi, who have their mother’s support (for their protection, she moved them to Iran for eight years, at which point they took up sports). Says 16-year-old Sadaf, “When I box, I feel happy.” Some of her female neighbors, on the other hand, can’t even attend school or leave the house. Although Shahla Sekandari has received her father’s blessing, her mother and brother

haven’t been as encouraging, the latter complaining that other men make fun of him (he’s also worried for her safety). During the course of the film, the girls travel to Vietnam and Kazakhstan, where they enter rings for the first time, competing against boxers from better funded programs. If they don’t go as far as they would like, it’s still a first step, although they return home to more criticism than acclaim. An interesting sports documentary with sociopolitical overtones, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennesy)

The Highest Pass ★★★

(2012) 90 min. DVD: \$24.95. Cinema Libre Studio (avail. from most distributors).

Viewers witness the perils of riding motorcycles through the avalanche-prone Himalayas in this documentary (which has the look and feel of MTV’s *The Real World*) that follows a difficult adventure undertaken by spiritual seekers in mountainous Northern India. Directed by Slamdance Film Festival co-founder Jon Fitzgerald, the film tracks eight bikers (including writer Adam Schomer) as they ride 1,200 miles through icy, treacherous mountain passes to reach an altitude over 18,000 feet. The group is led by 27-year-old Indian yogi Anand Mehrotra, who has been living under a prediction of early death since his childhood. Mehrotra decides to ride his motorcycle on a hazardous ascent from Rishikesh through the Himalayas as a way to overcome anxiety about that prophecy and feel more alive. The other bikers tag along, suffering accidents while traveling on roads that have vanished under snow. Along the way, Mehrotra’s disciples question his judgment and prudence, sniping via reality-TV-like interviews that seem out of place in this kind of project. In the end, everyone seems to find bliss, but something essential about the how and why is not communicated. DVD extras include deleted scenes and outtakes. Not a necessary purchase. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)



Breathe ★★★

(2012) 51 min. DVD: \$19.98. FilmWorks Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).

Filmmaker Martin Khodabakhshian’s tense but graceful documentary *Breathe* focuses on New Zealander William Trubridge, arguably the world’s greatest freediver. A competitive sportsman who swims (without a suit or special gear) to seemingly impossible depths, Trubridge can hold his breath for more than seven minutes, the result of training that appears to be as much spiritual as physical. Filmed in the Bahamas, the cameras follow Trubridge’s preparations to break his own freediving record, trying to reach 300 feet below the water’s surface in Dean’s Blue Hole, a deep and dark pit. Trubridge is an appealing subject, and his equanimity about pulling off the impossible adds to his mystique. While *Breathe* certainly introduces viewers to an arcane sport, it’s also a compelling personal portrait of an interesting man. DVD extras include a photo gallery. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

THE ARTS

Art Is... The Permanent Revolution

★★★

(2012) 82 min. DVD: \$27.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors).

Manfred Kirchheimer's documentary explores the expression of political protest in various forms of print art—lithographs, woodcuts, etchings, drawings, and engravings—from the 16th century to the present. Hundreds of activist works by some 60 artists—from Rembrandt, Goya, and Daumier to Dix, Grosz, and Picasso—are surveyed to demonstrate how art was employed as a means of criticism, with primary targets being war, social injustice, and political oppression. But Kirchheimer is not concerned merely with the past; *Art Is...* also features contemporary practitioners—etcher Sigmund Abeles, lithographer Ann Chernow, woodcutter Paul Marcus, and master printer James Reed—following each of them as they create works, describing the process step-by-step. Along the way, the artists also comment on predecessors and discuss how they are continuing the tradition of social criticism by taking on current domestic and international issues as subjects. Shifting between present and past—juxtaposing the laborious, highly personal process of production today with the socially conscious purposes that drove artists over the years to fashion striking images—this documentary should foster admiration for graphic artists' fusion of socially critical content with aesthetic form. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Autumn de Forest ★★1/2

(2012) 20 min. DVD: \$29.95. Crystal Productions. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-56290-691-7.

This short documentary introduces 10-year-old painter Autumn de Forest, who says she got her start in her "late fives," recalling that her father, Doug, was working on a furniture-making project when she began to splash paint on a piece of wood. Dad said that "it looked like a Rothko," and Autumn was off to the races. As influences, she cites Andy Warhol, Pablo Picasso, Jackson Pollock, Salvador Dalí, and Georgia O'Keeffe. Like the similarly-themed feature-length documentary *My Kid Could Paint That* (VL-3/08), this profile is likely to produce admiration or skepticism—or both. Autumn enjoys explaining how she creates her large-scale paintings (which she demonstrates for the camera, for other art students, and at a public event), but the way she repeats certain phrases comes across as somewhat robotic, as if she had rehearsed her lines. While working on a "pole painting," for instance—pouring paint on a canvas before smearing it with a metal pole—she mentions the horizon line three times, and insists on its importance, but doesn't

explain why (she sums up the technique by saying, "It's easy; it's fun."). Autumn believes that everyone should follow their passion and credits her parents for their support, though it's odd to hear a child use the word "career" in reference to her work. Since this is more of a vanity project than an objective portrait, there's no mention of the business dealings—such as agents or prices—although *Forbes* reports that Autumn's paintings fetch as much as \$25,000 each. Ultimately, this could inspire creativity in younger viewers, making it a strong optional purchase. Aud: E, P. (K. Fennessy)

Brooklyn Boheme ★★

(2011) 84 min. DVD: \$99.95: public libraries; \$295: colleges & universities. The Cinema Guild. PPR. ISBN: 0-7815-1399-5.

Presenter and co-director Nelson George says that it's inaccurate to compare the literature- and music-oriented Harlem Renaissance to the explosion of creativity in George's own Fort Greene and Clinton Hill neighborhoods in Brooklyn during the 1980s; but the vibe is similar in this affectionate retrospective covering the past 30 years—before gentrification and corporate real-estate grabs took the sizzle out of the region. Tracing Fort Greene's bohemian heritage all the way back to residents Walt Whitman and Richard Wright, George and co-director Diane Paragas chronicle how a generation of African American and Puerto Rican performers took advantage of late-20th-century neighborhood blight and white flight in order to move into brownstones and storefronts, creating an environment in which everyone knew and

helped each other. Spike Lee threw block parties and toted his scripts for *She's Gotta Have It* and *Do the Right Thing* around on his bicycle, corralling local talent; the Brooklyn Moon Café served crowds with spoken-word poetry and freestyle monologues rather than food or liquor; Chris Rock was motivated to become a comic force as a means to pay off his new house. The surging hip-hop marketplace helped too; as Lee says, these weren't starving artists but synergized ones determined to make money and build something lasting. Other interviewees include Rosie Perez, Branford Marsalis, and Lisa Jones Chapman. An interesting slice of black Americana, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Del Shores: Sordid Confessions ★★1/2

(2012) 89 min. DVD: \$24.99. Breaking Glass Pictures (avail. from most distributors).

Texas-born Del Shores, a brash gay playwright-screenwriter and standup comic, here follows up his previous one-man-show—*My Sordid Life* (VL-5/12)—with another cathartic feature-length monologue, which is preceded by a staged skit in which Shores encounters homophobic Christian pickets from a group whose acronym is "C.L.A.P." Alternately clever and queasy, Shores begins the set with payback and spite worthy of a gangsta rapper, revealing that his gay marriage (triumphantly mentioned in *My Sordid Life*) has ended; spewing bile on right-wing entertainer/blogger Victoria Jackson and other Tea Party types; judging Christian-music artists on their closet-gay qualities; and trashing an actor on one of his projects who made disdainful remarks to *The Advocate* on the quality of



Master Qi and the Monkey King ★★

(2012) 81 min. In English & Mandarin w/English subtitles. DVD: \$24.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors).

Two Chinese opera performers based in America take center stage in author and filmmaker Alan Govenar's documentary. Qi Shu Fang says that her sister-in-law—a member of the Peking Opera—specialized in female martial roles in the 1950s, a time when men normally played these characters. Inspired, Qi practiced at home in rural Xi'an until she was ready to audition for the opera academy. Three years later, Qi graduated early from the five-year program and moved to Beijing. In addition to martial arts, acrobatics, and dance moves, Qi learned to apply her own elaborate make-up. During the Cultural Revolution, she appeared in Madame Jiang Qing's (Mao's wife) play *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy*, which later became a movie (and inspired a Brian Eno record), making her famous throughout the country. Qi's husband, actor/director Ding Mei-kui, has his own specialty: the Monkey King, an immortal half-man, half-monkey character. The two met when they toured together in the 1960s, but love took time to bloom in the midst of Qi's nonstop rehearsing. While traveling through America in the 1980s, the pair felt they could make more of a difference by sharing their culture with new audiences, so they stayed behind to start their own troupe. Master Qi and Ding now perform with other Chinese immigrants who have Peking Opera training, including actor Liu Chun-nuan and orchestra conductor Tian Gang. Most live in Queens, which has a large Chinese population, but some work day jobs to make ends meet—which they don't seem to mind as long as it helps to keep their opera traditions alive. DVD extras include bonus performances and text bios. An interesting profile, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

the scripts. Meow! Or, as Shores might say, Me-fucking-ow! The comic also recounts his sexual mishaps in connection with varied genitalia—male and female—and comments on crimes in which vaginas prominently figured. Away from sexual topics (which isn't very often), Shores describes assorted real-life grotesques he's met in the American South who fuel his writer's imagination. But his mocking of impoverished homeless people who are (paradoxically) fat brings to mind the material of Andrew "Dice" Clay (which is no compliment). Larger LGBT collections will certainly want to consider. A strong optional purchase. Aud: P. (C. Cassidy)

How to Make a Book with Steidl ★★1/2
(2010) 88 min. In German w/English subtitles.
DVD: \$149 (\$249 w/PPR). Kino Lorber Edu.

This observational documentary spends quality time with exacting publisher Gerhard Steidl as he designs several high-quality books. Instead of speeding up his production process, Steidl tells author Martin Parr, he is "...more interested in longtime relationships with artists." Later, Steidl says to an unidentified interlocutor that he would be rich if he only published classics like Günter Grass's *The Tin Drum* and Robert Frank's *The Americans*, but he's just as interested in more esoteric titles. During the course of the film, Steidl travels from his Göttingen home base to New York, Los Angeles, Paris, Qatar, and Vancouver to meet with Grass, fashion designer Karl Lagerfeld, painter Ed Ruscha, and several photographers, including Frank, Joel Sternfeld, and Robert Adams. Some of the projects are given clear explanations, others are not. Sternfeld's revolves around iPhone pictures he took in Dubai, Lagerfeld's has something to do with the House of Chanel, and Ruscha's appears to center on Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*. (With Frank, who relocated from Switzerland to America, and Lagerfeld, who moved from Germany to France, Steidl speaks in German, but much of the rest of the dialogue is in English.) Since no definitions accompany terms such as "die-cut," "letterpress," and "offset printing" co-directors Gereon Wetzel and Jörg Adolph assume that viewers already have some knowledge of the design and/or publishing industries. Their fly-on-the-wall approach eschews any information about Steidl's background or personal life (other than a brief mention of his somewhat disapproving father), although as a look at his day-to-day working world, it is rich with detail. A strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

PressPausePlay: The Digital Revolution and the Changing Creative Landscape

★★★
(2011) 84 min. DVD: \$179.95. Films Media Group.
PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62102-625-9.

This ambitious survey looks at how new digital technologies have shaken the world of

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Understanding Art: Impressionism ★★½

(2011) 3 discs. 239 min. DVD: \$59.99. Acorn Media (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-59828-573-4.

Learned, ebullient Waldemar Januszczak—art critic of the U.K.'s *Sunday Times*—is the host of this 2011 BBC series that offers an expert, engaging introduction to the Impressionist movement initiated in French art. Presented in four hour-long episodes, the documentary begins with the so-called “Gang of Four”—Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Jean Frédéric Bazille, and Camille Pissarro—whose joint 1874 exhibition inaugurated a revolution that emphasized luminosity and soft focus in painting.

The second episode, “The Great Outdoors,” considers Paul Cézanne’s innovations in landscape perspective, as well as the Impressionists’ forays to locales where they could indulge their fascination with water and other natural phenomena. “Painting to the People” moves on to Edgar Degas’ pastels and Gustave Caillebotte’s portrayals of urban laborers, and also introduces women Impressionists, such as Berthe Morisot and Mary Cassatt. “The Final Flourish” concludes with Georges Seurat’s pointillism, Vincent van Gogh’s obsession with Japanese prints, and Monet’s subtle water-lily masterpieces. Januszczak proves to be a witty and knowledgeable guide, making a convincing case for the radicalism of Impressionist works and sharing a mass of historical detail while strolling through various locations that inspired the featured individuals. DVD extras include two excellent bonus documentaries—*Manet: The Man Who Invented Modern Art* and *Vincent: The Full Story*—as well as a text bio of Januszczak, and a 20-page viewer’s guide. Beautifully shot and skillfully edited, this is highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (F. Swietek)

art, music, film, and literature, democratizing the playing field via affordable devices and online communications, while circumventing the usual media-industry gatekeepers and making everyone a potential “viral” star. All good, says musician and DJ Moby, who also feels this is the best-ever time to be in a creative field. Not so, counters author Andrew Keen, who sees an ocean of “cacophony,” in which works of true genius go unnoticed in a relentless cascade of mediocrity cranked out by newly enabled no-talents. This oft-contradictory exploration of today’s media/artscape is interwoven with periodic visits with Iceland’s Ólafur Arnalds as he coordinates a pop-classical fusion concert in Manchester, England (Arnalds’ career got a lift from his online presence—a rather tenuous qualification for inclusion here). Other segments focus on Seth Godin, who made a self-published success out of his quickie book *Unleashing the Ideavirus* by broad-banding it as a free e-book; the groundbreaking Red Digital Cinema camera, which has enabled a fully software-based motion-picture industry; and Sean Parker and Shawn Fanning, who created the music file-sharing site Napster (before they ever met face-to-face) and had music execs running scared. Delivering a thought-provoking snapshot of the current state of the intersection between art and technology, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

The Story of the Costume Drama ★★½

(2008) 2 discs. 225 min. DVD: \$39.99. Acorn Media (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-59828-573-4.

Although little more than a glorified clip compilation, this BBC overview of the period

miniseries—a staple of British television—makes for an engaging tour of the genre, even if a brief taste of shows like *I, Claudius*, *Poldark*, and *Brideshead Revisited* serves only to whet one’s appetite for the entire meal (likely the *raison d’être* behind the project). Divided into five episodes—“The Greatest Stories Ever Told,” “The Stars,” “Affairs of the Heart,” “Picture Perfect,” and “A Call to Arms”—the series features a substantial amount of overlap and repetition. But it also covers a lot of territory, from 1955’s *Robin Hood* up through 2007’s *Cranford* and *Fanny Hill*, with recollections by actors, directors, and writers (such as Andrew Davies, who is repeatedly mentioned for his skill in teasing out the sources’ sexual implications without being blatant). The interview clips add a nice personal touch to the gushing narration—as do visits to the shooting locations. Some of the best-known performers are conspicuous by their absence as interviewees—Colin Firth, for instance, whose eye-catching wet-shirt scene from *Pride and Prejudice* is shown over and over again, eliciting swoons from female commentators. And the approach is definitely Anglo-centric, with constant mention of viewer numbers in British households and only rare reference to broadcast success in the U.S. But this will certainly encourage many viewers to seek out shows they’ve missed. A strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Studio Workshop with David Dunlop: Painting Skies ★★½

(2012) 2 discs. 210 min. DVD: \$79.95. SimmonsArt. PPR. Closed captioned.

This four-part series featuring artist-lecturer

David Dunlop (of the Emmy-winning PBS-aired *Landscapes Through Time with David Dunlop*) is an outstanding resource for both artists and art appreciators who would like to learn more about the nuances of landscape painting. Stressing that landscape painting is not about making maps or conveying empirical information, but rather about capturing a psychological effect or subjective feeling, Dunlop leads the viewer through fascinating discussions of works by Dutch master Jacob van Ruisdael and renowned landscape artist J.M.W. Turner, underscoring changing relationships over time between sky and land, light and dark, near and far, etc. Even Dunlop’s demonstrations on mixing colors are as much about aesthetic principles as practical advice for painters. Part three in the series is very much a hands-on class in creating a sense of motion in landscapes, while the final section, titled “Luminous Skies with Diffused Light,” is another master class with inspiring fine-arts talk. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (T. Keogh)

Water Children ★★★

(2011) 75 min. In Japanese & English w/English subtitles. DVD: \$89; public libraries; \$295: colleges & universities. Women Make Movies. PPR.

In *Water Children*, Dutch director Aliona van der Horst documents a friend’s unusual art installation. Tomoko Mukaiyama, a classical pianist and visual artist of Dutch and Japanese extraction, decided to create a piece that expresses her thoughts about a woman’s loss of fertility. Although she has a daughter who assists with the project, the onset of menopause finds Mukaiyama pondering the reality that she will no longer be able to conceive, and she concentrates her attention on menstrual fluid or “moon blood.” In the damp, isolated Japanese town of Sanga Mura, she fills a hall with her art piece, which she titles “wasted.” Arranged like a maze through which viewers can walk, it consists of layers of 12,000 diaphanous white silk dresses. In the center, a cluster of blood-saturated fabric hangs from the cathedral ceiling (from this vantage point, the piece looks like the inside of a jellyfish). One observer says it makes her feel sad, another finds it wonderful, while a third considers it inappropriate. Mukaiyama encourages other women to saturate a dress and to share their thoughts with her, so that she can incorporate their experiences into her musical improvisations on J.S. Bach’s “Goldberg Variations.” Van der Horst, who admits she has had her own fertility issues, spends time interviewing some of these women attendees, who talk about pregnancy, motherhood, hysterectomies, and miscarriages (in Japan, a “water child” signifies a miscarriage—one woman who lost a child 24 years before finds the “ritual of the dress” particularly cathartic). A multidisciplinary title that works in women’s studies and art collections, as well as being an engaging

documentary for general viewers, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

HISTORY & CURRENT EVENTS

8:46 ★★★

(2011) 55 min. DVD: \$14.99. Virgil Films (avail. from most distributors).

Actress and filmmaker Jennifer Gargano's 9/11-inspired short feature is an ensemble narrative (almost bereft of background music) that begins on September 10, 2001, and cuts between a multicultural assortment of New Yorkers and NYC visitors whose lives will be forever shaken (or lost) during the coordinated terrorist attacks of the next morning. The characters include a happy young wife, newly pregnant; a visiting Japanese businessman; an FDNY fireman; a Muslim-immigrant cashier; a reluctant intern beginning his first day at a brokerage; upscale executives; and the browbeaten World Trade Center maintenance staff (none directly based on real-life individuals, according to the credits disclaimer). The disaster is effectively re-created through quick cuts to news footage and sparse special effects, but the real intent here is to illustrate the emotional trauma inflicted on innocent families. At least part of Gargano's motivation is to direct attention towards Tuesday's Children, a nonprofit organization offering medical and psychiatric care and counseling to families ripped apart by 9/11 (extras include a short promo documentary on the group). A heartfelt effort, this is recommended. Aud: P. (C. Cassidy)

At Home with the Georgians ★★1/2

(2010) 3 discs. 180 min. DVD: \$34.98. BFS Entertainment & Multimedia (avail. from most distributors).

The British love of domesticity—in terms of both their houses and the life that goes on within them—is explored by Amanda Vickery in this handsome three-part BBC documentary. Vickery, a professor of early modern history at the University of London, argues that the 18th century determined English attitudes about home and hearth, a point she makes by poring over diaries and letters of the era, reading portions aloud (with some passages spoken by actors in period garb). In the first segment, "The Man's Place," Vickery focuses on the role of men, claiming that their yearning for marriage led them to become almost obsessive in planning living arrangements as well as courting mates. "A Woman's Touch" argues that women's attendance to household work spurred their talent for interior decoration. Both episodes offer some intriguing insights, even if it's somewhat debatable whether the examples offered by Vickery—whose narration often strains for an annoyingly chatty touch—prove the generalizations she draws. The final and most

fascinating hour, "Safe As Houses," delivers a wide-ranging tour of surviving homes while covering such topics as security devices, the division of space within domiciles among residents (including lodgers and servants), and various means of maintaining privacy within a crowded environment. As a contribution to social history, this series is reasonably engaging, but its conclusions are hardly definitive, and Vickery's rather mannered style might put some viewers off. A strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Bomber Boys ★★★1/2

(2012) 89 min. DVD: \$19.98. BFS Entertainment & Multimedia (avail. from most distributors).

Inspired by author Patrick Bishop's 2007 nonfiction book *Bomber Boys* and following up on their earlier historical documentary *Battle of Britain* (VL-1/12), actor Ewan McGregor and his brother Colin, a Royal Air Force pilot, focus on unsung heroes of World War II, those RAF commanders and gunners (many of them teenagers who had never even driven motorcars before) manning the mighty Lancaster bombers that took "total war" to Germany's heavily defended industrial heartland. Only half survived, and of the more than 7,000 Lancasters built, only two remain airworthy. Parallel narratives unfold as Ewan delivers the history while Colin trains to fly a lovingly preserved Lancaster. The siblings also chat with now-elderly RAF veterans (and a German Luftwaffe gunner), mixing reminiscences with full-gear run-throughs of navigation and crew stations. Also appearing are German victims of the saturation bombing of Hamburg; in fact, the devastation of Hamburg, as well as the inferno of Dresden, turned public opinion against the RAF Bomber Command, and only recently has a memorial to their effort been approved. A sidebar shows Colin visiting fellow RAF bombers in Afghanistan, where high-level technology enables pinpoint airstrikes that contrast markedly with the mass destruction wielded by the Axis powers and the Allies. An excellent addition to WWII collections, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Burma: A Human Tragedy ★★★

(2011) 85 min. In Burmese & English. DVD: \$24.95. CAV Distributing Corporation (avail. from most distributors).

Neil Hollander's earnest documentary looks at the brutality of the military junta that recently ruled Burma (aka Myanmar), as well as the power of the country's drug lords. Hollander places particular emphasis on the government's campaign against ethnic minorities, such as the Karen and the Rohingya, which drove many families into camps across the border—primarily in Bangladesh, where the people were also mistreated. Narrated by Anjelica Huston, *Burma: A Human Tragedy* employs archival

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footage to present a brief account of Burma's history since becoming independent in 1947, but the meat of the documentary is interviews, the most powerful of which are with refugees in the camps, who recount details of the miserable, dangerous conditions they faced. Many exhibit wounds suffered at the hands of the Burmese army—often inflicted by landmines that the junta planted indiscriminately around villages suspected of disloyalty (elephants were also injured by the explosives, and some of them outfitted with experimental prosthetics). Interspersed throughout are excerpts from a conversation with Nobel Peace Prize-winning opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who calls upon the world community to pressure the ruling cabal to move toward democracy and secure justice for Burma's persecuted minorities. Hollander's film is already somewhat dated, since it was shot before the 2010 elections that led to Suu Kyi's release from house arrest as well as some modest reform. But it does raise the curtain on the humanitarian crimes of a regime that had long been almost inaccessible to Western scrutiny. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Deadline Every Second ★★1/2

(2011) 58 min. DVD: \$24.95; individuals; \$220 w/PPR: institutions. Ken Kobre Photography. ISBN: 978-0-615-52646-1.

Photojournalism instructor and author Ken Kobre produced this episodic, cinéma-vérité survey of Associated Press photographers at work around the world. Aside from an opening montage, no time is spent on the long history and traditions of AP, nor are viewers offered any extensive recaps about how digital-imaging and online media have evolved since wet-darkroom days. Instead,

Deadline Every Second is presented at high shutter speed, relating the experiences of Richard Chew, who went right from covering a maternity fashion show to the WTC attacks (capturing haunting images of victims plummeting from the burning towers) and Julie Jacobson's eyewitness handling of the horrific Haitian earthquake. Other segments focus on survival tips while capturing unrest and carnage in the Middle East; controversy over showing the mortal wounds of a U.S. Marine in Afghanistan; and a near-miss for a news-hawk who found himself in the middle of a bombing in Pakistan. Nonviolent interludes depict AP photojournalists on assignment at the Tour de France and grabbing a novelty shot of a wax-museum dummy of Barack Obama in transit in San Francisco. Although it would have been nice to learn more background information about the individual shutterbugs and what led them to this calling, this is still a strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Give 'Em Hell, Harry ★★1/2

(1961) 55 min. DVD: \$19.98. *S'more Entertainment* (avail. from most distributors).

Not to be confused with the same-titled 1975 film starring James Whitmore, this presentation is a September 1961 episode of David Susskind's TV talk show that featured former President Harry S. Truman as the guest. Truman was, not surprisingly, direct and charming in his answers, which covered a broad scope of political and personal topics. Although Susskind's questioning is, uncharacteristically, often too polite, Truman nevertheless offers highly opinionated comments on subjects ranging from salaries for teachers (he believes they are much too low) to the power of the media (he warns

about corporations controlling both print and broadcast outlets) to the potential for atomic energy (he speaks vaguely of the need to test the science with more vigor). Truman expresses disappointment with the growing movement of nonaligned nations led by India's Prime Minister Nehru, but saves most of his disapproval for the Soviet Union and repeatedly refers to it as "totalitarian" rather than "communist." Susskind overlooks several of the hot-button issues of that year (Castro's Cuba and the Civil Rights movement are strangely absent), but he encourages Truman to discuss the historical evolution of the presidency. By contemporary standards, Truman's approach to Oval Office leadership is refreshingly honest and unapologetic. "The worst thing you can do is make no decision," Truman remarks. "If a decision is wrong, then just make another one to fix it." Really, how can one argue with that? Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Hawaii: A Voice for Sovereignty ★★1/2

(2009) 84 min. DVD: \$20 (\$150 w/PPR). Othila Media Productions.

On January 16, 1893, U.S. Marines entered Honolulu, capital of the sovereign nation of Hawaii, to back a group of mostly American businessmen in a coup that deposed the country's queen and placed a man named Sanford B. Dole (a cousin of James Dole, the pineapple mogul) in charge. Despite Queen Liliuokalani's protest to President Grover Cleveland, the U.S. remained a presence in Hawaii, annexing the country in 1898 and establishing a state in 1959. Filmed over four years, Catherine Bauknight's documentary examines that history and details the efforts of native Hawaiians to retain their culture and spirituality. Bauknight interviews activists and protesters, musicians and elders, taro farmers and fishermen, as she explores the Hawaiian experience. Among those featured are professor and human rights organizer Huanani-Kay Trask, Grammy nominee Willie K, author Gregg Braden, and cultural specialist Clifford Naeole. What emerges is a sense of the growing desire of Polynesian Hawaiians to return to an embrace of spirituality and connection with the natural world, as well as a determination to right the land grabs and disenfranchisement of the past. Beautiful Hawaiian scenery provides a lush backdrop to this informative, thought-provoking film. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Gardner)

Last Flight to Berlin: The Search for a Bomber Pilot ★★1/2

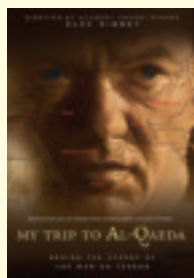
(2009) 50 min. DVD: \$24.95. *Nightfighters Productions* (dist. by Janson Media). PPR. ISBN: 978-1-56839-321-0.

An informative and also highly personal documentary by Robert Linnell, *Last Flight to Berlin* follows the filmmaker's quest to learn about the death of his father in 1944 during

My Trip to Al-Qaeda ★★1/2

(2011) 86 min. DVD: \$29.95. *Docurama* (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4229-2174-3.

Academy Award-winning documentary filmmaker Alex Gibney (*Taxi to the Dark Side*) and Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Lawrence Wright (*The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11*) joined forces for this innovative adaptation of Wright's Off-Broadway one-man show on the Al-Qaeda terrorist network, serving up a harsh and often disturbing view of the social and theological environments that enabled Al-Qaeda to spread globally, along with a distinctive deciphering of the mindset behind the terrorists' strategies. Originally broadcast on HBO, the film imaginatively mixes portions of the stage show (detailing Wright's experiences in the Middle East and encounters with the Al-Qaeda warriors), news clips of Al-Qaeda violence, and footage of Wright conducting interviews and being interviewed himself. Occasionally, the documentary seems to blur Al-Qaeda's endeavors with the excessive brutality of hard-line Islamic theocracy in other parts of the Arab world—particularly in recalling a 2002 fire at a girl's school in Mecca where 14 young girls died and more than 50 were injured when religious police prevented their rescue because they were "not properly covered." Wright's conclusion is that Al-Qaeda lacks the power to topple the United States externally, but is instead writing a script that will make America destroy itself while trying to eradicate her terrorist enemies. A powerful, provocative, timely film, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)



The Story of Wales ★★½

(2012) 3 discs. 354 min. DVD: \$39.98. BFS Entertainment & Multimedia (avail. from most distributors).

This six-part BBC-aired history of Wales covers a 30,000-year time span, beginning with the Ice Age in the British Isles and concluding with the nation's place in today's globalized world. The presenter is Welsh-born BBC anchorman Huw Edwards, who is obviously at home with the subject (and capable of pronouncing those notoriously tongue-twisty Welsh place-names). Viewers learn about the Roman imperial occupation and its aftermath, which left Britain divided into several tribal territories, followed by the emergence of a unified Wales on the southwestern coast in the 9th and 10th centuries under ambitious local kings. The chronology addresses early evidence that the ancient Welsh had extensive trading relations with Scandinavia and other European cultures (no mention is made of the alt-history theory that an Irish monk named Brendan sailed across the Atlantic and visited North America before Columbus); the legal codes of King Howell the Good and the translated Welsh-language Bible that helped unite the populace; and a coal-mining expansion that modernized the country, condemned low-paid workers to lives of danger and exploitation, and nurtured political activism and a support base for Britain's Labor Party. The final hour chronicles the 1960s agitation (not at all universal among the Welsh) for self-governance, and looks at the state of affairs today. With its exhaustive timeline and impressive coverage of Welsh customs, heroes, achievements, controversies, landmarks, and tragedies (much of which is generally unknown to North American audiences), this is highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (C. Cassidy)



World War II. Lloyd Linnell was a Royal Canadian Air Force pilot flying extremely dangerous missions in a heavy bomber over Germany, part of a squadron with a high casualty rate. Linnell was an infant in Canada when his dad was shot down during a raid on Berlin; his mother, practically a newlywed, never remarried. The pilot's Halifax aircraft—too underpowered, too easily detected by the enemy—crashed in a wooded area that today does not grow grass where the shattered plane spilled its fuel and burned (incredibly, some 60 years later, Linnell discovers small pieces of the airplane in those woods). Linnell employs excellent archival materials to tell the story of Lloyd's doomed squadron, while also interviewing several surviving pilots who knew the lost man. *Last Flight to Berlin* reaches a narrative and emotional peak with Linnell's conversation with Hauptmann Friedrich Tober, the German veteran who actually shot Linnell's father down. DVD extras include a photo essay. A powerful documentary, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

MLK: The Assassination Tapes ★★½

(2011) 46 min. DVD: \$14.98. Inception Media Group (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Tom Jennings' documentary, broadcast on the Smithsonian Channel, gathers archival film, photos, and audio recordings to present a disturbing record of the events preceding the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in Memphis on April 4, 1968, and the violent national tumult that followed. Although King's influence had been waning due to the rise of the Black Power move-

ment and his high-profile opposition to the Vietnam War, he still commanded national attention. King arrived in Memphis to support a strike by sanitation workers—most of them black—who were seeking safer working conditions and compensation closer to that of other municipal employees. During this visit, he delivered the astonishing "I've Been to the Mountaintop" sermon that would prove to be eerily prophetic. Although there's no Zapruder-style video of the shooting at the Lorraine Motel, the film does provide rare recordings of police reports of the crime and the beginnings of the frantic hunt for the gunman. Also included is news footage of the riots that were sparked by King's murder and televised pleas by President Lyndon B. Johnson and Sen. Robert F. Kennedy for calm in the aftermath of the tragedy. Strangely, Jennings does not focus on the lingering controversy over whether shooter James Earl Ray acted alone or was part of a conspiracy. Nevertheless, despite a relatively compact running time, this is a compelling study of an extraordinary, tragic event in U.S. history. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (P. Hall)

Occupy Unmasked ★½

(2012) 75 min. DVD: \$26.98. Magnolia Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

The late Andrew Breitbart, right-wing blogger and general provocateur, is the chief narrator of Stephen K. Bannon's documentary, which claims to be a searing exposé of the forces behind the Occupy Wall Street movement. Together with like-minded commentators—including David Horowitz and Brandon Darby—Breitbart argues that the

whole operation is a conspiracy, orchestrated by a cabal of left-leaning, America-hating ideologues using tactics taught by arch-villain Saul Alinsky—with many of the participants (to use terms Breitbart enunciates with obvious contempt) "union employees" or "community organizers." Most of the diehard Occupiers are scruffy radical riffraff according to Breitbart, while the clean-cut college types who join them are innocent dupes drawn in by a misplaced sense of idealism. As evidence for this thesis, Bannon offers footage of the most obnoxious protestors he encountered while prowling the streets, interspersed with shots of others he fingers as the Machiavellian puppet masters—all frenziedly delivered to emphasize how urgent it is to save capitalism from such dangerous demagogues. (Breitbart is especially incensed over demonstrators who appeared at the homes of bankers, "terrorizing" their families.) Occupy Wall Street is actually a fine subject for a balanced, thoughtful documentary, but this is not it. Like so many activist films made today on both sides of the political divide, it's little more than shrill propaganda that plays to the emotions of people who already share the filmmaker's point of view, but will have little appeal for anyone else. Not recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

TRAVEL & GEOGRAPHY

Discoveries...America National Parks: New Orleans Jazz & Acadian Culture

★★★

(2012) 60 min. DVD or Blu-ray: \$24.95. Bennett-Watt HD Productions. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-60490-162-7 (dvd), 978-1-60490-165-6 (blu-ray).

In Louisiana, even the approach to national parks is a little different. In this latest entry from Jim and Kelly Watt's high-def-filmed *Discoveries...America National Parks* series, viewers visit the New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park, which celebrates the birth of jazz in six city neighborhoods, including the French Quarter, as park rangers provide guided tours along famous streets. Celebrating the area's musical heritage, tourists dance to a sidewalk-musician performance of "Li'l Liza Jane," and a hot combo plays in a small club called the Funky Butt. A somewhat different vibe reigns at the Jean Lafitte Historical Park and Preserve, which encompasses multiple sites that showcase (among other things) Acadian agriculture and Cajun and zydeco music via a museum, as well as various events in Eunice, where (in contrast to New Orleans) no alcohol is allowed and the refreshments include Coca-Cola and popcorn. Other attractions visited here include Natchitoches, the state's oldest city (settled by the French in 1714), and the Creole Nature Trail, a 180-mile road that winds through wetlands and

wildlife refuges along the Gulf Coast. As the camera captures distinctive images, voiceover narration is supplemented with occasional commentary from locals to provide a colorful portrait of a unique segment of American culture. Recommended. Aud: P. (C. Block)

Ptown Diaries ★★★

(2012) 89 min. DVD: \$19.95. Cinema Libre Studio (avail. from most distributors).

Documentary filmmaker Joseph Mantegna (not to be confused with actor Joe Mantegna) presents an entertaining view here of Provincetown, MA, an iconoclastic community at the tip of the Cape Cod peninsula. Visited by the Pilgrims, Provincetown was, for much of its history, a sleepy fishing and whaling village. But over the years, Provincetown reinvented itself as an artists' and writers' colony that attracted the best and brightest of American culture, with Eugene O'Neill, Tennessee Williams, Jackson Pollock, John Waters, Norman Mailer, and Michael Cunningham among its most celebrated seasonal and full-time residents (clips of interviews with Mailer provide colorful footnotes here). Provincetown also made history as one of the earliest locations where gays and lesbians could enjoy an open lifestyle; indeed, its level of unapologetic tolerance made Provincetown a progressive business leader in cultivating profits from the LGBT community. Cheerful narration by Alan Cumming overlays the archival and contemporary footage, and while the film occasionally lapses into a standard-issue travelogue approach—complete with visits to notable museums and monuments, plus a tour of popular nightspots—*Ptown Diaries* also offers some amusing surprises, most notably its coverage of the "Bear Week" events aimed at a distinctive gay subculture of large, hairy men. A fine tribute, overall, to a unique location, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Worlds Together: Ethiopia ★★★

(2012) 25 min. DVD: \$29.95 (teacher's guide included). Master Communications. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60480-106-4.

This documentary sketch provides a brief overview of the geography, history, culture, and people of Ethiopia, with a young boy's voice providing narration as contemporary footage shows a variety of rural and urban settings, many featuring children at play or at work (engaged in tasks such as carrying firewood). Among the cities visited are the capital Addis Ababa, Harar, Gonder, and Lalibela, known for its ancient churches (some more than 800 years old and carved into volcanic rock). While acknowledging Ethiopia's poverty and lengthy droughts, the program focuses on positive elements, highlighting the lush green countryside and noting that waters originating in (and flowing through) Ethiopia contribute to the mighty Nile. In addition to historical links to the Queen of Sheba, we

learn that Ethiopia is world-renowned for its prize export, coffee. Interesting facts are sprinkled throughout—Ethiopia is twice the size of Texas; Ethiopians speak more than 83 languages; and the country features the "longest archeological record on Earth." Part of the *Worlds Together* series, two additional titles are also newly available: *East Africa* and *West Africa*. Offering a compact introduction to a fascinating land, this is recommended. Aud: E, I, P. (C. Block)

BIOGRAPHY

Dr. David Livingstone: Missionary Explorer to Africa ★★★1/2

(2011) 59 min. DVD: \$19.99. Gary Wilkinson (dist. by Vision Video).

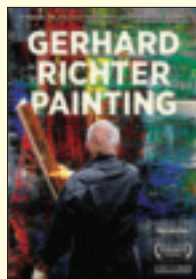
Most of us think of David Livingstone as a 19th-century British explorer of Africa, a man who dropped out of contact with the West for a few years and was famously found by American adventurer Henry Morton Stanley ("Dr. Livingstone, I presume?"). But there was a great deal more to Livingstone's life and accomplishments, as viewers will discover in this fine documentary that combines archival materials and interviews with several historians. The story begins with Livingstone's early life as a schoolboy who extended his education through books, despite having to work long hours in a Scottish mill. Becoming both a doctor and a missionary, Livingstone traveled to the least-known, widely inhabited place in the world, Africa, where he survived a devastating attack by a lion, malaria, and the death of his wife and child, among many other hardships while working to discover trade routes, as well as documenting the

continent's etymology, drawing maps, practicing medicine, teaching Christianity, and bringing attention to the barbarous slave trade (his eyewitness accounts were a major contribution to England's ultimate rejection of slavery). Livingstone's books would alter the common perception of Africa as the "Dark Continent," while his obsessive quest at the end of his life to find the source of the Nile River would add to his legend. Highly recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

George Bellows ★★★1/2

(2012) 30 min. DVD: \$19.95. Microcinema International. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-0-89468-379-4.

David Hammer's documentary short—produced in conjunction with an exhibition at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC—presents an overview of the life and career of painter George Bellows (1882–1925), who arrived in New York City at the beginning of the 20th century and witnessed an extraordinary wave of socioeconomic upheavals that he brilliantly captured on his canvases. The art establishment was initially shocked at his raw portrayals of street urchins and tenement dwellers, but he was soon hailed as a chronicler of the city's grittier environments. Bellows also took his sharp observatory skills to Maine, where he painted workers laboring along the stunning coastline of Monhegan Island. Bellows would court controversy with his exaggerated depiction of alleged German atrocities from World War I and freely used his work for political statements as an illustrator for socialist publications. Later, his fame and fortune were reflected in his paintings of well-heeled Newport society figures and the bucolic splendor of his vacation retreat in Woodstock, NY. Narrated by Ethan Hawke,



Gerhard Richter Painting ★★★1/2

(2012) 97 min. In German w/English subtitles. DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95 (avail. from most distributors), DVD or Blu-ray: \$189 w/PPR (avail. from www.kinolorberedu.com). Kino Lorber.

Many consider Gerhard Richter (b. 1932)—whose art has sold for higher prices than that of his contemporaries—to be the best living painter. Corinna Betz's outstanding documentary features substantial 2009 footage of the artist at work on a series of large abstract canvases, with the camera silently following his progress. But it also offers excerpts from interviews in which Richter struggles to articulate the creative process, while complaining that the very presence of the camera might be adversely affecting something he describes as intensely personal. Archival black-and-white clips of Richter as a young man are interwoven, along with footage of Richter arriving at galleries to oversee exhibitions of his paintings, and trying to address questions posed during press conferences. Biographical details are added as the artist peruses boxes of old photographs of himself and his family that he is beginning to arrange, scrapbook-style. The end result is a winning collage that invites viewers to piece together their own impressions of Richter, instead of merely receiving a recitation of facts. Extras include a featurette on Richter preparing for a Munich exhibition, conversations between Richter and art historian Benjamin H.D. Buchloh and museum curator Hans-Ulrich Obrist, and a DVD-ROM-accessible interview of Richter by the director. An excellent treatment of an important modern artist, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

this is a handsome chronicle of Bellows' finest achievements, with archival newsreel footage and rarely seen photographs of the artist and his family providing a glimpse of the elements that helped shape his life. DVD extras include an art gallery, a featurette on Monhegan Island, and archival film of "The Streets of Bellows' New York." A solid tribute to an influential figure in 20th-century American culture, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Johnny Carson: King of Late Night

★★★★½

(2012) 120 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.95 w/PPR), Blu-ray: \$29.99 (\$54.95 w/PPR). PBS Video. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-710-6 (dvd), 978-1-60883-711-3 (blu-ray).

Although Johnny Carson was not the first host of *The Tonight Show*, his 30-year-reign set the format and standard for every late night talk show. Narrated by Kevin Spacey, filmmaker Peter Jones's documentary—aired on PBS's *American Masters* series—calls Carson the "great American sphinx," because his outward affability masked a deep reserve. The film describes his Nebraska childhood, a somewhat distant relationship with a mother who was slow to show approval, and his early love of magic tricks and performing. Dubbing himself the "Great Carsoni," Carson quickly learned the new medium of television, swiftly progressing through a series of comedy and game shows, before becoming a talk show host where he exhibited mastery of the comedy of reaction and silence, while also displaying an uncanny ability of bringing out the best in his guests. Carson's many marriages were well documented, providing fodder for his *Tonight Show* routines, although less well known was his persistent drinking problem. Comedians, friends, and TV guests say that Carson felt "everybody wanted a piece of him" and he became increasingly remote and standoffish. A veritable who's who of show business celebrities—including Jerry Seinfeld, Jay Leno, and David Letterman—talk about milestones on *The Tonight Show*, as well as Carson's little-known generosity, and his talent for tapping into popular culture, which made his show a must-see and water cooler favorite for three decades. Although the documentary perhaps provides a bit too much detail on Carson's love life, the many interview clips, comedy monologues, and sketches easily demonstrate why Carson remains a legend. Highly recommended. Aud: P. (S. Rees)

Muhammad Ali: The Man, the Moves, the Mouth ★★★

(2012) 60 min. DVD: \$9.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).


Narrated by late boxing writer Bert Sugar, this documentary serves up a fine overview of the life, times, and career of heavyweight boxing champion Muhammad Ali, born

Cassius Clay. Beginning with Ali's roots as a promising teen amateur in Louisville, KY, the film briskly touches on every one of his 61 fights (56 wins, 5 losses), beginning in 1960 (following a gold medal triumph at the Summer Olympics) through his retirement in 1981. The pivotal bouts (against Sonny Liston, Joe Frazier, George Foreman, etc.) are covered in detail, including the amazing events surrounding the Zaire contest with Foreman (the famed "Rumble in the Jungle"). The story of America's love-hate relationship with Ali and the controversies over his conversion to Islam, his draft resistance during the Vietnam War, and his boastful clowning persona are also covered here, as well as his post-retirement role on the world stage as a humanitarian symbol who has been slowed but not stalled by Parkinson's disease. Boxing fans will appreciate the archival fight footage here, which underscore what made Ali so good in the ring: speed, strength, arm reach, and smarts. Recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

The Revolutionary ★★★★★


(2011) 92 min. DVD: \$79: public libraries & high schools; \$295: colleges & universities. Stourwater Pictures. PPR.

The history of Communist China is portrayed from a unique American perspective in Irv Drasnin's documentary, which profiles the life of Sidney Rittenberg (b. 1921), a South Carolina native and avowed leftist who became a member of the U.S. Communist Party while in college. During his World War II Army tour, Rittenberg was assigned to duty in China, and decided to remain there after the war's end, becoming a committed member of the Chinese Communist Party and working with many of its leaders, including Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai—although he was twice imprisoned on suspicion of espionage, spending a total of 16 years in solitary confinement. Rittenberg returned to the U.S. in 1980 with his Chinese wife and is now on the faculty of the Chinese Studies Program at Pacific Lutheran University in Parkland, WA. Much of *The Revolutionary* consists of interviews with Rittenberg (illustrated with archival footage), during which he relates the events of his life, including his relationship with the Chinese Communist leadership, his activism during the Cultural Revolution, and his time in prison. Rittenberg's reflections are equally critical of xenophobic Chinese officials, Americans who rebuffed Chinese diplomatic overtures, and himself. Whether or not one agrees with the choices Rittenberg made or the opinions he holds, the documentary presents a remarkable firsthand account of a significant epoch in modern history known to Americans only at considerable remove (for the most part), as well as a portrait of a fascinating man. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)



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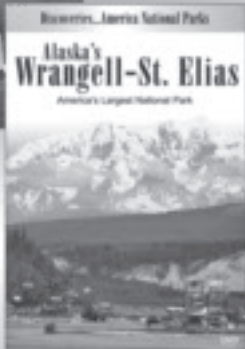
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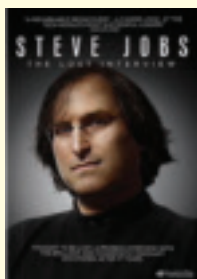
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Steve Jobs: The Lost Interview ★★★

(2012) 72 min. DVD: \$26.98. Magnolia Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

In 1995, Robert X. Cringely interviewed Steve Jobs for the PBS documentary series *Triumph of the Nerds*—a rare sit-down talk, much of it unused. Recently resurfacing on a backup VHS tape, *Steve Jobs: The Lost Interview* is largely uncut and unadorned by archival footage or cutaway background info about old hacker terms or an explanation of the BASIC computer language. Identifying himself as a “hippie” rather than a “nerd,” Jobs—speaking here a decade after he was ousted from Apple—discusses his origins in data technology and the making-cool-things field, employed at the age of 12 (!) by Hewlett-Packard, where he was struck by the upbeat, enviable corporate culture. Jobs tells stories about inventing the Apple and Apple II personal computers in a garage with Steve Wozniak, of developing the mouse against all advice from “experts,” and of the triumphs and failures at Apple. Along the way, he loses no opportunity to speak badly of arch-nemesis Microsoft as lacking the vision needed to fulfill its promise, yet also labels the floundering mid-1990s Apple as a dying concern. Those looking for Nostradamus prophecies about the iPhone, iPod, iPad, etc., will be disappointed; however, what is worthwhile here are some pearls of business history and philosophy from the iconic and personable Jobs. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

To Whom It May Concern: Ka Shen's Journey ★★½

(2012) 106 min. DVD: \$19.99. Virgil Films (avail. from most distributors).

Nancy Kwan broke a Hollywood barrier in 1960, becoming the first Eurasian actress to star in a major studio film: *The World of Suzie Wong*, in which the young ballet student was cast serendipitously as a Hong Kong prostitute who falls in love with a painter (William Holden). Kwan followed up in Ross Hunter's lavish 1961 adaptation of Rodgers and Hammerstein's Broadway musical *Flower Drum Song*, playing a vivacious dancer in a San Francisco Chinatown club. Neither film was well received, but as Brian Jamieson's almost hagiographic biography makes clear, they represent the apex of Kwan's career. The documentary traces Kwan's life chronologically from her childhood to the present, interspersing contemporary scenes of Kwan attending a performance of a *Suzie Wong* ballet in Hong Kong. Approximately equal attention is given to Kwan's screen work—which soon found her relegated to second-rate films—and her personal life, particularly her close relationship with her Chinese father, distant one with her British mother, and brief marriage to an Austrian man that resulted in the birth of her only child, a son she doted on until his tragic death. While Kwan's story is interesting—enlivened by film clips and other archival material—it's also undermined by Jamieson's lethargic approach and by banal narration and interview excerpts. DVD extras include a collection of watercolor paintings made by Jin G. Kam for the documentary, and a photo gallery. Earnest but languid, this is an optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Whittle: The Jet Pioneer ★★★½

(2012) 71 min. DVD: \$24.98. Shelter Island (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-934708-93-4.

Filmmaker Nicholas Jones's *Whittle: The Jet Pioneer* tells an absolutely fascinating story about the father of the turbine engine—which would revolutionize air travel—the late, innovative engineer Sir Frank Whittle. Whittle is seen and heard here via archival footage, in which he describes his uphill battle over several decades to see his turbojet inventions taken seriously. Eventually, Whittle's designs gained attention from military and commercial powers. Yet, incredibly, for a variety of reasons, he would not receive due credit in his native England until he was quite old. Originally made for the History Channel, the documentary covers a lot of ground (and air), mixing WWII-era footage with interviews of veteran test pilot Captain Eric Brown and German jet pioneer Hans von Ohain, who offer insights into the technological advances created by Whittle. An insightful tribute to Whittle and his world-changing passion, this engaging profile is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

VideoLibrarianOnline

Visit Video Librarian Online (www.videolibrarian.com) for more reviews during November and December, including: *Beyond Time: William Turnbull*, *Camel*, *Dirty Work: The Story of Elsie's Farm*, *Ecstasy of Order: The Tetris Masters*, *Heist*, *Jesus & Buddha: Practicing Across Traditions*, *Mari Winsor Beginner's Pilates*, *Mexico: The Royal Tour*, *Scarlet Road*, *Warriors of the Discotheque*, *Why Ships Sink*, and much more!

Series Update

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

Lionsgate and HIT Entertainment's **Thomas & Friends: Blue Mountain Mystery—The Movie** (64 min., DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$24.98) is an all-new movie featuring the popular characters based on the books by the Rev. W. Awdry. See review of *Thomas & Friends: Songs from the Station* in VL-7/05.

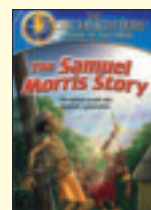


Newly available from Warner Home Video is **Happiness Is...Peanuts: Go Snoopy Go!** (46 min., DVD: \$14.98), which features Charles M. Schulz's Peanuts gang in the TV special “It's Spring Training, Charlie Brown,” and five adventures from *The Charlie Brown and Snoopy Show*. See review of *Happiness Is...Peanuts: Snow Days* in VL Online-12/11.

The latest addition to Paramount Home Entertainment and Nickelodeon's long-running preschool series is **Dora the Explorer: Dora's Royal Rescue** (69 min., DVD: \$14.99), a double-length adventure following Lady Knight Dora and Squire Boots on a quest to the Story Castle to help Don Quixote. See review of *Dora's Christmas Carol Adventure* in VL-11/10.

Vision Video and Ensign Media have released **A History of Christian Worship, Part 6: The Embrace** (56 min., DVD: \$19.99), the final volume in this series on the history of Christianity, which also features PDF discussion guides, and more. See review of *A History of Christian Worship, Part 1: The Word* in VL-5/11. Available from: Vision Video (see Distributor Addresses on pg. 98).

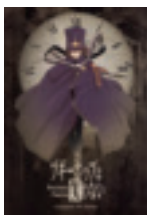
Also newly available from Vision Video is the Christian History Institute's latest addition to *The Torchlighters* series for ages 8-12: **The Samuel Morris Story** (30 min., DVD: \$14.99), focusing on the life of the Liberator prince who converted to Christianity. See review of *The William Booth Story* in VL-3/12.



Boogiepop Phantom: Complete TV Series

★★★★1/2

(2000) 4 discs. 360 min. DVD: \$29.99. The Right Stuff International (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-57032-715-7.



Crisply conceived and strikingly animated, *Boogiepop Phantom* serves up one of the most elaborate and innovative storylines ever created for an anime series. Set in an unnamed city some five years after a brief spate of unsolved serial killings, the narrative achieves a jolting degree of emotional creepiness without succumbing to the less savory vices of the genre. The plot opens with a new chain of unexplained crimes involving children who mysteriously vanish and are never seen again. Some blame the disappearances on the Boogiepop, considered to be a modern angel of death. But is the Boogiepop an urban legend or a genuine force of evil? The answer, quite frankly, is something no one could expect, and even hinting about it would create a spoiler of epic proportions. Compiling all 12 episodes originally aired in 2000 in a dual-language set, rated 15-up, extras include an audio commentary, music videos, a line art gallery, and production notes. Highly recommended. (P. Hall)

Fractale: The Complete Series ★★

(2011) 4 discs. 275 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$69.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4210-2516-7.



Based on a web comic, this cyber-sci-fi anime commands rapt attention even though—like the mind-enslaved humans it depicts—the narrative often seems to be going robotically through the motions of Japanimation tropes (a heroine who drops from the sky; a hero who's repeatedly misjudged as a sexual pervert via comical misunderstandings, etc.). Courtesy of an orbital virtual-reality array called Fractale, most of future humanity dwells in a synthetic paradise, free of the constraints of poverty or labor, and interacting mainly via "doppels," or avatars. Teenager Clain, however, is a fan of obsolete technology and retro lifestyles. He's still an amateur, however, compared to Lost Millennium, a rebel alliance of farmers and villagers intent on destroying Fractale. A mystery girl on the run from both Lost Millennium and the quasi-religious "Temple" that controls Fractale passes through Clain's life and leaves behind Nessa, an artificial intelligence creation in the form of a spirited child—evidently a key element of the Temple. All sides vie to capture the two female fugitives, as Clain learns that Fractale is fraying around the edges. The storyline here is rather mystifying, but the journey is fun,

with eye-popping visuals compensating for the oft-clichéd characters. Compiling all 11 episodes originally aired in 2011 in a dual-language set, rated TV-14, extras include commentaries, and an art gallery. Recommended. (C. Cassady)

Hetalia: World Series, Season 04 ★★1/2

(2012) 2 discs. 140 min. DVD: \$39.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4210-2531-0.



This latest installment of *Hetalia* hijinks continues one of the most bizarre concepts in anime: a series of short films in which the young characters are based on countries involved in World War II. The initial concept focusing on the wartime allies plotting against each other has long since been displaced by absurd situations and the prominent inclusion of non-WWII characters that embody Prussia, the Seychelles, and the dubious microstate Sealand. This new round of episodes continues the non-sequitur humor and weird plotlines, with abrupt time-traveling episodes thrown into the mix (not to mention a lot of cats scampering about). Various stories feature Germany and Italy stranded on an island, America and Japan trying to build a friendship via whaling, France holding a convoluted monologue about the end of the world, and Sealand running about trying to become anyone's friend. None of this makes the slightest bit of sense, but this late in the series, fans will either appreciate the increasing level of unapologetic strangeness or will balk at the escalating oddball antics and incoherent storytelling. Anyone coming to *Hetalia* for the first time, however, will be utterly confused. Compiling episodes 25-52 from season four (presently the final season) in a dual-language set, rated TV-MA, extras audio commentaries, bonus episodes, interviews, and more. Recommended for those collecting the series, this is optional elsewhere. (P. Hall)

Oblivion Island: Haruka and the Magic Mirror ★★

(2011) 2 discs. 100 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$24.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4210-2521-3.



This 2009 family-friendly award-winning anime feature film was made to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Fuji TV. The dazzling visual originality far outpaces the plot, a through-the-looking-glass storyline built around the premise that Japan's misplaced or neglected objects are hoarded by supernatural fox-spirits and taken to an amazing netherworld—Oblivion Island—which is fashioned out of mountains of unwanted or forgotten things. Teenager Haruka ventures through

the mystic portal leading to Oblivion Island, where she reunites with a long-lost stuffed animal and is soon on a quest for a hand-mirror—a memento of her late mother. But it turns out that mirrors are the most sought-after artifacts in this phantasmagoria, and an evil local boss covets Haruka's prize for all the usual conquer-the-universe motivations. Exquisite CGI animation sustains the viewer's attention throughout, even as the narrative travels down somewhat predictable paths. A dual-language release, rated TV-G, extras include a behind-the-scenes documentary, cast and filmmaker visits to relevant shrines and locations, and film premiere footage. Recommended. (C. Cassady)

Okami-san & Her Seven Companions ★★1/2

(2010) 4 discs. 300 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$69.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4210-2479-9.



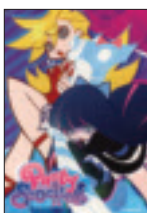
Although stuffed with fairy-tale references and archetypes inspired by the Brothers Grimm (just read the title), Hans Christian Andersen, and Aesop, this is no magic fantasy but a fitfully engaging high-school comedy anime, albeit one in which nobody is ever seen studying or in class. At the unorthodox Otogi Academy, eight students run a "bank" dealing in favors, usually of a personal nature, for other undergrads. Member Ryoko is a tough tomboy sort (and an avid boxer), while her sly, diminutive roommate, Ringo, is more like a Little Red Riding Hood type. Ryoko's combative attitude springs from traumatic mistreatment (possibly even rape) in junior high. Her love is clumsily sought by a shy but good-hearted boy—whom she usually thrashes when he embarrasses her. Actually, there are quite a few beat-downs and abductions involving thugs from a rival high school that sometimes lend a distasteful flavor to this series even when the action is slapstick. Better episodes riff on fairy tales, and a takeoff on Cinderella's lost slipper is particularly funny (albeit violent). While there's no nudity here, sex references and breast gags abound, including a snide Mother Goose-like narrator who continually mocks Ryoko's flat chest. Compiling all 12 episodes from 2010 in a dual-language set, rated TV-14, extras include audio commentaries, promo videos, and original TV commercials. A mixed bag—narratively speaking—this is still a strong optional purchase, overall. (C. Cassady)

Panty & Stocking with Garterbelt: The Complete Series ★

(2010) 3 discs. 325 min. DVD: \$64.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4210-2514-0.

After two crass angels—Panty and Stock-

ing (also known as the Anarchy Sisters)—are kicked out of Heaven because of their less-than-divine behavior, they wind up in a limbo realm where evil spirits known as Ghosts are wreaking havoc. To redeem their angelic stature, the fallen siblings must earn a large number of “Heaven Coins” by destroying Ghosts, an effort supervised by their guardian, Garterbelt, whose massive afro and thuggish demeanor make him look like a pimp from a 1970s blaxploitation film (note the tagline: “drop those britches, bitches!”). However, bad habits die hard: Panty is a nymphomaniac, Stocking has a sugar addiction, and Garterbelt has a pedophilia fetish. Doing its best to be rude and shocking, this anime series’ efforts to provoke overwhelm its ability to entertain, tiresomely serving up attempts at outrageous humor and taboo-pushing situations, while also inserting endless nose-picking, flatulence, and genital-centered jokes, among other puerile examples. Compiling all 13 episodes originally aired in 2010 in a dual-language set, rated TV-MA, extras include the OVA mini-episodes compilation *Panty & Stocking in Sanitary Box*, behind-the-scenes featurettes (including one with interviews of Japanese cast and crew members), and outtakes. Not recommended. (P. Hall)



Shakugan no Shana: Season I ★★½

(2005) 7 discs. 600 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$59.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4210-2242-7.



The concept underlying this lengthy 2005 manga-derived series has high-schooler Yuji being the only person able to perceive a paranormal attack on his city that is perpetrated by supernatural predators from the Crimson World. Although mystic martial-arts sword-girl Shana seemingly rescues Yuji, she coldly informs him that he’s already dead: his corporal entity—like a solid hologram—is just a temporary replacement; Yuji will gradually fade, just like other secret human casualties of the Crimson World’s life-sucking denizens. Things turn out to be more complicated, however, as Yuji helps Shana, who must both fight and protect the intruders (not all of them are evil). Part of the narrative becomes familiar anime melodrama, with alien battlers masquerading as school kids (complete with love triangles and a token swimsuit episode), while other episodes build a pantheon of godlike people-eaters, ill-defined superpowers, apprentice avengers and lackeys, and duty-bound beings neither alive nor dead.

The mythology behind the series is often downright baffling; nevertheless, the character evolution and conflicts (driven by the fundamental question of what it means to be human) remain involving. Compiling all 24 episodes from the first season in a dual-language set, rated TV-14, extras include bonus explanatory shorts. A strong optional purchase. [Note: *Shakugan no Shana: Season II, Part 1* is also newly available, with *Season II, Part 2* slated for release on Dec. 11, and *Shakugan no Shana: OVA* bowing Dec. 4.] (C. Cassidy)

Shangri-La ★★★½

(2008) 2 discs. 300 min. DVD: \$64.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4210-2524-8.



Adapted for TV from a Japanese science-fiction serial novel turned into a manga, this intricate tale is set in a cyber-punkish world warped by global warming, roughly a half-century into the future. While encroaching seas and jungles create subsistence-slums full of refugees, a less obvious consequence arises from a carbon tax that penalizes industrialized nations that generate smoke. An oligarchy of wealthy speculators make huge fortunes electronically manipulating carbon markets, including an especially ruthless trio comprised of Kewpie doll-like children who operate incognito behind workstations and virtual-reality avatars. Heroine Kuniko is a pink-haired teen daughter in the family behind Metal Age, an anti-authoritarian grassroots co-op. Fresh out of juvenile detention she plunges into intrigue involving the military, the profiteers, a mysterious mutant princess with deadly powers, a sensuous and sinister femme fatale serving as Japan’s prime minister (who looks about as Japanese as Jayne Mansfield), and a promised safe haven that is not what it seems. Turns out that Kuniko may also not be who she appears to be. Only a fraction of the questions are answered in this first half of the saga, but viewers will be hooked by the dystopic combo of high tech, high finance, shojo action, and “science” that is indistinguishable from magic. Compiling the first 12 episodes from 2008 in a dual-language set, rated TV-MA, this is highly recommended. [Note: *Shangri-La, Part 2* is also available.] (C. Cassidy)

This Boy Can Fight Aliens ★★½

(2012) 30 min. DVD: \$14.98, Blu-ray: \$24.98. Sentai Filmworks (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-6161-5223-9 (dvd), 978-1-6161-5224-6 (Blu-ray).

Soubi Yamamoto’s short subject is an artful, digitally drawn fantasy incorporating Kanji-character writing and expressions (translated in subtitles) as graphic elements,

kind of like an avant-garde comic strip. The premise faintly recalls the science fiction of American writer R.A. Lafferty: enigmatic aliens threaten the Earth but are forestalled by an amnesiac lad named Kakashi, whose martial-arts mojo enables him to beat the humanoids in combat. Every day Kakashi must duel with a potential invader; if he fails, the full-scale UFO invasion will proceed. Kakashi is often exhausted by his bouts, but he experiences an even tougher burden in the existential angst brought on by loneliness, lack of memories or family, and indefinite confinement to several square miles of greenspace/battleground. Kakashi has two male companions—snide supervisor Shiro and worshipful lad Arikawa—who try to comfort him and keep him on his game. Extras include a text-only Q&A with the filmmaker, plus three bonus cartoon shorts. Although it doesn’t really amount to much more than a digital doodle, this handsome-looking dual-language anime short, rated TV-PG, is a strong optional purchase. (C. Cassidy)



Towanoquon ★★★

(2012) 2 discs. 300 min. DVD: \$59.98, Blu-ray: \$69.98. Sentai Filmworks (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-6161-5214-7 (dvd), 978-1-6161-5215-4 (Blu-ray).



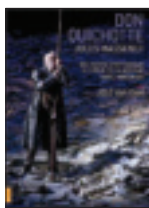
This exciting serial—comprised of six short features theatrically released in Japan—bears more than a passing resemblance to the *X-Men* franchise. Seemingly random children worldwide are born with mutant superpowers; often rejected by their parents and known as Attractors, the kids can wind up becoming monstrosities if their capabilities remain undisciplined. In Japan, the “teen-aged” Quon (who’s actually a thousand years old, thanks to a Wolverine-like ability to heal from any wound) leads a group of fellow Attractors who, operating from a hideout below a high-tech amusement park, try to save their younger counterparts not only from their own out-of-control powers but also from an elite, top-secret, globe-trotting militia (led by a particularly nasty villain in a cleric’s collar) that is bent on exploiting or destroying any Attractor it finds. Even the costuming somewhat recalls the live-action spin-offs of Marvel Comics, although this saga ultimately manages to find its own tone and style, which is frequently bloody and sprinkled with profanity. Presented in a dual-language set, rated TV-14, extras include audio commentary with the English voice actors. Recommended. (C. Cassidy)

Beatles Stories ★★½
(2012) 85 min. DVD: \$19.95.
Cinema Libre Studio (avail.
from most distributors).



Eight years ago, Long Island songwriter-turned-filmmaker Seth Swirsky set out to interview people who encountered the Beatles (individually or collectively). This utterly delightful documentary is comprised of short recollections, the majority conducted in person, although some are by phone, and a handful stem from meetings that transpired after the band broke up. Regardless of circumstance and context, nearly everyone recalls their Beatles experience with the kind of joy, reverence, and awe generally reserved for living deities. Singer-songwriter Jackie DeShannon, an opening act on the band's first U.S. tour, talks about playing Monopoly with George Harrison, while Justin Hayward of the Moody Blues recalls having to teach George the chords to "I'm Only Sleeping," a track from *Revolver*. Beach Boy Brian Wilson remembers Paul McCartney playing "She's Leaving Home" before it was recorded for *Sgt. Pepper*. Oscar-winning actor Ben Kingsley describes writing and performing songs for a musical directed by Beatles manager Brian Epstein, and then meeting John Lennon and Ringo Starr after the show, while former football star/broadcaster Frank Gifford recollects an encounter between Lennon and Ronald Reagan in the *Monday Night Football* booth. Not all of the reminiscences come from celebrities; others include the equipment manager for the Minnesota Twins, who received an autographed baseball when the Fab Four performed at Minneapolis' Metropolitan Stadium; Nancy Andrews, a former Starr girlfriend, who relates how he proposed to her in a Beverly Hills jewelry store (that union didn't happen); and an astronomer who got a letter from Ringo, thanking him for naming an asteroid after the drummer. While there is no original Beatles music heard, there are many heretofore unseen photos and video—including a brief clip of John delivering a very Lennon-esque weather report on a Philadelphia TV station in the 1970s. A must-see for Fab fans, this is highly recommended. Aud: P. (S. Graham)

Don Quichotte ★★½
(2010) 115 min. In French
w/English subtitles. DVD:
\$24.99. Naive (dist. by Naxos
of America).



Although not the last of Jules Massenet's operas—he would compose three more before his death in 1912—his 1910 take on Cervantes' famous elderly knight-errant has a valedictory feel, accentuated in this superb 2010 production from Brussels' Opera de la Monnaie by the presence of Brussels' native son José Van Dam. The libretto is simple:

Quichotte falls for the beautiful Dulcinea and determines to prove his love for her by retrieving a necklace stolen by a band of brigands. Instead, Quichotte is captured by the thieves, although his nobility so moves the rogues that they return the necklace. But while Dulcinea is happy to recover her missing jewelry, she spurns Quichotte, and he dies broken-hearted. The rich score is gorgeously performed by the company orchestra under Marc Minkowski. Septuagenarian Van Dam can no longer manage the lowest baritone register, but he remains an extremely stylish, affecting performer, while Silvia Tro Santafé is a resplendent Dulcinea (both visually and vocally), and Werner Van Mechelen is a gruffly humorous Sancho Panza. Although the costumes are an odd mix—gorgeous gowns for Dulcinea, a tattered topcoat for Quichotte, and glitzy toreador garb and black tuxedos (sometimes topped by horse-head masks!) for male choristers—the lavish sets are a distinct plus. Presented in Dolby Digital stereo, DVD extras include a "making-of" documentary. A striking production of a relatively rare opera, this is highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

Falstaff ★★½
(2011) 126 min. In Italian w/
English subtitles. DVD: \$29.99,
Blu-ray: \$39.99. Unitel Classica
(dist. by Naxos of America).



Giuseppe Verdi's 1893 last opera, a brilliant adaptation of Shakespeare (primarily *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, with additions from *Henry IV*), is splendidly performed in this 2011 Zurich Opera production. Although the setting is not the 15th century, the staging is very attractive—with simple interiors that give way to a courtyard and then to the woodland where Falstaff is humiliated by the women he has tried to seduce—while the costumes (mixing period garb with modern dress) are colorful. Ambrogio Maestri is excellent in the title role, looking the part while singing and acting with gusto. Massimo Cavalletti is almost as fine as Ford, the blustering husband whom Falstaff unsuccessfully attempts to make a cuckold, and Barbara Frittoli brings a lovely soprano to the part of Mrs. Ford, her voice blending nicely with those of the other chattering females, including Yvonne Naef's amusing Mrs. Quickly. The vibrant score—one of Verdi's most complex, if not his most melodious—is played with precision and richness by the company orchestra under Daniele Gatti, whose tempos never seem rushed. Presented in DTS 5.0 (DTS-HD 5.0 on the Blu-ray edition) and PCM stereo, this mounting of Verdi's final masterwork joins the Glyndebourne production (VL-7/10) as one of the best recent versions released. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

From the Back of the Room ★★½
(2011) 104 min. DVD: \$99.95.
Music Video Distributors (avail.
from most distributors). PPR.



From the Back of the Room looks at the contemporary American punk scene from an exclusively female perspective. Director Amy Oden travels across the country, speaking with women who've joined or formed groups, like Tribe 8, Blatz, and 2 Minute Tantrum. Some of the subjects prefer to make music with other women, while others don't have a preference. Several cite the riot grrrl movement as an inspiration, and Oden interviews Kathleen Hanna of Bikini Kill and Allison Wolfe of Bratmobile, as well as roadies, promoters, disc jockeys, club managers, and graphic artists. Old and new concert footage brings the high-energy music to life, while hand-drawn fanzines, posters, and record covers emphasize the D.I.Y. nature of the acts. Although Oden divides the film into chapters—like "Making Space" and "Motherhood"—the format is more free-form as speakers relate their experiences both as feminists and musicians. Oddly, the documentary makes no mention of punk pioneers, such as Patti Smith or Penelope Houston (still on the road with the Avengers), a bit of a disappointment since even a quick overview of 1970s punk would have added greater historical context to this somewhat scattershot documentary. A strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Il Trittico ★★½
(2011) 180 min. In Italian
w/English subtitles. DVD: 3
discs, \$29.99; Blu-ray: \$29.99.
Opus Arte (dist. by Naxos of
America).



This 2011 Royal Opera production of Giacomo Puccini's 1918 triptych of one-act operas is—in a word—masterful. The opening work, *Il Tabarro*, is a grim *verismo* tragedy of the vengeance a barge master takes on his unfaithful wife and her lover. The second, *Suor Angelica*, is a tender tale of a nun who commits suicide after she learns of the death of the illegitimate child she abandoned when her family forced her to enter the convent. And the third, *Gianni Schicchi*, is a rambunctious ensemble farce about a rogue who bamboozles a bunch of greedy relatives out of their expected inheritances. Each is conducted unerringly by company musical director Antonio Pappano, who displays remarkable sensitivity to the very different moods, while the orchestra responds richly. The vocalism is also exceptional, with Lucio Gallo exhibiting his versatility as both Michele, the vengeful husband in *Tabarro*, and as the scheming Schicchi; Eva-Maria Westbroek outstanding as Michele's wife, Giorgetta; and Ermonela Jaho a resplendent

and touching Angelica. Lesser roles and choral contributions are also handled well, and the production benefits from the elegant sets and costumes. Richard Jones' staging downplays the heavenly forgiveness at the end of *Suor Angelica* but is otherwise quite faithful to Puccini's intent. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray edition) and LPCM stereo, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette and brief intros by Pappano. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

John Gorka: The Gypsy Life ★★1/2

(2007) 68 min. Blu-ray: \$34.99. Aix Records (dist. by Naxos of America).



Troubadour John Gorka plays roots-oriented material in this spare and earthy set. The title, *The Gypsy Life*, refers to a 2007 album rather than to his style of music (in an accompanying interview, Gorka cites Emmylou Harris and Nanci Griffith as influences). His band mates include bassist Michael Manning, mandolin player Russ Rentler, and guitarist/pianist Susan Werner, who also shares backing vocals with Amilia K. Spicer. Seated on chairs in a circular formation, the percussion-less band performs a 19-song set in an empty Los Angeles theater in 2006, with the screen fading to black after each number. When he isn't playing acoustic guitar, Gorka turns to the piano, although his plainly-sung, observational songs remain much the same. In 1991's "I'm From New Jersey," he proclaims, "I don't expect too much." Other lyrics concern love in all its forms; new love, old love, and lost love, although he also touches on his Italian heritage. Viewers tuned into his particular wavelength will probably find this very appealing, but the show can become somewhat soporific due to the minor variations in melody and lack of audience dynamics. Gorka's baritone is pleasant, and the musicianship is strong, but it would take a dedicated fan to parse out the subtleties here. Besides the aforementioned interview, other extras include a behind-the-scenes segment and a brief live 2006 solo set. Presented in Dolby TrueHD 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1, and PCM stereo, this is a strong optional purchase. (K. Fennessy)

Kasabian Live! Live at the O2 ★★1/2

(2011) 137 min. DVD: \$19.98 (audio CD included), Blu-ray: \$19.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



Hard to believe that Kasabian are popular enough to headline London's massive O2 Arena, but the proof is in the pudding here (as it were). On tour in support of 2011's *Velociraptor!*, the British rockers perform in front of an LCD screen projecting stark black, white, and red imagery,

while their varied outfits reflect the way they combine different sub-genres: lead singer Tom Meighan has a New Wave look (white jacket, dark shades), guitarist/vocalist Sergio Pizzorno goes glam (feather-trimmed jacket, shag hairstyle), and bassist Chris Edwards and drummer Ian Matthews opt for post-punk apparel (black T-shirts, leather jackets). Three more players fill out the ranks on guitar and keyboards. Despite the volume and intensity, Kasabian comes across as pretty generic, somewhat akin to Placebo crossed with the Verve. If the songs in this 19-song set aren't particularly catchy, with the exception of college-radio hit "Clubfoot," the audience still sings along with numbers like "Underdog," while during "Thick as Thieves" Meighan slips into verses from the Doors' "People Are Strange" (other songs betray Beatles and Pink Floyd influences). Presented in DTS 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette with band interviews. Oddly, the DVD edition includes a bonus 13-track audio CD, missing from the identically-priced Blu-ray version. A strong optional purchase. (K. Fennessy)

The Klezmatics: On Holy Ground ★★

(2010) 104 min. DVD: \$22: individuals; \$59: public libraries; \$249 w/PPR: colleges & universities. Seventh Art Releasing.



Filmmaker Erik Greenberg Anjou's profile of veteran klezmer outfit the Klezmatics captures the band on and off the stage, alternating between interviews, a world tour, and recording sessions for *Wonder Wheel* (a collection of previously unrecorded Woody Guthrie songs). Together for 24 years, the primary players talk about their individual backgrounds and relation to Judaism. Guitarist and co-founder Lorin Sklamberg notes that his work at YIVO Institute for Jewish Research as a sound archivist dovetails with the Eastern European-inspired music that the Klezmatics play. During his off-hours, Sklamberg studies Yiddish and raises three children with his partner, Michael. Other band members point to their families, who instilled their interest in social justice and Yiddish music—including xylophone player Paul Morrissett and flute player Matt Darriau, neither of whom grew up in Jewish households. Trombone player Frank London and violinist Lisa Gutkin round out the group's mainstays. Guest vocalist Joshua Nelson relates the most unusual story since he hails from a Senegalese Jewish family and sings in a "kosher-gospel" style. All are forthcoming about their financial realities, noting that they couldn't make a living without outside work, despite winning a Grammy Award and other accomplishments. Additional speakers include drummer Alan Licht, clarinetist David Krakauer, and Woody

Guthrie's daughter, Nora. By film's end, viewers will really feel like they've gotten to know these people. Concludes Gutkin, "We are still making beautiful music together. It overpowers the other bullshit that goes on." An engaging, intimate portrait, this is recommended. (K. Fennessy)

Koukourgi ★★

(2010) 115 min. In French w/ English subtitles. DVD: \$29.99. Arthaus Musik (dist. by Naxos of America).



Even the most ardent fan of composer Luigi Cherubini won't have heard this comic opera, and with good reason: Cherubini began work on *Koukourgi* around 1791 but never completed it, leaving the opera without an overture or a third-act finale. In this 2010 world premiere from Austria's Stadttheater Klagenfurt, Heiko Cullmann has fashioned a performing edition from surviving materials, adding the overture to *Ifigenia in Aulide* (1788) as a curtain-raiser and reworking a conclusion Cherubini wrote for a 1789 Paris performance of Paisiello's *La Molinara*. The result is a sprightly concoction set in a Chinese court under assault from Tartar marauders, where the princess Zulma is loved by the brave orphan Amazan but wooed by Koukourgi, the cowardly son of a general. Although the French libretto—which could allude to contemporary events in the ongoing French Revolution (a fact that might explain why it was never finished)—is undistinguished, Cherubini's music is unfailingly gracious for both voices and orchestra. The spoken German dialogue (including much narration by Koukourgi)—written for the Austrian audience—kind of clashes with the sung French text; but it's good enough to show off the work's amiable qualities. And while the set is modest, the costumes are ornate and colorful. The Kärntner Sinfonieorchester plays well for Peter Marschik, and the soloists—Çiğdem Soyarslan as Zulma, Johannes Chum as Amazan, and Daniel Prohaska as Koukourgi—along with the chorus are solid. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 and PCM stereo, this agreeable introduction to a pleasant 18th-century rarity is recommended. (F. Swietek)

Lohengrin ★★1/2

(2011) 209 min. In German w/English subtitles. DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99; Blu-ray: \$39.99. Opus Arte (dist. by Naxos of America).



Hans Neuenfels' 2011 Bayreuth Festival production of Wagner's 1850 opera—revolving around a mysterious knight who becomes the champion and husband of Elsa (dispossessed heiress of the Kingdom of Brabant) while also demanding that his identity remain secret—dresses the chorus as

rats and serves up periodic animated projections of rodents on the march (apparently the idea is that the nobles are manipulating the masses, just as the Pied Piper led the scurrying creatures from Hamelin). While the choristers' costumes are cleverly designed (more so than those for the leads), and the sets are well done, Neuenfels' concept never stops feeling simultaneously pretentious and ridiculous. And that's especially unfortunate because musically the production is strong. Klaus Florian Vogt is virtually perfect in the title role, and Georg Zeppenfeld's King Heinrich and Samuel Youn's Herald impress as well. And while the women—Annette Dasch as Elsa and Petra Lang as the malevolent Ortrud—are not quite in the same league, they are still formidable. Add the splendid work by the Bayreuth Festival Orchestra under Andris Nelsons and this mounting would seem to be a solid recommendation were it not for Neuenfels' odd concept. As is, this is inferior to the Baden-Baden production (VL-9/07). Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray version) and LPCM stereo on DVD, extras include cast and crew interviews, and a cast gallery. Optional. (F. Swietek)

Los Lobos: Kiko Live

★★★★1/2

(2006) 150 min. DVD: \$16.98, Blu-ray: \$24.98. Shout! Factory (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-60399-617-4 (dvd), 978-1-60399-618-1 (blu-ray).



Filmed in 2006, this concert presentation of all of the songs on Los Lobos' critically-praised 1992 album *Kiko* is a joyous and adventurous musical experience. *Kiko*, produced by Mitchell Froom (who excels at working with folk-based rock artists), is an intriguing work full of instrumental textures that give the material a sense of rising out of spontaneous creation, full of surprises and organic inspiration. Led by David Hidalgo on guitar and vocals, the band plays a 16-song set with interwoven interview sequences in which founding members talk about reacquainting themselves with the songs and the ideas behind them, several of which were driven by such brutal themes as homelessness, child suicide, and sexual assault. Highlights include "Angels with Dirty Faces," with a shimmering, slow, feverish character; the rootsy delight and harp filigrees of "Saint Behind the Glass"; the blistering rock of "Reva's House"; and the gorgeous, soulful instrumental "Arizona Skies." Bonus features include a three-song encore with, of course, the group's trademark acoustic version of "La Bamba," plus bonus interview footage. Highly recommended. (T. Keogh)

Mowgli ★★1/2

(2008) 90 min. DVD: \$20. *Legendary Performances* (avail. from www.amazon.com).

London-born Alexander Prior was only 13

in 2006—the year the Moscow Classical Ballet commissioned him for this work based on Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book* (Prior began composing at the age of 8 before enrolling at the Saint Petersburg Conservatory). Prior conducted this 2008 premiere at Moscow's Kremlin Theatre and has since gone on to take a post with the Seattle Symphony. Stylistically, the score—occasionally employing a chorus as well as a large orchestra—is agreeable but not particularly memorable. Nevertheless, the players render it with an enthusiastic reading, although the mediocre sound does not showcase the orchestration to best advantage. The dancing here is more compelling, but the camerawork is unimaginative and the image quality only fair. Mowgli, Kipling's jungle boy, is introduced as a child (Nikolai Vasilev), and after a half-hour transforms into a young man (Nikolay Chechelov). At both ages he interacts with a large menagerie of animals—wolves, porcupines, birds of various kinds—in a friendly fashion, although in the second act he battles a hostile tiger. The critter costumes are imaginative and colorful, and the company members clearly enjoy performing. Chechelov also has several athletic solos, which he handles with aplomb. Angela Lansbury offers a taped introduction and reappears (along with Prior) during the interval between acts. An uneven introduction to a composer-conductor who someday could become a major musical figure—or not—this is an optional purchase. (F. Swietek)



Orfeo ed Euridice ★★1/2

(2011) 110 min. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Kultur International Films (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-0-7697-9197-5.



When it was first unveiled in 1762, Christoph Willibald Gluck's operatic version of the titular Greek myth—about a musician who travels to Hades in order to bring his wife back to life through his artistry—represented a reform of lyric tragedy, subjugating vocal pyrotechnics (which had long dominated) in favor of dramatic effect. This 2011 mounting, from the Festival Castell de Peralada outside Barcelona, adds a further modern tweak, with laser lights, rear-stage projections, and acrobatics overpowering Gluck's serene, limpid score. While the extravagant visual display—courtesy of Carles Padrissa of the Catalan troupe La Fura dels Baus, previously responsible for the well-received Valencia production of Wagner's Ring Cycle (see review of *Das Rheingold* in VL-5/10)—is excessive, this mounting does boast musical strengths. Anita Rachvelishvili exhibits an opulent if sometimes overly vibrato-laden tone as Orfeo, and while sopranos

Maite Alberola (Euridice) and Auxiliadora Toledano (Amore) are not her equal, they are certainly solid. Although the Orquesta bandArt plays well under concertmaster Gordon Nikoli, the decision to dress its members in extremely unflattering leotards and have them waltz around as part of the onstage action makes it nigh impossible to maintain absolute cohesion. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray release) and LPCM stereo, this is an uneven production in which overpowering spectacle renders Gluck almost irrelevant. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Ozzy Osbourne: Speak of the Devil—Live from Irvine Meadows '82

★★★

(1982) 78 min. DVD: \$14.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



Filmed at Irvine Meadows, CA, this June 1982 concert features rock wildman Ozzy Osbourne during his *Diary of a Madman* tour. Curly-maned Brad Gillis works strenuously to fill the void left by the then-recently-deceased Randy Rhodes (who died just a few months before in a plane accident), strumming away in a guitar/drum solo with Tommy Aldridge, along with Rudy Sarzo on bass, and Don Airey on keyboards. But the man of the hour is clearly the frosted-blond, kohl-eyed, spandex-sporting Mr. Osbourne. Sweating his way around the stage against cheesy laser show effects (this was 30 years ago), Ozzy's voice is pitch-perfect for this 13-song set, including the pipe organ tones of "Mr. Crowley," current commercial anthem "Crazy Train," power ballad "Goodbye to Romance," and tracks from the latest album *Diary of a Madman*: "Over the Mountain," "Flying High Again," and "Believer." Finishing up with Black Sabbath classics "Iron Man" and "Paranoid," this head-banging concert shows its age, technically speaking, but will be a must for fans. Presented in DTS 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo, this is recommended. (J. Williams-Wood)

Queen: Greatest Video Hits ★★

(2012) 2 discs. 134 min. DVD: \$19.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).

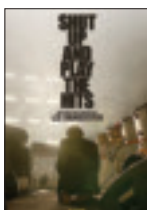


To quote President (as of this writing) Obama, "let me be clear" about *Queen: Greatest Video Hits*: if you have already purchased the first and second volumes of this two-disc set separately, you don't need this re-packaged release. But even if you haven't bought the earlier editions, this is a questionable acquisition. The '70s and '80s career of Brit rock superstars Queen—lead singer Freddie Mercury, guitarist Brian May, bass player John

Deacon, and drummer Roger Taylor—is represented here in 33 music videos that are split over two discs. The first (covering 1974-1981) boasts the best songs, including “Bohemian Rhapsody,” “Somebody to Love,” “We Will Rock You,” “Another One Bites the Dust,” “Killer Queen,” etc., but suffers the most from washed out visuals and unimaginative videos (the majority simply present the band lip-syncing or in concert clips). There are a few creative exceptions—the animation in “Save Me,” the ‘50s greaser get-up for “Crazy Little Thing Called Love,” and the brief flashes of nude women riding bikes in “Bicycle Race”—but by and large this is low-calorie (not to mention fuzzy and grainy) eye candy. Disc two (covering 1981-1989) features more innovative music videos (from big time directors including David Mallet, Russell Mulcahy, Mike Hodges, and the team of Rudi Dolezal and Hannes Rossacher), but musically many of the “hits” do not measure up (or were much bigger in Europe than America): “Las Palabras de Amor,” “Princes of the Universe,” “The Invisible Man,” “One Vision,” etc. (exceptions include “Under Pressure” and “Radio Ga Ga”). And the last music video to feature the late Mercury—“These Are the Days of Our Lives”—is conspicuously absent. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 and PCM stereo, extras include audio commentary by May and Taylor. Optional, at best. (R. Pitman)

Shut Up and Play the Hits: The Very Loud Ending of LCD Soundsystem ★★★

(2011) 105 min. DVD: 3 discs, \$34.99; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$39.99. Oscilloscope Laboratories (avail. from most distributors).

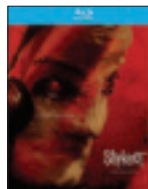


Directed by Dylan Southern and Will Lovelace, this documentary chronicles the April 2011 final performance of electronic dance-punk group LCD Soundsystem, turning a spotlight on enigmatic frontman James Murphy. Combining fly-on-the-wall backstage footage with comments by Murphy and author Chuck Klosterman, the centerpiece here is the sold-out Madison Square Garden show, captured with crisp production values. The band’s reliance on percussion and chant-like lyrics is nicely matched by the flashing lights, while the mellow, groovin’ hipster audience enjoys songs including “Dance Yrself Clean,” “All My Friends,” “45:33,” a cover of Harry Nilsson’s “Jump Into the Fire,” and “The Sound of Silver” (featuring a male chorus in crazy astronaut-like costumes). Extras include two bonus discs featuring the full three-hour-plus concert, along with an extended interview with Murphy and Klosterman, and outtakes. Serving up an

otherworldly, trance-like experience sure to appeal to fans—presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo—this is recommended. (J. Williams-Wood)

Slipknot—{sic}nesses: Live at Download ★★½

(2010) 159 min. Blu-ray: \$19.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



Although masked metal band Slipknot seems designed for dimly-lit venues, their 18-track set here starts out in daylight in front of 80,000 English fans (some with latex masks of their own) at Donington’s Download Festival in 2009 (although, by the end, the sun had sunk below the horizon). From their distorted, angry sound to their serial-killer look, Slipknot’s performance is basically a horror movie as rock concert, minus any humorous Alice Cooper touches (if the Des Moines nine-piece does have a sense of humor, they definitely keep it under wraps for this outing). For their imposing look, the band appears to have taken cues from *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *Halloween*, and *Hellraiser*, while song titles include such day-brighteners as “Dead Memories” and “People = Shit.” Throughout the set, the guitarists head-bang, frontman Corey Taylor mumbles and grumbles, and three percussionists—including Shawn “Clown” Crahan—pound away on a combination of regulation gear and oil cans (when he isn’t tossing around cans, Clown drums atop a moving hydraulic riser). Programmer/keyboard player Craig “133” Jones and bassist Paul Gray (who died the following year) also join in as pyrotechnics blaze behind the band. The camerawork is effective, but the ADHD editing is exhausting, with no shot lasting for more than a few seconds. Presented in DTS-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include three music videos and behind-the-scenes footage assembled by Clown. A strong optional purchase. (K. Fennessy)

Something from Nothing: The Art of Rap ★★½

(2012) 111 min. DVD: \$19.98. Vivendi Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



Grammy-nominated rapper and actor Ice-T directs this Sundance Film Festival selection that looks at the roots and evolution of rap and hip-hop music. Ice-T, who produced this tribute documentary because “rap music saved my life,” interviews a veritable who’s who of subjects, including Lord Jamar, Melle Mel, Big Daddy Kane, Afrika Bambaataa, a beatboxing Doug E. Fresh, Nas, Eminem (he and T recall favorite rhymes in unison), Chuck D., Kanye West, Rev. Run, DMC, Treach, Ice

Cube, Dr. Dre, and Snoop Dogg. While few women (unfortunately) are interviewed (MC Lyte, and Salt—but not Pepa?), the film does deftly explore early influences, techniques, the importance of lyrics that paint pictures, delivery skills, personal experiences, and the rigorous work ethic involved in the genre. Shot in various locations—NYC, Detroit, and L.A.—and featuring a killer soundtrack (presented in Dolby Digital 5.1), DVD extras include audio commentary by producer Paul Toogood, a “making-of” featurette, and outtakes. Highly recommended. (J. Williams-Wood)

Staind: Live from Mohegan Sun ★★½

(2011) 116 min. DVD: \$14.98, Blu-ray: \$19.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



On tour in support of their self-titled seventh album, the platinum-selling Springfield, MA, quartet Staind kicks up a loud, if not particularly distinguished ruckus in this live set from Connecticut’s Mohegan Sun Casino in 2011. Staind’s basic sound is alternative metal—in the vein of Nickelback or Creed—although a few acoustic interludes help to set them slightly apart. Heavily tattooed, baseball cap-sporting singer/guitarist Aaron Lewis gives the distinct impression that he grew up on a combination of hard rock and country, since he sings with a drawl about drinkers, hell raisers, and how he’s “never needed the government to hold his hand” (from “Country Boy”). His liberal-baiting T-shirt, which reads: “Family / Guns / Country,” reinforces this blue-collar impression (Lewis has also recorded a bestselling country record, *Town Line*, with Nashville session players). Lewis’s band mates for this 16-song engagement include lead guitarist Mike Mushok, bassist Johnny April, and drum-tech-turned-drummer Sal Giancarelli (replacing departing member Jon Wysocki). Songs performed include fan favorites, such as *Break the Cycle*’s “It’s Been Awhile” and *Chapter V*’s “Right Here.” Presented in DTS 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, and DTD-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include a featurette on Mushok’s guitars, and a band interview. A strong optional purchase. (K. Fennessy)

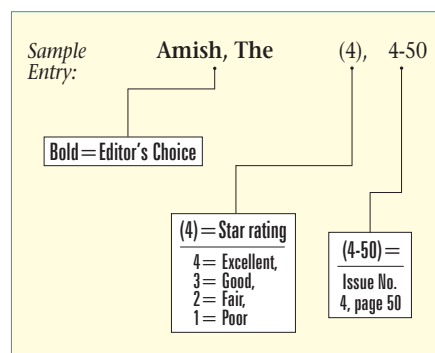
New to Blu-Ray

Idomeneo (Unitel Classica, Blu-ray: \$39.99). Bowing on Blu-ray, this 2008 production (VL-7/09 ★★★) of Mozart’s opera seria from Munich’s Cuvillies Theatre features conductor Kent Nagano leading the Bayerisches Staatsorchester.



Using the Index

Video Librarian's Index is arranged by both title and subject, and covers all of the titles reviewed in Volume 27, Issues 1-6 (calendar year 2012). Each entry in the index includes title, star rating, issue number, and page number. Titles which were deemed to be Editor's Choice titles are highlighted in bold. For example, the entry **Amish, The** (4), 4-50 is interpreted thus: the bold listing signifies an Editor's Choice title which received four stars (4), and was reviewed in Vol. 27, No. 4 on page 50 (4-50). A graphic example is shown below.



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Web: greatergoodmovie.org

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The Cinema Guild
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Tel: (503) 232-5345
Web: collectiveeye.org

Crystal Productions
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Glenview, IL 60025
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Terra Nova Films
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Indianapolis, IN 46220
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Native Stories on PBS



In 1877, to honor his dying son's last wish to be buried in his homeland, Ponca Chief Standing Bear set-off on a grueling, 600-mile journey home. Captured en-route, he stood before a court to prove that an Indian was a person under the law.

Beginning October 15 at 10 p.m. ET on PBS

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When a Navajo couple discovers their children have a disorder that makes exposure to sunlight fatal, they also learn that their Reservation is a likely hotbed for this rare, genetic disease.

Beginning October 18 at 10 p.m. ET on PBS's award-winning series, P.O.V.



Racing the Rez

Navajo and Hopi cross-country runners from two rival high schools put it all on the line for Tribal pride, triumph over adversity, and state championship glory.

Beginning November 1 on PBS



An intimate look at the little-documented Grab Day, the film follows three Laguna Pueblo families' lives leading up to the annual throw of bread, treats, and other household items from the rooftop of a home to a crowd of people below.

Beginning November 1 on PBS



Native American Public Telecommunications, Inc. (NAPT)/Vision Maker Media, a nonprofit 501(c)(3), receives major funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

NAPT is now Vision Maker Media.



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The documentary sensation of 2011 is now on Blu-ray! "We all get dressed for Bill." says *Vogue* editrix Anna Wintour. The "Bill" in question is 80+ *New York Times* photographer Bill Cunningham who, for decades, has been obsessively and inventively chronicling fashion trends for his beloved Style section columns "On The Street" and "Evening Hours."

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The Digital World

July 17, 2012.

That is the day I knew things really were going to be different.

An email in my morning inbox led with a promising subject heading (at least initially): "Morgan Spurlock's 'Mansome' to Be Released..." And then came the rest "...On Demand."

The press release continued: "Morgan Spurlock's comedic documentary [exploring] men's identity through...male grooming habits—will be released On Demand via cable and broadband on iTunes, YouTube, Amazon, VUDU, CinemaNow, Xbox [and] PlayStation [on] July 17th, 2012 through digital curator, FilmBuff."

The *Super Size Me* director's latest only available in a digital format?

What does this mean?

First and foremost, libraries cannot offer *Mansome* to their patrons or students because no physical copies are for sale on DVD or Blu-ray and none of the aforementioned delivery platforms (as far as I'm aware) feature multiple-circ mechanisms designed for institutional use.

We can all argue back and forth about the pluses and minuses of physical vs.

digital formats (and there is plenty to say), but—for me—the bottom line comes down to some version of the homespun wisdom that ownership is 9/10ths of the law. Armed with a book, CD, or DVD and the First Sale Doctrine, libraries can circulate an item numerous times—literally until it breaks or wears out. Take away the physical object, however, and the scenario changes dramatically.

Case in point: e-books.

Anyone who has been following the e-book wars between publishers and libraries knows that the situation is downright ugly. With the exception of Random House (who recently hiked prices) and Harper Collins (creators of the infamous 26 circ benchmark), none of the biggest book publishers have new title e-book agreements with libraries—Macmillan (no), Simon & Schuster (no), Scholastic (no), Hachette Book Group (no), Penguin (no, but testing).

Does anyone really think that Hollywood studios will play nicer with libraries than book publishers do? Battles with Netflix, Redbox, and others suggest that the studios are still very much concerned with release windows that help protect the cherished one-ticket = one showing model.

Right now, the landscape is sparse when it comes to large aggregators of commercial

digital video for libraries to offer to patrons for download or streaming. OverDrive carries a small collection of children's, documentaries, TV, and movie titles (New York Public Library, for instance, offers a total of 160 feature films to its patrons through OverDrive).

One of the most interesting developments on the horizon is Midwest Tape's Hoopla digital platform, which will allow public libraries to offer a wide selection of movies, television, music, and audiobooks to their patrons for use on mobile or desktop devices (I took a peek at Hoopla at a library conference—and was suitably wowed—and will have more to say when it launches).

Still, like most librarians, I am concerned. The digital world holds out tremendous promise, as virtual holdings will make a whole host of present-day concerns obsolete, including materials processing, damage, and shelf space. But by eliminating physical copies of books, CDs, and DVDs—and thereby making moot the First Sale Doctrine—the digital world also carries the threat of making libraries themselves obsolete, while further disenfranchising those on the other side of the digital divide.

Randy Pitman

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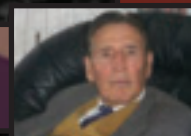
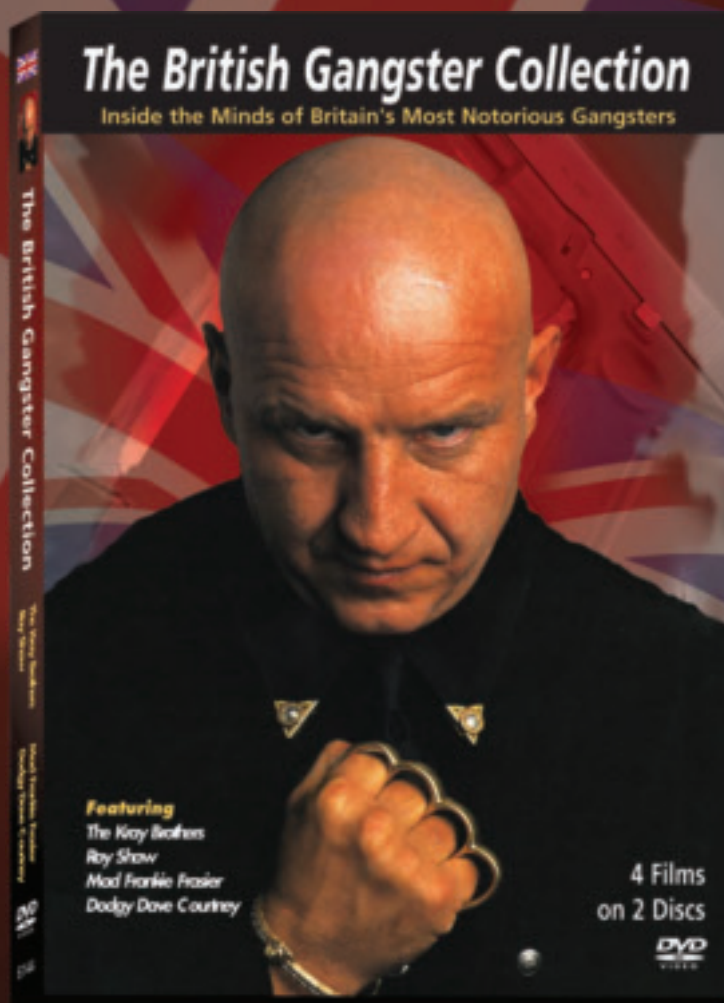
<p>breathe a breathing film</p> <p>300 feet, one breath, no second chances.</p> <p>BREATHE Item Number: FWD031 UPC: 8-97067-00031-5 Run Time: 51 mins. SRP: \$19.98</p>	<p>Thrilling, Distorted, Adrenal</p> <p>Running with Bulls</p> <p>An inside look at the controversial San Fermin Festival</p> <p>RUNNING WITH BULLS Item Number: FWD033 UPC: 8-97067-00033-9 Run Time: 51 mins. SRP: \$19.98</p>	<p>EARTH SONGS A Documentary Film by Michael York</p> <p>EARTH SONGS Item Number: FWD026 UPC: 8-97067-00026-1 Run Time: 82 mins. SRP: \$19.98</p>
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