

September-October 2014

Video Librarian

VOL. 29 ■ THE VIDEO REVIEW MAGAZINE FOR LIBRARIES ■ NO. 5



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Video Librarian (ISSN: 0887-6851) is published bi-monthly by *Video Librarian*, 3435 NE Nine Boulder Dr., Poulsbo, WA 98370. Subscriptions: \$64 for one year in the United States; \$69 (US) in Canada (includes GST); \$86 elsewhere. Address all correspondence to *Video Librarian*, 3435 NE Nine Boulder Dr., Poulsbo, WA 98370. Periodicals Postage Paid at Poulsbo, WA and at additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to *Video Librarian*, 3435 NE Nine Boulder Dr., Poulsbo, WA 98370. Copyright © 2014 by Randy Pitman. All rights reserved.

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The Fault in Our Stars ★★½

Fox, 126 min., PG-13,
 DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/
 DVD Combo: \$39.99,
 Sept. 16



Based on the best-selling YA novel by John Green, this poignant romance centers on a pair of teenagers who fall in love at a cancer support group: 16-year-old Hazel Grace Lancaster (Shailene Woodley) and 18-year-old Augustus Waters (Ansel Elgort). Together they struggle with the tough cards that life has dealt them, experiencing joy, anger, excitement, frustration, and pain—while also maintaining a sense of humor. Woodley is absolutely convincing as the thyroid cancer patient with compromised lungs, and she is strongly supported by Elgort, Nat Wolff, Laura Dern, Sam Trammell, and Willem Dafoe, with the latter playing the reclusive author of Hazel's favorite novel—a man who turns out to be a nasty, jaded, expat American living in Amsterdam. Directed by Josh Boone, *The Fault in Our Stars* (the title comes from Cassius' speech to Brutus in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*) is an emotional roller-coaster ride, a coming-of-age movie that replaces sentimental schmaltz with

surprisingly wicked wit and barbed wisdom. Fans of the book may be bothered by some changes (including the dumping of a subplot involving an ex-girlfriend), but most will be moved by this heartbreaking, bittersweet adaptation of a genuine tearjerker. Highly recommended. (S. Granger)

A powerful real-life documentary about kids with cancer, *A Lion in the House* (Docurama, 282 min., DVD: 2 discs, \$26.95)—which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival and was later broadcast on PBS's acclaimed *Independent Lens* series—is an emotionally devastating but also occasionally uplifting marathon documentary (VL-1/09) that follows the lives of five patients (ranging in age from seven to 19) being treated at the pediatric cancer ward of the Cincinnati Children's Hospital over several years. Directed by Steven Bognar and Julia Reichert, *A Lion in the House* was selected for *Video Librarian's* 2009 Best Documentaries list.

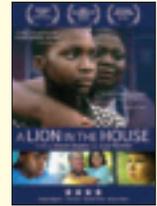


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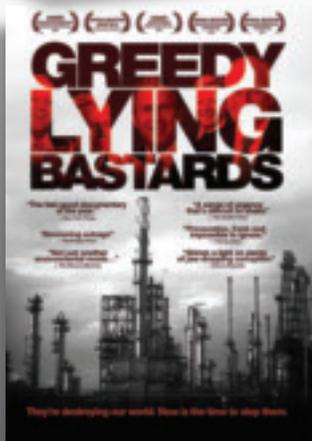
TDC ENTERTAINMENT



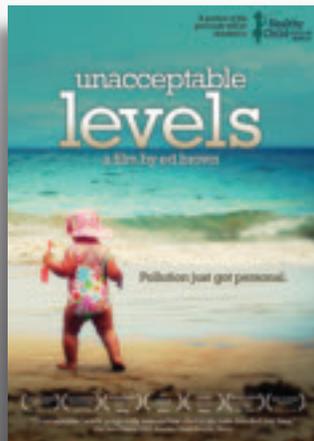
Mobilize: An explosive investigative documentary that explores the potential long-term health effects from cell phone radiation. *Mobilize* also illuminates how an industry's economic and political influence can corrupt public health. Features Devra Davis, PhD, MPH; Joel M. Moskowitz, PhD; Lt. Gov. Gavin Newsom, Steve Wozniak and many more.



\$19.98 SRP / UPC 826262011697 / ISBN 978-1-939517-25-8
 TDC-DV-116 / 84 mins color
 National release: September 9, 2014



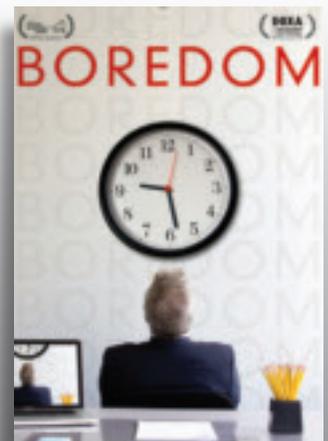
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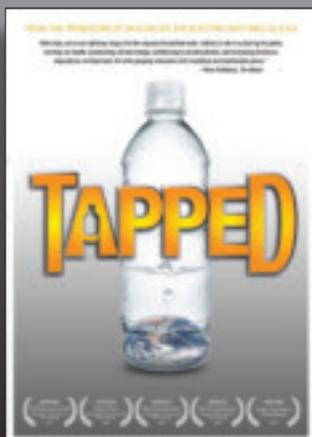
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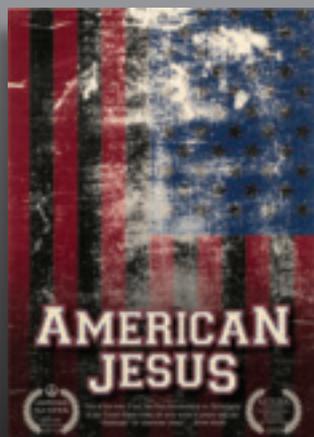
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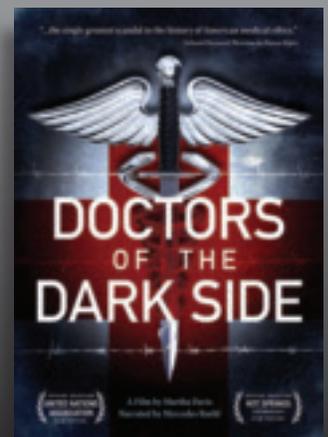
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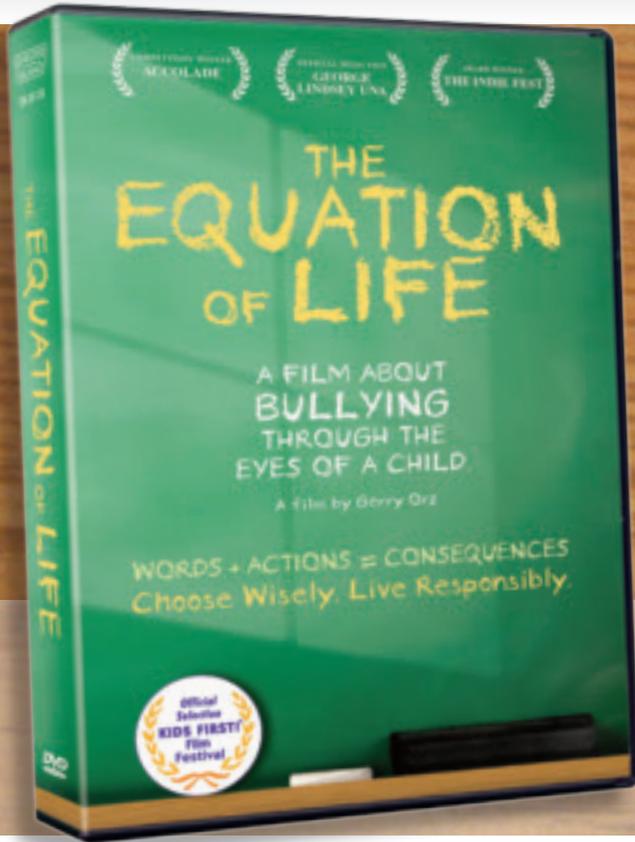


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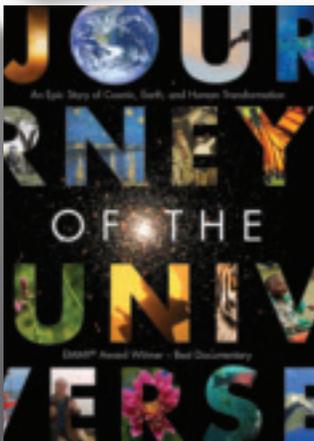
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When an 11-year-old boy (played by filmmaker Gerry Orz) is bullied in his new town on his way to school, he begins to video journal his experiences. He then takes matters into his own hands and everyone around him is affected. *The Equation of Life* is an award winning, dramatic film by one child who is speaking to all children about a subject so important it should be seen by all.

More than a story about bullying, the film teaches that every decision we make changes the path on which we travel.

\$16.98 SRP / UPC 826262011994 / ISBN 978-939517-28-9
 SHL-DV-119 / 32 mins + 26 mins bonus
 English w/Spanish subtitles / Closed Captioned for the Hearing Impaired.

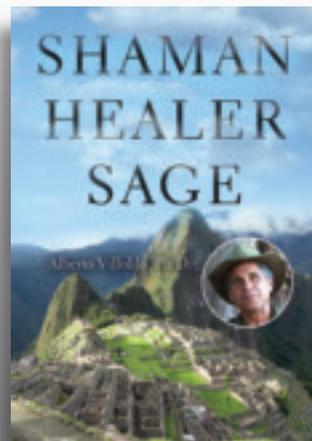
National release: October 14, 2014



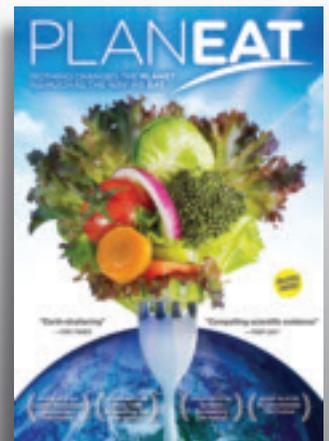
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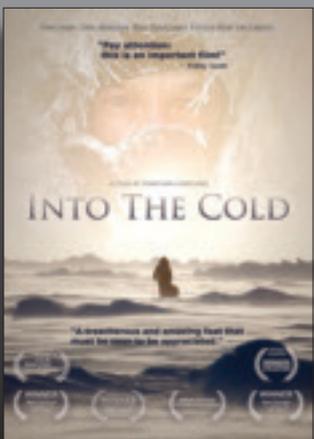
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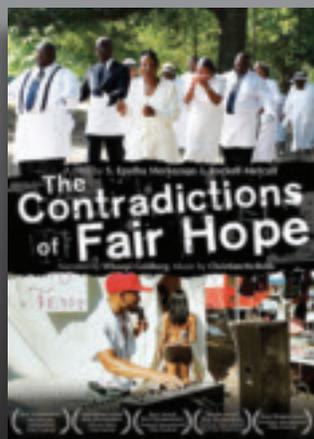
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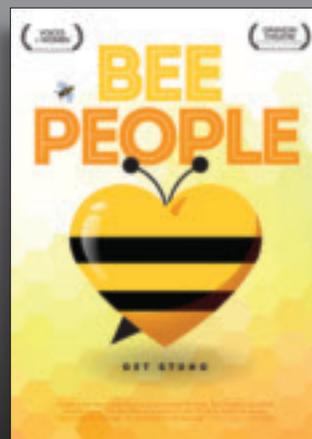
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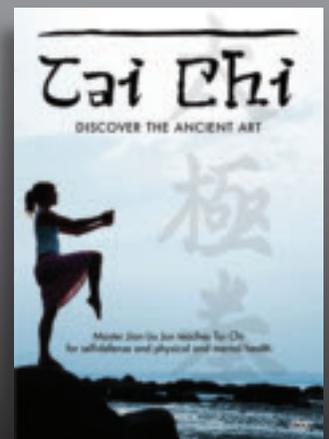
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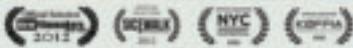


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Jacques Tati Collection and "La Dolce Vita" Headline Criterion Collection October Release Slate

Criterion's October releases kick off October 14 with John Ford's 1946 Western *My Darling Clementine* (DVD: 2 discs, \$29.95; Blu-ray: \$39.95), which revisits the legend of the O.K. Corral shootout, and stars Henry Fonda as iconic lawman Wyatt Earp. Slated for October 21 is Federico Fellini's 1960 Italian masterpiece *La Dolce Vita* (DVD: 2 discs, \$29.95; Blu-ray: \$39.95), which explores the darkness beneath the seductive lifestyles of Rome's rich and glamorous people as it follows a notorious celebrity journalist (Marcello Mastroianni) during a hectic week spent on the peripheries of the spotlight. Also coming October 21 is the Blu-ray debut of Orson Welles's clever and wildly entertaining 1975 film *F for Fake* (Blu-ray: \$39.95), a free-form documentary—inspired by notorious art forger Elmyr de Hory and his devious biographer Clifford Irving—that exposes fakery of all kinds. Arriving October 28 is *The Complete Jacques Tati* (DVD: 12 discs, \$124.95; Blu-ray: 7 discs, \$124.95), which compiles the work of a beloved French comic genius: director, writer, and actor Jacques Tati. This set features Tati's enchanting debut feature *Jour de fête* (presented here in three versions: the original 1949 black-and-white release, a 1964 cut featuring hand-painted color sequences and newly incorporated footage, and the full-color 1994 re-release); the famed quartet of films featuring Tati as his old-fashioned slapstick hero Monsieur Hulot—*Monsieur Hulot's Holiday* (1954), *Mon Oncle* (1958), *PlayTime* (1967), and *Trafic* (1971)—and Tati's final film, the circus-themed *Parade* (1974). Also coming October 28 is George Sluizer's haunting 1988 Dutch thriller *The Vanishing* (DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95), which follows a young man's obsessive search for his girlfriend—who mysteriously disappears while the couple are taking a sunny vacation.

Ken Burns' "The Roosevelts" Documentary Series Coming September 16 from PBS

PBS Distribution has announced a September 16 release date for *The Roosevelts: An Intimate History* (DVD: 7 discs, \$99.99; Blu-ray: 7 discs, \$129.99). Produced by prolific documentary filmmaker Ken Burns, this seven-part 14-

hour series weaves together the personal and professional stories of Theodore, Franklin, and Eleanor Roosevelt, three members of one of the most prominent and influential families in the



history of American politics. Following the family's saga for more than a century—from Theodore's birth in 1858 to Eleanor's death in 1962—*The Roosevelts* features legendary actress Meryl Streep as Eleanor Roosevelt in readings from her personal letters and writings, with Paul Giamatti as the voice of Theodore Roosevelt, and Edward Herrmann (a two-time Emmy Award nominee for his performance as Franklin Roosevelt) as the voice of FDR. Other notable voice cast members include Patricia Clarkson, Ed Harris, John Lithgow, Josh Lucas, Amy Madigan, Billy Bob Thornton, and Eli Wallach. Written by longtime Burns collaborator and FDR authority Geoffrey C. Ward, bonus features will include 13 additional segments, a "making-of" featurette, and deleted scenes with an introduction by Burns.

"Holiday Inn" Debuting on Blu-ray on October 7 from Universal Studios

Universal Studios Home Entertainment has announced the October 7 release of the timeless 1942 classic *Holiday Inn* (Blu-ray: \$22.98). Featuring the beloved Academy Award winning song, "White Christmas," the film stars Bing Crosby as a song and dance man who leaves showbiz to run an inn that is only open on holidays, with Fred Astaire costarring as his former partner and rival in love—as both men compete for the affections of the same lovely lady (Marjorie Reynolds). Digitally remastered and fully restored to its original luster from high resolution original film elements, bonus features include the 2008 color version of the film, audio commentary with film historian Ken Barnes (including archival audio commentary featuring Crosby, Astaire, and music director John Scott Trotter), "A Couple of Song and Dance Men" retrospective featurette (including an interview with Astaire's daughter, Ava Astaire-McKenzie), the production featurettes "All-Singing, All Dancing" and "Coloring a Classic," and a bonus UltraViolet copy of the film.

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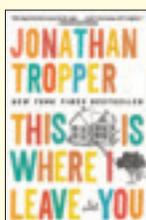
The following films based on books are slated to open during September and October. Movie release dates are subject to change.

Coming in September

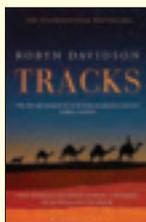
The Maze Runner (Sept. 19) is based on James Dashner's 2009 first book in his YA post-apocalyptic sci-fi trilogy. Directed by Wes Ball, the action-thriller stars Dylan O'Brien, Thomas Brodie-Sangster, Kaya Scodelario, and Patricia Clarkson.



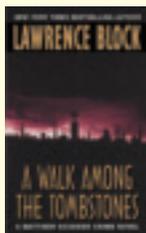
This is Where I Leave You (Sept. 19) is adapted from Jonathan Tropper's 2009 novel about combative siblings. Director Shawn Levy's comedy-drama stars Jason Bateman, Tina Fey, Jane Fonda, Rose Byrne, and Timothy Olyphant.



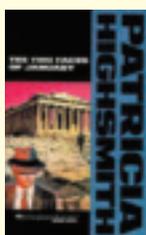
Tracks (Sept. 19, in limited release) is based on Australian writer Robyn Davidson's memoir of her 1977 1700-mile desert journey, which won the inaugural Thomas Cook Travel Book Award in 1980. Directed by John Curran, the film stars Adam Driver and Mia Wasikowska as Davidson.



A Walk Among the Tombstones (Sept. 19) is based on Lawrence Sanders' 1992 crime-thriller novel. Directed by Scott Frank, the drama stars Liam Neeson, Dan Stevens, Boyd Holbrook, and Sebastian Roché.



The Two Faces of January (Sept. 26, in limited release) is adapted from the 1964 psychological thriller by Patricia Highsmith. Directed by Hossein Amini, the film stars Viggo Mortensen, Kirsten Dunst, and Oscar Isaac.

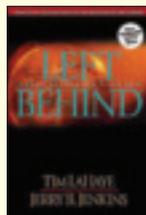


Coming in October

Gone Girl (Oct. 3) is adapted from Gillian Flynn's 2012 *New York Times* bestselling thriller. Directed by David Fincher, the mystery drama stars Ben Affleck, Rosamund Pike, Neil Patrick Harris, Missi Pyle, and Tyler Perry.



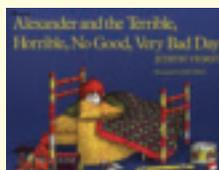
Left Behind (Oct. 3) is based on the bestselling 1995 Christian apocalyptic novel by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins. Directed by Vic Armstrong, this Rapture drama stars Nicolas Cage, Chad Michael Murray, Cassi Thompson, Lea Thompson, and Jordyn Sparks.



Addicted (Oct. 10) is based on *New York Times* bestselling erotic fiction author Zane's 1998 novel. Directed by Bille Woodruff, this dramatic thriller stars Sharon Leal, Boris Kodjoe, and Kat Graham.



Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day (Oct. 10) is a live-action adaptation of author Judith Viorst and illustrator Ray Cruz's 1972 book, directed by Miguel Arteta, and starring Steve Carell, Jennifer Garner, and Ed Oxenbould as Alexander.



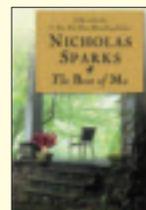
Kill the Messenger (Oct. 10) is based on Nick Schou's same-titled 2009 book, as well as film subject investigative journalist Gary Webb's 1998 expose *Dark Alliance*. Directed by Michael Cuesta, the film stars Michael Sheen, Mary Elizabeth Winstead, and Jeremy Renner as Webb.



You're Not You (Oct. 10) is based on Michelle Wildgen's 2006 novel about a terminally ill young woman. Directed by George C. Wolfe, the film stars Hilary Swank, Emmy Rossum, Ali Larter, and Marcia Gay Harden.



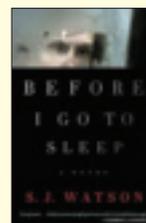
The Best of Me (Oct. 17) is adapted from romance author Nicholas Sparks' 2011 novel. Directed by Michael Hoffman, the decades-spanning love story stars James Marsden and Michelle Monaghan.



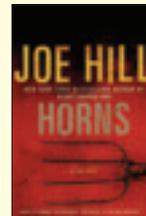
Low Down (Oct. 24) is based on Amy Jo Albany's 2003 memoir about her father, famed jazz pianist Joe Albany. Directed by Jeff Pries, the film stars Elle Fanning, John Hawkes, Lena Headey, and Glenn Close.



Before I Go to Sleep (Oct. 31) is based on S.J. Watson's 2011 *New York Times* bestselling first novel. Directed by Rowan Joffé, this psychological thriller stars Nicole Kidman, Colin Firth, and Mark Strong.



Horns (Oct. 31) is adapted from Joe Hill's 2010 supernatural novel. Directed by Alexandre Aja, the dark fantasy thriller stars Daniel Radcliffe and Juno Temple.

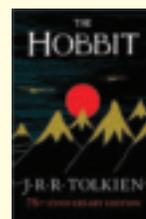


Looking Ahead

Slated for November is **The Hunger Games: Mockingjay, Part 1**, based on the 2010 final book in Suzanne Collins's YA sci-fi trilogy. Directed by Francis Lawrence, the film stars Jennifer Lawrence, Josh Hutcherson, and Liam Hemsworth.



Coming in December is **The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug**, the final film in director Peter Jackson's adaptation of J.R.R. Tolkien's 1937 fantasy novel *The Hobbit*, starring Martin Freeman, Ian McKellen, and Benedict Cumberbatch.



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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.

September 7—September 13

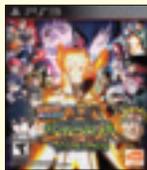
Destiny (Activision, PS3/PS4/X360/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: T). From the creators of the popular *Halo* franchise comes a new online first-person shooter in which the player is a Guardian of the last safe city on Earth, able to wield incredible defensive power.



NHL 15 (EA, PS3/PS4/X360/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: E10+). This latest entry in the popular professional hockey simulation game features the “NBC Sports Broadcast Package,” with all-new commentary and crowd models.

September 14—September 20

Naruto Shippuden: Ultimate Ninja Storm Revolution (Bandai Namco, PS3/X360: \$49.99, Rated: T). This third-person fighting game inspired by the popular anime series features 100 playable characters, as well as a new four-person tournament mode.



September 21—September 27

Disney INFINITY: Marvel Super Heroes (2.0 Edition) (Disney Interactive, PS3/PS4/WiiU/X360/XOne: \$74.99, Rated: E10+). In the second iteration of this *Skylanders*-esque third-person action game, players adopt the roles of Marvel figures from popular franchises including *The Avengers*.

FIFA 15 (EA, PS3/PS4/X360/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: E). The latest version of the popular soccer simulation franchise will

bring new player artificial intelligence, as well as next-gen visuals for PS4 and Xbox One players.

Hyrule Warriors (Nintendo, WiiU: \$59.99, Rated: T). In this *Dynasty Warriors/The Legend of Zelda* third-person action fighting title, players will be tasked with mowing down entire legions of enemies as Link, Zelda, Midna, and others draw on over-the-top crowd-clearing moves.



Natural Doctrine (NIS America, PS3/PS4: \$39.99-\$59.99, Rated: M). In this third-person strategy role-playing game featuring turn-based combat, players must conquer the evil that lurks in the sprawling networks of mines and ruins surrounding the fortress city of Feste.

Shadow Warrior (Majesco, PS4/XOne: \$39.99, Rated: M). In this re-imagined version of the cult classic first-person shooter, players will step into the role of Lo Wang, who is ordered by his employer to track down and acquire a legendary blade known as the Nobitsura Kage.

September 28—October 4

Crimes & Punishments: Sherlock Holmes (Maximum Games, PS3/PS4/X360/XOne: \$49.99-\$59.99, Rated: M). Players step into the iconic role of Sherlock Holmes in this third-person London-set game, gathering clues and solving cases in realistic, finely-detailed environments.



Forza Horizon 2 (Microsoft, X360/XOne: \$49.99-\$59.99, Rated: E10+). The latest installment of this popular racing simulation series features dramatic weather and day-night cycles, as players get behind the wheels of over 200 cars to compete in events across a beautiful, diverse European landscape.

Middle-earth: Shadow of Mordor (Warner, PS3/PS4/X360/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: M). In this third-person adventure game inspired by J.R.R. Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings* saga, players step into the boots of Talion, a half-human/half-wraith figure on a relentless vendetta.

Persona 4 Arena Ultimax (Atlus, PS3/X360: \$59.99, Rated: T). This long-awaited sequel to the original award-winning RPG

melds story elements within a third-person fighting game as players battle using favorite characters from the *Persona 3* and *Persona 4* universes.

October 5—October 11

Alien: Isolation (Sega, PS3/PS4/X360/XOne: \$49.99-\$59.99, Rated: M). Set in 2137, some 15 years after the events of *Alien*, this first-person horror survival game puts players in the role of Ellen Ripley’s daughter, Amanda, who is sent to the alien-infested space station Sevastopol to recover data that could help locate her mother.

Driveclub (Sony, PS4: \$59.99, Rated: E). This next-gen racing simulation game offers an authentic and immersive driving experience as players get behind the wheels of the most powerful and beautifully designed cars in the world in order to race in richly detailed real-world locations alongside teammates.



MX vs ATV Supercross (Nordic Games, PS3/X360: \$29.99, Rated: E). Players can choose between bikes or ATVs in this racing simulation game that features 17 tracks and the ability to race against more than 40 official riders in a bid for motocross glory.

NBA 2K15 (2K, PS3/PS4/X360/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: E). This latest entry in the bestselling NBA franchise series features unprecedented next-gen graphics coupled with ultra-realistic NBA gameplay.

NBA Live 15 (EA, PS4/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: E). The newest entry in the long-running EA basketball franchise offers 500+ core gameplay improvements and promises to deliver an up-to-date and immersive NBA experience.

Project Spark (Microsoft, XOne: \$39.99, Rated: E10+). In this sandbox game, players will be able to build the supreme gaming experience by creating unique and instantly playable levels, games, and worlds, and sharing them online.



Skylanders Trap Team (Activision, PS3/PS4/X360/XOne: \$74.99, Rated: RP). This third-person adventure game sequel is played with figurines (many separately available) that are placed on a new Trap-tanium portal (included) that will trap villains.



The Prosecution of an American President

101 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 9160800

Available Now!

Vincent Bugliosi presents a meticulously researched legal case that proves George W. Bush took the U.S. to war in Iraq under false pretenses and is therefore, under the law, guilty of murder for the deaths of 4,500 American soldiers. Bush's war also cost the United States over a trillion dollars; alienated our allies; caused the deaths of over 100,000 innocent Iraqis; and pushed a previously tranquil nation into unending civil war, atrocities and chaos.

"There is no mistaking Mr. Bugliosi's conviction, nor the thoroughness of his research." - The New York Times



The German Doctor

92 minutes, \$27.95, FRF 9161960

Street Date: September 16

Patagonia, South America, 1960. A German doctor meets an Argentine family and follows them to a small town where the family is starting a new life. The family welcomes the doctor into their home – unaware that he is a notorious war criminal. At the same time, Israeli agents are desperately looking to bring 'the German Doctor' to justice.

Based on director Lucia Puenzo's novel, the story follows Josef Mengele-SS officer and physician at Auschwitz--in the years he spent hiding in South America.

"A smart and unsettling atmospheric thriller."
- San Francisco Chronicle



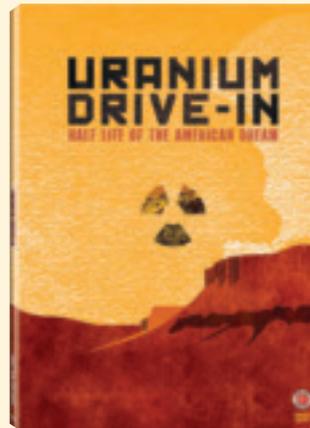
Casting By

89 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 9161890

Street Date: September 16

Places the spotlight filmmaking's unsung hero – the casting director – and takes us through 50 years of Hollywood history from an entirely new perspective. Marion Dougherty and Lynn Stalmaster were iconoclasts whose taste and instincts helped usher in 'New Hollywood' with movies like *Midnight Cowboy*, *The Graduate*, *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* and *Bonnie and Clyde*. In the process they launched the careers of countless iconic actors including James Dean, Robert Duvall, Warren Beatty, Gene Hackman, Glenn Close, John Travolta, Jeff Bridges, Bette Midler, and countless others.

"Critic's Pick!" - The Village Voice



Uranium Drive-In

70 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 9162330

Street Date: October 21

In economically devastated Naturita, Colorado, a proposed uranium mill would generate jobs and restore a proud heritage, but many residents are worried about the health and environmental consequences. The film offers a range of perspectives that will spark dialogue about the sacrifices we make to meet our energy demands, and brings to light an American West whose landscape is subject to the immense destruction that is the consequence of our national energy policy decisions.

"Beyond its provocative subject matter, we were especially impressed by the delicate and complex manner in which the film balances opposing perspectives." - DOC NYC

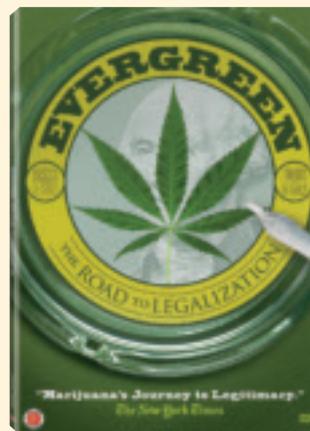


Every Three Seconds

100 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 9162570

Street Date: October 16

In a society where materialism reigns, what is the real secret to happiness? Award-winning filmmaker Daniel Karslake (*For The Bible Tells Me So*) tells the unforgettable stories of five regular folks - a boy, a college student, a thirty-something and two seniors - whose lives went from ordinary to extraordinary based on one simple decision: to engage. Each chose action over apathy, and in the process, each one has had a significant and lasting impact on two of the most challenging, yet solvable, issues of our time, hunger and extreme poverty.



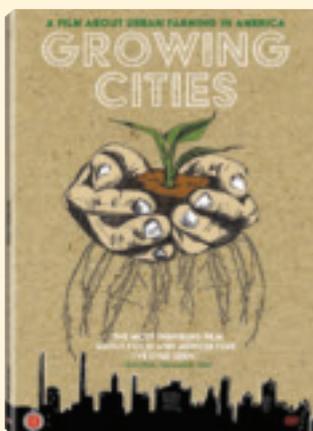
Evergreen

86 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF9161410

Street Date: September 16

After 40-years of the 'War on Drugs,' Washington State becomes a key battleground in the fight to legalize marijuana. But many advocates are opposed to Initiative 502. They say it will impose harsh DUI laws, new taxes, additional restrictions and penalties that will hurt medical marijuana patients and providers. These unexpected opposing forces make *Evergreen* a scintillating inside look at a political clash that exposes the economic and human impact of marijuana legalization.

"Marijuana's Journey to Legitimacy."
- The New York Times



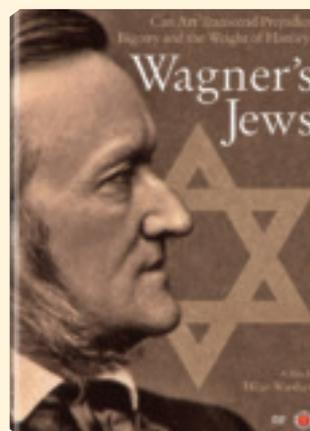
Growing Cities

93 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 9162400

Street Date: October 16

Visiting rooftop farmers to backyard beekeepers, *Growing Cities* goes coast to coast to tell the inspiring stories of these intrepid urban farmers, activists, and everyday city-dwellers who are challenging the way this country feeds itself. From those growing in backyards to make ends meet to educators teaching kids to eat healthier, viewers find that urban farming is about much more than simply good food.

"An excellent, edible adventure – a road trip to document many of the innovative urban agriculture efforts sprouting up all over the country." - Grist



Wagner's Jews

55 minutes, color-b&w, \$24.95, FRF 9162190

Street Date: October 7

German composer Richard Wagner was notoriously anti-Semitic, and his ideas were embraced by Hitler, but many of his closest associates were Jews who became personally devoted to him and provided crucial help to his career. Why were they drawn to him, and how could Wagner accept their embrace?

Featuring Zubin Mehta and Leon Botstein among others, the film also explores the controversy of Wagner's music in Israel. The same questions asked in Wagner's time still resonate today: is it possible to separate the art from its creator?

"Brilliant!" - BBC Radio

October 12—October 18

Borderlands: The Pre-Sequel! (2K, PS3/X360: \$59.99, Rated: M). In this new first-person RPG-shooter set on Pandora's moon, players control one of four new vault hunters fighting alongside Handsome Jack while contributing to the rise of the corrupt Hyperion Corporation.



The Evil Within (Bethesda, PS3/PS4/X360/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: M). In this third-person survival horror game, Detective Sebastian Castellanos and his partners are investigating the scene of a gruesome mass murder when they encounter a mysterious and powerful force.

The Walking Dead: Season Two (Telltale Games, PS3/PS4/X360/XOne: \$29.99, Rated: M). In this sequel to the award-winning point-and-click interactive survival horror game, players control Clementine as she encounters tragedy, struggles to survive, and discovers harsh realities in a game series where every decision matters.

October 19—October 25

Just Dance 2015 (Ubisoft, PS3/PS4/Wii/WiiU/X360/XOne: \$39.99-\$49.99, Rated: RP). In this latest entry in the top-selling dance game franchise, players can groove along with friends online to dozens of songs, including "Happy" by Pharrell Williams.

October 26—November 1

Assassins Creed Unity (Ubisoft, PS4/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: RP). This third-person adventure game in the long-running franchise is set in 1789 Paris, as players control Arno, a young assassin who embarks on an extraordinary journey to expose the true powers behind the French Revolution.



Lords of the Fallen (CI Games, PS4/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: RP). In this third-person medieval-looking action-RPG, players adopt the role of Harkyn, a convicted criminal given a chance for redemption when an army of the long-ago defeated god attacks the human realm.

Sunset Overdrive (Microsoft, XOne: \$59.99, Rated: M). In this third-person action-adventure game set in 2027 Sunset

City—where a new contaminated energy drink has transformed most of the population into toxic mutants—players transform the open world into a tactical playground by rail-grinding, vaulting, and wall-running across the city while deploying a devastating, unconventional arsenal.



WWE 2K15 (2K, PS3/PS4/X360/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: RP). This latest entry in the popular WWE wrestling franchise features visual and audio improvements, as well as new game modes.

TV on DVD/Blu-ray

Available Now

Bitten: The Complete First Season (Entertainment One, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 4 discs, \$49.98). Based on the first book in the bestselling *Women of the Otherworld* series by Kelley Armstrong, this 2014 debut season of the horror fantasy show follows a young werewolf (Laura Vandervoort) looking to leave her monster past behind and live a normal life in the city.

The Blacklist: The Complete First Season (Sony, DVD: 5 discs, \$69.99; Blu-ray: 5 discs, \$75.99). Wanted criminal Raymond Reddington (James Spader) turns himself in as part of a deal with several mysterious strings in this 2013-14 first season of the crime drama series.



Case Histories: Series 2 (Acorn, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99). This 2013 second series inspired by Kate Atkinson's novels and starring Jason Isaacs as astute Detective Jackson Brodie includes "Started Early, Took My Dog," "Nobody's Darling," and "Jackson and the Women."

Once Upon a Time: The Complete Third Season (Buena Vista, DVD: 5 discs, \$45.99; Blu-ray: 5 discs, \$79.99). This 2013-14 third season of the fantasy series features a *Peter Pan* storyline as Captain Hook (Colin O'Donoghue) arrives in New York City.

Revenge: The Complete Third Season (Buena Vista, DVD: 5 discs, \$45.99). A woman (Emily VanCamp) continues to take vengeance on the Hamptons community that played a part in her father's

murder in this 2013-14 third season of the drama series.

Revolution: The Complete Second Season (Warner, DVD: 5 discs, \$59.98; Blu-ray/DVD Combo: 9 discs, \$69.98). Set during a global technological blackout, this 2013-14 sophomore season of the post-apocalyptic adventure series stars Billy Burke, Giancarlo Esposito, and Elizabeth Mitchell.

September 2

Bonanza: The Official Seventh Season (Paramount, DVD: 9 discs, \$58.98). This 1965-66 seventh season of the long-running Western family series includes an exclusive feature film version of the series' first two-parter, "Ride the Wind."

Chicago Fire: Season Two (Universal, DVD: 5 discs, \$44.98). The Chicago Firehouse 51 crew goes up against an arsonist in this 2013-14 sophomore season, starring Jesse Spencer, Taylor Kinney, and Monica Raymund.

Chicago P.D.: Season One (Universal, DVD: 3 discs, \$44.98). This 2014 first season spin-off from *Chicago Fire* follows the workers of District 21, and stars Jason Beghe, Jon Seda, Sophia Bush, and Elias Koteas.



Crossbones: Season One (Universal, DVD: 2 discs, \$44.99). Set in the early 18th century on the island of Santa Campana, this 2014 first season of the dramatic adventure series based on *The Republic of Pirates* by Colin Woodard stars John Malkovich as Edward "Blackbeard" Teach.

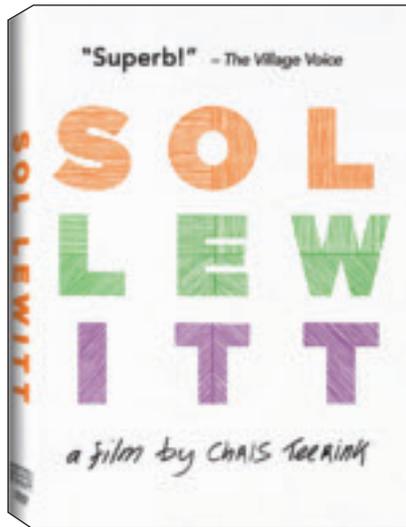
Grey's Anatomy: Complete Tenth Season (Buena Vista, DVD: 6 discs, \$45.99). This 2013-14 10th season of the medical drama series features guest appearances by Héctor Elizondo, Keke Palmer, and Annie Potts.



It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia: The Complete Season Nine (Fox, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$49.98). This 2013 ninth season of the FX-aired series set at a bar in the City of Brotherly Love stars Charlie Day, Rob McElhenney, and Danny DeVito.

The League: The Complete Season Five (Fox, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.98). Revolving

NEW FROM ICARUS FILMS



SOL LEWITT

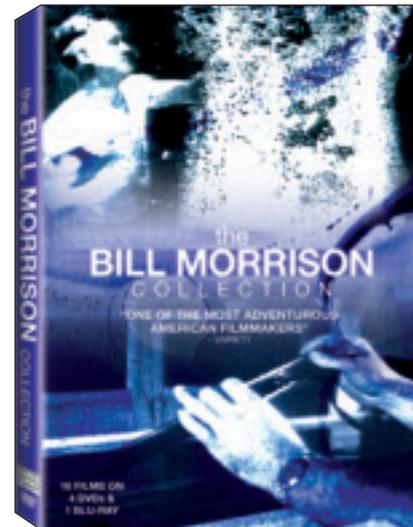
The first ever film about the key founder of conceptual art – Sol LeWitt, one of the most prominent post-war American artists. Filmmaker Chris Teerink explores the work and philosophy of the artist through extensive interviews and documentation of artwork installed around the world.

“Eye-catching and informative.”

—A.O. Scott, *The New York Times*

By Chris Teerink / DVD / 72' / Color / Closed Captions
English, and Italian and Dutch with English subtitles
UPC # 8-54565-00169-5 / SRP: \$24.98

STREET DATE: AUGUST 19

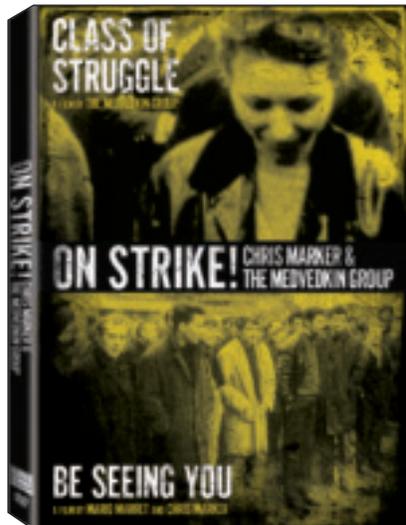


THE BILL MORRISON COLLECTION

This landmark box set comprises 16 works by filmmaker and multimedia artist Bill Morrison, called “one of the most adventurous American filmmakers” by *Variety*. Morrison’s work is characterized by his sensitive approach to found, often decaying film footage, and his close collaboration with contemporary composers, including Vijay Iyer, Johann Johannsson and Bill Frisell. Among other shorts and features, this set includes his acclaimed *DECASIA* (2002), “the most widely acclaimed American avant-garde film of the fin-de-siecle.” (J. Hoberman, *The Village Voice*).

4 DVDs + 1 Blu-ray / Booklet with articles and filmmaker’s interviews
UPC # 8-54565-00172-5 / SRP: \$49.98

STREET DATE: SEPTEMBER 23



ON STRIKE! CHRIS MARKER AND THE MEDVEDKIN GROUP BE SEEING YOU

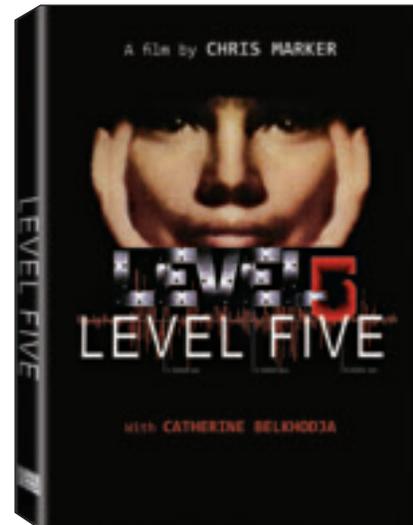
Workers at a textile factory on strike in pre-May '68 France, not just for more money, but for a different way of life.

CLASS OF STRUGGLE

After *BE SEEING YOU* was criticized by how the workers were portrayed, Chris Marker organized a project to train the workers themselves in how to make their own films about their own lives and concerns – *CLASS OF STRUGGLE* is the result.

DVD / 39' + 37' / B&W / 1968 & 1969 / French with English subtitles
UPC # 8-54565-00173-2 / SRP: \$29.98

STREET DATE: OCTOBER 14



LEVEL FIVE

In Chris Marker’s futuristic reverie, game-developer Laura creates a video game based on the WWII Battle of Okinawa. Marker’s only feature fiction film, available in the U.S. for the first time! Bonus booklet included!

“The future as a conduit to the past.”

—*Time Out*

By Chris Marker / DVD / 106' / Color / 1996
French with English subtitles

UPC # 8-54565-00171-8 / SRP: \$24.98

STREET DATE: OCTOBER 14

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around the escapades of a fantasy football league, this 2013 fifth season of the FX series features guest appearances by Adam Brody and Ali Larter.

Line of Duty: Series 2 (Acorn, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99). AC12 anti-corruption unit member Lindsay Denton (Keeley Hawes) looks into an attack on a police convoy in this 2014 second season of the British drama that also stars Vicky McClure and Adrian Dunbar.

New Girl: The Complete Season Three (Fox, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.98). Zooey Deschanel stars as a wacky teacher with fun male roommates in this 2013-14 third season that features guest appearances by Taye Diggs, Prince, and Jon Lovitz.

The Originals: The Complete First Season (Warner, DVD: 5 discs, \$59.98; Blu-ray/DVD Combo: 9 discs, \$69.98). This 2013-14 first season of *The Vampire Diaries* spin-off centers around the vampire family Mikaelson (Joseph Morgan, Daniel Gillies, and Claire Holt).



Person of Interest: The Complete Third Season (Warner, DVD: 6 discs, \$59.98; Blu-ray/DVD Combo: 10 discs, \$69.98). Starring Jim Caviezel, Taraji P. Henson, and Michael Emerson, this 2013-14 third season of the crime drama follows a former CIA agent and a scientist, who work together to prevent crimes.

September 9

Blue Bloods: The Fourth Season (Paramount, DVD: 6 discs, \$64.99). A family balances domestic life and police work in this 2013-14 fourth season of the crime-drama series starring Tom Selleck and Donnie Wahlberg.



Dynasty: The Final Season (Paramount, DVD: 6 discs, \$69.98). The Carrington and Colby clans go head to head for the last time in this 1988-89 ninth and final season of the Aaron Spelling-produced nighttime soap starring John Forsythe, Joan Collins, and Linda Evans.

The Goldbergs: The Complete First Season (Sony, DVD: 3 discs, \$45.99). Set in the 1980s, this family sitcom stars Wendi

McLendon-Covey, Jeff Garlin, George Segal, and the voice of Patton Oswalt.

Supernatural: The Complete Ninth Season (Warner, DVD: 6 discs, \$59.98; Blu-ray: 4 discs, \$69.98). Brothers Sam and Dean (Jared Padalecki and Jensen Ackles) continue to go up against strange forces in this 2013-14 ninth season.

The Vampire Diaries: The Complete Fifth Season (Warner, DVD: 5 discs, \$59.98; Blu-ray/DVD Combo: 9 discs, \$69.98). Based on the books by L.J. Smith, this 2013-14 fifth season follows Elena (Nina Dobrev) to college but doesn't end her association with vampires and other supernatural creatures.

September 16

About a Boy: Season One (Universal, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.99). Adapted from the 1998 book by Nick Hornby, this 2014 first season of the comedy series follows a man-child songwriter's (David Walton) friendship with a new next-door neighbor 'tween (Benjamin Stockham) and the boy's mother (Minnie Driver).

Arrow: The Complete Second Season (Warner, DVD: 5 discs, \$59.98; Blu-ray/DVD Combo: 9 discs, \$69.98). Based on the DC Comics character Green Arrow, this 2013-14 sophomore season follows the action-packed escapades of the titular vigilante (Stephen Amell).



Awkward.: Season 3 (Paramount, DVD: 4 discs, \$26.98). This 2013 third season of the MTV-aired teen sitcom follows main character Jenna (Ashley Rickards) through the ups and downs of her junior year of high school.

The Big Bang Theory: The Complete Seventh Season (Warner, DVD: 3 discs, \$44.98; Blu-ray/DVD Combo: 5 discs, \$54.98). Leonard and Penny (Johnny Galecki and Kaley Cuoco) further develop their relationship, while super-smart Sheldon (Jim Parsons) reacts dramatically in this 2013-14 seventh season of the sitcom, featuring a guest appearance by Stephen Hawking in voiceover.



Bones: The Complete Season Nine (Fox, DVD: 6 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 5 discs,

\$69.99). Coworkers Booth (David Boreanaz) and Bones (Emily Deschanel) finally tie the knot in this 2013-14 ninth season of the crime forensics black comedy series.

Burning Love: Seasons 2 & 3 (Paramount, DVD: 2 discs, \$22.98). Produced by Ben Stiller, this 2013-14 set compiling the second and third seasons of the reality dating show spoof features Michael Ian Black, Paul Rudd, Leslie Bibb, and Seth Rogen.

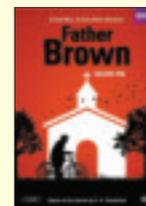


Castle: The Complete Sixth Season (Buena Vista, DVD: 5 discs, \$45.99). This 2013-14 sixth season of the black comedy series stars Nathan Fillion as a famous crime writer and Stana Katic as his detective love interest.

CSI: Crime Scene Investigation—The Fourteenth Season (Paramount, DVD: 6 discs, \$69.99). Ted Danson, Elisabeth Shue, and Jorja Fox are back in this 2013-14 14th season of the long-running crime drama series.

Death in Paradise: Season Two (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$34.98). Detective Inspector Richard Poole (Ben Miller) loosens up a bit for his new assignment solving murders on a Caribbean island in this 2013 second season.

Father Brown: Season One (BBC, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.98). Based on the character created by author G.K. Chesterton, this 2013 first season of the 1950s set series stars Mark Williams as the titular priest detective.



From Dusk Till Dawn: Season One (Entertainment One, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$49.98). Based on the 1996 action horror film from directors Robert Rodriguez and Quentin Tarantino, this 2014 debut season of the supernatural series stars D.J. Cotrona, Zane Holtz, and Don Johnson.

Grimm: Season Three (Universal, DVD: 5 discs, \$59.98; Blu-ray: 5 discs, \$69.98). This 2013-14 third season of the fantasy police procedural series continues as a homicide detective (David Giuntoli) goes after supernatural criminals.

Hannibal: Season Two (Lionsgate,

FOUR HORSEMEN



“One of the best of the many documentaries examining the causes and consequences of the financial panic of 2008 and the resulting economic depression. This film is required viewing for all concerned about rising income inequality.”

- James Rickards, Author, *The Death of Money*

“... it's *Inside Job* with bells on”

- Total Film

“... this is a hugely encouraging watch.”

- Mike McCahill, Cinesthesiac



“According to the high-profile interviewees here—including Noam Chomsky, Joseph Stiglitz, and Max Keiser—the forces behind those epochal events have since only grown more powerful, controlling both political parties and further stealing from the futures of an easily-distracted and fatalistic public. A powerful, thought-provoking condemnation of the evils of economic inequality, this is highly recommended.”

★ ★ ★ 1/2 - Video Librarian

The modern day “*Four Horsemen*” continue to ride roughshod over the people who can least afford it. Crises are converging when governments, religion and mainstream economists have stalled. Twenty-three international thinkers come together and break their silence about how the world really works and why there is still hope in re-establishing a moral and just society. *Four Horsemen* is free from mainstream media propaganda, doesn't bash bankers, criticize politicians or get involved in conspiracy theories. The film ignites the debate about how we usher a new economic paradigm into the world which, globally, would dramatically improve the quality of life for billions. *The Four Horseman* is a cinematic feature documentary which lifts the lid on how the global economy really works.



Gillian Tett is US managing editor and an assistant editor of the Financial Times.



James Turk has specialised in international banking, finance and investments for over forty years.



Michael Hudson is the President of The Institute for the Study of Long-Term Economic Trends (ISLET)



John Perkins is the New York Times bestselling author of 'Confessions of an Economic Hit-Man'.



Col. Lawrence Wilkerson former Chief of Staff to United States Secretary of State Colin Powell

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www.youtube.com/jansonmedia

DVD: 4 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$39.98). This 2014 sophomore season of the thriller series based on characters created by Thomas Harris follows a criminal profiler (Hugh Dancy) and also stars Laurence Fishburne, Caroline Dhavernas, and Mads Mikkelsen as Dr. Hannibal Lecter.

Hawaii Five-0: The Fourth Season (Paramount, DVD or Blu-ray: 6 discs, \$64.99 each). Alex O'Loughlin, Scott Caan, and Daniel Dae Kim are back in this 2013-14 fourth season of the reboot of the classic island-set crime drama series.

Prisoners of War: Season Two (Shout! Factory, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.95). Featuring episodes from the 2012 second season, this Israeli drama—the inspiration for Showtime's U.S. drama *Homeland*—continues to follow the re-adjustment trials faced by former POWs (Yoram Toledano and Ishai Golan).

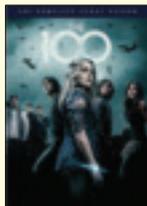
Sleepy Hollow: The Complete First Season (Fox, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$49.99). Ichabod Crane (Tom Mison) is resurrected more than 200 years after his death to help a police lieutenant (Nicole Beharie) uncover a supernatural mystery involving the Headless Horseman in this 2013-14 first season of the retelling of the classic Washington Irving story.



South Park: The Complete Seventeenth Season (Paramount, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$39.98). Stan, Kyle, Cartman, and Kenny continue their wacky and poor-taste escapades in this 2013 17th season of the Comedy Central series, which includes the episodes "Goth Kids 3: Dawn of the Posers," "Ginger Cow," and "A Song of Ass and Fire."

September 23

The 100: The Complete First Season (Warner, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$49.99). Nearly 100 years after a nuclear armageddon, young human survivors from the Ark space station head for Earth to see if it is habitable in this 2014 first season starring Eliza Taylor and Bob Morley.



Brooklyn Nine-Nine: Season One (Universal, DVD: 3 discs, \$44.99). Andy

Samberg stars in a Golden Globe-winning role as a wacky Brooklyn detective in this 2013-14 comedy series that also features Andre Braugher, Terry Crews, and Melissa Fumero.

Defiance: Season Two (Universal, DVD: 3 discs, \$59.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$69.98). Set in 2046 in a frontier town inhabited by humans and aliens, this 2014 Syfy-aired series stars Grant Bowler, Julie Benz, and Stephanie Leonidas.



How I Met Your Mother: The Ninth and Legendary Final Season (Fox, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.98). An epic wedding and two-part finale are the highlights of this 2013-14 ninth season starring Neil Patrick Harris, Alyson Hannigan, Jason Segel, Cobie Smulders, and Josh Radnor.

Key and Peele: Season 3 (Paramount, DVD: 2 discs, \$22.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$24.99). Sketch comedy duo Keegan-Michael Key and Jordan Peele are back with this 2013 third season of their Peabody Award-winning Comedy Central series.

LA Law: Season Three (Shout! Factory, DVD: 5 discs, \$29.95). The 1988-89 third season of Steven Bochco's early legal drama stars Harry Hamlin, Corbin Bernsen, and Jill Eikenberry.

Law & Order—Special Victims Unit: Year Fifteen, '13 / '14 Season (Universal, DVD: 5 discs, \$44.98). The 2013-14 15th season of the long-running crime spin-off series features guest appearances by Cathy Moriarty, Nia Vardalos, Jeffrey Tambor, Geraldo Rivera, and Bradley Whitford.

Modern Family: The Complete Fifth Season (Fox, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98). Winner of Golden Globe, Emmy, and Humanitas Prize awards, this 2013-14 fifth season of the family sitcom features guest stars including Jane Krakowski, Jesse Eisenberg, Patton Oswalt, and Stephen Merchant.

Mom: The Complete First Season (Warner, DVD: 3 discs, \$44.98). A newly-sober single mom (Anna Farris) works on making her life better in this 2013-14 debut season of the family sitcom that also features Allison Janney, Nate Corddry, Sadie Calvano, and French Stewart.



Nashville: The Complete Second Season (Buena Vista, DVD: 5 discs, \$45.99). Two country music stars (Connie Britton and Hayden Panettiere) compete for fame in this 2013-14 second season of the musical drama series.

Necessary Roughness: Season Three (Universal, DVD: 2 discs, \$34.98). A sassy sports therapist (Callie Thorne) begins working for a new boss (John Stamos) in this 2013 third and final season of the USA Network drama series.

Reign: The Complete First Season (Warner, DVD: 5 discs, \$59.98). The marriage and rule of Mary Stuart, Queen of Scotland, is explored in this debut season of the historical fiction series starring Adelaide Kane, Megan Follows, and Toby Regbo.



Royal Pains: Season Five (Universal, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98). Hamptons doctor Hank Lawson (Mark Feuerstein) heads back to work after surgery in this 2013 fifth season that features guest appearances by Henry Winkler and Jenna Elfman.

Scandal: The Complete Third Season (Buena Vista, DVD: 5 discs, \$45.99). Washington political fixer Olivia Pope (Kerry Washington) has to work on her own personal life in this 2013-14 third season that features guest star Lisa Kudrow.

September 30

24: Live. Another. Day. (Fox, DVD: 4 discs, \$49.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$59.99). Set four years after the end of the original show, this 2014 series features Kiefer Sutherland reprising his role as a counter-terrorist unit agent.

Agatha Christie's Marple: Series 6 (Acorn, DVD: 3 discs, \$49.99). Mystery author extraordinaire Agatha Christie's titular spinster sleuth is back in this 2014 sixth series that includes "A Caribbean Mystery," "Greenshaw's Folly," and "Endless Night."



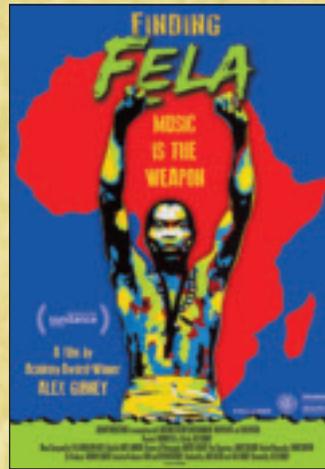
The Field of Blood, Set 1 (Acorn, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99). Based on the novels by Denise Mina, this 2011 BBC first series follows a newspaper reporter trainee (Jayd Johnson) whose family is affected by a



FLEX IS KINGS

In the high-crime Brooklyn neighborhood of East New York, a dance community has arisen, called, "Flex," characterized by wildly imaginative and poetic physicalizations of street life and the longing for a better world. Follow the intense competition between the principal dancers of this new movement in a homegrown contest known as, "Battlefest," that may lead a fortunate few to professional careers in entertainment. This inventive documentary reveals a glimpse into the complex relationship between artists and the communities that nurture their work, and then are transformed by it.

(Without PPR \$149)



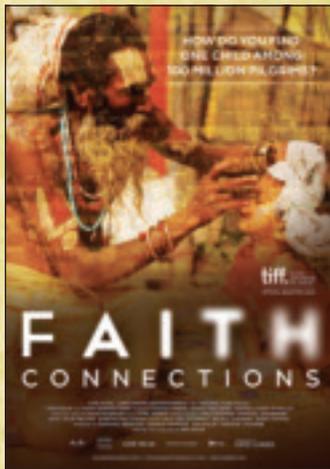
FINDING FELA

Finding Fela tells the story of Fela Kuti, creator of Afrobeat, who used that forum to express his revolutionary political opinions against the dictatorial Nigerian government of the 1970s and 1980s. This deep-level documentary explores the extraordinary life and lasting influence of a troubled icon in African politics, as told through remarkable historic footage and personal interviews with many of Kuti's friends and colleagues. Directed by Academy Award winning filmmaker Alex Gibney (*Taxi To The Dark Side*).

"A consistently understated, but deeply engaged inquiry."

—Slant Magazine

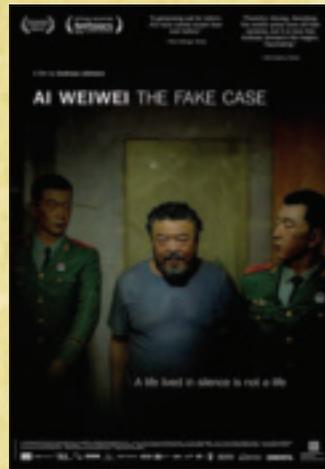
(Without PPR \$149)



FAITH CONNECTIONS

In India, five million Hindus gather at the confluence of three rivers to immerse themselves in the world's most extraordinary religious event. Shot amid astounding chaos, the film weaves together a collection of stories: a young runaway kid, a holy man renouncing the world, a mother desperately seeking her lost child, a yogi raising an abandoned baby, and a cannabis-smoking ascetic, all connected by one faith, all cast against a human tide of unimaginable devotion. *Faith Connections* bathes the viewer in feeling and unforgettable visuals, and delivers a deep sense of spiritual connection with things strange and unfamiliar.

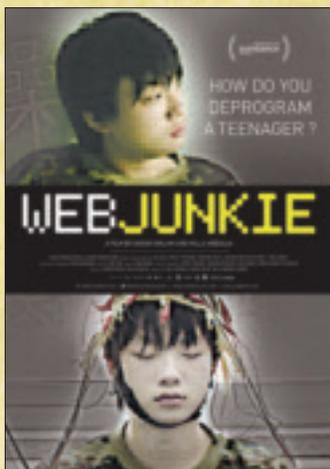
(Without PPR \$149)



AI WEIWEI: THE FAKE CASE

After 81 days of solitary detention, world famous subversive artist Ai Weiwei is put under house arrest. Suffering from sleeping disorder and memory loss, and with 18 surveillance cameras and a swarm of police agents following his every move, Ai Weiwei is further weighed down by heavy restrictions from the Kafkaesque Chinese government, who slap him with a gigantic lawsuit based on false evidence. Although shaken, Ai Weiwei nevertheless finds new ways to provoke and challenge the mighty powers of authority in his fight for human rights. Believing that China is ready for change, he'll do anything to make it happen.

(Without PPR \$149)

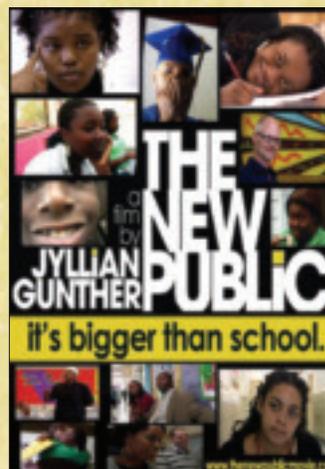


WEB JUNKIE

China is the first country to classify Internet addiction as a clinical disorder. *Web Junkie* takes viewers inside a bootcamp-style rehab center to witness the treatment of three teenagers, but as the patients experience withdrawal, and they and their families struggle with the center's controversial methods, questions arise about the nature of the addiction and the validity of the cure.

"The most revealing moments are about private, perceptual changes within families, as young Chinese men and their parents struggle with questions of individuality, personal freedom, self-development, and trust." —The New Yorker

(Without PPR \$149)



THE NEW PUBLIC

Over four years, this heartfelt verite film follows the journey of students, parents and educators striving to make a difference in the futures of young people whose lives are stark representations of our country's education and opportunity gaps. Through the prism of one inner-city public school, we witness complexities faced by urban public schools and communities everywhere.

"A well-crafted and emotionally gripping American story and an invaluable learning tool for potential and practicing educators everywhere."

—Anand R. Marri, Ph.D., Teachers College, Columbia University

(Without PPR \$149)

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murder story, and also stars David Morrissey and Peter Capaldi.

The Mentalist: The Complete Sixth Season (Warner, DVD: 5 discs, \$59.98). A “psychic” bureau consultant (Simon Baker) and his team narrow down a list of suspects in this 2013-14 sixth season of the police drama series that also features Robin Tunney and Rockmond Dunbar.



Mike & Molly: The Complete Fourth Season (Warner, DVD: 3 discs, \$38.99). Overweight Molly (Melissa McCarthy) leaves her job as an elementary school teacher to work on being a writer in this 2013-14 fourth season of the sitcom that costars Billy Gardell as her hefty police officer husband.

NYPD Blue: Season 7 (Shout! Factory, DVD: 6 discs, \$34.99). This 2000 seventh season of the long-running acclaimed cop drama stars Dennis Franz, Rick Schroder, and Kim Delaney.

October 7

Afterlife: Series Two (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.98). This 2006 second season following a psychic medium with special powers stars David Threlfall, Aidan McArdle, Natalia Tena, and Ed Westwick.

The Almighty Johnsons: Season 1 (PBS, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.99; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$44.99). This 2011 first season of the New Zealand fantasy dramedy series follows the four Johnson brothers, who are actually reincarnated Norse gods.



American Horror Story: Coven (Fox, DVD: 4 discs, \$49.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$59.99). The witches of Miss Robichaux's Academy in New Orleans experience trauma in this 2013-14 third season of the acclaimed horror anthology series that features guest appearances by Angela Bassett, Gabourey Sidibe, and Stevie Nicks.

Bates Motel: Season Two (Universal, DVD: 3 discs, \$44.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$49.99). Norman and his mother (Freddie Highmore and Vera Farmiga) continue to run their hotel despite strange goings on in this 2014 sophomore season of

the contemporary prequel to Hitchcock's *Psycho*.

The Following: The Complete Second Season (Warner, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray/DVD Combo: 7 discs, \$49.99). This 2014 sophomore season of the series about a cult built around a serial killer stars Kevin Bacon, James Purefoy, and Shawn Ashmore.

Hemlock Grove: The Complete First Season (Shout! Factory, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$49.98). This 2013 first season of the Netflix Original horror series based on the novel by Brian McGreevy is set in a sinister Pennsylvania steel town, and features Famke Janssen, Bill Skarsgård, Landon Liboiron, Lili Taylor, and Dougray Scott.

In the Flesh: The Complete Season Two (BBC, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.98). Recovered zombie Kieren (Luke Newberry) finds his plans for the future in jeopardy in this 2014 sophomore season of the BAFTA award-winning supernatural drama series.



October 14

2 Broke Girls: The Complete Third Season (Warner, DVD: 3 discs, \$38.99). Roommates and co-workers Max and Caroline (Kat Dennings, Beth Behrs) continue to raise cash for their business plans in this 2013-14 third season that also stars Garrett Morris and Jennifer Coolidge.

Dracula: Season 1 (Universal, DVD: 3 discs, \$44.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$49.98). Dracula goes undercover as an American industrialist bent on revenge in this 2013-14 first season, featuring Jonathan Rhys Meyers as the titular bloodsucker.

Fargo (Fox, DVD: 4 discs, \$49.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$59.99). Inspired by the 1996 Coen brothers black comedy, this 2014 debut season of the FX-aired series stars Billy Bob Thornton, Martin Freeman, and Colin Hanks.



Murdoch Mysteries: Season 7 (Acorn, DVD or Blu-ray: 5 discs, \$59.99 each). This 2013-14 seventh season of the Canadian drama series based on the novels by Maureen Jennings stars Yannick Bisson as turn-of-the-century detective William Murdoch.

Penny Dreadful: The Complete First Season (Showtime, DVD: 3 discs, \$45.99;

Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$54.99). Iconic characters from literature are revisited in this 2014 debut season of the Showtime-aired horror series starring Reeve Carney, Timothy Dalton, Eva Green, Josh Hartnett, and Billie Piper.

Two and a Half Men: The Complete Eleventh Season (Warner, DVD: 3 discs, \$44.98). Amber Tamblyn joins the cast as the late Charlie Harper's lesbian daughter in this 2013-14 11th season that includes guest appearances by Lynda Carter, Tim Conway, Garry Marshall, and Jane Lynch.



October 28

Accused: Series 1 & 2 (Acorn, DVD: 4 discs, \$59.99). Sean Bean, Christopher Eccleston, Juliet Stevenson, Andy Serkis, and others star in this 2010-12 first and second season compilation of the anthology series following characters who have their day in court.

Death Comes to Pemberley (PBS, DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99). Continuing Jane Austen's tale years later, this 2013 three-part BBC drama adapted from P.D. James's 2011 novel follows a murder-mystery featuring Elizabeth and Darcy (Anna Maxwell Martin and Matthew Rhys).

Looking Ahead

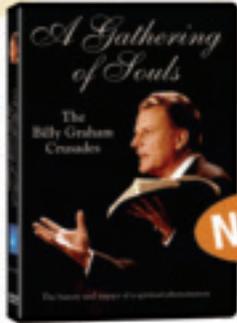
Slated for November is the first and second season set of **The Exes**, fifth season of **Hot in Cleveland**, the seventh season of **Quincy, M.E.**, the 13th set of **Poirot**, and the complete series of **The Sopranos** on Blu-ray.

Re-priced or New to DVD/Blu-ray

Breath of the Gods (Alive Mind, DVD: \$29.95). Filmmaker Jan Schmidt-Garre's 2012 documentary (VL-7/13 ★★1/2) explores the origins of modern yoga and features creator T. Krishnamacharya, B.K.S. Iyengar, and others. Extras include bonus interviews. Also newly available in home video editions are *Yangsi* (VL-5/14 ★★★) and *When the Iron Bird Flies* (VL-9/13 ★★★).



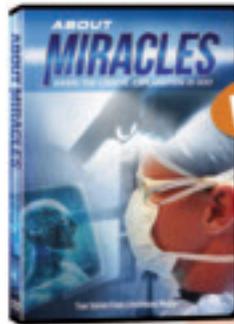
COMPELLING NEW DVDS FROM VISION VIDEO



A Gathering of Souls: The Billy Graham Crusades

During his long and distinguished ministry, Billy Graham has preached to over 200 million people worldwide. The massive evangelistic gatherings that took place in sports arenas, concert halls, and outdoor venues became known as the Billy Graham Crusades. With expert commentary from pastors, academics, Graham associates, and fellow evangelists such as Luis Palau, this documentary gives the history of the crusades from the first event in Los Angeles in 1949 to the remarkable gatherings behind the Iron Curtain and in the Far East. Documentary, 51 minutes.

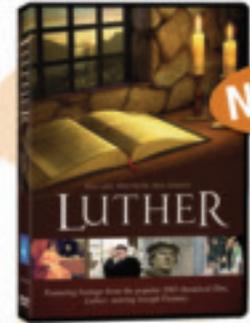
DVD - #501582D, \$14.99, UPC 7 27985 01582 8



About Miracles

About Miracles features four dramatic, true stories about modern-day miracles. Told by the actual people involved and featuring gripping reenactments, these stories will amaze you. A man is robbed, then shot in the head at point-blank range and left for dead. A woman hears a voice telling her to go to the ER even though she has no physical symptoms. A student has just one week to raise thousands of dollars for a mission trip. A baby is injured in a car accident and gradually loses his sight while his parents pray for healing. *About Miracles* offers the facts on these true stories and concludes that sometimes... the only logical explanation is God. Docu-drama, 59 minutes.

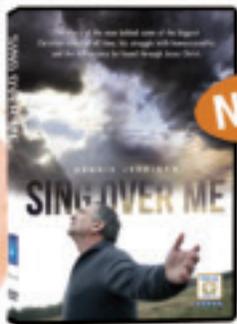
DVD - #501546D, \$19.99, UPC 7 27985 01546 0



Luther: His Life, His Path, His Legacy

Very few historical figures have affected modern society and humanity as enduringly as Martin Luther, and on such a global scale. This comprehensive documentary traces the footsteps of the great Reformer and reflects upon the places which have become inseparably connected with his name. The program features stunning dramatic footage from the 2003 theatrical film *Luther*, starring Joseph Fiennes, along with interviews with experts discussing his life and work. Docu-drama, 90 minutes.

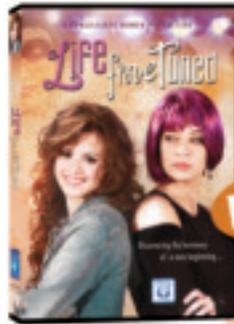
DVD - #501581D, \$19.99, UPC 7 27985 01581 1



Sing Over Me

Since the early 1990s people all over the world have been singing the songs of modern-day psalmist, Dennis Jernigan. His music and ministry, sparked by his lifelong struggle with homosexuality and the healing that came through his Christian faith, have led him on a remarkable journey of redemption. Now he shares his inspiring story so that all may have a deeper understanding of God's love. By telling his story, Jernigan puts forth an example of what God can do in the lives of those who put their trust in Him. Documentary, 87 minutes.

DVD - #501604D, \$19.99, UPC 7 27985 01604 7



Life Fine Tuned

This family friendly comedy-drama tells the story of a self-absorbed teen pop idol (aptly, named Star), who throws one too many tantrums during rehearsals for her new music video. Star drives off in a fury, expecting an apologetic call from her manager at any moment. Instead, she is replaced by her look-alike stand-in. Now lost in rural Virginia, Star is taken in by a family whose lifestyle stands in stark contrast to hers. Inspired by their faith, kindness, and mutual love of music, Star begins to confront her wounded past and get in tune with those around her and, ultimately, with God. Drama, 90 minutes.

DVD - #501606D, \$12.99, UPC 7 27985 01606 1



Human Trafficking

It is time to lay ignorance aside. Injustice is at our doorstep. Millions of young men, women, and children worldwide are being ensnared in a phenomenon called human trafficking, a form of modern-day slavery. This three-part program exposes the truth. Part 1 provides a brief but incisive overview. Part 2 is a 16-minute dramatic film portraying the plight of two young girls who are abducted by traffickers. Part 3 presents human trafficking experts answering the most common questions about the problem. This program will inform and inspire you to join the fight against this injustice. Docu-drama, 35 minutes.

DVD - #501601D, \$14.99, UPC 7 27985 01601 6



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

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

Current Films

2 Autumns, 3 Winters

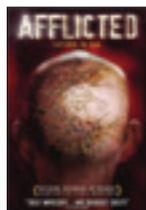
★★★★1/2

Film Movement, 91 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95

This playfully self-aware Gallic dramedy offers, in its own way, an homage to the fresh energy, excitement, and unconventional storytelling of the French New Wave from the late 1950s and early '60s. Writer-director Sébastien Betbeder's *2 Autumns, 3 Winters* centers on three friends whose lives are punctuated by random events, coincidences, and uncertainties. The film opens with shaggy, adorable Arman (Vincent Macgaigne) literally bumping into Amélie (Maud Wyler) while jogging through a Paris park, sparking an obvious attraction, although neither can quite seize the moment. Destiny sends the pair in different directions, until capricious fate brings them together again in a dark alley when Arman intervenes in an attempted assault on Amélie and is stabbed for his efforts. The two fall in love while Arman recuperates, but then Arman's friend, Benjamin (Bastien Bouillon)—the picture of youthful health—suffers a stroke that affects his speech, leading to the latter's romance with a speech therapist (Audrey Bastien). None of these twists and turns are revealed in a traditional storytelling way: in fact, much of the film finds the characters describing these chapters in their lives directly into the camera, complemented by scattered moments of action. An engaging movie about young adults navigating their way through lives that they cannot control while still finding faith in one another, this is highly recommended. (T. Keogh)



writing-directing team of Clif Prowse and Derek Lee outclasses most recent horror movies with far larger budgets. The filmmakers also star under their real names as two buddies who decide to go off on a round-the-world trip that documentary filmmaker Clif will also record for an Internet blog called "Ends of the Earth." The adventure is a dream journey for Derek, who has been diagnosed with an inoperable brain aneurysm and wants to live it up before it's too late. Unfortunately, while in Paris, Derek goes off with a voluptuous woman who also happens to be a vampire and she turns him. At first, this is crazily exhilarating: Derek now boasts super-strength and incredible dexterity (he can climb walls like Spider-Man). But the condition also brings cravings that are increasingly difficult to resist, and soon Derek is trying to track down the one-night stand who afflicted him with an insatiable need for blood, hoping that she can provide a cure. Of course, by then the authorities are also in hot pursuit. *Afflicted* plays like a more serious version of *An American Werewolf in London*, told using the hackneyed but apparently still durable "found footage" technique. While there's nothing terribly innovative here, the vivid, gritty approach and realistic acting make this more effective than you might expect. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)



Age of Uprising

★★★★1/2

Music Box, 122 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95

In contrast to the heightened action of *Braveheart* or the CGI-assisted razzle-dazzle of recent Hollywood-costumer battle-epics, director Arnaud des Pallières—adapting a fact-based novel by Heinrich von Kleist—imparts a sense of Robert Bresson-like austerity and foreboding realism to a saga about a peasant uprising in 16th-century France...and its price. Michael Kohlhaas (Mads Mikkelsen) is an educated, Bible-reading, well-liked merchant living in the feudal countryside, who is cheated out of a pair of horses by an insolent young baron. His legal petitioner is scared off the case, and when Michael's beloved wife appeals directly to royal administrators, she is murdered. Kohlhaas rallies his servants, serfs, and willing volunteers in revolt against the nobility, threatening to engulf the realm in violence, despite the protagonist's assertions that he only seeks proper justice. The dialogue here is terse, death is quick and cruel, and the single actual battle scene is shown overhead, detached, from a distance. Ambient sound and natural-light photography predominate



throughout this powerful tale of vengeance, which offers a convincing portrait of a Europe struggling to grope its way out of the Dark Ages. Highly recommended. (C. Cassidy)

The Amazing Spider-Man

2★★★★

Sony, 141 min., PG-13, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$40.99

Andrew Garfield returns in this superhero sequel as photojournalist/vigilante Peter Parker, who battles crime in New York City, while also coping with a) the mysterious death of his parents (Campbell Scott, Embeth Davidtz), and b) a complicated relationship with his high-school valedictorian, Oxford-bound girlfriend, Gwen Stacy (Emma Stone), whose late father (Denis Leary) warned Peter to stay away. Meanwhile, Peter's old frenemy, Harry Osborn (Dane DeHaan), heir to the secretive, mega-billion-dollar Oscorp, discovers that an unfortunate industrial accident involving electric eels turned mild-mannered engineer Max Dillon (Jamie Foxx) into the villainous, high-voltage Electro. In addition, the wiry webslinger must fend off both Osborn's Green Goblin, who believes his genetic anomaly can only be cured by absorbing some Spidey blood, and a super-fluous Russian mobster, Aleksei Sytsevich (Paul Giamatti), known as the Rhino. Sally Field is back as supportive Aunt May, Colm Feore embodies a duplicitous Oscorp exec, and the ubiquitous Stan Lee can be spotted in a cameo. Based on Lee and Steve Ditko's Marvel comic, filmmaker Marc Webb's *The Amazing Spider-Man 2* soars primarily due to its charming romantic chemistry, along with several stunning acrobatic-action sequences. Recommended. (S. Granger)



American Made Movie

★★★★

Virgil, 85 min., G, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$29.99

Appealing to home-field pride (complete with abundant baseball imagery), co-directors Nathaniel Thomas McGill and Vincent Vittorio profile the decline of U.S. manufacturing while putting in lay terms how the massive trade deficit is tied to the Great Recession closure of some 56,000 American factories since 2001—as cheaper goods were imported from ill-regulated overseas competitors (usually China). Instead of partisan finger-pointing at capitalists, political parties, or Wall Street, however, *American Made Movie* salutes a few patriotic heroes caught up in the crisis. After doling out humiliating layoffs to his employees, Mark Andol of General Welding & Fabricating fights back with an all-American-made retail-store startup. Home-crafter Merrie Buchsbaum's



red-white-and-blue “Merrily Made” line was carried by the Smithsonian—until they were able to get cheaper copies from China. Robert DeMartini’s New Balance remains the top athletic-shoe manufacturer left in the USA, yet he can only manufacture about a quarter of his goods on U.S. soil (New Balance is practically the economic backbone of Skowhegan, ME). Most American businesses, the film argues, suffer from shortsighted thinking oriented towards maximizing shareholder profits in quarterly statements. To create real change, businesses and consumers will need to recognize the value of something being U.S. made, which the filmmakers believe is an achievable paradigm shift. A thought-provoking documentary on a timely topic, this is recommended. (C. Cassidy)

The Art of the Steal

★★★1/2

Anchor Bay, 90 min., R, DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98

This big-budget, twist-filled Canadian caper movie stars Kurt Russell as “Crunch” Calhoun, who used to be a professional getaway driver specializing in art heists until a scam went wrong and his treacherous partner/half-brother Nicky (Matt Dillon) set Crunch up

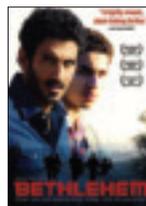


to serve time in an Eastern European prison. Now subsisting as an Evel Knievel-type stunt cyclist, Crunch gradually reassembles his old crew with an eye toward stealing a priceless medieval Gutenberg manuscript. Slippery Nicky is back on board, allegedly to make amends, but...can he be trusted? Russell is effortlessly charming here among a solid international cast that includes Terence Stamp, Kenneth Welsh, and Chris Diamantopoulos. Nothing is as it seems in writer-director Jonathan Sobol’s cross-bred heist/con-game flick; unfortunately, *The Art of the Steal* is ultimately too clever for its own good, verging on the incomprehensible. A strong optional purchase. (C. Cassidy)

Bethlehem ★★★

Adapt, 99 min., in Hebrew & Arabic w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95

This Israeli film from Yuval Adler deals with the yin-and-yang of conflict in the Middle East, focusing on the relationship between Razi (Tsahi Halevy) a sensitive Israeli intelligence operative, and a teenage Palestinian informant named Sanfur (Shadi Mar'i), the younger brother of a radical militia leader who becomes the chief target of a manhunt following a suicide bombing.



Razi hopes to use the boy to trap his brother, but doesn’t know that Sanfur is also serving as a conduit for funds from Hamas to his brother—or that rumors of that arrangement are causing both the venal officials of the Palestinian Authority and other militants to harbor doubts about him. Escalating tensions among the various Palestinian factions and demands from the equally divided Israeli side put increasing pressure on Sanfur, who must prove his manhood while dealing with the threat he faces by playing a double game. The complex narrative may bewilder some viewers, but the central relationships help personalize what could have simply come across as a cryptic game of power politics. Benefiting from a largely non-professional cast that offers convincingly realistic portrayals, *Bethlehem* might not offer new insights but it does depict the human cost of continuing war in the Middle East with often startling power. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

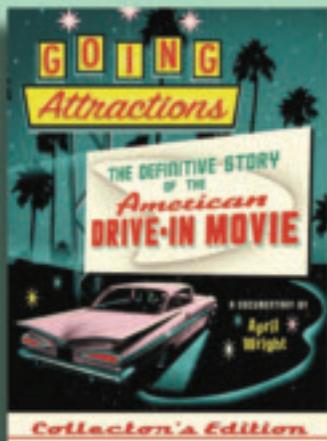
Bible Quiz ★★★1/2

Virgil, 85 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.99

Filmmaker Nicole Teeny won the Grand Jury Award at Slamdance for this compelling and sincere documentary about a 17-year-old



NEW RELEASES FROM PASSION RIVER FILMS



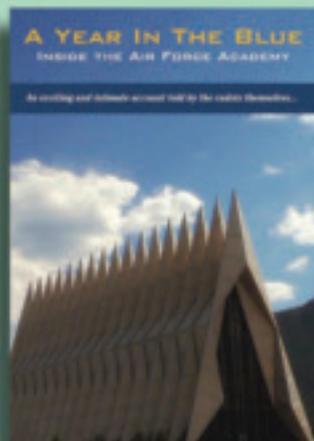
GOING ATTRactions

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trying to find her place in the world. Mikayla Irle belongs to a small church group in Tacoma, WA, that participates in competitions in which teenagers offer Bible recitations. In this case, the recitation is not based on oratorical skills, but rather on speed and massive memorizing, requiring huge chunks of biblical verse to be quoted verbatim in a rapid-fire manner. Mikayla is part of a three-person team from her church that is aiming at the national Bible Quiz championship; team captain J.P. O'Connor is eager to come home with first prize. But Mikayla finds her concentration skills challenged due to a growing infatuation with tall, handsome J.P. Complicating matters is Mikayla's domestic life: she lives with a divorced, alcoholic mother who is not supportive of her daughter's Bible Quiz efforts. Teeny does a remarkable job here, taking a pair of traditionally thorny subjects—evangelical Christianity and teen love—and blending them together without the slightest hint of condescension or stereotypes. While some secular-minded viewers might be surprised at the intellectual ferocity displayed by the teen competitors here, it will be easy to sympathize with Mikayla's plucky yet also painful attempts to find a comfort zone in a complex and often hostile world. Highly recommended. (P. Hall)

Blended ★

Warner, 117 min., PG-13, DVD: \$28.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$35.99



An innocuous romantic comedy that looks something like *The Brady Bunch* on safari, *Blended* stars Adam Sandler as Jim, a slovenly widower with three young daughters. Bubbly Lauren (Drew Barrymore) is an uptight divorcee with two sons. Their blind date at Hooters is predictably disastrous, but these single parents run into each other again at a drugstore, where Jim is buying tampons for his daughter and Lauren is replacing her son's girlie magazine, which she ripped up. And then, because of a credit card mix-up, the pair wind up at a fabulous South African safari resort, where they are forced to share the same suite for a week. Talk about an awkwardly laborious set-up. Jim and Lauren's broods include hormonal teens (Disney Channel star Bella Thorne and Braxton Beckham) and variously troubled moppets (Kyle Red Silverstein, Emma Fuhrmann, and Alyvia Alyn Lind). Kevin Nealon plays another vacationer, with jiggly Jessica Lowe as his young, trophy wife, and Zak Henril as his teenage son. Barrymore and Sandler have teamed up twice before in *The Wedding Singer* (1998) and *50 First Dates* (2004), both of which were far better than this drivel that is cartoonish-ly directed by Frank Coraci (with wildlife action that includes copulating rhinos). Not recommended. (S. Granger)

Breathe In ★★1/2

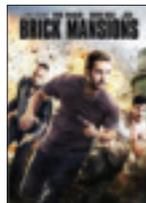
Cohen, 97 min., R, DVD: \$20.99, Blu-ray: \$24.99



Writer-director Drake Doremus's *Breathe In* tells the tale of a suburban family whose internal troubles flare up when an outsider enters their midst. The story is bookended by scenes of the Reynolds family—Keith (Guy Pearce), Megan (Amy Ryan), and teen daughter Lauren (Mackenzie Davis)—posing for photos to accompany their annual letters to friends. Between the two shoots, they are rocked by the arrival of Sophie (Felicity Jones), a British exchange student who challenges the Reynolds' marriage and Lauren's apparently charmed existence—although not from any maliciousness on her part. Keith, a frustrated musician teaching high school music, grows infatuated with Sophie, much to Megan's distress, while star swimmer Lauren is devastated when Sophie attracts the attention of Lauren's ex-boyfriend. All of this happens against the backdrop of a suburban society where everybody seems to be either divorced or filing for divorce. While the cast is excellent, *Breathe In*—comprised of quietly unsettling scenes that are punctuated by occasional melodramatic outbursts—simmers at such a low temperature that it becomes tedious, while the big moments are almost absurdly overstated. Optional. (F. Swietek)

Brick Mansions ★★

Fox, 91 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$39.99, Sept. 9



One of *Fast and Furious* star Paul Walker's last film roles before he was killed in a high-speed car crash in 2013, this recycled thriller by first-time director Camille Delamarre was adapted from the 2004 French film *District B13*. In dystopian Detroit, circa 2018, dangerous criminals occupy dilapidated buildings known as Brick Mansions. Unable to control crime in the area, the police rely on a colossal, 40-foot containment wall to protect the rest of the city. Earnest undercover narcotics cop Damien Collier (Paul Walker) is dispatched to infiltrate the Mansions in order to defuse a nuclear bomb hidden by Tremaine Alexander (Wu-Tang Clan's RZA), a gangster kingpin whom Damien blames for his cop father's death. Damien's only ally is Mansions-savvy ex-con Lino Dupree (David Belle), whose ex-girlfriend Lola (Catalina Denis) is being held hostage. Sporting a familiar concept dating back to John Carpenter's 1981 cult fave *Escape from New York*, this remake benefits somewhat from having Belle—known as the co-founder of the acrobatic martial art called "parkour," which involves running, jumping and/or climbing along a particular route while trying to avoid physical obstacles in the quickest, most efficient way possible—reprise his role

from *District B13*. So viewers will see a number of action-packed chase and fight sequences, but this is more Cirque du Detroit—a showcase for intrepid stuntmen—than satisfying drama. Optional. (S. Granger)

Capital ★★1/2

Cohen, 114 min., in English & French w/English subtitles, R, DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray: \$34.98



Costa-Gavras, one of cinema's most prolific promoters of political indignation, here takes on the financial wheeling and dealing that brought on the 2008 global economic collapse. The title obviously serves as an echo of Marx's *Das Kapital*, and like that famous tome, this film hones in on the excesses of the capitalist system, focusing on Marc Tourneuil (Gad Elmaleh), young CEO of a French bank (thrust into his job thanks to the illness of his predecessor), who aims to secure his position by laying off a large percentage of the firm's employees in order to increase profitability. Marc also has to contend with the machinations of American hedge fund manager Dittmar Rigule (Gabriel Byrne), whose offers of assistance mask an attempt to take over the bank. And Marc has to find some time off to indulge his lust for a beautiful supermodel (Liya Kebede), especially since his wife (Natacha Régnier) is a prissy moralist. *Capital* falls squarely in the tradition of films such as *Wall Street* and *Margin Call*, but the rhetoric here about a reverse Robin Hood mentality feels both heavy-handed and somewhat behind the curve, although the fact that most of the sharks wind up still swimming—unpunished, despite (or because of) their dastardly tactics—is right on the money. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

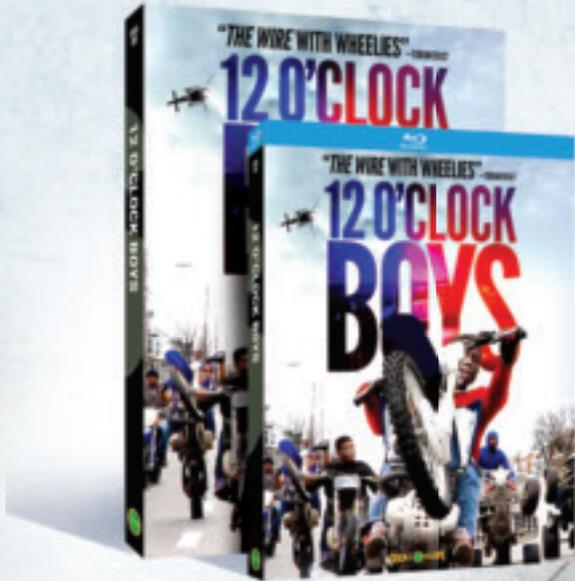
Chef ★★★

Universal, 115 min., R, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.98, Sept. 30



With the popularity of *Babette's Feast*, *Eat Drink Man Woman*, and *Big Night*, foodie films have become a savory genre. In this latest entrée, celebrated Los Angeles chef Carl Casper (Jon Favreau) infuriates his conservative restaurateur boss (Dustin Hoffman) when he confronts crotchety food critic Ramsey Michel (Oliver Platt)—and their Twitter and YouTube rant goes viral. It quickly becomes obvious that Carl needs a culinary change, which comes in the form of an invitation from his ex-wife Inez (Sofía Vergara) to join her and their social-media-savvy 10-year-old son Percy (Emjay Anthony) on a trip to Miami. Here, Carl acquires a battered, secondhand food truck from Inez's first husband, Marvin (scene-stealing Robert Downey Jr.). Teaming up with his son, and Hispanic line cook Martin (John Leguizamo),

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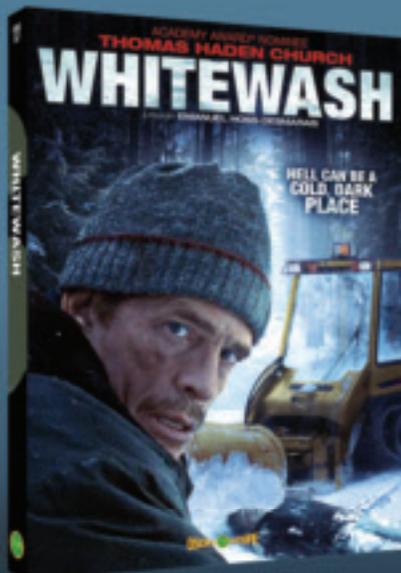
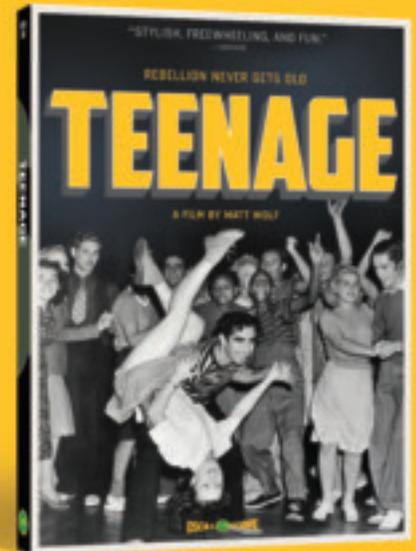


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STREET: SEP 2, 2014

Carl dubs his renovated truck “El Jefe” and takes scrumptious Cubano cuisine on the road, embarking on a poignant, redemptive trip back to the West Coast, which includes stops in New Orleans and Austin. Writer-director-actor Favreau—who guest-starred on TV’s *Top Chef*—aces the atmosphere of a working kitchen, although few real-life chefs have love interests like Scarlett Johansson and Vergara. A succulent, sweetly simmering, appetizing amusement sure to appeal to foodies, this is recommended. (S. Granger)

The Double ★★1/2

Magnolia, 93 min., R, DVD: \$26.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98



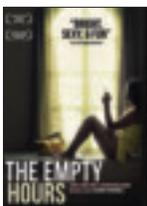
Actor-turned-director Richard Ayoade’s dark, stylized adaptation of Dostoyevsky’s novel stars Jesse Eisenberg in a dual role.

Simon (Eisenberg), a milquetoast fellow who can’t seem to do anything right, wears the same ill-fitting suit at all times. Simon’s fantasies revolve around Hannah (Mia Wasikowska), a smartly dressed co-worker who lives across from his flat. At night, using a telescope, Simon watches her work on art projects. After Simon finally gets the chance to strike up a conversation, a misunderstanding prevents him from meeting up with her at the annual office party. The next day, Simon’s boss (Wallace Shawn) welcomes James (Eisenberg), a new employee who looks exactly like Simon. Although no one notices Simon, everyone notices James—who gets whatever he wants. At first, Simon is drawn to his doppelgänger, but so is Hannah, who tries to go through Simon to get to James. Things only devolve from here, but the carefully controlled first half ends up working better than the faster moving second half, although cameos from Chris O’Dowd as a nurse, and musician J. Mascis as a janitor, liven up the story. A strong optional purchase. (K. Fennessy)

The Empty Hours

★★★1/2

Strand, 100 min., in Spanish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99



This quiet, yet oddly compelling, Spanish film is set at a rundown motel on a beach in Veracruz, Mexico, where good-natured 17-year-old Sebastián (Kristyan Ferrer) has agreed to run the place while the owner (Sebastián’s uncle) seeks medical treatment for a few days. What happens next might not be earthshaking, but proves to be a catalyst to greater maturity and wisdom. Sebastián befriends a boy who sells coconut juice that is extracted from the plentiful fruit falling from ubiquitous trees. He also reluctantly takes on housekeeping duties when a new maid never shows up. And he gets nowhere

trying to make an old handyman give him a straight answer about anything. Most importantly, Sebastián slowly befriends a woman named Miranda (Adriana Paz), whose trysts with a married lover suddenly come to an end. Despite the low-key story and quiet atmosphere, *The Empty Hours* conjures up a sense of existential anxiety that grows and grows as Sebastián begins to feel stuck in a role thrust upon him, with no word about his uncle and no end in sight to his obligation at a no-tell motel. Writer-director Aarón Fernández has created an understated coming-of-age drama with an unsettling twist. Highly recommended. (T. Keogh)

Ernest & Celestine

★★★1/2

New Video, 80 min., PG, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.95



Originally a French-Belgian animated feature based on a series of successful children’s books, this strange but delightful ode to the power of non-conformism has been dubbed into English with some top voiceover talent, including Forest Whitaker. Sporting visuals that recall 1970s-style watercolor animation, *Ernest & Celestine* introduces us to the polarized worlds of two rival species—both taught from an early age to hate and fear one another—the aboveground-dwelling bears and the subterranean rodents (the mice actually crawl topside to steal teeth left under young bears’ pillows to be used as all-important replacement incisors). Between these opposite worlds, two outcasts find each other: Celestine (voiced by Mackenzie Fay) is a misfit in the rodent community, an artist who likes drawing pictures more than collecting teeth. She has a chance meeting with Ernest (Whitaker), a hungry bear street musician/hobo who always seems to be in trouble with the bear police. After Celestine helps Ernest break into a candy store, the pair set off on a string of adventures, and before long are fugitives on the run from authorities. While on the lam, these two learn to accept each other’s differences and manage to forge an interspecies bond. A funny, sophisticated, heartwarming children’s story about finding the courage to be yourself in the face of an uncompromising status quo, this Oscar nominee also features the voice talents of the late Lauren Bacall, Paul Giamatti, William H. Macy, and Jeffrey Wright. Highly recommended. (M. Sandlin)

The Face of Love ★★1/2

MPI, 92 min., PG-13, DVD: \$24.98

This melodrama from filmmaker Arie Posin fitfully achieves a bittersweet variation on Hitchcock’s *Vertigo* plot about romantic obsession and the perils of remaking a per-

son into the image of a lost love. While on a Mexican seaside vacation celebrating 30 years of wedded bliss, California housewife Nikki (Annette Bening) makes a traumatic discovery on the beach: the body of her cherished architect-husband Garrett (Ed Harris), who accidentally drowned. Five years later, Nikki is still haunted by Garrett’s presence—literally, when she spots a random guy who looks exactly like him. Tom (Harris), an easygoing, amicably divorced college instructor is unaware of the skin-deep resemblance that compels Nikki to stalk him and then hire him as an art tutor, before eventually enticing him into a physical relationship. Meanwhile, Nikki has to keep Tom’s startling physiognomy a secret from both her college-age daughter and a widower neighbor (the late Robin Williams) with his own unrequited crush on the widow. Good performances help keep this from sinking too far into either camp or soap, and there is something to be said for a love story from youth-obsessed Hollywood in which nearly all of the characters are unapologetically AARP-aged. A strong optional purchase. (C. Cassidy)



Faust ★★★

Kino Lorber, 132 min., in German w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95



Much-feted Russian director Alexander Sokurov’s rendering of the Faust legend takes a lot of liberty with the original story while serving up plenty of visual elegance. Here, Faust (Johannes Zeiler) is portrayed as an unsuccessful medical doctor in rural 19th-century Prussia, a decaying, claustrophobic, pre-Enlightenment milieu full of human viscera, where the sickly specter of death always hangs heavy in the air. The Mephistopheles character is an old man called “the moneylender” (Anton Adasinsky), who promises Faust the girl of his dreams—town beauty Margarete (Isolda Dychauk)—if he will sign away his soul. The lonely, lovesick Faust agrees, thus assuring his own agonizing descent into a dark dreamlike underworld. Sokurov’s handling of the brief relationship between Faust and Marguerite is unnecessarily and obnoxiously risqué, while his vision of Hell is more ambiguous than previous adaptations. Faust seems to begin in a terrestrial Hell-on-Earth, only to be led to a half-real, half-dream-like place where Hell is more a state of mind than a tortuous physical environment. While the all-important philosophical questions at the heart of Goethe’s tale seem to get buried under the style, this decidedly artistic take will be appreciated by fans of the director. Recommended. (M. Sandlin)

Breaking Glass Pictures

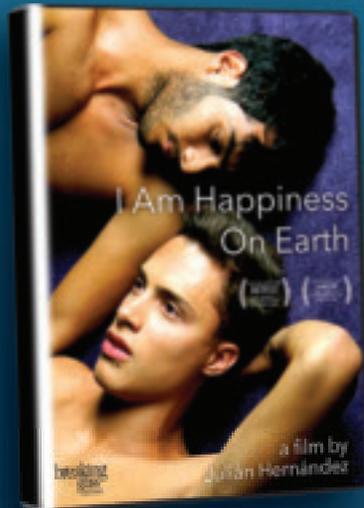
A World of Independent Films

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Emiliano looks at his life with the eyes of a film director, mixing the objective reality with the processes of the artistic creation. The story he is filming flounders with his daily life, until his world is trapped in the lens of his camera. Love, sexuality and the true self are all themes explored in the latest from Mexican Auteur Julián Hernández (A Thousand Peace Clouds Encircle the Sky, Broken Sky, Raging Sun, Raging Sky).

"...magnificent cinematography and highly sensual scenes..."
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REDEMPTION TRAIL

This modern Western stars Lily Rabe ("American Horror Story"), LisaGay Hamilton ("The Practice"), Jake Weber (Dawn of the Dead) and Hamish Linklater (Fantastic Four). Redemption Trail is the story of two troubled women - Ana (Rabe) a successful doctor and Tess (Hamilton) a convicted felon - fighting to come to terms with their pasts.

"...when it comes to character development and a solid story, Sjogren excels, and that alone makes 'Redemption Trail' worth seeing"
-Washington Post

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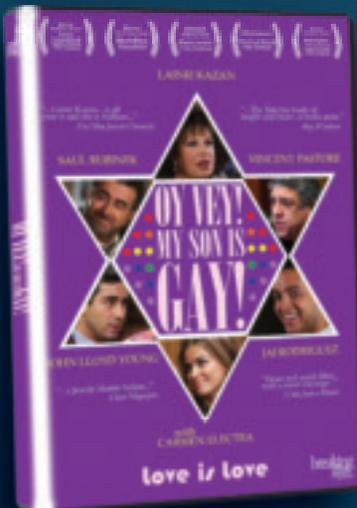


OY VEY! MY SON IS GAY!

A Jewish family struggles to come to terms with their son's non-Jewish boyfriend. Oy Vey! My Son is Gay! is a romantic comedy starring Lainie Kazan (My Big Fat Greek Wedding), Saul Rubinek ("Warehouse 13"), Vincent Pastore ("The Sopranos"), John Lloyd Young (Jersey Boys), and Carmen Electra ("Baywatch").

"...a Jewish Mambo Italiano..."
-IndieWIRE

\$24.99 SRP

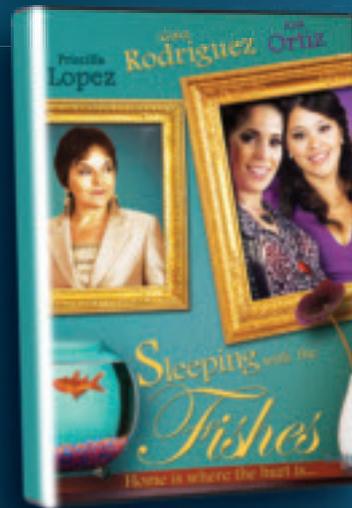


SLEEPING WITH THE FISHES

Sleeping with the Fishes is a comical story full of "ay dios mio" and "oy vey" moments starring Gina Rodriguez (Filly Brown, "Jane the Virgin"), Ana Ortiz ("Devious Maids" "Ugly Betty") and Priscilla Lopez (Maid in Manhattan, Original Broadway Cast "A Chorus Line"). Alexis Fish (Rodriguez) is left broke and broken-hearted after the death of her cheating husband. When she returns to her hometown of Brooklyn for a distant Aunt's funeral, she fears to admit to her family and overbearing mother (Lopez) that her life is a mess.

"A latino indie film we love... Extremely uplifting and real..."
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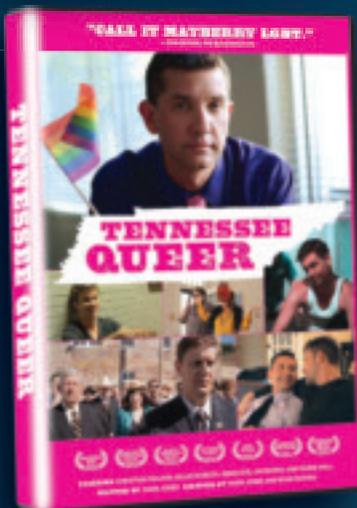


TENNESSEE QUEER

Out and proud Jason Potts returns to his hometown of Smyth, Tennessee only to find things have not changed for LGBT teenagers. When Jason hatches a plan to give the teens hope, things quickly spiral out of control when Jason is put in charge of Smyth's very first gay pride parade.

"Call it Mayberry LGBT."
- John Beifuss,
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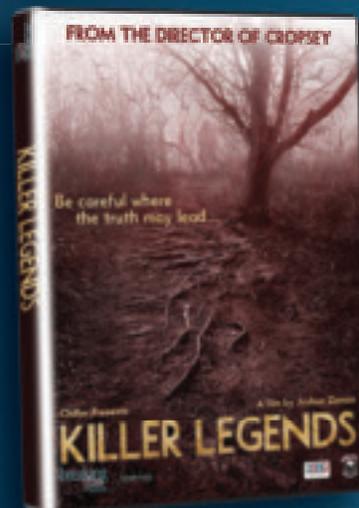


KILLER LEGENDS

Killer Legends is a chilling documentary that follows filmmakers Joshua Zeman and Rachel Mills as they investigate four timeless legends that continue to haunt the American public. Directed by Joshua Zeman (Cropsey), the documentary examines the urban legends of The Candyman, The Killer Clown, The Baby-Sitter and the Man Upstairs, and The Hookman.

"...wholly fascinating experience on a lot of levels..."
- Bloody Disgusting

\$19.99 SRP



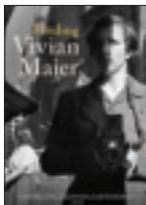
For more information please contact Richard Ross at ross@bgpics.com
Visit us at bgpics.com

Finding Vivian Maier

★★★1/2

MPI, 84 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.98

John Maloof's documentary relates the fascinating story of two highly-driven people. One is Maloof himself, who in 2007 purchased at a storage auction a box of old photographic negatives, which he developed and began posting on the Internet to enthusiastic response. Many felt that Maloof had discovered an exceptionally talented, entirely unknown photographer of Chicago street life named Vivian Maier, and his desire to collect, catalogue, and promote her work became as obsessive as was her photo-taking. Maloof not only seeks to accumulate and publish as much of Maier's output as possible, but also to research her life story, a quest that ultimately reveals a woman of mystery and contradiction who spent most of her life as a nanny in the Chicago area. Maloof tracks down families she worked for (including Phil Donahue's), who offer illuminating (if also often contradictory) recollections. Maloof also goes through everything that Maier, a hoarder, left behind in storage; hires genealogical specialists to ferret out information about her childhood in New York; and even travels to her mother's home village in France. And he visits the neighborhood where Maier spent her last days, interviewing some locals who knew her—at least as far as she allowed herself to be known. *Finding Vivian Maier* doesn't answer all of our questions about Maier—or Maloof. But that seems appropriate for this filmmaking labor of love about a woman whose oddly secretive artistic life appears to also have been a labor of love. It's fortuitous that these two found one another, as they prove a perfect match. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)



First Cousin, Once Removed

★★★1/2

HBO, 79 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.98

Veteran documentarian Alan Berliner gained permission from his elderly cousin Edwin to chronicle the old man's terminal struggles with Alzheimer's and subsequent progressive memory loss over a five-year period. Although this may sound thoroughly depressing, the film itself is fascinating not least because of a painful twist: Edwin Honig (1919-2011) was a widely published poet, critic, academic and multilingual knighted by Spain and Portugal for his English versions of their stage classics. In non-linear edits, viewers witness the terrible dwindling of a luminous literary mind, as Edwin forgets key events and traumas in his past while also regressing to birdlike vocalizations (with some moments of lucidity). During the process, Berliner delivers a



warts-and-all biography of the charming, much-honored Honig. The victim of a harsh father, Honig in turn was cold to his growing sons, who remained estranged from him practically to the end (his second wife left him, and she here confesses that she can no longer enjoy poetry). A powerful rumination on the ravaging effects of Alzheimer's, this HBO-aired documentary is highly recommended. (C. Cassidy)

Five Dances

★★★

Wolfe, 83 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95

Following an old Hollywood tradition, writer-director Alan Brown's independent film *Five Dances* uses a rather thin narrative as a frame on which to hang numerous dance sequences. A cast of five outstanding modern dancers are at the center of a small, New York City-based company led by a taskmaster choreographer named Anthony (Luke Murphy). Ryan Steele stars as Chip, an 18-year-old fleeing an awful domestic situation (his overbearing mother back in Kansas keeps calling to demand that he return home), who joins the troupe, although he has little money and nowhere to live. Coming under the wing of the older Katie (Catherine Miller), Chip lands a roof over his head just as Theo (Reed Luplau) begins making romantic moves on him. Adding to the soapy mix is an affair between Anthony and the married Cynthia (Kimiye Corwin) that brings a destructive tension into the group dynamics. All of this drama still only comprises about 40% of the movie; the rest is pure dance, and happily the dancers are a talented bunch who make it all worthwhile. Recommended. (T. Keogh)



For No Good Reason

★★★1/2

Sony, 89 min., R, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$40.99, Sept. 2

Acidly satirical British cartoonist Ralph Steadman is the subject of Charlie Paul's engaging if also uneven documentary, which is narrated by Johnny Depp, whose devotion to this project stems from Steadman's longtime collaboration with one of the actor's heroes, gonzo journalist Hunter S. Thompson (a character Depp has played). *For No Good Reason* features a lot of engrossing material—most notably in interviews with Steadman about his radical views; footage capturing his creative work in his studio; and examples of his drawings, some of them animated. But it's also burdened by too many extraneous scenes of Depp nodding amiably in response to Steadman and saying things like "awesome" and "amazing"—promptings that viewers really don't need (praise of Steadman by others including Terry Gilliam, Richard E. Grant, and Tim Robbins often



feels like padding too). Paul's treatment also sometimes seems to put the emphasis on Thompson rather than Steadman, although the film does draw on the contrast between the two in order to shrewdly observe how they meshed: Steadman, while quite conservative in his own lifestyle (unlike the grandiose, self-destructive Thompson) was actually more extreme in his opinions, and more pointed and precise in the way he expressed them in sketches than Thompson was in his writing. Despite its flaws, *For No Good Reason* is still welcome simply because it brings the modest Steadman's work and personal convictions to a wider audience. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Godzilla

★★★

Warner, 123 min., PG-13, DVD: \$28.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$35.99, Sept. 16

In 1954, Japan's Ishirō Honda created the iconic sci-fi creature Gōjira as a warning against nuclear proliferation following the horrific bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In 1956, the dubbed-into-English version was released as *Godzilla, King of the Monsters*. In this latest slick and spectacular-looking remake, crypto-zoologists (Ken Watanabe, Sally Hawkins) discover puzzling chrysalis-shaped pods attached to an enormous skeleton...with one pod already hatched. Japan-based American scientist Joe Brody (Bryan Cranston) lost his wife (Juliette Binoche) when the Janjira nuclear plant where they both worked suffered a seismic reaction. Skeptical of the cover-up by the Tokyo government, Joe has been obsessively searching for an explanation for the past 15 years, despite urgings to move on from his son (Aaron Taylor-Johnson), who is a military explosives expert with a distraught wife (Elizabeth Olsen) and son in San Francisco. Naturally, history will repeat itself with the arrival of mysterious monsters. Working from a globetrotting screenplay that features a cautionary environmental tale, director Gareth Edwards slowly builds tension while suggesting that U.S. nuclear testing in the Pacific Ocean (1946-1962) nourished an amphibious behemoth. Now, mining reawakens "Massive Unidentified Terrestrial Organisms" (MUTOs), and only sentient, prehistoric Godzilla—a 492-foot tall CGI lizard—can save humanity. A solid popcorn flick, this is recommended. (S. Granger)



The Grand Seduction

★★★

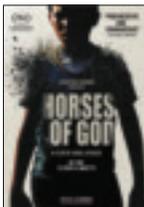
Entertainment One, 113 min., PG-13, DVD: \$24.98, Oct. 7

Viewers who enjoyed *Waking Ned Devine*, *Calendar Girls* and *The Full Monty* will likely be amused by filmmaker Don McKellar's breezy comedy



set in picturesque Newfoundland, Canada. Times are tough in the tiny harbor of Tickle Head, a place where once-proud fishermen are now out of work thanks to a cod moratorium that ended their livelihood. Shamefacedly, they line up each week to collect welfare checks from the postmistress (Liane Balaban). Although this is a decidedly depressing state of affairs, there's hope on the horizon: a "petrochemical byproduct repurposing facility" may open, which will mean lots of jobs. But the oil company requires that Tickle Head have a resident doctor—which it does not. Acting as Mayor, burly Murray French (Brendan Gleeson) tells everyone: "Find a doctor." Coincidentally, at the St. Johns airport, plastic surgeon Paul Lewis (Taylor Kitsch) is caught with cocaine in his carry-on and dispatched by a customs officer from Tickle Head to spend one month of community service in the burg. During that time, it's up to scheming, civic-minded locals to convince Paul to not only stay but also sign a five-year contract. Right away, houses are spruced up and trash stashed away. Since Paul's an avid cricket fan, the menfolk pretend to share his passion. Eavesdropping on his phone calls, the telephone operator (Mary Walsh) learns that he likes Indian lamb dhasak, which subsequently appears on the chowder house menu. And Murray patiently teaches him how to fish, while an old codger (Gordon Pinsent) makes sure he gets a sizeable catch. But how long can the charade continue? Serving up low-key, far-fetched fun, this is recommended. (S. Granger)

Horses of God ★★☆☆1/2
Kino Lorber, 114 min., in Arabic w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Sept. 2



On May 16, 2003, a group of young suicide bombers struck a series of sites in Casablanca, killing a total of 45 people—12 of the perpetrators and 33 victims. Nabil Ayouch's *Horses of God* serves up an imaginative dramatization of the underlying causes. Based on a novel by Mahi Binebine, the narrative focuses on two brothers living in Sidi Moumen, a squalid shantytown on the city's outskirts. Older, more bellicose Hamid (Abdelilah Rachid) not only protects his younger sibling, Yachine (Abdelhakim Rachid), but also becomes one of the area's gang leaders. When he's jailed, however, everything changes. Yachine now finds himself the target of neighborhood toughs, while Hamid returns from prison as a convert to Islamic fundamentalism—recruiting Yachine and several of his friends to join a cell of believers that is presided over by a radical imam. Eventually all of the young men are convinced to embrace roles as martyrs to the jihadist cause, becoming participants in the terrorist mission. While this fictionalized version of the historical event doesn't downplay

the intensity of the imam's indoctrination, it also emphasizes the brutal, impoverished upbringing of Hamid and Yachine as a key factor behind their ultimate turn towards terrorism. Whether or not you agree with the implied accusation that environment rather than religious ideology was the true breeding-ground for the brothers' embrace of violence, the argument is delivered in a compelling dramatic fashion. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

Ida ★★★

Music Box, 80 min., in Polish w/English subtitles, PG-13, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95, Sept. 9



Writer-director Pawel Pawlikowski's *Ida* is a touching personal story of spiritual identity. Opening in Poland, circa 1962, the story introduces Anna (Agata Trzebuchowska), an 18-year-old novice preparing to take vows at the convent where she's lived since being orphaned as a child. Before she makes her sanctified commitment to the Church, however, Mother Superior insists that Anna travel to Lodz to visit her only known relative, Wanda Grusz (Agata Kulesza)—her late mother's sister—whom she has never met. Known as "Red Wanda," this former prosecutor for the Communist government reveals a family secret: Anna was born Ida Lebenstein, and she's Jewish. Wanda says that she suspects Anna's parents were betrayed by Polish peasants while hiding from the Nazis during WWII—a revelation that propels a road trip into the bleak countryside to try to find the isolated farmhouse where Ida was born and to search the nearby forest for graves. During this journey of self-discovery, the two women—who could not be more different—will bond. Devoutly Catholic Anna is an idealistic innocent, while earthy, promiscuous, alcoholic Wanda cynically enjoys attacking her naiveté, bluntly asking: "What if you discover there is no God?" An engaging and intellectually affecting tale, this is recommended. (S. Granger)

It Felt Like Love ★★★

Kino Lorber, 82 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.95



The overt sexuality in Eliza Hittman's coming-of-age drama might have once been considered shocking, but in these teen-twerking days, the novelty here lies more in the fact that inexperienced heroine Lila (Gina Piersanti) is merely role-playing an attitude of bedroom sophistication and promiscuity, being a 14-year-old virgin herself. During a torrid summer vacation season at her oceanfronting hometown of Gravesend, NJ, Lila vicariously lives through the antics of the more worldly Chiara (Giovanna Salimeni), a

16-year-old dance-school classmate who has had at least three affairs. Lila herself gravitates towards a guy whom Chiara disdains, loutish college undergrad Sammy (Ronen Rubinstein), who hangs out with his buddies, smoking pot and watching porn. Lila even pretends to sleep with Sammy while he's drunk, hoping he'll not remember that they actually did nothing. The lone adult—Lila's widowed, cynical father—grumbles but otherwise remains passive about his wayward daughter's constant breaking of curfew. Hittman makes good use of the leading lady's wounded, expressive face, even if Lila remains something of a tight-lipped cipher—very likely not even knowing what she herself wants from the dark, grownup world of relationships. Recommended. (C. Cassidy)

Jackpot ★★★

Music Box, 86 min., in Norwegian w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95



A black comedy based on a story by popular Norwegian crime novelist Jo Nesbø, filmmaker Magnus Martens' *Jackpot* tells an absurdist tale of blood, mayhem, and a reconstructed alibi that strains police credulity. When the buffoonish Oscar (Kyrre Hellum) is discovered as the shotgun-toting sole survivor of a shootout at a strip club, a quirky, investigating detective named Solør (Henrik Mestad) naturally assumes he's guilty. But Oscar claims otherwise, laying out a convoluted story involving a Christmas tree factory; a soccer bet that reaps a fortune (followed by betrayal); a lost head; an old tanning bed missing a hidden corpse; a wall painted red; and a dying thug who is worried about picking up his kid at school. The mishaps—sometimes quite funny—pile on, although what gives *Jackpot* its sustained irony is the grudging relationship that grows between cop and suspect as, bit by bit, Oscar's nutty story checks out. Sure to appeal to Nesbø fans, this is recommended. (T. Keogh)

Kid Cannabis ★★

Well Go USA, 90 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98



Filmmaker John Stockwell's *Kid Cannabis* draws from a *Rolling Stone* article to tell the story of Nate (Jonathan Daniel Brown), a heavysset pizza delivery boy living in Coeur d'Alene, ID. Nate and his best friend, Topher (Kenny Wormald), enjoy smoking pot, so Nate devises a plan to make money off their hobby: they will find a Canadian supplier, smuggle product into the U.S., and recruit their friends as dealers. With funds from an Israeli-born investor (Ron Perlman), the money starts to roll in and the screen fills with cocaine, gangster

rap, and close-ups of female body parts. Unfortunately for Nate, a rival kingpin (Aaron Yoo, overacting wildly) doesn't appreciate the competition and hires a pair of thugs to do Nate in, just as Nate's own team has started to turn against him for taking the biggest cut of the take. At this point, guns and knives enter the picture, but it's hard to even care what happens to any of the people in this shallow film, with the possible exception of Nate's mother (Amanda Tapping). One of the few bright spots here is John C. McGinley's grower, a man who truly enjoys his work and family—which makes it even harder to understand why he would get involved with two knuckleheads like Nate and Topher. Optional, at best. (K. Fennessy)

The Last Days ★★1/2

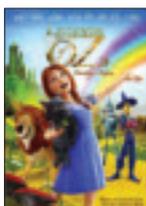
MPI, 103 min., in Spanish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.98



Alex and David Pastor's post-apocalyptic film de-emphasizes the horror aspects in favor of romance and suspense. Marc (Quim Gutiérrez), a Barcelona computer programmer, stays at work because the outside world has become inhospitable. As the film alternates between the days leading up to the Panic and the three-month period afterward, viewers follow the progression: at first, a few people get sick when they venture outside, but then everyone becomes susceptible to a deadly form of agoraphobia. Unable to leave their office building, Marc and his co-workers create a makeshift community, but he hasn't been able to reach his girlfriend, Julia (Marta Etura). After the team bores a tunnel into the subway, Marc's boss, Enrique (José Coronado)—aka "The Terminator"—offers to help Marc return home (although Enrique actually has his own destination in mind). In the subway, the two men encounter a Wild West scenario, and when a thief swipes their GPS, a gunfight ensues. The pair manage to escape, but once they reach Marc's building, they find no sign of Julia, so they attempt to solve the mystery. During their journey, the men face immigrant squatters, escaped zoo animals, and even a little overwrought melodrama. A low-budget, sometimes hokey film, *The Last Days* nevertheless boasts enough originality to make it a strong optional purchase. (K. Fennessy)

Legends of Oz: Dorothy's Return ★★

Fox, 88 min., PG, DVD: \$22.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$29.99



In this computer-animated sequel, based on a book by Frank L. Baum's great-grandson Roger, Dorothy (voiced by Lea Michele)—just returned from her original Oz

adventure—is summoned back by the Scarecrow (Dan Aykroyd), Lion (Jim Belushi) and Tin Man (Kelsey Grammer) to help them defeat The Jester (Martin Short), the evil brother of the Wicked Witch of the West, now in control of her powers and using them to turn all of the major characters in the realm into marionettes, including good witch Glinda (Bernadette Peters). While journeying to the Jester's castle, Dorothy and Toto are joined by an unlikely bunch of helpers—Wiser the Owl (Oliver Platt); Marshal Mallow, a soldier of Candy Land (Hugh Dancy); and the China Princess (Megan Hilty). Although facing numerous obstacles (including the Jester's flying monkeys), the group are able to reach their destination, thanks to a boat named Tugg (Patrick Stewart) that is fashioned from an elderly talking tree. Naturally, an epic battle will ensue between the forces of good and evil. Directed by Will Finn and Dan St. Pierre, *Dorothy's Return* unfortunately suffers from mediocre animation, sketchy characters, and forgettable songs, while also lacking even a hint of the original's magic—mostly proving that there's no Oz like Judy Garland's Oz. Optional. (F. Swietek)

Let Me Out ★★★

Funimation, 97 min., in Korean w/English subtitles, TV-PG, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$29.98



Created by filmmaker Jae Soh and Chang Lae Kim, who are also instructors at the Seoul Institute of the Arts, *Let Me Out* early on name-checks Tom DiCillo's *Living in Oblivion*, the behind-the-scenes cult indie comedy about life on a low-budget movie set. That film's vibe has pretty much been transplanted here to a fictitious South Korean film school. Student Mu-Young (Hyun-Sang Kwon) is a cineaste who has never shot a single frame of film. Boasting meager social and organizational skills, all Mu knows is theory and a worshipful stance towards the likes of Scorsese and Kubrick. Forced to finally pick up a camera and make his graduation project—a zombie-apocalypse drama—Mu contends with a misfit cast and crew (part student, part cast-offs from the commercial Korean movie industry), technical snafus, crippling inexperience, and scrutiny by a visiting VIP (a top Korean director whom Mu tactlessly criticized in class). As with *Living in Oblivion*, the character types and movie-insider humor of *Let Me Out* will appeal more to film-set veterans than disinterested civilians, although the Asian environment is appealing and the K-pop theme song is awfully catchy. Recommended, overall. (C. Cassidy)

Like Father, Like Son ★★1/2

MPI, 121 min., in Japanese w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.98

While more than a few films have drawn on the motif of babies switched at birth, rarely

has this plot device been handled with more sincerity and honesty than in this Japanese import from filmmaker Kore-eda Hirokazu, which won the 2013 Jury Prize at Cannes. Socially prominent architect Ryota (Masaharu Fukuyama) and his wife Midori (Machiko Ono) discover that the hospital where Midori gave birth accidentally switched their baby with another—news that arrives six years after the fact. A funky working class couple who run a small appliance store raised Ryota and Midori's biological son, while the latter's Keita (Keita Ninomiya) is actually the child of the other couple. The two families, who share almost nothing in common on any social or economic level, begin to arrange meetings and they experiment with a plan to exchange boys for a series of weekend visits. Ryota and Midori are surprised at how easily Keita adapts with the other family, but Midori's devotion to Keita only intensifies, while Ryota openly questions the traditional Japanese importance of maintaining an unbroken bloodline. A deeply satisfying film that raises interesting questions, this is highly recommended. (P. Hall)



Living Things: A Vegan & Meat Debate ★★1/2

Cinema Libre, 75 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.95

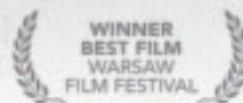


Writer-director Eric Shapiro's wife Rhoda Jordan stars here as a young vegan and yoga instructor named Rhona, who hosts a dinner of tofu and vegetables for Leo (Ben Siegler), her conservative, meat-loving father-in-law. At his instigation, the pair embark on a "discussion" of the relative merits of their philosophies of eating, extending their conversation to cover such topics as health and nutrition, spirituality, and morality. The initial cordiality gives way to argument—going from smiles and accommodation to barbs and insults until the conversation erupts into violence (oddly, when they are fighting over climate change, not veganism). *Living Things* is a message movie that clearly sympathizes with Rhona, although she doesn't really make the best case for veganism, not least because she spends too much time deflecting Leo's specious arguments (such as "plants have feelings, too"). Billing itself as being reminiscent of the much better classic *My Dinner with Andre*, this mildly interesting, low-budget, two-actor drama is an optional purchase. (F. Gardner)

Maidentrip ★★1/2

First Run, 82 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95

Then 16-year-old Laura Dekker made headlines in 2012 when she became the youngest person to sail around the world alone.



A FILM BY PAWEŁ PAWLIKOWSKI

Ida

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Maidentrip is a remarkable video journal of Dekker's near-two-year adventure, shot almost entirely by herself over countless days and nights bobbing on the ocean in a sailboat, with occasional stops made in distant lands. Film director Jillian Schlesinger organizes the raw material here into a coherent story, beginning with the family's battle with child welfare authorities in the Netherlands (who not only want to prevent Dekker from taking the risky trip but possibly remove her from her father's home). After overcoming that obstacle, Dekker sets sail, and before long the days turn into weeks and then months, spent largely in isolation. Dekker records her thoughts and reflections, as well as her conflicting feelings of homesickness along with the growing sense that she is a stateless person—i.e., a citizen of an entire planet that she is coming to know so intimately. Naturally, there are harrowing moments here as well: storms at sea, worries about pirates, and the daunting prospect of sailing around the notoriously challenging southern tip of Africa. A powerful portrait of one girl's unprecedented rite-of-passage into independence and self-knowledge, this is highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** (T. Keogh)



A Million Ways to Die in the West ★

Universal, 116 min., R, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.98, Oct. 7

Seth MacFarlane's feebly indulgent and moronic Western parody set in 1882 centers on Albert Stark (MacFarlane), an Arizona sheepherder sick of coping with danger in the Old West, particularly after his girlfriend (Amanda Seyfried) dumps him and he faces a potential gunfight with her new beau (Neil Patrick Harris). Albert is befriended by a mysterious sharpshooter (Charlize Theron), who—unbeknownst to him—is actually the wife of Clinch Leatherwood (Liam Neeson), the territory's most notorious outlaw. What goes wrong? Everything. Although MacFarlane's vulgarity was hilarious in *Ted* (2012) and on TV's *Family Guy*, he is simply not ready to assume full command as writer, director, producer, and star. Instead of a coherent script, MacFarlane strings together verbal and visual gags—formulaic fart and gross-out excrement jokes coupled with repetitive racist and sexist one-liners. MacFarlane is not even generous with his frontier costars, essentially hogging the screen in this vanity project, although Giovanni Ribisi is mildly amusing as a naive virgin in love with the saloon's most popular prostitute (Sarah Silverman), who—naturally—refuses to have sex with him until they're married, and Theron and



Neeson gamely do their best with bland, superficial caricatures. A comic misfire, this is not recommended. (S. Granger)

The Motel Life ★★1/2

Cinedigm, 85 min., R, DVD: \$14.95, Blu-ray: \$19.98

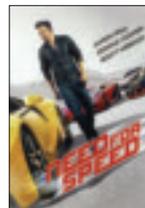
Based on the 2006 novel by Willy Vlautin, sibling co-directors Alan and Gabriel Polsky's *The Motel Life* is a downbeat drama about the extremes of brotherly love, set in 1985 in the drab mountain country of northern Nevada. Frank (Emile Hirsch) and Jerry Lee (Stephen Dorff) Flannigan, products of a badly broken home, have had to look out for each other since adolescence, with the younger Frank proving (marginally) to be the more level-headed and responsible one. After Jerry Lee kills a kid in a hit-and-run car accident—and then cripples himself in a botched suicide attempt—Frank liberates him from a hospital, one step ahead of the police. A rare stroke of luck for the pair—a longshot sports bet that pays off—allows them to hole up for a time in a community near Frank's old girlfriend (Dakota Fanning), from whom Frank bolted long ago when he couldn't face her abusing home life. This well-acted but also rather mopey tale is mainly distinguished by several striking (and highly sexual) hand-drawn cartoon sequences, designed by Mike Smith, representing the freestyle storytelling sessions that Frank habitually uses to raise Jerry Lee's spirits. A strong optional purchase. (C. Cassidy)



Need for Speed ★★

DreamWorks, 131 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99

Based on the successful racing simulation video game franchise, the ironic gimmick of this high-octane adrenaline-propelled action-adventure film is that it uses no CGI effects. Tobey Marshall (Aaron Paul) is a mechanic who street-races muscle cars. Desperate to keep his family-owned garage afloat, Toby reluctantly partners with a rival: arrogant, wealthy ex-NASCAR driver Dino Brewster (Dominic Cooper). But just after Tobey makes a major sale through car broker Julia Maddon (Imogen Poots), he finds himself in a disastrous race in which his protégé, Pete (Harrison Gilbertson), is killed, which allows Dino to frame Tobey for manslaughter. Out of prison two years later, Tobey is determined to wreak revenge by defeating Dino in a secret, high-stakes, no-rules race known as the De Leon, hosted by online shock jock Monarch (Michael Keaton). Problem is: Tobey's in Mt. Kisco, NY, and the race starts 2,800 miles away in San Francisco in 45 hours. Driving a \$2.7 million dollar custom Ford Mustang, Tobey and Julia careen across

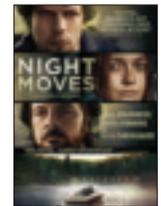


America, dodging cops and mercenaries who want the massive bounty that Dino puts on Tobey's head. Helping along the way are Rami Malek, as a bug-eyed mechanic, and hip-hop star Scott Mescudi (aka Kid Cudi), playing an Army Reserve pilot. Full of numerous plot holes and clichéd dialogue, director Scott Waugh's *Need for Speed* does boast amazing action—a gravity-defying 160-foot leap in downtown Detroit traffic, hot-fueling aerial flips, and exhilarating helicopter acts—that is genuine...in contrast to the acting, which is abysmal. Optional. (S. Granger)

Night Moves ★★★

New Video, 112 min., R, DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$29.95, Sept. 2

Kelly Reichardt's deliberately-paced eco-thriller dramatizes the planning and execution of an act of domestic terrorism. Environmental activists Josh (Jesse Eisenberg) and Dena (Dakota Fanning) join with ex-Marine Harmon (Peter Sarsgaard) in a mission to use an explosive-laden boat to destroy an Oregon hydroelectric dam, thereby sending a message that human intervention in the natural order of things will no longer be tolerated. Much of the suspense here arises from the attention to the mechanics of the operation—from the purchase of the vessel, to Dena's attempt to buy 500 pounds of ammonium nitrate without the requisite post-9/11 proof of identification—all of which leads to a prolonged episode in which the plotters quietly row the boat to the dam and set the explosives to detonate, only to be met by a Hitchcockian twist as the timer clicks down. *Night Moves*, which requires viewer patience, is greatly dependent on mood, but those willing to accept the glacial pace will find that it offers a compelling glimpse into an unfamiliar world. Recommended. (F. Swietek)



Nymphomaniac: Volume I and Volume II ★★1/2

Magnolia, 2 discs, 241 min., not rated, DVD: \$34.98, Blu-ray: \$39.98

Danish writer-director Lars von Trier is now too old to be called an *enfant terrible*, but he remains cinema's most blatant *provocateur*, striving here to challenge what he sees as modern squeamishness about sex, while filming in his usual artsy but increasingly unsubtle manner. Not surprisingly, however, even the most sexually explicit of intercourse shots grow tedious over the four hours of this two-part epic centering on Joe (Charlotte Gainsbourg), who is found—beaten in an alley—by a good Samaritan named Selgiman (Stellan Skarsgård) and taken to his apartment. Here, Joe relates her life story, which essentially involves a succession of sexual encounters, beginning with her younger self





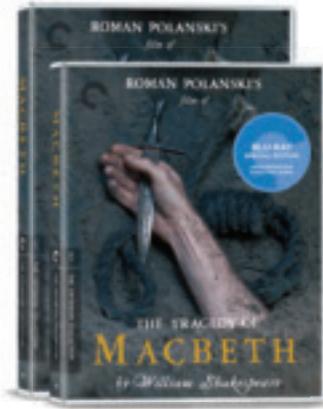
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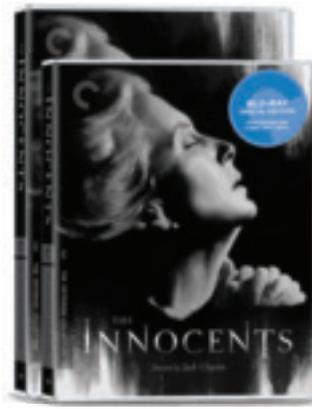
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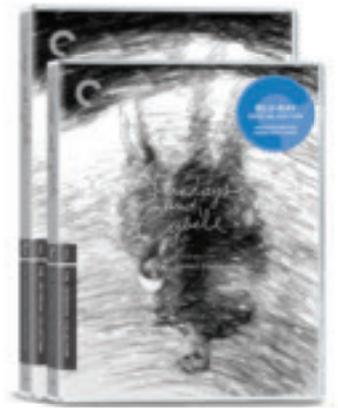
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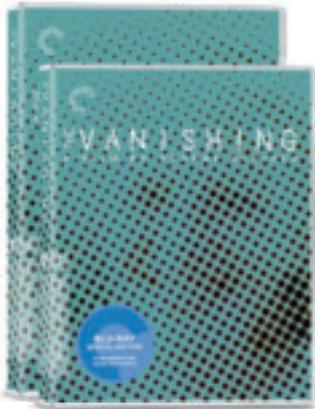
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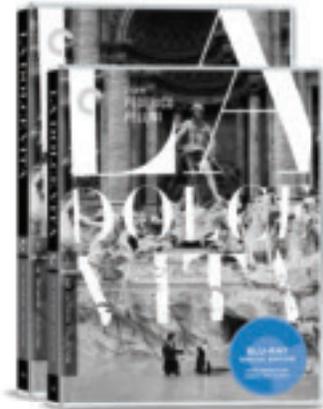
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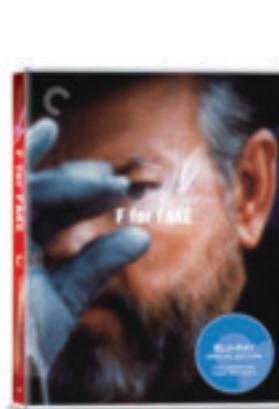
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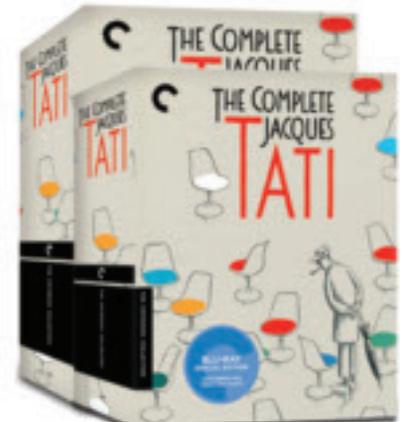
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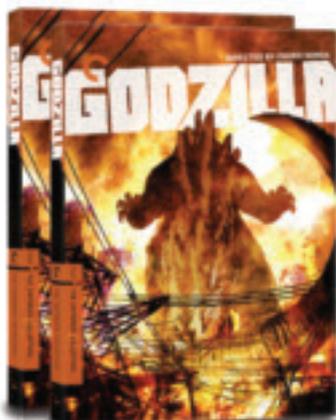
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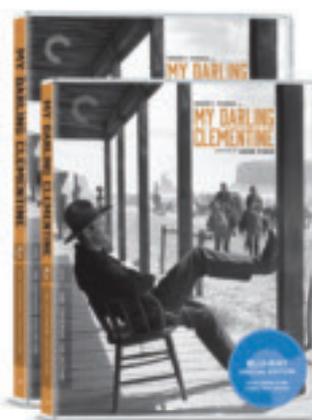
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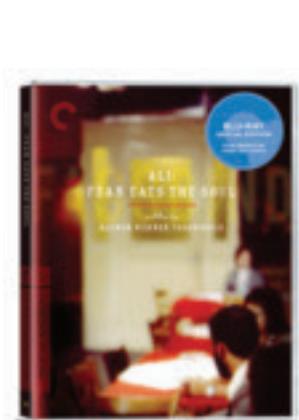
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(played by Stacy Martin) losing her virginity, and continuing through a wide range of experiments that culminate in the assault that begins the film. Naturally, the entire running-time can't be devoted to graphic sex, so von Trier adds subplots and ancillary characters to the mix, while also varying the tone—balancing very rough episodes with moments of surprising tenderness and jolts of unsettling humor. Also featuring Christian Slater, Shia LaBeouf, Jamie Bell, Uma Thurman, Willem Dafoe, and Connie Nielsen, *Nymphomaniac* ultimately comes across as an almost desperate attempt to shock, a film that will inevitably feed the already widespread criticism of the director as a misogynist. Still, this is the work of a renowned and highly influential filmmaker, and should therefore be considered a strong optional purchase for more adventurous collections. (F. Swietek)

Obvious Child ★★1/2

Lionsgate, 83 min., R, DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$24.98, Oct. 7



Igniting controversy at its Sundance Film Festival debut, Gillian Robespierre's radical romantic dramedy centers on a bawdy standup comedienne: 28-year-old, self-absorbed, money-strapped Donna Stern (Jenny Slate). Recently dumped by her boyfriend, Donna spews her angry resentment out in a raunchy and raw nightclub act at a dingy Brooklyn dive bar. Then she meets Max (Jake Lacy), a preppie, straight-arrow, corporate WASP from Vermont who is obviously dazzled by Donna's brazen (if overly scatological) honesty. The pair impulsively hook up that night and her unprotected, rebound sex leads to an unexpected pregnancy. Even immature Donna realizes that having a baby at this point in her life would be disastrous—although she, not the fetus, is the obvious child here. Describing Max as “so Christian he’s like a Christmas tree,” desperate Donna seeks solace from her best friend (Gaby Hoffmann) and divorced parents (Richard Kind, Polly Draper). But she can't seem to find the words to tell earnest, kind-hearted Max of her predicament during the two-week Planned Parenthood waiting time before she can have an abortion, while he, in turn, is puzzled by her awkward, erratic behavior. An edgy, female-centric film that will split audiences, this is a strong optional purchase. (S. Granger)

Oculus ★★★

Fox, 104 min., R, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$39.99



Mike Flanagan's horror movie doesn't wallow in blood splatters and brain tissue, but instead cleverly mixes past and present as well as reality and illusion to tell a story about a malevolent mirror. A decade ago, 'tween

Kaylie and younger brother Tim suffered a terrifying ordeal after they moved into a new house with their parents. One of the pieces of furniture was an antique mirror that proved to be demonically hungry, literally sucking the life out of plants and animals while also seducing the kids' mom and dad with visions and hallucinations before ultimately absorbing their souls. Now, Tim (Brenton Thwaites) is finally being released from the mental institution that's been his home ever since the nightmare, and Kaylie (Karen Gillan) wants his help in proving that the mirror is malevolent before it's destroyed. The siblings spend a night in their old house, aiming to record its malignant acts before smashing the glass to bits. Naturally, this plan does not go as hoped. *Oculus* juxtaposes flashbacks with fever dreams implanted in their minds by the mirror during the nightlong surveillance, with the time-frames sometimes merging as the twentysomethings watch their younger selves being terrorized. One can reasonably question whether the film plays entirely fair with the audience (the ending will disappoint those looking for a comforting resolution), but Flanagan's assured direction, along with good performances from Gillan and Thwaites, make this a genuinely eerie and unsettling film that is a nice change from the slice-and-dice carnage ordinarily found in contemporary horror movies. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

Only Lovers Left Alive

★★★1/2

Sony, 123 min., R, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray: \$35.99



Cult writer-director Jim Jarmusch brings his idiosyncratic style (slow-paced and deadpan) to this vampire movie about ultra-cool bloodsuckers (including Elizabethan dramatist Christopher Marlowe, played here by John Hurt)—who have survived over the centuries not just by quaffing down the necessary amounts of sanguinary fluid, but also through living unobtrusive though highly artistic lives. The titular lovers are vampires Adam (Tim Hiddleston) and Eve (Tilda Swinton), who have been devoted to each other literally for centuries. Eve lives in Tangiers but goes to visit Adam in Detroit when the latter grows suicidal after being disgusted at living in a world of “zombies” (i.e., mere humans). The couple enjoy an idyllic time together, which mostly involves sipping high-quality blood from exquisite long-stemmed sherry glasses, sucking on frozen bloodsicles, and engaging in name-dropping about famous old friends whose artistic triumphs they revere. But their peace is shattered when Eve's wild sister (Mia Wasikowska) shows up, greedily devours their blood supply, trashes Adam's prize possessions, and kills a young human who's been serving as Adam's lackey. Her antics

force Adam and Eve to flee to Africa, where they must locate a new source of sustenance if they are to survive. A thinly-disguised parable of addiction that is presented with a smug certitude regarding its own hipness, *Only Lovers Left Alive* will appeal to Jarmusch devotees, who will no doubt find it dreamy and hypnotic, but others are likely to consider this pretty but dull. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Ping Pong Summer ★★

Millennium, 92 min., not rated, DVD: \$28.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99



Spoofing *Karate Kid*-style movies by replacing martial arts with ping pong isn't necessarily a bad idea, but this tedious, flaccid coming-of-age story drops the (little plastic) ball, despite having Susan Sarandon on hand as the equivalent of Mr. Miyagi. Sarandon appears only briefly to give lessons—game-and-life related—to 15-year-old Rad Miracle (Marcello Conte), a likable geek who is spending the summer of 1985 with his family in Ocean City, MD. Rad, whose sole interests appear to be ping pong and Michael Jackson dance moves, quickly attracts an equally uncool pal (Myles Massey), as well as the ire of a rich bully (Joe McCaughy), who just happens to be the local ping pong champ. Rad also becomes smitten with the pretty girl (Emmi Shockley) fancied by the champ. In addition to Sarandon, *Ping Pong Summer* features a number of other recognizable actors (John Hannah, Lea Thompson, Amy Sedaris), but all play second fiddle to the kids, who mostly deliver amateur-night-level performances under the limp guidance of writer-director Michael Tully. Needless to say, the plot inevitably lumbers toward a table-tennis showdown between Rad and his rival, a match that is neither exciting nor fun. An inoffensive but monotonous film, this is not a necessary purchase. (F. Swietek)

Rage ★

Image, 98 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.98



Back in 2009, after Nicolas Cage discovered that he owed the IRS \$6.3 million in back taxes, his two houses in New Orleans (along with other properties) went into foreclosure. Subsequently, the *Leaving Las Vegas* Oscar-winner has simply been collecting paychecks in one tedious, dim-witted action thriller after another. After vowing to leave his gangster past behind, Paul Maguire (Cage) has become a respectable real estate developer with a trophy wife, Vanessa (Rachel Nichols), and nearly 16-year-old daughter, Caitlin (Aubrey Peeples). One night, when Paul and Vanessa are out at a restaurant, Caitlin, who was at home with

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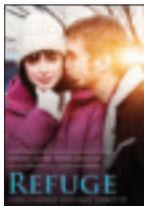
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two teenage friends, is abducted and later found murdered. When ballistics indicates that the weapon used was a Tokarev pistol, grief-stricken Paul and his burly construction crew (Max Ryan, Michael McGrady) go after a gang of Russian thugs with whom they've tangled in the past—despite warnings from Paul's mobster mentor (Peter Stormare), and a local detective (Danny Glover). But there's no chance of stopping vengeful, psychopathic Paul, who is determined to get to the mob boss, Chernov (Pasha D. Lychnikoff). Perfunctorily directed by Paco Cabezas, who serves up gratuitous, gruesome violence in a film that is senselessly punctuated by dull car chases and perfunctory knife fights, this is not recommended. (S. Granger)

Refuge ★★

Strand, 85 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99, Sept. 9

Filmmaker Jessica Goldberg's *Refuge* stars Krysten Ritter as Amy, a young woman who is serving as the de facto guardian of her two troubled siblings in a small town. Coiled tight and seemingly always on the edge of a breakdown, Amy is sacrificing her youth to stand in for her family's long-vanished parents. Along comes a roaming ne'er-do-well named Sam (Brian Geraghty), who moves in with the trio to share expenses, and then begins to shake things up by half-heartedly wooing Amy and acting like a semi-responsible adult to the other kids. While the challenges and opportunities in this new arrangement lead to a stronger (improvised) family, the story itself never feels like more than an outline in this film that lacks both texture and actor chemistry (there is no spark whatsoever between Ritter and Geraghty). A rather drab viewing experience, this is not a necessary purchase. (T. Keogh)



Rob the Mob ★★★

Millennium, 104 min., R, DVD: \$28.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99

Raymond De Felitta's fact-based crime story evokes NYC in the early 1990s, a time before Rudolph Giuliani's well-known housecleaning of the city. Tommy Uva (Michael Pitt), a young hothead robber just out of prison now holds an office job, thanks to the influence of his slightly more sensible wife, Rosemarie (Nina Arianda). But Tommy is fixated on the media-sensation John Gotti trial in progress—particularly the “social clubs” mentioned during testimony as mob hangouts where guns are not allowed. Naturally, Tommy embarks on a spree of armed robberies at these undefended clubs (with Rosemarie acting as getaway driver), correctly guessing that gangsters won't alert the police. The scheme works brilliantly, at first, so much



so that viewer sympathies lie more with the embattled wiseguys than with the hoodlum couple. Still, Tommy's backstory includes the fact that his family was victimized by organized crime, making this a sort of Robin Hood paycheck deal. Boasting an impressive supporting cast that includes Griffin Dunne, Ray Romano, Andy Garcia, Burt Young, Frank Whaley, and Cathy Moriarty, this is recommended. (C. Cassidy)

Run & Jump ★★★

MPI, 106 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.98

Former *SNL* cast member Will Forte stars in filmmaker Steph Green's clear-eyed Irish drama as Ted, an American psychologist working on a case study centered on Conor (Edward MacLiam), a carpenter recovering from a traumatic brain injury. For two months, Ted stays in the country home of Conor, wife Vanetia (Maxine Peake), and their children, Lenny (Brendan Morris) and Noni (Ciara Gallagher). Ted's work entails taking notes and following his subject around with a camcorder, which Conor's parents find invasive, although Ted is careful not to interfere with their daily affairs (in allowing Ted to stay with them, the family receives double the payment for their participation). Conor's symptoms include a short attention span, emotional outbursts, and bouts of sleepwalking. Unable to communicate with her husband the way she once did, Vanetia opens up to Ted, leading to a friendship (as well as sexual tension) that compromises the latter's ability to remain objective. Ted also grows close to Lenny, a teenager who requires more fathering than Conor can provide. Meanwhile, Vanetia's friend, Tara (Sharon Horgan), who attempts to attract Ted's interest, worries what will happen when he leaves. Co-writer Ailbhe Keogan was inspired by a similar experience with her father, who suffered a brain injury that transformed his personality. A solid drama, this is recommended. (K. Fennessy)



The Signal ★★1/2

Universal, 98 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.98, Sept. 23

William Eubank's stylish, surreal thriller begins with three friends from MIT leaving Cambridge for a cross-country trip in an old Volvo. Nic (Brenton Thwaites) and Jonah (Beau Knapp) are driving Nic's girlfriend, Haley (Olivia Cooke), to California. Haley will only be transferring to Cal Tech for a year on a fellowship, but Nic is deeply upset because he has a crippling degenerative disease and knows that his disability will only progress further. When they stop overnight at a mo-



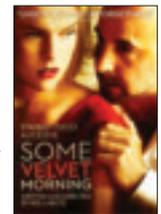
tel, Nic and Jonah realize that a mysterious hacker named Nomad has been tracking them (Nomad previously broke into MIT's computers and caused network problems); so they decide to turn the tables and track Nomad. A GPS signal indicates that he is not far away, so all agree to a detour into the Nevada desert, arriving late at night to Nomad's location, which appears to be a creepy and abandoned bunker. After blacking out, a confused Nic wakes up to find that he is incarcerated underground in a secret government facility. Subjected to relentless questioning by Dr. Wallace Damon (Laurence Fishburne), Nic learns that he's been exposed to an EBE—an Extra-Biological Entity, or alien encounter. Determined to find his friends and escape to the surface, yet dazed by repetitive flashbacks to his earlier life as a cross-country runner, Nic will encounter all sorts of obstacles, only to discover mysterious forces beyond his imagination. Although sporting an impressive audiovisual effectiveness that belies its low budget, the film's signal-to-noise ratio ultimately tilts toward the latter. Still, this should be considered a strong optional purchase. (S. Granger)

Some Velvet Morning

★★1/2

Cinedigm, 82 min., not rated, DVD: \$26.95

This being a film by Neil LaBute (*In the Company of Men*), viewers can count on being taught some brutal “truths” about the creative ways that men psychologically abuse and control women, as well as how women implicate themselves in said mistreatment. Coming across like a filmed stage play, with everything stripped down to the basic elements of dramatic structure, *Some Velvet Morning*—claustrophobically shot in a New York apartment—features only two characters, sleazy lawyer Fred (Stanley Tucci) and his supposed former mistress, Velvet (Alice Eve), whose professional life seems even shadier than Fred's. Velvet hasn't seen Fred in four years, but one day he just appears at her doorstep and proceeds to tell her, in annoyingly dawdling, wordy fashion, that he's left his marriage and wants to suddenly reboot their long-dead romance. The disturbingly single-minded Fred doesn't make much headway, and the two former lovers eventually are caught up in a verbal fencing match of awkwardly executed parries and thrusts that leads (unsurprisingly) to physical violence—although not without a cynical LaBute twist. As always, the filmmaker is an expert at creating a creeping sense of social unease; however, the perversely ironic ending feels more like a cop-out gimmick than any sort of darkly comic revelation. Optional. (M. Sandlin)



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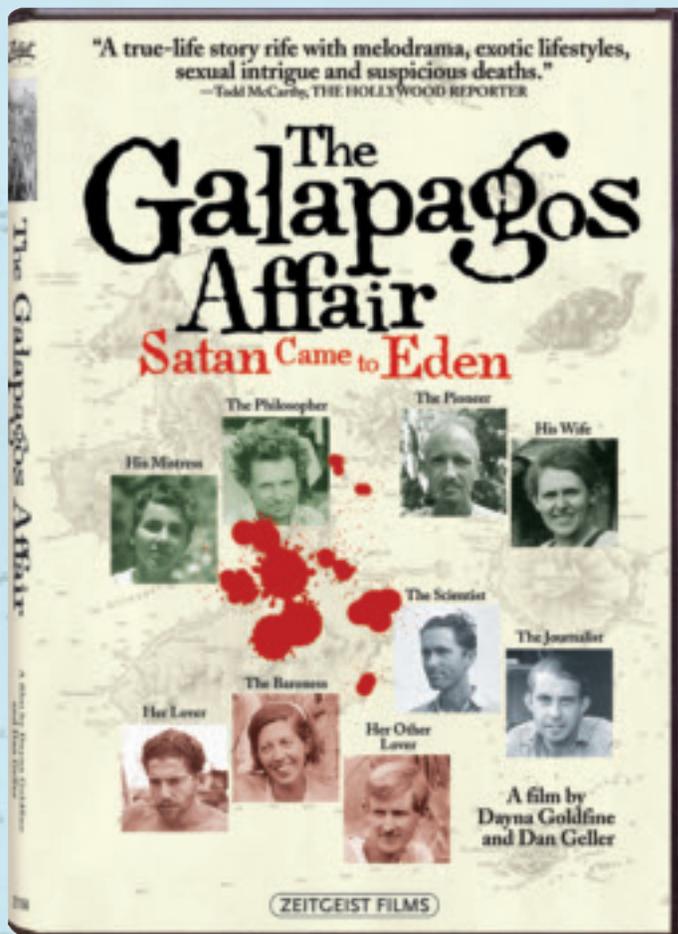
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The Galapagos Affair

Satan Came to Eden

A film by Dayna Goldfine & Dan Geller

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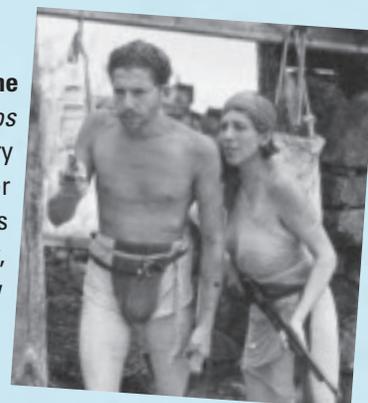


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Sophia Grace & Rosie's Royal Adventure ★★1/2

Warner, 75 min., G, DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$24.98

Famous from YouTube viral videos covering rap tunes, as well as recurring visits to *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*, 11-year-old Sophia Grace Brownlee and her younger cousin, Rosie McClelland, here star in their first movie. The buoyant Brits are excited to be sent to the European-ish country of Switzelvania in order to cover the upcoming king's handing down of royal honors to one of his three daughters. The girls are accompanied by easily-flustered publicist Phyllis Bundt (Amy Louise Wilson)—who promptly becomes separated from her charges (and embarks on a mishap-filled quest to find them). Sophia Grace and Rosie use "easy peasy, lemon squeezy" tactics to sneak into the castle and offer their opinions on the queenly candidates—two of whom are naturally awful human beings, while the third (Margaret Clunie) is totally cool and just needs a little lesson in princess-ness from the dynamo duo. Featuring poppy anthems and 'tween rapping (including a cringe-worthy rendition of MC Hammer's "U Can't Touch This"), this is a sparkly, silly, squealing diversion of a film that will no doubt appeal to the target audience. A strong optional purchase. (J. Williams-Wood)



many errant herds of sheep, *Stay* does feature some fine acting from the solid cast. A strong optional purchase. (C. Cassidy)

The Suspect ★★1/2

Well Go USA, 137 min., in Korean w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98

The action is fast and furious in Won Shin-yun's spy-on-the-run movie, a kind of Asian variant on *The Bourne Identity*. Gong Yoo plays Dong-chul, a former North Korean operative who defected to Seoul after his bosses betrayed him during a mission. Now working as a chauffeur for a wealthy businessman who has ties to the communist government in Pyongyang, the dour, taciturn Dong-chul is thrown back into the game when his employer is murdered by a pack of masked intruders, and Dong-chul winds up being framed for the crime. Before dying, the old man gives Dong-chul a pair of eyeglasses that are the key to some top-secret data, which sends the "suspect" on a mission not only to recover the information and prove his innocence, but also to learn the fate of the wife and daughter he left behind, and mete out retribution for their supposed demise—all while being pursued by a South Korean agent who bears a grudge against him, as well as an occasionally helpful woman who is working on a film about defectors. A weapons-for-food subplot adds some contemporary political resonance to the proceedings, but *The Suspect* is far less interested in making any serious points than it is in serving up a succession of set-pieces involving choreographed fights and frantic car chases. At two-hours-plus, the film is too long, and the convoluted plot is overloaded with flashbacks and saccharine sentiment—but action genre fans will not be disappointed. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)



Stay ★★1/2

Kino Lorber, 99 min., in English, French & Gaelic w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95

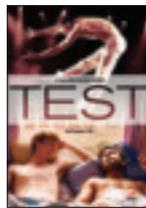
Followers of *Orange is the New Black* breakout star Taylor Schilling may be drawn to filmmaker Wiebke von Carolsfeld's loose-knit cross-cultural Canadian drama about a fraying relationship, based on a novel by Aislinn Hunter. Schilling plays Abbey, the much-younger lover of Dermot Fay (Aidan Quinn), a charismatic Irish archaeologist whose comfy existence in an Irish village actually follows being exiled from his academic livelihood in Dublin, where his affair with a student ended in a pregnancy scandal and tragedy. When Abbey also becomes pregnant, Dermot is outraged. Abbey takes advantage of an already planned visit to her father (Michael Ironside) back in Montreal to sort out conflicted feelings of where and with whom she belongs, emotional turmoil that is not helped by the fact of her mother's long-ago abandonment. Meanwhile, Dermot softens on the subject of children and uses an archaeology dig to monkey-wrench a hated planned housing-development scheme that promised quick cash in recession-hit Ireland. While the plotline roams all over the Auld Sod like so



Test ★★★

Wolfe, 90 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95

Writer-director Chris Mason Johnson's winning drama is set in San Francisco, circa 1985, a time and place where fear about the spread of AIDS in the gay community was rampant and the HIV blood test was newly available. Against this backdrop, young Frankie (real-life dancer Scott Marlowe) navigates his way through a confused sexual odyssey while also struggling to succeed in a dance company whose choreographer-director makes demands for greater maturity. Johnson adopts a low-key gentle approach in chronicling Frankie's journey (the character could almost be anyone's ideal younger brother), and Marlowe superbly telegraphs the deep emotions that lie beneath Frankie's



naïveté and diffidence. Equally engaging is Matthew Risch as a fellow dancer and burly scalawag who befriends Frankie against all odds and helps open the latter's eyes. A very physical movie—featuring elaborate dance performances (choreographed by Sidra Bell) that are mesmerizing, *Test* also features a music score that is heavy on 1980s college radio fare, mostly (and amusingly) heard through Frankie's brand new, clunky yellow Walkman. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

Vic + Flo Saw a Bear

★★★1/2

Kimstim, 95 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99

Don't let the title fool you: this is not a children's movie, even though it is a dark and unsettling fable about dangers that lurk in the woods. Written and directed by Denis Côté, *Vic + Flo Saw a Bear* is an oddball, unpredictable drama about two ex-convict female lovers who are trying to start a new life in a cabin on the outskirts of a small Quebec town. The 60-ish Victoria (Pierette Robitaille), fresh out of prison, moves into the home of an ailing uncle and soon occupies it. Before long, the younger Florence (Romane Bohringer) joins her, but their relationship—rocky and uncertain—is soon subject to external pressures in the form of a nosy probation officer and a demon or two from Flo's past. Côté's jagged approach to the narrative keeps the viewer mystified as to where the film is going, all the way up until the stunning ending. Highly recommended. (T. Keogh)



Vinyl ★★1/2

Shout! Factory, 85 min., not rated, DVD: \$14.98, Blu-ray: \$19.98

In this scrappy Welsh comedy, a has-been punk rocker runs an end-around on the music industry and scores the last laugh. Inspired by a true story, director Sara Sugarman's *Vinyl* stars Phil Daniels as Johnny Jones, former leader of the Weapons of Happiness, a group who had gold records in the 1980s before imploding. Now he lives in a trailer with his girlfriend, who longs to get pregnant, although luck hasn't been on their side. The funeral of a mate brings Johnny back in touch with band members Minto (Keith Allen), Robbie (Perry Benson), and Griff (Chris Turner), who still blame Johnny for the breakup, but put their grievances aside to bash out a drunken tune, which Robbie records. The next day, Johnny listens to the song, decides it's a hit, and takes it to his former label, which displays no interest in a bunch of middle-aged musicians. So Johnny puts together a group of teen players, including singer Drainpipe (Jamie Blackley), dubs them the Single Shots, and shops the



same song. Minto, a wedding photographer, handles the press photos, while Griff, a funeral home director, takes care of expenses. And sure enough, the song's a success. The soap opera stuff about infertility and paternity doesn't quite work, but the ageism of the record industry gets a nice satiric punch. Mike Peters of the Alarm—who inspired the character of Johnny—provides the songs, which accurately evoke peak-era punk bands like the Buzzcocks and the Stranglers. A strong optional purchase. (K. Fennessy)

Visitors ★★1/2

Cinedigm, 87 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.95

Visitors is a follow-up to the Qatsi trilogy—*Koyaanisqatsi*, *Powaqqatsi*, and *Naqoyqatsi*—a series of three dialogue-free visual essays capturing both the beauty and horror of encroaching technology directed by Godfrey Reggio and memorably scored by Philip Glass. A less visually kinetic film, shot in black-and-white and primarily featuring long and nearly static shots of faces and buildings, *Visitors* also has a more muted, less propulsive musical score. The film opens with an arresting series of three sequential images: a huge close-up of a gorilla's face, a shot of the moon's surface (a *2001: A Space Odyssey* reference, perhaps?), and a low-angle view of a building bearing the Latin inscription "Novus Ordo Seclorum" ("new order of the ages," which also, incidentally, appears on the back of a dollar bill). The 74 total shots (held for 70 seconds each on average) include a man with his face held in a silent scream, somewhat dead-eyed kids on a merry-go-round, and stark-looking (due to the b&w film stock) landscape scenes of a Louisiana swamp. The most arresting sequence here follows disembodied hands engaged in activities that we can all readily interpret: scrolling a mouse wheel, swiping across a tablet or smartphone, and texting—without seeing the actual devices, the shots look like elaborate mime routines. Faces, a cemetery, a landfill, buildings in ruin, a lunar vista—frankly, it's a bit hard to divine a coherent narrative purpose informing *Visitors*, which sometimes feels like an extended stare-down. Even so, the Qatsi films have a dedicated following, and fans will want to see this as well. A strong optional purchase. (R. Pitman)



We Always Lie to Strangers ★★1/2

Virgil, 108 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.99

For five years, filmmakers AJ Schnack and David Wilson followed showbiz folk in upstart entertain-



ment capital Branson, MO. Over a 50-year period, Branson went from sleepy Ozark town to a \$3 billion-per-year entertainment mecca, peddling all-American, G-rated recreation. *We Always Lie to Strangers* is less historical recap, however, than almost anthropological view of the players in many of the live-entertainment venues. Raeanne Presley is a personable, apparently hands-on mayor, who married into the town's longest-established performing dynasty (unable to sing or dance, she runs the place). Bill Lennon and singer wife Gail are part of the singing Lennons of Lawrence Welk fame; California transplants, the Lennons are rare liberals amidst the prevailing conservative Bible Belt culture (and only one person of color appears here: TV weatherman Al Roker, for a morning-show plug). Chip Holderman, part of Branson's low-key gay minority, seems to have an idyllic relationship even with his ex-wife and mother of his sons, until ugly homophobia erupts with her re-marriage and a potential custody battle. Caring for aging parents and struggling with economic recession also take their toll on Branson's middle-class customer base, adding to the offstage drama. Serving up an intriguing look at a nice, red-white-and-blue town that appears to have only one ephemeral product to sell in a down economy, this is highly recommended. (C. Cassidy)

Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow? ★★1/2

Film Movement, 106 min., in Mandarin w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95

Set in Taiwan, Arvin Chen's light comedy about marriage and honesty proves to be a surprisingly moving and effective film. Weichung (Richie Jen) is a shy and quiet optometrist living in a seemingly happy home with his wife, Feng (Mavis Fan), and their young son. At a dinner before his sister's wedding, however, Weichung runs into an old friend, Stephen (Lawrence Ko), who is also married but living the life of a single gay man. Stephen wonders why Weichung—who is also secretly gay—does not have a similar arrangement. And it is this question that comes to haunt Weichung when two things happen: Feng begins talking about having a second child, and a potential lover named Thomas (Wong Ka-Lok) enters Weichung's life. Chen explores the risks entailed in living authentically, as well as the fear concerning decisions made about love (there's also a funny parallel story about Weichung's sister, Mandy—played by Kimi Hsia—and her sudden decision not to marry). A handsomely-lensed film with a touch of magic realism (at one point a character flies off via an open umbrella, Mary Poppins-style), this thoughtful and charming film is highly recommended. (T. Keogh)



X-Men: Days of Future Past ★★★

Fox, 132 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$39.99, Oct. 14

In this sci-fi sequel/prequel, Logan/Wolverine (Hugh Jackman) time-travels 50 years into the past in a desperate effort to alter the course of history and thwart doomsday for humans and mutants alike. In the dark, desolate, dystopian future, gigantic killer robots known as Sentinels have almost succeeded in annihilating the mutants and their human supporters. Professor Charles Xavier (Patrick Stewart) and his longtime friend/rival, Erik Lehnsherr/Magneto (Ian McKellen) are in hiding with their few remaining allies. Their only hope is to use Kitty Pryde's (Ellen Page) mental powers to project Logan/Wolverine's consciousness back to 1973 to erase the Sentinel program from history. Catapulting through world history—including JFK's assassination, the Vietnam War, and Richard Nixon's presidency—Wolverine must convince reclusive, mentally/physically crippled young Xavier (James McAvoy), who is tended by Hank/Beast (Nicholas Hoult), of the danger. And with the help of Wolverine's agile pal Peter/Quicksilver (Evan Peters), they manage to free anarchistic Magneto (Michael Fassbender) from incarceration and become caught up in angry, blue-skinned, shape-shifting Raven/Mystique's (Jennifer Lawrence) plan to kill villainous, mutant-hating Dr. Bolivar Trask (Peter Dinklage). The confusing, convoluted screenplay is nevertheless adroitly directed by Bryan Singer in this summer blockbuster boasting lots of astonishing CGI and visual effects, as well as a huge cast of characters that also includes Storm (Halle Berry), Rogue (Anna Paquin), Havok (Lucas Till), and Iceman (Shawn Ashmore). Recommended. (S. Granger)



Classic Films

The Angela Mao Ying Collection ★★★

Shout! Factory, 3 discs, 590 min., not rated/R, DVD: \$34.95

During the 1970s, Angela Mao (billed in this DVD anthology as Angela Mao Ying) was the most electrifying heroine in the martial-arts genre. Although she never quite achieved the iconic stature of Bruce Lee and others who followed in his cinematic path, Mao nonetheless enjoyed a cult following who will certainly appreciate this handsome collection of six of her finest performances. The most familiar titles here are the crime thrillers *Stoner* (1974) and *A Queen's Ransom* (1976), which garnered some extra attention on this side of the Pacific thanks to post-007 star George



Lazenby; but these connect-the-dots potboilers, with Mao in supporting roles, are also the weakest offerings in the set. The real gem is *Broken Oath* (1977), a wild tale with Mao as the revenge-seeking daughter of a sexually assaulted female prisoner; the vibrant fight sequences coupled with Mao's wonderfully fierce persona help raise the film to near-genre-classic status. The remaining three movies—*When Taekwondo Strikes* (1973), *The Tournament* (1974), and *The Himalayan* (1976)—all share vigorous choreography and handsome production values, with Mao shining as a strong woman in the midst of whirlwind violence, but none truly stand out as masterworks of the genre. Nonetheless, Mao's presence consistently makes for an entertaining experience, and this set will likely be a joy to fans of martial-arts cinema. Recommended. (P. Hall)

The Big Chill ★★★

Criterion, 105 min., R, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.95

Lawrence Kasdan's 1983 ensemble piece captured the mid-1980s zeitgeist, bringing together seven thirtysomething college friends who reunite for the funeral of a classmate who committed suicide. Together, they reminisce about bygone days when they were far more radical, whining about how they've abandoned their old ideals for more conventional goals. To be honest, this is a pretty shallow bunch—an actor, a writer, a businessman and his wife, a lawyer, an unhappily married housewife, and an impotent Vietnam vet turned drug dealer. But their navel-gazing about the past and worrying about the future definitely struck a chord with the audience, especially fellow Baby Boomers. The cast of then-up-and-coming stars (Tom Berenger, Glenn Close, Jeff Goldblum, William Hurt, Kevin Kline, Mary Kay Place, Meg Tilly, and JoBeth Williams) played Kasdan's script for all it was worth, backed by a stellar soundtrack of '60s pop songs. Criterion's "director's approved" dual-format edition features a newly restored transfer on both DVD and new-to Blu-ray discs, along with extras including a "making-of" (from an earlier 1998 release), deleted scenes, a new interview with Kasdan, and a group conversation with Kasdan and several cast members at the 2013 Toronto Film Festival. A key '80s film beloved by many, this is recommended. (F. Swietek)



The Black Book ★1/2

Film Chest, 89 min., not rated, DVD: \$13.98

In this 1949 period drama, director Anthony Mann adopts an American urban film noir sensibility for a tale set in 18th-century Paris during the fury of the French



Revolution, with guys and dames in flouncy costumes and flamboyant hats talking like gangsters and street thugs while sneaking through cobblestone streets by torchlight. Robert Cummings stars as double agent Charles D'Aubigny, who is sent to Paris in the midst of the Reign of Terror, and Arlene Dahl costars as Madelon, a former lover who turns out to be D'Aubigny's Paris contact. But the villains own the film: Arnold Moss's mercenary Fouché is ready to sell out anyone and everyone for his own gain, while Richard Basehart's Robespierre is an icy criminal mastermind mob boss who is killing off his rivals (the film's title refers to the book in which Robespierre keeps his list of those destined for the guillotine). Mann creates a claustrophobic milieu of conniving characters, hard-boiled dialogue, shadowy visuals, and extreme camera angles in the alleys and dungeons of Paris in the 1700s—conceived, of course, on studio backlot sets, and brought to life by John Alton's inky, expressionist cinematography. Film Chest's restored edition is better than many previous releases, but it simply isn't up to the standard set by Sony's 2012 issue, which is preferable. Not a necessary purchase. (S. Axmaker)

Caught ★★★

Olive, 88 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95

The third of four films that sophisticated and elegant European director Max Ophüls made in Hollywood, 1949's *Caught* is a fascinating social drama about a dreamy young working-class woman named Leonora Eames (Barbara Bel Geddes), who puts her hopes for success into a charm school education and a modeling gig with the aim of ultimately attracting a rich husband. Robert Ryan is Smith Ohlrig, her dream come true—or so she thinks when the cold, demanding, industrialist millionaire suddenly proposes. James Mason costars as Leonora's jolt of reality, Larry Quinada, an idealistic doctor on New York's East Side who hires Leonora despite her lack of secretarial qualifications, after she flees the oppressive Ohlrig's control and jealous suspicions. The script sometimes awkwardly brings the social commentary right into the dialogue spoken by Mason, but Ophüls' delicate style more than compensates, beautifully capturing both the surface elegance and emotional emptiness of the millionaire lifestyle. Along the way, Bel Geddes effectively transforms from a callow, naive kid into a woman of strength and moral fortitude, while Mason tempers his saintliness with moments of doubt, and Ryan convincingly conveys a chillingly cruel manipulator whose only goal is to win at all costs. Ophüls twists the American dream into a nightmare, where even the happy ending feels just a bit tarnished. Debuting on DVD



and Blu-ray with a well-mastered transfer that preserves the production's shadowy beauty, this is recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Detective Story ★★★

Warner, 103 min., not rated, DVD: \$17.99

The 1951 screen version of Sidney Kingsley's Broadway play, directed by William Wyler and starring Kirk Douglas, William Bendix, and Horace McMahon as top detectives in a New York City police squad, could be the godfather of the TV precinct show. Set almost entirely in the squad room over the course of a long shift, the film charts the courses of a number of cases and characters. Douglas is James McLeod, a law-and-order zealot with a bad temper and a reputation for violence—a classic tough cop with a brutal edge and a ferocious moral superiority. Bendix is Lou Brody, a gentler, more understanding type who is predisposed to give first-time offenders a second chance; and McMahon is Lt. Monaghan, the wary chief trying to reign in the explosive McLeod. Eleanor Parker, a queen of the silver screen in her day, costars as McLeod's devoted wife, Mary, who has a big secret. Providing eccentricity and comic relief in smaller roles are Lee Grant, making her movie debut as a loquacious shoplifter, and Frank Faylen as a detective with a good-natured sense of humor. While it features a roll call of clichés and dated social issues, this stage-bound drama is sustained by good dialogue, fine performances, and engaging characters—and Wyler keeps things rolling at a lively pace. Previously out of print, this is newly available again as part of Warner's manufacture-on-demand Archive Collection. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



The Essential Jacques Demy ★★★1/2

Criterion, 13 discs, 573 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$124.95

This Criterion set compiles six defining films and a few early shorts from the sadder-but-wiser romantic of French New Wave filmmakers, Jacques Demy, who loved American movies but whose taste for musicals and candy-colored romance was balanced with a bittersweet sensibility. For all of the energizing music and dreamy love affairs on display, Demy movies usually don't feature traditional happy endings, as is evident in the most famous of the bunch here, *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* (1964), starring Catherine Deneuve and Nino Castelnuovo as young lovers separated by the Algerian War; entirely sung from a libretto set to Michel Legrand's score, this is a lovely, heartbreaking classic of French cinema. Bookending



the set are *Lola*, Demy's 1961 feature debut starring Anouk Aimée as a cabaret dancer and single mother looking for the father of her child in the port town of Nantes, and the home-video debut of the 1982 musical *Une Chambre en Ville*, set amidst a workers strike in Nantes, circa 1955, and starring Dominique Sanda, Danielle Darrieux, and Richard Berry. Also included are *Bay of Angels* (1963), a somber drama with Jeanne Moreau as a gambling addict; the sunny musical *The Young Girls of Rochefort* (1967), with Deneuve and Gene Kelly; and the odd musical fairy tale *Donkey Skin* (1970), a tribute to Jean Cocteau starring Deneuve and Jean Marais. All are presented in restored and remastered HD editions for this Blu-ray/DVD Combo collection that features extras including two superb documentaries on Demy by fellow New Wave veteran Agnès Varda, the filmmaker's widow; a visual essay on the director's influences and inspirations; interviews; archival TV episodes; and a booklet with essays. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Forced March ★★★

Passion River, 101 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95

Director Rick King's overlooked 1989 Holocaust drama employs an offbeat narrative device to tell the tragic story of Miklós

Radnóti—a real-life, revered Hungarian poet murdered during World War II—presented here as a story-within-the-story in a behind-the-scenes show-biz melodrama. American actor Ben Kline (Chris Sarandon), the star of a cheesy network action series who wants to do some serious work, travels to Hungary to play the lead in a Radnóti biopic. Kline is intrigued because his late mother was among those who survived the Nazi madness, which is something his father (Josef Sommer) won't discuss. On the set, however, Kline learns that his popcorn popularity landed him the role; the director actually considers him too lightweight to properly portray Radnóti's ordeal during a hellish forced march of Jews across Hungary. But Kline submerges himself in the character, eventually losing track of what's real and what's make-believe, while also being tormented by the fact that the victims in the script, unlike his macho TV persona, couldn't or wouldn't fight back. The movie re-enactments grow more intense and brutal, to the point that Kline (and the viewer) forgets about the artifice and film crew just off to the side, as he is drawn into Radnóti's terrible fate. Recommended. (C. Cassidy)



Herzog: The Collection

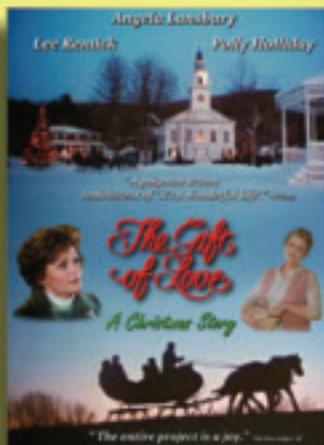
★★★1/2

Shout! Factory, 13 discs, 1,501 min., not rated/PG, Blu-ray: \$159.99



This Blu-ray collection presents 16 major films by Werner Herzog, one of the essential directors of the New German Cinema, with all but one making Blu-ray debuts (1979's *Nosferatu the Vampyre* was recently released individually). The set includes Herzog's 1972 breakthrough, *Aguirre, Wrath of God*, starring Klaus Kinski as a 15th-century Spanish conquistador who goes mad in the Peruvian jungle; the even more ambitious *Fitzcarraldo* (1982), with Kinski's obsessed character trying to build an opera house in South America; and two collaborations with Bruno S., starring in *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser* (1974) as a real-life savant raised in isolation, and in the tragic *Stroszek* (1977) as a troubled street musician who moves from Berlin to Wisconsin. All of these titles are essential Herzog, beautifully photographed with an earthy power and provocative scripts. Also included are the Kinski collaborations *Woyzeck* (1979), centering on a soldier who feels powerless in the grip of forces he can't control, and *Cobra Verde* (1987), about a bandit hired by a plantation owner to supervise slaves;

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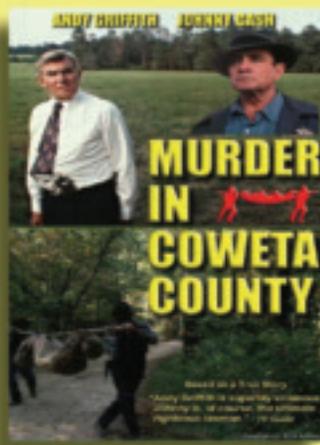
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"Destined to become a Yuletide classic!" - Los Angeles Daily News

"Poignant...reminiscent of 'It's A Wonderful Life'." - TV Guide

About to lose her mother, business, and husband, Janet (Lee Remick) longs for Christmas with her mother (Angela Lansbury) and aunt (Polly Holliday). During a visit home, she finds what really matters, at Christmas and always.

100 min. | 1983 | PPR: \$199 | SRP: \$19.95
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"A well-acted, well-crafted period movie." -The New York Daily News

Based on a true story, Sheriff Lamar Potts (Johnny Cash) goes head to head with the villainous John Wallace (Andy Griffith) when Wallace chases an underling into Potts' territory.

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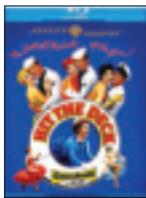


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Herzog's tribute to Kinski, *My Best Fiend* (1999); his eerie early features *Even Dwarfs Started Small* (1970), a hallucinatory tale about rebellious inhabitants of an island, and *Fata Morgana* (1971), which combines footage of the Sahara Desert with a spoken creation myth and songs by Leonard Cohen; the notorious *Heart of Glass* (1976), in which Herzog hypnotized all of his actors; and *Where the Green Ants Dream* (1984), set and shot in the Australian outback. Rounding out the compilation are four documentaries: *Land of Silence and Darkness* (1971), a study of a woman who's deaf and blind; *Ballad of the Little Soldier* (1984), an examination of child soldiers in Nicaragua; *Lessons of Darkness* (1992), about the 1991 Kuwaiti oil field fires; and *Little Dieter Needs to Fly* (1997), a profile of a helicopter pilot who escaped from a Vietcong prison camp. Many of these are now out of print on DVD, and all have been digitally remastered by Herzog himself. Extras include audio commentaries, behind-the-scenes featurettes, and an interview with the director. A compilation of some of the greatest—and most unusual—German films of the modern era, this is highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Hit the Deck ★★1/2

Warner, 116 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$21.99



The golden age of the MGM musical ended neither with a bang nor a whimper, but rather on a pleasant note in this film that occasionally recalls the studio's glory days. But be forewarned: *Hit the Deck* is no *On the Town*, and Russ Tamblyn (Danny), Vic Damone (Rico), and Tony Martin (William) are not Gene Kelly, Frank Sinatra, and Jules Munshin. Unlike the latter trio who had just one day in the Big Apple, William and company are on 48-hour furlough in San Francisco. Jane Powell, appearing in her last MGM musical, costars as Danny's sister, Susan, who is trying out for the eponymous musical within a musical. Ann Miller (who was also in *On the Town*) appears as William's long-engaged girlfriend, while Debbie Reynolds is Carol, a dancer in the show. Gene Raymond costars as a womanizing actor with designs on Susan, with Kay Armen as Rico's widowed mother, and Walter Pidgeon as Danny's father, a Rear Admiral (also look for Alan King as a shore patrol officer). *Hit the Deck* has been swabbed pretty good for this Blu-ray debut, looking and sounding great. Of the songs, "Hallelujah" and "More Than You'll Know" are standouts, while Miller is a knockout in her big dance number, "The Lady from the Bayou," and Reynolds and Tamblyn share a comical "A Kiss or Two." A strong optional purchase. (D. Liebenson)

Judex ★★1/2

Criterion, 97 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: 2 discs, \$24.95; Blu-ray/DVD Combo: 3 discs, \$39.95



Although technically a remake of Louis Feuillade's 1916 pulp fantasy serial—a silent adventure of crime and retribution—Georges Franju's 1963 film is more of a surreal reimagining. Franju is oddly faithful to the source material's bizarre plot, in which a masked vigilante who calls himself Judex (American magician Channing Pollock) makes it his personal mission to punish cruel banker Favraux (Michel Vitold) and also battle wicked femme fatale Diana Monti (Francine Bergé). But the director compresses Feuillade's five-hour-plus film series into 97 minutes and trades the original's rollercoaster pacing and cliffhanger-style adventure for a kind of dream ballet. Pollock plays Judex with an impassive blankness, while Franju compounds the strangeness by providing no motivation for Judex's actions and revealing no personality behind the mask. Maurice Jarre's delicate and lyrical score suggests not menace but rather tragedy and a wistful sense of loss, while the crisp black-and-white cinematography of Marcel Fradet adds to the unreal quality. A strange and beautiful cult picture, *Judex* may be too abstract even for fans of foreign cinema from the revolutionary 1960s, and it is certainly less essential than many other films from that vibrant era, including Franju's own *Eyes Without a Face*, a haunting horror film. Nonetheless, this DVD re-release and Blu-ray debut looks superb, and features extras including two short documentaries directed by Franju, a 1998 documentary about Franju, and interviews with his collaborators. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

Marty ★★★1/2

Kino Lorber, 90 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95

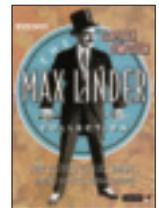


"Whadya wanna do tonight?" "I dunno, Angie, whadda you wanna do?" So goes a typical conversation for 34-year-old Marty Piletti (Ernest Borgnine), a good-natured but lonely Bronx butcher and self-proclaimed "fat, ugly man" who lives with his smothering widowed mother (Esther Minciotti) and hangs out with dead-end pals. Marty is almost crippled by shyness when it comes to women, adopting a self-deprecating humor as a kind of defense until he meets lonely schoolteacher Clara (Betsy Blair) at a dance and makes a connection. But Marty's mom and friends suddenly become hostile toward the romance, putting down Clara (whom they call a "dog") while trying to convince Marty to dump her, despite the happiness she clearly brings him. Paddy Chayefsky originally wrote the story

as a live TV drama in 1953 and expanded it for this 1955 feature film, adding more characters and an extended family with its own relationship problems, while still maintaining the focus on working-class folks and their everyday lives. The story's simplicity, the characteristic New York City dialogue, the casting of excellent but mostly unknown performers in supporting roles, and the gentle power of Borgnine's performance made this modest production a big success, earning rave notices from critics, winning the top prize at the Cannes Film Festival, and then sweeping the Academy Awards, with Oscars for Borgnine, writer Chayefsky, director Delbert Mann, and for Best Picture. Appearing in a newly remastered edition for this DVD re-release and Blu-ray debut, this is highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

The Max Linder Collection ★★★1/2

Kino, 205 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.95



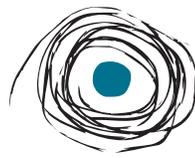
Often referred to as France's answer to Charlie Chaplin, Max Linder actually created his boulevardier character—a dapper society gentleman in top hat and evening dress with an eye for the ladies and a sly sense of humor—long before Chaplin stepped in front of a camera; in fact, Linder's "Max" was an inspiration for Chaplin's famous "Tramp." This collection from Kino Lorber presents all three feature comedies that Linder made in Hollywood after World War I, along with one of his early two-reel shorts. *Seven Years Bad Luck* (1921)—considered by many to be Linder's masterpiece—boasts some wonderful physical comedy (beginning with a superb mime mirror gag) that culminates in an elaborate game of hide-and-seek with railroad conductors. *The Three Must-Get-Theres* (1922) is a burlesque take on Douglas Fairbanks' swash-buckling adventures, with Linder as "Dart-in-Again," the bumpkin swordsman who joins the Queens Guard (despite all of the gags, it's remarkably faithful to the central plot of Alexandre Dumas' *The Three Musketeers*). Both of the films feature color tints, while the romantic farce *Be My Wife* (1921) and the short *Max Wants a Divorce* (1917) are in black-and-white. Linder wrote and directed all four films, which also feature music recorded for this release. While Linder never enjoyed the American success of Chaplin, Buster Keaton, or Harold Lloyd, he was one of the great stars of early silent comedy, and this set features fine editions mastered from prints restored by France's Lobster Films. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Memphis Belle ★★★

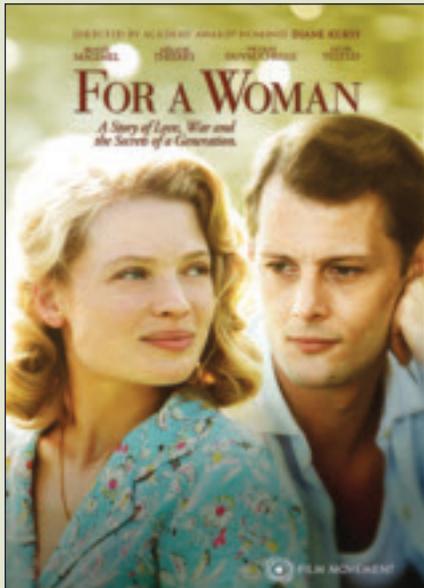
Warner, 107 min., PG-13, Blu-ray: \$19.98

Michael Caton-Jones' 1990 World War II drama was actually inspired by William

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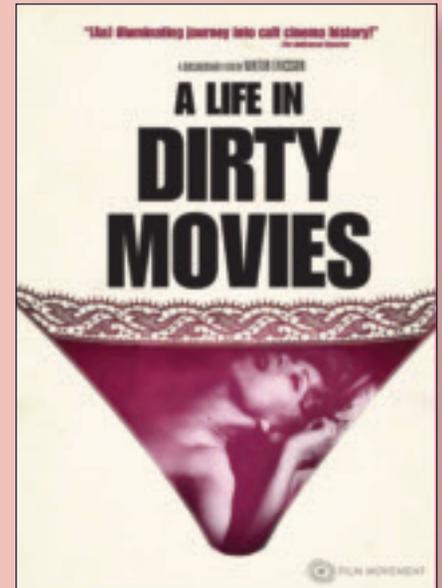
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Wyer's 1944 propaganda documentary *The Memphis Belle: The Story of a Flying Fortress* (included here as an extra). While the character names and traits have been changed, the essential facts remain the same: the *Memphis Belle* is an England-based B-17 Allied bomber that flies sorties over Germany. Although most other B-17s are shot out of the sky, *Belle* has achieved celebrity status by completing a full tour of nearly 25 operations largely untouched. When Lt. Col. Bruce Derriinger (John Lithgow), an unctuous U.S. Army PR flack, tries to turn the plane's final mission into a tacky media event, base commander Col. Craig Harriman (David Strathairn) is appalled, while the 10-man crew (played by young actors Matthew Modine, Harry Connick Jr., Tate Donovan, Eric Stoltz, and Sean Astin, among others) is more concerned about flack of a more dangerous variety. Will their amazing luck hold, as the flight plan takes them on a suicidal run to destroy a well-defended Bremen factory? Nearly an hour of drama precedes the actual bombing run, which is a doozy, as Axis fighter attacks are experienced entirely within the constrained POV of the claustrophobic aircraft. Recommended. (C. Cassady)



Separate Tables ★★★
Kino Lorber, 100 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95

Writer Terence Rattigan knits a pair of his one-act plays together for this 1958 chamber piece, an all-star drama about a somber gathering of lonely, repressed souls at a British seaside inn during the dreary off-season. David Niven and Wendy Hiller earned well-deserved Oscars for their subdued performances—Niven as Major Angus Pollock, a blustery old warhorse hiding a guilty secret; and Hiller as Pat Cooper, the efficient hotel proprietress. Burt Lancaster costars as John Malcolm, an alcoholic American writer whose secret affair with Pat is complicated when his former wife, Ann (Rita Hayworth), breezes in, reopening old emotional wounds; and Deborah Kerr is mousy Sibyl Railton-Bell, whose secret love for Major Pollock is shattered by scandal. American director Delbert Mann remains true to the sense of British reserve, as good manners and quiet desperation keep these sad folks isolated at separate tables, and he gracefully floats between the narratives. An intelligent, handsome production that is a little too respectful of its stage origins to take on a real life of its own, the combination of a superior cast and a literate script nevertheless makes this the kind of classic that will appeal to fans of such current TV shows as *Downton Abbey*. Re-released on DVD and bowing on Blu-ray, extras include an audio



commentary. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

So This Is New York ★★★

Olive, 78 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95

Although little known, this amiable 1948 comedy is notable for a couple of reasons. *So This Is New York* was the first feature produced by Stanley Kramer, who went on to make classic films with serious social themes (including *Judgment at Nuremberg* and *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*), and it was the first (and only) starring vehicle for acerbic radio comic Henry Morgan, who would later become a permanent panelist on the popular TV game show *I've Got a Secret*. Adapted from Ring Lardner's novel *The Big Town*, and directed by Richard Fleischer, this satirical period piece set in 1919 features Morgan as Ernie, an Indiana salesman whose wife, Ella (Virginia Grey), and sister-in-law, Kate (Dona Drake), come into an inheritance and persuade Ernie to move to New York, where they hope to snare a rich husband for Kate. Their scheme goes awry when most of the potential spouses turn out to be already married, or gold-diggers themselves. And the one real prospect, horse-racing fanatic Herbert (Rudy Vallee), finds his affection rebuffed as Kate prefers his jockey, Sid (Leo Gorcey). *So This Is New York* was made on a shoestring budget (and looks it), but Morgan is dourly amusing, and the film boasts a winningly odd supporting cast, including Bill Goodwin, Jerome Cowan, Hugh Herbert, and Arnold Stang. Recommended. (F. Swietek)



The Wind and the Lion ★★★

Warner, 119 min., PG, Blu-ray: \$21.99

Loosely based on a true historical incident, *The Wind and the Lion* (1975)—set in Morocco, circa 1904—stars Sean Connery as Berber chieftain Mulai Ahmed er Raisuli, with Candice Bergen as American widow Eden Pedecaris, who is kidnapped along with her two young children for ransom. American President Theodore Roosevelt (Brian Keith) sends U.S. troops into Morocco to rescue the family, a threatening action that could ignite war in Europe. Screenwriter-director John Milius delivers plenty of action featuring swords, military weapons, and men in robes charging across the desert on horseback; but the film is just as much about the battle between the charming but fierce Raisuli and the strong-willed Eden (antagonists who develop respect and affection for one another during the ordeal), as well as the long-distance game of international chess between Raisuli and Roosevelt. Milius's romantic take on revolution and the honor of war is out of step with the more

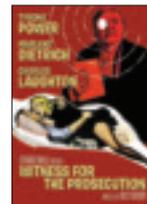


complicated sensibilities of American movies of the 1970s, but he creates such grand characters and colorful collisions of cultures and countries that it all works. Earning two Oscar nominations—including Best Music for Jerry Goldsmith's dramatic score—*The Wind and the Lion* debuts on Blu-ray in a gorgeous-looking edition with extras including audio commentary and a behind-the-scenes featurette. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Witness for the Prosecution ★★★

Kino Lorber, 116 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95

Billy Wilder, one of Hollywood's greatest writer-directors, takes on the venerable Agatha Christie stage play in this 1957 classic, injecting the tale with his own brand of humor, snappy dialogue, and barbed storytelling. Charles Laughton stars as Sir Wilfrid, a legendary barrister who defies doctor's orders and a heart condition to defend amiable but shiftless American Leonard Vole (Tyrone Power) from a murder charge, even as Vole's cool, suspicious German wife, Christine (Marlene Dietrich), delivers testimony that appears to doom her husband's chances for acquittal. Of course, this is a Christie plot, so nothing is as simple as it seems, especially after incriminating letters are sold to Sir Wilfrid, but the twisty plot is ultimately less interesting than the characters themselves. Laughton takes what might have been a hammy role—a brilliant legal mind, theatrical courtroom performer, and wily curmudgeon sneaking brandy and cigars over the objections of his nurse, Miss Plimsoll (Elsa Lanchester)—and invests it with a palpable sense of duty and honor. Power meanwhile plays to his strengths, mixing cocky American brashness and showy earnestness, while Dietrich enters with a defining dignity and then upends all expectations. The Old Bailey set is itself a character, one that Wilder uses well in the dramatic courtroom scenes. Offering a beloved mix of classic British mystery and American wit, *Witness for the Prosecution* has been newly remastered for this DVD release and Blu-ray debut. Extras include a brief archival interview with Wilder. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

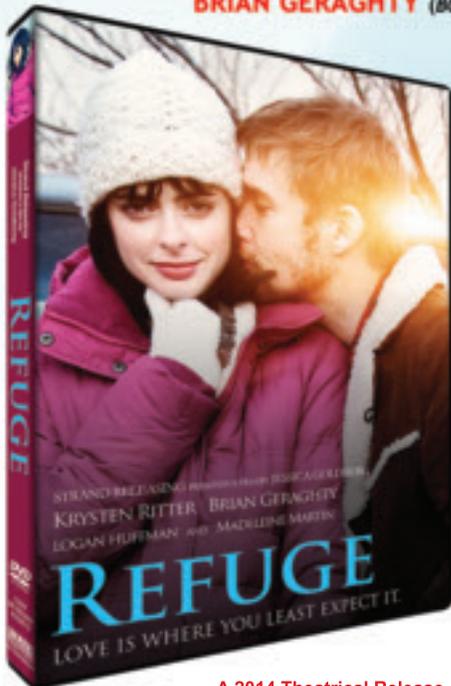


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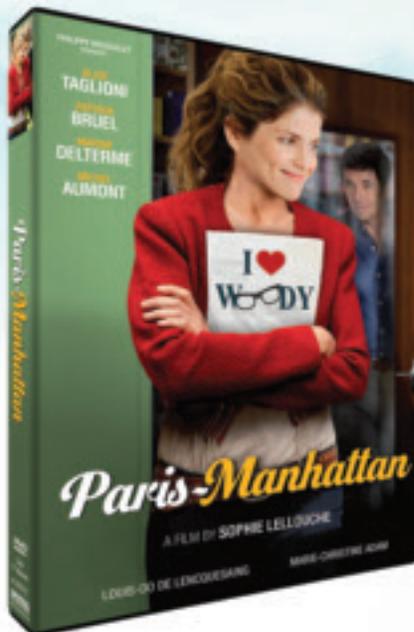
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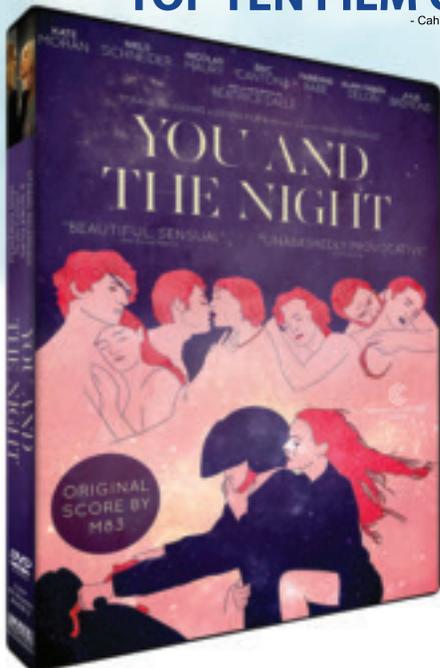
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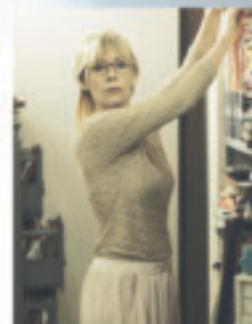
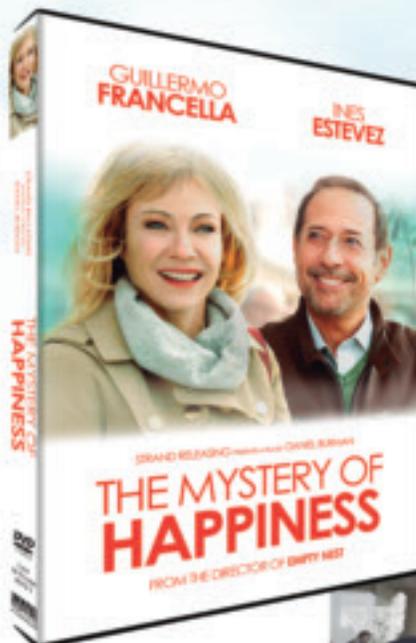
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Anna Karenina ★★1/2
Acorn, 3 discs, 539 min., not rated, DVD: \$59.99



This 10-part 1977 BBC-aired adaptation of Tolstoy's oft-filmed novel—about an aristocratic woman (married to a high government official) whose adulterous affair with a handsome cavalry officer leads to tragedy—has the benefit of scope, incorporating far more of the book's detail than other film and TV versions. The drawback, of course, is that this *Anna Karenina* is nearly four decades old, and today seems quite dated—shot almost entirely on soundstages, with only an occasional outdoor scene to alleviate the overall claustrophobic effect. While Nicola Pagett is suitably chilly in the title role (Anna is not a particularly likable character, abandoning her son as she does), Stuart Wilson makes a rather bland Count Vronsky—he's certainly no match for the magnetic young Sean Connery in the 1961 BBC archive version—and Eric Porter is nondescript as the rigid husband who refuses to give Anna a divorce. Although much shorter, the 2000 BBC-aired *Masterpiece Theatre* version starring Helen McCrory (*VL-1/05*) is a better choice. Optional. (F. Swietek)

Arne Dahl: Season One
 ★★★

MHz, 5 discs, 890 min., in Swedish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$49.95



Scandinavian mysteries and police procedurals have become an international phenomenon, both in novels and in TV series. The title here refers to the pen name of Jan Arnald, who wrote the books that inspired this set of five two-part stories, which all focus on the work of a special Stockholm police squad known as the A-Unit, created by hard-nosed Commander Jenny Hultin (Irene Lindh) in response to a series of high-profile killings. Naturally, the six-member team is an eclectic group (one on probation for using excessive force, another a linguistic genius, a third a former defense lawyer), with each bringing unique skills (as well as personal quirks) to cases that frequently have international connections (one centers on the murder of a family vacationing in the Alps, while another morphs into a tale involving an espionage ring). The plots are convoluted but sophisticated, with generous narrative arcs that not only allow for numerous twists but also expanded characters with interesting tics and peculiarities. The viewer has to be willing to accept the deliberate pace (not to mention the bleak and barren environment), but there are rewards for anyone who has enjoyed earlier examples of Nordic noir, such as *Forbrydelsen* or *Broen* (the originals of the series remade stateside as

The Killing and *The Bridge*—reviewed below). Recommended. (F. Swietek)

The Boondocks: The Complete Fourth Season
 ★1/2

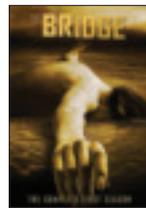
Sony, 2 discs, 225 min., not rated, DVD: \$40.99



The 2014 fourth and final season of *The Boondocks* was marked by comic strip creator Aaron McGruder's exit from the Adult Swim-aired animated series—a profanity-filled show (with gratuitous use of the N-word) centering on the antics of sassy young brothers Huey and Riley (both voiced by Regina King) and their grouchy Granddad (John Witherspoon). Guest voices include Michael B. Jordan as a screwed up rapper in "Pretty Boy Flizzy," and prolific voice actress Grey DeLisle in the reality star spoof "Granddad Dates a Kardashian" and as an overbearing phone feature in "I Dream of Siri," as well as Jenifer Lewis, Dennis Haysbert, and Ed Asner. Featuring all 10 uncensored final episodes, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes. Although it built up a following for its controversial material, there's something to be said for the fact that even the creator didn't want to come along for the last ride. Not a necessary purchase. (J. Williams-Wood)

The Bridge: The Complete First Season
 ★★★

Fox, 590 min., not rated, DVD: 4 discs, \$49.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$59.98

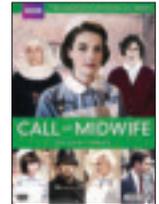


A remake of a Danish mystery series about a murder committed on the border between Denmark and Sweden, this American version relocates the action to the crossing between El Paso and Juarez and centers on the real-life tensions between anti-immigrant Texas and the cartel-dominated territories of northern Mexico. These added pressures complicate the investigation of what appears to be the isolated killing of an American judge but in fact turns out to be part of a serial crime spree. The volatile setting enriches the procedural, but what defines the show is the partnership of Texas-based detective Sonya Cross (Diane Kruger), an obsessive, by-the-book professional with borderline Asperger symptoms, and Chihuahua State Police investigator Marco Ruiz (Demián Bichir), a moral cop in an amoral system who joins in on the cross-jurisdictional case in order to do real police work unchecked by corrupt bosses. The evolution of their relationship is one of *The Bridge's* strengths, as are the diverse cast, multiple intertwining storylines, and exploration of complex symbiotic ties—both legal and illegal—between the U.S. and Mexico. Also on hand are Ted Levine as Lt. Hank Wade,

Sonya's commanding officer; Matthew Lillard and Emily Rios as reporters Daniel Frye and Adriana Mendez; and Annabeth Gish as Charlotte Millwright, a wealthy widow whose rancher husband harbored dark secrets. Presenting all 13 episodes from the 2013 debut season, extras include audio commentary, behind-the-scenes featurettes, and deleted scenes. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Call the Midwife: Season Three ★★★

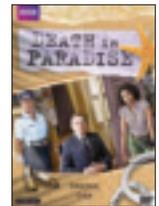
BBC, 547 min., not rated, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$44.98



The third season of the BBC's popular period drama revolves around change and loss, but still finds the good in every situation, no matter how dire. Things begin promisingly enough with the relationship between Jenny (Jessica Raine), a nurse, and Alec (Leo Staar), a surveyor. Sister Julianne (Jenny Agutter) appoints Jenny as head of the new antenatal clinic, which obviously disappoints the more experienced Trixie (Helen George), but friendship overpowers any hurt feelings. The nurses also welcome back Chummy (Miranda Hart), who found herself ill-equipped for life as a housewife, while new arrivals include Sister Winifred (Victoria Yeates), a nun with a weak stomach, and Patsy (Emerald Fennell), a nurse who proves to be less intimidating than she initially appears. Throughout, the ladies tend to patients in town, prison, and a residential home, while continuing to work closely with Dr. Turner (Steven McGann) and his wife, Shelagh (Laura Main), a former nun who struggles with secular life. Their efforts on behalf of a pregnant woman with Down syndrome are particularly touching, although tragedy strikes when two of the midwives lose people close to them. Adapted from semi-fictionalized memoirs by Jenny Worth, series creator Heidi Thomas's *Call the Midwife* has been renewed for a fourth season. Compiling all eight episodes from 2014, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette. Recommended. (K. Fennessy)

Death in Paradise: Season One ★★1/2

BBC, 2 discs, 466 min., not rated, DVD: \$34.98



In this BBC-aired series, Detective Inspector Richard Poole (Ben Miller) travels from London to the British Caribbean dependency of Saint-Marie to investigate the murder of a colleague. Poole is a stereotypical stuffy Englishman, with no great fondness for the Caribbean culture or weather. But after solving the crime, he winds up staying on the island in the role of senior detective for the local police force. Not surprisingly, Poole has trouble adapting to his new surroundings, especially since his

work habits fail to mesh with those of his new partner, Detective Sergeant Camille Bordey (Sara Martins). *Death in Paradise* quickly turns into a standard-issue crime drama, although its appeal lies not in the whodunit aspect, but rather in the personalities—the combustible dynamic between dyspeptic Poole and driven Bordey. At the same time, the show serves up a harshly non-travelogue view of today's Caribbean. Compiling all eight episodes from the 2011 debut season, this is a strong optional purchase. (P. Hall)

Endeavour: Series 2

★★★

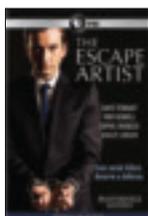
PBS, 2 discs, 360 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.99, Blu-ray: \$44.99



The second season of this *Inspector Morse* prequel, centering on the early days of Detective Inspector Endeavour Morse (Shaun Evans) in the Oxford City Police during the 1960s, opens with young Morse recovering from a gunshot wound that almost killed him. His superior officer and mentor, DI Fred Thursday (Roger Allam), nurses worries that Morse may have lost the passion for police work that made him a standout in a department filled with compromised and corruptible officers. But in his first investigation after returning to the job, Morse is quickly knee-deep, uncovering evidence that a suspected suicide is actually murder. Morse still alienates colleagues with his intellect and argumentative attitude, and Thursday still protects him from the older commanders. But more interesting than the personal conflicts is how the four mysteries compiled here reveal an environment of intolerance, abuse, and culture of corruption that goes back decades and involves the most powerful people in Oxford—all of which is enough to make Morse consider leaving, especially as Thursday is being pressured to retire. On a lighter note, Morse starts dating Monica (Shvorne Marks), a nurse in his apartment building. This series forges its own identity apart from the beloved *Inspector Morse*, developing into one of the better British mysteries airing today. Presenting four episodes from 2014 (in the complete British versions, rather than the slightly edited broadcasts on PBS's *Masterpiece Mystery!*), this is recommended. (S. Axmaker)

The Escape Artist ★★★

PBS, 180 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99



David Tennant continues his impressive post-*Doctor Who* run of appearances in British dramas with this three-part made-for-TV thriller, starring as Will Burton, a brilliant London barrister who is so successful at defending his clients that he's

earned the nickname "The Escape Artist." This moniker comes back to haunt him when he frees diabolical murder suspect Liam Foyle (Toby Kebbell) on a technicality, and Foyle then kills Burton's wife, Kate (Ashley Jensen). Rival attorney Maggie Gardner (Sophie Okonedo) takes up Foyle's defense in the new trial. A mix of mystery and courtroom drama, the miniseries pivots on legal details specific to British law that may well be unfamiliar to American viewers, but they add intrigue to the plot. Burton is legally barred from contact with the prosecutor because he is a witness in the case—a situation that Foyle specifically engineered—so Burton must covertly investigate and also advise the attorney who is seeking to put Foyle behind bars once and for all. Ultimately, this becomes a battle of minds as Burton tries to outsmart Foyle and protect his son (Gus Barry). While there aren't many likeable characters here, Tennant's Will is interesting if also enigmatic. While it aired in the U.S. on PBS's *Masterpiece Mystery!*, this release features the slightly longer British edition, as well as extras including interviews with Tennant and creator-writer David Wolstencroft. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Graceland: The Complete First Season ★★★

Fox, 3 discs, 547 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.98



Unlike most USA network original shows, which typically feature personable characters, light drama (with plenty of humor and banter), and colorful visual design—all on a budget—*Graceland* takes a somewhat grittier approach. Set in the culture of Southern California undercover intelligence operatives who share a lavish beach house as a base of operations, the show stars Daniel Sunjata as veteran FBI agent Paul Briggs, who has become so reckless that the agency sends in hotshot rookie Mike Warren (Aaron Tveit) to secretly investigate him. Vanessa Ferlito, Brandon Jay McLaren, Serinda Swan, and Manny Montana fill out the group as various FBI, DEA, and customs agents all working solo but pitching in whenever a housemate needs help on a case. The mix of undercover drama and hip action thriller revolves around drug dealers, gun runners, gangs, and cartels, with Briggs acting like both a seasoned pro and an adrenaline junkie, feeding on the danger and excitement of the job, while Warren is the company man who learns to improvise and cross the line when necessary. The motto of the house is "no secrets," but Briggs has plenty, which only compounds suspicion. While his story takes the entire season to reach a satisfying conclusion, each episode features at least one resolved case. Presenting all 12 episodes from the 2013 debut run, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette, deleted scenes, and a gag reel. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Helix: Season 1 ★★1/2

Sony, 3 discs, 530 min., not rated, DVD or Blu-ray: \$55.99



This Syfy original series about a viral outbreak at an Arctic research lab starts off as a high-tension thriller in a confined environment, segues into a kind of zombie horror story as the disease spreads, and then transforms into a conspiracy narrative. When the first victim, Dr. Peter Farragut (Neil Napier), falls grotesquely ill, the Centers for Disease Control sends a response team led by husband-and-wife pathologists Dr. Alan Farragut (Billy Campbell), who's also Peter's brother, and Dr. Julia Walker (Kyra Zagorsky). The situation is tricky, because Alan is estranged from Peter, who had an affair with Julia. Each episode presents a day in the ordeal, but following a lively start the plotting soon grows overly complicated and repetitive, with suspicion cast upon lead scientist Hiroshi Hatake (Hiroyuki Sanada), among others. *Battlestar Galactica* veteran Ronald D. Moore is one of the executive producers, and his influence is apparent in the claustrophobic labyrinth of windowless rooms and tunnels and inhospitable environs that make the show feel like a deep-space drama but also results in a visual sameness that quickly becomes tiresome. Only during the final minutes of the first season (which jumps ahead to Day 235) does *Helix* move into the world at large. Compiling all 13 episodes from the 2014 debut season, extras include audio commentaries, behind-the-scenes featurettes, deleted scenes, and outtakes (the Blu-ray edition adds bonus featurettes). Hardcore sci-fi fans may appreciate this show, but it's unlikely to find followers outside the genre. Optional. (S. Axmaker)

Hinterland: Series 1

★★★

Acorn, 4 discs, 398 min., not rated, DVD: \$59.99



Perhaps viewers will eventually tire of brooding, intricately crafted police procedurals that are spun into multi-part TV dramas, but *Hinterland* won't be the show that nails that particular coffin shut. Cut from the same broad cloth as *Wallander*, *The Killing*, *True Detective*, and others, this Welsh entry is divided into four feature-length episodes centered on a complicated homicide investigation. Detective Tom Mathias (Richard Harrington) returns to his native Wales after a shadowy career with the Metropolitan Police in London. His first day on the job in Aberystwyth—a gorgeous locale situated on the west coast of the largest British isle—Tom becomes involved in a gruesome murder case that will expose him to some very creepy human elements (and it won't be the only killing). While each installment sort of stands on its own, the larger themes

and overarching narrative of the quartet make *Hinterland* a deeply immersive viewing experience with long dramatic tendrils revolving around Tom's unresolved personal issues, as well as multiple conflicts with his boss, underlings, and a tight community that holds secrets of their own. Presenting the entire 2014 first season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes and a photo gallery. Boasting solid writing, direction, and performances, this is recommended. (T. Fry)

House of Cards: The Complete Second Season

★★★1/2

Sony, 4 discs, 663 min., not rated, DVD: \$55.99, Blu-ray: \$65.99

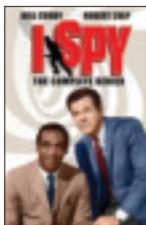


This original Netflix series continues the treacherous, often funny, and always spellbinding saga of antihero Francis Underwood (Kevin Spacey). Francis and his wife, Claire (Robin Wright), have moved into the West Wing as Vice President and Second Lady, and their hunger for power remains insatiable. Francis's unctuous smile and Southern charm hide his murderously Machiavellian brilliance, and such are his powers of manipulation that he makes us complicit by often turning to the camera to directly address the viewer. The situations are gripping, whether focused on a trade war with China, Claire's battle against sexual assault in the military, shady donations to a super PAC, or simply grinding personal enemies into dust. And even though it dives headlong into the bottomless pit of Washington politics, *House of Cards* is just as much about the bleakest conflicts at the center of the human soul. Compiling all 13 episodes from the 2014 second season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes. Serving up many surprises, this dark and delightful series is highly recommended. (T. Fry)

I Spy: The Complete Series

★★★

Timeless, 18 discs, 4,100 min., not rated, DVD: \$129.99



Robert Culp and Bill Cosby were TV's hippest Cold Warriors in the 1960s, a pair of jet-setting spies who goofed around like old chums in between tight situations while on cloak-and-dagger cases. Culp was Kelly Robinson, a veteran agent traveling under the guise of a playboy tennis amateur and minor sports celebrity, and Cosby was Alexander Scott, a Rhodes scholar turned American operative who posed as Kelly's trainer. In an era of shows like *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.* and *Mission: Impossible*, which cashed in on the popularity of James Bond, *I Spy* offered something different. Shot in foreign locations in Asia and Europe as well as the U.S., the show downplayed gadgets and gimmicks while

presenting a more streetwise version of international spycraft, often weaving social issues into the stories. The major draw, however, was the chemistry between the actors, whose rapport was established in both teamwork and their often improvised banter. And along with making the world safe for democracy, the duo effectively broke the color barrier by giving viewers black and white partners who were both friends and equals (which led to the series being banned by some TV stations in the American South). *I Spy* ran for three seasons (1965–68) and Cosby won three consecutive Emmy Awards for Outstanding Lead Actor in a Drama Series. Compiling all 82 episodes, this still entertaining classic TV series is recommended. (S. Axmaker)

The Indian Doctor: Series 3

★★★1/2

BFS, 2 discs, 227 min., not rated, DVD: \$34.98



The third season of the 1960s-set BBC–aired series centering on an Indian doctor who finds himself practicing medicine in a small Welsh village finds the residents of Trefelin shaken by the unexpected return of Basil and Robert Thomas, long-absent sons of the local mine owner. Indeed, the brothers make a dramatic entrance in a loud American sports car followed by a too-generous offer to buy everyone drinks at the pub. And the eponymous physician, Dr. Prem Sharma (Sanjeev Bhaskar), is taken by surprise when Basil (William Houston) and Robert (Rhydian Jones) offer him a job at a new medical center they are planning to build. But the Thomases actually have bigger real estate undertakings in mind involving the development of a new housing community—a scheme that risks creating more harm than happiness for the people of Trefelin. In the meantime, a cave-in at the mines stirs up anxiety among the locals, especially following the discovery that the disaster resulted from an act of sabotage. While the ensemble cast members turn in fine performances, the stories in this set of five episodes from 2012 are not as compelling as in earlier seasons. Still, fans will likely want to see how everything unfolds, making this a strong optional purchase. (P. Hall)

Jack Taylor: Set 2

★★★

Acorn, 3 discs, 280 min., not rated, DVD: \$49.99



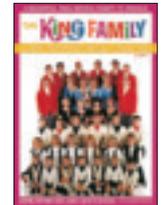
Iain Glen (Jorah Mormont in *Game of Thrones*) is Irish detective Jack Taylor, a hard-drinking ex-cop turned private detective in Galway who has a way of making every case personal. Jack is a likeably gruff private citizen in an Irish culture of shady characters, career criminals, corrupt officials, and a working class that has little faith in the cops. "The

Dramatist," the first entry in this 2013 second set of made-for TV movies, opens with Jack six months "off the sauce" and working to maintain his sobriety while he helps former colleague Kate (Nora-Jane Noone) look into the apparent suicide of a college girl that she thinks is connected to other deaths. The case takes a toll on both Kate and Jack, who returns to the bottle. Things only get worse in the second mystery, "Priest," after the murder of a cleric leads to the revelation of buried church secrets, and Jack's young protégé, Cody (Killian Scott), ends up suffering the consequences. By the third episode, "Shot Down," Jack has fled Galway, and he helps out a group of travelers (Irish gypsies) when a killing puts a young witness's life in danger. Throughout, Glen embodies the soiled hero in a corrupt world—as flawed as they come, but ultimately just the man to walk these mean streets. The culture and setting lend the series a distinctive identity, while Glen carves a great character out of the role. Extras include an interview with director Stuart Orme, and photo galleries. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

The King Family: Classic Television Specials Collection, Volume 1

★★

MVD, 2 discs, 200 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.95



Hopelessly wholesome and obliviously dated, this quartet of King Family holiday specials would make Huey Lewis rethink that whole "hip to be square" thing. This set contains the Easter, Mother's Day, June, and September (Back-to-School) specials, produced between 1967–69—three of the decade's most tumultuous years, but you'd never know that here. The King Family roots date back to the 1930s with the harmonizing King Sisters, but with the passing of decades, everyone—it seemed—got into the act (perhaps the most recognizable would be Tina Cole, a costar on *My Three Sons*). Their musical talent is undeniable, but they come across as so perky that one imagines even "Up with People" members would urge them to take it down a notch. For the uninitiated, think of those Maharelle Sisters sketches on *Saturday Night Live*, but even those cannot prepare viewers for the L7-ness of it all, from the winsome renditions of contemporary hits such as "Happy Together" to the bland Southern California outdoor settings (including a shopping center and a botanic garden). The accompanying extras feature some archival goodies, including excerpts from a lost 1968 Valentine's Day special, home movies, and clips from *The King Family Show* circa 1965. Possibly of interest to Baby Boomer TV buffs, this is an optional purchase. (D. Liebenson)

Klondike ★★★

Cinedigm, 2 discs, 429 min., TV-14, DVD: \$16.99, Blu-ray: \$20.99

Discovery Channel's first foray into scripted drama serves up a ripping yarn about the coots, con-men, and eager beavers who went gold crazy in the wild north of Canada's Yukon in 1897. Based on Charlotte Gray's book *Gold Diggers*, this six-part miniseries combines an impressive visual scope with a nice sense of historical adventure. The theme of man against nature is established immediately with a vivid re-creation of the trek up Chilkoot Pass, the brutal gateway trip required for those who were bent on prospecting for gold in the frozen Klondike. Bill and Byron (Richard Madden and Augustus Prew) are a pair of East Coast greenhorns who set out in hopes of striking it rich, although they are woefully unprepared for the harsh environment and dog-eat-dog morality in boomtown Dawson City. There's a bit of a formula feel to the character types and narrative arc, although an early plot twist upends expectations about how the adventure will unfold, and the supporting cast of oddballs, allies, and scoundrels flesh out the story nicely. Sam Shepard lends gravitas as a fearless preacher, Tim Roth brings subtlety to his mustache-twirling villain, Tim Blake Nelson is wryly inscrutable as a cagy confidante, and Johnny Simmons is all raw enthusiasm as aspiring wilderness writer Jack London. Extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes and cast interviews. Likely to appeal to fans of historical fiction, this is recommended. (T. Fry)



Low Winter Sun: The Complete Series ★★1/2

Anchor Bay, 3 discs, 430 min., not rated, DVD: \$49.98

The original *Low Winter Sun* was a British miniseries starring Mark Strong as a police investigator who conspires to kill a corrupt colleague—and is then assigned to investigate the murder. Strong reprises his role in this AMC-aired American version, this time playing Detective Frank Agnew, a Detroit officer who teams up with Joe Geddes (Lennie James), the frustrated partner of a brutal detective, to kill the bad cop and make it look like suicide. As the perfect crime unravels, Frank and Joe discover that they don't trust one another, a situation that grows worse when Internal Affairs starts its own investigation. Meanwhile, upstart gang leader Damon Callis (James Ransone) is muscling in on gangster territory with big plans and a small fortune in stolen cocaine. The contemporary Detroit setting makes for a suitably grim and desperate environment of poverty and collapse, and while the show wasn't renewed, it does end on an appropri-



ately cynical note that satisfactorily wraps up the story. Unfortunately, *Low Winter Sun* doesn't necessarily stand out from similar cable cop dramas, and since it was quickly canceled, interest will likely be low. Compiling all 10 episodes from 2013, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes and deleted scenes. Optional. (S. Axmaker)

Major Crimes: The Complete Second Season ★★1/2

Warner, 4 discs, 800 min., not rated, DVD: \$59.98

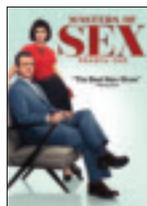
This spin-off of TNT's police procedural *The Closer* continues to center on Mary McDonnell's Captain Sharon Raydor and her relationship with troubled street kid Rusty (Graham Patrick Martin), a teenage witness in a serial-killing trial whom Sharon has taken in as a kind of foster child. This season follows the pressure on Rusty as he deals with threats against his life as the court date approaches. Along with the regulars—Lt. Louie Provenza (G.W. Bailey), Lt. Andy Flynn (Tony Denison), Lt. Mike Tao (Michael Paul Chan), Det. Julio Sanchez (Raymond Cruz), and tech-support provider Buzz Watson (Phillip P. Keene)—there's a new member, Det. Amy Sykes (Kearran Giovanni). Guest star Nadine Velazquez plays Emma Rios, a deputy D.A. whose abrasive approach rubs the crew the wrong way, and Tom Berenger is Sharon's ex-husband. As before, the show's formula is defined by crack teamwork and Raydor's soft-spoken leadership. More interesting than *The Closer*, the series puts greater emphasis on chemistry among the squad and issues in their personal lives, such as Provenza facing impending retirement and Flynn trying to repair family bonds following his divorce. Presenting all 19 episodes from the 2013–14 season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes and deleted scenes. While not must-see-TV, this is still a strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)



Masters of Sex: Season One ★★★1/2

Sony, 4 discs, 676 min., not rated, DVD: \$55.99, Blu-ray: \$65.99

This Showtime original series centers on the man and woman who were at the forefront of the sexual revolution, thanks to an ambitious, daring, and revelatory study of the social and physical realities of sex among American adults. Golden Globe-nominated Michael Sheen plays Dr. William Masters, the successful gynecologist who is determined to pursue his work despite objections from the conservative board at his teaching hospital, and Lizzy Caplan is Virginia Johnson, who began



as Masters' secretary, and soon became an assistant and then a research partner. The first season explores the beginnings of their decades-long partnership, as well as the controversy stirred up at Washington University in St. Louis in the conservative 1950s. Like *Mad Men*, the series uses the subject and setting in order to explore complex issues related to gender roles, chauvinism, sexual identity, and the conflicting pressures of social expectations and personal desires. And while the series unsurprisingly features nudity and sexual situations, it also examines the emotional complications attached to sex (and is oddly less explicit than shows such as *True Blood* or *Spartacus*). Presenting all 12 episodes from the 2013 debut season, extras include an audio commentary, behind-the-scenes featurettes, and deleted scenes (the Blu-ray edition adds bonus featurettes). Handsomely produced, intelligently written and directed, and boasting superb performances, *Masters of Sex* takes a mature approach to what might have simply been titillating subject matter. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

The Mill: Series One

★★★1/2

BFS, 2 discs, 191 min., not rated, DVD: \$34.98

A Dickensian flavor pervades this British series that mixes fact and fiction to tell the story of owners and workers at the Quarry Bank Mill in Cheshire during the Industrial Revolution in England. Set in the early 1830s, *The Mill* contrasts the attitudes of Samuel Greg (Donald Sumpter), founder of the textile manufactory, and his son, Robert (Jamie Draven). Samuel, a man of high motives, sees his hiring of women and children out of workhouses as philanthropic, a view shared by his wife, Hannah (Barbara Marten), who is also active in the abolitionist movement. By contrast, Robert is more pragmatic, believing in modernizing machinery and imposing harsh punishment on troublesome workers. The laborers' perspectives come from Esther Price (Kerrie Hayes), who is radicalized by the often brutal actions of supervisors and overseers; an apprentice named Tommy (Connor Dempsey), who loses a hand to one of the machines; and Daniel (Matthew McNulty), an engineer who is torn between self-interest and the agitation of a labor organizer promoting parliamentary passage of a 10-hour-workday bill. Shot on actual locations at the mill in Cheshire (preserved as a museum of the cotton industry), as well as newly constructed sets, the series features an appropriately dark and gritty look, with exemplary attention paid to period detail. Compiling all four episodes from the 2013 first season, this is highly recommended. (F. Swietek)



Prisoners of War: Season One ★★★

Shout! Factory, 3 discs, 530 min., in Hebrew w/English subtitles, TV-MA, DVD: \$29.95



Some viewers might have heard of this fine Israeli TV series, since it served as the basis for Showtime's smash hit, *Homeland*; but the two shows share only broad similarities. Missing the flashy, acrobatic acting and emphasis on thriller-like suspense that led to *Homeland*'s acclaim, *Prisoners of War* takes a quieter look at the personal and geopolitical aftermath of re-assimilation following prolonged trauma. Seventeen years after being captured on a secret mission in Lebanon, three Israeli soldiers are reunited with their families. Nimrod (Yoram Toledano) returns to an outwardly devoted wife and two teenagers who don't even know him; Uri (Ishai Golan) learns that his former fiancée is now married to his brother; and the remains of Amiel (Assi Cohen) come to a loving sister who breaks under the stress of having only his ghost. Also on hand is a suspicious military psychologist named Haim (Gal Zaid), who plays head games during relentless debriefings and a subsequent investigation. All of these narrative threads receive near-equal focus in this often riveting series in which the moral dilemmas faced in the relationships are remarkably well drawn through flashbacks, sharp writing, and a terrific ensemble cast. Compiling all 10 episodes from the 2009 first season, extras include audio commentaries, and cast and crew interviews. Recommended. (T. Fry)

Regular Show: The Complete Third Season ★★★

Warner, 3 discs, 440 min., TV-PG, DVD: \$26.95



Regular Show is currently neck-and-neck with *Adventure Time* for the honor of being the weirdest, funniest, and coolest pop entertainment on the Cartoon Network's roster of hipster animated series that holds equal appeal for child and adult demographics. Kids dig the frenetic pace, simple line drawings, bright colors, zany shenanigans, and constant references to stuff that pre-pubescents think is cool. College-agers, young parents, and aging boomers are wild about *Regular Show* for pretty much the same reasons—especially the constant references to stuff they consider hilarious. Heading up the animated menagerie of anthropomorphized animals, beasts, and inanimate objects here are cool dudes Mordecai the blue jay and Rigby the raccoon. Each segment offers a snapshot of their bromantic daily doings that zings along in a torrent of pop-culture nods to '80s sci-fi and action films, video game culture, slacker irony, stoner cool, and non

sequitur ribaldry. The two are always trying to duck work assignments from their boss, Benson, the gumball machine (a giant lollipop, a Frankenstein-like bully, a one-handed ghost, and a skipping yeti are also part of the ensemble). Among the best installments included here are "Cool Bikes," "Yes Dude Yes," "Butt Dial," "Gut Model," and "Dead at Eight," all of which feature distinctive blink-and-you'll-miss-it sight gags, biting wit, crazy cleverness, and farcical fun. Compiling all 40 episodes from the 2011–12 third season, extras include audio commentaries, behind-the-scenes featurettes, and a live episode read. Recommended. (T. Fry)

Resurrection: The Complete First Season ★★★1/2

Buena Vista, 2 discs, 344 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.99



Resurrection, which arrived last spring as an ABC midseason replacement, offers a mix of supernatural/sci-fi mystery, philosophical study of small-town psychology, and sensitive human drama. The pilot episode follows 10-year-old Jacob (Landon Gimenez) after he appears in a rural China rice paddy and then makes his way to Arcadia, MO...and the parents who buried him some 30 years earlier. Can it really be him? Jacob's mother, Lucille (Frances Fisher), is more certain than his father, Henry (Kurtwood Smith), but they're both freaked out—as is most of the town, especially after other years-dead residents and relatives start showing up unchanged, with no memory of what happened or where they've been. Omar Epps is a smart, sturdy presence as J. Martin Bellamy, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent who escorts Jacob home, and then sticks around as more of the creepy/emotional/confusing reappearances occur. A large ensemble cast populates Arcadia in this vaguely disturbing but also intermittently absorbing series filled with grace notes that help temper a now-familiar feel of paranormal intrigue. Compiling all eight episodes from the 2014 debut season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes, deleted scenes, and bloopers. A strong optional purchase. (T. Fry)

Rizzoli & Isles: The Complete Fourth Season ★★★

Warner, 4 discs, 673 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.98



TNT's popular pair of distaff crime-fighters—blue-collar Boston homicide detective Jane Rizzoli (Angie Harmon) and smart but awkward medical examiner Maura Isles (Sasha Alexander)—return with their successful formula intact, combining urgent cases with equally

pressing personal crises. The whodunits start with the sniper killing of a state senator during a community parade and conclude with the murder of a U.S. senator's daughter. These mysteries are mostly satisfying, although one episode in which Maura becomes a suspect when her date dies mysteriously—after she has blacked out—distinctly feels been-there-seen-that. Outside the precinct house, Maura must cope as best she can with family members who have gangster connections, while Jane has to confront the return of an old flame. The next season will need to explain the disappearance of one of the show's regular characters, since Lee Thompson Young, the actor portraying Detective Barry Frost, committed suicide towards the end of filming. Compiling all 16 episodes from the 2013–14 fourth season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes. Although *Rizzoli & Isles* doesn't quite measure up to the best TV crime dramas, it's a solid show that has settled into a dependable groove. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

Secret State ★★★1/2

Acorn, 2 discs, 180 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.99



This four-part 2012 British miniseries serves up an invigorating updated adaptation of Chris Mullin's 1982 bestseller *A Very British Coup*. Deputy Prime Minister Tom Dawkins (Gabriel Byrne) is thrust into power following an airplane crash that killed the prime minister. The tragedy occurs after a devastating industrial explosion in which 19 people died—but was there a link between the blast and the PM's death? Dawkins' decision to stand for the vacant leadership position creates a tumultuous swirl involving overly ambitious politicians who aren't above leaking unsavory aspects of Dawkins' past to scandal-sniffing journalists, including Ellis Kane (Gina McKee). Under Ed Fraiman's muscular direction, *Secret State* is a fast-paced thriller full of intellectual and emotional jolts that benefits from Byrne's wonderful full-throttle performance, and fine character turns from Charles Dance, Rupert Graves, and Sylvestra Le Touzel as political warriors. Robert Jones' screenplay takes some contemporary liberties with Mullin's novel—including a subplot related to al-Qaida—but the author clearly approved of the endeavor (he has a bit part as a vicar). DVD extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes and a Q&A with Mullin. Highly recommended. (P. Hall)

The Soul Man: The Complete First Season ★★1/2

Shout! Factory, 2 discs, 255 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.98

TV Land's *The Soul Man*, a spin-off from *Hot in Cleveland*, features a fairly high-concept sitcom setup, as a pop-star sensation steeped

in Las Vegas showmanship gets the calling and returns home to St. Louis—reborn as a preacher, but still full of the R&B showbiz spirit. Ample living up to his name, Cedric the Entertainer inhabits the role of Reverend Boyce “The Voice” Ballentine with great comedic skill. Ditto Niecy Nash as Lolli, his loving yet long-suffering wife, who discovers a lot of crossover elements between the music and God businesses. Also on hand in this family-friendly show are cranky dad Barton (John Beasley), frisky teenage daughter Lyric (Jazz Raycole), and huckster brother Stamps (Wesley Jonathan). While there is a narrative backbone of Christian religiosity here, Reverend Ballentine and his church are less interested in sermons than roof-raising music. Glimpses of Ballentine’s past life as “The Voice” are particularly amusing, and there’s solid chemistry in the interplay between Cedric and Nash. *The Soul Man* is no TV milestone, but it does serve up mindless secular fun, especially for fans of classic ’80s sitcoms. Compiling all 12 episodes from the 2012 debut season, extras include interviews with cast and crew and a music video. A strong optional purchase. (T. Fry)

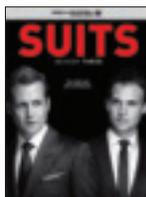


Suits: Season Three

★★★

Universal, 4 discs, 704 min., not rated, DVD: \$44.98

The USA Network’s light and snappy legal drama continues to leave the trial fireworks to other shows while it focuses on deals made outside the courtroom. Gabriel Macht is Harvey Specter, the superstar “closer” in a powerful New York law firm, and Patrick J. Adams is his protégé, Mike Ross, a young genius with a photographic memory and a knack for thinking outside the box. What Mike doesn’t have, however, is a law degree, a rather important fact that the firm’s idiosyncratic financial law expert, Louis Litt (Rick Hoffman), comes close to discovering in this set. *Game of Thrones* alumni Michelle Fairley and Conleth Hill costar this season as a major case creates a strain for the firm’s new merger with a British group, while Mike’s secret continues to be a liability to both the practice and the people he loves (especially after a U.S. attorney pressures Mike to incriminate Harvey), all of which makes an offer from a heavyweight investment bank look very attractive. *Suits* is a stylish series that is entertaining and addictive, with melodramatic plotlines, complicated alliances, romantic tangles, and cases treated as personal contests. Compiling all 16 episodes from the 2013–14 third season, extras include episode commentaries, deleted scenes, behind-the-scenes featurettes, a gag reel, and webisodes. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



The Village: Series One

1914-1920 ★★★½
BFS, 3 discs, 360 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.98

This set represents the start of an ambitious project by writer Peter Moffat that aims to dramatize life in an English village over the entire 20th century and into the 21st, as seen from the perspective of a single resident—Bert Middleton, portrayed at various stages of his life by Bill Jones, Alfie Stewart, Tom Varey, and David Ryall. This first of several proposed seasons covers the years from the outbreak of World War I in 1914, when Bert was 12, to the dedication of the community’s commemorative monument to its war dead some six years later. The focus is on the Middleton family—young Bert; his alcoholic farmer father, John (John Simm); his loving, long-suffering mother, Grace (Maxine Peake), who goes to work in a factory; his older brother, Joe (Nico Mirallegro), who volunteers for the army and returns from the trenches psychologically scarred; and his baby sister. But the Middletons’ lives become intertwined with those of the wealthy Allinghams, whose riches and power mask serious domestic troubles of their own. And Bert is much affected by a compassionate teacher, Gerard Eyre (Matt Stokoe), a conscientious objector who gives the boy a camera that allows him to take the photographs that, in old age, Bert will use to jog his memory. Many characters populate this multi-layered narrative, which plays a bit like *Downton Abbey*, only told from the other end of the social spectrum. Compiling the first six episodes from 2013, this evocative, engrossing series is highly recommended. (F. Swietek)



Wallander 3 ★★★½

MHZ, 4 discs, 549 min., in Swedish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$69.95

Kurt Wallander, the dour small-town Swedish police inspector created by novelist Henning Mankell, will be familiar to some American viewers through the excellent British telefilms starring Kenneth Branagh that were shown on PBS’s *Masterpiece Mystery!* But the original Swedish films with Krister Henriksson are even better, although sadly they end with this 2013 third series. The weather is wintry, but the mood is valedictory, as Wallander faces forced retirement while finally forging a strong bond with his estranged daughter, Linda (Charlotta Jonsson)—also a cop—and enjoying the company of his little granddaughter. The sense of closure is accentuated by a subplot that threatens the absorption of Wallander’s Ystad squad into operations at the provincial capital of Malmö. The dark plots—all based on books or story ideas by Mankell but writ-



ten by others—are twisty but also rich in character, involving long-buried Cold War secrets, kidnapped children, human trafficking, mob prejudice, and police corruption, among other topics. Superbly acted—particularly by Henriksson, who brings almost painful depth to Wallander as he struggles to close his final cases while confronting personal demons—this set marks a satisfying, if rather grim, conclusion to an outstanding series. Compiling the last six episodes, extras include an interview with Henriksson and a behind-the-scenes featurette. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

Witches of East End: The Complete First Season

★★½

Fox, 3 discs, 417 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.98

Created for Lifetime channel, this is a female-centered supernatural series about a family of witches beset by a curse. Joanna Beauchamp (Julia Ormond) is the immortal mother of two daughters, Freya (Jenna Dewan-Tatum) and Ingrid (Rachel Boston), who are fated to die before they turn 30 and are unaware of their magical legacy. Joanna’s more adventurous sister, Wendy (Mädchen Amick)—who has nine lives and turns into a black cat—arrives to warn Joanna of impending danger and sticks around to protect the girls, who are soon ushered into the ways of witchcraft. *Witches* borrows from shows like *The Vampire Diaries* and *Once Upon a Time*, where attractive stars and hot and sexy romances are employed to spice up the drama. But for all the cheesecake—including steamy scenes with Freya’s rich fiancé, Dash (Eric Winter), and his rebellious, bad-boy brother, Killian (Daniel DiTomasso)—as well as the usual mishaps and magic tropes, the show is grounded by the women’s strength and the increasingly strong family bonds that develop. Compiling all 10 episodes from the 2013 debut season, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette, deleted scenes, a gag reel, and a collection of bloopers featuring the cat. Lightweight but also fun and sexy, this is a strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)



Video Librarian Online

Visit Video Librarian Online (www.videolibrarian.com) for more reviews during September and October, including: *Case Histories: Series 2*, *Corazon Indomable*, *Orphan Black: Season Two*, *Scott and Bailey: Season One*, *Wahlburgers: The Complete First Season*, *Warehouse 13: Season Five*, *A Young Doctor’s Notebook*, and much more!

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

★★★★ = Excellent

★★★ = Good

★★ = Fair

★ = Poor

PPR = Public Performance Rights

DD = Digital Download

Aud = Audience

K = Preschool-Kindergarten

E = Elementary (grades 1-3)

I = Intermediate (grades 4-6)

J = Jr. High (grades 7-8)

H = High School (grades 9-12)

C = Colleges & Universities

P = Public Libraries

CHILDREN'S

Behold the Beautiful Dung Beetle

★★★★

(2014) 10 min. DVD: \$38.99. Dreamscape Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62923-582-0.

Combining watercolor and pencil artwork, this informative iconographic-animated adaptation of the 2014 picture book by author Cheryl Bardoe and illustrator Alan Marks serves up a positive spin on the lowly dung beetle, who...you know...eats poop. *Behold the Beautiful Dung Beetle* features visual examples—with textbook-like illustrations—along with lots of vocabulary words (such as "elytra" top wings, pupa, scarabs, etc.) to introduce young viewers to the three types of dung beetles (dwellers, rollers, and tunnelers), exploring their roles in digging and stashing food, while also looking at how eggs are laid and hatched. Narrated by Susie Berneis, this engaging nature study (sure to make youngsters giggle over euphemisms connected to feces, such as "lightening its load") also includes a read-along option. Recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Betsy's Kindergarten Adventures: Volume 4 ★★★★★

(2011) 120 min. DVD: \$19.95. Polka Dot Productions (dist. by Janson Media). ISBN: 978-1-56839-460-2.

Curious kindergartner Betsy explores school and the world around her in this eight-story compilation from the well-crafted

PBS-aired animated series. Joined by the diverse students in her classroom, Betsy learns about bike safety, takes a field trip to a firehouse, and receives a tutorial on the basics of molecules. Employing bright, simple animation and a lightly humorous tone—nicely conveyed by voice actors including Nancy Cartwright, Tom Bosley, Bess Armstrong, Fred Willard, and Sally Struthers—the show consistently tackles important and useful topics in an entertaining manner, while also taking brief side trips into unrelated subjects—just like your typical 5-year-old might (here, for example, lessons about safety and responsibility are interspersed with fun facts about lizards). *Betsy's Kindergarten Adventures* packs a lot of information into each episode, but maintains an easy pace and never feels overwhelming. Recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (K. Cruver)

Each Kindness ★★1/2

(2014) 9 min. DVD: \$59.95 (study guide included). Weston Woods Studios. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-0-545-67079-1.

Featuring realistic artwork (and nice touches such as light snow falling), this iconographic-animated adaptation of the 2012 Coretta Scott King Honor Book by author Jacqueline Woodson and illustrator E.B. Lewis is narrated by Nikki M. James and features music by Ernest Troost. Attitude-heavy tween protagonist Chloe helps torment a new girl with raggedy clothes and shoes named Maya, who is ostracized from the moment the principal introduces her to the class. Poor Maya tries to assimilate (but Chloe "didn't smile back") and brings shareable toys such as jacks, cards, and pickup sticks, although no one plays with her. "Every day we whispered about Maya," says Chloe, who along with her peers refers to Maya as "Never New," due to the latter's secondhand

clothes. Chloe feels remorse only after Maya doesn't show up for school for a long time, which makes her wonder whether her and her friends should have been nicer. Lovely watercolor illustrations and subtle sound effects (such as schoolyard chatter and water rippling over stones) can't quite compensate for the negativity of this story that means to deliver an anti-bullying message, but some may see as sympathizing with the bully. A strong optional purchase. Aud: K, E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Exclamation Mark ★★★

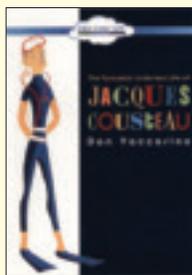
(2014) 6 min. DVD: \$59.95 (study guide included). Weston Woods Studios. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-0545-66114-0.

A simple slice-of-life tale starring various forms of punctuation, this animated adaptation of author Amy Krouse Rosenthal and illustrator Tom Lichtenheld's 2013 *Kirkus* honored children's book features a jazzy sax-heavy soundtrack by David Mansfield. Set against a notebook-lined background, the main character here is an Exclamation Mark who "stood out from the very beginning" in a realm of mostly Periods. Confused and upset about being so different, E.M. contemplates running away, until he meets a chatty, exuberant Question Mark, who helps draw out Exclamation's inner "wow" factor, revealing that he has great semantic power ("Yum! Boo! Look out! Encore!"). Narrated by Priscilla Holbrook, Emily Eiden, and MacLeod Andrews, this cute paean to punctuation—which also features a read-along option—is recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Goldy Luck and the Three Pandas ★★1/2

(2014) 9 min. DVD: \$38.99. Dreamscape Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62923-585-1.

Author Natasha Yim and illustrator Grace



The Fantastic Undersea Life of Jacques Cousteau

★★★1/2

(2014) 9 min. DVD: \$38.99. Dreamscape Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62923-617-9.

Sporting bright primary colors, this surreal iconographic-animated short based on the 2009 picture book by author and illustrator Dan Yaccarino offers an info-packed look at the life of aquatic aficionado extraordinaire Jacques Cousteau. Narrated by Qarie Marshall, *The Fantastic Undersea Life of Jacques Cousteau* explores the undersea pioneer's love of the sea ("he wanted to share its beauty with the world"), from his sickly French childhood

during which he was encouraged to swim for his health, to a car accident that left him with arm braces, after which he turned to the Mediterranean to regain his strength. After a friend hooked him up with some goggles, Jacques was off and running ("sometimes we are lucky enough to know that our lives have been changed"), eventually setting sail aboard his famed research vessel *Calypso* with a team of scientists. Throughout his multifaceted career in film, TV, and publishing, Cousteau helped to make advancements in diving equipment—including the invention of the Aqua Lung—and underwater camera and lighting, while also spearheading conservation efforts to protect the seas from pollution. Featuring a read-along option, this fine portrait of a passionate "ambassador of the oceans" is highly recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Zong's 2014 picture book is adapted in this iconographic-animated Chinese-American refashioning of the classic "Story of the Three Bears" fairy tale. Born in the Year of the Golden Dragon, young Goldy Luck is on her way to bring turnip cakes to share with the neighbor family of panda bears in honor of the Chinese New Year. Like the rude Goldilocks in the classic story, Goldy displays bulldozing selfishness when it comes to the pandas' worldly goods: she tastes their bowls of congee, observes that one panda's fluffy pillowed chair makes her feel "like stuffing in a pork bun," and that another's mattress "felt as hard as a week-old almond cookie," before settling on Little Chan's futon—and running away without apologizing when the family returns home. Also featuring a read-along option, this moderately engaging twist on the old tale centering on a poor role model is a strong optional purchase. Aud: K, E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Isabelle Dances Into the Spotlight ★★

(2014) 100 min. DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$26.98. Universal Studios Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned.

This latest addition to the live-action movies inspired by American Girl doll characters is based on the "Doll of the Year" stories by

Laurence Yep. Nine-year-old Isabelle (played by the obviously older Erin Pitt, who was born in 1999) likes her performing arts school but feels overshadowed by her energetic and legendary older sister (Grace Davidson). When auditions come up with famous dancer Jackie Sanchez (National Ballet of Canada ballerina Tanya Howard), Isabelle—who often makes mistakes and falls down—is encouraged to try out for a part in the upcoming *Nutcracker*, and later a "fourth grade" spot in a summer program. The overall message to "be yourself" is more than a little shopworn, but this franchise entry is still sure to be popular. Optional. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Monster High Clawesome Double Feature: Fright On!/Escape from Skull Shores ★★★

(2014) 92 min. DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$26.99. Universal Studios Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned.

The ghoulishly glamorous gals of *Monster High* are back in this double-feature compilation. "Escape from Skull Shores" follows the gang on a spring break trip to the Great Barrier Reef to visit sea monster's daughter Lagoon's folks. As a freshwater-creature himself, boyfriend Gil is naturally stressed about meeting Lagoon's saltwater parents,

but that storyline is sidetracked after a shipwreck leaves the entire group stranded and at the mercy of a villainous traveling freak show owner named Farnum, who sees dollar signs when he looks at the creepy teens. In "Fright On!," Headmistress Bloodgood announces that the school will expand to include students from the "vamposers" Belfry Prep and lupine Crescent Moon High. The teens have some difficulty warming up to each other, which is only made worse when a clandestine outside party uses doppelgangers and tricks to drive them further apart. Sure to be popular, this two-fer from the tongue-in-cheek series is recommended. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Mumfie's Quest: The Movie ★★

(1994) 108 min. DVD: \$9.98. Lionsgate (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Featuring pallid Saturday morning cartoon level animation, this 1994 film inspired by the works of Katharine Tozer and written by Britt Allcroft (of *Thomas the Tank Engine* fame) finds "little pachyderm with the great big heart" Mumfie packing up some snacks and heading out on an adventure beyond the edge of the wood. Meeting a scarecrow and a winged pig named Pinkey, the trio go off to search for Pinkey's mom, a quest that features crazy escapades: riding a whale, get-

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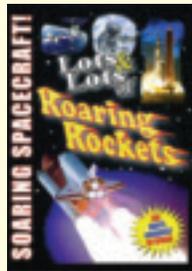
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Lots & Lots of Roaring Rockets ★★★1/2

(2014) 90 min. DVD: \$14.95 (\$19.95 w/PPR). Marshall Publishing. ISBN: 978-1-936134-30-45.

Following the mold of other offerings in the *Lots & Lots* series, this release serves up a capsule history of rockets, space flight, and exploration. Featuring the usual winning elements (strong visuals accompanied by original music and cover songs from James Coffey), *Lots & Lots of Roaring Rockets* touches on everything from hobby-kit models launched in backyards around the world, to the (much) bigger vehicles used in the exploration of deep space. Viewers will see archival footage of early unmanned flights into orbit and beyond, moon shots (Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo missions), space shuttles, the International Space Station, the X-15 rocket-powered airplane, and more. The jet-fueled fun is augmented with informative science ranging from a guide to the solar system to an overview of the physics of space flight. *Roaring Rockets* also acknowledges some of the human tragedies that have been part of the story. Offering a solid combination of information and entertainment that should appeal to younger viewers, this is highly recommended. Aud: P. (C. Block)



ting chased by a cat, and avoiding the prison guard of the mean Secretary of Night (who bottles and hoards wonderful sounds, such as children's laughter, for his own devices). Also featuring loads of other random stuff tossed in—a magical umbrella, a mysterious cove, pirates, and talking eels—this may hold some nostalgic value for those who saw it growing up in the '90s, but is unlikely to appeal to today's youth. Optional. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

VeggieTales: Celery Night Fever ★★★

(2014) 45 min. DVD: \$14.98. Big Idea Productions (avail. from most distributors).

This latest title in the long-running Christian children's animated series adopts a disco-ish theme for a story inspired by Ephesians 4:32, a biblical verse concerning forgiveness. The corny, pun-filled *Celery Night Fever*—featuring vegetables as characters—centers on young Laura Carrot, who wants to stop a real estate tycoon (smoothly voiced by comic actor Terry Crews) from redeveloping the local Celery Park into “something classy...like a strip mall or a motel.” Laura comes up with a wild idea for a fundraising effort to save the park: namely, asking her grandfather to get his band the Groovy Brothers back together for a money-making reunion. Flashbacks explain how the group fell apart, while the storyline eventually pulls all of the major players together for the concert finale—which someone attempts to sabotage. Boasting catchy tunes and solid humor, this addition to the popular series is recommended. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Worlds Together: Colombia ★★★

(2013) 25 min. DVD: \$29.95 (teacher's guide included). Master Communications. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60480-156-9.

Producer Elmer Hawkes's latest *Worlds Together* entry takes viewers to the “Gateway

to South America”—the Republic of Colombia, offering a look at the country's culture and history. Situated close to the Equator (so there are no strong seasonal changes), Colombia is home to 10% of the world's living plant species. Boasting a major seaport and being the second largest coffee producer, Colombia—which was never actually visited by Christopher Columbus—features a mix of Spanish and African influences on the Mestizos and Amerindian culture. Combining descriptive maps and graphics with on-location footage, *Colombia* visits the economic center of Cali (with its book fairs and nightlife); the modern metro system and extensive universities of “the land of eternal spring” in Medellín; the colonial mountain hideaway of Villa de Leyva; the Tres Fronteras Amazonian border port Leticia; the festival-friendly Cartagena (which has history with famed Welsh pirate Henry Morgan); and the capital city of Bogotá. Also serving up details on cuisine (including year-round fresh veggies and fruit) and social observances (such as the siesta), this interesting overview is recommended. Aud: I, J, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

PSYCHOLOGY & SELF-HELP

ADHD Rush Hour ★★★1/2

(2012) 76 min. DVD: \$169.95. Films Media Group. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-61753-422-5.

Italian director Stella Savino divides her time between kids, parents, and medical experts in this informative, if also somewhat unfocused, documentary about ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) in which none of the speakers are identified until the end credits. For children with ADHD, school presents an obvious challenge, since trouble concentrating and being disruptive can impede the learning process for both the kids and their class-

mates. A treatment specialist recommends summer school to help these children catch up. Doctors talk about the criteria used in diagnosing ADHD, such as “has trouble sitting still,” which is a characteristic that applies to many children, suggesting that a psychologist or neurologist would be better equipped to render a verdict than a general practitioner. In America, 10% of the population has been diagnosed with ADHD, although that statistic likely includes a number of misdiagnoses. While no one knows the exact cause, it is believed that both genetics and environment are contributing factors. Furthermore, Americans consume 80% of the relevant prescription medications—such as Adderall, Ritalin, and Concerta—which can cause problems for those who don't actually have the disorder. Armando, a high school student, says he used to make strange sounds in the classroom if he didn't take his dose for the day; he adds that he concentrates better on Concerta, but becomes distant and has problems sleeping, so he stops taking it during the summer. The overall conclusion here is that we still have a long way to go in regards to both the diagnosis and the treatment of ADHD. A strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Boredom ★★★

(2013) 61 min. DVD: \$19.98. The Disinformation Company/TDC (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-939517-23-4.

Filmmaker Albert Nerenberg takes an irreverent, sometimes illuminating, sometimes obvious look at the subject of human boredom in this somewhat persuasive documentary. Beginning with the question of what exactly is boredom, Nerenberg explores the underlying biology, discovering that something many of us assume—i.e., that boredom causes sleepiness—is a fallacy. Boredom leads to stress and an overactive brain, which results in the subjective experience of time moving very slowly. Nerenberg argues that in our modern age of digital information—which is constantly accessible through cell phones, tablets, etc.—we are training our minds to find any sensory experience other than a virtual one to be flat and boring. Nerenberg even goes on to suggest that it's in the actual interest of employers and schools to disguise the true nature of boredom, since it can then be assumed that boredom is an individual problem rather than an institutional or cultural one. So, how do we liberate ourselves from boredom-inducing habits? Nerenberg demonstrates one old-fashioned way: simply stop what you're doing and look around. Presenting both the full-length documentary and a 48-minute “Revolutionary Accelerated Unboring Version,” extras include bonus featurettes. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)



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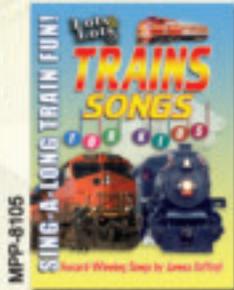
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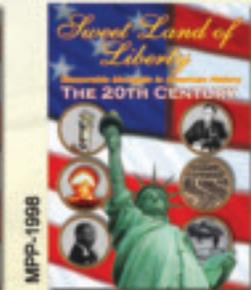
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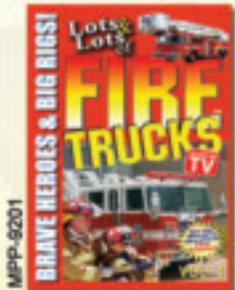
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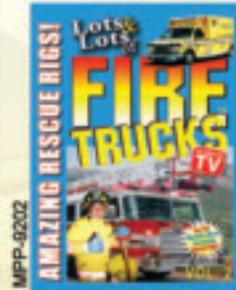
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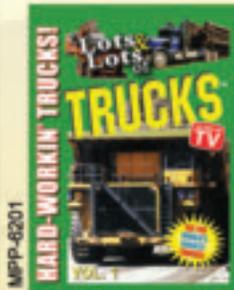
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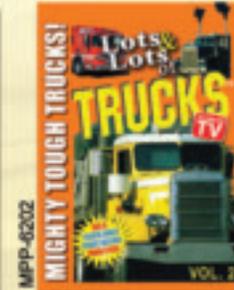
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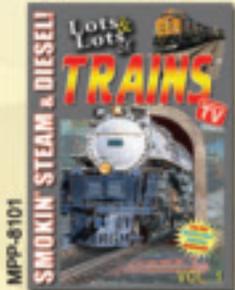
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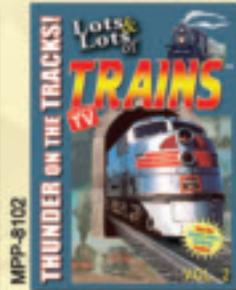
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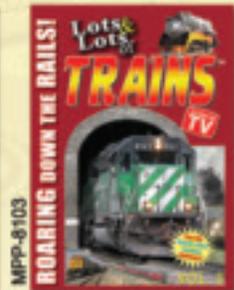
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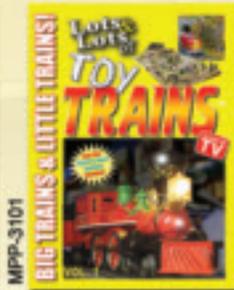
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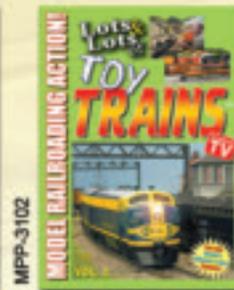
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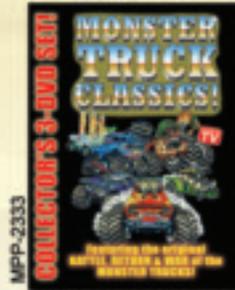
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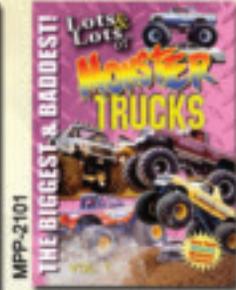
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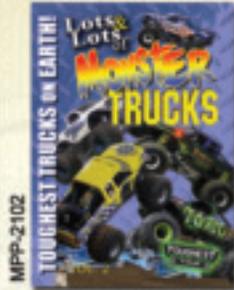
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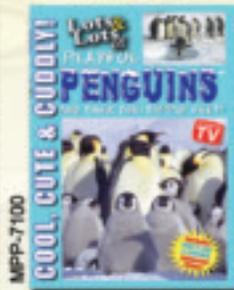
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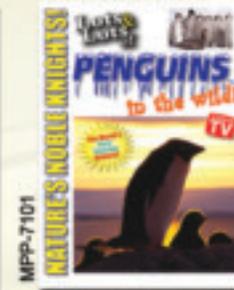
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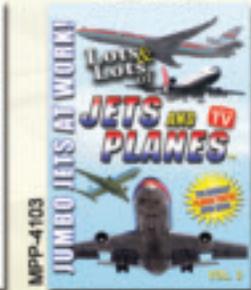
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Too Sane for This World ★★★1/2

(2014) 63 min. DVD: \$19.95. Cinema Libre Studio (avail. from most distributors).

Despite the considerable media attention devoted to autism in recent years, many remain confused about the subject, as is clearly evident in this documentary by William Davenport in which a person-on-the-street interviewee defines autism as a “disease kind of thing.” *Too Sane for This World* does a fine job of presenting the facts, while also showing how 12 very different adults—diagnosed with either autism or Asperger syndrome—are able to enjoy complete and happy lives. Some of those profiled were not aware of their condition until relatively late in life—one man laughs as he recalls how his then-wife insisted that “there was something odd about me.” A few of the spotlighted individuals will be familiar to many viewers, including bestselling author Rudy Simone and animal-behavior expert and autism activist Dr. Temple Grandin; others have achieved admirable career goals in a variety of fields. During the in-depth conversations, the interviewees come across as articulate, sincere, and focused while discussing their individual health conditions and respective efforts to become fully functioning participants in the wider society. At a time when one in 110 American children is being diagnosed on the autism spectrum, this film provides an invaluable understanding of the nature of autism and an inspirational look at how those diagnosed can go on to thrive, living successful adult lives. DVD extras include the “Space Cadet” music video. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Crisis Hotline: Veterans Press 1

★★★1/2

(2014) 40 min. DVD: \$19.98. HBO Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Ellen Goosenberg Kent’s HBO-aired documentary follows up on her previous work—*Wartorn: 1861–2010* (VL-9/11) and *Alive Day Memories: Home from Iraq* (VL-1/08)—in detailing the struggles that returning military personnel face in the aftermath of battle. The focus here is on the work of the Veterans Crisis Line in upstate New York, which offers telephone assistance to wounded warriors who are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and dealing with crises ranging from alcohol and drug dependence to homelessness. The number of those in need of help is staggering: since 9/11, more veterans have died from suicide than from fighting on the Afghanistan and Iraq battlefields. The facility featured here has received more than 900,000 inquiries in the past seven years, with calls ranging in duration from a scant few minutes to gruelingly lengthy cries for help. Kent’s camera bears witness to the call center’s counselors, who assure and engage the troubled callers in conversations that are often harrowing, although the responders maintain professionalism and contain their emotions while guiding vets through problems. Although relatively short, *Crisis Hotline: Veterans Press 1* offers a vivid reminder of the continuing (yet often ignored) challenges faced by combat vets. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Saying Goodbye ★★★

(2013) 38 min. DVD: \$129. Terra Nova Films. PPR.

This short work consists of 15 video clips

that Chicago-based psychiatrist and educator Dr. Geraldine Fox compiled of her elderly father, Si, over an eight-year period, as his health was steadily deteriorating and his emotional state slid into deepening depression. At one point, Si glumly confesses, “I’ve not really accomplished much in my lifetime.” Observing his 97th birthday at a restaurant, Si comments that he will “hopefully not have many more” such celebrations. Fox’s mother is also present—if only in body; she suffered from dementia, which further isolated Si. “It ain’t no fun getting old,” he remarks, while grimly viewing his surroundings at a nursing care facility as “a new life and the gateway to infinity.” Fox bills this production as a “personal documentary of attachment and loss at end of life,” but her filmmaking skills are somewhat lacking. The sound is often substandard—a low hiss permeates the soundtrack at some points, while an exterior sequence is ruined by audible gushes of wind around the camera. While Si’s plight is heartbreaking, Fox’s filming of his anguish feels insensitive—despite the family connection—and the viewer is left feeling both uncomfortable and helpless while listening to Si’s barely concealed sorrow and his frank talk about wishing to die. DVD extras include an instructor’s manual with discussion tips on topics such as quality of life, stages of grief, and advance directives. Optional. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

About Miracles ★★★

(2014) 59 min. DVD: \$19.99. Lifestreams Media (dist. by Vision Video).

This Christian-faith-based documentary takes on the subject of modern miracles,

drawing on the stories of four people: a left-for-dead victim of a convenience store robbery, whose terrifying experience ultimately leads to both an unexpected recovery and a solution to his immigration woes; a woman who, without any apparent symptoms, acts on a “feeling” that she needs to be taken to the ER and receives just-in-time care as she slips into a coma; a blind musician (the result of a childhood accident) whose parents’ prayers for their son’s sight to be restored seem to have gone unanswered—until one considers his success; and a student who has just one week to raise thousands of dollars for a mission trip. Producer-director Chris Lang presents these narratives through dramatic re-enactments and interviews with the subjects, who note that the key factor for each was their faith in God—letting go of their own sense of control, in the face of overwhelming odds, in order to trust in the divine. Recommended. Aud: P. (C. Block)

David Suchet: In the Footsteps of St.

Paul ★★★

(2011) 108 min. DVD: \$29.99. Athena (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62172-216-8.

In this two-part BBC-aired documentary, noted English actor David Suchet—famous for playing Hercule Poirot, Agatha Christie’s Belgian sleuth—follows the journey by which Paul, an erstwhile persecutor of Christians, became Christianity’s most influential early spokesperson and organizer. Suchet says that he grew fascinated with Paul while reading his epistles, and now simply wants to know more about the man and his mission. So he travels to Tarsus, where Paul was born and later became an intransigent foe of the new sect, and follows the presumed route to Damascus where Paul had his famous conversion experience. Suchet then journeys to eastern cities—Antioch, Ephesus, Athens, and Corinth, among them—where Paul attempted to establish Christian communities (with various degrees of success). After detouring to Jerusalem, where an early council accepted Paul’s controversial accommodations for gentile converts, Suchet proceeds to recount Paul’s arrest and transfer to Rome for trial as a Roman citizen, ending with some speculation about why the date and manner of his death remain matters of conjecture and legend. Along the way, Suchet reads from Paul’s letters and conducts interviews with local specialists, as well as high religious figures—although his questions are more those of an enthusiast than a scholar. Still, while the series might have benefited from a more rigorously academic approach, it will surely appeal to those who are looking for a biblically inspired travelogue rather than a learned lecture. DVD extras include a text bio of Suchet and a viewer’s guide. Recommended. Aud: P. (F. Swietek)

A Gathering of Souls: The Billy Graham Crusades ★★★

(2014) 51 min. DVD: \$14.99. Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals (dist. by Vision Video).

Billy Graham was a superstar in the mid-20th-century world of evangelical Christianity. *A Gathering of Souls*, which presents an interesting overview of the administrative machine that supported his ability to preach to millions of people in North America, Europe, Asia, and Africa, combines archival stills and footage together with commentary from pastors, Graham associates, and other evangelists to offer an eye-opening profile. In the same way that a rock band with a huge following will engage in logistical talks with a city (regarding security, traffic, etc.), a Graham booking begins a year or so before a given appearance with the creation of a regional committee tasked with making sure that members of all Christian faiths in the area know they are invited. Graham's approach has been to cross every divisive line—denominations, class, and race—in order to create a unified church based on the sweeping love of God. This documentary makes a good case for Graham's role as an emerging diplomat on the world stage, using his crusades to teach the gospels at a

time when the Cold War was threatening civilization. Anti-communist yet also sensitive to the world's "age of anxiety," Graham is seen here as a persevering force for good. Recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

Secrets of the Vatican ★★★

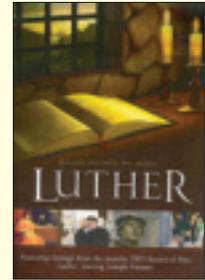
(2014) 90 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-088-6.

Vatican City is a state within a state featuring its own post office and bank—not to

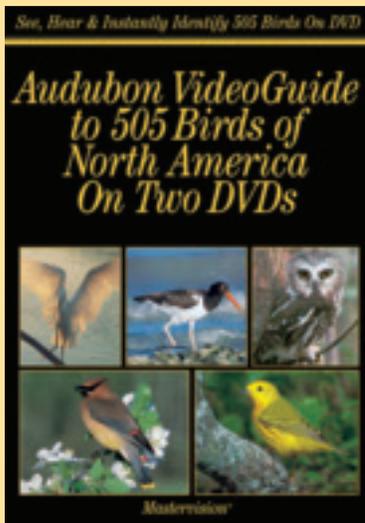
Luther: His Life, His Path, His Legacy ★★★1/2

(2014) 90 min. DVD: \$19.99. Vision Video.

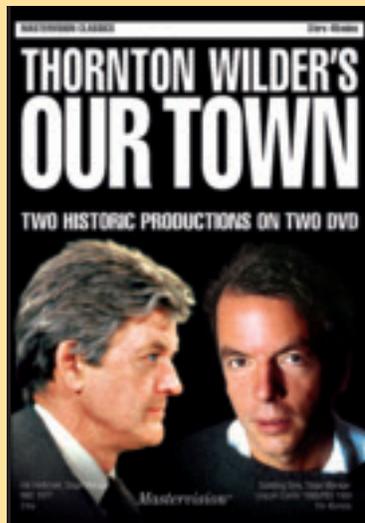
Interweaving excerpts from the 2003 theatrical film *Luther* (starring Joseph Fiennes), this documentary offers a fascinating look at the complex man credited by many with sparking the Protestant Reformation—i.e., the beginnings of non-Catholic forms of Christian worship during the 16th century. Voiceover narration accompanies footage of historical sites (including Eisleben, the German town where Luther was born and died), documents, and artwork, while religious scholars offer insights about Luther's tremendous impact. Punctuating these elements are the movie clips, with Fiennes bringing the historical figure to life in dramatic intervals. Viewers will learn about Luther's difficult relationship with his stern and often disapproving father, one that may help to explain why Luther was so driven to change what he thought was wrong with some aspects of Catholicism at the time. Luther's now-legendary document "The Ninety-Five Theses on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences" was written in protest of the practice of relatives paying the Church to allow deceased loved ones to leave Purgatory and enter Heaven (publication of which led to Luther's excommunication). As both a German monk and a Catholic priest, Luther had access to the Latin Bible, and in another bold act created a version written in common German, enabling more people to read it. A fine profile of one of the most important figures in the history of religion, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Block)



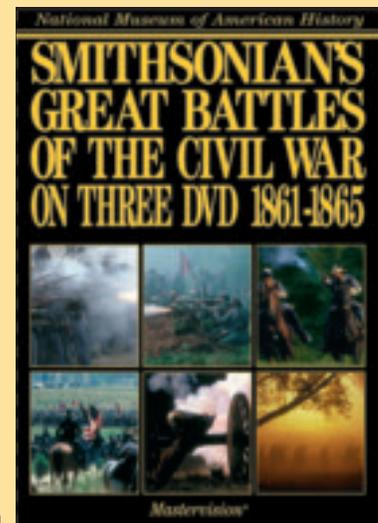
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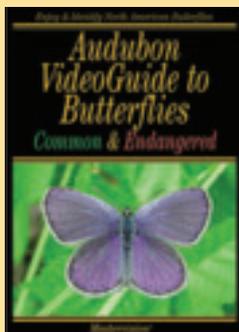
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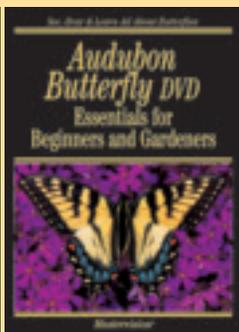
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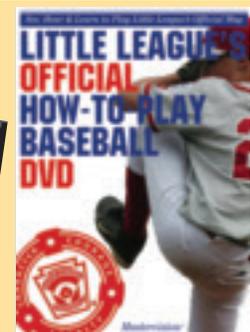
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3 hours



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mention unique culture, along with plenty of pomp and ceremony. The Vatican also has an impressive bureaucracy—known as the Papal curia—which in recent years has been beset by charges of corruption, cronyism, systematic hiding of child sexual abuse, and even criminal enterprises such as money laundering. This PBS-aired *Frontline* documentary from filmmaker Antony Thomas arrives at a critical time, a year after Pope Francis succeeded an aging, ailing Benedict, offering the promise of a new era of humility and transparency. Experts interviewed here agree that Benedict was a holy man, but also a scholar and product of the institutional church who perhaps lacked the administrative skills necessary to reform the Church in crisis. The documentary looks at a group called the Legionaries of Christ, who are good at fundraising, but also implicated in covering up child sexual abuse, all the while living extravagant lifestyles. Too often, the Church dealt with pedophilia charges by transferring offenders, intimidating accusers, and aggressively challenging lawsuits. Interviewees here claim that some priests lead double lives, engaged in partying and promiscuity; viewing rules as mere priestly vestments—to be removed when convenient. The film also covers “Vatileaks,” the notorious case of Benedict’s butler, who revealed details about the secret life of the Vatican. By choosing a new Pope from outside Rome, who emphasizes piety and mercy, many harbor the hope that a new era has dawned for the Catholic Church. Obviously, no conclusions can yet be reached, but while the unquestioning devout are unlikely to enjoy this critique, it seems mostly fair. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)

SOCIAL & POLITICAL ISSUES

American Arab ★★1/2

(2013) 60 min. DVD: \$99.95; public libraries & high schools; \$350: colleges & universities. The Cinema Guild. PPR. ISBN: 0-7815-1473-8.

The Arab-American experience and its attendant dilemmas are explored a little too sketchily—and very personally—here by Iraqi-born, Iowa-bred, and Chicago-educated filmmaker Usama Alshaibi. Alshaibi and his family fled Saddam’s regime for U.S. citizenship, but even though he identifies himself as an atheist, the filmmaker is distressed over the image of Islam in post 9/11 America. His Palestinian mother sums up her own personal disappointment with a eulogy for a younger son, who died in Chicago a heroin addict; he had “the wrong kind of freedom.” Alshaibi presents a media montage of kitschy Hollywood Arab stereotypes, citing the hypocrisy evident in demonizing Muslim headscarves and veils when similar ethnic Anglo-European female attire (bonnets,

babushkas, mantillas, and nun habits) carry no stigma. And he profiles musician Marwan Kamel and the iconoclastic “Taqwacore” music scene, which blends Arab pride and discontent together with punk rock. The recurring themes of xenophobic bigotry here hit home when Alshaibi is beaten in the Iowa town where he had planned to start a family, although the hate-crime headlines bring accusations (mainly from internet trolls, it seems) that Alshaibi faked the assault as PR for his documentaries. Animated and surreal interludes interwoven throughout underscore Alshaibi’s background in avant-garde work in this film that feels too short for the wide-ranging arguments it mounts. A strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Anomaly ★★★

(2013) 47 min. DVD: \$80: public libraries & high schools; \$300: colleges & universities. Third World Newsreel. PPR.

Director Jessica Chen Drammeh, who is of Chinese and Caucasian descent, draws inspiration from her own background for this short documentary on multiracial identity. Like her, all of the interviewees here have faced the same question—“what are you?”—in daily life and on census forms, and they respond in different ways. Folk singer Gabriella Callender, who grew up in a foster family, used to check “black,” but then started to consider alternatives, such as “other,” since she’s part white. During the course of filming, Gabriella reunites with her mother, who had to give her up when confined to a mental institution (Gabriella never met her father, but hasn’t stopped searching). Thaddeus Rutkowski, a jazz musician with a Caucasian mother and a Congolese father, prefers “all of the above,” but that isn’t always an option. Michelle Myers, a spoken word artist who has performed on *Russell Simmons Presents DefPoetry*, identifies herself

as Asian, partially because her father’s family hasn’t offered as much support as that of her Korean mother, especially once she married a black man. She and her husband, Tyrone, have since had three children, who share an even more complicated racial heritage. The growth of the multiracial population in the U.S. has led to courses on the subject at colleges throughout the country, and professors from New York University, the University of Massachusetts, and Stanford University all contribute commentary here. A thought-provoking film on melting pot America, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennesy)

Connected By Coffee ★★★1/2

(2014) 70 min. In English & Spanish w/English subtitles. DVD: \$20: individuals; \$295: public libraries. Stone Hut Studios. PPR.

Aaron Dennis and Chelsea Bay Dennis’s enlightening documentary offers an eye-opening behind-the-scenes look at the real world of coffee—some 25 million people across the globe grow coffee beans—exploring the methods by which beans are nurtured and harvested, while also detailing the long history of exploitation and oppression endured by independent coffee farmers. Here, a team of American progressive activists visit Southern Mexico and elsewhere, observing the painstaking process by which small farmers develop beans until they are mature enough to be picked and processed (washing, drying, etc.). But *Connected By Coffee* goes well beyond simply serving up an agriculture lesson as it looks at the painful history of coffee farmers being intimidated and controlled by large corporations, i.e., the “middle men” who buy coffee beans very cheaply from farmers and sell them to manufacturers at an enormous profit. Subject to violence and even murder in the 1990s, coffee farmers banded together in cooperatives, helping one another in business and bargaining



The Education of Mohammad Hussein ★★★1/2

(2014) 38 min. DVD: \$19.98. HBO Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Detroit is home to the largest Muslim community in the United States, a city with several mosques and a number of schools for Muslim children—who have only known a post-9/11 world. Filmmakers Heidi Ewing and Rachel Grady’s HBO-aired documentary *The Education of Mohammad Hussein* takes viewers into this culture to meet some of the families, teachers, religious leaders, and ordinary kids—American citizens who face discrimination both from government authorities (who treat them as potential threats to national security) and anti-Muslim bigots fueled by ignorance and outrageous assumptions. Against this backdrop, the camera visits classrooms, social gatherings (in which adolescent girls and boys don’t interact), and religious centers where children memorize the Koran under guidance. Meanwhile, the arrival of anti-Muslim activist Terry Jones (who famously threatened to burn the Koran) in the city raises tensions, particularly when Jones leads an angry rally. Informative, suspenseful, and ultimately optimistic (introducing an interfaith alliance between Muslims, Jews, and Christians that inspires hope for the future), this powerful documentary is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

with manufacturers directly. The farmers interviewed here speak of these cooperatives with a certain reverence—not only because the groups bring power in numbers, but also because these local collectives allow growers to hold onto their cultural, social, and spiritual values. Highly recommended. Aud C, P. (T. Keogh)

Disruption ★★★1/2

(2014) 84 min. DVD: \$349. Skylight Pictures. PPR.

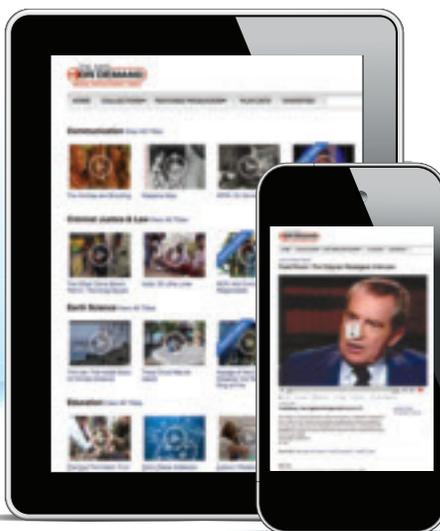
Disruption follows the efforts of award-winning activist/economist group Fundación Capital, whose leaders work to create economic opportunities for Latin American women living in extreme poverty. Through interviews with FC leadership and program participants in Brazil, Colombia, and Peru, filmmaker Pamela Yates examines three initiatives. In the first, impoverished mothers with school-age children receive “cash transfers” paid directly into bank accounts set up for them. Many are thus able to learn about banking for the first time and to meet their families’ basic needs, but Fundación Capital wants to “scale up” so that those receiving assistance will continue to be financially viable after their children turn 18 and the payments stop. A second project encourages financial saving; even people in extreme poverty will set aside small amounts if encouraged to do so and if banks are willing to host modest accounts. A third undertaking brings personal-finance education to rural residents via tablet computers (with a colorful app designed to teach strategies for and benefits of money management that proves remarkably successful). Fundación Capital hopes to transform communities and eliminate poverty as women develop assets and begin to see themselves as agents of change—a vision that seems to be borne out, as participants not only save, but also teach their daughters to manage funds or start small businesses of their own. A moving account of visionary and successful efforts targeting some of the world’s most disenfranchised but deeply appreciative and enthusiastic individuals, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (M. Puffer-Rothenberg)

DREAM: An American Story ★★★1/2

(2014) 96 min. DVD: \$159: public libraries & high schools; \$289: colleges & universities. Dark Hollow Films. PPR.

Given the inability of the United States Congress to pass a meaningful overhaul of immigration laws, this passionate documentary could not be more timely, especially with the current political resistance to President Obama’s controversial Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. The latter, which provides a path to citizenship for young illegal immigrants (so-called DREAMers) raised in America, lies at the heart of Aldo Bello’s documentary *DREAM: An American Story*, which details the challenges

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and obstacles faced by a young man named Juan Gomez, who was illegally brought to Miami by his Colombian parents when he was a little boy and raised as an American in every sense—except in the eyes of the law. In 2007, during his final year of high school, Gomez and his family were arrested by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Although his parents were deported, Gomez and his brother were allowed to stay. *DREAM* follows Gomez as he receives a full scholarship to Georgetown University, where he becomes involved in the DREAMers' grassroots movement to persuade Congress to give tens of thousands of young illegal immigrants a way of becoming citizens, tracing the ups and downs of that hard work over several years, and capturing intense sequences of DREAMers demonstrating in the streets and risking arrest. A powerful documentary that underscores the real-life anxiety and uncertainty of DREAMers in America, this revelatory film is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

The New Black ★★★

(2013) 74 min. DVD: \$49.95; public libraries & high schools; \$295; colleges & universities. California Newsreel. PPR.

The controversy over same-sex marriage and its divisive effect among African Americans is the subject of Yoruba Richen's documentary, which begins with the 2008 passage of California's Proposition 8—prohibiting such unions in the state. Part of the campaign by supporters of the ban involved an appeal to black church leaders to mobilize their congregations to vote yes on the proposal, which some thought was a reflection of their religious conservatism but others saw as a rebuke to the LGBT community for the latter's portrayal of their struggle for marriage equality in terms of civil rights. Richen's primary focus, however, is on the campaign surrounding a referendum to ratify a same-sex marriage law passed in 2012 in Maryland, a state with a substantial African American population, which sparked intense debate when black LGBT men and women became active proponents of the measure even as most African American religious leaders opposed it. The passage of the referendum represented the first time that marriage rights had been extended to same-sex couples by popular vote in the U.S., marking a watershed moment for gay rights and indicating a shift in African American opinion that essentially parallels American society as a whole. Richen speaks with individuals on both sides, but there's little doubt that *The New Black* considers the Maryland vote to be a triumphant continuation of the struggle for civil rights, especially when considering the black LGBT activists who have been instrumental in changing many hearts and minds. Including both the full-length version and a 53-minute abridged edition, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Status Quo? The Unfinished Business of Feminism in Canada ★★★1/2

(2012) 2 discs. 87 min. DVD: \$195. National Film Board of Canada. PPR.

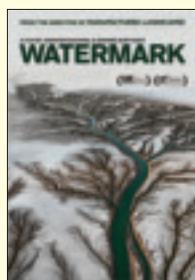
Documentarian Karen Cho looks at activism and government policies surrounding childcare, abortion rights, and domestic violence in Canada, some four decades after the Royal Commission on the Status of Women submitted its report (which was soon tabled) to Parliament. Archival footage of Commission meetings and early activists provides historical context for an examination of the state of affairs for contemporary Canadian women. Many—particularly immigrants, Natives, and those of lower economic status—lack access to affordable childcare and birth control and still need better protection from violence. Representatives of these populations are interviewed about their experiences; many have become activists or now work for support services as a result of having survived abuse, or been severely limited in their options for childcare or family planning. Several illustrate the difficulties that low-income individuals in particular face trying to work while raising children, or leave abusive situations. The problems are familiar: domestic violence is much more common than anyone thought in the 1970s, and the goal of eliminating it seems insurmountable; hard-won reproductive rights always seem to be under threat from vocal anti-abortion campaigns, while many physicians are reluctant to provide contraception; and not only is childcare prohibitively expensive, but caregivers working in advantaged households often

sacrifice their own families' well-being as they attempt to earn a living. Also featuring a separate disc offering each segment ("Childcare," "Abortion Rights," and "Violence Against Women") as separate programs, *Status Quo?* is an informative, disturbing, and revelatory documentary about key feminist issues that women continue to face. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (M. Puffer-Rothenberg)

Valentine Road ★★★1/2

(2012) 88 min. DVD: \$295. BMP Films (dist. by Bullfrog Films). PPR. SDH captioned. ISBN: 1-56029-087-0.

Marta Cunningham's riveting documentary investigates a 2008 school shooting: a one-on-one act of classroom violence in an Oxnard, CA, junior high school that defies easy stereotypes and simple finger-pointing. Larry King, an openly gay student, was fatally wounded in a computer lab by fellow student Brandon McInerney. Both came from dysfunctional family backgrounds—a series of foster homes for King, an environment of drugs and guns for McInerney. In the lawyerly gamesmanship prior to the jury trial, the notion is advanced (and supported by some schoolteachers) that the flamboyant King had no sense of boundaries and baited his killer with humiliating taunts and, most significantly, a Valentine's card in front of peers—leading to a trial defense that the accused suffered from "gay bullying." On the flip side, however, is the presence of Nazi material in the defendant's home, and a white supremacist presence in the community (King was of mixed



Watermark ★★★1/2

(2014) 92 min. DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98. Entertainment One (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4172-4225-6 (dvd), 1-4172-4226-4 (blu-ray).

Documentarian Jennifer Baichwal and Canadian photographer Edward Burtynsky previously collaborated on *Manufactured Landscapes* (VL-11/07), a brilliant visual essay focusing on enormous factories, villages destroyed to make way for reservoirs, and fields of discarded ships and computers, all to illustrate the effect of modern industrialization on the land. Now they turn their attention to another modern dilemma, depicting in incredibly rich and detailed sequences—shot with ultra-high-definition digital video cameras—how our use of the earth's water has altered the natural order of things. From spectacular shots of waves billowing through huge dams, to views of irrigation circles from high overhead, to scenes of what were once flowing rivers that have now turned into arid trenches, and lakes transformed into empty basins, *Watermark* shows the unmistakable, and perhaps irreversible, handprint that mankind is leaving on the environment. While the filmmakers eschew narration, viewers will hear occasional observations from affected local residents—such as a worker in Bangladesh who matter-of-factly notes that industrial waste from his factory pours directly into a nearby stream—as well as comments from scientific investigators, who incisively bring home the documentary's main point. *Watermark* dramatically and effectively calls attention to the pressing need for conservation efforts, not through verbal polemic but rather with beautifully crafted, unforgettable images. DVD extras include a "making-of" featurette, deleted scenes, a Q&A with the co-directors, and a photo gallery. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

race). While one teacher leaves her job in disgust, another is aghast at how quickly homosexual activists take advantage of the situation to march and emote on camera. Meanwhile, a grassroots movement urges mercy for the shooter. It's up to the viewer to decide whether this is a bigotry-ridden travesty, a system bogged down in "diversity," or a town trying to show humanity and tolerance in regards to a crime that everyone agrees never should have happened. Including both the full-length version and a 52-minute abridged edition, this thought-provoking film is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

TEEN ISSUES

Insights: Queer Youth Defining Our Future ★★★

(2014) 93 min. DVD: \$50: individuals; \$100: public libraries; \$300: colleges & universities. Frameline Distribution. PPR.

This collection of five nonfiction and fiction gay-oriented shorts is aimed at students and educators (a sixth film, *I Don't Want to Go Back Alone*, is available on YouTube). In Ellen Brodsky's short, *What Do You Know?* (VL-5/13), kids aged 6-12 talk about homosexuality, sharing stories of incidents that first brought the word "gay" into their lives and discussing what they think it means. Many of these kids—some of whom have gay parents or siblings—first heard the word as a slur. Several say they've told classmates not to use the word "gay" in a negative way, while others believe that teachers should be the ones who are monitoring. In Evan Roberts's *Yeah Kowalski!*, 13-year-old Gabe (Cameron Wofford), who has a crush on mature-looking Shane (Conor Donnelly), tries to make himself look older, resulting in an embarrassing episode at a pool party, although Shane proves to be more sympathetic than expected. In Dominic Haxton and David Rosler's *Teens Like Phil*, however, a crush turns bad when Adam (Jake Robbins) not only refuses to acknowledge Phil (Adam Donovan) in public but even beats him up (this short is more appropriate for older viewers due to the mature content). Rebecca Louisell's *Genderfreak* focuses on Rachel (Halle Charlton), a straight girl who falls for the androgynous Sammy (Lauryn Whitney), while Melissa Koch's *The Infamous T* profiles Jonathon, a black teenager who moves to a white LGBT foster home following years of homelessness and overcrowded apartments. A solid anthology centering on gay teens, this is recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Stop Bullying with Mike Hall ★★★1/2

(2014) 22 min. DVD: \$59.95. Paraclete Press. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-61261-570-7.

Coach, mentor, and expert on bullying

Mike Hall shares simple and practical advice for dealing with bullies in this effective guidance program featuring interviews with children who talk about their experiences with bullying, including physical assaults, threats, gossip, and verbal abuse. The segments here center on four Cs—remain *calm* (don't give tormentors the reaction they want), *compliment* the bully, get *connected* (to other people), and be *confident*. Hall, who endured his own childhood difficulties with bullies, displays compassion for teen victims while also noting that intimidators usually also have problems. Although these methods could work well for many kids, several rely heavily on active socialization, which might not be a comfortable approach for those who are more introverted. Even so, a lot of viewers could benefit from Hall's suggestions. DVD extras include a booklet with discussion questions. Highly recommended. Aud: J, H, P. (K. Cruver)

EDUCATION

Growing Up Green ★★★

(2013) 27 min. DVD: \$39: public libraries; \$79: high schools; \$295: colleges & universities. The Video Project. PPR. Closed captioned.

Director Bob Gliner's PBS-aired *Growing Up Green* looks at ways to get young kids thinking about conservation, laying the foundation for them to become environmental stewards in the future. Gliner focuses on Michigan's Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative—with place-based learning forming part of the curriculum—in which kids work with biologists and other members of the scientific community on projects involving mussels, crayfish, salmon, and more. As one student notes, some of the projects require familiarity with physics, geometry, and algebra, meaning that the kids are learning while also doing something useful (other projects incorporate art and history). From these lessons, students have already helped their parents, neighbors, and even their schools to find more environmentally beneficial ways to clean streams, fertilize lawns, and conserve energy when running household appliances. Ramona Gligor, a project coordinator at the Detroit Institute of Technology, believes that her students have now come to see their city more as a resource or an opportunity than a hindrance or a roadblock. In doing their part to improve communities, many students are also considering conservation as a career path. Parents, educators, and students are sure to find ideas, inspiration, and encouragement in this engaging documentary. Recommended. Aud: J, H, C, P. (K. Fennessy)

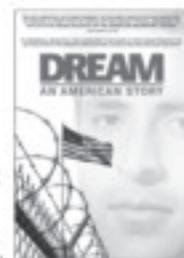


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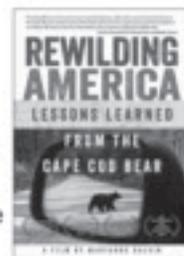


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REWILDING AMERICA

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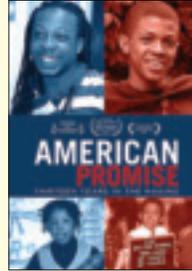


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American Promise ★★☆☆1/2

(2013) 135 min. DVD: \$24.95. New Video Group (avail. from most distributors).



In 1999, when Dr. Joe Brewster and Michelle Stephenson enrolled their then 5-year-old son Idris in Dalton School—one of NYC's most elite private schools—the couple also began filming the boy's scholastic odyssey, following him all the way to college applications. But this is no mere vanity doc; Idris and his best friend, Seun, are among the very few students of color at Dalton and their young lives in and out of class expose issues of racial alienation, accusations by peers of "acting too white," and adolescent diagnoses of learning disorders—attention-deficit for Idris, dyslexia for Seun (who eventually leaves Dalton for Brooklyn's Benjamin Banneker School instead). Along the way, viewers also witness family dramas and tragedies (especially for Seun's household), first love, the historic Obama presidential campaign, and friction between Idris's highly competitive parents over their teen son's chronic lack of initiative. Brewster and Stephenson have, enterprisingly enough, also presented this material in a book, *Promises Kept*. Featuring the 135-minute full-length film, along with 80-minute, 45-minute, and 30-minute abridgments, extras include discussion guides. Highly recommended. [Note: this is also available with public performance rights for \$495 from Ro*co Films Educational, www.rocoeducational.com.] Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

speakers. Wearing a cheerleader's uniform and using chants to punctuate various elements of the curriculum, Amy explores potentially thorny grammar fundamentals such as past and present tense, present continuous and present simple tense, and the correct use of the articles "a," "an," and "the." Each section is divided into four segments, and includes an introduction to concepts, questions, and a review drill (with onscreen text). Throughout, emphasis is placed on speaking and understanding complete sentences using American accents and idioms. Featuring lots of visual jokes, courtesy of Amy and a silent supporting cast, this is a practical and simple learning system (the same lessons are also available on the disc in Spanish) that will benefit ESL speakers. Recommended. Aud: P. (K. Cruver)

LAW & CRIME

Living for 32 ★★☆☆

(2013) 40 min. DVD: \$79; high schools & public libraries; \$195; colleges & universities. The Video Project. PPR. Closed captioned.

Kevin Breslin, son of reporter/novelist Jimmy Breslin, builds his documentary *Living for 32* around Colin Goddard, a Virginia Tech graduate who became a gun control advocate. Goddard was in his French class in 2007 when Seung-Hui Cho entered the room and began firing; Goddard was shot four times, but the international studies major would recover from his injuries—one of seven students in a class of 17 to survive, including his friend, Kristina Anderson, who recalls that they almost skipped school that morning to get breakfast. A total of 32 students died, not counting Cho, who took his own life. The experience galvanized Goddard, a former Army ROTC student, to become an activist. Here, he visits gun shows with a hidden camera to prove that many private sellers fail to check identification or conduct background checks in order to make quick sales. As Gerald Schembri, a retired New York police officer, tells Goddard, Cho obtained weapons intended for law enforcement. "I don't see any reason for a civilian to have it," he says, referring to the shooter's semiautomatic handguns. Cho, who had a history of mental illness, also used the more lethal hollow-point bullets. As a participant in the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, Goddard works towards passage of HR 2324 in an effort to close the gun show loophole (unfortunately, the bill would not end up in either chamber for a vote). Offering an inspiring and sobering look at the gun

control issue, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

The Ultimate Guide to Passing Your Law Enforcement Oral Board ★★☆☆

(2013) 60 min. DVD: \$39.95. 40 Cal. Productions. PPR.

For many jobs in law enforcement—including police and corrections personnel, deputy sheriffs, highway patrol officers, state fish and game officials, and border patrol agents—a key aspect during the hiring process is the in-person interview (also called the "oral board"). In this guide designed to help entry-level job applicants, host Jacob Mueller—a former Southern California police officer—covers the gamut of what to consider for the interview, including suitable attire, appropriate body language, and questions to expect during the face-to-face encounter. Mueller notes that interviewers are likely to probe into certain areas with questions along the lines of: Are your ethics solid—especially in situations that some would consider ambiguous? Are you accountable? And can you solve problems? A practical, no-frills, low-budget production designed for those hoping to land jobs in law enforcement, this is recommended. Aud: P. (C. Block)

LANGUAGE ARTS

Speak to Win: American English, Level 1 ★★☆☆

(2013) 110 min. DVD: \$20.95. Speak to Win AE. PPR.

Displaying boisterous energy and humor, presenter Amy takes charge in this appealing language instruction program, which offers a series of short lessons in English for Spanish

NATURE, MATH & SCIENCE

A Changing Delta: Restoring the Colorado River Delta in Mexico ★★☆☆

(2012) 26 min. DVD: \$39; public libraries & high schools; \$69; colleges & universities. Green Planet Films. PPR. Closed captioned.

Now serving 25 million people, the Colorado River system has more demand placed on it than any other watershed in the world. Over the span of many decades, less and less water has made it all the way to the Colorado's delta in Mexico, where the waterway empties into the Gulf of California. At one point, 90 percent of the terminus was depleted, turned into a vast wasteland of parched earth. Filmmaker Brandon C. White's *A Changing Delta* recounts the astonishment of scientists and environmentalists over how swiftly parts of the region recovered during the flood years of 1997–2000, noting the quick reappearance of vegetation, and the return of birds and fish. Now the U.S. and Mexico have agreed to increase flow to the delta, while environmental groups such as the Sonoran Institute and the Nature Conservancy are working to buy water rights and return them to the Colorado. Insights from assorted experts are combined with reminiscences and observations from farmers, fishermen, and other area residents, while archival and contemporary footage provides striking images of the "before and after" story. An uplifting and inspiring documentary about the recovery of a valuable ecosystem, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Gardner)

Evolutionary Biology Essentials

★★☆☆1/2

(2013) 24 min. DVD: \$129.95. VEA (dist. by Films Media Group). PPR. ISBN: 978-0-81609-701-2.

Packing lots of information into a relatively short running time, the three-part *Evolutionary Biology Essentials* opens with "Geo-

logical Timescale,” which begins with the understatement, “Earth, some might say, is seriously old.” Covering the billions of years between the first geologic era (Hadean) and most recent major era (Cenozoic)—depicted here as relative portions of a clock face—the section touches on topics ranging from the shifting of the continents, to the “Great Dy-

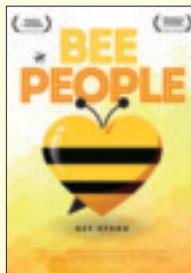
ing” mass extinction. Next up is “Radiocarbon and Other Dating Techniques,” which combines real-world footage, animation, and graphics to explore how we are able to learn much from fossils using techniques such as radio carbon dating and electron spin resonance (to determine the age of teeth). Finally, “The Hominid Chronology” traces

the evolutionary trail from Australopithecus, up through the “handy man” Homo habilis, socially interactive Neanderthals, and ultimately us: Homo sapiens. A fine primer, this is highly recommended. Aud: J, H, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Bee People ★★★

(2014) 102 min. DVD: \$19.98. True Mind/TDC (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-939517-27-2.

This amusing curiosity is a fun documentary that more closely resembles a reality TV show than a serious exploration of bee colony collapse disorder. Although the opening minutes of filmmaker David G. Knappe's *Bee People* investigates the alarming disappearance of honeybees around the world, the film soon finds its true purpose in tracking the adventures of one Gregg “Bee Guru” McMahan, who works with a small team to extract enormous colonies of bees from the walls of old barns and other structures. McMahan and his colleagues are busy bees, removing tens of thousands of the endangered insects and “rescuing” them for safe delivery to beekeepers. Along the way, vast quantities of honey are accumulated (and enjoyed), and the principal members soon become ersatz stars who we see teasing one another, flirting with an attractive female homeowner, and even interacting with a noisy pet pig. DVD extras include the bonus featurette “Extracting Honey.” An entertaining watch for armchair beekeepers and fans of reality TV shows, this solid companion to films such as *Vanishing of the Bees* (VL-5/11), *Queen of the Sun* (VL-1/12), and *More Than Honey* (VL-1/14) is recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)



Field Biologist ★★★

(2014) 55 min. DVD: \$49.99 (\$195 w/PPR): public libraries; \$295 w/PPR: colleges & universities. Collective Eye.

A young animal lover shares both his knowledge and enthusiasm in filmmaker Jared Flesher's engaging documentary portrait. Tyler Christensen is an open-faced 22-year-old from New Jersey who works as a nature educator at a local park. Tyler, who says he inherited his love of animals from his father (who died of leukemia two years before filming), also sews, plays guitar, speaks Spanish, and enjoys rock climbing (he also contributed to the film's score and camera work). Although he never attended college, Tyler's life resembles that of a zoological undergraduate, with Flesher tagging along as Tyler explores the ornithological collection at Princeton and embarks on his second birding trip to Costa Rica, a self-financed expedition (made a bit more affordable by the fact that his mother owns property in the country). “I know a lot of people think I'm strange,” he

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Cosmos: A Spacetime Odyssey ★★ ★ 1/2

(2014) 4 discs. 553 min. DVD: \$49.98, Blu-ray: \$59.98. Fox Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

More than 30 years after the airing of the original *Cosmos*—created by Carl Sagan and Ann Druyan—which went on to become the most influential science program ever shown on American TV, astrophysicist Dr. Neil deGrasse Tyson (one of the many scientists who were inspired by Sagan) joined Druyan to offer an update and continue the exploration in this new 13-part series. *Cosmos* employs state-of-the-art special effects to engage the next generation as it details advances in our scientific understanding of the universe and the evolution of our solar system, reaching back in history to trace the roots of that knowledge. The series puts the scientific method front and center as it charts the continuum of research, experimentation, and discoveries that have led to what we know about everything from the Big Bang to black holes. Tyson is an authoritative and inspiring host and his use of the “ship of the imagination” to visualize scientific concepts provides an engaging way to explore the ideas outlined in each episode. Although it was attacked in some quarters for a) acknowledging the church’s persecution of scientists who contradicted religious beliefs over the centuries, and b) refusing to acknowledge faith-based ideas about evolution, the only truly quasi-controversial aspect here is the show’s aggressive confrontation of climate change denial. Extras include an episode commentary, behind-the-scenes featurettes, and an interactive cosmic calendar. Sure to be popular, this is highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Axmaker)



says, adding that “it’s difficult to find people who share my love of nature.” Nonetheless, he convinces a friend and three volunteers to join him in banding birds for research purposes. By identifying declining species, Tyler hopes to contribute to conservation efforts. If anything, Tyler comes across more as an autodidact than an oddball; since barely graduating from high school, he appears to have accomplished more on his own than as part of a structured academic curriculum. But by film’s end, Tyler warms up to the idea of college, in part because he realizes that he can make more of a difference with a degree. An amiable profile that incorporates numerous gorgeous close-ups of hummingbirds, katydids, leafcutter ants, and other creatures, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Hidden Kingdoms ★★ ★

(2014) 177 min. DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98. BBC Worldwide Ltd. (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned.

This three-episode BBC series (which aired in the U.S. on the Discovery Channel sporting the semi-absurd title *Mini Monsters*) presents a spectacular high-tech look at some of the smaller denizens of the animal kingdom—filmed from wide-and-low-angle POVs in environments around the world. Rodents tend to predominate, including the lightning-fast little elephant shrew of Kenya, which zips around a network of well-memorized ground trails (another shrew, the ever-hungry tree shrew of Borneo, is here stalked by a snake). The grasshopper mouse of Arizona boasts the speed and favorable biology to be able to defeat and eat scorpions. The final episode travels to urban

environments in Rio and Tokyo to track the odysseys of a pair of lost critters—a marmoset monkey and a rhinoceros beetle—capturing their encounters with predators that are well-adapted to the city. Nature-film purists may rightfully cry foul after watching the bonus “making-of” featurettes, which reveal that all of this was carefully scripted, storyboarded, and even blue-screen superimposed, achieving a deceit that sometimes seems practically Orwellian (close-ups of the marmosets of “Rio,” for instance, were actually shot at a marmoset shelter in England and composited with Brazilian footage). Still, for all of the fakery, *Hidden Kingdoms* serves up many memorable and even breathtaking HD moments, backed up—one hopes—with valid science, not simulacra. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Killer Quest ★★ ★

(2013) 45 min. DVD: \$19.98. National Geographic (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-4263-4617-0.

This National Geographic documentary is as much reality TV as nature film. When wildlife filmmaker Andrew Manske and outdoorsman Brian Bildson embark on a quest in Northern Canada to shoot a scene of wolves taking down a wood bison, the mission proves to be easier said than done. The expensive production (featuring a team of 15 people, a rented helicopter, and tons of gear) runs headlong into all kinds of problems: forest fires, cracking ice, swarms of mosquitoes, exhaustion, and, worst of all, no scenario in which Manske actually observes wolves kill a bison. True, there are a couple of close calls—in one charged scene three

wolves cleverly lure a bison cow away from the protection of her herd—but the money shot proves to be elusive. Ultimately, *Killer Quest* is more about a group of people who are trying to hold onto their sanity under adverse conditions, particularly Mankse, who begins to resemble an obsessed Captain Ahab chasing his destiny. Recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

Stephen Hawking’s Grand Design

★★ ★ 1/2

(2014) 129 min. DVD: \$29.95. Cinedigm Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Stephen Hawking—the world’s most famous physicist—begins this three-episode series with a look at science’s long quest to determine the origin of the universe, asking whether God has a place in its creation (with apologies to religious believers, Hawking says no), before tackling the “meaning of life” and whether the laws of physics allow for “free will.” All of this serves as prelude to dense and esoteric quantum-physics material, as Hawking tries to describe a Grand Unified Theory of Everything in which quarks and string theory play an important role. Hawking illustrates the multiverse nature of string theory using a CGI-enhanced string quartet, an effect that while quite charming, seems somewhat stretched as a metaphor. However, other physics examples here (including one of Einstein’s illustrations of relativity—using three people on a moving train, and one on a platform) are quite marvelously rendered. Besides his well-known computer-synthesized voice, Hawking’s thoughts are also read by actor Benedict Cumberbatch. Offering a mind-boggling survey of current cosmological thinking, based on Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow’s 2010 book *The Grand Design*, this is highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Thin Ice: The Inside Story of Climate Science ★★ ★ 1/2

(2013) 74 min. DVD: \$69; public libraries & high schools; \$295; colleges & universities. Green Planet Films. PPR. Closed captioned.

Geologist and photographer Simon Lamb explores the question of climate change in this account of a three-year odyssey that took him from Antarctica to the Arctic (and nearly every continent and ocean in between) while filming the work of far-flung researchers who are seeking answers to why the earth is warming. The strength of this documentary—a joint effort by Oxford University, Victoria University of Wellington, and a London production company—lies in its gathering of 40 scientists from around the world, whose collective efforts have made a compelling case for rising amounts of carbon dioxide as the climate change culprit. Lamb takes viewers on incredible excursions (to the inside of a tunnel in a glacier in Antarctica,

for example), while also providing striking observations and projections, such as the fact that 45 million years ago the planet was so warm that crocodiles flourished at the North Pole (decades from now, that scenario could possibly recur). More immediately, we learn that only a generation ago the frozen Finnish pastures inhabited by the Sami and their reindeer held no trees; now the herders fret about warmer temperatures and their animals' inability to flourish in the shade. While Lamb's final conclusion that "there is no [climate] hoax," seems a little anticlimactic in the face of the overwhelming evidence, this is a beautifully filmed and compelling documentary. Extras include bonus featurettes (many of them outtakes) on various climatological issues and the scientists who study them. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (F. Gardner)

Your Inner Fish ★★★

(2014) 180 min. DVD: \$29.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-067-1.

Wherever Neil Shubin goes he is reminded of the "ghosts of animals past." Shubin, author of the bestselling book *Your Inner Fish*, is also a fish paleontologist and chairman of the University of Chicago's anatomy department. This three-episode PBS documentary series from producer and director David Dugan traces humankind's unlikely family tree, looking from primates all the way back to the early fishes that became transitional creatures, having left the sea to venture onto land. Fish were the first to have bony skeletons, evidence of which is fossilized in rocks from the Devonian period (some 360 million years ago) that are now found in ancient Arctic riverbeds, Greenland, and even in the lush green countryside of Pennsylvania. Shubin describes how primitive fins evolved into the "miracle" of animal and human hands, which would allow for tasks ranging from simple grasping to creatively advanced activities such as writing, painting, crafting, and tool-making. Animation is used here to suggest how these transitional creatures might have appeared and moved. Over millions of years, humans have shed certain characteristics, such as a yolk sac surrounding the fetus (which is necessary for egg layers like reptiles), while the human tailbone or coccyx is a likely remnant of our ancestors' tails. Sometimes change comes with a price, such as having only two sets of teeth over a lifetime, or the development of hernias and bad backs, or improved hearing at the expense of a reduced sense of smell. Other topics included here are the evolutionary role of hair, skin, color awareness, and most important, bi-pedalism—our ability to stand upright and walk on two feet. The series travels from the Namib Desert in South Africa to Nova Scotia's Bay of Fundy, and on to Ethiopia, home of one of our most famous

human ancestors: "Lucy," who lived some 3.2 million years ago. Along the way, comments from scientists, behavior experts, and fossil hunters help to shed light on new discoveries and controversies. Presenting lots of thought-provoking information with a dash of humor, this is highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

HEALTH & FITNESS

Color Power: Fruit & Vegetables ★★★

(2014) 23 min. DVD: \$79.95 (downloadable teacher's guide available). Learning ZoneXpress. PPR. Closed captioned.

Aimed at teens, *Color Power* focuses on the benefits of fruits and vegetables, offering solid dietary advice and information about the properties of whole foods. Addressing four questions—"Why eat fruit and vegetables?" "How much do I need?" "How can I eat more?" and "How do I select?"—the program serves up a wide range of practical guidance, from easy tips on how to incorporate new kinds of produce into a regular diet, to the reasons why consuming large quantities of these foods is essential for good health. Interviews with dietitians and independent growers alternate with footage shot in farmers markets, as well as scenes of food preparation. The dietitians discuss the importance of eating plants of various colors due to their different nutrients, and they encourage diversity in eating because it's fun as well as beneficial. Offering compelling arguments, this should help encourage healthy dietary habits. Recommended. Aud: J, H, P. (K. Cruver)

Easy Yoga: The Secret to Strength & Balance ★★★

(2014) 76 min. DVD: \$19.99 (\$34.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-074-9.

Yoga enthusiast and instructor Peggy Cappy presents an easy-to-follow guide to basic yoga technique, designed both for the novice and as a refresher for skilled practitioners. Cappy, whose teaching career spans 40 years, presents each lesson with a pair of aides (with one performing seated exercises), and often leans on a chair for needed balance. The message is clear: anyone can do this and reap benefits from yoga stretches and poses, which work together to help free the body's locked-up energy. Cappy begins with breathing exercises and then segues into "seated warm-ups" and "balanced warm-ups," which lead to graceful floor stretches and, finally, a guided relaxation. DVD extras include a two-part featurette on developing and maintaining balance, and breathing and building strength. Recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

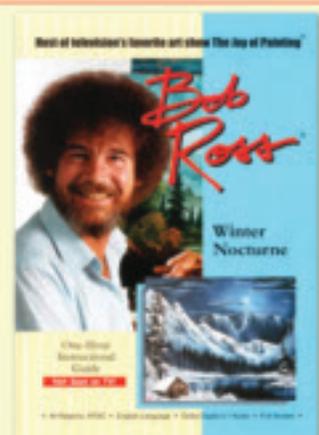
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MD Fitness: The Doctor's Workout ★★★

(2013) 3 discs. 135 min. DVD: \$24.99. MDfitness (avail. from www.amazon.com). PPR.

Orthopedic surgeon Dr. Tom Kleeman and his RN-certified fitness professional wife, Anne Talbot-Kleeman, step in front of the camera for this three-part exercise program that incorporates strength, cardio, and interval training moves. Looking for a way to fit exercise into a busy schedule and help reverse the aging process, Kleeman ("I wasn't lookin' for a six-pack of abs, I just wanted a better quality of life") designed this combination of standing, mat, and weights work that begins with a "Level 1" routine for fitness newbies that includes a warm up, marching in place, arm swings, walking "butt-kicks," standing biceps curls, modified canoe twists, pushups, bicycle crunches, and more. Moving to heavier weights, "Level 2" (suggested after 4-6 weeks of Level 1 work) includes fuller versions of the moves as well as lateral deltoid lifts, scarecrows, and full side planks. For added challenge, "Level 3" ups the intensity with 5-8 lb weights and exercises such as the Superman and jumping jacks. Reminding viewers that "it's important to visualize your goals and keep at it," this gradually progressive exercise program is well-suited to sedentary middle-aged and senior individuals. Recommended. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)



What's Up with E-Cigarettes? ★★★1/2

(2014) 19 min. DVD: \$149.95 (teacher's guide included). Human Relations Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62706-046-2.

E-cigarette smokers claim that e-cigarettes are not as harmful as tobacco alternatives, are not addictive, and don't create secondhand smoke. *What's Up with E-Cigarettes?*, which looks carefully at each of these assertions, begins with a definition: e-cigarettes are battery-operated inhalers that basically allow smokers to draw vaporized nicotine into their lungs—vapors that are often laced with candy-like flavors to make the experience more fun. Although an increasing number of people smoke e-cigarettes, no certainty exists about the effects on smokers of the metals and toxic carcinogens that are mixed in with the nicotine, or about the impact on others who involuntarily breathe in those substances. What is clear is that e-cigarettes are being marketed to young adults, who are buying the premise that the product is safe. The conclusion reached here is that we don't really know what the long-term health impact will be on the public. Anyone thinking about taking up the e-cigarette habit would do well to watch this informative overview first. DVD extras include a teacher's resource guide. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (T. Keogh)

Yoga for Belly, Butt & Thighs ★★★

(2014) 75 min. DVD: \$14.98. Gaiam (avail. from most distributors).

New York City-based instructor Chrissy Carter presents a series of low-key but intense yoga routines for toning belly, butt, and thighs, as well as strengthening the core in this exercise program filmed on a beautiful windswept pavilion next to the ocean. Carter offers voiceover instructions while demonstrating various poses and movements during

the three title routines (the fourth workout targets abdominal muscles and the lower back). Although nicely paced, this is most appropriate for those with medium-to-high levels of proficiency, as significant stamina is required for the many lifts in the "Belly" and "Butt" sections, while the "Thighs" workout requires longer stretches, and "Complete Core" features several leg lifts. An effective, no-frills yoga exercise program, this is recommended. Aud: P. (K. Cruver)

CHILDBIRTH & PARENTING

Kids' Rights: The Business of Adoption ★★★

(2014) 94 min. DVD: \$19.95. Cinema Libre Studio (avail. from most distributors).

New York filmmakers Michael Dudko and Olga Rudnieva are a Ukrainian-American couple whose interest in adopting a child leads them on a tangled docu-diary journey that is wide-ranging, unfocused, often surprising, and sometimes genuinely horrifying. Despite the presence of 132.2 million orphaned children worldwide, the process of adoption—international adoption, especially—is maddeningly difficult. Prospective parents may spend \$25,000, wait for years, and come up empty-handed. Sir Elton John, who alongside long-term partner David Furnish sought to give a loving home to a boy from the Ukraine, was refused on numerous counts (amounting to homophobia; the now-embattled Ukraine does not come off well here). Divided into seven chapters, the film also touches on adolescent homelessness and addiction; child abuse and infanticide; parents with special-needs kids; the media climate of hyper-sexuality that inspires teen pregnancies; and China's infamous one-child policy. Other interviewees here include authors Dave

Pelzer, Paul R. Ehrlich, and Francesca Polini. The overall conclusion: the stultifying adoption marketplace coupled with government nanny-state political-correctness essentially amounts to a "war on children" that prevents the most desperate youngsters from reaching safety and attaining stability. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

RELATIONSHIPS & SEXUALITY

Suitcase of Love and Shame ★★★

(2013) 70 min. DVD: \$99.95: public libraries & high schools; \$350: colleges & universities. The Cinema Guild. PPR. ISBN: 0-7815-1470-3.

This unusual documentary sheds light on a relationship through audio recordings—left behind by a couple—that director Jane Gillooly came across through an eBay auction. In the mid-1960s, Tom and Jeannie, whose accents suggest a Midwestern provenance, recorded over 60 hours of material, which was all stored in a suitcase. Tom, a veterinarian, starts by talking about seeing patients, while Jeannie, a veterinary assistant, makes comments about watching television (they don't work together). He calls her darling, she calls him daddy. As they speak, images of cassettes, non-figurative photos, and approximations of locations they mention appear on the screen. Tom also records songs, like "In the Still of the Night," when he isn't whistling or singing into the microphone. At first, the pair appear to be husband and wife, but it soon becomes clear that they're having an affair. Both mention their robust sex life—including their rendezvous at his office after hours (Tom keeps nude photos of Jeannie as mementos, and makes references to hugging, kissing, and more risqué activities—with the sound of those activities sometimes included). The explicit passages make it seem likely that the couple didn't intend these tapes for anyone other than themselves, so it's hard not to feel like a voyeur while listening. Towards the end, Tom reveals that his wife, Lucille, has found out about the affair, after which events take an interesting and unexpected turn. A strange love story that touches on a number of topics ranging from interpersonal relationships to privacy, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

FOOD & SPIRITS

Crafting a Nation: One Craft Beer at a Time ★★★

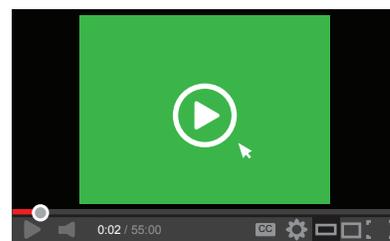
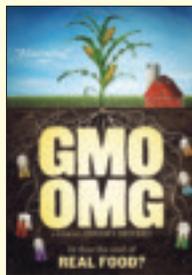
(2013) 95 min. DVD: \$24.95. Free Mind Productions (dist. by Janson Media). ISBN: 978-1-56839-471-8.

It's a fair critique that Thomas Kolicko's hops-umentary resembles an extended beer commercial with its lyrical amber-colored

GMO OMG ★★★1/2

(2013) 85 min. DVD: \$24.98. MPI Home Video (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 0-7886-1791-5.

GMO OMG asks a basic question that most people can't accurately answer: namely, what exactly is a genetically-modified organism (GMO)? Filmmaker Jeremy Seifert acknowledges that he's heard the term many times yet isn't absolutely sure what it means. As the father of young children who are growing up in a world where vast numbers of edible crops are being grown from GMO seeds, he sets out to find some answers. Seifert's mission takes him to American farms, where he meets farmers who grow GMO crops, as well as those who work strictly in organics. He also travels to Paris, Norway, and Haiti, where farmers destroyed their own yields from GMO seeds donated by agribusiness giant Monsanto (the grown crops didn't look right). Along the way, Seifert learns that GMO seeds are developed to resist destruction from widely-used herbicides and pesticides, meaning that food will grow despite being exposed to these poisons, yet may also bring some chemical residue onto our dinner plates. Seifert also finds that seeds are actually being patented, and that the top three agribusinesses in the U.S. are providing 57% of all the seeds (all GMO) used in the world, raising the issue of the perils of monoculture farming. And the director also muses about the giant shift in American agriculture over a couple of generations, with farmers today comprising only 2 percent of the workforce. Perhaps the most alarming reflection here comes from an analyst who describes today's agriculture as a "brittle industry," suggesting that no one really knows if GMO-based agriculture is here to stay or could collapse for a variety of reasons—and thus jeopardize our food sources. DVD extras include bonus interviews, and the animated short "The Scarecrow" (made by the Mexican food chain Chipotle). A disturbing look at a hot-button topic, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)



STREAMING

FALL 2014



cinematography, mellow melodies, and loving interiors of distilleries and barrel rooms. But that's perfectly reasonable, given that the subject here is the craft-brewing movement, which is defined as a beer factory that bottles less than a million units per year. Craft brewers and brewpubs have experienced a boom across Great Recession USA, as energetic entrepreneurs have followed their dreams. Amidst sound bytes from the management of Black Shirt Brewing Company, Sierra Nevada Brewing, Upslope, Jester King, and other outfits—mostly describing financial struggles coupled with a deep belief in their products—a bit of a political subtext foams up: namely, that these underdog, privately run breweries tend to embrace progressive/sustainable practices: re-habbing abandoned factories in urban-blight areas (including the abandoned print-shop in which *Escape from New York* was filmed), forming alliances with small farmers, using solar energy and recycling, and sometimes adding professionals who were either laid-off or discouraged from the corporate world. For all their success, however, craft brewers still wrestle with the dominance of the giant beer multinationals (Budweiser and Anheuser-Busch reps are not interviewed here) and are forced to fight against shortsighted government regulations that end up discouraging small, local breweries (Texas is described as particularly bad in this regard). Sure to appeal to microbrew lovers, this entertaining overview is recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

BUSINESS & ECONOMICS

Generation Like ★★★1/2

(2014) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-087-9.

This PBS-aired *Frontline* documentary examines the ways in which corporations engage young people with brands and products online, noting that teens who use social media to indicate preferences and share passions with their friends (and the online world at large) are often unknowingly participating in focused marketing campaigns. Correspondent Douglas Rushkoff interviews teenagers and advertisers to both learn about what kids are gaining from online interactions with mass media, and determine how their activities are being tracked and analyzed in order to boost sales. Social media can make people feel empowered, as demonstrated by one woman who spends hours at the *Hunger Games* movie website competing for "sparks"—a virtual reward that gives her bragging rights as a "top" fan. Tyler Oakley, 25, started posting YouTube videos about things he liked and wound up garnering millions of followers, eventually landing corporate advertising deals. Steven Fernandez, 15, caught viewers' attention with skateboarding videos before moving into raunchy clips and stunts; he hopes to parley his persona into a living, but thus far has earned only free skateboards

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and clothes. Actor Ian Somerhalder appears here in consultation with Oliver Lockett of theAudience, the company that manages Somerhalder's web presence with pinpoint precision—coordinating his social media posts and tracking how many of his 24 million fans “like” other specific personalities or brands. Using these and other examples, Rushkoff illustrates how buzz is managed, attention is manipulated, and kids wind up becoming unwitting promoters. An eye-opening look at a growing phenomenon, this is highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (*M. Puffer-Rothenberg*)

Underhand Tactics—Investigating Corporate Culture: Neuromarketing—Programming the Brain to Buy ★★1/2

(2012) 56 min. DVD: \$169.95. Films Media Group. PPR. Closed captioned.

This French documentary from the eight-part series *Underhand Tactics: Investigating Corporate Culture* employs English-language narration rather than subtitles, which seems a bit awkward when the narrator speaks for a class of five-year-olds (who find it easier to identify brand logos than national flags). Neuromarketing isn't a new concept, but emerging technology is helping to provide more accurate information about consumers. Appealing to buyers' emotions by way of the limbic system, advertisers are able to encourage people to purchase specific products and services (neuromarketing's detractors prefer the verb “manipulate,” since the aim is to bypass rational thought). A representative from a marketing agency shows viewers one way his company conducts research: by fitting volunteers with special glasses that allow tracking to determine what packaging cues catch the eye and how long subjects spend on various words and images before making selections. In another study, volunteers wear facial electrodes that record micro-expressions in response to TV ads. A Danish neuromarketing consultant, who counts McDonald's among his clients, talks about the use of fragrance in the chain's restaurants to stimulate the olfactory cortex. Although McDonald's claims that they don't use neuromarketing, director Benoît Bringer has no problem tracking down consultants with whom they work, even if non-disclosure agreements prevent the interviewees from going into detail. Another reason for company denial: it's illegal in France to use MRIs for the purposes of marketing research, yet many firms still do it. For those who can look past the off-putting narration, this documentary addresses a fascinating and worrisome topic. Other titles in the series include *Green Marketing: How Green Is It?*, *Tax Havens: Where Money Hides in Style*, and *Disease Branding: Selling Sickness to the Public*. A strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (*K. Fennessy*)

SPORTS, GAMES & RECREATION

The Class of '92 ★★1/2

(2013) 119 min. DVD: \$19.98. Universal Studios Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned.

Manchester United is England's best-known professional soccer team. Benjamin and Gabe Turner's documentary *The Class of '92* focuses on six brilliant players—David Beckham, Nicky Butt, Ryan Giggs, Gary Neville, Phil Neville, and Paul Scholes—who led the team into making soccer history. While fans are sure to appreciate the exciting game-play footage and comments by stars, from an American perspective the documentary seems strangely preoccupied with class consciousness (the filmmakers keep stressing the working class backgrounds of the six players) and it indulges in a bit of rewriting of British political history (the suggestion that the fall of Margaret Thatcher's administration helped create a seasaw effect that enabled a new flowering in the nation's social and sports life is more than a little odd). While Beckham is naturally the most recognizable figure here, Scholes is the funniest member of the group, and his observations and recollections about the team's ascendancy are scene stealers. Along the way, notable fans—including former Prime Minister Tony Blair and filmmaker Danny Boyle—offer gushy comments without much genuine insight. Extras include a “making-of” featurette. A strong optional purchase. Aud: P. (*P. Hall*)

The Crash Reel ★★★1/2

(2013) 109 min. DVD: \$95; high schools & public libraries; \$295 w/PPR: colleges & universities. Ro*co Films Educational.

Lucy Walker's HBO-aired documentary starts off like many similar celebrations of snowboarding and its colorful young athletes, but soon joins the growing number of nonfiction exposés on the epidemic of concussions and traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) in action sports. Kevin Pearce, a Vermont native and rising star in snowboarding, was headed for the 2010 Winter Olympics when an accident on a half-pipe track in Park City, UT, gave him a severe TBI that landed him in the intensive care ward for 26 days. Cameras follow his slow, painful rehabilitation (with a special emphasis on Kevin's large, colorful, and supportive family) and his gradual coming to terms with the reality that he will not be able to compete again. At least his many corporate sponsors (including Nike) stuck with Pearce throughout the ordeal; other extreme-sports casualties are hit with massive hospital and long-term care bills that they cannot pay (and two people here die). The sad irony is that many fans spend millions to patronize free-style skateboarding/motocross/skiing events largely due to the exciting possibility of an epic crash. A physician even claims that many ESPN reports about jocks in trouble with the law aren't really about spoiled, rich guys misbehaving, but rather point to concussed young men with brain damage who have lost their judgment. A thought-provoking sports documentary, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (*C. Cassidy*)



Half the Road ★★★

(2014) 106 min. DVD: \$24.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Professional cyclist Kathryn Bertine steps behind the camera for this lively and impassioned examination of gender inequity in pro cycling. Interviewees include Bertine's colleagues, along with athletic pioneers such as Kathrine Switzer, the first woman to compete in the Boston Marathon, and Chrissie Wellington, a four-time Ironman Triathlon champion. Bertine begins by tracing the history of pro cycling from the 1800s; back then, roads weren't race-worthy, so cyclists competed in velodrome settings, such as Manhattan's Madison Square Garden. Suffragettes embraced the bicycle, because it provided them with freedom of transportation, and women wanted to race, but had few opportunities to do so. The Tour de France remains a male-only competition, and women weren't able to compete in Olympic cycling until 1984. The 1990s ushered in longer races at higher altitudes, but media coverage and sponsorship remained scarce. The situation can be seen as a parallel to pro tennis before Billie Jean King and other players made a stand for equal pay, since 50% of female pro cyclists make less than \$3,000 per year. While the women believe that the Union Cycliste Internationale—the sport's governing body—should provide them with a minimum base salary (as they do for men), former president Pat McQuaid doesn't feel that women have made enough of an impact to justify the expense. British silver medalist Emma Pooley says, “It's just so galling when you look at what the men have.” Adds Mexican racer Veronica Leal Balderas, “When you get in the professional level, you have to dedicate 100% of your day.” Bertine, who hails from St. Kitts, also looks at the UCI's age restrictions for women and the difficulty of Olympic qualification for competitors from small nations. A thought-provoking sports documentary, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (*K. Fennessy*)

Seattle Seahawks: Road to XLVIII ★★1/2
(2014) 349 min. DVD: 3 discs, \$39.95; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$49.99. Cinedigm Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).

When the Seattle Seahawks won the Super Bowl on February 2, 2014, trouncing Peyton Manning and the AFC Champion Denver Broncos in a lopsided 43-8 victory, this longtime Seattle-area resident felt that—to quote Phil Collins—“I’ve been waiting for this moment all my life.” Or at least since 1976, the year that the fledgling expansion team was born (and originally assigned to the AFC). Unfortunately, unless you happen to be a diehard Seahawks fan with an urge to free up some digital real estate on your DVR, there is not much of a reason to take this *Road* trip, since it is truly a barebones journey, featuring the network broadcast of the Super Bowl itself, along with the two Seahawks games leading up to it: the 23-15 divisional playoff win against QB Drew Brees and the New Orleans Saints, and the championship game 23-17 victory over tattooed, extremely mobile QB Colin Kaepernick and the rest of the division rival San Francisco 49ers. The only thing different here is that the commercials have been cut. Yes, it was a joy to follow the 2013 Seahawks: to witness the amazing calm of second-year fleet-footed quarterback Russell Wilson; watch running back Marshawn Lynch in “Beast” mode, dragging half the opposing team along for an extra 5-10 yards; and marvel as trash-talking cornerback Richard Sherman made one big interception after another. But for those who want to really follow the Seahawks’ “road” to victory, a much better choice here would be *Super Bowl Champions XLVIII: Seattle Seahawks*. Optional. Aud: P. (R. Pitman)

CRAFTS, ARTS & HOBBIES

Grinding Your Own Oil Paint ★★★

(2014) 48 min. DVD: \$16.95. On Air Video. PPR.

Artists who want to gain more control over the viscosity or texture of their paint can do so by grinding each color by hand—using pigment, oil, and the abrasive carborundum. In this program, Sharyn Pak Withers explains the complex process—which varies for each pigment—while demonstrating with five colors: chrome yellow light, titanium white, bone black, aquamarine blue, and alizarin crimson. Each requires a differing amount or even type of oil, and various grinding techniques, all with the goal of getting the best possible results in terms of consistency, drying period, and resistance to yellowing over time. Along the way, Withers covers materials (paint is ground on a glass sheet using a glass mull), safety issues, and shows viewers how to get the final product into tubes. A printable materials list and template for keeping track

of how a particular color is mixed is also included. While not every artist will want to make the extra effort of grinding their own oil paints, those who do will find this program helpful. Recommended. Aud: P. (F. Gardner)

It’s Sew Easy: Series 600 ★★

(2013) 4 discs. 74 min. DVD: \$39.99. KS Productions (dist. by The AV Cafe). ISBN: 978-1-891514-12-8.

Each of the 13 half-hour episodes from this public-TV-aired sixth season of *It’s Sew Easy* features 3-4 segments on sometimes unrelated topics. In one program, for instance, an instructor demonstrates how to use a serger, while another guide discusses princess seams for a “little black dress,” and a couture expert covers adding fluting—curved tucks—to a fashionable top. These presentations are not for beginners—no step-by-step process explains how to finish a project, for example—and for many items (such as a baby pillow that expands to an appliqued sheet for a little one to play on) the viewer is directed to a website for details. Several of the installments also feature products from the show’s sponsors, such as sewing machine accessories that turn hems or gather cloth, or a pattern-cutting machine. In addition, the technical qualities occasionally seem amateurish (often the camera can’t quite capture what the demonstrator is talking about), and details can be sketchy: “For sewing silk, you can just use regular thread,” one presenter says—but what is “regular”? Optional, at best. Aud: P. (F. Gardner)

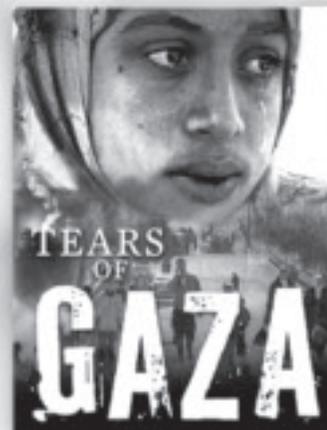
Turning Toys with Richard Raffan

★★★

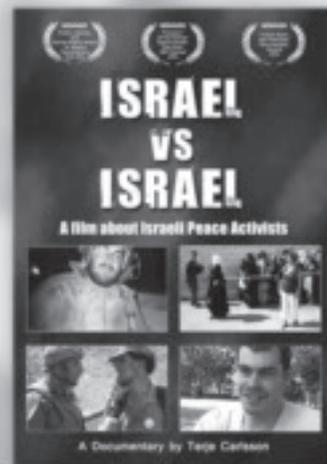
(2014) 160 min. DVD: \$19.95. The Taunton Press (dist. by The AV Cafe). ISBN: 978-1-62710-390-9.

Author and master woodworker Richard Raffan demonstrates how viewers can use a handful of carving tools and a power lathe to turn blocks of wood into wonderful little wooden toys of varying degrees of sophistication. The low-key Raffan makes it all look simple, yet it’s easy to see that his expertise is tied in large part to variables that cannot necessarily be captured on video—for example, knowing exactly how much pressure to apply by hand, or when to stop carving. Nevertheless, it’s a pleasure to watch Raffan teach these how-to lessons, which include making simple if elegant wands and tops, a classic puzzle tray (which involves trying to maneuver marbles into holes), and ornate goblets, as well as rolling toys for active toddlers—such as “wheely bugs” (snails pulled on strings) and painted race cars. When the flying sawdust settles, the results are indeed charming. Likely to appeal to crafters and hobbyists, this is recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

DOCS ABOUT THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT



“Critics’ Pick” – The New York Times
“Highly Recommended” – Educational Media Reviews Online
“Highly Recommended” – Video Librarian
ISBN: 978-1-933724-42-3 / UPC: 6-82086-70692-4



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ISBN: 978-1-933724-37-9 / UPC: 6-82086-70642-9



A film about Gaza made by Palestinians living in Gaza.
“penetrating, subtle, anguished documentary” – Mondoweiss
“compelling and moving” – Brown Paper Tickets
ISBN: 978-1-933724-43-0 / UPC: 6-82086-70702-0

MiddleEastDocs.com

Beat Generation ★★★

(2013) 45 min. DVD: \$225. Film Ideas. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-60572-764-6.

French filmmakers Jean-Jacques Lebel and Xavier Villetard helmed this English-language documentary on the three main creative powers of the Beat Generation—Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, and William Burroughs—focusing on both their respective contributions to post-World War II American literature and their complex and often convoluted relations with each other. In their eagerness to reconsider the basic structures of fiction and poetry, the writers brought an astonishing burst of energy into their breakthrough works. Yet each struggled with often significant personal problems, and the challenge of meeting the high expectations generated by their initial work eventually took a toll. *Beat Generation* offers some treats—most notably an audio recording of Ginsberg reciting his landmark poem *Howl* (albeit in a somewhat monotone presentation) and Kerouac speaking French in a Canadian TV interview (the child of French-Canadians, Kerouac didn't speak English until he was six). However, the directors rely too heavily on an early 1990s video interview with Ginsberg to fill in a lot of the facts, and the production is littered with well-worn stock footage depicting the American society that the Beat authors rebelled against. Nonetheless, viewers unfamiliar with Kerouac, Ginsberg, and Burroughs will find this to be a satisfactory introduction—one that will hopefully inspire some to discover the trio's still-amazing works. Recommended, overall. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Bringing King to China ★★★1/2

(2011) 85 min. DVD: \$159; public libraries & high schools; \$289; colleges & universities. Dark Hollow Films. PPR.

An engrossing documentary that underscores how even the best intentions can go awry, *Bringing King to China* centers on an American teacher named Caitrin McKiernan living in Beijing, China, who receives word that her father, Kevin McKiernan—a TV journalist—has been killed while covering the Iraq War. After Kevin turns up alive, Caitrin is inspired to try to make the world a better place—talking to her Chinese students about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the Civil Rights movement in the U.S. Noting that King can help serve as a kind of bridge between America and China (where he is much admired as a foe of so-called imperialism), Caitrin decides to produce a play about King with Beijing's most prestigious theatre company, a project that faces great difficulty on many levels, from financing to logistics to dialogues with the show's director and cast about the meaning of King's legacy and how

it relates to Chinese political culture. Things go swimmingly for a while, but eventually it becomes obvious that the director's take on the play and on King himself is quite different from Caitrin's. Capturing all of this on film is dad Kevin (who is the film's director, although some of the cinematography here was done by the legendary Haskell Wexler), whom Caitrin feels is suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder following his Iraq experience. With its various levels of psychodrama, *Bringing King to China* winds up being a fascinating and thought-provoking film. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

Broadway Theatre Archive Great Performances: Set One ★★★

(2014) 4 discs. 357 min. DVD: \$39.99. Kultur (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-0-7697-4926-6.

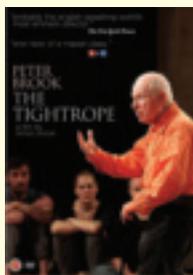
The Broadway Theatre Archive has long been collecting and restoring old television productions of plays—unseen for years—and releasing them initially on VHS and then DVD. Now, some are being repackaged into compilation sets. The jewel in this initial volume is certainly Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* (VL-9/02), which aired on CBS in 1966. Although the text has been shortened, the trimming was done by Miller himself, and the film not only preserves shattering performances by the stars of the original 1949 Broadway production—Lee J. Cobb as long-suffering Willy Loman and Mildred Dunnock as his wife—but also boasts a sterling supporting cast, including George Segal, James Farentino, Edward Andrews, and Gene Wilder. Wendy Wasserstein's debut play, the amusing *Uncommon Women and Others*, taped for PBS's *Great Performances* in 1979, is set during the high tide of early feminism and centers on a group of Mount Holyoke alumnae who meet and reminisce about their college days (with

many flashbacks). The fine ensemble features Meryl Streep and Jill Eikenberry, but the drama is dominated by an electric Swoosie Kurtz. Ntozake Shange's 1975 "choreopoem" *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide* has been given a more conventional narrative slant in this 1982 PBS *American Playhouse* version, but with a cast that includes Alfre Woodard this rumination on the oppression of black women is definitely superior to Tyler Perry's recent movie version. The weak entry here is Elizabeth Swados' *Alice at the Palace*, a quirky "music hall" take on Lewis Carroll's *Alice* books—captured in a 1982 NBC taping—also starring Streep, here playing an Alice who is good-natured but also rather feeble. A bargain-priced collection, this is easily recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (F. Swietek)

The Frog Princes ★★★

(2011) 45 min. DVD: \$225. National Film Board of Canada. PPR.

Directed by Ryan Mullins and Omar Majeed, this 2011 documentary follows the months-long preparation of a Concordia University (in Montreal) Center for Arts and Human Development production of *The Frog and the Princess*, up through opening night. One of the notable challenges here is that the cast—under the tutelage of drama therapy professor Stephen Snow—is comprised of people with developmental disabilities, which adds another element to age-old theatre hurdles such as remembering lines, taking direction, and exhibiting diva behavior. Although focusing on the cast as a whole, *The Frog Princes* also offers particular glimpses into the lives of lead actors Ray-Man (who is extremely excited about moving out on his own, and tells his mother "don't push your luck" about constant visits) and Tanya, a woman with an eating disorder who laments about being overweight (and

**Peter Brook: The Tightrope ★★★1/2**

(2013) 83 min. DVD: \$27.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

This documentary by Simon Brook—son of the titular subject, legendary stage director Peter Brook—offers an unusual master class in the art of acting. Working in a spacious room covered in Persian rugs that offers an almost mystical ambience, the elder Brook instructs a handful of adult students in the actor's art of immersion. Brook demands that the group take scenes seriously, embracing truths and reacting accordingly, beginning with a deceptively simple exercise in which students must walk across an invisible tightrope and believe that they are actually doing so. Brook also leads the group through a fascinating "shared mind" exercise, dismantling individual agendas while training the ensemble to think as one. Enlisting the help of musicians, the soft-spoken Brook continues to add layer upon layer of practical and spiritual challenges, during which viewers are able to see the underlying intentions. Perhaps the best bit of wisdom here is Brook's definition of the difference between actors and non-actors: the actor, says Brook, has a direct connection between imagination and the body. Given what we see here, that seems to be absolutely true. Extras include bonus interviews and a photo gallery. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

has fears of being onstage). Presenting the production as both a growth experience and the opportunity to “create good theatre,” *The Frog Princes* concludes with a coda set during graduation. Offering a heartening look at one example of art serving as a therapeutic form of confidence-building, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

O Samba ★★★

(2013) 82 min. DVD: \$19.99. EuroArts (dist. by Naxos of America).

Director Georges Gachot’s documentary focuses on Martinho da Vila’s Vila Isabel Samba School, as members prepare for the 2013 Rio de Janeiro Carnival parade with the aim of not just making a good showing, but ultimately triumphing over the other 11 schools. Although Gachot includes interviews with a few participants, *O Samba* is mostly shot in narration-free *cinéma vérité*, observing float preparations, rehearsal sequences, and song performances. To singer and composer da Vila, samba keeps the history of Brazil alive through tales of the country’s African roots and customs. For drum instructor Master Wallan, samba represents Brazil at its best, although he remembers a time when authorities held samba in low regard. As da Vila notes, the music has always been associated with the favelas, the country’s poorest neigh-

borhoods. Fortunately, times have changed. “Samba, for me,” Wallan states simply, “is my life.” Da Vila also travels to Paris, where he records a duet with Greek singer Nana Mouskouri in an interesting interlude that doesn’t really tie in with the rest of the film. Other featured performers include Moyses Marques, Leci Brandão, Ney Matogrosso, and da Vila’s daughters, Mart’nalía and Maíra Freitas. The Vila Isabel parade performance at the end features an Angola-inspired float dominated by a giant golden lion and dozens of dancers in elaborately beaded and feathered costumes. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Pennsylvania Ballet at 50 ★★★

(2014) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62789-013-7.

The Philadelphia-based Pennsylvania Ballet was founded in 1963 with support from the Ford Foundation in response to renowned choreographer George Balanchine’s call for ballet companies to be created throughout the United States. It quickly emerged as a leader in the regional ballet movement and in May 2013 celebrated its 50th anniversary with a gala at the city’s Academy of Music featuring the current troupe, along with many former dancers. Substantial excerpts from that performance are presented in

this PBS special featuring three major (and highly diverse) pieces: a complete rendition of Christopher Wheeldon’s *After the Rain*; the pas de deux from Margo Sappington’s *Under the Sun*; and “Diamonds” from Balanchine’s *Jewels*. The dance segments here provide a clear demonstration of the high professional standards maintained by the Pennsylvania Ballet, which might not be routinely placed in the top tier among companies in the U.S., but is one that connoisseurs recognize for its high degree of technical polish, wide-ranging repertoire, and continuing espousal of Balanchine’s legacy. DVD extras include bonus interviews. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

Richard II ★★★1/2

(2013) 165 min. DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99. Opus Arte (dist. by Naxos of America).

It’s been a good year for Shakespeare’s play focusing on the titular 14th-century English king whose high-handed rule led to his deposition and brutal execution, followed by the accession of Henry Bolingbroke and his Lancastrian line. Rupert Goold’s film version starring Ben Whishaw was the highlight of the BBC series *The Hollow Crown* (VL-1/14), and now Gregory Doran’s 2013 staging for Stratford-upon-Avon’s Royal Shakespeare Company delivers a strong alternative, perhaps lacking the cinematic flourishes of

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Rating: N/A
Original Language: English
Color
Run Time:
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Goold's adaptation but sporting an equally impressive lead performance by David Tennant. In the early scenes the former Doctor Who embodies Richard's casual cruelty with disarming ease, but later earns some of our sympathy even while portraying the deposed monarch as flighty and politically obtuse to the bitter end. Doran surrounds Tennant with a superb supporting cast that delivers the verse with precision and authority on an elegantly simplistic set that employs some rear projection to accentuate the period costumes. The audience reaction at times feels intrusive, but that is the price one pays for the substantial benefits of a live performance, which is here captured with excellent visuals and sound. DVD extras include an audio commentary by Doran, an interview with Tennant, behind-the-scenes featurettes and a cast gallery. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (F. Swietek)

Russia's Open Book: Writing in the Age of Putin ★★★

(2014) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-056-5.

Russia has long been noted for its epic literature, which—though often dour—also ultimately expresses joy, hope, and the resilient spirit of humanity. But with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the world seemed to stop hearing about new Russian writers. Sarah Wallis and Paul Mitchell's PBS-aired documentary, hosted by actor and author Stephen Fry, introduces six distinctive, varied Russian writers who are making an impact on the national literary scene (some have been translated into English). Zakhar Prilepin is described as an "extreme nationalist"—a veteran of the war in Chechnya and activist sometimes at odds with government leaders—who is concerned with "male occupations" and tests of strength. His 2005 novel *Pathologies* has been characterized by a critic as a "terrorist attack" in print. Ludmila Ulitskaya, on the other hand, eschews activism, but does choose to "stand on the side of the individual." Some authors offer commentary through satire or fantastic, futuristic tales. In the Soviet era, when Russians lacked access to rock concerts, international books, and uncensored television, homegrown literature helped fill the void. Today, Russians can enjoy a shared global culture, and writers cite far flung sources for their inspirations—from Stephen King to rapper 50 Cent. A literary critic notes that in Russia the "poetry comes first, then the politics." Fry reads excerpts from the authors' works, and the film includes a visit to the Moscow Book Fair. The upshot is that Russians "grapple with the past, live in the present, and create fiction [for] the future." American audiences may not share Fry's enthusiasm for the excerpts read here, and the documentary could have benefited

from added context, but on the whole this look at contemporary Russian literature is recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)

Seduced and Abandoned ★★1/2

(2014) 98 min. DVD: \$19.98. HBO Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Newsflash: the movie biz caters to big, overblown comic-book franchise schlock while forsaking smaller, more personal material. Who'da thunk it? That familiar plight is explored in this HBO documentary by two insiders, director James Toback and actor Alec Baldwin, who crash the money-rich, artistically bankrupt Cannes Film Festival. In a Riviera climate of superstar hype, marketing, and immense wealth (presented with a Shostakovich soundtrack), the conspirators film themselves shopping around a hard-sell movie idea—a *Last Tango in Paris* remake set in Iraq as a political-sexual thriller, featuring Baldwin and Neve Campbell. Most investors shun the idea of backing what clearly sounds like box-office poison, citing the lack of internationally bankable stars or car/submarine chases. Fringe benefits here (or interruptions of the non-starter narrative) are Q&As with Cannes scenesters Bernardo Bertolucci, James Caan, Jessica Chastain, Diane Kruger, Ryan Gosling, Diablo Cody, etc. Martin Scorsese and Roman Polanski also share warm memories of Cannes career breakthroughs, but join Francis Ford Coppola in the general opinion that the era of funding a *Mean Streets*, *Taxi Driver*, or *Chinatown* is long gone. Author/gossip reporter Taki complains that Cannes is overrun by Russian oligarch crooks. And

yet, they all still love cinema, for its illusion of immortality and the rare triumph that happens when a worthwhile picture gets made. Toback (who appears considerably less weathered than his 1970s contemporaries) and Baldwin are interesting enough, but the premise here is old news. A strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

To Tell the Truth: Working for Change

★★★1/2

(2013) 56 min. DVD: \$348. Icarus Films. PPR. Closed captioned.

This excellent title focuses on the formative years (1929–1941) of the social documentary film genre in the U.S. and Britain, a period during which economic and social upheaval accompanied the Great Depression, the rise of labor unions, and the introduction of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal. Mixing archival footage and interviews with scholars and surviving filmmakers from the era, director Calvin Skaggs tells the stories of pioneers in the field, some of whom formed the Workers Film and Photo League and sought to capture real events and their impacts on ordinary Americans: including police assaults on labor rallies, homeless people making soup from a butcher's discarded bones, and field workers trying to irrigate dusty soil with buckets of water. Viewers will also see what was happening on the other side of the Atlantic, where British filmmakers secured government financial support to make hard-hitting films about the coal industry, poverty, and environmental devastation. Lacking similar financing in America, the U.S. counterparts formed co-ops



Six by Sondheim ★★★

(2014) 86 min. DVD: \$19.98. HBO Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Originally broadcast on HBO, James Lapine's Peabody Award-winning documentary offers a unique celebration of the work of composer Stephen Sondheim, tracing his tumultuous life and career in a collage of interviews with the subject over the years through such diverse settings as Mike Douglas's old TV talk show to a *60 Minutes* chat in which Diane Sawyer all but genuflects before Sondheim. The eponymous sextet refers to a half-dozen classic songs from Sondheim's shows, which the composer talks about in modest and funny recollections. Three of the songs are presented in vintage clips—Larry Kert singing "Something's Coming" from a 1958 TV broadcast, Dean Jones offering a stunning rendition of "Being Alive" in a scene from D.A. Pennebaker's documentary *Company: Original Cast Album*, and the cast of *Sunday in the Park with George* performing "Sunday" from a PBS production. Three other songs are given new interpretations in strange settings: Audra McDonald sings "Send in the Clowns" in a lighting-fixture warehouse, Pulp singer Jarvis Cocker oozes "I'm Still Here" in a seedy nightclub setting, and the *Merrily We Roll Along* number "Opening Doors" is delivered a bit too cute by Darren Criss, America Ferrera, and Jeremy Jordan, with Sondheim joining in briefly (and—oddly—pretty badly). Sondheim offers selective autobiographical morsels, emphasizing a troubled childhood and making an evasive acknowledgement of being in a same-sex relationship (but not identifying his partner by name). All told, this is something of a mishmash, but still a tuneful and happy concoction centered around a charismatic musical genius that will certainly delight Broadway devotees. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

and production companies that continued to churn along as money from other sources became available. Throughout these developments, the social documentary genre evolved, built around the idea that a movie camera could both record current events and react to them spontaneously—an ideal and aesthetic that endures to this day. Along with the also newly available companion volume *To Tell the Truth: The Strategy of Truth*, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

We're in the Movies ★★★

(2014) 217 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.95. Flicker Alley (avail. from most distributors).

This Blackhawk Films anthology features two documentaries on film culture, along with a handful of "itinerant films" from the first half of the 20th century. *Palace of Silents: The Silent Movie Theatre in Los Angeles* (2010) chronicles the long history of what remained for over 50 years the only exclusive silent movie theater in the country, launched in 1943 by John Hampton, closed in 1979, and reopened in 1991 by Lawrence Austin. Film love gives way to real-life melodrama as the documentary explores Austin's murder in a contract killing in 1997, while also revealing tawdry details about his private life and shady dealings. While the seedy elements certainly spice up the history, *Palace of Silents* is still first and foremost the story of how passion and dedication kept the theater running for years and how subsequent owners have maintained the venue's viability by expanding its offerings. The second documentary, *When You Wore a Tulip and I Wore a Big Red Rose* (1983), examines the origins and production of the short film *The Lumberjack* (1914), which was made in Wausau, WI, by an itinerant production company (i.e., one that traveled from town to town and made films using local talent). While somewhat meandering, director Stephen Schaller (who also restored the original *The Lumberjack*, which is included on the disc) shines an interesting spotlight on a specialized quarter of the early film industry. This Blu-ray/DVD Combo release also includes six examples of itinerant filmmaking from both silent and sound eras, including a new restoration of the 1937 film "The Kidnapper's Foil," which was selected for the National Film Registry in 2012. Bundled with an accompanying booklet, this is a specialized set that will be of interest to die-hard film history buffs but few others. Recommended, with the aforementioned caveat. Aud: C, P. (S. Axmaker)

HISTORY & CURRENT EVENTS

50 Children: The Rescue Mission of Mr. & Mrs. Kraus ★★★1/2

(2014) 63 min. DVD: \$21.99: individuals; \$79: public libraries & high schools; \$295 w/PPR: colleges & universities. Seventh Art Releasing.

In 1939, Philadelphia lawyer Gilbert Kraus

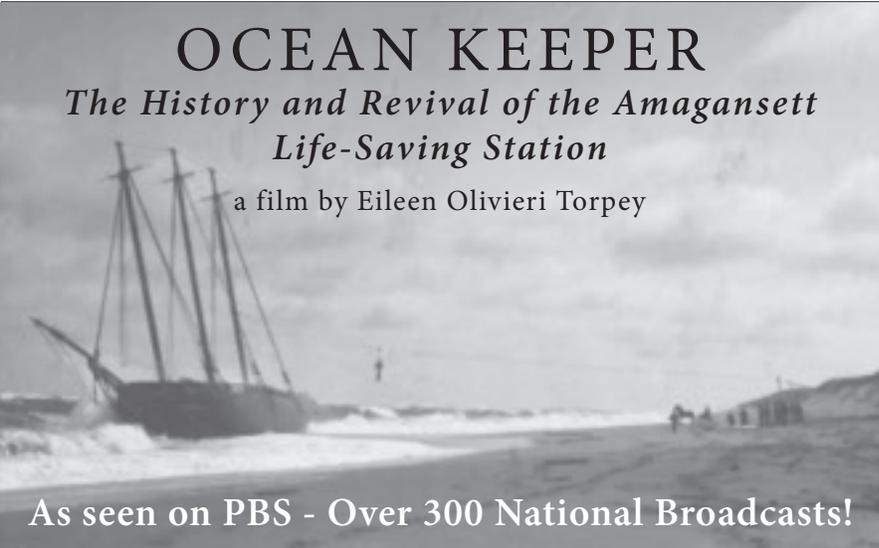
and his wife Eleanor traveled to Austria to rescue 50 Jewish children and resettle them safely in the United States. The couple faced major obstacles, from American immigration policy that kept thousands of European Jewish refugees from receiving asylum, to Jewish-American groups who were not openly supportive of the Krauses' efforts. To make matters worse, the Krauses were Jewish, so their presence in Nazi-controlled Vienna was not welcomed by local authorities. Nonetheless, they managed to arrange passage for 50 children between the ages of 5 and 14 to cross the Atlantic—no mean feat, given that the State Department was not overly benevolent in granting visas to Jews fleeing Nazi tyranny. Narrated by Alan Alda,

this HBO-aired documentary by filmmaker Steven Pressman serves up a powerful and sincere tribute to these long-forgotten heroes and their remarkable act of heroism. Nine of the children saved by the Krauses are interviewed here, while Eleanor Kraus's journal of the perilous journey offers an inspiring view of courage (actress Mammie Gummer recites Eleanor's writing). A stirring true Holocaust story, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Civil War: The Untold Story ★★★

(2013) 2 discs. 276 min. DVD: \$49.99. Athena (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62172-234-2.

With the possible exception of World War



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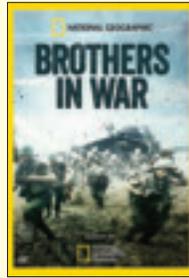
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Brothers in War ★★☆☆1/2

(2013) 90 min. DVD: \$19.98. National Geographic (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-4263-4619-4.

The Vietnam War was the only recent major U.S. military conflict that was not subject to censorship in filming battlefield campaigns (indeed, the almost-nightly TV news broadcasts from the frontlines helped propel anti-war opinion), creating a voluminous library of footage that has proven useful in enabling subsequent generations to understand what happened in Vietnam and how it affected the military personnel who served there. Narrated by Charlie Sheen and directed by Liz Reph, *Brothers in War*—which originally aired on the National Geographic Channel—focuses on a single year and regiment: 1967, when Charlie Company went through vigorous boot camp training before shipping out to the Viet Cong stronghold in the Mekong Delta. Reph skillfully mixes digitally restored archival clips with home movies taken by the troops (much of this video has not been seen publicly or has been unavailable for many years), and she includes audio recordings sent home by the soldiers that offer eloquent first-person accounts of their lives overseas. The experience in the Mekong Delta turned out to be bloody and tragic: of Charlie Company's 160 men, 26 were killed and 105 wounded. The documentary also features footage of survivors arriving home in 1968, and revisits them during reunions in later decades. DVD extras include deleted scenes. A moving tribute to military courage, heroism, and camaraderie, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)



II, no other military conflict has been the subject of so much cinematic attention as the Civil War. This five-part PBS-aired series focuses less on the events and personalities that have been the subject of now-classic productions and instead zeroes in on the military campaigns in what it calls “the West”—here meaning the western fringes of states at war in the region between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi River. Narrated by Elizabeth McGovern, and featuring several Civil War scholars, filmmaker Chris Wheeler's *Civil War: The Untold Story* combines dramatic re-creations with 3D maps to illustrate life and warfare in the 1860s, although the genuine emotional power comes from archival photographs of the era and the heartfelt letters and diaries written by those in the middle of the struggle. Perhaps the most disturbing element addressed is the plight of escaping black slaves, who sought refuge behind Union lines but were often met with a racial hostility in the North that seemed violently at odds with the Union's goal of eradicating slavery. DVD extras include archival footage from the 50-year anniversary observance of the Siege of Vicksburg, and a viewer's guide. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (P. Hall)

Drop City ★★☆☆

(2012) 82 min. DVD: \$29: individuals; \$79: public libraries & high schools; \$295 w/PPR: colleges & universities. Seventh Art Releasing.

“It's impossible to define Drop City,” states an interviewee in filmmaker Joan Grossman's chronicle of the brief, storied existence of an early 1960s commune—but that doesn't stop Grossman from giving it a good try. Drop City was founded in southern Colorado (near the

town of Trinidad) by free-spirited couple Jo Anne and Gene Bernofsky, who were increasingly unhappy with Vietnam-era America and embraced the theories and designs of R. Buckminster Fuller. The DIY site drew painters, poets, writers, and inventor Steve Baer (aka “Luke Cool”), who installed solar-energy systems and experimented with Fuller-esque designs in creating the dodecahedron geodesic dome-structures (made from scavenged car parts) in which the “Droppers” lived. Drop City featured experimental music/art jams, witnessed the birth (the assertion goes) of underground “comix,” and served as a major inspiration for Stewart Brand's *Whole Earth Catalogue*. Still, personal differences ultimately led to the founders' desertion; a druggier, aimless hippie influx mixed poorly with the old guard; and in 1969, a young “flower child” committed suicide at the commune. By the 1970s, Drop City was an empty, domed ghost town. Serving up an engaging scrapbook of one aspect of 1960s American counterculture (that would be somewhat overshadowed by later developments at Woodstock and Altamont), *Drop City* will definitely appeal to Baby Boomers, as well as readers of T.C. Boyle's novel *Drop City* and Lauren Groff's similarly-themed *Arcadia*. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Nuremberg: Its Lesson for Today

★★★☆☆1/2

(2014) 78 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$495 (teacher's guide included). New Day Films. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-57448-478-6.

The centerpiece of this important boxed set is the recovered film *Nuremberg*, a 1946 U.S.-sponsored documentary on the Nuremberg war crimes trials that followed World War II

(a film later suppressed by the government itself), presented here in a restored version with new narration by Liev Schreiber, along with the addition of historical audio tracks. The original film was the work of Stuart Schulberg, who melded documentary footage with excerpts from two films made for the use of prosecutors (*The Nazi Plan* and *Nazi Concentration Camps*), creating a newsreel-style compilation that laid out an analysis of Hitler's policies, including the Final Solution. While the reconstruction adds no new visual material, it's surprising how much power Schulberg's film retains: the choice of footage, juxtaposition with other documentary evidence, and trial excerpts here still have enormous impact, while the fast-paced '40s presentation style carries amazing visceral energy. *Nuremberg* was suppressed in the U.S. by the very government that commissioned it, not only due to the graphic images, but perhaps also because it represented a diplomatic viewpoint that no longer fit American foreign policy toward the Soviet Union. However, it was widely shown in Germany, and while the original negative was lost, Schulberg's daughter Sandra, working with Josh Waletzky, was able to recover it from surviving prints at the German National Film Archive. DVD extras include eyewitness accounts (including Schulberg's) and legacy interviews. The Blu-ray edition adds eight supplementary films, along with more eyewitness accounts and interviews. Also included is a 12-page timeline of important events in the history of international criminal justice from 1474 to 2012, as well as a 140-page educational guide. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Rails to the Catskills ★★☆☆1/2

(2014) 95 min. DVD: \$19.95: individuals; \$69.95: institutions. Willow Mixed Media. PPR.

Written and directed by Tobe Carey, *Rails to the Catskills* is a love letter to the sometimes-forgotten railroads that once served the northern and southern Catskill Mountain areas of New York State. In our age of omnipresent highways, it might be hard to imagine the importance of the rail routes, but especially in this part of the U.S., they were the lifeblood for communities, commerce, and general transportation (anyone traveling in the region today will witness how their absence has contributed to economic decline in many towns). Built near waterways, the Catskill routes had their origins in the canal-building era of the late 1820s, picking up steam—so to speak—in the post-Civil War period to achieve prosperity with mergers, only to be followed by bankruptcies in the 20th century. Carey tells this story using an artful combination of historical photographs and documents, vintage and contemporary film and audio clips, period-correct songs (expertly performed by Dick Staber and Paul Lounsbury), and interviews with a series of

historians, whose love for the subject matter is evident throughout. Covered here are the Canajoharie & Catskill Railroad; the D&H Canal; the New York, Ontario & Western Railroad; electric trolleys; the Catskill Mountain Railway/Otis Elevating Railway; and many others, including the restored Catskill Mountain Railroad, whose volunteer workers built and now operate a line that carries tourists through a scenic stretch of countryside. Marked by successes and failures, crises and conflicts, this tale of the Catskill rails is engagingly told. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Block)

The Rock (La Roca) ★★★

(2011) 70 min. In Spanish w/English subtitles. DVD: \$89: high schools & public libraries; \$350: colleges & universities. PRAGDA. PPR.

La Roca examines the relationship between the British territory of Gibraltar and the nearby Spanish community of La Linea, through the eyes of both local populaces, who over the decades have seen peace give way to conflict. People from Gibraltar once worked and played freely in La Linea and vice versa, drawn to each other's attitudes and cultures and often marrying and living happily together. Filmmaker Raúl Santos intersperses archival and news footage with interviews of people who share remi-

niscences, moving more or less chronologically to recount the evacuation of residents of Gibraltar to London during World War II; Germany's surrender and the families' return to "The Rock"; and the discovery of Western music and culture in the early 1960s. Extensive coverage is devoted to Generalissimo Francisco Franco's closing of the border between Gibraltar and Spain in 1969, which resulted in forced separations within extended families that led to heartbreaking attempts at cross-border communication (including Sunday gatherings at the boundary gates where people would peer through binoculars in search of loved ones on the other side), as well as elaborate smuggling operations. Despite the eventual reopening of the crossing in 1982—amid great fanfare—political strife continues between Spain and the U.K., while the trust between citizens on both sides seems to be irrevocably broken. A sad, thought-provoking film, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (M. Puffer-Rothenberg)

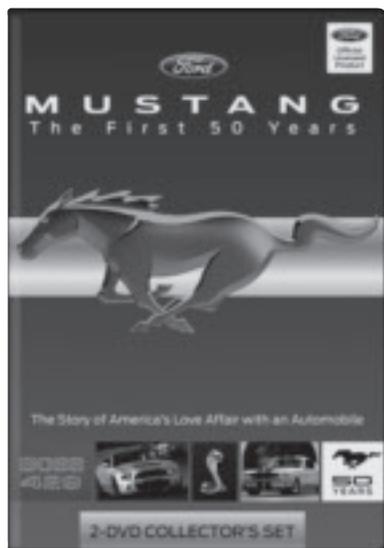
Salty Dog Blues ★★★1/2

(2012) 52 min. DVD: \$80: public libraries & high schools; \$300: colleges & universities. Third World Newsreel. PPR.

Al Santana and Denise B. Santiago's engaging documentary focuses on the

experiences of African American and Puerto Rican men and women who served in the U.S. Merchant Marine from the 1930s through the 1980s. For many, the Merchant Marine offered an opportunity to both escape from crushing poverty and to literally sail away from a segregated society. Featuring on-camera interviews interwoven with archival photos and stock footage, *Salty Dog Blues*—narrated by journalist and media personality Felipe Luciano—covers several forgotten milestones in U.S. history, including the formation of the National Maritime Union in 1937, with its then-revolutionary pledge to treat all people as equals; the barrier-breaking achievement of Hugh Mulzac in becoming the first black captain of a Merchant Marine vessel (he had to receive his training in England after being refused instruction in the United States); the percentage of fatal casualties suffered by the branch during World War II (second only to the U.S. Marine Corps); the unusual opportunities afforded to females who sought careers in the Merchant Marine; and the shameful blacklisting of maritime union executives during the McCarthy era, which included the deportation of Jamaican-born union leader Ferdinand Smith. The filmmakers also address contemporary issues facing

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The Rise of the Nazi Party ★★☆☆1/2

(2013) 3 discs. 506 min. DVD: \$59.99. Athena (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62172-241-0.



For many centuries, Germany was noted for its intellectual and cultural achievements in the areas of music, literature, and philosophy. So how in a mere span of 20 years did the country embrace Nazi terror and genocide? Narrated by Joseph Kloska, this 10-part series explores the rise of and fall of Nazism, along with the postwar move to cleanse the nation of its Nazi past. As Hitler recovered from wounds suffered at the end of World War I, he was outraged by news of the German surrender, and immediately embraced the “stab in the back” theory that the defeat was engineered by international financiers and the Jews. Hitler was also motivated by a feeling that his destiny was tied to restoring his adopted country to its former glory, while also achieving world conquest and establishing the supremacy of the “master race.” *The Rise of the Nazi Party* describes Hitler’s almost accidental association with the movement’s beginnings in the streets and beer halls of Munich, followed by the growth of a “gangster regime” populated by obsessed anti-Semites who included Joseph Goebbels, Heinrich Himmler, and Hermann Göring. The Nazis—who had a hatred for communism and a contempt for democracy—outwardly maintained respectability and proclaimed peaceful intentions, but all the while the organization harbored a secret agenda. Employing visceral images and inflammatory language, the Nazis used social chaos and street violence to consolidate power, while incrementally enacting measures designed to marginalize and remove Jews from society’s mainstream. Experiments with euthanasia for the mentally and physically handicapped led to a public outcry, convincing the Nazis that genocide must be conducted away from population centers and scrutiny. Increasingly, Hitler became convinced of his own infallible judgment, which led to disasters such as the Russian invasion. Even as the regime crumbled, the “Final Solution” continued, with trains bringing Jews to the death camps. Except for the curious omissions of the 1936 Nazi Olympics and the Battle of Britain, this series provides a comprehensive portrait of a murderous regime. Bundled with a 16-page viewer’s guide, this is highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

now-retired veterans, including stagnant pension plans and healthcare problems. An intelligent and compelling slice of off-the-beaten-path military history, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

TRAVEL & GEOGRAPHY

Brazil ★★☆☆

(2014) 227 min. DVD: \$24.98; Blu-ray: \$29.98. BBC Worldwide Ltd. (avail. from most distributors).

Having traveled around the world in *Full Circle with Michael Palin* (VL-5/98) and journeyed from the Arctic to the Antarctic in *Pole to Pole* (VL-4/93)—with numerous shorter stints along the way (in Hemingway country, the Himalayas, and the Sahara desert)—Monty Python alum Michael Palin heads for Brazil, the fifth largest country in the world, in this four-part series. The longstanding draw of traveling with Palin has always been his winning combination of genuine enthusiasm, unflagging curiosity, and wonderful wit, but our then-68-year-old guide seems more subdued here than in previous efforts. Moving north to south, Palin takes in a bull-baptizing ceremony in São Luis, stops at a literally gold-filled resplendent church in Salvador, joins a

drum group (“time for a touch of the Keith Moon”), visits the favelas where elite police forces are taking back neighborhoods from drug lords, travels to the remote outpost of Fordlandia (where Henry Ford built a failed workers’ utopia—the subject of Greg Grandin’s excellent book *Fordlandia*, which we see Palin reading), and visits with the granddaughter of the man who designed the famed Christ the Redeemer statue, which is the most iconic image in Rio de Janeiro. While there are some weird sights (including a calf with two anuses), Palin seems to spend a fair amount of time in Chamber of Commerce mode, listening to happy talk from politicians and entrepreneurs. Still, there are some wonderful moments, including Palin’s funny double-take when walking past phallic-shaped art in Paraty, his ultimately successful fishing attempt to land a yellow piranha (promptly prepared and eaten as sashimi), and his comical efforts to help make bread from manioc root with Yanomami native women. Palin acknowledges that Brazil continues to face enormous problems related to social inequity, but also notes that real progress has been made, as he watches a gay pride parade attended by two million—an event that 21 years ago attracted 28 people. Likely to be appreciated by both Palin fans and armchair travelers, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (R. Pitman)

Discoveries... America National Parks: Mount Rushmore ★★★

(2014) 50 min. DVD or Blu-ray: \$24.95. Bennett-Watt HD Productions. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-60490-172-6 (dvd), 978-1-60490-195-5 (blu-ray).

Rich in historical detail and entertaining anecdotes, this latest entry in Jim and Kelly Watt's high-def filmed *Discoveries... America: National Parks* series focuses on South Dakota's unique and fascinating national parks. Towering over all, of course, is Mount Rushmore, the largest piece of public art in the world. Built by 400 men over 14 years, this monument to several American presidents—carved into solid rock—was the brainchild of South Dakota historian Doane Robinson and sculptor Gutzon Borglum, whose original plans for the monument changed due to geological variables. Viewers will also accompany a park ranger who gives a tour of Wind Cave National Park, which boasts plentiful wildlife, as well as one of the longest caves in the world, caked in limestone (with so many narrow entrances into the cave, it's easy to get lost and exit out another hole). Jewel Cave National Monument has the third longest cave in the U.S., while Badlands National Park features beautiful grasslands and rugged formations created from the accelerated erosion of rock. Badlands is also home to a remarkable fossil trail that has recorded the presence of prehistoric animals (evidence also suggests that the area was once covered in water). Sure to appeal to armchair travelers and park enthusiasts alike, this is recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

BIOGRAPHY

Anita: Speaking Truth to Power ★★★

(2014) 77 min. DVD: \$24.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

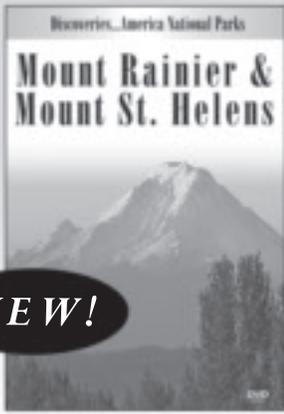
Borrowing her title from Anita Hill's own 1998 autobiography, filmmaker Frieda Lee Mock heroically profiles the woman whose 1991 testimony concerning sexual harassment challenged—unsuccessfully—the nomination of Clarence Thomas to the U.S. Supreme Court. In retrospect, Hill (who is treated like a veritable icon by admirers here) was instrumental in raising the public's consciousness regarding workplace impropriety and sexism. Perhaps the documentary's most eyebrow-raising revelation is that Hill brought many witnesses who could have supported her bombshell allegations that Thomas had made numerous lewd remarks and advances when he and Hill worked together in the U.S. Bureau of Education during the early 1980s—but none were called to testify by the presiding investigator...a certain Joe Biden. No mention is made of Hill's vindication following the publication of David Brock's 1993

right-wing bestseller *The Real Anita Hill*, a book that was later repudiated by its own author after he switched political sides. One of the more timely interviews here is with *New York Times* ex-executive editor Jill Abramson (co-author of a book on the Thomas confirmation hearings), whose own ouster from the newspaper earlier this year was tinged with innuendo about office gender inequalities and old-boys networks. DVD extras include a keynote address by Hill, and a performance in honor of Hill coordinated by Eve Ensler. Generally hagiographic but also featuring insightful commentary about a key figure who stirred up water cooler debates across the nation in the early '90s, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

B.B. King: The Life of Riley ★★★

(2014) 119 min. DVD: \$16.95, Blu-ray: \$19.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).

Morgan Freeman narrates this well-rounded profile of blues musician Riley "B.B." King, who began life in 1925 as the son of Mississippi sharecroppers. As a structuring device, director Jon Brewer here draws on an annual visit by King to his Delta birthplace, along the way adding comments from friends and relatives, accompanied by photos and archival performances from King and those who have inspired him, such as Django Reinhardt and T-Bone Walker. Blues contemporaries, including Buddy Guy and Bobby "Blue" Bland, also offer reminiscences. After his parents split up, King's mother died from complications due to diabetes (a condition he shares), and he was raised by a succession of relatives. King developed an interest in the guitar at an early age, and picked up paying gigs after moving to Memphis, where he worked as a disc jockey. Once King started touring, he never stopped, and he doesn't consider it unusual to play 365 days a year (although that workload did contribute to the end of his first marriage). King also acknowledges a weakness for the ladies, saying, "I never met a woman that I didn't like." With the rise of British blues-rock in the 1960s, King's audience actually grew larger, particularly after he released the pop hit "The Thrill Is Gone," which added strings to his sound, and he toured with the Rolling Stones. Collaborations and more tours with U2 and Eric Clapton in later years would continue to expand his reach. *B.B. King: The Life of Riley* pays tribute to the electric blues that King popularized as much as the man himself, and includes commentary from several high-profile fans and practitioners, including John Mayall, Leon Russell, and Bonnie Raitt. Extras include extended interviews and a 2011 performance from London's Royal Albert Hall. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennesy)

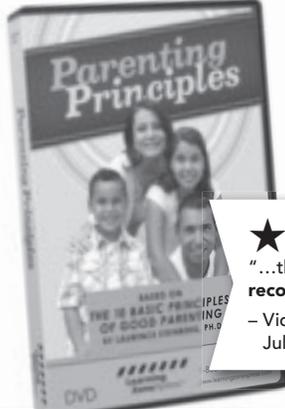


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Every Everything: The Music, Life & Times of Grant Hart ★★★

(2014) 93 min. DVD: \$19.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).

Director Gorman Bechard builds his biographical documentary around a series of interviews with charismatic Minneapolis musician Grant Hart, creating the impression of a monologue that is illustrated with handbills, posters, and concert footage. As a kid, Hart took inspiration from extroverted drummers, such as Gene Krupa and Keith Moon. He met guitarist Bob Mould while working at a St. Paul record store, and—along with bass player Greg Norton—formed the punk power trio Hüsker Dü, which put out singles, toured the country, and released their debut album *Land Speed Record* in 1982 on the New Alliance imprint. For the follow-up *Metal Circus*, the band moved to SST, one of the leading independent record labels of the '80s. Hart, whose father taught drafting, would design every album cover, but by 1987—only two years after signing to Warner Brothers—the band called it quits. Although Hart had developed a heroin addiction, the breakup had more to do with artistic differences of opinion. Before going solo, Hart played in other groups, such as Nova Mob, and fathered a son, but admits he hasn't been a very good parent (and hasn't kept in touch with his siblings either). If he has kind words for Mould, he offers a more critical assessment of Greg Ginn, who ran SST, since he doesn't believe that he received his financial due. The life story brings viewers up to date with the 2013 release of *The Argument*, Hart's most critically-acclaimed work to date. Featuring music by both Hart and Hüsker Dü—as well as bonus interview footage—this solid profile is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

The Last Outlaws: Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid ★★★

(2014) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-053-4.

By the dawn of the 20th century, America's outlaw era was all but over, relegated to early cinematic efforts such as the 1903 silent *The Great Train Robbery*, while the West itself was romanticized in spectacles like Buffalo Bill's Wild West shows. But a few outlaws refused to ride quietly into the sunset. Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, along with their ragtag "Wild Bunch," continue to intrigue Hollywood and Western history buffs. Narrated by Michael Murphy, filmmaker John Maggio's PBS-aired *American Experience* documentary revisits the exploits of two of the West's last and most unlikely outlaws. Butch was born Robert Leroy Parker to devout Mormon parents. His father was away much of the time, so—trying to support his family—Butch took a job as a cowboy ranch hand, where he learned to cut corners and rustle cattle. A brutal winter killed off the cattle, and Parker, who had changed his name to Butch Cassidy to avoid shaming his religious mother, quickly set his sights on bank robbery. Cassidy was an intelligent, careful, and methodical outlaw who avoided violence through planning ahead, and outran posses by stringing riders along a getaway trail. Meanwhile, far to the east, Harry Longabough, who was raised in a grimy Pennsylvania industrial town and had his imagination fired by dime novels, decided to head west, eventually hooking up with Butch's wild bunch. Nicknamed "Sundance" following a prison stay, Harry and the others rode the fabled Western outlaw trail, switching to train robberies

and laying low between bouts of drinking, gambling, and whoring. Eventually, their activities roused the ire of the big banks, which employed the Pinkerton Detective Agency ("we never sleep"), forcing the outlaws to go on the lam—making an improbable trip to see the sights in New York City, before moving to the remote open spaces of Argentina. Traveling with a mysterious woman named Etta Place, the pair's luck ran out when a letter home from Sundance was traced back to South America, after which Butch and Sundance fled to Bolivia, where their crime spree ended in a murder-suicide. Etta Place subsequently disappeared, leaving behind conjecture and conspiracy tales. Full of interesting details and colorful lore, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)

The Lost Diary of Dr. Livingstone ★★★

(2014) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$52.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-094-7.

David Livingstone—doctor, author, missionary, explorer, and anti-slavery activist—remains one of the 19th century's most enigmatic figures. At great personal sacrifice and peril to his health, this Scotsman traversed what was once called "darkest Africa," launching several expeditions in search of the source of the Nile river. Filmmaker Melisa Akdogan's PBS-aired documentary looks at Livingstone's heroic quest, one that eventually became something of a dark obsession—perhaps an attempt to atone for the death of his wife on Livingstone's second expedition. Of particular interest here is his "lost" journal, which was written during a critical period when Livingstone witnessed a massacre of innocent villagers, including women and children, by slave traders. The slave trade was a brutal, sordid business, with slaves forced to carry ivory from central Africa to the coast, sometimes with their heads trussed and speech silenced with medieval-looking masks. Stragglers were whipped or tied to trees, and left as prey for wild animals. Following the massacre, Livingstone tried to make a record of what he witnessed, using old newspapers for writing paper, and crushed berry juice for ink. Livingstone was a contradictory figure, a man of medicine who sometimes consulted witch doctors, and a staunch opponent of slavery who formed alliances with slave traders. Although Livingstone hoped that his mapping of the trade route (and description of the horrors of slavery) would "open up" the continent, ending its isolation and encouraging honest trade, a tragically ironic consequence of the European "scramble for Africa" was that it led to a century of European imperialist exploitation. An informative film about a key figure in the history of 19th-century exploration (who has been reduced to the familiar punch-line, "Dr. Livingstone, I presume?"), this is recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

In No Great Hurry: 13 Lessons in Life with Saul Leiter

★★★1/2

(2013) 75 min. DVD: \$29.99. Zeitgeist Films (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned.

Filmmaker Tomas Leach's engaging documentary captures late photographer Saul Leiter (1923-2013) at a moment in his life when broad, international recognition of his gifts and legacy were finally forthcoming. Leiter, who was in his late 80s when Leach began filming, comes across as equally impish and dubious about being the subject of a project that he can't control. That attitude fits Leiter's overall profile as an artist who was the equal of more famous New York School photographers in the 1950s such as Diane Arbus and Richard Avedon, but chose a quieter path of taking painterly, colorful pastoral shots. As we see here, Leiter took daily breaks from work in his cluttered apartment to stroll Manhattan at a leisurely pace, shooting new images with blurry splashes of color and interesting textures that, for him, evoked some hidden world beneath superficial reality. Leiter also speaks about his family and formative years in a household where achievement was valued but kindness was not, briefly discusses some of the artists (John Cage, Jackson Pollock) he photographed, and notes how a camera teaches one to really look at the world and appreciate "all kinds of things." DVD extras include bonus interviews. An illuminating portrait of a shutterbug artist, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)



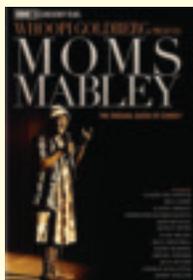
My Father and the Man in Black ★★1/2
(2012) 88 min. DVD: \$24.95 (avail. from most distributors), \$199 w/PPR (avail. from edu. passionriver.com). Passion River. Closed captioned.

Many biographical documentaries wind up being hagiographies that make their subjects seem almost superhuman. Debut director Jonathan Holiff takes the opposite tack in *My Father and the Man in Black*, since Holiff believes that time spent with Johnny Cash contributed to his father's death. Saul Holiff served as Cash's manager from 1960-1973, a period of significant professional success and personal misfortune. In his somewhat wooden narration, Holiff says that the Cash biopic *Walk the Line* spurred him to re-examine the relationship between Cash and his father. Here, he draws from books, audiotapes, and interviews to recount his father's rise from retailer to restaurateur to promoter, which eventually led him to Cash. The two men hit it off and Holiff moved from Canada to California—into a world of pills, arrests, and cancelled concerts. On the plus side, Holiff teamed Cash with wife-to-be June Carter, and oversaw the release of *At Folsom Prison*, among other hit recordings. After leaving his unpredictable employer, Holiff returned to British Columbia where he drank too much, alienated his children, and wound up taking his own life in 2005. It's understandable that Holiff would harbor bitterness towards a father who treated him more like a client than a son, but there are times when this film feels like an attempt to settle scores rather than an illuminating account of the lives of a celebrity and his manager. Nonetheless, there is value here for Cash completists, particularly in terms of news articles, legal documents, and other rare materials. And credit must also go to voice actor David James, who does a convincing Cash impression. A strong optional purchase. Aud: P. (K. Fennessy)

Paul Bowles: The Cage Door Is Always Open ★★★

(2013) 87 min. DVD: \$24.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

The late author Paul Bowles' last interview is the centerpiece of this documentary profile, in which the writer speaks from what was essentially his deathbed in 1999. Due to his weak condition, Bowles can't deliver comprehensive answers to all of filmmaker Daniel Young's questions, but the director also interviews many notable subjects (some also now gone) who knew Bowles over the years, including Gore Vidal, Edmund White, Bernardo Bertolucci, John Waters, Ruth Fainlight, and William Burroughs. The film begins with an overview of Bowles' tormented childhood under a "monstrous" father, followed by his early creative years as a respected composer of piano sonatas. Bowles launched his writing career by becoming a



Whoopi Goldberg Presents Moms Mabley ★★★1/2

(2014) 71 min. DVD: \$19.98. HBO Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Watching *The Ed Sullivan Show* while growing up during the '60s, I found myself looking forward to the comedians almost as much as the rock bands. I liked Moms Mabley for the simple reason that she looked and talked funny; this documentary reminds us that Mabley—who has since fallen into obscurity—was also a trailblazer. When it comes to female comics, Phyllis Diller and Joan Rivers usually receive the most props for being game-changing standups. In what is obviously a labor of love and respect, director Whoopi Goldberg here overcomes a dearth of personal information about Mabley to etch an indelible portrait of the African American comedian and storyteller who achieved crossover success at a time when America could be scandalized by a TV special in which Petula Clark touched singer Harry Belafonte's arm. Goldberg has gathered an A-list roster of peers and admirers, including Rivers, Belafonte, Eddie Murphy, Anne Meara and Jerry Stiller, Dick Cavett, and an eloquent and insightful Arsenio Hall. The well-chosen clips include a moving appearance on, of all things, *Playboy After Dark*, in which Mabley sings "Abraham, Martin and John," and a hilariously uncomfortable stint with Merv Griffin in which she says that people down South love her and refer to her as Roy Rogers' horse, Trigger ("at least I think that's what they say," she deadpans). Baby Boomers will get a kick out of being reacquainted with Moms, while for comedy buffs this is an essential missing piece of history. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (D. Liebenson)

music critic, but it was his unorthodox marriage to the complicated Jane Bowles—who published a book (albeit one he edited) before he did—that seems to have spurred him. *The Cage Door Is Always Open* examines the cultural impact of Bowles' debut novel *The Sheltering Sky* and looks at his subsequent works, but much of the running time here is devoted to Bowles' life in Morocco, where he embraced local traditions, stories, and even hallucinogenic substances. Eyewitnesses discuss the odd dramas that erupted around Paul and Jane's stormy marriage, including the strong suspicion that someone close to Jane was poisoning her. Bowles touches on most of these subjects during the interview, and casually notes that he is awaiting death with no thought of an afterlife but with an awareness of his legacy. A solid biographical portrait, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

The Royals ★★★

(2013) 3 discs. 264 min. DVD: \$34.98. BFS Entertainment & Multimedia (avail. from most distributors).

Although some of the commentators and footage overlaps here, Anglophiles will nevertheless line up to watch this six-part miniseries focusing on the less historical and more titillating aspects of the British royal family. Narrated by Alistair Appleton, *The Royals* explores the lives of the Windsors, serving up lots of somewhat common knowledge but also more off-the-beaten-track observations. The episode "Royal Weddings," for instance, obviously draws quite heavily on the fairytale aspects and parallels between the nuptials of Charles/Diana and William/

Kate, but also mentions an interesting tidbit about the reason why brides now customarily wear white (namely, Queen Victoria really wanted to stand out in the middle of the crowd). Also including segments on "Royal Scandals," "Young Royals" (cheeky Prince Harry receives plenty of airtime for his antics), "Royal Funerals," "Royal Pets," and "Royal Babies" (the heir Prince George is also featured), this is recommended. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Rubén Salazar: Man in the Middle

★★★

(2013) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-970-4.

The 1960s was a time of protest and pride for many minorities, including America's often marginalized and disenfranchised Hispanics. Mexican-American journalist Rubén Salazar, the product of a conservative Hispanic caste system, married an Anglo woman and boasted impeccable journalistic credentials (including a press tour covering the war in Vietnam), yet continued to feel like he was living between two cultures—trying to become a "half-assed American." Filmmaker Phillip Rodriguez's PBS-aired documentary examines Salazar's quest for both self-identity and justice for his people. Sadly, his life was cut short in August 1970, when a police tear gas projectile fired into a bar (where Salazar had sought shelter during a violent street protest) killed him instantly. The film covers Salazar's still relevant concerns on issues such as immigration, drug enforcement, border security, and coping with living in a time of rapidly changing Hispanic culture in California and the Southwest. Salazar became in-

creasingly aware of injustices, and sometimes wound up blurring the line between activist and journalist. A friend said that Salazar “didn’t like cops” (understandably, since he was monitored by the police and FBI). His colleagues at the *Los Angeles Times* describe Salazar as a committed but still evolving figure. Was he targeted by police, becoming a civil rights martyr? *Man in the Middle* looks at the half-hearted follow-up inquest, as well as conspiracy theories, but generally presents a balanced view of an imperfect man who suffered a premature, violent death. Combining excerpts from Salazar’s work with contemporary and archival interviews, this title serves up a good investigation into the life of an important but little known figure. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)

Sasha Waltz: A Portrait ★★

(2014) 72 min. In German, English & French w/English subtitles. DVD: \$24.99. Arthaus Musik (dist. by Naxos of America).

Documentarian Brigitte Kramer’s biography on famed German dancer-choreographer Sasha Waltz is organized around a striking exhibition that Waltz mounted in 2013 at the Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie in her native city of Karlsruhe—a highly imaginative installation that represents her desire to break down barriers (in this case between the stage and the museum hall). But through clips from rehearsals and previous productions, as well as archival footage and interviews with Waltz herself, the documentary actually covers much of her career to the present, going back to the 2005 outdoor staging of Purcell’s *Dido and Aeneas* that her company Sasha Waltz and Guests prepared in conjunction with the Berlin State Opera, which gave rise to Waltz’s passion for what has come to be called choreographed opera. *A Portrait* is complemented here by Kramer’s earlier *Garten der Liste*, an hour-long companion piece chronicling Waltz’s earlier career, from her training in Amsterdam and New York up through her years in Berlin, where she established the troupe that embodied her vision of melding dance and theater and achieved international renown. Taken together, these two films offer an insightful and enlightening portrait of one of our most innovative contemporary choreographers. DVD extras include rehearsal footage from Waltz’s 2006 piece *Dialogue 06—Radiale Systeme*. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Video Librarian Online

Visit Video Librarian Online (www.vid-eolibrarian.com) for more reviews during September and October, including: *Come Hell or High Water*, *Havana Curveball*, *The Lost Diary of Dr. Livingstone*, *Lost Faces of the Bible*, *Pad Yatra: A Green Odyssey*, *Sasha Waltz: A Portrait*, and much more!

Series Update

Lionsgate and LeapFrog Enterprises are back with the latest program in their problem-solving educational series, **LeapFrog Letter Factory Adventures: Counting on Lemonade** (35 min., DVD: \$14.98), which follows friends Tad, Lily, and Leap as they sell lemonade to raise money for the library. See review of *LeapFrog—Scout & Friends: The Magnificent Museum of Opposite Words* in VL-3/13.



Rugrats: Outdoor Shenanigans! and **Rugrats: Reptar Returns!** (71 and 72 min., DVD: \$9.98 each) are two compilations from Paramount Home Entertainment featuring episodes from the classic Nickelodeon animated series centering on a group of baby friends. See review of *Rugrats: Halloween* in VL-9/02.

HIT Entertainment and Lionsgate recently released the latest program in the long-running *Barney* children’s series, **Barney: A Super-Dee Duper Day!** (56 min., DVD: \$9.98), which finds Barney encouraging the gang to participate in a variety of simple activities and games, and also features an “I Love You” karaoke music video. See review of *Barney: Best Manners* in VL Online-3/04.

Newly available from Paramount is **Bubble Guppies: Get Ready for School!** (139 min., DVD: \$16.99), which continues the underwater escapades of a fun group of young merkids in a compilation of six school-themed stories from the Nickelodeon-aired series, including “Good Hair Day!” and “Check It Out!” See review of *Bubble Guppies* in VL-7/12.

Entertainment One recently released **Peppa Pig: The Balloon Ride** (60 min., DVD: \$14.98) featuring adorable girl pig Peppa and her family in a collection of 12 episodes from the BAFTA Award-winning series, which is aired stateside on Nick Jr. See review of *Peppa Pig: My Birthday Party* in VL-5/14.



Newly available from PBS Home Video and WGBH is **Peep and the Big Wide World: Peep Discovers** (100 min., DVD: \$9.99), narrated by Joan Cusack, which

includes the two-part “The Road Not Taken,” “The Last Straw,” “Marble Mover,” and “Fair Shares.” See review of *Peep and the Big Wide World* in VL-1/92.

Daniel Tiger’s Neighborhood: Daniel Tries Something New (100 min., DVD: \$12.99) is the latest title from the PBS Kids animated series following the preschool adventures of *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood* character Daniel Striped Tiger’s adorable young offspring. See review of *Daniel Tiger’s Neighborhood: Life’s Little Lessons* in VL-5/14.

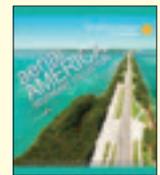


Another title from PBS Kids is **Caillou Fun and Games with Caillou** (50 min., DVD: \$9.99) featuring four-year-old Caillou, who uses his imagination in the episodes “Caillou’s Toy Trouble” and “Blast Off to Space Caillou.” Extras include coloring pages and activities. See review of *Caillou: Let’s Go Sledding* in VL-11/13.

PBS has also released **Arthur Goes Back to School** (56 min., DVD: \$9.99), based on the books by Marc Brown, starring Arthur the aardvark in episodes including “To Eat or Not to Eat,” “S.W.E.A.T.,” “Baseball Blues,” and “Brain’s Biggest Blunder.” See review of *Arthur: Big Brother Binky* in VL-5/08.

Compiling fan favorites, historically significant pieces, and notable one-shots, Warner Home Video’s most recent volume of Warner Bros. Looney Tunes cartoons, **Looney Tunes Platinum Collection: Volume Three** (344 min., Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$44.98), features Blu-ray exclusives including the all-new documentary “That’s All Folks! Tales from Termitte Terrace,” and a 12-page booklet with rare images and a cartoon guide by historian Jerry Beck. See review of *Looney Tunes Platinum Collection: Volume Two* in VL-1/13.

Inception Media Group added a new title to their high-definition filmed location series, **Aerial America: Southeast Collection** (291 min., Blu-ray: \$19.98), aired on the Smithsonian Channel, which focuses on the landscapes and landmarks of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina. See review of *Aerial America: New England Collection* in VL-1/14.



Code:Breaker ★★★

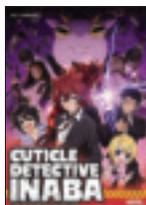
(2012) 4 discs. 325 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$69.98. *Funimation* (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4210-2889-1.



This action/sci-fi anime carries overtones of the *Twilight Saga* and *X-Men* movies. Popular school-girl Sakura suddenly witnesses brooding, mysterious new transfer student Rei Ogami literally burning people alive with his hand. Ogami is a “Code:Breaker,” one of several top-secret paranormal (and mostly teenage) assassins employed by Eden, a Japanese government office, to dispose of criminals and other enemies. Ogami, despite being a seasoned avenger, takes a fatalistic view of his abilities, considering himself a killer government tool, hardly better than the menaces he dispatches. Although initially marked for elimination, meddling Sakura turns out to be immune to the normally lethal touch of a Code:Breaker. Before long she’s surrounded by a colorful team of similarly super-powered youths, who ultimately unite against one of their own who has gone rogue. Naturally, this leads to a talky, multi-episode showdown featuring good-guys-who-turn-out-to-be-bad-guys-who-turn-out-to-be-good guys (which is more moral shadings than Hollywood comic-book-ish fare usually serves up, but still somewhat wearying in melodramatic megadoses). Refreshingly free of cheesecake T&A elements, the 13-episode 2012 series *Code:Breaker* is presented in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo, rated TV-14. Extras include episode commentaries. Recommended. (C. Cassidy)

Cuticle Detective Inaba: The Complete Collection

★★★★1/2
(2013) 300 min. DVD: 2 discs, \$49.98, Blu-ray: \$59.98. *Sentai Filmworks* (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-6161-5510-0 (dvd), 978-1-6161-5511-7 (blu-ray).



A rollicking *MAD* magazine sense of humor predominates in this comics-derived comedy from 2013. Hiroshi Inaba is a “secret Doberman,” one of an elite corps of test-tube babies made from mixing human/werewolf DNA in order to create...the ideal Japanese police dog. Young Hiroshi, who is tired of being on a short leash—so to speak—quits the force to become a P.I., surrounded by misfit assistants (including his old ultra-macho cop partner, who just won’t stay out of the picture). Inaba’s perennial nemesis is Don Valentino, a Mafiosi counterfeiter who just happens to be a bi-pedal goat and is a truly hilarious character. Hiroshi’s long-lost younger brother, who identifies with sheep (despite being part wolf) also turns up, but he’s allied to Don Valentino (because villains seem more interesting). The characters mock

prison-drama clichés, get slapstick bullets in the head repeatedly and harmlessly, and speculate on the content of the dreaded Last Episode (spoiler: a devil-like figure tries to find employment in this madcap world and is unable to cope). With minimal fan service content (but plenty of Japanese cultural references), this entertaining 12-episode series, rated TV-14 and presented in Japanese with English subtitles, is highly recommended. (C. Cassidy)

Deltora Quest: The Complete Series ★★★

(2012) 8 discs. 1,165 min. DVD: \$79.95. *Cinedigm Entertainment* (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.



Storybooks by Emily Rodda inspired this 2007-08 high-fantasy TV anime saga, which is Tolkien-esque in both its breadth and better moments, and Marvel Comics-like in its weaker ones (an Incredible Hulk imitation is pretty painful). The land of Deltora has been taken over by the demonic Shadow Lord, whose minions usurped a weak king and scattered the only relic capable of Shadow Lord-busting—namely, a metal belt fitted with seven gems, representing the land’s seven principle human (and semi-human) tribes. Adolescent rebel Lief, accompanied by a stalwart member of the former royal guards, sets out to laboriously recover the gems, which are hidden in the realm’s most dangerous places and guarded by monsters (who are 3D-CGI, as opposed to the flat animation style of the rest of the series). The adventures here pull from mythology and often weave in clever logic puzzles and problem-solving riddles, although at times the heroes seem amazingly oblivious and gullible. On balance, however, this is an ambitious entry that should appeal to ‘tweens. Presenting all 52 episodes in an English-dubbed set, suitable for 10-up, extras include a character sketch gallery. Recommended. (C. Cassidy)

Karneval: The Complete Series ★★★1/2

(2013) 4 discs. 325 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$69.98. *Funimation* (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4210-2886-7.



Two young boys are at the center of this 13-part anime series: Nai, who is of mysterious origin and possesses a special bracelet with important powers, and Gareki, a miscreant who comes across as an iteration of Dickens’ Artful Dodger. Somehow or other, the pair are scooped up by Circus, a security force with a vague affiliation to the government (the agency’s name refers to its strange way of apologizing to communities that it disrupts: namely by putting on a

circus-style show in order to make amends). Circus is apparently trying to protect Nai from Kafka, a dark organization engaged in illegal genetic testing (the Kafka team has created Varugas, monsters that were once human). Also thrown into the mix is a teenager named Karoku, who’s imprisoned by Kafka but communicates telepathically with Nai. The storyline incorporates a chaotic swirl of monsters, robots, conspiracies, mad science, traps, betrayals, and violent fights, but moves so quickly that viewers don’t have much time to ponder the weird shenanigans. Fortunately, the animation is colorful and inventive enough to almost distract from shortcomings in the plot. Compiling all 13 episodes from 2013 in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, rated TV-14, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette and audio commentaries. A strong optional purchase. (P. Hall)

Red Data Girl ★★★1/2

(2013) 2 discs. 300 min. DVD: \$54.98. *Funimation* (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4210-2888-3.



Inspired by Noriko Ogizawa’s fantasy novels, this exquisitely animated series focuses on 15-year-old Izumiko, who was raised by her grandfather in an ancient shrine within a secluded forest. After being enrolled at the Houjou Academy, Izumiko is promptly bullied by her ill-tempered classmates. Her problems are further compounded by a strange affliction—she somehow destroys any electrical appliance that she touches—and by the presence of Miyuki, the brooding son of a gentle monk, who takes an immediate dislike to her. Izumiko also discovers that she’s a vessel for a Shinto *kami* (spirit) that is both powerful and vengeful. *Red Data Girl* is arguably a triumph of style over substance, but what style! Characters and settings are brilliantly captured in rich and subtle hues, while the tale’s mystical elements are presenting in boldly vibrant detail. Compiling all 12 episodes from 2013 in a dual-language set, rated TV-14, DVD extras include audio commentaries. Highly recommended. (P. Hall)

New to Blu-ray

Heavenly Sword (Cinedigm, DVD: \$14.95, Blu-ray: \$19.98). Based on the 2007 video game, this magical sword quest adventure features the voices of Alfred Molina, Anna Torv, and Thomas Jane.

Mayo Chiki: Complete Collection (Sentai, Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$69.98). Featuring 13 episodes following the TV-MA escapades of gynophobic Sakamachi Kinjiro, this collection is newly available on high-definition Blu-ray.



Aida ★★1/2

(2013) 148 min. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. *Bel Air Classics* (dist. by *Naxos of America*).



Celebrating its 100th anniversary, the Arena di Verona in 2013 mounted a flamboyant new production of Verdi's 1871 opera about the doomed love between the titular enslaved Ethiopian princess and Radamès, general of the Egyptian army tasked with conquering her father's realm. Directed by the innovative Catalan group La Fura dels Baus, this *Aida* is visually spectacular, with people brandishing flaming torches atop the arena walls, mechanical elephants and camels traipsing across the stage, and blue-clad figures walking amid the audience hoisting luminous globes in their hands, while another performer dangles from a swing between two towers. Unfortunately, the camerawork is similarly busy, breathlessly cutting between various parts of the *mise en scène* (seen in person, this was no doubt exciting; here it comes across as overdone), while the musical side is unexceptional. Omer Meir Wellber, too often the camera's focal point, conducts adequately but without real distinction. Hui He makes an admirable Aida, and Fabio Sartori exhibits a strong albeit edgy voice as Radamès, but as Amneris, Aida's rival for the general, Giovanna Casolla displays a prominent wobble. The supporting cast is decent, and the costumes, many of which feature a metallic sheen, are unusual but not always attractive. With many other solid traditional productions available, including a 2012 Arena di Verona staging (VL-3/14), this production—presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 and PCM stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and PCM stereo on Blu-ray—is an optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Capriccio ★★1/2

(2013) 163 min. In German w/English subtitles. DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99; Blu-ray: \$39.99. *C Major* (dist. by *Naxos of America*).



Richard Strauss's last opera—first performed in 1942 and presented here in a very fine 2013 production from the Vienna Staatsoper—is essentially a rumination on the nature of opera itself that follows a debate between a composer and a poet about the relative importance of words and music, argued before the widowed countess for whom both profess their love. In a single act of Wagnerian length, *Capriccio* features some of Strauss's most radiant, luxurious music, marked by exquisite solos, rich ensembles, and sinuous orchestral work. Christoph Eschenbach's conducting here is lovingly shaped (although the slow tempos occasionally threaten to come to a complete halt), while the set and costumes are models of

elegance. As the countess, Renée Fleming's vocalism is extremely poised but just a shade pallid, while Markus Eiche as the poet, Olivier, and Michael Schade as the composer, Flamand, both offer strong, secure singing. Bo Skovhus brings a sonorous tone to the role of the countess's brother, who has his own romantic interest in the actress Clairon (nicely sung by Angelika Kirchschrager). And despite a prominent wobble in his voice, veteran Kurt Rydl is commanding as La Roche, the director who challenges the suitors to collaborate on an opera. Presented in DTS 5.0 (DTS-HD 5.0 on the Blu-ray release) and PCM stereo, this is highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

Dio: Live in London—Hammersmith Apollo 1993 ★★★

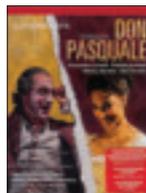
(1993) 114 min. DVD: \$14.98, Blu-ray: \$19.98. *Eagle Rock Entertainment* (avail. from most distributors).



Metal man Ronny James Dio was wrapping up a European tour with a revised lineup for this 1993 concert at London's Hammersmith Apollo. Only a year before, he had reunited with Black Sabbath to record *Dehumanizer*, so it's only natural that he includes Sabbath songs in the set, such as "The Mob Rules" and "Heaven and Hell." The rest of the material hails from his solo career (not counting Rainbow's "Man on the Silver Mountain"), including selections from 1993's *Strange Highways* with the same players that appear on the album: bassist Jeff Pilson, guitarist Tracy G, keyboard player Scott Warren, and sometime Black Sabbath drummer Vinny Appice. Unlike some Dio shows, the group here eschews props (such as the giant dragon in 1986's *Finding the Sacred Heart*), concentrating on the playing, which features solos for guitar, bass, and drums, while eight Marshall amp stacks ensure a rich and powerful sound. It's otherwise a fairly standard set with no real highlights or low lights, although signature tracks such as "Holy Diver" and "The Last in Line" come across best due to stronger songwriting. The group energetically performs 17 numbers in all, including a three-song encore, presented in DTS 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and PCM stereo on Blu-ray. Extras include a featurette with backstage band member interviews. Recommended. (K. Fennessy)

Don Pasquale ★★1/2

(2013) 128 min. In Italian w/English subtitles. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. *Opus Arte* (dist. by *Naxos of America*).



Performed at the 2013 Glyndebourne Festival, Donizetti's 1843 opera is cut from the same cloth as Rossini's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, focusing on an elderly miser whose

plans to marry—and ruin the wedding hopes of young lovers—are thwarted by a clever rascal. The manipulator is Dr. Malatesta, who persuades Don Pasquale to take Malatesta's supposed sister as his bride although the girl in question is actually Norina, the betrothed of Pasquale's nephew Ernesto, whom the old man has threatened to disinherit. After a sham wedding, Pasquale's new "wife" becomes such a shrew that he happily acquiesces to her marriage to Ernesto. This is fluff straight out of the *commedia dell'arte* handbook, but Donizetti's effervescent score makes it irresistible, and the London Philharmonic under Enrique Mazzola here delivers a lively performance. Generally perceptive direction by Mariame Clément sets the action on a turntable stage where members of the cast shine, with Alessandro Corbelli a wonderfully befuddled Pasquale and Nikolay Borchev a suavely Machiavellian Malatesta. Danielle de Niese's voice is a bit edgy for Norina, and as Ernesto, Alek Shrader tends to bark rather than caress the notes, but overall both are more than acceptable, as is the chorus. Presented in DTS 5.1 and Dolby Digital stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include an introduction by de Niese, behind-the-scenes featurettes, and a cast gallery. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

Elektra ★★1/2

(2010) 109 min. In German w/English subtitles. Blu-ray: \$9.99. *Arthaus Musik* (dist. by *Naxos of America*).



This 2010 Salzburg Festival performance of Richard Strauss's intense one-act opera is an excellent mounting of the 1909 piece based on Sophocles' tragedy about the tortured titular woman who drove her brother Orest to kill their mother, Klytämnestra, and her lover, Aegisth, because the pair had murdered Elektra's father, Agamemnon, after his return from the Trojan War. The vocalism is superb, with Irène Theorin standing out as Elektra and equally strong work from Waltraud Meier (Klytämnestra), Eva-Maria Westbroek (Elektra's sister, Chrysothemis), Robert Gambill (Aegisth), and René Pape (Orest). While Daniele Gatti doesn't bring out the fierceness of the music to the degree that some conductors do, he elicits solid playing from a softer-toned Vienna Philharmonic that reveals the subtlety of Strauss's orchestration. More traditionally minded viewers may be put off by the modern costumes, but otherwise Nikolaus Lehnhoff's staging is beyond reproach, with the abstract set's dark tones and stark architecture lending an appropriate sense of foreboding to the doom-laden story. While there is formidable competition from previous releases, including the 2010 Thielemann staging from Baden-Baden (VL-3/11), this Blu-ray edition is bargain-priced and includes more than two hours of excerpts

from other ArtHaus Musik titles. Presented in DTS-HD 5.1 and PCM stereo, this is highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

Elton John: The Million Dollar Piano ★★½

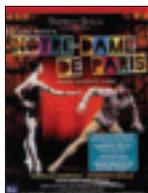
(2013) 112 min. DVD: \$14.98, Blu-ray: \$19.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



Still making critically-acclaimed albums after nearly 50 years of success, Elton John wows an appreciative Caesars Palace crowd in Las Vegas during this refreshingly-medley-free 2012 concert featuring an energetic 18-song set. Seated behind the million dollar (\$1.4 million actually) glass piano that Yamaha built for John (complete with an LED video screen), the senior citizen entertainer with the impish grin is surrounded by seasoned pros, including drummer Nigel Olsson (who was with John at the beginning), longtime guitarist Davey Johnstone, the late Bob Birch on bass, Kim Bullard on keyboards, John Mahon and Ray Cooper on percussion, the Croatian 2CELLOS (Luka Sulic, Stjepan Hauser), and a group of backup singers (with Rose Stone of Sly and the Family Stone fame). Although this is not a greatest hits concert (John has more hits than could possibly fit in a single performance), the king of ivory-tickling rock does serve up many favorites, including "Rocket Man," "Your Song," "Levon," "Tiny Dancer," "Blue Eyes" (for Elizabeth Taylor), "I Guess That's Why They Call It the Blues," "Philadelphia Freedom," "I'm Still Standing," "Crocodile Rock," and "Circle of Life," and even invites audience members onstage for a rousing rendition of "Saturday Night's Alright (For Fighting)." Wonderful highlights here include the rarely performed epic anthem "Indian Sunset" (a beautifully poignant elegy to Native Americans off *Madman Across the Water*), and the lovely and touching paean to New York "Mona Lisas and Mad Hatters." Presented in DTS 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include a featurette on John's new piano, and a four-song excerpt from his live 2012 concert in Kiev (featuring "Candle in the Wind"). Highly recommended. (R. Pitman)

Notre-Dame de Paris

★★½
(2014) 95 min. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Opus Arte (dist. by Naxos of America).



French choreographer Roland Petit achieved considerable success with his 1965 ballet—based on Victor Hugo's classic novel *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*—which has been staged numerous times over the last half-century. This 2014 mounting from the Teatro alla Scala in Milan replicates Petit's

original choreography, as well as René Allio's impressive set design, Jean-Michel Désiré's complementary lighting, and Yves Saint Laurent's colorful costumes. The dancing is superlative, especially by Roberto Bolle as Quasimodo, with Natalia Osipova (Esmeralda), Mick Zeni (Frollo), Eris Nezha (Phoebus), and the corps, all in fine turns. Under Paul Connelly's baton, the company orchestra plays excellently. But, unfortunately, these demonstrably fine efforts are made in the service of a mediocre work. Petit's libretto reduces Hugo's complex narrative to the most simplistic terms, and aside from a nice *pas de deux*, the music by Maurice Jarre lacks the melodiousness of his film scores, mainly consisting of endlessly repeated propulsive motifs that sound a bit like second-rate Stravinsky. And while Patrizia Carmine's camerawork is generally straightforward, on too many occasions we see shots filmed from above that a live audience could never experience (which tend to come across as ersatz Busby Berkeley). Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray release) and LPCM stereo, extras include cast and crew interviews and a photo gallery. Optional. (F. Swietek)

Otello ★★½

(2013) 149 min. In Italian w/ English subtitles. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. C Major (dist. by Naxos of America).



The courtyard of the doge's palace in Venice provides an impressive setting for the Teatro la Fenice's 2013 production of Verdi's penultimate opera, adapted from Shakespeare's tragedy about the Moor who is driven to kill his faithful wife, Desdemona, due to a jealous rage fomented by his malicious aide, Iago. The visual scheme crafted by director Francesco Micheli and his designers—dominated by black and dark blues, with flashes of white—works beautifully in the striking locale, although less successful is Micheli's decision to periodically personify the emotions driving the characters via gesticulating figures dressed in what appear to be fishermen's black rain slickers. For the most part, however, the performance is worthy of the visual trappings. Conductor Myung-Whun Chung doesn't stint on orchestral power, but he also brings remarkable delicacy to the score's quieter moments. And he's blessed with a strong cast: Gregory Kunde, his face darkened, makes a virile, full-throated Otello, while Lucio Gallo is a silkily malevolent Iago. Carmela Remigio isn't in ideally firm voice, but she's a touching Desdemona, and the supporting cast and chorus acquit themselves well. The catalog is replete with excellent versions of *Otello*—among them several productions starring Plácido Domingo, including a 2010 La Scala staging (VL-1/10), as well as Barenboim's Berlin version (VL-7/03), and a 2006 Barce-

lona production (VL-7/07)—but this Venice mounting of Verdi's masterpiece is the equal of all. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray release) and PCM stereo, this is highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

Toto: 35th Anniversary—Live in Poland ★★½

(2013) 114 min. DVD: \$14.98, Blu-ray: \$19.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



California stadium-rock band Toto has experienced significant lineup changes since the 1990s, but their basic sound remains the same in this 35th anniversary show filmed at the Atlas Arena in Lodz, Poland, in 2013. Featured here are three of the original players (keyboardist Steve Porcaro, pianist David Paich, and guitarist Steve Lukather), three longtime associates (singer Joseph Williams, bassist Nathan East, and drummer Simon Phillips), and two backup singers (Amy Keys and Mabvuto Carpenter). Together, they put on a crowd-pleasing concert that heavily evokes the 1980s (despite the use of sampling technology to duplicate some instruments). If Toto aren't as bombastic as Starship, they also aren't as soulful as Journey or as distinctive as Supertramp, although all work in the same radio-ready genre. During the often-frantically-paced 21-track set, Toto serves up hit songs including "99," "Rosanna," "Africa," and "Hold the Line," which would all have benefited from a more relaxed pace (with the exception of "99," from 1979's *Hydra*, which gets the balance right). Presented in DTS 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette in which the core players talk about their roots in San Fernando Valley's high school music scene. Given the band's popularity, this should be considered a strong optional purchase. (K. Fennessy)

New to DVD/Blu-ray

Great Women Singers of the 20th Century (Kultur, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.99). This three-disc set features separate programs on famous songstresses Nancy Wilson, Sarah Vaughan, and Chaka Khan.



Under the Electric Sky (Universal, DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$26.98). Capturing a June 2013 concert, this dance music tribute show-casing the annual Electric Daisy Carnival in L.A. features Afrojack, Armin Van Buuren, Calvin Harris, Fatboy Slim, and others.



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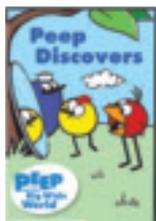
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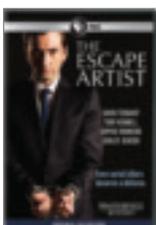
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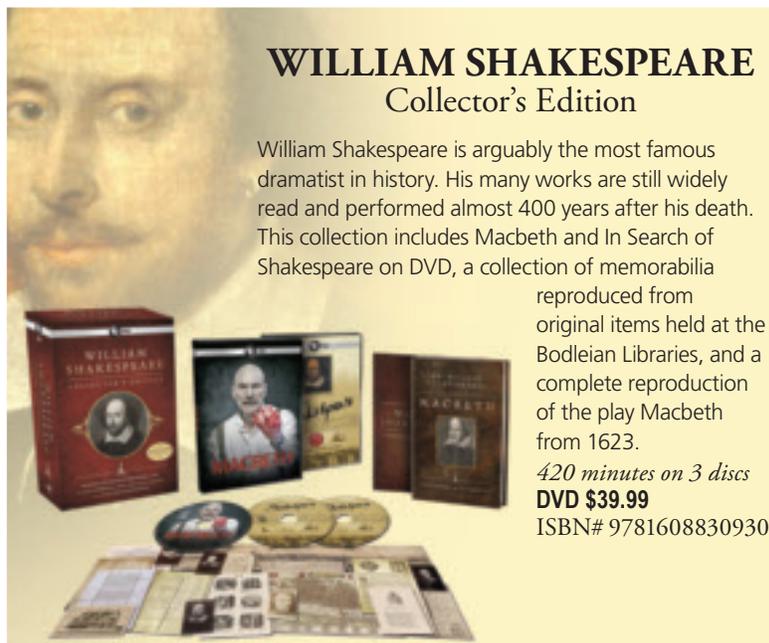
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Life in an MMORPG

I am in Mor Dhona (or “More Drama,” as a catty player named Mint Dew calls this particular area in the sprawling kingdom of Eorzea), a central hub where players gather to buy, sell, and upgrade weapons and armor; engage in dorky yet endearing group dances; shoot the breeze and argue; or...other activities.

For instance: a scantily-clad blonde character named Lara Croft, standing suggestively with her bare midriff in the face of a seated silver-armored warrior, brazenly asks to be given “gil” (the in-game currency) in a rather aggressive display of panhandling—but is summarily rebuffed by the knight (“go do a quest”).

I have witnessed decidedly weirder goings-on over the past few months.

I’ve been an avid video game player for nearly 30 years, but have studiously avoided what are called MMORPGs (Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games) for a number of reasons (the biggest being that I never wanted to be one of those *World of Warcraft* guys who keep an empty two-liter plastic soda bottle nearby to urinate in should that become necessary during a heated hours-long battle).

My life in an MMORPG began this past April when I picked up *Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn*, which is currently played by about two million gamers worldwide who pay a monthly fee.

FF14:ARR, as it is known, shares much in common with other RPGs: namely, you embark on a long save-the-world story quest while leveling up your character’s various skills, weapons, and armor—fighting monsters along the way and periodically facing “end bosses” (tougher monsters).

What makes an MMORPG different is the social factor: a player cannot simply enter a dungeon or take on a boss solo; depending on the type of “duty” (dungeon, boss fight, tower raid), he or she will be paired online with a range of 3-23 other players who will likely be complete strangers hailing from around the world.

You depend on these people—as they depend on you—to excel in their particular roles as the party travels through dungeons and/or fights often complicated bosses: these players are divided into tanks (who hold the attention of the monsters/boss), healers (who try to keep everyone alive), and DPS (“damage per second” dealers who must work quickly to take down enemies).

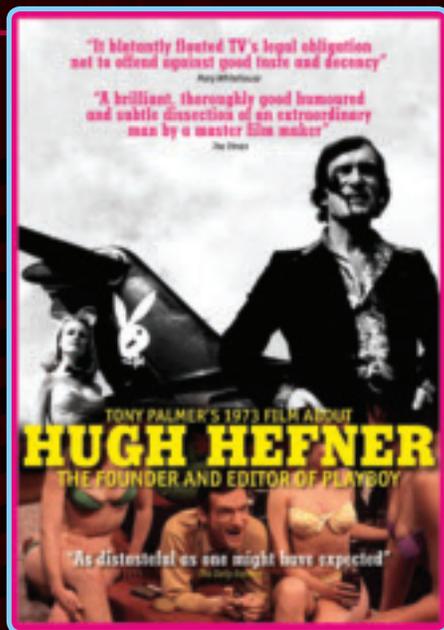
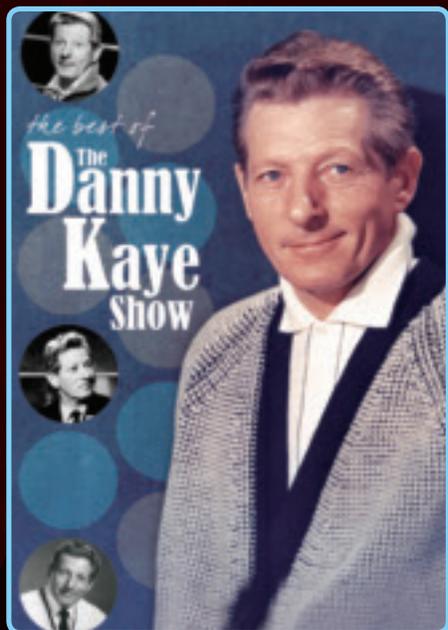
I have played alongside male and female characters (who may be the opposite genders

in real life) with names such as Arya Stark (among many other *Game of Thrones* monikers) and Biggus Dickus (nomenclature is no indicator of skill quality). Incidentally, no personal information is displayed onscreen—unless players share something in the chat box on the side of the screen (a crucial feature for giving and receiving directions during battle), but I have no doubt that players range in age from pre-teens to senior citizens.

Not surprisingly, the chat box will sometimes include mean remarks, but far more often it will be helpful encouragement, funny jokes, and the absolute quotidian (“be right back, gotta marinate the chicken”). Despite horror stories about rude and offensive behavior in MMORPGs, my experience has been overwhelmingly positive.

I don’t yet know how libraries can play a role in online role-playing games, but I would love to hear suggestions and/or experiences from others. Send me an e-mail at vidlib@videolibarian.com, or if you play *FF14* drop me a message in-game. My level 50 dragoon DPS character is named Raney Dylan (the names of our two dogs)—on the Jenova server—and I am almost always up for running a dungeon.

Randy Pitman



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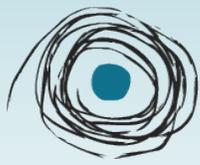
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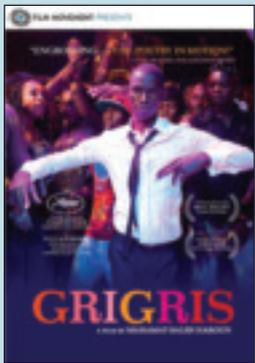
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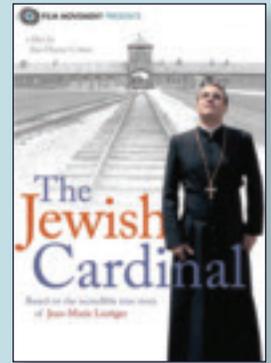
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