

March-April 2012

Video Librarian

VOL. 27 ■ THE VIDEO REVIEW MAGAZINE FOR LIBRARIES ■ NO. 2




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Spotlight Review

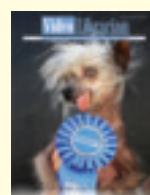
Superheroes ★★★
 (2011) 81 min. DVD: \$29.95. Docurama (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4229-7492-8.



This HBO-aired documentary turns the spotlight on crime-and-comics-concerned individuals who patrol cities in superhero mode wearing homemade costumes. Only one, Master Legend, claims to possess actual superpowers (evidently faith-based); others are mere mortals who practice gymnastics, parkour, archery, gadget-building, or martial arts to enhance their crime-fighting abilities. Featured are Brooklyn's New York Initiative, Salt Lake City's Black Monday Society, San Diego's Xtreme Justice League, Florida's Team Justice, and people such as Portland's Zetaman and Seattle's Dark Wolf. Despite risky criminal-baiting by Zimmer, TSAF, Dark Guardian, and others in the New York Initiative, most of the heroics shown here could be classified as charity work or concerned-citizen assistance. Along the way, director Michael Barnett overlays CGI comic-art panels and interviews a bemused

Stan Lee, author Robin S. Rosenberg (*Superhero Origins*), and a San Diego police officer who worries that hometown vigilantes ignore constitutional law and due process. While much of this comes across as ragtag role-playing and grandstanding for the cameras, this real-life complement to *Kick-Ass* is nevertheless quite entertaining and sure to be popular. DVD extras include deleted scenes. Recommended. Aud: P. (C. Cassidy)

Photo Credit: Peter Tangen's cover photo of Ragensi was created for The Real Life Superhero Project (www.reallifesuperheroes.com), which spotlights several of the individuals that were featured in the documentary *Superheroes*.



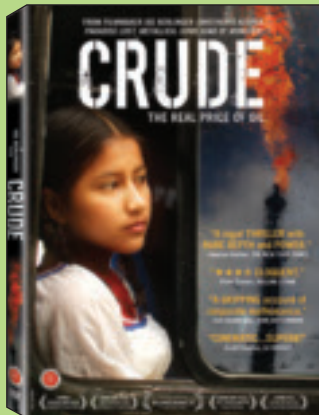
Video Librarian will be exhibiting at the 14th Public Library Association (PLA) conference in Philadelphia, PA, from March 14-16. We hope you will drop by our booth (#1237) to say hello!

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FILMS TO HONOR EARTH DAY



CRUDE

104 minutes, color, SRP \$24.95, FRF 913997D

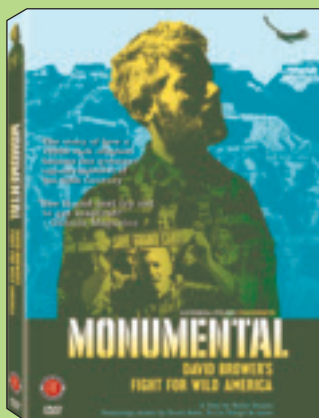
From Oscar-nominated director Joe Berlinger and winner of 19 international awards, *Crude* is the epic story of one of the most controversial legal cases on the planet: the \$27 billion "Amazon Chernobyl" case pitting 30,000 rainforest dwellers in Ecuador against U.S. oil giant Chevron.

"Critic's Pick! A legal thriller with rare depth and power."

-The New York Times

"A fascinating case study of real world political action."

-Los Angeles Times



MONUMENTAL DAVID BROWER'S FIGHT FOR WILD AMERICA

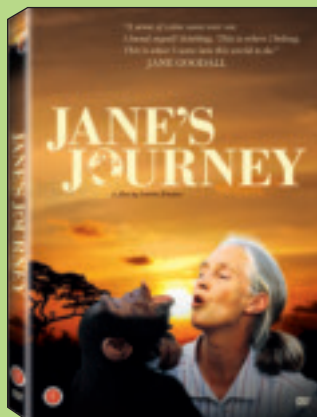
80 minutes, color & b/w, SRP \$24.95, FRF 911757D

The story of a true American legend, *Monumental* documents the life of David Brower, whose fiery dedication not only saved the Grand Canyon but also transformed the Sierra Club into a powerful national political force, giving birth to the modern environmental movement.

NOMINATED FOR AN EMMY AWARD!

"Stylish and substantial. Richly cinematic!"

-Seattle Times



JANE'S JOURNEY

111 minutes, color, SRP \$27.95, FRF 914895D

An inspiring portrait of the private person behind the world-famous icon Jane Goodall, whose 45 year study of wild chimpanzees in Africa is legendary. Featuring a wide range of interviews and spectacular footage from her own private collection (including her years in Gombe), this Oscar-shortlisted documentary also reveals Goodall's commitment to conservation and education.

"Fascinating & inspiring! An engaging, often personal look at the great primatologist turned-conservationist."

-The Hollywood Reporter



PLASTIC PLANET

90 minutes, color, SRP \$27.95, FRF 914635D

We live in the Age of Plastic. It's cheap, it's practical, and it's everywhere – from the highest mountains to the hottest deserts, from the North Pole to the South Pole. It's even part of us – inside our blood. Should we be worried? This intriguing and informative film provides the answer.

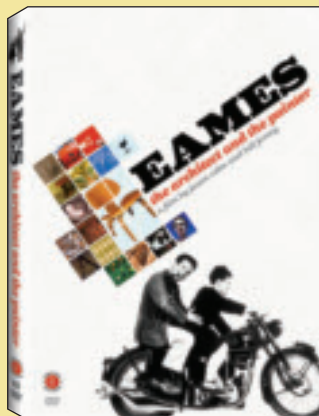
"Fascinating and ultimately alarming."

-The New York Times

"Every bit as unshakable as An Inconvenient Truth."

-Time Out New York

RECENT RELEASES IN THE NEWS



EAMES THE ARCHITECT AND THE PAINTER

84 minutes, color, SRP \$27.95, FRF 914925D

The husband/wife team of Charles and Ray Eames are widely regarded as America's most important designers. Best remembered for their plywood and fiberglass furniture, the Eames Office also created a mind-bending variety of other products. This is the first film since their death dedicated to these creative geniuses and their work.

"A thorough and vibrant examination of the master Modernists." -Los Angeles Times



PIANOMANIA

93 minutes, color, SRP \$27.95, FRF 914987D

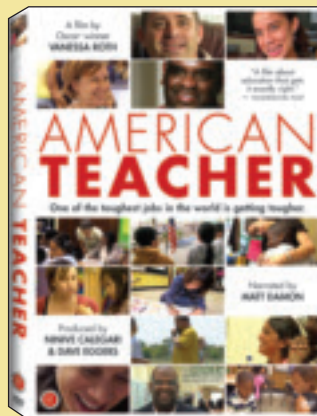
Featuring Lang Lang and other world-class pianists, *Pianomania* is a surprisingly suspenseful peek into the heated clash of wills between a genius craftsman (Steinway's Chief Technician and Master Tuner in Vienna) and the renowned pianists who rely on his talent as they search together for that elusive perfect tone.

"The art of the Steinway whisperer."

-The New York Times

"Thoroughly enjoyable!"

-Christian Science Monitor



AMERICAN TEACHER

80 minutes, color, SRP \$24.95, FRF 914949D

The one thing everyone agrees on is the need for great teachers. Yet teachers are so underpaid that almost two-thirds must work a second job in order to make a living. *American Teacher* explores how we can re-value teaching and turn it into a prestigious, financially attractive and desirable profession.

"This essential film ought to be seen by anyone concerned about the fate of the public school system, and the nation as a whole."

-New York Daily News



OUT LATE

64 minutes, color, SRP \$24.95, FRF 914864D

Out Late is an inspirational and moving documentary about five individuals who made the courageous and life-altering decision to come out as lesbian, gay, or transgender, after the age of 55. Why did they wait so long to come out? Their stories prove it's never too late to be yourself.

"A valuable film that will encourage young gays to live their lives without fear and secrets."

-Joy Behar, Co-Host of *The View*



NEW FROM FIRST RUN FEATURES



THE MAN NOBODY KNEW

As powerful and riveting as a John Le Carre thriller, *The Man Nobody Knew* uncovers the hidden life of legendary CIA spy-master William Colby. Told by his son and featuring a who's who of the intelligence community as well as top journalists and writers, Colby's story unmasks the lies, myths, truths, sacrifices and casualties of a spy.

"Critic's Pick! Operates on many levels, all riveting."

-The New York Times

"Powerful...absorbing...shattering."

-Wall Street Journal

104 min., color, SRP Blu Ray \$29.95; Std \$27.95
FRF 915045D | Documentary | **STREET: APRIL 17**



IN THE GARDEN OF SOUNDS

Deprived of his sight at an early age and awed by the restorative powers of sound, Wolfgang Fasser establishes a physical therapy retreat for disabled children where they use music and noise to communicate with others and gain control of their own bodies. As this incredible film shows, the children embrace the physicality of the sonic vibrations, and slowly begin to respond.

"The healing powers of aural therapy. With quiet reverence, audiences witness a remarkable journey into new sensory worlds."

-Minneapolis-St. Paul Int. Film Fest.

90 minutes, color, SRP \$27.95, FRF 915021D
Documentary | **STREET DATE: MARCH 20**



GARBO: THE SPY

The Allies called him Garbo. The Nazis dubbed him Alaric. Both sides in World War II were sure Juan Pujol Garcia was their man. In reality, Pujol was a double agent – and his elaborate web of deceit helped to save thousands of Allied lives. This documentary thriller artfully reveals the astonishing story of WWII's greatest spy.

"Ingenious & engrossing! One of the year's best documentaries."

-Roger Ebert

"The flair of a Hollywood spy movie: dramatic, and entertaining!"

-The New York Times

93 minutes, color, SRP \$27.95, FRF 915045D
Documentary | **STREET DATE: APRIL 17**



LITTLE GIRL

Bathed in the neorealist tradition of Roberto Rossellini and Vittorio De Sica, *Little Girl* tells the story of an abandoned two year-old girl who is taken in by a family of hard-luck circus performers on the outskirts of Rome. As the bond grows between them, this naturalistic drama becomes a revealing and soulful portrait of courage, loss and togetherness.

**WINNER - 30 AWARDS
IN FESTIVALS WORLDWIDE**

"A gem. Melts viewers' hearts."

-Hollywood Reporter

"Captivating...grittily evocative."

-The New York Times

100 minutes, color, SRP \$27.95, FRF 914932D
Fiction | **STREET DATE: MARCH 20**



MONSEÑOR: THE LAST JOURNEY OF OSCAR ROMERO

In 1970s El Salvador, one man was known as the voice of the poor and disenfranchised: Archbishop Oscar Romero. Monseñor Romero worked tirelessly for peace, justice and human rights, while in constant personal peril. Using the power of the pulpit, he inspired millions – until he was shot dead at the altar. *Monseñor* is a timely portrait of one man's quest to speak the truth, though it cost him his life.

"Astonishing."

-New York Review of Books

"A terrific film."

-Marcel Ophuls, Oscar-Winning Director

88 minutes, color, SRP \$27.95, FRF 915014D
Documentary | **STREET DATE: MARCH 20**



THE HITLER CHRONICLES

This special edition box set includes four riveting documentaries about Adolf Hitler and the rise and fall of the Third Reich:

- *Hitler, A Career*
- *The Architecture of Doom*
- *Dear Uncle Adolf*
- *The Top Secret Trial of the Third Reich*

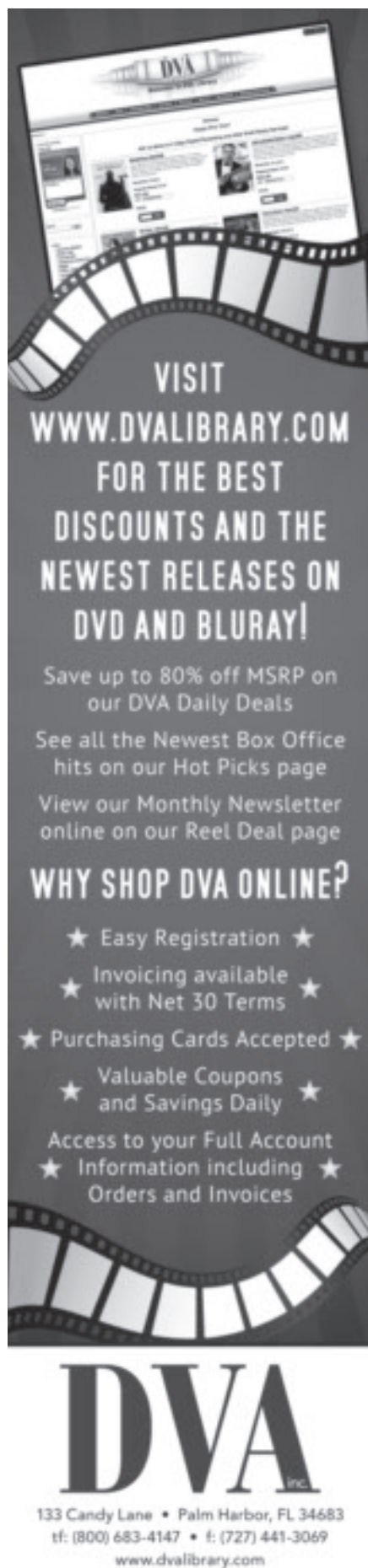
"A masterpiece of scholarship and imagination." -Variety

"This re-examination of the Nazi past is a revelation...never fails to stun audiences." -TIME Magazine

"Shocking. Includes all manner of Nazi spectacles." -Village Voice

410 min. on 4 discs, color & b/w, SRP \$59.95
FRF 915038D | **STREET DATE: APRIL 17**

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"Masterpiece Classic: Great Expectations" Coming April 3 from PBS Distribution

Timed to coincide with the TV premiere, PBS Distribution will release *Masterpiece Classic: Great Expectations* (DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99) on April 3. This lush retelling of Charles Dickens's classic coming-of-age story features colorful conspirators, rogues, rakes, and wretches in a remarkable tale of rags-to-riches to self-knowledge, starring Gillian Anderson, David Suchet, Ray Winstone, and Douglas Booth. Young Pip expects no more from life than to join his brother-in-law at the blacksmith's forge, but fate intervenes when neighboring rich eccentric Miss Havisham seeks Pip out as a playmate for her adopted daughter. Also featuring Harry Lloyd (the real-life great-great-great grandson of Dickens), the story follows Pip on a course that sees him tested in many ways.

David Attenborough-Narrated "Frozen Planet" BBC Series Bows April 17

Just in time for Earth Day, BBC Home Entertainment will release *Frozen Planet* (DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$54.98) on April 17. This breathtaking seven-part series, narrated by the legendary Sir David Attenborough, takes viewers on the ultimate adventure in a co-production four years in the making. Providing a stunning portrait of Earth's polar regions, the series captures the power of natural elements and the fragile, jaw-dropping beauty of pristine locations. Featuring incredible wildlife cinematography, the cameras go deep under the sea ice into a magical world, plunge into the heart of an erupting polar volcano, and fly to the South Pole across the Antarctic icecap, retracing the steps of the great polar explorers while also featuring animals including polar bears, penguins, wolves, and orcas, who fight for survival in an extreme environment. Bonus features include the "Science at the Ends of the Earth" and "Freeze Frame" making-of featurettes, production video diaries, and the hour-long highlights special "The Epic Journey."

"A Streetcar Named Desire" 60th Anniversary Blu-ray Debut Coming April 10 from Warner Home Video

On April 10, Warner Home Video will

debut *A Streetcar Named Desire* in a Blu-ray digi-book for \$34.99, commemorating the 60th anniversary of playwright Tennessee Williams's masterwork. Directed by Elia Kazan, the classic 1951 film adaptation starring Marlon Brando, Vivien Leigh, Kim Hunter, and Karl Malden was nominated for 12 Academy Awards. This "Original Restored Version" features three minutes of footage thought to be lost until its rediscovery in the early 1990s. Selected by the United States Library of Congress for preservation in the National Film Registry, *A Streetcar Named Desire* depicts a culture clash between a pretentious, fading alcoholic Southern belle, and a rising member of the industrial, inner-city immigrant class. Bonus features include audio commentary (with Malden, and film historians Rudy Behlmer and Jeff Young), outtakes, Brando's screen test, five production featurettes, and a 40-page book with photos, film history trivia, and more.



Zeitgeist to Release "Women Art Revolution (!War)" Feminist Art Doc on March 20

Zeitgeist Films will release *Women Art Revolution (!War)* on March 20 (DVD: \$29.99). Artist and filmmaker Lynn Hershman Leeson (*Conceiving Ada*, *Teknolust*) directed this critically acclaimed 2011 documentary that presents a revelatory "secret history" of the late-20th-century Feminist Art movement. Leeson has been documenting the mavericks of this woefully underexplored movement for more than 40 years, culminating in this intimate and inspiring portrait of their struggles to break down barriers both in the art world and society at large. Combining artworks, archival footage, and comments from artists, historians, curators, and critics, the film features a rousing rock score by Sleater-Kinney's Carrie Brownstein. Featured are Miranda July, The Guerrilla Girls, Yvonne Rainer, Judy Chicago, Marina Abramovic, B. Ruby Rich, Hannah Wilke, Carolee Schneemann, Cindy Sherman, Yoko Ono, Marcia Tucker, and other groundbreaking art world figures. DVD extras include a featurette on the art installation RAW/WAR, and additional interviews with Leeson, comic artist Spain Rodriguez, and philanthropist Elizabeth A. Sackler.

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

Coming in March

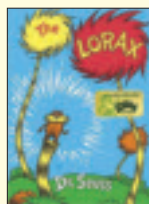
Being Flynn (Mar. 2) is based on author and playwright Nick Flynn's 2004 memoir *Another Bullshit Night in Suck City*. Directed by Paul Weitz, the film stars Robert De Niro, Julianne Moore, Paul Dano, and Olivia Thirlby.



Bel Ami (Mar. 2) is an adaptation of French author Guy de Maupassant's 1885 novel. Directed by Declan Donnellan and Nick Ormerod, this romantic drama stars Robert Pattinson, Christina Ricci, Uma Thurman, Kristin Scott Thomas, and Colm Meaney.



Dr. Seuss' The Lorax (Mar. 2) is adapted from whimsical author Theodor Geisel's 1971 children's book. Directed by Chris Renaud and Kyle Balda, the film features the voices of Zac Efron, Taylor Swift, Betty White, and Danny DeVito.



John Carter (Mar. 9) is based on Edgar Rice Burroughs's classic 1917 sci-fi novel *A Princess of Mars*. Directed by Andrew Stanton, the action-packed fantasy film stars Taylor Kitsch as the titular hero, along with Bryan Cranston, Lynn Collins, Willem Dafoe, Ciarán Hinds, Mark Strong, and Polly Walker.



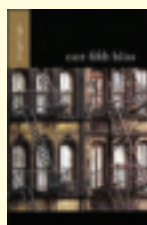
Salmon Fishing in the Yemen (Mar. 9) is based on the 2007 Wodehouse Prize-winning novel by Paul Torday. Directed by Lasse Hallström, this comedy stars Emily Blunt, Ewan McGregor, Kristin Scott Thomas, Rachael Stirling, and Catherine Steadman.



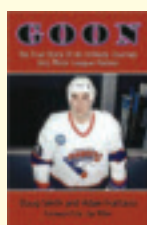
The Hunger Games (Mar. 23) is adapted from the 2008 first book in Suzanne Collins's YA sci-fi trilogy. Directed by Gary Ross, the post-apocalyptic thriller stars Jennifer Lawrence, Josh Hutcherson, Elizabeth Banks, and Woody Harrelson.



The Trouble with Bliss (Mar. 23) is based on Douglas Light's 2007 debut novel *East Fifth Bliss*. Directed by Michael Knowles, the romantic dramedy stars Michael C. Hall, Lucy Liu, Brie Larson, Peter Fonda, and Rhea Perlman.



Goon (Mar. 30, in limited release) is a sports comedy adapted from Doug Smith and Adam Frattasio's 2002 book *Goon: The True Story of an Unlikely Journey Into Minor League Hockey*. Directed by Michael Dowse, the film stars Seann William Scott, Liev Schreiber, Alison Pill, and co-screenwriter Jay Baruchel.



Mirror Mirror (Mar. 30) is an adaptation of the Grimm Brothers' fairy tale "Snow White." Directed by Tarsem Singh, the fantasy film stars Julia Roberts, Lily Collins, Sean Bean, and Nathan Lane.

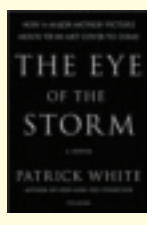


Coming in April

A Bullet to the Head (Apr. 13) is based on the French graphic novel series *Du plomb dans la tête* (2004-06) by Alexis Nolent, aka Matz. Directed by Walter Hill, the action thriller stars Sylvester Stallone, Jason Momoa, and Christian Slater.

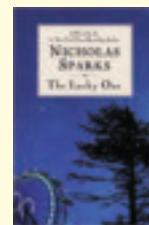


The Eye of the Storm (Apr. 20) is adapted from Nobel prize-winning Australian author Patrick White's 1973 novel. Directed by Fred Schepisi, the drama set at the deathbed of a powerful



matriarch stars Charlotte Rampling, Geoffrey Rush, and Judy Davis.

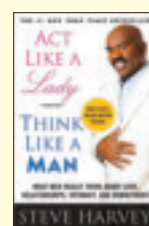
The Lucky One (Apr. 20) is an adaptation of Nicholas Sparks's 2008 romantic drama novel. Directed by Scott Hicks, the film stars Zac Efron, Taylor Schilling, Blythe Danner, and Jay R. Ferguson.



The Moth Diaries (Apr. 20) is based on Rachel Klein's 2002 debut novel set at an elite girls' boarding school. Directed by Mary Harron, the horror film stars Sarah Gadon, Lily Cole, Sarah Bolger, and Scott Speedman.



Think Like a Man (Apr. 20) is based on Steve Harvey's 2009 nonfiction bestseller *Act Like a Lady, Think Like a Man: What Men Really Think About Love, Relationships, Intimacy, and Commitment*. Directed by Tim Story, the film stars Meagan Good, Taraji P. Henson, Kevin Hart, and Morris Chestnut.



The Pirates! Band of Misfits (Apr. 27) is based on Gideon Defoe's 2004 book *The Pirates! In an Adventure with Scientists*. Directed by Peter Lord and Jeff Newitt, the Aardman Animations production features the voices of Hugh Grant, Brendan Gleeson, David Tennant, Salma Hayek, and Jeremy Piven.



Looking Ahead

Slated for May is **The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel**, based on English author Deborah Moggach's 2004 book *These Foolish Things*. Directed by John Madden, the India-set dramedy about a group of retirees stars Bill Nighy, Maggie Smith, Judi Dench, Tom Wilkinson, Dev Patel, and Penelope Wilton.





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183 minutes (plus bonus) • 16x9 (1.78:1) for DVD / 1080i High Definition 1.78:1 for Blu-ray
5.1 Surround Sound for DVD / DTS-HD Master Audio for Blu-ray
English with SDH Subtitles • Drama/Mini-Series • Production Year: 2011 • 2 Disc Set

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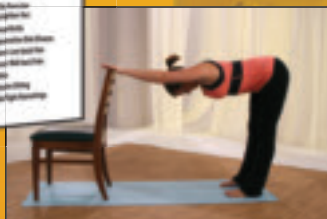
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Mixed Media features new release information on upcoming video games and TV series on DVD/Blu-ray, as well as notable older titles that are re-priced or new to DVD/Blu-ray.

Video Games

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

Available Now

Grand Slam Tennis 2 (EA, PS3/X360: \$49.99, Rated: E). Featuring over 20 of the world's greatest tennis pros, this sports simulation game allows players to experience all four Grand Slam tournaments: the Australian Open, the French Open, Wimbledon, and the US Open.



March 4—March 10

Major League Baseball 2K12 (Take 2, PS3/Wii/X360: \$39.99-\$59.99, Rated: E). The longest running Major League Baseball franchise returns with advanced pitching and hitting controls, detailed player profiles and scouting reports, and deeply immersive game modes.

Mass Effect 3 (EA, PS3/X360: \$59.99, Rated: M). In this final chapter of the hugely popular third-person hybrid RPG/action game, players once again step into the boots of Commander Shepard, who is tasked with nothing less than saving the universe.



Ridge Racer Unbounded (Namco Bandai, PS3/X360: \$59.99, Rated: T). The popular racing franchise returns in this game that lets the player race and drift through the streets and alleys of Shatter Bay, while also adding the option to design new tracks.

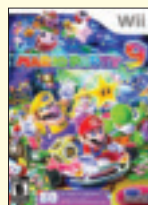
Silent Hill HD Collection (Konami, PS3/X360: \$49.99, Rated: M). This collection combines two classic spine-chilling third-person survival-horror titles from the past, *Silent Hill 2* and *Silent Hill 3*, enhanced with high-definition graphics.

Street Fighter X Tekken (Capcom, PS3/X360: \$59.99, Rated: T). The long-awaited dream match-up between the two leaders in the fighting game genre becomes a reality in this tag-team combat-style game featuring characters from the *Street Fighter* and *Tekken* universes.

March 11—March 17

FIFA Street (EA, PS3/X360: \$59.99, Rated: E). In this street version of soccer, players will enjoy intuitive ball control and superior responsiveness all while utilizing aerial skills to maneuver past opponents with an all-new sophisticated wall-play system and over 50 skill moves.

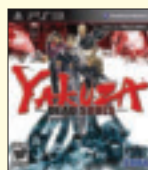
Mario Party 9 (Nintendo, Wii: \$49.99, Rated: E). The latest entry in the popular party game franchise features 80 mini-games blending coop and competitive action for up to four players.



Silent Hill Downpour (Konami, PS3/X360: \$59.99, Rated: M). In this third-person horror-adventure game players once again return to the town of Silent Hill after a prison transport vehicle careens off the road, leaving inmate Murphy Pendleton stranded to face horrific creatures and other terrors, as well as mind-bending puzzles.

Tales of Graces F (Namco Bandai, PS3: \$59.99, Rated: T). In this enhanced version of the Japanese RPG *Tales of Graces*, originally released on the Wii, players take on the role of Asbel, who tries to protect those he holds dear on the planet of Efinia.

Yakuza: Dead Souls (Sega, PS3: \$59.99, Rated: M). In this third-person action-shooter game set in the infamous Red Light District of Tokyo, its business as usual...until all hell breaks loose when a zombie outbreak turns the area into a quarantine zone, walled off by the Japanese Self-Defense Force.

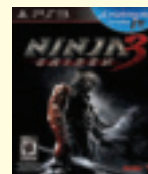


March 18—March 24

Armored Core V (Namco Bandai, PS3/X360: \$59.99, Rated: T). In this mech action game, players control all-new customizable mechs in intense one-on-one battles.

Ninja Gaiden 3 (Tecmo Koei, PS3/X360:

\$59.99, Rated: M). In this latest entry from the bestselling third-person action-adventure series, players once again pick up the Dragon Sword of super ninja Ryu Hayabusa for a new blood-soaked journey revolving around a mysterious masked figure.



Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City (Capcom, PS3/X360: \$59.99, Rated: M). In this third-person team-based shooter (which also features a single-player campaign mode) set in the *Resident Evil* universe, Umbrella orders an elite team into Raccoon City to destroy evidence, while the U.S. government dispatches its own team of soldiers to determine the source of the mysterious T-virus outbreak.

March 25—March 31

Blades of Time (Konami, PS3/X360: \$59.99, Rated: M). In this third-person action-adventure game, players take on the role of gun-sword-wielding treasure hunter Ayumi, who carves a path of destruction to break free from a mysterious possessed island.

Tiger Woods PGA Tour 13 (EA, PS3/X360: \$59.99, Rated: E). The number-one selling golf franchise returns for another season with the first controller-free, voice-enabled, body tracking sports simulation game for Kinect, as players compete against the world's best golfers at the Masters.



April 1—April 7

Devil May Cry HD Collection (Capcom, PS3/X360: \$39.99, Rated: M). Compiling the first three *Devil May Cry* games that originally appeared on the PS2, this third-person action series puts players in the boots of Dante, a demon hunter in search of those who killed his family.

Kinect Star Wars (Lucasarts, X360: \$59.99, Rated: T). Bringing the *Star Wars* universe to life using the controller-free power of Kinect, this action game allows players to physically experience training as a Jedi, use the Force, and battle with a lightsaber.

April 15—April 21

The Witcher 2: Assassin of Kings (Warner, X360: \$59.99, Rated: M). In this sprawl-

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ing third-person action RPG—an expanded port of the award-winning PC original—players take on the role of Geralt of Rivia, a professional monster slayer or “witcher.”



April 22—April 28

Prototype 2 (Activision, PS3/X360: \$59.99, Rated: M). In this third-person sequel, players control Sgt. James Heller, the ultimate shape-shifting human weapon, traveling the wastelands of post-viral New York Zero and building a genetic arsenal of all-new biological weapons on a quest to murder Alex Mercer, the devil himself.

Risen 2: Dark Waters (Deep Silver, PS3/X360: \$59.99, Rated: M). Set several years after the end of *Risen*—when raging Titans have devastated the world and monstrous creatures have risen from the ocean depths—players step into the shoes of a nameless member of the Inquisition in this RPG that combines classic gameplay mechanics with a fresh pirate-based theme spread over a huge variety of island locales.

TV on DVD/Blu-ray

Available Now

Borgia: Season One (Lionsgate, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98). Starring John Doman, this 2011 first season of the religious drama series is executive produced by Tom Fontana and Barry Levinson.

The Brief: Complete Collection (Acorn, DVD: 4 discs, \$59.99). Alan Davies stars as criminal law barrister Henry Farmer in this compilation from the 2004-05 crime drama series.

The Brontës of Haworth (Acorn, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99). Literary giants and siblings Charlotte, Emily, Anne, and Branwell Brontë are showcased in this 1973 BAFTA-nominated historical Australian mini-series featuring Michael Kitchen.



The Fades: Season One (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$34.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$39.98). Lily Loveless, Iain De Caestecker, Sophie Wu, and Natalie Dormer star in this 2011 first season of the fantasy-horror series.

Here's Lucy: Season Five (MPI, DVD: 4 discs, \$29.99). This 24-episode set from the penultimate 1972-73 fifth season of the comedy series finds Lucy (Lucille Ball) working at her brother-in-law's employment agency and features guest stars such as Eva Gabor, Don Knotts, and Phyllis Diller.

Matlock: The Seventh Season (Paramount, DVD: 3 discs, \$49.99). Andy Griffith stars as Atlanta defense attorney Ben Matlock in this 1992-93 seventh season, featuring guest appearances by Randy Travis, Amy Yasbeck, and Vivica A. Fox.

Merlin: The Complete Third Season (BBC, DVD: 5 discs, \$49.99). The early adventures of young wizard Merlin (Colin Morgan) and Prince Arthur (Bradley James) at Camelot are explored in this 2010 third season of the BAFTA-nominated family fantasy series.



Midsomer Murders, Set 19 (DVD: 4 discs, \$49.99; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$59.99). Inspired by the mystery novels of Caroline Graham, this 19th set from the acclaimed long-running British crime-drama includes four episodes from 2010.

Mission: Impossible—The '89 TV Season (Paramount, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.99). Peter Graves heads up an all-new team of elite agents in this 16-episode compilation from the 1989-90 reboot of the action-adventure series.

Wainy Days: Seasons 1-4 (Vivendi, DVD: \$14.95). Starring David Wain, this compilation of the first four seasons (2007-2010) of the Internet video series features guest stars such as Jason Sudeikis, Jonah Hill, Paul Rudd, and Janeane Garofalo.

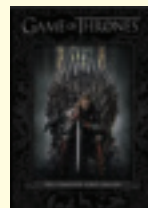
March 6

Cimarron City: The Complete Series (Timeless, DVD: 6 discs, \$39.98). Starring George Montgomery as an Oklahoma Territory mayor, this set compiles the complete 26-episode 1958-59 Western series.



Dalziel & Pascoe: Season 5 (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.99). This 2000 fifth series of the gritty crime drama starring Warren Clarke and Colin Buchanan as the titular investigators includes four episodes: “A Sweeter Lazarus,” “Cunning Old Fox,” “Foreign Bodies,” and “Above the Law.”

Game of Thrones: The Complete First Season (HBO, DVD: 5 discs, \$59.99; Blu-ray: 5 discs, \$79.98). Based on the popular fantasy series by George R. R. Martin, this acclaimed Emmy and Golden Globe winning medieval fantasy series' 2011 debut season features a star-studded cast including Lena Headey, Iain Glen, Peter Dinklage, and Sean Bean.



Happily Divorced: Season One (Paramount, DVD: 2 discs, \$22.99). Fran Drescher stars as an L.A. florist who learns that her husband is gay in this 2011 first season of the sitcom that also features Rita Moreno and Tichina Arnold.

Hawthorne: The Complete Final Season (Sony, DVD: 3 discs, \$45.99). Single parent nursing director Christina Hawthorne (Jada Pinkett Smith) balances a challenging career with her personal life in this 2011 third and final season of the TNT-aired medical drama.

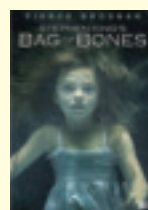
Judge John Deed: Season Five, Episodes 1-4 (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.99). High court Judge John Deed (Martin Shaw) is back in this collection of four episodes from the 2006 fifth season of the legal drama series.

MI-5, Volume 10 (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.99). The tenth and final volume from the 2002-11 BAFTA award-winning spy series features Peter Firth, Lara Pulver, Max Brown, and Alice Krige.

Poirot: Series 3 (Acorn, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.99; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$49.99). Newly remastered and available on high-definition Blu-ray, this 1990-91 third series compilation starring David Suchet as Agatha Christie's debonair Belgian sleuth includes “The Mysterious Affair at Styles,” “How Does Your Garden Grow?,” “Wasps' Nest,” “The Double Clue,” and more.

March 13

Bag of Bones (Sony, DVD: \$26.99). Based on Stephen King's 1998 novel about a writer struggling to write a book at his seemingly haunted Maine summer home, this 2011 A&E miniseries stars Pierce Brosnan, Melissa George, Annabeth Gish, and Jason Priestley.



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Breakout Kings: The Complete First Season

(Fox, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.99). Two U.S. marshals team up with three former fugitives to capture criminals in this 2011 first season of the suspense series starring Laz Alonso, Brooke Nevin, Jimmi Simpson, and Domenick Lombardozzi.



Call Me Fitz: The Complete Second Season

(eOne, DVD: 2 discs, \$19.98). Starring Jason Priestley as a sleazy used car salesman, this 2011 sophomore season of the Canadian comedy series features guest stars including Jonathan Torrens and Joanna Cassidy.

Come Fly with Me: Season One (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$24.99). British comic duo Matt Lucas and David Walliams portray nearly 50 characters in this 2010-11 first season of the mockumentary airport-set BAFTA-nominated comedy series.

Doctor Who: The Three Doctors—Special Edition (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$34.99). Newly available in a two-disc “special edition,” this four-episode 1972-73 10th anniversary story arc from the sci-fi fantasy series features Jon Pertwee, Patrick Troughton, and William Hartnell combining forces as the Doctors. Also newly available at the same price is **Doctor Who: The Tomb of the Cybermen—Special Edition**, as well as **Doctor Who: The Face of Evil** and **Doctor Who: The Robots of Death**, priced at \$24.99 each.

Ghost Hunters International: Season Two, Part 1 (Image, DVD: 3 discs, \$24.99). Featuring episodes from the 2009-10 sophomore season of the spin-off paranormal series, this compilation includes 12 investigations from around the globe.

The Killing: The Complete First Season

(Fox, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$49.99). Nominated for Golden Globe and Emmy awards, this 2011 first season of the AMC series revolving around the investigation of the murder of a young girl stars Mireille Enos, Brendan Sexton III, Billy Campbell, and Michelle Forbes.



Out (Acorn, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99). Framed and wrongly imprisoned for a bank robbery, Frank Ross (Tom Bell) goes after revenge in this 1978 BAFTA-winning

series that also features Brian Cox and Derrick O'Connor.

Superjail! Season Two (Warner, DVD: \$19.99). David Wain provides the voice of the Warden for the eponymous jail in this 2011 second season of the animated series from the Cartoon Network's Adult Swim programming block.

The Tribe: Series One, Part One (Shout! Factory, DVD: 4 discs, \$29.99). The children of the world attempt to create a new society after an enigmatic virus wipes out the grownups in this 26-episode set from the 1999 first season of the New Zealand series.

Wallace & Gromit's World of Invention (Lionsgate, DVD or Blu-ray: \$14.98 each). Created by Nick Park, this 2010 six-part Aardman Animations series follows popular stop-motion duo Wallace and Gromit as they look at real-life inventions from around the globe.



March 20

The Adventures of Tintin: Season Two (Shout! Factory, DVD: 2 discs, \$19.99). Based on the classic European comic strip, this compilation from the 1992 sophomore season features stories about the heroic escapades of the titular reporter and his loyal canine Snowy.

Jane By Design, Volume One (Walt Disney, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.99). Erica Dasher stars as an ordinary teen who lives a double life in the taxing world of fashion in this first volume from the ABC Family series, also starring Andie MacDowell and Nick Roux.



Kojak: Season Three (Shout! Factory, DVD: 6 discs, \$44.99). Starring Telly Savalas in his Emmy and Golden Globe-winning role as a lollipop-sucking lieutenant, this 24-episode 1975-76 third season of the NYC crime drama features guest appearances by Sylvester Stallone and David Ogden Stiers.

Scarecrow and Mrs. King: The Complete Third Season (Warner, DVD: 5 discs, \$39.99). Starring Bruce Boxleitner and Kate Jackson as the titular spy duo, this compilation includes 22 episodes from the 1985-86 penultimate third season of the Golden Globe-nominated adventure series.

March 27

CatDog: Season 1,

Part 2 (Shout! Factory, DVD: 2 discs, \$19.99). Conjoined brothers Cat and Dog and friends are showcased in this 10-episode second compilation of episodes from the 1998 first season of the Nickelodeon animated series featuring the voices of Jim Cummings, Tom Kenny, and Billy West.



Eureka: Season 4.5 (Universal, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.99). Colin Ferguson, Salli Richardson-Whitfield, and Joe Morton star in this compilation from the 2010-11 fourth season of the Syfy-aired series.

I, Claudius: The Complete Series—35th Anniversary Edition (Acorn, DVD: 5 discs, \$59.99). Winner of Emmy, BAFTA, and Royal Television Society awards, this acclaimed 1976 historical drama BBC miniseries based on novels by Robert Graves features a star-studded cast including Derek Jacobi, Siân Phillips, Brian Blessed, and John Hurt.

Murder Investigation Team: Series Two (Acorn, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99). A brisk DI (Samantha Spiro) and perceptive DC (Lindsey Coulson) head up an elite squad in London's Metro Police in this 2005 second series from the Thames Television procedural mystery series.

Single-Handed: Set 2 (Acorn, DVD: 3 discs, \$49.99). Dublin transfer Sergeant Driscoll returns to his coastal Irish hometown in this second set of episodes from the thriller series starring Owen McDonnell and Sean McGinley.

South Park: The Complete Fifteenth Season

(Paramount, DVD: 3 discs, \$49.99; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$57.99). Created by Matt Stone and Trey Parker, this 2011 15th season of the long-running Comedy Central cartoon series includes episodes such as “Crack Baby Athletic Association” and “A History Channel Thanksgiving.”



April 3

Bob: The Complete Series (Paramount, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.99). Bob Newhart stars as a comic book creator whose character becomes newly popular in this short-lived 1992-93 sitcom that also features John Cygan and Cynthia Stevenson.

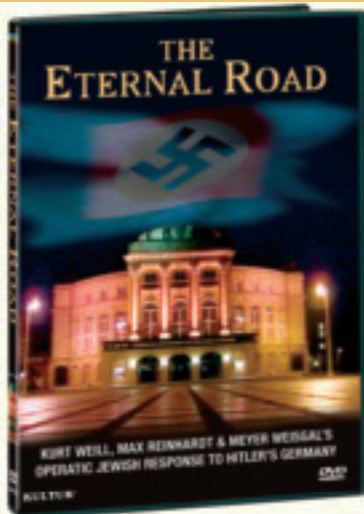
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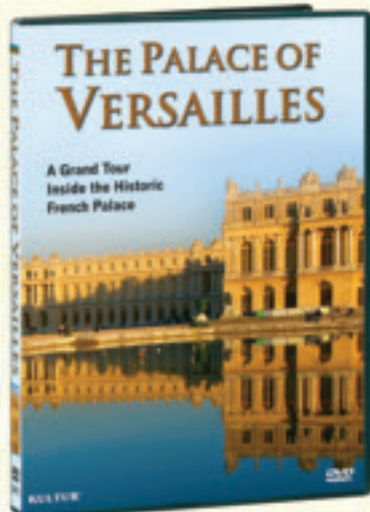
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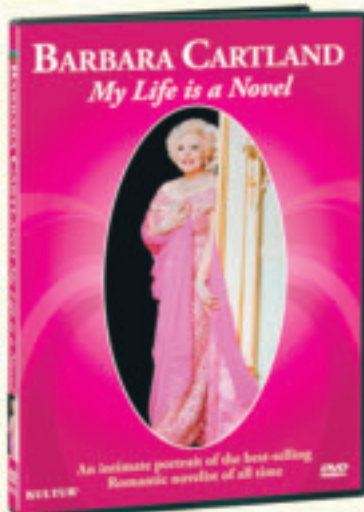
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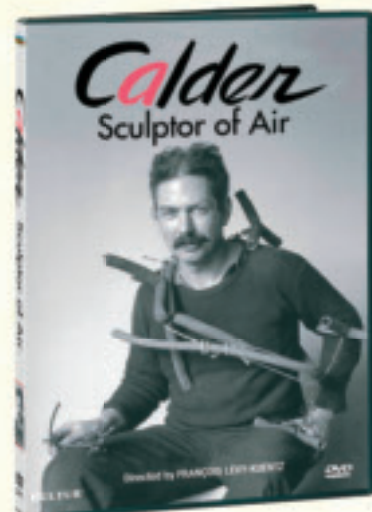
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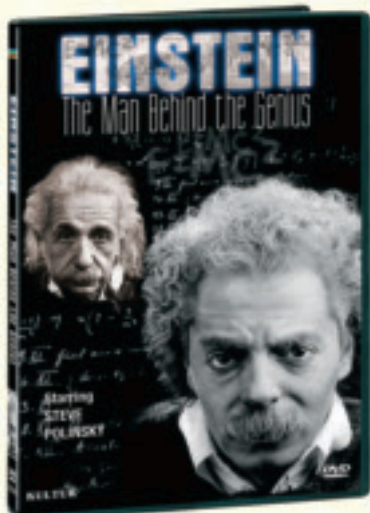
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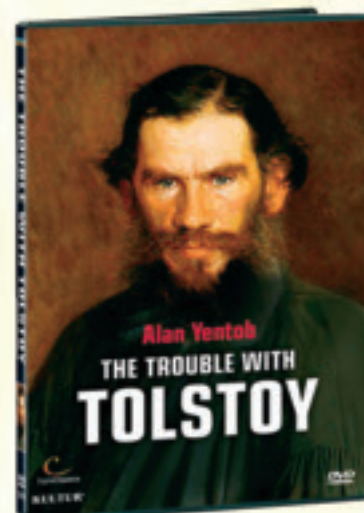
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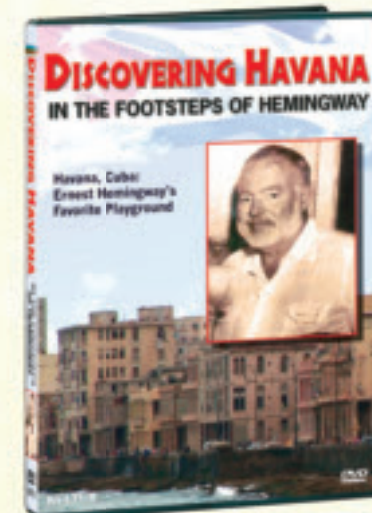
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Designing Women: The Complete Sixth Season (Shout! Factory, DVD: 4 discs, \$44.99). This 1991-92 penultimate sixth season continues the personal and professional escapades of women in an Atlanta design firm, and stars Dixie Carter, Annie Potts, Julia Duffy, and Jan Hooks.

Eagleheart: Season One (Warner, DVD: \$19.99). Aired on Adult Swim, this 2011 comedy series from executive producer Conan O'Brien stars Chris Elliott as crime-fighting Marshal Chris Monsanto.



April 10

Adam-12: The Final Season (Shout! Factory, DVD: 4 discs, \$34.99). Martin Milner and Kent McCord star in this 1974-75 seventh and final season of co-creator Jack Webb's classic police drama, with guest appearances by June Lockhart and Dick Van Patten.

Dark Shadows: The Complete Original Series (MPI, DVD: 131 discs, \$599.98). Timed to coincide with the upcoming feature film from Tim Burton starring Johnny Depp as Barnabas Collins, this mammoth box set compiles the entire 1966-71 fantasy soap series set in the mysterious town of Collinsport, ME.

Doctor Who: Carnival of Monsters (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$34.98). This four-part 1973 story arc features Jon Pertwee as The Doctor in a narrative built around a sea dinosaur attack. Also newly available at the same price is **Doctor Who: The Daemons**, also featuring Pertwee.

The Gene Autry Show: The Third and Fourth Seasons (Timeless, DVD: 4 discs, \$24.98). Singing cowboy Gene Autry is spotlighted in this compilation from the 1953-54 third and fourth seasons of his Western series, which features guest appearances by Lee Van Cleef.



Laverne & Shirley: The Fifth Season (Paramount, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.99). Compiling 26 episodes, this 1979-80 fifth season of the sitcom starring Penny Marshall and Cindy Williams features guest stars such as Vicki Lawrence, Art Garfunkel, and Henry Winkler as Fonzie.

Logan's Run: The Complete Series (Warner, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98). Based on the original novel by William F. Nolan and the popular 1976 film, this classic science-fiction TV series compiles all 14 episodes from the 1977-78 series starring Gregory Harrison.

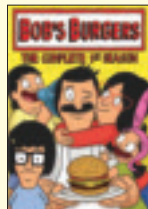
Night Gallery: Season Three (Universal, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.99). Created by Rod Serling, this 1972-73 third and final season of the mystery fantasy series features guest appearances by Vincent Price, John Astin, Mickey Rooney, Joan Van Ark, Ozzie and Harriet Nelson, Lesley Ann Warren, and Sally Field.

One Tree Hill: The Complete Ninth and Final Season (Warner, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.99). Compiling all 13 episodes of the 2012 ninth and final season of the North Carolina-set small-town drama series, this set stars James Lafferty, Bethany Joy Galeotti, Sophia Bush, and Austin Nichols.

April 17

American Dad, Volume 7 (Fox, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98). A CIA agent balances work with his wacky family life—including adopted alien Roger—in this seventh volume of episodes from Seth MacFarlane's animated series.

Bob's Burgers: The Complete 1st Season (Fox, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.98). H. Jon Benjamin provides the voice of beleaguered restaurant owner Bob Belcher in this 2011 debut season of the cartoon comedy.



Eight is Enough: The Complete First Season (Warner, DVD: 2 discs, \$24.99). Nominated for two Emmy Awards, this 1977 first season of the sitcom based on the book by Thomas Braden stars Dick Van Patten, Lani O'Grady, Adam Rich, and Willie Aames.

Treme: The Complete Second Season (HBO, DVD: 4 discs, \$59.99; Blu-ray: 4 discs, \$79.98). Denizens of New Orleans continue to rebuild their lives in the wake of Hurricane Katrina in this 2011 sophomore season of the Emmy-nominated HBO drama starring Khandi Alexander, Melissa Leo, Steve Zahn, David Morse, and Jon Seda.



Tyler Perry's Meet the Browns: Season 5 (Lionsgate, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.99). Compiling episodes 81-100 from the TBS-aired sitcom, this series from creator Tyler Perry stars David

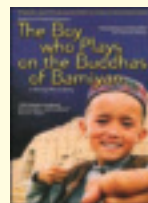
Mann, Tamela J. Mann, and Lamman Rucker.

Looking Ahead

Coming in May is the fifth season of **Wagon Train**, the sixth season of **The Virginian**, and the complete series set of **The Invisible Man**.

Re-priced or New to DVD/Blu-ray

The Boy who Plays on the Buddhas of Bamiyan (Microcinema, DVD: \$25 [\$120 w/PPR]). Phil Grabsky's 2004 documentary explores the story of eight-year-old Afghani Mir and his family, who live among the ruins of the titular tall stone statues, which were destroyed by the Taliban. Also newly available from filmmaker Grabsky are *Brazil: An Inconvenient History* and *The Lost Temple of Java*.



The Famous Authors Series: Confucius (Kultur, DVD: \$19.99). Exploring the life of the renowned philosopher, this program in the popular series focuses on the works of Zhou Dynasty thinker Confucius. Also newly available is *The Famous Composers Series: Gustav Mahler*.

An Injury to One (Icarus, DVD: \$24.98). Directed by Travis Wilkerson, this 2002 documentary chronicles the rise and fall of a Montana mining town, focusing on the mysterious death of labor organizer Frank Little. Also newly available is *Milestones + Ice*.

Swastika (Kino, DVD: \$29.95). Director Philippe Mora's 1974 documentary incorporates color home movie footage shot by Hitler's wife Eva Braun, along with propaganda clips, to provide a different side of the notorious dictator.

A Third Testament: Malcolm Muggeridge (Vision, DVD: \$29.99). Featuring six segments, this 1976 PBS and BBC-aired location series features celebrated journalist Malcolm Muggeridge, who explores the lives of Saint Augustine, Blaise Pascal, William Blake, Soren Kierkegaard, Leo Tolstoy, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Also newly available is *Paul the Apostle*.



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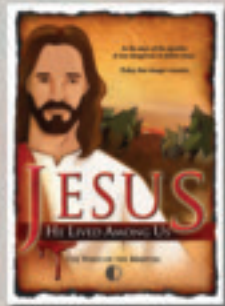
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Jesus: He Lived Among Us

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Will Wright dreams of playing baseball in the big leagues and is ready to sacrifice anything to make it happen. But in South Carolina during the 1920s, the only path to pro baseball is through the local textile mill team. Against the wishes of his wealthy father, Will leaves his family and privileged life behind to work in the harsh conditions at the mill. His natural talent on the field makes him the rising star of the mill-league team—and also earns him criticism from his father for his association with the working class. But Will learns that he is not so different from the mill workers and that his sheltered life only masked his real needs. Drama, 80 minutes.

DVD - #501410D, \$19.99, UPC 7 27985 01410 4



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

★★★★★ = Excellent

★★★★ = Good

★★★ = Fair

★ = Poor

3 ★★★

Strand, 119 min., in German w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$27.99

German director-screenwriter Tom Tykwer's brittle comedy-drama about an unusual ménage à trois offers a peculiar combination of the cerebral and the earthy. The focus is on Hanna (Sophie Rois) and Simon (Sebastian Schipper), a professional couple—he's an engineer, she's a talk show host—who share an interest in the arts. Each separately meets—and becomes sexually involved with—Adam (David Striesow), a scientist engaged in advanced genetic research. Tykwer depicts the relationships among them with clinical, bemused detachment, as though he were studying specimens in a petri dish—treating situations dispassionately, with a touch of mordant humor, even when dealing with serious illnesses such as pancreatic and testicular cancer. And he adds a cheeky numerical subtext in which the number "3" reappears in various permutations, while also employing dancing split-screen arrangements to mimic the way that cells, atomic particles, and even human beings join up and disassemble. In suggesting that men and women can be observed like specks through a microscope, the cool, almost antiseptic 3 deliberately eschews any sense of sympathy for its flawed, frail characters. But while the film may not be emotionally resonant, it is intellectually stimulating, serving up a challenging, cleverly constructed cinematic puzzle. Recommended. (F. Swietek)



1911 ★★

Well Go USA, 99 min., in Mandarin w/English subtitles, R, DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99

A sprawling epic from China, *1911* tells the story of the revolution that ended imperial rule at the beginning of the 20th century, ushering in a

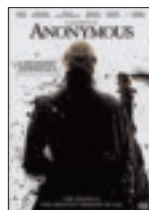


Western-style republic founded by Sun Yat-Sen (the remnant of which survives today on Taiwan). As presented here, the transition represented only the first stage in the undoing of China's feudal system, which was ultimately completed by Mao's Communist takeover. *1911* offers this very simplified take on history, presumably held by Jackie Chan, who not only co-directed but exhibits his modest dramatic talents as Huang Xing, the charismatic general who led the revolutionary fighters back home while Sun (Winston Chao) was abroad, collecting funds from expatriates and trying to convince European bankers and politicians that their continued support for the empress's corrupt government was a mistake. Unfortunately, while the battlefield sequences are impressively staged, the characterization is pedestrian, the dialogue unremittably banal, and the introduction of a love interest for both Huang and Sun ludicrous. Perhaps Chinese audiences can feel a sense of nationalist pride while watching this shallow and cartoonish—if also visually lavish—piece of propaganda, but for westerners it will be a chore, especially since reams of printed titles are used to identify unfamiliar people and events while trying to cover massive gaps in the narrative. Not a necessary purchase. (F. Swietek)

Anonymous ★★1/2

Sony, 130 min., PG-13, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray: \$35.99

Who wrote Shakespeare's plays? Could it have been an ordinary man like our William, an itinerant actor whom some say was illiterate? Or was it a nobleman with royal connections, like Sir Francis Bacon, poet/playwright Christopher Marlowe, William Stanley, the 6th Earl of Derby, or, as this story speculates, Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford? "There is no evidence that Shakespeare actually wrote anything," maintains screenwriter John Orloff. With Derek Jacobi delivering the prologue and epilogue, director Roland Emmerich explores Orloff's far-fetched conspiracy theory, focusing on de Vere (Rhys Ifans), who was so well connected in London that he may have been young Queen Elizabeth's lover, and father of her illegitimate child. Because of political and social constraints imposed by his domineering Puritan guardian/father-in-law, William Cecil (David Thewlis), advisor to the Queen, de Vere pays a cheeky, narcissistic thespian named William Shakespeare (Rafe Spall) to pretend he's authored the provocative manuscripts that acerbically reflect the nefarious intrigue and blatant manipulations within the English court. Emmerich offers up lots of intriguing eye candy in this opulent 16th-century costume drama (Oscar-nominated for Best Costume Design), while he clumsily—and confusingly—transitions back and forth in time with Joely Richardson



as young Queen Elizabeth and her real-life mother, Vanessa Redgrave, playing the frustrated, aged monarch. But undercutting the overall concept is a significant detail: Edward de Vere died in 1604, before *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, and *The Tempest* appeared. Students of the ongoing war over the Bard's identity will appreciate this. A strong optional purchase. (S. Granger)

Bad Actress ★★★

Strand, 85 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99

In Robert Lee King's black comedy, a soap star goes to desperate lengths to hang on to her extravagant Hollywood lifestyle. Alyssa Rampart-Pillage (Beth Broderick), formerly appearing on *HMO Nurse*, now makes commercials with her husband, Bernie (Chris Mulkey), an appliance store magnate. The couple have three resentful children, one of whom, Topanga (Keri Lynn Pratt), is trying to be an activist, even if that means protesting her own father's business. However, in the first chapter, "Motive," Topanga dies from a fall before she can make amends (the other chapters are titled "Means" and "Opportunity"), which leaves the bulimic Rebecca (Whitney Able) and sex-obsessed Russell (Ryan Hansen). After Topanga's death, Bernie undergoes a spiritual awakening and, to Alyssa's chagrin, turns to a New Age religion, scales back his business, and cuts his family out of his will. Alyssa promptly turns to Bernie's cousin, Morris (Vincent Ventresca), with whom she's been having an affair, to make her hubby pay. Before long, Bernie winds up dead, and the LAPD is sniffing around, spurring the kids to try to hunt down evidence to implicate Alyssa. Along the way, another person turns up dead, while Alyssa ensnares a fortune teller (Nathan Lee Graham) and an actor (Corbin Bernsen as himself) in her mess. King actually keeps this fairly preposterous narrative nicely humming along, and while it's rarely laugh-out-loud funny, *Bad Actress* is always engaging. Recommended. (K. Fennessy)



A Beautiful Life ★★1/2

New Video, 122 min., in Mandarin w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$26.95

Had Douglas Sirk been Chinese, he might have made films like this beautifully shot, melodramatic love story set in Beijing, featuring an implausible couple at its center. Fang (Liu Ye) is a sad-sack cop, and Li (Shu Qi) is a high-living Hong Kong girl who has come to the capital to strike it rich in real estate. After meeting cute in a bar, the pair grow close despite their differences; but after Fang is diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's, he decides to go off



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by himself. However, Li tracks him down, and the couple wed and have a child—only to suffer a tragic reversal when Fang is attacked by a thief he's chasing and winds up lying in a hospital near death. As if this weren't maudlin enough, *A Beautiful Life* features subplots involving a blind buddy of Fang's, and the cop's autistic brother, who falls in love with a mute girl. The back-and-forth between uplift and woe makes this an eventful *Life*, if also one that feels very much like a Warner Bros. weepie from the 1940s. Still, the cast plays with conviction, and director Andrew Lau—best known for *Infernal Affairs*, the inspiration for Martin Scorsese's *The Departed*—sets the scenes in vibrant locations. *A Beautiful Life* is essentially soap opera, but the exotic flavor makes it somewhat palatable, despite the manipulative and borderline absurd plot. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Boy Wonder ★★

Inception, 97 min., R, DVD: \$26.99

Sean is a 10-year-old Brooklynite who witnesses his mother's murder during a carjacking; nine years later, he has matured into a young man living a double life: he's a straight-A student by day and a ruthlessly brutal vigilante by night. The cops at the local precinct allow Sean (Caleb Steinmeyer) to hang out and study mug shots in an attempt to find the killer who left him motherless, but no one initially connects the seemingly mild-mannered youth with the twilight violence that is creating havoc in the streets. Eventually, however, a young police detective named Teresa (Zulay Henao) begins to connect the dots and tries to pin Sean to the attacks. While the title may give the impression of a *Batman*-style romp, *Boy Wonder* is a dark and dreary thriller that has nothing to do with the comic book genre. First-time director Michael Morrissey never quite finds his groove, largely because the story is stuffed with too much information—including a distracting subplot about Sean's relationship with his ex-alcoholic father (Bill Sage) and Teresa's interactions with her comic-relief partner, Gary (Daniel Stewart Sherman). And Steinmeyer is never entirely convincing as either the mild Sean or his wild alter-ego. Although *Boy Wonder* picked up a number of awards at second-tier film festivals, this is not a necessary purchase. (P. Hall)



Brighton Rock ★★★

MPI, 111 min., R, DVD: \$24.98

Although based on Graham Greene's first "Catholic" novel, Rowan Joffe's adaptation minimizes the book's religious subtext in favor of its gangster-thriller surface plot—a



small-scale tale of a brutal young gangster named Pinkie (Sam Riley), who romances Rose (Andrea Riseborough)—a naïve and homely waitress he actually despises—in hopes of deflecting her from connecting him to a murder. Joffe has altered the original chronology, setting the story in 1964, when clashes between Mods and Rockers provide a colorful (and violent) backdrop to the narrative taking place in the titular seaside vacation town. But Pinkie remains an utter scoundrel, killing a member of a larger gang in retaliation for the accidental stabbing of his boss, while also aiming to take over leadership of his own crew by shunting aside older rivals. In order to keep the cops at bay, however, Pinkie must deal with the danger posed by Rose while simultaneously negotiating a deal with another mob leader—and he finds a nemesis in Ida (Helen Mirren), Rose's maternal employer. While Joffe's noir-ish style occasionally trumps narrative clarity, it works fairly well. More of a pulpish diversion than the examination of moral issues Greene envisioned, this is still recommended. (F. Swietek)

Carnage ★★1/2

Sony, 79 min., R, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray: \$35.99, Mar. 20

Directed by Roman Polanski—who shares screenwriting credits with Yasmina Reza in adapting her Tony Award-winning play *God of Carnage*—this biting NYC-set comedy shot in real time revolves around differences in bourgeois ethics and parenting styles. After a playground incident in which one youngster knocks out another's front teeth, the protective parents of the "victim" invite the chagrined mother and father of the "bully" to their apartment. What begins as a request for an apology and a polite discussion about childrearing soon deteriorates into verbal warfare, with no one escaping the slaughter. Penelope and Michael Longstreet (Jodie Foster, John C. Reilly) are filing an insurance claim against Nancy and Alan Cowan (Kate Winslet, Christoph Waltz), which leads to bickering about the document's wording. A stressed-out investment broker, Nancy feels guilty about the time not spent with her son, a sentiment not shared by her amoral, cell phone-addicted lawyer husband. An angry liberal, Penelope finds the Cowans' behavior "disgusting," while genial Michael, a hardware supply salesman, just wants everyone to get along. Instead, tension escalates not only between the couples but also between the spouses as liquor swiftly dissolves the veil of civility. The main problem with *Carnage*, which resembles a welterweight version of Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, is the miscasting of Foster, who dilutes the ensemble's effectiveness (on stage, Marcia Gay Harden made the same psycho-babbling



character less brittle and more vulnerable). A strong optional purchase. (S. Granger)

Cast Me If You Can

★★1/2

MVD, 97 min., in Japanese w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$19.95

This Japanese rom-com focuses on struggling actor Hiroshi (Toru Masuoka), whose career in supporting roles has brought him recognition but not fame (in public, he's often mistaken for somebody else). Hiroshi's father, Kenta (Masahiko Tsugawa), is a celebrated playwright who views his son's dramatic career with contempt. But Hiroshi's life changes when he meets aspiring actress Aya (Hiromi Nagasaku), believing that she is destined to be the love of his life. Filmmaker Atsushi Ogata offers amusing insights into the Japanese entertainment industry, especially the concept of fame in a country where the national culture traditionally discourages self-promotion. Also entertaining is Hiroshi's endless dilemma of being the victim of mistaken identity—which at one point leads to his arrest when he's incorrectly assumed to be a wanted criminal. However, the Hiroshi-Aya love story never quite resonates, and the film starts to lose steam by the two-thirds mark. The real draw here is Tsugawa as the grouchy dad who cannot fathom his offspring's apparent lack of success; it's a shame the film didn't follow the combustible father-son dynamic rather than veer into the too-safe territory of romantic fluff. A strong optional purchase. (P. Hall)



Caterpillar ★★

Kino Lorber, 84 min., in Japanese w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95

Koji Wakamatsu's *Caterpillar* takes place during World War II, with Japanese war hero Kyuzo (Shima Onishi) returning from the Chinese battlefield with severe injuries. Kyuzo has lost arms, legs and hearing in the conflict, but is designated as a "war god" and is presented during propaganda rallies. Kyuzo is also a horrible husband: before the war, he beat his wife Shigeko (Shinobu Terajima) for not producing children; now, in his disabled state, he endlessly demands that Shigeko feed his sexual needs, and continues his abusive behavior through insults and spitting. Shigeko, however, can only tolerate so much in her miserable existence. *Caterpillar* clearly aims to present a story of emotional disaster stemming from wartime imperialism and ultra-nationalist patriotism, but it's an extremely unpleasant watch, full of sexual violence (including flashbacks of Kyuzo raping a Chinese girl during the war) and utterly crass framing of the sex between the limless



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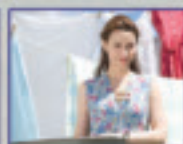
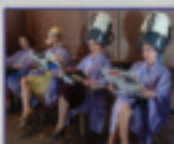
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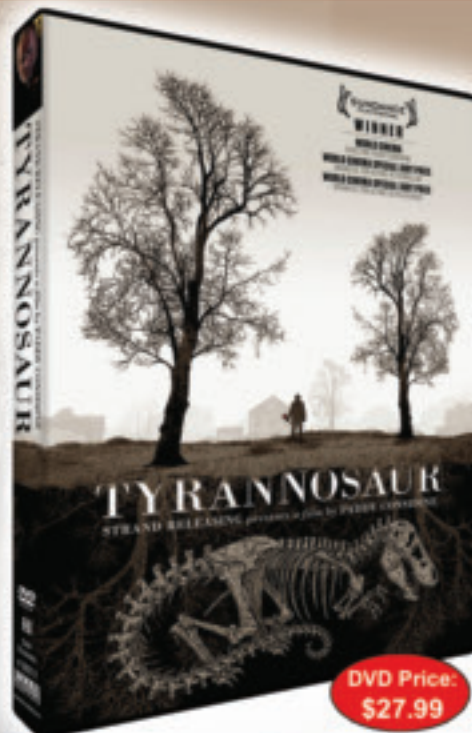
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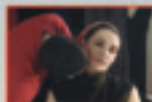
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Kyuzo and his increasingly agitated wife. Wakamatsu, a veteran of Japan's soft-core pink movie genre, reportedly shot this film in 12 days on a \$120,000 budget; unfortunately, the lack of visual style only reinforces the lack of subtlety here. Optional. (P. Hall)

Daddy Longlegs

★★★1/2

Zeitgeist, 98 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.99



Some dads are real characters, which doesn't mean they don't try to be good fathers—just that they may struggle more. In Josh and Bennie Safdie's *Daddy Longlegs*, Ronald Bronstein perfectly portrays Lenny, a jittery, loud-mouthed perpetual-motion machine, filled with crippling insecurity and unbridled bravado—a man funny from a distance but less so close up. A film projectionist by trade, Lenny is a divorced New Yorker with two boys, Sage and Frey (Sage and Frey Ranaldo)—grudgingly handed over to him for two weeks by his ex-wife (Leah Singer). Lenny loves his kids—and vice versa—so what could go wrong? Well, Lenny spends the night with a stranger and then brings Sage and Frey along with the woman on a funny, surprising, and rather lovely upstate adventure in which disaster seems to lurk around every corner. Although it features humorous moments, *Daddy Longlegs* is not a domestic comedy; in fact, a sense of unease permeates the proceedings, building to a feeling of nightmarish dread before the film ends in a flourish of transcendent surrealism. The opposite of escapist entertainment—even if it never fails to entertain (and viewers with a similarly eccentric parent might even find it comforting)—this is highly recommended. (K. Fennessy)

The Darkest Hour ★

Summit, 89 min., PG-13, DVD: \$26.99, Blu-ray: \$30.99, Apr. 10



Art director-turned-helmer Chris Gorak's wannabe sci-fi doomsday thriller revolves around a pair of American Internet entrepreneurs—Sean (Emile Hirsch) and Ben (Max Minghella)—who travel to Moscow to raise funding for their new social media website. When they discover that a duplicitous Swedish opportunist named Skyler (Joel Kinnaman) has stolen their idea, the lads drown their sorrows at the trendy Zvezda nightclub and distract themselves with two winsome tourists, Natalie and Anne (Olivia Thirlby, Rachael Taylor)—until, that is, aliens attack, vaporizing all humans in their path. The frolicking foursome, along with Skyler, take refuge in a basement, emerging five days later to find utter devastation. Not only has the entire city been besieged, but all power sources have been consumed

by the ravenous yet elusive extraterrestrials. The quintet encounter an engineer-turned-inventor, an audacious teenage scavenger, and a partisan technician leading a ragtag army of survivors against the invaders, who can be detected only by their electro-wave energy. *The Darkest Hour* makes the most of the Russian capital's iconic architecture, but the flimsily-sketched characters are uninteresting and the plot makes little sense. A dim-witted disaster of a film, this is not recommended. (S. Granger)

De Gaulle and Churchill: The Appeal of June 1940

★★★

Kultur, 87 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$19.99



Originally aired on the French television series *Ce jour là, tout a changé*—devoted to recreations of significant historical events—this 2010 docudrama focuses on the 10 days between June 7 and June 17, 1940, when the last ministry of the Third Republic—headed by Prime Minister Paul Reynaud—debated whether to fight on in the face of German advances or seek an immediate armistice. The story is told from the perspective of General Charles De Gaulle, recently-appointed Minister of War, who argues forcefully against accepting German terms and is sent to England to negotiate with Prime Minister Winston Churchill about securing English military assistance to bolster the crumbling French lines. De Gaulle's nemesis is the aging Deputy Prime Minister Henri Pétain, who would eventually outmaneuver De Gaulle, sign the cease-fire with Hitler, and lead the collaborationist Vichy regime. Obviously drawing on De Gaulle's memoirs, the film presents him as a hero who becomes the voice of French resistance, although as portrayed by Michel Vuillermoz he comes across as a rigid, priggish sort who must learn the art of politics from Churchill (Christian Rodska in a cannily exuberant scene-stealing performance). Using archival footage to supplement the mostly stage-bound exposition, Felix Olivier's film clearly contains a patriotic message, but balances it fairly well with historical accuracy, offering an intriguing snapshot of one of the lesser-known episodes of World War II. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

Essential Killing ★★1/2

New Video, 85 min., not rated, DVD: \$26.95



Polish writer-director Jerzy Skolimowski offers a commentary on the War on Terror in the form of a survival story set in the wintry east European countryside. The protagonist is Mohammed (Vincent Gallo), a

Taliban fighter captured in Afghanistan by American commandos after he kills several soldiers. Mohammed is subjected to brutal interrogation—including waterboarding—before being transported to Poland for confinement; but en route the prison vehicle crashes and he dashes to freedom. What follows is an episodic account of his encounters with pursuers (killing one for warmer clothing) and locals (including a nursing mother whom he uses as a source of nourishment in a scene that some will find deeply unsettling). Finally, he receives some assistance from a woman named Margaret (Emmanuelle Seigner), who lives in an isolated shack and also seems to be an outcast. One has to admire Gallo (who truly looks like he's suffering from the cold and lack of food and sleep), as well as the skill with which Skolimowski and cinematographer Adam Sikora employ locations—both the initial desert scenes and the chilly Polish countryside—to create a sense of vastness that is nonetheless paradoxically confining. But ultimately *Essential Killing* is little more than a repetitive reflection on the fact that people will do anything to survive—whether committing a captured enemy to inhumane treatment or eliminating those who stand in the way of escape. An optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

The Fat Boy Chronicles

★★★

Phase 4, 78 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.99



Based on Diane Lang and Michael Buchanan's YA novel, *The Fat Boy Chronicles* focuses on Jimmy Winterpock (Christopher Rivera), a 5' 5", 188-pound high school freshman who is self-conscious about his weight. As part of a literature class assignment, Jimmy keeps a journal, where he writes about both the people who make fun of him and his subsequent feelings, but he perseveres and finds two other students, Allen (Jacob Boyd) and Sable (Kelly Washington), who will eat lunch with him. On the advice of his doctor, Jimmy begins a weight-loss plan, encouraged by his gym teacher. Hanging out after school with his best friend, Paul (Chris Bert), Jimmy learns that Sable has been cutting herself, that Paul's home life is deteriorating, and that Robb (Cole Carson), the jock who's been bullying Jimmy, is failing math. Despite his personal problems, Jimmy isn't depressed (his grades are good, and his parents supportive); in fact, once he puts things into perspective, his situation improves. While some of the acting here is awkward—especially from Rivera and Washington—director Jason Winn's sympathy for his characters always shines through. A solid young adult film, this is recommended. (K. Fennessy)



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Fish Story ★★★

Pathfinder, 112 min., in Japanese w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.98

Yoshihiro Nakamura's 2009 comedy is set in the year 2012, approximately five hours before a comet is due to collide with Earth. While most of Tokyo has fled for safety, a few individuals wind up in a record store where the long-forgotten punk music song "Fish Story" is being played on a turntable. The store's owner insists that the song will save the world, although the tune's strange lyrics and a section of complete silence only seem to add to the general confusion. *Fish Story* then takes a trippy time-traveling spin, showing how the playing of this particular song in 1982, 1999, and 2009 resulted in astonishing changes for those fortunate enough to hear it. Along the way, we also witness a 1975 sequence on the punk band that recorded the song, only to break up shortly after toiling in obscurity—just before the Sex Pistols put punk on the music map. With its exaggerated style and tongue-in-cheek silliness, *Fish Story* often feels like a (pardon the expression) big fish tale, but while the loose narrative structure may seem initially baffling, all is ultimately tied up in a satisfying manner. Recommended. (P. Hall)



Footloose ★★★

Paramount, 113 min., PG-13, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray: \$40.99, Mar. 6

As this rockin' remake begins, the small, Southern Bible-belt town of Bomont is grief-stricken over the tragic death of five local teenagers in a car accident following a party. Led by Reverend Shaw Moore (Dennis Quaid), the town council overreacts, setting a curfew for kids and banning all loud music and public dancing. Three years later, after the death of his mother, Ren McCormack (Kenny Wormald) moves from Boston to Bomont, settling in with his aunt and uncle (Kim Dickens, Ray McKinnon). Flaunting a defiant spirit, Ren immediately catches the attention of Ariel (Julianne Hough), the rebellious daughter of overprotective Rev. Moore and his wife Vi (Andie MacDowell), incurring the wrath of Ariel's abusive boyfriend, Chuck Cranston (Patrick John Flueger). A charming subplot involves Ren's clumsy best friend, Willard (Miles Teller), who learns to dance to please his girlfriend Rusty (Ziah Colon). Director Craig Brewer has revised and updated the script with Dean Pitchford (who wrote the original screenplay). Upping the toe-tapping ante this time, Hough is a *Dancing With the Stars* winner, while acrobatic Wormald toured with Justin Timberlake. Choreographer Jamal Sims also adds a fresh, new hip-hop sequence at a drive-in movie theater and a country line-



dancing number at an Atlanta club. A solid remake, this is recommended. (S. Granger)

Green Guys ★★

FilmWorks, 95 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.98

Rookie director Cole Mueller's financial thriller centers on four young, foul-mouthed Phoenix stockbrokers—Travis (Kris Lemche), Bill (Christopher Redman), Levi (Darrel Davenport), and Andrew (David J. Phillips)—who join forces to scam 17 wealthy marks. While playing poker, Travis meets Garcia (Roberto Sanchez), a Mexican drug lord who becomes a potential 18th, so the four guys fly to his ranch to offer their investment services, returning with an inconceivable \$10 million in dirty money. Aside from the dangerous client, there's another reason they aren't likely to keep their pyramid scheme going: the FBI has Garcia in its sights, which means that Agent Mike Northcutt (Nathan Marlow) puts them under surveillance. Nonetheless, they maintain a respectable front for six months, although Travis's mouth, Bill's nerves, Levi's paranoia, and Andrew's girlfriend (Christie Rounds) all start to seem like liabilities. The situation becomes even more precarious when Garcia asks for his cash back, Bill kidnaps an FBI informant, and one of the quartet gets cold feet. Naturally, things don't end well. While *Green Guys* tries to project a professional image, this is a relatively low-budget film, and it's frankly a little hard to believe that the not-so-fab four are rolling in dough when they have so little to show for it. Optional. (K. Fennessy)



Hop ★★

Universal, 95 min., PG, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$39.98, Mar. 23

Hidden beneath giant statues on Easter Island, a wondrous candy factory is run by the Easter Bunny (voiced by Hugh Laurie), who plans to pass the confectionary production and delivery duties to his irresponsible son, E.B. (Russell Brand)—much to the chagrin of power-crazed chick Carlos (Hank Azaria)—in this Easter-themed live-action/animation comedy. Preferring to play the drums, floppy-eared E.B. runs away (via the Rabbit Hole Transporter) to seek his fortune in Hollywood, auditioning for a David Hasselhoff-hosted *American Idol*-type talent show after an impromptu jam session with the Blind Boys of Alabama. Meanwhile in nearby Van Nuys, amiable slacker Fred O'Hare (James Marsden) is kicked out of the house by his frustrated parents (Gary Cole, Elizabeth Perkins). When his sister (Kaley Cuoco) offers to let him house-sit her boss's Beverly Hills home, Fred accidentally runs over E.B., who plays the sympathy card for his



(nonexistent) injuries and moves in. Cheeky, talkative E.B. soon becomes Fred's constant companion, engaging in zany escapades, but the Easter Bunny's intrepid Pink Berets are determined to bring E.B. home to assume his rightful duties in time for the seasonal holiday. Blandly derivative of *The Santa Clause* and *The Tooth Fairy*, this so-so holiday entry is an optional purchase. (S. Granger)

Hugo ★★★1/2

Paramount, 126 min., PG, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray: \$40.99

Martin Scorsese brings Brian Selznick's beloved children's book *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* to life in this magical adventure set in a busy Parisian train station in the 1930s. Living with his dissolute Uncle Claude (Ray Winstone) in a tiny apartment in the terminal's rafters, Hugo (Asa Butterfield) is an orphan who oils and maintains the building's clocks. His prize possession is a broken-down automaton and a notebook—left by his father (Jude Law)—that contains instructions for repairing the intricate, wind-up robotic figure. Cleverly eluding the watchful Inspector (Sasha Baron Cohen), Hugo steals the tiny parts he needs from cranky toy-store proprietor Georges (Ben Kingsley), who eventually catches him. Afraid that his precious notes will be burned, Hugo follows Georges home, befriends the elderly gentleman's goddaughter, Isabelle (Chloë Grace Moretz), and discovers that the embittered Georges is actually Georges Méliès, the magician-turned-pioneer-filmmaker who created 500 incredible sci-fi fantasies, the most famous of which was *A Trip to the Moon* (1902). Artfully woven throughout is Scorsese's passionate plea for the preservation of film as the 20th century's most innovative art form. Opulent, dazzling, and enchanting, the Oscar-nominated *Hugo* is highly recommended. (S. Granger)



I'm Glad My Mother Is Alive ★★★

Strand, 90 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$27.99

In father-and-son directors Claude and Nathan Miller's true-story-inspired film, 12-year-old Thomas (Maxime Renard) lives with middle-class couple Yves and Annie Jouvett (Yves Verhoeven, Christine Citti) but constantly thinks about his working-class mother, Julie (Sophie Cattani), who walked out on him when he was 5. Flashbacks reveal that Julie was no prize, having lost Thomas and his brother, Patrick (whom the Jouvets have renamed François), because of immaturity and gross neglect. When angry and troublesome Thomas becomes unmanageable, the Jouvets send him to boarding school, where he manages to secure the name and





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address of the woman who abandoned him. Discovering that she's started a new family, Thomas decides not to reconnect with her; but eight years later, he does visit Julie, who has since divorced. Although still living at home, Thomas (now played by Vincent Rottiers) works as a mechanic, while Julie is employed as a cleaning woman. Thomas attempts to insinuate himself into her life and that of her young child, Frédéric (Quentin Gonzalez), alternating between playing son to Julie (although sometimes coming across more like a suitor) and father figure to Frédéric. All of this plays out in a straightforward if tense manner, before building to a big satisfying finish. Recommended. (K. Fennesy)

In Time ★★

Fox, 109 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$39.99

In the bleak, futuristic sci-fi world of *In Time*, people have only one more year to live after they reach the age of 25—as indicated by a glowing digital clock on their forearms—but extra time can be bought, sold, exchanged, traded, or stolen. Time is the key currency: wages are paid in minutes and hours; rent might cost several days, a phone call one minute, and an hour earns a brief interlude with a prostitute. For working-class Will Salas (Justin Timberlake) and his mother, Rachel (Olivia Wilde), it's a constant challenge to keep their timepiece from hitting zero—such as when Rachel fatally underestimates bus fare. But the very rich, including industrialist Philippe Weis (Vincent Kartheiser), literally bank on immortality. After Will encounters a suicidal stranger (Matt Bomer) and receives an unexpected gift, he kidnaps Weis's daughter, Sylvia (Amanda Seyfried), who falls in love with Will and wants to work with him to change the system—an effort threatened by the dogged pursuit of an unstoppable Timekeeper (Cillian Murphy). Unfortunately, writer-director Andrew Niccol's slick, dystopian allegory never answers critical questions—including why the kidnapping of Sylvia would effect a sweeping change in society's global economic structure. Optional. (S. Granger)



The Innkeepers ★★

MPI, 101 min., R, DVD: \$27.98, Blu-ray: \$34.98, Apr. 24

The setting for this ghost story is the once-popular Yankee Pedlar Inn in Torrington, CT, established in 1891, but now fallen upon hard times and preparing to shut its doors forever. While the owner vacations in Barbados, two college dropouts cover the front desk: tomboyish Claire (Sara Paxton) and dorky Luke (Pat Healy)—avid viewers of the website *Real Hauntings*—who want to document the



ghostly presences in what many believe to be one of New England's most haunted hotels. According to local legend, a bride named Madeline O'Malley (Brenda Cooney) hanged herself in the inn long ago after being jilted on her wedding day. Fearful of bad publicity, the proprietors hid her body, and after it was found were forced to sell the establishment. But Madeline's spirit has apparently never left the premises. As the inn's closing draws near, a once-famous TV actress, Leanne Rease-Jones (Kelly McGillis), checks in. Since retiring, she's taken up psychic healing, so when the piano in the lobby inexplicably sounds a chord, panicked Claire consults vodka-swilling Leanne, who offers to help Claire communicate with the poltergeists and warns her against going into the basement. Writer-director Ti West presents all of this with slow, deliberate pacing, and loads of serious paranormal prattle, but relatively few spooky scares. Curiously, the real turn-of-the-century Yankee Pedlar Inn still welcomes guests. An optional purchase. (S. Granger)

J. Edgar ★★★

Warner, 137 min., R, DVD: \$28.98, Blu-ray: \$35.99

Masterfully embodied here by Leonardo DiCaprio, J. Edgar Hoover was once the most powerful man in America, the iconic—if paranoid—head of the Federal Bureau of Investigation for nearly 50 years. Serving eight presidents through three wars, he used evidence gained from surveillance to try to blackmail Roosevelt, Nixon, Robert Kennedy, and Martin Luther King Jr., while also shrewdly manipulating the media to support his ruthless pursuit of communists and gangsters. Dominated by his mother (Judi Dench), ambitious Hoover worked at the Library of Congress before he moved into law enforcement and founded the FBI, introducing fingerprinting while also establishing professional policies and procedures. Crime-fighting was his passion; secrets were his weapons. The most pivotal case in Hoover's career was the abduction of aviator Charles Lindbergh's baby, which led Congress to make kidnapping a federal offense, and drove Hoover to establish a framework for collecting and testing forensic evidence from a crime scene, ultimately popularizing the G-Man image. A dapper, self-aggrandizing, megalomaniacal, right-wing ideologue, Hoover was also believed to be an isolated, emotionally repressed, sublimated homosexual whose small circle of trust included his devoted secretary, Helen Gandy (Naomi Watts), and his dutiful companion, Clyde Tolson (Armie Hammer). DiCaprio delivers a powerhouse performance in director Clint Eastwood's eye-opening character study. Recommended. (S. Granger)



Jack and Jill ★1/2

Sony, 91 min., PG, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray: \$35.99, Mar. 6

Jack and Jill Sadelstein (both played by Adam Sandler) are fraternal twins. Working in advertising as a director of commercials, Jack lives in a Los Angeles mansion with supportive wife Erin (Katie Holmes) and their two cheerful children (Elodie Tougne, Rohan Chand), while Jill is a squawking, lonely spinster, stuck in the Bronx with a pet cockatoo named Poopsie. When obnoxious, offensive Jill arrives for Thanksgiving and decides to remain as a houseguest through Hanukkah, Jack is determined to find her someone to love—searching dating websites, even Craigslist, for eligible men because Jill's continuing annoying presence could jeopardize Jack's upcoming New Year's Eve cruise on Royal Caribbean's Allure of the Seas (one of many product placement plugs). But Jack has another, even more pressing problem: persuading Al Pacino to become a Dunkin' Donuts pitchman to introduce their new Dunkaccino. And maybe, just maybe, after a Lakers game, Al Pacino and Jill could...yada, yada, yada. Chaotically directed by Dennis Dugan, *Jack and Jill* puts heavy emphasis on stereotypical Jewish shtick, sloppy slapstick, and flimsy celebrity cameos, including Shaulie O'Neal, Bruce Jenner, Drew Carey, David Spade, John McEnroe, Christie Brinkley, Regis Philbin, and even an uncredited Johnny Depp. Cinematic cross-dressing has been done so much better before, by Jack Lemmon and Tony Curtis in *Some Like it Hot*, Dustin Hoffman in *Tootsie*, and Robin Williams in *Mrs. Doubtfire*, among others. *Jack and Jill* is just a downhill drag. Not recommended. (S. Granger)



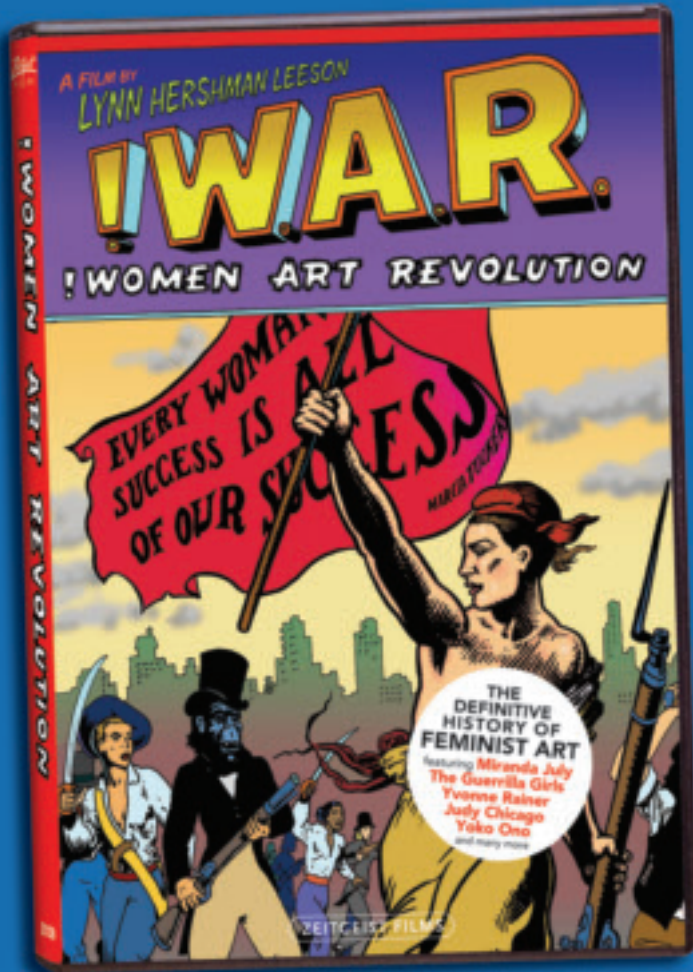
Jess + Moss ★★★

Strand, 82 min., not rated, DVD: \$21.99, Mar. 20

In actor-turned-director Clay Jeter's *Jess + Moss*, two unlikely friends spend a final summer together in rural Kentucky. Eighteen-year-old Jess (Sarah Hagan) and 12-year-old Moss (Austin Vickers) are second cousins. Years before, Moss's mother and father died in an automobile accident and Jess's mother split the scene sometime afterward. Now, their home lives are empty: Jess lives with her estranged father, and Moss stays with his ghostly grandparents. As the long, hot summer unfurls, the pair swim, bike past tobacco fields, and watch fireworks, but mostly they hang out in a dilapidated old house where Jess listens to cassettes her mother left behind (Moss prefers self-help tapes). *Jess + Moss* is a languid, purposefully repetitive, and thoroughly self-contained character study (only a few other characters appear, albeit briefly).



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Paul Goodman was once so ubiquitous in the American zeitgeist that he merited cameos in Woody Allen's *Annie Hall* and Richard Linklater's *Slacker*. Author of the legendary bestseller *Growing Up Absurd*, Goodman was also a poet, out-queer (and family man) in the 1940s, pacifist, co-founder of Gestalt therapy—and a moral compass for the burgeoning counterculture of the 1960s. Director/producer Jonathan Lee and producer/editor Kimberly Reed (*Prodigal Sons*) have woven a rich portrait of an intellectual heavyweight whose ideas are ripe for rediscovery.

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The duo strike poses against rusty trains and broken-down buildings, while voiceover narration stands in for conventional dialogue. With its emphasis on atmosphere over story, *Jess + Moss* is a slice of arty Southern Gothic in the vein of Terrence Malick and his disciples David Gordon Green and Harmony Korine. Recommended. (K. Fennessy)

Leo's Room ★★1/2

Global Film Initiative, 92 min., in Spanish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95



In Enrique Buchichio's drama, Martín Rodríguez stars in the titular role of a handsome college student who just broke up—mainly due to his lackluster sexual performance—with his girlfriend of six months. After Leo begins to wonder if he's intended for heterosexual pleasures, he hunts around the Internet and hooks up with Seba (Gerardo Begérez), a Mr. Right Now who could possibly be Mr. Right...if Leo wasn't so afraid of coming out. But then a chance reunion with pretty Caro (Cecilia Cósaro)—a former classmate suffering a spell of severe depression—makes Leo question his orientation once again. Is Leo forcing himself to be interested in Caro out of double-pronged pity for his own sexual guilt and her mental state? This Uruguayan import is burdened with an unsubtle solemnity that eventually becomes oppressive, and its insistence on screenplay clichés—especially predictable input from a wise psychologist and a zany stoner roommate—only add to a sense of simple connect-the-dots filmmaking. Still, on the whole, *Leo's Room* seems sincere in its exploration of sexual orientation. A strong optional purchase. (P. Hall)

Love Exposure ★★1/2

Olive, 237 min., in Japanese w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95



The course of true love does not run smoothly in Sion Sono's weird, frenetic, overlong but fascinating take on sex, familial dysfunction, and religion. Yû (Takahiro Nishijima) is a kid from a pious Catholic family whose father, Tetsu (Atsurô Watabe), becomes a priest after his wife's death—and then takes a mistress. Under pressure from Tetsu to confess sins—any sins—Yû becomes addicted to photographing women on the street from angles that reveal their panties and takes to dressing in drag himself. While in female guise he meets Yôko (Hikari Mitsushima), a schoolgirl who hates men and enjoys beating them up because she was sexually assaulted by her dad. Yu decides she's his soulmate, but his pursuit is naturally complicated by his real gender—as well as the fact that his father and her mother become romantically involved. Meanwhile Yu and

Yôko are being observed by Aya (Sakura Andô), a manipulative girl who castrated her abusive father and then went on to form a cult called Church Zero. A mixture of martial-arts action, slapstick, blunt satire, dark comedy, explicit sex, and flashy violence, *Love Exposure* is more unsettling than funny, but there's an oddly innocent vibe to the film, which winds up as a story of two kids who come together despite being damaged by their families and society. For adventurous viewers, this is a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

The Man from London

★★1/2

Zeitgeist, 132 min., in Hungarian, French & English w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99



Although based on the same-titled mystery by Georges Simenon, Hungarian director Béla Tarr's adaptation is less an exercise in suspense than a virtuoso exhibition of camera moves and atmosphere. The slender plot focuses on Maloin (Miroslav Krobot), a harborside railway worker who witnesses two men scuffling over a briefcase (thrown onto shore from a ship) containing a stash of British currency. Shortly thereafter, an English investigator shows up looking for the thief. *The Man from London* also features a subplot concerning Maloin's sudden desire to remove his daughter, Henriette (Erika Bók), from an unflattering job, but little comes of it apart from the appearance of Tilda Swinton as Maloin's unhappy wife, Camélia. Narrative, in any event, is hardly Tarr's main interest; imagery is far more important, and here the film impresses with its extraordinary use of light and shadow in the black-and-white compositions, coupled with virtuoso tracking shots that border on the amazing (even if some—often just following characters as they walk silently across squares and over roads—grow tedious). On the other hand, the frequently glacial recitation of the sparse dialogue makes this long film slow-going. Still, *The Man from London* is an intriguing example of the director's very personal cinematic vision, so this should be considered a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Mandrill ★★

Magnolia, 90 min., R, DVD: \$26.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98



Now here's something you don't see every day: a martial arts-action-adventure-thriller from, uh, Chile. Actually, *Mandrill* marks the third collaboration between writer-director Ernesto Díaz Espinoza and star Marko Zaror (their earlier films, *Mirage-man* and *Kiltro*, were barely seen in the U.S. market). In this go-round, Zaror plays the titular hitman, orphaned as a child after

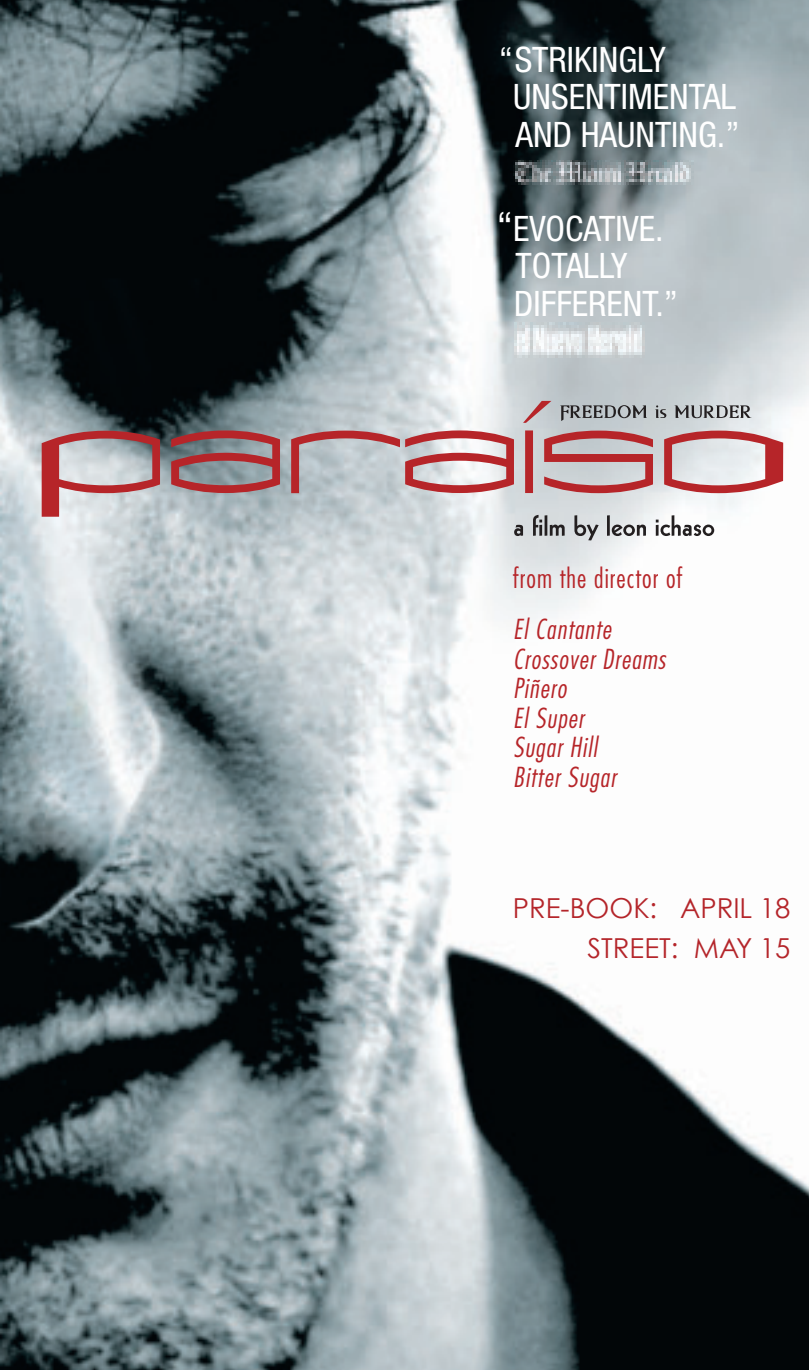
a murderer known as Cyclops killed his parents. Mandrill's latest assignment is to eliminate a casino owner; but when he sets his eyes on his target's gorgeous daughter, Dominic (Celine Raymond), the mission grows much more complicated, especially since Mandrill's new love interest has her own connection to Cyclops. Much of the plot is fairly standard-issue, although Zaror's acrobatic skill is very impressive (a champion martial artist and stuntman, Zaror doubled for Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson in *The Rundown*). Unfortunately, the star's acting leaves something to be desired, making the English-dubbed version included here preferable to the original Spanish-language presentation with Zaror's monotonous line readings. And while Raymond is very pretty, she rivals Zaror for inept emoting. Likely to be of moderate interest to action aficionados, this is an optional purchase. (P. Hall)

Melancholia ★★1/2

Magnolia, 135 min., R, DVD: \$26.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99, Mar. 13



Danish filmmaker Lars von Trier's grim psychological disaster tale opens with the overture to Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* accompanying a dreamlike prologue of extreme-slow-motion scenes of birds dropping out of the sky; a bride striding across a manicured lawn; a woman running across a darkened golf course, clutching a child; and a huge planet obliterating a smaller one. The first part of the film is a flashback revolving around Justine (Kirsten Dunst), a depressed copywriter about to marry handsome but clueless Michael (Alexander Skarsgård) at the lavish estate occupied by her anxious sister, Claire (Charlotte Gainsbourg), whose wealthy husband, John (Kiefer Sutherland), pays the bills. Justine's father (John Hurt) is a drunken leech, while her misanthropic mother (Charlotte Rampling) curses the institution of marriage. Justine's boss (Stellan Skarsgård) needs an ad campaign tagline and he assigns an underling (Brady Corbet) to follow Justine around all evening, creating angst and ultimately hysteria. The second part focuses on a wayward planet, Melancholia, which is hurtling toward Earth. Looking through his telescope, John declares it will be a harmless "fly by," but others are not so sure, particularly Claire, who believes doomsday is imminent. In many respects, this bizarre, nihilistic meditation is a pretentious bore, continuing von Trier's gloomy cinematic exploration of the suffering of women (*Breaking the Waves*, *Dogville*, and *Dancer in the Dark*). Yet the magnificent, ethereal visuals/special effects are haunting, making this a strong optional purchase. (S. Granger)



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UNSENTIMENTAL
AND HAUNTING."

The Miami Herald

"EVOCATIVE.
TOTALLY
DIFFERENT."

El Nuevo Herald

FREEDOM is MURDER

paraíso

a film by leon ichaso

from the director of

El Cantante
Crossover Dreams
Piñero
El Super
Sugar Hill
Bitter Sugar

PRE-BOOK: APRIL 18
STREET: MAY 15

DVD SPECIAL FEATURES

- Video interview with Leon Ichaso
- Optional 5.1 soundtrack
- Introduction by Benjamin Bratt
- On-set photo gallery
- Theatrical trailers
- Downloadable press kit PDF

USA, 2009, 100 min.,
Color/B&W,
Aspect ratio: 1.78:1
In Spanish with
optional English subtitles

1 DVD Unit
\$29.95
S.R.P.
each
NYD 116412

16/9
COMPATIBLE 4/3
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DVD Cat. #: NYD 116412
UPC: 7-17119-11644-6
ISBN: 1-56730-504-0



"A charmer.... [with] a visual style
and a deadpan humor that owes
an obvious debt to the
Finnish director Aki Kaurismäki."
—Manohla Dargis, THE NEW YORK TIMES



octubre

a film by Daniel and Diego Vega

2011 Theatrical Release

DVD Cat. #: NYD 114512
UPC: 7-17119-11454-1
ISBN: 1-56730-501-6

16/9
COMPATIBLE 4/3
LETTERBOXED

1 DVD Unit
\$29.95
S.R.P.
each
NYD 114512

Peru, 2010, 83 min., Color, Aspect ratio: 2.35:1,
In Spanish with optional English subtitles



DVD SPECIAL FEATURES

- Interview with co-director Daniel Vega
- Theatrical trailer • The Vega brothers' award-winning short film, *Inside Down Basement* • Optional DTS 5.1 soundtrack
- Downloadable press kit PDF

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Newsweek

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Le Monde EL PAÍS

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FAMILY MAN
MILITANT
HERO
CONVICT
SAVIOR
ROMANTIC
LEGEND

LULA

SON OF BRAZIL

A FILM BY FÁBIO BARRETO

PRE-BOOK: MAY 2 STREET: MAY 29



- From Academy Award-nominated director Fábio Barreto (*O Quatrilho*)
- Produced by L.C. Barreto, the legendary Brazilian production company:
Vidas Secas (Nelson Pereira dos Santos)
Bye Bye Brazil (Carlos Diegues)
Dona Flor and Her Two Husbands (Bruno Barreto)
Four Days in September (Bruno Barreto) — Academy Award nominee
- 2012 Theatrical Release
- DVD Special Features: Q&A with the producers, Making-of featurette, Theatrical trailer, Optional 5.1 soundtrack, Downloadable press kit PDF

DVD Cat. #: NYD 116312
UPC: 7-17119-11634-7
ISBN: 1-56730-505-9

1 DVD Unit
\$29.95
S.R.P.
each
NYD 116312

16/9
COMPATIBLE 4/3
LETTERBOXED

Brazil, 2010, 128 min.,
Color/B&W,
Aspect ratio: 1.85:1,
In Portuguese with
optional English subtitles

"Unprecedented... likely to become a classic."

—Dennis West, *CINEASIE*



DVD SPECIAL FEATURES

- Five Elements For Any Universe (Ideas About Landscape): A short film by the filmmaker
- Vintage photo gallery of the Village of Aldealseñor
- Pello Azketa painting gallery
- Downloadable press kit PDF
- Theatrical trailer
- Booklet essay by Victor Erice

THE SKY TURNS

A FILM BY MERCEDES ÁLVAREZ

2011 Theatrical Release



DVD Cat. #: NYD 110712
UPC: 7-17119-11074-1
ISBN: 1-56730-502-4

Spain, 2005, 106 min., Color,
Aspect ratio: 1.33:1,
In Spanish with English subtitles

1 DVD Unit
\$29.95
S.R.P.
each
NYD 110712

The Mill and the Cross

★★★1/2

Kino Lorber, 95 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95

A combination of historical drama, film essay, and art history study, Lech Majewski's *The Mill and the Cross* takes the viewer into Pieter Bruegel the Elder's legendary painting "The Way to Calvary" and back out to explore the world the artist lived in. Rutger Hauer plays Bruegel as both a thoughtful and committed painter and a husband and father living in 16th-century Flanders. Majewski contrasts elaborately staged scenes of the artist—sketching studies for his paintings and discussing the symbolism of his imagery with local aristocrat Nicolaes Jonghelinck (Michael York)—with naturalistic shots of daily life in the family home. Majewski also uses computer-generated imagery to place actors within Bruegel's paintings, layering live-action into the compositions, both to explore the creative process and to illustrate and comment upon the way Bruegel turns the classic subject of Christ and Calvary into a metaphor for the religious and social persecution of the Protestant citizens of Flanders by Spanish Catholic soldiers. The result is an ingenious mix of political commentary, historical re-creation, and creative fancy, an illuminating method of deconstructing and analyzing a work of art. Although not a documentary and certainly not a traditional biopic, this is an eye-popping and thought-provoking portrait of the artist. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)



Milltown Pride ★★★1/2

Vision, 135 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.99

Set in rural South Carolina during Prohibition, *Milltown Pride* serves up an evangelistic drama about a privileged 17-year-old, Will Wright (Thomas Sneed), who defies his well-to-do father, Ezekiel (Darren Lawson), and takes a job at a fabric mill in order to play baseball for the company team. Will hopes to attract the attention of a pro scout, and for a while he does everything right: living clean, working on his swing, courting a Christian girl named Ginnie (Rebecca Kaser), and, above all, staying away from moonshine whiskey, the bane of other players with fewer prospects. But Will eventually succumbs, starting on a downward spiral from which there's no way out until he accepts that he isn't living for himself, but for Jesus Christ. While the Christian message is strong, director Tim Rogers's film suffers from weak acting, wooden action, and little sense of period atmosphere. Still, this will appeal to audiences who appreciate finding born-again Christian values couched within a generally entertaining narrative. A strong optional purchase. (T. Keogh)



The Muppets ★★★

Walt Disney, 103 min., PG, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99, Mar. 20

"We're trying to get the old gang back again!" croaks Kermit the Frog, setting the stage for an endearing revival of the beloved franchise started by Jim Henson. Now, in idyllic Smalltown, USA, Gary (Jason Segel) and his sweetheart, Mary (Amy Adams), take Gary's younger brother, Walter (voiced by Peter Linz)—who doesn't realize he's a Muppet—to L.A. to visit Muppet Studios. Discovering that tycoon Tex Richman (Chris Cooper) intends to tear down the dilapidated facility to dig for oil, Gary and Walter are determined to find Kermit and round up his crew for a \$10 million fundraiser. Kermit has retired to the cavernous Bel Air mansion he once shared with Miss Piggy, who's in Paris editing French *Vogue*; Fozzie Bear's cracking bad jokes with a Muppets tribute band in Reno; Gonzo's a plumbing magnate; and Animal's learning anger management. "In this market, you guys are no longer relevant," declares a TV executive (Rashida Jones); but when a programming emergency occurs, it's "show time" as the Muppets kidnap Jack Black for their telethon. And, conquering stage fright, Walter discovers his special talent as an operatic whistler. This family-friendly film is an upbeat reboot offering nostalgic moments, high-spirited musical numbers, and fun cameos. Recommended. (S. Granger)



My Week with Marilyn ★★★

Anchor Bay, 99 min., R, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$39.99, Mar. 13

What's extraordinary about this cinematic memoir is Michelle Williams's Oscar-nominated performance as screen icon Marilyn Monroe. In the summer of 1956, young British aristocrat Colin Clark (Eddie Redmayne) was determined to break into the movie business (the film is adapted from Clark's same-titled book). Through a family connection, Clark became a lowly third-assistant director, running errands for Sir Laurence Olivier (Kenneth Branagh), who was directing and starring in the film version of Terence Rattigan's play *The Prince and the Showgirl*, which Olivier had previously appeared in onstage with his wife, Vivien Leigh (Julia Ormond). Now Monroe, the most famous movie star in the world, was going to play opposite him, along with Dame Sybil Thorndike (Judi Dench). Arriving in London with her new husband, playwright Arthur Miller (Dougray Scott), and Method acting coach Paula Strasberg (Zoë Wanamaker), Monroe is terrified, turning to Clark for comfort, particularly during an



idyllic week in the country. Clues suggest they had an affair—with manipulative Marilyn as seductress—but that's not pivotal to the plot, except to explain why dazzled Clark's ostensible girlfriend, Lucy (Emma Watson), dumps him. Directed by Simon Curtis, *My Week with Marilyn* is essentially a one-dimensional film full of cinematic clichés. But Williams so completely channels Monroe's ethereal appeal in her compelling, perfectly nuanced performance that this is recommended, overall. (S. Granger)

The Myth of the American Sleepover ★★★

MPI, 96 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.98

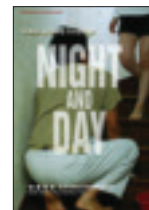
Suburban Detroit youth culture is explored in writer-director David Robert Mitchell's poignant, coming-of-age story centering on adolescent angst, which follows several teenagers searching for sexual connections on their last night of summer vacation. High schooler Maggie (Claire Sloma) ditches an all-girl slumber party to look for excitement with cynical pool-boy Steven (Doug Diedrich). While on her drinking/skinny-dipping spree, Maggie's accompanied by her bespectacled pal, Beth (Annette DeNoyer). Meanwhile, Claudia (Amanda Bauer), who's new in town, incites jealousy when she kisses the wrong boy in the cellar of his girlfriend's house. Toting his sleeping bag, Rob (Marlon Morton) is ostensibly off to a "guy sleepover," but he's so obsessed with finding a pretty blonde he saw in the supermarket that he's oblivious to the homosexual crush his buddy Marcus (Wyatt McCallum) has on him. And after being dumped, college junior Scott (Brett Jacobsen) stalks a pair of newcomer twins (Jade and Nikita Ramsey) at an overnight gathering in the college gym. Confused teenage misfits have been film fodder from *Rebel Without a Cause* through John Hughes's '80s classics, and beyond, but *The Myth of the American Sleepover* owes its biggest debt to George Lucas's *American Graffiti*. The novice cast performs admirably, although uneven pacing ultimately makes this dramedy drag on a bit too long. Still, this is recommended, overall. (S. Granger)



Night and Day ★★★1/2

Zeitgeist, 144 min., in Korean & French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99

Korean director Hong Sang-soo's film has something of a Woody Allen vibe, with a plot revolving around a married man's dalliances during a sojourn away from his wife in Paris. Escaping likely arrest in Seoul for marijuana use, painter Seong-nam (Kim Yeong-ho) winds up in the French capital and takes a





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-MELISSA ANDERSON, THE VILLAGE VOICE

"DENIS PODALYDES IS UNCANNILY GOOD."
-SCOTT TOBIAS, NPR

The Conquest is that rare specimen produced while its political subject is still in power. Denis Podalydès delivers a witty yet commanding portrayal of Nicolas Sarkozy and his rise to the French presidency through the lens of his unraveling marriage to wife Cecilia (Florence Pernel).



THE CONQUEST

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-MOVIE GUIDE

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THE HEIR APPARENT LARGO WINCH

Catalog# MBFHE 031 DVD UPC# 7-36211-21505-5 SRP \$29.95 STREET DATE: MARCH 27, 2012
108 MIN. / FRENCH AND ENGLISH / NOT RATED / WIDESCREEN 2.35:1 / 5.1 DOLBY DIGITAL

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room in a small hotel that is run and largely populated by Korean expatriates. Rambling about the city and talking to his spouse by phone, Seong-nam happens to meet Min-sun (KimYou-jin), a married woman he had once been involved with in Korea, and the pair take up again. Through her he's also introduced and becomes strongly attracted to a young art student named Yu-jeong (Park Eun-hye). Between courtship scenes, Seong-nam interacts with other expatriates, not only jovial hotel owner Mr. Jang (Gi Ju-bong), but also a North Korean he meets—and briefly argues with—at a party. A meandering quality infuses Seong-nam's journey, but the wandering represents the character's perpetual indecision in matters of the heart. In the end he will be forced by circumstances to make a commitment, although his choice turns out to be a bittersweet one, mixed with regret and betrayal. Overlong, *Night and Day* nevertheless has charmingly off-center moments, making it a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Ocean of an Old Man

★★★1/2

Global Film Initiative, 84 min., in Hindi w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95



Indian filmmaker Rajesh Shera's deeply moving film is set on a small island in an archipelago off the Indian coast during the aftermath of the catastrophic 2004 tsunami. British schoolteacher Thomas (Tom Alter) has survived the deluge, but his wife and young daughter perished under the waves. Thomas (the only named character) attempts to restart his school, but many of his students were lost in the disaster, and although he tries to console the surviving classmates, the unsettled atmosphere continues to persist after the arrival of a government functionary who signals that the local population will need to be relocated. Thomas then becomes convinced that some of his missing charges are still alive somewhere in the island chain, and he embarks on a quest to locate them. Much of the film's power stems from the subtle yet devastatingly effective performance by Alter as the grief-stricken protagonist. An American actor whose career has been based in the Indian movie industry, Alter brilliantly blurs the line between optimism and desperation, ultimately imbuing his role with a tragic majesty. Highly recommended. (P. Hall)

Octubre ★★1/2

New Yorker, 83 min., in Spanish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95



The gloomy existence of a small-time moneylender is altered by the arrival of a baby in this visually drab but moderately touching slice-of-life dramedy from Daniel and Diego Vega Vidal, a fraternal

writing-directing team whose international recognition is part of a recent resurgence of Peruvian filmmaking. Clemente (Bruno Odar) is a dour, solitary figure who fills his days trying to extract payment from his hapless clients and his nights being mechanically serviced by a series of prostitutes. When one of them leaves behind a bag containing an infant—his unbeknownst-to-him daughter—Clemente becomes the child's reluctant caretaker and hires Sofia (Gabriela Velásquez) as a live-in nanny. Sofia's religiosity is linked to a great festival held each October in Lima called the Lord of Miracles, and she's the one who christens the newborn Milagritos, the "miracle child," not because the little one redeems Clemente in any specifically Christian sense, but because it's through the child that he ultimately reestablishes emotional connections with other human beings. The filmmakers tell this ragged, uneven story in a homespun style, adding touches of earthy humor along the way. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Outrage ★★

Magnolia, 109 min., in Japanese w/English subtitles, R, DVD: \$26.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98



The latest from Japanese actor-director-screenwriter Takeshi Kitano, *Outrage* finds Kitano playing Ôtomo, a lower-tier member of a Tokyo crime syndicate who's dispatched to terminate a pact made between his boss, Ikemoto (Jun Kunimura), and a rival gang leader, Murase (Renji Ishibashi), sealed when the men were in prison together. Ôtomo carries out his order with harsh violence, but this only serves to ignite a bloody gang war between the yakuza organizations. Kitano has enjoyed a minor cult following on this side of the Pacific for his deadpan screen persona and artistic visual style, presented in memorable works such as *Sonatine* (1993) and *Hana-bi* (1997), although *Outrage* is far removed from these earlier films in both style and substance. The narrative quickly becomes tiresome, strident, and confusing as a multitude of black-suited thugs run around Tokyo torturing each other with sadistic physical assaults on fingers, ears, and teeth (frankly, the R-rating seems more than a little generous). Not a necessary purchase. (P. Hall)

The Piano in a Factory

★★★

Film Movement, 105 min., in Mandarin w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99



Set in the 1990s, Zhang Meng's film about a father who enlists the help of friends to maintain custody of his daughter offers the kind of deadpan humor rarely

seen in Chinese cinema. Former factory worker Chen Guilin (Wang Qian-Yuan), who lives in a northern province and plays accordion in a local band, faces a dilemma when his long-absent wife serves him with divorce papers that include a provision for their child, Xiao, to choose whether to stay in the country with her father or move to the city with her mother, who lives with a well-off new boyfriend. Xiao sets up a clever challenge: she will go with whichever parent can provide her with a piano—a possible key to upward mobility for the talented girl. Like his ex, Guilin has also started to see someone since their separation, Shu Xian (Qin Hailu), a single mother who sings in his ensemble and becomes caught up in his attempts to secure the desired instrument. After trying to steal and borrow money for his cause, Guilin asks community members for help, and despite their own domestic difficulties, they ultimately band together around a solution that involves building a piano from scratch. An entertaining and touching foreign film, this is recommended. (K. Fennessy)

Protektor ★★

Film Movement, 102 min., in Czech w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95



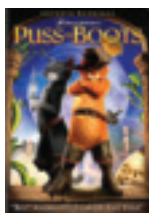
The central figures in this uneven but stylish and sporadically moving film—set in Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia between 1938 and 1942—are married couple Emil (Marek Daniel) and Hana (Jana Plodková). Emil is a second-string reporter for the national radio station, while Hana is a glamorous, up-and-coming cinema star. But she's also Jewish, and after the Anschluss her career screeches to a halt, while he's chosen to serve as the station's "local" voice, replacing an outspoken colleague. Over the years, Emil turns into a celebrity—despite accusations of collaboration—and enjoys some extramarital romance. Meanwhile, Hana—although protected from the worst treatment accorded Jews because of her husband's position—grows increasingly enraged by her loss of fame and subsequent isolation in their apartment, and she eventually takes up with a movie projectionist. Marek Najbrt's portrait of people trying to survive under a brutal regime has a studied feel, but the depiction of Emil and Hana's deteriorating relationship has considerable power, and the film is beautiful to watch, thanks to Miloslav Holman's glossy cinematography. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

Puss in Boots ★★1/2

DreamWorks, 90 min., PG, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray: \$40.99

After the exploits of intrepid feline adventurer Puss in Boots (voiced by Antonio Banderas) were acclaimed in *Shrek 2*, a picaresque animated spin-off for the supporting star

seemed inevitable. Directed by Chris Miller, the fairy tale/nursery rhyme-based plot revolves around the backstory of Puss and a glib egg named Humpty Alexander Dumpty (Zach Galifianakis), who became childhood "brothers" in the Spanish orphanage of San Ricardo, and dreamed of finding those magical beans that would lead them up the beanstalk into the giant's fortress in the clouds, where Mother Goose guards her precious child, the Goose That Laid the Golden Eggs. Years later, as notorious, debonair Puss is trying to steal the magic seeds from avaricious Jack and Jill (Billy Bob Thornton, Amy Sedaris), he unexpectedly encounters sultry, slick-fingered, feline femme fatale Kitty Softpaws (Salma Hayek), who is after the same treasure. Puss, Kitty, and Humpty Dumpty—who has a jealous, duplicitous streak—team up for a quest featuring numerous double-crosses and betrayals, along with a flamboyant flamenco-dancing interlude. Serving up a stylish revenge-and-forgiveness story, this is frisky, family-friendly fun. Highly recommended. (S. Granger)



Putty Hill ★★★

Cinema Guild, 149 min., not rated, DVD: \$34.95

In this double-feature compilation, director Matt Porterfield—an instructor at Johns Hopkins University—presents a perspiration-dappled vision of Baltimore. In *Putty Hill*, a multigenerational group (played primarily by nonprofessionals) gathers to honor Cory, a 24-year-old ex-con who died of a heroin overdose. The working-class mourners include Cory's cousin Jenny (Sky Ferreira), younger brother James (James Siebor), and various other relatives and friends, who speak with Porterfield's unseen interviewer during paintball matches, tattoo sessions, and skateboard excursions. As they discuss Cory, they also talk about themselves, and eventually congregate at Cory's funeral party to dance, sing, and pay their respects. If Cory never truly comes alive as a person, that also seems to be Porterfield's point: life goes on without him. Also included is *Hamilton*, the filmmaker's 2006 debut, in which young baker Lena (Stephanie Vizzi) hangs out with her extended family and infant son, while her estranged boyfriend, Joe (Chris Myers), mows lawns, plays video games, and walks around town. As the film winds down, the pair reconnect, but their future remains uncertain. Recommended. (K. Femmessy)



adapted Thierry Jonquet's novel *Tarantula* for this psychosexual thriller—a perverse, convoluted story that revolves around a celebrated plastic surgeon and his beautiful captive patient. Dr. Robert Ledgard (Antonio Banderas) works in almost complete isolation in an impressive clinical compound—El Cigarral (the Orchard)—outside Toledo, Spain, where he conducts cellular experiments that, while violating bioethical standards, have enabled him to perfect fire-resistant artificial skin. Ledgard is motivated by the horrific burns and disfiguring scarring that his wife (now deceased) suffered in a car crash. Clad neck-to-toe in a flesh-colored body stocking, curvaceous Vera (Elena Anaya) is the human guinea pig for his grafting. Observed on a wall-size video surveillance screen, she practices yoga, scribbles on the walls, and meditates in solitude, receiving her meals via a dumbwaiter. The enigmatic Vera is watched over by Ledgard's dutiful, devoted "housekeeper," Marilia (Marisa Parades), whose wastrel son, Zeca (Robert Álamo), makes an unexpected and unwelcome visit during Carnival. Meanwhile, flashbacks reveal a fateful encounter six years earlier between Robert's mentally disturbed teenage



daughter, Norma (Blanca Suárez), and a junkie named Vicente (Jan Cornet). A shocking, voyeuristic, and hyperstylized Frankenstein-like tale, this existential melodrama—influenced by Hitchcock, Buñuel Hammer horror films, and Georges Franju's *Eyes Without a Face*—is revolting yet also riveting. Highly recommended. (S. Granger)

Special Treatment

★★★1/2

First Run, 95 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$27.95

Writer-director Jeanne Lebrune contrasts the lives of a prostitute and a psychoanalyst in this deliberately paced drama. Like her well-heeled clients, high-class hooker Alice (Isabelle Huppert) works out of a business-like room, except that hers sports a bed instead of a couch. For some men she dresses as a schoolgirl; for others, she dons dominatrix gear. Xavier (Bouli Lanners), a professorial-looking man who shares a practice with his wife, begins to see Alice while his marriage is disintegrating. Between his compulsive hand-washing and crying jags, Xavier seems to need help more than his patients, but Lebrune and actor/co-writer Richard Debuisne unfortunately don't fill in



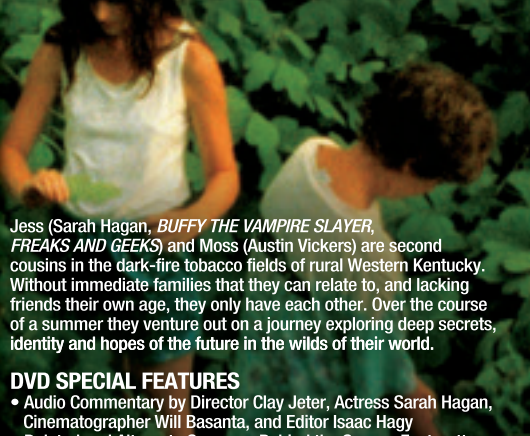
A LYRICAL TALE OF TWO SOLITARY, PLAYFUL AND YOUNG SOULS

"A PORTRAIT OF THE FRESHNESS AND VULNERABILITY OF YOUTH"

—David D'Arcy, Screen Daily

"A BRACING JOLT FROM THE USUAL FILM EXPERIENCE"

—Kirk Honeycutt, The Hollywood Reporter

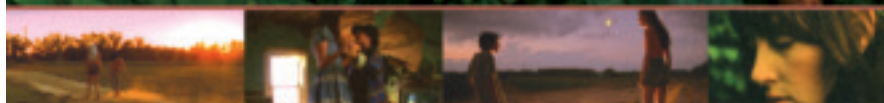


Jess (Sarah Hagan, *BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER*, *FREAKS AND GEEKS*) and Moss (Austin Vickers) are second cousins in the dark-fire tobacco fields of rural Western Kentucky. Without immediate families that they can relate to, and lacking friends their own age, they only have each other. Over the course of a summer they venture out on a journey exploring deep secrets, identity and hopes of the future in the wilds of their world.

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The Skin I Live In ★★★1/2

Sony, 117 min., in Spanish w/English subtitles, R, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$45.99, Mar. 6

Spanish filmmaker Pedro Almodóvar

any back-stories. Alice's motivation comes from wanting to buy various items. Xavier, who in Alice's mind represents a coveted chandelier, also frequents auction houses where he bids on pricey collectibles, a hobby that he finds more interesting than his career. Lebrune alternates between the recent past and the present in depicting their sessions with each other, but for most of the running time, neither psychiatrist nor prostitute are giving or getting much in the way of sexual or emotional satisfaction. Although *Special Treatment* can be slow-moving, the gifted Huppert is always eminently watchable, making this a strong optional purchase. (K. Fennessy)

The Sunset Limited

★★★

HBO, 91 min., not rated, DVD: \$26.98, Blu-ray: \$34.98

Life, death, faith, hope, and the proposition that we live in a bleak, godless universe are debated over the course of a long day in this adaptation of Cormac McCarthy's titular play, adapted by the author and directed for HBO by Tommy Lee Jones. This minimalist production is shot on a single set—a rundown tenement apartment in a New York City slum—with two unnamed characters: Jones plays an atheist philosophy professor who has just tried to kill himself (jumping in front of a train—the Sunset Limited) and Samuel L. Jackson costars as an ex-con who spends the day trying to talk Jones's character out of committing suicide. While there is nothing new in this debate, which features many of the themes explored in McCarthy's novels—couched here in a borderline didactic meeting of diametrically opposed perspectives on life—the conversation is civil between strangers who respect one another, McCarthy's language is marvelous (simultaneously symbolic and down to earth), and the performances are engaging: Jones is calmly resigned to a dark nihilism, while Jackson meets the professor's bleak philosophical pronouncements with jailhouse stories, Bible lessons, and folk wisdom, all delivered with a smile. Recommended, overall. (S. Axmaker)



The Three Musketeers

★★★

Summit, 110 min., PG-13, DVD: \$26.99, Blu-ray: \$30.99, Mar. 13

Alexandre Dumas would scarcely recognize this campy incarnation of his swashbuckling tale, with its airborne CGI galleons and armed Milady who secures rappelling apparatus within her corset. The story begins in 17th-century Venice, where sardonic Athos (Matthew Macfadyen), good-humored Porthos (Ray Stevenson), and astute



Aramis (Luke Evans) team up with intrepid Milady de Winter (Milla Jovovich) to steal blueprints for a war machine from Leonardo da Vinci's vault. But Milady betrays them, delivering the plans to the Duke of Buckingham (Orlando Bloom) and then allying herself with Cardinal Richelieu (Christoph Waltz), who's scheming to seize the French throne and engulf Europe in war. Meanwhile, cocky young D'Artagnan (Logan Lerman) travels to Paris to become one of the elite soldiers sworn to protect France's foppish, teenage King Louis XIII (Freddie Fox). En route, Capt. Rochefort (Mads Mikkelsen), leader of Richelieu's Guards, earns D'Artagnan's eternal enmity by mocking his horse, after which D'Artagnan not only joins up with Athos, Porthos, and Aramis—who are in search of a "cause" and find one in the effort to stop Richelieu—but also becomes smitten with Constance (Gabriella Wilde), lady-in-waiting to the Queen (Juno Temple). As the plot thickens, an unlikely escapade involves Milady stealing the Queen's diamond-studded necklace as part of Richelieu's diabolical plan. Directed by Paul W.S. Anderson, *The Three Musketeers* is dazzling in its extravagance, but the plot lacks substance, the vapid characters are never fully developed, and the dialogue is woefully stilted. Even the badly edited swordfights lack tension and suspense. Not a necessary purchase. (S. Granger)

Thunder Soul

★★★1/2
Lionsgate, 88 min., PG, DVD: \$19.98

Narrated by Jamie Foxx, Mark Landsman's heartfelt documentary pays tribute to Houston high school band teacher Conrad "Prof" Johnson through the music he made and the lives he touched. Ninety-two years old at the time of filming, Johnson led the Kashmere Stage Band during the 1970s, but instead of repertoire standards, he taught the all-black outfit to play funk music as competently as admired professionals including James Brown and Earth, Wind, and Fire (the band added dance moves to the mix, another crowd-pleasing innovation). Today, his students recall their reasons for joining the group: to master an instrument, to meet girls, and to have a good time. Along the way, they learned discipline and teamwork; and for some, Johnson was as much a father figure as a teacher. While there were fewer female players, they felt like equals, and everybody dressed to the hilt in bell-bottoms and platform shoes. The group racked up championships and trips to Europe and Japan, but it ultimately fell apart in the late 1970s when the high school began to excel in other areas, including athletics. Landsman builds *Thunder Soul* around a reunion to honor Johnson by putting on one last concert. Outside voices include DJ Shadow, who has sampled their work, and Now Again's Eothen



Alapatt, who has recently released recordings by the band. Highly recommended. (K. Fennessy)

Thurgood

★★★1/2
HBO, 105 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$24.99

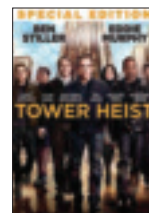
Laurence Fishburne might have bombed on *C.S.I.*, but he's at the top of his game in George Stevens Jr.'s play about Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall. In this performance filmed at Washington's Kennedy Center by Stevens's son Michael, Fishburne is literally the whole show, framed as a one-man journey of recollection spoken before an audience of Howard University students. Ambling with a cane onto a stage that's bare except for a long conference table and occasional back projections, the aged jurist greets his listeners directly before launching into a chronological survey of his life. The actor dispenses with the cane as he recounts stories of Marshall's boyhood and unlikely academic career and then adopts a swagger as he continues with the young lawyer's entrance into the embryonic—and often dangerous—Civil Rights movement. Stevens's script is filled with wry observations and rousing anecdotes about key individuals Marshall worked with (such as Martin Luther King, Jr.) and accounts of the landmark legal cases in which Marshall played a prominent role (most notably *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka*, which ended segregation in public schools), culminating in his appointment to the federal bench and then being named the first African-American Supreme Court Justice by Lyndon Johnson. Fishburne captures Marshall's gregarious personality beautifully, even as he departs from the script momentarily to welcome a couple of latecomers trying to squeeze unnoticed into their front row seats. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)



Tower Heist

★★★
Universal, 105 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$34.98

Ben Stiller stars as Josh Kovacs, manager of one of New York's most luxurious residences—The Tower (think Trump)—in this comedy caper. Dutifully determined to please the owner—Wall Street tycoon Arthur Shaw (Alan Alda)—Josh is meticulous about every detail, at least until selfish, arrogant Shaw is arrested for masterminding a Ponzi scheme that swindled \$2 billion from his shareholders. Since Josh asked Shaw to invest the Employees' Pension Fund, he feels personally responsible for the financial losses of everyone on his staff, which is why he's determined to steal Shaw's \$20 million stash. But Shaw has been placed under house arrest and his penthouse apartment is guarded by



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98 MINUTES | COLOR | SRP \$24.99 | BGP311
 THRILLER | STREET DATE: APRIL 24

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101 MINUTES | COLOR | SRP \$24.99 | QCC309
 GAY/DRAMA | STREET DATE: MARCH 27

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During his final semester of seminary studies, closeted gay student Ryan must face the challenges of a new romance, his school's hostile stance towards homosexuality and his mother's strong religious views - all while finishing his thesis on the nature of God's love.

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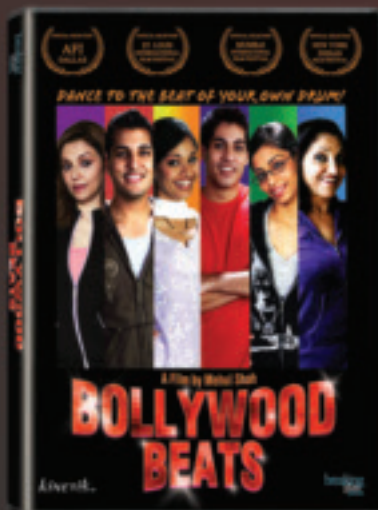
99 MINUTES | COLOR | SRP \$24.99 | QCC318
 COMEDY | STREET DATE: APRIL 3

Del Shores My Sordid Life

Writer and performer Del Shores presents his most outrageous standup performance to date in this mash-up of the true events that inspired much of his writing and career. Now, for the first time, Del Shores sets the record straight. Truth and fiction are separated, and the result is absolute, side-splitting hilarity.

Hilarious one-man show from the creator of the cult phenomenon "Sordid Lives"

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113 MINUTES | COLOR | SRP \$24.99 | BGP307
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Bollywood Beats

When aspiring hip-hop dancer Raj has trouble finding his first big break, he decides to start his own dance class for Indian women. As the class grows, Raj and his students end up finding love, friendship and acceptance where they never thought to look. But when Raj has the chance to perform in a music video, he'll have to choose between being there for his newfound friends in a time of need and pursuing his dreams.

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"Bollywood Beats is a winner!"
 — *Rogue Cinema*



100 MINUTES | COLOR | SRP \$24.99 | BGP317
 DRAMA/ROMANCE | STREET DATE: MAY 29

Kinyarwanda

A young Tutsi woman and a young Hutu man fall in love amidst chaos; a soldier struggles to foster a greater good while absent from her family; and a priest grapples with his faith in the face of unspeakable horror in this illuminating film set in Rwanda.

2011 National Theatrical Release!

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 — *Roger Ebert*

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an FBI squad, headed by Special Agent Claire Denham (Téa Leoni). So Josh assembles an amiable if eclectic team that includes Charlie (Casey Affleck), the concierge; Mr. Fitzhugh (Matthew Broderick), a bankrupt, recently evicted banker; elevator operator Enrique Dev'Reaux (Michael Peña); about-to-retire doorman Lester (Stephen McKinley Henderson); and Odessa (Gabourey Sidibe), a feisty, flirtatious Jamaican maid. With their varied skill-sets, the team is familiar with all of The Tower's intricacies, but since no one knows how to execute a heist, confrontational Slide (Eddie Murphy)—an experienced petty thief—is also recruited. Predictably, as the cracks in the master plan become larger, the tension mounts, leading to unexpected twists. Slickly directed by Brett Ratner, this revenge romp is recommended. (S. Granger)

Trigger ★★★

Wolfe, 78 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95

Bruce McDonald's acerbic yet heartfelt film revolves around musicians, but the focus is on female friendship, with Molly Parker and Tracy Wright playing former band mates who reunite for a tribute event. Flashbacks and fantasy sequences reveal addictions to alcohol and heroin, and a fractious relationship that might have been more than platonic, although both women also express interest in men. Today, upwardly mobile Kat (Parker) works as a music advisor in Los Angeles, while sarcastic Vicky (Wright) has been toiling in Toronto on a solo project. As they eat dinner, attend shows, and catch up with old friends, feelings of jealousy and competitiveness alternate with affection and rapport. As the night winds down, the two reveal fears that they'll never love again and will die before their time. Parker and Wright play well off each other, and while neither of their characters is particularly likeable, both are engaging and vulnerable beneath their brittle exteriors, becoming more sympathetic towards the end. Sarah Polley, Don McKellar (Wright's partner), and producer Callum Keith Rennie all appear in welcome cameos. Wright, who gave her final performance here, died of pancreatic cancer after filming. Recommended. (K. Fennessy)



Tuesday, After Christmas

★★★

Kino Lorber, 99 min., in Romanian w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99

This drama from director Radu Muntean and co-screenwriter Razvan Radulescu (who also worked on *The Death of Mr. Lazarescu* and *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days*) offers a clear-eyed look at infidelity



and the resulting dissolution of a family. Banker Paul Hanganu (Mimi Branescu) and his lawyer wife, Adriana (Mirela Oprisor), are a comfortably middle-class couple with a 9-year-old daughter, Mara (Sasa Paul-Szel), living in a seemingly stable, loving household. But Paul is having an affair with Mara's beautiful dentist, Raluca (Maria Popistasu), and scenes of the illicit lovers alternate with intervals showing the Hanganus at home and elsewhere. When Paul finally reveals his adultery in the middle of the holidays, the fallout is painful, honest, emotionally messy, and very uncomfortable—as human as cinema gets (especially since Branescu and Oprisor are a real-life couple). Despite a brief release after a strong showing in festivals worldwide and excellent reviews, *Tuesday, After Christmas* is not well known—even to many foreign film fans—although viewers should be aware that the film features explicit nudity and sexuality, handled in a matter-of-fact way. A fine example of the flowering of Romanian filmmaking that began in the 2000s—after decades of Soviet-imposed repression—this is recommended for more adventurous collections. (S. Axmaker)

Tyrannosaur ★★★1/2

Strand, 91 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.99, Apr. 3

In the opening sequence of his first feature—a fierce yet moving tragedy—actor-turned-screenwriter/director Paddy Considine dares audiences to feel anything for Joseph (Peter Mullan) after having the widower kick his dog to death. Joseph regrets his actions but can't seem to help himself; he tosses insults around freely but reveals a softer side with a neighbor boy, Sam (Samuel Bottomley). Although Hannah (Olivia Colman), a Christian charity-shop worker, shows Joseph compassion after some locals rough him up, he demeans her, too. Hannah, it turns out, has her own problems, including a drunken husband, James (Eddie Marsan). If James wasn't such a rotter, she might not see Joseph again, but after the latter apologizes, they have a drink together. James suspects his wife is having an affair, and the more he abuses her, the more she imbibes and veers towards the potentially dangerous Joseph. A family friend even drops a hint that Joseph might have slapped around his late wife, the "tyrannosaur" of the title, but he continues to be kind to Hannah, who's hiding a volatile nature of her own. A hit in England, some American observers have deemed *Tyrannosaur*—with its working-class environs and unvarnished cinematography—overly dour. But much like Joseph there's a lot of heart beneath the film's gruff exterior. Highly recommended. (K. Fennessy)



United Red Army ★★★

Kino Lorber, 190 min., in Japanese w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95

Running over three hours, Kôji Wakamatsu's portrait of the extreme militant-left movement in 1970s Japan is a fact-based film that turns history into a riveting psychological thriller. Opening with a survey of the student protests of the 1960s—using documentary images, voiceover, and onscreen text—the film goes on to show how fringe groups broke off and transformed into an ideologically confused, slogan-spouting revolutionary organization calling itself the United Red Army. With fictionalized inserts interspersed here and there, most of the story takes place during the group's self-imposed exile in the mountains, where a training program turns twisted due to the megalomania of its leaders—including Tsuneo Mori (Gô Jibiki)—who exhibit a tyrannical, cult-like sense of domination. Throughout the ordeal, many committed to the cause die through abuse and starvation, and Wakamatsu uses flashbacks to chronicle their early involvement. Eventually, a days-long shootout transpires between the police and the last of the United Red Army members, who hole up in a vacation lodge and vow to fight to the end. Both a powerful drama and a revealing look at a facet of Japanese political history little known to Americans, this is recommended. (S. Axmaker)



The Way ★★★

Arc, 121 min., PG-13, DVD: \$26.99, Blu-ray: \$32.99

Grief and the posthumous reconciliation of a father-child relationship form the crux of one man's spiritual journey along the historical Christian route known as El Camino de Santiago in writer-director Emilio Estevez's *The Way*. California ophthalmologist Tom Avery (Martin Sheen) is a widower whose only son, Daniel (Estevez), abandons his doctoral dissertation to travel around the world. But soon afterwards, Tom receives a phone call from a policeman in a French village in the Pyrenees. Caught in a blizzard, Daniel died while hiking "The Way of Saint James," a 780-kilometer trip (nearly 500 miles) from France, across the mountains to the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Spain. After having Daniel's remains cremated, Tom impulsively decides to finish his son's trip, placing the ashes in his backpack and joining others who are making the picturesque pilgrimage for various personal reasons. Initially a surly loner, Tom is befriended by a gluttonous, gregarious Dutchman (Yorick van Wageningen) who's trying to lose weight before his brother's wedding; a chain-smoking, emotionally ravaged Canadian (Deborah Kara Unger); and a



hard-drinking Irish writer (James Nesbitt), who chronicles Tom's story. Sensitive without being sentimental, this simple, if also somewhat contrived, enlightenment story unfolds slowly through superb ensemble acting, with Estevez's real-life father Sheen delivering a subtly nuanced, compelling performance. Recommended. (S. Granger)

The Women on the 6th Floor ★★1/2

Strand, 104 min., in French & Spanish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$27.99, Mar. 13

In this sociopolitical satire from director Philippe Le Guay, Fabrice Luchini stars as Jean-Louis Joubert, a Parisian stockbroker who lives with his status-conscious wife, Suzanne (Sandrine Kiberlain), in the fifth-floor flat his family has owned for three generations. Five Spanish maids occupy the far more humble rooms on the upper floor. When the Jouberts' longtime housekeeper leaves, they hire María (Natalia Verbeke), a new arrival who joins her aunt, Concepción (Carmen Maura), and four other Franco refugees on the sixth floor. Although relatively inexperienced, María does her job so well that Jean-Louis increases her pay, but withholds this information from Suzanne.



Through María, Jean-Louis gets to know her colleagues and helps to spruce up their quarters, and before long he's learning their language, eating their food, and studying Spanish history. While Suzanne thinks he's having an affair with a client, he's actually fighting an attraction to María. When Suzanne kicks him out, he takes a cramped room in the attic, and while Suzanne isn't happy with the arrangement, Jean-Louis feels like he can finally be himself—although he can't live upstairs forever. Unfortunately, the idea of a romance between Jean-Louis and María never quite rings true. Still, this should be considered a strong optional purchase. (K. Fennessy)

The World is Big and Salvation Lurks Around the Corner ★★1/2

Olive, 110 min., in Bulgarian, German, Italian, Slovenian, English & Hungarian w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99

A wise old man and his amnesiac grandson bond over the course of a bike ride from Germany to their native Bulgaria in Stephan Komandarev's adaptation of Ilija Trojanow's semi-autobiographical novel. Presented in chronologically fractured fashion, the story




begins with the birth of the boy, Sashko (Carlo Ljubek), in still-communist Bulgaria. When his father, Vasil (Hristo Mutafchiev), decides to flee the oppressive regime, the family ends up in an Italian refugee camp, from which they eventually emigrate to Germany. Years later, a car crash takes the lives of his parents, but a damaged Sashko survives, and his grandfather, Bai Dan (Miki Manojlovic), arrives to help. On the subsequent road trip, the pair ride a tandem bike to a now-democratic Bulgaria, a journey that Bai Dan designs to help Sashko recover his past. Along the way, Sashko also meets a girl named Maria (Dorka Gryllus) and experiences first love. Although the narrative is predictably sentimental, Manojlovic's earthy performance as the granddad adds considerable charm. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Video Librarian Online

Visit Video Librarian Online (www.videolibrarian.com) during March and April for DVD/Blu-ray-specific comments added to the video movies reviewed here, as well as new reviews, including *A Dangerous Method*, *Happy Feet Two*, *In the Land of Blood and Honey*, *Like Crazy*, *The Sitter*, *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, and much more!



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NOT RATED



Above Suspicion, Set 1

★★★1/2

Acorn, 2 discs, 254 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.99

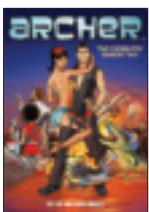
Lynda La Plante, who created the original British version of *Prime Suspect* with Helen Mirren, works police procedural magic again, but with a twist. Here, the woman at the center isn't a seasoned commander but rather a rookie detective named Anna Travis (Kelly Reilly), who is just starting out on the homicide squad headed by gruff, demanding DCI James Langton (Ciaran Hinds). This set includes the first two series from 2009 (two episodes) and 2010 (three episodes). The initial case involves a serial killer of women, with suspicion eventually falling on a handsome movie actor whose own mother was murdered years earlier. In the second series, the squad is in pursuit of someone who killed a young woman in imitation of the infamous Los Angeles Black Dahlia murder of 1947. Both series are adapted by La Plante with customary finesse from her own novels, and the excellent Hinds and Reilly are backed by a supporting cast of Britain's finest—including the redoubtable Sylvia Syms as a housekeeper. The only drawback to the plotting involves Travis's inclination to become involved with handsome men in the investigations—the suspect in the first case, a journalist in the second—a narrative trick that becomes a crutch when repeated. But otherwise these are fine English police dramas that should appeal to fans of both La Plante and Brit procedurals. DVD extras include a pair of “making-of” featurettes, photo galleries, and a text bio of La Plante. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)



Archer: The Complete Season Two ★★★

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

The second run of this FX original animated series continues the adventures of Sterling Archer (voiced by H. Jon Benjamin), the playboy secret agent who has worked his way to the top of the spy game through a combination of arrogance, recklessness, hard drinking, womanizing, and nepotism. Lana Kane (Aisha Tyler) is the team's other top operative, helping to tame a world where the Cold War never ended and '60s-style despots still rule third-world kingdoms. Along with the expected spy-movie spoofing—with secret missions endangered by ill-advised affairs and hangovers—the comedy features cutthroat office politics (sort of like *The Office* staffed by oblivious hedonists). Knowingly ridiculous and absolutely raunchy, the show remains interesting because Sterling is a genuinely



talented agent; he may be an idiot in other respects, but the man has mad skills. The second season expands Archer's story by making him a father and saddling him with cancer, an ordeal that he handles with all the aplomb one would expect from a full-grown adolescent with serious childhood scars; the wretched parenting skills of his mother (Jessica Walter) are revealed in flashbacks. Chris Parnell and Judy Greer costar as Cyril and Cheryl, office accountant and secretary, respectively. Compiling all 13 episodes from the 2011 second season, extras include new bonus shorts, a Q&A with Archer, and a Comic-Con panel discussion. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Boardwalk Empire: The Complete First Season

★★★1/2

HBO, 5 discs, 732 min., TV-MA, DVD: \$59.99, Blu-ray: \$79.98

In fine (and bloody) style, HBO's *Boardwalk Empire* returns to 1920, when the nationwide ban on booze led to a rising syndicate of bootleggers and smugglers. Created by *Sopranos* writer Terence Winter and produced by Martin Scorsese, the multilayered story centers on Atlantic City treasurer Enoch “Nucky” Thompson (Steve Buscemi), who schemes in private while preaching temperance in public. War vet Jimmy (Michael Pitt) is his right-hand man, while federal agent Nelson Van Alden (Michael Shannon) and mobster Arnold Rothstein (Michael Stuhlbarg) represent significant threats to his enterprise. Nucky's other associates include his brother, Eli (Shea Whigham), girlfriend Lucy (Paz de la Huerta), and distributor Chalky (Michael K. Williams). If Nucky has little regard for law and order, his sensitive side emerges in his dealings with Irish immigrant Margaret (Kelly Macdonald), who segues from abused wife to kept woman. Nucky sends Jimmy away to Chicago for a spell, and the onetime sidekick winds up joining forces with Al Capone (Stephen Graham) and disfigured vet Richard Harrow (Jack Huston). Inspired by Nelson Johnson's same-titled nonfiction book, *Boardwalk Empire* combines factual and fictional characters with blue language and ladies sans brassieres (scripter Winter may take liberties with the historical record, but the series never claims to represent the truth and nothing but). Although the entire ensemble deserves praise, Buscemi rules the show as thoroughly as Nucky rules the city. Compiling all 12 episodes from the 2010 debut season, extras include audio commentaries with cast and crew, behind-the-scenes and historical background featurettes, and a character guide. Exclusive to the Blu-ray version is an enhanced interactive picture-in-picture viewing mode. Highly recommended. (K. Fennessy)



The Borgias: The First Season ★★★

Paramount, 3 discs, 467 min., not rated, DVD: \$49.99, Blu-ray: \$65.99

Tapping into the contemporary rage for sexy historical storytelling on TV, this Showtime original series presents the Borgias—the most notorious family of Renaissance-era Italy—members of an aristocratic house who amassed power using tactics worthy of a Shakespeare villain. Although the show appears to follow the same formula as *The Tudors*—a recipe of royal intrigue, aristocratic depravity, and lusty sex in the courts of old Europe—Oscar-winning creator Neil Jordan (who directed two segments and scripted all nine included here) is more interested in power plays and diplomacy than spectacle and titillation. Jeremy Irons plays family patriarch Rodrigo Borgia, who becomes the Pope in the first episode through a combination of bribery, coercion, and the promise of political favors—basically, just a little corruption between cronies in the Church, which rivals the power of some countries in Renaissance Europe. The first season focuses on the education of Rodrigo's children, who will become the most notorious of the clan: Cesare (François Arnaud), Rodrigo's heir and right-hand man; and Lucrezia (Holliday Grainger), the golden-haired daughter who revels in the joys of power. What's most compelling here is not the spectacular nature of the crimes or the rampant immorality (from poisoning rivals to open affairs) but rather the brazen displays of dictatorial authority and inspired gestures of diplomacy, especially as wielded by Irons's Rodrigo. Compiling all nine episodes of the 2011 debut season, this is recommended. (S. Axmaker)



The Confession ★★

New Video, 97 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.95

The Confession, which began its life as a made-for-Internet offering in March 2011 on Hulu and is now arriving on DVD, consists of 10 short episodes. The series takes place in a church confessional booth, where an unnamed hit man (Kiefer Sutherland) tells a priest (John Hurt) that he is responsible for killing many people, and that his next victim will die that night unless the priest agrees to hear his confession. This setup leads to flashbacks detailing the story behind each slaying, with the two men engaging in an intensive debate about the moral ramifications of the assassin's career. Although *The Confession* features an interesting premise, the stars seem to be on autopilot as their characters hash out well-worn ideas and concerns about life and death. To its credit, however, the brief series boasts handsome production design,





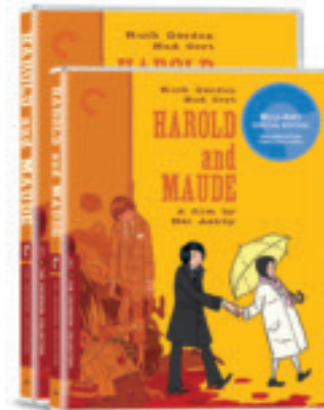
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with writer-director Brad Mirman achieving a visual style that is eons removed from the public access-level look of many Internet series. DVD extras include four previously unseen episodes, cast and crew interviews, and behind-the-scenes footage. An optional purchase. (P. Hall)

Design for Living

★★★1/2

Criterion, 91 min., not rated, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.95; Blu-ray: \$39.95



Ben Hecht adapted Noel Coward's very continental play for director Ernst Lubitsch, and Hecht's gift for both highbrow wit and street-smart dialogue is a fine match for the Lubitsch touch in this elegant and risqué 1933 comedy. Fredric March and Gary Cooper star as Tom Chambers and George Curtis, American artists and best friends in Paris, who take up housekeeping with the modern-thinking Gilda Farrell (Miriam Hopkins), a Yank they meet on a train in a delicious scene of miscommunication and good old American forwardness. Gilda decides that rather than choose one over the other, she'll live with them both—a situation Lubitsch would never have gotten past the censors after the imposition of the Production Code later that year. The arrangement is strictly platonic, of course, which only compounds the tensions. The glory of Lubitsch was the sly way he brought winking innuendo into his motion pictures, suggesting what he couldn't actually show onscreen, and this is one of his best efforts, with the European grace of Coward and the American earthiness of Hecht brought together in a glorious marriage (or should I say ménage à trois?) of sophistication, sex, and farce. Previously only available exclusively in a Gary Cooper DVD boxed set, this superior new Criterion release on DVD and Blu-ray features a wealth of extras, including select-scene commentary by film professor William Paul, a segment from the 1932 film *If I Had a Million* starring Charles Laughton, a 1964 British television production of the play *Design for Living* (introduced on camera by playwright Coward), a new interview with film scholar Joseph McBride, and a booklet. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

A Farewell to Arms

★★★

Kino, 89 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95



The first screen version of Ernest Hemingway's novel is not necessarily the most faithful—at 89 minutes, it's considerably condensed, and Hemingway himself was displeased with this adaptation of his semi-autobiographical story—but to date it's still the most passionate and moving interpretation. Gary Cooper is almost

impossibly young and handsome as Lt. Frederic Henry, the stalwart soldier resigned to the grind of war, and Helen Hayes practically glows as Catherine Barkley, an angel of a nurse who's nonetheless down to earth when it comes to romance and sex. Their affair leads to the birth of a child out of wedlock, a situation that the 1932 film refuses to judge. Director Frank Borzage's romanticism would seem a poor match for Hemingway's stoicism, but he elevates the couple's love to a holy purity even as it takes place outside the boundaries of church dictates and social acceptance. A priest performs a benediction over their union, suggesting some kind of marriage, but the Catholic League wasn't fooled and condemned the movie. Winner of Oscars for Best Cinematography and Best Sound and nominated for Best Film and Best Art Direction, *A Farewell to Arms* remains a beautiful work, even though choppy editing suggests rather violent treatment from studio editors. This new Kino release—remastered in HD from an archival 35mm print for both DVD and Blu-ray—is the best it's ever looked and sounded. Extras include a stills gallery. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Good Morning, Vietnam

★★★

Buena Vista, 121 min., R, Blu-ray: \$20



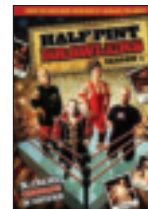
In this 1987 comedy set in 1965, Robin Williams plays armed forces DJ Adrian Cronauer, a real-life figure who brought rock 'n' roll to American soldiers in Vietnam and shook up the staid military-radio format. Directed by Barry Levinson, *Good Morning, Vietnam* features a superb supporting cast, including Forest Whitaker as Edward Galt, Cronauer's assistant; Bruno Kirby as Lt. Steven Hauk, Cronauer's straight-arrow supervisor; J.T. Walsh as Sgt. Maj. Dickerson, the humorless senior officer who tries to stop the anti-establishment commentary in Cronauer's free-form patter; Robert Wuhl as Sgt. Marty Dreiwitz, a fan and supporter; and Richard Edson as the clueless Pvt. Abersold. But it's Williams who powers the movie with the same rapid-fire, stream-of-consciousness monologues that defined his standup comedy act—repurposed here as on-air chattering, with Cronauer not realizing the positive effect his music and comedy have on morale. Off the air, Cronauer is a rebel without a cause, until he ventures into the countryside and meets some of the locals. Although based on a true story, the film takes great liberties while making familiar observations about the American presence in Southeast Asia. Released after *Platoon*, which inspired a wave of Vietnam movies, this is more of a Williams showcase, and on those terms it's very entertaining, with a soundtrack featuring a lively mix of 1960s hits. Bowing on Blu-ray, extras include a multi-part production diary and a

compilation of raw monologues (featuring footage from unused improvisations). Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Half Pint Brawlers:

Season 1 ★1/2

Image, 138 min., not rated, DVD: \$14.98

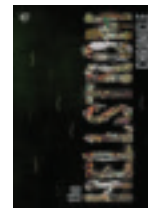


This reality TV series follows a wide-roving four-man troupe of little person wrestlers who are managed, coached, and scripted by self-proclaimed "psycho dwarf" Steve "Puppet" Richardson. The first episode, in which a stunt gone bad rips open one mini-grappler's shaven scalp in bloody close-up, pretty much sets the dare-you-to-watch tone. Apparently the presumed audience consists of the same drunken frat boys who cheer on the Half Pint Brawlers at their saloon gigs, judging by the lowbrow execution (piss drinking! poo-throwing! and so on)—although in a trip through Louisiana the guys have to modulate their vulgarity for a family-friendly carnival one day, and a prison audience the next. What meager substance this sideshow possesses comes from the camaraderie of the men and their hazing/initiation of agreeable new guy "Turtle" (a former telemarketer) into the HPB brotherhood. When Puppet, in the final segment, commits to a show with an extra team of half-pints not trained to his standards, the viewer can't help but imagine that a production about his 12 years on the job and the day-to-day business operations of the enterprise might have made for a more intriguing narrative. As it stands, however, *Half Pint Brawlers* falls considerably short. Not a necessary purchase. (C. Cassady)

The Hellstrom Chronicle

★★★1/2

Olive, 90 min., G, DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95



In the early 1970s, science-fiction author Frank Herbert (*Dune*) created the character of Dr. Nils Hellstrom, a rebellious scientist who tries to breed a superior race of humans with insect attributes. Filmmaker Walon Green's *The Hellstrom Chronicle*—which won the Best Documentary Oscar for 1972—is like a nonfiction (or quasi-nonfiction?) prequel to Herbert's novel *Hellstrom's Hive*. The pariah Ph.D., played here by actor Lawrence Pressman, attempts to warn the viewer about his controversial theory: namely, that the "lowly" insects, not *Homo sapiens*, are at the top of the food chain. Given the seemingly relentless stream of environmental toxins produced by man, the creepy-crawlers—ruthless and endlessly adaptive—will be the only ones left after an eco-apocalypse reduces cities to ruins. Striking nature footage (accompanied by a Lalo Schiffrin soundtrack) shows extreme

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close-ups of marauding ants, bees, mosquitoes, butterflies, spiders, centipedes, and beetles to illustrate Hellstrom's various points about bug versatility and behavior, and the macrophotography is every bit as good as the visuals seen in 1996 in the less dire French art-house hit *Microcosmos* (VL Online-9/97). While the sturm-und-drang rants and prophecies here regarding human extinction might seem heavy-handed, they were standard for an era when industrial pollution made frequent headlines in newspapers and magazines. Of course, many would say the message is still valid in 2012, whether the bearer of bad news is genuine or a storyteller's invention. Highly recommended. (C. Cassidy)

An Idiot Abroad ★★½

BBC, 2 discs, 347 min., not rated, DVD: \$34.98



The ugly American has nothing on the ugly Englishman. That is one of the lessons viewers can take from this comic travelogue—an improvisational documentary from Ricky Gervais and his partner Stephen Merchant. The pair send Karl Pilkington, producer of their radio show, to a different foreign locale in each of the seven 45-minute episodes here to visit a wondrous sight: the Great Wall of China, the Taj Mahal, the stone monuments at Petra in Jordan, the Mayan ruins at Chichen Itza, the Egyptian pyramids, the mountaintop statue of Christ in Brazil, and the Incan ruins of Machu Picchu in Peru. Not surprisingly, Gervais's and Merchant's intent is hardly benign. Pilkington is an insular, highly opinionated fellow, and his employers hope that his encounters with foreign cultures will result in lots of laughs. To make that likelier, the pair engineer a stream of potentially humiliating activities for him to endure—kung-fu exercises in China, getting into the ring with masked Mexican wrestlers, undergoing “extreme scenario” training in Israel, taking long (and uncomfortable) camel rides, visiting a nude beach in Brazil, and the like. Some of Pilkington's grouchy observations about his travels are amusing (Gervais certainly finds them hilarious), but just as many are simply rude or repetitive (especially his recurrent complaints about cuisine and toilet facilities), and the overall aim of making him miserable has a cruel edge. A bonus eighth episode is essentially a clips show, with the three men going over highlights. Extras include deleted scenes and a photo gallery. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Il Cappotto / The Overcoat ★★★

Raro, 107 min., in Italian w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.98

Moving the setting from 19th-century Russia to a small town in postwar Italy, director Alberto Lattuada adapts and expands Nikolai Gogol's short story about a mousy clerk who

gains newfound respect when he purchases a handsome new overcoat. In this little-seen 1952 classic, Renato Rascel plays Carmine De Carmine, a meek scrivener in City Hall oblivious to the corrupt ways of local politics. On the verge of losing his job, he's suddenly given a “bonus” after overhearing the pompous mayor (Giulio Stival) talking with his mistress (Yvonne Sanson), and he uses the bribe money to buy the handsome garment. His new sense of pride and appearance of affluence and dignity bring him sudden recognition, but his odyssey takes unexpected turns when the coat is stolen. Lattuada embellishes Gogol's central motif with tender grace notes and wry asides, and behind the bouncy caricatures and deft satire lies a quiet humanism. With its portrait of petty bureaucrats and blithely corrupt politicians, *Il Cappotto* features the same street-drama backdrop as famed neorealist films of the time, and deserves greater recognition. Bowing on DVD in a restored version created by the Turin National Film Museum, extras include audio commentary by film professor Flavio de Bernardinis, an interview with contemporary director Angelo Pasquini, deleted scenes, and an accompanying booklet. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



Justified: The Complete Second Season ★★★

Sony, 3 discs, 547 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.95, Blu-ray: \$49.95



Originally adapted from an Elmore Leonard short story, this FX-aired series stars Timothy Olyphant as Kentucky-born U.S. Marshall Raylan Givens, who is transferred (demoted actually) from Miami back to his home county. *Justified* has turned into one of the channel's notable critical and popular successes thanks to a superb cast, smart writing, and the decision to script each season around a self-contained story—in this case, one that will be familiar to readers of Leonard's entertaining latest novel, *Raylan*. Here, Raylan is dropped into the middle of a complicated standoff involving a family syndicate running marijuana, meth, moonshine, and other vital interests in coal country. Margo Martindale won a well-deserved Emmy Award as Mags Bennett, the wily matriarch of the backwoods mafia, busy taking on a corporate mining concern while her less disciplined sons (notably Jeremy Davies as Dickie, a schemer with a grudge against Raylan) stir up trouble in their dope trade. Walton Goggins is Boyd Crowder, a former criminal (and one-time buddy to Raylan) who tries to go straight but finds himself drawn back to his strengths as the balance of power in the rural crime world shifts. Compiling

all 13 episodes from the 2011 second season on DVD and Blu-ray, extras include two behind-the-scenes featurettes, deleted scenes and outtakes, and—exclusive to the Blu-ray release—a roundtable discussion with Leonard and the show's writers and producers. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Mildred Pierce ★★★½

HBO, 344 min., TV-MA, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 4 discs, \$49.99



In Michael Curtiz's hands, James M. Cain's novel *Mildred Pierce* became a suburban noir in 1945, but Todd Haynes spins a more class-conscious tale in this five-part 2011 HBO miniseries. The Depression is in effect when Mildred (Kate Winslet, ably filling Joan Crawford's shoes) parts from her unfaithful husband, Bert (Brian F. O'Byrne), leaving the Glendale housewife to work supporting her daughters as a waitress and part-time baker. To keep up the middle-class façade, Mildred tells only one person, neighbor Lucy (Melissa Leo), about her job; but by protecting 11-year-old Veda (Morgan Turner) from the truth, Mildred only encourages the elder child's snobbish tendencies. Mildred's pastry-making skills eventually enable her to open a chain of restaurants with help from Lucy, feisty colleague Ida (Mare Winningham), and opportunistic realtor Wally (James LeGros), with whom she has a fling. That ends when she falls for playboy Monty (Guy Pearce), who takes a shine to the musically inclined Veda, at which point the girl becomes truly insufferable. The first time Mildred slaps her, it's hard not to suppress a cheer; the second time, Veda hits her mother back. When Mildred finally kicks her out (Evan Rachel Wood plays the teenage Veda), you'll wonder why she didn't do it sooner. Audiences have long debated the issue of Mildred's attempts to buy her daughter's love—was Veda a bad seed or did poor parenting make her that way? Despite some awkward staging towards the end, the excellent cast—particularly Emmy recipients Winslet and Pearce—makes this work. Extras include two audio commentaries, a “making-of” featurette, and “Inside the Episode” segments. Highly recommended. (K. Fennessy)

The Piano ★★★½

Lionsgate, 120 min., R, Blu-ray: \$19.99



Jane Campion's intense and intimate 1993 story of a mute Scottish woman named Ada McGrath (Holly Hunter), who is essentially sold into marriage to New Zealand landowner Alisdair Stewart (Sam Neill) on an isolated island, is a period costume drama gone native. Ada is a single mother (a very young Anna Paquin, in her

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feature debut, plays her precocious daughter) who—in a way—speaks through the piano she has brought with her from home. After her emotionally barren husband—who strives to maintain European decorum in this jungle—abandons the piano to the wilds (a sign of how little respect he has for Ada), the couple's rough-hewn neighbor, George Baines (Harvey Keitel), buys it. Baines, with his face tattooed in the manner of the natives, is a European who has embraced the local Maori lifestyle, but he desires Ada and offers to trade the piano to her in exchange for sexual favors, to put it bluntly. But there are grave consequences to this illicit relationship. An earthy, erotic story full of passion, jealousy, and anger, *The Piano* won three Academy Awards (for Hunter as Best Actress, Paquin as Best Supporting Actress, and Campion for Best Original Screenplay) out of eight nominations, including Best Picture. Bowing on Blu-ray, this is highly recommended. (S. Axmayer)

Portlandia: Season One

★★★

VSC, 135 min., not rated,
DVD: \$16.95, Blu-ray: \$26.95

This sketch-comedy series—from indie rock-turned actress Carrie Brownstein (of Sleater-Kinney fame) and *Saturday Night Live* regular Fred Armisen—practically made Portland the capital of comic cool in America when it premiered on IFC in 2011. Brownstein and Armisen skewer slackers, yuppies, counter-culture types, activist bicyclers, and extreme political correctness of all stripes in their tribute to the city where “the dream of the ‘90s is still alive.” While the show was not a major ratings hit by network standards, it became IFC's most talked-about original series ever, and the cable network fed the fandom by posting clips to YouTube, where some of the skits have been seen by over a million viewers. *Portlandia*'s popularity reaches well beyond the channel's subscribers, and it's become a cult favorite among teens and young adults (it's also a rarity among cable comedy shows in that it doesn't resort to sexual innuendo or crude gags for laughs). Compiling all six episodes of the first season on DVD and Blu-ray, extras include episode commentaries, deleted scenes, and outtakes. Recommended. (S. Axmayer)



Sabu! ★★★

Criterion, 3 discs, 286 min., not rated, DVD: \$44.95

Sabu, born Selar Shaik, was a maharaja's young elephant driver when he was cast as the lead in the 1937 adventure drama *Elephant Boy*—based on Rudyard Kipling's short story “Toomai of the Elephants”—produced by



Alexander Korda and co-directed by his brother, Zoltan Korda, along with pioneering documentary filmmaker Robert J. Flaherty, who shot all the location footage. The casting was perfect, with the 12-year-old Sabu riding and clambering over the full-sized pachyderm with effortless ease, displaying an exotic beauty, authenticity, and unself-conscious screen charisma that would make him a star. This boxed set features *Elephant Boy* and two of the other films Sabu made for the Kordas (the fourth, 1940's *The Thief of Bagdad*, is available separately from Criterion). In *The Drum* (1938), Sabu plays a young prince protected by the British colonial forces in India, while *Jungle Book* (1942) is a glorious Technicolor fantasy with the now-adult Sabu—a confident and acrobatic movie star—portraying the grown orphan Mowgli, who speaks with the animals in the wild. The first two films are well-mounted and exciting, although their devotion to British colonial rule in India comes across as terribly dated. *Jungle Book*, however, is a folk tale come to life—a visual delight sporting grand imagery, with real leopards, tigers, bears, and other creatures (the Indian landscape was actually re-created in California, where Sabu swings from the vines like Tarzan). This family-friendly boxed set of classics from a bygone era is a welcome addition to Criterion's Eclipse line, and features film notes by cinema historian Michael Koresky. Recommended. (S. Axmayer)

Seven Chances ★★1/2

Kino, 56 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95

Buster Keaton directs and stars in this 1925 silent comedy as Jimmy Shannon, a bachelor and struggling young lawyer who's informed that he must marry by 7 p.m. on his 27th birthday—which just happens to be that very day—in order to inherit \$7 million. Turned down by Mary (Ruth Dwyer), the girl he's long loved, Jimmy frantically searches for someone—anyone—to wed. While *Seven Chances* doesn't boast the sustained inspiration of his best films (such as *The General* and *Steamboat Bill, Jr.*), Keaton nevertheless fills the movie with inventive moments and clever ideas, notably a series of desperate proposals (the “seven chances” of the title) leading to an outrageous finale, as a church full of hopeful brides all expecting to marry into his fortune set off on a surreal chase of epic proportions, with the hapless Keaton fleeing the angry mob of women and outrunning an avalanche of rolling stones and massive boulders—never once losing his trademark deadpan expression. The biggest weakness here is an embarrassing blackface performance that, while common for the time, is tasteless to modern eyes. Newly remastered for DVD and Blu-ray, with a musical score by Robert



Israel, bonus features include an audio commentary, a pair of background featurettes, and two shorts—the Three Stooges in *Brideless Groom* (1947), and Edwin S. Porter's *How a French Nobleman Got a Wife Through the New York Herald Personal Columns* (1904). A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmayer)

Shameless: The Complete First Season

★★★

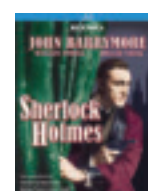
Warner, 595 min., not rated,
DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray:
2 discs, 49.99



American producer John Wells teamed up with British creator Paul Abbott to adapt the latter's successful dramedy of a family scraping by on the lowest rungs of the socioeconomic ladder, relocating the action from Manchester to South Chicago. The Showtime series stars William H. Macy as Frank Gallagher, a perpetually drunk single father of six, and Emmy Rossum as eldest daughter Fiona, who juggles multiple jobs to manage things in his absence. It's not that Frank—who is on permanent disability—has run off; rather, he's simply not around, or has passed out during those rare times he's home. The other kids do what they can to help out: Philip (Jeremy Allen White) accepts payments for taking the SAT for classmates; Ian (Cameron Monaghan) works at a convenience store; and Deb (Emma Kenney) pilfers from her UNICEF collections. Ten-year-old Carl (Ethan Cutkosky) and baby Liam are too young to add to the family till. Also stepping up to take on some responsibility is Fiona's boyfriend, Steve (Justin Chatwin), a car thief with a double identity. While it's not your traditional portrait of family values, *Shameless* works—creating an often compelling portrait of a household doing its best under difficult circumstances. Compiling all 12 episodes from 2011's first season on DVD and Blu-ray, extras include an audio commentary on the pilot, behind-the-scenes featurettes, and a sneak peek at the next season. Recommended. (S. Axmayer)

Sherlock Holmes ★★1/2

Kino, 85 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$34.95



Directed by Albert Parkes, 1922's *Sherlock Holmes* stars John Barrymore in the titular role—not the first screen appearance of the best-known character in English literature, and certainly not the definitive one. Based on a play by William Gillette, a stage actor who made a career playing the fictional sleuth, it rewrites the figure's origin and personality, making him a morally driven white knight who at one point actually falls in love with a young woman named Alice Faulkner (Carol Dempster). While

Barrymore has the requisite profile and intelligent focus, there's no deerstalker cap or meerschaum pipe (Barrymore's Holmes prefers cigars), and the faithful Watson is a college buddy and neighbor rather than right-hand man. The mystery itself is convoluted and confused, involving a young prince (Reginald Denny) falsely accused of theft in an incident that could lead to international scandal, with the evil Professor Moriarty (Gustav von Seyffertitz) turning out to be the scheming presence behind it all. Von Seyffertitz's flamboyance in his role is well-suited to silent filmmaking, although the production relies on lengthy inter-titles to tell much of the tale. *Sherlock Holmes* also marks the screen debut of two major actors of the sound era: William Powell (in a small role) and Roland Young as Watson; otherwise, it's a minor piece of cinema history. Making its Blu-ray debut with an enjoyable organ score by Ben Model, this is a strong optional purchase. (S. *Axmaker*)

The Shiver of the Vampires ★★½

Redemption, 95 min., in French w/English subtitles, R, DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$24.95

The Shiver of the Vampires is one of the strangest and most surreal films to come from director Jean Rollin, serving up a nutty mix of hippie vampires, lesbian seduction, and moonlight ceremonies in a graveyard bathed in red and blue light. Newlyweds Isa and Antoine (Sandra Julien, Jean-Marie Durand) stop off at a castle to visit the bride's oddball cousins (Jacques Robiolles, Michel Delahaye) only to discover that the relatives are dead—although after dark, they show up for dinner. Isa is later seduced by Isolde (Dominique), a statuesque vampire high priestess who makes her memorable entrance stepping out a grandfather clock. Released in 1971, this is a mad skin-flick for surrealists, with naked women wandering wordlessly through the hallways. The sketchy performances, slapdash effects, and narrative abstraction are typical of Rollin, whose reputation never really extended beyond cult fans who appreciated the distinctive style and imagery of his sex-and-horror films, as well as his ability to create an unsettling atmosphere out of simple locations and minimalist sets. Newly remastered for DVD and Blu-ray—with both the original French-language version with English subtitles and an English dub track—extras include an introduction by and interview with Rollin, along with a 20-page booklet. Kino is also releasing a number of other Rollin films, including *Fascination*, *The Iron Rose*, *Lips of Blood* and *The Nude Vampire*. Falling somewhere between exploitation and outsider art, this is a strong optional purchase. (S. *Axmaker*)



The Simpsons: The Fourteenth Season ★★★

Fox, 483 min., not rated, DVD: 4 discs, \$49.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$59.99

The adventures of Matt Groening's iconic animated family continue in this 22-episode 2002-03 14th season of the long-running series, kicking off with the latest "Treehouse of Horror" three-part Halloween special, featuring the creepy cursed hammock tale "Send in the Clones," the zombie Wild West gang massacre story "The Fright to Creep and Scare Harms" and the *Island of Doctor Moreau* parody "The Island of Dr. Hibbert." This season features celebrity guest voices including Little Richard ("Special Edna"), WNBA star Lisa Leslie (who hilariously chides Bart about his grammar in "Pray Anything"), and Steve Buscemi (spoofing himself in "Brake My Wife, Please"), as well as Homer's rock camp dream "How I Spent My Strummer Vacation" (with Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, Lenny Kravitz, Tom Petty, and others). Still somewhat fresh—at least compared to the series' contemporary episodes—the 14th season's standout storylines include an accidental boob job for the Simpson matriarch ("Large Marge"), Homer hiring a P.I. to bond with Lisa ("The Dad Who Knew Too Little"), and Moe the bartender's newfound lease on life through a friendship with baby Maggie (the season finale "Moe Baby Blues"). Extras include audio commentaries, deleted scenes, original sketches, and more. Recommended. (J. *Williams-Wood*)



Stars and Stripes Forever ★★★

Fox, 89 min., not rated, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.99

Unabashedly jingoistic but undeniably enjoyable, Henry Koster's flag-waving 1952 musical biopic celebrates march king John Philip Sousa, the most famous bandleader of his time. The film's great strength—apart from the famous tunes that are played with élan throughout—is the characteristic comic hauteur that the inimitable Clifton Webb brings to the lead. Whether Sousa was actually quite as prim and unflappable as portrayed here is open to question, but this is one of Webb's best turns, perfectly complemented by Ruth Hussey as his bemused, supportive wife, Jennie. Unfortunately, the filmmakers felt compelled to add an entirely fictional romantic subplot—a young member of Sousa's company (Robert Wagner) brings his singer girlfriend (Debra Paget) into the band—to the chronological account of Sousa's career from the close of his stint as U.S. Marine Corps Band director up through his efforts on behalf of the troops fighting in the Spanish-American War.



Presenting a sparklingly crisp restoration of the film, extras on this Blu-ray/DVD Combo pack include a retrospective "making-of" featurette, a segment on Sousa's contribution to American music, the U.K. version of the title sequence, and stills galleries. Recommended. (F. *Swietek*)

Switched at Birth: Volume One ★★★

Buena Vista, 2 discs, 435 min., TV-14, DVD: \$29.99

The title of this ABC Family Channel teenage melodrama says it all: well-to-do suburbanites John and Kathryn Kennish (D.W. Moffett, Lea Thompson) and struggling single mom Regina Vasquez (Constance Marie) discover that the daughters they've raised since birth are not their own biological progeny. It turns out that rich girl Bay Kennish (Vanessa Marano), a graffiti artist with a rebellious streak, and whip-smart, well-adjusted Daphne Vasquez (Katie Leclerc), who's deaf as a result of a childhood illness, were accidentally switched at the hospital—human error, not anything malicious—and a high school science experiment reveals a genetic anomaly that brings the whole thing to light. That's all in the first five minutes. The rest of the series covers the girls' awkward but fulfilling efforts to get to know their blood relations while still maintaining their home ties, resulting in a collision of class, culture, and child-rearing philosophies (that one of the teenagers is hearing-impaired opens up the show to a culture rarely seen on TV). There are plenty of boyfriend troubles, parenting crises, and personality clashes, along with a few manufactured brouhahas and a tendency to gloss over the repercussions of some dramatic twists, but in general *Switched at Birth* strives to address issues of identity and relationships (including teenage sexuality) responsibly. Presenting the first 10 episodes of the 2011-12 debut season, this is recommended. (S. *Axmaker*)



Tokyo Drifter ★★★

Criterion, 82 min., in Japanese w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95

This 1966 pop-art crime story about a loyal former gangster who takes the fall for a yakuza killing and then goes on the lam to take the heat off his boss is one of the most interesting offerings from inventive director Seijun Suzuki, known for pushing mob movies, thrillers, and other exploitation genres into strange and surreal territory. Tetsuya Watari, a young Japanese matinee idol of the era, stars as Tetsu, the cool killer in dark shades who whistles his own theme song as he drifts across the country while rival mobsters, cops, and





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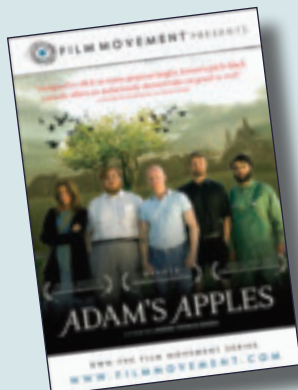
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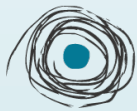
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even his own clan try to track him down. Suzuki opens the widescreen production in high-contrast black-and-white with isolated eruptions of color that finally explode in oversaturated hues, like a comic book come to life, while the twisting story becomes more abstract as it takes Tetsu from deliriously gaudy nightclubs—where killers hide behind every pillar—to the beautiful snowy plains of northern Japan and back again. Suzuki's extreme stylization, jarring narrative leaps, and wild plot devices combine to create pulp fiction on acid, but while there's plenty of gunplay and killing here, there's almost no blood. Although not an essential example of 1960s Japanese cinema, *Tokyo Drifter* is certainly one of the most entertaining. Freshly remastered for DVD and bowing on Blu-ray, extras include an interview with Suzuki, and a booklet. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

The Tuskegee Airmen

★★★1/2

HBO, 106 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$14.98



HBO's 1995 made-for-cable historical drama *The Tuskegee Airmen*—the story of the black fighter pilots who broke the color barrier in the U.S. Air Force during World War II—makes its Blu-ray debut to coincide with the release of George Lucas's similarly-themed theatrical film *Red Tails*. Laurence Fishburne stars as Hannibal Lee, a proud and solemn Iowan, with Cuba Gooding Jr. as city-kid hipster Billy Roberts; the two meet en route to Tuskegee Air Force Base, where they're among the recruits for an "experimental" program to "prove" the abilities of African-American men in military services. Fighting prejudice from racist officers and government officials and held to a consistently higher level of performance than their white counterparts, these individuals excel in training and in combat, many dying for their country in the process. Andre Braugher costars as Benjamin O. Davis, a West Point graduate who takes charge of the unit in Africa and in Italy (Davis later became the first African-American general in the Air Force). Although slow starting and episodic, the film is occasionally rousing (Fishburne and Braugher both earned Emmy nominations for their performances), but the drama is periodically undercut by war movie clichés. Packaged with an illustrated booklet with notes on the film, this is noteworthy mainly for its historical perspective. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

Underbelly: The Trilogy

★★★
eOne, 12 discs, 1,704 min., not rated, DVD: \$99.98

This Australian TV crime drama (which has been compared to *The Sopranos*) chronicles the violent, drug-fueled Melbourne gangland war that exploded in the 1970s

and continued through the 2000s. The stories are based on real-life events, fictionalized to some extent but basically following the historical record of murders (of both witnesses and criminal rivals and snitches), disappearances of key figures, and arrests, all within the framework of the career of one police officer, Jacqui James (Caroline Craig), who serves as narrator. Straddling the line between gritty tell-all and lurid melodrama, the sex- and violence-laden *Underbelly*—directed with a rapid pace and flamboyant sensibility—was highly controversial when it first appeared on Australian TV, but went on to become a massive hit, so subsequent installments followed, rewinding back to the 1970s to trace the origins of the mayhem in Sydney and Melbourne. The "trilogy" in the title refers to the initial three 13-episode seasons of the show—*War on the Streets* (2008), *A Tale of Two Cities* (2009), and *The Golden Mile* (2010)—although the boxed set reorganizes the order so the storyline unfolds chronologically. American audiences won't necessarily get the Australian cultural and historical references, but the tales of a rampant drug culture and intertwined police corruption are compelling in their own right. Compiling 39 episodes on 12 discs, extras include a documentary on Carl Williams (the real-life gangster at the center of the 2008 production), and two behind-the-scenes featurettes. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



Way Down East

★★★
Kino, 149 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$34.95

D.W. Griffith's 1920 classic was self-consciously old-fashioned even for its day, with a radiant Lillian Gish playing Anna Moore, the innocent country girl who is seduced, impregnated, and betrayed by mustache-twirling cad Lennox Sanderson (future director Lowell Sherman), and then protected by all-American David Bartlett (Richard Barthelmess), a good boy from a proud family that looks down on the despoiled young woman with a child born out of wedlock. Based on a sentimental 19th-century stage melodrama by Lottie Blair Parker, the story is made larger than life with Griffith's Dickensian approach, flair for spectacle (in particular, a thrilling race across ice floes), and use of cross-cutting and orchestrated pacing to turn the climactic moments into nail-biting action. Griffith was still one of the masters of American filmmaking at the time, and this is one of his best works, despite the theatrical clichés and corny Victorian morality. And while *Way Down East* may not be as iconic or historically essential as *The Birth of a Nation*, it's also neither as controversial nor potentially offensive to viewers. Newly



remastered for Blu-ray from the Museum of Modern Art's 35mm restoration—with color tints and a score by the Mont Alto Motion Picture Orchestra—extras include a clip from the Edison Studio's 1903 version of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (featuring the floating-ice sequence that inspired Griffith's scene), documents and notes on the film, and stills galleries. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Wings

★★★
Paramount, 144 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99



Paramount's lavish 1927 war drama will always have a place in film history, winning the very first Academy Award for Best Picture. Love interest Clara Bow takes top billing in this silent drama, although Charles "Buddy" Rogers and Richard Arlen as pals and fellow pilots Jack Powell and David Armstrong are at the center of the film. Even so, the real star of this World War I picture is the amazing aerial spectacle of dogfights over the battlefields. Director William A. Wellman, who was a WWI fighter pilot himself, successfully captures the camaraderie of men in battle while also filling the screen with the thrilling flight of the warriors, including downed planes spiraling through the clouds with a tail of black smoke and yellow flame (color was digitally painted in for flourishes, just like the hand-coloring of the time). All of this was staged and shot for real and the budget soared to \$2 million, making it one of the most expensive films of its era. *Wings* presents a romanticized look at war, but it's also what Hollywood does best, combining a love story, scenes of bonding under fire, and rousing "war is hell" action. Paramount beautifully restored and remastered the film for its debut on DVD and Blu-ray. Both editions offer two musical scores (a new recording of the original orchestral score with sound effects, and an archival organ score by Gaylord Carter) and a featurette on the film. Exclusive to the Blu-ray release are two bonus featurettes on the restoration and dogfights. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Video Librarian Online

Visit Video Librarian Online (www.videolibrarian.com) for more reviews during March and April, including: *Branded to Kill*, *The Brontës of Haworth*, *Call Me Fitz: The Complete First Season*, *Case Histories*, *Godzilla*, *The Increasingly Poor Decisions of Todd Margret*, *It Takes a Thief: Complete Series*, *Jerry Lewis as The Jazz Singer*, *Medea*, *The Moon in the Gutter*, *Rock-A-Bye Baby*, *Royal Pains: Season Three (Volume One)*, *Three Popular Films by Jean-Pierre Gorin*, and much more!

Ordering information for the videos 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

Abraham Lincoln ★★

(2011) 21 min. DVD: \$39.95. *Getting to Know*. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-0982880357.

Sixteenth president Abraham Lincoln is the focus of this latest entry in the *Getting to Know the U.S. Presidents* series produced by author and director Mike Venezia. Combining pastel colors, archival photos, animation, and narration by "Abe" himself, *Abraham Lincoln* explores Lincoln's life, beginning with his birth in a Harden County, KY, dirt cabin, brief months of schooling, and encouragement to read from his stepmother (Lincoln enjoyed *Robinson Crusoe*, Shakespeare, and the Bible). Touching on various jobs taken by the strong but skinny jack-of-all-trades, the program depicts Lincoln as a soldier, surveyor, lawyer, postmaster, and more, before delving into his political career, family life, Civil War difficulties, and historical significance. Featuring quotes, important events, vocabulary, and fanciful bits (such as Abe discussing the love scene in *Romeo and Juliet* with talking oxen), this is definitely recommended. Aud: E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

The Esrog ★★

(2010) 65 min. DVD: \$19.95. *Holy World Productions* (avail. from www.holyworldproductions.com). PPR. Closed captioned.

The Esrog compiles claymation versions of two edifying stories associated with Baal

Shem Tov, the 18th-century mystical rabbi who founded the Hasidic movement in Judaism. The titular piece revolves around Dovid, a poor but pious farmer whose great dream has been to someday purchase the most beautiful esrog (a kind of citrus) in the village market for his family's celebration of the harvest festival Succos. One year, Dovid secretly saves enough money to buy a magnificent fruit; but when he brings it home, his wife's reaction teaches him a lesson about what's really important. The second tale, "Yaakov and Eliyahu," concerns a man named Yaakov, who prays to see Elijah (believed to have mentored Baal Shem). Yaakov ultimately learns that true religion is based on kindness and generosity to others, not conversation with a prophet. Although director Tawd B. Dorenfeld clearly wishes to make these traditional narratives available in a form that will appeal to youngsters, the execution here is amateurish—with stop-motion work reminiscent of *Gumby*—and the pacing is lethargic. DVD extras include a "making-of" featurette, four music videos, and an interactive tool for teaching the Hebrew alphabet. Although well intentioned, this is not recommended. Aud: P. (F. Swietek)

Families of Germany ★★

(2011) 30 min. DVD: \$29.95 (teacher's guide included). *Master Communications*. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60480-113-2.

This latest addition to the *Families of the World* series explores the daily lives of two German youngsters, filmed around the fall holidays. Rural seven-year-old Sophia lives in the fairy-tale-like town of Marburg, which served as an inspiration to the Brothers Grimm. Viewers follow Sophia (sometimes with her parents and older siblings) during various activities, including collecting eggs on a nearby farm, performing a rendition of "Singin' in the Rain"

with her English class, attending a school benefit, at a guitar lesson, and celebrating St. Martin's Day. Also featured is urban Berlin 10-year-old Ole, who we initially see at a cookout with his Boy Scout group (they roast sausages and marshmallows). Ole (and sometimes his family) also prepares pumpkins and treats for Halloween, shows off a tortoise pet, takes a tour of the many city attractions and forms of transportation, does his 5th-grade homework, and practices handball. A solid entry in the popular multiple-volume travelogue and cultural awareness series, this is recommended. Aud: E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Fun on the Farm 2 ★★

(2011) 33 min. DVD: \$14.99. *TM Books & Video* (avail. from most distributors). PPR. ISBN: 978-1-936890-00-2.

Belle the animated cow is back for this second helping of *Fun on the Farm*, which features a mix of live-action and animation, coupled with catchy original songs. Belle is joined by a new character, Mo the dog, and the two serve as guides to the activities on a farm in Indiana, where milk from the dairy cattle is made into cheese and ice cream. Since it's produced by the John Deere company, the familiar green-and-yellow machines are prominent here, and those unfamiliar with modern agricultural apparatus will be fascinated to witness some of the intricacies of these mechanisms, as exemplified by a tractor with giant folding arms that resembles an insect tucking in its wings. As they sing along with tunes composed by James Coffee, young viewers will learn how cows are milked and fields are plowed, planted, cultivated, and harvested. Adding to the fun are the presence of numerous baby animals, and most of the vignettes include alphabet and counting games. Sure to delight preschoolers, this is recommended. Aud: K, P. (C. Block)

(cont. on pg. 55)



Fizzy's Lunch Lab: Fresh Foods 101 ★★

(2011) 70 min. DVD: \$9.99 (\$29.95 w/PPR). *PBS Video*. ISBN: 978-1-60883-582-9.

Focusing on 10 nutrition-related topics, this compilation from the PBS Kids Internet series consists of webisodes, related songs, and talk show-style *Lunch Lab Live* segments. "Attack of the Pizzanators" introduces Professor Fizzy, who entices his young friends with healthful alternatives to Fast Food Freddy's greasy fare. Young viewers will also meet Sully the Cell, who illustrates how the body processes white vs. wheat flour (as in pizza crust); hear the singing Freezer Burn band of frozen goods; and witness a *Lunch Lab Live* contrasting two guests: a hyper-then-frazzled piece of white bread vs. a consistent, energized slice of wheat. Also including segments such as "Breakfast Boost," "Kid Critic" (in which a finicky food reviewer is won over by a juicy black bean burger), and "Family Dinner Team" ("The family table beats microwave dinners and cable!"), bonus features include printable recipes and activities. Highly recommended. Editor's Choice. Aud: K, E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

ALA-ALSC Notable Videos 2012

ALA's Association for Library Services to Children (ALSC) has selected its 2012 list of Notable Children's Videos, which includes videos and DVDs for children 14 years of age and younger. Unless otherwise noted, titles are available from most distributors or the companies are listed in the "Distributor Addresses" on page 90.

All the World (Weston Woods, 6 min., DVD: \$59.95, ages 3-7). Liz Garton Scanlon's 2009 Caldecott Honor Book combines gorgeous illustrations and simple, rhyming text narrated by Joanne Woodward to follow a multicultural family's activities throughout the day as they go from the seashore to a farmer's market, weather a rainstorm, and end the evening with relatives and friends. (VL-11/11)

A Child's Garden of Poetry (HBO, 27 min., DVD: \$9.98, ages 6 and up). This HBO Family special features entertainers including Carrie Fisher, Julianne Moore, Ziggy Marley, and Philip Seymour Hoffman reading poetry by Robert Louis Stevenson, Langston Hughes, and Emily Dickinson, backed by lyrical animation and live-action scenes.

Children Make Terrible Pets (Weston Woods, 8 min., DVD: \$59.95, ages 4-8). Animated by Soup2Nuts, this adaptation of author Peter Brown's 2010 *New York Times* Best Illustrated Book of the Year and Carnegie Medal winner serves up a whimsical role reversal tale about Lucy Bear, who finds a little boy in the forest and takes him home against her mother's wishes.

Choosing to Be a GFF (Good Friend Forever) (Good Friend, 15 min., DVD: \$52, web: goodfriendinc.com, all ages). Featuring commentary by students with autism/ASD in 6th through 8th grade, this program encourages awareness of autism and peer acceptance.

Coming Out: What Every Teen (Gay and Straight) Needs to Know (Human Relations Media, 23 min., DVD or VHS: \$139.95, ages 12-18). In this well-shot and edited documentary, human sexuality experts provide commentary to accompany the stories of several young people who have had positive experiences with both peers and family in identifying themselves as LGBT. (VL-7/11)

The Day of the Dead (Weston Woods, 9 min., DVD: \$59.95, ages 4-8). A pair of youngsters celebrate their heritage and pay tribute to ancestors on the titular Latin American holiday in this adaptation of author/illustrator Bob Barner's 2010 picture book—featuring luscious collage illustrations and poetic text—narrated by Rita Moreno.

Don't Let the Pigeon Stay Up Late! (Weston Woods, 6 min., DVD: \$59.95, ages 2-7). Incorporating elements from earlier titles and featuring a giggling chorus of schoolchildren interacting with the mischievous Pigeon, this latest animated adaptation from author, illustrator, and narrator Mo Willems is based on the 2006 picture book. (VL-1/12)

Eric Carle, Picture Writer: The Art of the Picture Book (Eric Carle Studio, 32 min., DVD: \$40, web: carlemuseum.org, all ages). Designed for viewers of all ages, this program explores the life and creative processes of author Eric Carle, who has produced more than 70 books for young children.

Kitten's First Full Moon (Weston Woods, 9 min., DVD: \$59.95, ages 2-7). Narrated by Joan Allen with music by Ernest Troost, this adaptation of Kevin Henke's 2005 Caldecott Medal winner follows an inquisitive kitten's exciting evening.

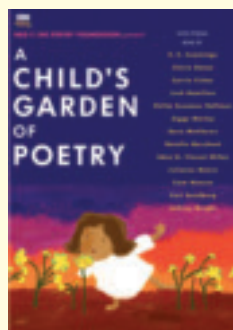
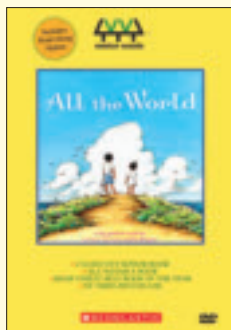
The Laurie Berkner Band: Party Day (Razor & Tie, 49 min., DVD: \$16.98, ages 3-8). Also including a bonus audio CD, this latest addition to the popular "kindie" rock group Laurie Berkner Band's series of children's music videos features the titular singer, keyboardist Susie Lampert, bassist Adam Bernstein, and drummer Bob Golden expounding on the fun theme of whimsical parties with 12 tunes. (VL-9/11)

Private Eyes/Les Yeux Noirs (National Film Board of Canada, 15 min., DVD: \$129, web: nfb.ca, ages 4-8). Presented in both English and French versions, this 3D stereoscopic animated adaptation of Gilles Tibo's 1999 children's book follows a blind child who draws on the strengths of his other senses while snooping for his birthday present.

Robot Zot! (Weston Woods, 8 min., DVD: \$59.95, ages 3-7). This delightful, fully animated version of the 2009 bestselling children's book by author Jon Scieszka serves as a great showcase for the brightly colored drawings of award-winning illustrator David Shannon as it tells the tale of courageous but tiny Robot Zot, who crash-lands on Earth with a conqueror's intentions. (VL-11/11)

Safety Smart Science with Bill Nye the Science Guy: Germs & Your Health (Disney Educational Productions, 26 min., DVD: \$29.99, web: dep.disney.go.com, ages 9-13). Wacky host Bill Nye employs green goo and ultraviolet lights to illustrate the scientific elements behind tiny germs.

Scaredy Squirrel (Weston Woods, 7 min., DVD: \$59.95, ages 4-8). Narrated by David de Vries and featuring music by Scotty Huff and Robert Reynolds, this animated adaptation of author and illustrator Mélanie Watt's 2006 ALA Notable picture book marks the first title in the series featuring the titular rodent (see review on page 56).



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Stone Soup (Weston Woods, 12 min., DVD: \$59.95, ages 4-8). A retelling of the classic fable with a cultural twist, this iconographic-animated adaptation of the 2003 picture book by author and illustrator Jon J. Muth—featuring narration by B.D. Wong—travels along with three Zen monks on a quest for inner happiness. (VL-1/12)

Too Many Toys (Weston Woods, 10 min., DVD: \$59.95, ages 4-8). Featuring music by Michael Bacon, this Soup2Nuts animated adaptation of author and illustrator David Shannon's 2008 picture book tells the story of a boy whose

whopping collection of toys is starting to negatively impact his family's lifestyle.

2012 Notable Children's Videos Committee: Martha Simpson, Chair, Stratford Library Association, Stratford, CT; Marilyn Ackerman, Brooklyn Public Library; Linda L. Ernst, King County Library System, Bellevue, WA; Dr. Linda A. Gann, University of North Carolina, SLIS, Greensboro; Suzanne Myers Harold, Multnomah County Library, Portland, OR; Lindsay D. Huth, Arlington Heights Memorial Library, Arlington Heights, IL; Gwen Taylor, Clarkston, WA; Emily Tichenor, Tulsa City-County Library, OK; and Joanna Ward, Pasadena, CA.



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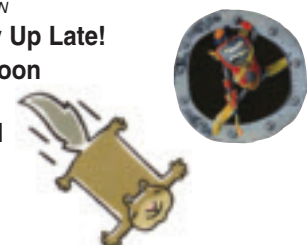
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Where Books Come Alive!

(cont. from pg. 51)

The Great Race ★★★

(2011) 13 min. DVD: \$49.95 (study guide included). Nutmeg Media. PPR. ISBN: 1-933938-82-X.

This iconographic-animated adaptation of writer-illustrator Kevin O'Malley's 2011 picture book *The Great Race*—an updated version of *The Tortoise and the Hare*—is narrated by Michael Pongracz, who relates the story of Nate Tortoise, an out-of-shape turtle, and Lever Lapin, an athletic rabbit. The former is a sarcastic slowpoke, while the latter is a conceited champion. Nonetheless, Nate believes he could beat Lever in a race, and while dining in his favorite restaurant, La Gaganspew, he voices that thought aloud, just as Lever arrives with his entourage. The fleet-footed sprinter accepts the challenge, and a week later, the competition commences, beginning with Lever in front and Nate behind (a snail cracks, "He's so slow, he's gonna get a parking ticket"). After a while, Lever starts to goof off for the crowd, before stopping for lunch and signing autographs. Meanwhile, Nate catches up—to the point that even if Lever cuts through all the fans clamoring for his signature, he still might not make it. DVD extras include an audio interview with O'Malley. Combining a droll narrative with appealing watercolor imagery, this is recom-

mended. Aud: K, E, P. (K. Fennessy)

How Did That Get in My Lunchbox? The Story of Food ★★½

(2011) 18 min. DVD: \$49.95 (study guide included). Nutmeg Media. PPR. ISBN: 1-933938-83-8.

This iconographic-animated adaptation of the 2011 picture book written by Chris Butterworth and illustrated by Lucia Gaggiotti offers a general introduction to a few different food sources. The bread in one's lunchbox sandwich, for example, comes from the flour ground from wheat; the tomatoes ripen from green to orange to red before being plucked; and the apple is picked from an orchard. Presenting a basic overview of major food groups and the amounts people need to eat from each, the program offers solid information but suffers a bit from the static, unremarkable illustrations and humorless approach. DVD extras include a brief conversation with Butterworth, who talks about how she became a children's author. Optional. Aud: E, P. (T. Keogh)

Nature for Kids: Beginning Spanish

★★★

(2011) 40 min. DVD: \$19.99. Language Tree. PPR. ISBN: 978-0-9835037-1-2.

Narrated in Spanish but also available with

English subtitles, this language immersion program features 12 lessons focusing on various wild animals and their characteristics. *Nature for Kids* includes clear nature footage showcasing animals including lions, giraffes, monkeys, gazelles, hippos, birds, and insects, while also examining specific anatomical parts of the creatures (such as a spotlight on paws or teeth), colors, sizes, and other facets, in a conversational manner. Combining interesting clips (such as lion cubs battling each other in play) with creative sound effects (snoring; hyped-up music to reflect action), this enriching language program is recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Where Does Food Come From? ★★★

(2011) 62 min. DVD: \$15. Kidsinglish Productions (avail. from www.kidsinglish.com). PPR.

Simple, straightforward, and pleasing to the eye and ear, *Where Does Food Come From?* introduces young children to Earth's wide-ranging sources of food, looking at how people cultivate, catch, or process what they eat. Organized into 14 topics covering rice, sugar, honey, vegetables, fruit, seafood, and more, the program presents brief animated segments hosted by a gnomish fellow who guides the viewer through the stages of getting edibles to our plates. For example, the piece on rice offers a quick tour illustrating

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Scaredy Squirrel ★★½

(2011) 7 min. DVD: \$59.95 (study guide included). Weston Woods Studios. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 0-545-32712-1.

Narrated by David de Vries and featuring music by Scotty Huff and Robert Reynolds, this animated adaptation of author-illustrator Mélanie Watt's 2006 ALA Notable picture book follows the precise daily routine of the titular rodent, whose existence is limited to sleeping, watching, and eating due to the fact that he "never leaves his nut tree." The squirrel is terrified of the unknown—including tarantulas, poison ivy, green Martians, killer bees, sharks, germs, etc.—and his emergency kit (featuring a parachute and bug spray) does nothing to alleviate his fears. Admitting that there are both advantages and drawbacks to being stationary, one day Scaredy makes some drastic changes. Incorporating pre-school subjects such as time elements and days of the week within a cute story about facing real and exaggerated fears, this 2012 ALA-ALSC Notable Children's Video selection also includes an interview with Watt. Highly recommended. Aud: K, P. (J. Williams-Wood)



how the grain is raised in water, harvested, and hulled, while the wheat chapter explains how parts of the kernel are separated out before flour is sent to bakeries to make bread. The produce sections sort through the differences (and similarities) between fruits and vegetables, and how eating them is part of nature's way of dispersing seeds. The discussion on chocolate will amaze chocoholics of all ages with the complicated tale of the production process from the cacao tree in South America to the Hershey bar at the corner store. Unlike the other segments, the section on meat skips over some steps—including the grisly details of slaughter. Also featuring bouncy songs summarizing the information, DVD extras include bonus music videos, MP3s of all the songs, multiple-choice test sheets, and printable lyrics. Recommended. Aud: E, P. (T. Keogh)

PSYCHOLOGY & SELF-HELP

A Child's Mind: How Kids Learn Right & Wrong ★★½

(2011) 34 min. DVD: \$109 (downloadable teacher's guide available). Learning Seed. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 1-55740-585-9.

Operating from the premise that every child is born into some sort of cultural framework that involves attitudes and behaviors labeled "good" and "bad" or "right" and "wrong," this program presents a survey of several major models of moral development from influential theorists, with plenty of real-world examples and interviews with early childhood education experts and a developmental psychologist. Their observations are intended to answer important questions: What is the responsibility of adults to teach ethics to children? And how and when can youngsters actually comprehend such information? Each theorist and model is introduced, explained, and compared

(with various criticisms also noted). From Jean Piaget's heteronomous versus autonomous morality up through current "theory of mind" ideas that have to do with kids' ability to see the world through another's perspective, each segment includes practical suggestions on how parents, teachers, and caregivers can integrate particular theories into everyday interactions with children. The added emphasis on practicality makes this useful for both developmental psychology coursework and teacher training or parenting classes. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (E. Gieschen)

Kelso in Action, 4th Edition ★★½

(2011) 18 min. DVD: \$89.95 (teacher's guide included). Cerebellum Corporation. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-61867-202-5.

The widely adopted *Kelso's Choice* conflict management skills program for children—originally developed in 1992—is a simple system built on the straightforward premise that all kids are "smart enough and strong enough to resolve conflict." Using the graphic of a wheel, youngsters can choose from nine actions, divided into verbal and nonverbal responses. Problems are classified as "small" and "big" (or "minor" and "serious" for upper grades), and viewers are taught to differentiate between the two, as well as advised when to involve a trusted adult. This all-new updated edition of the tried-and-true program is divided into age-appropriate presentations, with the same content—five well-acted vignettes clearly illustrating the peacemaking principles in action (the grades K–3 portion uses the original animated character of Kelso the Frog, while the grades 4–5 section does not). The strategies presented here for children to do their own problem-solving are rooted in practicality and are empowering. The one potential drawback of this excellent production is that it is designed to be implemented using the full curriculum found in the considerably more expensive kit. However, the standalone video can still

be very useful for getting kids to think about employing better strategies in their peer relationships. Highly recommended. Aud: K, E, I. (E. Gieschen)

People in White ★★★

(2011) 64 min. In Dutch w/English subtitles. DVD: \$99.95; public libraries; \$295; colleges & universities. The Cinema Guild. PPR. ISBN: 0-7815-1392-8.

Instead of featuring psychiatrists talking about their patients, Dutch directors Tellervo Kalleinen and Oliver Kochta-Kalleinen's *People in White* alternates between scenes of patients re-enacting their conversations with therapists and sharing their experiences in a group context. Although six of the participants are patients, the other four are actors. Some say they prefer a casual relationship with their doctor, while others want to maintain a professional one. Margreet (Ellen van Rossum) initially thought her psychiatrist looked like "the crazy one," but she continued to see him for the next 20 years. After undergoing electroshock therapy, Margreet's depression disappeared, along with a portion of her memory; now, the 54-year-old can't work, but she believes it was a necessary sacrifice. Fabio, a schizophrenic, also credits his doctor for bringing him back into the light, but others' recollections aren't so pleasant. Kees says he goes through a bar of soap daily due to obsessive-compulsive disorder, but his psychiatrist sees him more as a collection of symptoms than a human being. And when Mieke, who takes lithium for manic depression, complained about side effects, her therapist dismissed her concerns; her subsequent acting out earned her a stint in the isolation ward. Peter (Hugo Maerten), who suffers from bipolar disorder, has also had difficulty in getting his doctors to listen to him. In the most discomfiting segment here, a doctor acts inappropriately with Loes (Christine van Stralen), which only worsens her psychological state. While the mix of real patients and actors may be unusual, the directors do successfully raise valid questions about doctor-patient relationships. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennesy)

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

Dark Nights and Doubts in Our Lives: A Failure of Faith—Or Imagination?

★★★

(2011) 165 min. DVD: \$19.99. Oblate Media (dist. by Videos With Values). PPR. ISBN: 978-932142770-3.

The Rev. Ron Rolheiser of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio hosts another retreat for Roman Catholic clergy and laity in *Dark Nights and Doubts in Our Lives*, which like his earlier *Sacred Fire: An Anthropology and Spirituality of Sexuality* (VL-3/11) consists of

three lectures. The main subject here is what is commonly referred to as “the dark night of the soul”—those doubts that periodically challenge the religious beliefs of even the most devout. Rolheiser’s basic teaching is that such experiences are a positive part of God’s redemptive plan, ultimately bringing growth in both humility and maturity—as well as our acceptance of divine ineffability—while also purifying the soul. Although naturally speaking from a theological perspective, Rolheiser is an amiable presenter, avoiding jargon in favor of common-sense language and using personal reflection and humor to lighten his argument. And he illustrates his points with aptly chosen excerpts from various texts, including those of such mystics as John of the Cross and figures like Mother Teresa, whose diaries reveal her own struggle with uncertainty. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Legendary Voices: Cantors of Yesteryear

★★★

(2011) 78 min. DVD: \$29.95 (\$100 w/PPR). Ergo Media. ISBN: 1-56082-390-9.

This compilation of archival footage showcases the artistry of eight notable khazanim—cantors who were stars in the American Jewish community of the ‘30s—

Mordechai Hershtman, Adolph Katchko, Samuel Malavsky, Moishe Oysher, David Roitman, Yossele Rosenblatt, Josef Shlisky, and Leibele Waldman. The film clips of the men intoning brief portions of the Hebrew liturgy are mostly drawn from footage shot by Joseph Seiden between 1931 and 1938, in which the subjects performed with choral accompaniment either in temple settings or in a staged “concert” format (in one case, the excerpts are drawn from A.J. Bloome’s 1934 documentary *Dream of My People*). Although the video and audio qualities are unsurprisingly mediocre, the voices—smooth, piercing tenors that move into ringing falsetto and powerful baritone—are still amazing. The collection is introduced by Cantor Jack Mendelson, who also offers amusing biographical sketches of the subjects, spiced with his own personal observations (he’s particularly adept at describing the special characteristics that distinguished each man’s voice). Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Through a Lens Darkly: Grief, Loss and C.S. Lewis ★★★1/2

(2011) 56 min. DVD: \$19.99 (discussion guide included). Ensign Media (dist. by Vision Video).

Designed to help people dealing with grief,

Through a Lens Darkly serves up a practical, Christian application of lessons contained in C.S. Lewis’s *A Grief Observed*, which he wrote after the death of his wife, Joy Davidman, in 1960. The documentary includes multiple interviews with individuals who have endured intense grief stemming from tragedy: the murder of a mother, a teenage daughter succumbing to cancer, the shocking death of a band mate on the eve of success, an athlete’s paralysis at the top of his game, and more. Each interviewee speaks of his or her private journey through grief in its many stages, from the initial intensity of raw emotion to denial, anger, and ultimately acceptance. Although the circumstances differ, common threads run through these testimonies, and illustrative passages from Lewis’s book are cited and explored to help viewers understand the process these people have all undergone. Lewis’s honesty about feeling abandoned by God is expressed by various survivors here, each of whom then talks about finding a way back to faith. DVD extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette, a music video, producers’ comments, a PDF discussion guide, and resources for individuals ministering to the grief-stricken. Highly recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

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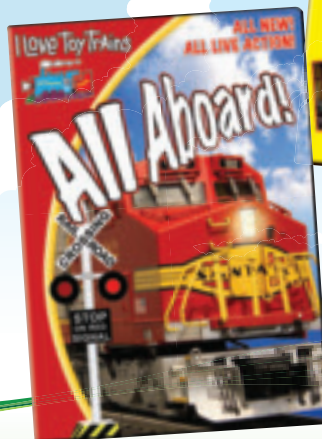
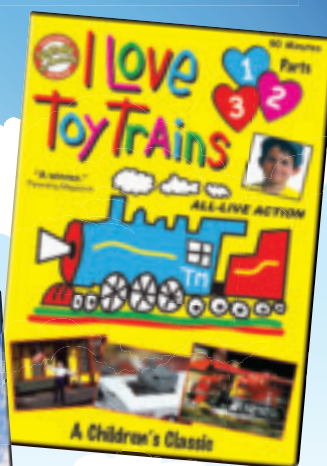


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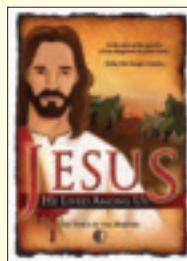
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Jesus: He Lived Among Us ★★★★★

(2011) 90 min. DVD: \$14.99. Vision Video.

Bookended by the story of John the Baptist's imprisonment for his beliefs, this animated feature-length production depicts key events in the life of Jesus as related in the New Testament of the Bible, beginning with the virgin birth and King Herod's order to kill all male children, and continuing with a stirring depiction of John's first encounter with Jesus and his accounts of Jesus's various miracles and teachings. Part of the *Voice of the Martyrs* series, the emphasis here is on the sacrifices religious figures made and the persecutions they suffered in order to live the convictions of their faith, but the presentation balances the difficulties and agonies of Jesus's life (including a tastefully depicted crucifixion) with more light-hearted moments, giving a rounded dimension to the subject. DVD extras include the featurette "A Film to Reach Millions." Highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** Aud: P. (C. Block)



The William Booth Story ★★★★★1/2

(2011) 30 min. DVD: \$14.99. Christian History Institute (dist. by Vision Video).

This animated feature from the YA-aimed *Torchlighters* series traces the origins of the Salvation Army, providing interesting background information about the organization—familiar to many through its resale stores and the ubiquitous bell-ringers and collection kettles that appear every holiday season. The story goes back to London's rough-and-tumble East End in the mid-1800s, when William Booth preached salvation and sobriety, arousing the ire of pub owners. Following parallel paths, two central figures here are disaffected Londoners—a boy who exchanges loot from his pickpocketing adventures for a glass of beer, and his doppelganger elder, a lost soul facing the gallows as a result of an empty life of sin—ultimately changed by faith in God. Although threatened with violence from those who opposed his work, Booth called his army of followers to a different sort of arms—wielding Bibles, love, forgiveness, and music—eventually creating a worldwide phenomenon that continues to this day, with the Salvation Army taking on contemporary issues such as human trafficking and slavery. DVD extras include a leader's guide with lesson plans, handouts, and discussion materials. Highly recommended. Aud: P. (C. Block)

SOCIAL & POLITICAL ISSUES



Barbershop Punk ★★★★★

(2010) 77 min. DVD: \$295. *This End Up Films* (dist. by Bullfrog Films). PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 1-59458-807-4.

Barbershop Punk tells the story of how an ordinary citizen took on a major corporation and reinvigorated the debate over privacy in the digital age. Oregon software tester and barbershop quartet baritone Robb Topolski found that Internet provider Comcast was keeping tabs on his usage at all times. Initially,

Topolski considered this to be a technical issue rather than a privacy concern, because it hampered his ability to trade music files, so he penned a series of blog posts, which attracted press attention. But then, for unrelated reasons, his life started to fall apart, culminating in depression and a cancer diagnosis. Topolski later awoke from surgery to find that the *New York Times* and other news outlets had picked up the story, which led to an FCC investigation that put several corporations (including Verizon) in the hot seat (although Topolski actually feels that Comcast's denials were more egregious than their practices). Wisely, directors Georgia Sugimura Archer and Kristin Armfield define relevant terms—from "common carriage" to "net neutrality"—and bring both sides into play. Speakers include former FCC Commissioner Jonathan Adelstein, former White House press secretary Mike McCurry, and rocker Damian Kulash (OK Go), who testified at the hearings, but the filmmakers return to Topolski and musician Ian MacKaye (Fugazi) most often. The latter provides the "punk" in the title, using the word to describe those, like Topolski, who question the status quo. DVD extras include bonus interviews and a performance by OK Go. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Crossing Borders ★★★★★

(2010) 72 min. DVD: \$24.95. *Crossing Borders Films* (dist. by Janson Media). PPR. ISBN: 978-1-56839-409-8.

Filmmaker Arnd Wächter's cross-cultural documentary plays like a more grounded, personal version of MTV's hyper-edited reality TV series *The Real World*, following four American college students abroad in Spain who join Wächter's exchange-program-within-an-exchange program, sallying south across the Strait of Gibraltar to Morocco to spend a week with Muslim host families and to mingle and tour various sites with Moroccans their own age. Talk (and more important, listening) on both sides addresses the misunderstandings and xenophobia of

the post-9/11 world. Islamic youths complain about being perceived as terrorist fundamentalists (yet they also defend the right of the voiceless to violently protest, such as when faraway cartoonists in Denmark defamed the prophet Mohammed). The Americans, meanwhile, acknowledge their scant knowledge of the Muslim world, and come to realize that they take for granted the USA's envious standard of living and freedom of travel—a point that hits home when Spain tightens its borders against North Africans and newfound friends from the two cultures realize they may never visit again, except through long-distance telephone and the Internet. Although parts of *Crossing Borders* could be considered an infomercial for Wächter's scholar-exchange program, overall this is still a thought-provoking documentary on a timely subject. DVD extras include a student dialogue segment, an interview with Wächter, and a featurette. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

El Velador: The Night Watchman ★★★★★1/2

(2011) 72 min. DVD: \$398. *Icarus Films*. PPR.

In examining the drug plague in Mexico, filmmaker Natalia Almada takes a minimalist approach, showing—with no preamble, interviews, or explanatory narration—the day-to-day routine of a town cemetery kept "busy" by the local violence, even though most of what we see is quiet and deceptively siesta-peaceful. Gravediggers and ground-skeepers, mostly silent, do their work with portable radios on; the titular night watchman arrives; and attractive young women sweep dust off mausoleums and memorials (only via liner notes does one learn these are widows) as their children play. Every so often a mariachi-band procession comes along and other slain young males—presumably fallen in the drug cartel wars—are interred. And then the sun-washed graveyard waits for its next permanent residents. An English-language segment near the end spells out the message: the United States pours billions into a distant conflict in Afghanistan but hardly acknowledges this ongoing terror on its very doorstep. Still, while less may sometimes be more, the lack of guiding context here limits the potential audience for this timely documentary. A strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Enemy Alien ★★★★★

(2011) 82 min. DVD: \$79.95: public libraries & high schools; \$275: colleges & universities. *Third World Newsreel*. PPR.

Konrad Aderer's documentary looks at two examples of state-sanctioned fear-mongering against a specific demographic: the experiences of the Japanese-American filmmaker's family in the U.S. internment camps during World War II, and the post-9/11 arrest of Palestinian human rights activist Farouk Abdel-Muhti. Aderer argues that both stories

feature much common ground: namely, that a military attack against the U.S. resulted in the suspension of civil liberties against

minority groups who were the longstanding objects of racially motivated hysteria. Making the film proved to be more challenging

than expected, with the original producer abandoning the project, and Abdel-Muhti's American-born son becoming the subject of a police investigation. Abdel-Muhti endured a harsh incarceration, including prolonged solitary confinement and a denial of access to his medications. He was eventually released in April 2004, only to die from a heart attack three months later. While Aderer's goals are sincere and noble, *Enemy Alien* suffers a bit from a stop-and-start effect whenever the filmmaker's personal narrative takes over from that of Abdel-Muhti's. Nonetheless, the film offers a much-needed reminder of the uglier aspects of post-9/11 society, when government-engineered fear and violence became the "new normal" under the guise of homeland security. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Dish: Women, Waitressing & the Art of Service ★★★

(2010) 60 min. In French, Japanese & English w/English subtitles.
DVD: \$89; public libraries & high schools; \$295: colleges & universities.
Women Make Movies. PPR.

Waitresses in Canada, France, and Japan "dish" about their trade in this enlightening documentary from director Maya Gallus, who visits locales ranging from truck stops to high-end eateries. Pam in Ontario says, "Truck drivers want to see a woman wait on them," and diner owner Ash agrees, adding that male customers prefer younger women, although Pam's mother is still going strong at 69. Employees at Montréal's upscale "restos" also believe that guys respond more positively to more youthful waitresses, and that inappropriate comments come with the territory. Those who work at Hoster, the city's version of Hooters, expect that kind of attention, enduring endless jokes and often insubstantial tips; some even view their jobs as a form of role-playing—they may flirt, but don't give out their phone numbers. Gallus also visits a Montréal diner where the servers are topless, a Japanese maid café where they're especially subservient, and in Paris, interviews Jean-Pierre, a service industry veteran who notes that in the fancy restaurants, servers are often male, and make more money than their female counterparts. Noekia, a young mother who works 14-hour days at a more rustic locale, sighs, "I have no social life, of course." Gallus contrasts these present-day comments with clips from vintage industrial films. Clearly, while some things have changed, many have not. Offering an interesting glimpse of social and economic factors within the restaurant world, this is recommended. [Note: this is also being sold on home video for \$30 at www.dishdocumentary.com.] Aud: C, P. (K. Fennesy)



The First Movie ★★★1/2

(2011) 77 min. DVD: \$79; public libraries; \$299: colleges & universities. Seventh Art Releasing. PPR.

Filmmaker Mark Cousins grew up amidst violence in Belfast, Northern Ireland. Now, he takes his lens—actually, a collection of mini-DV cameras—to another ravaged trouble-spot, in the Middle East. Cousins meets children in the war-torn village of Goptapa with the intention of giving them the means and opportunity to communicate their thoughts

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and values in their own DIY narratives using camcorders. After a free showing in the town square of classic international children's films (climaxing with *E.T.: The Extraterrestrial*), the boys and girls begin to document their own lives and concerns, although the results we see are strongly (and probably necessarily) filtered through Cousins's own poetic musings on youthful resilience and storytelling in response to deprivation and immense suffering. Although many viewers may guess in advance, only near the end of the documentary does Cousins name this land—Iraq—and identify Goptapa as one of the Kurd villages hit by chemical weapons during Saddam Hussein's genocidal 1980s campaigns. *The First Movie* is a beautiful visual essay, less concerned with history than with general humanity and morality (and the potential healing power of cinema). Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

A Good Day to Die ★★★

(2011) 90 min. DVD: \$149 (\$249 w/PPR). Kino Lorber Edu.

Observing the larger subject of 20th-century American Indian political unrest and defiance, filmmakers David Mueller and Lynn Salt's *A Good Day to Die* ostensibly serves up a bio of American Indian Movement (AIM) co-founder Dennis Banks, while also sympathetically describing—through comments by Banks and others, along with vintage footage and stills—the arc of AIM itself. Born in 1937, Banks was sent to one of the oft-brutal, white-run Indian Schools where speaking one's tribal language meant beatings. He ran away at the age of 15, and later—during a jail term—read history books on Indians and the March on Washington, which led him

to realize that “no one was speaking for the native people.” After his release, Banks created and directed AIM with the like-minded George Mitchell, Jay WhiteCrow, Russell Means, and others. Banks forged a sort of moderate/radical dynamic with the fiery Means (not interviewed here) in a series of protests in the 1960s and '70s, notably an occupation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1972. AIM demonstrations continued at various sites, leading to a prolonged and deadly siege with federal authorities, after which Banks became a fugitive, was ultimately offered sanctuary in California, and then turned himself in and served his sentence. While AIM seemed to wither over time, American Indian nations as a political force earned recognition and respect that would likely have been much longer in coming without the organization. A fine accompaniment to Banks's 2004 memoir, *Ojibwa Warrior*, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

How to Start a Revolution ★★★1/2

(2011) 87 min. DVD: \$229. Seventh Art Releasing. PPR.

Ruaridh Arrow's documentary serves up an appreciative sketch of Gene Sharp, professor emeritus at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth and founder of the Albert Einstein Institution, whose book *From Dictatorship to Democracy: A Conceptual Framework for Liberation* has served not just as an inspiration to those working to overthrow oppressive regimes, but also as a tactical guide in the techniques of nonviolent revolutionary resistance. As the film shows, Sharp's book has also attracted the attention of rulers in authoritarian states such as Russia, Iran, and Venezuela, where officials have tried—often brutally—to suppress its

circulation. Observations by the elderly Sharp (who chuckles over accusations that he is an agent of the CIA), his young office associate Jamila Raqib, and Bob Helvey (an ex-military man who enlisted Sharp's help in advising Burmese rebels in the early '90s) alternate with testimony from Serbian activist leader Srdja Popovic, who details the influence of Sharp's ideas in the overthrow of Slobodan Milosevic. The documentary also features acknowledgment of indebtedness to Sharp's thinking from resistance figures in countries of the erstwhile Soviet Union, as well as Egypt and Syria. Despite some repetition and a tendency to meander through its vaguely chronological order, *How to Start a Revolution* effectively uses fine archival footage, and makes a persuasive case that Sharp's nonviolent means of bringing about regime change have proven far more effective than military force. A justifiably admiring portrait of a modest idealist whose softly spoken words have had significant global impact, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

I Am ★★

(2011) 78 min. DVD: \$24.98. Gaia (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-0-7662-5737-5.

Ace Ventura director Tom Shadyac takes a sharp left turn in the documentary *I Am*, which had its genesis following a bike accident that resulted in cuts, bruises, a concussion, and finally depression, during which the filmmaker began to contemplate the state of the world. Wondering why it's in such a mess, Shadyac's conclusion pointed to aggressively competitive people like him: Americans who strive to amass wealth at the expense of their well-being, interpersonal relationships, and the environment that sustains them. Shadyac illustrates his point with repeated shots of his private jet and extravagant properties, then speaks with famous figures who emphasize compassion, including sustainability activist David Suzuki, linguistics professor Noam Chomsky, progressive historian Howard Zinn, and environmentally conscious CEO Ray Anderson (star of *The Corporation*). Shadyac also speaks with his father, Richard, who co-founded St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital. While the filmmaker's heart is in the right place, *I Am* doesn't quite add up, as Shadyac seems to be simultaneously bragging and beating himself up. By film's end, he downsizes in order to lead a more constructive existence, although it's hard to tell whether this is a permanent shift, an advanced case of midlife crisis, or a holiday from Hollywood until the next potential blockbuster comes along. An optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Love During Wartime ★★★1/2

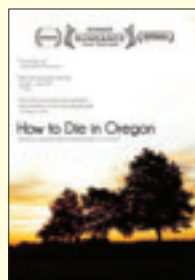
(2011) 92 min. DVD: \$79; public libraries; \$299: colleges & universities. Seventh Art Releasing. PPR.

In a latter-day Romeo-and-Juliet conun-

How to Die in Oregon ★★★1/2

(2010) 107 min. DVD: \$29.95. Docurama (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4229-9524-0.

Peter D. Richardson's HBO-aired documentary—winner of a Grand Jury Prize at Sundance—focuses on terminally ill individuals who take advantage of Oregon's status as the first state (beginning in 1994) to legalize physician-assisted suicide. There's a difference, however, between “physician-assisted” and “physician-administered”: those who qualify can lawfully request fatal dosages of barbiturates, but the doctors cannot actually help them end their lives. After opening with footage of a cancer patient named Roger Sagner—who drinks a life-ending barbiturate draught while insisting, “It was easy, folks!”—the film focuses on several people who experience a wide range of complex emotions during their final days. Most notable is Cody Curtis, a 54-year-old with liver cancer and a six-months-to-live diagnosis, who nevertheless carries on with a sunny outlook. And the grimmest irony lies in the story of Randy Stroup, a cancer patient who was angrily opposed to the notion of taking his own life; Stroup's insurance carrier decided to stop offering coverage for surgery and instead provided him with the option of paying for a doctor-assisted suicide. An intelligent, sincere film about a perennially debated topic, this is highly recommended. [Note: this is also available with public performance rights for \$250 from Clearcut Productions, www.howtodieinoregon.com.] Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)



Women War & Peace ★★★

(2011) 2 discs. 240 min. DVD: \$39.99 (\$69.95 w/PPR). PBS Video. ISBN: 978-1-60883-578-2.

Set in the context of war, when rape is routinely used as an instrument of power and humiliation—as well as an attempt to subjugate the enemy—this four-part PBS series examines cases where women fought back in the court of world public opinion. The first episode, “I Came to Testify,” narrated by Matt Damon, deals with the horrific “ethnic cleansing” that took place among Serbs, Croats, and Muslims in early-1990s Yugoslavia. Almost overnight, nationalistic Serbs attacked former friends and neighbors—songs celebrated rape and slaughter, “rape camps” were set up, and Muslim women were subjected to gang attacks in brothels. International outrage led to a war crimes tribunal in The Hague where victims—whose identities were concealed—came forward to accuse their tormentors in what was mostly a symbolic effort (estimates suggest that the number of incidents exceeded 50,000). Serb leaders were convicted, but Bosnia remains a chilling reminder that such atrocities could recur. The second episode, “Peace Unveiled,” narrated by Tilda Swinton, concerns the plight of Afghan females during Taliban rule, when they were forbidden to seek most medical care, schools were burned, and cumbersome, identity-concealing burkas were mandatory garments. Today, after the fall of the Taliban, women worry that their hard-won freedoms may be traded in peace talks with ultra-conservative Muslims. The episode follows several women who attend a *jirga*, run for office, and encourage voting and education for Afghan girls—occasionally risking their lives. The third episode, “The War We Are Living,” narrated by Alfre Woodard, examines the plight of Afro-Columbian women whose land has been expropriated, while the final hour, “War Reexamined,” narrated by Geena Davis, offers a broader look at the role of women in war and peace. Serving up an unflinching exploration of important international issues, this timely series is recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)



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drum, the star-crossed leads of this true love story from filmmaker Gabriella Bier are an Israeli woman, Jasmin, and a Palestinian man, Osama, nicknamed Assi. Married since 2004 and wild about each other, they still mostly live apart as the narrative opens—citizenship laws restrict Assi from dwelling with his wife in Israel and prevent Jasmin from joining her husband in Ramallah, in the newly created Palestinian Authority territory. Told primarily through their own (subtitled) narration with contributions from family members, the documentary briefly sketches their courtship and wedding (which happened during a peak in the intifada, says Assi's brother, contributing to the Arab in-laws' outrage; Jasmin's parents, meanwhile, accept their daughter's husband). Ultimately, they must leave the Middle East altogether to cohabitate in Germany; but Europe, too, carries on in terrorism-lockdown mode, and Assi's visa does not permit him to hold a job or remain indefinitely, which makes him depressed and angry. Both halves of this remarkable, beleaguered couple work in the arts (Assi as a sculptor; Jasmin, a dancer), and neither is religious or especially nationalistic. While their story may not reflect that of the majority of those suffering in and around the occupied territories and Jerusalem—who face checkpoints, arrests, bullying, and suicide-bombers—it still brings into focus the innocent victims of the continuous crisis. An emotional jewel of a film, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Revenge of the Electric Car ★★★

(2011) 90 min. DVD: \$29.95. Docurama (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned. ISBN: 1-4229-9500-3.

In contrast to his 2006 exposé *Who Killed the Electric Car?* (VL-11/06)—which offered a funny, angry, and ultimately scary look at how General Motors launched and then willfully destroyed the nonpolluting, efficient EV1—filmmaker Chris Paine's follow-up is a nonjudgmental examination of the subsequent race to develop a breakthrough affordable electric-powered auto to assuage consumers' environmental and Mideast-war concerns. The four contenders are Nissan-Renault, under CEO Carlos Ghosn; Silicon Valley upstart Tesla Motors, led by PayPal founder Elon Musk; a DIY guy named Greg “Gadget” Abbott, who retrofits classic vehicles with lithium-ion cells rather than inventing a whole new machine; and—surprise!—returning villain GM, now under new chairman Bob Lutz and making their play with a battery-gas hybrid called the Chevy Volt. Narrated by Tim Robbins, *Revenge of the Electric Car* tracks each interested party through production delays, disappointing trial runs, divorce, lawsuits, bankruptcy—even an arson-caused fire. Although the conclusion is somewhat open-ended, this is an engrossing big-manufacturing-business drama that humanizes finance section headlines while also capturing the ordeals of people striving to create a revolutionary product. DVD extras include celeb-



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city interviews, additional footage, and clips from a Tribeca Film Festival panel discussion. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

The Sky Turns ★★★

(2005) 106 min. In Spanish w/English subtitles. DVD: \$29.95. New Yorker Video (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-56730-502-4.

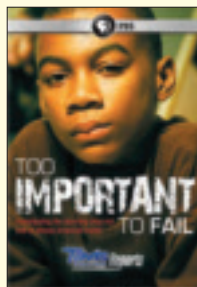
Less documentary than cinematic meditation on the passage of time, Mercedes Álvarez's film offers an impressionistic account of her year-long visit to the tiny Spanish village of Aldealseñor, where she spent the first three years of her life. *The Sky Turns* follows the seasons, with each of the four chapters including episodes dealing with past, present, and future. In obviously staged scenes we observe the few remaining (mostly elderly) inhabitants talking in a rambling fashion about their lives and remembering how things used to be. Viewers overhear a guide describing the Roman conquest of nearby Numantia in the second century B.C. as he leads a group of tourists through the ruins of the once-proud city; follow a woman pointing out dinosaur fossil imprints; and listen as some residents speculate about the future—what the implications will be of the transformation of a medieval palace into a hotel, and whether humans will eventually colonize Mars. But Álvarez also considers present-day change in a “chance” meeting of two Moroccans—a shepherd and a visiting track star—who have migrated to the area that Spanish families have abandoned. Álvarez ultimately encapsulates her perspective in the figure of a painter who's going blind, equating his failing sight with the gradual loss of memory about Aldealseñor as its population disappears. DVD extras include a video essay and a photo gallery. Serving up arresting images, this often-haunting elegy is recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

EDUCATION

Finding D-Q U ★★★

(2010) 26 min. DVD: \$59.95: public libraries & high schools; \$175: colleges & universities. Third World Newsreel. PPR.

The subtitle “The Lonely Struggle of California's Only Tribal College” suggests an apt eulogy for the subject, D-Q (for Degana-widah-Quetzalcoatl) University, a product of the American Indian protest movement of the late 1960s. Founded on reclaimed land in Yolo County and granted full accreditation in 1978, D-Q strove to provide college-level education in a genuine pan-Indian environment, keyed to both North American and Mexican-American native cultures. At its peak in 1990, the school had 500 students, but financial mismanagement, questionable appointees, and other internal turmoil (full



Too Important to Fail ★★★

(2011) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.95 w/PPR). PBS Video. ISBN: 978-1-60883-565-2.

Tavis Smiley hosts this PBS special focusing on the state of education among minority youth in America and what can be done to improve it, specifically in inner-city schools, where the dropout rate for African-American males is approaching 50 percent. Traveling to Philadelphia, Chicago, Oakland, and Los Angeles, Smiley finds that black male students are held back by low expectations, absence of role models, violence on the streets and at home, poor reading and writing skills, and a general lack of identification with characters and situations in the books they do read. Smiley interviews educators working against long odds and limited budgets, and he hangs out with the kids, inquiring about their hopes for the future. He visits Philadelphia's elite “promise academies,” which supply discipline, structure, and inspiring male examples; however, lack of funding limits the number of enrollees. The need to earn money often encourages students to drop out, so the Los Angeles Conservation Corps has a “transitional green jobs” program that supports kids working while also staying in school. Many of the problems come down to a question of commitment and the distribution of resources, but the consequences become clear when Smiley visits detainees in an Oakland juvenile detention center. Recognizing that no single effort can solve all of the challenges, Smiley nonetheless emphasizes the need for caring adult mentors, and correctly notes that this is an urgent matter that should concern all Americans. Hard-hitting and insightful, this is recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

details are not given here) led to D-Q's closure in 2005, although an “Occupy”-style rogue community of academics, former and would-be students, and faculty holdouts tried to continue operating—ineffectively, it would seem. One interviewee states that this kind of infighting and dysfunction are all too typical of reservation-mindset politics, although there's a hint that D-Q's fate may befall many small colleges across the board as funding runs low in a Great Recession economy. A fuller, feature-length accounting of the D-Q saga would have been more instructive—filmmaker Chris Newman expanded this version from his seven-minute thesis project—although this is still a good addition for Amerindian studies collections. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Getting In: The Truth About College Admissions ★★★1/2

(2011) 23 min. DVD or VHS: \$149.95 (teacher's guide included). Human Relations Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-55548-934-2 (dvd).

This excellent program offers a compact step-by-step guide to the whole process of preparing for, applying to, and getting into college, presented from the perspectives of four diverse high schoolers, coupled with observations from college admissions professionals. Acknowledging that the undertaking causes incredible stress for most juniors and seniors—whether it be from fear of the unknown, financial worries, or perceived competition—the focus here is on getting students to figure out what they want rather than being overwhelmed by tests and grades. As one of the interviewees, a guidance counselor, points out, “College is a match to be made, not a prize to be won.” Viewers will

learn how to build a strong case for admission (taking challenging courses and participating in extracurricular activities that institutions value, for example), while also hearing tips on college selection, the application process, and final decision making. In addition, *Getting In* features insights into the financial aid side of the equation, including applying for loans, grants, and scholarships. The accompanying curriculum contains a practical run-through for students to immediately start preparation for admissions. Highly recommended. Aud: H. (E. Gieschen)

Understanding Plagiarism and its Consequences ★★★1/2

(2011) 29 min. DVD: \$54.95: public libraries; \$99.95: high schools; \$129.95: colleges & universities. VEA. PPR. Closed captioned.

This fast-paced program explains what plagiarism is and why students—as well as professionals—might engage in it. The information is presented by two actors portraying a young female writer/researcher and a male college student, with additional comments from a narrator, a university lecturer, and an editor at *Lonely Planet*. Viewers are told that using someone else's work prevents the development of one's own ideas and research skills; in addition, plagiarists can lose jobs, be expelled from school, and even face criminal charges. While the consequences are not downplayed, the tone here is sympathetic to those who might be ignorant of copyright laws and even to some degree plagiarists succumbing to familial or academic pressure to succeed, noting that the behavior can occur inadvertently and that first-time offenders are usually given the benefit of the doubt (several tips are offered to help avoid unintentional

plagiarism). Although electronic programs may be used as a means of detection, teachers can often spot changes in a student's unique writing style. Viewers are also encouraged to protect their own work, and several "myths" about plagiarism are briefly addressed. Highly recommended. Aud: J, H, C, P. (M. Puffer-Rotherberg)

LAW & CRIME

Who Killed Chea Vichea? ★★★

(2010) 58 min. DVD: \$19.95. IndiePix (avail. from most distributors).

Cambodian trade-union president and activist Chea Vichea was gunned down on the streets of Phnom Penh in 2004 in the aftermath of a controversial election, during which he received text-message death threats from someone he suspected was a high-level authority figure. Two tearful suspects who were arrested had strong alibis and repeatedly claimed innocence, insisting that signed confessions were secured by police coercion and torture; a key witness later fled to the U.S. and recanted. Nonetheless, the "assassins" were convicted and sentenced to 20 years in prison. Telescoping outwards from this miscarriage of justice, filmmaker Bradley Cox interweaves archival and contemporary footage with interviews of eyewitnesses and others to present a damning journalistic investigation that functions less as an answer to the titular question than as a look at Cambodia's thug-ocracy, where courts and cops are an extension of the strongman regime that kills citizens at will and puts on a token appearance of democracy and "justice" for the international community

(especially the U.S. and other avid consumers of sweatshop goods). This pathology, Cox suggests, inevitably arose from a society borne of the infamous Khmer Rouge genocide that left fewer than a dozen educated people alive in the entire country. DVD extras include interviews, deleted scenes, and background on Cambodia's justice system and garment industry. Recommended. [Note: this is also available with public performance rights for \$235 from Loud Mouth Films, www.whokilledcheavichea.com.] Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

NATURE, MATH & SCIENCE

Atlantic Crossing: A Robot's Daring Mission ★★

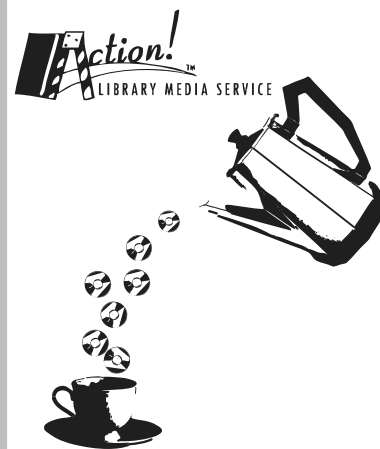
(2011) 75 min. DVD: \$49: public libraries & high schools; \$195: colleges & universities. Green Planet Films. PPR.

Produced by Rutgers University, Dena Seidel's documentary focuses on an oceanographic milestone: the 2009 launch of the first autonomous underwater robot to cross the Atlantic Ocean—from New Jersey to Spain. And why did the robot cross the ocean? The missile-shaped, propeller-free "glider" (named The Scarlet Knight, even though it was painted yellow) was fashioned by Rutgers scientists as the deep-sea equivalent of Sputnik, sent forth to conquer a new horizon. Scarlet's trip was not without hiccups; a typo in the computer coding nearly sank it before it left the Jersey shoreline, while a blanket of biological growth halted its progress in the shark-infested waters off the Azores. Since Scarlet did not carry a video camera, Seidel focuses instead on the scientists and engineers

Limelight ★★★1/2

(2011) 102 min. DVD: \$26.98. Magnolia Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).

What looks like a fizzy cocktail of NYC pop-nostalgia morphs into a gripping true-crime courtroom case in this documentary directed by Billy Corben. Canadian entrepreneur Peter Gaten established a number of successful nightspots in the United States, including the Limelight, a disco in a former Manhattan church that became the place to see and be seen for straights and gays alike in the 1980s. Meanwhile, AIDS and ecstasy (among other narcotics) hit the Big Apple party scene, and NYC police and government prosecutors—determined to clean up the streets during the crack-cocaine nightmare—targeted Gaten, making an example out of the eyepatch-wearing mogul. The case fell apart when a trio of "scumbag" key witnesses eventually turned on their own government handlers, but authorities and Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's City Hall remained obsessed with "getting" Gaten, and he was eventually deported. Whether or not one buys into the dubious proposal that the Limelight was a cultural treasure, the incredible story here comes across like the American dream in reverse—a successful immigrant torn down by a vindictive, prejudiced system. Corben interviews Gaten and other figures on both sides, and even though Gaten's daughter served as producer, it's clear that the subject was scapegoated (books such as *Clubland*, by interviewee Frank Owen, have touched on the same material). DVD extras include deleted scenes. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)



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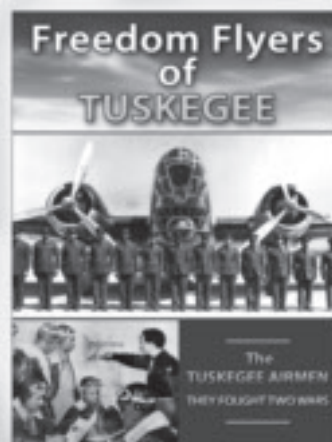
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behind the project, somewhat charisma-challenged folks who detail their work in monotonous tones when not fighting among themselves. The combination of droning and bickering talking heads and an inanimate object floating in the sea does not exactly make for compelling viewing (the DVD includes both the 55-minute version aired on PBS and a 75-minute director's cut—although either way, it's a long haul). DVD extras include a "making-of" featurette. Not a necessary purchase. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Discover Science: Episode 1, The Camel Stands On Eggs—Pressure ★★★

(2011) 14 min. DVD: \$19.95. Worldwide Academic Media. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-59163-179-8.

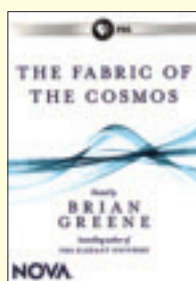
Part of a new educational franchise that's apparently hoping to capture some of the Bill Nye demographic in shorter installments, this first chapter in a 26-part English-language adaptation of an award-winning series from Japanese TV giant NHK carries out a dramatic display of weight dispersion via a 750-kilogram live camel named Jackson. First we see how a pith-helmeted woman in high heels struggles to walk through sand in Jackson's native environment; the much heavier animal, with his four widely splayed feet, has no such trouble. As a further demonstration, Jackson is ultimately brought to stand on a specially-built transparent sheet, which is lowered dramatically to rest on 500 (hollowed) hen eggs, the combined strength of which, tenuously, supports the creature. What's unfortunately missing from the don't-try-this-at-home experiment (most of the action is actually dialogue-free, carried out by anonymous, jumpsuited extras called "Experiment Rangers") is a more detailed

explanation of how this classic principle of physics can be applied in real-world engineering. Still, this short, eye-catching program will certainly make for an entertaining introduction and should lead to classroom discussion. Other titles in the *Discover Science* series include *The Secret of Aerial Ballet*, *Let's See the Speed of Sound*, *Magnetic Ninja*, and *Ice on Fire*. Recommended. Aud: E, J. (C. Cassidy)

Eco-Environment ★★★

(2008) 45 min. DVD: \$39.95 (teacher's guide included). Cerebellum Corporation. PPR.

Repackaged for the classroom, this episode from the Discovery Channel's science magazine-format show *Daily Planet* looks at potential ways that economic viability and environmental responsibility can intersect. Enthusiastic hosts Jay Ingram and Natasha Stillwell take viewers around the globe to offer examples of eco-friendliness that are also practical and profitable, profiling several large- and small-scale projects (ranging from the greenest office building in the world to a biodegradable cell phone with an embedded flower seed), while also providing behind-the-scenes peeks at green businesses (such as a nonchemical-based dry cleaning shop and a bottle recycling plant). Conservation efforts are also explored, from tree planting in Australia to Las Vegas's ambitious water-saving and reclamation initiatives. Other titles in *The Environment Series* (part of the larger *Daily Planet in the Classroom*) include *World of Water: Vessels*; *World of Water: Taking the Plunge*; *World of Water: Watercrafts*; *Winter; Fire*; *The Cold*; *Weather Patterns*; *Natural Disasters*; *Natural Garden*; *Mining*; and *Eco-Houses*. Informative, inspiring, and entertaining, this is recommended. Aud: J, H, P. (E. Gieschen)



The Fabric of the Cosmos ★★★

(2011) 2 discs. 240 min. DVD: \$29.99 (\$59.95 w/PPR), Blu-ray: \$34.99 (\$64.95 w/PPR). PBS Video. ISBN: 978-1-60883-511-9 (dvd), 978-1-60883-512-6 (blu-ray).

This PBS-aired NOVA documentary series, hosted by physicist Brian Greene (featuring material partly drawn from his same-titled book), takes viewers on an informative, eye-popping tour of the universe, which Greene describes as a "deeply mysterious" place in which our three-dimensional world may be illusory and human teleportation (as in *Star Trek*) could be possible. The four-part program kicks off with "What Is Space?", which examines the make-up of the vast ethereal realm that we often think of as "empty." "The Illusion of Time" ponders whether events flow in linear fashion or in a series of snapshots; "Quantum Leap" covers the daunting topic of quantum mechanics; and "Universe or Multiverse" presents the startling notion that a series of parallel universes may actually exist. Obviously, these are dense, difficult concepts, but Greene lightens the mental processing load with everyday examples that draw from the worlds of baseball and bowling, as well as Las Vegas casinos. Assorted experts add to Greene's observations, while terms such as "entangled particles" are explained, along with the provocative theory that the Big Bang was not a cataclysmic one-time event, but one that allows for a series of smaller but still significant cosmic eruptions. Suitable for high school and college physics students, and also likely to appeal to cosmology buffs, this is recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

Science Under Attack: Has the Public Lost Faith in Scientists? ★★★

(2011) 52 min. DVD: \$149.95. Films Media Group. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62102-009-7.

In this documentary originally broadcast on the BBC's *Horizon* series, Paul Nurse—president of Britain's Royal Society and a Nobel Prize winner—examines why so much of the public refuses to accept the results of scientific research despite the fact that the modern world was basically created by science. Although Nurse touches upon several illustrative issues—resistance to vaccines, opposition to genetically altered foods, doubts about the cause of HIV—his emphasis is on the widespread rejection of the concept of climate change or global warming. Nurse interviews Fred Singer, one of the relatively few scientists who are skeptical of the theory, but he concentrates on what has come to be called the “Climategate” scandal, in which hacked laboratory e-mails were alleged to carry evidence of a scientific conspiracy to manipulate evidence in support of global warming. Nurse interviews not only the researchers at the center of the controversy to demonstrate that the correspondence was, in fact, misunderstood, but also James Delingpole, one of the journalists who publicized the accusations most vigorously (he comes across here as irrationally fanatical). While Nurse finds fault with press sensationalism, he closes by emphasizing the responsibility of scientists to better explain their methods to the public. A reasonable, persuasive—even humble—presentation that also pays tribute to the great scientific minds of the past through a visit to the archives of the Royal Society, this is recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (F. Swietek)

Understanding Weather ★★★

(2011) 40 min. DVD: \$34.95. TMW Media Group. PPR.

This straightforward, practical program is intended to help viewers understand weather and learn how to interpret meteorological information. For some of us, having this kind of knowledge is just a matter of convenience, but for others—especially those whose livelihoods depend on weather-related factors, such as farmers, airplane pilots, and construction workers—it can be a matter of staying in business or even survival. Each of the short segments here is introduced by a friendly young host, after which relevant material is presented—from types of clouds to exploring air pressure systems—through a combination of live-action footage, informative graphics, and onscreen vocabulary. *Understanding Weather* also provides helpful information related to forecasting, not just through reading weather maps or a barometer, but also by observing local signs in nature. An informative, wide-ranging survey, this is recommended. Aud: J, H, P. (E. Gieschen)

What is a Reptile? ★★★

(2011) 11 min. DVD: \$69.95 (teacher's guide included). Visual Learning Systems. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-59234-678-3.

Part of the six-volume series *Animals*, this title presents a basic overview of the identifying characteristics, habitats, and behaviors of reptiles, especially in relation to other types of animals, such as mammals or amphibians. The most common groups of reptiles are covered—snakes, lizards, turtles, alligators, and crocodiles. Vibrant footage of the creatures in their natural habitats is intercut with plenty of onscreen vocabulary (covering terms such as “cold-blooded”) and periodic “You observe” screens (inviting viewers' comments in response to directives such as “Describe the skin of this alligator”), making this short program easy to integrate into an existing elementary-level life science curriculum. The other titles in this series are *What Is a Mammal?*, *What Is a Bird?*, *What Is an Amphibian?*, *What Is a Fish?*, and *What Is an Insect?* Recommended. Aud: K, E. (E. Gieschen)

HEALTH & FITNESS

65_RedRoses ★★★1/2

(2011) 74 min. DVD: \$95: high schools & public libraries; \$295: colleges & universities. Ro*co Films Educational. PPR.

“Sixty-five roses” is how Eva Markvoort's parents taught her to pronounce “cystic fibrosis” when she was diagnosed as a toddler. Now in her early 20s, the young woman from British Columbia wants to attend college, do work, and enjoy time with family and friends. Instead, as chronicled in this documentary from filmmakers Philip Lyall and Nimisha Mukerji, she does what she can between hospitalizations while waiting for a possible double-lung transplant. Eva's friendships with other CF patients must be conducted online to avert the risk of creating a life-threatening “superbug.” Two of Eva's closest Internet friends, Spirit-of-Kina and Megmucus, are also profiled here (“65_Redroses” is Eva's social-networking handle). Each faces different challenges, from lack of family support to problems with Kina's lung transplant, which doctors think her body is rejecting. Intense situations are interspersed with long periods of waiting (for a transplant, an e-mail, a coughing fit to subside), and several twists and surprises occur along the way, as well as some good news. A powerful documentary—airing on the Oprah Winfrey Network—that offers insights into the health and lifestyle challenges posed by cystic fibrosis, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (H. Seggel)

(cont. on pg. 68)

Match & Marry



A fresh look into the ancient tradition of matchmaking. Although focusing on Jewish culture, the messages about dating and marriage are universal.

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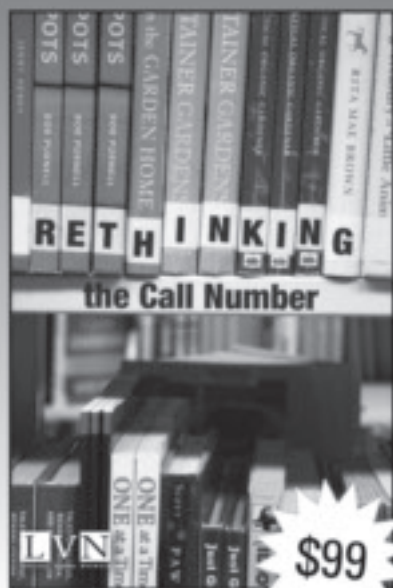
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Spotlight on Fitness

Bethenny's Skinnygirl Workout ★★

(2011) 50 min. DVD: \$16.99. Acacia (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-59828-688-5.



Controversial reality star Bethenny Frankel (*The Real Housewives of New York City*, *Bethenny Ever After...*) is featured in this yoga workout program branded by the *Skinnygirl* weight management franchise. Stating that "you don't need to be afraid of yoga," Frankel takes a mostly backseat stance to experienced instructor Mike McArdle as she follows his moves for three routines that include cleansing twists, lunges, cardio jump-switches, prayer hands, chair pose, squats, baby cobra, warrior poses, pulleys, and more. While the movements are basic (although the duo either explain or demonstrate techniques for pushing the limit), Frankel's constant interruptions with questions or commentary take away from the flow, and some interaction is just odd ("...this is good for childbirth...not that you would know anything about that," Frankel says, to which McArdle replies "I'm down."). Bonus features include a stretching segment and a recipe booklet. Not a necessary purchase. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Dance Off the Inches: Hip Hop Body Blast ★★

(2011) 44 min. DVD: \$14.98. Anchor Bay Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.



Dance-fitness expert Jennifer Galardi's third *Dance Off the Inches* program breaks down 10 separate hip-hop step combinations (each given a memorable if silly name like "Happy Feet" and "Bait and Switch"), and then mixes them up into three fat-burning workouts. The "Step Guide" walks through the moves slowly, separating footwork from arm maneuvers, then combining the two and adding speed. The movements are then incorporated into each of the three dances: "In the Club," "Groovin,'" and "Kicking It." Bookended with gentle warm-ups and cool-downs, these routines offer good cardio sessions that don't feel like work. Galardi is an encouraging instructor, and her two backup dancers illustrate variations with the moves. Both fun and effective, this is recommended. Aud: P. (H. Seggel)

Fit Body Yoga ★★★

(2011) 60 min. DVD: \$14.98. Gaia (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-0-7662-5623-1.



NY Giants and Yankees yoga coach Gwen Lawrence instructs this intense and focused yoga program that includes three main routines filmed in a minimal setting. "Upper Body Blast" features moves such as "ragdoll" forward bend, chair pose, forward plank, and baby backbend, while "Lower Body Tone" incorporates strengthening figure eights, and an advanced crouch pose that Lawrence says is "one of my favorites to teach my athletes...but my athletes hate it!" The "Core Definition" segment serves up standing mountain and camel poses with twisting/lunge combos. Light on the chitchat while also providing tips for optimal alignment, balance, and breathing, the program also includes a bonus 10-minute "Express Toning" downloadable segment. Recommended. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Kathryn Budig: Aim True Yoga ★★★1/2

(2011) 80 min. DVD: \$14.98. Gaia (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-0-7662-5430-5.



Many yoga DVDs seem to have their own special appeal; in the case of *Kathryn Budig: Aim True Yoga*, it's Budig herself. Her lithe dancer's form exhibits flawless physical poetry as she moves through two lengthy routines, one for beginners and the other for intermediate practitioners. The flexibility, strength, and stamina required even for the first series of moves is considerable, and the second is truly acrobatic. Some prior understanding of yoga practice/positions is assumed, as Budig demonstrates movements only as they appear in each routine; in this respect, *Aim True Yoga* is more of an exercise program than a primer on yoga (although a segment on "poses demystified" gives tips and demonstrates a few of the maneuvers). The setting for the exercises—a vast, airy room with a high ceiling and flowing curtains at tall windows—is a welcome change from the claustrophobic sets used in many similar productions. DVD extras include a downloadable bonus workout. An excellent program, this is highly recommended. Aud: P. (F. Gardner)

Seane Corn: Detox Flow Yoga ★★★

(2011) 110 min. DVD: \$14.98. Gaia (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-0-7662-5584-5.



Instructor Seane Corn touts benefits in the areas of circulation, digestion, strength, weight-loss, relaxation, energy, and more in the introduction for this breathing-focused yoga program. Performing in a rustic outdoor setting, Corn offers a half-hour "Twist and Flow" routine for beginners featuring more in-depth explanations of movements and modifications, followed by the hour-plus "Purify," which builds on elements of the first sequence and is geared towards those ready for intermediate moves. The program offers an instruction-only track vs. a "full" audio track, a refreshing addition that allows the viewer to choose whether to concentrate on verbal cues or detoxification themes (such as "Stand at the front of your mat" vs. "I took a deep breath and listened to the old bray of my heart" overlaying the same footage). Recommended. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Shiva Rea: More Daily Energy ★★★

(2011) 158 min. DVD: \$19.99. Acacia (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-59828-646-5.



In her latest program, popular vinyasa flow yoga teacher Shiva Rea demonstrates three "beginner" lunar sequences and four "intermediate" solar practices—each approximately 20 minutes long—with opening meditation and closing relaxation segments (in addition to the prescribed routines, viewers can also build a personalized workout). Rea is seen positioned on a raised platform in a studio setting, with atmospheric music playing quietly behind her gentle voiceover narration. Although Rea cautions viewers about doing more difficult poses only "if you can," generally these moves require a lot of flexibility and strength and will be too challenging for many beginners. Rea's intermediate-to-advanced fans, however, will likely appreciate this offering. Recommended. Aud: P. (M. Puffer-Rothenberg)

SparkPeople: 28 Day Bootcamp

★★★★1/2

(2011) 84 min. DVD: \$16.99. Acacia (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-59828-727-1.

Designed with customization in mind,

SparkPeople: 28 Day Bootcamp is broken up into four separate routines that can be combined or performed separately, along with a 28-day plan featuring select workouts for the viewer. Coach Nicole



Nichols explains each move, many of them simple strength-training maneuvers done in combinations, such as a lunge with a triceps extension. These moves are interspersed with higher-speed aerobics for a full-body cardio and strength session. Nichols works with two helpers; one shows "easier" versions of the exercises, generally shortening the range of motion or keeping both feet on the floor for balance, while the other demonstrates more difficult options for those who want a challenge (Nichols performs the "mid-range" moves). Also featuring warm-up and cool-down routines, DVD extras include recipes, tips for burning more fat, and abs exercises to do while seated at a desk. Providing a variable and challenging workout, this is highly recommended. Aud: P. (H. Seggel)

Trudie Styler's Strengthen & Restore Yoga ★★★

(2011) 70 min. DVD: \$14.98. Gaia (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-0-7662-5613-2.



Musician Sting's wife Trudie Styler follows the direction of instructor James D'Silva in their latest exercise collaboration (see review of *Trudie Styler's Warrior Yoga* in VL-7/10). During the introduction, Styler mentions an overweight parent as an impetus for her maintaining mobility through exercise, but she is mainly quiet while D'Silva provides primary narration in a woodsy outdoor setting, backed by a mystical soundtrack. The 45-minute "Strong Body & Mind" flow sequence makes up the bulk of the program, including moves such as horse stance, heart center, prayer, lunges, warrior, roll-up, curls, and windmill. The duo move well in unison, and also make things look easy for "Trudie's Toning Practice" matwork and stretches, finishing up with D'Silva's "Calming Meditation" in a stark white room where he suggests that we "sigh a little...and let the heart soften down..." Bonus features include a 10-minute "Winding Down" downloadable practice. Recommended. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

DVD Picks

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TIERRA (EARTH) TF1019, \$29.99

A mysterious insect exterminator visits a small wine community and begins a relationship with two women while also dealing with his strange alter ego who may, or may not be, an angel. *Tierra* is director Julio Medem's (*Lovers of the Arctic Circle*) epic metaphysical melodrama that sprawls across a gorgeous widescreen landscape. *Tierra* was also the winner of two 1996 Goya Awards: Best Original Score (Alberto Iglesias) and Best Special Effects. The DVD features remastered picture & sound and includes a "Making of" documentary.



KATHY SMITH'S TIMELESS COLLECTION GREAT BUNS & THIGHS BAY206, \$12.99

Kathy Smith's *Timeless Collection* is a new series containing the fitness legend's favorite and most effective workouts from the past. *Great Buns & Thighs Step Workout* is a terrific workout to strengthen and sculpt the entire body. A high-energy cardio routine starts things off; handing off to the sculpting portion targeting legs & buttocks; and then finishing with a powerful floor exercise to take care of additional lower body trouble spots. Also Available – Kathy Smith's *Timeless Collection: Step Workout* (BAY207, \$12.99)



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(cont. from pg. 65)

Amazonia: Healing with Sacred Plants

★★★

(2011) 70 min. DVD: \$19.98. *True Mind* (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-934708-72-9.

The “sacred plants” in the documentary *Amazonia* are ayahuasca, a powerful hallucinogenic made from a South American vine, and chacruna, whose leaves are ritually brewed with ayahuasca to make a foul-tasting concoction that induces a psychedelic effect akin to that of LSD. People venture from all over the world to Peru’s Madre de Dios River in the Amazon watershed to partake of ayahuasca. Here, travelers—hailing from the U.S., Chile, Germany, and Sweden—rapturously offer their observations: “It’s deep healing, very deep work here in the Amazon,” says a Swedish woman, who at one point is seen hugging a tree. While the subject is interesting, the presentation is scattershot: no introduction sets the stage; narrator Alberto Villoldo, a psychologist and medical anthropologist, simply starts talking about the experience of taking ayahuasca without describing the medicine itself, along the way touching on the “four steps of initiation” and the “nine levels of consciousness,” as well as tangential topics including the fear of death. Director Miguel Heded Abraham intersperses handsome shots of the jungle, exotic birds, animals, and the river itself with interviews of the participants and some medical experts—as well as hazy images of people taking cups of ayahuasca from the hands of a shaman—but while those with prior knowledge of ayahuasca might gain some additional insight here, others are likely to find this confusing. An optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (F. Gardner)

Energy Balance ★★★

(2012) 20 min. DVD: \$79.95 (downloadable teacher’s guide available). *Learning Zone Express*. PPR. Closed captioned.

This informative program explains why balancing personal energy—in terms of input and output—is an important equation to master for a healthy life. Here, “energy in” refers to what we eat, and “energy out” denotes our physical activity (or lack thereof). Working from the USDA’s MyPlate dietary guidelines, registered dietician Melissa Halas-Liang offers lots of easy-to-follow suggestions on adopting good nutritional habits, covering topics such as good and bad fats, healthy snacking, planning ahead for eating out, and the nifty strategy of using “color diversity” (consuming foods of many hues) for better nutrition. Personal trainer Dwayne Arthur Jones explains the “energy out” aspect, noting that most teens should aim for at least an hour of muscular/cardiovascular activity per day. Jones outlines all the

benefits of staying fit, and provides practical strategies for overcoming excuses to avoid exercise. Interviews with teenagers practicing a healthy energy balance are intercut with the experts’ advice. A solid introduction to cultivating health-conscious living habits, this is recommended. Aud: J, H, P. (E. Gieschen)

Going Blind: Coming Out of the Dark About Vision Loss ★★★

(2010) 81 min. DVD: \$250. *Lovett Productions*. PPR. ISBN: 978-0-615552-13-2.

Director Joseph Lovett, who has glaucoma, confesses that the prospect of going blind terrifies him. Fortunately, Lovett has access to an expert physician; he also takes medication, works with a low-vision therapist, and has had two surgeries to relieve retinal pressure (during the course of the documentary, he undergoes two more, but blindness remains a possibility). To prepare for the future, Lovett speaks with various visually-impaired individuals, learning about challenges and opportunities along the way. Jessica, an art instructor, lost her sight from diabetic retinopathy and uses a guide dog, while computer applications help her with e-mail and lesson plans. Ray, who has retinitis pigmentosa, teaches high school students how to use guide dogs, but it took him years to find this fulfilling career. Patricia, who works at New York’s Veterans Administration Center, has cataracts and also underwent a long readjustment period; although she employs neither canine nor cane, she relies on her nephew for assistance on shopping trips. On the other hand, Steve, who lost his sight during the Iraq War, does use a cane and is learning to read Braille. Lovett also speaks with 8-year-old Emmett, who has strabismus, although he can see well enough to play

soccer. The last interviewee, Peter, suffers from macular degeneration, but a new treatment has restored his sight, allowing him to continue working as an architect. With its clear explanations of conditions and procedures—related within the easily accessible framework of a personal journey—this informative documentary is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Nutrition—Intro: Cells and Macronutrients ★★★1/2

(2011) 26 min. DVD: \$49.98. *Cerebellum Corporation*. PPR. ISBN: 1-58565-426-4.

This in-depth introduction to an equally comprehensive series on nutrition features a multicultural cast of energetic, articulate teens who talk viewers through potentially confusing material in a logical way, using plenty of humor and memorable graphics. This first module explores the science behind how the body interacts with the building blocks of food, with special attention paid to the macronutrients: carbohydrates, proteins, and fats. Each is explained in detail, with real-life examples of every vocabulary word presented. In addition, viewers will come to understand how all those lengthy terms on nutrition labels interact, and how each affects the body—for example, the (deep breath) polyunsaturated omega-3 fatty acid found in tasty fish and walnuts provides the body with energy and necessary nutrients, while also enhancing cardiovascular health (so viewers essentially also receive tips for eating smart along the way). Other titles in this series include *What Your Body Does With Food*; *Food Spectrum*; *Micronutrients: Vitamins, Minerals, and Water*; *Preventing Nutritional Disorders*; *Eating in Context*; *Where Does Your Food Come From?*; and *The Savvy Eater*. Highly recommended. Aud: J, H, C. (E. Gieschen)

Aligned and Well: Below the Belt for Men ★★★

(2009) 40 min. DVD: \$14.95. *Well Balanced Media* (dist. by Janson Media). PPR. ISBN: 978-1-56839-418-7.

Part lecture, part exercise demonstration, *Below the Belt for Men* features biomechanics expert Katy Bowman, who talks about how modern living is out of sync with the way the human body is engineered. Sitting as much as we do all day—and then moving in ways that conflict with the body’s design—can lead to sexual dysfunction, disease, premature aging, and chronic pain, according to Bowman. The program focuses on the pelvis, noting that many of the daily habits of men, in particular, defeat the purpose of the area’s bone structure. The pelvis, Bowman tells viewers, supports upper organs and allows muscles to stretch to their proper length, thus encouraging optimal circulation, proper nerve function, and uncluttered waste removal through the lymph system. Bowman goes into great detail about the relevant inner workings and prescribes five gentle exercises to gradually realign the body to promote biomechanical efficiency. DVD extras include a “Human Physics” lecture by Bowman and a printable exercise program. Informative—and potentially transformative—this is recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)



CHILDBIRTH & PARENTING

Pain Management for Childbirth, Volume 1: Comfort Techniques ★★★

(2011) 29 min. DVD: \$69.95; public libraries; \$199.95; high schools, colleges & universities. InJoy. PPR. Closed captioned.

This first program in a two-volume set covers “natural comfort techniques” that women can use to manage pain during childbirth—either solely or in combination with pain-relieving medication. A female narrator and a childbirth educator/doula offer specific suggestions—for creating a soothing physical environment, lying or leaning in various physical positions, and performing deep breathing relaxation exercises—while also covering massage and hydrotherapy. Doula Laurel Wilson explains what causes pain during labor (illustrated with cutaway animation), suggests how to prepare for the discomfort, and discusses relevant common myths. Couples are interviewed both before and after unmedicated births, and labor room footage captures how they used various comfort techniques. Wilson explains that during the birth process, “pain” is “Purposeful, Anticipated, Intermittent, and Normal,” and

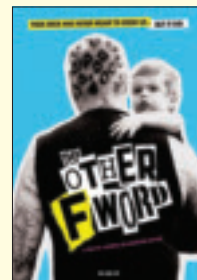
understanding that the situation isn’t a sign of injury or disease can be comforting in

itself. The program also includes numerous tips for birth partners. DVD extras include

The Other F Word ★★★

(2011) 99 min. DVD: \$29.99. Oscilloscope Laboratories (avail. from most distributors).

First-time filmmaker Andrea Blaugrund Nevins builds her sympathetic, yet fair-minded documentary around an intriguing question: what happens to punk rockers when they become parents? In an opening inter-title, she introduces *The Other F Word* as “a coming of middle age story,” which proves to be an apt description, since she looks at both parenthood and aging. As Brett Gurewitz (Bad Religion) puts it, punk “was never meant to grow up, but it did.” Many of Nevins’s California-based subjects, from musicians to professional skaters, grew up with absent or overbearing fathers, but found a second family through punk rock. Now they have to figure out how to raise a kid while staying true to their anti-authoritarian beliefs. Nevins has selected some particularly forthcoming subjects, like *Punk Rock Dad* author Jim Lindberg (Pennywise), a father of three who admits that he dyes his hair to maintain his image. Lindberg provides the narrative center, since he has a lot to offer about the history of L.A. punk, which began as a particularly violent variant of the genre (Lars Frederiksen of Rancid is the only Bay Area participant). Lindberg and Ron Reyes (Black Flag) admit that they have, out of necessity, become a part of the same system they once rejected. Nevins also speaks with reps from MySpace and Napster, as well as a few teenagers, such as Clara, the piano-playing daughter of Flea (Red Hot Chili Peppers). Interspersed throughout are animated sequences and music clips that keep the pace moving right along. DVD extras include audio commentary (with Nevins, Lindberg, and Everclear’s Art Alexakis), extended interviews, music videos and bonus performances, and outtakes. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)



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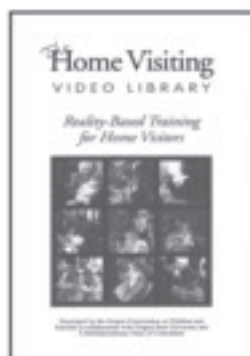
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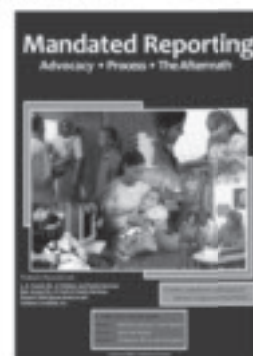
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a bonus segment focusing more specifically on one of the featured couples. Also newly available is the second volume in the series: *Analgesics & Epidurals*. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (M. Puffer-Rothenberg)

RELATIONSHIPS & SEXUALITY

Mutantes ★★1/2

(2009) 91 min. DVD: \$149 (\$249 w/PPR). Kino Lorber Edu.

In *Mutantes*, French author/filmmaker Virginie Despentes documents the rise of “post-porn” feminism, which began in the 1980s in reaction to mainstream pornography and is pro-gay, pro-prostitution, and pro-punk. Annie Sprinkle, Carol Queen, and Candida Royalle are among those who talk about their introduction to sex work, while film critic B. Ruby Rich, director Catherine Breillat, photographer Del La Grace Volcano, and musicians Lydia Lunch and Lynnee Breedlove add their related perspectives. As Breillat sees it, “The concept of obscenity is a totalitarian tool to reduce women.” While the sex workers all feel more empowered than victimized (although some have now left the field), their origins are strikingly different. Norma Jean Almodovar, for instance, started out as a police officer, but after being disillusioned by widespread corruption in the LAPD, she protested through prostitution, an experience that led to the book *Cop to Call Girl*. Other topics include lesbian pornography, fetish and bondage films, legalization versus decriminalization, and porn versus erotica (jokes Rich, “It’s the lighting”). In between interviews, Despentes intercuts an array of sexually explicit scenes from the films of Sprinkle, Royalle, Richard Kern, Shu

Lea Cheang, and Todd Morris. Despentes presents some provocative ideas and images here, but *Mutantes* ultimately loses its way at the end with a long sojourn amongst Barcelona’s post-porn scene that revels in exhibitionism and degradation in a manner that seems more amateurish than empowering. Academic collections will want to consider, but the explicit sexual material makes this optional for all but the most adventurous of public libraries. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Shut Up Little Man! An Audio Misadventure ★★★1/2

(2010) 90 min. DVD: \$26.95. New Video Group (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4229-9254-3.

Cult audio history was made in 1987 when two young Midwest transplants named Eddie and Mitch moved into a rundown apartment in San Francisco and found that their next-door neighbors, aging chronic alcoholics Raymond Huffman and Peter Haskett, fought verbally and sometimes physically throughout the night. Initially the youths made cassette-tape recordings as potential evidence for the police, but soon their taping of the profane harangues, homophobic slurs, and almost ritual insults (“Shut up, li’l man!”) became an entertainment pastime. Eddie and Mitch included samples in music-mixtapes circulated amidst friends, ultimately issuing some 14 hours of Raymond-Peter arguments, which went “viral” before the term was coined. The ensuing years have witnessed Raymond and Peter CDs, remixes, stage dramatizations, and at least three Hollywood film projects that failed to launch—and now this oft-uproarious Australian-made documentary, written and directed by Matthew Bate, that details the backstory. The bulk of the film consists of interviews with Eddie and

Mitch, supplemented by archival photos and footage, a few re-enactments, and contributions from graphic novelist Daniel Clowes and others. Along the way, Bate considers the impact the tapes had on pre-reality TV pop culture, and raises (but never really answers) questions about copyright and whether the whole phenomenon simply exploited two sad drunks (a finale aspires to restore some dignity to the now-deceased roommates). DVD extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette, an interview with cartoonist and comics scholar Ivan Brunetti, and deleted scenes. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

When Strangers Click: Five Stories from the Internet ★★★

(2011) 56 min. DVD: \$19.98. *The Disinformation Company* (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-934708-1-1.

In this HBO-aired documentary, director Robert Kenner (*Food, Inc.*) explores modern dating habits, with an emphasis on the Internet. Interspersed among the five stories featured here are interesting observational tidbits, such as “Women are afraid of meeting a serial killer. Men are afraid of meeting someone fat.” New Jersey divorcee Kim had no luck with blind dates, so she went online and found a man from Prague, whom she wound up marrying (nine years later, they’re still together). Dave, a diminutive New Yorker, lacked the confidence to approach women in person, but the virtual world opened up occasions to flirt, have sexual encounters, and form a lasting relationship. Fellow New Yorkers Beth and Andy also found love through the web. The only foreign interviewee, Jonas, reinvented himself through Second Life, since his remote location in Sweden made socializing difficult. Within the game, his avatar performed music for other players, including a woman with whom he enjoyed a virtual romance with real-world repercussions (in an odd touch, Kenner interviews him as a Second Life avatar). The fifth subject, Ryan, grew up in a conservative Montana home and had nowhere to turn as a gay teen, but when his dad brought home a computer, he discovered chat rooms. His story takes the most surprising twist after he moves to Spokane to attend college, where he forms an online bond with the least likely individual, leading to a scandal that broke nationwide. DVD extras include an interview, deleted scenes, and a Q&A session. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

FOOD & SPIRITS

A Community of Gardeners ★★★1/2

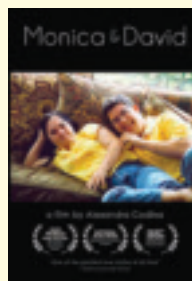
(2011) 60 min. DVD: \$25: individuals; \$89: public libraries & high schools; \$195: colleges & universities. Cintia Cabib. PPR.

Cintia Cabib’s documentary examines the

Monica & David ★★★1/2

(2010) 67 min. DVD: \$29.95. Docurama (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4229-8633-0.

In this HBO-aired documentary, the titular couple—two high-functioning Down syndrome adults living in Florida—defy expectations by falling in love and planning to marry, with the blessing (and assistance) of their families. First-time filmmaker Alexandra Codina is Monica’s cousin, allowing the film to achieve a sense of intimacy that is never intrusive or voyeuristic during the wedding ceremony and the newlyweds’ first year together as man and wife. Although employed part-time, Monica and David necessarily live with the bride’s mother and stepfather, both retirees (the latter, not unkindly, doubts that the couple will ever be able to sustain themselves and function independently), a situation that leads to the family moving across town to a custom-designed divided suite. The stress of the move and a health crisis for David seem to be the greatest surface challenges faced by the pair, whose affection for each other appears to be strong and deep. While an ideal support system, including social welfare agencies, seems to exist around Monica and David, both of their biological fathers left their mothers behind soon after their respective births, and for Monica in particular it’s a heartache that still hurts. A powerful, emotional documentary, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)



renewed interest in community gardens, with a focus on several such enterprises in

Washington, DC. As places where people come together to cultivate food and friend-

ships, each locale has its own personality. One garden in an economically struggling area is set up to trade produce for labor; another at a school provides scents to savor and textures to touch to help educate disabled children. Elsewhere, neighbors band together to transform a forgotten lot into a productive plot; young people's effort on the grounds of the National Arboretum brings families together for Saturday work parties; and in a section of Rock Creek Park, urban dwellers find relief from the condo lifestyle by literally getting their hands dirty. The narration-less film draws on the comments of a wide range of articulate gardeners, including children. Reflecting the fact that the movement has enjoyed resurgences at various times in the past, Cabib presents a history via old photos and some interesting text facts: in 1906, there were 76,000 school gardens throughout the U.S.; by 1918, 5 million gardens were helping on the home front during World War I; and in 1944, 40 percent of the nation's produce came from victory gardens. DVD extras include the bonus featurette *A Garden Grows at 13th and C Streets*, which relates how committed community members turned a sea of asphalt into a park with space for community gardening. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Gardner)



Le Cirque: A Table in Heaven ★★★

(2009) 74 min. DVD: \$24.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors).

Filmmaker Andrew Rossi provides an unvarnished, behind-the-scenes look at Le Cirque, a celebrated restaurant patronized by New York's political, financial, and social elites—filmed at a time when owner Sirio Maccioni and his three sons face difficulties. Trends are changing, business is declining, and the decision is made to close the titular establishment at the Palace Hotel at the end of 2004. The elder Maccioni—an opinionated, strong-willed man—decides to relocate to the Bloomberg Building, and this HBO-aired documentary follows the bittersweet rituals of closing the venerable eatery and arduous process of planning a new venture, with intergenerational tensions coming to the fore in decisions regarding issues such as establishing a patron dress code, designing the menu, and hiring and training waiters. Meanwhile, vintage footage tells Silvio's backstory, from his humble beginnings in Tuscany and immigration to America, to his career in the restaurant business, including overseeing Le Cirque in its heyday, with Richard Nixon among the diners. The 2006 opening night at the new location is a gala, celebrity-studded affair—with Donald Trump, Tony Bennett, Woody Allen, and many others on hand—but the establishment wins only two stars from the *New York Times* (after some retooling, a third is eventually added.) A few years later, Silvio, in his mid-70s, still has no thoughts of retiring from the labor-intensive enterprise. DVD extras include bonus scenes and a Q&A with Rossi. Sure to be popular with foodies and NYC buffs, this is recommended. [Note: Rossi and wife Kate Novack's related 2004 documentary *Eat This New York* is also newly available from First Run Features.] Aud: P. (S. Rees)

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Food Carving Artistry: The Basics

★★★

(2011) 73 min. DVD or Blu-ray: \$24.95. Bennett-Watt HD Productions. PPR.

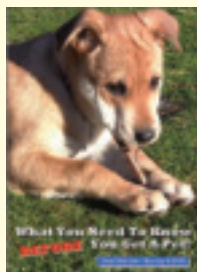
At the beginning of *Food Carving Artistry*, chef Ray Duey lays out his tools: a cheese plane, flexible knives, and cutters that can gouge a “U” or a “V” from the flesh of a fruit or vegetable. In quick order, Duey turns a leek into a chrysanthemum, crafts an apple luminaria, carves out a bell pepper poinsettia, and forms flowers from root vegetables, tomatoes, zucchini, and cantaloupe. He also coaxes a rose and a Christmas tree from a pineapple, makes a banana into a dolphin, turns a summer squash into a bird, and deftly carves a spiral staircase around a butternut squash, all while providing running commentary with a quirky sense of humor. Carving produce, he says “gets you more involved in your food.... You’ll just be the center of attention on the cul-de-sac.” A fun instructional program featuring clever and sometimes astonishing creations, this should appeal to foodies with a crafts flair. Two other titles are also available in the series: *Advanced Techniques* and *Ultimate Creations*. Recommended. Aud: P. (F. Gardner)

Our Daily Poison ★★★½

(2011) 112 min. DVD: \$398. Icarus Films. PPR.

This earnest documentary from filmmaker Marie-Monique Robin explores timely questions about food. How do pesticides, chemicals, and additives in food affect our bodies? Why is relevant research so difficult to access? And why are rates of cancers and autoimmune diseases rising? A French production, *Our Daily Poison* approaches its subjects—which includes farmers sickened by pesticide exposure, acceptable body intake and maximum residue levels, the controversial sweetener aspartame, endocrine disrupters (including BPA), the “cocktail effect” (when disparate substances interact in the body), and nutrition’s role in cancer—from a Eurocentric view, although much of the research and several of the interviews were conducted in America. English-language narration plays over archival and contemporary footage/stills interwoven with talking-head commentary, as Robin doggedly pursues the facts in the face of opposition from both industry and government (in one case, a conflict-of-interest notation disappears from the European Food Safety Authority’s website after Robin raises questions about a member working for a company that makes aspartame). *Our Daily Poison* makes a strong case that corporate interests have trumped truth at the expense of consumers’ health, offering a sobering exposé of industries intent on profit over safety—and governments asleep at the helm. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Gardner)

PETS



What You Need to Know Before You Get a Pet! ★★★½

(2012) 2 discs. 15 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$29.95. Hilene Videoworks. PPR.

Writer-director Ross Mayberry serves up plenty of pertinent information in this short primer on things to consider before welcoming a pet into the home. Admittedly focusing on dogs, *What You Need to Know Before You Get a Pet* asks viewers to take into account various factors, including how much time you can dedicate to the animal, what kind of environment the creature will live in, and how it will fit into your routine and family (including interaction with kids). Featuring detailed descriptions and price breakdowns of necessities including neutering or spaying, veterinary visits, food (and other supplies for dogs, cats, fish, birds, and more), the program also provides advice about treats, exercise, and training. Noting that it’s important to “make the right choice the first time” to avoid returning or abandoning a pet in the future, the program also assures viewers that with proper research and preparation, “there’s a perfect match for you and your circumstances.” Highly recommended. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

BUSINESS & ECONOMICS

Budgeting and Financial Decision-Making ★★★

(2011) 36 min. DVD: \$99.95. Films Media Group. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-61733-949-3.

This program in the *Personal Finance Essentials* series—aimed at young people who are just becoming financially independent—covers a variety of topics, including planning and sticking to a budget, consumer rights, buying auto and/or health insurance, deciding whether to purchase or lease a car, buying versus renting a home, protecting wireless communications, avoiding identity theft, and recognizing scams. Combining live-action vignettes, animation, and talking-head commentary, the program offers solid information and advice, ranging from general tips (don’t open e-mail from strangers) to fairly detailed scenarios. For example, renting a house for \$1,000 a month (including utilities) is compared to buying a \$200,000 house with a 30-year fixed mortgage at a 5 percent interest rate, taking into account overall monthly expenses and interest payments. A very traditional-looking educational series—likely to work best in the classroom in small doses (aided by easy access to individual chapters)—other titles include *Checking Accounts and Everyday Banking*; *Credit, Borrowing, and Debt*; *Saving and Investing*; and *Taxes and Tax Benefits*. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (M. Puffer-Rothenberg)

From Sports to Career: Transferable Job Skills ★★★

(2012) 22 min. DVD: \$49.95 (downloadable teacher’s guide available). Learning Zone Express. PPR. Closed captioned.

This refreshingly different approach to

career preparation—embodied in the tagline “habits athletes learn from sports are the very attributes employers want”—is delivered via a series of interviews with both successful business professionals and athletes, who talk about how competitive sports teaches crucial skills that are directly transferable to the workplace. Whether currently or formerly involved in athletics, viewers will benefit from learning ways to pinpoint and develop specific habits and qualities that will make them an asset to any employer. Some ties are fairly obvious, such as the cultivation of teamwork or the attainment of discipline through practice; others are less so, such as time management, coping with failure, or dealing with ambiguity. Creative editing and an excellent variety of authentic voices—from a high school varsity senior, to various executives, to an NFL player—make this program an inspiring choice. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (E. Gieschen)

The History & Function of U.S. Federal Reserve System ★★★

(2011) 30 min. DVD: \$29.95. Worldwide Academic Media. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-59163-389-1.

This presentation teaches students about the origins and ongoing operations of the Federal Reserve System. Following a brief summary of early efforts to establish a central national bank—all of which failed because of political opposition—the program details the circumstances that led to the 1913 creation of what we now call “the Fed,” a multilayered institution designed to reflect central, local, and private interests. The production delineates the separate but interdependent functions of its presidentially appointed Board of Governors, the Federal Open Market Committee, and the 12 regional Federal Reserve Banks. In addition, viewers learn about the role of the Fed in overseeing the nation’s monetary

policy and banking system, as well as the effects that its decisions can have on ordinary citizens. Aimed at middle and high school students (an example concerning interest and inflation is based on deciding what to do with a cash birthday present), this straightforward overview emphasizes the role of the Fed in maintaining a safe, stable financial system (although it neglects to discuss failures during the current recession), combining narration, archival material, and illustrative graphs for a solid historical and economic account. Recommended. Aud: J, H, P. (F. Swietek)

SPORTS, GAMES & RECREATION

Games of the North: Playing for Survival

★★★

(2011) 27 min. DVD: \$24.95 (\$150 w/PPR). Native American Public Telecommunications (dist. by VisionMaker Video).

Originally broadcast on PBS, Jonathon Stanton's documentary focuses on four young Inuit athletes—David Thomas, Jesse Frankson, Elizabeth Rexford, and John Miller III—who are keeping alive the traditional sports of Alaska's aboriginal population. Through statewide competitions and international events involving teams from other Arctic Circle nations, they perform physical feats designed to test their endurance and stamina. While a few of these events might seem a bit strange to non-Inuit viewers—including the "knuckle hop," the "butt hop," and the "kneel jump"—all have their roots in Arctic hunting protocol, and the juxtaposition of vintage video against contemporary footage effectively demonstrates these connections.

Also present is Brian Randazzo, a legendary champion in this niche sports world, who serves as narrator while also chronicling his own athletic odyssey. Unfortunately, the relatively short running time doesn't allow for much depth on the subjects' lives beyond competition. Even so, this well-made production offers a fascinating glimpse of a distinctive and underappreciated sporting tradition rarely seen by the wider world. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Official 2011 World Series Film

★★★★

(2011) 2 discs. 240 min. DVD: \$29.95. A&E Home Video (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4229-3673-2.

St. Louis native and *Mad Men* star Jon Hamm narrates this documentary featuring both an overview of and highlights from Major League Baseball's 2011 World Series, focusing on the champion St. Louis Cardinals, who won their 11th title and provided a winning exit for retiring manager Tony La Russa. The exciting, dramatic coverage begins with the Cardinals' playoff series against the Philadelphia Phillies and the Milwaukee Brewers, as they overcame injuries and other complications to advance to an even match-up against the Texas Rangers in the World Series. Highlights of all seven games in the sometimes nail-biting competition enliven the narrative, punctuated by such strong moments and memories as Cardinals pitcher Chris Carpenter's amazing catch and dangerous slide across a base in Game 1, and David Freese's crushing home run in the 11th inning of Game 6 to keep the Redbirds' hopes alive one more day. La Russa's bullpen strategy is frequently praised, and individual

Bobby Fischer Against the World ★★★

(2011) 93 min. DVD: \$29.95. Docurama (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned. ISBN: 1-4229-8634-9.

The mercurial Bobby Fischer (1943-2008) was a New York prodigy who, at the age of 29, represented the USA in the World Chess Championship Match of 1972—a widely televised spectacle that, because it pitted an American against Russia's Grandmaster Boris Spassky, became a Cold War-proxy fight. Even before his victory, Fischer—a loner—exhibited eccentric, egomaniacal, and petulant behavior, often appearing late for matches and risking default victories by Spassky. Paparazzi treatment by the press didn't help, and subsequently Fischer dropped out of the spotlight, joined a doomsday cult (which he left angrily when their apocalypse failed to occur), denounced America and Zionist conspiracies and Jews in general (although he himself was of Jewish descent), and lived in cranky exile in a succession of countries. Documentarian Liz Garbus delivers a Freud-101 diagnosis of Fischer's pathologies (including an emotionally remote, career-driven single mother), but judging from comments by the few interviewees who really got to know him (photographer Harry Benson, for one), it sounds like Fischer was a born misfit. Others who offer their observations over the archival footage include his bodyguard, his trainer, authors including Malcolm Gladwell, and celebrities such as Henry Kissinger and Dick Cavett. DVD extras include a history of chess and a featurette titled "The Fight for Fischer's Estate." A solid portrait of a nonconformist who displayed brilliant moves on the chessboard but regrettable ones off it, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)



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players are profiled on and off the field. DVD extras include Game 5 in its entirety and assorted featurettes, including a segment on La Russa, postseason highlights, and clips of the World Series parade. Highly recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

Ready, Set, Bag! ★★★

(2008) 80 min. DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$24.99. *Passion River* (avail. from most distributors).

This engaging documentary revolves around an annual grocery bagging competition, which culminates in a trip to Las Vegas for the state champions and their families (plus \$2,000 for the winner). Frank DiPasquale of the National Grocers Association not only feels that the event helps reinforce the importance of customer service, but also believes that the lowest members on the service industry food chain deserve the chance to shine. Justine Jacob and Alex P. da Silva concentrate on eight of 2007's 24 contestants—ranging from high school and college students to middle-aged men and women—who in their free time hang out with friends, and play video games, among other activities. If the state competitions are largely low-key affairs, the California equivalent plays like a super-charged frat party. Everything ultimately leads up to the annual event in Vegas, where participants bag a set amount of groceries as quickly as possible without breaking, crushing, or leaving out any items. For many, bagging isn't just a job: 17-year-old Jacob from Virginia says that it helped him to come out of his shell after his parents' divorce. The filmmakers also speak with store managers, trainers, and relatives. While quite similar to other competition-oriented documentaries (such as *Spellbound* [VL-1/04] and *Wordplay* [VL-11/06]), *Ready, Set, Bag!* also features compelling stories about working-class hopes and dreams. Recommended. Aud: P. (K. Fennessy)

Wimbledon: 2011 Official Film ★★★

(2011) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99. SRO (dist. by Kultur International Films). ISBN: 978-0-7697-9140-1.

This documentary captures the highlights, drama, disappointments, and surprises of the 125th Wimbledon Championships, and also includes some nostalgic looks at past competitions to put today's tennis game in perspective. A chronological approach takes the viewer through a succession of matches, introducing younger players and catching up on developments with such star veterans as Venus and Serena Williams, the latter defending the women's title but handicapped by recent surgery. Roger Federer seeks his seventh triumph in the men's division, while Rafael Nadal returns to defend his title, ultimately squaring off against Novak Djokovic after Federer and Scotland-born Andy Murray are defeated along the way. Brief chapters on the history of Wimbledon, the tradition of Honorary Stewards, and a look at the practice

facilities help to give context to the surrounding culture, while visits with the legendary Billie Jean King, Boris Becker, and Martina Navratilova remind us of some of the great athletes who have dominated this notable event in years past. Recommended. [Note: the companion volume *Wimbledon: Men's and Women's Final 2011* is also newly available.] Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

CRAFTS, ARTS & HOBBIES

Tinplate Legends in Action ★★★

(2011) 50 min. DVD: \$14.99. TM Books & Video (avail. from most distributors). PPR. ISBN: 978-1-936890-07-1.

Sure to appeal to model-railroad aficionados and antiques fanciers, *Tinplate Legends in Action* takes a nostalgic trip down memory lane with train sets dating from before the World Wars—in some cases even back to the 19th century. As described by enthusiastic collectors and experts, the "tinplate" engines (some key-wound rather than electric) and layouts—usually American- or European-manufactured—did not feature the accurate detailing of later scale models and meticulous modern reproductions. Stylized out of plain metal sheeting and sometimes wonderfully fanciful, these pieces are compared by one connoisseur to French Impressionist painting. Such relics have been passed down and traded by celebrity owners, including cartoonist Ward Kimball and broadcast legend Tom Snyder. One lengthy interlude concerns Snyder's posthumous wish (he died in 2007) to transfer

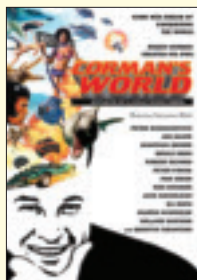
his sprawling, hi-rail standard-gauge layouts (including a formidable wooden mountain) intact to a public locale; it's now on display at the New Jersey Hi-Railers Train Club. An enjoyable excursion into the past, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

THE ARTS

Colin Quinn: Long Story Short ★★★

(2011) 75 min. DVD: \$14.95, Blu-ray: \$19.95. Video Service Corp. (avail. from most distributors).

While standup comedy concerts on home video are legion, *Long Story Short* purports to have an overarching theme—namely, the rise and fall of great empires—as comedian and former *Saturday Night Live* player Colin Quinn stars in his own self-written Broadway monologue, cracking wise on human behavior and ethnic stereotypes while offering observations on, for example, basic survival instincts taking over when standing in the supermarket checkout line. Filmed in 2011 at the Helen Hayes Theatre in New York City, Quinn tweaks the material to place everything in chronological historical context, offering a Quinn-tastic view of the world from the Stone Age, through humanity's long march of "progress" (Chinese civilization lasted millennia, built wonders like the Great Wall, yet never came up with more than one hairstyle), and on—clear up to the present day and the post-9/11 climate. Quinn acts out the Iraq War as a drunken saloon fight, with a soused USA constantly insisting Iraq has a gun, a love-smitten England jumping



Corman's World: Exploits of a Hollywood Rebel ★★★★★

(2011) 89 min. DVD: \$26.98, Blu-ray: \$29.99. Anchor Bay Entertainment (avail. from most distributors on Mar. 27).

Cineastes will feast on this fond career retrospective/appreciation of low-budget director-producer extraordinaire Roger Corman—from his cheapie debut *Monster From the Ocean Floor*, through juvenile-delinquent non-epics, Vincent Price/Edgar Allan Poe gothics, '60s biker dramas, and '70s action-exploitation flicks and sex comedies, all the way up to the recent Syfy production *Dinoshark*, whose crew try to save money by communicating via toy walkie-talkies. Although some cohorts lament that

Corman never graduated from the drive-in-schlock demographic to "quality" pictures approaching those of his admired Ingmar Bergman, the soft-spoken and gentlemanly Corman says that cheap quickies appeal to him; megabucks movie budgets would be better spent on urban renewal and social programs (this from a dated Tom Snyder interview). While cranking out hundreds of potboilers and cult classics, Corman discovered and nurtured world-class talent (many shown here), including Jack Nicholson (in a very effusive mood), Martin Scorsese, David Carradine, Peter Fonda, Bruce Dern, Joe Dante, John Sayles, Ron Howard, Peter Bogdanovich, Robert De Niro, Paul Bartel, Jonathan Demme, and Penelope Spheeris. And we see Corman himself, accompanied by longtime wife and producing partner Julie, receiving his honorary lifetime-achievement Oscar. Director Alex Stapleton focuses considerable attention on one of the least seen of Corman's storied productions, the serious 1962 racism drama *The Intruder* (William Shatner's cinematic debut), which was perilously shot on location in the Deep South; it was one of the filmmaker's few money-losers. Highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

into the fray to keep hitting on longtime on-off sweetheart France, and so on. Some routines miss—or could have come from any open-mic night—but more hit in this slick presentation. Extras include an audio commentary with Quinn and Jerry Seinfeld (who directed the Broadway show), and behind-the-scenes footage. Recommended. Aud: P. (C. Cassady)

Discoveries...America—Artist Profiles: Painters ★★★

(2010) 68 min. DVD: \$24.95. Bennett-Watt HD Productions. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-934682-53-1.

This edition of the *Discoveries...America* series focuses on seven painters and the processes they employ to create art. Featured are Walter Piehl of North Dakota, who paints Western subjects in an abstract impressionist style; Alan James Robinson of Connecticut, whose interest in maps converges with his art; Camille Patha of Washington state, who uses various mediums and techniques in her boldly colored creations; Mitchell Tolle of Kentucky, whose intricate pencil drawings and watercolors include portraits and landscapes; Michael Smirolfo of Louisiana, who produces vibrant canvases depicting jazz-related images; and Scott Hagen of Ohio, a self-described “barn artist” whose brush strokes adorn the sides of agricultural

buildings in more than a dozen states. Like other productions in Jim and Kelly Watt’s high-definition-filmed series, the visuals here are superb. Offering an intimate look at the creative process, this is recommended. Aud: P. (C. Block)

Futurist Life Redux ★★

(2011) 46 min. DVD: \$24.95 (\$199 w/PPR). Microcinema International.

The Futurist movement—which rejected traditional artistic forms in favor of a vision emphasizing dynamism, provocation, and violence—found cinematic expression in a 1916 film called *Vita Futurista* by Arnaldo Ginna, which featured 11 segments created by prominent futurists, including movement founder F.T. Marinetti, on topics such as “How a Futurist Sleeps” and “The Sentimental Futurist.” Since that work is lost, a group of contemporary artists have been recruited to contribute to a new compilation in the same cheeky spirit. Like most anthologies, *Futurist Life Redux* is a highly variable affair. While all 11 episodes are not only playful in tone (many take their inspiration from the titles and scenarios of the 1916 production) but also try to emulate the movement’s mission to use cinema to expand the range of sensory experience, the pieces generally come across like disordered experimental shorts, marred

by fairly primitive technique, poor acting, and stabs at edgy humor (exemplified by title puns like “Cerebral Ballzy” and “Acid Redux”). Ben Coonley’s strange, goofy “Why Cecco Beppe Does Not Die” is the exception, using cats and supposedly futurist infants in a wildly imaginative flight of fancy. DVD extras include interviews with four of the filmmakers, a printed essay, and a synopsis of the original *Vita Futurista*. Not a necessary purchase. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)


Histoire(s) du Cinéma ★★1/2

(2011) 2 discs. 266 min. In French w/English subtitles. DVD: \$49.99. Olive Films (avail. from most distributors).

Jean-Luc Godard’s *Histoire(s) du Cinéma* is not, strictly speaking, a history—at least not in a traditional documentary sense—but rather a personal essay on film in the form of eight video essays (made between 1988 and 1998) that reflect the legendary French New Wave director’s typically idiosyncratic style and nonlinear train of thought. Godard jumps through stills and clips spanning the 20th century, shuffling and intercutting seemingly unrelated works to draw his connections, and constantly bounces between the ideas of cinema as art and as industrial creation while finding beauty in both. His narration and slogan-like titles serve as both

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celebration and criticism, but while the subtitles work hard at keeping up, it's easy to become confused by the vast amount of

information, especially since Godard puns his way through the often ironic textual commentary. Meanwhile, the viewer flies

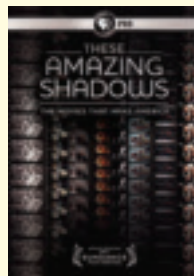
blind through the references: neither the clips, the subjects of the stills, nor the works of art are identified, although many will recognize the more famous sources, ranging from Vermeer paintings to Hitchcock films. The audio excerpts from movie soundtracks are in their original languages, while the narration and titles/texts are in French with English subtitles. Academic collections will definitely want to add this challenging meditation from France's *enfant terrible* of cinema, but this should also be considered a strong optional purchase for public libraries as well. Aud: C, P. (S. Axmaker)

These Amazing Shadows: The Movies That Make America

★★★1/2

(2011) 88 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.95 w/PPR), Blu-ray: \$29.99. PBS Video. ISBN: 978-1-60883-573-7 (dvd), 978-1-60883-574-4 (blu-ray).

Directed by Paul Mariano and Kurt Norton, this PBS-aided documentary looks at the National Film Registry, created by the Library of Congress to recognize and protect American motion pictures of lasting importance. Movies are the most perishable of the popular arts—indeed, half of all films released before 1950, particularly from the silent era, are now lost forever. However, it was the controversial issue of colorization of black-and-white productions—which took off during the home-video explosion in the 1980s—that brought the issue of preservation and integrity to the fore. Each year a committee of experts (along with input from the public) nominates 25 works to add to the Registry, and while initial selections focused on expected classics like *Citizen Kane*, recently the list has expanded in diversity, encompassing documentaries, experimental films, and home movies—even Michael Jackson's "Thriller" music video and the Zapruder JFK assassination footage. Viewers go behind-the-scenes for glimpses of the discussions leading to selections and to see the painstaking work that library employees perform in order to preserve and store these fragile artifacts. Critics and historians such as Leonard Maltin add perspective to the many clips included here, while an outstanding musical score by Peter Golub further enhances the production. DVD extras include featurettes (on preservation and restoration techniques, recording the score, and the Sundance Festival premiere), deleted scenes, and outtakes. A fine celebration of "our family album," this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)



Making the Boys ★★★1/2

(2010) 93 min. DVD: \$27.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors).

Mart Crowley's play *The Boys in the Band* opened off-Broadway on a drizzly day in 1968 with little fanfare in front of a far-from-packed house; the following night Crowley showed up to find a line stretching from the ticket window clear across town. A shift in the national consciousness had taken place: people were ready to see a production about the lives of gay men who weren't apologizing for who they were. Director Crayton Robey interviews Crowley, Edward Albee, Dominick Dunne, and several others connected with the stage version and later film adaptation. Ironically, the movie's release after the Stonewall riots and launching of the gay rights movement turned out to be the worst possible timing; performances that were initially groundbreaking soon struck many as stereotypical and tacky. Both the stage mounting and moviemaking angles of the story told here are interesting, but what really stands out is a reminder of the speed in which history can suddenly pivot. DVD extras include the featurettes "Dominick Dunne's Hollywood" and "Relationship Time with Dan Savage." Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (H. Seggel)

Puppet ★★★

(2011) 74 min. DVD: \$99.95; public libraries; \$295; colleges & universities. The Cinema Guild. PPR. ISBN: 0-7815-1381-2.

While some cultures revere puppetry as a performance art equal to any other, many Americans perceive it as a simpleminded diversion for small children. Filmmaker David Soll's documentary focuses on puppeteer-dramatist Dan Hurlin, who tells grown-up stories onstage through the Japanese craft of "bunraku" (using non-caricatured wooden "actors" manipulated by technicians masked head-to-foot by dark clothing). *Puppet* follows the development of Hurlin's latest project, "Disfarmer," which serves up a narrative about a cloistered, real-life Arkansas studio photographer who hid his past from his tiny community (the openly gay Hurlin sees parallels with his own life late in the action). While the technically complicated show takes

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shape, Soll gleams insight from historians, members of Jim Henson's family, and various filmmakers who've utilized puppetry. By scaling down from a sweeping survey of the art form to one troupe's experience, *Puppet* may sacrifice some edutainment value (ventriloquist dummies go unmentioned, as do *Team America: World Police*, and Gerry and Sylvia Anderson's popular marionette fantasies, such as *Thunderbirds*). But the film carries a deeper emotional resonance and appreciation for Hurlin's daring vision—and a glimpse of what equally imaginative artists could do with puppetry. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassady)

Troubadour Blues ★★★

(2011) 91 min. DVD: \$24.95. Tom Weber Films.

Tom Weber roams the country to speak with roots-oriented musicians who travel from town to town, much like the troubadours of old. Since most only use a guitar as accompaniment, they can cover a fair amount of territory for a modest amount of money. If some, like Dave Alvin, don't necessarily enjoy the rigors of touring, they still feel it's worth the effort in order to perform in front of live audiences. As RB Morris puts it, "I feel like a circuit preacher." Although the tools of the trade—guitar and harmonica—have virtually remained unchanged from the heyday of Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger, the ability to use the Internet for promotional purposes represents a significant difference. With overhead costs going down over the years, Chris Smither feels that he's "doing better than I ever did in my life." Artists who have been burned by the record business, such as Gurf Morlix, also appreciate doing things for themselves, even if that means more work on their part. Morlix plainly states, "I detest the music industry." Weber spends most of his time with Peter Case, who played in the Nerves and the Plimsouls in the 1980s. The Plimsouls had an alternative radio hit with "A Million Miles Away" and appeared in *Valley Girl*, but Case has been a solo act for decades now (and says he originally started out as a street singer). During filming, Case undergoes heart surgery, but soon returns to the stage. In between the performance clips, Weber works in thoughts about songwriting and the risks of the road. An interesting documentary, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Women in the Dirt: Landscape Architects Shaping Our World ★★★

(2011) 73 min. DVD: \$29.99 [\$295 w/PPR], Blu-ray: \$34. Wind Media Productions (avail. from www.womeninthedirt.com). ISBN: 978-0-9838177-1-0.

Landscape architect Carolann Stoney profiles seven women working in her chosen field in this informative documentary that opens with commentary from University

of Washington professor Thaisa Way, who notes that although histories of the profession often focus on male practitioners, females have long been active. All of Stoney's subjects reside in California, and for the most part they prefer to work with the state's Mediterranean climate rather than against it, using various low-maintenance shrubs, trees, and flowers to create designs that are often quite stunning. Stoney sees these professionals as combining art with function in their parks, gardens, and street-scapes. From the subjects' perspective, they are melding their ideas with the needs of their clients and communities, so some degree of constructive compromise is inevitable. The interviewees come across as artists, horticulturists, structural engineers, and environmentalists, each of whom adhere to different styles and philosophies. While Isabelle Greene concentrates on flora and organic shapes, Pamela Palmer focuses on water and angularity. Although most of their commissions are for high-end individuals and organizations, Andrea Cochran has created calming gardens for low-income properties, like San Francisco's Curran House, while Mia Lehrer has been working for years to transform the 32-mile Los Angeles River Basin, possibly the most ambitious project featured here. Stoney's other subjects are Katherine Spitz, Lauren Meléndrez, and Cheryl Barton, and she adds context-providing commentary from writers, editors, sculptors, urban designers, city commissioners, and other landscape architects. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

300 Miles to Freedom ★★★1/2

(2011) 33 min. DVD: \$129: public libraries; \$229: colleges & universities. W & B Productions (dist. by Transit Media). PPR.

On June 4, 1844, 27-year-old John W. Jones and four other slave men quietly escaped from a plantation in Leesburg, VA, heading north along the Underground Railroad. The quintet traveled mostly by night in order to avoid the bounty hunters who scoured the Virginia-Maryland-Pennsylvania corridor in search of runaway slaves. Jones began his new life as a free man in Elmira, NY, where he worked as a church sexton, learned to read and write, and eventually saved enough money to buy a house that served as a refuge for those seeking liberty in Canada. This wonderful documentary short by Richard Breyer and Anand Kamalakar traces Jones's remarkable odyssey, highlighting the courageous abolitionists who provided him and his traveling companions with food and shelter (actions that were against the law in pre-Civil War America). The filmmakers follow the escapees' route, interviewing assorted subjects along the way—historians, ministers, farmers, ferryboat captains, and others. The film also identifies the still-extant houses where the men took refuge during their perilous flight. Most astonishing is a segment that recalls a long-forgotten chapter of Civil War history: the Confederate prisoner-of-war camp at Elmira. Jones worked here during the conflict as part of the facility's burial staff—the fact that he would voluntarily provide dignified



The Black Power Mixtape 1967-1975 ★★★1/2

(2011) 96 min. DVD: \$24.98. MPI Media Group (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 0-7886-1443-6.

"A documentary in nine chapters" is how *The Black Power Mixtape 1967-1975* bills itself, covering eight critical years of the civil rights struggle (plus a prelude) in the United States as it evolved from the nonviolent approach of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to the more militant/revolutionary stance signaled by the rise of Stokely Carmichael and the Black Panther Party, as well as Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam. The real twist here, however, is that the material hails from Swedish TV, not U.S. media. The "neutral" Swedish reporters appear to have no agenda or preconceptions, and many interviewees—including Carmichael, Angela Davis, and Bobby Seale—look more at ease with foreign reporters than they did with white-establishment American counterparts. Some material is indeed revelatory, such as a soft-spoken Carmichael making frightening good sense about the shortfalls of nonviolent protest; here, he's far from the radical image often ascribed to the Panthers. Modern-day commentators add their reactions to archival footage, mostly progressive-to-left activists/entertainers (Harry Belafonte, Erykah Badu, and others), rather than a broader cast of black academics, politicians, and opinion leaders. While it states up front that this is not a complete chronicle of the Black Power movement (rather, a "mixtape"), this is still an important addition to our understanding of the intersection of race relations, U.S. politics, and history during a turbulent era. DVD extras include a documentary short, a featurette, and additional interviews. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassady)

interments to men who sought to perpetuate his enslavement is heartbreakingly

ironic. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (P. Hall)

Civilization: Is the West History? ★★½

(2011) 6 discs. 288 min. DVD: \$149.99 (teacher's guide included). Ambrose Video Publishing. PPR. Closed captioned.

British-born Harvard historian Niall Ferguson specializes in cheerfully alarmist tomes about the decline of the West. In this six-episode series—a companion to his book *Civilization: The West and the Rest*—Ferguson argues that Euro-American civilization no longer holds a monopoly on the special qualities which made the West globally dominant for the past five centuries. Always quick with a phrase, Ferguson terms these the “killer apps,” responsible for Europe’s rise to power in the early modern period: competition, scientific inquiry, property rights, medical innovation, consumerism, and the work ethic. Ferguson devotes one episode to each, but his eclectic approach leads him to address associated topics that occasionally overwhelm the original subjects. So the treatment of property leads to discussions of democracy and the rule of law, while the episode on medicine branches off into considerations of empire and racial Darwinism, and the piece on work features a sidebar on religion, particularly the relationship between Protestantism and entrepreneurial drive. The overall result is a highly selective historical survey of the West since the 15th century, unquestionably eccentric and tendentious but also provocative and lavishly illustrated with dramatic re-creations, artwork, and location footage, backed by Ferguson’s engaging narration (although his penchant for puns—“not the space race but the spice race”—can be occasionally groan-worthy). Despite the title, this isn’t a diatribe against globalization; Ferguson concludes by suggesting that the real danger to the West lies not so much in the fact that other areas of the world are adopting its “apps,” but rather in the West’s own loss of self-confidence. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (F. Swietek)



Hell and Back Again ★★★

(2011) 88 min. DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95. Docurama (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4229-7452-9 (dvd), 1-4229-9252-7 (blu-ray).

Danfung Dennis's *Hell and Back Again*, which won two awards at last year's Sundance Film Festival and garnered a nomination for Best Documentary at this year's Academy Awards, focuses on Sgt. Nathan Harris of the U.S. Marines Echo Company, who is injured in battle in Afghanistan and returns to his North Carolina home to recover from injuries to his hip and leg. Dennis is with Harris and his comrades in the midst of conflict, and he spends extensive time with the Marine and his wife, Ashley, during the difficult rehabilitation process. Harris is not the most likable individual—his fixation with guns and frequently surly attitude towards Ashley dilute some viewer sympathy. In an initially jarring but eventually annoying approach, Dennis cuts back and forth from the frenetic chaos of battle to the slower pace of life on the home front during the recovery process. Like the Oscar-nominated *Restrepo* (VL-1/11), this is another nonfiction film that turns the lives of U.S. ground forces into extended versions of reality TV productions. Extras include audio commentary by Dennis and editor Fiona Otway, a featurette on the ground-

(cont. on pg. 82)



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ALA-VRT Notable Videos 2012

The American Library Association (ALA) Video Round Table Notable Videos for Adults Committee has compiled its 2012 list of Notable Videos for Adults featuring 15 outstanding programs released on video within the past two years. Unless otherwise noted, titles are available from most distributors or companies listed in the "Distributor's Addresses" section on page 90.

Battle for Brooklyn (Rumor Films, 93 min., DVD or Blu-ray: \$295, web: battleforbrooklyn.com). Filmmakers Suki Hawley and Michael Galinsky's documentary finds activist Daniel Goldstein battling to save his home from being demolished to make way for a pro sports arena.

Better This World (Bullfrog Films, 89 min., DVD: \$295). Directed by Katie Galloway and Kelly Duane de la Vega, this documentary follows a pair of twentysomething political protesters arrested for domestic terrorism during the 2008 Republican National Convention.

Bonecrusher (New Day Films, 72 min., DVD: public libraries: \$119, colleges & universities: \$249, web: newday.com). Michael F. Fountain's documentary focuses on Lucas Chaffin, a young fourth-generation Appalachian coal miner who is following in the footsteps of his father, Luther "Bonecrusher" Chaffin. (VL Online-2/10)

Catfish (Universal, 88 min., DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$26.98). This controversial documentary from directors Ariel Schulman and Henry Joost features Schulman's younger photographer brother in a bizarre tale revolving around a precocious 8-year-old artist and communication with her family on Facebook. (VL Online-1/11)

A Film Unfinished (Oscilloscope, 90 min., in English, German, Hebrew, Polish & Yiddish w/English subtitles, DVD: \$19.99). Yael Hersonski's remarkable documentary tells the twisted story of a

Nazi propaganda film made in the Warsaw Ghetto in 1942. (VL-3/11)

The Flaw (Docurama, 82 min., DVD: \$29.95, avail. Apr. 17 [\$295 w/PPR from Bullfrog Films]). Directed by David Sington, this examination of the 2008 financial crisis features interviews with prominent economists.

Freedom Riders (PBS, 120 min., DVD: \$24.99 [\$54.99 w/PPR], Blu-ray: \$29.99 [\$54.95 w/PPR]). Broadcast on PBS's *American Experience* series, Stanley Nelson's superb documentary details the story of the Freedom Riders: black and white activists who rode buses into the Deep South to challenge Jim Crow segregation laws. (VL-7/11)

Hot Coffee (Docurama, 86 min., DVD: \$29.99). The 1990s civil litigation case brought by a coffee-spilling grandma against fast-food giant McDonald's is at the center of director Susan Saladoff's look at how America's judicial system is becoming more anti-consumer and pro-big business. (VL-1/12)

Jaffa: The Orange's Clockwork (Trabelsi Productions, 52 min., DVD: \$29, web: trabelsiproductions.com). Through photography, cinema, poetry, paintings, and comments from historians, Eyal Sivan's documentary provides a visual history of the famous citrus fruit that originated from Palestine.

The Labyrinth: The Testimony of Marian Kołodziej (December 2nd Productions, 37 min., DVD: \$19.95: individuals, \$99: public libraries, \$190: colleges & universities, web: thelabyrinthdocumentary.com). Narrated by Roman Czarny, director Jason A. Schmidt's moving film looks at an astonishing art exhibition created by Marian Kołodziej, a Polish Catholic survivor of Auschwitz. (VL Online-8/11)

Mugabe and the White African (First Run Features, 94 min., DVD: \$27.95). Film-

makers Lucy Bailey and Andrew Thompson surreptitiously shot this exploration of controversial Zimbabwean leader Robert Mugabe, who reputedly takes white-owned farms and redistributes them to wealthy bureaucrats, cronies, and judges. (VL-3/11)

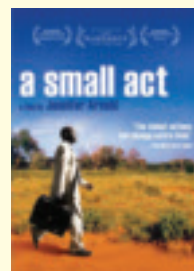
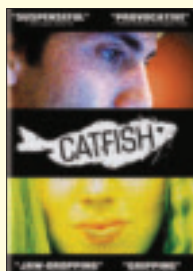
Neshoba: The Price of Freedom (First Run Features, 87 min., DVD: \$27.95). Directed by Micki Dickoff and Tony Pagano, this documentary revisits a horrific event in June 1964 in Philadelphia, MS, when three civil rights activists were murdered and buried in an earthen dam. (VL-3/11)

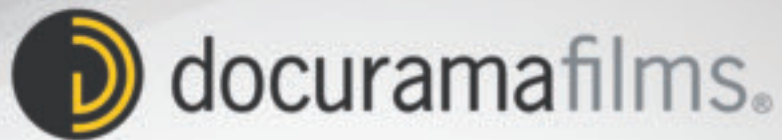
The Price of Sex (Women Make Movies, 73 min., DVD: \$89: public libraries, \$295: colleges & universities). Human trafficking is the subject of Mimi Chakarova's powerful documentary, which looks at how women from Eastern Europe are lured to other countries with empty promises of a better life, only to find themselves quickly forced into prostitution. (VL Online-10/11)

A Small Act (Docurama, 88 min., DVD: \$29.95 [\$95 w/PPR: public libraries & high schools; \$295 w/PPR: colleges & universities from Ro*co Films Educational]). Aired on HBO, this documentary from director Jennifer Arnold tells the moving and inspiring story of how a Swedish Holocaust refugee's act of charitable generosity toward a young student in Kenya turned out to have a great effect. (VL-1/11)

War, Love, God and Madness (Typecast, 83 min., DVD: \$300, web: typecastfilms.com). On a visit to Iraq in 2007, filmmaker Mohamed Al-Daradji reflects on making movies in a volatile war zone over the previous three years.

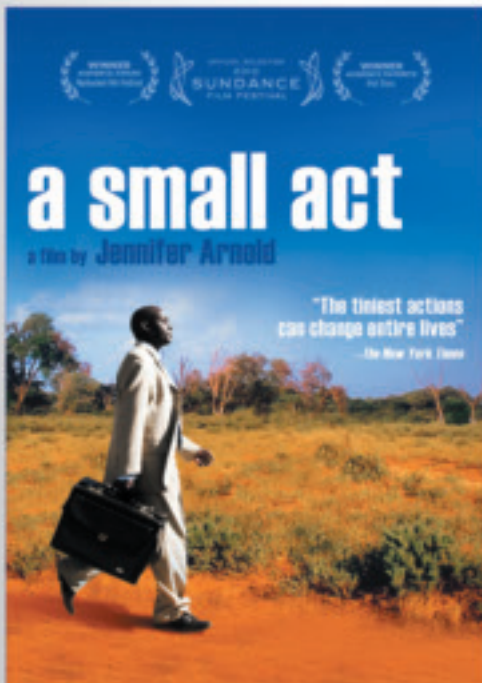
Members of the 2010-11 committee are Chair, Mary Hanlin, Tidewater Community College; Laura Jenemann, George Mason University; Julia Churchill, Oak Lawn Public Library; Maureen Tripp, Emerson College; Tom Ipri, University of Nevada, Las Vegas; Tracy Montri, Toledo-Lucas County Public Library; Sam Readman, Miami-Dade Public Library; and Joan Skowronski, Hillsborough County Library.





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(cont. from pg. 79)

breaking cinematography technology used in the film (this is the first production shot entirely with a highly customized Canon 5D Mark II digital SLR camera rig), deleted scenes, and Willie Nelson's "Hell and Back" slideshow. Considering the extensive award recognition, this is recommended, overall. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Peace Commandos ★★ ★

(2010) 27 min. DVD: \$150. *Collective Eye*. PPR.

Skye Fitzgerald's compelling documentary short focuses on a pair of organizations dedicated to bringing some degree of peace to the war-torn Democratic Republic of Congo: Mines Advisory Group, a humanitarian endeavor that collects and destroys weapons stores, and Search for Common Ground, a performance troupe that uses interactive street theater to preach the concepts of co-operation and tolerance. Presenting the idea of peace in a country that has suffered some of the most extraordinary levels of wartime fatalities in modern times is no mean feat, and one can't help but wonder whether either enterprise will possibly make any substantial impact—particularly when so many factions, both Congolese and international, are financially profiting from the continued bloodshed. Nonetheless, they push forward with their missions: Mines Advisory Group does manage to remove some weapons, while Search for Common Ground reaches out to the public (including a large number of children) with their breezy yet wise performances. *Peace Commandos* is told largely from the perspective of individuals involved in the two organizations, ultimately providing a rare insider view on the violence and poverty in this troubled region. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

The Wereth Eleven ★★ ★ ★

(2011) 60 min. DVD: \$24.95. *The Ardennes Group* (dist. by Janson Media). PPR. ISBN: 978-1-56839-411-X.

This remarkable docudrama, written and directed by Robert Child, chronicles the story of 11 African-American soldiers who were captured and brutally murdered near Wereth, Belgium, by the Nazi SS during the Battle of the Bulge. The men were members of the 333rd Field Artillery Battalion, and their terrible tale has been called one of the least-known atrocities of World War II. Narrated by actor Corey Reynolds, *The Wereth Eleven* weaves together excellent interviews with WWII veterans and historians, never-before-seen archival footage, and top-notch visual effects (including CGI-animated graphics), while Ken Arnold leads an impressive cast in the reenactments. A winner of the Founder's Choice Award at the 2011 GI Film Festival, DVD extras here include bonus interviews and panel discussions. Highly recommended. **Editor's Choice**. Aud: P. (C. Block)

TRAVEL & GEOGRAPHY

Travel with Kids: Jamaica ★★ ★

(2011) 57 min. DVD: \$14.95. *Equator Creative Media* (dist. by Janson Media). ISBN: 978-1-56839-399-7.

The *Travel with Kids* franchise, created by husband-and-wife filmmakers Jeremy and Carrie Simmons—who present themselves and their two kids as “the Roberts family”—sallies forth to Jamaica as the couple and sons Seamus and Nathan, age 5 and 7, roam the tourist-friendly tropical coasts of the nation. The capital city of Kingston, although an airport hub, is not on the itinerary; instead, the trip covers the

island's north shore—including Montego Bay—and the less frequented west coast. The parents' alternating narration offers tips and recommendations on resorts offering personal nannies, one-time pirate anchorages, horseback rides through water, a bay that glows at night with bio-luminous organisms, and the open-to-the-public Jamaican dog-sledding center. The family also takes occasional detours off major tourism routes to absorb Jamaica's more “authentic” small villages and culture. Pop-up tips and website references advise viewers on where to go for further information. DVD extras include a trip planner, bloopers, tips and resources, and a “Jamaica at Home” section (featuring recipes and crafts). Recommended. Aud: P. (C. Cassidy)



Coast ★★ ★ ★

(2011) 8 discs. 960 min. DVD: \$69.98. *BFS Entertainment & Multimedia* (avail. from most distributors).

The BBC-aired *Coast* offers a stirring, epic circumnavigation of the British Isles, with ever-enthusiastic host Neil Oliver and his team of co-presenters visiting all the shoreline regions of England, Cornwall, Wales, and Scotland, with trips to adjacent Ireland, as well as Norway, Denmark, and France, plus a double-back shortcut through Scotland via the Caledonian Canal. The 20-episode series spans a rich pageant of arts, science, history, economics, industry, engineering feats and follies, marine wildlife and fishing, warfare, and marvels of transportation in this part of the world, where water meets land. Highlights include segments on a seaside outdoor amphitheater renowned for al fresco performances of *The Tempest* (often in actual tempests); the discovery of fractal geometry in the formation of craggy coastlines; heroic anti-Nazi resistance pockets in Denmark, Norway, and Brittany; the 16th-century female pirate Grace O'Malley; and lighthouses and shipbuilding centers. A final journey up the Thames Estuary takes viewers to the capital city of London. Some knowledge of British history is helpful but not absolutely necessary. Highly recommended. **Editor's Choice**. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

BIOGRAPHY

Eames: The Architect and the Painter

★★ ★

(2011) 84 min. DVD: \$29.95. *First Run Features* (avail. from most distributors).

Charles Eames (1907–78) and his second wife, Ray (1912–88), were among the most innovative and influential American designers of the mid-20th century. Narrated by James Franco, this documentary by Jason Cohn and Bill Jersey serves up a chronicle of their lives and achievements, alternating archival material with comments from family, colleagues, and still-adoring members of their studio staff. *Eames* briefly covers the early years of both—Charles the architect and Ray the painter—but the emphasis here is on the groundbreaking work they accomplished in the circus-like atmosphere of their company headquarters in Venice, CA. The revolutionary design of the so-called Eames chair, made of malleable material and contoured to fit the human body, and

the house they built—rightfully considered a milestone of modern architecture—receive due attention, but so do the advertising films they devised for major American companies like IBM, the extravagant museum exhibition on the colonial period they spearheaded for the U.S. Bicentennial, and the impressionistic film about America they created for public showing in the Soviet Union. And the filmmakers take time to reflect on the Eames' personal relationship (noting that Ray consciously deferred to the more charismatic Charles) and on the charge that the pair failed to adequately acknowledge the contributions of their staff. DVD extras include bonus scenes. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Mind of the Demon: The Larry Linkogle Story ★★ ★

(2011) 63 min. DVD: \$24.99. *Breaking Glass Pictures* (avail. from most distributors).

Narrated by Motörhead heavy metal legend Lemmy Kilmister, filmmaker Adam Barker's *Mind of the Demon* is essentially an antidrug PSA wrapped in an extreme-sports video,

combining vintage footage with contemporary interviews to tell the story of how Larry Linkogle rose to prominence in the 1990s as a dirt-bike rider who pioneered freestyle motocross. Inspired by the attention paid to snowboarders and surfers, Linkogle and his two-wheeled co-conspirators would enter races not with the aim of crossing the finish line but rather to break from the pack for daredevil jumps and aerial acrobatics. Linkogle and his "Metal Mulisha" crew set the pace for the new sport, shattered records, wowed fans, and lived the rock-star lifestyle—including drugs and alcoholism, aggravated in Linkogle's case by pain medication after a spleen injury. Ensuing problems jeopardized Linkogle's career and family life, even while he stunt-doubled for Vin Diesel on the action hit *xXx* (during which he was also badly hurt). A cautionary tale of sobriety-or-else, DVD extras include a short horror film starring Linkogle, and a behind-the-scenes featurette. Recommended. Aud: P. (C. Cassidy)

The Topp Twins: Untouchable Girls

★★★1/2

(2011) 84 min. DVD: \$19.98. *The Disinformation Company* (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-934708-82-8.

Talk about niche marketing: Jools and Lynda Topp are farm-raised yodeling country singers and character-based comedians from New Zealand; they're also "out" lesbian twins who've been political activists for the length of their career, which has been enormously successful since its onset in the 1980s. Blending clips of the sisters in character, interviews, and performance footage, together with commentary from friends and family, director Leanne Pooley spins out the Topps' history (including a somber interlude involving Jools's fight against breast cancer). From busking in town to touring the country in a tractor-pulled gypsy caravan (and consistently packing houses along the way), the sisters have also been on the frontlines of Maori land-rights protests, anti-Apartheid demonstrations, and the fight for sexual equality, joyfully approaching all of their work while also finding a worldwide audience. Folksinger Billy Bragg singles the Topps out as unique among political artists for bringing humor to their causes without diluting the impact of their message. DVD extras include a background featurette, additional interviews, and deleted scenes. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (H. Seggel)

Video Librarian Online

Visit Video Librarian Online (www.videolibrarian.com) for more reviews during March and April, including: *Crossing Our Borders*, *Nazi Hunters*, *Radioactive Wolves*, *Royal Upstairs Downstairs*, *Top Secret America*, and much more!

Series Update

Choices, Choices! (25 min., DVD: \$12.99) is the 15th volume in Sunny-Side Up Entertainment and Vision Video's *Cherub Wings* series featuring the bouncy little emissary and pals, who learn about tackling temptation. See review of *Cherub Wings #1: Little Things* in VL-3/01.



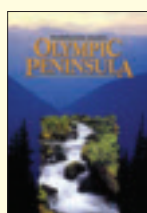
Newly available from Lionsgate and HIT Entertainment is **Timmy Time: Timmy Needs a Bath** (45 min., DVD: \$14.98), featuring Timmy the lamb and his farmyard friends, who enjoy the fun side of cleaning up in this five-story compilation from the *Shaun the Sheep* spin-off produced by Aardman Animations. See review of *Timmy Time: Timmy Steals the Show* in VL-5/11.

Also newly available from Lionsgate and HIT is **Barney: I Love My Friends** (58 min., DVD: \$14.98), featuring the purple dinosaur and friends, including Baby Bop, Riff, and B.J. See review of *Barney: Best Manners* in VL Online-3/04.

Marlow Meets—Series One: Michael Palin, Mike Leigh, Tony Bennett, Paul Smith, and Renée Fleming (115 min., DVD: \$25 [\$120 w/PPR]), **Tim Marlow at... The Courtauld** (72 min., DVD: \$30 [\$200 w/PPR]), and **Tim Marlow on...Carsten Höller at Tate Modern** (39 min., DVD: \$25 [\$120 w/PPR]) are the latest programs in Microcinema International's series featuring art expert Tim Marlow. See review of *The Nude in Art with Tim Marlow* in VL-5/11.

Being Catholic: How Catholics Pray (20 min., DVD: \$24.99), the most recent program in Videos with Values and Oblate Media's *Being Catholic* series, explores the subject of prayer as a connection with God. See review of *Being Catholic* in VL Online-4/08.

Newly updated from Hatzoff Productions, **Washington State's Olympic Peninsula** (30 min., DVD: \$19.95) features a segment on Forks, a major filming location for the popular *Twilight* series. See review of *Washington State's Olympic Peninsula* in VL-10/89. Available from: Hatzoff Productions, P.O. Box 9465, Seattle, WA 98109; tel: 800-458-5335; web: videotravelogues.com



The newest title in Paramount's Nickelodeon-aided animated adventure series is **Dora's Easter Adventure** (66 min., DVD: \$16.99), following Dora and her monkey buddy Boots on an Easter fiesta outing in which viewers interact to help rescue the Hip-Hop Bunny's egg basket. See review of *Dora the Explorer: Big Sister Dora* in VL-5/05.



Angelina Ballerina: Sweet Valentine (61 min., DVD: \$14.98) is the latest holiday-themed episode from HIT and Lionsgate in the computer-animated series based on the books by author Katharine Holabird and illustrator Helen Craig chronicling the adventures of dancing mouseling Angelina. See review of *Angelina Ballerina: Friends Forever* in VL-3/03.

SpongeBob SquarePants: SpongeBob's Frozen Face-Off (88 min., DVD: \$16.99) is the most recent compilation from Paramount's Nickelodeon series, focusing on the villainous Plankton's attempts to steal the Krusty Krab secret formula while SpongeBob and the rest of the town of Bikini Bottom are busy with a sled racing competition. See review of *SpongeBob SquarePants: Tide and Seek* in VL-9/03.

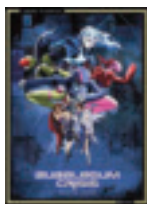
Show Me Science—Astronomy: The Sky Isn't Falling (14 min., DVD: \$44.95) and **Show Me Science Advanced: Ecology—Bats, Creatures of the Night** (17 min., DVD: \$44.95) are the newest additions to TMW Media Group's extensive educational series. See review of *Show Me Science Advanced: Fuel Technology—Transportation Innovations* in VL-5/11. Available from: TMW Media Group, 2321 Abbot Kinney Blvd., Venice, CA 90291; tel: 800-262-8862; web: tmwmedia.com.

Updated for 2012 with new CPR standards, **Pet Emergency First Aid: Dogs** (58 min., DVD: \$29.95) is the latest first-aid title from Apogee Communications Group. See review of *Pet Emergency First Aid: Dogs—Working Dogs Edition* in VL-5/11. Available from: Apogee Communications Group, 159 Alpine Way, Boulder, CO 80304; tel: 800-210-5700; web: apogeevideo.com.



Bubblegum Crisis Tokyo 2040: The Complete Series ★★★

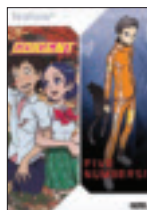
(1999) 4 discs. 650 min. DVD: \$49.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4210-2354-7.



This 1998–99 remake of the classic anime OVA *Bubblegum Crisis* (originally airing between 1987–91) is set in the year 2040, when robots called Boomers—manufactured by the mysterious conglomerate Genom—handle Tokyo's less desirable manual labor jobs. The Boomers have a bit of a quality control issue: they attack their human supervisors, and when traditional police are unable to control the bots, the Knight Sabers—a quartet of young ladies in fashionable armor—appear to save the day. Each has her own secret to deal with—most notably, one of them is actually the daughter of the Boomers' creator. However, the Knight Sabers manage to keep their neuroses in check long enough to uncover some nasty truths about Genom while also putting the Boomers in their place. The longer-form *Bubblegum Crisis Tokyo 2040* allows for more character development, while the animation wonderfully captures late-1990s cyberpunk style. Even those unfamiliar with this series' fabled predecessor will enjoy the slam-bang nature of the full-throttle action sequences. Compiling all 26 episodes in a dual-language set, rated TV-MA, this is recommended. (P. Hall)

Coicent/Five Numbers! ★★★

(2011) 60 min. DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$39.98. Sentai Filmworks (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-6161-5185-0 (dvd), 978-1-6161-5186-7 (blu-ray).



This release pairs two anime sci-fi OVAs. *Coicent* is a sort of rom-com-mecha escapade (with a nod to the Audrey Hepburn classic *Roman Holiday*) set in the futuristic city of Nara, which is celebrating its millennium anniversary with high-tech attractions. A lifelike robot named Toto, programmed to look and behave like a goddess, escapes her cruel creators (disguised, naturally, as a schoolgirl) for a romantic idyll with a student named Shinichi (voiced by Kensho Ono, famous in Japan as the dubbed voice of Harry Potter). The darker *Five Numbers!* is set on a space-station prison orbiting Earth, where five nameless convicts serving life sentences wake from drug-induced slumber to find the complex deserted, except for an old man and his cat. The men struggle to figure out the situation in this sardonic piece that could have come from the mind of Rod Serling in a nihilistic mood. Presented on a dual-language disc, rated TV-PG, extras include cast and crew interviews. Recommended. (C. Cassidy)

Darker Than Black: The Complete Second Season ★★★1/2

(2007) 5 discs. 400 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$59.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4210-2362-8.



This anime series' second season wades into *X-Men* territory with its lineup of Contractors—able to perform supernatural feats—hired as assassins by governments and corporations. Taking place two years after the initial run's mayhem, the focus is now on a Russian teenager named Suo Pavlichenko, whose scientist father is murdered and whose twin brother, a physically disabled Contractor, has mysteriously disappeared. Suo joins forces with Hei to locate her mother, and the tension between bratty young Suo and the older and taciturn Hei offers a strange *True Grit*-style vibe amidst a narrative full of conspiracies, traps, and unsavory yet colorful characters. This is a convoluted and somewhat murky story, but viewers can simply enjoy the moody animation and frequent bursts of imaginative energy. Presenting 12 episodes originally aired in 2007 (plus OVAs), extras on this dual-language set, rated TV-MA, include select audio commentaries. A strong optional purchase. (P. Hall)

Fairy Tail, Part 1 ★★★1/2

(2009) 4 discs. 300 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$54.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4210-2378-4.



Magic is a serious (and often humorous) business enterprise in this winning fantasy series. In the kingdom of Fiore, sorcerers have systematized and regulated the black art, forming guilds to better ply their trade as they take on freelance assignments. Teen wizard Lucy aspires to join one of these organizations—the illustrious Fairy Tail. She gets her chance after being rescued from slavers by Natsu and his flying blue cat, Happy, both Fairy Tail members. Natsu is, in fact, a mighty “fire wizard” and was raised by a dragon—although, despite his hot-headed courage, he suffers from chronic motion sickness. Lucy soon learns that most of the Fairy Tail mages have similar quirks (and a tendency to cause major property damage during monster battles). *Fairy Tail*'s colorful but economical animation harkens back to the popular *Hiro Mashima* manga series from which it derives, with spelled-out sound effects and gag labels. Compiling 12 episodes from 2009 on a dual-language set, rated TV-14, extras include audio commentaries from the English-language cast. Highly recommended. [Note: *Fairy Tail, Part 2* and *Part 3* are also newly available, with *Part 4* slated for release on Mar. 20.] (C. Cassidy)

Revolutionary Girl Utena: The Black Rose Saga ★★★1/2

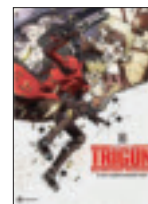
(1997) 3 discs. 300 min. DVD: \$49.99. The Right Stuff International (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-57032-705-X.



This anime offering from director Kuni-hiko Ikuhara is the second part of a series involving the unlikely adventures of Utena Tenjou, an orphaned girl who grows up to attend the Ohtori military academy, dresses in a male uniform, and wins the love of Anthy, a rival's girlfriend. In this part of the saga, Utena encounters new foes: duelists who wear rings featuring a black rose (Utena has her own red-rose ring, given to her by a mysterious prince when she was a child). These opponents report to Souji Mikage, who uses a funky type of mind control that claims victims who share their deepest hatreds with him. Needless to say, Utena is seen as the stumbling block in Souji's attempt to not only spread his malice across Ohtori but also kill Anthy. As in *Revolutionary Girl Utena: The Student Council Saga* (VL-11/11), this follow-up takes a mature approach to gender roles and sexuality without ever becoming exploitative or smutty. Unfortunately, Souji is not a particularly memorable villain. Compiling episodes 13–24 in a dual-language set, rated 16-up, DVD extras include interviews, and art galleries. A strong optional purchase. [Note: *Revolutionary Girl Utena: The Apocalypse Saga* is also newly available.] (P. Hall)

Trigun: Badlands Rumble ★★★

(2011) 137 min. DVD: 2 discs, \$29.98; Blu-ray: \$34.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4210-2417-9 (dvd), 1-4210-2418-7 (blu-ray).



This feature-length anime title reboots the popular *Trigun* series that debuted in 1998, featuring anti-hero/anti-violent gun-fighter Vash the Stampede and behemoth bank robber Gasback. The story opens with Vash stumbling into one of Gasback's bank heists and interfering with its execution; during the ensuing melee, Gasback's colleagues double-cross him. A 20-year flash-forward finds Gasback seeking revenge on his now-wealthy former comrades, who are living comfortably in a boomtown called Macca City. Gasback, however, has his own problems: namely, a small army of bounty hunters seeking to collect a \$300 million prize for his capture, dead or alive (preferably the former, all things considered). Fans of Vash's peculiar shtick will enjoy his return here. Presented on a dual-language disc, rated TV-14, extras include cast and crew interviews and a behind-the-scenes featurette. Recommended. (P. Hall)

Andrea Chénier ★★☆☆

(2011) 130 min. In Italian w/ English subtitles. DVD: \$29.99; Blu-ray: \$39.99. Unitel Classica (dist. by Naxos of America).

Like all the productions from Austria's Bregenz Festival, Keith Warner's 2011 mounting of Umberto Giordano's 1896 *verismo* opera—a French Revolution drama in which a noblewoman chooses to go to the guillotine with her beloved titular poet rather than surrender herself to the revolutionary leader who might save him—is a spectacular mounting. The vast lakeside stage is dominated by a huge statue rising from the water modeled after David's famous painting of Marat dead in his bath; nearby opulently costumed characters scurry about on scaffolding and stairs, occasionally even falling into the lake as part of the action, creating an overall visually impressive effect. Ulf Schirmer leads the Vienna Symphony in a propulsive reading of the score, and tenor Héctor Sandoval as Chénier, soprano Norma Fantini as noblewoman Maddalena, and baritone Scott Hendricks as nemesis Gérard all deliver strong performances, with fine supporting work from Tania Kross as Maddalena's servant. Despite a couple of discordantly modernist interludes by David Blake and conspicuous head microphones on the soloists, this is an effective version of one of the better second-tier operas in the repertory. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray release) and PCM stereo, this is recommended. (F. Swietek)



CD Hwy: The Complete First & Second Seasons ★★1/2

(2000) 6 discs. 975 min. DVD: \$39.99. SRO (dist. by Kultur International Films). ISBN: 978-0-7697-9133-3.

This six-disc set presents two seasons of the music series from New York's WPBS, hosted by singer/songwriter Laurie Roth and showcasing independent artists—both old and new—who encompass genres ranging from doo wop to New Wave (Japan's Travelers, a swing band, represents the only non-U.S. entry). Each episode features one veteran act, like Buck Owens, Al Green, or Kinky Friedman (who performs a duet with Willie Nelson on "Sold American"), in conjunction with more obscure or regional musicians, such as Cajun fiddler Lisa Haley and yodeling barber David Jackson (some performers, including Rita Coolidge, the Tokens, and the Murmaids, appear more than once). Roth is certainly game, as evidenced by her singing along with the Temptations, Coolidge, and Jackson—who even gives her a trim during their conversation (later, during the sequence with retro-rockers Lil' Elmo and the Cosmos, she receives a matching pompadour). Roth's gushiness with some



of her favorite artists, like former Stray Cats bassist Lee Rocker and band leader/keyboardist Paul Revere, just adds to the down-home feel, but describing 1980s balladeer Gino Vanelli as a "thoroughbred" and *Days of Our Lives* actress-turned-singer Gloria Loring as an "enormous success" seems a bit much. Although produced for public television, *CD Hwy* sometimes feels more like a public-access production as it has a less polished look and sound than PBS staples such as *Austin City Limits* and *Soundstage*. Presenting all 39 episodes from 1998–2000, in Dolby Digital stereo, this is a strong optional purchase. (K. Fennessy)

Carmen ★★1/2

(2010) 156 min. In French w/English subtitles. DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99; Blu-ray: \$39.99. Unitel Classica (dist. by Naxos of America).

Bizet's ever-popular war-horse about the tragic romance between the titular gypsy seductress and besotted soldier Don José has largely escaped Eurotrash revisionism, but Calixto Bieito's 2010 production at Barcelona's Gran Teatro del Liceu rectifies that omission, updating the piece to what appears to be the last years of Franco's rule in the early 1970s (although among the items the smugglers carry are microwave ovens and flat-screen TVs), opting for starkly minimalist sets—except for banged-up cars that are frequently driven or dragged onto the stage. Bieito also freely ignores the text, as when the children's chorus accompanying Don José's squad in the first scene is changed into a group of female beggars, turning what they actually sing into utter nonsense (the civilian crowd is also replaced with soldiers engaged in military exercises). Still, even despite these arbitrary alterations, the performance itself boasts musical merit: Roberto Alagna is a virile Don José with a ringing tone, and even though Béatrice Uria-Monzon is a bit matronly for Carmen, her vocalism remains strong, and both leads literally throw themselves into the suggestive poses Bieito demands of them. Marina Poplavskaya is too sophisticated for Micaëla, and Erwin Schrott displays fine swagger but a wobbly voice as the bullfighter Escamillo, though Marc Piollet secures firm, sensitive playing from the orchestra. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray release) and PCM stereo, this *Carmen* is worth watching once, but a more traditional staging—such as the 2002 Glyndebourne production reviewed in VL-7/03—is preferable. An optional purchase. (F. Swietek)



Coppélia ★★1/2

(2011) 83 min. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Opus Arte (dist. by Naxos of America).

Contemporary choreographers seem re-

luctant to stage Léo Delibes's frothy 1870 ballet—the story of a man who falls in love with a female automaton—in its original form. In his last work as ballet master of the Paris Opera, Patrice Bart here offers another radical rethinking, jettisoning much of the original music and replacing it with selections from other compositions by Delibes (including *Lakmé*), resulting in a darker score, better suited to the revised narrative Bart has spun in the spirit of E.T.A. Hoffmann's original tale. In this 2011 mounting, robotic dolls take a back seat to a romantic triangle involving Swanilda (Dorothée Gilbert), Frantz (Mathias Heymann), and a new suitor named Coppélius (José Martinez). While other traditional versions of the ballet are available (VL Online-9/03), this re-imagining shines, boasting spectacular choreography, gorgeous sets and costumes by Ezio Toffolutti, and superb dancing by all, including Fabrice Bourgeois (the fourth principal), and the Corps de Ballet. And on the musical side, the reworked score is beautifully played by the Orchestra Colonne under Koen Kessels. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on Blu-ray) and LPCM stereo, extras include a "making-of" featurette and a cast gallery. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)



Deep Purple with Orchestra: Live at Montreux 2011 ★★1/2

(2011) 166 min. DVD: \$14.98, Blu-ray: \$19.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).

Deep Purple with Orchestra seems designed to appeal to the veteran band's older or more conservative fans, presenting orchestrated versions of selections from their hard rock catalog, recorded at the 2011 Montreux Jazz Festival with the Neue Philharmonie of Frankfurt under conductor Stephen Bentley-Klein. As singer Ian Gillan notes, Deep Purple (and Montreux) were both celebrating their 45th anniversary. While the group still rocks hard, the additional instruments smooth over some of the sharper edges, although the results never fall down the lounge rabbit hole. Since Deep Purple has always been a keyboard-heavy band, the songs in which keys feature prominently come across better than guitar-oriented numbers, like "Highway Star," which opens the show (although the hard-driving "Woman from Tokyo" works better than expected). One highlight is Don Airey's solo, in which his synth and Minimoog playing dominates, although he leaves room for some violin contributions from Bentley-Klein. Other notable numbers include "Hush," "Space Truckin'," and the perennial crowd-pleaser "Smoke on the Water." The other players include Ian Paice on



drums, Roger Glover on bass, and Steve Morse on guitar (Airey and Morse replaced original members Jon Lord and Ritchie Blackmore). Presented in DTS 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1, and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include band member interviews. A strong optional purchase. (K. Fennessy)

Die Liebe der Danae

★★★

(2011) 155 min. In German w/English subtitles. DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99; Blu-ray: \$39.99. Arthaus Musik (dist. by Naxos of America).



Richard Strauss's penultimate opera, based on Greek myth, went unperformed during his lifetime and has rarely been mounted since, making this 2011 staging from the Deutsche Opera Berlin most welcome. After a financially-strapped King Pollux offers the hand of his daughter, Princess Danae, to golden-touch famed Midas in hopes of replenishing his treasury, Jupiter intervenes, harboring design's on the young woman himself. But Danae's preference for Midas leads Jupiter to impoverish the couple and then lament that he is unable to experience human love. Parts of the work are lighthearted, especially when Jupiter is ridiculed by Mercury and accosted by women he'd previously seduced; but most of it is quite serious, marked by the sort of lushly romantic music for which Strauss was famous. In this version, the vocals by Mark Delavan (Jupiter), Manuela Uhl (Danae), and Matthias Klink (Midas) are excellent, and the supporting singing and choral work are fine as well. But even though conductor Andrew Litton strives for the ardency demanded by the score and the orchestra responds enthusiastically, the result remains somewhat pallid. And visually the staging is problematic: Dorothea Katzer's vaguely modern costumes are effective, but the minimalist sets are unimpressive, and an inverted piano dangling from the rafters is a pointless distraction. Still, this presentation makes a good case overall for this unjustly neglected work. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.0 and PCM stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.0 and PCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette and a plot synopsis. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

Dream Theater: Live at Budokan

★★★

(2004) 246 min. Blu-ray: \$19.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



Beyond the cult following forged over the last three decades, Dream Theater are known for their epic performances, technical skill, and undeniable musicianship. In our current era, when flash and commercial panache are valued

over serious rock chops, the band—drummer Mike Portnoy, guitarist John Petrucci, bassist John Myung, keyboardist Jordan Rudess, and frontman James LaBrie—is resolutely old school, combining elements of classic hard/progressive rock and heavy metal. In support of their 2003 release *Train of Thought*, Dream Theater served up an 18-song set at the famed Japanese venue Budokan in this 2004 performance, including defining tracks such as “This Dying Soul,” “Hollow Years,” and “Stream of Consciousness.” Also included are selections from the album *Six Degrees of Inner Turbulence*, and the single “Pull Me Under.” Presented in DTS-HD 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1, and LPCM stereo, Blu-ray extras include a tour documentary, band member interviews, and a drum solo by Portnoy. Recommended. (B. Gibron)

Eastern Voices

(2009) 110 min. DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. EuroArts (dist. by Naxos of America).



In *Eastern Voices*, co-directors Frank Scheffer and Günter Wallbrecht document preparations for a concert incorporating traditional music from Central Asia and the Middle East at the 2009 Morgenland Festival Osnabrück. Event director Michael Dreyer matches up a German chamber orchestra and an Iranian conductor and composer with singers and players from Iran (husband and wife Salar Aghili and Harir Shariatzadeh), Syria (Nouri Iskandar, Ibrahim Keivo), Azerbaijan (father and daughter Alim and Fargana Qasimov), and Uzbekistan (Yulduz Turdieva Ensemble). Iskandar feels that the strength of traditional Syrian music comes from its twinned roots in Christian and Muslim traditions, suggesting that he's already bringing a hybrid form into the equation. Says German player Stefan Mertin, “We play different music, and we play music differently,” but he looks forward to seeing what results when these divergences come together. As it turns out, the process yields both frustration and enlightenment as discipline meets instinct (the Germans prefer scored music, the guest musicians do not). There's also a more spiritual dimension to the Eastern works, whose players view themselves as communicating with a higher power. Nonetheless, Christian Heinecke says, “I found the rehearsals more interesting than the concert”—which could also speak for the documentary as a whole, since the final performance itself is not part of the program. However, DVD extras do include separate appearances by the Qasimovs, Keivo, and Aghili and Shariatzadeh, all featuring traditional lyrics and keening vocals over spare percussive or drone-based instrumentation. Presented in DTS-HD 5.1 and PCM stereo, this is recommended. (K. Fennessy)

God Bless Ozzy Osbourne

★★★

(2011) 135 min. DVD: \$14.98, Blu-ray: \$19.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



Produced by his son Jack, this conventional yet clear-eyed documentary looks at the life of Ozzy Osbourne, including his formative years with Black Sabbath. In the present day segments—shot over a 3-year period—Ozzy embarks on a world tour and celebrates his 60th birthday with wife Sharon, kids, and Sabbath's Bill Ward, but most of the running time retraces his biography, starting with his childhood in Birmingham, England. Speakers include his sister Iris, band mates Geezer Butler and Tony Iommi, and friends and fans such as Henry Rollins and Paul McCartney. The Sabbath members have happy memories of their music, but regrets about substance abuse, citing cocaine and alcohol as particularly devastating addictions. Says Ozzy's oldest son, Louie, “When he was around and he wasn't pissed, he was a great father”; but he wasn't around much, and by the time *Never Say Die* was released, the group had reluctantly kicked him out. After that, Osbourne joined forces with guitarist Randy Rhoads, but a plane crash ended that collaboration, and he continued to burrow ever deeper into the bottle (rocker Tommy Lee shares some hair-raising tales about a tour with Mötley Crüe in the 1980s). Meanwhile, Ozzy got divorced, married Sharon, had more children, and drank his way through a reality-TV series. Co-directors Mike Fleiss and Mike Piscitelli combine vintage clips with contemporary footage and interviews. In the end, the film becomes a tale of recovery, as Jack gives up booze and inspires his father to do the same. DVD extras include a Q&A session with Ozzy and Jack, deleted scenes, and film festival clips. Recommended. (K. Fennessy)

Heifetz Master Classes

★★★

(2011) 2 discs. 221 min. DVD: \$34.99. Kultur International Films (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-0-7697-9111-1.



During the 1960s, legendary violinist Jascha Heifetz shared his knowledge with students in a series of master classes at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles. *Heifetz Master Classes*—filmed in 1962 for National Educational Television—offers 15 excerpts, arranged into eight segments. We see Heifetz interacting with talented young players—most of whom went on to substantial careers as teachers, orchestral members, and soloists—on a wide variety of pieces by Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, Paganini, Tchaikovsky, Franck,

Wieniawski, and Dont. Although capable of impish wit, Heifetz is mostly stern and professorial here, at times delivering a withering stare more intimidating than any spoken insult. Occasionally he takes up his own instrument to make a point and in one case even plays the piano to accompany a student. Aspiring violinists, especially at a fairly advanced level, will gain practical benefits from watching this set, but more generally it offers a glimpse of the man behind the technically flawless performances (which Heifetz was famous for), and serves as a fine complement to Peter Rosen's biographical documentary, *God's Fiddler* (VL-11/11). DVD extras include a previously unreleased parody of an audition Heifetz performed for his students, which proves that he could play as badly as Jack Benny if he set his mind to it. Although the black-and-white visuals and constricted sound naturally show their age, this is definitely recommended, especially so for music education collections. (F. Swietek)

La Traviata ★★

(2011) 110 min. In Italian w/English subtitles. DVD: \$29.99; Blu-ray: \$39.99. Arthaus Musik (dist. by Naxos of America).



Verdi's perennial favorite is given the Eurotrash treatment in this 2011 production from the Graz Opera, with director Peter Konwitschny opting for modern costumes and a grubby, red-light updating that gives the narrative—about a dying prostitute who nobly casts off her lover at his father's urging—a tawdry feel. And Konwitschny's frantic staging of the action—mostly in front of a lurid burgundy curtain—emphasizes specious excitement at the expense of elegance. The musical side of the performance is simply not strong enough to overcome these visual deficiencies, except for one outstanding element: Marlis Petersen, who makes a vocally resplendent, dramatically compelling Violetta. But as the besotted Alfredo, Giuseppe Varano combines an unimpressive stage presence with a weak voice; and as the elder Germont, James Rutherford looks the part of a concerned parent but exhibits a gruff, wobbly baritone. To add to the woes, the orchestra sounds thin, and the playing under Tecwyn Evans is scrappy and undisciplined, perhaps because the frenetic staging mandates some breakneck tempos. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.0 and PCM stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.0 and PCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette. Despite Petersen's star turn, several fine mountings are already available on home video (see reviews in VL-9/11 and VL-1/09, in particular), making this an optional purchase, at best. (F. Swietek)

Les Vêpres Siciliennes

★★★★1/2

(2010) 208 min. In French w/English subtitles. DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99; Blu-ray: \$39.99. Opus Arte (dist. by Naxos of America).



This 2010 staging by De Nederlandse Opera of Giuseppe Verdi's 1855 grand opera is a rarity, presenting the complete, original French version (even including the third-act ballet demanded by 19th-century Parisian taste) rather than the later Italian translation. The work takes its title from a 1282 uprising in which the citizens of Palermo rebelled against their hated French occupiers, but the plot leading up to that finale is entirely fictional, centering on Henri, who is torn between his love for the rebel Hélène—whose brother was executed by Governor Guy de Montfort—and his desire to prevent de Montfort's assassination because Henri has just learned that the Frenchman is his father. Director Christof Loy hews closely to the libretto but stages the piece against minimalist settings (with occasional back projections) in modern dress. Loy also transforms the dance interlude, originally a purely ornamental exercise devoted to "The Four Seasons," into a flashback of Henri's childhood and his mother's dalliance with de Montfort. This re-imagining works surprisingly well, and the performance is musically exceptional, with strong vocalism from Burkhard Fritz (Henri), Barbara Haveman (Hélène), and Alejandro Marco-Buhrmester (de Montfort), and superlative playing by the Netherlands Philharmonic under Paolo Carignani. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray release) and LPCM stereo, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette and a cast gallery. While not a great work, *Les Vêpres Siciliennes* is still a good one, and it is well performed here. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

The Little Mermaid

★★★★1/2

(2011) 154 min. DVD: 2 discs, \$29.98; Blu-ray: \$39.98. C Major (dist. by Naxos of America).



There's no trace of Disney in this adaptation of Hans Christian Andersen's famous tale from John Neumeier, director and chief choreographer of the Hamburg Ballet. Built upon a modernist score by Lera Auerbach, Neumeier has refashioned the classic fable of love into a dark psychological drama of romantic obsession, even introducing Andersen himself into the plot as a character called The Poet, whose homoerotic feelings toward a recently married friend are expressed through the figure of the mermaid who sacrifices her tail to the sea witch in order to travel on land in pursuit of the prince she's saved

from drowning. But the mermaid can only watch helplessly as her beloved proposes to a princess whom he mistakenly believes is his rescuer. Now, the mermaid must struggle with the decision of whether to kill the prince to regain her original form. In this splendid 2011 staging (featuring imaginative scenic, costume, and lighting design) by the San Francisco Ballet, Neumeier's choreography—blending traditional ballet, modern dance, and drama—is beautifully realized by Yuan Yuan Tan (The Mermaid), Tiit Helimets (The Prince), Lloyd Riggins (The Poet), Sarah Van Patten (The Princess), and Davit Karapetyan (The Witch), while Martin West conducts the score with sensitivity. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on Blu-ray) and PCM stereo, extras include an introduction by Neumeier, a behind-the-scenes featurette, and an illustrated booklet. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

Medea in Corinto

★★★★1/2

(2010) 151 min. In Italian w/English subtitles. DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99; Blu-ray: \$39.99. Arthaus Musik (dist. by Naxos of America).



The ongoing revival of interest in long-neglected composer Giovanni Simone Mayr (1763–1845) reveals him to be an important bridge between Mozart and Rossini in the development of Italian opera, and this 2010 mounting of his 1813 magnum opus at the Nationaltheater in Munich confirms that he was indeed a formidable talent. The tale of the sorceress who helped the Greek hero Jason secure the golden fleece—only to be betrayed by him for another woman, leading her to take revenge by killing their children—has been the basis for many operas, but Mayr's proves to be a particularly fine one, replete with masterfully constructed arias and ensembles. This staging is not perfect: the score is slightly shortened (the overture is omitted, and one early scene is replaced with a brief instrumental interlude), the modern costumes sometimes distract, and director Hans Neuenfels fills the stage with extraneous business, such as gods cavorting around or characters being knifed, shot, or garroted in the background. But musically this is excellent, with superb singing from Nadja Michael as Medea and Ramón Vargas as Jason, and energetic orchestral playing under the baton of Ivor Bolton. Strong support comes from Alastair Miles as Jason's conniving father, Creonte; Elena Tsallagova as the "other woman," Creusa; and Alek Shrader as Egeo, the king of Athens who's in love with Creusa. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.0 and PCM stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.0 and PCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette and a piece on Mayr. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

New York Dolls: Lookin' Fine on Television

★★★

(2011) 70 min. DVD: \$14.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).



The New York Dolls were what kids today might call a "hot mess." Perhaps fittingly, so is this collection of live-performance clips. Spliced together with no source credits and peppered with bits of vintage interview footage filmed by Bob Gruen and Nadya Beck, this is nevertheless an exhilarating look at early-1970s music culture. While the visuals are black-and-white and often quite grainy, the sound is fine, and the performances are edited so smoothly it takes a minute to register the venue and costume changes within a single song. Singer David Johansen is a cut-up as an interviewee, and he's nicely backed by the rest of the band: guitarists Johnny Thunders and Sylvain Sylvain, bassist Arthur "Killer" Kane, and drummer Billy Murcia. The Dolls never had any major hits, but fans will appreciate the versions of "Personality Crisis," "Jet Boy," and "Lookin' for a Kiss" presented here, as well as footage of a Halloween show the group played at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel, where their proto-glam stylings are completely upstaged by the audience's own costumes. A brief conversation between Johansen, Thunders, and music journalist Lisa Robinson conducted in 1976 is included here as an extra (by then Thunders had already moved on to his own band, The Heartbreakers). Presented in 5.1 surround sound, this is recommended for larger music collections. (H. Seggel)

Pearl Jam Twenty ★★★

(2011) 120 min. DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98. Sony Music (avail. from most distributors).

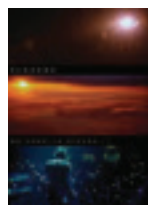


Although they've certainly made their mark, Pearl Jam seems like an unusual choice for an *American Masters* special, being rather young to qualify as "classic" (the band formed in 1990); nonetheless, director Cameron Crowe makes a fine case here for their inclusion. Anyone expecting insights into their personal lives may be disappointed, as Crowe opts instead to emphasize the group's history, interpersonal dynamics, and indelible performances. He begins with their roots in Malfunkshun and Mother Love Bone; after the drug-related death of singer Andrew Wood, the surviving members decided to start a new outfit. San Diego surfer Eddie Vedder heard their demo, recorded some vocals, flew to Seattle, and after five days of rehearsal, they played their first show. In short order, Pearl Jam released hit records, toured the world, battled with Ticketmaster, and somehow managed to stay together. Crowe has unearthed an impressive array of rare and sometimes humorous

footage to chronicle their journey, along the way incorporating concert clips showing the band's shift from small venues to big arenas. Other than Soundgarden's Chris Cornell, there are few outside voices here, but Crowe's inside-out oral history approach works well. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 surround and PCM stereo (the Blu-ray version adds a PCM 5.1 option), extras include two bonus songs and deleted scenes. Recommended. (K. Fennessy)

Placebo: We Come in Pieces ★★1/2

(2010) 179 min. DVD: \$14.98, Blu-ray: \$19.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



Filed in 2010 at London's Brixton Academy, this is the final concert in the *Battle for the Sun* tour mounted by British alternative rock band Placebo, who combine glam guitars with New Wave keyboards and emotive vocals. The energetic playing here pleases the excitable crowd, but by revving things up, the group loses some of the subtleties of their recorded work, especially on "Special Needs," which is too loud. In some ways, their look is more distinctive than their sound, as tattooed drummer Steve Forrest sports a modified mohawk, bass player Stefan Olsdal wears a metallic suit, and singer/guitarist Brian Molko recalls Jack White with his center-parted hair, eye shadow, and black-and-white outfit (two other players, Bill Lloyd and Nick Gavrilovic, rarely appear). For a few numbers, synth player Fiona Brice switches to violin, but it's hard to hear her over the din. Towards the end of the 20-song set, Placebo covers Nirvana's "All Apologies," although Kurt Cobain's plaintive melody ultimately just highlights the weaknesses of the band's own material. For many numbers, director Paul Shyvers adds cool-looking digital graphics that could be headache-inducing in combination with the strobe lights and fast-cutting. Presented in DTS 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1, and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include a behind-the-scenes documentary and six additional live tracks from the tour. A strong optional purchase. (K. Fennessy)

Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny ★★★★★

(2010) 138 min. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Bel Air Classiques (dist. by Naxos of America).



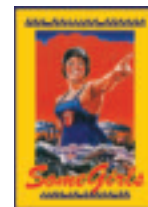
The 1930 collaboration by Kurt Weill and Bertolt Brecht—written both as a critique of Germany's failing Weimar Republic and more broadly as a stinging rebuke to capitalism—is brilliantly mounted in this 2010 performance from the Teatro Real de Madrid. The produc-

tion by Alex Ollé and Carlus Padrissa of the innovative Catalan theatrical troupe La Fura dels Baus opts for simple but imaginative set, costume, and lighting choices. Musically, the elements are also first-rate, with conductor Pablo Heras-Casado securing sizzling playing from the Madrid Orchestra in an unfamiliar idiom, and the cast is superb, headed up by Jane Henschel as Widow Begbick, Measha Brueggergosman as Jenny Smith, Michael König as Jim MacIntyre, and Willard White as Trinity Moses. The chorus also contributes mightily, even engaging in some suitably suggestive bits of stage business as the satirical tale unfolds chronicling the sudden rise and subsequent swift fall of the titular metropolis. The one possible quibble here is the use of Michael Feingold's English translation rather than Brecht's original German libretto; but the decision actually helps emphasize the piece's roots in popular musical theater as well as opera. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 and PCM stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and PCM stereo on Blu-ray, this vivid performance of a modern masterwork is highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** (F. Swietek)

The Rolling Stones: Some Girls—Live in Texas '78

★★★1/2

(2011) 86 min. DVD: \$14.98, Blu-ray: \$19.98. Eagle Vision (avail. from most distributors).



Another year, another vintage Stones concert: this one hailing from the Will Rogers Auditorium in Fort Worth, TX, on July 18, 1978, when the bad boys of British rock performed a 17-song set that included seven tunes from their latest LP, *Some Girls*. Today (nearly 35 years later) the Stones are much the same: Mick Jagger remains the quintessential rock 'n' roll frontman, Keith Richards and Ron Woods are still guitar heroes, and Charlie Watts continues to lay down the blues rock beat on drums. The only difference is the absence of stone-faced bass player Bill Wyman, who left the band in 1992. Well, it's also highly unlikely that during a contemporary performance of "Tumbling Dice," you will see Jagger reach down and cup Woods's dice the way he does here, deep in the heart of Texas. Yes, ladies and gentlemen, this is the Rolling Stones during their cock rock heyday, a time when concerts weren't choreographed to within an inch of their life: Jagger staggers, struts, pouts, shakes an ass he doesn't really have, and generally commands the screen as the band works its way through then-brand-spanking-new songs like "Shattered," "Beast of Burden," "Miss You," and "When the Whip Comes Down," coupled with earlier hits such as "Happy," "Honky Tonk Women," "Brown Sugar," and "Jumpin' Jack Flash." A wonderful highlight here is the loving-but-irreverent cover of The Temptations' "Just My Imagination" (with the slightly revised Jagger punch

line: “but in reality, she doesn’t fooking know me”). Of course, for many viewers, the whole concert will be a blast-down-memory-lane highlight. Presented in DTS-5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1, and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include a new interview with Jagger, archival ABC News 20/20 interviews with the band, and four *Saturday Night Live* performances. Highly recommended. (R. Pitman)

Styx: The Grand Illusion/ Pieces of Eight—Live

★★★1/2

(2011) 102 min. DVD: \$14.98, Blu-ray: \$19.98. Eagle Vision (avail. from most distributors).



Prog-rock band Styx performs two classic albums—1977’s *The Grand Illusion* and 1978’s *Pieces of Eight* (19 songs total)—in this live concert filmed November 9, 2010 at the Orpheum Theater in Memphis, TN. A couple caveats: first, this is not really Styx—the most notable absentee here being distinctively-voiced lead singer/keyboardist Dennis DeYoung, and second, *Pieces of Eight* is only a classic in one sense (old). Those big exceptions aside, two of the band’s mainstays—guitarists/singers Tommy Shaw and James “J.Y.” Young—are on hand, while a third, original bass player Chuck Panozzo, guests on several songs. Déjà vu does not immediately kick in with the opening title cut of *The Grand Illusion* as Lawrence Gowan tries to do his best DeYoung impersonation. Many viewers, however, will feel the warm fuzzies when Shaw steps up to the mic for “Fooling Yourself” and “Man in the Wilderness,” or while Young belts out “Miss America.” But despite all the flashy behind-the-back keyboard playing, Gowan cannot replicate DeYoung’s signature voice on songs like “Come Sail Away” and “Castle Walls.” And the less said about *Pieces of Eight* the better: from its bland opening song—“Great White Hope, which is essentially Young ripping off his own “Miss America”—to the blander instrumental closer “Aku-Aku,” Styx’s much-anticipated follow-up to *Grand Illusion* had little to recommend it beyond two fine Shaw hits (“Blue Collar Man” and “Renegade”). Presented in DTS-5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1, and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette and a short piece on “Aku-Aku.” Optional. (R. Pitman)

A Tale of Two Cities—In Concert ★★★1/2

(2009) 96 min. DVD: \$19.95. Tale Productions (avail. from most distributors).



Les Misérables was the obvious model for Jill Santoriello’s musical adapta-

tion—which had a brief Broadway run in 2008—of Charles Dickens’s famed novel. This concert version, performed before a live audience, includes the majority of the musical numbers, but eliminates most of the linking dialogue, replacing it with narration delivered by actor Michael York. Although the performers appear in costume, no scenery is evident, and the orchestra—conducted by Michael Reed—is seated behind the singers onstage rather than in the pit. The libretto necessarily excises much of the book’s detail, concentrating on the romantic triangle involving French nobleman Charles Darnay (Simon Thomas), lovely Lucie Manette (Brandi Burkhardt), and alcoholic lawyer Sydney Carton (James Barbour), who ultimately sacrifices himself to save his rival from the guillotine when the aristocrat is condemned through the machinations of radical Madame Defarge (Natalie Toro). Unfortunately, Santoriello’s lyrics are more functional than inspired, while her music sounds like second-rate Andrew Lloyd Webber. Barbour easily steals what show there is as the cynical attorney, although Toro fumes and rages to considerable effect as Defarge. By contrast, Burkhardt and Thomas sing well but are wooden and dull presences. DVD extras include two additional songs and an interview with a descendant of Dickens. Connoisseurs of flop musicals may appreciate, but this is otherwise an optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Twisted Sister: From the Bars to the Stars ★★★1/2

(2011) 5 discs. 490 min. DVD: \$59.98. Eagle Vision (avail. from most distributors).



A five-disc set from veteran metal band Twisted Sister may seem like overkill, but fans will probably feel otherwise as they watch this riot of thick riffs, big hair, snug spandex, and bright greasepaint. The Long Island rockers kick off with a 1982 show before a hometown crowd, mounted just two days before they flew to England to record their first album, *Under the Blade*—although, as singer Dee Snider states, they’d already been playing the club circuit for six years. Band members A.J. Pero (drums), Mark Mendoza (bass), Eddie Ojeda (guitar), and Jay Jay French (guitar) crank out the raucous rhythms, while Snider struts, screams, and praises hard-working men and women, combining original hits like “We’re Not Gonna Take It,” “I Wanna Rock,” and “Destroyer” with covers such as “Leader of the Pack” and a speed-metal rendition of “It’s Only Rock ‘n’ Roll (But I Like It).” Other shows include a Reading set from the same year (with Lemmy Kilmister and “Fast” Eddie Clarke from Motörhead joining in), the NY Steel benefit from 2001 (their first Big Apple concert in 13 years), a Wacken gig from 2003, and a Christmas

set from 2009, in Las Vegas. By the 2000s, the boys had toned down their look, but the songs—many performed repetitively in this collection—remained much the same. DVD extras include interviews with the band. Presented in Dolby Digital stereo (with the Wacken segment also featuring a Dolby Digital 5.1 track), this is a strong optional purchase. (K. Fennessy)

Usher: OMG Tour—Live from London ★★★

(2011) 104 min. DVD: \$14.98, Blu-ray: \$19.98. Eagle Vision (avail. from most distributors).



R&B star Usher Raymond IV plays mostly to the ladies in this 2011 concert from London’s O2 Arena, part of a tour in support of *Raymond v. Raymond*. After an instrumental fanfare, Usher enters the stage on a riser lowered from the ceiling; like his male dancers, the singer sports the *Mad Max*-type outfits Michael Jackson used to favor (black, studded-leather motorcycle get-ups). By the second song, “She Don’t Know,” the sweat’s flowing, which isn’t surprising, given his forceful, acrobatic dancing, and by the fifth, “U Don’t Have to Call,” he takes off his shirt, revealing his well-toned physique. While the men echo Usher’s moves, the female hoofers provide a more overtly sexual counterpoint, often acting out skits with him during numbers, which alternate between slow and fast. Although Usher doesn’t boast the most original vocal style, his vibrato-laden singing on this solid 19-song set is strong, coming across like a new-school combination of Stevie Wonder and Marvin Gaye. Presented in DTS-5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1, and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include a featurette on the tour. Recommended. (K. Fennessy)

25 Years Later

Broadway’s longest-running production of all time celebrates a triumphant quarter century on stage in *The Phantom of the Opera at the Royal Albert Hall* (Universal, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$39.98), which captures a live performance starring 2011 Olivier Award nominees Ramin Karimloo as the lovestruck Phantom and Sierra Boggess as the beautiful and gifted soprano Christine, along with Hadley Fraser as Raoul (with special guest appearances from the original production’s Phantom and Christine—Tony Award winner Michael Crawford and Sarah Brightman—in a final curtain call that also features composer Andrew Lloyd Webber).



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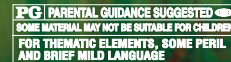
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28 Days Later

In the November/December 2011 *Final Frame* column, I talked about Warner's decision to withhold theatrical titles on DVD and Blu-ray for libraries and home video rental outlets until 28 days after their retail release.

One of the first titles to be affected was *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, Part 2*, which bowed on home video on November 11, but was unavailable for libraries to purchase until December 9, and then only in a stripped-down version minus the extras.

Here's an exchange posted on *Entertainment Weekly's* website (www.ew.com) on the 27th of last October:

Kelly: "This is also affecting libraries—Warner Bros. won't let us purchase copies of these titles until after the 28 days have passed. Our patrons who can't afford to rent movies or buy them are going to be very upset that they won't be able to check out *Harry Potter* or *Hangover II*."

Steve: "As far as I know, there's nothing [Warner] can do to stop places, whether it's libraries or rental stores, from going out and directly purchasing copies of their films to rent/lend to their customers."

Steve is absolutely correct. Because of the First Sale Doctrine, Warner cannot stop librarians from walking into a store and legally purchasing full retail versions of movies. Warner might say libraries aren't allowed to buy retail copies, but the Supreme Court says otherwise, which is why Blockbuster and Redbox—also barred from buying Warner theatrical retail titles—are working around the studio in order to provide customers with titles on retail release dates.

Now, Warner has announced plans to extend the original 28-day embargo for an additional 28 days, bringing the total to 56. And Disney is also considering tossing its mouse ears into the delayed-release-ring.

Of course, Fox and Paramount tried something similar before—creating separate sell-through and rental versions of titles—and failed. Warner's efforts are doomed as well, for a very simple and logical reason: once a studio releases a DVD or Blu-ray title into the retail market, it by definition (and by law) relinquishes all control over who can and cannot buy it.

Unfortunately, Warner's policy does have a real effect on library vendors who are stuck with having to provide compromised customer service to libraries, not only with-

holding certain titles for 28 and possibly 56 days, but also selling inferior discs, minus all extras.

Still, there is absolutely no legal or ethical reason why libraries should not buy the uncensored full retail versions for their patrons.

What worries me more, however, is the question of what will happen in the future. Currently, physical DVD and Blu-ray discs are still king in terms of home entertainment revenue share, but at some point, digital movies will reach a balance between economic feasibility, audience acceptance, and tolerable piracy losses. What might libraries expect to see when studios finally have complete and exclusive control over a secure digital format?

Remember HarperCollins's infamous 26-circ limit for an e-book?

Big brouhaha, but at least HarperCollins and other book publishers have a very strong symbiotic relationship with libraries, meaning that controversial actions on the part of publishers will lead to vigorous and healthy debate. A two-way debate, because with publishers, libraries matter.

Sadly, I don't see that kind of relationship with Warner or the other studios.

Randy Pitman

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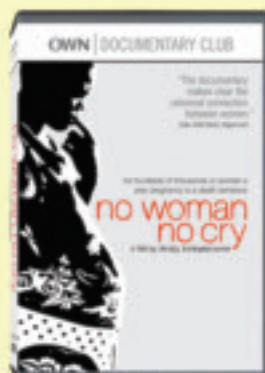
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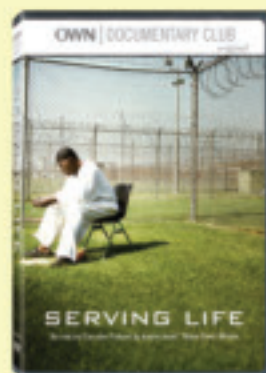
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