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Snyder gets to embellish

Not intended for movie theaters, **Zack Snyder's Justice League**, released as a 4K UltraHD Blu-ray by WB DC Studio Distribution Services (UPC#883929774739, \$50), is presented in full screen format, with an aspect ratio of about 1.33:1, and runs 242 minutes. The film is so long that it is spread to two platters, like a miniseries, and in fact has six numbered chapter demarcations, with titles. Since the original 2017 theatrical film (Aug 18), which was letterboxed at 1.85:1, ran half that length at 120 minutes, Snyder's 2021 reworked presentation has a good number of improvements. The original film was a relief simply because it wasn't a bad movie, since its predecessor, **Batman vs. Superman**, which Snyder had also directed, was a clear misfire with very few redeemable embers. Snyder is credited with directing the first **Justice League** as well, but had to step away and allow Josh Whedon to complete the film for him. Since that alteration was widely publicized and with the nature of the marketplace having changed, it was seen as a decent bet to let Snyder build upon what he had started and do **Justice League** not necessarily as he had originally intended, but to complete it without the constraints of a running time imposed by a theatrical marketplace.

The 2017 **Justice League** was passable entertainment. So many comic book movies have the same plot—super duper villains are going to destroy the world and after hardships and pain, the hero or heroes manage to scrape together enough power to save the day—that the original film and its new iteration do not break new ground in that regard. It is well tread territory, and that is a drawback to the film only because so much effort has gone into it, one wishes that it kept the same characters but was about something else. The problem remains, however, that for comic book films to justify their spectacle, they have to up the ante to the point where it is total destruction of the Earth, Mankind and the super heroes themselves, or it doesn't seem worth the expense.

That said, everything else about the original movie was quite enjoyable. The performances were lively, the special effects were engaging, there was a decent pace to the action scenes and an equally decent distribution of them. In that the film managed to introduce three new super heroes in addition to using three that had already been introduced in previous movies, its best accomplishment was to spread out the excitement among all six players, giving each a chance to thrill the viewer in a unique way. And that is what Snyder builds upon in his embellished version. We have read that the program is 'boring' or 'slow paced,' but that is emphatically not true. It just simply does not have the pace of a theatrical film, and given its length, it shouldn't, because it would come across as superficial if it did. Instead, each character gets a lot more time to do his or her thing. Yes, their backgrounds are enhanced and you learn more about their inner conflicts, but you also just get to spend way more time with each one. As a consequence, you get to know their personalities, their quirks and their super powers better than you did in the rush of the feature. Ben Affleck, Henry Cavill, Gail Gadot, Ezra Miller, Jason Momoa and Ray Fisher star, with Ciarán Hinds as the primary villain and Jeremy Irons scoring a decent amount of screen time as the assistant of Affleck's character. Amy Adams is also on hand for some key sequences. The show has a great deal of both science fiction and fantasy, and because it is longer, you get to spend more time savoring both the characters and the world they inhabit.

You could say that **Avengers Infinity War** and **Avengers Endgame** managed to do the same thing (with pretty much the same plot) on a much more spectacular and successful basis while sustaining a theatrical format, and you wouldn't be wrong. Even though **Zack Snyder's Justice League** was less ambitious, it does succeed in improving what was already a successful entertainment, and offering a pathway to greater successes in the future. To that end, the show's last chapter, which runs a healthy 20 minutes

of almost entirely new material, consists of a series of increasingly crazy epilogs, which offer clues to story quirks during the bulk of the tale that are otherwise left unexplained (including the possibility that the viewer has been simultaneously watching two slightly different time lines move forward mostly but not completely in tandem), blueprinting the possibility of sequels that will probably never be seen, and allowing Snyder to dwell in the black-hearted pessimism he so clearly enjoys without having to pay for it in the real world.

The use of the squared image does not help the program in any sort of appreciable way. If all TV shows came like that, then it might be justifiable, but they don't anymore, and so it just seems confining, making the action feel a little smaller and losing the opportunity to showcase some heroic widescreen poses. Nevertheless, the image detail is sharp and the special effects are still dazzling. In comparison to the earlier feature, there is more picture information on the top and bottom of the image and nothing lost from the sides (at times, there appears to be a bit more on the sides on the new version, as well). The original **Justice League** did not stand out as a 4K showcase, and there are plenty of other movies that benefit more from 4K than the **Zack Snyder's Justice League** picture does, particularly because of the squared image. The four-platter release also presents the program on two standard Blu-ray platters, which are also in full screen format, and the detail on the 4K presentation is more satisfying in the busier moments. Overall, the colors are also more subdued than on the earlier release, in keeping with Snyder's preferred design tastes, but the quality of the image itself is so solid that the alternate shadings are fully satisfying. The only time you might prefer one version over the other is when you put the two up next to each other. Otherwise, it looks great.

The Dolby Atmos sound is not exceptional, at least until you get to Allison Crowe's stunning rendition of Leonard Cohen's *Hallelujah* on the end credit scroll, but it does have more surround coverage and impact than the Dolby Atmos sound on the BD, just as it did on the original version. The audio mix is never disappointing, but it is not particularly invigorating, either. Both the 4K presentation and the standard BD have audio tracks that describe the action ("Bruce suddenly whirls around and flings a Bat-a-rang at Barry."), French, two Spanish, Italian, Czech and Polish audio tracks, and fourteen subtitle tracks, including English.

Additionally, the standard BD has a Portuguese audio track, Portuguese subtitling, a Slovenian audio track and a second Polish track that has one voice translating the English dialog, superimposed over that dialog, while the 4K presentation has a German audio track and a German description of the action, along with an additional 4 subtitle tracks. Also featured on both presentations is a 25-minute promotional documentary with substantial footage of Snyder talking about his approach to the show.

The original **Justice League** may have been a middling hit, but it made Momoa a big star, enough to justify an elaborate big-budget 2018 spin-off based upon his character, **Aquaman**, which is available on a two-platter Blu-ray from WB Entertainment (UPC#883929624324, \$29). Directed by James Wan, the film begins auspiciously, opening on a lighthouse keeper in the midst of a heavy wind, trying to tie down a storm shutter, but he's trying to tie it in an open position rather than closed over the window it should be protecting. From there, however, the movie most assuredly soars. It is an origin story that avoids the template feeling so many comic book films are burdened with, shifting with humor, romance and energy from incidental action scenes, to sequences that feel like they are out of a James Bond movie, on steroids, and then to a grand spectacle of a climax that never comes across as labored or redundant. If that is not enough, there are also chilling images of Lovecraftian horror that are equally accomplished and thrilling.

Snyder (Continued)

The special effects are truly amazing. To hold in one's mind the memory of perusing an Aquaman comic book as a child and then seeing that fantasy realized with such verisimilitude on the big screen is almost science fiction in its own right. Momoa's trick is to not take it all that seriously while at the same time embracing the genuine dramatic conflicts that arise. Because the world's oceans have such a delicate and threatened ecology, the 143-minute film can include heartening environmental messages on the fly without interrupting its furious narrative conflicts. Momoa's character has a human father and a mother who is royalty and was facing a forced marriage in the technologically advanced underwater civilization she abandoned. His adult character must wrest the throne from his half-brother to prevent an attack on the unsuspecting human world. Along with everything else, the film is a grand adventure, and as it leaps about the planet for its locations, whether the staging of the action is on land or underwater, the fights, chases and battles are as spellbinding as they are invigorating.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1. The Blu-ray is packaged with a DVD that is also available separately (UPC#8839-29695744, \$15). The color transfer on the BD looks terrific and it is usually impossible to differentiate between the live action components and the computer graphic effects. It is all gloriously colorful, thus making the BD a very worthwhile improvement over the softer and weaker DVD. The Dolby Atmos sound on the BD is also highly satisfying, with a strong dimensionality and all sorts of revved up noises. The DVD's 5.1-channel Dolby Digital track seems all wet in comparison. Both versions have an audio track that describes the action ("Aquaman emerges, dressed in Atlan's gold scale armor, with green gloves and matching boots that feature fin-like flourishes. He wields the golden trident."), alternate French and Spanish audio tracks, and optional English, French and Spanish subtitles. In addition, the BD has a Portuguese audio track and subtitles, along with 96 minutes of good production featurettes that convey an appreciable sense of how the film was staged, however much its scope remains exceptionally impressive. The DVD has just one of the featurettes, running 8 minutes, although it, too, provides a nice overview of what the filmmakers were tackling.

Murder in your home town

The 2021 HBO series, Mare of Easttown, released by HBO Home Box Office and Studio Distribution Services (UPC#883929728817, \$25), opens with a montage, perfectly in synch with the rhythm of Lele Marchitelli's musical score, of the Pennsylvania town where the program is set. Every image is vividly real, and when the montage is concluded and characters appear, every one of them is vividly real as well. The dialog is what you hear every day—not necessarily the content, but the syntax and the grammar. It is the screenwriter's Holy Grail blend of talking that sounds natural and yet builds purposely to generate character and narrative. Emmy winner Kate Winslet is a burnt out police detective, a couple of decades after being the star basketball player in a gender-reversed Irwin Shaw-like portrait of faded virility. Yes, the series is a crime story, and by the end of the first episode, there is a fresh murder, but the show had us enraptured long before that. It had us with its atmosphere, without the intrusion of the mystery component, although perhaps it was because we knew something like that would eventually arise that we were ecstatic to watch the drama of the heroine's messy life unfold, and not turned off by the idea that it could just as easily be taking place in a house next to our own. In fact, that was what blew us away, of all the amazingly perfect things in the show's opening. The house where Winslet's character lives is a split-level ranch. If it's not the most common style of suburban house in America, it is surely one of the top three, especially in Pennsylvania, and yet we've never, ever seen it in a dramatic film or television show before. The layout is so familiar—the entranceway that enters to stairs at a midpoint and goes directly up to a kitchen entrance beyond a railing and hallway, with the open living room and dining room on the right and the hallway to the bedrooms and bathroom on the left, with more rooms down the other half of the stairs—that you know exactly where everything is as soon as she comes through the door. The recognition is thrilling, quickening the pulse as much as if the show had come up with some sort of spine-tingling action stunt, but unlike such stunts, the excitement is not ephemeral. Instead, it just builds and builds as the story is threaded through one everyday commonality after another.

And here is Winslet, who once had the privilege of being one of the most glamorous characters the movies ever created, detective or not, looking as grungy as your own neighbor after a bad night. Usually, the magic of movies is that it transports us away from the reminders of our own dreary existences, but every once in a while there is that special magic that manages to come full circle and transport you into someone else's dreary existence, which looks and smells exactly like your own, but creates a barrier that lets you dwell in its fascinations without being forced to draw the connections to your own realities. That is what Winslet is doing there. Her performance is impeccable, but she's Kate Winslet, so it's okay to take what is going on as fancy HBO entertainment and not think that you have by accident just opened your window shade instead of turning on your TV.

From there, the program proceeds with its murder mystery, through seven episodes on two platters, running a total of 418 minutes. Every scene is wonderful, and is rich in modern Americana. The town is small enough that pretty much everyone knows everyone (and is related to everyone through

blood or marriage), so that every turn in the plot has a domino effect as it ripples through the local social fabric. The mystery is terrific, with multiple pathways of investigations, multiple corpses, thrills, excitements and several highly rewarding final twists (momentarily, the story appears to be over in the fifth episode, but there are two more to go, and every time it looks like that is the end, there's still more). All of the performances are marvelous. Jean Smart is absolutely hysterical as the mother of Winslet's character, supplying the tale with unexpected and greatly welcomed comedic relief, and Julianne Nicholson also won an Emmy for her impeccable work as the detective's best friend. The one story line that doesn't entirely work has Guy Pearce as a bestselling author and creative writing teacher at a local college who has a romance with the heroine. It reeks of author envy. Couldn't they have made him a plumber or something, instead? But even that shortcoming is not a flaw, just a weaker point in what is otherwise a captivating and masterfully executed drama.

Each platter has a 'Play All' option. The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1 and an accommodation for enhanced 16:9 playback. The image has a softness meant to convey a realistic, documentary feel, but is accurately transferred, while the 5.1-channel Dolby Digital sound has a satisfying dimensionality and reasonably clear details. There are optional English subtitles and 17 minutes of informative promotional featurettes.

Exceptional Alexanderplatz

An African refugee in Germany becomes buddies with a psychopathic drug dealer in the exceptionally engrossing and hallucinatory 183-minute adaptation of the Alfred Döblin novel, Berlin Alexanderplatz, a Kino Lorber Blu-ray (UPC#738329253264, \$30). Written and directed by Burhan Qurbani, the narrative takes the hero, played by Welket Bugué, through a series of successes and tragedies, while the drug dealer, played by Albrecht Schuch, swings between affection and extreme jealousy depending upon the amount of control he has over the hero's fate. When the hero hooks up with a prostitute who falls for his essential gentleness and kindness, that completely throws Schuch's character over the edge.

Despite being set in modern times, the plot is reasonably faithful to the Twenties novel, and that provides enough of a melodramatic anchor to allow Qurbani great latitude in his stylistic choices. The result is truly hypnotic and exhilarating, with HBO-style sex, feverish action and captivating performances. Its depiction of the underbelly of modern Germany is instinctively accurate on a spiritual level. If Döblin foresaw the rise of fascism in the crushing of romance, Qurbani grasps at the hope that, amid dislocation, crime and betrayal, even the greatest destruction still leaves pieces which can be reformed if one is ready to move on.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.4:1. Slick and glossy, every shot is mesmerizing, and every color is precise. The DTS sound has a really incredible surround mix, which throws noises farther afield than we can ever recall hearing on another program. And when the beat picks up, it runs through your spine. A good portion of the 2020 film is actually in English, since that is the common language the characters from different backgrounds use to communicate with one another. Unfortunately, the film's optional English subtitles don't just cover the German, they cover all of the English, as well, which can be needlessly distracting at times. Along with a trailer, there is a nice 2-minute 'introduction' to the film by Qurbani. "We made this movie for cinema and we worked on every aspect of the film to be cinematic—the images and cinematography, of course, but you might also find that the music and the sound design have been created in a way that unfolds quite nicely in this space, cinema."

Like children posing

Stanley Donen's Charade was a perfect movie, but that doesn't happen too often. His 1966 attempt to strike gold a second time, enthusiastically urged on by Universal, of course, Arabesque, tries really, really hard to make the magic work again, but love left the masquerade. To be sure, Sixties enthusiasts will not want to miss the gorgeous Universal Kino Lorber Incorporated KL Studio Classics Blu-ray (UPC#738329255015, \$30), which not only has a terrific color transfer, with accurate hues and rich flesh tones, but looks exceptionally crisp, even in comparison to other Blu-rays. At every turn where the plot—or the is-it-a-comedy-or-is-it-a-drama performances, or Henry Mancini's lackluster musical score, or Donen's wrongheaded attempts to look psychedelic—brought us down, we had only to shift our attention from the story to the details of the image and our spirits picked up again, because the BD's incredibly sharp edges and minute color detail impeccably resurrect the past.

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Gregory Peck is an antiquities professor who is called upon to translate a note written in hieroglyphics. In short order, people are trying to kill him and get the note from him. Sophia Loren has the Cary Grant role, constantly lying to Peck's character about who she is and what she wants. That Peck is intended to be as vulnerable as Audrey Hepburn is just one of the movie's many miscues. Alan Badel is the villain, but not only is his performance unnecessarily stiff and single toned (he seems to be doing a Peter Sellers imitation, and never takes off his sunglasses), but the movie lacks the marvelous rogue's gallery of future Oscar-winning stars in the villain roles that makes **Charade** even more impressive today than it was at its time (when Walter Matthau became lovable as a movie star, that film's dynamic became far more complex). Anyway, back to **Arabesque**. There are a few well-paced action scenes (basically, straight out of **North by Northwest**) and violent interludes, plenty of ritzy locations and nice production designs, and Loren is not only appealing, but has closets of great outfits to match. But running 105 minutes, the plot defies logic. Apparently, the bad guys are trying to retrieve information about their own plan to assassinate a prime minister that other bad guys have stolen, or something; they also kidnap somebody who is supposed to be dead instead of just killing him for real—your mind goes as loopy trying to figure it out as Peck's head does after the bad guys drug him. It is only the finite nature of cinema that saves the film, because, darn it, you can only watch **Charade** so many times and a semi-viable substitute such as this, which comes from the same artists and the same era, is much, much better than nothing at all.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1. The monophonic sound is fine and there are optional English subtitles, along with a terrific 10-minute promotional featurette from 1966 profiling Mancini, a 3-minute montage of ad artwork and posters (accompanied by Mancini's score), six TV commercials, and two trailers.

Sixties movies enthusiasts Howard S. Berger, Steve Mitchell and Nathaniel Thompson provide one of their reliably engaging commentary tracks, essentially saying that the movie is not **Charade**, it is **Arabesque** and should be appreciated as such, and because the era and the artists were so wonderful, the movie's flaws don't matter at all. "To me, this is a gift. I don't care if it makes sense or no sense. It is making sense, and to me, the sheer brutality of this was so inviting to me, and that's what I thought was interesting. It says a lot about how Donen communicates to me, as a younger viewer—and I'm assuming others, as well, I can't be the only one—that somehow the violence was so perverse and stylish and just gleefully gorgeous and bizarre at the same time, you can't help but embrace it. It's exciting to watch."

They go over Donen's career in detail, examine the unsung, groundbreaking nature of his artistry, and point out that his films are a great deal darker than their marketing lets on. "He really helped, if not define, for sure, he certainly legitimized this sort of ostentatious explosion of 'mod,' and this is really aggressive, even for movies that were naturally 'mod.'" "It's interesting because a lot of those quote mod movies, that was radical thinking for the period. They were going against the norms. And what I like about Donen's British period, he was going against his own norms, which was he was a studio director. This is very evolutionary stuff."

Klutzy kidnapers

Sometimes we want to get a hold of a program just so we can listen to the commentary track, and that is what happened with **The Night of the Following Day**, a 1969 Universal feature released on Blu-ray by Universal and Kino Lorber Incorporated as a *KL Studio Classics* title (UPC#73832925-2977, \$30). Directed by Hubert Cornfield, we reviewed Universal's original DVD release in Jul 04, and we really didn't need to see the movie again, although we were happy to discover that it improves significantly the more times you watch it because you are ready for its quirky turns and lethargic momentum. Based upon a novel by Lionel White, Pamela Franklin is the daughter of a wealthy financier who is kidnapped by a phony chauffeur played by Marlon Brando, who picks her up from a French airport and abducts her as soon as she gets into the limo. Richard Boone, Jess Hahn and Rita Moreno are his accomplices. The film was subject to a number of production problems, not the least of which was Brando's apathy about making it and his irritation with Cornfield's direction. While the initial kidnapping plot is smartly executed, the villains are just too greedy and stupid to see it through and everything falls apart. The performances are terrific, especially if one measures the quality of a performance not just by acting skills but by the combination of those skills with film star iconography, and if the 93-minute movie seems to lose its way at the same time the characters turn on one another, once you are prepared for the self destruction, it is much easier to accept—even, as suggested by the title, the movie's oddball, elliptical **Vanishing Point** twist at the end.

But anyway, like we said, what we really looked forward to was the commentary on the Blu-ray from cult film aficionado Tim Lucas, whose previous commentaries have offered a wealth of information and insight, and he did not disappoint. Why would he have chosen this movie, which is at least a little outside of his normal purview? Apparently he had a crush on Franklin as a youngster, and this was enough to fuel an obsession with the feature, which included her first nude scene. Hence, his expertise in the film's background and production history comes not just from his thorough and extensive research but from the added impetus to find out everything he could

about the movie for reasons of his own. When he teasingly mentions late in the talk of a conversation he had in person with Franklin, you may be left to fill in the blanks yourself, but there is enough of an image to set off a whole movie in your head of how such an interview might have played out.

With his usual command of biography and trivia, Lucas goes over the backgrounds of the cast and the crew, and in particular how the vector of each career led to the specific feature at hand (Moreno, who gives the film's best performance, was brought on board by Brando, who had once had a relationship with her and used their roles to work out some apparently unfinished emotional business). He talks about the film's production history, as well, and how Brando and Cornfield became increasingly antagonistic toward one another as the shooting progressed. Lucas also speaks extensively about the original novel and how the film differs from it, and while not actually saying it directly, he rewarded our enthusiasm for his talk by drawing a marvelously clear comparison between the movie's characters and the filmmakers themselves. "White is writing in a very spare style, obviously more intelligent than his characters, but absolutely clued into the psychologies of each one as a delicate situation gains momentum, and then begins to fall apart for reasons owing everything to that volatile cocktail of crooked personalities. Hubert Cornfield, by his own admission, lost control of this film to Brando, who had some underlying contempt for him..."

The color transfer is improved in comparison to the DVD. Flestones are richer and other hues are better defined. The film's finale, although shot day-for-night, is set at the twilight of dawn and while, on the DVD, most if it is just dark, the BD gradually lightens as the sun gets closer to the horizon. The monophonic sound is also clearer and richer, sharpening the voices, bringing out more sound effects and adding detail to Stanley Myers' pleasing jazz score. There are optional English subtitles, a trailer and a 4-minute introduction to the film by Joe Dante.

There is also a second commentary track featuring Cornfield, who recorded his talk using some sort of voice assisting device. His talk is sporadic, with longer and longer gaps as the film proceeds. He speaks a bit about the troubles he had with Brando that Lucas covered more lucidly in his commentary, explains how he came to do the film, praises Moreno's acting skills, and shares a few anecdotes about the shoot. "The day we shot that swish pan from one bank to the other, we got permission, we put up the bunks to set up the camera and then I said, 'Okay, where's the camera?' Believe it or not, the camera crew forgot to bring the camera. We lost hours until we got the camera."

Judo in Hong Kong

A dryly comical and rather eccentric Hong Kong feature about gangsters and judo—yes, judo—**Throw Down**, has been released on Blu-ray by the Criterion Collection (UPC#715515264013, \$40). The 2004 production was directed by Johnnie To, who professes a great love for Akira Kurosawa, although the evidence of that in the film itself is limited. The narrative centers on three characters. A former judo champion played by Louis Koo, who has started drinking heavily and may have other physical problems, enlists the aid of a young, eager judo enthusiast played by Aaron Kwok and an aspiring singer played by Cherrie Ying to steal a cash delivery intended for a gangster in a video game arcade. From that point, there are schemes and fights and comings and goings to see the 95-minute film through to its conclusion. To is very deliberate in letting the viewer figure out what is going on, to the point where he even admits his choices to leave stuff out probably led to the film's boxoffice failure. Viewers who don't mind—the second or third time through, it is easier to follow who is who and what is what—will enjoy the film's wry spirit and amusing twists and turns. At one point the heroes steal cash from a gambling den, which goes flying everywhere as they run down the street, causing both them and the heavies chasing them to stop and try to gather the cash instead continuing the chase. If the film were dour or determinedly nihilistic it would be insufferable, but it is just lighthearted enough to parlay its action and the intrigue surrounding its characters into a viable entertainment. Because it takes work to figure out what is going on, not everyone is going to respond to the film, but it is certainly unique enough to appeal to those looking for something fresh and different.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1. One of the film's strengths is its glossy portrait of Hong Kong's back streets and alleys, and the image transfer delivers it with a slick perfection. The 5.1-channel DTS sound is also terrific, with many marvelous separation effects, a steady dimensionality and some good low range thumps. There are actually some higher, sheerer noises that can make you jump even though they are not connected to a dramatic surprise. The film is in Cantonese with optional English subtitles and comes with a trailer; a good 40-minute interview with To, who talks about what he wanted to achieve and how he approached the production; an 11-minute interview with screenwriter Yau Nai-hoi, who explains what To wanted from him and how he chose what to leave out and what to put in; an 11-minute interview with composer Peter Kam who talks about his process for planning the music and then putting it together ("Johnnie To didn't say anything. Basically, he didn't complain about it, so he likes it."); a reasonably thorough 21-minute breakdown of what the movie is about and its different plot points; a passable 13-minute analysis of the film's themes and To's sensibilities; and an 11-minute promotional featurette with lots of behind-the-scenes footage (they used wires for the balloon scene).

Halloween treats!

Four cheap black-and-white Columbia Pictures horror films from the Fifties have been gathered together in an appealing Arrow Video four-platter set, **Cold War Creatures Four Films from Sam Katzman** (UPC#76-0137688082, \$100). Each film is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1 and has an appealing picture transfer. All four have inherent grain and compromised cinematography, but the image transfers are terrific, with crisp, rich contrasts and no wear. The same is true of the monophonic sound. There are optional English subtitles, and each film is accompanied by a trailer and a nice selection of promotional stills, along with some more elaborate supplements. Katzman was a bargain basement producer, and the individual films have different directors and settings, although the four films would flow wonderfully as a drive-in quadruple feature, or a nice rainy afternoon's indulgence on one's sofa.

In the first film, *Creature with the Atom Brain* from 1955, a mobster seeking revenge hooks up with a German scientist to use radioactivity for the re-animation of corpses, who are then employed by remote control to carry out murders. A sharp witted police doctor played by Richard Denning figures out the scheme readily enough but is pretty much one step behind the villain until the very end. Since bullets do not stop the corpses, there is a fairly busy shootout at the climax, but the 69-minute film is generally lethargic and repetitive. What sets it apart from many horror features of its day, however, is that there are no teenagers. The cop has a wife and a young girl (who is later threatened by one of the monsters), which leads to some choice sequences of what passed in the Fifties for domestic bliss (when the cop has to leave before dinner, the wife waits until he is out of the door before downing his cocktail). Otherwise, the heroes, the villains and the corpses are all middle-aged men in business suits, which is some people's idea of horror to begin with. Directed by Edward L. Cahn (from a script by Curt Siodmak), the film does have some valid emotional content—the hero's partner becomes one of the animated corpses—but is most effective in establishing the collection's atmosphere and setting the stage for the other features.

While it is never made entirely clear, a pair of no good scientists apparently turn an automobile crash victim played by Kim Charney into a werewolf in the 1956 *The Werewolf*, and then somehow let him escape. Directed by Fred F. Sears, the 80-minute film begins with the man in human form, wandering into a bar in a woodsy town with amnesia to ask if anyone recognizes him. When one of the patrons follows him out to mug him, the attack kicks off the werewolf morph and the mugger is killed. Soon, the whole town is looking for him, while a doctor and his pretty daughter, after meeting the man when he changes back again, urge the local sheriff to be humane. Meanwhile, the scientists sneak into town to get their experiment back, and the man's wife and young child also arrive in an attempt to track down the missing man of the house. The werewolf effects utilize simple dissolves from one make-up application to the next, but they work well enough, and the film is reasonably entertaining. Although in all likelihood completely unintentional, there is also an intriguing gay subtext to the endeavor, as the hero could be seen to have abandoned his family to pick up and grapple with various men in an aroused state, for which he suffers intense confusion and guilt when the arousal subsides. In any case, the film is more engaging than *Creature with the Atom Brain* because there is more going on in the narrative, with a wider array of characters and much stronger emotional underpinnings, and it also has appealing outdoor locations in California's Big Bear country.

A terrific zombie feature, the 1957 *Zombies of Mora Tau*, also directed by Kahn, is the best film in the group, with an appropriate mix of characters and story vectors to pull the viewer through the 69-minute running time without a let up. Although the title implies that the film comes from the South Seas, and the cast is populated entirely by Caucasians, it is set in 'Africa.' A young woman arrives at a mansion to stay with her great-grandmother just as a group of shady adventurers also show up, hoping to dive in the local bay for a sunken boat that is supposedly loaded with diamonds. But the bay also has a zombie-infestation problem, something the old lady, played by Marjorie Eaton, warns anyone who will listen to her, although nobody does, at least at first. The film is even more involving than *Werewolf*, because of the different things that are going on at the same time. Of course the girl and one of the adventurers hit it off, although he eventually has to decide between her and the diamonds, but each character has a distinctive personality and most of them have established backgrounds, as well. There are still plenty of continuity idiosyncrasies, but the mere fact that the film understands what a decent movie should be, and does its best to incorporate that much dramatic content with its thrills is highly satisfying in a way that many more sophisticated films can never manage to accomplish. From the performances to the action scenes, the movie is trying really hard, and that is what is important.

The final film, *The Giant Claw!*, is sort of like a cheap dessert after a fast food banquet, and is just as irresistible. An enormous buzzard-like bird (so obviously a puppet that aliens, or God, operating its strings is a real possibility) is eating airplanes and parachutists and everything else in the air. Guns can't kill it because it has a natural 'anti-matter' shield protecting it. The hero, played by Jeff Morrow, and a kissable mathematician companion, played by Mara Corday, chase it down to determine its feeding patterns, find its nest and massacre its egg, and then 'reverse the polarity' on some

doohickey to break through the shield. Directed by Fred F. Sears and running 74 minutes, the 1957 film has all sorts of shots of the kooky bird destroying and eating things, and people running away in terror as buildings crash around them (the poor Chrysler building doesn't stand a chance), but it is never dull, because each shot of the bird doubles down on the ludicrousness of the entire production until it exponentials itself into sublime wackiness.

The first platter also contains a terrific 74-minute overview of Katzman's entire career as a producer, with a marvelous emphasis on his marketing skills. The piece is so good at pointing out the innovations Katzman came up with and the film trends he founded that we were disappointed at the end when his final film, *Born Losers*, is identified without the fanfare of mentioning how it started Tom Laughlin's career. Nevertheless, the piece is loaded with ad and promotional artwork, and any film collector will be delighted with its approach.

There is also an excellent 24-minute featurette on the second platter that looks at the depiction of women in all four films. The fact that a comprehensively thorough documentary on the employment and depiction of women in all four films only runs 24 minutes says something about those films, to be sure, but that doesn't change the insights and counterintuitive revelations it has to offer.

The last two platters have 33 minutes of additional featurettes about the films, but they are less focused on a specific topic, just going over how the movies are not only representative of a shift in social attitudes and horror formulas in the Fifties, but may even have contributed to those newly developed trends. As a result, *Zombies of Mora Tau*, because it is the only movie with a supernatural basis, is denigrated in comparison to the other three (although the science involved in the movie's deep sea diving is conveniently ignored).

All four films are also accompanied by cheery introductions from Kim Newman, running, as a whole, 42 minutes ("Plainly, the producer here is being positioned as the auteur of this set of films, and that's quite right. These are films informed by his own interests, commercial instincts, and even personality."). You should wait until the end of the set to watch them, but they are full of the humor, insight and production knowledge that Newman can always be relied upon to share.

Additionally, three of the films are accompanied by abridged 8mm presentations, with a bit of voiceover narration here and there to cover the narrative gaps. Emphasizing the action and the horror, each version eliminates anything that has to do with the emotional lives of the characters, and becomes little more than a highlight reel. The gist of *Creature with the Atom Brain* is readily conveyed in the 19-minute presentation, even though the domestic sequences are gone, but the 8-minute version of *The Werewolf* loses its appealing drama and psychological conflict, and the 6-minute presentation of *The Giant Claw!* simply has the movie's opening, a couple of the bigger effect sequences, and its finale.

Each of the four movies also comes with a knowledgeable commentary track that not only provides a background on the individual production, but provides an approach to appreciate each entertainment on its own terms.

On his commentary for *Creature with the Atom Brain*, for example, film historian Russell Dyball, who does an excellent job going over the careers of the filmmakers ("Producer Sam Katzman, like so many purveyors of 'B' movies, low budget films, exploitation, grindhouse, whatever you want to call it depending on what time period we're talking about, often gets lambasted by the intelligentsia for wanting to make movies that make money, as opposed to some sort of grand artistic statement. But the thing about Katzman, the man had his finger on the pulse of the youth audience.") and deconstructing the film's strategies ("We get a lot more here in terms of angles, edits and close-ups. I suspect that is largely because this scene is a bit of an information and exposition dump."), and pointing out the parallel family dynamics that are presented, pitting the hero and his 'nuclear' family against the two villains (one forceful and one nurturing) and their brood of monsters. He also makes it clear that the film is one of those that scared the bejeezus out of children when it was broadcast on TV (probably because of the little girl and the way the monsters are otherwise normal looking adults), which is, of course, the path such films take to become beloved classics a half-century later. "On the whole, I think it is fair to say that *Creature with the Atom Brain* is perhaps not as fondly remembered as it really deserves to be. It's a solid 'B' movie, and I want to make clear I'm not using that term in a pejorative manner. I'm not referring to it as something that is—to employ some clichés—a guilty pleasure, or so bad it's good. If you're throwing 'bad movie night' gatherings, this one isn't going to scratch that itch. Sorry. I think that unfortunately, sometimes, some big fans of genre offerings will turn their backs on movies like this that aren't either the best thing ever or the worst thing ever, however one wishes to define those extremes. It's important to not dismiss something like this, something that is clearly an honestly and professionally put together film, just because it's low budget, or created based primarily on commerce as opposed to high art, or not perfect or whatever the term, 'B movie,' seems to have been bastardized into over the past 40 years or so. On the other hand, it's equally important not to oversell, not hold up *Creature with the Atom Brain* as a forgotten masterpiece. It's a solid, well meaning effort. It achieved the goals Katzman had for it. That's okay. Little kids were scared, money was made. Mission accomplished."

Horror film expert Lee Gambin has less to say about the cast and crew on *The Werewolf*, but he does a terrific job analyzing the film and its narrative for common Fifties themes and fears. “The film shares a lot in common with varied tropes offered by westerns and film noir, and it seamlessly weaves these within a Cold War movie monster plot. This is a picture about the clearly identified ‘other,’ who poses a threat and must be controlled or destroyed.” He compares the hero’s condition directly to alcoholism, but while not citing the gay component directly, he also mentions **Tea and Sympathy** and describes the hero admitting to having murdered a man in his werewolf state as ‘outing himself.’ Gambin provides a comprehensive history of werewolf films, from the earliest (and now lost) silent shorts to films in the Eighties, but he always keeps a focus on the themes he is describing and their development in the genre. “Horror films are very much about emotions and about feelings and characters relating to one another and turmoil and repression and sadness and love and frustration and anger and devotion and dedication and sexuality and all that sort of stuff, which is all very emotive and very hyper-aware, and operatic, almost, so there’s this kind of really emotionally drawn out sensibility in horror movies, whereas science fiction is more clinical and more about sort of this very, very rigid way of thinking, and logic being something that sort of anchors the film.”

Feminist genre enthusiast Kat Ellinger supplies an equally rewarding commentary on *Zombies of Mora Tau*, again providing the basics of the film’s production (the movie was being shot simultaneously with another Katzman film, and one day one of the cast members was given his daily script for the wrong show), but using most of the time to place the film in the historical context of zombie movies (it was the first to have underwater zombies) and folk horror. She also has great things to say about the film’s essential inventiveness. “Some people look down on low budget, as if that’s some terrible thing, but the thing I love about low budget film, especially when it comes to genres like horror and exploitation, is because of those limitations, you get this sense of anarchy, this sense of, ‘how can we make this exciting on the smallest budget possible?’ Things that are seen in a wider sort of film discussion as ‘bad’ are to me not bad. What they are is they bring in opportunity. There’s a lot of pressure on the cast and crew to get things right and get things done. You get a lot of ingenuity in that. You get people—and it was very much the same in Italy—who are craftsmen, people who had been in the industry for decades, who are able to just get really clever, to navigate what would be seen as restrictions in a bigger budget world, and it just becomes absolutely fabulous.”

Right off the bat, genre film historians from Australia, Emma Westwood and Cerise Howard, admit that *The Giant Claw* is, “one of the most hysterically stupid monster films of all time,” but that doesn’t dampen their admiration for the film’s larkish *mise en scène*. They talk a bit about the backgrounds of the cast and the crew, and about Fifties monster movies in general, but they sort of wing it, as it were, and do not provide the same level of knowledge and insight that the other commentators brought to their talks. Still, what they have to say is usually worthwhile. In reference to the film’s special effects: “The people who worked on *The Giant Claw*. I know nothing about them. Maybe they did turn out some quality effects for other films, I have no idea. But this thing just looks, I don’t mean to call it unconvincing. That’s unfair, as if we’re going to be convinced. But it just looks daft somehow, it looks too insubstantial. It has a weightlessness that doesn’t convince.” “It is, and I say this with love, quite artless.”

A film that uses the same essential premise as *Creature with the Atom Brain*, Ted V. Mikels’ 1968 *Astro Zombies*, is available on Blu-ray from IE and Kino Lorber Incorporated as a *KL Studio Classics* title (UPC#738329204020, \$30; the film’s title card reads, ‘*The Astro-Zombies*’). John Carradine is a scientist spewing marvelously phony, science-sounding gobbledeyook, who the animates corpses of killers with brain control masks and power packs, only to have the original impulses of the killers come to the fore. At the same time, a group of federal agents and cops, overseen by Wendell Corey but more actively led by Tom Pace, are trying to locate the scientist’s lab. What Mikels adds that *Atom Brain* didn’t have, however, is quite inspired, a third group of foreign agents led by Russ Meyer veteran Tura Satana, who also want to obtain the tech the scientist has developed. Not only do the three segments look like they were shot by entirely different film crews in different years, but each is so gloriously bad in its dramatic structure and dialog composition that the movie is essentially one jaw-dropping moment of awfulness after another. Satana is mesmerizing, decked out in a go-go getup, bossing around her minions and shooting people pretty much for the heck of it. Running a full 91 minutes, the movie gives the viewer plenty of time to savor its every dumb, inept moment, sometimes more than once, as there is plenty of repetition and other stalling to pad out the narrative.

The film’s erratic sensibilities carry over to the movie’s image transfer, which has clearly been executed with every care imaginable. Nevertheless, the tone of colors shifts from one shot to the next, going from bright to pale and back again, as grain and other impurities come and go. The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1. The monophonic sound is as good as can be expected, and unlike most Kino releases, there is no subtitling. A trailer that promises the moon (“One of the most frightening horror films ever made!”) is included.

Horror film expert Chris Alexander provides a reasonably straightforward commentary, suggesting that the film’s redundancies leave it

running a bit too long, but otherwise praising its inherent silliness and disparate components. He shares a lot of background information about the production and places the claims that Mikels, Satana and others have said about their efforts on the film in a more objective light. When he goes over Satana’s boast that Mikels created the film primarily to showcase her talents, however, he dismisses her statement as unlikely because she’s only in one of the movie’s three intermingled parts, but never allows for the likelihood that Mikels did tell her that even if it wasn’t the truth. One look at her and you understand that most guys would tell her anything she wanted to hear. Alexander also points out that these days, horror titles that begin with the letter ‘A’ do very well, because they’re positioned at the top of streaming menus.

Mikels himself also has a really great commentary track, vividly recalling what happened on the shoot and explaining the logic behind each seemingly bizarre choice that he made. The opening and closing credits, for example, feature shots of toy robots that have nothing to do with the rest of the film, but it was substantially cheaper for him to shoot the robots himself and have the company that makes credits put stuff over it than it would have been to have that company do both the lettering and whatever backgrounds they might have designed. He speaks about working with the different cast members, the different locations he used (including Peter Falk’s backyard), the reason for different shots, the innumerable times the lab messed up the day-for-night footage, and the various ways that he saved oodles of money and still came up with a usable film “When I talk about using short pieces of film: The cameramen at the studios would put in thousand-foot rolls, which would last 9 to 10 minutes, ninety feet a minute. But when they’d get down to a hundred and fifty, up to three hundred feet, they’d take out the end, wrap it up, and then they’d sell it to guys like me for, you know, a third of the cost of new film. But unfortunately, it would only run in the camera for a minute or 2 minutes, and at the most, 3 with a three-hundred-foot load.”

Finally, there is an official Rifftracks track, featuring two guys cracking jokes, or trying hard to crack jokes, as the film unfolds. Sometimes their efforts can earn a giggle, such as when they mimic Carradine’s instructions in a lab sequence (“Increase the fakey lab sounds from Shrill to Unbearable. Turn on the seven dollar disco ball from Spencer’s Gifts.”) or describe what was in the script as a female scientist being used as bait to attract the zombies, has nothing productive to do while she waits (“The phrase, ‘Silently moves around the lab,’ appears in the screenplay three hundred and fifty times.”), and the stuff with Satana pretty much writes itself (shifting into an effeminate voice—“The Surgeon General should put a warning label on me.”). Nevertheless, the movie is funnier without it, since most of the time they try too hard to point out obvious, without a wit sufficient to make it worthwhile.

We reviewed the cheapie 1959 20th Century Fox horror feature, *The Alligator People*, in Oct 04, but could not resist revisiting it for the Fox Scream Factory Blu-ray (UPC#826663198249, \$23), particularly since there are a number of similarities in the plot to *The Werewolf*, including the gay overtones. Beverly Garland is a newlywed who is abandoned by her husband before the honeymoon can get started. Searching for him, she ends up in a mansion in a Louisiana swamp, where nobody seems willing, at first, to share a family secret, or what is going on in a nearby clinic that requires radioactive fuel. Directed by Roy Del Ruth, the cast is marvelous, including Richard Crane, George Macready, Lon Chaney, Jr. (with a hook for a hand) and Bruce Bennett. Running 74 minutes, the film has a wonderful Gothic atmosphere that enables you to accept the silly make-up effects with no more than a stifled giggle while it finds the right balance between legitimate emotional drama and the specter of unauthorized science.

Presented in letterboxed format with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1—one of the things you have to love about Fox is how their commitment to Cinemascope even extended to their ‘B’ pictures, or, in this case, their ‘C’ pictures—the DVD looked really good and even had a slightly remastered stereo surround soundtrack, and the BD is the same, sharpening everything up a little to make the black-and-white film even more of a horror treat. A very thin vertical line appears in one sequence, but otherwise the source material is pretty much spotless. The sound has a stronger punch, and even the original mono track has some visceral moments that go straight for your chest. The DVD was fine, but the BD ups the ante.

There is no captioning. Along with a trailer and a passable collection of promotional memorabilia, there is a new commentary track featuring a podcast crew called ‘The Monster Party,’ who specialize in horror films. Their talk is fairly basic compared to some of the commentaries on the **Sam Katzman** collection, but they do cover the backgrounds of the cast and the crew (they go over Macready’s feature films and horror titles, but do not mention his wonderful work on **Peyton Place**), point out that because the film was shot at Fox, there were many motion picture veterans contributing to the movie’s creation (cinematographer Karl Struss won the first Oscar for that category), and share reflections on the film that were offered in interviews by Garland, who basically couldn’t stop laughing on the set at the make-up effects. “What was so great about Del Ruth as a director, you know, he’d try to calm people down and he took his job very seriously, and tried to treat the film seriously. Beverly Garland said if it wasn’t for Del Ruth she didn’t think she could get through the film.” “The only way you’re going to make this thing work is to play it deadly serious.”

Happy Halloween from Japan

Know any kids you want to damage for life (without leaving visible marks, of course)? Can they read subtitles? Then by all means set them down with a display of enthusiasm and have them watch the gloriously disturbing 1968 Japanese horror feature, **The Snake Girl and the Silver Haired Witch**, an Arrow Video Blu-ray (UPC#760137684381, \$40). The young heroine, smartly and impressively performed by Yachie Matsui, is brought from an orphanage to the home of her parents after a mix up at the birth hospital had separated them. But the day after her homecoming, her father has to leave on an important business trip, and so she is left with the mother—apparently crazy and claiming that another little girl also lives in the house—and the sweet housekeeper. The first night, a snake drops on her while she's sleeping, just like in *The Adventure of the Speckled Band*, and the nightmares proceed over the next few days, with child-styled terrors reminiscent of the Indiana Jones movies. That the film gets the dream-like horrors of a room filled with spiders and snakes just right more than compensates for the inexpensive execution of the effects themselves. And what the film also gets right is the child's perspective of the frights, which also includes deformed or ghoulish human figures constantly threatening her or popping up when they are least expected. Matsui's character is spunky and resourceful, persevering through the horrific adversity that confronts her, but scene after scene is designed in a way that doesn't just induce a momentary jump, but imbeds itself in the fear center of a child's memories. Directed by Noriaki Yuasa, the 82-minute story is mostly logical (not every incident can be explained), but has a very succinct and satisfying conclusion, making the tale akin to a giallo feature or, more accurately, one of those Hammer murder thrillers that left you wondering what was going on until the final scene. Hence, even though the film is ostensibly set in the realm of childhood orientations, adults, at least those with strong hearts, will savor every frame.

The black-and-white picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1. The source material has some minor wear, but contrasts are reasonably well designed and the presentation is in decent shape. The monophonic sound is sharp and the film is in Japanese with optional English subtitles. Along with a brief collection of memorabilia in still frame and a trailer, there is an excellent 28-minute featurette that goes over the entire history of Japanese folk tales (among other things, did you know that the Grimm brothers originally made their villains the mothers of the children, and it was when their publisher said that wouldn't sell that they came up with the idea of using step-mothers instead?), manga comics, and Japanese monster programs, with still plenty of time to provide an overview of the movie itself, its production history and its entertainment dynamics.

"One of the things that gives this movie its enduring power and appeal is its singularity. If you fall for this film, you will be hard pressed to anything else quite like it," says Japanese horror expert David Kalat at the beginning of his excellent commentary track. He provides a very thorough talk, going over the careers of the cast and the crew, but he posits this information in a fascinating analysis of the film by comparing it to various Japanese fantasy subgenres, and how the film's creators drew from their experiences in those other genres to create something that is truly unique. He also points out the many narrative ambiguities that exist in the film (just how much of the film is the heroine only imagining?), and suggests that it is a better movie for defying logic. "Part of what gives this movie its enduring power, part of what makes it possible for fans to watch it again and again and again and again and continue to be thrilled and entertained is that it doesn't completely fit together. It has gaps and contradictions. When you re-watch it, different details will take prominence and you'll mentally fit it together just a little bit differently than the time before. The end effect is like the old saying about how you can never step in the same river twice, you can never quite watch the same movie twice. It changes."

A 4K Orange

The subversive precision of Stanley Kubrick's seemingly loosest film, the 1971 **Stanley Kubrick's A Clockwork Orange**, achieves its ultra expression on the WB Studio Distribution Services 4K *UltraHD 50th Anniversary* Blu-ray release (UPC#883929723430, \$34). At first glance, the film looks sloppy, with the actors leaning too far into one another's space, the mix of discordantly colored sets and mood-breaking London locations undermining concentration, the jargon-heavy voiceover narration sowing confusion, and the unfettered abundance of nudity (ironically, for a film that is supposedly about violence, the violence is fairly tame compared to what has come afterward, while sex in films, on the other hand, was approaching a zenith and has since become much tamer) creating a locker room attitude, giving the film a haphazard tone that sends the protagonist bouncing from one situation to the next. Kubrick's camera movement pulls the viewer backwards, almost out of the screen, again and again, a feeling that is especially forceful in the sharpness of 4K. When not being directly satirical, the film is intentionally off-kilter, offering up a barely veiled assessment of modern society and authority, and daring one to draw the boundary between truth and fantasy.

Kubrick's films were a marvel before, but they are even more a marvel having been transferred to 4K format with the utmost and even Kubrickian attention to detail. From **2001: A Space Odyssey** (Feb 19) to **The Shining** (Dec 19), the effects of the 4K format have been stunning. So what is one to make of a film that is seemingly constructed as anything but clockwork? A half-century later, modern society and authority are still

fretting over youthful violence. Absolutely nothing in the real world has changed, and it apparently never will. The shifts between a softer image in one scene and a crisper image in another are meant to undermine a viewer's stability of orientation, of understanding how much of the fantasy should be taken seriously and how much should be brushed off. In earlier home video formats, **A Clockwork Orange** could be appreciated for its cheeky naughtiness and rebel spirit or it could just as easily be dismissed for dwelling upon, and by default celebrating, aberrant behavior. In 4K, however, the exactness of every moment never lets the viewer settle upon a specific attitude or emotional response. Instead, the film becomes a demonstration, or even a proof, that disorientation lies at the core of reality.

In addition to the 4K platter, a standard Blu-ray presentation of the film is also included, which is also sharper and better colored than the very fine DVD release we reviewed in Dec 07. Still, the sharpness of the 4K presentation is much more gripping. The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.7:1. There is less of a difference in the 5.1-channel DTS sound, which brings a general dimensionality to the music and some mild separation effects but is unable to overcome the basic limitations of its age. Both platters have an alternate French track, two types of Spanish tracks, an Italian track, and a German track. The 4K platter also has a Polish and the standard BD platter has a Portuguese track. The standard BD platter has fourteen subtitling options, including English, and the 4K platter has seventeen subtitling options.

A good commentary with the film's star, Malcolm McDowell, and film expert Nick Redman, which appeared on the DVD, has been carried over to both the 4K platter and the standard BD platter. The standard BD also has 72 minutes of rewarding retrospective documentaries that had appeared previously, as well as a trailer. Additionally, the standard BD has a 26-minute piece, somewhat exploitive, about the film's violence, although it does have some interesting material about why the film was subsequently banned in England and Ireland until Kubrick passed away, and a marvelous 11-minute bit with McDowell looking through memorabilia and reminiscing about his experiences.

Forgotten noir

Angela Lansbury shimmies out of her bathing suit top underneath a towel by a patio pool as she entices the hero, a struggling architect played by the forgotten Keith Andes, to go into business with her and her wealthy husband. It is a rare appearance for Lansbury as a sex symbol femme fatale, but she gives the role her all and rescues the 1955 film directed by Paul Guilfoyle, **A Life at Stake**, from the anonymity of forgotten film noir. In order to sign onto a lucrative housing deal, Andes' character has to take out a hefty life insurance policy payable to the wealthy husband of Lansbury's character. Just because Andes' character is inherently paranoid doesn't mean that people aren't trying to kill him. The fun is trying to figure who, or how many, and for a while, the 76-minute feature carries the viewer along with its engaging uncertainties. Released on Blu-ray by Film Detective as a *Special Edition* (UPC#760137577881, \$25), the story eventually collapses on its own inevitabilities, and however good Lansbury is as an actress and appealing as a seductress, the script is too undeveloped to make her emotional swings completely believable. Oh, and there is a cabin next to a cliff that once had a deck above the drop, now removed except for the door in the cozy living room with a very significant, 'watch that first ste-e-e-e-e-p.' Wonder what the California building inspectors would have thought of that? Still, as the film unfolds, it is a fully enjoyable, classic tale about a nice guy who makes the mistake of thinking with his wrong body parts several times too often.

A public domain feature, the full screen black-and-white picture is sharp and contrasts are nicely detailed, with barely a scratch or a speckle. There are, however, a fair number of splices, and the image also does a shimmy of it is own a couple of times. The monophonic sound is reasonably strong, and there is no captioning. A good 11-minute featurette is included about Ida Lupino and the production company she created that inadvertently (when a director had a heart attack) kickstarted her remarkable directing career. **A Life at Stake** was one of the films the company produced, and it only gets a quick mention, but the piece as a whole is a very worthwhile portrait of Lupino's maturation as a filmmaker and how she parlayed the cracks that were starting to show in the studio system to create a thriving independent production company and a path-breaking legacy.

Film historian Jason A. Ney supplies a very good commentary track for the feature. He gets off on the wrong foot by claiming that character actor Jane Darwell's most indelible film role was in **Mary Poppins**, without even an honorable mention for **Grapes of Wrath**, and he never talks about the Lupino connection, but from there he does quite a good job breaking down the effectiveness (and clever ambiguities—most of the characters have intricately mixed motives) of individual sequences, going over the careers of Lansbury, Guilfoyle and other members of the cast and crew (during the Blacklist era, Elmer Bernstein wrote the score but remained uncredited), and comparing the movie to more prominent film noir classics. "This film displays a scrappy energy and willingness to work within all kinds of constraints. It would probably cripple filmmakers who were accustomed to working in far more economically stable and even pampered environments. There's something to appreciate about artists who are always hustling to get the next project made, and while this film is certainly rough around the edges, that might actually be part of its charm."

Fuller classic

The marvelous 1953 20th Century Fox Samuel Fuller Cold War crime feature, **Pickup on South Street**, has been released on Blu-ray by The Criterion Collection (UPC#715515260510, \$40). We reviewed Criterion's DVD release in Mar 04. It looked and sounded terrific, but the Blu-ray is even better if such a thing is possible. The transfer is immaculate, and the full screen black-and-white image is as sharp as it is clean, while the monophonic sound is solid and crisp. There are optional English subtitles.

Richard Widmark plays a pickpocket who upsets the delivery of some microfilm into the hands of enemy agents and then tries to parlay his score into a big payday if his conscience doesn't get the better of him. Thelma Ritter, Jean Peters and Richard Kiley co-star, and all four of the performances are great. The title has a multiple meanings, referring not only to the New York location where the action takes place and Widmark's character being brought in by the police, but also to the romance that is kindled—and smolders—between his and Peters' characters. Running an efficient 80 minutes, the film is thoroughly entertaining from start to finish, as rich in dramatic conflicts as it is in excitements. We refer readers to our previous review for more details, but would also like to add an admiration for Fuller's unheralded use of African-American extras in his city crowd scenes. It may be commonplace today, but it was rarely if ever done at the time.

In addition to the 30 minutes of archival interviews with Fuller that appeared on the DVD, there is a very good 36-minute analysis of the film that also goes over the accomplishments of Fuller, Widmark, Ritter and Peters, and a decent 1954 *Hollywood Radio Theater* adaptation featuring Ritter, with Stephen McNally and Terry Moore, running 52 minutes. Finally, there is a terrific collection of trailers for sixteen Fuller films, from **Fixed Bayonets!** to **White Dog**, running a total of 40 minutes. What the clips reveal is a fascinating consistency in the intensity of Fuller's filmmaking style and the flamboyance of his subject matter. It also makes you want to go diving back into every movie he's made.

Errol vehicle

Leon Errol stars in a 1945 RKO Radio Pictures farce built around his talents, **What a Blonde**, a Warner Home Video *Archive Collection* title (UPC#883929683833, \$22). The title seems to be randomly chosen, although there are a few ladies running around, as every good farce ought to have. Veda Ann Borg and Elaine Riley co-star. In the days when gas rationing curtailed commuting, Errol is the CEO of a clothing plant who hires a couple of people to travel into work with him so his car will be allowed extra gas. (His character does not want to take the train because everyone there smokes too much, a comedy sequence that has an entirely different meaning today than it did at the time.) Borg's character, however, one of the travelers he has hired, has a group of showgirl friends, and they all end up staying at his mansion because they have nowhere else to live, and when an important customer arrives for dinner, one lie leads to another. Running 71 minutes, you have to be able to tolerate Errol's clowning to tolerate the film, but there are moments where the complications build effectively, and even though the ending does not wrap everything up, the film delivers essentially what it promises and is reasonably amusing. The full screen black-and-white picture has a couple of substantial splices and a number of other scratches and speckles. The monophonic sound is adequate and there is no captioning.

DVD News

NEW ADDRESS: Hopefully for the last time ever, we have moved once more. As you can see by our spiffy new masthead, we can now be reached at PO Box 382, Glen Cove NY 11542. We have also eliminated our FAX number, but our phone number remains (516)594-9304. Incidentally, the return envelopes included with the re-subscription reminders this month still have our old address and that is fine, since we are currently in the process of the transition.

CRITERION CORNER: The Criterion Collection is releasing Gordon Parks' **The Learning Tree** with a documentary on the making of the film, featuring artist and critic Ina Diane Archer, curator Rhea L. Combs, and filmmakers Ernest R. Dickerson and Nelson George; a conversation, moderated by film scholar Michael B. Gillespie, between artist Hank Willis Thomas and art historian Deborah Willis about the influence of Parks; *My Father: Gordon Parks* (1969), a documentary made on the set of **The Learning Tree**, narrated by Gordon Parks Jr., and featuring interviews with Gordon Parks Sr. and members of the cast and crew; *Diary of a Harlem Family* and *The World of Piri Thomas*, two 1968 films on which Parks played creative roles, with a new introduction by Combs; and *Unstoppable* (2005), a documentary featuring producer Warrington Hudlin in conversation with Parks and filmmakers Ossie Davis and Melvin Van Peebles. Regina King's **One Night in Miami** will feature a conversation between King and filmmaker Kasi Lemmons; a conversation among King, screenwriter Kemp Powers, and critic Gil Robertson; a conversation between King and filmmaker Barry Jenkins from a 2021 episode of *The Director's Cut – A DGA Podcast*; a program featuring King and actors Kingsley Ben-Adir, Eli Goree, Aldis Hodge, and Leslie Odom Jr.; a program on the making of the film, featuring King, Powers, director of photography Tami Reiker, editor Tariq Anwar, producer Jody Klein, costume designer Francine Jamison-Tanchuck, and set decorator Janessa Hitsman; and a program on the film's sound design, featuring sound editor and mixer Andy Hay, sound mixer Paul Ledford, and music producer Nick Baxter. Criterion's 4K release of Michael Powell's **The Red Shoes** will include a restoration demonstration featuring Martin Scorsese; a commentary from 1994 by film historian Ian Christie, featuring interviews with actors

Marius Goring and Moira Shearer, cinematographer Jack Cardiff, composer Brian Easdale, and Scorsese; *Profile of The Red Shoes*, a 2000 documentary on the making of the film, featuring interviews with members of the production team; an interview with Powell's widow, editor Thelma Schoonmaker Powell, from the 2009 Cannes Film Festival; audio recordings from 1994 of Jeremy Irons reading excerpts from Powell and screenwriter Emeric Pressburger's novelization of **The Red Shoes** and the Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale, *The Red Shoes*; publicity stills and behind-the-scenes photos; a gallery of memorabilia from Scorsese's collection; and *The Red Shoes Sketches*, a 1948 animated film of Hein Heckroth's painted storyboards, with the **Red Shoes** ballet as an alternate angle. Criterion is also adding a 4K version to the previously announced **Uncut Gems**.

4K HOBBITS: WB Home Entertainment is releasing a 31-platter collector's set, **Middle Earth Ultimate Collector's Edition**, which includes the theatrical and extended versions of the six films, **The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey**, **The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug**, **The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies**, **The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring**, **The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers**, and **The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King**. **Ultimate Collector's Edition** comes in a 'Puzzle Box' collectible packaging and includes a 64-page booklet featuring costumes, photography and production notes from the film, and art cards featuring travel posters and images from locations throughout the fictional Middle-earth including The Shire, Lake-Town, Erebor, Anduin, Rohan, Minas Tirith, and Rivendell. Also included are the original Cannes Film Festival presentation reel, and footage from an Alamo Drafthouse cast reunion featuring director Peter Jackson along with cast members Sean Astin, Cate Blanchett, Orlando Bloom, Billy Boyd, Ian McKellan, Dominic Monaghan, Viggo Mortenson, Andy Serkis, Liv Tyler, and Elijah Wood.

NEW IN BLU: The following titles were recently issued on Blu-ray—What Really Happened to Baby Jane? and Films of the Gay Girls Riding Club (AGFA); Eli Roth's History of Horror Season 2 (AMD); A Tiny House Christmas (Bridgestone); Black Widow, Cruella (Buena Vista); Finding Faith, Positive, Godsend, The Prodigal Cowboy (Burning Bulb); Auntie Lee's Meat Pies, The Devil in Maddalena, A Dim Valley, Fantasm/Fantasm Comes Again, Girls School Screams, Tough Guys Don't Dance (CAV); Alone in the Dark, Blithe Spirit, The Damned, Hunters, Kubo and the Two Strings, Paranorman, Tampa Bay Lightning 2021 Stanley Cup Champions, The Vigil (Cinedigm); International Lady (Classicflix); Love & Basketball, Melvin Van Peebles Four Films, Mona Lisa, Throw Down (Criterion); Secrets of Sweet Sixteen/Wacky Taxi (Dark Force); Commando Ninja (ETR); Witnesses (Excel); A Life at Stake (Film Detective); Crazy Nights (Full Moon); Over Downeast Maine (Gemini); Skipping Stones (Glasshouse); American Badger (Good Deed); The High Frontier (The High Frontier); Boys from County Hell, Great White, Violation (Image); Will and Liz (Indie Rights); The Jinxx and Dela Holiday Special (Jinxx); Apocalypse '45, Arabesque, Bird on a Wire, Blue Panther, Bluebeard, Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid, Death Ring, The French Conspiracy, A Full Day's Work, Golden Needles, The Hunchback of Notre Dame, The Hunter Will Get You, Illustrious Corpses, Macho Callahan, Masquerade, Masquerade, Masquerade, Never Gonna Snow Again, Pufnstuf, Riffi in Paris, Seven Days...Seven Nights, Skullduggery, Story of a Woman, Theater of Blood, 13 Washington Square, The Tomb of Ligeia (Kino); Catch the Bullet, Dementia 13, The Gateway, Lady of the Manor, Twist, Zola (Lionsgate); Black Belt Kuro Obi, Shadow Dead Riot, X-cross (Media Blasters); Frost/Nixon (Mill Creek); Scream 2, Scream 3 (Miramax); Beats (Music Box); The Beast, Cold War Creatures Four Films from Sam Katzman, A Day of Judgment, Death Screams, Don't Go Gentle A Film about Idles, The Dungeon of Andy Milligan Collection, Escape from Area 51, The Fourth Victim, Harry and Snowman, Legend, Midnight, The Return of Swamp Thing, The Snake Girl and the Silver Haired Witch (MVD); Blue Chips, Breakdown, Clue, Crocodile Dundee Trilogy, Hard Ball, The Longest Yard, Nancy Drew Season 1, Nancy Drew Season 2, Necessary Roughness, Star Trek Enterprise Complete Series, The Wolf of Wall Street (Paramount); Adrenalin Fear the Rush, Haunt, Lawnmower Man 2 Jobe's War (Ronin); Mapplethorpe (Samuel Goldwyn); Psycho Sisters (Saturn's Core); Dark Nemesis, Elijah and the Rock Creature, Finding Joy, The Grand Promise, Growing Op, Impossible Crimes (Shoreline); The Blacklist Season 8, The Human Factor, I Carry You with Me, Walk on the Wild Side (Sony); American Pie Presents Girls' Rules, Because of Him, The Boss Baby Family Business, Can't Help Singing, F9 The Fast Saga, For the Love of Mary, The Forever Purge, Resident Alien Season 1, Something in the Wind, The Sparks Brothers, State of the Union, The Woody Woodpecker Screwball Collection, You Should Have Left (Universal); Out of Death (Vertical); Batwoman Season 2, Dr. Who Sylvester McCoy Season 1, Mare of Easttown, A Night at the Opera, Santa Fe Trail, Straight Time, The Window, Young Sheldon Season 4, Zack Snyder's Justice League (Warner); Crazy Fist, God of War II (Well Go)

NEW IN 4K: The following titles have recently been issued in 4K format—Black Widow, Cruella, Unbreakable (Buena Vista); Terminal Island (CAV); Halloween, The Transformers The Movie (Cinedigm); Children of the Corn (MVD); G.I. Joe Retaliation, G.I. Joe The Rise of Cobra, Hansel & Gretel Witch Hunters, Mission Impossible Rogue Nation, Rear Window, Star Trek Into Darkness, Star Trek The Original 4-Movie Collection, Terminator Genisys (Paramount); F9 The Fast Saga, The Forever Purge, The Thing, Vertigo (Universal) A Clockwork Orange, The Shawshank Redemption, Zack Snyder's Justice League (Warner)

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Current Attractions

The following titles recently appeared for the first time:
Aalto (Film Movement)
Abigail Harm (Film Movement)
Agnus Thongs and Perfect Snogging (Paramount)
Alien Artifacts Pyramids Monoliths and Marvels (Really)
Allen Battlefield Earth (4Digital)
All the Streets Are Silent (Kino)
The Alpines (Gravitas)
American Badger (Good Deed)
American Visa (Bayview)
Apocalypse 45 (Kino)
Arabesque (Kino)
Around Santa Cruz Island (Sailing)
As Luck Would Have It (Cinedigm)
Atlantis (Grasshopper)
Barbara Lee Speaking Truth to Power (Kino)
Basketman Season 2 (Warner)
Behind the Random Denominator (Bayview)
Benry Loves You (Epic)
Bergerson Brothers Wedding Videographers (FreeStyle)
Berlin Station Season 3 (Kino)
Bird on a Wire (Kino)
Birds of Prey (Triad)
Black Belt Kuro Kubo (Media Blasters)
Black Magic Live Stripped (MVD)
Black Pumpkin (Uncork'd)
Black Widow (Buena Vista)
The Blacklist Season 8 (Sony)
Blithe Spirit (Cinedigm)
Blood Conscious (MPI)
Blue Panther (Kino)
Bluesman (Kino)
Blues Clues and You Story Time with Blue (Paramount)
Bonkers Gross Science What's Eating Us? (Brandy Pants)
The Boss Baby Family Business (Universal)
Boys from County Hill (Image)
Bug (Paramount)
Bug Season 5 (Paramount)
C.I. Ape (Lionsgate)
Can You Bring It Bill T. Jones and D-Man in the Waters (Kino)
Capitol Attack and The Electoral Vote Part 1 (Wownow)
Capitol Attack and The Electoral Vote Part 2 (Wownow)
Capitol Attack and The Electoral Vote Part 3 (Wownow)
The Carnival (TLAY)
Catch the Bullet (Lionsgate)
Censor (Magnolia)
Charlatan (Strand)
Chasing Madoff (Kino)
Christmas (Cinedigm)
Chicago P.D. Season 8 (Universal)
Chloe and Theo (Vision)
The Christmas Dance (Gravitas)
Circle of a Serial Killer (Stonecutter)
Corner Store (FreeStyle)
Crazy about You (Well Go)
Crazy Fist (Well Go)
Crazy Nights (Full Moon)
Cruella (Buena Vista)
The Damned (Orion)
Danger Road 8 Crashes (Movie Time)
Dart (Joe Vertical)
The Dark Web Tapes (Wild Eye)
Dave of the Dead Deadly Delivery (Wownow)
David Copperfield (Digicom)
A Day of Judgment (MVD)
Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid (Kino)
Dead Pigs (Film Movement)
Death Drip Gorgious (MPI)
Deep Living with the Russians (Digicom)
Delusions End Breaking Free of the Matrix (Really)
Demented (New Wood)
The Devil in Middletown (CAV)
Diego of the Dead (Wownow)
A Dim Valley (CAV)
Discovering Your Warrior Spirit with D.J. Van (Paramount)
Divine Love (Strand)
Dolly The Ultimate Collection (Time Life)
Domino Battle of the Bones (Triostar)
Don't Go Stealing (MVD)
Down a Dark Stairwell (Kino)
Downing of a Flag (Paramount)
Downstream to Kinshasa (Icarus)
Dr. Syn (Digicom)
Dreaming Grand Avenue (Music Box)
Eastside Story (Bosko)
Eerie Fairy Tales (Bayview)
Eli Roth's History of Horror Season 2 (AMD)
Estatee 1976 (MVD)
Emergency! Complete Series (Universal)
The Equalizer Season 1 (Lionsgate)
Escape from Area 51 (MVD)
The Evil Next Door (Magnolia)
Exhumed A History of Zombies (Paramount)
The Facts of Life Complete Series (Cinedigm)
The Fan (Paramount)
A Father's Legacy (Cinedigm)
Femalen Cosmic Crush (Full Moon)
Finding Faith (Burning Bub)
First Date (Magnolia)
Fish & Men (Kino)
F9 The Fast Saga (Universal)
Forces of Nature (Paramount)
The Forever Purge (Universal)
The Forever Forever (FreeStyle)
The Fourth Victim (MVD)
Frankenstein Ruins Halloween (Wownow)
Frankie Drake Mysteries Season 4 (Paramount)
Freaks (Triad)
Freddie the Freezemaker's Christmas Dinner (Triad)
The French Conspiracy (Kino)
A Full Day's Work (Kino)
Fully Realized Humans (Gravitas)
The Furnace (Universal)
G.I. Joe A Real American Hero Complete Series (Cinedigm)
Gaga (Decal)
The Gateway (Lionsgate)
God of War II (Wownow)
Godsend (Burning Bub)
Gold Dust (Bayview)
Golden Needles (Kino)
Gold Tips and Techniques (Kino)
Great White (Image)
Guilt (Paramount)
Haphazard (Green Apple)
The Haunted House of Horror (Cinedigm)
Harvest of Horror (Wild Eye)
Hatched (Uncork'd)
Hearing at the House Immigration Bill Passes Part 2 (Wownow)
Hearing at the House Immigration Bill Passes Part 2 (Wownow)
Hellbox (SRS)
The High Frontier (High Frontier)
High End (MVD)
Holly Hobb's Book Club Cinderella (Wownow)
A House Divided Season 3 (AMD)
House Monster (Wild Eye)
How to Swim Fasters Starts Turns and Finishes (Sportsvids)
Howling Village (Epic)
The Human Factor (Sony)
The Hunchback of Notre Dame (Kino)
The Hunter Will Get You (Kino)
Hunters (Cinedigm)
Hurricanes Rise of the Superstorms (Cinedigm)
I Can't You with Me (Sony)
I Love Us (Vision)
Joe Blink (Sailing)
Illustrious Corpses (Kino)
International Lady (Cinedigm)
The Interceptor (Corinth)
It Runs on Water (Digicom)
It Wants Blood (AOC Bath)
The Jinx and Delta Holiday Special (Kino)
Joe and Joe (Bayview)
Joe Biden's Inauguration (Wownow)
Just a Kiss (Paramount)
Just My Type / Harvest Love (Paramount)
Know Fear (Wedge)
Lady of the Manor (Lionsgate)
Lady Worsley's Royal Myths and Secrets V.2 (Paramount)
Last Call (In House)
The Last Champion (In House)
The Last Male (MPI)
A Life at Stake (Film Detective)
The Life of L.L. Bean (Gemini)
Light Spirit Lighthouses of the Maine Coast (Gemini)
Little England (Corinth)
Lost Coast (Kino)
Lots and Lots of Wooden Trains (Galore (Marshall)
Lourdes (Film Movement)
Love & Basketball (Criterion)
Love Alaska (Brain Power)
Love Is Not a Crime (Cinedigm)
Lucky Life (Film Movement)
Lured (Triad)
Macho Callahan (Kino)
Mad Hot Ballroom (Paramount)
The Magic Pony (Triostar)
Magnum P.I. Season 3 (Paramount)
Marc X (Paramount)
Mare of Easttown (Warner)
Many Life after Jesus The Road to Ephesus (Exploration)
Masquerade (Kino)
Masquerade (Kino)
Max and Me (Bayview)
Meadow Van Peebles Four Films (Orion)
Memphis 69 The 1969 Memphis Country Blues Festival (Fat Possum)
Midnight (MVD)
Miranda Will (Indican)
Mobot's African Movie Theater Episode 6 (Movie Time)
Molly of Denali Moll and the Great Dr. Syn (Paramount)
Mona Lisa (Orion)
Monster Horror Documentary Series Season 1 (Wownow)
Muniryangabo (Film Movement)
Murder in the Night (Digicom)
Mysteries of Mental Illness (Paramount)
Nancy Drew Season 2 (Paramount)
National Geographic Cesar Milan Better Human Better Dog (Buena Vista)
Never Gonna Snow Again (Kino)
Nightdrive (MPI)
Nuclear Nightmares (Corinth)
On These Grounds (Gravitas)
The One and Only Dick Gregory (Paramount)
One Day University A Grand Tour of Film (Dreamscape)
One Day University A Jewish Founding Father (Dreamscape)
One Day University Bioethics (Dreamscape)
One Day University Ethical Dilemmas and Modern Medicine (Dreamscape)
One Day University FDR (Wownow)
One Day University FDR and the Evolution of an American Ideal (Dreamscape)
One Day University Free Speech (Dreamscape)
One Day University Free Speech Revisited (Dreamscape)
One Day University Learning from the Roman Empire (The Wiggles Halloween Party (Kino)
One Day University Living and Dying in America (Dreamscape)
One Day University Positive Psychology (Dreamscape)
One Day University The Amazing Terrifying Future of Medicine (Dreamscape)
One Day University The Art of Aging (Wownow)
One Day University The Human Brain (Dreamscape)
One Day University The Political Genius of Franklin D. Roosevelt (Digicom)
One Day University The Political Genius of LBJ and FDR (Dreamscape)
One Day University The President's Book Club (Dreamscape)
One Day University The Science of Sleep and Stress (Dreamscape)
One Day University The Scientific Genius and Legacy of Thomas Edison and Nikola Tesla (Dreamscape)
One Day University The Supreme Court An Up-to-the-Minute Presentation (Dreamscape)
One Day University The Supreme Court How Did We Get Here and Where Are We Headed? (Dreamscape)
One Day University U.S. Presidential Debates (Dreamscape)
One Day University What Makes a Great Jewish Leader? (Dreamscape)
One Day University What We Know (and Don't Know) About the Universe (Dreamscape)
Out of Death (Venical)
Oversand (Gemini)
Perfumes (Icarus)
Positive (Burning Bub)
The Power (Image)
The Prayer List (Bridgestone)
The Prodigal Cowboy (Sunning Bulb)
The Proud Rebel (Digicom)
Puppy Playground Halloween Party (Brainy Pants)
The Queens of Comedy (Paramount)
Ram Mantras (Wownow)
The Rape of the Virgin Girls (CAV)
Real Prophecies (ITN)
Resident Alien Season 1 (Universal)
The Return of Swamp Thing (MVD)
Rick and Morty Season 4 (Paramount)
Rift in Paris (Kino)
Rogue Hostage (Lionsgate)
Rumba Love (Vision)
Sandcastles (Triad)
Schlock Lives! (Filmandia)
SEAL Team Season 4 (Paramount)
Seven Days, Seven Wonders (Triad)
Shakespeare The Truth behind the Name (Vision)
Shiva Mantras (Wownow)
Shy (Music Box)
Silo (Oscilloscope)
Silver Queen (Classicfix)
Sin U Peccato (Corinth)
Skinwalker (Uncork'd)
Skipping Stones (Glasshouse)
Sky Juggler (Kino)
Slaxx (Image)
The Soul of The Midnight Special (Time Life)
St. Helens (Triad)
Star Trek Enterprise Complete Series (Paramount)
Stinger (Bayview)
Straight Outta Nowhere: Scooby-Doo! Meets Courage the Cowardly Dog (Warner)
Sunset over the Killing Fields (ITN)
Sweet Autumn (Cinedigm)
Tampa Bay Lightning 2021 Stanley Cup Champions (Cinedigm)
Target Earth (Triad)
Ted Bundy American Boogeyman (MPI)
Ten Million Throwaways (Gravitas)
Tethered (Cinedigm)
Theater of Blood (Kino)
13 Washington Square (Kino)
Throw Down (Orion)
Thy Neighbor (Bridgestone)
A Tiny House in Christmas (Bridgestone)
Tiny Tim One Man Parade Live from Dallas July 4 1994 (Ship to Shore)
Together Together (Decal)
The Tomb of Ligia (Kino)
Tooth Fairy The Last Extraction (ITN)
Transcend with Street (Sailing)
The Trench (Vision)
The Trillion Dollar Proposal (Wownow)
Trinity (Bayview)
The Trolley Terror (Triad)
The 27th Day (Cheesy Flicks)
Twist (Lionsgate)
Typo (Bayview)
The Ultraman The Complete Series (Mill Creek)
Ultraman 80 The Complete Series (Mill Creek)
Unit Eleven (101)
Upper Floors (Bayview)
The Video Game Years V.5 1988-1989 (Retrovare)
The Vigil (Cinedigm)
Village of the Vampire (ITN)
Wander Down (Glasshouse)
War of the God Monsters (SRS)
Waterboys (Corinth)
Whirlybird (Kino)
Whitstable Pearl (Acorn)
The Wiggles Halloween Party (Kino)
Will and Liz (Ink Rights)
Witches of Blackwood (Dewlorks)
Witnesses (Excel)
Wonder of Science Skyscraper (Digicom)
Wrestling Tie-Ups Shots and Defense (Sportsvids)
WWE Legends V.1 (Lionsgate)
WWE Legends V.2 (Lionsgate)
WWE SummerSlam 2021 (Cinedigm)
X-Cross (Media Blasters)
You Look Familiar Venice Watson (Digicom)
You Should Have Left (Universal)
Young and Wiling (Classicfix)
Young Sheldon Season 4 (Warner)
Your Fight Is in Their Hands (Image)
Youth Volleyball Skills and Drills (Sportsvids)
Zack Snyder's Justice League (Warner)
Zaps (Bayview)
Zola (Lionsgate)
*Did not appear on last month's Coming Attraction's listing

From Cheesy Flicks:
SS Camp 5 Women's Hell
From Cinedigm:
Christmas
The Christmas House
Christmas in Vienna
On the 12th Date of Christmas
Little Vampire
Christmas by Starlight
Maude Complete Series (18 platters)
Christmas She Wrote
A Timeless Christmas
Christmas Waltz
Good With Season 7
WWE Best of 1996 Prelude to Attitude
WWE Extreme Rules 2021
WWE Crown Jewel 2021
Meet Me at Christmas
One Royal Holiday
Come True
Crabtree Christmas
The Stars
A Christmas Tree Grows in Colorado
Five Star Christmas
Christmas Cookies
A Little Christmas Charm
Good Morning Christmas!
Punky Brewster Complete Series (16 platters)
Pract Christmas Wish
Old Henry
A Goodnick Christmas Second Chance, First Love
My Sallinger
The Eight Hundred
Sesame Street Wonderful World of Friends!
From Classicfix:
Thank You for Supporting the Arts
Black Magic
The O. Henry Playhouse Complete Series (3 platters)
From Corinth:
The Career
The Pastor
From Cinedigm:
The Screaming Woman (Olivia de Havilland)
The Victim (Elizabeth Montgomery)
Lucky Luciano
Spring Blossom
The Hanging Frisbee in North Korea
Not Going Quietly
The Big Scary S Word
Gomorrah The Series Season 1
Designated Survivor Complete Series (15 platters)
The Learning Tree
One Night in Miami
From Decal:
In the Earth
New Order
Ride the Eagle
Pig
From Digicom:
The Cold Beast Terror
From Distribution:
All Light, Everywhere
Redeemed
Minty Minty
From Dreamscape:
One Day University Corporate Culture and Strategy
Danced for the Angel of Death
From One:
Designated Survivor Complete Series (15 platters)
From Excal:
Once I Was Engaged
From Film Detective:
Frankenstein's Daughter
The Amazing Mr. X
From Film Movement:
The Real Thing
Fillbus
Say Amen Somebody
The Riffleman
The Final Set
Aalto
Sweet Thing
Cunosa
Sisters
The Early Films of Lee Isaac Chung
Wildland
Sweet Thing
From Flicker Alley:
The Beast Must Die (Argentina)
The Bitter Stars
From Fibhouse:
Dracula in Love (Shira The Vampire)
Samurai-Horons of War
Amazed by You/Shake Off the World
Baileica/Star Force
From 4Digital:
The Last Inn
From The Flood:
Alter the Animation
From Mill Creek:
I Dream of Jeanie Complete Series (12 platters)
From Gemini:
Lighthouses of Maine A Journey through Time
Over the North of Maine A Sense of Place a Sense of Time
Chummy Rich Maine Boat Builder

Ralph Stanley An Eye for Wood
Kathleen Mountain of the People
From Giant:
Alive in France
From Grasshopper:
Red Post on Escher Street
The Inheritance
From Gravitas:
The Center Gibbons and Guardians Stronger for Life
Florian's Knights
Eddie and Abbie and Ellie's Dead Aunt
Last Testament
From Green Apple:
Bridal Doves
From Icarus:
The Lockdown Hauntings
Downstream to Kinshasa
Lourdes
From Image:
Fried Barry
No Man of God
Skull The Mask
Prisoners of the Ghostland
The Banishing
Caveat
From Inalcoom:
Romance in the Wilds
Christmas in the Pines
Christmas in the Wilds
Christmas in the Rockies
Christmas on the Coast
Christmas in the Smokies
Dick
Burred Vision
Terror Eyes
3 Tickets to Paradise
Rock Paper Scissors
From Indigo:
Turns Inside Out.2: Red
Wilkin and Wilkin
The University of It All
Back to Soloz
Prisoners of the Buffalo
From ITN:
Tooth Fairy The Last Extraction
Dinosaur Hotel
Buckskin
Monsters of War
The Curse of Humpty Dumpty
The Convert
Dragon Fury
Meteo
Texas Red
From Kandoo:
All or Nothing (Mike Leigh)
From Kino:
The Screaming Woman (Olivia de Havilland)
The Victim (Elizabeth Montgomery)
Lucky Luciano
Spring Blossom
The Hanging Frisbee in North Korea
Not Going Quietly
The Big Scary S Word
Gomorrah The Series Season 1
Designated Survivor Complete Series (15 platters)
Casanova Last Love
Conator of Mirrors
On Broadway
From One:
Live at Mister Kelly's
The Big Scary S Word
Savior for Sale Da Vinci's Lost Masterpiece?
The Corp Tapes
Illustrious Corpses
Genesis The Last Domingo?
Genesis When in Rome 2007
The Enormous Turn of Mind
Who You Think I Am
The Mystery of Edwin Drood
Hemobodies
Man in the Field The Life and Art of Jim Denevan
Hope
The Fever
White As Snow
Karen Dalton In My Own Time
Night Has a Thousand Eyes
Wife of a Spy
The Deceivers
In Balanchine's Classroom
The Village Detective A Song Cycle
From Lionsgate:
Amityville Moon
The Green Knight
You're Revolting
The Road
The Titans That Built America
Survive the Game
A Single Man
From Magnolia:
The Prolegé
Tyler Perry Complete Play Collection
Needle in a Timestack
On the Rocks
Waning
Saving Sloane
Ancient Aliens Season 14
A Gift from Bob
From Mando:
Samurai-Horons of War
The East
Swan Song
Alexis a Princess
Cytotzo
From Media Blasters:
Shadow Dead Riot
Alter the Animation
From Mill Creek:
I Dream of Jeanie Complete Series (12 platters)
From Gemini:
Lighthouses of Maine A Journey through Time
Over the North of Maine A Sense of Place a Sense of Time
Chummy Rich Maine Boat Builder
Native American Healing & Spirituality Collection
Ultraman Dyno
The Match
From MPI:
Dream Fabric
Aileen Wuornos American Boogeywoman
Dangerous Assignment The Complete Series
Chernobyl 1986
Blood Conscious
Dark Shadows and Beyond The Jonathan Fryd Story
County Legends Dolly Parton
Porter Wagner & Friends
From Strike Back:
The Hidden Life of Special A
Christmas Carol
The Hidden Life of Special A
The Concube
The Old Ways
Coming Home in the Dark
From Music Box:
Ema
From MVD:
Overnight
Star of David Beautiful Girl Hunter Star Vehicle
The Django Collection
Dirty Laundry
Christmas with Bob
Broken Diamonds
Tab Hunter Confidential
Heidi
The Last Days of Patton
Savior for Sale
The Paul Newman Trilogy
The Harvey and the Glory
The Power of the Girl
The Bridge of San Luis Rey
Turns Inside Out.2: Red
Altho Into Blue
Midnight
The Fourth Victim
It Came from Below
Escape from Death Block 13
Overrun
The Mutation
From Universal:
Newst 52 Hourly
Roadrunner A Film about Anthony Bourdain
Peppa Pig Peppa Visits America
Old
Stiletter
New Amsterdam Season 3
Spirit Riding Free Spirit of Christmas
Saved by the Bell Season 1
From Vertical:
The Stand
Clarice Season 1
Mary Chapin Carpenter One Night in London
The Hayling Frisbee by Billy Manor
Sandra Day O'Connor The First
The Loud House Season 1
The Loud House Season 2
Lish Girls Complete Collection (6 platters)
Lives Lived Well
The Adventures of Jimmy Neutron Boy Genius Complete Series (10 platters)
Walker Season 1
UFO
Crime Story (Richard Dreyfuss)
Snake Eyes G.I. Joe Origins
Yellowstone Season 3
Zone 414
Babette Season 2
The Fugitive Complete Series (32 platters)
Paw Patrol The Movie
The New Years Season 1
Christmas
The Loud House Cooked Season 3/2
Under the Dome Complete Series (12 platters)
Star Trek Deep Space Nine Complete Series (47 platters)
Muhammad Ali A Film by Ken Burns
America after 9/11
Emily in Paris Season 1
Younger Complete Series (10 platters)
American Experience Citizen Hearst
From Passion River:
What Lies Ahead
From Paris:
The MVD Red Fern Grows
From Pop Twist:
Simon Marsden's Haunted Life in Pictures
From Psywik:
The Riffleman
From Quiver:
The Survivalist
Gunlight at Dry River
From Really:
The American Revolution
Origins Unknown The Alien Presence on Earth
Unleashing Hatred
Alexis a Princess Military UFO Encounters
Megalodon Great White Godfather
Alien Encounters in Ancient Egypt
From Real 2 Real:
The Passion of the Christ
Rise 67
From Secret Identity:
The In-Between

From Sony:
Escape Room Tournament of Champions
Honey Girls
The Crown Season 4
From Spinning House:
All Heaven & Nature Sing
From SRS:
Zlafofo
Night Feeder
Horror Effects Monster Make-Up/Zombie Jamboeze
Tainted Blood
Monster Seafood Wars
Dune World
Midnight 2
Hell on the Shelf
From Strand:
The Weasel's Tale
Divine Love
From Strike Back:
Overrun
From Synergetic:
La Condesa
The Long Leg
Pretty Toxic
Your Eyes Tell
From TCB:
Clark
From Time Life:
Saturday Night Live The Early Years (12 platters)
The Ultimate Richard Pryor Collection Uncensored
From TruTV:
Widow's Peak
Souvenirs
From Uncork'd:
Dory I Killed You
Dory II Killed You
The Curse of the Blind Dead
Death Alley
Zone Drifter
It Came from Below
Escape from Death Block 13
Overrun
The Mutation
From Universal:
Newst 52 Hourly
Roadrunner A Film about Anthony Bourdain
Peppa Pig Peppa Visits America
Old
Stiletter
New Amsterdam Season 3
Spirit Riding Free Spirit of Christmas
Saved by the Bell Season 1
From Vertical:
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The Hayling Frisbee by Billy Manor
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Megalodon Great White Godfather
Alien Encounters in Ancient Egypt
From Real 2 Real:
The Passion of the Christ
Rise 67
From Secret Identity:
The In-Between

Coming Attractions

The following select DVD titles are promised for the near future. How many of them will show up is never a certainty. Logical subdivisions appear unmarked within each division. Titles which did not appear on last month's list are marked with an arrow (→) and are added to the bottom of subdivisions so that the longest awaited titles appear at the top within each grouping.
From Acorn:
Ms. Fisher's Modern Murder
Mysteries Season 2
The Heart Guy Season 5
Jack Light Season 5
Hinterland Complete Series (7 platters)
From AMD:
Des
Soulmates
→For the Love of Jason
→Kevin Can Handle Himself Season 1
From Backyard Green:
The Holsten Dilemma
From Bayview:
Penitent
Fire and Smoke
Operation Carpebagbag
→Perfect Hour
→Penitent
→Poltergeist Diaries
→Ashburn Waters
→Into the Night
→Soldier Home
→Old Habits Die Hard
→Operation Carpebagbag
→Soldiers Six Stories Six Wars
→Lost & Love
From Bleiberg:
Highway Hitcher
From Brain Power:
→Dashing Home for Christmas
→Christmas with a Prince The Royal Baby
From Brainsy Pants:
Game On The History of Soccer
→Gadget Heads Journey to the Moon
From Breaking Glass:
→On the Fringe of Wild
From Buena Vista:
Free Guy
2021 National Geographic Sharkfest
National Geographic AFV Animal Edition
National Geographic When Sharks Attack Season 7
National Geographic Drain the Oceans Season 4
National Geographic Breaking Bobby Bones
National Geographic The Incredible Dr. Pol Season 19
Jungle Cruise
From Bullfrog:
→Let Them Eat Dirt
From CAV:
9.9
→Steam Room Stories Movie & Series
→Classic Gay Romance Collection