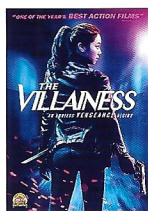


on Spanish history and contemporary politics, with the latter ultimately bringing one of the men face to face with modern reality (a jaw-dropping moment). Melancholy undertones run throughout centering on aging and self-doubt, but despite that serious strain, the film remains a visually intoxicating travelogue that also offers a savory introduction to upscale Spanish cuisine, as well as another helping of delicious joint comedic routines by two masters of the craft. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

### The Villainess ★★1/2

Well Go USA, 124 min., in Korean w/English subtitles and English-dubbed, not rated, DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$29.99



This South Korean action thriller that reworks the plot of *La Femme Nikita* (with some new twists) opens with an amazing action sequence shot from the point of view of an unseen fighter who is wiping out armies of thugs with bullets, knives, and bare hands—ultimately revealed (without a visible editing cut) to be a fierce young woman—kicking the film off with high energy and impressive style. Sook-hee (Kim Ok-bin) is arrested and immediately taken in by a covert organization that trains her to become an assassin with the promise of freedom at the end of 10 years of service...if she survives. Sook-hee agrees for the sake of her unborn child, whom she raises in the top secret facility until she graduates with a cover identity and an apartment in the city. Sook-hee's story unfolds in flashbacks that reveal a tragic past, with a previous life as a criminal assassin, and a dead husband who turns out to be alive and out to kill her. Director Byung-gil Jung serves up some thrilling, elaborately-choreographed action scenes while weaving past and present stories together to reveal twists and betrayals. But despite the clever plotting and mix of action and melodrama, the film is more visually impressive than dramatically gripping and our heroine is very much a blank slate. Still, this is likely to appeal to fans of action cinema. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

### The Wizard of Lies

★★★1/2  
HBO, 133 min., TV-MA, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$24.99

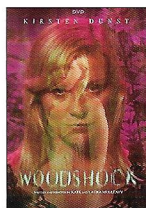


Journalist Diana Henriques's titular 2011 best-seller inspired filmmaker Barry Levinson's rueful HBO-aired drama about the Bernie Madoff financial scandal, a \$65 billion Wall Street Ponzi scheme that rocked the world financial community and brought special pain to Jews, including Holocaust survivors, who lost their life savings to Madoff. Robert De Niro portrays the mercurial, cryptic con-man being

interviewed in prison by Henriques (who plays herself). Flashbacks to the year 2008, when the scandal exploded in the headlines, mix with the fallout for Madoff's family, especially wife Ruth (Michelle Pfeiffer) and two ultimately doomed sons who are blindsided by it all. Along the way, Madoff offers excuses, evasions, and justifications for this vast financial fraud. A concluding verdict may well be that he is mentally ill (a charge that offends the onscreen Madoff in the extreme). Bolstered by excellent performances, this ripped-from-the-headlines drama is highly recommended. (C. Cassidy)

### Woodshock ★

Lionsgate, 100 min., R, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$24.99

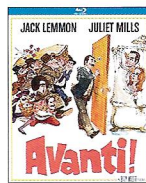


Filmmaker siblings Kate and Laura Mulleavy, who founded the successful haute couture firm Rodarte, here serve up a screen debut that offers a few striking individual images within a film that is opaque, repetitive, and dull. Kirsten Dunst stars as Theresa, who works in a medical marijuana shop. After she laces a joint with poison for her terminally-ill mother, she spirals into deep grief that even her handsome logger boyfriend cannot assuage. In her distraught, sleepless state she hallucinates and wanders about, and even occasionally—if what viewers see is to be literally believed—levitates amid the redwoods. Her distracted state leads her to make a terrible mistake when she prepares another fatal drug cocktail for a sad-faced customer but gives it instead to a young man. While this scenario might have been the basis for a modern noir, the only suspense the Mulleavys whip up is trying to decipher why anybody should care about dreary Theresa's plight. Not recommended. (F. Swietek)

### Classic Films

#### Avanti! ★★★1/2

Kino Lorber, 140 min., R, Blu-ray: \$29.99

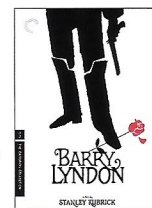


Filmmaker Billy Wilder's 1972 film version of the 1968 Broadway play by Samuel Taylor marks one of the director's attempts to adapt his trademark mix of wit, romance, and sex to the more permissive era of the 1970s. Jack Lemmon stars as Wendell Armbruster, Jr., an American visiting Italy to bring back the body of his father—who died in a car accident while on vacation. Wendell is demanding, carping, insensitive, and utterly unlikeable, which is the polar opposite of chatty, optimistic British woman Pamela Piggott (Juliet Mills), come to claim her mother—who it turns out was having an affair with Wendell's father and also died in the car wreck. Lemmon, who

has played both a charming romantic lead and served as goofy comic relief for Wilder, here tackles the role of Ugly American, a tightly-wound, unpleasant businessman who slowly learns to enjoy life in the romantic surroundings of the vacation town, thanks to the influence of working-class Pamela. Clive Revill offers marvelous support as the hotel manager whose first duty is always to the client, a man as witty as he is efficient. Shot on location on the coast of Italy—a gorgeous setting of sunny beaches, brilliant blue water, and authentic old-world Italian streets—this is a classic romantic comedy in which the modern American world collides with the provincial Italian way of life, as the impatient corporate man learns to slow down and enjoy life. Bowing on Blu-ray, extras include interviews with actors Mills and Revill. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

### Barry Lyndon ★★★

Criterion, 2 discs, 185 min., PG, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99



Stanley Kubrick's lavish 1975 historical drama—adapted from the 1844 novel by William Makepeace Thackeray about the rise and fall of a poor Irish lad—stars Ryan O'Neal as a country boy with no name or prospects whose destiny turns him into a master cad: a deserter, a cheat, and a philanderer who marries into a fortune and makes his wife (Marisa Berenson) miserable while squandering her money chasing a title. Kubrick directs the film with a measured pace and pays attention to every detail, from the painstaking compositions (his images resemble paintings, and he shot scenes by candlelight using NASA deep space lenses) and grandly-dressed sets, to the era's social manners and customs. *Barry Lyndon* is now recognized as a masterpiece but upon its initial release was criticized both for its slow pace and for the casting of O'Neal, who was accused of delivering a shallow performance, although his wide-eyed look of pained, guileless innocence actually serves the character well. Other Kubrick films remain more popular but this one took home four Oscars—for Cinematography, Score, Art Direction, and Costume Design—more than any other of his films except *Spartacus*. Newly remastered and presented in its original aspect ratio, this is now the definitive home video release, with extras including featurettes on the film and Kubrick, interviews with Kubrick collaborators, an archival TV clip on the film's costumes, and a booklet. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

### Children of the Corn ★★

Arrow, 92 min., R, Blu-ray: \$39.95

Fritz Kiersch's 1984 adaptation of Stephen King's 1977 titular short story about a couple who stumble upon a Nebraska farm town



that has been taken over by sinister young worshippers of "He Who Walks Behind the Rows" is a cheesy movie, but it spawned no fewer than eight sequels as well as a TV remake, and has become a minor cult film. Peter Horton and Linda Hamilton star as unlucky outsiders Burt and Vicky, who discover that almost all of the adults in Gatlin have been eliminated by the local children, led by Isaac (John Franklin), a maniacally charismatic 12-year-old who is in turn kept in line by his ruthless enforcer Malachai (Courtney Gains). Crusty horror veteran R.G. Armstrong costars as a gas station attendant left alive because he supplies Isaac with fuel. *Children of the Corn* is by no means a good film, but this Arrow release is by far the best edition yet, with extras including two audio commentary tracks (one with Kiersch, co-producer Terrence Kirby, and stars Franklin and Gains; the other by journalists Justin Beahm and John Sullivan), interviews, behind-the-scenes featurettes, a storyboard gallery, and the first screen adaptation of King's story—a 1983 short titled *Disciples of the Crow*. Optional. (F. Swietek)

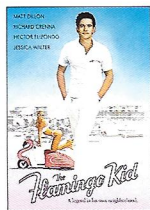


### The Flamingo Kid

★★★★1/2

Kino Lorber, 100 min., PG-13, DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95

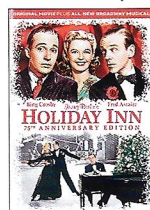
Filmmaker Garry Marshall's class-conscious 1984 coming-of-age dramedy boasts pitch-perfect acting and writing. Set in 1963, the story centers on Brooklyn teen Jeffrey (Matt Dillon), who enjoys a sweet summer romance with Carla (Janet Jones), who hails from an affluent Long Island family. Jeffrey is equally smitten with the flashy poolside lifestyle of Carla's slick car-salesman father (Richard Crenna)—so different from his own blue-collar roots and plumber dad (Hector Elizondo). Jones is an alluring screen goddess, but the viewer's interest eventually shifts to the moral question of which father-figure Jeffrey will select as his role model. Despite critical praise, *The Flamingo Kid* enjoyed only mild audience success (especially compared to Marshall's hit *Pretty Woman*), but it gained popularity later in HBO reruns. Extras include audio commentary by actor/filmmaker Pat Healy and his brother, film curator Jim Healy, who share stories about Marshall. Highly recommended. (C. Cassidy)



### Holiday Inn

★★★★1/2  
Universal, 101 min., not rated, DVD: \$14.99, Blu-ray: \$19.99

Jim Hardy (Bing Crosby) and Ted Hanover (Fred Astaire) are showbiz chums about to retire in this beloved 1942 holiday musical

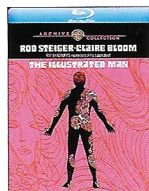


comedy directed by Mark Sandrich. Hardy's retirement winds up being short lived, due to dwindling finances, so he decides to convert his farm house into a theater/inn that is only open on holidays. This successful venture gives him considerable time to loaf, and provides an excuse for enough Irving Berlin tunes to fill three ordinary musicals (as well as a number of dazzling Astaire routines). Marjorie Reynolds and Virginia Dale costar as the romantic interests in this multi-Oscar-nominated film that took home a statue for the song "White Christmas" (the film was partially remade in 1954 as *White Christmas*). Presented in a 75th anniversary edition, the excellent extras include the option to watch the film in its original black-and-white or color, audio commentary by film historian Ken Barnes, a profile of Crosby and Astaire, behind-the-scenes featurettes, and a separate disc featuring a full-length 2016 Broadway adaptation of *Holiday Inn*. Highly recommended. (R. Pitman)

### The Illustrated Man

Warner, 103 min., PG, Blu-ray: \$21.99

Ray Bradbury's 1951 short story collection *The Illustrated Man* is built around the tale of a man whose tattoos come to life at night. This 1969 anthology film adapts three of the stories, expands the central character's narrative, and connects them all through casting. Rod Steiger stars as the surly circus worker who wanders Depression-era America with his dog, Claire Bloom is the artist who covers his body in "skin illustrations" (as he calls them), and Robert Drivas is the young drifter to whom he tells his stories. The three actors also play the major characters in "The Veldt," which is about a virtual reality playground that brings out the feral side of the children of a worried married couple; "The Long Rain," centering on interstellar travelers shipwrecked on an alien planet with constant rain; and "The Last Night of the World," a meditative piece about apocalyptic premonitions. The dusty landscapes of 1930s rural America contrast with the austere home of white surfaces in "The Veldt" (a very '60s idea of the future), the dense alien foliage of the claustrophobic "Rain" (the jungle is entirely fabricated in the studio), and the white tents and architecture out of ancient Greece in "Last Night." Steiger's performance is mannered and intense but the film fails to capture the horror inherent in the stories, making it yet another cinematic effort that misses the dark wonder of Bradbury's writing. Extras include an archival featurette. Optional. (S. Axmaker)



### Innocent Blood

Warner, 115 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$21.99

After gaining international attention as the lead in the sexy 1990 French action thriller *La*

*Femme Nikita*, actress Anne Parillaud traveled stateside to star as the elegant vampire Marie in John Landis's mix of horror movie, mob war drama, and romantic twist on the buddy action thriller. Marie has two rules: never play with your food (in other words, no romantic entanglements) and always make sure your meal is finished (preferably by severing the head). She uses a mob war as the perfect cover for her latest feed but inadvertently leaves mob boss Sallie "The Shark" Macelli (Robert Loggia) unfinished and he rises from the dead with a sudden surge of strength and a craving for human blood. Anthony LaPaglia costars as Joe Gennaro, an undercover cop embedded in the mob whose identity is blown. Joe finds himself teaming up with Marie to put an end to Sallie's grand plan to make his made men into undead warriors. Landis has always been a fan of combining black humor and bloody spectacle; *Innocent Blood* isn't quite successful (Parillaud's voice-over is more flippant than witty) but it is often entertaining, and Landis piles on the Italian mob clichés (every thug listens to Sinatra) and has fun with Joe's frustrated attempts to arrest Marie for crimes that defy all human logic (he also casts Don Rickles as the mob's apoplectic lawyer). It's fun and sexy but never reaches the imaginative heights of Landis's horror-comedy *An American Werewolf in London*. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)



### Into the Night

Shout! Factory, 115 min., R, Blu-ray: \$27.99

John Landis's 1985 romantic thriller was not a hit initially, but it is one of the best "neon noir" urban crime movies of its era. Jeff Goldblum (in his first starring role) downplays his often eccentric personality to portray suburban husband Ed Okin, a corporate engineer who sleepwalks through his days and can't sleep at night. Taking a midnight drive to shake it off, he's suddenly drafted as a getaway driver for a former model and jilted mistress named Diana (Michelle Pfeiffer), who is on the run from Persian gangsters willing to kill to retrieve an object that she smuggled in Los Angeles. It's a classic film noir situation—middle-class innocent jolted out of his protected but dull existence and plunged into a nightmarish odyssey through the urban underworld—with a charge of romance. Landis weaves in elements of black comedy and offbeat humor, some delivered by the director himself through his slapstick antics as a mute gangster, but he never ridicules the dangerous situation of the protagonists, and Goldblum is both likable and compelling as the Everyman who discovers his inner hero over the course of a long night. Set to an

