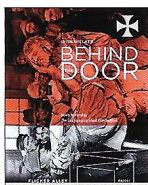


of German ancestry who left the sea for the love of a woman—a banker's daughter named Alice (Jane Novak)—but he enlists when war is declared. Alice stows aboard his ship, which is torpedoed by a German submarine, after which she is taken prisoner while Krug vows to take revenge on the sadistic commander (Wallace Beery) who leaves him to drown. The film both confronts the anti-German sentiment in America during the war in its portrait of Krug as a brave and committed American and it embraces the stereotype of the bloodthirsty German “Hun” with Beery’s U-boat captain, who preys upon the helpless Alice, tossing her to his sex-starved men to be raped and murdered. Krug eventually takes his vengeance offscreen, but the intertitles leave no doubt about the transgressive nature of his revenge: “I told him if I ever caught him I’d skin him alive. But he died before I finished.” A minor classic with a brutal edge, *Behind the Door* features a vivid performance by Bosworth as a stalwart hero driven to violence, and strong direction by filmmaker Irvin Willat. This Blu-ray/DVD Combo set presents the new restoration (with missing footage reconstructed using film stills) along with an alternate, re-edited Russian version—both with a lovely score by Stephen Horne—and extras that include an interview with silent film historian Kevin Brownlow, a restoration featurette, outtakes, a gallery of stills and artwork, and a booklet with photos and essays. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



Dead or Alive Trilogy

★★★★
Arrow, 291 min., in Japanese w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.99; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$49.99

The titular gonzo gangster trilogy from Takashi Miike, Japan’s master of action movie madness, is remastered for this complete collection. In the original *Dead or Alive* (1999), Miike whips the usual tired yakuza clichés into a brutal, bloody meringue, as a small-time hood (Riki Takeuchi)—a sneering tough in black leather and a retro pompadour—tries to muscle in on the Tokyo heroin trade while a morally bankrupt cop (Sho Aikawa) takes him on. The furious opening montage could be its own film—with mob hits, heists, strip shows, a sodomy assassination, and the gut-busting murder of a noodle-gobbling thug—and the finale boasts apocalyptic dimensions. Takeuchi and Aikawa return as different characters in the two sequels. In *Dead or Alive 2: Birds* (2000), Aikawa plays a mob assassin who discovers that his rival (Takeuchi) is his childhood best buddy, after which the pair team up to take on their former gangster



bosses. *Dead or Alive: Final* (2002) leaps 300 years ahead into a dystopian *Blade Runner*-esque future where Aikawa plays a genetically engineered soldier who joins the rebellion against a maniacal mayor and Takeuchi is a tough militia cop (their climactic collision is unlike any action film clash you’ve ever seen). The *Dead or Alive* films make no logical narrative sense but explode onscreen in bizarre flights of audacity that cemented Miike’s reputation as a cult filmmaker. Presented in a Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, extras include audio commentary by Miike biographer Tom Mes, archival and new cast and crew interviews, and archival behind-the-scenes featurettes. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

The Handmaid’s Tale

★★★1/2
Shout! Factory, 109 min., R, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$29.99

This 1990 screen adaptation of Margaret Atwood’s dystopian novel stars Natasha Richardson as Kate, a wife and mother living in a dystopian future where most women have been rendered infertile under a theocratic dictatorship. Fertile women are held captive, indoctrinated with a twisted religion, and made to bear the children of powerful men while becoming servants to their infertile wives. After Kate is separated from her daughter, she is assigned to a powerful military commander (Robert Duvall) whose wife (Faye Dunaway) is wary of her husband’s attraction to young handmaids. Aiden Quinn costars as the groundskeeper and chauffeur, a wily character who seduces Kate and introduces her to the rebellion. *The Handmaid’s Tale* is more metaphorical than realistic, a caricature of a modern Fascist takeover (the fictional country is called Gilead) that also serves up a commentary on the oppression of women by a hypocritical patriarchy. Women are officially considered sacred vessels of life but treated like sexual objects and property, and the men revel in the decadence that they ban. Playwright Harold Pinter wrote the script, while Volker Schlöndorff directs, giving the film an emotionally cool quality and a color scheme drained of bright colors except for the scarlet robes of the handmaids, but this is ultimately more of an intellectual exercise than a dynamic drama. Ironically, the fact that this landmark feminist novel was brought to the screen by men may explain the passionless production. Debuting on Blu-ray to coincide with the acclaimed new TV adaptation aired on Hulu, this is a strong optional purchase, particularly given the increased interest in Atwood’s novel since Trump’s election. (S. Axmaker)

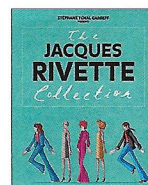


The Jacques Rivette Collection

★★★★1/2
Arrow, 6 discs, 415 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$99.95

Jacques Rivette is less well known than his

fellow New Wave filmmakers Jean-Luc Godard, Claude Chabrol, and Eric Rohmer, but his career was just as resilient and interesting. The three films in this collection, never before released on home video in the U.S., present Rivette at his most idiosyncratic, with the first two being examples of the director’s love of fabulism—creating worlds of myth and fantasy within a familiar material world. *Norôit* (1976), starring Geraldine Chaplin as a woman on a mission of vengeance against a vicious pirate queen (Bernadette Lafont), is a Jacobean drama that reworks the early 17th-century play *The Revenger’s Tragedy* into a femme-centric pirate movie. *Duelle* (1976) begins as a murder mystery about a hotel clerk (Hermine Karagheuz) searching for a missing man and ends up as a battle between two capricious gods (a Sun spirit played by Bulle Ogier and an earthier Moon spirit played by Juliet Berto) searching for a magical stone. Both are odd films in which figuring out the stories and the motivations are part of the mystery. Rivette made two more films before he suffered from nervous exhaustion and took a break, returning with *Merry-Go-Round* (1981), which reworked ideas from the earlier films into a modern mystery of conspiracies, secrets, and a scavenger hunt of sorts, with Maria Schneider and Joe Dallesandro sent scurrying after clues to a dead man and the fortune he left behind. These surreal, enigmatic films are minor Rivette, of interest largely to aficionados, but they receive red carpet treatment here with new restorations and extras that include interviews with film critic Jonathan Rosenbaum, Rivette, and actors, as well as a book with writings on the films. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)



Ludwig

★★★★1/2
Arrow, 4 discs, 257 min., in Italian & English w/English subtitles, not rated, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$49.99

Helmut Berger stars as 19th-century King Ludwig II, the notorious “mad king” of Bavaria, in Luchino Visconti’s melancholy 1973 study of madness and decadence. *Ludwig* is an epic production, following the life of the king who was crowned in 1864 at the age of 19 and then isolated himself from the world as he focused interest on the arts—including a sponsorship of composer Richard Wagner (Trevor Howard) that ends in scandal—and built castles while withdrawing into his fantasy fairy-tale kingdom during his decline. At the same time, he essentially ignored matters of state, which finally drove the government to call a tribunal and have him deposed as mentally unfit. Romy Schneider costars as his cousin, who psychologically leverages



Ludwig's attraction to her. *Ludwig* is not a traditional historical epic; Visconti favors intimate scenes that reveal the troubled nature of his main character over big set pieces marking historical turning points, and he structures the film in long, often dreamlike flashbacks. A lavish production, this is the third film in Visconti's unofficial "German trilogy" (following *The Damned* and *Death in Venice*), and running at nearly four hours it is sometimes lugubrious and self-indulgent, but always beautiful. Winner of the David di Donatello Awards (Italy's equivalent to the Oscar) for Best Film and Best Director, *Ludwig* makes its high-def debut in this Blu-ray/DVD Combo set that features both the 235-minute director's cut and a longer five-part TV version, along with extras including archival documentaries, new and archival cast and crew interviews, and a booklet. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

Marjorie Morningstar

★★★1/2

Kino Lorber, 128 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95



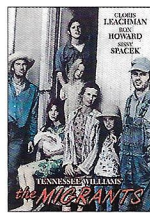
Based on the famous 1955 novel by Herman Wouk, this occasionally stirring 1958 melodrama is worth viewing for the engrossing performances of its central players alone. Marjorie Morgenstern (Natalie Wood) is the 18-year-old daughter of a prosperous Jewish family living in Manhattan's Upper West Side whose intelligence and worldly desires keep her from settling down with the affluent boy her parents have arranged for her to marry. Instead, Marjorie has an affair with older composer Noel Airman (Gene Kelly) during her stint as a dramatic counselor at a summer camp. Their love is as rocky as it is fiery, with the requisite push/pull dynamic occurring like clockwork between the aimless Noel, who sees himself as a failure for being unable to stage his pet musical, and the determined Marjorie, who is attempting to recognize her own worth as an actress while simultaneously trying to rehabilitate her damaged lover and navigate the turgid waters of sex and domesticity in the modern age. Although the narrative doesn't offer much in the way of surprise, Wood and Kelly are both captivating, with Wood bringing warmth to a character that can come across as the archetype of the blessed chaste virgin, and Kelly shining in a number of scenes that show him as a pitiful lost soul underneath all of the superficial charm. And Max Steiner's lush theme music has the power to move the viewer even when the film itself does not. A strong optional purchase. (J. Cruz)

The Migrants ★★★1/2

Kino Lorber, 90 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.99

A quality CBS-TV movie, this Emmy-winning 1974 drama scripted by Lanford Wilson

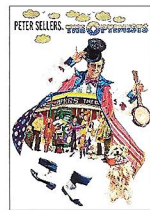
from a story by Tennessee Williams focuses on the Barlows, a clan of modern-day migrant workers who follow a longstanding annual routine of picking and packaging produce, traveling in caravans from the South to the North. Son Lyle (Ron Howard) scrimps and saves in order to buy the family out of their running debts to their straw boss. But while near Cincinnati, Lyle meets a town girl (Howard's own *American Graffiti* costar Cindy Williams) who inspires the boy to try striking out on his own, breaking the cycle that seems to keep him trapped in rootlessness and poverty. Cloris Leachman and Ed Lauter are the Barlow parents, while Sissy Spacek plays their daughter. Directed by Tom Gries, *The Migrants* is a classic TV movie, one that will be a revelation for viewers who only associate Howard with *Happy Days* or as a director of Hollywood blockbusters. Highly recommended. (C. Cassidy)



The Optimists ★★★

Kino Lorber, 110 min., PG, DVD: \$14.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95

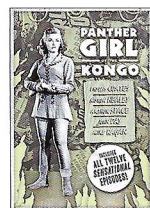
This loosely plotted 1973 feature film from director Anthony Simmons—adapting his own 1964 novel *The Optimists of Nine Elms*—features comic actor Peter Sellers as Sam, who was once a headlining comic entertainer in the vanished London music-hall scene. Now, Sam ekes out a living as a street musician. Two Cockney children (Donna Mullane and John Chaffey) befriend the curmudgeonly showman and plan to give Sam's ailing old dog a fitting burial in the landmark Victorian-era pet cemetery that is tucked into Hyde Park (the film has many London sights that most tourists never see). *Oliver* composer Lionel Bart contributed the songs and music for this bittersweet, working-class sleeper, in which Sellers avoids Inspector Clouseau-like pratfalls and slapstick in favor of comedy with a more delicate appeal. Recommended. (C. Cassidy)



Panther Girl of the Kongo ★★★1/2

Olive, 168 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99

One of the very last of the storied Republic Pictures cliffhanger serials, *Panther Girl of the Kongo* debuted in 1955 as a loose follow-up to the same studio's 1941 Edgar Rice Burroughs adaptation *Jungle Girl*. The title character is a leggy buckskin-clad adventuress (Phyllis Coates, whose stunt double does some impressive acrobatic vine-swinging) who is determined to get on film the "devil beasts" that are suddenly terrorizing her section of Africa.



The "claw monsters" are actually common crustaceans, turned into giants by a local evil scientist to scare intruders away from a diamond mine. The scientist's henchmen fight running battles with the good guys, amid interpolations of loads of stock footage and *Jungle Girl* clips. Trick scenes of crawfish filmed in close-up amidst dollhouse-sized props aren't the best serial f/x, but they're not the worst either; much the same could be said for the characterizations of the "African" natives who are friend and foe alike to the Panther Girl. The innocent, naïve charm here partially compensates for the weak/clunky plot and budget-minded antics. A strong optional purchase. (C. Cassidy)

Property Is No Longer a Theft ★★★

Arrow, 126 min., in Italian w/ English subtitles, not rated, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99



Elio Petri spent his career making smart and witty films that engaged with the social and political issues of his day and featured a satirical edge. *Property Is No Longer a Theft* (1973) is one of Petri's most aggressive commentaries on capitalism, privilege, and power in 1970s Italy, told through a comic revenge tale. When Total (Flavio Bucci), a bank clerk who is allergic to paper money, is refused a loan because he has no collateral, he quits his job and declares war on the Butcher (Ugo Tognazzi)—the bank's star customer—by robbing his personal items: a knife, his mistress's jewelry, and his mistress (Daria Nicolodi) herself. "I'm a Mandrakian Marxist," he proclaims. "I only steal what I need." The Butcher uses the thefts to cover insurance fraud but then realizes that his empire of illegal businesses could be exposed if the police catch the robber. There is no attempt at realism here: the Butcher's shop has the sleek glamour of a jewelry store, an anti-theft exhibition features devices out of a James Bond movie, Total looks through police mug shots to recruit a seasoned thief for his latest plan, and in between sequences the characters address the camera for brief, often comic commentaries on socioeconomics. Remastered from a new 4K restoration for this Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, extras include new interviews with Bucci, producer Claudio Mancini, and makeup artist Pierantonio Mecacci. Likely to appeal to fans of offbeat and brainy foreign cinema, this is recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Ride the High Country

★★★1/2

Warner, 94 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$21.99

Filmmaker Sam Peckinpah's 1962 second feature (and first unqualified masterpiece) is a laconic tale about the end of the frontier that both celebrates and de-

