

feature debut, plays her precocious daughter) who—in a way—speaks through the piano she has brought with her from home. After her emotionally barren husband—who strives to maintain European decorum in this jungle—abandons the piano to the wilds (a sign of how little respect he has for Ada), the couple's rough-hewn neighbor, George Baines (Harvey Keitel), buys it. Baines, with his face tattooed in the manner of the natives, is a European who has embraced the local Maori lifestyle, but he desires Ada and offers to trade the piano to her in exchange for sexual favors, to put it bluntly. But there are grave consequences to this illicit relationship. An earthy, erotic story full of passion, jealousy, and anger, *The Piano* won three Academy Awards (for Hunter as Best Actress, Paquin as Best Supporting Actress, and Campion for Best Original Screenplay) out of eight nominations, including Best Picture. Bowing on Blu-ray, this is highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

### Portlandia: Season One

★★★★

VSC, 135 min., not rated, DVD: \$16.95, Blu-ray: \$26.95

This sketch-comedy series—from indie rocker turned actress Carrie Brownstein (of Sleater-Kinney fame) and *Saturday Night Live* regular Fred Armisen—practically made Portland the capital of comic cool in America when it premiered on IFC in 2011. Brownstein and Armisen skewer slackers, yuppies, counter-culture types, activist bicyclers, and extreme political correctness of all stripes in their tribute to the city where “the dream of the ‘90s is still alive.” While the show was not a major ratings hit by network standards, it became IFC’s most talked-about original series ever, and the cable network fed the fandom by posting clips to YouTube, where some of the skits have been seen by over a million viewers. *Portlandia*’s popularity reaches well beyond the channel’s subscribers, and it’s become a cult favorite among teens and young adults (it’s also a rarity among cable comedy shows in that it doesn’t resort to sexual innuendo or crude gags for laughs). Compiling all six episodes of the first season on DVD and Blu-ray, extras include episode commentaries, deleted scenes, and outtakes. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



### Sabu! ★★★★★

Criterion, 3 discs, 286 min., not rated, DVD: \$44.95

Sabu, born Selar Shaik, was a maharaja’s young elephant driver when he was cast as the lead in the 1937 adventure drama *Elephant Boy*—based on Rudyard Kipling’s short story “Toomai of the Elephants”—produced by



Alexander Korda and co-directed by his brother, Zoltan Korda, along with pioneering documentary filmmaker Robert J. Flaherty, who shot all the location footage. The casting was perfect, with the 12-year-old Sabu riding and clambering over the full-sized pachyderm with effortless ease, displaying an exotic beauty, authenticity, and unself-conscious screen charisma that would make him a star. This boxed set features *Elephant Boy* and two of the other films Sabu made for the Kordas (the fourth, 1940’s *The Thief of Bagdad*, is available separately from Criterion). In *The Drum* (1938), Sabu plays a young prince protected by the British colonial forces in India, while *Jungle Book* (1942) is a glorious Technicolor fantasy with the now-adult Sabu—a confident and acrobatic movie star—portraying the grown orphan Mowgli, who speaks with the animals in the wild. The first two films are well-mounted and exciting, although their devotion to British colonial rule in India comes across as terribly dated. *Jungle Book*, however, is a folk tale come to life—a visual delight sporting grand imagery, with real leopards, tigers, bears, and other creatures (the Indian landscape was actually re-created in California, where Sabu swings from the vines like Tarzan). This family-friendly boxed set of classics from a bygone era is a welcome addition to Criterion’s Eclipse line, and features film notes by cinema historian Michael Koresky. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

### Seven Chances ★★1/2

Kino, 56 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95

Buster Keaton directs and stars in this 1925 silent comedy as Jimmy Shannon, a bachelor and struggling young lawyer who’s informed that he must marry by 7 p.m. on his 27th birthday—which just happens to be that very day—in order to inherit \$7 million. Turned down by Mary (Ruth Dwyer), the girl he’s long loved, Jimmy frantically searches for someone—anyone—to wed. While *Seven Chances* doesn’t boast the sustained inspiration of his best films (such as *The General* and *Steamboat Bill, Jr.*), Keaton nevertheless fills the movie with inventive moments and clever ideas, notably a series of desperate proposals (the “seven chances” of the title) leading to an outrageous finale, as a church full of hopeful brides all expecting to marry into his fortune set off on a surreal chase of epic proportions, with the hapless Keaton fleeing the angry mob of women and outrunning an avalanche of rolling stones and massive boulders—never once losing his trademark deadpan expression. The biggest weakness here is an embarrassing blackface performance that, while common for the time, is tasteless to modern eyes. Newly remastered for DVD and Blu-ray, with a musical score by Robert



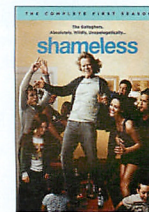
Israel, bonus features include an audio commentary, a pair of background featurettes, and two shorts—the Three Stooges in *Brideless Groom* (1947), and Edwin S. Porter’s *How a French Nobleman Got a Wife Through the New York Herald Personal Columns* (1904). A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

### Shameless: The Complete First Season

★★★★

Warner, 595 min., not rated, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, 49.99

American producer John Wells teamed up with British creator Paul Abbott to adapt the latter’s successful dramedy of a family scraping by on the lowest rungs of the socioeconomic ladder, relocating the action from Manchester to South Chicago. The Showtime series stars William H. Macy as Frank Gallagher, a perpetually drunk single father of six, and Emmy Rossum as eldest daughter Fiona, who juggles multiple jobs to manage things in his absence. It’s not that Frank—who is on permanent disability—has run off; rather, he’s simply not around, or has passed out during those rare times he’s home. The other kids do what they can to help out: Philip (Jeremy Allen White) accepts payments for taking the SAT for classmates; Ian (Cameron Monaghan) works at a convenience store; and Deb (Emma Kenney) pilfers from her UNICEF collections. Ten-year-old Carl (Ethan Cutkosky) and baby Liam are too young to add to the family till. Also stepping up to take on some responsibility is Fiona’s boyfriend, Steve (Justin Chatwin), a car thief with a double identity. While it’s not your traditional portrait of family values, *Shameless* works—creating an often compelling portrait of a household doing its best under difficult circumstances. Compiling all 12 episodes from 2011’s first season on DVD and Blu-ray, extras include an audio commentary on the pilot, behind-the-scenes featurettes, and a sneak peek at the next season. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



### Sherlock Holmes ★★1/2

Kino, 85 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$34.95

Directed by Albert Parker, 1922’s *Sherlock Holmes* stars John Barrymore in the titular role—not the first screen appearance of the best-known character in English literature, and certainly not the definitive one. Based on a play by William Gillette, a stage actor who made a career playing the fictional sleuth, it rewrites the figure’s origin and personality, making him a morally driven white knight who at one point actually falls in love with a young woman named Alice Faulkner (Carol Dempster). While

