

## The Phantom's NOIR GANG

### ARROW VIDEO

(\$39.95 Blu-ray) 2/19

**MY NAME IS JULIA ROSS** (1945) B&W

888

D: Joseph H. Lewis. Nina Foch, Dame May Whitty, George Macready, Roland Varno, Doris Lloyd, Queenie Leonard. 65 mins.

While it may be a stretch to categorize this housebound, England-set thriller as a noir, **Julia Ross**, by any other name, amply delivers the goth goods. Foch, late of the chillers **Return of the Vampire** (Scream Factory) and **Cry of the Werewolf**, stars as the eponymous heroine, an unemployed young woman who answers an ad for a private secretary. No sooner does Julia land the bogus gig than she finds herself a prisoner in a Cornwall mansion, complete with a new identity (Marion Hughes), a husband, psychopathic Ralph Hughes (Macready), and under the sway of the latter's scheming mater Mrs. Hughes (Whitty). Something of a streamlined, modernized **Gaslight**, the film depicts Julia's fierce resistance to both the intensive brainwashing campaign and its ultimately lethal intent. A top cast, earnest tone and taut pacing keep the suspense at a steady simmer before heating up in the final reel. Considered a second feature sleeper in its day, **Julia Ross** later received A-level treatment as Arthur Penn's 1987 remake **Dead of Winter**, starring Mary Steenburgen. Extras on Arrow's pristine new Blu-ray include **Identity Crisis: Joseph H. Lewis at Columbia**, where Nora Fiore provides the film's background and an analysis, an audio commentary by noir scholar Alan K. Rode, and the theatrical trailer. The same label debuts another dubious "noir" by Lewis, later of **Gun Crazy** (VS #108) fame, the rural France-set **So Dark the Night** (1946), an ingeniously plotted, inventively lensed psycho story that fails to fully sell its central plot twist but remains worth watching for Lewis's directorial flourishes, a rare starring turn by veteran character actor Stephen Geray, and a cameo by Theodore Gottlieb—better known as black-clad future sick-joke monologist Brother Theodore—as a hunchback. The Blu-ray includes commentary by critics Glenn Kenny and Farran Smith Nehme, **So Dark...Joseph H. Lewis at Columbia**, with critic Imogen Sara Smith, and trailer. Arrow likewise issues Robert Siodmak's long-awaited nightmare noir **Phantom Lady** (1944), based on a Cornell Woolrich novel and justly famed for Elisha Cook Jr.'s immortal turn as a diminutive lust-crazed jazz drummer with bad teeth and a bowtie (you know the type). Among the bonus material are the archival documentary **Dark and**

**Deadly: 50 Years of Film Noir**, with contributions from Robert Wise, Edward Dmytryk, Dennis Hopper and others, an hour-long 1944 **Phantom Lady** radio dramatization by the **Lux Radio Theatre**, starring Alan Curtis and Ella Raines, and an image gallery.

### CRITERION COLLECTION

(\$39.95 Blu-ray) 3/19

**DETOUR** (1945) B&W 88888

D: Edgar G. Ulmer. Tom Neal, Ann Savage, Claudia Drake, Edmund McDonald, Tim Ryan, Esther Howard. 69 mins.

Few films have captured the mood and texture of clinical depression as killing as **Detour** (though **White Zombie's** hallucinatory club scene comes close). Cut-rate nightclub pianist Al (a brilliantly understated Neal in his finest thespian hour) suffers from a serious case of, in Sartre's famous phrase, *La Nausee*. Screenwriter Martin Goldsmith, wisely allowed to adapt his own novel, conveys the literal feel of Al's angst when the abject musician describes a generous ten-spot tip as "a piece of paper crawling with germs." German emigre director Ulmer taps his Teutonic expressionist roots by placing Al literally in an obfuscating fog as he and chanteuse squeeze Sue (Drake) discuss their impending separation while making their way through a nocturnal NYC's Riverside Drive, their progress signaled by dimly glimpsed street signs. When Sue strikes out to try her luck in Hollywood, a lonely Al embarks on his own ill-advised road trip, where his black-cloud karma would seem to act as the passive catalyst for a series of escalating disasters involving a pill-popping motorist (McDonald) and an ultra-aggro femme (Savage, in one of early noir-dom's most indelible perfs, setting the tone for Peggy Cummins' psychopath in the aforementioned **Gun Crazy**, Jean Gillie's ruthless femme fatale in **Decoy** [VS #64], and Faith Domergue's mega-destructive dame in **Where Danger Lives** [VS #106]). Neal's iconic character would later serve as the inspiration for Charles Aznavour's tonier ivory-tickling variation in Francois Truffaut's breakthrough noir deconstruction/homage **Shoot the Piano Player**, his unofficial answer to fellow **Cahiers du Cinema** critic-turned-auteur Jean-Luc Godard's **Breathless** (withal, one of film-dom's greatest call-and-responses). Criterion rolls out the digital red carpet for this oft-issued PD classic with a new 4K restoration, plus a slew of extras, including the 2004 documentary **Edgar G. Ulmer: The Man Off Screen**, featuring Ann Savage, Roger Corman, Joe Dante and Wim Wenders, an interview with film scholar Noah Isenberg, a program on the restoration, Janus Films' rerelease trailer, and an essay by critic Robert Polito.



### KINO LORBER

(\$29.95 Blu-ray) 2/19

**DESERT FURY** (1947) 881/2

D: Lewis Allen. Elizabeth Scott, John Hodiak, Burt Lancaster, Mary Astor, Wendell Corey, James Flavin. 96 mins.

A rare Technicolor noir that's a bit too awash in suds (of the cleansing kind, not the imbibing variety) to achieve max impact, **Desert Fury** casts short-lived star Hodiak as Eddie Bendix, a bigtime Vegas racketeer who returns to his old small-town Nevada haunt to lay low for a spell. Eddie's complex emotional life includes an erstwhile liaison with influential casino owner Fritz Haller (**The Maltese Falcon** alum Astor), a current romance with her daughter Paula (Scott), and an unusual (for the time) homoerotic relationship with his hopelessly smitten right-hand man Johnny Ryan (Corey), who's fiercely possessive of Eddie and no fan of the fairer sex. Also in the picture is local lawman Tom Hanson (an underutilized Lancaster), who's in love with Paula. Further clouding the situation is the lingering suspicion that Eddie murdered his wife. Age discrepancies abound—Tom, we're told, is 28, while Eddie and Johnny are presumed to be in their 40s; coincidentally enough, each of the male leads was precisely 33 at the time of the film's release. While shaky as a crime drama, **Desert Fury** compensates with a vibrant color screenscape, courtesy of cinematographers Charles Lang and Edward Cronjager. Extras include an audio commentary by film historian Imogen Sara Smith.