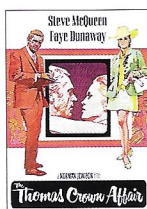


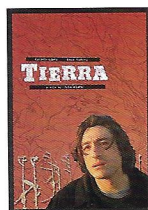
suave bank executive who masterminds an ingenious daylight robbery of his own bank, and Faye Dunaway is elegant and relentless insurance investigator Vicki Anderson in this 1968 heist classic from director Norman Jewison. The actual heists here aren't particularly elaborate—Crown uses telephone signals to instruct hired operatives who never meet—and the film instead focuses on the cat-and-mouse battle of wits between Crown and Anderson. Jewison relies on flashy camera angles, fragmented editing, and elaborate split screens to jazz up the look, giving the film a sheen of modern style that looked snazzy in 1968 but appears contrived and dated today. McQueen was at the height of his screen stardom and never seems less than cool whether he's pulling the strings of a robbery or wooing Dunaway over a game of chess in front of a roaring fire, and Dunaway is equally commanding as the ambitious, almost ruthless investigator. Jack Weston costars as the hapless getaway driver who is snared by the otherwise ineffectual cops. McQueen and Dunaway bring the sex appeal in the handsomely mounted *The Thomas Crown Affair*, but while somewhat interesting as a period piece it's also a disappointing crime film. Winner of an Oscar for its theme song, "Windmills of Your Mind," the film bows on Blu-ray with extras including audio commentary tracks (one by Jewison, the other by film historian Lem Dobbs and filmmaker Nick Redman), interviews with Jewison and title designer Pablo Ferro, and an archival behind-the-scenes featurette. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)



### Tierra ★★★

Olive, 124 min., in Spanish w/ English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99

The lush, visually vivid films of Spain's Julio Medem are as much about his country's distinctive landscapes and natural wonders as they are about the restless and obsessive characters that wander through his world. His 1996 film *Tierra* ("Earth") begins in the heavens with a vast view of the planet and then dives down into a microscopic examination of the underworld beneath the red soil of a remote wine-growing region in Spain. There we find Angel Bengoelxo (Carmelo Gómez), a melancholy fumigator whose wandering soul is torn between the lovely, lonely, ethereal Angela (Emma Suárez) and the earthy, passionate, impulsive Mari (Silke). Medem sets this tale of love and lust amidst the stunning austere landscape of fiery red hills, a world that seems both primal and alien (dressed in white protective suits, the fumigators look like astronauts on the red planet Mars), where the enigmatic wood lice lives under the ground



and angels reside with humans above. Medem weaves multiple stories together with natural history and philosophical musings into a passionate film about fate, fantasy, and the illogical power of love. A transcendent, beautiful movie, this is recommended. (S. Axmaker)

### Topaze ★★★

Kino Lorber, 78 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99

John Barrymore stars as Professor Auguste A. Topaze, a dedicated and beloved schoolteacher in an elite private school, in this satirical 1933 comedy adapted from the play by French writer Marcel Pagnol. Barrymore, who tended to embrace his hammy side, is more restrained here as a naïve, idealistic professor who is blind to the corruption of the real world and winds up being fired when he refuses to give a passing grade to a failing student. Through the kind of screwball coincidences that exist only in plays and movies, he lands a job with the aristocratic Baron de La Tour-La Tour (Reginald Mason)—father of the failing student that got him canned—as the representative of a phony tonic. Ben Hecht, a master of American cynicism and barbed wit, adapted the play, filling it with satirical jabs at the hypocrisy of the rich and powerful that was only possible pre-Code: in fact, the film opens with the Baron telling his mistress Coco (Myrna Loy), "You know I have to get home to my wife." Director Harry d'Abbadie d'Arrast brings an elegant touch and worldly attitude to this cynical portrait that features a satisfying twist of poetic justice. Extras include audio commentary by film historian Kat Ellinger. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



### Viva L'Italia ★★★

Arrow, 129 min., in Italian w/ English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99

Roberto Rossellini was one of the godfathers of Italian neorealism, but in the 1960s he directed a series of historical films that explored key events in Italian and world history, combining documentary realism with political rumination. *Viva L'Italia* (1961) was his first, a drama about Giuseppe Garibaldi and his military campaign to aid the uprisings in Sicily and Naples against the Bourbon king in 1860. Renzo Ricci stars as Garibaldi, leader of a revolutionary movement to unify the disparate states of the Italian people under the constitutional monarch Victor Emmanuel II. Garibaldi is portrayed as a driven and courageous general as well as a committed humanist as he leads his loyal thousand volunteers against the superior numbers of the Bourbon forces. Ricci plays the character with a paternal warmth and contemplative seriousness. The film was commissioned by the Italian government to



celebrate the centenary of Italian unification and Rossellini uses his budget to present grand scenes of warfare, but it is as much history lesson as drama, with loads of dialogue featuring background on the politics and historical backdrop of the events onscreen. Rossellini's intention was to direct it as a "documentary made after the fact" and he claimed that he was more proud of this film than any other he made. Bowing on DVD and Blu-ray in a newly restored edition, extras include a shorter English-dubbed version originally created for American release, an interview with Rossellini's assistant Ruggero Deodato, and a video essay by Rossellini scholar Tag Gallagher. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

### The Wilby Conspiracy

★★★1/2

Kino Lorber, 105 min., PG, Blu-ray: \$29.99

Sidney Poitier is Shack Twala, a political activist in 1970s apartheid-era South Africa, and Michael Caine plays Jim Keogh, a British engineer who ends up on the run with Twala after he intervenes during a brutal display of police abuse. Adapted from a 1972 novel by Peter Driscoll, this 1975 escape thriller plays like a modern version of *The Defiant Ones*, minus the shackles and racial animosity—at least between the two fugitives. The racism is all on the side of the white South African police led by the ruthlessly racist Afrikaner Major Horn (Nicol Williamson), who treats the manhunt like a matter of national security. The story plays like a classic chase thriller as the two strangers thrown together by circumstance work together to get across the border to safety in Zimbabwe. It is also one of the first mainstream American movies to present apartheid South Africa as a racist police state, a lesson that Keogh learns firsthand. Director Ralph Nelson doesn't soften the portrait of the virulently bigoted cops who treat every black African as a criminal or a child. It makes for an interesting time capsule, while the banter between Poitier and Caine sustains the action through the familiar twists and turns of the plot. The great Indian actor Saeed Jaffrey plays a friend sympathetic to the black rights movement, while Rutger Hauer makes his film debut in a small role. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)



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