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Argentine thrills

Nothing, not even rollercoasters or walking down dark alleys, fills us with adrenaline the way discovering, as we watch it, that a film we've never heard of before is a fantastic, incredible film. The experience is a combination of discovery, enlightenment and excitement, amplified in degrees by how unexpected it turns out to be. Take, for example, the UCLA Library, The Film Noir Foundation and Flicker Alley combination DVD + Blu-ray release, **Never Open That Door** (UPC#617311688492, \$40). Akin to uncovering an Old Master painting at a yard sale, film enthusiasts are discovering that Argentina made great movies in the Fifties that even Argentina had forgotten about, and as they become available through restoration efforts from Flicker Alley and so on, it has been pretty much one exciting cinematic revelation after another.

Like the **Alfred Hitchcock Presents** TV series, Carlos Hugo Christensen's 1952 **Never Open That Door** (*No Abras Nunca Esa Puerta*) is an anthology film with two crime tales, each an exquisite expression of suspense and guilt, presented with such Film Noir sensibilities you'd think the genre had originated in Buenos Aires and not Hollywood. The two stories, based upon Cornell Woolrich tales, are very different from one another, but each is, in a sense, perfection, succinctly manipulating the viewer's emotions to follow a deliberate path that suddenly drops off a precipice in a concluding plot twist, which was also the hallmark of the crime magazine stories that the **Hitchcock** show replicated.

In the first story, *Somebody on the Phone: Anguish* (*Alguien al Teléfono: La Angustia*), a man realizes that a woman in his life has incurred gambling debts and confronts her. The plot concludes ambiguously, but the story's emotions are resolute and compelling from beginning to end, as is the film's style. As it methodically advances from one sequence to the next, you learn along with the protagonist what has happened, and become caught up in his fury.

In the second story, *The Humming Bird Comes Home: Pain* (*El Pajaro Cantor Vuelve al Hogar: El Dolor*), three men involved in a deadly robbery escape and end up spending the night in the home of a blind woman, who turns the tables on them after they fall asleep. As she creeps around in their rooms in the semi-darkness, the silence rivals Jules Dassin's caper sequence in **Rififi**. The film is viscerally rewarding, but the relationships between the characters give it an even greater depth and resonance.

The film runs 85 minutes, so it has more time than a TV episode to embellish the characters, create links between them and enrich both the psychology and the emotional depths of their actions. Meanwhile, transferred without a blemish, the squared full screen black-and-white image is always strikingly lit, illuminating faces and moments, and then disguising faces and moments in darkness. The lighting itself seems to place you at its mercy. It is the impact of every component in the film that makes the stories so compelling. You don't just enjoy them, you want to share them with everyone you know.

The monophonic sound is a little rough and wobbly in spots, but workable. The sound is a little stronger on the BD platter than on the DVD platter, but otherwise the two presentations are pretty much indistinguishable. The film is in Spanish with optional English and Spanish subtitles, and comes with a good 26-minute celebration of Woolrich that also incorporates an appreciation of the film, and an interesting 16-minute segment on Christensen (apparently, he has a number of masterpieces just waiting to find their way onto disc...), the film's stars and Argentine cinema in the Forties and Fifties.

Argentine film expert Guido Segal supplies a solid commentary track, placing the film within the history of Argentine movies, talking extensively about the principal members of the cast and the crew and their careers, and exploring the dynamics of the two parts of the film itself, how the stories are reflected in Argentina's Catholicism (the characters make important moral choices) and how Christensen and his collaborators were eagerly absorbing the films that were appearing from other parts of the world.

He explains that the sets themselves were designed with dark components and that there was a close collaboration between the cinematographer and the art director to achieve the Noir style. "What Christensen was doing was way too dark for the time. He's kind of part of a second wave of directors in Argentina. Before him, [the major directors] were more lighthearted. This was very edgy for the time, in terms of sexual overtones, in terms of violence. There's no insinuation. We're seeing things happen."

But wait, there is much, much more! Christensen originally shot **Never Open That Door** as a three-part anthology of Woolrich tales, except that the third story ran to feature length itself, and was therefore split from the other two, the 1952 *If I Should Die before I Wake* (*Si Muero antes de Despertar*). That film has also been included on the disc, although the source material—apparently the only print that exists—has permanent English subtitles and many pronounced markings. Despite these drawbacks, this was the film that blew us away. We were screaming at the screen in excitement, ourselves whipped into a greater frenzy because we had thought we were just going to be watching a supplement, not one of the greatest films ever made.

The movie opens with what at first appears to be a tacky and dated little homily about life and fairy tales, but in reality, Christensen is telling you exactly what will happen, which is that the movie will begin with real locations but will eventually journey into studio sets, as the young hero frantically searches for the girl he wants to save. More immediately, the film calls to mind the German Expressionist films, particularly **M** (it actually quotes **M** visually in a couple of places) and, in a dream sequence, **The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari**. Tapping into the frustrated resentments not only of children, but of adults who remember when they were children, the hero cannot share what he knows about a child murderer after a close friend is killed, and is then placed in an even more brain exploding predicament when he recognizes the killer a couple of years later as the killer begins grooming his next victim. Running 71 minutes, the film again has time to really flesh out the characters, such as the hero's parents, and savor the schoolyard environment, but by the final act, the film becomes as exciting as another movie based upon a Woolrich story that Hitchcock made a couple of years later, **Rear Window**, to which *If I Should Die before I Wake* stands very much on par—a straightforward story building to a maniacally exciting climax that will not only have you biting your fingernails but in all likelihood chomping off the digits themselves.

Calling all monsters

What is most remarkable about the Warner Bros. 2024 monster extravaganza, **Godzilla x Kong The New Empire**, is that it remains coherent and entertaining from beginning to end. Directed by Adam Wingard and running 115 minutes (actually, 107 minutes before the end credits begin), it still has time to interlace three separate stories—Godzilla rampaging through Europe, King Kong exploring his 'hollow Earth' realm and discovering there are more of his kind, and the human characters also traveling to the Earth's wild, airy, fully illuminated interior in search of a psychic warning beacon—and allow the thrills of each to accumulate until they all weave together for the finale. At the same time, the characters and the monsters are supplied with palpable personalities, so that you care about their interests and respond to their wit as the story progresses.

It was the bones of dinosaurs who lived when Earth was a very different place that inspired the imaginations of humans as they began to roam the planet. Filtered by the different cultures and different religions that took hold, there was never total isolation of any culture, and less and less as technology arose. The American created Kong and the Japanese created Godzilla, but Godzilla was popular in America and Kong was so popular in Japan that he was pitted against Godzilla in another imaginative advance. Few monster icons are as purely Asian, and more specifically, as purely Japanese, as the vaguely Buddhist Mothra, but Americans embraced the enormous, benign moth with an equal enthusiasm.

Monsters (Continued)

In addition to individual cultures, the entire world has one culture that is expressed in blockbuster motion pictures, and **New Empire** taps into that culture both vigorously and imaginatively, resurrecting Mothra and others (we don't want to spoil ALL of the surprises) to populate the screen in a constant stimulation of energy and imagination. Beyond that, it is the film's aural and visual spectacle, enthusiastically accommodated by the Warner and SDS Studio Distribution Services 4K Ultra HD Blu-ray (UPC#883929817153, \$50), that gathers from the story's coherence and blossoms across a viewing environment like the explosion of an expensive firework. Letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1, the editing moves fast to hide the more fantastical aspects of the animation blending with the live action, but the 4K image is so sharp that everything looks real anyway, even though you know it can't be. Meanwhile, the Dolby Atmos sound is practically designed to be pushed past the limits of sensible playback. The mad combination of roars, screams, radioactive breath and everything that is getting destroyed in the process whips up the audio environment and the exhilaration, and yet the noises are always deliberate and are never cacophony.

There is an audio track that describes the action ("He raises the body of a dead wartog overhead. He rips it in half, drenching himself in its green blood."), alternate French and Spanish audio tracks, optional English, French and Spanish subtitles, and 71 minutes of promotional featurettes that enable you to relive the film's many highlights, in some instances more than once, without having to wade through the drama.

In compensation for the relatively vacuous featurettes, there is a fully substantive commentary track featuring Wingard, effects supervisor Alessandro Organo, production designer Tom Hammock and editor Josh Schaeffer. They share innumerable details about conceptualizing the film's different sequences and how each segment was executed.

"I really wanted to take the inspiration from my childhood of the way it felt whenever you walked into the toy aisle at Toys 'R Us or Walmart and there was just G.I. Joes, Thundercats, Transformers, all these really colorful, very neon primary colored toys that really just jumped out at you. The sensation that it gave you as a kid was just so insane. I wanted to bring that sort of color palette inspiration to this film, but I wanted Tom [Hammock] to find a way to ground that. So if you look at these sets, they're all very worn in, and lived in, and yet they still have this very over-the-top type color palette."

"We ended up trying ground our main choices of yellow & black and red & white. Really in that those are two color combinations in nature that are warnings, right? 'Don't touch.' When you think of bumblebees or poison arrow frogs. And that [the humans have] gone on to use these color combinations as warning to the [monsters] to stay away from their facilities, other than trying to fight them or shoot them."

"You see, this is why I love Tom, is because I'm like, 'Hey Tom, I want pretty colors,' and then Tom's like, 'Here's a justification for your pretty colors.'"

Morricone

If you are like us, you have hours of Ennio Morricone's soundtrack scores on your phone and listen to them constantly. Okay, you're not like us, but that doesn't mean that you won't find Giuseppe Tornatore's outstanding 2021 documentary, **Ennio**, released by Music Box Films (UPC#75177895-2021, \$30), to be a highly rewarding experience, to the point where, by its end, you may indeed start seeking out every available piece of Morricone music recorded. Running a concise 156 minutes, the film proceeds in a generally chronological fashion, beginning with Morricone's childhood (his father was a trumpeter, and so was he as a teenager—he actually plays the trumpet during a sequence in **The Bird with the Crystal Plumage**) and education (he gravitated away from performance in favor of composition). He began as an orchestrator because that was how he was trained, but he was so talented that not only was he soon orchestrating innumerable Italian pop songs, he almost single-handedly pulled Italian pop music out of the schmaltzy doldrums and into a playful distinctiveness that bordered on the experimental John Cage-style music that he and his friends were performing in their spare time (this would reach an ultimate expression in the opening, music-less sound effect-driven scene from **Once upon a Time in the West**). "The fact that my melodies were successful doesn't mean that I was wrong to be against the traditional melody." From Fifties pop, it was a natural transition to orchestrating and scoring films in the Sixties (yes, he and Sergio Leone, who had gone to grade school together and then rediscovered one another as adults, did indeed lift what Dimitri Tiomkin had done in **Rio Bravo** for **A Fistful of Dollars**, but that was just one component of the wide ranging experiments he was implementing with the film's music), and by the end of the Sixties, every Italian director wanted to work with him (there is a fascinating comparison of a key scene from **Investigation of a Citizen above Suspicion** using an initial score and then what Morricone adjusted for it). In the Seventies, every really intelligent American director wanted to work with him, in the Eighties, everybody in the world wanted to work with him, in the Nineties rock bands were playing his music, and by the next century he was performing concerts of his compositions and achieving the renown he so wholeheartedly deserved as he continued to compose and perform for the remainder of his life.

Shot before he passed away, Tornatore had Morricone's full cooperation in making the film. He had access to some fantastic archival footage from practically every stage of Morricone's life and career (a surprising number of clips from his youth have sound). Not only are there extensive interviews, but Tornatore intrudes upon Morricone's life to catch everything from the composer's morning calisthenics to scratching out a score on the fly. Dozens of others also sat for interviews, including Bernardo

Bertolucci, Roland Joffé, Lina Wertmüller, Clint Eastwood, Quentin Tarantino, Oliver Stone (who willingly embarrasses himself in sharing a story that shows how masterful Morricone was), Hans Zimmer ("How is it possible that you can recognize a piece of Ennio Morricone on the first note? He puts so much of himself into the music that even the way the strings start, you just know, it can't be anybody else."), Joan Baez ("Nobody, not knowing me directly, could have written to this exact point of my best vocal range. It's a miracle."), Pat Metheny, and Bruce Springsteen. There is an adorable segment where the Taviani Brothers sing Morricone's dance theme from their **Allonsanfan** (Feb 24), in unison.

The film also has reams of film clips, all of which not only look fabulous, but have wonderful sound. The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1 and an accommodation for enhanced 16:9 playback. The 5.1-channel Dolby Digital sound is heaven sent, and the only question is which theme will be repeating itself over and over in your head when you're done with the disc. Although there is a game attempt to have all of the Italian interviews dubbed in English, it is much more worthwhile to listen to them in Italian with optional English subtitles, even when your eyes are flitting like mad between the subtitling and the clip identifications. In addition to a trailer, the film comes with a very important 2-minute deleted scene (the only piece to mention Italy's greatest film composer, Nino Rota, who understood what Morricone was accomplishing when few others were the wiser), an enjoyable 6-minute segment of behind-the-scenes footage that show how much Tornatore was torturing Morricone to get the film just right, and a very nice 33-minute interview with Tornatore, who also made **Cinema Paradiso** (Jan 21) and essentially brings the same love of the movies and music that he demonstrated in that film to this one.

Tornatore accomplishes many things in **Ennio**. The movie is an outstanding sampler of Morricone's music, with the added bonus of intelligently deconstructing the uniqueness of his compositions. But more importantly, it is a complete biographical portrait of an artist who was truly in the right place at the right time, and grew creatively as he arrived at each milestone in his career, so that one not only takes away lessons about Morricone's life, but about the intricate needs and measures of his vocation. The only downside, for us, anyway, was that it sent us scurrying back to Amazon's digital music downloads, with a whole new shopping list for our phone.

Raoul Walsh musical romance

It might be understandable, but a misunderstanding about American movies in the Production Code era persists to this day, and is perhaps even magnified as each new day advances into the future. That misunderstanding is that films during the era were somehow less mature than the films before and most especially the film after. But while movies in the late Thirties, the Forties and the Fifties could not for the most part address sex and other touchy matters directly, that does not mean that the characters were any less grown up or worldly. Still, it is rather startling to come across Raoul Walsh's 1947 musical romance, **The Man I Love**, which has been released by Warner Bros. as a **Warner WB Archive Collection** Blu-ray (UPC#840418305614, \$22), and to see just how realistically adult the characters are. It may help that the squared full screen black-and-white picture looks terrific, with sharply defined details and nary a blemish. It also helps that a woman who was soon to make one of the rarest transitions of the era into becoming a filmmaker herself, Ida Lupino, stars without compromising her integrity, even though she was dubbed by Peg La Centra for the song numbers (she would later do her own singing in other films).

It may be difficult to wrap your head around the idea of Walsh making a romance with music, but not after you see the film. Lupino is a nightclub singer who returns to her home on the West Coast to take a break from her career in the East. She has two sisters and a brother who are all still living together. One sister, working at a nightclub along with her brother, is also caring for a son while she waits for her husband to come out of an Army hospital where he has been suffering, rather graphically, from PTSD. The other sister is younger and more interested in caring for her neighbor's baby twins than in going out on the town with her boyfriend. The neighbors have problems of their own, with the husband working late to keep the money coming in and the wife constantly stepping out to spend the money and have fun. When Lupino's character arrives, she lands a gig at the nightclub where her sister and brother are working, only to discover that the nightclub owner is putting the moves on, well, every female in the film. And then she meets the man almost literally of her dreams, a pianist she has long admired who has hit rock bottom. The music is integrated with the many nightclub sequences, and includes standards such as the title song, *Why Was I Born?*, *Bill* and *If I Could Be with You* (all of which sound terrific thanks to the solid and crisp monophonic audio track). Lupino's character goes through the ups and downs that a character in a romance would go through, and the film's appeal rests primarily on the interlaced stories of the characters and their troubles, the explicit heartaches that Lupino's character undergoes in her romance, and that plethora of recognizable songs.

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But the film is also a spire of adult sensibility, and compensates for the vaguely concocted plot complications by placing Lupino at its center. The film not only plays out through the eyes of her character, it radiates the mature acceptance of life that gives her character strength by making her its centerpiece. She comes into the lives of the other characters, helps them move forward, and then moves on herself, and it is hard to imagine any other actress who could accomplish this with quite the same amazing blend of intelligence, polish, fortitude and self-controlled vulnerability. If you didn't know before how Lupino could have possibly risen to success as a film director in an environment where virtually no other woman could succeed, after the film is over, you somehow understand, even though her character is a fictional creation.

Robert Alda, Bruce Bennett, Andrea King, Martha Vickers, Tony Romano and Craig Stevens co-star. The film runs 97 minutes and is said to include a number of minutes that were taken away from the film early on, which really isn't surprising except that, other than the PTSD scene, it is hard to determine which specific minutes those might be. There are optional English subtitles, a trailer and a different pair of gorgeous color 1946 *Looney Tunes* cartoons than what is listed on the back of the jacket, *Rabbit Transit* running 8 minutes (Bugs Bunny's take on the 'Tortoise and the Hare' story) and *Crowing Pains* running 7 minutes (Foghorn Leghorn plays tricks on a baby hawk and Sylvester the Cat).

Shanty town romance

Frank Borzage's 1933 pre-Code, Depression era romance—and yeah, it hits all of those buttons—from Columbia Pictures, **Man's Castle**, has been released on Blu-ray by Sony Pictures Home Entertainment (UPC#043396636385, \$30). Loretta Young and Spencer Tracy meet on a Manhattan park bench. Both are destitute, and they eventually settle into a shack together in a shantytown next to the East River, even going skinny dipping when they are first getting to know one another. Tracy gained prominence as an avuncular movie star. Although the films he made with Katherine Hepburn were saucy and charming, they weren't particularly sexy, and romance always felt secondary to the friendly byplay their characters would show one another. Young would also become a beacon of prim behavior later in her career, but in her pre-Code films, she was steamier than a teapot in a Turkish bath. Her character hooks Tracy's vagabond character by being totally subservient to him at all times—something that may make feminist film critics wince today, but remains a valid character construct—and in her arms he becomes the sexiest man alive. Even flashy Glenda Farrell, as a successful stage performer, tries to get her hooks on him.

Although he made a ton of films, Borzage was not just another assembly line director. He had very few peers and yet has remained woefully underappreciated even as individually his films attract substantial praise. He had a thing for filtered images, and so the squared full screen black-and-white picture often looks very soft, but that is not to be confused with a poor transfer, since it is obvious that when the camera lens is free of artistic obstruction, the image looks very nice for a pre-Code film. Borzage was all about filters, in fact, and that is what the entire movie amounts to. He is addressing Depression era audiences who may not be quite as bad off as Tracy and Young's characters, but were still struggling and looking to the movies for escape from those troubles. Borzage toys with them for a while (when you first see Tracy, he's in a tux, and later, Farrell's character is living la vida loca) but then he deftly shifts to an idealized, almost fairy tale depiction of poverty, which is another reason that Tracy's common man character serves as the film's anchor despite his apprehension about settling down and making commitments. Running 89 minutes, the film baits the viewer with escapism but then hooks them by sneakily demonstrating that sex and struggle are okay and that everything will work out so long as you listen to your heart.

Speaking of listening, the monophonic sound is workable for the film's age. The disc has no menu, but optional English subtitles can be manually activated.

Analysis

By any measure, Bobby Darin delivers an outstanding performance as an incarcerated American Nazi in 1943 in the 1962 United Artists feature, **Pressure Point**, an MGM Blu-ray (UPC#810134948723, \$22). Produced by Stanley Kramer, who had a reputation for making 'message' movies, and directed by Hubert Cornfield, Sidney Poitier plays a prison psychiatrist who helps Darin's character get over the nightmares and blackouts he is having, but then suspects the cured patient is still harboring his basic hatred beneath a better managed façade. The film is told in flashback, as Poitier's character is advising a fellow doctor played by Peter Falk on another case, and shares his story the way therapists often share stories to help you work through your problems. Shot on a low budget, Darin's character tells stories about his childhood and describes some particularly weird dreams (John Huston's **Freud** also came out in 1962, and this seems in some ways a parallel creation), but many are depicted on a pitch black stage with just the items and people required for his stories in view. The film could easily be taken as an over-the-top tale about race relations and the difference between obvious prejudice and hidden prejudice, but the thing is, none of what the film is exploring has disappeared a half-century later, from Americans embracing Nazism to successful black men still encountering alignments that disregard the value of their input. Poitier won awards for other films, and even more importantly, broke through boxoffice barriers with others, becoming, for a while, a bankable star. This film came out before any of that happened, and all of the factors that would lead to his success are there in his presence. Darin, however, was often disregarded as an actor, even though he did manage to garner secondary attention in a few films, because of his overwhelming career as a pop star. But most of the 89-minute **Pressure Point** is just the two performers together in a cramped office space, tackling issues and feelings that people would still rather sweep under the rug or otherwise ignore today, and while you can label the film as a message movie, that shouldn't be a reason to ignore the pleasures of watching two exceptional actors unleash the power and unnerving precision of their dramatic craft.

The black-and-white picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.66:1 and is in spotless condition, with sharp contrasts and smooth blacks. The monophonic sound is clear and crisp, and there are optional English subtitles.

Indigo Velvet

Look at the two platters contained in the Criterion Collection 4K Blu-ray release of David Lynch's **Blue Velvet** (UPC#715515298919, \$50). The top of the standard Blu-ray, which is a duplicate of the Criterion BD we reviewed separately in Jul 20, is decorated with the blue velvet robe worn by Isabella Rossellini in the film, which also serves, as if it were a drape or curtain, as the backdrop for the film's opening credits. It is a pure, deep blue. Now look at the 4K platter, which has the same artwork, except that the robe is indigo, darker and with a touch of violet in comparison to, well, what it ought to look like. As it turns out, from start to finish, the differences in the color transfers on the 4K presentation and the standard BD presentation are fully replicated on the backs of those two platters. In the film's indelible opening montage of flowers and a fire truck, the colors 'pop' on the standard BD, as they should, while they are slightly subdued on the 4K presentation. A film about the darkness of men's souls, Frederick Elmes's cinematography is intended to echo that darkness, and where details are still clear in low light on the standard BD, the shadows tend to overwhelm them from time to time on the 4K image, despite the presentation's enhanced crispness. That enhanced crispness also serves to amplify the film's natural graininess, which is evident on the standard Blu-ray, but less noticeable than it is on the 4K presentation. If there is a difference in the 5.1-channel DTS sound between the two versions, we could not detect it.

There is nothing outrageously wrong with the 4K presentation. The 1986 feature, also starring Kyle MacLachlan and Laura Dern, with Dennis Hopper as an especially scary drug dealer, is about being on the cusp of adulthood and learning that adulthood has some serious and unexpected drawbacks. Lynch balances the film on that cusp, creating a wonderfully disturbing drama that shifts sneakily between drawing upon a viewer's nostalgia for the freedom of adolescence's final stages and recognition of the blunt realities of adult lives. The great advantage of the 4K format is that it enables a viewer to tap most readily into a filmmaker's subliminal creative dynamics, and on that level, the unspoken emotions of the characters, the exquisitely sexual atmosphere and the wonderful ironies of perspective on American culture are all genuinely enhanced by the power of the 4K disc's delivery, even if, at the same time, some of the 120-minute film's other distinctive pleasures are lost.

There are optional English subtitles, and as with the standard BD—on the instructions of Lynch, apparently—there is no chapter encoding. To recap the special features that appear on the standard BD, there is a 55-minute collection of deleted footage, a 70-minute retrospective documentary, an 89-minute behind-the-scenes piece, 18 minutes of audio-only reminiscences by Lynch, a 16-minute interview with composer Angelo Badalamenti, and another 16-minute collection of retrospective interviews.

Most film directors love movies. That's why they chose a career to make them, and they cannot help but be influenced by their favorite films, or films that left impressions upon them, particularly in childhood. When they make movies, they do not replicate those films, but they have ingested what they have seen, and the influences of those films seep out as they go along, affecting their choices. Anyone sitting through **Wild at Heart** (Jan 05) would immediately recognize Lynch's familiarity with **The Wizard of Oz**, but his interest in the 1939 classic has actually made an imprint upon virtually every film or TV show that he has made, as is demonstrated in the spellbinding program released on Blu-ray by Janus Films and The Criterion Channel, **Lynch/Oz** (UPC#715515294317, \$30).

The movie's director, Alexandre O. Philippe, has made a number of movies that deconstruct genres or specific films, and his works are sheer confection for anybody obsessed with cinema. Running 110 minutes, the film is divided into five distinctive segments, each hosted by a different narrator, including film critic Amy Nicholson and filmmakers John Waters, Karyn Kusama, Rodney Ascher (who made the outstanding deconstruction of **The Shining** that we reviewed in Dec 19, **Room 237**), and the filmmaking team of Justin Benson and Aaron Moorhead. As Philippe explains in a 17-minute interview that also appears on the disc and basically functions as a sixth segment, he interviewed the individuals first to get their input, assembled their ideas and had the individuals formally record his edited transcriptions of those interviews for the narration. He then set about matching what they had to say to film clips. Hundreds of film clips, all of which look fantastic with the picture transfer, always sharp and vividly colored (and always presented in their proper aspect ratios). There are oodles of excerpts from every feature-length movie and TV series that Lynch made, except for the marvelous **On the Air** (Feb 94), and of course there are lots of clips from **The Wizard of Oz**, but there are also clips from a dazzling, peripatetic array of other features, from **It's a Wonderful Life** (which also has strong parallels to not only the structure of **The Wizard of Oz**, but its popularity over time) to **Suspiria** and **After Hours**.

It is both the job and the joy of film critics to draw parallels between specific movies and other experiences, whether those experiences are other movies or other aspects of life. In **Lynch/Oz**, you are bombarded with ideas, perspectives and insights from those parallels. The program examines how **The Wizard of Oz** became a shared social experience throughout America in the late Fifties and Sixties, to why its images, moments, and concepts have continued to be reflected both consciously and subconsciously in so many other films. And it also examines Lynch's filmography to reveal the incredible depth and breadth that his film art has achieved—how in almost every one of his films, the more often you examine what he is presenting, the more you see and the more possibilities for exploration, inside and outside of yourself, you want to take on. That he was often channeling **The Wizard of Oz** is just one very small part of his creative acumen, but it is an ideal key to unlock an initial door of the whole, and to draw back a few symbolic curtains (see above). If ideas excite you, every moment of the program is a thrill.

The 5.1-channel DTS sound has a full dimensionality and there are optional English subtitles. A trailer DTS is also included. Annoyingly—you'd think, by now, Criterion would have wised up—the program does not start up where it left off if playback is terminated.

Return of King

During the recent frenzy of American Blu-ray releases of Chinese martial arts features, we came across one film that stood out significantly from the rest, combining the usual creativity and elaborately energetic action scenes with a unique and genuine sense of art that embellished the film not only visually but seeped into the souls of its characters, King Hu's **Come Drink with Me** (Apr 22). As it turns out, Hu, who also made the fabulous **A Touch of Zen** (Sep 16) and **Dragon Inn** (Sep 18), belongs in the same breath as the other great filmmakers of the world. His works are both exquisitely composed and deeply considered, and make compelling home video programs that show off the intricacies of your delivery set-up—well, the visual components, at least—while providing endless possibilities for revisiting his masterworks of art and pleasure.

Eureka has now released Hu's enormously fun 1975 swordplay feature, **The Valiant Ones**—considered by many to be the last of its genre—on Blu-Ray as a *The Masters of Cinema* title (UPC#760137153009, \$40). Running 106 minutes, the film may be set in pre-technological times, but it is in effect a procedural. Japanese pirates are terrorizing the coast of China, so the Chinese emperor assigns a very competent officer to shut them down. He assembles a crack team and methodically works his way up the hierarchy of the villain's organization, busting small bandit teams at first, and then getting them to spill on their superiors until he reaches the island hideout of the primary bad guy (wonderfully embodied by Sammo Hung as if he were channeling John Belushi). By 1975, blood was flowing freely in martial arts features, but Hu sticks to the old style—people get sliced and arrows fly, but nothing splatters. No matter. The fight scenes are constant and exhilarating, while the personalities of the heroes are engagingly delineated, even when the characters themselves, such as the only female in the group, remain guarded. It is Hu's mastery of filmmaking that makes the movie so enjoyable from start to finish. The pacing is smart and involving. By the time the film reaches the point where two of the heroes, in the villain's lair, are presented in a 'friendly' manner with a successive array of opponents, so much has already passed that the sequence works both as a breather and as an advancement to the next level of the narrative, while at the same time presenting one dazzling set-to after another. By the time the sequence is finished, you wonder how Hu can possibly top what just occurred, and that is when it is time for the final battle.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1. The outdoor sequences are crisply photographed and transferred, turning the different locations into exotic, mythic settings, while the indoor sequences have lovely solid colors and sharp details. The monophonic sound is reasonably good—the musical score, by Yun-Dong Wang, is excellent, but the recording conditions were less than ideal and its range is tentative at times. The film is in Mandarin, with optional English subtitles. Asian movie expert Tony Rayns provides a decent 24-minute overview of the film and Hu's career. Also featured is a good 22-minute celebration of the film's fight sequences ("Hu adds to these techniques an intensified montage approach, which gets increasingly abstract as **The Valiant Ones** goes on by lighting bits of the action, by trimming shots down to a fraction of a second and by pushing characters to the very edge of the frame, forcing the spectator's eyeballs to ping pong from one side of the screen to the other."); an interesting 21-minute interview with stunt performer Billy Chan about his training and career, and working with Hu; a good 26-minute interview with actor Ming-choi Ng about working with Hu, along with another 4-minute interview with Ng; another 26-minute summary of Hu's career that also goes over the projects that were never realized; and a decent 17-minute interview with actress Feng Hsu from 2003 about her career in film.

Chinese film authority Frank Djeng supplies excellent commentary track, providing thumbnail profiles of the cast and crew members, identifying locations, translating the film's cultural and historical references—as well as the idiomatic language used by the characters—and going into detail about the plot to demonstrate how Hu manages to slip in character development where other directors would only be worried about the action and getting to the next scene. He also deconstructs the action scenes and explains how Hu shot them (substituting doubles for the heroes so that they seem to be all over the place at once), and breaks down various passages from the musical score to point out the references and reasoning behind the compositions.

Djeng also explains that Hu shot two films concurrently to save on production costs, using the same locations and much of the same cast (though not Hung) and crew. The other film, **The Fate of Lee Khan**, which came out first in 1973, is available from Film Movement as a *Classics* title (UPC#850003924212, \$35). It is a more intimate film, and more significantly, where **Valiant Ones** had just a single actress in a major role (and even then, she is more of an addendum to one of the male characters, although she is clearly her own woman), **Lee Khan** is not only filled with them, but is arguably more about them than about the male characters. The film is set primarily at an inn, although there is a nearby somewhat desert landscape where several fights are staged. Li Hua Li is the innkeeper, with Hsu, Angela Mao and Helen Ma as members of the staff, who are intent upon stealing a document with battle plans being transported by an important official—the title character. We were surprised that we kept on thinking about **Casablanca** as the film played out, not just because of the plot device of the document and the fact that a foreign power—the Mongols—are ruling the land and the local inhabitants are secretly in rebellion (and the inn is positioned next door to a desert). It was also because Hu's staging of the scenes in the inn's dining and gambling area, it's main hall, are as intricately organized as Michael Curtiz's blocking of the nightclub scenes in the 1943 feature. He lifts and drops the camera onto one table and another, sometimes looking at separate little dramas and sometimes revealing that characters separated by a few tables are actually working in unison. All of the characters coming and going have distinctive personalities, and even the villains are personable. And then, doing Curtiz one better, there is an exquisitely choreographed brawl. Running 106 minutes, the film is tremendously entertaining, and while it does not have the sense of scope or historical heroism that **Valiant Ones** conveys, in depicting a lesser incident it is still a rousing and satisfying tale of patriotic action.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1 and an accommodation for enhanced 16:9 playback. The color transfer looks terrific, with sharp hues and accurate fleshtones. Outdoor sequences are slightly softer than indoor sequences, but otherwise the image looks great. There is a 5.1-channel Dolby Digital soundtrack in both Mandarin and English. The enhanced mix breaks out the film's musical score in a very entertaining manner and also adds a slight surround dimensionality to background noises and voices. The application is spotty, but good fun. There are optional English subtitles, two trailers and a passable 16-minute appreciation of the film.

Shot at the same sprawling Korean monastery as the 1970 **The Shaolin Plot** (Apr 24), Hu's 1979 **Raining in the Mountain**, another Film Movement *Classics* Blu-ray (UPC#850003924663, \$40), is in part a caper film about stealing a rare scroll (the robbers even use the same hiding spots that the characters in **Shaolin Plot** did), but that is just a small component of its many, many pleasures. It is also a courtroom drama (set outdoors!), an amazingly choreographed martial arts action film (there is a chase through the forest that is shot mostly from a distance, but is as uniquely beautiful as it is exciting), a comical farce (one gag, about characters not seeing one another as they walk past partitions, comes straight from Laurel and Hardy) and, above all else, a serious, spiritual tale about the transition of leadership at the monastery. One of the joys of watching the 121-minute film, which also brought to mind **Hara-kiri** (Feb 13), is unraveling exactly what it is about while the story, which is not the least bit complicated, unfolds, so the fewer details shared, the better, but it is without question one of Hu's best films—which is saying quite a lot—and highly entertaining from beginning to end. The performances are marvelous, the locations are compelling and Hu's seemingly effortless style is transfixing.

Hsu, Yueh Sun, Lin Tung and Chia-hsiang Wu star. The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1. While the film has undergone an extensive restoration, colors remain somewhat pale and the image is soft in places. These shortcomings are not enough to spoil the entertainment, as the image stable and free of wear. The monophonic sound also has a limited range, but is workable. The film is in Mandarin and comes with optional English subtitles, a trailer and a good 18-minute introduction to the film and its Buddhist themes.

There is also a full commentary by Rayns, who focuses his talk primarily on the film's spiritual themes, Hu's career and Hu's artistry, comparing his unusual editing in **Rain on the Mountain** to innovations he utilized in other films. "He definitely is a craftsman and the fact that he designs and edits his films himself is to the point. You can find daring examples of innovative film language in [Hu's] earlier films, notably **The Valiant Ones**, which plays interestingly with patterns of repetition in shots. He breaks continuity in order to underline moments by simply repeating the shot from a slightly different angle several times in that film. Equally, in **Fate of Lee Khan**, for example, there are those very elaborately contrived tracking shots taking in complicated action at different stages of the track. That's much more ambitious than most of what was going on in Chinese cinema at the time and marks him out as a craftsman innovator. He's a man who thinks about film language, chooses a film language appropriate for the subject, and works it through in quite daring and innovative ways that are not restrained by tradition. What he does have in common with tradition is a reluctance to think in terms of master shots and cutaways in the Hollywood way. He tends to edit in camera almost in the sense that he sets up shots that are designed to be edited later. I think we have to think of him as one of the leading artists in Chinese cinema. He knows how to create history. He doesn't try to psychologize these characters from the ancient past, but he places them in stories which play out elemental power plays between them. He creates fictions in which the tensions between them are dramatized by conflicts, but also by visual contrasts, visual oppositions. So he plays things out in terms of color, in terms of rhythm, in terms of patterns of editing. He has a whole battery of visual strategies which are certainly craftsman-like, but I would contend they are also very creative because I would contend this is a filmmaker who insists on the primacy of visual expression."

In the same way that Hu made **The Fate of Lee Khan** and **Valiant Ones** at pretty much the same time, he also made **Raining in the Mountain** in conjunction with his epic 1979 ghost story, **Legend of the Mountain**, available from Kino Lorber and Kino Classics on Blu-ray (UPC#738329230197, \$30) and DVD (UPC#738329230180, \$20). The film runs 191 minutes, and there is no action for the first couple of hours, but from its opening frames (a lovely montage of mountainscapes from sunrise to sunset), it is a mesmerizing exploration of the hazy boundaries between the natural world and the spirit world. A scholar is asked to copy a 'sutra' that will release the souls of the dead, and is sent to a remote castle where he will be undisturbed in his labors. When he arrives, however, the daughter of the housekeeper seduces him and very quickly he is married to her. Later, he becomes friendly with another girl at a nearby tavern. Neither woman, however, is what they seem, and soon they are battling one another to get a hold of his manuscript. The film does eventually explore the backstory and the psychologies of the characters involved, but it mostly presents itself as a dream tale, very much like **Spirited Away**, where one oddball thing after another occurs, all within a magnificently haunting natural environment and empty, aged structures. It would be completely understandable that a viewer might reject the pace and coherence of the narrative, but the film is an imaginative adventure that can be fully engrossing and highly rewarding if given a chance.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1. Colors are bright and fresh, but the image is soft in places. Not helped by a constant and sometimes menacing mist, the picture can look very sharp in some shots and then softer in others, a variation that does not impact the pleasures of the Blu-ray, but are exacerbated by the DVD playback. Generally, however, the presentation, which underwent an elaborate restoration, looks terrific.

The film's musical score, by Dajiang Wu, is outstanding, and not just in comparison to other Chinese film scores. For one thing, the music, too, is epic in its construction, a full orchestral rendering of Chinese motifs that plays constantly within the film, pausing only for the occasional explosion. The score has the flourish of the mountain vistas, but is adeptly detailed to support the action on the screen, and its abundance of melody and unique instrumentation is another component in the film's excitements. At one point, the women battle one another with cymbals and bongos. The sound effect mix is also quite impressive, delivering distinctive footsteps and other incidental sounds, as well as environmental noises, and again, the BD provides a stronger delivery than the DVD. The film is in Mandarin, with optional English subtitles. Along with a trailer, there is a nice 5-minute montage of promotional materials and production photos, an excellent 18-minute overview of Hu's career and the film's production by Travis Crawford, and a similar 21-minute talk by Rayns.

Another Swedish director from the Sixties

The second of Sweden's three most accomplished filmmakers of the Sixties and Seventies has finally been given his due on Blu-ray with the Criterion Collection release of two beginning films and two monster international hits in a four-platter set, **Bo Widerberg's New Swedish Cinema** (UPC#715515286213, \$100). All four films are in Swedish with optional English subtitles.

Widerberg's first film, *The Baby Carriage* (*Barnvagnen*), from 1963, is a messy but ultimately satisfying feature about a teen pregnancy. It is very much a film made by young people about young people, as young filmmakers all over the world were doing at that time. Sweden's third most accomplished filmmaker in the Sixties and Seventies, Jan Troell, was the cinematographer. While the film has scenes that lack coverage or are simply dead ends, it eventually coalesces into a coherent tale in which the heroine, played by Inger Taube, matures and comes to terms with her life first as a pregnant mother-to-be and then as a single mom. The two young men in her life, the pop musician who impregnated her, played by Lars Passgård, and the bipolar son of a well-to-do art dealer, played by Tommy Berggren, also mature over the course of the 95-minute feature, with the film's point being that Taube's character is her own person and learns that the life she wants is more achievable if the men are kept in abeyance. Shot in the working class areas of Malmö, in a squared full screen black-and-white image that is crisp and spotless on the BD, and accompanied by a lovely and clean monophonic jazz score from Jan Johansson (a fair portion of the scenes are shot without sound), the film is a worthy start to a promising career, presenting a memorable slice of unremarkable lives made worth sharing by the gradual clarity of the exposition.

Widerberg and Troell co-directed their first film, a 30-minute black-and-white short from 1962 entitled *The Boy and the Kite* (*Pojken och draken*), which is also included on the platter, with a 3-minute introduction from Troell. Also set in the less glamorous parts of Malmö, it is a lovely, simple depiction of a day a boy spends with his father while his mother is in the hospital awaiting the arrival of a sibling. Most of it is set in a semi-industrial waterfront area where the father has a fishing shack. While the father attends to chores, the boy wanders around, meets a friend, and eventually flies a kite that the father puts together for them. Not only is the film told with the same clarity and texture that carried over into *Baby Carriage*, but Widerberg and Troell elicit exceptionally natural and effective performances from the kids, making the piece ideal for sharing with one's own family or young acquaintances, regardless of the subtitling.

Also featured in the supplement is a quick 2-minute interview with Widerberg about the film and transitioning from critic to filmmaker, and a 15-minute summary of Widerberg's career.

Widerberg's 1963 *Raven's End* (*Kvarteret Korpen*) has an autobiographical feel to it and is about a young writer, played by Berggren, coping with his father's alcoholism and the poverty of his lower class Malmö neighborhood. Set in 1936 (although some of the shirts look like they came from the Sixties), Widerberg's own daughter, Nina, barely past being a toddler, has a small role. Running 101 minutes, the film presents several interesting characters and a series of strong, fairly well acted scenes, but it is a downer and fairly dreary as a whole. In one of the two supplements, Widerberg (with his daughter on his lap) talks with a TV reporter in a black-and-white promotional interview running 7 minutes in which he says, "I think everyone else makes lighthearted films about refined society and I wanted to make a movie about average people. The film is partly about money, about people who are not well off, on the brink of destitution. Directors don't make films like that anymore."

The full screen black-and-white picture is in excellent condition, with crisp contrasts and no apparent wear. The monophonic sound is okay. There is also an 18-minute interview with Berggren from 2021 about the three films they worked on together and what Widerberg was like behind the scenes.

Widerberg's biggest blockbuster hit was a tragic romance set in the Nineteenth Century and based upon a true incident involving an AWOL Swedish military officer and a circus tightrope walker in Denmark, the 1967 *Elvira Madigan* (upon hearing the title, those who are film fanatics will of course immediately picture a midnight horror movie hostess portraying a New York City police detective...). Shot in color, the film opens with Widerberg's daughter again, not much older than she was in the previous film, observing the two lovers in a grassy field (for a moment, you think they might be dead already), as Wolfgang Mozart's *Piano Concerto #21* wafts lyrically around them, Widerberg being almost single-handedly responsible for placing the tune in 'classical music's greatest hits' anthologies. Berggren stars with Pia Degermark, and while they roll around a lot in fields, their strikingly white Nineteenth Century outfits never accumulate a single grass stain. Widerberg is to be admired for his counterintuitive approach to the story. He never shows how the couple met or how they became attracted to one another. Instead, for 90 dreamy minutes he just follows them around the Danish countryside (sharp-eyed viewers will spot the locations from a number of Danish films) as they gradually run out of money and get hungrier and hungrier, but never loose their sheen. Yeah, it's a terrible movie, with a ubiquitous score that makes you want to blow your

own brains out, but in its day the film was an innovation, giving you a terrible tragedy without making you pay for it graphically, and the two leads are attractive enough that you don't really mind spending your time admiring them.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.66:1. The color transfer is excellent, with precise fleshtones and solid hues. There is a minute of black-and-white behind-the-scenes footage with sound, a 21-minute interview with cinematographer Jörgen Persson from 2021 about working with Widerberg and how they pulled it off (they were inspired by the paintings of Pierre-Auguste Renoir), and a cute 5-minute television interview with Widerberg from 1967 conducted by children (who were smart enough to point out that the movie does not show how the couple met).

An ideal double bill for *Matewan*, *Ådalen 31* is another true story, about a 1931 labor strike in several Ådalen area-based lumber mills that ended in tragedy. Most of the 1969 feature, which was also a big boxoffice success, depicts a specific family that must cope with the pressures the strike is placing upon their livelihood, and like *Raven's End*, there is an age strata to the drama, where the smallest children are oblivious to the conflict, the teenagers that the film pays most of its attention to are inconvenienced and the adults are stressed out. Running 115 minutes, the film depicts a lyrical summer in their lives, but with more characters to follow, it has more narrative intricacy than *Elvira Madigan*, as well as a more elaborate sense of humor, and is a great deal more rewarding. The film is not perfect. Among other things, the fate of a teenage girl (who has modern bikini lines, incidentally) is never revealed, and while the chaos of the riot scene is understandably hard to follow, the confusions could have been reduced with better coverage. Indeed, it feels near the end like Widerberg is barely hanging onto the different plot threads he has attempted to shoot, but his ambitions pay off. Presented with an aspect ratio of about 2.4:1, his crowd scenes are impressively populated, and the film transitions beautifully from the inconsequential experiences the characters share over the course of the summer to the very consequential catastrophe that concludes it, changing not just their own lives, but Sweden as a whole.

The picture looks gorgeous, again with precise fleshtones and fresh, solid colors. We spotted one fleeting, nearly invisible vertical line, and otherwise the source material appeared to be free of wear. A 4-minute television interview from 1968 features Widerberg and union official Hjalmar Näsström, who was present at the actual conflict, talking about the incident and Widerberg's preparations for the film, and includes newsreel footage from the historical event.

Hong Kong action

In 1975, Queen Elizabeth and Prince Phillip conducted a Royal visit to Hong Kong. An enterprising filmmaker grabbed a widescreen camera and shot as much footage as he could possible get of the visit, usually from afar, even with the ubiquitous Hong Kong zoom lens (the two best shots are saved for the very end). Then a script had to be put together that could incorporate the footage. The 1976 Hong Kong production directed by Shan-hsi Ting, **A Queen's Ransom**, released on Blu-ray by Eureka! (UPC#760137153016, \$40), appears at first like an incoherent mess. A group of international assassins led by George Lazenby plot to kill the queen. The Hong Kong police are on to them, but are also frazzled in a dozen different directions by the Queen's visit and other events. The film feels slapdash and ridiculous, jumping from one idea to another and doing everything possible to match what is going on with the footage from the visit. At least there are enough action scenes to avoid boredom. But then, remarkably—and you have to hang in there for quite a while to get to it—every story point makes complete sense and nothing is confusing at all. Well, nothing important, anyway. There are loads of fights, explosions and chases, and even though it is using a very popular narrative trope, it does so with such cleverness that to say any more would spoil the pleasure the film brings to anyone who is willing to trust that the filmmakers know perfectly well what they are doing.

Angela Mao, Jimmy Wang Yu, Pei-shan Chang and Bolo Yeung are among the many stars in the film, which also, among other things, has one sexy sequence set in a room with the greatest black-and-white wallpaper ever to grace a film's production design (or, in this case, location scouting). Really, the film would be worth it just for the wallpaper if nothing else. The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1 and the color transfer is excellent. Yes, the cinematography can be uneven at times, but colors are always very fresh and fleshtones are finely detailed. In addition to all of the exhilarating violence, there is nudity, as well.

Two versions of the film are presented. The *Hong Kong Theatrical Version*, in Mandarin, runs 98 minutes and has a second English audio option, while the *Export Version* is in English only and runs 92 minutes. Surprisingly, it is the *Hong Kong Version* that has the more elaborate sex sequences. The English dubbing is different on the two versions, and while both are a bit awkward—even for Lazenby's scenes—the dubbing on the *Export Version* is better. The *Export Version* does not have optional subtitling. Also featured is a trailer and an interesting 16-minute interview with martial arts trainer Michael Worth, who talks about working with Lazenby a few years after the film was made and relaying what Lazenby had to say about his career and the people he'd worked with and knew, including Bruce Lee.

Worth is also joined on a commentary track by Chinese films expert Frank Djang over the *Hong Kong Version*, while Hong Kong action film enthusiasts Mike Leeder and Arne Venema supply a commentary over the *Export Version*. Both talks are very rewarding and do not substantially overlap, making it well worth one's while to treat them as one extended talk. Worth discusses the skills of the various players, while Djang fills in wonderful technical information about everything from the Queen's visit to why the use of sugar cubes in the film has prominence, and he also supplies quick and efficient background information on the cast, the crew and the locations. Leeder and Venema approach the film more as fans, but explain why their enthusiasms are justified, while also sharing more gossip about the individual players, pointing out many of the plot's dubious occurrences and celebrating everything from the quality of the transfer to the fearlessness of the performers.

Terror marathon

Kino Lorber Incorporated has released a quadruple bill of glorious Forties thrillers through Paramount as a two-platter *KL Studio Classics* Blu-ray, **Republic Pictures Horror Classics** (UPC#738329266523, \$50), and another triple bill of fantasy thrillers from the Fifties and Sixties in a similar two-platter Blu-ray, **Sci-Fi Chillers Collection** (UPC#738329266578, \$50). If individually the films are lacking in cinematic élan, they make up for it, as is said, in volume. In each film, there is such an earnest attempt to give viewers what in concept might be a thrill (while spending as little money as possible) that you rapidly begin to accept both the limitations and the efforts presented. And then very quickly, the more of them you watch, the more of them you want to see. On all of the features, the monophonic sound has no significant drawbacks and there are optional English subtitles.

Each of the four **Republic Pictures** films has a squared full screen black-and-white picture that is reasonably sharp most of the time, but is periodically visited by speckles, scratches, blemishes and other markings, although never to the point where the appeal of the film is compromised.

Erich von Stroheim is a mad scientist trying to keep the brains of monkeys alive in a castle. In Arizona. With tumbleweeds blowing across the portcullis. Yes, he eventually graduates to a human brain. Do we really have to say any more? Well, yeah, we should, because the 1944 *The Lady and the Monster*, the opening title on the first platter, is the first screen adaptation of Curt Siodmak's novel, *Donovan's Brain*, and while it is neither as cheesy nor as famous the later 1953 version featuring Lew Ayres and Nancy Davis (Aug 89), it is definitely just as wacky. Richard Arlen is the lab assistant whose mind becomes possessed by the brain in the large glowing beaker, and Vera Ralston, who actually has top billing, is the ward or something of von Stroheim's character, and is in love with Arlen's character. Directed by George Sherman, with cinematography by John Alton (the 1953 film was badly overlit, while this one is nice and dark—the 'brain' is never clearly seen—with Alton pointing a light up from the ground on Arlen's chin to show he is possessed), the 86-minute film goes on a different tack once the brain takes charge, as it guides Arlen's character to retrieve funds kept in local banks as if they were Swiss accounts (he just needs a number to open them) and then hire a lawyer to defend a young man from a murder charge. How the young man is related to the brain is one of the film's revelations, but what happens to the young man is left unmentioned by the otherwise helpful voiceover narrator at the movie's end. The plot is constantly shifting gears and making sharp turns, and the farther it gets away from the limping and obsessed von Stroheim, the less stimulating it becomes, but the loopiness of its premise has an enduring appeal.

Genre movie experts Tim Lucas and Stephen R. Bissette supply a thorough 60-minute online discussion about the film and its cast, going over brain movies and possession movies, as well, along with the nature of the film market in the day and how the movie has been perceived over the years.

Bissette and film historian Gene Michael Dobbs provide a passable commentary track, too (although Bissette repeats a lot of the information he shares in the segment with Lucas), dissecting the pluses and minuses of the film and going into the more interesting stories behind some of the cast members, including von Stroheim's storied career and Ralston's relationship with Republic's boss, Herbert Yates. Although they do not have much to say about Sherman, for the most part they cover everything that might be of interest, from the history of Siodmak's bestseller (Humphrey Bogart wanted to get the rights) to the story of how it was Republic that forever improved movie fistfights.

All things considered, the 1945 *The Phantom Speaks* is not a bad film. Stanley Ridges plays a renown scientist investigating the paranormal who visits a Death Row convict the day before execution and promises he will try to bring the killer's soul back from death. A couple of months later, he does indeed make contact, but very soon the dead man's spirit is not only possessing him, it is making him murder the people who sent the guy up the river. Arlen is the film's hero, a reporter who is dating the scientist's daughter and starts to piece together what is happening. Directed by John English, the film is careful to leave everything so that it could just about be that the scientist has gone mad, but that is enough to make every fantasy sequence valid, and while the film is in some ways predictable, it has a fair amount of suspense and a nice array of characters. Running a succinct 68 minutes, the movie delivers most everything you would hope from it.

Lucas provides a solid commentary track, primarily going over the backgrounds of the cast and crew, but always drawing links to their previous and future intersections, while also talking about the film's production history, its similarity to the *Donovan's Brain* story and other pertinent points of interest, such as the plethora of 'phantoms' in Forties culture.

After Val Lewton and Jacques Tourneur's 1942 *Cat People* (Nov 06), Hollywood thought feline horror features were the cat's meow, and Republic climbed onto the scratching post with the 1946 *The Catman of Paris* on the second platter, in which the something suggested by the title is terrorizing the streets of Nineteenth Century Paris at night, killing people and leaving deep claw marks. While pros will spot most of what is going on right away, with period décor, a great can-can dance number at the opening, and some decent performances, the 64-minute production, directed by 'B' movie stalwart Lesley Selander, is the most satisfying and accomplished of all seven films, and it also has the best scream.

Film enthusiasts David Del Valle and Miles Hunter supply an engaging commentary track. They are not overly enthusiastic about the film, having been disappointed with it in their youths when they were ravenous for 'horror films' on TV, but they generally appreciate it for what it is and go over the legacies of the cast and the crew. Even though they think the film comes up short ("There's a lot to like. It's just a weak story that doesn't quite know how to scare you or what a monster is."), they do praise what the film manages to accomplish. "The fact that it has been so overlooked, I think there is much to appreciate with it. I've always enjoyed it, and it's not long enough

to really get on your nerves. For us, looking at these movies of this period, it's like looking into another world. Life is not like this, people are not like this. We might as well be looking at an alien race. These movies all had a charm because they were made at a time when people took a little bit more time with civility and culture. It's that fairy tale charm."

Robert Livingston is a doctor and Adrian Booth is a nurse in the 1946 *Valley of the Zombies*. They are also a couple, and get blamed by the police when a fellow doctor is found dead and embalmed, especially when another corpse shows up in their office in the same condition a little time later. Directed by Philip Ford, the film has a strong and steady sense of humor, with Livingston and Booth playing directly into that like a comedy team, but it is also filled with frights—the actual killer is quite a creepy guy—and deftly balances the humor and the suspense to create quite an entertaining concoction for its 56-minute running time. Ian Keith, Thomas Jackson and Charles Trowbridge co-star.

Del Valle and Hunter supply another commentary, again enjoying the film while also pointing out its shortcomings (they don't think the comedy component is all that funny), and using the film to discuss the nature of horror films in the Forties and the different variations that the various studios applied to the genre. They also talk about the cast (with extra praise for Keith, whom they feel should have been a greater horror star) and the story's specific idiosyncrasies.

A second commentary by Lucas complements the first one effectively, as he generally goes into different details both about the film itself and the backgrounds of the cast and crew. His attention to minutia is rewarding. "As you can see here, there was no futzing around with 'day for night' on this set. This is actually night, and it's actually helpful when [Booth's character] points out there's a locked gate somewhere in front of them. It's hard to see. Rather than waste time trying to light the location, the dialog acknowledges the limited visibility of the environs and even rejects the notion of using a flashlight. It must have been a conscious decision to play with the darkness, to plunge the audience once and awhile into pitch black, 'Just for the yell of it,' as the old advertisements used to say."

What happens when you go spelunking in the Caribbean? You discover voodoo zombie cave dwellers, of course, as well as a fungus—or the runoff from an array of large, broken washing machines—that turns ordinary local farmers and anybody else stuck in the cave into the monsters in the 1957 *Unknown Terror*, which opens the first platter on **Sci-Fi Chillers**. Unaware of all of this, the heroes, played by John Howard, Mala Powers and Paul Richards, go on an expedition to search for the brother of Powers' character, who was hunting for the source of a myth. After coping with uncooperative locals, they meet a sleazy doctor (with a very pretty wife) who seems to know more about what is happening than he lets on, but encourages them to go exploring, expecting that they will never return. Fortunately, they have the skills needed for survival. Directed by Charles Marquis Warren, the film takes a while to set things up (nicely augmented by the unstated competition between the two women for Richards's character), and is never even the remotest bit scary or suspenseful, but as a hokey adventure, it has enough silly charms to tickle your fancy for its 78-minute running time.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1. The image is crisp and very clean. Other than one reel-change point that has some vague wear, the picture is in great shape. The film's first act includes a pair of enjoyable numbers by Sir Lancelot King of the Calypsos, which will have you bobbing in your seat and pondering how low the film plans to go.

Bissette provides a very thorough and intelligent commentary track, going into detail about the members of the cast and crew, and talking extensively about the history of fungus movies and fungus stories. He cleverly compares the film to **Bad Day at Black Rock** and ponders the film's reputation as a laughable genre offering as he also points out its underlying sexual dynamics.

Ross Martin—the second banana on the **Wild Wild West** TV series—is a scientist working on solving world hunger when he is killed in a traffic accident. His father, played by Otto Kruger, is a top-notch brain surgeon and his brother, played by John Baragrey, is a skilled electrical engineer, so in no time at all they put his brain into a robot and flick the switch in the 1958 *Colossus of New York*, the companion film on the first platter. Produced by William Alland and directed by Eugene Lourie, the film at least dabbles in both a moral exploration—lacking a 'soul,' the robot is no longer interested in solving world hunger and thinks just getting rid of starving people would be more efficient—and an emotional exploration—the robot feels compelled to interact with both the wife (played by Powers) and the son of the scientist. The robot also wants to murder the brother, who was putting moves on the wife. While we could not go so far as to say that the film is scary, the crude robot makeup remains fascinating even after numerous close-ups, and in certain lighting conditions he does strike a somewhat chilling figure. The film only runs 70 minutes, so it does not overstay its welcome and on the whole, it delivers a decent amount of what one would be hoping for watching it in the first place.

The black-and-white picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1. While there are plenty of sequences where scratches and speckles pop up, overall the image transfer is very sharp and smooth, and looks real nice. Along with a trailer, there is a commentary track featuring folksy film historian Tom Weaver, who also incorporates recorded reflections by film experts and interviews with the original filmmakers read aloud by others. Extensively researched, Weaver has plenty to say about the cast, the crew, the film's production and the movie's antecedents (it purposely recalls **The Golem**), and he takes great delight in pointing out the film's incidental flaws (a body appears on the floor right before the robot starts zapping the people around it). "Poor *Colossus of New York*. The cast members I talked to either didn't remember it or didn't like it. The producer didn't like it. The director apparently hated it, or perhaps just hated his memories of making it. Even the composer didn't think it was very good. Looks like the only people who like it are the people it was made for, us, and in the Twenty-first Century, we still do."

Lucas and Bissette also have another 63-minute Internet conversation about the film, which they point out has plenty of similarities to *The Lady and the Monster*. It is a very erudite conversation, going over the careers of the cast and the filmmakers, and examining the film's resonant themes.

You know you are in good hands when less than 3 minutes in, the hero arrives at the surface station for an underwater laboratory and is told, "There's something odd going on down there, that's for sure." Embarrassingly, Kino neglected to include the film's title on the **Sci-Fi Chillers** second platter menu, even though it is the only film on that platter, but it is well worth pressing "Play" to access the 1966 telefilm-like *Destination Inner Space*. Scott Brady, who, um, has a rather difficult time getting the aqualung strap to fasten across his bulging wetsuit belly, is sent by the military to investigate an unidentified underwater object that the lab has been tracking, and faster than you can say, "**Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea**," a colorful monster is aboard the lab, wreaking havoc. The monster's very first appearance is actually a pretty good scream, and if the rest of the 82-minute film is as silly as all get out, well, hey, there's lots of underwater footage, the lab is shaped like a cross and has no immediate ceilings or any evidence of hallways, and the color picture, letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1, looks pristine way up the film's penultimate shot, which is suddenly quite grainy as if they had intended to put the end credit scroll there with opticals, as Brady and Sheree North start making out, but then decided to wait for an underwater shot to do it. Gary Merrill—who apparently stopped trimming his eyebrows when he started living underwater—co-stars, with Wende Wagner, Mike Road and, as the lab's housekeeper (he runs around in a chef's hat, picking up messes), James Hong. Directed by Francis D. Lyon, the surface station may look like it is actually a rusting barge sitting in visibly shallow water, and the establishing shots of the lab look like they were staged in a fish tank, but like they heroes themselves, once you go down below, you are trapped without escape until it is all over, and much happier to be there.

Lucas and Bissette have another video conversation, running 38 minutes, explaining that the film was pre-sold to TV, but was always intended for theatrical release first, although it basically has the lighting and graphics of a telefilm. The also provide pertinent information about the cast and the crew, discuss the film's most memorable moments, go over the context of films and TV shows set underwater, and analyze what works in it and what comes up short. They also mention that the BD is the first time since the film's limited theatrical release that it can be seen in widescreen. "I think the presentation does enhance it."

Finally, Del Valle is accompanied on a commentary track by film expert Stan Shaffer, viably comparing the film to **The Thing from Another World**. They talk about the cast and about Lyon, but eventually they shift into primarily remarking about the action on the screen and sharing gossip about the actors, particularly Merrill, basically celebrating the film's irreverent spirit. "Let's be frank. In these movies, usually the guy in the monster suit is like in the back parking lot, smoking a cigarette, and while he's doing that, all this expository stuff is being filmed, you know, to kind of give you a little breathing time until his next appearance. But what I like about *Destination Inner Space* so much is that we do see a lot of the monster once he is introduced."

A Frenchman in L.A.

If you aren't interested in the Seventies, then the movie probably isn't going to do much for you, but Jacques Deray's fantastic, totally stoned 1972 action thriller set in Los Angeles, **The Outside Man**, has been released by Gaumont and Kino Lorber Incorporated as a *KL Studio Classics* two-platter Blu-ray (UPC#738329265311, \$30). Not just Jean-Louis Trintignant, but the Jean-Louis Trintignant from the early Seventies, stars as a hitman called in from Paris to kill an important mobster, only to discover after he performs the job that another hitman, played by Roy Scheider, now wants to kill him, so he goes running to a stripper played by Ann-Margret (dressed like a female impersonator) for help. All three performances are in character, yes, but more importantly, the performers are being their movie star selves as they act their parts, and either you are like us and are bedazzled by all three of them, or you at least have a passionate fondness for how one of the three comports him or herself on screen. And it doesn't stop there. Angie Dickinson co-stars (although she is under used), along with a marvelous group of supporting players including the young Jackie Earle Haley, Georgia Engel, Michel Constantin, Alex Rocco and Umberto Orsini. Felice Orlandi, who played the assassinated witness at the beginning of **Bullitt**, is wonderful as the cop trying to piece everything together, and John Hillerman and Talia Shire have brief parts. Trintignant's character performs the hit early on in the 111-minute feature, and from that point forward, most of the film is about Scheider's character trying to catch up to him. While the narrative, partially written by Luis Buñuel's collaborator Jean-Claude Carrière, is relentlessly linear (and sneakily satirical), it is also meticulously logical, so that even though Scheider's character seems to appear again and again out of nowhere, there is always a valid reason for why he is there. The chases are visceral, with all of the wonderful early Seventies cars, outfits, road signs and urban blight in the background. And between each extended piece of action, the story starts to come together. No, the film is not a masterpiece, but it is a wonderful, sensible absurdity that only a foreigner coming to America and wishing to fit in could accomplish, and no other movie is exactly like it.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.66:1. The color transfer is fine. The image is not vividly fresh, but colors and fleshtones are accurate, and what aging there seems to be fits in so precisely with the era that it probably isn't aging at all. The monophonic sound is in passable condition and there is a Michel Legrand electronic boogie musical score that is as skimpy and inadequate as it is you-wouldn't-have-it-any-other-way ideal. There are optional English subtitles and an American trailer.

The second platter contains the French language version of the film, *Un Homme Est Mort*, which runs 110 minutes. There are no significant differences between the two versions, and the image quality is the same on both. You do get

Trintignant's voice, but it mostly just makes a good excuse to watch the movie again. The trailer for the French version (which has more pizzazz than the American trailer) appears on the platter, and there are optional English subtitles.

On the English language version, there is also a commentary featuring Seventies film enthusiasts Howard S. Berger, Nathaniel Thompson and Steve Mitchell. Although Berger has a couple of brain freezes (he confuses **Romeo and Juliet** with **Love Story**), the commentary is near perfection, admiring the film for the time machine that it is and celebrating the artists who put it together (while they discuss the presence of Ann-Margret and Scheider in depth, they speak less about Trintignant than about Rocco, Haley and a couple of the other supporting players). A chunk of the chase sequence was shot at Pacific Ocean Park, a popular Los Angeles amusement park that had closed down after a series of fires. "This was used as a location, or this part of Santa Monica was often used on cop shows. One of the things I kind of like about this, and maybe Deray liked it, too, it sort of feels like a sun-baked version of post-War Europe. And once again, what's great about this is that it is sort of a little insight into the city that was. Those high rises in the background are representative of where the city is at now. Talk about faded glory."

All-star British crime thriller

A 1954 British crime thriller produced by Romulus and picked up by United Artists, "**The Good Die Young**," released on Blu-ray by MGM (UPC#8101-34948761, \$22), begins with four men in a car planning to rob something that is yet to be identified. But it does not return to the crime until the final third of the 101-minute Lewis Gilbert feature, as the focus shifts to flashbacks exploring the troubled marriages and money problems that have led the four men, free of criminal records, to turn to crime. Jack Clayton was an associate producer with a major billing credit, and the film has a wealth of movie stars that would make the movie worthwhile even if the plot were not as compelling as it is. Laurence Harvey is the mastermind, an aristocrat locked out of his inheritance by his spiteful father (disturbingly played by Robert Morley) and unable to stretch the patience of his wealthy wife, played by Margaret Leighton, any longer. Richard Basehart, in one of his best performances, plays a veteran who leaves his job in New York to come overseas and in effect rescue his wife, touchingly played by Joan Collins, who is being manipulated by her resentful mother (a wonderfully nasty Freda Jackson). John Ireland is an American airman who goes AWOL after his wife, a movie star played by the marvelously earthy Gloria Grahame, becomes more glaringly unfaithful. And Stanley Baker is a promising boxer who cannot find work after he hurts his hand in the ring and doesn't know how to support his loving wife, played by Rene Ray. Two of the relationships are beyond help, and the film dawdles on them for the sake of salaciousness, but the other two are just challenged by fate, and the more the film explores them, the more achingly tragic the end becomes when the crime and its suspenseful aftermath get underway. With its stellar cast, wide ranging romances (which are effectively intercut as the men gradually meet one another in a pub to drown their sorrows) and tense action, the film is a real and surprisingly forgotten gem.

Unfortunately, the squared full screen black-and-white picture could use a bit more polish. Always soft looking and occasionally visited by scratches and speckles, some sequences also have an irritating outline around the faces and hands of the performers. Overall, the film is still watchable and is just too good to pass by, but the presentation reflects the film's trash bin past. The monophonic sound is workable, and there are optional English subtitles.

Belmondo stunts

Predating Jackie Chan, Jean-Paul Belmondo does his own cringe-inducing stunts in Henri Verneuil's 1971 **The Burglars**, riding on the outside of a bus in busy traffic as he is being chased by the cops, and then later tumbling down a long steep hillside with rocks rolling all around him. Verneuil always makes sure to place the camera where you can see, clearly, that it is Belmondo risking life and limb like Buster Keaton. Two versions of the Columbia Pictures film have been released on a two-platter Blu-ray set by Sony Pictures Home Entertainment (UPC#043396636422, \$30), the *U.S. Version* and the *International Version*, each appearing on its own platter. Skip the *U.S. Version*. It runs 114 minutes, has pronounced grain and pale colors, while the *International Version* runs 126 minutes, has much less grain and bright colors. There are no major differences in the two presentations so far as the dramatic content is concerned. The *U.S. Version* trims some of the conversations here and there to pick up the pace, and the ending has been shortened slightly, but all of the major scenes are in both presentations.

If it had better colors, the *U.S. Version* might be preferable, since you get Dyan Cannon's voice and wonderfully cackling laugh, as well as Omar Sharif's voice, and other than the action sequences, the locations and the stars (Robert Hossein is also featured), the film is not very good. Shot in Piraeus and Athens, Belmondo's character and his team crack a safe to lift a fortune in emeralds, only to discover that the boat they had arranged for their getaway is in drydock. Sharif is a cop who is on to them but won't pounce until he can locate the stones, and Cannon is a model that Belmondo's character picks up at his hotel while he's killing time. There is some running around, but often times the individual scenes between the action seem pointless, and the film isn't anywhere near the fun as Ennio Morricone's musical score makes you believe it will be.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1. The image on the *International Version* is not perfect, but it looks nice enough to not be a distraction, while the quality of the *U.S. Version* is a complete turn off. On both, the monophonic sound is fine, and on both, while it is not offered in the menu, there are optional English subtitles that can be activated or, in the case of the *International Version*, which is in French with Belmondo's voice, deactivated. The *U.S. Version* also has a Spanish language track.

Don't judge a Blu-ray by its cover

Arrow Video has replicated the original promotional artwork for the covers of their 4K UHD Blu-ray release of the 1995 suspense thriller, **Mute Witness** (UPC#760137152811, \$50), and for their standard Blu-ray release (UPC#760137152828, \$40), so it's not their fault, really, that the artwork is horribly misleading. Depicting a face with the lips sewn tight, the artwork implies that the film is some sort of torture porn thriller. It doesn't help that the brief descriptions of the plot give the premise as the heroine having surreptitiously seen a snuff film being made and is now on the run from the killers. That part is true, but the film has no real gore of any consequence. It is a bit violent at a couple of points, but nothing anywhere close to being as gruesome as the jacket cover. On the other hand, it is brisk, exciting and lots of fun. Shot in Moscow, Marina Zudina is a makeup artist on the set of an American film being shot on a soundstage. She can hear perfectly well, but for reasons gratefully left unexplained, she cannot speak, using sign language to communicate with her sister (who is married to the director) and jotting on a notepad to everyone else (Zudina was a Russian actress, but you'd never know). Forgetting a prop one night, she goes back to the soundstage and that is when she sees a woman actually being raped and murdered. The murderers see her, and the chase is on. Running 97 minutes, the plot takes on some more elaborate complications after a while, but the entire story happens over just one long night and the editing keeps things moving forward even if it means jumping ahead from time to time and letting the viewer get caught up on the fly. Directed by Anthony Weller, the film is a basic, solidly entertaining thriller with a slightly exotic setting and some nice performances (most of the cast is unknown, but Alec Guinness, with less than a minute of screen time, is spellbinding), and should not be judged by the misconstrued concepts of its now long dismissed marketers.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1. The picture on the standard BD is slightly brighter than the picture on the 4K image, bringing out more detail from the shadows. Whether that will be enough to compensate for the subliminal advantages of the 4K presentation, especially as it supercharges the excitement, will be up to individual viewers and the sizes of their screens. The film's look is purposefully grimy and drab, but since the film is set at night, the added detail and, as a corollary, slightly truer hues on the standard BD might make a difference in the entertainment. The stereo sound has a basic dimensionality that contributes effectively to the film's tense atmosphere on both versions. There are optional English subtitles; a small collection of promotional photos in still frame; two trailers; the entire 3 minutes of footage that Weller shot of Guinness; 8 minutes of location scouting footage with live sound; a 25-minute investor promotion reel that focuses on selling the talents of the filmmakers and includes clips from a number of animated pieces Weller made in his childhood and beyond; and two thorough run-throughs of the genres the film is tapping into (from moviemaking thrillers to heroines that can't speak) and the many movies (with extensive clips) that similarly dabbled in one such category or another, running a total of 34 minutes ("If you've ever actually made a movie yourself, you'll agree that sometimes the process of production is infinitely more horrifying and traumatic than any fiction that might end up on the screen.").

There are two commentary tracks. One, emceed by the late film enthusiast, Lee Gambin, features production designer Matthias Kammermeier and composer Wilbert Hirsch, who share many interesting details about the day-to-day shoot and about the film's production strategies.

The other has Weller by himself, talking about the cast, his own career and how he staged various sequences. He also goes into how rampant the corruption was in Russia even back then, having to pay extra for what had already been promised almost every step of the way. He shot the Guinness sequence, incidentally, nearly a decade before making the rest of the film, on the fly after he met him the day before. "It's the first shot of the first feature film I'm ever shooting in my life and it's a close-up of Sir Alec Guinness. It can't get better than that."—Except that he forgot to say, 'Action,' so Guinness just sat there until someone wised up.

MacLean spy thriller

A Universal Cold War thriller from 1961 produced by Richard Widmark, who also stars, directed by Phil Karlson and based upon a bestseller by Alistair MacLean, **The Secret Wav**, has been released by Universal and Kino Lorber Incorporated as a *KL Studio Classics* Blu-ray (UPC#73832925-0928, \$25). The rest of the cast is German, with Senta Berger being the most recognizable co-star. "Filmed in the danger zones of Europe!" proclaims the wonderful ad artwork that Kino has replicated on the disc jacket. Would that the film could live up to such excitements. The black-and-white feature was shot mostly in Vienna and has more wet, shiny cobblestones than **The Third Man**. The normal MacLean hero is three steps ahead of everyone around him, but Widmark's character is the opposite. Owing money to bookies and possessing skills from his days in the military, he agrees for a price to help a respected professor defect from Hungary, and starts the task by seeking out the professor's daughter, played by Sonja Ziemann, who is living in Austria. Posing as a reporter and his secretary, as soon as they get on the train to cross the border, they are targeted by the authorities. The film runs 112 minutes and there are none of the clever twists and turns one normally expects from a MacLean tale. Widmark's character just sort of stumbles through things and only survives from luck, so that it is hard to measure what is accomplished by

the end, even though he technically succeeds, and ends up in a promising relationship, as well. The film is pretty much the opposite of **The Spy Who Came in from the Cold** in terms of literary depth, psychological complexity and even realism. But it does have a surprisingly good John Williams musical score, lots of great location shots, loads of atmospheric cinematography and production design, and a narrative that keeps moving forward regardless of how much sense any one moment actually makes.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1. The image is free of wear and is reasonably sharp. The monophonic sound is adequate and there are optional English subtitles and a trailer. Sixties film enthusiasts Howard S. Berger and Steve Mitchell supply a commentary, finding a lot more to like in the film than we did. They talk extensively about Karlson's interesting career and his propensity for hard-edged violence, and they talk a lot about MacLean and the adaptations of his novels, as well as providing their usual insightful reflections on the other members of the cast and crew (it was Williams' second feature score, although he'd done a lot of television), and they discuss the context of the film's release, which occurred before the spy fad came even close to getting into high gear, although they don't mention **The Counterfeit Spy**, which bears at least a few superficial similarities (and is a much better film).

Action in Afghanistan

Almost all of history's recorded wars, and certainly all of the ones that America has been involved with, have been depicted in the movies. In the past century, however, the movies actually had to live with wars and process the experience, initially as much for catharsis as for entertainment. Usually, it takes about a decade for the one to give way entirely to the other, because it requires objective viewpoints to extract the entertainment value entirely from the horrors of combat. We absolutely guarantee that someday there will be several fantastic movies made about the war going on in Ukraine, but we may not be around long enough to see them.

America's incursion in Afghanistan lasted an unusually long time, nearly a generation, and films about the experience have been equally varied in the perspective of time. One excellent film that had largely passed under the radar has now been released as a well-deserved *4K UltraHD* Blu-ray by Warner Bros. and SDS Studio Distribution Services, Nicolai Fuglsig's **12 Strong** (UPC#840418303443, \$25). The 2018 feature was made before America had entirely withdrawn from the country, so its end credit wrap up will feel a little skewed, but it is about the very first ground operation in Afghanistan by American troops after 9/11, when a unit was assigned to assist a warlord (and direct the smart bombs) in breaking through positions held by the Taliban and gaining control of a major northern city. Based upon a carefully researched book, the film's value beyond its invigorating action sequences is its historical viewpoint. The film explains clearly why America was going into Afghanistan, the attitudes of the American soldiers assigned there, the problems they faced and how they started their campaign. The fact that there are movie stars in the primary roles, including Chris Hemsworth, Michael Peña, and Michael Peña, enhances the entertainment significantly, speed dialing the emotions of responsibility and brotherhood, and keeping the 130-minute drama lively and involving. When Hemsworth's character must leap onto a horse like the Red Rascal, lead a charge to rouse his discouraged Afghan allies and take out a fortified Taliban position, it becomes an indelibly heroic moment, not just for this movie for all war movies.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1. Not only is the image transfer precise, but the 4K playback sharpens a viewer's attention during the action sequences and makes them even more exciting than they already are. The DTS sound has a vigorous mix and is finely detailed. There are optional English subtitles, a trailer and 32 minutes of good promotional featurettes focusing on the individuals the film was based upon.

It appears that the same New Mexico locations used in **12 Strong** were also utilized to stand in for Afghanistan in Peter Berg's 2014 feature, **Lone Survivor**, a Universal release (UPC#025192175886, \$10). Mark Wahlberg is the title character, sent with three others to scout a Taliban stronghold and compromised when they encounter a goat herder. They hold out as long as they can while being chased up and down the steep hillsides. Made while the conflict was still a major operation, the 121-minute film, which is based upon a true story, calls to mind **Bataan** and other patriotic features produced in wartime and unsure of what the ultimate conclusion will be, examining the heroism of individuals facing great odds and how their bonds as soldiers and their inherent American attitudes prevent them from ever giving up. Again, the film has terrific action scenes, and turns out to be far less xenophobic than it first appears. In fact, that is one of its primary purposes.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1 and an accommodation for enhanced 16:9 playback. The color transfer is excellent and the image is sharp. The 5.1-channel Dolby Digital sound has many enjoyable surround effects and is well worth amplifying. There is an audio track that describes the action ("In a cargo plane, a SEAL kneels beside a flag-draped coffin, his hand to his face. In another photo, men in camouflage escort another coffin toward the plane's exit ramp. Another picture shows a soldier slumped over a flag-draped casket."), an alternate Spanish track, optional English and Spanish subtitles, and 21 minutes of highly rewarding promotional featurettes that link the movie to the actual incident and people it was based upon.

Out of frying pan, into fire

Four passengers sneak off a cargo liner to avoid catching the plague only to find themselves crossing the dense jungles of a tropical island in Cecil B. DeMille's 1934 pre-Code Paramount adventure, **Four Frightened People**, a Universal Kino Lorber Incorporated *KL Studio Classics* Blu-ray (UPC#738-329254773, \$25). Claudette Colbert, Herbert Marshall, Mary Boland and William Gargan star, with Leo Carrillo as an English-speaking native who volunteers to be their guide, but gets lost. Colbert starts out the story as a mousy teacher afraid of everything, but gradually matures and opens up the deeper she ventures into the wild. Running a brief 78 minutes, the film wastes no time getting into its story and mixes a nice amount of humor (Boland suffers through the entire journey with a lapdog in her arms) with its jungle thrills. There are also brief glimpses of Colbert or her body double topless. Quite a bit of the film was shot on location, and there is a real sense in the production designs that the stars were not roughing it on a soundstage, at least not too much. Of course, it is a romance, as well, and a pre-Code one at that, so its brevity and range of entertainments in De Mille's competent hands are readily engaging.

The squared full screen black-and-white picture has an early Thirties softness, but is otherwise in good condition, with minimal wear. The monophonic sound is aged but workable, and there are optional English subtitles, along with a trailer. Film expert Nick Pinkerton provides a well researched commentary track, going over the careers of the cast and the crew but also sharing lots of press stories that were published while the filmmakers were on location, and drawing parallels between De Mille's enthusiasm for bondage fetishes and how his characters often get tied up in his films.

A Crocodile to make you smile

A Thai crossploitation feature, **Crocodile**, has been released on Blu-ray by Synapse Films (UPC#654930324493, \$30). The monstrous title creature begins eating villages up river and works its way down to the ocean, snack by snack. A pair of doctors whose families are digested during a vacation become obsessed with destroying the bus-sized reptile, and retreat to a lab to pour beakers holding different colored liquids onto a smaller crocodile in a tank. From the results of their experiments, they determine that the best way to kill the marauding beast will be with dynamite, so they hire a boat to meet the monster at the river's end. They wait all day long for the creature to appear, and then, while the boat is still bobbing in the water, they all go below and fall into a deep sleep. It would have been helpful if at some point in his rampaging, the crocodile had swallowed an alarm clock, but no such luck. Running 92 minutes, the film utilizes many really lovely miniatures of Thai buildings, villages and towns, actual crocodiles of various sizes, one very scared water buffalo (who delivers the best performance in the film), a pretty good full-sized mockup of at least one side of the creature, and a smaller more complete and moveable model. On the one hand, the editing is barely coherent, the dubbing is awkward, the performances aren't any good to begin with (except for the buffalo) and the whole thing is pretty dumb, but on the other hand, the movie is titled **Crocodile**, so that's why you're there, to bask in the bloody mayhem and marvel at the filmmaking prowess of under funded Thais. The miniatures really are adorable.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1. The color transfer is clearly as fresh as it possibly can be, even though the cinematography doesn't always allow the colors the distinctions they deserve. When the image is sharp and clear, it is very sharp and clear. In one scene, a young woman is treading water in the middle of a bay and the camera ducks beneath the surface to get a shot of her scissor-kicking legs, but if you aren't staring at her bikini you can immediately see the wall of the swimming pool where they actually did the underwater shots to match with the surface shots behind her. The monophonic sound has plenty of volume and a musical score that is at times just a note or two different from a certain John Williams composition. There are optional English subtitles, a trailer and 22 minutes of alternate footage from various versions around the world, although none of the material involves much in the way of character enhancement.

The presentation is the original 1979 American theatrical release. The film was a Thai and Korean co-production made in 1977. Both a Thai director, Sompote Sands (who has the opening credit on the BD), and the Korean director, Won-se Lee, have been credited with shooting the film (an American, Dick Randall, oversaw the a recut and the dubbing, and is also sometimes listed as the director). There is a 32-minute interview with Lee, who implies that Sands worked as a producer and was not involved in the day-to-day directing (he is in fact surprised that Sands has that credit on international releases). He also talks about the difficulties of working with the various croc props, the limitations of film production in Thailand (they could not even make dailies there) and how special effects have substantial improved since the film was made ("All we had was a camera to make a film.")

Movie historian Lee Gambin supplies a wonderful commentary track—one of his final efforts—focusing mostly on the genre of 'eco horror.' He touches now and then on the film at hand, but enthusiastically describes and relates to many other movies about wildlife gone extra wild. He obviously has a special affection for the genre as a whole, and shares his joy in a comprehensive manner. He does pay attention to the film, pointing out a 'mondo' documentary moment where a real crocodile is butchered on screen, and he has plenty of praise for the film's unique factors. "It's just such an energetic film and it does some interesting stuff with its design. What I really champion about **Crocodile** is its 'cause and effect' aspect, the idea of jumping

to another image that really does comment on the image you just saw. Also, the beautiful visual styling, the angles and the sort of energetic and crazy editing, as well, and the way that it does do its job, but doesn't actually just sort of buy into become, you know, a warts-and-all carnage fest. There is nice pacing. There's some beautiful stuff that builds up to violence, and that's really important."

Ain't got nobody

Let's see—Richard Gere, Héctor Elizondo, Rodeo drive, fancy Los Angeles hotels, prostitution. **Pretty Woman**, right? Oh, whoops, no, it's **American Gigolo**, Paul Schrader's decade earlier style-setting 1980 tale about a male escort who rubs a few too many people the wrong way and ends up framed for murder. Paramount and Arrow Video have released the film as a 4K UHD Blu-ray (UPC#760137154044, \$60) and as a standard Blu-ray (UPC#760137154051, \$50). Letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1, the first couple of reels are very grainy and the presentation looks like it is teetering, but then, around the time of the wonderful choosing-his-wardrobe-for-the-day montage, the image stabilizes and from then on, the picture looks just fine. The 4K presentation is so accurate that the differences between Lauren Holly's complexion, which looks vaguely greenish, and Gere's, which is more of a pinkish orange, are disorienting, but that is clearly a makeup strategy choice that may have gone awry or that folks in those days didn't realize 4K was lurking in the future. No matter, the standard BD (which is a touch darker) and the 4K BD both deliver the film in a better condition than it really deserves, and give the viewer a positive attribute that can make the entire 121-minute film worth seeing through to the end.

Schrader makes imperfect films. They are always intellectually ambitious, and he clearly understands how movies work, but somewhere along the line, every time, an aspect of a given film will undercut its potential. The idea of **Gigolo** is great and Gere gives a solid performance, not just in measuring out the drama, but in owning the critical visual component of the role. Holly is adequate, but one can't help but think of what a more accomplished actress might have done with the part. The entire movie depends upon you believing that they have actually crossed the line and fallen in love, but Schrader is so intent about being cool that he won't let the film really open up to them. He creates an air of self-consciousness that sometimes feels out of synch with Gere's chameleonesque character. The same is true of the mystery that is fueling the plot. It is drawn out with needless redundancies, detours into humor with Elizondo (as a style-challenged detective), and then, despite an invigorating sequence with the wonderful Bill Duke (standing up to his part as a pimp), is blandly punctuated. Schrader understands movies, but he doesn't understand entertainment.

The audio track defaults to the film's original monophonic mix, but there is also a 5.1-channel DTS track that swings Giorgio Moroder musical score from left to right and back with a marvelous wavy zip. Moroder actually wrote the music while Deborah Harry contributed the lyrics for the Blondie hit single, *Call Me*, that is not just featured in the film, but forms the primary melody that Moroder then manipulates for the remainder of the score. There are incidental crowd noises and such that also get a full dimensional treatment, but it is the music that makes the enhanced stereo worthwhile.

Also featured are optional English subtitles; a trailer; a nice collection of promotional materials in still frame; an 11-minute interview with Elizondo about his career and his part in the film (he says it is easier to cut a beard off for a role, as he did with **Gigolo**, than it is to grow one); a 15-minute interview with Duke discussing his approach to his character (incidentally—both he and Gere have scenes in the film where they have to perform while hanging upside down); a 7-minute interview with editor Richard Halsey about cutting the film (Gere came into the editing room to nervously check out his infamous frontal nude scene); a really nice 25-minute interview with camera operator King Baggot who talks about his interesting career (as a news cameraman he became a witness at the Charles Manson trial; he was also an early Steadicam operator) and shares details about shooting the film; a satisfying 15-minute analysis of the musical score; a good 19-minute piece on the film's you-are-now-entering-the-Eighties style; and a fascinating 20-minute interview with Schrader, who explains that were he to have made the film today, the protagonist's bisexuality would not have been a problem, but not only did it have to be 'hidden' at the time, even then John Travolta, who was originally cast, backed out because of it. He also points out, "This film came from an era where people actually paid to see famous people naked on the screen. There was a financial incentive. That era is gone now. There's very little nudity in movies. It doesn't make money. The only nudity left in movies is absolutely necessary but you don't put nudity in movies to make money. People want to see nudity, they know how to see it and they can see it within three or four keystrokes. They can see it to what degree they want. They don't need to go to movies to see it. So it has fallen out of the commercial language of cinema."

Grasping for straws, film critic Adrian Martin provides a commentary track that attempts to carefully dissect the film's artistry, going over Schrader's favorite themes and filmmakers, and drawing parallels to sequences in the movie. He also quotes writers who have had negative opinions on the film and Schrader, and particularly the film's ambiguous or not so ambiguous homophobic components, which he defends as being misunderstood and, as Schrader points out, a product of its time. In general, what he has to say about the film is well reasoned and valid, but that doesn't mean you have to buy into it.

From the days of yore...

We had always assumed that Chuck Connors was the model for Leonardo DiCaprio's character in **Once upon a Time in Hollywood** (Jan 20), but after watching the comprehensive Warner Bros. *Warner WB Archive Collection* Blu-ray boxed set, **Colt .45 The Complete Series** (UPC#840418-302019, \$80), we are not so sure that Wayne Preston isn't a more appropriate analogy. Who is Wayne Preston? Exactly. The 'half-hour' western TV series was a big hit when it appeared on ABC in 1957, and Preston, who had not done much besides a scattering of appearances in other TV shows beforehand, shot into stardom, only to have it fizzle a couple of years later. Fortunately for him, Italy came calling, and he enjoyed a brief resurgence doing Spaghetti westerns such as *Today We Kill Tomorrow We Die* before falling back into oblivion again. Preston's character is an Army captain, 'Christopher Colt,' but works undercover as a gun salesman, hawking his uncle's newly upgraded pistol that supplies the show with its title. After a few episodes where he interacts with senior Army officers, his status changes to just being an 'agent' for the U.S. government, getting his directions from 'Washington.' Later, he goes back to working for the Army, and the thing about being a salesman is dropped entirely, although he remains in civilian clothing. His character's familiarity with the gun and its improved accuracy, however, makes him the fastest on the draw anywhere. Hence, every episode is a new situation somewhere in the Old West where he enters, performs his catalytic duties, and rides off to another adventure.

The show endured until 1960. In the oddly shorter **Second Season**, Preston grows a silly little mustache that always has a crooked trim and never sits right. In the final season, Donald May was hired as a substitute for Preston (who got rid of the mustache) in thirteen of the episodes, playing the 'cousin' of Preston's character, another Army agent in 'civilian' clothing. May never really made it to feature films, but had a lengthy career in primetime TV and the soaps. Physically, May is similar to Preston, tall in the saddle with a chiseled jaw. Nevertheless, while he is a bit better of an actor, he does not have quite as strong of a screen presence. In one enjoyable episode, *Phantom Trail*, they team up, with May being the undercover player who pretends to be at odds with Preston's character to get in good with the bad guys.

Each of the three seasons of the series appears in a separate jacket within the boxed set, and each jacket has its own UPC code, **Colt .45 The Complete First Season** (UPC#840418302941), **Colt .45 The Complete Second Season** (UPC#840418302958) and **Colt .45 The Complete Third Season** (UPC#840418302965), although the seasons are not being marketed individually. On the other hand, the individual platters throughout the set are numbered '1' to '10' (the **First** and **Third** seasons have four platters, while **Second Season** only has two platters).

The entire collection of sixty-seven episodes runs 1650 minutes, and there is a 'Play All' option, with chapter encoding that brings you reliably past the relatively brief Warner opening but leaves you at the start of the title sequence, which has a number of amusements in each season, the more times you watch it. The basic idea is that the star—Preston or May—is in the main street of a western town. Someone off screen shouts, "Colt!" He turns and shoots directly at the camera six times (albeit from two pistols) as the letters and numbers, "COLT .45," appear on the screen (the '.4' is a single shot). That's great, but behind Preston's character in **First Season**, there are a pair of horses standing leisurely at a rail who flinch in fright each time the gun goes off. The deeper you get into the season, the more you feel for them. In the second and third seasons, Preston rides up to a building in a hurry and jumps off his horse. Still, you can see that horse flinch in the window reflections when the gun is shot, and you can also see the arc light and other evidence of people standing around and watching in those reflections. May also rides up on a horse in his intro, almost running over what one assumes is a stunt man and not simply a wayward extra, followed by similar reflections of the horse (flinching) and the crew when he shoots.

The 'half-hour' format has always been terrific for sitcoms, but it was also a viable format for dramas in the early days of television, before commercials cut too great of a swath into the individual episode running times. It takes quite a while for the show, which seemed to be a work in progress, to get up to speed, and at first it is constantly experimenting with everything from the presentation format to Preston's outfit. Initially, both his tie clip and his hatband are decorated with little pistols, but then the clip disappears and the hatband changes to horses ('colts'). At first, some episodes have trailers, but they disappear after a while. Other episodes have teasers from scenes that appear later in the episode, or in one instance, don't actually appear in the episode at all, before finally settling on a pre-credit teaser, once in a while, that functions as the episode's first scene. The end credit music is instrumental at first, but suddenly, after about a dozen episodes, an irritating but addicting theme song appears, which has a killer shift in one bridge from two-four time to four-eight time.

The premise allows the hero to travel all over the West and fit into a variety of situations. Two of the best episodes appearing in **Season Two**, *Queen of Dixie* and *Yellow Terror*, take place on a Mississippi riverboat and feature some impressive special effects. In the first two seasons, Native Americans only appear as an abstract natural threat, marauding or what not, and beaten off with gunfire. Only in **Third Season**, along with the marauding threats, are there actual Indian characters (including one played by Lee Van Cleef and another by Glenn Strange!) and only in one episode are they completely sympathetic, even though the hero still has to take the side of the bad white villain and shoot at them before things get worked out. Another episode is specifically about tolerance and features a female doctor character, although it is primarily about a town being nasty toward railroad workers. That episode is entitled *The Gandy Dancers*, which was a slang term for European track layers in the Northeast, and the workers are indeed European,

while the episode is clearly set in the Southwest where Mexicans and Asians were primarily utilized. When it came to American television, tolerance only goes so far. Other than the riverboat episodes, there is only one episode that includes an African-American character.

An episode in **Third Season**, *Trial by Rope*, opens with one of the most violent shots we've ever seen. The victim is in front of the camera and when a girl shoots him, the bullet comes bursting out of his back. Our eyes popped out. And then later in the same episode, there is another fantastic stunt where a man falls off his horse, down a small embankment, and the horse tumbles right on top of him. There are a few scattered episodes in the first two seasons that are good fun, but it isn't until **Third Season** that the creators really find their stride and land on the right mix of action, suspense and drama, something that seemed to be helped by making sure that May, who is initially presented as a more romantically-inclined character (that does get dropped, although the very last shot of the entire series has him kissing a girl again), is given the most emotional sequences. In *The Devil's Godson*, Preston's character is on his way in a wagon with a companion to tell a woman that her husband has been killed, with the corpse in the back of the wagon. On their way, they meet the young son of the dead man, but do not let on what has happened, because they want to tell the wife first. Preston is smiling the entire time, which is probably the low point of the whole series. Still, Preston is the central force in another two of the best episodes. In *Chain of Command*, he is forced to stage a mutiny when an Army commander leading a wagon train that contains civilians makes wrong choices on the trail. Yes, there is a mindless battle with Indians, but it is still exciting and the show is a terrific mix of drama and action. If that one is reminiscent of **Red River**, then *Alibi* is a take off on **Bad Day at Black Rock**, as Preston's character rides into town looking for man who mailed a letter asking for help, but everybody there denies knowing he exists. It's a good drama with a satisfying finish.

Some episodes utilize historical characters, including a (right-handed) Billy the Kid played by Robert Conrad, with Wayne Heffley as Pat Garrett and Willis Bouchee as Governor Lew Wallace (Don Gordon also shows up in the episode) in *Amnesty*. Another enjoyable sojourn features 'Edwin Booth' and 'David Belasco' in *The Man Who Loved Lincoln*. Someone is trying to assassinate Booth in revenge for what his brother did. It is a simple story, more lackluster than most episodes, but it does allow a lengthy performance of Hamlet's soliloquy by Robert McQueeney as Booth. Other episodes feature 'Buffalo Bill' (*A Legend of Buffalo Bill*), 'Calamity Jane' (*Calamity*) and 'Judge Roy Bean,' nicely played by character actor Frank Ferguson in *Law West of the Pecos* (Ferguson is also terrific in *Rare Specimen* as a lizard enthusiast).

The most eye-opening guest performer in the series is Adam West. Before he became a household name in **Batman**, West was best known for his cringe-inducing, overheated performance at the opening of *The Young Philadelphians* (Feb 07), but that same energy is ideal for the small screen and a shorter time slot. In *The Escape*, he plays a killer Preston's character is taking back for a hanging, when they have to spend the night in a cabin waiting out a storm with a wounded soldier and a girl. West's arch, focused performance is riveting, ideal when a lot of emotional information has to be squeezed into a very short time space, and he is so good that you wish he had been cast as the hero instead of Preston. He reappears as a different character and acts circles around Preston once more in a later episode, *Don't Tell Joe*, about a good sheriff who doesn't want to kill any more (he is also in a third episode, *The Devil's Godson*, playing 'Doc Holliday,' and he is given the first guest star credit at the opening of the episode, something that subsequently happens only for a handful of stars). It is a shame West never landed his own western.

In *The Deserters*, there is a girl in it who looks exactly like Angie Dickinson in **Rio Bravo** and you think, okay, that was the style, except that it turns out to be Angie Dickinson. Van Cleef shows up twice, in *Dead Reckoning* and *The Trespasser* (playing the vicious Indian), and in each instance the episode is improved simply because it is Van Cleef filling in the part. Charles Bronson delivers a captivating performance in the well-directed *Young Gun*, as a teenager seeking revenge. The wonderful character actor, Emile Meyer, is the primary villain in *Point of Honor*, suffering from gout. Every moment he's on the screen is marvelous, as his character arranges for a woman doctor to come out west and set up a clinic so she can treat him. Ray Danton gives a very enjoyable performance in *Bounty List* as a bounty hunter collecting men from a specific robbery and killing them because he was actually involved in the robbery as well. The final showdown is great. Neil Hamilton is wonderful as a 'pirate' in an otherwise wacky episode, *The Pirate*, where he tries to set up his own fiefdom in tidewaters separating the United States and Mexico. Vaughn Taylor is effective as a photographer who is being targeted by unseen villains and does not know why in *The Magic Box*.

In another of the very best episodes, *The Golden Gun* (misidentified on the jacket as 'Golden Gate'), Paul Fix is an aging gunfighter who has a stash of hidden gold—his performance is exquisite—and Edward Byrnes does a wonderful dime store James Dean performance as his son, who wants nothing to do with him. The ending is very clever, there are a couple of terrific shootouts, and the whole episode is super. Faith Domergue is the femme fatale in another terrific episode, *Breakthrough*, which manages to squeeze lots of plot and action into the time allotment when there are problems surrounding the construction of a train tunnel. The mining footage alone is impressive, but there is also a cave-in, shootouts and other duplicitousness.

Other stars showing up to good effect in different episodes include a very creepy Leonard Nimoy in *Night of Decision*, John Doucette in *Dead Aim*, Alan Hale Jr. in *The Saga of Sam Bass*, familiar character actor Percy Helton in the especially suspenseful *Martial Law*, Dorothy Provine in *The Confession*, Dick Foran as an alcoholic in *Final Payment*, Lyle Talbot and Van Williams in *The Sanctuary* and future TV stars Robert Colbert and Gary Conway, who show up together in *Attack* (Colbert plays a 'good' Indian) and separately in the enjoyable *Strange Encounter* and decent *Absent without Leave* respectively, while Troy Donahue in *The Hothead* (misidentified on one jacket as appearing in **Second Season** and then correctly identified on the jacket for **Third Season**) and George Kennedy in *The Rival Gun* are less effective in their early turns, in weaker episodes. A few worthwhile episodes without significant supporting players include *Mantrap* (which upends expectations), *Circle of Fear* (trapped in a stagecoach, with Indians all over the place), *Tar and Feather* (utilizing May's acting skills), *Appointment in Agoura* (a terrific episode with a wonderful punchline) and *Showdown in Goldtown* (another good May drama with great action).

Although some stock footage is reasonably easy to spot, the squared full screen black-and-white picture transfer is so good throughout most of the show that other effect shots or shots of a busy cavalry at work are a challenge to differentiate from the footage shot for the show, since it all looks extremely crisp and finely detailed. There isn't much action, but the production design on *Ghost Town* is exceptional. Of course, whether it is a stage set or a location, you start to recognize the same rocks, bushes, storefronts and 'Wanted' signs from one episode to the next. Television shows in the Fifties were purposely overlit to compensate for weak TV signals and crude screens, but the image rarely looks false and the complexions of the actors are finely detailed, even if there are instances where the shadow of the sound boom is equally detailed on the wall above them. And in other instances, the show's lighting is truly impressive (check out *Split Second*), including noir-like shadows when the hero follows a villain into an alley, and a nice shift from light to dark when a candle is blown out. Here and there, the picture quality in **Third Season** has slightly softer edges, but only in some shots and not in others. Overall, the presentation looks gorgeous from the first episode to the last. The monophonic sound is solid, and there are optional English subtitles.

Castle of doppelgangers

A doctor played by James Harris swerves off a road and then hears another car skid out behind him. He goes to the car and there is a woman passed out in the driver's seat, played by Rita Calderoni. He lifts her, takes her to his car and leaving her there, he goes up to a nearby castle to ask for help. Once he is inside, he sees a portrait of the same woman, and then the woman herself, dressed differently and behaving in quite the come-hither manner. Then it is the next day and the woman is walking up to the castle, where she sees what appears to be the doctor, dressed in different clothing, who is also all come hither in a male sort of way. The two original characters eventually actually meet each other again, confront their doppelgangers and try to make sense of the very weird things going on in the castle in the 1974 Italian production, **Nude for Satan** (*Nuda per Satana*), a Redemption release (UPC#738329264291, \$20).

It appears that the filmmakers got free reign of the mostly empty Italian castle and its grounds, and decided to put something together. Directed by Luigi Batzella (billed as Paolo Sovay), the mise en scene is lethargic, but there is plenty of nudity, so lingering on it is rather the point. Running 80 minutes, the film is deliberately dreamlike and suggests at times that the characters have entered purgatory after death. Another character, dressed nicer than anyone else, appears to be the boss and is controlling everything. At one point, Calderoni's character finds herself trapped beneath a spider's web, while a paper maché arachnid bounces around above her until the doctor shoots it and it blows apart as if it were a piñata. And the other women in the castle wear very little clothing, although one is so emaciated it looks like the actress/model had been subsisting on a single carton of cottage cheese and some lettuce for weeks to prep for the role.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1 and an accommodation for enhanced 16:9 playback, allowing the characters and their doppelgangers to appear in the same shot, at least at arm's length. The fleshtones are reasonably accurate most of the time, and other colors are relatively bright, although edges are a little soft and there are regular flurries of speckles along with a smudge or two. The monophonic sound is slightly muted but relatively clear, with a jazz score that is as improvisationally lethargic as the film's action. The show is dubbed in English and there is no captioning. An Italian trailer and a small collection of memorabilia in still frame are included.

DVD News

INDEX AVAILABLE: Our annual Index to the DVD and BD reviews in The DVD-Laser Disc Newsletter, identifying all titles reviewed between Apr 97 and Jun 24, can be obtained for \$24 by writing DVD-LDN Index, PO Box 382, Glen Cove NY 11542. You can also receive a downloaded version of the complete Index for free. Just email DVDLaser@rocketmail.com and indicate if you would like the Index in PDF format or Microsoft Word format. A complete set of Back Issues, from Sep 84 to last month, is available on two DVD-ROMs for \$74.95 plus \$4 S&H US, \$15 S&H foreign. Write to: Back Issues, DVD-LDN, PO Box 382, Glen Cove NY 11542

CRITERION CORNER: The Criterion Collection will be releasing Todd Solondz's **Happiness** in 4K format with a conversation between Solondz and filmmaker Charlotte Wells, and an interview with Dylan Baker. John Mackenzie's **The Long Good Friday** will be in 4K format and

will include Mackenzie's commentary; *An Accidental Studio* (2019), a documentary about the early years of HandMade Films; an introduction by Ashley Clark; a documentary about the making of the film featuring interviews with Mackenzie, Bob Hoskins and Helen Mirren; and a program comparing the soundtracks for the UK and U.S. releases. Alex Cox's **Repo Man** will also be in 4K and will feature a commentary with Cox, executive producer Michael Nesmith, casting director Victoria Thomas, and actors Sy Richardson, Zander Schloss, and Del Zamora; interviews with musicians Iggy Pop and Keith Morris and actors Dick Rude, Olivia Barash, and Miguel Sandoval; deleted scenes; a roundtable discussion about the making of the film, featuring Cox, Richardson, Rude, Zamora, and producers Peter McCarthy and Jonathan Wacks; a conversation between McCarthy and Harry Dean Stanton; and Cox's "cleaned-up" television version of the film. Andrew Haigh's **All of Us Strangers** will be in 4K and will have a conversation between Haigh and author and critic Michael Koresky; an interview with cinematographer Jamie D. Ramsay; a behind-the-scenes documentary; and featurettes. Finally, three films will be collected in **Greg Araki's Teen Apocalypse Trilogy**, *The Doom Generation* and *Nowhere*, which will both have 4K presentations, and *Totally F***ed Up*, which will have a standard Blu-ray only, and they will also feature a conversation between Araki and Richard Linklater; a commentary on *Nowhere* with Araki and actors James Duval, Rachel True, Nathan Bexton, Jordan Ladd, Sarah Lassez, Guillermo Diaz, and Jaason Simmonds; a commentary on *Totally F***ed Up* with Araki, Duval, and actor Gilbert Luna; a documentary on the trilogy's visual style featuring Araki, Duval, producer Andrea Sperling, cinematographer Jim Fealy, costume designers Cathy Cooper and SaraJane Slotnick, production designer Patti Podesta, art director Michael Krantz, and hair and makeup artist Jason Rail; Duval's *Teen Apocalypse Archive*, a conversation between Araki and Duval; Q&As with Araki, moderated by filmmakers Gus Van Sant and Andrew Ahn; and *The Doom Generation* video comic book.

NEW IN BLU: The following titles were recently issued on Blu-ray— Catch of the Day, Mind Melters 45, Mind Melters 46 (Acid Bath); Brooklyn 45 (AMD); Zombie Christ (Bill Zebub); Laroy Texas (Brainstorm); Fighting the Fire, Secret Ceremony, The 7th Lie (Burning Bulb); China O'Brien, Das Kombrutalle Duelle, Hunt Her Kill Her, Riddle of Fire (CAV); The First Slam Dunk, Mars Express (Cinedigm); Typhoon Club (Cinema Guild); Super Bowl XLV Green Bay Packers (Cineverse); Bound, Querelle, Orlando My Political Biography, The Underground Railroad, Victims of Sin (Criterion); Immaculate, La Chimera, Origin (Decal); Streetwise (Dekalog); Bag of Lies (Epic); Slopes Game Room Cult Movies Shows and Classic Comics (ETR); Vacation! (Factory 25); Grand Star Complete Series (Filmchest); L'important C'est d'Aimer... (Film Movement); Never Open That Door (Flicker Alley); Bring Her to Me (Full Moon); Strangers Kiss (Fun City); Finding the Money, The Mattachine Family (Giant); Bad Behavior, Break, Penitencia, The Present (Gravitas); Dead Hand, Dealing with Dad, Scooter LaForge A Life of Art (Indie Rights); Anna Boleyn, Arthur Dong's Asian American Stories, Arthur Dong's LGBTQ Stories, The Chase, Death Machine, Film Noir The Dark Side of Cinema XIX, The Hour before Dawn, Lost Soulz, Mouthpiece, The North Star/Armored Attack, Nowhere Special, The Old Oak, The Perfect Weapon, Pursued, Remembering Gene Wilder, Saigon, She Is Conann, Teaserama plus Varietease and Buxom Beautease, When Night Is Falling, White Room (Kino); The Icing, Murder for Pleasure, Wolves (Leomark); Mollie and Max in the Future (Level 33); The Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare (Lionsgate); The Animal Kingdom (Magnolia); The Machine Girl Chronicles, Zebraman/Zembraman 2 (Media Blasters); Faceless after Dark, Founders Day, The Last Kumite, The Old Ones, Stopmotion (MPI); American Gigolo, Amsterdamned, Backwoods Double Feature, Bandits of Orgosolo, Beast Fighter, Blood and Snow, Enter the Clones of Bruce, Enter the Drag Dragon, The Game of Clones Brucesploitation Collection V.1, The Guyver, Homework, The Miracle Fighters, Mute Witness, My Favorite Things The Rodgers & Hammerstein 80th Anniversary Concer, Ozon's Transgressive Triple, Sympathy for the Underdog, Royal Warriors, Yes Madame! (MVD); Invited, The Woodmen (105ive); Piaffe (Oscilloscope); Strickly Ballroom, South Park Joining the Panderverse, Stop-Loss, Swingers, When Worlds Collide (Paramount); Obsession, The Phantom of the Monastery, The Shop at Sly Corner, Tomorrow We Live (Powerhouse); The Apartment, Behind India, Beyond Fury, Dark Prism, Killer Piñata, The List, Lonely Hearts, My Beautiful Sheep (Rising Sun); The Great Nick D (Round Town); The Three Musketeers Part II Milady (Samuel Goldwyn); Article 99, A Family Thing, Warriors of Virtue, Winter People (Sandpiper); Beverly Hills Ninja, The Burglars, Cat Ballou, Ghostbusters Frozen Empire, Shotgun Stories (Sony); Children of Camp Blood, Claw, Claw 2 Blood Legacy (Sterling); Houseboat Horror (Umbrella); Dogman, In Restless Dreams The Music of Paul Simon, Monkey Man, Warehouse 13 Complete Series (Universal); Game of Pleasure (VHShitfest); Act of Violence, American Fiction, Betrayed, Bolero, The Boost, The Boys in the Boat, Class, Doctor Who Peter Davison Season 2, The Flash The Original Series, Godzilla x Kong The New Empire, The Man I Love, The Mighty Quinn, Mr. and Mrs. Smith, The New Adventures of Batman Complete Collection, The Shining Hour, Superman and Lois Season 3 (Warner); Without Name (Yellow Veil); Dogman Beyond the Legend, The Great Hereafter (Zapruderflix)

NEW IN 4K: The following titles were recently issued in 4K format— China O'Brien, Navy SEALs, Postal (CAV); The Case of the Bloody Iris (Celluloid Dreams); Matinee, Platoon, RoboCop, RoboCop 2 (Cinedigm); Typhoon Club (Cinema Guild); Little Darlings (Cinematographe); Blue Velvet, Bound, Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas (Criterion); Bad Lieutenant (Kino); The Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare (Lionsgate); The Last Kumite (MPI); American Gigolo, The Guyver, Mute Witness (MVD); Rango, South Park Bigger Longer & Uncut, Team America World Police (Paramount); Ghostbusters Frozen Empire, Glory, La Femme Nikita (Sony); Back to the Future The Ultimate Trilogy, Monkey Man, Shrek Forever After (Universal); Godzilla x Kong The New Empire, Purple Rain (Warner)

An index to the reviews contained in this issue

BDs	Colt .45 The Complete Series p10	Wake) p1 (Kvarteret Korpen) p5	Puerta) p1	p6	The Fate of Lee Khan p4
(Ådalen 31) p5	Crocodile p9	(The Lady and the Monster) p6	The Outside Man p7	(Si Muero antes de Despertar) p1	(If I Should Die before I Wake) p1
American Gigolo 4K p9	(Destination Inner Space) p7	Legend of the Mountain p4	A Queen's Ransom p5	12 Strong 4K p8	Legend of the Mountain p4
(The Baby Carriage) p5	(Elvira Madigan) p5	Lynch/Oz p3	The Phantom Speaks) p6	(Un Homme Est Mort) p7	Lone Survivor p8
(Barnvagnen) p5	Four Frightened People p9	The Man I Love p2	Pressure p3	(Unknown Terror) p6	Never Open the Door p1
Blue Velvet 4K p3	Godzilla x Kong The New Empire 4K p1	Man's Castle p3	Raining in the Mountain (Raven's End) p5	The Valiant Ones p4	(No Abras Nunca Esa Puerta) p1
Bo Widerberg's New Swedish Cinema p5	"The Good Die Young" p7	Mute Witness 4K p8	Republic Pictures Horror Classics p6	(Valley of the Zombies) p6	Nude for Satan p11
The Burglars p7	(If I Should Die before I	Never Open the Door p1	The Secret Ways p8	Ennio p2	(Si Buero antes de Despertar) p1
(The Catman of Paris) p6		(No Abras Nunca Esa	Sci-Fi Chillers Collection		
(Colossus of New York) p6					

Current Attractions

The following titles recently appeared for the first time:

My Favorite Things

The Rodgers & Hammerstein 80th Anniversary Concert (MVD)*

The Three Musketeers Part II Milady (Samuel Goldwyn)*

Founders Day (MPI)*

Party of Five Complete Series/Dawson's Creek Complete Series (Mill Creek)*

Happy Endings Complete Series/Community Complete Series (Mill Creek)*

30 Rock Complete Series/Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt Complete Series (Mill Creek)*

Friday Night Lights Complete Series/Coach Complete Series (Mill Creek)*

Quantum Leap Complete Series/Miami Vice Complete Series (Mill Creek)*

The King of Queens Complete Series/Mad about You/Complete Series (Mill Creek)*

Airwolf Complete Series/Knight Rider Complete Series (Mill Creek)*

Bewitched Complete Series/I Dream of Jeannie Complete Series (Mill Creek)*

When Three Become One (Leomark)*

On the Ridge (Freestyle)*

The Sinners (Brainstorm)*

Christmas

Homecoming (Cinedigm)*

Framed for Murder A Fixer Upper Mystery (Cinedigm)*

Anything for Love (Cinedigm)*

Shock (DigicomTV)*

A Nashville Legacy (Cinedigm)*

Front of the Class (Cinedigm)*

Lies We Tell (Brainstorm)*

Bad Behavior (Gravitas)*

King Serio (Serocontrola)*

The Wedding March/The Wedding March 2 (Cinedigm)*

Our Paradise (Breaking Glass)*

Ask Me to Dance (Electric)*

Men for Sale (Breaking Glass)*

Christmas Wishes & Mistletoe Kisses (Cinedigm)*

What Brings Us Together (Random)*

Broadcasting Christmas (Cinedigm)*

Christmas at the Plaza (Cinedigm)*

Piaffe (Oscilloscope)*

Richland (Cinema Guild)*

Relax I'm From the Future (Breaking Glass)*

The Stolen Valley (Breaking Glass)*

The Present (Gravitas)*

Laroy Texas (Brainstorm)*

Romance with a Twist (Cinedigm)*

Outrage (Freestyle)*

Mind Melters 46 (Acid Bath)*

Catch of the Day (Acid Bath)*

The 7th Lie (Burning Bulb)*

Mind Melters 45 (Acid Bath)*

Penitencia (Gravitas)*

Catch of the Day (Acid Bath)*

The Keepers of the 5 Kingdoms (Vision)*

Monkey Man (Universal)*

Christmas in Vienna (Cinedigm)*

A Girl in Every Port (Alpha)*

Uproar (Breaking Glass)*

Space Kids Time and Space Seeing into the Past (Wonderscape)*

Math Kids Solve for X in One-Step and Two-Step Equations (Wonderscape)*

For Heaven's Sake (Alpha)*

West of Texas (Alpha)*

The King of Kings (Alpha)*

Hangman's House (Alpha)*

The Man Who Laughs (Alpha)*

Until They Get Me (Alpha)*

The Greatest Question (Alpha)*

That Certain Thing (Alpha)*

Blank Slate (Electric)*

The Great Hereafter (Zapruderfix)*

Alien Contactees Close Encounters (Zapruderfix)*

420 Nurses (Zapruderfix)*

Dogman Beyond the Legend (Zapruderfix)*

Psychopaths (Alpha)*

Super Bow L

Champions Tampa Bay Buccaneers (Cineverse)*

D-Day 80th Anniversary (Amcomri)

History of Evil (AMD)

Ceremonie Secrete (Burning Bulb)

Fighting the Fire (Burning Bulb)

Shloh (Cinedigm)

Come Fly with Me (Cinedigm)

Return to Lonesome Dove (Cinedigm)

Roll with It (Cinedigm)

Typhoon Club (Cinema Guild)

Don't Look Deeper (Cineverse)

Querelle (Criterion)

Victims of Sin (Criterion)

The Underground

Railroad (Criterion)

Orlando My Political Biography (Criterion)

Immaculate (Decal)

Origin (Decal)

Insane Like Me? (Deskpop)

The Bright Path (Dreamscape)

Fast and Furriest (Dreamscape)

Good Guys! Doing Good (Dreamscape)

Kids Safari V.1 (Dreamscape)

Kids Safari V.2 (Dreamscape)

Kids Safari V.3 (Dreamscape)

Kids Safari V.4 (Dreamscape)

Kids Safari V.5 (Dreamscape)

Kids Safari V.6 (Dreamscape)

Lessons from the Bible Season 1 (Dreamscape)

Lessons from the Bible Season 2 (Dreamscape)

Love Violet (Dreamscape)

Personally Yours (Dreamscape)

A Plate of Hope (Dreamscape)

A Ramadan to Remember (Dreamscape)

The Secret Life of John Paul II (Dreamscape)

Stay Calm (Dreamscape)

Surviving Camp Analog (Dreamscape)

Travis A Soldier's Story (Dreamscape)

The Walk (Dreamscape)

Toni (Film Movement)

The Sales Girl (Film Movement)

Every 21 Seconds (Filmhub)

Exit Plan The 4th Move (Filmhub)

Up Country (Filmhub)

Never Open That Door (Flicker Alley)

Head of the Family (Full Moon)

Bring Her to Me (Full Moon)

Bad Influencer (Full Moon)

Strangers Kiss (Fun City)

Finding the Money (Giant)

Re: Uniting (Gravitas)

Break (Gravitas)

Before the World Set on Fire (Gravitas)

Wild Eyed and Wicked (Gravitas)

All the Wrong Ingredients (Gravitas)

Dead Hand (Indie Rights)

Scooter LaForge A Life of Art (Indie Rights)

Dealing with Dad (Indie Rights)

Don't Look at Me That Way (Indiepix)

Remembering Gene Wilder (Kino)

Roots of Fire (Kino)

Hidden Master The Legacy of George Platt Lynes (Kino)

She Is Conann (Kino)

Nude for Satan (Kino)

Nowhere Special

(Kino)

Copa 71 (Kino)

Lost Soulz (Kino)

The Old Oak (Kino)

In the Company of Kings (Kino)

Anna Boleyn (Kino)

Bittersweet Monday (Leomark)

The Thing on the Doorstep (Leomark)

Mauthausen (Leomark)

Gleehan and the Knaves of Industry (Leomark)

Second Nature (Leomark)

#EM3 (Leomark)

The Sacrifice (Leomark)

Wolves (Leomark)

Dark Web (Leomark)

The Key (Leomark)

The Shape of the Woods (Leomark)

La Reserva (Leomark)

Wicked Witches (Leomark)

Darkness of Man (Sony)

Shotgun Stories (Sony)

Ghostbusters Frozen Empire (Sony)

Amityville Backpack (SRS)

A Prince (Strand)

An Awkward Sexual Adventure (Tribeca)

World of Tanks and Commanders (Trinity)

Warehouse 13 Complete Series (Universal)

The Long Game (Universal)

Xena Warrior Princess Complete Series (Universal)

Ruby's Choice (Vision)

Final Heat (Vision)

Princess Halle and the Jester (Vision)

The Evil Fair Queen (Vision)

Death on the Border (VMI)

Beetlejuice Complete Series (Warner)

Call the Midwife Season 13 (Warner)

Death in Paradise Season 13 (Warner)

Dexter's Laboratory Complete Series (Warner)

Ghosts Complete Series (Warner)

Godzilla X Kong The New Empire (Warner)

My Adventures with Superman Season 1 (Warner)

Steven Universe Complete Collection (Warner)

Superman & Lois Season 3 (Warner)

Welcome Back Kotter Complete Series (Warner)

Without Name (Yellow Veil)

*Did not appear on last month's Coming Attractions listing

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 Acid Bath:

→Mind Melters 48

→Mind Melters 49

→Mind Melters 50

From Amcomri:

Twisters The Real Story

From Bounty:

→The Debt Collector

→Water Horse

→Girls' Night Out

→Don't Show Mother

→Last of the Pretty Boys

→Lucifer's Satanic Daughter

→The Men in Black

→The Wrong Crowd

→Wanda and Sully

From Breaking Glass:

→A Cat's Life

From Bridgestone:

A Fireman for Christmas

Bumbling Ballerina

Civil Christmas

→This Train

From Burning Bulb:

→Children As Giants

→Judge Not

→Derelect

From Cinedigm:

Holiday Road / Heaven Down Here

Love & Jane / Paging Mr. Darcy

The Good Place Complete Series (9 platters)

Perfect Harmony / Mid-Love Crisis

→Love Of Course

→Rendel Cycle of Revenge

→Shifting Gears / A Taste of Love

→An American in Austen / Rip in Time

From Cinema Libre:

I Am Gilmo

From Criterion:

Black God White Devil

Perfect Days

Anselm

Not a Pretty Picture

Brief Encounters / The Long Farewell: Two Films by Kira Muratova

From Decal:

→Stress Positions

→Ezra

→William Shatner You Can Call Me Bill

From Deskpop:

→The Buddy Cop

→Murder Motel

From DragonFlix:

→Once upon a Time in Hollywood

From Drathouse:

The World of Kanako

From Dreamscape:

Africa's Deadly

Kingdom Bushveld

Africa's Deadly

Kingdom Coastlines

Africa's Deadly

Kingdom Deserts

Africa's Deadly

Kingdom Grass Plains

Africa's Deadly

Kingdom Kalahari

Africa's Deadly

Kingdom Reefs

Backfield in Motion

Beautiful Prison

Bubby Beautiful Kitty-Corn

Clinton Road

Forest Fairies

Kids Safari V.7

Kids Safari V.8

Kids Safari V.9

Kids Safari V.10

Kids Safari V.11

Kids Safari V.12

Kids Safari V.13

Kids Safari V.14

Kids Safari V.15

Kids Safari V.16

A Moment in History

Mount Hideaway

Mysteries Exes and Oh No's

Ponyshifters Club Fun at the Fair

Ponyshifters Club The Big Sleeper

Race to the Red Planet

Super Science Showcase The Movie

Trump's Rosebud

William Kelly's War

→Dare to Be Me

→The Luckiest Man

→Olympians at Heart

→Super Detention

→What's the Big Deal?

From Electric:

→Alone

From Film Movement:

Before, Now & Then

→All Your Faces

From Full Moon:

→The Gingerdead Man

→Sci-Fi Vixens from Beyond

From Giant:

→Stephen King's A Good Marriage

From Grasshopper:

Gueule D'Amour

→Pictures of Ghosts

From Gravitas:

→Beneath the Green

→Along Came the Devil

→Along Came the Devil II

→Splice Here A Projected Odyssey

→Conversion

→Geoff McFetridge

→Drawing a Life

→Exposure

→Bitter Melon

→Altitude Not Attitude

→Boys vs. Girls

→Autumn Road

→A Bitter Legacy

→Christmas on Holly Lane

→Dimland

→Gladesman The Last of the Sawgrass Cowboys

→Drugs As Weapons against Us

→Giddy Stratosphere

→Exhibit #8

From Hidden Gem:

Workplace Dramas

From House Lights:

Close the Divide

From Image:

Arcadian

From Indican:

→Green City Life

From Indiepix:

→The Escort

From Kino:

Paternity

When Three Become One

Kidnapped The Abduction of Edgardo Mortara

Revival 69 The Concert That Rocked the World

Uncle's Paradise

Taking Venice

→Unite One Complete Series

→Queendom

→Patrice Leconte Collection

(Hairdresser's Husband, Yvonne's Perfume, Girl on the Bridge, Half a Chance)

→Single Out Season 2

→Swan Song

→June Zero

→Green Border

From Leomark:

The Manias

→Two Sisters

→Spring in Petare

→Ship of the Damned

→Second Chance

From Level 33:

→East Bay

→Deadly Justice

From Lionsgate:

→Civil War

→Bog King World

→Unsung Hero

From Magnolia:

→Food, Inc.

→Catching Fire The Story of Anita Pallenberg

From Movie Time:

Mobutu's African Movie Theater Episode 9

From MVD:

The Crippled Masters

→Door-to-Door Maniac

Titanic The Musical

The Linguini Incident (David Bowie)

→Under Western Stars

→Kentucky Rifle

→Confessions of a Serial Killer

→El Rebozo de Soledad

→The Bat Whispers

→Cocaine Werewolf

→The People's Joker

→When the Bullet Hits the Bone

From Paramount:

A Brief History of the Future

Great American Eclipse

PBS Kids Get Creative

Professor T Season 3

Roots of Comedy with Jesus Trejo

Grantchester Season 9

Hope in the Water

A Brief History of the Future

Halo Season 2

Dynamic Planet

→Grizzly 399 Queen of the Teton

→D.I. Ray Season 2

→Now Hear This Season 5

→Saving the Animals of Ukraine

→If

→NCIS Season 21

→Hope in the Water

→Monster High 2

→Hotel Portofino Season 3

→Cobra Rebellion Season 3

From Peak5:

→Scuba

From Pinnacle Peak:

Deer Camp '86

From Random:

→The Lake of Scars

→The Doldrums

→Gift of Fear

→Eddie

From SRS:

The Whale God

Nanoshark

The Frontrooms

From Sony:

→Tarot

From Strand:

→Songs of Earth

From 360:

Ancient Astronauts II

Forgotten Mysteries of the 19th Century

Ancient Mysteries

HAB Theory

→Destruction on a Periodic Basis

Innovators of Black History V.1

Ancient Symbols 2

Great Mysteries of Tutankhamun

America's Most Deadly Police Chases

Automata The First A.I.

Ice Age History & Future

The Egyptian Origins of Christianity

The Face on Mars

Greatest Mysteries of Ancient Egypt

From Tribeca:

In Her Name

From Undercrank:

→The Craving

From Universal:

Monsters of California

Blacklight / Memory / The Marksmans

→Abigail

→Not Another Church Movie

→Chuck Season 3

From Vertical:

Fast Charlie

→Prey

From Warner:

→The Abraham Accords

→Beyond Paradise Season 2

→Blue Lights Season 1

→Challengers

→Furious: A Mad Max Saga

→Sister Boniface

Mysteries Season 3

→Ted Lasso: The Richmond Way

True Detective Night Country

→Vikings Valhalla Season 1

→The Watchers

Young Sheldon Complete Series

From Well Go:

→Alienoid Return to the Future

→Sting

From Wild Eye:

Bigfoot Exorcist

From Wonderscape:

→History Kids The Electoral College

→How the U.S. Presidency Is Won

→Social Studies Kids

Freedom of Speech and the Right to Protest

From Wownow:

→Johnny Puff Secret Mission