

## DIGITAL DEBUTS

### ARROW VIDEO

(\$29.95 Blu-ray) 7/19

#### THE LOVELESS (1981) ♂♂♂1/2

D: Kathryn Bigelow, Monty Montgomery.  
Willem Dafoe, Robert Gordon, Marin Kanter, J. Don Ferguson, Tina L'Hotsky. 82 mins.

A scaled-down post-modern **The Wild One** with a rockabilly beat (much of it provided by musician costar Gordon), **The Loveless**—initially titled **U.S. Highway 17**, then the more generic but accurate **Breakdown**—marked the moody feature-film debut (with co-director/producer Montgomery) of future cinematic heavyweight Bigelow, who went on to helm the redneck vampire classic **Near Dark** (VS #45) and the Oscar-netting **The Hurt Locker** (VS #74), among many other memorable movies. 25-year-old Dafoe scored his first major role as Vance, nominal leader of a squad of perennially preening bikers who stall out in a small Southern town on their way to Daytona, circa 1958. The town, set designed with almost fetishistic precision, from its sleek sports cars to sweaty dive bars, soon draws the gang into its intrigues as Vance, mostly out of boredom, becomes involved with fast-driving teen wild girl Telena (Kanter) and her sleazy, abusive local big-shot dad Tarver (Ferguson) while trying to keep hotheaded cohort Davis (Gordon) in line. The dual directors and cinematographer Doyle Smith capture the location's dangerous languor with admirable fidelity, at times creating an ambience that verges on virtual reality while maintaining an almost anthropological emotional distance. Once the action does heat up, it explodes with a random inevitability that packs a devastating gut-punch. Though completed in 1981 (as an NYU film thesis, no less), **The Loveless** didn't see release until 1983. (We recall a push to sell it as a midnight movie when it briefly played in that time slot at Greenwich Village's Waverly Theater.) While Dafoe was the sole thesp to enjoy a major film career, the entire cast pulls its thespic weight here, with Kanter and erstwhile downtown diva Tina L'Hotsky as Debbie, the lone girl in the cycle gang, especially impressing. Arrow Video's pristine print further polishes the filmmakers' vision, while the disc boasts a wealth of compelling extras, highlighted by **No Man's Friend Today: Making The Loveless**, featuring new video interviews with actors Dafoe, Kanter, Gordon, Phillip Kimbrough and Lawrence Matarese. Other featurettes include **U.S. 17: Shooting The Loveless**, and **Chrome and Hot Leather: The Look of The Loveless**, with set designer Lilly Kilvert. Also onboard are a new audio commentary with Montgomery, moderated by Elijah Drenner, an audio interview with musician Eddy Dixon, an

extensive image gallery, including on-set photographs, storyboards and original production documentation, theatrical trailer and more. Kudos to Arrow for rescuing this reel rarity.

### KINO LORBER FILMS

(\$29.95 Blu-ray each) 11/19

#### IT ALWAYS RAINS ON SUNDAY (1947)

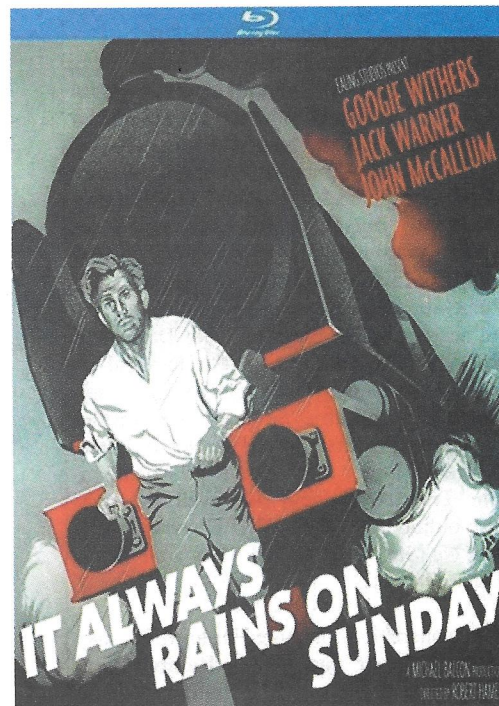
B&W ♂♂♂1/2

D: Robert Hamer. Googie Withers, Jack Warner, John McCallum, Edward Chapman, Susan Shaw, Patricia Plunkett. 92 mins.

Working from Arthur La Bern's novel, director Hamer, late of the influential fright anthology **Dead of Night** and two years shy of his black comedy triumph **Kind Hearts and Coronets**, fashions a brilliant day-in-the-life mosaic featuring a large, colorful cast of postwar East Enders. At the center of the activity is Rose (**Dead of Night** alum Withers), a bright, attractive woman who's settled for a life of secure drudgery as the wife of decent but dull older bloke George (Chapman) and stepmother to his grown daughters, daring Vi (Shaw) and the more sedate Doris (Plunkett). Rose's rather dreary, chore-driven and, as per the title, sporadically damp day is dramatically interrupted by the unexpected appearance of former flame and current fugitive Tommy Swann (McCallum), target of an intensive manhunt led locally by Sergeant Fothergill (Warner). While Rose reluctantly hides Tommy, the action fans out to depict a wide cross-section of characters, from a trio of petty crooks looking in vain to unload a cache of stolen roller skates (!) to a pair of shady entrepreneur brothers to restless kids searching for ways to break the boredom, among many more. Hamer and ace cinematographer Douglas (**Raiders of the Lost Ark**) Slocombe lead us on an intimate tour of the nabe's noisy pubs and busy penny arcades (where an array of vintage coin-op machines are on display), smoky dance clubs, people-choked street bazaars, and even an outdoor boxing match (fixed, natch). The camera keeps returning to our core story—a tense, conflicted Rose's efforts to save a desperate Tommy, who hopes to make it to a nearby ship and safe passage to Capetown before his luck runs out. The pic culminates in an intricately staged chase through a nocturnal railroad yard, a dynamic exercise in editing wizardry. Hamer and crew's riveting blend of kitchen-sink drama and gripping crime tale deserves to be far better known, a goal that Kino's sharp Blu-ray should go a long way in achieving. Extras include a brace of fascinating featurettes, **Coming in from the Rain: Revisiting It Always Rains on Sunday** and **Locations**, along with an audio commentary by film historian Imogen Sara Smith, and theatrical trailer.

#### MADIGAN (1968) ♂♂♂

D: Don Siegel. Richard Widmark, Henry Fonda, Inger Stevens, Harry Guardino, James Whitmore, Susan Clark, Don Stroud. 101 mins.



Of the two Don Siegel-directed policiers costarring Susan Clark and Don Stroud and centering on lawmen pursuing a fugitive in NYC that we saw on 42<sup>nd</sup> St. during their initial 1968 runs, the Clint Eastwood showcase **Coogan's Bluff**, released in March of that year, remains our fave. Runner-up **Madigan**, co-scripted by longtime blacklist victim Abraham (**Force of Evil**) Polonsky and issued that October, places a fairly distant second but still boasts ample virtues of its own, chief among them Widmark's earnest portrayal of the eponymous NYPD detective. When petty criminal turned murder suspect Benny Benesch (Steve Ihnat) gets the drop on Madigan and partner Rocco Bonaro (Guardino), relieving them of their guns before escaping, Commissioner Anthony X. Russell (Fonda) puts the shamed pair on 24/7 duty to apprehend the felon. While the two work through street contacts like pimp/informer Hughie (Stroud, who'd taken the fugitive role in **Coogan's Bluff**), the script injects unnecessary soap opera elements, like Russell's clandestine affair with a married woman (Clark, Clint's love interest in **Coogan's Bluff**) and Madigan's perennial friction with his dissatisfied spouse (Stevens). The action reheats in the film's later reels as the cops draw closer to their sociopathic prey. Visually, **Madigan**, photographed by camera king Russell (**Touch of Evil**) Metty, reps an unusually awkward mix of legit Fun City exteriors and obvious sanitized studio streets that detracts from the intended realism. While **Madigan** doesn't rate among Siegel's best, it's a slick effort that crime-film fans won't want to miss. Look for the late Michael Dunn as bookie Midget Castiglione. Extras on Kino's Blu-ray include a commentary track by Howard S. Berger, Steve Mitchell and Nathaniel Thompson. Kino also intros the superior 1973 Siegel caper **Charley Varrick**, starring Walter Matthau. ♂

—The Phantom