

ENTERTAINMENT

By Norman Wilner, December 5, 2011

DVD Drop: Happy Jessica Chastain day!

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Bradley Cooper, Ed Helms and Zach Galifianakis in "The Hangover Part II" (Warner Bros.)

the best of intentions but winds up the victim of its director's melodramatic inclinations.

Mr. Popper's Penguins: Jim Carrey makes his return to conventional family entertainment with an adaptation of Richard and Florence Atwater's children's book that's just a little bit smarter and better-cast than it needs to be. The penguins are adorable, and it's good to see Carrey in his comfort zone... but it's Ophelia Lovibond who steals the picture as Carrey's amusingly alliterative assistant.

Point Blank: Fred Cavayé's "Pour Elle" followed a husband who'd do anything to spring his wife from prison after her murder conviction. His new thriller plays like an echo of that film, tracking a male nurse (Gilles Lellouche) who must aid a prison break to guarantee the safety of his pregnant wife (Elena Ayana, whom you may recognize as Antonio Banderas' captive from "The Skin I Live In"). A solid ticking-clock picture with some nice twists.

Project Nim: With "Rise of the Planet of the Apes" coming to disc next week, there's no better time to consider James Marsh's Hot Docs hit about an infant chimpanzee raised by humans in a Manhattan brownstone as part of a university experiment in the 1970s. A powerful cautionary tale of hubris and compassion -- and one of the best documentaries you'll see this year.

Triple Tap: [Derek Yee's](#) marginally connected sequel to the 2000 Hong Kong actioner "Double Tap" once again revolves a battle of wits between two very good shots. This time, it's a banker (Louis Koo) and a cop (Daniel Wu) who get all up in each other's grills after the banker stops a robbery and the cop suspects his action wasn't as noble as it may have appeared. Slick and easy to watch, which is good enough as these things go.

ALSO AVAILABLE

Criterion releases Ernst Lubitsch's "Design for Living" with a spiffy new transfer and a fine set of extras, while Alliance brings the Shaw Brothers' kickass "Flying Guillotine" and "Flying Guillotine 2" to disc under the Dragon Dynasty banner and pops out a well-timed boxed set of "Steig Larsson's Dragon Tattoo Trilogy" that features extended versions of all three of the Swedish originals. And Kino ventures into goofiness with two volumes of "The Found Footage Festival," a bizarre but compelling live show in which two buddies screen awful, awful old videos for an audience.

TV

This week sees the release of the first season of VSC's "Portlandia," the fourth season of Paramount's "The Game," the fifth seasons of Paramount's "The Lucy Show" and Shout! Factory's "Designing Women," the ninth season of Universal's "[Law & Order](#)," the 14th season of Fox's "The Simpsons," a 22nd volume of Shout! Factory's "Mystery Science Theater 3000" -- this one collecting "Mighty Jack," "Time of the Apes," "The Violent Years" and "The Brute Man" and the final seasons of BBC Video's "The Sarah Jane Adventures" and HBO's "Big Love" -- the latter of which is available on its own and in a complete-series collection.

You'll also find a new volume of Warner's "Ben 10: Ultimate Alien," "The Wild Truth" and the TV-movies "Magic Beyond Words: The J.K. Rowling Story" from Alliance and "A Christmas Wedding Tail" from Anchor Bay.

BLU-RAY

Disney's "The Help," Warner's "The Hangover Part II," Fox's "Mr. Popper's Penguins," Universal's "Cowboys & Aliens" and Sony's "Life, Above All" arrive in combo editions, while Alliance's "The Debt" is BD-only. In the direct-to-disc market, Well Go's "Triple Tap" gets a combo release while eOne's "Point Blank" is BD-only.

There's some great stuff on the catalogue shelves this week: Criterion's new special editions of "[Design for Living](#)" and Alfred Hitchcock's "The Lady Vanishes," Sony's "The Caine Mutiny" and Fox's "Tora! Tora! Tora!," and a wave of combo sets from Alliance that includes Joel and Ethan Coen's "No Country for Old Men," a much-needed remastered edition of Martin Scorsese's "Gangs of New York" and the extended cut of Peter Jackson's "Heavenly Creatures." (Speaking of extended versions, Alliance is also rolling out "Steig Larsson's Dragon Tattoo Trilogy.") And Paramount releases the first three "Mission: Impossible" films in a new "Extreme Trilogy" boxed set... though I'm not sure what's so extreme about leaving out the second disc of extras that comes with the existing edition of "M:I III."

Not much HD TV action this week; just VSC's combo release of "Portlandia: Season One" and Fox's "The Simpsons: Season 14." But isn't that enough?

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