

## DIGITAL DEBUTS

### ARROW VIDEO

(\$29.99 Blu-ray) 6/15

#### PIT STOP: DIRECTOR APPROVED

#### SPECIAL EDITION (1969) B&W

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D: Jack Hill. Brian Donlevy, Dick Davalos, Ellen Burstyn, Sid Haig, Beverly Washburn, George Washburn, Titus Moody. 92 mins.

Hot-rodder Rick Bowman (Davalos) gets the attention of race car owner Grant Willard (Donlevy) and scores an opportunity to drive on the legit race circuit. Mr. Willard's number one man, Hawk Sidney (Haig), is a multi-winner down at the Ascot Raceway, where they run the figure-8 races. Cars intersect on the deadly figure-8 track and the crowds cheer every crash. Rick is a natural and soon leaves Hawk in the dust, moving up to become Mr. Willard's new ace driver and taking over Hawk's steady girl Jolene (Washburn). The stakes keep getting raised higher and higher until a tragedy puts Rick in a situation where he has to decide if he wants to gain his soul back or sell it for good to the double-dealing Willard. This was Hill's "art film about racing" he made for Roger Corman and, honestly, it is his best film. It's simply told but completely compelling and the performances are perfect. Davalos is coolly charismatic, while Haig shows why he was on his way to a distinguished career as a top character actor. Donlevy brings a certain menace to his character, and Washburn stands out as the sweet and vulnerable Jolene. Future star Burstyn appears here as Ellen McRae. The film's hip soundtrack works as a really cool heartbeat, intertwining these characters together through the ever-moving plot. Arrow's release includes a new commentary with Hill as well as on-camera interviews with Hill, Haig and producer Corman, along with the original theatrical trailer. You may know that Code Red also released a Blu-ray version of *Pit Stop* under its *Roger Corman Presents* label. That disc includes different on-screen interviews with Corman and Haig. The Arrow Video version presents the film under its original title *The Winner*, while the Code Red version has the *Pit Stop* handle. Both editions are excellent and I'm sure reps from both companies would not argue if you purchased copies of each. And if you're going to do that, you might as well drop some cash on the long-out-of-print Anchor Bay DVD edition from 2000 that includes a different commentary by Hill with Johnny Legend, the Crash-O-Rama! making-of featurette, B&W and colorized trailers, a stills gallery and talent bios. Regardless of which edition you settle on, make sure this flick is in your homevid library.

—Rob Freese

### COHEN MEDIA GROUP

(\$39.98 Blu-ray) 11/15

#### TWO MEN IN TOWN (1973) ⌘⌘⌘

D: Jose Giovanni. Alain Delon, Jean Gabin, Mimsy Farmer, Michel Bouquet, Victor Lanoux, Gerard Depardieu. 99 mins.

Following an arc that's as venerable as *Les Misérables* and that's recently surfaced on disc in such disparate ventures as Josef von Sternberg's brilliant expressionist 1935 Dostoyevksy adaptation/Peter Lorre showcase *Crime and Punishment* (Mill Creek Entertainment), the 1954 noir *Loophole*, and the 1978 Dustin Hoffman vehicle *Straight Time* (both Warner Archive—see page 50), *Two Men in Town* casts a perfect-haired Delon as Gino, an ex-con who's looking to hug the straight and narrow but can't escape the scrutiny of sociopathically punitive cop Inspector Goitreau (Bouquet). Gino finds a staunch and loyal ally in prison reformer Germaine (a typically expert Gabin, taking a break from his trademark tough guy roles), an ideal new love interest in Lucie (Farmer), and an honest job as a pressman. But when a prying Goitreau learns that Gino's been approached for a heist by shady former colleagues, he becomes obsessed with entrapping his target and returning him to prison. What begins as a crime and redemption tale gradually morphs into a campaign against the death penalty and France's particularly gruesome and humiliating state instrument of destruction, the guillotine, viewed here in an eerily beautiful cathedral-like setting that adds immeasurably to the horror of its purpose. Director/writer Giovanni and co-scripter Daniel Boulanger assemble a cogent case against this barbaric practice, though they ultimately sacrifice some of the human drama to serve their polemical agenda. Delon is terrific as always, while Bouquet—unforgettable as the guilt-haunted killer in Claude Chabrol's brilliant contemporaneous thriller *Just Before Nightfall* (VS #79)—makes for a convincingly hateful villain who perverts the law to achieve his evil ends. (The property has since been remade with Forest Whitaker and Harvey Keitel in the leads.) Cohen Media's Blu-ray includes an audio commentary by Gabin biographer Charles Zigman, along with original and re-release trailers.

—The Phantom

### CRITERION COLLECTION

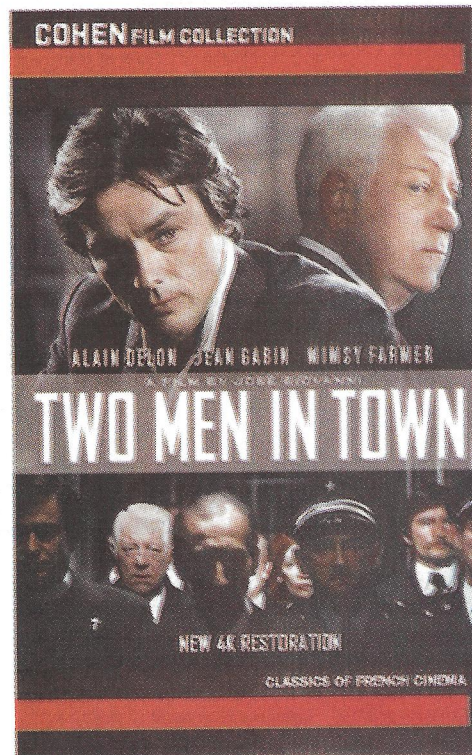
(\$39.95 Blu-ray) 9/15

#### THE HONEYMOON KILLERS (1970) B&W

⌘⌘⌘ 1/2

D: Leonard Kastle. Shirley Stoler, Tony Lo Bianco, Mary Jane Higby, Doris Roberts, Kim McArdle, Marilyn Chris. 107 mins.

Sort of the *Night of the Living Dead* of art-house psycho noirs, Kastle's brilliant, fact-based indie, rescued from videoblivion by the Criterion Collection back in 2003, now receives a well-deserved digital upgrade via the outfit's new Blu-ray edition. Originally titled *Dear Martha* and set to be directed by a young Martin Scorsese



before writer Kastle assigned himself that chore. *The Honeymoon Killers* chronicles the shocking exploits of the real-life 1940s "Lonelyhearts Killers," lethal lothario Ray Fernandez (Lo Bianco) and hefty death nurse Martha Beck (Stoler, later of Lina Wertmuller's *Seven Beauties* and Frank Henenlotter's *Frankenhooker* fame). With Ray supplying the seductive charm and Martha the merciless violence, the duo, posing as brother and sister, cut a deadly swathe through suburban America's lonely female population, even as they cemented their own emotionally needy romantic bond. Both Lo Bianco and Stoler turn in chillingly flawless performances, baring their vulnerabilities while cruelly dispatching their desperate prey. Veteran radio actress Higby, in a rare film appearance, rings achingly true as Janet Fay, the most pathetic of the killers' victims. Lensed in stark, verite-styled black and white, the deliberately unglamorous film (Kastle envisioned it as the anti-*Bonnie and Clyde*) not only packs an unforgettable punch but also comes equipped with a layer of sneaky dark wit. A lengthy bonus interview with one-shot auteur Kastle—a music composer by trade (thus the film's powerfully ironic Mahler score)—provides a backstory that's every bit as fascinating as the film itself. Other extras include "Dear Martha..." Scott Christianson's illustrated essay on the actual Fernandez-Beck case, *Love Letters*, a new Q&A program featuring interviews with actors Lo Bianco and Chris and editor Stan Warnow, a film-appreciation booklet by critic Gary Giddins, and the original theatrical trailer. Comparison-minded viewers, meanwhile, might also want to scope out Mexican director Arturo Ripstein's equally devastating take on the same case, 1996's *Deep Crimson* (VS #32).

—The Phantom