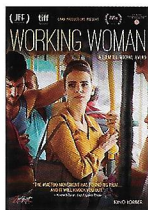


country-western performer in Scotland. Just released from jail after serving a stint for drug charges, and wearing an ankle bracelet under her high cowgirl boots, Rose-Lynn has sex with her boyfriend and gets into a fight at the Grand Old Opry of Glasgow before showing up at the apartment of her mother (Julie Walters), who has been taking care of her children Wynonna (Daisy Littlefield) and Lyle (Adam Mitchell). She takes a job as a housecleaner to Susannah (Sophie Okonedo), who encourages Rose-Lynn to go to Nashville and try to break into the music business there. Eventually, Rose-Lynn makes her way to Tennessee, even though it means leaving her children behind at a particularly difficult moment. Just when the film appears to be heading for a clichéd *Star Is Born* finale, the story takes a sudden turn that is satisfyingly redemptive. The pleasures of *Wild Rose*—in addition to the standout performances and genial music—lie in its refusal to succumb to the familiar feel-good fantasy ending. Despite a plot that is hardly innovative, the film is refreshingly quirky and unpredictable, an unabashed crowd-pleaser that, like its title character, also frequently breaks the rules. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

Working Woman

★★★1/2

Kino Lorber, 93 min., in Hebrew w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99



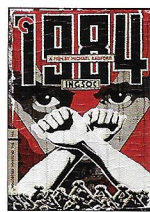
Israeli director Michal Aviad's *Working Woman* deals in blunt fashion with the harsh reality of women's lives in the workplace—especially young and ambitious mothers like the protagonist, Orna (Liron Ben-Shlush), who struggles along with her husband to provide for their three kids in an up-and-coming section of Tel Aviv. When Orna lands a high-end real estate job selling a line of fashionable apartments, things seem to be looking up. But viewers know that her imposing, swaggering, unhappily married older boss Benny (Menashe Noy) is nothing but trouble. One day he forcibly kisses Orna, who recoils in shock. But she eventually gets over it, and after a while it seems that Benny has successfully suppressed his inappropriate sexual urges. However, gradually we see a change in Benny, and there's a subtle inevitability in the way he eventually assaults Orna again—this time while on a business trip in Paris. How Orna acts under duress throughout is perfectly believable: it's not heroic, just human as she finds herself caught in a patriarchal vice grip between a controlling, sexually aggressive boss and a husband who is quick to suspect that she didn't do enough to reject her boss's advances. A timely film that makes its powerful points through well-fashioned drama, this is highly recommended. (M. Sandlin)

Classic Films

1984 ★★★

Criterion, 110 min., R, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99

Michael Radford's film adaptation of George Orwell's dystopian classic—the second big screen version of the 1949 novel—was released, appropriately enough, in 1984. John Hurt stars as Winston Smith, a shuffling, almost lifeless proletariat rewriting history to serve the purposes of the totalitarian government ("Big Brother"), but he privately rebels in forbidden activities, such as keeping a secret diary and engaging in a tender affair with Julia (Suzanna Hamilton). Richard Burton (in his final screen role) is brilliant as the government interrogator O'Brien, who uses torture and terror to break Smith and make him betray his lover and his own free will. Faithful to both the story and spirit of the novel—a savage indictment of totalitarianism and Soviet Communism—the film presents a gray, grimy world in which dead-eyed, joyless citizens parrot the party line while enduring a life of propaganda broadcasts and privation. Winston's emaciated frame and hacking cough suggest malnutrition (not helped by the cold damp of his shabby room), while the retro-technology (dial phones and pneumatic tubes) suggests a future of creative stasis. Even if Radford never fully captures the devastating ordeal of mental and physical torture of Orwell's novel, this remains an admirable effort and its portrait of language and propaganda being used to manipulate citizens is as timely now as it was in 1949 and 1984. Presented in a new 4K transfer, extras include new interviews with Radford, cinematographer Roger Deakins, and author David Ryan (*George Orwell on Screen*), as well as behind-the-scenes footage, a choice between two soundtracks (the original orchestral score by Dominic Muldowney and a hybrid featuring electronic music and songs by the Eurythmics), and a booklet with an essay by writer A.L. Kennedy. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



Akio Jissoji: The Buddhist Trilogy ★★★

Arrow, 4 discs, 394 min., in Japanese w/English subtitles, not rated, Blu-ray: \$99.99

Japanese director Akio Jissoji (1937-2006) had a bifurcated career, making highly commercial sci-fi movies and TV programs (including the popular *Ultraman*) while also directing experimental, sexually-explicit dramas for Japan's Art Theatre Guild, as part of the so-called Japanese New Wave of the 1960s and '70s. The best-known are the three collaborations with writer Toshiro Ishido



known as the "Buddhist trilogy," so called because they obliquely reflect on aspects of Buddhist thought. *This Transient Life* (1970) is about siblings involved in an incestuous relationship and a monk who becomes the brother's collaborator to make a statue of Buddha while also having feelings for the sister. *Mandara* (1971), the only film in color, concerns college students who are drawn into a cult that practices extreme sexual activities, including rape. And *Poem* (1972) is about a servant whose spiritual progress is upended when his teacher proposes to sell their serene mountain estate to greedy profiteers. All three films showcase bravura camerawork, mixing long tracking shots with sharp edits and surrealist imagery, and they feature music scores that combine modernist instrumentals with classical excerpts and religious chants. All are presented in excellent transfers (*Poem* in both the theatrical version and a longer director's cut), and each film features enlightening introductions and commentaries by film scholar David Desser. A bonus fourth disc contains Jissoji's *It Was a Faint Dream* (1974), a more conventionally shot drama about a woman who flees libertine court life to become a nun. Also included is a 60-page illustrated book. While the provocative subject matter and abrasive style of these films will hardly be to all tastes, they do represent significant contributions to an important movement in Japanese cinema. Recommended for more adventurous collections. (F. Swietek)

Alphaville ★★★1/2

Kino Lorber, 99 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99



Jean-Luc Godard's 1965 sci-fi drama stirs together elements of *1984* and *Brave New World* into a pulp fiction private-eye thriller. Eddie Constantine, a craggy-faced American actor who found fame as a tough-guy star of French B-movies, reprises his role as Lemmy Caution, a character he played in numerous earlier European films. Here he's an American agent sent to the European metropolis of Alphaville to retrieve a double agent (Akim Tamiroff) and shut down Alpha 60, the mega-computer that rules the totalitarian state where the expression of emotion is considered both illogical and illegal. Anna Karina, Godard's former wife and longtime muse, costars as Natacha, an emotionless sex worker who is also the daughter of the computer's creator (Howard Vernon). Caution is a two-fisted hero in a film noir trenchcoat and fedora in a futuristic culture where those who can't adapt are either pushed to suicide or executed in scenes out of a surreal water ballet. Godard created his future cityscape entirely from existing locations, shooting in and against modernist buildings mostly at night and using simple effects and expressionist lighting