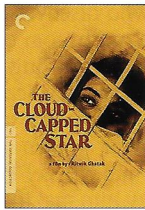
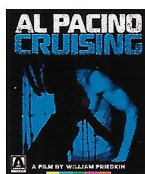


in poverty on the outskirts of Calcutta. The optimistic and generous Neeta (Supriya Choudhury) becomes the primary breadwinner of the family while her father, a retired schoolteacher turned tutor, grows increasingly fragile, and her self-absorbed siblings pursue their own interests. As she sacrifices her happiness to care for a family that takes her for granted, Neeta's health suffers and her spirit is broken. Ghatak was a contemporary of Satyajit Ray and *The Cloud-Capped Star* is closer to Ray's social realist dramas than the popular musicals that dominated India's film culture, but Ghatak has a very different approach. Ghatak takes on poverty, the plight of the displaced (never directly addressed but alluded to), and women in a culture that neglects their aspirations, all within a melodramatic story that is full of expressionist flourishes, from poetic imagery to the sound of lashes on the soundtrack as Neeta sees her dreams crushed. The film opens on sunny images of breathless beauty and introduces Neeta with a beatific smile and idealistic spirit, but as the family exploits and betrays her, the imagery becomes increasingly dark, and Choudhury's brilliant smile and sparkling eyes become shrouded in exhaustion and disillusionment. A powerful, beautiful, neglected classic of world cinema, the film is presented in a new restoration, with extras including a conversation between filmmakers Saeed Akhtar Mirza and Kumar Shahani on the film's legacy, a stills gallery, and an essay by film scholar Ira Bhaskar. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)



### Cruising ★★1/2

Arrow, 102 min., R, Blu-ray: \$39.99



William Friedkin's 1980 thriller set in the gay subculture of New York leather bars and S&M clubs was notorious in its day for brutal violence and an extreme portrait of urban gay life. Al Pacino stars as Steve Burns, a patrolman recruited to go undercover by Capt. Edelson (Paul Sorvino) to try to catch a serial killer targeting gay men. Burns is straight and has a girlfriend (Karen Allen) but fits the victim profile and he commits himself fully to the assignment, creating a new identity and cruising the most extreme underground sex bars for information. Friedkin moves between scenes of murder mystery investigation and the perverse spectacle of the leather trade at its most extreme. The club scenes are shot as if in a dark, shadowy dungeon and a walk through Central Park at night becomes a public meat market of gay hook-ups and anonymous quickies. Pacino's character observes it all with a blank expression that makes his involvement ambiguous: is he fascinated, repulsed, attracted, or indifferent

to the spectacle he sees? And the film leaves that question unanswered. Based on Gerald Walker's 1970 novel, which was inspired by real-life murders, *Cruising* quickly became infamous, sparking protests by the New York gay community over the film's distorted portrait of gay life. Seen with hindsight, this is an interesting if not necessarily satisfying film, part sideshow and part art film dive into a subculture, with hints of suppressed homosexual feelings awakened in the hero. Presented with a new 4K restoration, extras include audio commentary by Friedkin and critic and broadcaster Mark Kermode, an archival commentary by Friedkin, and archival featurettes. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

### The Fate of Lee Khan

★★★★

Film Movement, 106 min., in Mandarin w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99



After the financial failure of *A Touch of Zen* (1971), an epic mix of martial-arts action and philosophical drama now considered to be the director's masterpiece, filmmaker King Hu's 1973 action drama *The Fate of Lee Khan* returns to the mode of his earlier hit *Dragon Gate Inn* (1967), with government officials, soldiers, spies, and members of the resistance converging on a remote inn and gambling house in the desert. Tien Feng stars as Lee Khan, the Mongol warlord who arrives at the inn to receive a stolen battle map, and martial-arts movie icon Angela Mao plays one of the savvy serving girls recruited by resistance leader Wan Jen-mi (Chinese film superstar Li Li-Hua). Plenty of action and comedy ensue as one stranger after another enters the inn's dining hall, and the women—who all have criminal pasts—artfully fend off inappropriate advances as they try to sort out the players. Most of the film is set in the vast dining room and Hu keeps it moving forward with clever choreography and dynamic cutting, until the story spills out into the desert plains for the final battle between Khan's forces and the resistance. This is not Hu's greatest film but it is masterfully directed and great fun, with clever action scenes (characters are constantly flying through the air thanks to hidden trampolines and careful editing) and colorful characters whose hidden talents are revealed as they collide. Newly restored, extras include a discussion of the film, and an essay by film scholar Stephen Teo. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

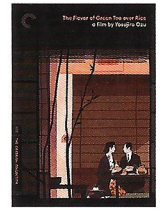
### The Flavor of Green Tea Over Rice

★★★★

Criterion, 116 min., in Japanese w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99

One of the most sublime films from Yasujiro Ozu, a master of quiet domestic dra-

mas and comedies, the 1952 drama *The Flavor of Green Tea Over Rice* serves up a portrait of a marriage on the verge of falling apart. Headstrong wife Taeko (Michiyo Kogure) routinely lies to her husband Mokichi (Shin Saburi), an easygoing, unexciting executive, and makes fun of him while out with her friends. When Taeko's 22-year-old niece Setsuko (Keiko Tsushima) refuses to enter into a marriage arranged by her parents, she points to her aunt's stifled, unhappy situation as evidence for her decision. Ozu has been called the "most Japanese" of Japanese directors for his measured style and observation of distinctly Japanese routines and domestic spaces. This film offers a glimpse of a culture in transition after World War II, with a mix of Japanese and Western conventions (from business suits to baseball games) within a story of a young woman rebelling against tradition. But it also takes a subtle, sublime turn in the final act, an understated scene between Mokichi and Taeko sharing a simple late meal. Criterion presents the film's home video debut in a new 4K restoration, with extras including Ozu's 1937 film *What Did the Lady Forget?*, a video essay by film scholar David Bordwell, the new documentary *Ozu & Noda* on the director's longtime collaboration with screenwriter Kogo Noda, and a booklet with an essay by scholar Junji Yoshida. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



### Footlight Parade ★★1/2

Warner, 103 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$21.99



Generally prized as one of the best movie musicals of the 20th century, filmmaker Lloyd Bacon's *Footlight Parade* (1933) was honored and preserved by the Library of Congress in 1992. But the film remains an awkward marriage of comic charm and garish excess, with a couple of brief racist gags that are hard to overlook. This movie about showbiz is set in the early days of "talking pictures," a technological disruption that has undercut the nominal success of would-be impresario Chester Kent (James Cagney), whose stage musicals can't compete with the new advancements on the Silver Screen. In a flash of inspiration, Chester realizes there's money to be made in producing short stage shows (called "prologues") to precede movies in theaters, and he partners with two rats who chisel him out of profits while his attention is totally focused on conceiving and creating an endless stream of content. Dick Powell is charming as a rising singer who earns Chester's faith, while Ruby Keeler is delightful as a plain-Jane secretary who suddenly blossoms into a great hooper and songbird. Joan Blondell is wonderful as Nan, Chester's long-suffering secretary who guides