

and social engagement without judgment or pretense. French New Wave icon Sami Frey plays the devoted music student dating Annie who falls hard for the uninhibited Dominique and becomes pathologically jealous over her flirtatious behavior. Clouzot weaves in multiple storytellers through the witness statements and extended flashbacks, making the dense narrative look effortless while also pulling strong performances from the entire cast. And in keeping with Bardot's sex kitten image, Clouzot offers teasing shots of an undressed Bardot just shy of explicit nudity. *La Vérité* is a film that dangles a lurid crime of passion in front of the audience but ends up being a character portrait of a woman in an unsympathetic world. Largely overshadowed by Clouzot's more famous films, notably *The Wages of Fear* and *Diabolique*, it was nominated for an Academy Award and won a Golden Globe in 1961. Extras include a 2017 documentary on Clouzot, archival interviews with Bardot and Clouzot, and a booklet with an essay by film scholar Ginette Vincendeau. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Peppermint Soda ★★★

Cohen, 101 min., in French w/ English subtitles, PG, DVD: \$25.99, Blu-ray: \$30.99

The 1977 directorial debut of actress turned filmmaker Diane Kurys follows a year in the life of two teenage sisters in 1960s Paris. Anne (Eléonore Klarwein) and Frédérique Weber (Odile Michel) return from summer on the beach in Normandy with their father and begin the year back home with their mother, whose new boyfriend claims much of her time and attention. Anne is an adolescent at an all-girls school where the teachers are tyrannical bullies and misinformation about sex is passed along on the playground as "common knowledge." It's 1963 and as Anne navigates the onset of puberty, her older sister Frédérique is becoming interested in both boys and politics and she gets into trouble at school for selling peace sign buttons and protesting the Algerian War. *Peppermint Soda* is an episodic film that is less concerned with big drama than with the details of individual experiences in this time of rebellion and sexual awakening. Much of this is observed through the wide-eyed attention of Anne, who is learning the cues of the mysterious adult world from her mother and older sister. While the details evoke a past era, the emotions and anxieties are timeless and the film remains a touching and sensitive portrait of the difficult teenage years for girls. Extras include interviews with Kurys, Klarwein, and composer Yves Simon, as well as an archival featurette. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Phantom Lady ★★★

Arrow, 87 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$39.99

Ella Raines gives a star-making perfor-

mance as Carol Richman, a Girl Friday to civil engineer Scott Henderson (Alan Curtis), who is convicted of murdering his wife—a crime that he insists he didn't commit—in this fine low-budget mystery from Robert Siodmak, one of the masters of film noir. Henderson's only alibi is a mysterious woman who attended a musical revue with him, a woman whose name he never learned, so Richman turns amateur detective to find out why the witnesses are lying to police about this phantom lady's existence. Franchot Tone takes top billing as a famous sculptor and best friend of the convicted man, one who has ulterior motives when he joins the investigation. Based on a 1942 novel by Cornell Woolrich (writing under the pseudonym William Irish), this is a minor masterpiece of film noir, featuring a strong, professional working woman at the center of the tale. The narrative is built on the kinds of plot contrivances common to murder mysteries of the time but the script is clever and Siodmak delivers superb set pieces and striking images on a comparatively tiny budget. Cult actor Elisha Cook Jr. (*The Maltese Falcon*) plays a drummer who takes Richman to an underground jazz jam session in one of the film's standout sequences, and future Oscar nominee Thomas Gomez is the no-nonsense police detective who helps her out with the investigation. Extras include the 1994 British TV documentary *Dark and Deadly: 50 Years of Film Noir*, the 1944 radio adaptation of the film featuring Raines and Curtis, and a gallery of stills and promotional material. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

The Prize ★★½

Warner, 135 min., not rated, DVD: \$21.99

Paul Newman stars as Andrew Craig, a cynical, hard-drinking, shamelessly womanizing American author who is in Stockholm to receive the Nobel Prize, and Elke Sommer is his "handler" Lisa Andersson, in this 1963 Cold War thriller. Andrew insists that he's there for the prize money but there is also the lure of his beautiful handler and a mystery surrounding the sudden personality change in a physicist (played by Edward G. Robinson) who is also attending the ceremony. *The Prize* is a thriller in the Hitchcockian vein, complete with shadowy thugs, tantalizing clues, and a web of conspirators determined to either make Andrew look foolish or kill him. It's even scripted by *North by Northwest* screenwriter Ernest Lehman, who adapts Irving Wallace's 1962 novel but adds set pieces that are right out of his great Hitchcock lark. Lehman has plenty of fun with the dialogue, both in Andrew's sassy flirtations ("And what was she wearing?" "Sort of an

off-the-shoulder smile") and his smart-aleck remarks when no one believes that someone is trying to kill him. The pacing is snappy and the romantic interludes are entertaining, but Mark Robson otherwise directs with dutiful professionalism, and never actually manages much in the way of suspense or thrills. Still, Newman's rascally performance keeps the film alive, while Sommer is sexy, sharp, and delightfully exasperated by Andrew's shenanigans, which she finds increasingly hard to resist. Diane Baker, Micheline Presle, and Kevin McCarthy costar. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

Sarah T.: Portrait of a Teenage Alcoholic ★★★

Shout! Factory, 96 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$27.99

Two years after the release of *The Exorcist*, child star Linda Blair had a memorable turn as the eponymous lead in the provocative 1975 TV movie *Sarah T.: Portrait of a Teenage Alcoholic*. Playing an amorphous 15-year-old girl with a spiraling addiction to alcohol, Blair demonstrates a keen grasp of an addictive personality who becomes increasingly lost and destructive. At the same time, Blair also proves to be pretty convincing as a denier who refuses to admit the obvious about Sarah's problems and accept help. The teleplay by Richard and Esther Shapiro (*Dynasty*) ably balances the clinical with the personal, creating a well-rounded drama that is aided immeasurably by actors who within a few years would become pop culture icons: Mark Hamill (*Star Wars*), Verna Bloom (*Animal House*), William Daniels (*Knight Rider* and *St. Elsewhere*), and Larry Hagman (*Dallas*). Add to that soon-to-be-A-list director Richard Donner, whose 1978 *Superman* would play a part in ushering in the superhero genre. Donner gives *Sarah T.* a shadowy look and feel while never descending into cheap shocks or strained seriousness. Extras include new interviews with Donner and producer David Levinson, and with Blair. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

Shame ★★★

Criterion, 103 min., in Swedish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99

Ingmar Bergman became famous for his stark portraits of relationships under stress, characters struggling with faith, and allegorical dramas set in the distant past. *Shame* brings all of these themes together in a tale set in the midst of a modern civil war in an unnamed country. Bergman's longtime collaborators Max von Sydow and Liv Ullmann star as married couple Jan and Eva Rosenberg, former musicians in a disbanded orchestra, who now struggle

