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MCN Columnists



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## The DVD Wrapup: Fright Night, Kung Fu Panda 2, Rise of Planet of the Apes, Daddy Longlegs, Meet Me in St. Louis, Branded to Kill, Circumstance ...

### Fright Night: Blu-ray

I must not have been paying attention when the first “**Fright Night**” was released, way back in 1985, causing a stir among horror buffs looking for something a bit different than the usual teenagers-in-jeopardy stuff. Starring Roddy McDowell, Chris Sarandon, William Ragsdale and Amanda Bearse, Tom Holland’s thriller may have been produced on the cheap, but it hauled in a bunch of money by parodying genre conventions, while also scaring audiences. Then, as now, “Fright Night” imagines what might happen if a handsome vampire moves into a quiet neighborhood and the only person who smells a rat is the less-than-credible kid next-door. A quarter-century later, the only thing that’s really changed is the cast, which, of course, skews younger: Anton Yelchin, Colin Farrell, Toni Collette and Iomgen Poots in the lead roles and Sarandon, who still looks as if he actually were a vampire, in a cameo appearance. This time around, even with the critics’ approval and 3D, the movie underperformed at the box office. (The similarities to “Disturbia” couldn’t have helped.) Not having a 3D-equipped Blu-ray player, I can’t say with any certainty how well the splatters and shocks might look on your stereoscopic platforms. I’m guessing, OK. In 2D, director Craig Gillespie’s adaptation looks sharp in its new Albuquerque-for-Las Vegas digs and Yelchin and Farrell make formidable rivals. David Tennant has also been enlisted as a celebrity vampire scholar who moonlights as a big-ticket illusionist in a show very much like Criss Angel’s “Believe.” With everything we now know about killing such fiends, it seems as if movie vampires are getting even more difficult to destroy. By all rights, Farrell should have been vanquished by the end of the second reel. Instead, he sticks around for the duration. The Blu-ray package adds deleted and extended scenes; bloopers; a primer on “How to Make a Funny Vampire Movie”; an overview of Tennant’s Las Vegas magic show; “Squid Man,” an extended version of the homemade movie-within-a-movie; the music video, “No One Believes Me,” by Kid Cudi; and digital and DVD copies. – *Gary Dretzka*

### Kung Fu Panda 2: Blu-ray

What’s most interesting about “**Kung Fu Panda 2**” is its long-awaited explanation as to how a goose could be the father – biological or otherwise – of a panda. The origin story doesn’t dominate the movie, but it adds an interesting dimension (4D?) to the character of Po Ping. Apparently, Po’s been too busy being the Dragon Warrior to fret over the fact that he doesn’t have webbed feet, a particularly long neck or an orange beak. It’s only during a confrontation with a powerful new supervillain that he’s prompted to seek answers to the same questions other orphans ask when they are made aware of the knots in their family tree. This isn’t to imply, however, that the sequel is overly contemplative or lacks the martial-arts fury that powered the original. It had to come up sometime and the sooner the better. It’s been three years since Po and the Furious Five vanquished the evil snow leopard, Tai Lung, so he’s had plenty of time on his paws to ponder what it means to achieve true inner peace. His potential enemies have enjoyed the same cushion of time to come up with strategies and weapons powerful enough to wrack havoc on the residents of the Valley of Peace. Not able to compete against the Po and the Furious Five

using traditional martial-arts techniques, the predatory peacock Long Shen raises the ante by introducing a mechanical weapon. The thought of a Doomsday weapon sufficiently potent to neutralize the science and philosophy governing kung fu is too much for Po to bear and he seeks refuge in his long-sublimated past. In the time it takes Po to snap out of his daze, the Furious Five has picked up the slack and held the line against total defeat. With Po at full strength and focused on the task ahead, the decisive battles are as exciting as they are fun to watch. Among the actors new to the voicing cast are Gary Oldman, Dennis Haysbert, Jean-Claude Van Damme, Danny McBride and Victor Garber. Returning actors are Jack Black, Angelina Jolie, Seth Rogan, Jackie Chan, David Cross, Lucy Liu and Dustin Hoffman. Once again, I can't vouch for the 3D presentation, but assume it is representative of the latest technology available to the smart folks at DreamWorks. The bonus material includes a sneak-peek episode of the upcoming Nickelodeon TV series "Kung Fu Panda: Legends of Awesomeness" and the animated short "Secrets of the Masters"; filmmakers' commentary; "Animation Inspiration," in which director Jennifer Yuh Nelson presents an interactive map of the filmmakers' 2008 trip to China and locales that inspired settings in the film; cast interviews; a pop-up trivia track; a primer on Mandarin; an interactive game; deleted scenes; the featurette, "World of DreamWorks Animation"; and a piece on the real threats to China's panda population. — *Gary Dretzka*

### **Rise of the Planet of the Apes: Blu-ray**

Employing every known digital-effects trick at their disposal and then some, the creators of "Rise of the Planet of the Apes" have returned to the philosophical foundation of French novelist Pierre Boulle's novel, imagining not a "planet of apes," but a seriously pissed-off collection of laboratory specimens in desperate need of a leader. The balance between humans and other Earth-bound species has become dangerously skewed on the side of the planet's most predatory animal — man — and a correction is long overdue. As the movie's final credits roll past our eyes, viewers are allowed to speculate as to how the events they've just witnessed might inevitably lead to the discovery, in 2500, of the Bizarro world prophesized in 1963 by Boulle. In his novel, a French journalist and scientist travel to the nearest star system to Earth and the red sun, Betelgeuse, where a parallel civilization to ours is dominated by a master race of apes, who treat humans as slaves and prey. The 1968 movie, which starred Charlton Heston and Roddy McDowall, takes liberties with the book, of course, but they both arrive at the same place, eventually. If newcomers to the saga are so inclined, they may want to pick up the 2011 "Rise of the Planet of the Apes" along with the 1968 edition — also available in Blu-ray — and play them back-to-back, starting with the James Franco vehicle. As origin myths go, "Rise" provides a plausible foundation, at least, for events that pick up again two millennia down the road.

Because few good deeds go unpunished in the movies, one scientist's genuine desire to help people suffering from Alzheimer's disease is manipulated by a greedy pharmaceutical concern to reap ungodly profits off Medicare providers and consumers hoping to delay the ravages of old age. Franco plays Will Rodman, the scientist whose obsession is fueled by a desire to end his father's decline into dementia. After a frightening and completely unexpected setback, largely unrelated to the drug test, Rodman is given an opportunity to start over again with the infant chimp being so fiercely protected by his mother. Rather than deal with the bureaucracy, Will decides to bring Caesar home, where he can monitor the animal's progress, while simultaneously keeping track of his dad (John Lithgow), who's also being given the medication. Miraculously, Caesar's accelerated intellectual growth parallels the old man's startling recovery. Chimps will be chimps, however, and Caesar manages to scare the crap out of the neighbors during a couple of romps through their backyards. When the old man is physically challenged by a neighbor — who's legitimately concerned about his daughter's safety — Caesar goes ape on him.

Local authorities decide that enough is enough and stash him away in what amounts to a prison for monkeys. To the public eye, the "yard" resembles a habitat in a progressive zoo. Behind the scenes, however, it's nothing more than a concentration camp, with sadistic guards and inedible chow. Anyone who's seen the commercials for "Rise" already knows that the abuse leads inevitably to a prison break and attempt to reach the forests of northern California. Anyone who decides not to stay with the movie through the credits will miss the link to the future and, ostensibly, the real point of "Rise." What otherwise distinguishes "Rise" from previous editions of the series won't be found in the narrative, as directed by Rupert Wyatt and written by Rick Jaffa and Amanda Silver. It's in the special visual effects that accentuate Caesar's humanity and animate his rage. Andy Serkis does a marvelous job as the CGI model for Caesar, infusing in the ape emotions that are indistinguishable from those of Rodman. (Fans are advised to stay tuned to making-of featurettes than explain how Serkis pulled off his Oscar-quality performance.) "POTA" buffs will enjoy the many subtle references to previous films in the series, as well as nods to other primate iconography, but the show really belongs to the chimps. Even if "Rise" is legitimately branded "PG-13," the apes' anger and revenge is frighteningly realistic. Parents shouldn't automatically think that their 6-year-olds are mature enough to handle the threatening behavior of a psycho-primate without some sort of parental guidance. Compared to these guys, the Winged Monkeys in "Wizard of Oz" are pussycats. The Blu-ray package includes deleted scenes, some with Serkis in his CGI motion-capture suit; several interesting making-of and "POTA" background featurettes; two commentary tracks; a character-concept art gallery and scene breakdown; and piece on the great apes. — *Gary Dretzka*

### **Daddy Longlegs**

As indie as indie movies get these days, "Daddy Longlegs" once again raises the rhetorical question, "If licenses are required to drive automobiles and own dogs, why aren't they mandatory for parents hoping to raise children?" In Josh and Benny Safdie's freshman feature, we watch in horror as an adult slacker, Lenny (Ronald Bronstein), interacts with his two young s doesn't during a two-week visitation period. It is a privilege he neither deserves nor is suited to perform. Like many Boomer and post-Boomer moms and dads, Lenny doesn't understand why it's risky business for parents to aspire to be their kids' BFF, especially in New York. As the prototypical man-child, Lenny doesn't expect his sons to be guided by the same rules, guidelines and middle-class conventions he, himself, ignores. Indeed, he has enough trouble being on time for his job as a projectionist, without also having to worry about picking up the kids from school on time. Then, he has the gall to berate the principal for demanding he not leave the boys alone on the streets after school and suggesting he pay more attention to their behavioral problems.

He decides to sidestep the problem entirely by pulling them out of school for a couple of days, while he joins his latest one-night stand on an impromptu autumn vacation upstate. The boys dig it as much as Lenny, but their mom is furious ... as is the woman's boyfriend, who can't imagine why they've been invited to tag along on the trip. Then, one night when he can't find a babysitter, Lenny crushes up a sleeping pill and gives it to the boys, raising the ire of the last doctor in Manhattan who performs emergency house calls for ne'er-do-wells. There's more, but you get the picture.

As appalled as we are by Lenny's lackadaisical approach to parenting, we sympathize with his desire to remain a non-conformist in a society where oddballs and lovable losers are only tolerated in TV sitcoms and movies. In some ways, Lenny reminds me of Jason Robard's iconoclastic character in "A Thousand Clowns." In the nearly 50 years since Fred Coe's adaptation of Herb Gardner's play helped inspire a generation of non-conformists — temporary, for the most part — the stakes have risen dramatically for the children of unrepentant hippies and other anti-establishment types. The Safdie's decision to record their story on a hand-held Super 16 camera recalls the films of John Cassavetes and early fly-on-the-wall documentarians. "Daddy Longlegs (a.k.a., "Go Get Some Rosemary") isn't for everyone, but it should reward viewers looking for something fresh and adventurous from a pair of filmmakers on the ascendency. The DVD set features a high-definition transfer to widescreen 35mm. projection; eight deleted scenes; the making-of piece, "The Second Stop from Jupiter"; rehearsal footage; a theatrical introduction; animations, promotional shorts and the Cannes trailer; and a 20-page booklet of art and writings, liner notes by Scott Foundas and Josh Safdie's "While They're Sleeping" 'zine, with childhood photos of the filmmakers by their father. — *Gary Dretzka*

### **Meet Me in St. Louis: Blu-ray** **Stars & Stripes Forever: Blu-ray**

There's probably no more old-fashioned way to enjoy a quiet evening at home with the family than by scheduling a double-feature of "**Meet Me in St. Louis**" and "Stars & Stripes Forever" on the home-theater set-up. You might have to drag the kids kicking and screaming to your screening room, but, for once, Grandma and Grandpa will find something to their liking on the list of new Blu-ray releases. The musical soundtracks won't blow them off their rockers and the only thing that's gratuitous is the schmaltz. Released in 1944, Vincente Minnelli's feel-good movie describes a prototypical turn-of-the-century Midwestern family – albeit, one wealthy enough to afford an extremely comfortable living – about to undergo the upheaval that comes with dramatic economic and social change. For the Smith family, St. Louis is the only city that matters. Neither as sophisticated nor as intimidating as larger cities east of the Mississippi River, St. Louis seemed the perfect place for a family whose ambitions didn't include being seen at the opera on opening night or churning out debutantes. In 1904, no riverfront city in a former slave state could possibly have been free of serious crime or racism, but Alonzo Smith knew how to insulate the womenfolk from the horrors of urban life. When Alonzo is offered a better position, in New York, the Smiths are shaken to the core. The thought of giving up their comfortable home, possibly missing out on the impending World's Fair and losing their individual identities has no appeal for them. In a very real sense, the Smiths represent Middle America's fear of life in the multi-cultural, ethnically diverse and constantly-in-flux in capital of American culture and finance. What the Smiths couldn't imagine is how much the fair would change St. Louis.

Judy Garland plays the ever-exuberant Esther Smith, who, when we meet her, is about to experience her first blush of romance, literally with the boy next door. Her older sister has been there, if not done it, and her precocious younger siblings still have a ways to go before they hit puberty. An older brother attends college back East, where he's running with a relatively fast crowd; Gramps has the time to listen to the kids' complaints and mediate differences; and Marjorie Main plays the quintessential maid, who frets over the children as if they were her own. The 22-year-old Garland, who would soon thereafter marry Minnelli, was reluctant to portray another teenager and she also worried that cute, little Margaret O'Brien would upstage her. Conscious of this, Minnelli framed his self-conscious star's big moments in ways that made her look as beautiful as possible. There's wasn't much he could do about the impossibly precious O'Brien, who Garland finally identified with as an at-risk child star. The framing device is most effective when Garland is singing the songs that would be embraced by the public, "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas," "The Boy Next Door" and "The Trolley Song." It is O'Brien who gets the ball rolling, however, with a delightful rendition of "Meet Me in St. Louis, Louis."

The restorers at Warner Home Video were able to recover all the vivid colors and contrast associated with three-strip Technicolor. The Blu-ray also sounds terrific. Among the excellent bonus features are an introduction by Liza Minnelli; commentary and interviews with historians, actors, composers and vault material with Minnelli; an interesting piece on the creation of the songs and soundtrack; substantial making-of material, including the process of adaptation from Sally Benson's New Yorker stories; many vintage Garland recollections; the WB Vitaphone short, "Bubble," with the Gumm Sisters; radio and outtake performances; the 1966 "Meet Me in St. Louis" television pilot, which blessedly never aired; a CD music "sampler"; and Digibook packaging with photographs and text.

Released eight years after "Meet Me in St. Louis," the snappy John Philip Sousa biopic, "**Stars & Stripes Forever**," similarly represented an evolutionary step forward for the Hollywood musical. They did so by using songs to advance the story, rather than allowing them to stand on their own merits and please fans who might subsequently buy the sheet music or records. Likewise, the Twentieth Century Fox production was shot in Technicolor, which is nicely recaptured in the Blu-ray. Apart from patriotic holidays, Sousa's marches aren't heard much anymore. Halftime shows at college football games now tend to showcase the same classic-rock songs that have made FM stations so dull. At the time, however, they were the bee's knees. Henry Koster's film covers Sousa's most productive period, from 1892-1900. He had resigned as conductor of the Marine Corps Band – then, as hot as any pop group today – to find fortune and even more fame as a private-sector composer and band leader. He would populate his band with the most accomplished musicians of the day, from whom Sousa demanded military-like loyalty, precision and discipline. As portrayed by Clifton Webb, Sousa may have been a fuddy-duddy and taskmaster, but he wasn't lacking a sense of humor or romantic streak with his less stern wife, played by Ruth Hussey.

Hot young stars Robert Wagner and Deborah Paget were added to the story as a nod to viewers younger than, say, 50. Wagner plays an undisciplined marine private who introduces both the sousaphone and a frisky vaudeville singer (Paget) to Sousa's civilian ensemble. As contrivances go, it isn't all that bad, although I was never clear as to whether the marine invented the instrument or merely brought the tuba-like hunk of brass to Sousa's attention. Their romance is appropriately chaste for the period and Hayes Office restrictions. If this sounds like a giant drag, you might want to hold out for the next Miley Cyrus or Jonas Brothers' movie. The musical soundtrack can't be faulted, except by haters of the genre, and the choreography of the marching formations and party dances is pretty entertaining, as well. The Blu-ray supplements add "From Our National March to the Silver Screen," "John Philip Sousa's Contribution to American Music," a press book, original advertising and still galleries and standard DVD. – *Gary Dretzka*

### **Tanner Hall**

Whenever I watch a coming-of-age movie set in a boarding school, here or in England, I wonder why some parents bother to have children at all. For all the time they spend together as a family, it's amazing they still recognize each other. Historically, kids from privileged families are enrolled in elite schools to meet the right sort of friends, create alliances with them and learn how to compete against their peers. Typically, though, the preppy students we meet in the cinema spend most of their time participating in and being scarred by hazing rituals; wondering how mommy and daddy could be so cruel; exploring their sexuality and that of their roommates; crushing on their teachers; hooking up with and breaking the hearts of the local rustics; and finding that one teacher on the faculty who remembers what it's like to feel lost, abandoned and occasionally delirious. There may be a million miles of cinematic distance between "Goodbye Mr. Chips," "David Copperfield" and "Dead Poets Society," and "If ...," "The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie" and "Lost and Delirious" – "Harry Potter," too, for that matter – but they all tend to resemble each other from a distance. Just as boarding schools serve as feeder academies for Ivy League institutions, movies about such places have served as a proving ground for up-and-coming actors. To name just a few, the list includes Robert Sean Leonard, Ethan Hawk and Josh Charles ("Dead Poets Society"); Rob Lowe, Andrew McCarthy, John Cusack, Alan Ruck ("Class"); Piper Perabo, Jessica Pare and Mischa Barton ("L&D"); and Thandie Newton, Nicole Kidman and Naomi Watts ("Flirting").

Released briefly in 2009, "**Tanner Hall**" is as formulaic a movie about life at a girl's boarding school as one could imagine. What makes it interesting, however, is a cast that includes Rooney Mara, Georgia King, Brie Larson and Amy Ferguson, all of whom are on their ways to substantial careers in film and TV. The girls of Tanner Hall are from wealthy backgrounds, but each is given an archetypal personality trait. Flavor-of-the-month Rooney made "Tanner Hall" before "A Nightmare on Elm Street" and "The Social Network," and landing the role of the young century as Lisbeth Salander in the English-language remake of "The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo." Here, she's a much-envied senior, Fernanda, who enters into a dangerous love affair with an older family friend (Tom Everett Scott), who's married and soon to become a parent. She makes the mistake of pissing off a classmate, Victoria (King), whose twisted relationship with her stepmother has lit a powder keg of hostility and menace within her. Ferguson's Lucasta hasn't fully accepted the fact that she's infinitely happier in the company of girls than boys, while Larson's Kate enjoys toying with the emotions of a teacher, played by Chris Kattan. He's married to the school's randy house mother, portrayed by Amy Sedaris, and can only be aroused by thoughts of rescuing the phony seductress from distress. Not much real teaching takes place in classes at the school, from which the girls take every opportunity to ditch, and there are no positive adult role models within a hundred miles.

In other celebrity sightings, co-writer/directors Tatiana von Furstenberg and Francesca Gregorini are descended from a similar line of corporate royalty as

Mara, whose grandfathers founded the National Football League's New York Giants and Pittsburgh Steelers. Gregorini is the daughter of actor Barbara Bach and stepdaughter of Ringo Starr, while Von Furstenberg is the daughter of fashion designer, Diane, and real-life German prince, Egon von Furstenberg. Apparently, the writer/directors based "Turner Hall" on their experiences at a boarding school. – *Gary Dretzka*

### **Come Have Coffee With Us**

#### **Body Puzzle**

#### **Murder Obsession**

#### **Branded to Kill: The Criterion Collection: Blu-ray**

Christmas has come early for fans of niche horror, extreme cult and otherwise wacked out movies from Italy and Japan. The latest package from increasingly essential Raro Video collection contains a juicy sex farce from 1970, a gory giallo from 1992 and an even bloodier giallo from 1981. From Criterion Collection comes a completely off-the-wall yakuza thriller, from 1967, which is every bit as enigmatic as anything that came out of France and Italy during the same period.

"**Come Have Coffee With Us**" stars Ugo Tognazzi ("La Cage aux Folles") as an unscrupulous tax collector in a scenic town on the eastern shore of Lake Maggiore, near the Swiss border with Italy. Emerenziano's records have led him there as he pursues love, marriage and wealth without actually having to raise a sweat. The targets of his gold-digging affections are three physically mismatched sisters, whose late father left them a huge inheritance. Not particularly young or conventionally attractive, the sisters might as well be nuns for all the sexual experience they display individually and collectively. Even as he convinces the oldest sister — painfully shy and with freakishly long black hair — to marry him, Emerenziano is plotting affairs with the other two. To his shock, the women not only go along with his whims, but begin to display insatiable desires for sex. Turns out, each of the sisters has one physical attribute that keeps the tax collector coming back for more, even when he's become exhausted. Before long, Emerenziano is transformed from cad to boy-toy. For all the bed-hopping that takes place in "Come Have Coffee With Us," there's precious little nudity. The steam we see emanating from the screen is a byproduct of the sisters' palpably volcanic passions. As far as I can tell, Alberto Lattuada's comedy didn't find distribution in the U.S. Maybe it didn't contain enough nudity to satisfy audiences whose appetite for it was growing with each new title from Radley Metzger, Kenneth Russell and the newly liberated Swedes. In any case, Tognazzi makes "Coffee" come alive in a way that will make many middle-age viewers feel nostalgic.

Lamberto Bava's "**Body Puzzle**" appears to have been targeted at English-speaking audiences looking for some garish Italian horror. It stars Joanna Pacula, as the widow of famous pianist who suddenly begins finding the amputated appendages and vital organs of murder victims in her home. Tomas Arana plays the police detective, who, while investigating the case, falls in love with the freaked-out blond. Unlike the cops, we know who's behind the attacks almost as soon as the first one is perpetrated. What's prompting them successfully remains a mystery throughout most of "Body Puzzle." That's a good thing. By 1992, the distinctive giallo texture and depictions of extreme violence weren't selling here and there was no urgency to import the movie. On DVD, however, it could find a home among hard-core fans of offbeat slasher movies.

"**Murder Obsession**" is even more garish a giallo than "Body Puzzle," as it combines slashing and dismembering with the black arts, movie magic and lots of sex. The mayhem takes place in the spooky, decaying mansion once inhabited by the star of a horror movie. Something horrible had happened here, but the details aren't precisely clear in the young man's mind. His mother still lives there with a creepy valet at her beck and call. When the son arrives ahead of a production team for his next project, he mysteriously decides not reveal the true nature of his relationship with the woman he brought with him. Things get even stranger when cast members move into the spare bedrooms and become the targets of the unseen killer. As for the nudity, two words: Laura Gemser. The Javanese star of countless soft-core classics is one of several beautiful women — it would be giallo scream queen Anita Strindberg's final movie — that disrobe here in the service of Italian genre cinema. And, for their loyalty, are cruelly dispatched. If the special makeup effects in "Murder Obsession" occasionally look prehistoric by current industry standards, the blood still looks pretty real. The movies arrive with interviews with key participants in the productions.

From Japan comes Seijun Suzuki's nearly indescribable gangland action-thriller, "Branded to Kill," in a splendidly restored edition from Criterion Collection. It is such a strange concoction that it actually caused Suzuki ("Tokyo Drifter," "Tattooed Life") to be fired from his studio position when he handed it in to his bosses. The chipmunk-cheeked actor, Joe Shisido, plays a mob assassin, Hanada, who accepts an assignment that ultimately leads to some serious backstabbing and an impromptu competition between hitmen for the title of No. 1 killer. Not being an expert on mid-century Japanese cinema, the closest I can come to a simple description is that "Branded to Kill" blends several then-popular genres in the service of B-movie existentialism. When it isn't being deadly serious, the movie is hilarious in the same twisted way that Quentin Tarantino's flicks often are. Hanada is, at once, ruthless and vulnerable. An assassin performing at Hanada's level may be capable of taking out his or her victim in ways that border on the mystical, but, as accomplished as they are, they can never be satisfied with No. 5 or No. 2. Moreover, to maintain their edge, they must forgo close relationships with other people and learn to live in the shadows.

"**Branded to Kill**" has more sex and nudity than I can recall being in similar Japanese crime pictures of the period, although we're now seeing more representatives of the so-called Toei Pink and Roman Porno genres. Suzuki pushes the borders of the conceit to the limit by requiring Hamada to breathe in the scent of boiling rice before he can become sexually aroused. He also plays tricks with music, cinematography and other atmospheric elements. The high-def digital restoration captures all of the nuances. The Blu-ray package adds several highly entertaining interviews with Suzuki, Shishido and second-unit director Masami Kuzuu, and a booklet featuring an essay by critic and historian Tony Rayns. – *Gary Dretzka*

### **Circumstance**

Life in contemporary Tehran is put under the microscope in Maryam Keshavarz' scathing drama about choices and borders, "**Circumstance**." At its most obvious level, it is a story about a brother and sister who fall in love with the same girl. Scratch the surface, though, and "Circumstance" is a heart-breaking examination of how it feels to be young, full of life and already deprived of the freedom to make meaningful choices in a world full of them. Shireen and Atafeh are high school girls with rebellious streaks that can't be hidden beneath a shawl and chador. Atafeh's liberal, well-educated and wealthy parents returned to Tehran from the United States after the Islamic revolution. Thirty years later, they are faced with the reality that they've sentenced their children to a life sentence in the same posh prison in which they now live. Lately, Atafeh's attempts to break out of that prison have been thwarted by the moral imperatives of corrupt mullahs and their ignorant thug militias. Whenever they can, Shireen and Atafeh frequent underground nightclubs, where they're free to dance, sing, smoke cigarettes and enjoy the company of like-minded people. Anyone who's seen "No One Knows About Persian Cats" will recognize the music and spirit of young Iranians, as well as the palpable fear of being busted by the morality police.

At the same time, Atafeh's brother Mehran has given up his aspirations for becoming a classical pianist and traded a heroin habit for Islamic fundamentalism. Even as he sinks deeper into the culture of spying and squealing encouraged by his spiritual leaders, there's a spark of something decent in the young man. He's aware of the girls' sexual attraction to each other, but takes every opportunity to protect Shireen and win her heart with his wealth, love and vulnerability. The American-born filmmaker knew it would be impossible to shoot "Circumstance" in Tehran and wisely chose Beirut as a reasonable facsimile. Her casting choices couldn't be more spot-on, either. Sarah Kazemy and Nikohl Boosheri are alternately radiant and tragic as the star-crossed

teens, and Reza Sixo Safai keeps us guessing as to what the brother's true intentions really are.

"Circumstance" was completed before last year's bloody protests in the streets of Tehran. Ironically, one of the young male characters – an Iranian educated at Harvard – is attempting to incite dissent by dubbing "Milk" into Farsi and showing young people how campaigns for human right are launched in America. Considering that the president of the Islamic Republic has asserted that homosexuality doesn't exist in Iran, but, if it did, gays and lesbians likely would be put to death, it's an odd choice for a rallying point. The DVD arrives with a making-of featurette and commentary. – *Gary Dretzka*

#### **99 And 44/100% Dead/The Nickel Ride: Double Feature**

1973 was a helluva year for Jason Miller, star of the newly re-released on DVD crime-thriller "**The Nickel Ride**." First, he landed the key role of Father Karras in "The Exorcist" – his performance would qualify him for an Oscar nomination — and then he won the Pulitzer Prize for his play, "That Championship Season." The next year, he was handed the lead role in Robert Mulligan's L.A. noir, "Nickel Ride," as an overwhelmed fixer for the mob. In a rare predicament, truck hijackers have been so successful in their quest for recyclable merchandise that their warehouses are overflowing with swag. It's the responsibility of Miller's character, Cooper, to find the vacant warehouse space needed to keep operations moving smoothly. For some reason, the market for warehouse space in downtown Los Angeles has turned sour and Cooper's usual sources have been unable to fulfill their promises. Another associate has reneged on a pledge to throw a fight. There's been a change in leadership in gangland circles and the new bosses have little patience for old-school guys, like Cooper, who now fears for his life. If this sounds a bit like the scenario for "The Friends of Eddie Coyle," well, stranger coincidences have happened. George V. Higgins' 1970 novel has far snappier dialogue and Robert Mitchum fit the mold of a soon-to-be-extinct mob dinosaur better than Miller in the screen adaptation, but Mulligan was similarly proficient in capturing the city's underworld milieu. Throw in a pretty blond moll (Linda Haynes), a sadistic hitman (Bo Hopkins) and an icy boss (John Hillerman), and you have a nifty example of mid-century pulp fiction.

Also released in 1974, "**99 and 44/100% Dead**" takes a pulpy premise and builds a kooky, inky-black action-parody around it. Richard Harris plays highly proficient assassin, Harry Crown, hired by elderly Mafia boss Uncle Frank (Edmond O'Brien) to eliminate chief rival, Big Eddie (Bradford Dillman). Anticipating Harry's arrival, Eddie brings in the one-armed enforcer, Marvin 'Claw' Zuckerman (Chuck Connors), who has more tricks up his nearly empty sleeve than David Copperfield. The dames are pretty swell here, too. (Ann Turkel as a school-bus driver in heels, anyone?) John Frankenheimer has all sorts of fun, messing with genre conventions, character stereotypes and interesting camera angles. Among other things, he opens the movie with a visit to Davy Jones' Locker, where the mob buries the people and things it no longer needs. There are wild chases and alligators sharing space in the sewers with homeless people. Anyone looking for a completely unconventional crime movie will find it here. – *Gary Dretzka*

#### **Heavenly Creatures: The Uncut Version: Blu-ray**

##### **Velvet Goldmine: Blu-ray**

##### **City of God: Blu-ray**

It behooves anyone whose viewing habits have been changed by the addition of a home-theater unit to keep track of new releases, otherwise they might miss the arrival of some long-awaited titles or cult gems (such as the aforementioned "Nickel Ride" and "99 and 44/100% Dead"). The good folks at Lionsgate/Miramax have just released a trio of films that are interesting for all sorts of reasons. Based on a true story, "**Heavenly Creatures**" describes how a pair of teenage outcasts in the land of the Kiwi becomes such close friends that they commit murder to prevent being separated by a concerned mother. The girls, who spend much of their time together creating elaborate fantasies, are chillingly portrayed by Kate Winslet and Melanie Lynskey (Rose, in "Two and a Half Men). The movie was directed by little-known Peter Jackson, who, eight years later, would begin rolling out a continuing string of Tolkien adaptations. As a modern horror story, "Heavenly Creatures" wasn't that much of a stretch for Jackson, who had already dabbled in the genre with "Bad Taste" and "Dead Alive," and would follow it with "The Frighteners." Even as we are repelled by their crime, it's difficult not to sympathize with the girls' situation. The Blu-ray adds 20 minutes previously eliminated footage.

Likewise, "**Velvet Goldmine**" would provide a springboard for Todd Haynes to gain mainstream attention. Previously known as the creator of the kooky "Superstar: The Karen Carpenter Story" (told with Barbie dolls), would build on the success of the exquisitely staged "Velvet Goldmine" and become a Hollywood darling with "Far From Home" and, more recently, "Mildred Pierce." Borrowing elements of "Citizen Kane," "VG" is an investigation into the disappearance of a Bowie-like pop sensation who disappeared from view after staging his own mock execution on stage. On the 10-year anniversary of that headline-making occurrence, a journalist played by Christian Bale embarks on the trail of Brian Slade (Jonathan Rhys-Meyers). Several years earlier Bale's Arthur Stuart was just another teenage fan, struggling with sexual identity and acne. He would be inspired by the music and unisex personae of the post-Beatles, pre-glam rockers who began popping up in the early 1970s. They wore makeup, colored their immaculately cut hair and aspired to be fashion icons, as well as musicians. Neither were they reluctant to flaunt their bi-sexuality and divine decadence in front of the media, which ate it up and spit them out. Naturally, the desire to one-up their fellow musicians on and off stage would lead to mad adventures fueled by hard drugs, booze and promiscuity. Only the strong survived ... but just barely.

Also very good here is Ewan McGregor, as an American rocker modeled after Iggy Pop and Lou Reed. His balls-to-the-wall approach to the music and no-holds-barred lifestyle impressed Slade immensely. That admiration would lead to a love triangle, which also included Slade's wife (Toni Collette), and be exploited by their manager (Eddie Izzard). This was topped by the arrival of the even more outrageous musician and producer, Brian Eno, in London. Lurking in the background throughout this whole crazy period was fanboy, Arthur; the ghost of Oscar Wilde; and the rising specter of anarchy and anti-fashion, as represented by the Sex Pistols. Haynes captures all of it with an eye for detail that was uncanny. The wardrobe design was wonderfully period-specific and the visualizations of rock dreams nothing short of dazzling. The music is good, too. Added features include commentary with Haynes and producer Christine Vachon.

"**City of God**" benefits, as well, from the Lionsgate/Miramax restoration and its arrival is especially timely because Rio de Janeiro is about to become the center of the sports world, hosting the World Cup and Summer Olympics in succession. Upon its release in 2002, "City of God" was one of the very few films allowed access to the city's teeming favelas and gang culture. It remains a frighteningly intimate document. The story, such as it is, is told through the eyes of a young warrior whose life is validated when he is given a camera and told to shoot what he knows. The Blu-ray adds the documentary, "News from a Personal War," which describes the impact of the drug trade on the favelas. – *Gary Dretzka*

#### **The Black Power Mixtape, 1967-1975**

I don't expect this intriguing documentary will find much traction during Black History Month, even though it's far more relevant than most of the material offered high school students. Using footage taken by Swedish documentary crews during the most turbulent period in modern American history, "**The Black Power Mixtape**" recalls how the non-violent activism at the heart of the civil-rights movement was challenged by young people who had become frustrated by the pace of change and charismatic leaders in the Nation of Islam. The assassinations of Malcolm X, Martin Luther King and Robert F. Kennedy would serve to validate the anger and impatience of militants, including the Black Panther Party and Black Guerrilla Nation. Because the American media tended to treat such vocal Black Power advocates as Angela Davis, Stokely Carmichael, Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale as commie freaks, their message remained undelivered by the media. Open displays of guns and a willingness to use them would interest the press, while corrupting the message that comes through

loud and clear in the clips in “Mixtape.” Nor was the media willing to accept the widely held belief among radicals of all stripe that the FBI had dedicated itself specifically to destroying the Black Panthers, even if it meant infiltrating local chapters and instigating violence when none was planned. J. Edgar Hoover is quoted as saying that the Panthers’ free-breakfast program was the most dangerous tactic being employed by the movement and no one in the mainstream media rose to challenge him. The agency’s COINTELPRO program, along with the subsequent rise of drug addiction and the dramatic display of establishment power at Attica and San Quentin, effectively drained the Black Power cause of its leaders, leaving nothing in its place to buoy minority citizens.

To supplement the archival footage, the producers of “Mixtape” returned to the U.S. decades later to record the impressions of artists and intellectuals who were influenced by things that happened, sometimes before they were born. Among those selected by director Goran Hugo Olsson are Talib Kweli, Erykah Badu, Abiodun Oyewole, John Forte, and Robin Kelley. It’s also interesting to hear the editor of TV Guide, a magazine not known for its insightful political coverage, defend a cover story, which, at the time, branded Dutch and Swedish television the most anti-American in the world. That the magazine was owned by one of the most powerful and wealthy men in America – and someone intimate with Richard Nixon and other presidents — was a fact ignored in the piece. While the documentary does come down on the side of the progressives within the Black Power movement, its reporters don’t fall blindly into the trap of buying into the fiery rhetoric advocating armed revolt. Its depiction of life in the impoverished communities inhabited largely by African-Americans pretty much speaks for itself. A longer film might have dug deeper into the flameouts experienced by the most charismatic and vocal leaders of the time and the reluctance on the part of average African-Americans to pick up the torch and carve a movement more to their liking. The DVD comes with a contemporary musical soundtrack, additional documentary footage and interviews. – *Gary Dretzka*

### **Intruder: Director’s Cut: Blu-ray/Astron-6 Collection**

**Jessicka Rabid**

**Klown Kamp Massacre**

**Psycho Sleepover**

In the arena of micro-budget and do-it-yourself movie making, it isn’t unusual to find a few chunks of gold among the dross and detritus formed by awful acting, cheeseball effects and pointless plots. Those moments often are reason enough to invest 90 minutes of one’s time on Earth watching them. The filmmakers would have made the movies anyway, so catching the eye of someone at Troma or Synapse and seeing their twisted little movies released into the straight-to-DVD market is hardly a disappointment. With luck, the DVD will capture the fancy of a niche blogger or discerning geeks and their endorsement will encourage buffs to rent a copy and recommend it to friends. Entire careers have been founded on less evidence of potential than that.

I picked up the Blu-ray screener of “**Intruders**” not knowing anything about the picture, except what it said on the cover about being produced by “the creators of ‘Evil Dead II.’” Beyond that, though, it was mystery? In fact, what I took to be a standard-issue, straight-to-DVD slasher flick had been made in 1989 and sent out long ago on VHS. It was directed by Scott Spiegel and co-written with Lawrence Bender, both of whom would graduate to bigger things. Among its stars were such now-recognizable faces as Renee Estevez, Dan Hicks, Sam and Ted Raimi, Bruce Campbell and Eugene Robert Glazer. “Intruder” takes place on the overnight shift at an old-fashioned supermarket in Michigan. A madman is loose in the store and it isn’t the most likely suspect, a deranged former boyfriend of a pretty blond sales clerk. What distinguishes “Intruder” from a million other indie horror flicks, before and since 1989, are the special makeup effects associated with the murders. They’re grotesque, even by today’s standards and predictive of the kind of work these people would do later. For this reason alone, the entertaining and informative making-of featurette is must-viewing. The Blu-ray edition of the uncensored “Director’s Cut” is distinguished, if you will, by a 2K digital restoration, commentary with Spiegel and Bender, extended murder sequences from the original work print, outtakes from the lost short, “Night Crew,” audition footage and a stills gallery.

Apart from being a holiday in Tolkien lore, **Astron-6** is the name of a quintet of singularly deranged sketch artists based in Winnipeg. The team specializes in demented parodies of movies, trailers and sexual stereotypes. Not only are the sketches politically incorrect, but they’re incorrect in most every other way possible, as well. As such, the troupe’s best material bares a passing resemblance to that of Kids in the Hall, SCTV and the Whitest Kids U’ Know, only far less ready for prime time. It took me a while to figure out what exactly Astron 6 was doing, but, once I got in step with the gang’s rhythm and twisted takes, I quite enjoyed what I was seeing. In addition to being faux violent, the sketches are very raunchy. Sensitive types should probably avoid it.

From Troma comes “**Jessicka Rabid**,” a truly sick and uniquely pointless torture-porn in which a young woman is kept in dog cage, brutalized and raped whenever the mood strikes her demented keepers. They include one of the men’s girlfriend, who enjoys having Jessicka lick peanut butter off her nipples ... presumably, just as she would if a real dog was doing it. The real fun begins when Jessicka escapes the clutches of her captors and turns the tables on them, and that’s not all that much fun, either. The movie comes with commentary and a making-of piece.

“**Klown Kamp Massacre**” is another movie that looks as if its budget was limited to somewhere in the vicinity of \$15,000 and most of that was squandered on crack. Given time, though, the movie begins to work a spell on you. It’s set at rural camp for aspiring clowns. The founder was humiliated on graduation night at just such a school and now teaches students the art of throwing toxic pies, squirting caustic liquids at the rubes and killing audiences with otherwise harmless props. Not even the instructors are immune from killer comedy. The DVD includes more than two hours of special features.

As if on cue, a clown becomes an early victim of slap-stick tragedy in “**Psycho Sleepover**,” and its head makes return appearances throughout the rest of the movie. As veterans of “The Janice Dickinson Modeling Agency,” Adam Deyoe and Eric Gosselin know the face of terror when they see it. “Psycho Sleepover” is insane parody of the sub-subgenre of horror films set during sleepover parties hosted by really, really skanky teenage girls. Because this one coincides with a breakout at a local prison for the criminally insane, the results are especially twisted. The sudden appearance of sexually voracious loons makes it difficult to distinguish them from the usual array of male party crashers. “PS” is more silly than scary, but some viewers might find the violence in “Psycho Sleepover” less than appetizing. If they keep repeating, “It’s only Caro syrup, mixed with water, food coloring and corn flour,” they should get through it OK. – *Gary Dretzka*

**Portlandia: Season One: Blu-ray**

**PBS: Steve Jobs: One Last Thing**

**Sledge Hammer! The Complete Series**

**Switched at Birth: Volume One**

**History: Swamp People Season Two**

**G.I. Joe: Series 2, Season 1**

**Sarah Jane Adventures: Complete Fourth Season**

One needn’t have grown up in Oregon or even spent much time in the Pacific Northwest to enjoy the IFC sketch comedy “**Portlandia**.” It does help, however, to be conversant in many conceits and conventions associated with life in one of America’s most notorious hipster colonies. Once populated with lots of hard-working, lumberjack types, Portland has been overrun by politically correct, proto-hippies who speak in gentle tones and are intolerant of (almost) all points of view that don’t square with their own. Bicycles are the preferred mode of transportation, unless their cars run on waste products or the

batteries are powered by the occasional glimpse of sunshine between rain clouds. Hipster clothing is made from natural fibers and the anniversary Jerry Garcia's death is a civic holiday. If anything, as representative citizens of Portland, Fred Armisen ("Saturday Night Live") and Carrie Brownstein (the Sleater-Kinney band) sometimes hit too close to the button and satire appears to merge with ridicule. That's perfectly OK with me, but explains how the humor might offend sensitive types. On the other hand, it's difficult for me to imagine anyone without a working knowledge of hipster culture stumbling across the show accidentally and knowing what it's about. Kyle MacLachlin plays the city's impossibly upbeat mayor, who calls on Fred and Carrie for guidance on creating a city song and ways to land a Major League baseball team; Aimee Mann appears as herself, playing a maid; and Aubrey Plaza ("Parks and Recreation"), Steve Buscemi, Heather Graham, Selma Blair, Jason Sudeikis, Gus Van Sant and Sarah McLachlan also make cameos. The Blu-ray set contains all six episodes (a new season arrives soon), deleted and alternate scenes, a blooper reel, "Thunderant" videos and commentary.

It took cancer to make Steve Jobs a larger-than-life character in the story of America. Since his death, the Apple founder has been accorded the respect and admiration generally reserved for the presidents whose likenesses are carved into a cliff on Mount Rushmore. His sins against consumer freedom-of-choice have been forgiven and his idiosyncrasies rendered folkloric. Jobs had detractors, to be sure, but his ability to turn ideas into gold for shareholders trumped most negative observations about his business practices, temperament, hygienic quirks and ability to ignore the complaints of his customers if they conflicted with his principles. "**One Last Thing**" largely takes the man at his word, expounding on his philosophies and focusing on the people who made him what he later became. The 60-minute bio-doc is built around a never-before-seen interview.

David Rasche, still one of our finest character actors, starred in the short-lived sitcom, "**Sledge Hammer!**," which ran on ABC from 1986 to 1988. The sneaky-funny Second City graduate frequently plays characters that while completely full of themselves never quite understand how silly and transparent they look to everyone around them. As Dirty Harry-wannabe Sledge Hammer, Rasche solves crimes with all the subtlety of the tool after which he's named. He's been suspended from the force several times, primarily for using weapons and interrogation techniques usually reserved for sadists in the CIA. He even fires warning shots at jaywalkers. It isn't likely that "Sledge Hammer!" could have existed without the ice-breaking done by "Naked Gun!," but the show managed to outlive its offshoot, "Police Squad!," by 35 episodes, all of which are collected here.

The possibility that a nurse or doctor may have confused the identities of babies born within minutes of each other and switched the names on their ID bracelets is a concern many parents have shared, especially if their kids don't resemble them or display sociopathic tendencies. There have been enough recorded cases of such terrible mistakes to warrant some suspicion, at least, of it having happening again. Naturally, Hollywood has capitalized on these fears and built comedies and dramas around them. The latest is the ABC Family series, "**Switched at Birth**," starring Katie Leclerc and Vanessa Marano. In it, girls from opposite backgrounds don't discover that they've been switched until they're well into their teens. One grows up in a household surrounded by all the trappings of wealth, as well as a brother, while the other lost her hearing at an early age due to meningitis. She lives in a single-parent household in a working-class neighborhood. The truth isn't at all funny or comforting to the girls, but they struggle to deal with it on a weekly basis. The show also stars Lea Thompson, Marlee Matlin, Constance Marie and D.W. Moffett.

Fortunately for the fans and producers of History's "**Swamp People**," a few alligators were left alive after the debut stanza to allow at least one more go-round in the Atchafalaya Swamp of Louisiana. In Season 2, the newly arrived gator season means it's time for Captain Troy Landry, Jacob Landry and the Edwards boys to get back in the boat and start hunting for "honey holes" and monster skins. The competition has intensified with new swampers attempting to steal their trophies out from under them. The DVD includes additional footage.

The latest collection of "**G.I. Joe**" adventures is comprised of material from the second animated TV series, which began in 1990. In it, America's top-secret mobile strike force battles Cobra, Serpentor and Cobra Commander. The set includes the miniseries, "Operation Dragonfire."

In the BBC's "Dr. Who" spinoff, "**The Sarah Jane Adventures**," investigative journalist, Sarah Jane Smith (Elisabeth Sladen), and her three teenage sidekicks combine their diverse talents to save the world from extraterrestrials. The fourth season is noteworthy as being the final one in which Sladen appears. She died of cancer, at 65, just as the new chapters were beginning to unfold, and, typical of the series, the loss was worked into narrative as a teaching opportunity for young fans. Making a guest appearance are the current Doctor (Matt Smith) and a former doctor's companion, Jo Grant (Katy Manning). The stories include "The Nightmare Man," "The Vault of Secrets," "Death of the Doctor," "The Empty Planet," "Lost in Time" and "Goodbye, Sarah Jane Smith." — *Gary Dretzka*

#### **Peter Cetera: Live: Blu-ray**

The latest addition to Image Entertainment's catalogue of "Soundstage" concerts features **Peter Cetera**, a founding member of Chicago and highly successful solo artist. The Windy City native doesn't often appear in concert, so this should come as an especially welcome treat for four decades' worth of fans. In the 2003 concert recorded here, Cetera was joined by Amy Grant. Together, they perform "Baby, Baby," "Simple Things," "Next Time I Fall," and "El-Shadaii." The singer, songwriter and bassist also offers songs from across the wide spectrum of his career, including his first hit, "25 or 6 to 4." If "Soundstage" looks particularly good in Blu-ray, it's because Chicago's PBS station was an early adopter of hi-def technology and learned out to do things right. — *Gary Dretzka*

#### **Beethoven's Christmas Adventure**

The sixth sequel in the series that began with 1992's hit family comedy, "**Beethoven**," puts the lumbering St. Bernard in a position to play the hero by saving Christmas for all good boys and girls. Crime must be rampant on the North Pole, because every other holiday DVD I see involves some kind of an attempt to derail Santa's annual mission, starting with the re-release of "Santa Claus Conquers the Martians." This time, an elf named Henry (Kyle Massey) takes an unscheduled flight on Santa's sleigh from the North Pole, with his constantly expanding bag of toys in tow. When he crash lands somewhere in Suburbia USA, the valuable cache goes missing. Beethoven and his teenage friend, Mason (Munro Chambers) volunteer to save the day. The good news here is that Beethoven finally speaks, as all CGI critters must ultimately do. The bad news is that he sounds very much like Tom Arnold. The DVD comes with deleted scenes, a gag reel, a making-of featurette and "Beethoven Goes Caroling." — *Gary Dretzka*

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1. *David Richoux* says:  
[December 16, 2011 at 10:59 am](#)

Re Stars & Stripes Forever – the Sousaphone sub plot-line is confusing because it is so historically inaccurate! The real story can be found here:

<http://www.sousaphones4ever.nl/sousaphone-hist-2.htm> Otherwise, an interesting bio-pic for the era...

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RT @CameronCrowe: Portrait of our movie father and son, just before their big fight scene in Zoo. <http://t.co/x5cUUVUav>

RT @martynpedler: The Bender-meets-God episode of FUTURAMA makes me oddly emotional.

!!! #IACAUCUS RT @ajschnack: And we have a movie.

MT @dankois: LOTS OF PUSHBACK ON MY MARGARET TWEET. But seriously if he cut 5 more scenes like that this movie could've come out in 2006

RT @TommyWiseau: Rain makes for mood of sadness. I wish for sunny days for all. My fans.



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*The sets for my next film productions have started construction. At the same time the sets are being built I am in the process of continuing to develop the screenplay for myself and my father to act in together on these very sets. He is also an actor and that is the next film I am planning to make as a director-producer. This will be the first role I write for myself to act in that will be written as an acting role as opposed to a role that was written for the character I play to merely serve the structure. But even still on some level I am writing the screenplay to be something that I can afford to make. There are two other projects I am currently developing to shoot on sets at my property in the Czech Republic. The cost of the set building will determine which one I actually shoot next. They are will all be relatively affordable yet still cinematically pleasing.”*

~ [Set-Building With Crispin Hellion Glover](#)

*“The more [Lisa] suffered, the more I connected with her and the other five people watching the film; who knows what brought them there, but given the years of circumstances that could have kept us from sharing this moment, it felt like a miracle. When [she] finally connects with someone, embracing her mom—spontaneously, against all odds and sense—in their theater packed with strangers, our empty theater seemed to swell.”*

~ [Kevin D. Lee On First Encountering Margaret](#)



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