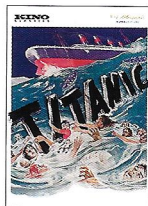


documentary conventions as it tells the story of a bullied kid who graduates from petty crime to bank robbery in gag-laden skits. Along the way, the film parodies genres such as the prison drama, the caper film, and the prison break thriller, with chain gang scenes out of classic prison dramas from the 1930s up through *Cool Hand Luke*. While using the documentary format for humorous ends was popular in older Hollywood short subjects, Allen took the idea in new directions with cartoonish gags and verbal humor that mixed historical and literary references together with neurotic commentary and stand-up schtick, giving rise to a whole new genre of comedy: the mockumentary. It's hit-or-miss but hilarious at its best, full of throwaway gags (the identities of Virgil's parents are protected by goofy plastic novelty glasses). A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

Titanic ★★

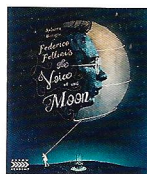
Kino Lorber, 88 min., in German w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99



Made in Germany as the tide of World War II was turning against the Axis powers, this 1943 production presents the famous story of the sinking of the *Titanic* as a mix of disaster movie and propaganda piece. The lavish production frames the voyage as a business scheme by the greedy officers of the White Star Line to buy up the company stock at rock bottom prices and then cash in when their state-of-the-art new ship *Titanic* breaks the world record for the transatlantic crossing to New York. The first-class passengers are a veritable *Grand Hotel* of characters, including a notorious burglar, a Russian countess, and an American millionaire attempting to bankrupt White Star. Subplots include a doomed romance between a lowly crewman and a manicurist, and even a little drama in the overcrowded steerage section, where all of the poor and working-class passengers are basically locked in. *Titanic* paints the British and Americans as greedy and power-hungry, risking the lives of innocents for profit and then becoming cowardly when tragedy strikes, and the only authority figure to stand up to them and the irresponsible Captain (who buckles under the pressure of the company president despite warnings of icebergs) is the sole German officer in the British crew. The elaborate miniatures used for the special effects of the sinking of the *Titanic* are impressive and were reused in the 1958 British film *A Night to Remember*. While hardly the best film about the *Titanic*, this is an entertaining slice of disaster melodrama and it is fascinating as a piece of cultural propaganda from Nazi Germany. Extras include audio commentary by film scholar Gaylyn Studlar, and archival footage of the real-life *Titanic* and its sister ship *Olympic*. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

The Voice of the Moon ★★

Arrow, 121 min., in Italian w/English subtitles, not rated, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99



Federico Fellini's final film, 1990's *The Voice of the Moon*, was neither well-received on the festival circuit nor released in America—quite a comedown for a one-of-a-kind director whose beloved classics *La Strada*, *La Dolce Vita*, and *8 1/2* helped establish a ravenous market for foreign films in U.S. theaters and on college campuses in the 1950s and '60s. A well-intended journey through perennial Fellini themes—including reckoning with one's past and present, the search for meaning in the face of mortality, and the absurd vanity of earthly concerns in an overwhelming cosmos—*The Voice of the Moon* stars Roberto Benigni as Ivo Salvini, a wide-eyed innocent who is indirectly constructing his own Romantic mythology. Ivo hears voices calling to him from a well, pines to be one with the Moon, and gazes starry-eyed at a sleeping woman he imagines is our lunar neighbor made flesh. *The Voice of the Moon* exists in a peculiarly Fellini-esque dimension where dreams, memory, and farce are combined, along with foggy ideas that are presented in obscure vignettes tinged with social satire that feels anachronistic (with one spectacular exception). Extras include the archival "making-of" documentary "Towards the Moon with Fellini," a photo gallery, and a booklet. Fellini completists will certainly want to add this, but for others it is an optional purchase. (T. Keogh)

Whispering Shadows and The Devil's Assistant ★★

Undercrank, 91 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.95



This double feature presents two obscure silent films that were considered lost for many years. *Whispering Shadows* (1921) features a convoluted plot involving embezzlement, false accusations, a conveniently timed death, and a brave heroine fighting to clear her lover's good name with a little help from the recently deceased via occult communication. Emile Chautard's direction is stagy and laborious, moving the story along at an uncommonly lethargic pace. Far more entertaining is the short *The Devil's Assistant* (1917), in which an evil physician (we know he's evil because he briefly grows demonic horns when thinking wicked thoughts) gets his patients hooked on morphine. When a woman who spurned his romantic advances seeks treatment, his lascivious plans for her include drugs and an attempted sexual assault. The film features astonishing imagery, including a vision of drug addiction as a

red-tinted Hell complete with a winged Satan smacking the damned with his pitchfork. It also moves at a ridiculously fast pace, which is not surprising as this is an abbreviated version of a now-lost longer production. Andrew E. Simpson created the original organ scores for the films. Diehard aficionados of silent film may be drawn to this minor double-feature. Optional. (P. Hall)

The Woman in Red ★★1/2

Kino Lorber, 87 min., PG-13, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99



Cinematic funnyman Gene Wilder's third film as a director, *The Woman in Red* combines farcical elements with saucy frills and short shots of straight drama. Teddy Pierce (Wilder), a "director of information" at a San Francisco ad agency, spies the titular knockout (Kelly LeBrock) in her crimson dress one day in the parking garage and becomes instantly smitten. Despite the fact that he's "happily" married to a supportive wife (Judith Ivey) and is the father of two girls, Teddy can't help but reach out to the model, but unbeknownst to him his amorous phone call is received by another woman in his office, Ms. Milner (Gilda Radner). The universe seems to be out to best Teddy at every turn and deter him from his path: his pal Joey (Joseph Bologna) has been abandoned by his wife after she caught on to his womanizing ways, Teddy's attempts to make his date with the model—in actuality Ms. Milner—are constantly foiled by familial obligations and his own inherent guilt, and even after Teddy has formally introduced himself to the model and asked her out for dinner, their plans to rendezvous are further hampered by one surprising revelation after another. Wilder's script, an adaptation of the French film *Pardon Mon Affaire* (1976), constructs a duplicitous universe where just about everyone is engaged in some form of infidelity, amusingly supporting the notion that the heart is a fickle beast. Although somewhat hampered by a subpar Stevie Wonder soundtrack, this remains a reasonably entertaining film. A strong optional purchase. (J. Cruz)

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