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An exceptional 4K release

John Ford's 1956 pioneer adventure, **The Searchers**, is not a film that is loved by all. It addresses directly and with a fair amount of authority, the manner in which settlers of European extraction made their homes in the American Southwest, at the expense, often, of the indigenous peoples who were already living there. The settlers are not the heroes per se, but they are the protagonists of the story. Set during a half decade or so that begins in 1869, John Wayne stars as a former Confederate soldier who returns to his homestead where his brother and his brother's family are part of a ranch community. Why he didn't return immediately after the war is never explained—he lingered, and he accumulated an appreciable sum of money somehow. But there isn't any time to talk anyway, because the day after he arrives, the Native Americans attack, slaughter his brother's family, and abduct the youngest daughter—Lana Wood in the early scenes, and her sister, Natalie in the later ones—obligating him to chase after them, accompanied by a young man the brother had raised after his own family had been killed in a similar manner, who is played by Jeffrey Hunter. As delineated in the title, the 119-minute film is about their journey crisscrossing the land over the course of several years (enough for Lana to grow into Natalie), the tale periodically intercut with the lives of the other ranchers in the community, and focusing on the relationship between Hunter's character and the daughter of another rancher, played by Vera Miles for a romantic comedy counterpoint. Understanding that by the time they find her, Wood's character will have been thoroughly sullied by her captors, the crux of the drama is how Wayne's character will act when she is retrieved—whether he will accept her as she is or put her out of what he sees as her misery.

Plenty of viewers don't understand the film, even after they've seen it a couple of times. Wayne has such a towering reputation as a heroic western figure that even though his performance is magnificent, many continue to believe he is meant to represent something he does not represent, and that readily bleeds into believing the film endorses the attitudes the characters express and enact. What the film is endorsing is family and heritage—somehow the Southwest became part of the contemporary United States, and that it is simply searching to understand how that happened. The Hunter and Miles characters have been on the land since they were children, and any battle over its ownership is not their fault. Designed, dressed and considered in its period setting with great care by Ford and his team, the film meticulously separates the emotional impact of its characters as feeling individuals from the historical inevitability of their actions. The film builds to such a compelling merger of aesthetic accomplishment and exchanged emotions that it can readily induce tears, and this is where the outstanding two-platter Warner Bros. *Warner WB Archive Collection* 4K Blu-ray (UPC#84041830-3085, \$30) comes into play.

There are 4K Blu-rays and then there are 4K Blu-rays. Some give you a decent presentation of a film that is no worse than any previous presentations, and perhaps a bit better. Once in a while, however, a real effort goes into creating the 4K transfer, so that it not only is immediately discernible as superior to all versions that have come before it, but it substantially enhances an appreciation of the film it represents. **The Searchers** was shot in VistaVision, which is already a leg up when it comes to processing a film in 4K for home video, since the format, letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1, is ideally suited for coaxing the most intricate detail out of an image. The interiors of the homesteads have incredible texture—the wood, the oddball knick-knacks that were used for who knows what, the simple Americana fabrics—and the movie becomes just as thrilling indoors as it is when the characters step outside and somehow have Monument Valley in their West Texas backyards. The timelessness of those desert vistas is so clearly delineated, one with even a rudimentary knowledge of geology understands that the land has been there much longer than any humans at all. The film's complicated lighting—parts of the movie are set at night, or twilight—has been carefully measured and rendered in every frame. The bottom line is that the absolute strength of the film's artistry is flawlessly accessible with the 4K presentation, and regardless of how the characters are ascertained by individual viewers, the mere validity of the psychological conflicts of the characters, placed within one compelling tableau after another, is sufficient to reveal the soaring, complex beauty that a motion picture can create, and the frights, joys, struggles, hopes, anxieties and dreams that our forefathers felt as they blundered about, trying to make a place for themselves and their future generations.

All of that said, the second platter, the standard Blu-ray, which is also available separately (UPC#840418318577, \$22) is also one of the finest Blu-rays ever produced and would be worth hailing if it were not superseded by the even sharper and more solid 4K image. On both, the monophonic audio track is solidly and clearly delivered. Both platters have optional English subtitles. We reviewed an awfully good looking DVD in Jun 06, and Warner had previously released that version on Blu-ray, too (UPC#085391115328, \$20), but in direct comparison, just to the new Blu-ray, it looks overly grainy, and the colors are not as rich.

Both platters have a commentary by Peter Bogdanovich that originally appeared on the DVD and the older BD. Bogdanovich takes advantage of the substantial time he spent with Ford, probing his memories, and while the talk feels superficial at first, it gets better as it goes along. The standard BD has several more special features carried over from the DVD and the older BD, including a trailer; a 2-minute introduction by Patrick Wayne; a 31-minute appreciation of the film with Martin Scorsese, John Milius and Curtis Hanson; a terrific 33-minute collection of behind-the-scenes footage; and 22 minutes of the Warner Bros. promotional TV program, *WB Presents*, hosted by Gig Young and including interviews with Hunter and Natalie Wood. Also featured is a minute-long newsreel clip of the film's opening in Chicago and a pleasing 12 minutes of silent outtakes.

Once upon a time in Occupied France, in 4K

Quentin Tarantino's comical 2009 take on World War II movies the world over, **Inglourious Basterds**, has been released as a two-platter 4K Blu-ray by the Weinstein Company, Universal and Arrow Video (UPC#760137153887, \$60). Running 153 minutes, the film turns out to be one big joke, even though individual scenes have the drama, tension and violence that one would expect from a war movie, and in retrospect of the joke's punchline, those individual scenes often have exaggerations or excessive flair that can readily be reinterpreted as lampooning such productions. A case in point occurs in the film's opening shots. A French dairy farmer is swinging an axe into a stump, his work interrupted when his daughter points to a small German motorcade approaching in the distance. You are distracted by the motorcade the first time you see the film, but after that, you start asking yourself, 'Why is his smashing an axe into the middle of this tree stump in front of his house?' The stump, and a lower offshoot, have both been neatly sawed, and he is swinging the axe directly into the center of the top stump. He is clearly not cutting down the tree—it is nowhere in sight—and neither is he making firewood, since he is chopping into the stump itself and not using it as a base for splitting wood. So what is he doing, carving out a birdbath? No time to wonder, since we have to worry about the Germans, but the movie follows with one inanity after another, humorously tossing about its impulsive, devil-may-care tropes and diversions. Charged with searching for Jews in hiding, the German in the car is played by Christoph Waltz, who won a Best Supporting Actor Oscar for his revved up, multi-lingual performance. His character is actually the film's throughline, since he is in everything from that first scene to the movie's final shot. An actor of more prominence, Brad Pitt, has the starring role, although seemingly less screen time, as the head of a specialized American unit that is working behind the lines. Pitt also delivers quite a comical performance—he is an exaggerated American in the same way that Waltz is an exaggerated German—but the movie you actually wanted to see, of his unit wasting Nazis, is relegated to just one scene and a couple of those brief diversions. Melanie Laurent plays the manager of a Parisian movie theater, meeting a German war hero who has been cast, Audie Murphy-style, in a film based upon his heroic exploits. She hopes to use the film's premiere as an opportunity to cause some trouble. With her presence comes an endless stream of geeky film references about Nazi cinema, French cinema, Italian cinema and American cinema (Tarantino cast an elderly Rod Taylor as Winston Churchill, who has no lines and just one scene, but is subject to a loving close-up. The reaction of younger viewers: 'Who's that guy? Must be some kind of general.' The reactions of older viewers: 'That doesn't look very much like Winston Churchill.' The reaction of movie lovers of a certain age: 'Wow! Quentin made Rod Taylor look like Churchill! This is so great!'). There has never been a more in-your-face film. Tarantino isn't just showing off, he's pushing his reverence to the limits, daring anyone to stop him, but somehow, despite all of his smart-alecky indulgences, the disparate threads of the story nevertheless twist together into something coherent, vaguely but consistently amusing, suitably bloody and, despite one's better judgment, wholly entertaining.

Once upon a time (Continued)

And this is especially true of the 4K presentation. Arrow has also released the film in a standard two-platter Blu-ray set (UPC#760137153900, \$50), with the second platter in both releases being the same standard Blu-ray presentation of special features. The picture on the 4K version is immaculate from beginning to end. Sharp and precise, the colors are solid and the image never wavers. In comparison, the standard BD image has colors that are bright, but over-saturated at times. The DVD we reviewed in Jan 10, when we referred to the time to the film as a 'monstrosity,' looks even softer and more over-saturated. While ostensibly the standard Blu-ray presentation is fully acceptable, its flaws are just enough to mess with a viewer subliminally and disrupt the teetering balance of legitimacy that Tarantino is already pretending not to maintain.

It isn't that Tarantino resurrected cues from Ennio Morricone, Riz Ortolani and others to use in the movie, it's that he's taken old monophonic music and given it to you, at appropriate visual moments, in full 5.1 surround sound. Here, there is not much of a difference between the standard BD and the 4K presentation, but both sound fantastic, reinvigorating the movie time and time again. There are optional white English subtitles for the English dialog in the film, while dialog passages in other languages are supported by permanent yellow English subtitles.

Psychotronic film expert and god of commentary tracks, Tim Lucas, has probably never recorded a talk before for a film made in a year that begins with a '2,' but he supplies one here and it is outstanding. He provides incisive deconstructions of individual scenes, while filling in backgrounds on the cast and the crew and also annotating the musical score. He points out that the use of 'cover versions' for some of the music can be seen as a reflection of the nature of the film itself, which is not only a 'cover version' of the Enzo Castellari feature the movie's title bastardized, but the next in a long line of covers of films about bands of disreputable men coming together to perform good deeds, beginning, perhaps, with **The Seven Samurai**. He also shares a fascinating treatise on the German writer, Karl May, and the links from his writings to the film. He suggests that the film ushered in the 'Post-Factual Era' that subsequently enshrouded American politics. In his own stab at postfactualism, Lucas credits the direction of **Sergeant York** to John Ford rather than Howard Hawks, but that does not negate the wealth of verifiable information and insight that he has to share. Almost every moment of his talk is worth quoting, and it was a great challenge to limit ourselves to just one choice passage:

"One of my favorite lines of dialog in the movie: 'So if you ever want to eat a sauerkraut sandwich again, you gotta show me on this here map where they are.' It's hilarious because it encompasses such a ridiculous, clueless idea of who the enemy is, and thereby is a perfect distillation of the ignorance and objectification that arises in international relations when countries go to war. It is also very true to the dialog that is spoken in Enzo G. Castellari's **Inglorious Bastards**, where at one point Bo Svenson preps his men for battle by saying, 'Let's trade in these apple strudels for some homemade apple pie.'"

The second platter opens with an 11-minute interview with assistant editor Fred Raskin, who describes his own career, some of the film's editing challenges and what it was like working with the editor, the late Sally Menke (included later on the platter is a 2-minute montage of bloopers where the cast members say hello to her). Next is a good 11-minute interview with supporting actor Omar Doom, who describes his career, shares a few anecdotes about the shoot and explains why he was the actor chosen to scalp the German corpses. Makeup effects man Greg Nicotero talks for 22 minutes about working on the film, going into detail about how the scalping thing worked and other applications. Tarantino and Pitt have a fun 31-minute 2009 interview talking about their enthusiasm for working with one another, Pitt's wonderful reading of the film's dialog, the other inspired performances in the film, the joys of making a WWII movie in Germany (Tarantino doesn't realize in 2009 that Russia and Ukraine will be fighting with one another a decade later when he claims that WWII was the last war where white guys could blend in behind enemy lines), and how the film may be the be-all and end-all of WWII adventures. Also featured is a truly wonderful, very precious 11-minute interview with Taylor; 11 minutes of interesting deleted and alternate scenes (which appeared on the DVD as well) that would have stressed the film's running time a bit; the 6-minute compilation of the 'film within a film,' directed by co-star Eli Roth, about the German marksman shooting scores of American soldiers (which also appeared on the DVD); with two audio tracks featuring different musical scores, along with a cute, jokey 4-minute 'promotional featurette' with Roth (in a secondary role as the film's 'director') and several cast members in character; an 8-minute tribute to the original Castellari film by Roth; a 3-minute montage of blooper-like slate shots (we've never seen that in a supplement before); an insightful 22-minute appreciation of the film; another, less insightful 20-minute appreciation; a brief 16-minute piece about French filmmaking during the Occupation, although there is no real link to the clips from the film that play underneath the talk; a great 11-minute identification of the various film posters (fictional and nonfictional) seen in the movie; and four trailers.

The heels of the fisherman

Voting for the next pope has a natural dramatic structure that the movies love. All these guys with ulterior motives locked in a room together and horse trading their support for who is going to be their next boss—it is surprising that it hasn't led to more than just a handful of films and TV shows. The 2024 **Conclave** is fine, cerebral entertainment. At any moment, it feels like it could shift into becoming a genuine thriller, and even though it never really does, there is enough going on to keep a viewer on edge for its full 120-minute running time, up to an interesting final story twist. Ralph Fiennes is the administrative head in charge of running the voting process after the pope passes away, and he must navigate several competing factions of cardinals to see that the choice becomes a genuine consensus and not a lowest common denominator. Some of the cardinals are using underhanded tricks to take out their competition, and others have skeletons in their closets. Directed by Edward Berger, the enjoyable cast includes John Lithgow, Stanley Tucci and Isabella Rossellini (the cardinals are apparently not locked in the room for days on end, only when they are voting—and are sequestered on a kind of honor system the rest of the time). Fiennes

delivers a full-fledged, beginning-to-ending performance, and it is the emotional landscape he transgresses that makes the film worthwhile.

Focus Features and Universal Pictures Home Entertainment have released the film as a two-platter **4K UltraHD** Blu-ray (UPC#840418320136, \$30). The film has a few moments of surprise and suspense—enough to fill a trailer, at least—but it is mostly conversation, and as such, the presentation benefits from the solidity and color detail of the 4K image. Nevertheless, the standard Blu-ray is also very impressive, with a sharp picture and rich colors. The Dolby Atmos sound on the 4K presentation is a bit more encompassing than the 7.1-channel Dolby Digital sound on the standard BD. Only the standard BD has an audio track that describes the action ("An overhead view shows the cardinals carrying white umbrellas as they cross the muddy ground. In slow motion, they move around a fountain. Water ripples in the large green tint base of the fountain. In the Sistine Chapel, Thomas stands with his arms outstretched.")

Letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1, both versions have an alternate Spanish audio track, optional English and Spanish subtitles and a passable 17-minute promotional featurette containing interviews with various cast and crew members. Berger provides an informative commentary track, talking quite a bit about working with Fiennes as well as the other members of the cast, identifying how the various locations were constructed from a combination of sets and blue screens, and explaining the various choices he made, such as using longish takes because the stars hold a viewer's attention so well. He also explains that it was dicey at first with Fiennes, because Fiennes had tried on a genuine cardinal's wardrobe and was thrown off with the film's fantasy wardrobe, until Berger explained that a movie sometimes has to be hyper-realistic. "[Costume designer Lisy Christl] discovered this fabric and showed it to me and I immediately thought, 'Wow, this is beautiful. I love the color, I love the richness,' and it's actually not the way cardinals' costumes look today. It's more old fashioned. It's more inspired by what they used to look like, but it's its own design. We could have gone to any costume shop and rented. In fact, **The Young Pope** [Nov 17] probably had eighty, ninety cardinals' costumes sitting in the closet and the production was like, 'Why don't you use those?' They're the real cardinals' costumes.' We said, 'No, we're not going to use them.' And it's a huge fight, because it's a big item in the budget and when you don't have money, then those things will get contested. But as I love Lisy so much and I trust her so much, and I didn't like what the cardinals are actually wearing today, because it looks a little bit cheap. The robes look so much better. They should actually copy our design, I think, because these look much more beautiful than what they're wearing."

Ci tio estas amuza horora filmo

A wonderful, arty 1966 black-and-white horror film, starring William Shatner (!), speaking Esperanto (!), **Incubus**, has been released as a 4K Blu-ray by Arrow Video (UPC#760137167297, \$50). Not only is it the perfect movie to watch on Halloween, it's the perfect movie to watch every Halloween, reminiscent of **Carnival of Souls** (Jun 00) not for its narrative content, but for its simple but compelling hypnotic power. The characters are all talking this weird language that sounds understandably familiar—absolutely after the first time through you can drop the optional English subtitles, unless that is part of the charm—but still foreign. The cast is limited to a few people and the film (which was shot at Big Sur) is set in an isolated farm that has an empty church nearby—somebody clearly maintains the church, but you never see them. Shatner's character is a war hero recovering from his battle experiences, who lives on the farm with his sister, played by Eloise Hardt. Allyson Ames is an agent of the devil who is supposed to seduce immoral men and draw their souls to Hell, but she sees Shatner's character and wants to take him on, even though her partner warns her that he is 'pure' and she will fail. The first part is mostly the romance, while demons and blood arrive in the second half. Directed by Leslie Stevens, the movie runs a basic 74 minutes and is accompanied by Dominic Frontier's relaxed but mesmerizing thriller score, sustaining the mood along with the movie's evocative and shadowy black-and-white cinematography (if the film were in color, it wouldn't work at all). Shatner's performance is terrific, even though he isn't speaking English (there's a reason why he would soon be chosen as the lead star in a major television series), and so like Esperanto itself, the movie has the vocabulary of a Fifties European art house feature, but a syntax of readily familiar and understandable designs. There is a second subtitling option, in Esperanto.

Only one legitimate source could be located (either it is still missing some footage or the filmmakers ran out of money, since the climax contains a couple of jump cuts that don't spoil the film, but create a momentary distraction), a print in France that contained permanent French subtitles. The film is presented letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1, masking off the top and the bottom of the image—the framing is still compelling—so that only a bit of that subtitling can be seen, once in a while. Within the special features, the original squared full screen presentation can be played back, which also has a viable framing (and optional English subtitles covering the French subtitling). That mostly gives the viewer a decent excuse to watch the movie again, although the letterboxed presentation remains preferable. The monophonic sound is reasonably strong, all things considered, with minimal distortion. Another option in the supplement allows playback of just Frontier's score, most of which he apparently lifted for the movie from his work on **The Outer Limits**. On the whole, the audio on that selection is even stronger and cleaner than the audio for the film as a whole.

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Arrow has also released a standard Blu-ray (UPC#760137167280, \$40), with the same special features as the 4K release. The picture is a little softer, so details are compromised on a larger screen, but otherwise it is a decent presentation. In general, the transfer is very nice. Except when the French subtitles barge in, there is no significant wear. The film still has a kind of aged, obscure look to it, but that contributes to the atmosphere it requires to keep the viewer spellbound, entertained not only by the movie at hand, but by an experienced understanding of the production's limitations and aspirations.

The film has three commentary tracks. The primary one, by horror film expert David J. Schow, is meant to be the overview, and he includes a lot of information about Stevens, the cast and crew, and the movie's production history, but his talk is not well organized and he often references people or incidents that will be unfamiliar to those not already steeped in the movie's arcana. As he explains, most of the filmmakers, including Shatner, had worked with Stevens on **The Outer Limits**, and in some ways the film qualifies as a glorified episode of the beloved series. It is still a viable introductory talk, but you know as you listen to it that you will understand it better after you've sifted through all of the other special features.

Cinematographers Conrad Hall and William Fraker, and producer Anthony Taylor, are prompted by Schow on another track, reminiscing about their experiences on the set, how some of the shots were achieved, how they bluffed the people in charge of the church to let them shoot there (the battle between Shatner's character and the demon was described in the phony script they submitted to gain access as, 'two brothers playfully wrestling') and everything that has happened since the film was made. "It's interesting how the term, 'incubus,' has become in much more common usage in the last 30 years. At the time, people had no concept, and now I see, obviously because I'm aware of it, but I see it in news stories and all sort of things. I guess we've become more students of the occult."

Best of all, Shatner supplies his own commentary track. Whatever prompts he is receiving are unheard, and there are longish pauses between comments in places, but it is a wonderful, full-fledged talk about his experiences making the film, what was happening on the set (including off screen liaisons), and the film's specific challenges. "I had the English and the Esperanto on the opposite page, written out so I could pronounce it. It was halfway through the picture that I realized that all these seven million people who spoke Esperanto would come and see this picture and hear me pronounce a word in Esperanto and say to themselves and to each other, 'Doggonit, I've been speaking Esperanto for 20 years, and I've been mispronouncing that word all this time.'"

Along with a freshly composed trailer for the film, there is also an additional interview with Schow, Hall, Fraker and Taylor running 19 minutes that is probably the best place to start as an introduction to the film's conception and history ("It reminds me of an Ingmar Bergman film, actually."), an entertaining 43-minute piece that goes into a history of Esperanto turning up in movies as well as going over a history of Esperanto itself, its use in **Incubus**, and how that movie, simply by existing, started an Esperanto cult among horror film enthusiasts; and a more detailed, 22-minute history of Esperanto.

Another Alien

Although a couple of the performances aren't bad, there are no distinctive character actors (except for Ian Holm, who has been resurrected from the grave) and no overlapping dialog in the 2024 sci-fi thriller, **Alien Romulus**, a 20th Century Studios DVD release (UPC#043396640276, \$35). Otherwise, however, the 119-minute film is fully entertaining and a great improvement over the **Prometheus** films. Set above a mining outpost where the workers owe their souls to the company store, a group of younger employees spot a derelict ship heading toward the ring system surrounding the dark planet they inhabit and take off to scavenge it, hoping to obtain the supplies needed to transport themselves to a better world. The time frame is tight—the derelict ship is about to be obliterated by the icy ring—and once they get there, they unfortunately discover that while the craft's human operators have long been dead, it holds other creatures that don't expire so rapidly. Very nasty creatures. On the whole, the film adeptly captures the basic excitements of the very first **Alien** movie—which is closing in on being a half-century old, but still packs a punch—and while it cannot achieve that level of quality or thrills, the important thing is that it does nothing to undermine the film's basic potential. If there are symbolic suggestions that the humans entering the ship are like sperm about to fertilize an egg, such thematic considerations never interfere with the competently designed special effects and steadily paced excitements. There is nothing ridiculous about it and nothing to distract from the basic, get-out-of-there-before-you-die challenges that the heroine, played by Cailee Spaeny, faces. A dozen more movies like this one would be most welcome.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1 and an accommodation for enhanced 16:9 playback. Despite the limited lighting in a number of scenes, the image is solid and sharp, without distortion. The 5.1-channel Dolby Digital sound has an effective separation mix and plenty of power. There is an audio track that describes the action ("Byorn pries the facehugger's fingers off Navaro's face and withdraws the creature's feet-long tongue from her throat. He tosses it away. Tyler sprays the facehugger with cryofuel and it escapes down the hole in the floor. Everyone stares at the hole."), alternate French and Spanish audio tracks and optional English, French and Spanish subtitles.

A Turkish Rohmer

About two-thirds of the way through the 198-minute Turkish feature, **About Drv Grasses**, released on Blu-ray by Janus Films, Sideshow and The Criterion Channel (UPC#715515304412, \$30), the protagonist, a middle school art teacher in a rural Eastern Turkish community, played by Deniz Celiloğlu, has dinner at the house of a teacher from a different school, played by Merve Dizdar, and they begin talking about life and politics. The film, directed by Nuri Bilge Ceylan, had seemed like a variation on **Claire's Knee**, with Celiloğlu acting like a borderline creep with his older female students (particularly one played grippingly well by Ece Bağcı), but here, the

movie suddenly turns into **My Night at Maud's**. You could say that the film is a cross between those two Eric Rohmer classics, although, perhaps more accurately, it is a combination, since it is almost as long as the sum of their running times. The dinner may be guardedly romantic, but its purpose is as much to share the ideas the characters are expressing as it is to unveil the process of their thoughts and priorities, while providing a believable pathway for them to come together.

Like **Maud's** as well, the film is set almost entirely in the throes of wintertime. The still on the jacket cover, which is replicated on the disc's menu screen, shows Celiloğlu, Dizdar and Musab Ekici, playing another teacher and a rival for the affections of Dizdar's character, on a sunlit summer's day, but that comes from the film's relatively brief coda. Almost entirely, the film takes place not just with snow on the ground, but with snow falling, and is about the experiences of Celiloğlu's character during the school's second semester as he trudges through the drifts every day from his state-supplied living quarters to his job.

Letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1, the film mostly takes place in closed quarters, protected from the snow, but every once in a while you get the full sweep of the neighborhood and its surroundings. There is a shot of the kids playing in the schoolyard at the beginning that seems to evoke Bruegel and bring his snow-bound paintings to life. The film has many such teases, whether it is the insertion of the occasional hillside vista, montages of the snapshots Celiloğlu's character has taken as a hobby, or moments where Celiloğlu's character verges on a genuinely immoral act but does not follow through. At one point, again at around the two-thirds mark, Ceylan even breaks the fourth wall, although the purpose of doing that remains obscure. What accumulates over the course of the movie is a feel for the completeness of the characters' interiors, an effective portrait of the community and its bureaucratic school system, and hints at what the soul of Turkey itself embodies. Nothing is ever rushed. Conversations run their course, and yet the film, despite its length and despite the uneventfulness of the drama, never feels lethargic or stupefying. Thus, Ceylan's teases, which could be said to be represented allegorically by Bağcı, are what carry the viewer spellbound through the film, even when pinning down what actually happens in the movie will make the entertainment sound as mundane as a day or a couple of months at work almost anywhere.

The picture transfer is gorgeous, and that also adds to its mesmerizing power. While many of the interior scenes are deliberately drab and cluttered—Celiloğlu and Ekici's characters, who share the living quarters, are not exactly great housekeepers—whenever the camera gets an opportunity to look at something nice, including the suddenly frozen images from the snapshots, your breath stops and you widen your eyes to prevent them from blinking. The 5.1-channel DTS sound has a terrific surround mix with many detailed directional effects. There are optional English subtitles. Along with a trailer, there is an illuminating 14-minute interview with Ceylan, who, among other things, explains, sort of, why he broke the fourth wall, "I want to say to audience, 'Watch the movie, even if you know it's a film, with some other organs, not life-only emotions.'"

Enduring music

At the behest of a friend, one of the world's finest contemporary cabaret singers organized an unusual but spellbinding 2024 concert in Münster, Germany, that has been released on Blu-ray by ArtHaus Musik and Monarda Music, **Ute Lemper Lieder Für Die Ewigkeit / Songs for Eternity** (UPC#4058407094753, \$46), singing songs that were composed by Jews in Europe during the horrific reign of the Nazis. Shot before an unseen live audience, the images blend Lemper and the quintet of musicians backing her (each standing in a separate corner of the stage) with inserts and superimpositions of archival slides and video footage that are otherwise being projected on the backdrop behind her. The songs are lovely, often not that much different than the Kurt Weill tunes that Lemper is so superb at interpreting. Optional English subtitling allows the viewer to comprehend the songs, although suppressing the subtitling (the default setting is none at all) can also open the viewer to simply absorb the cadence of the German and (apparently, it is hard to tell for sure) Yiddish lyrics. Running 94 minutes, each song sort of becomes a segment in the program that has a specific meaning or spirit. The video cutaways between some numbers, which are also projected behind her, show Lemper and her friend (and agent), Orly Beigel, whose mother survived the camps, visiting Holocaust memorial sites. They converse in English. She also introduces the provenance of each piece before performing it, in German.

Now, it is difficult to consciously reconcile the gusto Lemper utilizes in her vocal phrasings with the imagined whispered defiance that must have actually expressed some of the songs in places such as Auschwitz (for example, she gives her all to a traditional Polish tango that was sung with altered lyrics by the inmates, and it is hard enough to imagine where or when in the camp that could have occurred, much less with boisterous volume), but the melodies and lyrics are so spine-tingling that Lemper's message gets across anyway. Like the flowers that bloom in the ashes of a volcano, music endures and survives wherever humans exist. By trumpeting the songs, Lemper is not just preserving history, she is bringing renown to their distinction. The compositions may have not sounded like this aloud, but in the hearts of those murmuring, humming or just mouthing the songs, they did, to be passed down, amplified and preserved for the generations that follow in the beauty and glorification of Lemper's unrestrained, articulate and melliferous vocals.

The 5.1-channel DTS sound has a full dimensionality (there is a palpable subsidence when the program cuts to her memorial visits) and smooth, porcelain tones. The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1. The image is sharp, clear and fresh. One number, a lullaby, is presented in black-and-white, and when the color returns to the stage at its end, the effect is chilling. There are also optional French, Spanish, Italian and German subtitles.

Chang action films

Four Shaw Bros. period (sort of) martial arts films from the Seventies directed by the wonderful action filmmaker, Cheh Chang, have been bundled onto two Blu-ray platters in the oddly titled Celestial Pictures Eureka! release, **Horrible History Four Historical Epics by Chang Cheh** (UPC#760137170099, \$55). John Woo, among others, tutored under Chang, and it was essentially Chang's shoulders he was standing on when he created his early masterpieces. Chang's films are consistent for their clarity, inventiveness and cinematic acumen, and not only did he direct many masterpieces himself, but even his lesser films have a distinctive style and vigor that are inherently appealing regardless of the narrative at hand. All four films are letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1, and all four have lovely color transfers that are entirely free of wear. On each, the monophonic sound is in Mandarin with optional English subtitles, and has a pleasing solidity to it much of the time.

Richard Harrison plays the title character in Chang's 1975 *Marco Polo*, and although he is simply used as a catalyst for what is otherwise a standard martial arts movie, it is enough of a variation to make the film seem unique and engaging. His character pauses in his travels to work for a Mongol king. When there is an assassination attempt upon the king's life, he is sent to uncover where the assassins came from, along with the king's best bodyguards. The dead assassins had four brothers, and learning of the failure, the brothers go to an elderly fighting master to ask for additional martial arts training. He puts them to work around his estate—the old 'training while doing chores' bit. When Harrison's character and the bodyguards finally locate the brothers, they are pumped and ready for the final match. There are fight scenes throughout the 108-minute film, and they are all quite entertaining, building up, of course, to the most elaborate clashes at the end. Even the training sequences, however, are very entertaining. Throughout the film, Harrison's character also provides an unpredictable emotional counterpoint to the clearly defined confrontations between good and bad. Because he is the only Caucasian in the film, he stands out and attracts the eye, but there is another movie star in the cast who also stands out, because he has the mysterious, magnetic movie screen charisma that movie stars have, Alexander Fu Sheng. This was one of the earlier movies in his tragically short career, but it seems clear that if he had not died in a traffic accident, he would have eventually gained fame worldwide. His fighting skills are terrific, but more importantly, his ability to sustain his character expressions and attitudes regardless of the physical challenges he is undergoing bring the full impact of his personality to every fight, every scene and every frame he is in. The film would still be enjoyable without him, but zeroing in on him as one of the central heroes, the movie becomes a classic.

Hong Kong film enthusiasts Mike Leeder and Arne Venema supply a workable commentary track. They don't focus on the fighting, or much of the film's narrative for that matter, but they continually use images from the film as jumping off points for their engaging conversations about the industry and other matters. When one of the heroes gets bamboo splinters in his arms from his practice regimen, they chime in, "Those splinters suck like hell. And in Hong Kong, you will get bamboo splinters. If you live in Hong Kong for about within 6 years, if you haven't had a bamboo splinter you're..." "You're either living a charmed life or you're lying."

They talk about the cast members, including Kuan-Chun Chi, Bruce Tong, Phillip Kwok and Gordon Liu, and the explain how Fu Sheng would have seriously undercut Jackie Chan's career if he hadn't been killed. They have some great stories about Harrison (he was too lazy to read a script and so the director shot footage of him that was used in several movies) and they point out plenty of Chang's idiosyncrasies. "This is a Chang Cheh moment. They smile at each other over the dead bodies."

Lung Ti plays the dashing title character in *The Pirate* from 1973, coming to shore when his boat is damaged in a battle to arrange for its repair. He uncovers corruption in the local government and takes pity on the peasants, robbing the local bosses to spread the wealth. An uncorrupt official played by David Chiang arrives in town, recognizes him and seeks to arrest him. While all of this is going on, the disrepaired boat is hijacked by another pirate. Running 101 minutes, the plot is sort of cobbled together and lacks the focus and momentum that made *Marco Polo* so effective. The fights have a few decent moments, but do not really stand out overall, and while that wouldn't matter if the narrative had been stronger, it also sort of falls apart at the end, with the two heroes sparring for a while and then bonding and making gooey eyes at each other, while Yung-Yu Chen's musical score, which had been serviceable up to that point, starts pulling in strains of *My Old Kentucky Home* (which wouldn't actually have been composed for another half century, according to the film's timeline, although you can also see modern apartment buildings on the far hillside in one brief shot earlier).

Fortunately, Ti is also an appealing movie star, and so the pleasure of watching him go about his business, whether it is stopping the villains from taking a young peasant woman from her father, furiously fighting a tough opponent in the surf, or just walking around in his flowing white outfit, is enough to make the movie entertaining. What also helps is that the picture transfer is exceptionally gorgeous. All four movies look terrific, but *The Pirate* is the best of all. It is constantly fresh (there is mud splattered on the lens for some shots during the beach fight, but that is not the fault of the transfer, which enhances the clarity of the mud along with everything else), with bright, immediate colors and detailed flesh tones. The quality of the picture gives every new period dressing the benefit of the doubt and keeps a viewer involved as the plot works its way through the movie as best it can.

Hong Kong film experts Frank Djeng and Michael Worth supply an informative commentary track, talking about the players and the narrative, but also going into how various scenes are staged. They dissect Chang's style and particularly his propensity for moving or zooming the camera within a shot, pointing out where it happens again and again within a specific sequence. "He will do this sometimes, which I find to be actually really effective, and it's also economical sometimes, because if you want two shots out of a sequence, you do it with one. You don't have to set the camera up and restart it again, you actually save on time. If there was anybody who probably knew how to get a film done on time, it was Chang Cheh."

The first platter also contains a fairly basic 21-minute introduction to the four films in the set.

The flipside of **55 Days at Peking**, Chang's 1976 *The Boxer Rebellion* is about the Chinese resistance to the foreign powers that were slicing up pieces of the country at the Turn of the Century. Running a healthy 143 minutes, the film's primary focus is on three highly talented brothers played by Fu Sheng, Chi and Ka-Yan Leung, who witness the madness around them as hordes of young fighters believe their bodies will not be harmed by the bullets and explosive being hurled in their direction. There is a lot of showy choreography, but there are also some terrific battle sequences and a steadily advancing narrative—some Chinese leaders are more interested in grabbing profits for themselves than in actually protecting their home. Chang also inserts archival photos from the event, and then recreates the scenes. The third act depicts the aftermath and focuses on Fu Sheng and Chi's characters seeking to leave the city and to cause as much damage as they can on the way out. Throughout the film there are little dramas playing out between the fight sequences, and while the film does not culminate as a grand production, it is still has a cast of hundreds and makes an elaborate and satisfying afternoon's entertainment.

Leeder and Venema provide an excellent commentary track, staying on topic most of the time and discussing not just the cast, the story and Chang, but explaining the historical incidents that the film is based upon. They also have more great anecdotes about Harrison, who shows up as a German officer, and they go over the film's elaborate production. "There is no doubt in my mind that Chang Cheh really did his best on this film and tried to make them put the money up on the screen. I have zero doubt about that."

Four Riders, from 1972, is set in the early Fifties (although the haircuts on the extras say otherwise) in Seoul, where four former U.N. soldiers, played by Ti, Chiang, Kuan-Tai Chen and Chung Wong, have a run-in with drug dealers working out of a nightclub. Yasuaki Kurata, who has an Alain Delon thing going, plays the manager of the club. The sound is especially punchy and immediate, adding not just to the excitement of the action scenes, but the energy of the dramatic sequences, whether it is from the square-trying-to-be-hip musical score or just every noise that has been added to the soundtrack. The two climactic fights, one in the nightclub and the other in a well-stocked gymnasium, are inventive, elaborate and brutal. Building up to that, the 109-minute film is a reasonably decent mix of character and narrative, and while he is not always successful, Chang at least tries to keep the locations and designs oriented to the Fifties (ignore the billboard with a digital clock). There is also a cute Chang-style sequence where a character goes out at night to buy a gun, which is staged as if he were cruising for something else.

Djeng and Worth supply another commentary track, discussing the film's use of Seoul locations, the cast (Fu Sheng has a quick cameo), the story and the action in the individual fight scenes. Also featured on the platter is a passable 19-minute overview of the Boxer Rebellion and its significance.

Brothel stories

If you readily put out for fabulous colors, be prepared to open up your wallet for the seductive hues of **Facets of Love**, a 1973 Shaw Bros. production released on Blu-ray by Celestial Pictures and 88 Films (UPC#760137161608, \$35). Letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1 (and often employing that cute Shaw Bros. widescreen lens that distorts the edges of the picture as if it wanted to be even wider), the image transfer is impeccable and the film's costumes and production designs are resplendent. Blue silks, red felts, gold and so on, set against delicate and carefully augmented flesh tones. Every frame in the film is exquisite, and there is not a moment on the Blu-ray where the movie's original splendor is not transcribed with a virginal freshness.

Directed by Han-Hsiang Li, the 99-minute feature is set in a Shanghai brothel in the early Twentieth Century, where a young farm girl has been placed into servitude against her will, but interwoven with that narrative are a number of flashbacks to shared stories about the brothel's legends in other periods. There is an abundance of unblushing nudity in the film, but no tedious or redundant lovemaking sequences, since the emphasis is on the characters and the stories (there is an undue amount of whipping, however). Among the highlights is a tale about a prostitute who is saving herself for a young emperor, who arrives at the brothel in disguise. About two-thirds of the way through the film, Jackie Chan shows up in another small role, similar to the one he had in **The Golden Lotus** (Oct 24), and once again, although the role is simply comical dialog delivery, he has a riveting presence and much stronger, more mature acting skills than many of the performers around him. Lily Ho, Chin Hu, Teresa Ha and Yueh Hua star.

The musical score is also exceptional, featuring original traditional-sounding Chinese music by Da-Jiang Wu, including a couple of songs, most of which are heard in the background, but one becoming an outright musical number sung by some of the characters. The monophonic sound is strong and clear. The film is in Mandarin, with optional English subtitles, a 2-minute montage of promotional stills and a trailer.

Detective blues

Yusaku Matsuda is a nightclub singer who moonlights (or 'daylights,' rather) as a private detective in Eiichi Kudo's 1981 **Yokohama BJ Blues**, a Radiance Films Blu-ray (UPC#760137169949, \$40). Letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1, much of the film was shot with telephoto lenses to make Matsuda's character seem disconnected from his surroundings. The image is also deliberately grainy and pale, to emphasize his destitute soul, and even the occasional speckles on the image feel like part of the plan. His friend, a cop, is murdered while talking to him in a park, and he is accused of the crime, so he starts tracking down who might have actually been responsible, zeroing in on a group of gay drug dealers that are about to close a big score. The details of the narrative can be difficult to follow, even after a couple of viewings, but the film not only celebrates the dreariness of rainy Yokohama, it also seems to embrace the spirit of being lost in a mental fog created by the pressures of existence. Hence, while the story's logic may be too convoluted for purists, its dive into the spiritual quagmire of society's dark side will be highly satisfying to fans who just want to swill in the mood of it all.

Owing to the hero's other occupation, the film has a lot of music, which is solidly delivered on the monophonic audio track. The songs, a mix of English phrases and Japanese connective tissue, reflect the essence of the film as a whole. The program is in Japanese with optional English subtitles and is accompanied by a trailer; a nice 14-minute interview with co-star Mari Hemmi reminiscing about the shoot; an interesting 22-minute interview with screenwriter Shoichi Maruyama, who says he based the film on **The Long Goodbye** (loosely) with a dash of **Cruising**; and an 18-minute breakdown of the Yokohama locations that were used in the production and how they look several decades later, interspersed with an appreciation for the film's artistry.

4K Wenders

Presented with a gorgeous, fresh color transfer, the Criterion Collection's 4K Blu-ray presentation of Wim Wenders's 1984 **Paris, Texas** (UPC#715515306010, \$50) has the solidity and smoothness of a projected film. The two-platter release also contains a standard Blu-ray, and the colors on its presentation are brighter, but are also over saturated at times, and the image has a graininess that the 4K version, which has solid, stable hues, does not. The discrepancies in the standard BD are a minor distraction—it is an outstanding transfer—but the consistency and accuracy of the 4K presentation has no distractions at all. We reviewed Criterion's standard Blu-ray release in Mar 10. The standard Blu-ray included with the 4K platter is identical in program content to the earlier BD release (and neither one will start up where it left off if playback terminated, although the 4K platter does).

Running 147 minutes, the narrative is pointedly linear, following Harry Dean Stanton as he first appears on the screen wearing a red hat and wandering across the desert, eventually collapsing in a decrepit tavern and awakening in a grungy doctor's office. His brother, played by Dean Stockwell, flies out from Los Angeles to retrieve him and they drive back. Stanton's character revives from his despondency and eventually drives back to Texas again, taking his young son, whom the brother had been caring for, with him, to search for the mother. Amid this traveling is a reasonably simple but nicely apportioned drama about family reconciliation and responsibility. The film is never slow paced, but it is laconic—advancing gradually and steadily accruing its emotional understandings as you come to know the characters and their histories. The 5.1-channel DTS sound is also confidently enveloping, placing you not only in each setting, but in the center of Ry Cooder's guitar, so that its accentuation of every melodramatic turn is felt more deeply than what is expressed in the dialog. It has always been a captivating film, but with the improved image, which is presented with a 1.66:1 aspect ratio, solidifying fleshtones and preserving every environmental detail, the narrative's parceling of revelations and confrontations is transfixing.

Along with optional English subtitles, both platters contain a commentary track featuring Wenders—who sort of cut his teeth on road films and was an expert at the genre when he took on the film—who describes the effort that went into the production and the people who worked on it, while also talking about the story.

The standard BD platter contains a good collection of production photos in still frame; 24 minutes of deleted scenes, also with a Wenders commentary; 7 minutes of the 'home movies' from the characters that were staged to be included in the film; a 29-minute interview with Wenders; a 12-minute segment with Wenders and Cooder; a 43-minute collection of retrospective interviews; a 20-minute interview with Claire Denis, who worked as a production assistant on the film; and a great 25-minute interview with Allison Anders, who also worked as a production assistant.

Infidelity and suicide

James Mason plays Gustave Flaubert, defending the morality of his novel before a court of law at the opening of Vincente Minnelli's 1949 MGM production, **Madame Bovary**, a Warner Bros. *Warner WB Archive Collection* Blu-ray (UPC#810134947467, \$22), which then plays out as he periodically chimes in with voiceover narration. Jennifer Jones is the title character, Van Heflin is the humble country doctor that she marries, and Louis Jourdan and Charles Kent are the lovers she takes on once ennuï seeps in. A young Henry Morgan has a memorable turn as the town cripple. By the end of the following decade, Hollywood's Production Code would be a shambles, but the set up is an interesting approach to chipping away at it during the time when it was still a fortress protecting the souls of the audience. Backed up by the MGM's heft in the industry and the source material's heft—as the closing title card points out, Flaubert was acquitted—in justifying the heroine's remorseless infidelities (she only regrets that she has run out of money) and eventual suicide (although not in a 'go try this at home' manner—it may be the studiously serious film's greatest amusement), Minnelli does a surprisingly good job at bringing the essence of the story to a 115-minute feature film. His attention to the production designs have a raided-the-antique-shop earnestness that enables to film to remain lavish while generally depicting characters who are not, and his blocking of individual scenes is, as usual, impeccable—the one big ballroom dance sequence is especially dynamic while remaining entirely within the contextual confines of the narrative. The only real failure of the film is that Jones' character, supposedly the heroine, is so utterly spoiled and selfish as to be entirely unsympathetic, thus placing the film in a long line of Hollywood endeavors that pretend to promote the freedom and self-actualization of women while steadfastly doing precisely the opposite.

The squared full screen black-and-white picture is impeccable, adding to the subliminal appeal of Minnelli's masterful execution, and the monophonic sound is clear and solid. There are optional English subtitles, a trailer, an 8-minute color MGM *Tom and Jerry* cartoon from 1949 entitled *Love That Pup* (the mouse continually tricks the father of a puppy to save himself from the cat), and a really fun 42-minute MGM promotional film for its 1949 releases, emceed by Lionel Barrymore (also celebrating MGM's 25th anniversary, clips are included of one film from each preceding year), thus presenting snippets from loads of movies that are just dying to be released on Blu-ray.

Smart cowboys

Two terrific westerns have been combined on a single Blu-ray platter for a Kit Parker Films MVDvisual release, **Saddle Up Western Double Feature Apache Rifles Panhandle** (UPC#760137168935, \$20). You'll probably want to watch them in reverse order, only because the color transfer on *Apache Rifles* is so fantastic that the interesting sepia-toned brown-and-white transfer on *Panhandle* feels like a letdown when you watch it afterwards. Both films have monophonic audio tracks and optional English subtitles.

Directed by westerns veteran Lesley Selander, Rod Cameron stars in the 1948 Allied Artists *Panhandle* as a gunslinger investigating the murder of his brother. He basically knows who did it, and the guy who did it knows he knows, but they spend 84 minutes kind of circling around each other until the hero can set a trap to prove his suspicions. Cameron comes across as a poor man's Randolph Scott, but he is engaging enough in the part to carry the viewer along, and Selander does a decent job with the standoffs, fistfights and gun battles. He also brings some nice texture to individual sequences—a character jumping over a fence to avoid being shot catches his foot on one of the rails, which comes tumbling down with him, but his fall probably saves him from the bullet. Another character is shooting from the corner of a building and a bullet fired at him sends a splinter flying into his cheek, with the scar still there in the next scene. Blake Edwards not only collaborated on the script and co-produced the film, but he also has a great supporting part as a bratty young villain just itching to get what's coming to him. Ultimately, the script has its share of contrivances, but it gets by well enough thanks to Cameron's charisma, Selander's talent and the dependable western setting.

As for the sepia, which is how the film originally appeared in theaters, we were very tempted to suppress it and just watch the film in black and white, but the image, despite some minor speckling in a couple of places, is smooth and tolerable. The sound also has some ups and downs, but is reasonably stable most of the time.

From the opening blood red credit panels to the lovely Southwestern vistas and unblemished fleshtones, the color transfer on the 1964 William Witney Admiral Pictures 20th Century Fox western starring Audie Murphy, *Apache Rifles*, looks gorgeous. Stock footage is soft, as are some transitional shots, and we did see some speckles at one point, but otherwise the image is beautiful (the sound is consistently good), and gives the 92-minute film a leg up before it even gets underway. And it is a great movie, too. There are very vague similarities to **Fort Apache**, except that it is a much better film. Murphy is a captain who corrals a group of renegade Apaches and persuades them to settle into the reservation in exchange for policing the entrances to keep out illegal gold miners. It works, and he is able to sustain the peace for a while, until the miners and their backers stage an incident and Murphy's character is replaced by a colonel who can't measure what is really going on. Under Witney's masterful guidance, the action scenes are marvelous (this is 1964, so the violence is revved up a bit, too) and the drama is well executed, thanks as much to the decently composed plot as to Witney's sense of pace. Michael Dante has second billing as the primary Native American warrior—both he and Murphy are also rivals for the attentions of a half-breed social worker missionary played by Linda Lawson—and L.Q. Jones, Ken Lynch and Charlie Watts are the actual villains. The film has such a decent mix of action and drama that it would be entertaining under any conditions, but the image quality, letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1, raises the pleasure of the viewing experience, one's affection for the characters, and the escapist nature of the entertainment exponentially.

The films have optional subtitling that must be activated manually. Also featured on the platter are two good 6-minute overviews—one for each film—from westerns historian Toby Roan, going over the basics of each production, including the backgrounds of the directors and the stars, the supporting players, and how the films were received, accompanied by wonderful montages of memorabilia.

Stupid cowboys

Reasons to consider Chip Baker's 2022 **The Price of Death**, an Octane Multimedia Blu-ray (UPC#840418321331, \$20): One, it's a western, and westerns almost always get a free pass, especially ones that have been shot in Spain. Two, the widescreen cinematography is lovely and has been letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1, with sharp and accurate, albeit dusty colors. Three, the musical score, presented in two-channel Dolby Digital, is also very nice, featuring guitars augmented by other strings, and some of the atmospheric effects also have a viable dimensionality. And four, some of the performances aren't bad, particularly a couple of the villains. But that is really about it, unless you want to count the way that the climax is a flagrant, shot-for-shot imitation of **The Good, the Bad and the Ugly**.

Running 81 minutes (not the 84 listed on the jacket), the characters in the film are really stupid. Not stupid funny, but stupid didn't you know you were going to get hit over the head, and didn't you know you were walking into an ambush, and didn't you see the guy coming up to relieve himself in the dark as you were spying on the gang? After some colorful and nicely dressed (and topless) period business in a brothel with characters that you never meet again, the protagonist, a bounty hunter who sometimes is quick on the draw but sometimes is slower and dumber than dirt, is hired to escort a man who is in jail in one town, but sentenced to be hung at another venue because otherwise there wouldn't be a story. His gang wants to free him not because they miss his campfire camaraderie but because they want to know where he stashed the loot. When he is not using Sergio Leone as a previs, Baker's direction leaves much to be desired and that is really the crux of the film's problem. You could live with and even enjoy the stupidity displayed by the characters if the blocking and editing were dynamic, but instead they are often inept. Those widescreen shots may be gorgeous, but they can wear out their welcome, even with the guitar pushing them along, as they stretch out the running time while the characters ride across ridge after ridge in silhouette, and Baker usually catches the action more by chance than by design. We enjoyed ourselves because, yeah, the film is a western, but you may not be so forgiving. There are optional English subtitles that must be activated manually, and a trailer.

Environmental impact

Ryusuke Hamaguchi's superbly crafted 2023 **Evil Does Not Exist**, released on Blu-ray by Sideshow, Janus Films and The Criterion Channel (UPC#715515307017, \$30), is a leisurely film, and no more so than during its first 15 minutes or so, as it depicts the branches of trees from the perspective of the forest floor looking upwards (something that will recur, but at night, at the chilling conclusion), a man chopping wood and then the same man gathering fresh water in a stream. The man then interacts with another man who has walked up to the stream, and they carry some of the jugs of water back to his car. This portion of the 106-minute film is so transfixing it does not matter if anything else happens. From a cinematic perspective you have the woods, you have people whose lives you are just beginning to know, and it is all utterly engrossing even in its stillness. The man who was at the spring proceeds to pick up his daughter from school, and more pieces of his life are filled in, as is an appreciation for the rural area where he resides, which turns out to be a couple of hours' drive north of Tokyo. The film gets even better after that, however, as the next major sequence is a community meeting, where representatives of a developer are presenting their proposal to build a campsite franchise near the town, which will severely upset the environmental harmony as it currently exists. Were it not for that opening sequence, the viewer would not appreciate the concerns the citizens are expressing about the pollution the campsite will cause. So it all ties in. Meanwhile, the sequence is, once again, utterly gripping, with amazing performances by everyone in the room. Hamaguchi doesn't just put you in there with them, he glues you to the floor. From there the film seems like it could go in a couple of different directions, from **An Enemy of the People** to **Local Hero**, and the two campsite presenters begin to have a bigger part in the remainder of the film. Unfortunately, the film has been so leisurely that when it becomes time to wrap everything up, it must turn very dark in order to do so—it kind of makes **An Enemy of the People** seem like **Local Hero**—and the only reason that the final act is acceptable is that Hamaguchi has done such an outstanding job placing the viewer not just in the tactile environment, but in the minds of many different characters, so that regardless of where the story arrives, the journey has been a satisfying one.

The film does not start up where it left off if playback is prematurely terminated. The picture is presented with an aspect ratio of about 1.66:1. The color transfer is vivid, adding greatly to the immediacy that Hamaguchi achieves with nearly every shot. The 5.1-channel DTS sound is also terrific, always placing the viewer in the center of the environment with a crisp, detailed clarity. The film is in Japanese with optional English subtitles and comes with a trailer and an excellent 19-minute talk by Hamaguchi, summarizing his career and going over the process of making the film, which began because he wanted to incorporate the music of Eiko Ishibashi, who resides in an area close to the film's locations.

'Greatest Film of All Time.' Not.

On his commentary for Douglas Sirk's **Magnificent Obsession** (Feb 23), film historian Thomas Doherty reveals, "I remember when I was in graduate school at the University of Iowa in the late 1970s, how the female graduates in film trudged wearily to the exemplary works of the feminist avatar Chantal Akerman, but flocked to the Douglas Sirk screenings with a zeal not entirely scholarly."

Perhaps you may have heard that every decade the highbrow British film magazine, *Sight and Sound*, conducts a poll to determine by critical consensus, the 'Greatest Films of All Time.' For decades, the chosen film was **Citizen Kane**. Another time, it was **Vertigo**. In the most recent poll, however, Chantal Akerman's 1975 **Jeanne Dielman 23, quai du Commerce 1080 Bruxelles** pushed out **Kane** and a number of other beloved classics to become the number one film in the world. We originally reviewed the movie on a Criterion Collection DVD in Apr 10. It is an impressive film, yes, but it is not the kind of movie that could make anyone fall in love with cinema. Movies like **Citizen Kane** and **Vertigo**, or the films of Douglas Sirk, for that matter, are universal in their appeal. You can show them to a beginning film class in a high school and the students will be engaged by the dynamism those films impart. Disregarding the content of the films themselves, viewers will understand the stimulation and fulfillment of the film viewing experience, the excitement of the art connecting with the viewer's intellect and emotions. Try putting the 201-minute **Jeanne Dielman** on in a high school class and there will be paper airplanes flying around the room within 20 minutes.

The Criterion Collection has released a collection of nine Akerman films in a comprehensive three-platter Blu-ray set **Chantal Akerman Masterpieces 1968-1978** (UPC#715515291514, \$100). Almost all of the films appeared previously on DVD, and several of them are shorts. The films are in French and supported by optional English subtitles. The jacket and platter art say nothing and the jacket insert is somewhat vague, so there is no way of discerning which films appear on which platter without spinning it up and examining the menu or, of course, keeping this review close by.

The first platter contains six films, none of which qualify as a 'masterpiece' by any stretch of the imagination. They are beginning films and experiments, and they are all very well made and intelligently conceived, but that is the extent of their accomplishment. The platter opens with Akerman's first film, from 1968, *Saute Ma Ville*. Running 13 minutes, it is in black-and-white and is about a teenage girl (played by Akerman with an Agnès Varda haircut—it grows out in her subsequent films) having a nervous breakdown in the kitchen of her apartment, which looks like a more compact version of the kitchen in **Jeanne Dielman**. Both the film and her performance are astutely offbeat and it is an impressive work for a budding artist. Akerman provides a minute-long intro. The image quality is admirable, considering the rudiments of its source. The film has sound but no specific dialog.

The 1971 *L'Enfant Aimé ou Je Joue à Être Une Femme Mariée* runs 33 minutes and is another black-and-white piece that is more of a documentary than any sort of drama. A woman who could be an actress looks after a little girl who is apparently her daughter and also cleans and cooks, while talking to Akerman who is also, periodically, in the shot with her. In 1971, cooking and cleaning were not common topics for filmmaking, and the piece can be considered innovative in that regard. While individual sequences tend to go on a bit, the film does have a sort of hypnotic appeal in that the more mundane the activities, the more captivating it becomes. There are also a couple of sequences involving nudity, which may be just as mundane as the sequence showing the actress preparing green beans for boiling, but cannot avoid a prurient attentiveness in the eyes of some beholders. The squared full screen black-and-white image is quite grainy, but still looks smooth.

Running 12 minutes, the silent squared full screen color *La Chambre* from 1972 consists of a single take with the camera placed in the center of a cramped single-room apartment and doing two complete circular pans and then, on the third pass, doing a partial pan, back and forth several times, of the area in the room where the bed is placed. Akerman is on the bed the entire time, lying down or chewing on an apple. It's an exercise that is well executed and the details of the apartment are such that you look forward to reexamining them on the subsequent passes, but any deeper reading of the shot is up to the individual pondering its purpose. The colors are richer than they were on the Criterion Eclipse DVD collection, **Chantal Akerman in the Seventies** (Apr 10). If you want, play *In My Room* by The Beach Boys a couple of times as accompaniment.

The 63-minute *Hotel Monterey* from 1972 is another silent documentary, poking around a lower budgeted New York hotel from its lobby to its roof. Many of the camera setups are intriguing, but the shots can seem to outlast their welcome (they don't—the editing is very good—but the lack of sound takes its toll), and in silence the exercise soon acquires a perfunctory and academic tone, experimenting with tracking shots and other maneuvers, taking delight in the humans that cross the camera's path and amounting to not much more than a fleeting time capsule view of dreary lodgings. The squared full screen image is sharp, but very grainy and even smeary at times, and the colors are drab, as befits the setting. It also appeared with a less impressive picture quality in **Chantal Akerman in the Seventies**.

An actress with a pretty smile, Chris Myllykoski, futzes around a small apartment while, in voiceover, Akerman recites a stream-of-consciousness soliloquy (in English!), which seems less and less connected to the images and what the actress is doing or thinking as it proceeds, in the 43-minute *Le 15/8* ('August 15') from 1973. By the time Akerman starts referencing Virginia Woolf in the voiceover, it is easy to start believing that there is no there, there, but Myllykoski is charming enough to carry the burden of the exercise. The squared full screen black-and-white picture is sharp with just occasional grain, although there is a hair at the bottom of the image for a while.

Most of Akerman's films have a distinct three-act structure, and in her 1975 *Je Tu Il Elle*, the equal divisions in the 86-minute feature are quite pronounced. In the first third, Akerman is alone in a room that may be an apartment or a small house. It has no furniture except for a mattress, and when she is not writing pages of something or sleeping, she is swallowing spoonfuls of processed granular sugar from a paper bag—something that will make you wince even more than watching her smoke—and wandering around the room. There is an occasional voiceover narration that is just partially connected to the action. In the second third, she hitches a ride with a truck driver played by Niels Arestrup and sort of steps into his life for the duration of the ride. He has a long soliloquy about his life, which is impressively delivered even if it is true, and they stop a couple of times for drinks (Akerman's character blatantly pretends to drink her beer while not doing so) and food, and she appears to willingly service him during the course of the ride. In the final part, she visits a friend played by Claire Wauthion and they have totally naked sex on a bed that pretty much takes up the entire segment. It's a great sequence, all things considered, but it really does kind of reinforce the 'emperor has no clothes' aspect to Akerman's filmmaking in general.

The voiceover and dialog are in French, but the incidental noises in the bar and on the truck's radio are in English. Given that the sequences that were shot under controlled conditions look fantastic, the grainier squared full screen black-and-white images during darker scenes and in the truck's cab are fully excusable. Again, the image transfer is softer on the **Chantal Akerman in the Seventies** presentation.

The platter also has a supplement. One of the extras is 27 minutes of color footage from a promising documentary Akerman shot at a youth center in 1973, *Hanging Out Yonkers*. Unfortunately, the sound was lost and so the project was dropped, but the existing footage, even without the sound, is a wonderful glimpse of teenagers being themselves as the Sixties gave way to the Seventies. Four 3-minute silent squared full screen black-and-white pieces Akerman made for film school during a short period there in 1967 include a look at festivities and rides at a carnival; a depiction of Akerman visiting a house (her family?), cleaning dishes, curling her hair and going shopping; a young woman shopping; and the woman doing more shopping and trying on shoes. All four are deftly shot and edited, despite going out of focus here and there. Also featured is a 20-minute overview of the films in the collection, which emphasizes how important Akerman's films were for female filmmakers and film enthusiasts at the time, although exactly how enduring that influence will be remains to be seen as the separations between the accomplishments of women and the accomplishments of men become less pronounced. "She was creating a new cinematic language for truths that were previously untold and unshown about women's lives and what they were really like outside of male fantasies and male projection."

Skipping over the second platter for the moment, the third and final platter contains two features from the late Seventies. The first is a full-length documentary from 1976, *News from Home*, a wonderful time machine look at the streets, sidewalks and subways of Manhattan in the mid-Seventies, capturing with perfection the lonely 'city of strangers' vibe that an outsider can feel. The sounds of the subway are fantastic thanks to the crisp monophonic sound transfer. The sounds in other environments are deliberately subdued and there are no voices, whatsoever, from the crowds. There is a voiceover component to the film, as Akerman reads letters from her mother, asking how she is doing and sharing reports from family life in Belgium. The letters are sincere, but never elaborate. The voiceover is in French with optional English subtitles, but there is also an alternate English track (and there are times, deliberately, when the voiceover gets drowned out by the subway). Since the film was shot during the same period when we ourselves moved away from home to settle in Manhattan, frequenting many of the streets where she sets up her camera, the 89-minute program had us enthralled in a nostalgic fervor. The cinematography is precisely composed, aided by an excellent squared full screen color picture transfer, and while the editing may be leisurely, what happens within the frame is almost always intriguing and fascinating. We know, however, that similar, shorter documentaries Akerman made in places we have never been before are fascinating, so it is probable that, despite the relative inconsequentiality of the film's images and the concerns of Akerman's mother, others who have the patience for such programs will find *News from Home* equally captivating. The squared full screen color picture is at the mercy of the environments, but the image is more solid and riveting than the presentation in **Chantal Akerman in the Seventies**.

The second film is ostensibly a regular drama from 1978, *Les Rendez-vous d'Anna*, about a filmmaker, played by Aurore Clément, arriving in Germany for a screening and then returning by train to Paris with a stop at Brussels. Sequentially, she has substantial conversations with five different characters along the way—one of the screening sponsors in Germany, played by Helmut Griem; a family friend she sees at the train station while waiting for her train to go back, played by Magali Noël; a guy on the train played by Hanns Zischler; her mother in Brussels, played by Lea Massari; and her on-and-off boyfriend in Paris, played by Jean-Pierre Cassel. In general, they do all the talking and she just listens. Fortunately, Clément is a terrific actress, or her blank slate character would be a hole in the center of the film too deep to fill in. On the one hand, the film runs an undisciplined 128 minutes and offers little more than the quick portraits of the five characters and a general sense of ennui within the heroine. On the other hand, the cinematography, letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.66:1, is intensely symmetrical, pulling your eyes into every image with a force that holds your attention each time for much longer than it deserves to. In one scene very near the end, there are a number of quick hiccups, and it is difficult to tell if these are jump cuts or just very disguised splices. Otherwise, the color transfer is lovely and grain is minimal except where the lighting is exceptionally challenged. As with the other films, the presentation is more solid and more gripping than the relatively nice looking presentation in **Chantal Akerman in the Seventies**. The monophonic sound is also crisp and finely detailed. The film is mostly in French with optional English subtitles. Also featured is a 28-minute segment depicting Akerman's interaction with her own mother; a 17-minute clip from the 64-minute **Chantal Akerman by Chantal Akerman** profile we reviewed in Sep 17; and a 23-minute audio-only reflection by Akerman (introduced by Varda) on many of the films in the collection ("It might sound very pretentious, but I really believe it. I think I'm making films that are very close to how I feel and to what I am, and I don't speak the language of men to express myself.").

Appearing on the second platter, **Jeanne Dielman 23, quai du Commerce 1080 Bruxelles** is the centerpiece of the collection, of course, but it was also released previously by Criterion on Blu-ray by itself (UPC#715515196512, \$40). The title is the address of the apartment building where the title character, played by Delphine Seyrig, resides. Note that the address is incomplete, because unless Brussels is a really friendly place, the mail cannot be delivered unless an address includes an apartment number.

The 1975 film is divided into three sections, each running about an hour. The first two sections represent two presumably sequential days in the life of the Seyrig character, a widow, and each day is introduced by a title card. Just the evening's activities are depicted on the first day. On the second day, she gets up, does a few chores, prepares breakfast for herself and her young adult son, sees him off to school, does more chores and straightening up, goes out to deposit her earnings and goes shopping for dinner, comes back, prepares dinner, goes out to have coffee in a café, comes back, has sex with a man who pays her, cleans up after he leaves, finishes preparing dinner, welcomes her son home, serves dinner, hangs out after dinner, goes off somewhere with her son and then comes back, and gets ready for bed. The camera is static, often with long takes, very little movement within the take, and minimal editing. The direction must have gone something like 'sit at the table motionless, count to twelve, touch your shirt pocket with your left hand and then lower it again, count to six' and so on. The third section represents what is apparently an imaginary day, introduced by an ambiguous title card that suggests it is a dream. It ought to be a dream, at least, because otherwise there are continuity errors galore, as dinner appears and disappears on the stove behind Seyrig's character when the angles shift in the editing while she tries to pour herself some coffee. If anything, the takes get even longer. One cut, a stationary shot depicting most of the living room, has her sitting in a chair for 68 seconds doing nothing but breathing. She does the pocket thing again, turns her head to the left briefly, and then goes back to sitting motionless, the cut ending after 48 more seconds of breathing. Soon afterwards, something major happens that is the movie's only real spoilable surprise, reinforcing the strong possibility that the final section is a dream.

The color transfer on the single release Blu-ray platter appears to be identical to the transfer on the **Masterpieces** platter. The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.66:1. The picture is more solid than the DVD was able to achieve, and the film's drab colors are not only as accurate as they are bland, but the vivid crispness of each hue can be captivating—when you see clips of the film, your heart races, and it is only when you have to slog through the whole thing that it starts to lose its luster. There

are occasional short hairs along the bottom of the image. The monophonic sound is so clear it has a near-stereophonic presence, capturing the environmental noises with exquisite precision. The film is in French with optional English subtitles.

All of the special features on the DVD have been carried over onto the free-standing release, including a fascinating 69-minute collection of primitive black-and-white video footage shot on the set during different moments in the production as Akerman and Seyrig rehearse the scenes and argue about the actions (the segment is so meticulous that not only are Akerman's initial ideas for scenes clearly detailed, but Seyrig's additions and modifications are also clarified, while the rest of the mostly female crew shuffles about, searching for the right props and preparing the technical aspects of the shoot); a 20-minute retrospective interview with Akerman; a 17-minute program Akerman made for French TV about cinema; another 7-minute interview from 1976 with Akerman and Seyrig; a good 23-minute interview with cinematographer Babette Mangolte; the 28-minute piece with Akerman's mother; and *Saute Ma Ville*.

The **Masterpieces** platter has the 69 minutes of behind-the-scenes footage, the 20-minute interview with Akerman, the 7-minute piece with Akerman and Seyrig and the 23-minute interview with Mangolte.

We would be the first to defend the film as a genuine work of cinematic art, certainly worth study and contemplation. There is obviously a strong feminist consideration in its thematic construct, particularly since it was composed in 1974 and 75, when its approach would have been considered a great deal more radical than it is now. Continuity anomalies aside, there is nothing slapdash about its composition (the colors and décor of the apartment are awful, but that would be a reflection upon the characters not the aesthetic taste of the filmmakers), and its daunting length gives its spare tableaux the chance to both stimulate a viewer's benumbed emotions and challenge the presumptions of both the rules of moviemaking and of life. But 'Greatest Movie Ever Made' it is not. Except for its moot feminist perspective, there is no excitement within its design over what movies are capable of. There is barely any excitement in the movie about anything. Another, more recent film appeared a little lower down on the Sight and Sound list, but represents the sort of spine-tingling realization of cinema's potential that Great Movies achieve, genuinely lifting a viewer's spirit while embracing social ideas that were kept out of view in the past, **Portrait of a Lady on Fire** (Jul 20). We don't think that film belongs in the top position, either, but unlike **Jeanne Dielman**, we would not argue if it found its way there someday.

Like Varda, Akerman's last films were autobiographical documentaries (as were a number of her earlier movies), but unlike Varda, the films are not very playful and are not audience friendly. Her final film, the 2015 **No Home Movie**, released on Blu-ray by Icarus Films Home Video (UPC#854565004252, \$37), runs 113 minutes and has a number of takes where nothing happens on the screen for several minutes at a time, intercut with longish shots that do have activity, and shorter clips. At this period in her life, Akerman was living with her mother in Brussels, but also traveling around the world to festivals, screenings and so on. She would come in, stay for a few days, and then leave again. One assumes that the landscape shots, absent of people and sometimes absent of life of any kind, are locations she visited during her travels. Some are captured from the window of an automobile and some are shot outside. The film opens, for example, with a 4-minute take of a strong wind buffeting grey trees in the last stages of losing their leaves, and it is only much later that you come to recognize the sequence as a metaphor for the pressures she is feeling, which then makes you wonder what the empty long shot of dirt and rocks is meant to represent. When at home, Akerman sets up a stationary camera and records her mother's gradual deterioration from ill health. She also pokes the camera around the apartment, and once in a while guides the conversations between the immigrant health aides and her mother. Near the end, when she herself conducts a brief interview with one of the aides, whose mastery of French is tentative, you learn Akerman's mother was a survivor of Auschwitz and several other details about the family. Hence, while the film appears slapdash and lethargically padded, it is actually carefully and powerfully constructed, working its way toward the deliberate conclusion that all of life works its way towards.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1. Sometimes, even when people are doing things, the lights in the apartment are left off, although there is probably more illumination coming from the windows into the rooms than the camera can capture, or that Akerman has set her aperture for (again, metaphorically?). The image is otherwise sharp and free of distortion. The DTS stereo sound has a terrific dimensionality, unhindered by the normal conventions of protecting a microphone from the elements. You hear the wind outside, and the aides puttering about in the apartment, all around you. The conversations are in French, with optional English subtitles.

An excellent 2015 profile of Akerman directed by Marianne Lambert, *I Don't Belong Anywhere: The Cinema of Chantal Akerman*, has also been included on the disc. Opening on the Staten Island ferry approaching Manhattan, the 67-minute film includes behind-the-scenes footage from **No Home Movie** (she shot a lot of it with her phone, and used a table rather than a tripod in her mother's apartment), provides an overview, with her reflections, upon a number of the films appearing in **Masterpieces** (including the sex scene from *Je Tu Il Elle*), and also features terrific interviews with Clément and with Gus Van Sant, who patterned one of his films after **Jeanne Dielman**. There is also a segment on the documentaries Criterion collected in their excellent **Eclipse Series Chantal Akerman Four Films** (Jun 16) and on her ostensible shot at transitioning to popular film, **A Couch in New York** (Aug 98). It is, however, the substantial material that Lambert amassed during the making of **No Home Movie** that is the most rewarding, as Akerman not only dissects what she is doing with the film and contemplates the avocation of filmmaking, but really explores the parameters of life itself. The presentation is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1 and is in French, mostly, with optional English subtitles.

Fairbanks entertainments

Not the best Douglas Fairbanks silent films, but still two of his better ones are paired on the single-platter Cohen Media Group *Cohen Film Collection* Blu-ray, **Douglas Fairbanks Double Feature Robin Hood and The Black Pirate** (UPC#738329263324, \$30).

Directed by Allan Dwan, the 1922 **Robin Hood** runs a whopping 133 minutes and may be most impressive for its matte shots and crowd scenes. Cashing in on the popularity of Fairbanks, the film has a good-sized budget and it all shows on the screen. Wallace Beery is King Richard and Enid Bennett is Maid Marian. Alan Hale, who would have the same role in the Errol Flynn version, plays Little John. Made before the story's dynamics were fully honed for film audiences, the narrative is a bit drawn out and has only a couple of the best known moments—there is, for example, no archery contest. But there are whole messes of bad guys, who try to take over England when Beery's character leaves for the crusades. Fairbanks's character, learning of the betrayals, tries to return without causing alarm but is scorned by the king, who thinks he is deserting to be with Bennett's character. Fairbanks certainly has a number of stunts, climbing up walls and leaping from them, as well as the expected hand-to-hand and swashbuckling combat, but there is so much story between each showpiece that the movie's pace dials down. The film really works best if you have seen all of Fairbanks's greatest movies and are hooked on his routines. It is a terrific film overall, but it doesn't have the pure breathless excitement and cinematic joy that the best Fairbanks movies can convey even to jaded contemporary viewers.

The squared, full screen black-and-white image has a mild tinting that does not interfere with the details of the image. When Beery's character picks up one of the villains in the finale with a single hand, you can see the wire that is helping him carry the guy. There are a few hidden splices, but they rarely interfere with the flow of the drama. More often, there are lovely blends of light, reality and art that convey the beauty of adventure without undermining its artifice. The film is accompanied by a suitable Robert Sauer orchestral score, drawn from historical sources and performed by the Mont Alto Orchestra, that never interferes with the action. We reviewed a Kino DVD in Aug 99 that had a blumier picture with much stronger tinting and a blander, less satisfying musical score.

The 1926 **The Black Pirate**, directed by Albert Parker, is more compact and more consistently engaging. Douglas is a nobleman who bluffs his way onto a pirate ship after he is shipwrecked, beats the captain in a fair fight, and then talks the crew into letting the next set of captives live, so that ransom can be collected. Billie Dove is one of the prisoners held for ransom, and Donald Crisp is another pirate. By keeping most of the action to the ship while it is anchored in one position, the film can sustain the narrative at hand without distractions. Douglas has one great stunt where he punches through the top of a sail with his knife and then descends as he cuts it apart (he repeats the action three times), and running 95 minutes, the film is a terrific mix of stunts, adventure, wit and romance.

The squared full screen movie was shot in a two-color process, which comes across as dirty brick occasionally highlighted with grey blue. Nevertheless, it is more appealing than straight black and white, simply because it is different, and if you do suppress the colors and watch the film in pure black and white, the film just isn't as interesting. There are quite a few stray scratches and other imperfections, but it is sharper and better detailed than the Kino DVD we reviewed in Aug 99, despite the over saturation on the DVD bringing a little more life to the deepest reds. The stereo score is a replication of the music that originally accompanied the film, and is effective if held to a modest volume. The commentary that film historian Rudy Behlmer provided for the DVD has been carried over, along with 18 minutes of outtakes that also had a Behlmer commentary. Additionally, a fresh 29 minutes of silent black-and-white outtakes have been included, the century-old footage of the actors at work being just about as valuable as actual pirate treasure.

What Cohen accomplishes with the Fairbanks Double Feature is even more impressive when one samples the way that his films usually appear on home video. Alpha Video has released the wonderful 1927 silent classic starring Fairbanks and Lupe Vélez, **The Gaucho**, as a *Silent Classics Collection* DVD (UPC#089218865496, \$9), and the squared full screen black-and-white picture is soft and even smeary, with plenty of speckles and scratches. A random collection of classical music pieces such as *The Four Seasons* and *The Nutcracker Suite* have been used for the musical score, although except for a brief passage during the climax, the music is in stereo and sounds rather decent. Despite its randomness, passages from the pieces often match the action quite well.

Even with the weak image—which will work better on a smaller screen than a larger one—the film is so rewarding that the disc is worthwhile until a better presentation comes along. The performance Fairbanks delivers is terrific. Set in the Andes, his character, basically an outlaw who heads a very large band of roving bandits, is cocky and athletic. Fairbanks mastered the bola and uses it with confidence, while his climbing, his jumps and his daring leaps have the same crisp precision as the movements of his chin and his eyes. Vélez is a fiery waitress who matches his zest for life, and as soon as he meets her she is attached to him—he even has his men drag her entire house, with 'a hundred horses,' so she doesn't have to leave his embrace when it is time to depart her village. The film's special effects are very elaborate and befitting of the kind of budget such a star vehicle would warrant, but the movie also has a strong spiritual component—the next town they intend to loot has a healing shrine (Mary Pickford in a cameo part plays the Holy Virgin), and a series of events open the hero's heart to a purer way of life. Directed by F. Richard Jones and running 95 minutes, the film has terrific action and a very satisfying character arc to support the lively and resonant narrative. Now if someone could only bring the film itself to a shrine to purge the source material of its impurities...

Olmos famous

The marvelously enjoyable 1988 drama, based upon a true story, about the teacher who guided the students in a barrio high school math class to pass an AP calculus test, **Stand and Deliver**, has been released by Warner Bros. as a *Warner WB Archive Entertainment* Blu-ray (UPC#840418303405, \$22). Edward James Olmos gives a lovely, persuasive and detailed performance as the teacher, and the film derives much of its entertainment from his character's creative and inspiring interactions with his students. Jacking up its star power, Lou Diamond Phillips was cast as one of the more rebellious students, and is surprisingly effective in the part despite his pinup boy demeanor. Andy Garcia has a small but unnerving role as a test administrator. Directed by Ramon Menendez, the 103-minute film has moments of humor as well as conflict, and manages to track the stories of more than a half dozen students in addition to the teacher, his family and the school's staff, leading to a devastating plot turn in its center, before a joyful, tears-in-your-eyes finale.

We reviewed a DVD in Mar 99, which was in great condition for its day, but the solidity and color detail afforded by the BD removes any distraction the picture quality might have to interfere with the drama. The film, striving for realism—the production designs are wonderful—may have a drab look, but hues are consistently solid and accurate. The monophonic sound is sharp and clear. There are optional English subtitles and a trailer.

Olmos is equally memorable in Luis Valdez's 1981 Universal adaptation of Valdez's stage production, **Zoot Suit**, which is available from Universal and Kino Lorber Incorporated as a *KL Studio Classics* Blu-ray (UPC#738329258146, \$30). Danny Valdez stars in the evocation of a true story, about a group of Mexican-Americans who were arrested for murder shortly after the start of World War II, and subjected to the damnation of the press and a farcical trial. Olmos plays the alter ego of the Danny Valdez character, sometimes embodying the spirit of all Mexican-Americans living in Los Angeles and sometimes simply being the devil that sits on the boy's shoulder whispering in his ear. Danny Valdez also gives a terrific performance, and the dynamic between him and Olmos is electrifying, exploring the soul of the single character not through a dichotomy, but by the back and forth momentum of their quantum superposition.

Owing as much to a limited budget as to the strength of the original stage concept, the film is also presented as a stage show and was in fact shot entirely within a theater. The contemporary audience is present, and is seen periodically, but then the film forgets about them as it moves intimately between the characters or transitions between settings in way that a stage show never could. Olmos provides a link there, as well, speaking to the viewer and the audience at times, before returning to his interactions with Danny Valdez. And finally, the production is also a musical, incorporating both swing numbers from the Forties and original Spanish language numbers, giving Olmos kind of MC or deejay duties, as well. The music is terrific, and more importantly, it serves as a salve for the anger and despondency that the bitterest parts of the narrative inspire. It is a wonderful, original and unique motion picture that celebrates Mexican-American culture—right down to, frankly, celebrating the original stage production—while exploring the need of corporate America to keep cultures like that demonized as a way of sustaining profit. And if you haven't ever heard of the film before now, that is why.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1. The color transfer looks bright and fresh. Sometimes the image is soft because of the lighting, but other times it is sharp. The DTS stereo sound has a reserved dimensionality, but it breaks out at just the right moments to punctuate or underscore the music. Although Spanish phrases abound, the show is essentially in English, with optional English subtitles. It should be noted that Tyne Daly and John Anderson are among the supporting players. Along with a trailer, there is a 16-minute interview with Luis Valdez, talking about the history of the play, the film and the actual event, as well as describing his involvement in theater projects and so on. Film historian Daniel Kremer provides a very good and enthusiastic commentary track (despite his irritating propensity for misusing the word, 'would'), going over the same topics Valdez covered but in far greater detail, while also discussing the film's unusual play-within-a-play-within-a-movie format and wracking his brain to name titles that are even remotely similar, such as **Marat/Sade**. He also supplies detailed backgrounds for the cast (although he leaves out Olmos's well-deserved Emmy for some reason) and an extensive description of how the original stage program and even the film did so fabulously well in Los Angeles and then bombed so spectacularly in New York (in part because clueless marketers thought the tastes of Chicanos and Puerto Ricans were interchangeable).

Suzuki Beauty

Everything ceases the moment we get our hands on another Seijun Suzuki crime thriller. They are just too much fun to put off. We already reviewed his 1958 gangster movie, **Underworld Beauty**, as a Home Vision DVD in Apr 21, but now the film has been released on Blu-ray by Radiance (UPC#760137171300, \$40). Letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1, the black-and-white image still has some vague implications of wear, but is generally in much better shape, removing the overt speckles that were present on the DVD and delivering sharper details. The monophonic sound is also stronger, adding to both the terrific Fifties jazz score and to the gunshots. Michitarō Mizushima is a former convict just released from prison, who digs up the stolen diamonds he had hidden before he was caught. The gang he worked for wants them, but he feels he owes them to the sister of his former partner, played by Mari Shiraki. The diamonds trade hands a couple of times during the course of the 87-minute film (ironically, they end up in a coal bin) as various gangsters and greedy individuals try to find them or hide them for a while before Mizushima locates them again and takes them back. The film has a general sense of refined humor—at one point, the diamonds get pressed into the breast of a clay mannequin before it is placed in a kiln—and a nice amount of suspense leading up to its elaborate final shoot-out. Every scene is wonderfully entertaining and much more satisfying than doing chores or otherwise going about our day.

The film is in Japanese with optional English subtitles and comes with a trailer and a 15-minute appreciation of the film from a feminist perspective, emphasizing Shiraki's performance, as well as the other actresses taking off their clothing for the camera. As an additional treat, a 39-minute black-and-white film Suzuki made in 1959, *Love Letter*, has also been included. It is a romance, shot with the same gusto that Suzuki addresses his crime films, about a nightclub pianist who meets another pianist and spends time with him in his remote mountain cabin. She goes back to work when he gets sick, but they continue to correspond until, after a couple of years, his letters begin to trail off and she returns to the mountain to find out what happened. Hisako Tsukuba stars with Kyōsuke Machida and Frank Nagai. Letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1, the film positively gushes with romantic atmosphere, and yet it never drowns in it because of Suzuki's crisp editing and dynamic camera setups. It is unabashedly romantic and appealing for its expressed emotions, cozy wintertime atmosphere and the adeptness with which the cast members deliver the narrative.

The source material is a little worn and aged, but is consistently presentable. The monophonic sound has the equivalent amount of background noise, but is otherwise in decent shape, enough to convey the music—Nagai also sings a couple of songs—without significant distortion. The film is in Japanese with optional English subtitles and comes with a full-length trailer (which gives away the entire plot, like it's a miniature version of the film). There is also a commentary by Suzuki expert William Carroll, who emphasizes that Suzuki was more than just a crime film maven. He goes over the backgrounds of the cast, discusses Nikkatsu Studio's production strategies (the film was intended as the second half of a double bill), and thoroughly explores Suzuki's stylistic choices and how the short film illuminates the true parameters of his artistic abilities.

Romcom delight

The world, at least the home video world, is filled with romantic comedies. You could watch a new one every day and never get to the end of them—heck, you could probably watch a Christmas-themed one every day and never get to the end of them. To rise above the mundane, however, a romantic comedy must be somehow special, like that perfect someone who is either waiting for you or has found you already, and so allow us to bring your attention to the 2005 *Must Love Dogs*, a Warner Bros. *Warner WB Archive Collection* Blu-ray (UPC#840418319529, \$22). Diane Lane, who has never become a big star, but has charmed audiences since her childhood (and even garnered an Oscar nomination at one point), plays a divorcee who is dabbling in dating apps on the Internet, back when that was still a major thing before smart phones came along and accelerated the process. John Cusack plays a boat builder who is similarly situated. In both cases, it is actually their family and friends that first put them up online and thus arrange the initial awkward meeting, and then it takes the film's full 98-minute running time to seal the deal. So what makes the Gary David Goldberg feature so special? Basically, it is the ensemble cast. Elizabeth Perkins, Dermot Mulroney, Stockard Channing and Christopher Plummer co-star, but down to the cast members who are there only for the dating failure montages, every performer is witty and inspired. Cusack is ideally prepossessing, but Lane is the film's center of attention. Her timing is consistently sharp, so that her interaction with each of the other performers is delightful, and the script is structured to throw in just the right amount of complications before it is time to wrap things up. The movie is one cute, knowing moment and chuckle after another, and wins your heart just like a romcom ought to.

As does the Blu-ray. Letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1, the colors are sharp and the image is immaculate. The 5.1-channel DTS sound has a reserved but viable separation mix. There are optional English subtitles, 8 minutes of amusing and touching deleted scenes, a minute-long blooper and a trailer.

Hooray for Bollywood

Bollywood had been around for decades, rivaling Hollywood at least in terms of filling seats in theaters, but in the Nineties, with the proliferation of both audio and video cassettes, the unique format of the films produced in India achieved a worldwide marketing penetration that had previously been out of their grasp. This in turn energized the film production, which was also taking advantage of upgraded filmmaking technologies—particularly what had been developed to facilitate the explosion of music videos following the popularity of MTV. Where MTV presented short films to help in the sale of pop music hits, the films of Bollywood had always been so tightly entwined with Top 40 hits—even more so than Hollywood in the Thirties—that the two were in effect one industry. And so the enthusiasm for the music video format also fueled an enthusiasm for what are, in effect, feature length music videos.

Shoreline Entertainment has started to release a number of those Nineties Bollywood features on Blu-ray, and they are, at least, an improvement over the smeary and messy DVDs that we used to put up with because we were so starved for the films. The movies are, as a whole, an acquired taste, and that is readily apparent with the Shoreline release of the 1992 *Raju Ban Gava Gentleman* (UPC#840418309681, \$15). Your immediate impulse when you put on the 147-minute feature is to eject it and move on to something else. Directed by Aziz Mirza, the acting is terrible, the shots are sloppy (with extras looking into the camera) and the editing is desperate. But then, the first catchy number kicks in, people start moving in unison and you are hooked. Shah Rukh Khan is an engineering graduate who

moves from the sticks to Mumbai looking for a job that matches his skill set. He settles into an impoverished neighborhood, catches the eye of a cute girl, and finally lands a position with a construction company. Impressing his superiors with his knowledge in a meeting, and the daughter of the company's owner, he is quickly promoted and put in charge of a big project. A rival who is jealous of the daughter's interest, however, sabotages the project. It takes a while for the story to get going, but the song and dance numbers readily hold your attention and you begin to settle in with the tale. As the plot turns accumulate, you become more and more involved, and by the end, the suspense of the drama, fused with the lingering strains of the music and the subsequent happy ending, have you completely won over. Juhi Chawla and Nana Patekar co-star. Khan is a dreamboy, while the two actresses are charmingly real, even when glamoured up.

Music may soothe the savage beast, but it also goes a long way to quieting your inner critic. To make matters worse, there seems to be only a handful of basic Bollywood song structures and orchestrations, which get repeated from film to film with no more than the slightest variations. That never matters in the slightest, however, since the lyrics are appropriate to the film at hand, the stagings are fresh and the choreography is well organized. The sound is monophonic and a little reserved, but it is not distorted. The film is in Hindi with optional English subtitles which default to the 'off' setting. That said, the subtitled is much better than it was on the older DVDs. There are no typos, and even the lyrics to the songs are translated. Contrary to a notation on the back of the jacket, the picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1. Colors are fresh, and while the image is a bit soft at times, details are reasonably clear.

Rah, rah, rah

Cheerleaders were a big thing for erotic movies in the Seventies in drive-in movie theaters, a popularity that eagerly made its way to home video in the following decades. Long before the *Bring It On* series brought the genre down to kiddie level, the idea was to show actresses who could pass or almost pass for teenagers doing what everyone fantasized they did when they stood before crowds on cold autumn nights jumping up and down in short skirts and rotating their evocative pompoms. Arriving late in the cycle, Jeff Werner's 1979 *Cheerleaders' Wild Weekend* is nevertheless an ideal representation of the genre. It has an ostensibly serious narrative blended with a decent amount of comedy and plenty of topless nudity, and it is stupid as all get out. What more could a fan ask for?

MVDvisual has released the film on Blu-ray as part of their *MVD Rewind Collection* series (UPC#760137164906, \$25; the film's actual title card lacks the apostrophe), an attempt to resurrect the nostalgia of the videotape rental days. Letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1, the colors are fresh and fleshtones are accurate, although the image still has a number of scratches and speckles. They don't seem to matter in the least.

Cheerleaders from three schools in Los Angeles—pointedly an inner city school, a middle class school and an upper class school—are riding the same bus to a cheerleading competition in Sacramento. But the bus is only driving on back roads, not I-5, and three disgruntled former football players lie in wait to abduct the girls and hold them all in a woosy cabin, demanding a ransom from the parents. The premise is even dumber than that, but that is the gist of it. Realizing no one is coming to rescue them, the girls let go of their animosities toward one another and devise a plan, which involves tying all of their panties together to make a rope, among other things. Kristine DeBell and Jason Williams are billed above the title, but none of the performers really stands out above the others. The acting is not great, but the ensemble spirit and just the general idea of the film is enough to be pleasing, as it is with most cheerleading movies of this sort.

The monophonic sound is reasonably clear, and there are optional English subtitles. Two commentary tracks are featured, both of which are prompted by a pair of eager video producers. One commentary features Werner, co-star Marilyn Joi and editor Gregory McClatchy, reacting to the scenes and sharing a few anecdotes about the shoot. Joi insists that the nude scenes were fun to do, and everyone actually seems to have had a good time banding together on the very low budget production. On the second track, DeBell, who claims the people on the other commentary were making a lot of stuff up, does her best to remember what she can about the shoot, and also talks about her career (they end up talking a lot about her other films and TV work) and life experiences. Although she herself did not do any nude scenes, she has no problem with those who did, although she's made an interesting discovery that a lot of performers never anticipate. "I was never one to say, 'Oh my gosh, what would my parents think?'" but now I would certainly say, "What would my boys think?"

Also included is a trailer; a 3-minute montage of memorabilia that highlights the nudity; a 4-minute alternate title sequence (which also lacks an apostrophe); a wonderful 11-minute interview with DeBell, reeling off her memories of the different screen jobs she's had; a nice 9-minute interview with Williams talking about his career and in particular his starring role in *Flesh Gordon*; a 15-minute interview with Joi sharing the most memorable moments from her career; and an excellent 27-minute interview with co-star Leon Isaac Kennedy, who plays a DJ the kidnappers use to deliver their ransom demands, talking about his career as an actor and major exploitation action producer and star (Muhammad Ali did him a favor and agreed to appear in one of his films, so he shot Ali on the first day of production, "I was going to shoot him first. The very first day of shooting I was getting Muhammad Ali on film because that's insurance that the rest of the film would get done.").

Exceptional *Star Wars* TV

Several short-form television shows have been created as spin-offs from the *Star Wars* films, and most of them are good fun, filled with cute creatures and stories drawn from famous westerns, gangster movies and so on. One series, however, hovers far above the others, not only addressing serious adult themes but speaking to our present world's politics so definitively and with such enlightenment it may well serve as a handbook for surviving the times, ***Star Wars Andor: The Complete First Season***. Released as a three-platter *4K UltraHD Collector's Edition* Blu-ray by Lucasfilm Ltd and Disney+ (UPC#786936900965, \$86), the 2022 series is a prequel that depicts events and characters leading up to the exceptional ***Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*** feature (May 17). Cute creatures are few and far between, although the show is heavy in *Star Wars* tech and loaded with suspenseful action as it cuts between the efforts of the Empire to tighten its control of the worlds within its realm, the efforts of highly placed politicians to undermine that control, and the experiences of the title character, who is initially recruited for a robbery and, over the course of the season, comes to realize that he must do everything he can to contribute to the rebellion and destroy the Empire. The action scenes are so exhilarating that they are well worth waiting for, and that allows the show, as it builds from one to the next, to take its time and not rush into mindless mayhem. The narrative is constantly interested in the mechanics of political conflict, the application of power, and the dynamics of freedom. Within the rush of the glorious sci-fi imagery—some of it drawn with great satisfaction from existing *Star Wars* algorithms, and some of it contributing to the collective pot—and specific plot advancements, there is plenty of room to present interesting characters and enable them to grow. Diego Luna stars. Stellan Skarsgård, Fiona Lewis, Forest Whitaker and Andy Serkis are among the best known supporting players. Twelve episodes are spread across the three platters, running a total of 546 minutes, and there's not a moment of it that lets you down. Instead, it grabs hold of your imagination, respects your maturity and offers you a mindful, multifaceted view of what power is, what it does, how it is used and how it can be interfered with.

It is during the end credits, as the scores of artists who labored upon the film are dutifully listed in blocks of names that you realize how sharp the 4K image actually is. Every name is readable, which isn't always the case, even on a standard Blu-ray. Perhaps that is another reason, also, why one gets so swept up in the drama and the action as the show proceeds. Even the lyrical moments, where characters just pause to savor or study their surroundings, have a subliminal magnetism thanks to the crispness and accuracy of the image details. Oh, and speaking of the end credits—be sure to watch the final episode all the way through, because after they're over, there is a little teaser that shows, among other things, what the hero was making during his stretch of prison labor.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1. The Dolby Atmos sound has a wonderful spectrum—in one town where a lot of the film is set, chimes are periodically sounded from a tower, and with the right audio setup, it reverberates throughout your living space. There is an audio track that describes the action (“With evasive spinning maneuvers, Luthen flies at the arrestor and buzzes the bridge. The remaining two fighters swoop back around for an attack. Coming out of his spin, Luthen folds in his ship's wings to form a protective shell. From another secret panel, a cylinder twirls out into position. Laser beams emit from both sides of the ship, which rolls again and cuts both fighters to shreds.”), alternate French and Spanish audio tracks, optional English, French and Spanish subtitles, and 41 minutes of engaging promotional featurettes.

Hail Fellowes, well met

Superficially it never exceeds the demands of soap opera, but the costumes, décor and period trappings are so scrumptious and enjoyable that so long as there are characters and a narrative to pull you along, it is hard to resist Julian Fellowes's take on America's discovery of luxuries, ***The Gilded Age: The Complete Second Season***, a three-platter WB HBO Home Video DVD release (UPC#883929812769, \$25). We reviewed the first season in Sep 22. The series primarily follows two families, one that represents new wealth, living in an enormous mansion on a side street just off of New York's Fifth Avenue, and one that has been part of New York society for much longer, who are still well off, but not quite in the same way, and live in a somewhat smaller brownstone across the street. The plots extend to the servants of both houses as well, and there is also what one might consider an upper middle class African-American family that lives in Brooklyn, whose lives intersect with the other characters. The show also has a great deal of fun transporting its stories to the mansions of Newport, Rhode Island, “for the season.” Morgan Spector is the rail, steel and banking tycoon who lives in the big house, and Carrie Coon is his wife, who is trying to establish herself as the centerpiece of New York Society, in this season by backing the new Metropolitan Opera House in a rivalry with the long established Academy of Music. Spector's character is also coping with labor problems at his steel mill (who isn't?). Christine Baranski and Cynthia Nixon are the older sisters living across the street, who must face tragedies and financial disasters over the course of the season, while the show's ostensible heroine, their niece, played by Louisa Jacobson, considers a promising offer of marriage from a well-to-do widowed cousin. Nathan Lane, sporting a thick Southern accent, also has a prominent role as a kind of go-between that Coon's character uses to ingratiate herself with the other social figures.

Like the first season, there are occasional but glaring anachronisms in the dialog, but the creators do their best to get into the spirit of history, and ***Second Season*** forms one climax around the building and opening of the Brooklyn Bridge. More so than in Fellowes's British-based shows, there is a lot of intermingling between the ruling class

and the help, some individuals moving up in the world and others moving down. If you get into the stories, there are plenty of shared emotions, both in joy and sorrow, that will readily pull you from one episode to the next, but frankly, what brought us to tears was simply the dresses, the hats, the jewelry and the amazing locations, which don't just capture the past, but celebrate the beauty of the impulses and indulgences of the day.

Eight episodes are spread across three platters and run a total of 447 minutes. Each platter has a ‘Play All’ option. The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1 and an accommodation for enhanced 16:9 playback, and while the lighting is always relatively faithful to what was available at the time, the colors remain sharply defined and glorious to behold. The 5.1-channel Dolby Digital sound has a functional dimensionality. There are optional English subtitles and, spread across the last two platters, 32 minutes of promotional featurettes that concentrate on the characters, but are separated into such small units—most under a minute—without a ‘Play All’ option, that they really aren't worth slogging through. We recommend the final three, which are a little better than all of the others.

We reviewed Fellowes's dip into the popularity of the ***Bridgerton*** time period, ***Belgravia***, in Jan 21, which was a superb blend of constant, irresistible plot hooks and fascinating historical minutia. Now there is a sequel released on two DVD platters by Universal Pictures Home Entertainment, ***Belgravia: The Next Chapter*** (UPC#840418309216, \$30). Fellowes is listed as a producer, but his hand is in less evidence, beyond the standard upstairs downstairs mix of narratives. The 2024 program, which runs a full eight episodes (the first season only ran for six episodes), is set two generations after the original series, placing it right in the middle of Victoria's reign, and has an entirely new cast, including Harriet Slater, Benjamin Wainwright, Toby Regbo, Edward Bluemel and Elaine Cassidy. There are still plenty of plot hooks, but none of Fellowes's surprises. These you can all see coming a mile away, although, that said, the mix of costumes, financial hijinks and broken hearts is still nearly impossible to resist. Slater's character marries a financier played by Wainwright, who has emotional insecurities and trouble getting through the wedding night. That's just the start of his problems, since he also begins stretching his investments more than he ought to. The servants have their secrets, and other characters also have secrets of their own. Slater, who begins hanging out with a group of Bohemians when her marriage starts to go south, essentially has to cut through all of secrets to find her happiness.

Each platter has a ‘Play All’ option, and the complete program runs 307 minutes. The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2:1 and an accommodation for enhanced 16:9 playback. The color transfer looks fine and some of the costumes are quite enchanting. The 5.1-channel Dolby Digital sound has a periodic dimensionality, and there is an extremely catchy and familiar sounding musical score by ***Downton Abbey*** composer John Lunn. There are optional English subtitles.

Mansion murder

The Gilded Age goes Hallmark with the Hallmark Mystery Ciniverse *A Hallmark Mystery Original Movie* DVD release, ***Gilded Newport Mysteries: Murder at the Breakers*** (UPC#767685170700, \$15). A fictional niece of Cornelius Vanderbilt is the heroine, played by Ali Skovbye, who writes about women's interests for a Newport, Rhode Island newspaper in the late Nineteenth Century, but also socializes with the wealthy. A body comes flying out of the balcony and lands next to her during a summer party at her uncle's, and her stepbrother is accused of the crime. The local ‘constabulary’ investigator is a hunk and is smitten with her, so they investigate the crime together, although her attention is also piqued by a nattily dressed bearded fellow who says he is a reporter but seems to have access to places and events that the press is not allowed to enter. So you basically have a decent romantic triangle, a viable murder mystery with plenty of suspects, and fancy clothing, all taking place in gorgeous mansions. Very difficult to resist, to say the least. The 2024 84-minute telefilm was directed by Terry Ingram and at least gives lip service to the expressions and vocabulary of the day, up to a point (in one scene, Skovbye's character holds the door open for a man to exit a house before she does, something that would never, ever have actually happened at that time in that place). In some ways the show is squeaky clean, as one would expect from a Hallmark production, but it proceeds with an adequate amount of intrigue and is reasonably fun in its execution.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1. The color transfer is very fresh and the image is sharp. The 5.1-channel Dolby Digital sound has a workable dimensionality and a little flair from time to time. There are optional English subtitles.

Hitchcock sampler

Marc Cousins, who made the terrific ***Complete Story of Film*** (Oct 23), has now created a 120-minute documentary about one key film director whose work helped to define the art of cinema, ***My Name is Alfred Hitchcock***, which has been released on Blu-ray by Cohen Media (UPC#738329269074, \$30). Cousins hired an actor, Alistair McGowan, to imitate Hitchcock's voice so that Hitchcock could seem to be narrating the program. The imitation isn't bad, and more importantly, it manages to sustain the theatrical illusion that Hitchcock is telling his own story for the length of the program. Clips from virtually every Hitchcock feature film are included (we did not notice anything from ***Secret Agent***, ***The Skin Game*** or ***Easy Virtue***, but every other available film is there at some point). The presentation is organized thematically, around the ideas of ‘Escape,’ ‘Desire,’ ‘Loneliness,’ ‘Time,’ ‘Fulfillment’ and ‘Height,’ as Cousins uses such generalizations as an excuse to explore the different clips and point out consistencies in Hitchcock's filmmaking choices amid the impressive breadth of his entertainment. Cousins shares some production trivia here and there, along with tidbits of Hitchcock's biography, but the primary purpose of the film is simply to celebrate Hitchcock's movies. In that it would take more than 2 hours to visit the fifty plus movies in their entirety, or even view all of their trailers, his organization of the highlights and motifs is both informative for newcomers and an immense pleasure for anyone else. That is the true purpose of the documentary, to let viewers bask in the sheer pleasure of Hitchcock's cinematic art and to know where it came from if they want to go back for more.

Cousins may not make note of Hitchcock's obsession with the juxtaposition between reds and greens in his earliest color films, but thanks to the lovely transfers of the clips, viewers cannot help but notice it. All of the color films and many of the black-and-white films look gorgeous, and the original footage Cousins has shot is solidly and clearly delivered, with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1. The 5.1-channel DTS sound has a mild dimensionality, and there are optional English subtitles, a trailer voiced by McGowan, an alternate trailer with Cousins doing the narration (badly), a 4-minute audio audition by McGowan (which is still a bit rough, but definitely on the right track), a 2-minute montage of tryouts for the film's graphics, a very nice 7-minute segment with Cousins riffing directly to the camera about the pleasures Hitchcock in general and **Sabotage**, **Notorious** and **Rope** in particular, and a nice 27-minute interview with Cousins talking to Chuck Rose, who has a great Hitchcock anecdote of his own.

It's not only rock and roll

While there are dozens of documentaries and even dramatic films about the origins and rise of The Beatles, there is darn little available about The Rolling Stones. When they first appeared on the scene, they were the interesting ones, the bad boys, and they got a lot of press, but a funny thing happened. The Beatles broke up and thus became an object of fascination and longing, while the Stones, for all intents and purposes, stayed together and, hence, became 'boring.' That said, we were still very eager to dive into the terrific 2001 documentary put out on Blu-ray by R2R, Darkside Releasing and Trinity Creative Partnership, **Mick Jagger: The Ultimate Performer** (UPC# 840418321270, \$20).

Running 60 minutes, the film focuses on the first two decades of the band's success. Neither Jagger nor his main partner, Keith Richards, is interviewed, but there are interviews with many of the band's initial managers and backers, as well as former band member Mick Taylor, along with rock luminaries such as Ian Anderson, B.B. King, and Paul Kantner, and others in the business who crossed paths with them during the Sixties and Seventies. Music from concert performances and other second hand sources fill the background, often in a modest two-channel Dolby Digital stereo. There is no captioning. The image has an aspect ratio of about 1.66:1. While archival clips vary in quality, the interview footage is sharp and brightly colored. Along with rare performance footage and marvelous news footage, the film also includes decent length clips of the David Bowie and Jagger music video of *Dancin' in the Streets*, and Jagger's exquisite performance as a drag singer in the 1997 adaptation of *Bent*.

As the documentary's title implies, the film's central focus is on Jagger, who began, with Richards, as chosen supporting musicians for the band that Brian Jones put together out of an eagerness to play American blues. Since the purpose of the documentary is to trace Jagger's rise to fame, there is no analysis or deconstruction of specific songs (except for *Dancin' in the Streets*) or albums, just a general idea of which musical phase they were going through at which point in time. Popularity strengthened Jagger and Richards, while Jones disintegrated, and the film, despite its brevity, takes the viewer through a step-by-step record of how that came about, and how Jagger and the band coalesced and survived the financial challenges caused by a merry-go-round of managers. They rose to the top not only through their music, but through their large venue performances, thanks to Jagger's ability at projecting his unique musical act to crowds large and larger. There is an attempt to explain what it is about his charisma and stage presence that enabled him to accomplish that, but ultimately, his skills are undefinable. Maybe some day, Peter Jackson will put together a multi-episode documentary about the band, but until that day comes, beyond the concert programs that are available on DVD and Blu-ray, **Ultimate Performer** delivers a concise and rewarding executive summary of how and why the group and Jagger became such an enduring success.

The Frank Capra box

No room is available to publish our entire review of Sony Pictures Home Entertainment's **Frank Capra at Columbia** (UPC#043396635937, \$231), a twenty-film, eighteen-platter boxed set that also includes 4K presentations of nearly half the films, so we have chosen instead to publish the review for free on our Substack page (<https://dvd-laserdisc.substack.com/p/the-dvd-laser-disc-newsletter-special>) and have also made it available for free as a PDF file for download, which can be requested by writing Capra Review at DVDLaser@rocketmail.com. If you have no access to a computer and want a hard copy, we unfortunately have to charge \$10 to cover our expenses (\$15 outside of the U.S.). Please write to Capra Review %The DVD-Laser Disc Newsletter, PO Box 382, Glen Cove NY 11542, and include a check or credit card details. The review also includes a review of the freestanding Criterion Blu-ray, **It Happened One Night** (UPC#715515119610, \$40). The reviews are also incorporated in our PDF format compilation book available on CD-ROM, *DVDs*, for \$24.95 plus \$4 shipping (\$15 outside of the U.S.). Write to DVDs, The DVD-Laser Disc Newsletter, PO Box 382, Glen Cove NY 11542.

DVD News

NO REASON TO PANIC: You may have heard that Sony has stopped making Blu-rays, but that is not entirely true. They have stopped making recordable Blu-rays, the type one buys in packets of ten or fifty to store large computer files, etc. Sony will most certainly continue to release pre-recorded movies on Blu-ray well into the foreseeable future.

CRITERION CORNER: Sean Baker's Oscar-nominated **Anora** is being released in 4K format by The Criterion Collection with two commentaries, one featuring Baker, producers Alex Coco and Samantha Quan, and cinematographer Drew Daniels, and the other featuring Baker and actors Yura Borisov, Mark Eydelshteyn, Karren Karagulian, Mikey Madison, and Vache Tovmasya; a making-of documentary; interviews with Baker and Madison; the Cannes Film Festival press conference; a Q&A with Madison and actor-stripper Lindsey Normington; and deleted scenes. Baker's **Prince of Broadway** will include two commentaries, one featuring Baker and the other featuring producer and co-writer Darren Dean, associate producer and actor Victoria Tate, and actor Karren Karagulian; an introduction by Baker; two documentaries on the making of the film; and a restoration demonstration featuring Baker and Coco. Julian Schnabel's **Basquiat** will be a black-and-white version in 4K, along with the original color version on a standard Blu-ray and will have a commentary with Schnabel along with interviews with Jeffrey Wright, Schnabel and David Bowie. **Jean de Florette / Manon of the Spring Two Films by Claude Berri** will be in 4K format and will include *Claude Berri: The Card Dealer* (2018), a documentary on director Berri's life and career, and *The Force of Destiny* (2017), a documentary about the making of the films. A 4K presentation of Billy Wilder's **Some Like It Hot** will have a commentary from 1989 featuring film scholar Howard Suber; a program on Orry-Kelly's costumes for the film, featuring costume designer and historian Deborah Nadoolman Landis and costume historian and archivist Larry McQueen; three behind-the-scenes documentaries; appearances by Wilder on *The Dick Cavett Show* from 1982; a conversation from 2001 between Tony Curtis and film critic Leonard Maltin; a French television interview from 1988 with Jack Lemmon; and a radio interview from 1955 with Marilyn Monroe. Kenji Mizoguchi's **Ugetsu** will be in 4K and will feature a Tony Rayns commentary; *Kenji Mizoguchi: The Life of a Film Director*, a 1975 documentary by Kaneto Shindo; *Two Worlds Intertwined*, a 2005 appreciation of **Ugetsu** by Masahiro Shinoda; *Process and Production*, a 2005 interview with Tokuzo Tanaka, first assistant director on **Ugetsu**; and an interview from 1992 with cinematographer Kazuo Miyagawa. Wong Kar Wai's **Chunking Express** will be in 4K and will come with an interview from 2002 with cinematographer Christopher Doyle; an episode of *Moving Pictures* from 1996 featuring interviews with Wong and Doyle; and deleted scenes.

NEW IN BLU: The following titles were recently released in Blu-ray—Glitch Ditch 31, Glitch Ditch 32, Glitch Ditch 33, Glitch Ditch 34, Glitch Ditch 35, Mind Melters 96, Mind Melters 97, Mind Melters 98, Mind Melters 99, Mind Melters 100 (Acid Bath); Blood-a-Rama Triple Frightmare II (AGFA); Kuso, The Sacrifice (AMD); A Little More Flesh (Art); Heretic, We Live in Time (A24); Upstream (Bayview); Starve Acre (Brainstorm); Melodrive, One by One, Retail! (Burning Bulb); Orders (Canadian); Hundreds of Beavers (Cartuna); Black-Eyed SusanCongo, The Keep, Last Embrace, Maybe It's Love, Sliver (CAV); Shaw Bros. Classics V.4 (Cinedigm); The Call (Cineverse); The Little Rascals The Restored Silents V.1 (ClassicFlix); The Grifters, Jo Jo Dancer Your Life Is Calling, The Mother and the Whore, Winchester '73 (Criterion); The Return, Rumours (Decal); Cannibal! The Musical (Degausser); He Never Left (Epic); Chris Claremont's X-Men (ETR); Nine Perfect Strangers (Fifth Season); Candy Mountain, Cash Calls Hell, Close Your Eyes, No Home Movie (Film Movement); Bring It All Back Home, Glue Trap, Old Man, Paradise, Rocky's, September Babies, Trigger Happy, When It Rains in L.A. (Gravitas); Feet of Death, Space Command Redemption, Twilight Ride (Indie Rights); April Fool's Day, Body Parts, The Coffee Table, Fade-In, Houseboat, Invasion of the Bee Girls, Let's Get Lost, My Name Is Alfred Hitchcock, Reindeer Games, Shout at the Devil, Soundtrack to a Coup d'Etat, The Spiral Road, Teacher's Pet, That Funny Feeling (Kino); Goldilocks and the Three Bears Death and Porridge (Leomark); All You Need Is Blood (Level 33); Armor (Lionsgate); Omni Loop (Magnolia); Hippo (Memory); Icons Unearthed Marvel (Mill Creek); Carnage for Christmas (MPI); The Substance (Mubi); Apache Rifles/Panhandle, Beneath the Valley of the Ultra Vixens, The Cell, Dark Sanctuary The Story of the Church, Feed, Impact, Incubus, Inglourious Basterds, Love and Crime, Poverty Row Classics King of the Zombies / Miss V from Moscow, Rambo Noir, Running on Karma, Super Vixens, The Triumph of Sherlock Holmes/Silver Blaze, Underground Beauty, Vixen., Weak Spot (MVD); Dad & Step-Dad (Nobudge); Sometimes I Think about Dying (Oscilloscope); Smile 2 (Paramount); Daria, God City Da Movie, The Green Sea, Heyday The Mic Christopher Story, I Am Samuel, Imperial Blue, In the Heart of the Machine, Iona, Lone Wolf (Rising Sun); Dogs in Quicksand (Saturn's Core); Badrinath Yatra, Bhagwan Parshuram, Bhraashatchar, Brahmachari, Dil Hai Betaab, Dil Tera Aashiq, Mangal Pandey The Rising, Mehndi, Mohabbat, Namak, Once upon a Time in the Caribbean, Param Dharam, Raju Ban Gaya Gentleman, Sarkar, The Soul of Ashanti (Shoreline); Here, Saturday Night, Venom The Last Dance (Sony); House The Complete Series (Universal); The Line (Utopia); Elevation (Vertical); Death Laughs among Us (VHShitfest); Daffy Duck's Quackbusters, Frankenstein Jr. and the Impossibles Complete Series, Full Moon in Blue Water, Gabriel over the White House, The Happy Ending, Last Stand at Saber River, Romance & Cigarettes, Till, Wait Till Your Father Gets Home Complete Series (Warner); Beyond the Wasteland, Burning, Escape, Get Fast, A Legend, Whiteout (Well Go); Sweet Sweet Lonely Girl (Yellow Veil)

NEW IN 4K: The following titles have recently been issued in 4K format—Congo, The Keep, Last Embrace, Sliver (CAV); Sanctum (Cinedigm); JoJo Dancer Your Life Is Calling, The Mother and the Whore, Winchester '73, Yojimbo/Sanjuro (Criterion); April Fool's Day, Body Parts, Murder by Decree, Orca The Killer Whale, Reindeer Games, Sea of Love (Kino); Jackie Brown, Kill Bill V.1, Kill Bill V.2 (Lionsgate); The Substance (Mubi); Beneath the Valley of the Ultra Vixens, The Cell, Incubus, Inglourious Basterds, Opera, Super Vixens, Vixen. (MVD); Chinatown, Once upon a Time in the West, Smile 2 (Paramount); Venom The Last Dance (Sony), Se7en (Warner); IP Man 2 Legend of the Grandmaster (Well Go)

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Second Season p10
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Current Attractions

The following titles
recently appeared for the
first time:

Alone in Venice (Freestyle)*
Apache Rifles/Panhandle
(MVD)
The Ark and the Darkness
(Vision)*
Armor (Lionsgate)*
Arthur and the Minimoys
Season 1 (Dreamscape)
Arthur and the Minimoys
Season 2 (Dreamscape)
Arthur and the Minimoys
Season 3 (Dreamscape)
Attenborough's Life Journey
(Paramount)
Beggars of Life (Alpha)
Beneath the Valley of the Ultra
Vixens (MVD)
Bible Land Passages
(Dreamscape)
A Billmore Christmas
(Cinedigm)
Bolani's Shoes (Freestyle)*
Bring It All Back Home
(Gravitas)*
Cartouche (Reel Vault)
Climate for Change
(Dreamscape)
The Cowboy and the Queen
(Kino)
Criminal Minds Evolution
Season 17 (Paramount)
Daria (Rising Sun)
Dark Sanctuary The Story of
The Church (MVD)
Dead before They Wake
(Deskpopp)
DinoGator (Vision)*
The Domino Revival (Sol Deo
Gloria)
Dracula's Drive-In Atom Age
Vampire (Wownow)
Dracula's Hidden Kingdom
(Paramount)
Elevation (Vertical)
Escape (Well Go)
Eve's Leaves (Alpha)
Extraordinary Ecosystems
(Dreamscape)
Falling in Love in Niagara/A
Whitewater Romance
(Cinedigm)
Feet of Death (Indie Rights)*
Flesh Eaters (SRS)
Full Moon in Blue Water
(Warner)
The Gauchos (Alpha)
Get Fast (Well Go)
Gilded Newport Mysteries
Murder at the Breakers
(Cinedigm)
Girl in the Palms (Random)*
Gladiator The Real Story
(Wownow)
Glitch Ditch 31 (Acid Bath)*
Glitch Ditch 32 (Acid Bath)*
Glitch Ditch 33 (Acid Bath)*
Glitch Ditch 34 (Acid Bath)*
Glitch Ditch 35 (Acid Bath)*
Global Harmony (Freestyle)*
Glue Trap (Gravitas)*
God City Da Movie (Rising
Sun)
Goldilocks and the Three
Bears Death and Porridge
(Leomark)*
Good Side of Bad (Freestyle)*
The Green Sea (Rising Sun)
Guardians of the Wild (Alpha)
The Gutter (Magnolia)

The Happy Ending (Warner)
Heavens to Betsy
(Dreamscape)
Here (Sony)
Hermeticism and the Hermetic
Order of the Golden Dawn
(Wownow)
Heyday The Mic Christopher
Story (Rising Sun)
History Kids: Gandhi And The
Power Of Peaceful Protests
(Wonderscape)*
How Deep Is the Ocean (Indie
Rights)*
I Am Samuel (Rising Sun)
Imperial Blue (Rising Sun)
In the Heart of the Machine
(Rising Sun)
The Incredible Journey: Daniel
(Dreamscape)
The Insanity of God
(Dreamscape)
Iona (Rising Sun)
Kensuke's Kingdom (Breaking
Glass)*
Killcast (SRS)
Killing Sherlock Lucy Worsley's
Holmes vs. Doyle (Warner)*
Lady Like (Freestyle)*
The Last Amityville Movie
(SRS)
A Legend (Well Go)
Left at Wall (Freestyle)*
Lions of the Skeleton Coast
(Paramount)
Lone Wolf (Rising Sun)
Meatcleaver Massacre (Reel
Vault)
Melodrive (Burning Bulb)*
A Merry Scottish Christmas
(Cinedigm)
Miracle in Bethlehem PA
(Cinedigm)
Monster Summer (Decal)
Monsterland 3 (Wownow)
The Mother and the Whore
(Criterion)
My Name Is Alfred Hitchcock
(Kino)
Nastie (Shoreline)
Night Fright (Shoreline)
Nochebuena (Type A)*
Numbered Woman (Reel
Vault)
Nundead (SRS)
Old Man (Gravitas)*
Omni Loop (Magnolia)*
One by One (Burning Bulb)*
Outer Space Documentaries
Collection (Alpha)*
Paradise (Gravitas)*
PBS Kids Birthday Bash
(Paramount)
The People Next Door (Reel
Vault)
Retail! (Burning Bulb)*
The Return (Decal)
Riot on Redchurch Street
(Freestyle)*
Rocky's (Gravitas)*
Romance & Cigarettes
(Warner)
Rumours (Decal)
Saturday Night (Sony)
Science Kids: Zoology And
The Animal Kingdom
(Wonderscape)*
The Season Four Love Stories
(Random)*
Separated (Kino)
September Babies (Gravitas)*
She Has a Name
(Dreamscape)
Shelf Life (MVD)
The Shield of Honor (Alpha)

Silent Slapstick Comedy
Parade V.4 (Alpha)
Sisterhood (Film Movement)
Smile 2 (Paramount)
Sniper The Last Stand (Sony)*
Sometimes I Think about Dying
(Oscilloscope)
Soundtrack to a Coup D'Etat
(Kino)
Space Command Redemption
(Indie Rights)*
Spirit Riser (Alpha)
Stella Dallas (Alpha)
The Story of Bookworm Gogo
(Dreamscape)
The Strange Woman
(Digicom)*
The Substance (Mubi)
Sundays and Cybele (Reel
Vault)
Super Vixens (MVD)
Things Will Be Different
(Magnolia)
Through the Breakers (Alpha)
Till (Warner)
Time for Her to Come Home
for Christmas (Cinedigm)
Tilo Margot and Me (Indiepix)
To Dye For The Documentary
(Kino)
Touched by Darkness
(Random)*
Transformation (Dreamscape)
Trigger Happy (Gravitas)*
The Triumph of Sherlock
Holmes/Silver Blaze (MVD)*
Twilight Ride (Indie Rights)*
Vengeance Turns V.2
(Random)*
Venom The Last Dance (Sony)
Verona (7 Palms)*
Vienna Blood Season 4
(Paramount)
Vintage Arizona (Deskpopp)
Vixen. (MVD)
The Watches Season 1
(Dreamscape)
When It Rains in L.A.
(Gravitas)*
Whiteout (Well Go)*
The Woman Hunter (Digicom)*
The Yorkie Werewolf
(Deskpopp)

*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:
→Hell Hike 2
→Glitch Ditch 36
From AMD:
Azrael
Little Bites
→V/H/S/Beyond
From BMG:
→Lost in the Maze

→Bright Sky
→For the Love of Puppies
→Mum Said
From Bounty:
→Shit
From Breaking Glass:
→B.O.Y. Bruises of
Yesterday
From Bruder:
→Files on JFK
From Burning Bulb:
→Kingdom of Judas
→QAS
→A Life of Purpose
→Film Camp
→I Want to Jump
From Cinedigm:
→The Last Voyage of the
Demeter
→Morning Show Mysteries
Complete Movie
Collection
→The Real West
→Guns of Redemption
→An Easter Bloom / The
Blessing Bracelet
→Head over Heels
From Cinema Guild:
Cane Fire
From Criterion:
King Lear (Godard)
Last Summer
A Woman of Paris
→Anora
From Deskpopp:
→The Jets Making It Real
→Forgive Me Father
From Digicom:
→Charlotte Brontë's Jane
Eyre (George C. Scott &
Susannah York)
From Dreamscape:
Alice in Wonderland
Season 1
Dating Daisy
Deedee The Little
Sorceress Season 1
Flunk Season 1
Heavens to Betsy 2
→Lewis Hamilton
Mia and Me Season 1
Penn's Seed The
Awakening
20th Century Icons JFK The
Assassination
20th Century Icons Lewis
Hamilton
20th Century Icons The
Kennedy Legacy
Vic the Viking Season 1
The Wild Adventures of
Blinky Bill Season 1
From Duke:
TT Isle of Man 2024 Review
From Film Movement:
Naked Acts
Obsessed with Light
→Adiós Buenos Aires
→Agent of Happiness
→Mapantsula
→Joseph Campbell and the
Power of Myth with Bill
Moyers
From Filmhub:
→Space Boobs in Space
→Bikini Girls vs. Dinosaurs
→Zombie Wars
→The Touchstone
→Trap
→Consent
→Something in the Woods
→Cold Highway
→Silver Woods
→Ride Share
→The Covid Story
→Stay

→Weed Man
→All about the Ring
→Night of the Dead
→The Customer
→What You Can't Promise
→Milgram and the
Fastwalkers 2
From Found Footage:
Found Footage Festival V.9
& V.10
The Found Footage
Festival Cherished Gems
From Freestyle:
→Clone Cops
→Single Car Crashes
From Full Moon:
→Death Streamer
From Gemini:
→Year-Round Metal
Enjoyment
From Gravitas:
→Swede Caroline
From Greenfield:
→Gunner
From High Fliers:
St. Patrick's Day Massacre
From Indiepix:
Nadia
From Ketchup:
Weekend in Taipei
From Kino:
Carville Winning Is
Everything Stupid
Master Crimes
World Series Champs The
2023 World Series
(Texas Rangers)
Oh Canada
The Other Widow
Oscar Micheaux The
Superhero of Black
Filmmaking
America Is Sinking
Alien Rubicon
The Road to Eilat
→Naked Acts
→Rose
→UnBroken
→Women Who Run
Hollywood
→Every Little Thing
→The Klezmer Project
→Gladiators
→Meth Gator
→Ex-Husbands
From Leomark:
→Hype! Vision Studios V.1
From Level 33:
→Across the River and into
the Trees
From Magnolia:
→Lake George
→Ernest Cole Lost and
Found
From MPI:
Flesh+Blood
→Riley
→Project Silence
From Music Box:
In the Summers
From MVD:
Endless Summer Syndrome
→Monster on the Ocean
Floor
→Motorspycho
→Russ Meyer's Up!
→Eat the Night
→Quackser Fortune Has a
Cousin in the Bronx
→Dinner with Leatherface
→Daddy
From My Way:
Hanukkah
From Oscilloscope:
→Omar and Cedric If This
Ever Gets Weird
From Paramount:
Decoding the Universe
Rubble and Crew On the

Job
Miss Scarlet Season 5
Monster High Season 2
Smurfs Season 1
Building Stuff
→Star Trek The Lower
Decks Final Season
→Funny Woman The New
Revolution Season 2
→Gladiator II
→Ken Burns The Statue of
Liberty
→Ken Burns Thomas
Jefferson
→All Creatures Great &
Small Season 5
→Lost Tombs of Notre
Dame
→PBS Kids Every Day Is
Earth Day
→Tulsa King Season 2
→Resistance They Fought
Back
→The Man with the Iron
Heart
→Great Migrations A
People on the Move
→Paw Patrol Air Rescue
From Random:
→Ed and Rooster's Great
Adventure
→Front Stage and Back
→Just a Bit Outside
From Reel Vault:
→Ghosts Can Do It
→Welcome Danger
From Rising Sun:
Dark Night of the Soul
Safehouse 1618
Painted in Blood
The Price of Death
The Shepherd
Mick Jagger The Ultimate
Performer
→Terra Nova
→Terra Nova Complete
Series
→The Color of Yellow
From Rustblade:
→Drag Me to Fest Tales
from the Italian Horror
From Samuel Goldwyn:
→The Count of Monte
Cristo
From Shoreline:
→Paysigs
→Applause
From Sol Deo Gloria:
Lady Ballers
From Sony:
→Kraven the Hunter
From SRS:
Kajui Glam Metal Shark
Attack
Don't Make a Sound
Amityville AI
Cheater Cheater
→War of the Ninja
Monsters Jaron vs Goura
→The Girl Who Wore
Yellow Lace
From Strand:
→Marcello Mio
From Uncork'd:
→Cute Little Buggers
→Krampus Unleashed
→Crypsis
→Homewrecker
→The Rizen
→Peelers
→Ghosts of Darkness
→The Snare
→Don't Be Bad
→Clawed
→The Elf
→The Basement
→Game Therapy
→Bethany
→Scarecrows

→Death Kiss
→Anti Matter
→The Lullaby
→Alien Reign of Man
→Replace
→Restoration
→Arianna
→Beacon Point
→Anger of the Dead
→An Eye for an Eye 3
→The Dawnseeker
→Defective
→Hallowed Ground
→Man Vs.
→Angels Fallen Warriors of
Peace
From Universal:
Quantum Leap Complete
Series (7 platters)
Woody Woodpecker and
Friends Classic
Collection (6 platters)
Werewolves
Saturday Night Live 50th
Anniversary Collection
Seasons 1-5 (37 platters)
Wicked
→Nosferatu
From Vertical:
→The Order
From Vision:
From Warner:
Boardwalk Empire
Complete Series (20
platters)
Gossip Girl Complete
Series (30 platters)
Lego #2
Lego DC Super Heroes 11-
Film Collection (7
platters)
→The Lord of the Rings
The War of the Rohirrim
→Red One
Regular Show Complete
Series
→Shameless Complete
Series
The Wayans Bros.
Complete Series
→Women Talking
From Well Go:
Panda Plan (Jackie Chan)
100 Yards
→Eye for an Eye 2 Blind
Vengeance
→Devils Stay
From Wonderscape:
→NASA Explores Other
Worlds Planets Europa
Titan
→Social Studies Kids
Telling the Difference
between Rules and Laws
→History Kids Abraham
Lincoln
From Wownow:
What Did Diddy Do?
All Hallows' Eve Trickster
Watch If You Dare To
JFK Conspiracy Part 2
Going Deeper
Boonie Bears The
Adventurers Bright Spot
Boonie Bears The
Adventurers Adventures
at the Museum
Dracula's Drive-In Presents
Attack from Space
→Bigfoot vs Megalodon
Resurrection
→Aqua League
→Bigfoot's Movie Night
Curse of Bigfoot
From Zoom:
→Body of Water