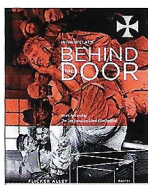


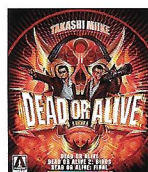
of German ancestry who left the sea for the love of a woman—a banker's daughter named Alice (Jane Novak)—but he enlists when war is declared. Alice stows aboard his ship, which is torpedoed by a German submarine, after which she is taken prisoner while Krug vows to take revenge on the sadistic commander (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. Axmayer)



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. Axmayer)

The Handmaid's Tale

★★★1/2

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



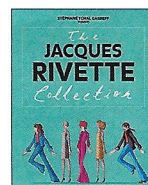
This 1990 screen adaptation of Margaret Atwood's dystopian novel stars Natasha Richardson as Kate, a wife and mother living in a dystopian future where most women have been rendered infertile under a theocratic dictatorship. Fertile women are held captive, indoctrinated with a twisted religion, and made 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. Axmayer)

The Jacques Rivette Collection

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

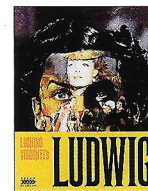
fellow New Wave filmmakers Jean-Luc Godard, Claude Chabrol, and Eric Rohmer, but his career was just as resilient and interesting. The three films in this collection, never before released on home video in the U.S., present Rivette at his most idiosyncratic, with the first two being examples of the director's 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. Axmayer)



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