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Things passed along

James Stewart passed away in 1997, the same year that DVDs were introduced in America, but he had already made a commentary track for one of his films, because a decade earlier he had recorded a talk with film historian Paul Lindenschmidt for the MCA/Universal Home Video laser disc release of Anthony Mann's 1950 western, **Winchester '73** (Feb 87), and now The Criterion Collection has obtained the talk for the Universal and Criterion two-platter 4K Blu-ray (UPC#715515308410, \$50). The film was a breakthrough part for Stewart not just tonally, removing the comedic trappings from his westerns for his first of many collaborations with Mann, but because Stewart scored the first 'profit percentage' clause in a movie star's contract, and cleaned up when the film became a big hit.

The breakthrough for Mann was the discovery that, as he had with his film noir features, he could make a western with A-list actors and still sustain an adult sensibility in its drama, something that had been elbowing its way into genre films during and especially after World War II. Heroes could be conflicted or obsessed in their journeys and audiences were not repelled. Stewart's character has a beef with Steve McNally's character and intends to kill him, a situation that is only acerbated when the two compete in a marksmanship contest and McNally unfairly runs off with the prize—the gun of the title.

The irony of the film's legacy is that while Stewart earned more from it than any film star had ever earned from a film up to that point, there are lengthy stretches in the 93-minute film that he does not appear, since the film's plot follows—although not obsessively—the journey that the gun takes when various characters relieve other characters of its possession. As the gun passes hands from one character to another within the narrative, the film becomes a veritable ammo belt of character actors and future Hollywood stars, each bursting in talent and appeal for a moment before giving way to the next. Both Tony Curtis and Rock Hudson (as an Indian chief) have small speaking parts. Will Geer, Jay C. Flippen, John McIntire, Steve Brodie (who is especially charismatic for a background part), John Alexander and James Best are just a few of the marvelous supporting players. Billed third, Dan Duryea doesn't even show up until the film's final half hour, but he delivers his all when he does. Millard Mitchell has almost as much screen time as Stewart, playing, in effect, his sidekick, so that their conversations can move the story forward. Shelly Winters has a nicely composed part as the love interest, getting passed around almost as much as the rifle, with Charles Drake as her initial fiancé.

The depiction of Native Americans in the film is moderately problematic for today's viewers, although there are other movies that are a lot worse in this regard. They are used primarily as an action component. Lip service is given (by Hudson) to how they have been mistreated—and, indeed, massacred—by settlers, but they are presented as a threat, spoken of derogatorily and make for a lengthy and exciting battle sequence. The other action scenes are all well staged, except for the finale, which is flamboyant, with Stewart's character chasing McNally's character up one of Mann's cliff faces, but feels contrived when these two expert shots suddenly begin missing one another with great regularity until the time comes to finish things up. Nevertheless, the film is rewarding because the action is secondary to the panoply of characters whose lives and psychologies Mann manages to explore with such fine detail along the way.

The squared full screen black-and-white picture is crisp and spotless. Even the standard Blu-ray that comes in the set looks terrific (even the LD looked great), although it is the 4K presentation that is easily preferable for the intricate textures it brings out in both the faces and the landscapes. The monophonic sound is clear, and there are optional English subtitles. On both platters, the film starts up where it left off if playback is interrupted, but on the standard BD, the special features appearing only on that platter do not. Included in those features is a trailer, a very good 18-minute piece that specifically addresses the depiction of indigenous Americans in American films, and an enjoyable 47-minute piece specifically about the films Mann and Stewart made together in the Fifties. In his commentary, Stewart says that the *Lux Radio Theatre* people refused to adapt the film, because the script had too many pages without dialog, but he was probably thinking of another film since *Lux* did indeed do the film with Stewart in a 1951 episode (*Lux* kept the series going until television killed it in 1955). That version, hosted by William Dieterle and co-starring McNally and Julia Adams (who fills in those gaps effectively by narrating the story, as well), which runs 61 minutes, is also included on the disc.

The 1986 commentary, which Criterion misidentifies in its menu as having

been recorded in 1989 (and Lindenschmidt was billed as Lindenschmid on the LD—the correct spelling is ambiguous), appears on both platters. At the time, Criterion had done a couple of commentaries on LDs, and one or two others had also appeared, all featuring academic experts on the films at hand, but Stewart was the first significant filmmaker to participate in such a talk, the first to spend the entire time as a movie unfolds sharing memories about its making. They were trailblazers, and as such, they approach the task with caution and uncertainty. Lindenschmidt reads prepared questions at first and Stewart answers them as best as he can, but they gradually shift into a more conversational talk as the film progresses and they get comfortable, so that by the final third of the film, they really start picking up on what is happening on the screen and riffing about the people, objects and situations they see. While often diverging into other topics, they discuss the cast members as they appear, reflect upon the action and its production challenges within individual scenes, and go over related matters, such as the personality of the horse Stewart always used in films, and the well-worn 'lucky hat' that he wore in every western (he met both the horse and the hat for the first time making **Winchester '73**), which he claims was a challenge to dry clean after the film was over. They also talk about Stewart's career, his family and how his earlier Oscar ended up in his father's hardware store. "A lot of people saw it. He'd take it out of the window every once in a while when he wanted to show he had some new line of hardware or something, he'd take it out, but he put it over the knife counter." At the very end, Stewart also acknowledges his groundbreaking effort in what is now a common occurrence, creating a second audio track for a film's home video release as an embellishment for fans. "This laser thing is fascinating."

Four Kurosawas in 4K

The Criterion Collection's previous Blu-ray release of Akira Kurosawa's **The Seven Samurai** (Oct 11) looked really good for the most part, but there was still a lingering sense here and there that the squared, full screen black-and-white film was an older Japanese movie. Criterion's new three-platter 4K Blu-ray release (UPC#71-5515305211, \$60), while not radically improved, is just cleaned up enough and sharpened enough that it doesn't feel like an old movie. Every once in a while, there will be a well-lit shot that is startling for how crisp and clean it looks, and generally, when you toggle back and forth between the two images, the older BD looks the same in other sequences, but just not quite as detailed. Running a healthy 208 minutes, the film is continually invigorated by the 4K presentation, and what was already a wonderful, spirited tale of adventure (in fear of a bandit raid after their harvest, some villagers travel to a town to persuade several former warriors to return with them and prevent the bandits from attacking) becomes even more engrossing and satisfying, particularly as the samurai spell out with charts exactly what they are going to do and how they are going to do it. The film's methodical narrative becomes even more gripping in 4K, and the characters, including the lead samurai played by Takashi Shimura and the eager outsider played by Toshiro Mifune, become more distinctive and developed, because you catch every psychological nuance.

As with the previous release, the film has a stereophonic track that widens its music slightly and gives the film a more dimensional and enveloping feel, although the actual music recording is still clearly older, and even the dialog is raspy at times. The original monophonic audio is also available. Nevertheless, the soundtrack distortions are barely noticeable most of the time, and if you aren't distracted by the wonderful characters and the engaging plot, then you are distracted by the fantastic looking picture. The film is in Japanese and is supported by optional English subtitles. Both the 4K platter and the standard BD platter have two commentary tracks. One is a complete talk by film historian Michael Jeck and the other has sequential talks, each lasting around 40 minutes, by five additional and highly respected Japanese film experts, Tony Rayns, Donald Richie, Stephen Prince, Joan Mellen and David Desser. Both the standard BD platter that contains the film and the second standard BD platter that holds more special features are identical to the previous release. Included on the special features platter are four trailers, a small collection of memorabilia in still frame, a 49-minute Japanese retrospective production documentary, a 55-minute American documentary about the film and Japanese samurai features in general, and an extensive 116-minute interview with Kurosawa from 1993 talking about his life and career.

Kurosawas (Continued)

Criterion always releases **Yojimbo** and **Sanjuro** at the same time, most recently before now as separate single-platter Blu-rays (Apr 10), and we always end up watching them together, inevitably going with the more popular and famous 1961 **Yojimbo** first before segueing into the 1962 **Sanjuro**. Heck, they used to appear as a double bill in revival houses, and we watched them in that order then, as well. Both movies, after all, star Mifune as, apparently, the same character, and the second one was indeed produced to capitalize on the popularity of the first one. But this time, we got smart, and so, apparently, has Criterion. Criterion has released the two films as 4K Blu-rays in a single four-platter set, **Yojimbo / Sanjuro** (UPC#715515306614, \$80), recognizing that the one goes with the other like love and marriage, or a sword and its sheath. But this time, we watched **Sanjuro** first.

We always, previously, recognized that **Sanjuro** was great entertainment, absolutely, but there was always a little, tiny bit of a letdown watching it after the thrills of **Yojimbo**. Without having seen the two films in more than a decade, we could put on **Sanjuro** and sample its pleasures without prejudice, and we were indeed rewarded for having done so. Mifune's character, who wanders the land, is sleeping in an abandoned building when he overhears a group of young men worried that they have uncovered corruption in the local government. He recognizes immediately, however, that they have identified the wrong individual as the one who is corrupt, and from there he must play nursemaid when the villains arrive to assassinate the kids. The film is completely transfixing as Mifune's character navigates the conspiracies and continually protects the young men from making the wrong decisions, and it has exciting moments with sword confrontations and killings, but it also has a great deal of humor, and while you are aware of the humor when you watch it after **Yojimbo**, your attention has still been misdirected by the emphasis on confrontation and swordfights in the other film. Without that subliminal blockage, the 95-minute film truly becomes funny as all get out, filled with exquisitely timed character humor and even a touch of slapstick here and there. The female characters that Mifune's character helps to rescue, especially, might seem like secondary figures, the way they are in **Yojimbo**, but without such preconceived notions, they are not only the soul of the movie, but, consistently, the comical highpoint, contrasting everything about how women see the world to how men see it. The film is an absolute joy, right up to its gloriously bloody punchline.

It may also have helped that the transfer on the 4K platter is gorgeous. Criterion has included those same two Blu-rays we reviewed before—neither one of the black-and-white films, letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1, starts up where it left off if playback is terminated on the standard BD platters, although the 4K platters do—and the early transfer of **Sanjuro**, while it may have seemed fine at the time, has weak contrasts where details are completely lost in the shadows, and a generally soft, even hazy image, while the 4K is sharper than Mifune's sword. Every frame is not only finely detailed, but delivers solid blacks, pristine whites, and every carefully measured level of grey between the two. The image looks so good you just can't help but sit back and let Kurosawa captivate you with his compelling story, his carefully defined characters, his intriguing blocking, his intricate environments, his dazzling action and his wonderful humor. If you're sharing the films with a friend, it is definitely worthwhile to show them in reverse order. Nobody has ever said **Sanjuro** isn't a prequel to **Yojimbo**, anyway.

Yojimbo opens with humor, but also with the sort of violence that does not happen in **Sanjuro** until the end, and much of the 111-minute film is a serious drama with limited opportunities for chuckling (two rival families control a town to the detriment of the regular townspeople, and so Mifune's character plays the families against each other until they destroy themselves). Mifune's character is also less irreverent in **Yojimbo** than he is in **Sanjuro**, even when he is taunting the villains. As it turns out, both movies derive most of their entertainment from the cerebral games Mifune's character plays on those villains, but the emotional perspective taken by the viewer is different because of how **Yojimbo** begins. The action is more exhilarating, and thus the film's excitements seem more visceral. In any case, it is an enormously entertaining film because of the strength of the story, the thrills of the action and the wonderfully magnetic performance by Mifune in its center.

And again, exactly like **Sanjuro**, the 4K presentation is a substantial improvement over the standard Blu-ray (which as we mentioned is identical to the previous release). Not only are details and textures clearer, but the basic sharpness and uninhibited presentation of the image accentuates both the film's artistry and its entertainment.

As with **Seven Samurai**, both films have their original three-channel stereo audio tracks, although both default to mono, so the stereo must be selected. Again, the distinctive effects are limited to occasional surges in the musical score, but their presence still adds to the transporting experience the movies provide (especially **Yojimbo**), and this time, on both films, the dialog is clear and solid. The films are in Japanese with optional English subtitles. The 4K platters carry over the informative Prince commentaries that also appear on the standard BDs. The standard BDs also carry over their retrospective documentaries, **Sanjuro**'s running 35 minutes and **Yojimbo**'s running 45 minutes, along with trailers and great collections of production photos in still frame.

Kurosawa's phantasmagorical 1990 **Akira Kurosawa's Dreams** is available in a two-platter 4K Blu-ray from Warner Bros. and Criterion (UPC#715515285919, \$50). The second platter, a standard Blu-ray, was released previously (UPC#715515188715, \$40). Running 120 minutes, the film is a collection of eight fantasy vignettes. In the first two, a young boy encounters spirits, and in the third, a mountain climber encounters a spirit. Following those, an army officer meets the ghosts of his unit at the entrance of a tunnel he has passed through. In the next, a traveler, who becomes a consistent figure in the remaining pieces, visits an art exhibit of Vincent Van Gogh paintings, and then finds himself within the brightly colored worlds of the paintings, encountering Van Gogh himself, who is notably played by Martin Scorsese. After that, the traveler witnesses atomic explosions surrounding Mt. Fuji and speaks to characters who understand that mankind has polluted the world. In the next piece, the traveler encounters a demon on a hillside, who shows him other demons that are suffering. In the memorable finale, the traveler meets an elderly man in a bucolic streamside village filled with watermills (an old man lives in a watermill in **The Seven Samurai**, too), and learns that the village's contentment comes from its lack

of technological accoutrements. The mills also look like film reels. As a whole, the film's message appears to be that nature wants humans to back off, and so the irony here is that there is no better way to absorb that message, and become transfixed by Kurosawa's artistry, than with an advanced piece of human technology, the 4K Blu-ray, to deliver it.

The film has a simple, two-channel stereophonic soundtrack, but even on the standard Blu-ray, the DTS sound is incredible, with both music and effects not only distinctively separated, but brought forth with a crystalline purity that rivals the stream running the mills. The colors on the standard BD are bright but over saturated at times, although in the case of the Mt. Fuji segment, that actually works to the film's advantage, since the images of the mountain on fire are meant to be expressionistic. But when it comes to blades of grass, brushstrokes, the costumes the spirits are wearing, and the waterwheel village, the solid hues are still bright on the 4K presentation, and their crispness is more captivating.

Along with a trailer, the standard BD platter has a nice 17-minute interview with production manager Teruyo Nogami about her work with Kurosawa and how they staged various effects in the film; an interesting 16-minute interview with assistant director Takashi Koizumi, who tries to explain the autobiographical connections for Kurosawa in each segment; and a spellbinding 52-minute testimonial to Kurosawa's artistry and insight to his techniques by a number of famous filmmakers, from Bernardo Bertolucci to John Woo (and Clint Eastwood talks about the first time he saw **Yojimbo**, in the Fifties!).

An exceptional production documentary that runs 151 minutes deliberately mixes behind-the-scenes footage, interviews (including a sit-down talk with Kurosawa about the film and his other movies), storyboards and finished footage to create kind of an adventure film into the world of **Dreams**. You see Kurosawa at the mercy of the weather and the clouds, and you see how some of the film's magical yet practical special effects were achieved (including shooting a continuous 16-minute shot with 10-minute film reels). It is the way that the different aspects to the shoot are all blended together that make it so fascinating, embellished as well by the eight completely different settings and filmmaking challenges. The documentary also contains descriptions and drawings of the 'dreams' that did not make it into the final film (the script for one that almost made it is included in the jacket insert, although it is a good thing Kurosawa decided against it).

Prince provides another excellent commentary track that is present on both platters, deconstructing the meanings of each segment, both from a literal standpoint and in connection with Kurosawa's own past, while at the same time describing how the segments were staged and how the film resonates as an exploration of life. "Kurosawa's way of working is a little bit unusual because it departs from a long tradition in cinema of relating dreams to the workings of the unconscious mind. Many filmmakers have explored dream worlds. Indeed, there seems to be an analogous connection between cinema and dreaming. The difference is that Kurosawa stays within the boundaries of real life visual and temporal experience, whereas most other filmmakers exploring dreams have not. They show strange, irrational things abruptly happening, create odd visual transitions, transform characters and objects in unexpected ways, and use composition and editing to undermine the reality of time and space, and to emphasize instead the irrational. That style seems to more closely resemble our experience of dreaming, where odd juxtapositions become normal and where time and space are slippery and deceptive. It's curious, then, that Kurosawa calls these episodes, 'dreams,' because for me, at least, they don't feel very dreamlike. They seem quite rooted in real time and space, and don't have the strange, subjective quality that dreams do. What he's really given us, I think, are a set of dramas that explore things that are a great concern to him."

Eastwood's Juror

The story is entirely different and scenes involving the deliberations take up much less than half the film, but Clint Eastwood's **Juror #2** has the same premise (one juror is unsure of what the verdict in a murder trial should be and raises doubts with his fellow jurors) and the same entertainment dynamic as **12 Angry Men**, and it is just as engrossing. What could well be Eastwood's final feature, the 2024 Warner Bros. production has been released on Blu-ray by Warner (UPC#883929835188, \$35) and it is expertly directed, so that it carries you along even if you've read more about the specific premise and even if the drama is more about anxiety than justice. The methodical sense of discovery is still there thanks to the film's pacing, its casting and the clarity of its narrative advancement. Nicholas Hoult is the holdout juror, Toni Collette is the aggressive prosecutor, Zoey Deutch is the very pregnant wife of Hoult's character, J.K. Simmons is a fellow juror and Keifer Sutherland, who has clearly turned a corner in his career, is a lawyer not involved directly in the case but there to lend advice nevertheless. Running 114 minutes, the presentation is smooth and glossy, aided greatly by the quality of the color transfer, which is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1. The film opens with the image of Deutch's character wearing a blindfold like the statue in front of the courthouse, carrying you along as much with the lovely immediacy of its images as with the comfortable familiarity of its characters, and it concludes, quite unneringly, with the sudden sounds of cicadas—the first time you hear them in the film, which is mostly set in the late fall and winter, in Atlanta—made all the more compelling thanks to the disc's smoothly detailed and crisply defined Dolby Atmos sound. There is an audio track that describes the action in American ("Denise hands the bailiff a piece of paper, containing the verdict, who carries it to the bench and passes it to the judge. Removing her spectacles, the judge's brow knits slightly as she gazes down at the paper."), another track that describes the action in British ("Denise hands bailiff Wood the document. Wood in turn hands it to

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the judge. Judges Stewart removes her glasses and reads the document.”), alternate French, Spanish and Italian audio tracks and optional English, French, Spanish, Italian and Dutch subtitles. The picture on Warner’s DVD (UPC#883929835256, \$30) is substantially softer, and makes the drama less involving. The 5.1-channel Dolby Digital sound is also less stimulating. Along with the American audio track that describes the action, there is an alternate Spanish audio track and optional English and Spanish subtitles.

Demi mondo

Whenever a genre film manages to weather critical antagonism and achieve honors and awards, it is a cause for celebration. Coralie Fargeat’s 2024 **The Substance**, released on DVD by MUBI (UPC#850069757007, \$30), is a cross between **Seconds**, **The Picture of Dorian Grey**, **Cinderella** and **Blood Feast**, with a few others thrown in as well, and concludes with a veritable fire hose of blood shooting every which way. Demi Moore plays an actress who loses her job as an exercise show host because of her age. While what her character does to compensate has been well publicized, it is still best left for discovery. Running 141 minutes, the film is methodical and easy to follow. Plot points are literally spelled out for the viewer with words on the screen, repeatedly. Margaret Qualley co-stars as the younger upstart who replaces her. There is lots and lots of nudity, along with totally gross and oozing gore, but the film is also a celebration of Moore, and every Hollywood actress who has ever lived past her thirtieth birthday, since Moore and her character are meant to be emotionally interchangeable in the viewer’s eye. The film is simple and utterly absurd, presented as an exaggerated satire—Dennis Quaid has a clownish role as a production executive, often shot with fisheye close-ups—and basic special effects showcase, which begins with moderate realism, but advances so that the climactic events are so outlandish they become less a perfunctory end to the plot and much more a lambasting of how society values aging in women. It is kind of an ‘okay, if this is what you want, here it is’ in-your-face scream that underscores how Hollywood’s representation of real life is not so much idealized as it is a reflection of the truths everyone otherwise tries to keep suppressed.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1 and an accommodation for enhanced 16:9 playback. The image transfer is super. Colors are bright and slick, and the image is solid. The 5.1-channel Dolby Digital sound is aggressive and sharp. There is an audio track that describes the action (“Elisabeth reaches for the note, but pulls her hand back quickly. Shaking, she raises her hand again and studies her index finger, now discolored and aged. Flexing her hand, she gawks at the slightly grey and heavily wrinkled skin extending up her finger and ending in a bedraggled nail bed. The marred finger stands in stark contrast to the otherwise healthy skin and nails on the rest of her hand.”), alternate French, Spanish and German audio tracks, optional English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, German and Turkish subtitles, and a surprisingly good 2-minute plug for the film by Fargeat. “I really hope the viewers’ experience will stay with them, first as a cinematic experience, but that will also make them think about everything that is around us. It seems to me that the power of cinema is like a cathartic medium. At the same time, you can have a very fun and entertaining experience. It makes you reflect on our own human condition.”

Getting ahead through diligence

The 1997 Dutch Best Foreign Film Oscar winner, **Character**, has been released on Blu-ray by Sony Pictures Classics (UPC#043396633438, \$27). Directed by Mike van Diem, the film runs 125 minutes and is utterly absorbing from beginning to end. It is a period film (set in Rotterdam, it was shot in a number of locations in The Netherlands and Belgium) taking place mostly in the Twenties, and is framed as a murder investigation so that a young man who has just become a lawyer, played by Fedja van Huêt, can explain why he has been accused of killing a prominent and wealthy bailiff played by Jan Decleir. The disc is promoted on its jacket cover as ‘Dickensian’ and that is the essence of its appeal, as Huêt’s character proceeds to tell his life story to the cops—how his impoverished mother was not married, how he studied and worked his way into clerking at a financial law firm (it is his ambition that gives the movie its captivating momentum) and why he ended up confronting Decleir’s character shortly before the man’s corpse was discovered brutally beaten and stabbed. The period details may be dreary, but they are beautifully presented nevertheless. The film also offers snippets of history (Huêt’s character attends labor meetings) mixed with a fascinating portrait of several characters who steadfastly refuse to show their emotions, even when doing so is to their detriment, so that it becomes entirely understandable that those emotions would eventually explode.

The film is in Dutch. The disc has no menu, so the optional English subtitles, which default to an ‘off’ position, must be manually activated. The picture is framed with an aspect ratio of about 1.66:1. As we implied, much of the film is grey, brown and dour, but the image transfer is captivating and highly satisfying. The 5.1-channel DTS sound has a subtle but pleasing dimensionality.

Bank robbery

A taut 1988 German bank robbery and hostage thriller, **The Cat** (*Die Katze*), has been released on Blu-ray by Radiance (UPC#760137172840, \$40). The robbers, one of whom is directing everything outside of the bank, create the hostage situation on purpose, as a distraction, in order to carry out a more devious plan. Set in Düsseldorf, the film runs 118 minutes and is taken up entirely by the daylong event. The steadily engrossing tale was directed by Dominik Graf and stars Götz George, Gudrun Landgrebe and Joachim Kemmer.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.9:1. While the image is grainy at times, that is conceptual, adding to the movie’s you-are-there atmosphere. Colors are fresh and fleshtones are accurate. There is a nice 5.1-channel DTS audio track, with a subdued by steady dimensional presence. The film is in German with optional English subtitles and comes with a trailer; a good 32-minute talk by screenwriter Christoph Fromm about his career, as well as about the film’s structure and characters, and how it all came together; a really great 32-minute talk by producer Georg Feil, who describes how he, Fromm and Graf used a TV series they were working on to develop the various components they would utilize in the feature, the panic that set in when the owners of the location they were using got tired of them and tried to kick them out, and the disappointment he felt when he could not get the funding to do more such features; a 13-minute deconstruction of three scenes by Graf; and an excellent a 65-minute interview with

Graf systematically going over the creation of the film (he was inspired by Robert Aldrich), how important it was to have George involved (the cinematographer, Martin Schäfer, was taking a lot of time with his lighting and the producers were giving Graf problems about it until George told them to lay off) and what George brought to the film (“We tried to create a character that is very nuanced in his machismo. A German can tell immediately that [George’s character] is not from Düsseldorf. Judging by his accent, he’s from Berlin. This was the result of me seeing him prancing about in a pinstripe suit and thinking, ‘Where is the proletariat? He looks like a banker.’ Then I asked him if he could switch to his natural dialect occasionally, as if it were a slip. I was very pleased with that. It’s his native tongue and you can tell. Each dialect has a physical effect on the speaker that you notice right away. The language becomes a physical resource.”).

Gorgeous martial arts

The female actresses remain on the periphery for the first third of the 1983 Shaw Bros. feature, **The Lady Assassin**, a Celestial Pictures 88 Films Blu-ray (UPC#760137167662, \$35), but the star, Leanne Lau—and we hope we won’t be spoiling things—is the only one left standing in the spectacular final freeze frame. Directed by Tony Liu, the film has absolutely everything going for it and makes a terrific Blu-ray. First off, the color transfer is impeccable and, since it is a period film and a lot of it is set in the emperor’s palace, the costumes and the décor are utterly captivating. The production design seems to have used every color imaginable, and the film is constant visual candy. The Shaw Bros. camera lenses have their problems—one is consistently soft on the upper edge and another just seems to make everything look slightly less sharp than the others, but when the source material is capable of presenting a sharp image, the BD, letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1, is there to handle it. Secondly, the narrative is aggressively structured and never lingers. A prince arranges to have the emperor’s will changed, so that he will inherit the throne rather than his more deserving brother. After that comes to pass, he breaks the promises he made to those who helped him, and so they come after him. Running 91 minutes, there is enough story to make you feel like you’ve really lived through something when you watch it. Thirdly, the fight choreography is dazzling. Physics are defied as fighters swat one another with swords while flying through the air, but the fights are fast, furious, bloody and never too far apart. The only reason you may want to avoid the BD is that it is so invigorating, it makes you want to obtain more movies like it.

The film is in Cantonese with optional English subtitles, and comes with a trailer, a 3-minute montage of promotional stills and a 24-minute interview with fight coordinator Poon Kin-Kwan, who talks about his career (he began as a child), doing stunts, staging fights (he discusses the details of movement) and how martial arts films have advanced for good and ill (they are made more quickly now, with less time to plan or try things out), but never mentions **Lady Assassin**.

Japanese fantasy adventure

In the Eighties, Haruki Kadokawa became the Dino De Laurentiis of Japan, emphasizing an aggressive showmanship and marketing in the films that he produced. Some of his movies were serious historical dramas, but others were a great deal more flamboyant, and what is perhaps the best known of the latter is his glorious 1983 fantasy adventure directed by Kinji Fukasaku, **Legend of the Eight Samurai**. We reviewed a cropped, monophonic, dubbed and missing footage DVD from VCI Entertainment in Aug 03 which was still a lot of fun, and indeed, before that, we had obtained an imported Japanese laser disc that we fully enjoyed even though we could not make heads or tails of it. Now, however, Eureka! has released the film, originally entitled *Satomi Hakken-den*, as a *The Masters of Cinema Series* Blu-ray (UPC#760137173427, \$40), and the presentation is utterly glorious. The color transfer is consistently solid and sharp, with bright, finely detailed hues and accurate fleshtones. The beauty within the image, letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1, contributes significantly to the film’s pleasures.

Running 136 minutes, the film has the momentum and spirit of a Republic serial. The villains are a woman and her son, who have been given quasi immortality and have supernatural powers. They have sent out their army and a few nasty creatures to capture a young princess played by Hiroko Yakushimaru (from **Sailor Suit & Machine Gun**—Dec 21), who alone can cause their downfall. The heightened threat has activated these marble-sized, glowing white-blue orbs in the possession of eight different heroes, who realize in different sequences that they are the ones who must protect the princess. The primary hero, a frisky thief who develops a special relationship with the princess, is played by future Emmy winner Hiroyuki Sanada, but the marketing often emphasizes the presence of Sonny Chiba, who plays one of the other warriors. The many special effects are Eighties tacky, but are backed by Japanese craftsmanship and a correlative artistic spirit. Even the natural locations are impressive and exotic. The performances are overstated, and because of how the sets are cluttered, the fighting is not as clearly choreographed as it is in the best samurai features. But there is a tiny bit of nudity, a little more gore, and lots and lots of action. Underscored by Eighties keyboard music that works as an accelerant during every fight, the film just never gives you time to tire of its inanities, because it keeps piling them on and you have no other choice but to sit back and be dazzled, amused and energized by its audacious enthusiasm.

The 5.1-channel DTS Japanese soundtrack is never subtle, but the obviousness of its directional effects and the pounding dimensionality of its musical score fit right into the movie’s overblown atmosphere. The English track is also available, in mono, and there are optional English subtitles. Along with a trailer, there is a nice 25-minute interview with Fukasaku’s son, Kenta Fukasaku, about his father’s career and passion for popular filmmaking, and a very good 16-minute overview of the film’s creation, inspirations and boxoffice success.

Japanese film expert Joe Hickinbottom supplies a comprehensive commentary track, going over the careers of Fukasaku, Kadokawa, the stars and other members of the cast and the crew. He has fun explaining why the movie has disorienting English language pop songs for its score, goes over the logic behind Fukasaku becoming involved in fanciful productions after making a name for himself with serious gangster dramas, and he illuminates the intricate details of the narrative while explaining the history of the story it is based upon and how it has been adapted elsewhere, many times.

Godard's forgotten maybe masterpiece

The Criterion Collection doesn't just put out movies on disc, it provides for the dissemination of important motion pictures (with the reinforcement of its supplements) to a large enough population of film academics and enthusiasts that the true artistic value of such a film will crystallize. We really think that is what happened with Chantal Akerman's **Jeanne Dielman 23, quai du Commerce 1080 Bruxelles**. Criterion released it on DVD (Apr 10) and a decade later, if showed up at the top of Sight and Sound's 'Greatest Films of All Time' list, with a number of other Criterion titles that appeared in the interim also showing up on the list for the first time. Maybe Criterion's Blu-ray release of Jean-Luc Godard's 1987 **King Lear** (UPC#715515308212, \$40) will not earn it a place on the next list, but it is certain to enhance the film's reputation in Godard's own filmography, especially if one listens to the 31-minute interview on the disc with Godard enthusiast Richard Brody, who insists in his opinion that **King Lear** is the best film ever made. While the film has been available to fanatics (we've had a PAL DVD for a number of years), it barely played in theaters, appeared much too late to make an impression in the dwindling number of revival houses that were still in operation and was certainly never released on any home video format in the United States.

You would think that just putting Godard's name on the video box would sell copies, especially if you could somehow hint that the film stars Molly Ringwald and features Woody Allen, but the Byzantine contracts that led to its creation and execution—sparked famously by an initial contract signed between Menahem Golan and Godard on a napkin—prevented the promotion of the film in that sort of way. In any case, the film was beyond the marketing capabilities of The Cannon Group and MGM, and has thus languished until now, where everyone who is enamored with Godard, loves film or just wants to experience something challenging can have a go.

The film is also a chance to experience a Jean-Luc Godard movie the way that French speakers do, without the distraction of subtitles, because Godard shot and mixed the film in English. Since Godard likes to drown out conversations at times with sound effects—in this case, birds calls, mostly—you still may want to activate the optional English subtitles now and then, but for the most part, the 91-minute film provides a real opportunity to just sit back and listen to his plays of words and dialog—in this instance, some of it coming from William Shakespeare—as the actors, well, act. Shot around Godard's home in Rolle, Switzerland, just as **Goodbye to Language** (May 15) was, the film could be categorized as a variation on **Contempt** (Jan 24) in that Godard delivered to Golan and the Cannon Group the same sort of meandering anti-boxoffice indulgence—the complete title appears to be *King Lear Fear and Loathing*—that he had given Carlo Ponti and Joseph Levine, except that this one didn't turn out to be an immediate masterpiece, unless you are Richard Brody.

Opening, sort of, with Norman Mailer delivering a script that takes Shakespeare's play about an elderly king dividing up his kingdom to his daughters, and altering it to be about Jewish gangsters (it was Mailer's participation in the film that obligated Cannon to back **Tough Guys Don't Dance**), the film then segues to its most rewarding and, although intercut with other business, lengthiest component, Burgess Meredith pretty much in character although in modern dress and often sitting in a restaurant, reciting passages from the play, wonderfully, with Ringwald responding as his daughter and/or the character of his daughter. The other major component features theatrical icon Peter Sellers composing a Shakespearean journal while he wanders through a forest of sorts (an environment reminiscent of **Weekend and Goodbye to Language**), hangs out by the lake and spends a little time indoors with Godard himself, who sports a Rastafarian headpiece made of audio cables and mumbles a lot, acting like a jester. The DTS stereo audio track is also filled with environmental sounds, be it the restaurant chatter or the birds, which have a terrific dimensionality and place you within Godard's environment. Julie Delpy shows up briefly, too, and Allen finally appears 5 minutes before the end, taking Godard's place at the editing bay and suggesting solely by his appearance, with memories of his role with Vanessa Redgrave in **Everything You Want to Know about Sex**, that we have all—but particularly Golan and Cannon—been played for a fool.

The squared full screen images are confidently composed and are edited with equal confidence, repetition in their appearance being no different than a phrase repeated in Shakespeare's poetry. The color transfer is reasonably sharp, depending upon the lighting in each scene, and it is fresh. Watching without the distraction of subtitles, you are much more aware of the performances—Meredith is a truly a king, while Mailer is more of a clown—and of the blends in rhythm and light that Godard finds so engaging. Still, Godard's goal seems to be tied to Lear's prophetic line, "Nothing will come of nothing," and that is pretty much what Golan got stuck with, although the things that can be rewarding in a Godard film—the exploration of language (including the savoring of Meredith's phrasings), the examinations of western culture, and the manipulations of the cinematic form—are all there and can be appreciated. Brody summarizes how the film came to be produced and dissects what he sees as its primary themes. "**King Lear** is the film in which Godard represents the cinema cinematically, both more explicitly and more spectacularly than anywhere else, that he actually dramatizes what he means by a reinvention of the cinema. I find it deeply moving in that regard, and at the same time, I find it equally deeply moving as a first order emotional level of the deep pathos in Shakespeare's *King Lear*."

Additionally, a lovely 19-minute interview with Ringwald is included, sharing her experiences on the shoot and explaining how the film opened her eyes to a different way of making movies. Also featured is a magnificent 25-minute interview with Sellers, who combines his insider witnessing of how the film was made with a retrospective interpretation of its artistry and accomplishment. While he misses the way that Godard's performance within the film was, among other things, imitating Meredith, he himself points out that it is a movie you can revisit again and again, seeing new things every time. He also goes over how Shakespeare was incorporated—Godard pretty much stuck with only using the opening scene of the play, but then later, with Sellers' collaboration, added more Shakespeare onto the soundtrack, along with running Ludwig Beethoven's string quartets backwards, but that's another story.

Finally, there is an intelligent and lively 36-minute audio-only presentation of a Cannes press conference, where Godard, among other things, is respectful of his producers. He explains the producers are the only ones who give money to make a film, while everyone else in the cast and the crew just takes, and he says he will happily accept funding from anywhere. "You can buy me any day, but just because I can be bought doesn't mean I've sold out."

Pryor engagements

Sweet nostalgia and engaging comedy are blended with raw, unblemished drama in Richard Pryor's gutsy 1985 Columbia Pictures autobiographical feature, **JoJo Dancer, Your Life Is Calling**, a Sony Studios Home Entertainment Criterion Collection two-platter 4K Blu-ray (UPC#715515308014, \$50). Pryor, who also directed, plays a successful stand-up comedian not unlike himself, who sparks a fire while fiddling with a broken crack pipe and then ethereally separates from himself in the hospital burn unit so that his spirit can go back and observe how he got himself into such a mess. The film only runs 97 minutes and includes a nice segment about his childhood. Hence, the actual rise to fame, which is the fun part of almost every star biography, zips past fairly quickly, but everything else in the film lasts only as long as a viewer would likely tolerate it anyway, as the editing is as smart as every other aspect of the film's construction. The movie is consistently funny, with Pryor drawing from routines during each phase of his success, and adding additional humor when his soul reacts to the stupidity of his life choices. Meanwhile, old Motown hits waft across the soundtrack, and the costumes, cars and decorations are meticulously chosen to reflect the otherwise undated times. Not everyone can play themselves, but Pryor was especially gifted as an actor to be able to do so. The core of Pryor's humor was always impressions, which he brought to a whole new level, since he could imitate inanimate objects with the same brilliant and insightful humor that he brought to his imitations of animals and humans, and thus doing impressions of himself during the different stages of his life becomes another series of routines. He never bothers to explain why he is taking drugs, he just depicts with a reasonably clear vision what the consequences are, and as the film swings back and forth between its humor and its knowing portrait of bad impulses, the viewer is left both dazed and amused.

Debbie Allen, Barbara Williams, Carmen McRae, Diahnne Abbott, Billy Eckstine, Art Evans and Fay Hauser co-star. Wings Hauser and Dennis Farina can also be glimpsed. The presentation is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1. The cinematography has a deliberate grain that can be distracting on the standard Blu-ray included in the set, but is more properly smoothed and textured on the 4K presentation. Otherwise, both images have the same fresh color transfers, and both have the same terrific two-channel DTS audio tracks, which mix the richly delivered oldies with the more dimensional and existential strains of an original Herbie Hancock score. There are optional English subtitles and an excellent 18-minute appreciation of the film, Pryor's talent and his career by Robert Townsend ("It's not a perfect film, but when you really put it in the context of this fearless artist, that alone is worth the price of admission."). On both platters, the film begins where it left off if playback is terminated, but the special features on the standard BD do not.

Additionally, the standard BD has a 48-minute episode of *The Dick Cavett Show* that is so good it actually functions as a viable second feature for a double bill with the main attraction. Cavett did some shows in Los Angeles in the Eighties, and the 1985 interview is shot in front of an audience at a Santa Monica theater on a makeshift stage, in which the two men talk for the entire program. Cavett had come up with Pryor in the New York comedy scene in the Sixties and so they not only knew one another, they had a comfortable working relationship. The segment is as much about Cavett as it is about Pryor—among other things, they discuss their first gay experiences—but that is really okay, because Cavett is able to coax a lot out of his guest by opening himself up. Interestingly, they talk about the comedians who paved the way for Pryor's success, but never mention Lenny Bruce. Pryor had completed **JoJo Dancer** at the time and they eventually talk about it, but the film was not in release yet and Cavett clearly had not seen it—which is a shame, really, since the conversation would probably have been even richer if he had—but the talk is still very rewarding and enlightening, with plenty of laughs, including at least one total guffaw moment. It is not only a great pick me up after the spiritual stress of the film, but it also manages to establish a genuine throughline between whatever fictions Pryor has employed for the sake of his drama and the reality of his sitting in the chair across from Cavett, cautiously offering his real self to the world.

Another Masumura masterpiece

One of the serendipities of home video is discovering terrific movies you've never heard of before, but an even greater serendipity is discovering directors you've never heard of before. The former is like coming across a hundred dollar bill on the street, while the latter is like coming across a bag filled with hundred dollar bills.

On such director for us is Damiano Damiani. It seems like every new home video release of one of his films reveals another masterpiece. But there is another director whose works have been equally enlightening and amazing, and that is Yasuzō Masumura. We would suggest that he is the Douglas Sirk of Japan, but he's a little edgier and more eclectic than that. His films have no distinctive visual style. Rather, each film's style is indeed distinctive, but organic to the film's subject. He has worked in a variety of genres, but if there is anything close to a common thread among his films, it is a heightened sense of melodrama, so when one of his films comes along that would be, in any other director's hands, a classic melodrama, you can be assured that Masumura has taken it to the next level, and that is the case with the amazing Arrow Video Blu-ray release of his 1970 feature, **Play It Cool** (UPC#760137171119, \$40).

Mari Atsumi plays the daughter of a prostitute who becomes one herself when her mother is sent to jail for murdering a boyfriend, after the boyfriend rapes the daughter. Since the mother hadn't intended the daughter to follow her career path, the daughter was raised to be studious and even righteous, and that is how she tackles her chosen profession, essentially working her way to the top when she becomes the mistress of a wealthy client, except that she falls in love along the way. What happens to her by the end is jaw dropping, but it is really the path that the drama follows during the 94-minute film that

makes it so captivating. The characters are expressively composed, but they are approached with an almost casual style, so that rather than hitting you in the face with the film's emotional excess, Masumura slips it into the action almost offhandedly. You start following Atsumi's experiences and you keep guessing at how her psyche is reacting to what has happened to her, and yet you are surprised again and again. Meanwhile, her rise to success (rather than charging customers, she plays poker with them for the chance to sleep with her—making a great deal more money per transaction in the process) is irresistible.

If there is any drawback to the Blu-ray, which is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1, it is that the image is often irritatingly soft, and it is difficult to tell how much of that was Masumura's intention and how much comes from the forgotten and discarded nature of the source material. That said, the colors are reasonably fresh and when the image isn't overly fuzzy, it is moderately sharp. There is a good deal of nudity, but it is part of the film's restrained tease. Atsumi will often cover herself demurely, but then will be exposed in the same shot, after one has given up expecting it. The monophonic sound is clear and the musical score is suitably hip for the times. The film is in Japanese with optional English subtitles and is accompanied by a trailer, a small but quite sexy collection of promotional photos in still frame and a 46-minute monolog on the film and Masumura's career by Japanese film historian Mark Roberts.

Japanese movie experts Jasper Sharp and Anne McKnight supply a good commentary track, talking about the careers of Masumura and Atsumi, the film's proto-feminist components and Masumura's filmmaking techniques.

"The aesthetic of this is just so highly stylized. It's so interesting. The space is so claustrophobic, but in their own way, kind of modernist and eye-catching. We have such a sense of crampedness and claustrophobia in the story world as well as in this architectural world."

"There's definitely a feeling of claustrophobia, and then there's Masumura's style, I think is really interesting, because it's not like really showy visuals. It's very invisible. There's a lot of quick editing, but when we look at the individual scenes, [they] actually play on for very long. The manner of storytelling is really interesting, because the film just unravels and it doesn't set you up and then you think you know where it's going. It's constantly moving in different directions, the plot, in a sort of seamless fashion. I think that's what I like about Masumura's work. It's just really fast-paced and sort of exaggerated."

Marriage on the rocks

Jean Simmons is a housewife beset by what was known in the day, thanks to Betty Friedan, as the 'feminine mystique,' taking to alcoholism as she searches to find the meaning of her marriage and her life in Richard Brooks's 1969 United Artists drama, "**The Happy Ending**," an MGM Blu-ray (UPC#840418306383, \$20). John Forsythe plays her husband, with a terrific cast that features Nanette Fabray, Shirley Jones, Lloyd Bridges, Teresa Wright, Tina Louise, Karen Steele and others. Although kids at the time were embracing the counter-culture, the film is completely oblivious to them as it is about their utterly clueless parents, so that it nails a certain segment of the era with great precision. It is also worth noting up front that most of the film was shot on location in Denver and in Nassau in the Bahamas, providing a terrific time capsule glimpse of both locations. Simmons and Jones both have highly erotic and revealing moments in front of the camera, as well. Running 112 minutes, the film gets off to a bad start by presenting a flashback where the Forsythe and Simmons characters are first dating and becoming engaged. Set supposedly in the mid-Fifties, there is no attempt to make the two stars seem anywhere younger (let's face it, Forsythe was eternally middle aged) and it is jarring (perhaps because it is meant to represent the memories of Simmons's character, but it isn't communicated as such), preventing the viewer from orienting in a timely manner to the actual drama. Simmons's character is hiding bottles of alcohol in her boots and also pouring it into perfume bottles while she puts up a front as a contented lawyer's wife, happily entertaining her husband's clients and otherwise shopping and living at the beauty parlor. They have a daughter (who also seems oblivious to the counter-culture), but she is a teenager and no longer in need of constant supervision. If you work the math, it appears that the Simmons character was pregnant by the time they got married, but nothing is ever said about it. She has already undergone a crisis before the film begins, and as the movie unfolds she is undergoing another one. Forsythe's character has taken away her credit accounts and is trying to clamp down on her drinking, while she schemes to fly away, ending up in the Bahamas where she meets an old school chum, played by Jones, who is there with a married man. The two have conversations about their lives and Simmons's character gradually begins to see that she needs to define herself outside of her marriage in order to survive, regardless of her affection for her family. Letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1, the Conrad Hall color cinematography is outstanding—in the aftermath of one party, the smoke still hangs heavily in the living and dining rooms of the house—and so while Brooks may have ultimately outsmarted himself by playing things too close to his chest and obligating viewers to figure out what the real conflicts are, he fully succeeds when it comes to the Blu-ray, where repeat viewings are not a problem and the film's true rewards can be revealed.

The image is deliberately soft in places and there is a mild amount of grain that was common in the era, but colors are very fresh and finely detailed. The monophonic sound is fine and there is a viable music score by Michel Legrand. There are optional English subtitles.

Early Spacek

Between **Badlands** and **Carrie**, Sissy Spacek made a telefilm-like romance about a divorced architect, played by Monte Markham, who picks up a 'hippie' hitchhiker over the Christmas and New Year holidays and falls for her in the 1974 **Ginger in the Morning**, which has been resurrected in a very nice Film Masters **Archive Collection 50th Anniversary Edition** Blu-ray release (UPC#840418317518, \$24). Screenwriter Mark Miller also gave himself a part as the gregarious friend of Markham's character, who bursts in and disrupts what was looking like a sure thing for the pair, and the wonderful TV veteran Susan Oliver plays the ex of Miller's character, who also crashes the party a bit later. Slim Pickens has a supporting role as a very patient local sheriff. The film was shot in New Mexico and is by no means mindless, since there are lengthy conversations about life, love and happiness, but you do have to like the actors to enjoy it. Spacek brings a measure of intelligence and humanity to the part that is not in the script but

should have been, and while the film centers on Markham—who is amiable enough but not as charismatic—it is the opportunity to savor Spacek's presence in the 95-minute program that gives it a fair chance to retain an enduring appeal.

The source material is taken from a preliminary cut of the film when it was titled **Pick Up the Pieces**, a bad pun that was thankfully discarded for the better one. The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1. The production was clearly inexpensive, allowing several shots that are badly out of focus to remain in the film because they contain critical dialog or otherwise had no alternate coverage, but most of the time the image is very fresh and reasonably sharp. There are no more than a handful of speckles, and colors are always bright and accurate. The monophonic sound is reasonably clean and strong, and includes a couple of songs that Spacek wrote and presumably sings. There are optional English subtitles, three trailers and a wonderful 18-minute interview with the elderly Markham, sharing his memories about making the film.

Also featured is an excellent commentary track from film historian C. Courtney Joyner and telefilm expert Amanda Reyes, who explain why the film is so easily mistaken for a TV movie because of its cast, the typeface used for its credits, and its distribution history. "There's so many threads that I could see why people for years thought this was a made-for-TV movie, because it's not just that it was packaged with these other films, but it looks and feels like a TV movie because it uses a lot of the same tropes throughout." They also discuss with great thoroughness the backgrounds and accomplishments of the cast and crew members, go over a history of hitchhiker movies (**Breezy** is mentioned prominently since the film has narrative similarities, but no mention is made of **Chastity**, which was at least, like this film, a little different from the standard hitchhiker tales), and they deconstruct what the movie was trying to accomplish ("It's a romance movie but it's also a buddy film, almost equally.") and what market it was hoping to reach (unfortunately, audiences that favored staying home and watching TV to going out to the movies).

Politics not as usual

Hollywood has done so few political films that you can probably count them, but that makes sense. People go to the movies to escape things like politics. Still, when Hollywood does focus its attention on the subject, the result is often remarkable precisely for its unique nature, and for the intriguing filtering that occurs as reality is ground into motion picture entertainment. With an astute sense of timing, Warner Bros. has released the absolutely wild 1933 Gregory La Cava feature made for MGM, **Gabriel over the White House**, as a **Warner WB Archive Collection** Blu-ray (UPC#840418321867, \$22).

Context here is very important, and the adage about history repeating itself is something that is best left on the backburner. The film was written and shot in 1932, before Franklin Roosevelt took office, although it was released after his inauguration (fascinating newsreels from another inauguration, held in a downpour, open the film). Obviously, a lot of the New Deal had been formulated and talked about well before his election, so that concepts such as the WPA, ending Prohibition and even the declaration of an extended bank holiday were not surprises when they were introduced as official policy. Still, what happens within the film is less abstract than it may seem.

Walter Huston plays the man who has been elected president in 1932. He is a fool, more loyal to his party than to the Constitution, and more interested in getting to drive his car at unlimited speeds in a motorcade than caring about the vast numbers of men who are out of work around the country. When he has a car accident, however, he comes out of his coma a changed man and starts barking out orders. He fires all of the career politicians around him, persuades Congress to shut down and give him carte blanche, and assuming that ending Prohibition will take too long, he creates a domestic military organization akin to the FBI to battle the bootleggers (with tanks!). That Roosevelt also bent rules wherever he could and chose to seek a third term lessens the gap between him and Huston's character (who also creates an 'army of workers' to perform federal work projects so the unemployed will have something to do), however benign their intentions. The film is clearly the conception of those who think they know better than the people who are actually trying to govern, but it paints a picture that is more horrifying than it is uplifting, suggesting that America can only be saved if the rule of law is suspended or circumvented—although, if one looks closely at history, it often has been.

The characters are superficial. Franchot Tone and Karen Morley co-star as the president's aides, and have a vague romance. There is also a hint that Huston's character—whose appearance alters at times, as he acts like he is in a trance—is channeling Abraham Lincoln. Huston's character then turns his attentions to achieving world peace, while making all of the countries who owe money to the United States pay up their debts. Such simplicities ought to make the film certifiably awful, but age has been kind, turning its brashness into equally spectacular naiveté, so that the more outrageous the actions of Huston's character and the situations he faces become (the gangsters try to take him down with a drive by... at the White House), the more giddily entertaining the film becomes. During a cumulative speech, Huston's character begins speculating about the path that arms development and proliferation will take if the instant peace he is strong-arming the other countries into accepting is not immediately agreed upon. "The next war will depopulate the Earth. Invisible poison gasses. Inconceivably devastating explosives. Annihilating death rays." Two of those things (atomic radiation and the Bomb) actually appeared within a decade. It's taken about a century longer, but they're still working hard on the third one, and it is very close to being used on the battlefield. World peace, on the other hand, not so much.

The squared full screen black-and-white picture is fairly soft and grainy, but the image is stable, consistent and free of overt wear. The monophonic sound is also scratchy but adequate for its age. There are optional English subtitles and three black-and-white Warner cartoons from 1933, **Bosco in Person** running 8 minutes (the black caricatured character performs music numbers on the stage imitating various performers of the day), **Buddy's Beer Garden** running 7 minutes that appeared previously with **Christopher Strong** (Nov 23) and **The Dish Ran Away with the Spoon** running 8 minutes that appeared previously with **Little Giant** in **Warner Bros. Gangsters Collection 4** (Jan 09).

The wicked step-mother

A well directed film that delineates precisely why there must be an impervious romantic barrier between minors and adults, Catherine Breillat's 2023 **Last Summer**, has been released on Blu-ray by Janus Films, Sideshow and The Criterion Channel (UPC#715515310017, \$30). Both sides are selfish and everyone gets hurt, but only one side is truly responsible for their actions—hence, the common phrase, 'the adult in the room.' Léa Drucker is an advocate for abused children no less, who falls into a relationship with her unstable teenage stepson, played by Samuel Kircher, while her husband is out of town. In some ways, the 104-minute film is predictable and, through its predictability, anxiety-driven. It basically makes you pay for having enjoyed its eroticism. But if you can withstand the stomach-turning emotional conflict that inevitably comes from their fling, then it is a rewarding drama, both for its vivid realness and the inherently defective personalities of the characters. Breillat brings a compelling immediacy to their presence, while establishing an inviting atmosphere, so that each character's betrayal—not to one another, but to the viewer's investment—happens gradually and deviously.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1. The color transfer is sharp and nicely detailed. The film's last shot is a fade to black in an already darkened room, so that the only light that is left is the tiniest glint off a wedding ring. On the BD, it is very clear. The 5.1-channel DTS sound is not aggressive, but has a pleasing environmental surround mix. The film is in French and comes with optional English subtitles, a trailer and an excellent 18-minute interview with Breillat, talking about her approach to the film, the characters and the sex scenes.

Mao revenge tale

Angela Mao stars in a terrific tale of martial arts revenge, the 1977 Golden Harvest production directed by Chang Wha Chung, **Broken Oath**, a Celestial Pictures Eurekal Blu-ray (UPC#760137164814, \$40). Based upon the Japanese feature, **Lady Snowblood** (Sep 04), the mother of Mao's character gives birth to her in prison, and she is raised in a monastery where she learns kung fu and how to make friends with scorpions. When she is old enough to become aware of her background, she sets forth to take revenge upon the men who killed her stepfather and imprisoned her mother. The narrative is direct and methodical, with a number of intriguing and engaging characters. One villain does not learn why he is being killed, and a few supporting characters fall by the wayside for the climax, but otherwise the plot is fully engaging and well executed. Similarly, the fight scenes are not so much elaborate as they are direct and exciting, including one that features Sammo Hung. In any case, the film delivers intrigue, action and, with Mao, kick-butt glamour. It is pretty much irresistible.

Two versions of the film are presented, the *Hong Kong Theatrical Cut*, which runs 98 minutes, and an *Extended Cut*, which runs 102 minutes. The *Extended Cut* adds more to the narrative detail and is preferable, even though it is presented as the second choice on the menu. The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1. The shots are not always in focus, but the picture transfer is otherwise un hindered and colors are accurate most of the time (there was one passage where they might be vaguely compromised, but it was difficult to tell and did not distract from the drama). The film also contains some brief nudity that is effectively integrated with the story. The monophonic sound is clear and the film is in Mandarin with optional English subtitles. The *Hong Kong Theatrical Cut* also has an English language track, although the dubbing is not all that effective. Also featured is a trailer, a good 12-minute introduction to the film and a more specific 8-minute comparison of the film to **Lady Snowblood** ("If I really had to describe the difference between the two, it's that **Lady Snowblood** is more of a 'period film revenge drama,' whereas **Broken Oath** is more of a martial arts film with long, long, long and fantastic fight sequences.")

Hong Kong film expert Frank Djeng provides a good commentary track for the *Hong Kong* version, explaining the plot, providing backgrounds for the cast and the crew, deconstructing some of the fights and the film's use of slow motion, but most of all, talking about Mao, who retired to the United States. On the fight she has with Hung's character: "It's always great to see them fighting together. Angela would tell me that she would read newspapers online, articles online, so she still follows what happened with a lot of stars that she worked with, Sammo included, and whenever she sees Sammo now—obviously, Sammo's getting up there in his age; he's more frail; he uses a cane, he uses a wheelchair—she always has tears and she always cries whenever she sees pictures of him looking frail."

The *Extended Cut* contains a lively commentary by Hong Kong film enthusiasts Mike Leeder and Arne Venema, who tend to digress a little bit more than Djeng, but supply a viable second perspective both on the careers of the cast members and the film's story. They also point out the similarities and differences to **Lady Snowblood** in great detail.

Great western

Along with a number of outstanding Nineteenth Century American historical dramas, Ted Turner also oversaw a brief but welcome revival of old-fashioned westerns for his cable and broadcast empire. Westerns have always been with us and still are, but TNT Productions was responsible for reviving the spirit of what westerns were like when they dominated the boxoffice and the public's consciousness, presenting movie stars in action dramas that are both rousing and moving, and infused a genuine acknowledgement of American heritage with a decently plotted narrative. All of this comes together wonderfully in TNT's 1997 telefilm, billed on the terrific TNT Original Warner Bros. **Warner WB Archive Collection** Blu-ray as **Elmore Leonard's Last Stand at Saber River** (UPC#840418321874, \$22).

Directed by Dick Lowery, Tom Selleck stars as a Confederate veteran returning to Texas before the Civil War is entirely over to gather his family and move back to their homestead in Arizona, where they encounter resentful Union veterans and other Confederates who still think the war can be won. Meanwhile, the wife of Selleck's character must adjust to how the war has changed him. Running 96 minutes, there are steady eruptions of confrontations and other action scenes, gorgeous scenery, and

Leonard's well-measured plotting. It's not entirely logical—why does the villain abduct the little girl, except that he's crazy and it makes for a fantastic climactic chase?—but it always follows through on character while keeping the viewer guessing as to what will happen next. The film is also loaded with wonderful stars, spanning from Harry Carey, Jr. to Haley Joel Osment, with David Dukes, Suzy Amis (doing a nice Cybill Shepherd thing, but with guns), and both Keith and David Carradine. Selleck never really worked out as a movie star, but on TV he was fantastic and here he nails not only the toughness and vulnerability of his character, but the aura of the Nineteenth Century the show must sell to keep the viewer transported. From story and setting to action and adventure, family bonding and nuanced history, the film has everything a viewer could wish for in a western.

The squared full screen picture looks terrific, with fresh, solid colors. The monophonic sound has a pleasing range—there is more than one thunderstorm during the show, along with everything else—and David Shire's musical score is exceptional. Optional English subtitles are included, as is a trailer.

A very enjoyable action film

An enormously enjoyable action film that opens on a chase with guns blazing and pretty much never lets up, **Get Fast**, has been released on Blu-ray by Well Go USA (UPC#810348037619, \$30). Directed by its star, James Clayton, it is about three different groups that want to grab two sacks of gunrunning money. In the opening shootout, Clayton's character ends up with the cash, but his beloved partner is taken hostage by the gang that was running the deal. A group of crooked cops is also after them. There is just enough story to keep the 88-minute movie moving forward, with brief but appropriate pauses so everyone, including the viewer, can catch their breaths. The performances are as good as the script allows, filling in the backstory with a few well timed expressions, and this is especially true of the diciest part, an 'innocent bystander' played by Suleiman Abutu, an ice cream truck driver with anxiety issues. The temptation to roll your eyes at first is quickly squelched by the evenhanded nature of his performance, and it is from the strength of this weakest link that the rest of the film stays tight, on target and breathless. The story and the action are always logical and relentless, every actor, even among the snarling villains, is very appealing, and the blood, explosions, gunshots and foot-to-the-floor driving are all exhilarating from start to finish.

As a testament to Clayton's skills as a director, you assume that the film is taking place in the Southwest and it is only during the end credits that you discover it was shot in British Columbia. The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.9:1. The color transfer is fine and the 5.1-channel DTS sound keeps you fully engaged with the movie's many noises and hard rocking musical score. There are optional English and French subtitles, and a trailer.

Who let the dogs out

A 2024 variation on **The Purge** using you-know-whats, **Werewolves**, has been released on Blu-ray by Universal Studios Home Entertainment (UPC#840418321478, \$22). Directed by Steven C. Miller, the film intercuts two stories, linked by a CDC operative of some sort played by Frank Grillo. It is established that werewolves had appeared during a previous 'super moon' and will do so again with the moon that is rising the night the film is set. Everyone exposed to moonlight turns, unless they are inside or are entirely covered, with dark glasses or goggles. Miller's group has developed a formula that holds off the effect for a couple of hours. In the one part of the story, his group is experimenting on a batch of volunteers in order to finesse the serum, while in the other part, his late brother's wife and daughter are barricaded in a house that he has rigged with booby traps and other defenses to keep the prowlers out, as have many of the neighbors. Basically, the lab experiments flop and he has to rush home to protect his besieged niece and her mother. Running 94 minutes (with 6 minutes of end credits), the film is a good deal of fun. The werewolf effects aren't bad, there is one perfectly timed jump scream and lots of suspense and action sequences. Not all of it makes complete sense, but then, turning into a wolf because of moonlight really doesn't either, so who cares?

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1. The color transfer is fine, even though a lot of the film is set in the dark. The 5.1-channel DTS sound has a satisfying dimensionality that adds to the thrills. There is an audio track that describes the action ("A view creeps past the tipped over couch to find Cody slumped against the bookshelf. He abruptly comes to. His mask falls off his face, leaving his skin exposed to moonlight shining through the shattered window. His facial muscles spasm and his eyes turn yellow."), optional English and Spanish subtitles, and 7 minutes of sensibly deleted scenes that fill in a few of the most flagrant plot holes.

Snack time in the swamp

Jim Wynorski is still at it, as he has been for decades, making cheap monster creature movies featuring girls in bathing suits getting gobbled. He takes full advantage of inexpensive computer graphic effects in his 2024 **Dinogator**, about a cross between a cobra and an alligator that is about the size of a bus and wiggles through the images with the vague sense that it is actually on the ground or in the water. Released on DVD by Vision Films (UPC#840418321768, \$15), the 82-minute feature shot in Florida, after the initial teases, has Michael Madsen and Paul Logan attempting to capture the creature, while a girl band that is filming a rock video in the swamp, and the owner of the boat the filmmaker has chartered, are the nominal heroes, being picked off until only the main romantic couple is left. There is a modest amount of suspense in some of the final action scenes, lots of décolletage, and otherwise nothing to set it apart. Anyone old enough to have graduated from elementary school will not be disturbed by the creature chowing down its victims, and with computer animation being so cheap, there are plenty of monster scenes to satiate the restless. Bon appetit.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1 and an accommodation for enhanced 16:9 playback. The image is sharp—even the sequences taking place in supposedly dark but fairly well illuminated caves—and colors are accurate. The sound defaults to a standard stereo, but there is a 5.1-channel Dolby Digital track that is somewhat nicer, with a more even surround presence, and the band's rock songs have a decent amount of power. There are optional English subtitles and a trailer.

Stage vs. film

The only rival to our love for cinema is our love for stage productions. Actors in stage productions have no net, and the intimacy you share with them, even in a large venue, can never be equaled on the screen. That intimacy mitigates almost any shortcoming a stage production might have. *Amadeus* the film can never live up to the almost unbelievable talent on display with *Amadeus* on the stage. From a middle school production of *Hit the Deck*, to a regional theater rendition of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* with an African-American actress in an otherwise all-white cast rivaling Uta Hagen with her performance of Martha, to Alec Guinness in a biographical profile of Jonathan Swift, such works may be ephemeral, but they are burned into the fondness center of our memories and will never leave. Unlike film, stage is ALL about the actors. It has an entirely different set of criteria to succeed or to be appreciated.

Liberation Hall has, fortunately, brought some preservation to such ephemeral experiences, and we have reviewed a number of their inspired releases in the past, from **42nd Street** (Nov 21) to **Anything Goes** (May 23). They have now issued Paul Bartel's final 1993 feature film, **Shelf Life**, on Blu-ray (UPC#089353405526, \$27), a film (not video) recording, without an audience, of a stage production written and performed by its three stars, O-Lan Jones, Andrea Stein and Jim Turner. As a film, it is a painful, excruciating experience, but if you look through that to imagine it being performed live, while it still may be annoying as all get out, it represents a true tour-de-force performance and a breathtaking artistic experience.

The premise is simple enough and thanks to the film it is spelled out a little more clearly than it probably was on the stage. A man, his wife and three children are sitting at the breakfast table when they learn from the TV that JFK has been assassinated. They gather up the kids, and open a hidden, bookcase door (you don't even have to use the freeze frame to spot a Stephen King novel on one of the shelves) and descend to a fallout shelter. The play then properly begins several decades later. The parents have long since passed away, there is an enormous (unseen) adjacent tunnel loaded with preserved food, and within their moderately cramped and fairly messy living space, the three enact daily childish rituals that have been only partially modified to suit their adult bodies. There is a black-and-white television there that appears to receive broadcasts, but not very clearly, and the three characters are, culturally, still stuck in the early Sixties, but with the 'telephone game' modifications that come with years of days of repetition. While never overstated, there is also a simmering sexual tension as there would be whenever a man is locked up in an enclosed area with two women his age for that length of time. It is surprising no one is pregnant. Anyway, the emphasis in the 81-minute feature is on the rituals and 'games' that the characters participate in to spend a typical day. A lot of it—heck, all of it—is gobbledygook, which is why the movie is so insufferable, but whether the actors are following a script or improvising, the intensity, absurdity and consistency of their performances is absolutely amazing. We kept thinking that we probably would have hated the drama just as much if we had seen it live (originally performed by the Actor's Conservatory Ensemble at the Lex Theatre in Hollywood), but we would have clapped like hell at the end and meant every bang of our hands.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1. The image is constantly speckled, but colors are tolerable and if you accept the idea that no video technician in his right mind is going to sit down and remove each errant markings, the presentation is workable. After all, the speckles sometimes help to distract from the show's enforced claustrophobia. The sound is stereophonic but generally centered and the era music that is played back is monophonic. There are optional English subtitles, three trailers, a 35-minute retrospective interview with the three actors, describing the initial inception of the play and Bartel's contributions in moving it over to film, and a jokey 9-minute black-and-white presentation of the three actors in character attending a present day seminar where they are interviewed by members of the sparse audience (as if the segment were an epilog to the film). Jones, Stein and Turner also supply a commentary track over the feature, sharing detailed recollections of what was involved with staging the individual scenes and what some of their specific inspirations were, as well as what Bartel brought to the project.

Looney Tunes on Blu-ray

No room is available to publish our entire review of the four-platter Warner Bros. *Warner WB Archive Collection* Blu-ray, **Looney Tunes Collector's Choice Vols. 1-4** (UPC#883929833153, \$40), or the individual releases that make up each of the four platters, **Looney Tunes Collector's Choice Vol.1** (UPC#883929811557, \$22), **Looney Tunes Collector's Choice Vol.2** (UPC#883929817146, \$22), **Looney Tunes Collector's Choice Vol.3** (UPC#883929819584, \$22) and **Looney Tunes Collector's Choice Vol.4** (UPC#883929832859, \$22), so we have chosen instead to publish the review for free on our Substack page (<https://dvdslaserdisc.substack.com/p/the-dvd-laser-disc-newsletter-special-014>) and have also made it available for free as a PDF file for download, which can be requested by writing Looney Tunes 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 Looney Tunes 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 *Warner Archive Collection* Blu-ray, **Daffy Duck's Quackbusters** (UPC#840418321881, \$22). The reviews have also been 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

CRITERION CORNER: The Criterion Collection is issuing Jacques Demy's lovely *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* in 4K format with *Once Upon a Time . . . The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*, a 2008 documentary, an interview with film scholar Rodney Hill; a French television interview from 1964 featuring Demy and Michel Legrand discussing the film; and archival audio interviews with Legrand and Catherine Deneuve at the National Film Theatre in London. A 4K presentation

of Norman Jewison's *In the Heat of the Night* will feature interviews with director Jewison and Lee Grant; a segment from a 2006 American Film Institute interview with Sidney Poitier; an interview with Aram Goudsouzian, author of *Sidney Poitier: Man, Actor, Icon*; a commentary featuring Jewison, Grant, Rod Steiger, and cinematographer Haskell Wexler; *Turning Up the Heat: Movie-Making in the '60s*, a program about the production of the film and its legacy, featuring Jewison, Wexler, producer Walter Mirisch, along with John Singleton and Reginald Hudlin; and *Quincy Jones: Breaking New Sound*, a program about Jones's innovative soundtrack, including the title song sung by Ray Charles, featuring interviews with Jones, lyricists Alan and Marilyn Bergman, and Herbie Hancock. Richard Lester's *The Three Musketeers / The Four Musketeers* will be in 4K and will include *Two for One*, a documentary by critic David Cairns; *The Saga of the Musketeers* (2002), a two-part documentary featuring interviews with cast and crew members; and *The Making of The Three Musketeers*, a 1973 featurette with behind-the-scenes footage of Lester. Charles Burnet's *Killers of Sheep* will be in 4K and will have a commentary featuring Burnet and film scholar Richard Peña; interviews with Burnet and actor Henry Gayle Sanders; an appreciation by Barry Jenkins; two short films by Burnet—*Several Friends* (1969) and *The Horse* (1973), with a new introduction to the latter by Burnet; an excerpt from the 2010 UCLA LA Rebellion Oral History Project, featuring an interview with Burnet by film scholar Jacqueline Stewart; *A Walk with Charles Burnett* (2019), a documentary by Robert Townsend; and a cast reunion from 2007. Abbas Kiarostami's *The Wind Will Carry Us* will include *A Week with Kiarostami* (1999), a documentary by Yuji Mohara on the making of the film; an interview from 2002 with Kiarostami; and a video essay presenting Kiarostami's poetry narrated by Massoumeh Lahiji, a longtime translator and creative collaborator with the director. Bruce Robinson's *Withnail & I* is being released in 4K format with two commentaries, one from 2020 featuring Robinson, and the other from 2001 featuring Ralph Brown and Paul McGann; a short program featuring Robinson and Richard E. Grant; *Withnail and Us* (1999), a documentary on the making of the film; a British Film Institute Q&A from 2017 with Robinson and Grant; and a stills gallery featuring photographs by artist Ralph Steadman. Robinson's *How to Get Ahead in Advertising*, a standard Blu-ray, will come with a documentary featuring interviews with Robinson and Grant.

NEW IN BLU: The following titles were recently released on Blu-ray—Glitch Ditch 36, Glitch Ditch Cyber Casket Collection V.1, Glitch Ditch Cyber Casket Collection V.2, Glitch Ditch Cyber Casket Collection V.3, Glitch Ditch Cyber Casket Collection V.4, Glitch Ditch Cyber Casket Collection V.5 (Acid Bath); Hell Hike 2 (Acid Bath); Satan War (AGFA); Azrael, Influencer, V/H/S/ Beyond (AMZ); The Special People (Art); The Clock (Bayview); Disembodied (Bleeding Skull); Shit (Bounty); New Life (Brainstorm); A Real Pain (Buena Vista); All In, Film Hub, Ghost Trader, I Want to Jump, Kingdom of Judas, A Life of Purpose, Not a Clue, QAS, 7 Welcome to London, Success Camp, Taxi 121, Voices in the Deep, We Believe (Burning Bulb); Keanu & Co. (Canadian); The Last Match (Cauldron); Curse of the Devil / Demon Witch Child / The Vampires Night Orgy, Deranged, Iced, The Seventh Curse / Witch from Nepal, Furious, The Lady Assassin, Street Trash, The Terronauts, Virtuosity (CAV); A Chinese Odyssey Parts 1 & 2 (Cinedigm); Cane Fire (Cinema Guild); Heroes Like Us, Joyride (Cinematographe); Dead Ant, The Final Wish, Gangster Land (Cineverse); King Lear, Last Summer, Performance (Criterion); Adela Has Not Had Supper Yet, In the Moscow Slums, The Savage Hunt of King Stakh, Tamala 2010 A Punk Cat in Space, Trapped Ashes (Deaf Crocodile); Hard Truths, 2073 (Decal); Hukkle (Dekanalog); In Search of Edgar Allan Poe (East Rock); Dick Dynamite 1944 (Epic); Videoman (ETR); Truth Be Told Complete Series (Fifth Season); Naked Acts, Once Were Warriors, The Sales Girl (Film Movement); Racing with the Moon, Lifeguard (Fun City); Year-Round Metal Enjoyment (Gemini); Advent, Body of Water, Desert Fiends, Inhabitants, Know Mercy, Singing in My Sleep, Swede Caroline (Gravitas); Blades in the Darkness (Indican); Wonderful Paradise (Kani); The Conqueror, Film Noir The Dark Side of Cinema XXIII, Frances, Graveyard Shift, Hot Pursuit, Noble House, Oh Canada, Oscar Micheaux The Complete Collection, Play It Again Sam, Summer Rental, Uncle Buck, Whore (Kino); Bemisal Incomparable, Disco Dancer (Leomark); Joan Baez I Am a Noise, Joan Jett Bad Reputation, The Last Circus (Magnolia); The Image (Melusine); Documentary Now! Complete Series (Mill Creek); The Canyons, Flesh + Blood, Smiley Face (MPI); In the Summers (Music Box); The Cat, A Certain Killer/ A Killer's Key, Daddy, Dinner with Leatherface, Dinosaur Valley Girls, The Emperor Jones, Endless Summer Syndrome, Evilenko, Hokuriku Proxy War, Legend of the Eight Samurai, The Mask of Satan, Monster from the Ocean Floor, Thong Girls (MVD); Omar and Cedric If This Ever Gets Weird (Oscilloscope); September 5 (Paramount); The Color Yellow, Dark Night of the Soul, Mick Jagger The Ultimate Performer, Painted in Blood, The Price of Death, Safehouse 1618, The Shepherd, Terra Nova, Terra Nova Complete Series (Rising Sun); Jacker / Jacker 2 Descent to Hell (Saturn's Core); Paypigs (Shoreline); Character, Respiro (Sony); Camp Blood 9 Bride of Blood, Empire of the Apes, Invasion of the Empire of the Apes, Odder Noggins, Strange Things Happen at the Weird House 2 (Sterling); Almost Dead, Anti Matter, The Basement, Beacon Point, Bethany, Cute Little Buggers, The Dawnseeker, Death Kiss, Defective, The Dinner Party, The Elf, The Lullaby, The Night Sitter, Peelers, Pitchfork, The Snare (Uncork'd); Nosferatu, Quantum Leap Season 2, Werewolves, Wicked (Universal); The Order (Vertical); Bandits, Doctor Who Sylvester McCoy Season 2, The End, Inserts, Juror #2, The Lord of the Rings The War of the Rohirrim, Outpost in Malay, Tom and Jerry The Complete Cinemascope Collection, Twilight Time, Uptown Girls (Warner); Better Watch Out, Big Kill, The Invisible Raptor, Panda Plan, T-34 (Well Go); Dream Team (Yellow Veil)

NEW IN 4K: The following titles were recently released in 4K format—Disembodied (Bleeding Skull); Bang the Drum Slowly, Deranged, Virtuosity (CAV); Thieves Like Us (Cinematographe); The First Slam Dunk, Galaxy of Terror, Ghosts of Mars, Humanoids from the Deep, John Carpenter's Vampires, The Last Voyage of the Demeter, Sick (Cinedigm); King Lear, Performance (Criterion); Cronos, Drugstore Cowboy, Punch Drunk Love (Criterion); Felidae, Trapped Ashes (Deaf Crocodile); Body Parts, Graveyard Shift, The Sacrifice, Two Spaghetti Western Classics, Uncle Buck (Kino); The Image (Melusine); Alice Sweet Alice, Cruising, Evilenko (MVD); My Girl, Panic Room, The Social Network (Sony); Nosferatu, Wicked (Universal); Amadeus, Constantine, Judas and the Black Messiah, The Lord of the Rings The War of the Rohirrim, The Nice Guys, Paddington 2 (Warner)

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Table with 5 columns: BDs, Dinogator p6, JoJo Dancer, Your Life Is Calling 4K p4, Legend of the Eight Samurai p3, Shelf Life p7. Includes titles like Akira Kurosawa's Dreams 4K p2, Broken Oath p6, The Cat p3, Character p3, Daffy Duck's Quackbusters p7, etc.

Current Attractions

- The following titles recently appeared for the first time: Abbey Grace (Uncork'd)*, Across the River and into the Trees (Level 33), Adios Buenos Aires (Film Movement), Advent (Gravitas)*, Agent of Happiness (Film Movement), Alice in Wonderland Season 1 (Dreamscape), Alien Reign of Man (Uncork'd), Alien Rubicon (Kino), All about the Ring (Filmhub), All Girls Weekend (Uncork'd)*, All Hallows' Eve Trickster (Wownow), All In (Burning Bulb)*, Almost Dead (Uncork'd)*, America Is Sinking (Kino), American Descent (Uncork'd)*, American Exorcism (Uncork'd)*, Armitville AI (SRS), The Armitville Terror (Uncork'd)*, Anger of the Dead (Uncork'd)*, Ani Matter (Uncork'd), Applause (Shoreline), Aqua League (Wownow), Arianna (Uncork'd), Azrael (AMD), B.O.Y. Bruises of Yesterday (Breaking Glass), The Basement (Uncork'd), Beacon Point (Uncork'd), Bethany (Uncork'd), Between the Trees (Uncork'd)*, Bigfoot vs Megalodon Resurrection (Wownow), Bigfoot's Movie Night Curse of Bigfoot (Wownow), Bikini Girls vs. Dinosaurs (Filmhub), Biology 101 (Uncork'd)*, Blades in the Darkness (Indican)*, Blood Moon (Uncork'd)*, Boardwalk Empire Complete Series (Warner), Body of Water (Gravitas), Bon Jovi In Performance (Shoreline)*, Bonnie Blue James Cotton's Life in the Blues (Freestyle)*, Boonie Bears The Adventurers Adventures at the Museum (Wownow), Boonie Bears The Adventurers Bright Spot (Wownow), Breakdown Forest (Uncork'd)*, Bright Sky (BMG), Broadway Limited (Digicom)*, Building Stuff (Paramount), Cane Fire (Cinema Guild), Cash for Gold (Freestyle)*, Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre (Digicom), Cheater Cheater (SRS), The Chemists (Deskpop)*, Clara Bow Collection V.2 (Alpha)*, Clash of the Dead (Uncork'd)*, Clawed (Uncork'd), Clone Cops (Freestyle), Cocaine Gangster. Talk (Filmhub)*, Cold Highway (Filmhub), The Color Yellow (Rising Sun), Condemned (Uncork'd)*, Conjuring the Genie (ITN)*

- Consent (Filmhub), The Covid Story (Filmhub), Crazyed (Uncork'd)*, Crucible of the Vampire (Filmhub)*, Cry for the Bad Man (Uncork'd)*, Crying Wolf (Uncork'd)*, Cypsis (Uncork'd), The Customer (Filmhub), Cute Little Buggers (Uncork'd), Daddy (MVD), Danny Got Season 4 (Yippe), Dark Moon Rising (Uncork'd), Dark Night of the Soul (Rising Sun), Dating Daisy (Dreamscape), The Dawnseeker (Uncork'd), Dead by Dawn (Uncork'd)*, Death Kiss (Uncork'd), Decoding the Universe (Paramount), Deedee The Little Sorceress Season 1 (Dreamscape), Deep Dark (Uncork'd)*, Deeper The Retribution of Beth (Uncork'd)*, Defective (Uncork'd)*, Demon Tongue (Uncork'd)*, Desert Fiends (Gravitas)*, Desolate (Uncork'd)*, Dinner with Leatherface (MVD), Discreet (Uncork'd)*, Do You Dream in Color? (Uncork'd)*, Don't Be Bad (Uncork'd), Don't Make a Sound (SRS), Double Exposure (Freestyle)*, Dracula's Drive-In Presents Attack from Space (Wownow), Ed and Rooster's Great Adventure (Random), The Elf (Uncork'd), The End (Warner)*, The Entity Within (ITN)*, Endless Summer Syndrome (MVD), Escape: Puzzle of Fear (Uncork'd)*, EuroClub (Uncork'd)*, Euthanizer (Uncork'd)*, An Eye for an Eye 3 (Uncork'd), The Fear (ITN)*, Feed the Devil (Uncork'd)*, Fight for Redemption (ITN)*, Files on JFK (Bruder), Film Camp (Burning Bulb), Finding Bobbi A Search for Self (Green Planet)*, Flesh+Blood (MFI), Flunk Season 1 (Dreamscape), For the Love of Puppies (BMG), Forgive Me Father (Deskpop), Forsaken (Uncork'd)*, The Found Footage Festival Cherished Gems (Found Footage), Found Footage Festival V.9 & V.10 (Found Footage), Front Stage and Back (Random), Funny Woman The New Revolution Season 2 (Paramount), Further Witness (Uncork'd)*, Game Therapy (Uncork'd), Gearheads (Uncork'd)*, Ghost Trader (Burning Bulb)*, Ghosts Can Do It (Reel Vault), Ghosts of Darkness (Uncork'd), Glitch Ditch Cyber Casket Collection V.1 (Acid Bath)*, Glitch Ditch Cyber Casket Collection V.2 (Acid Bath)*

- Glitch Ditch Cyber Casket Collection V.3 (Acid Bath)*, Glitch Ditch Cyber Casket Collection V.4 (Acid Bath)*, Glitch Ditch Cyber Casket Collection V.5 (Acid Bath)*, Glitch Ditch 36 (Acid Bath), Gossip Girl Complete Series (Warner), The Greatest of All Tina (Freestyle)*, The Greene Murder Case (Reel Vault)*, Half-Life of Memory (Freestyle)*, Hallowed Ground (Uncork'd), Haunted (ITN)*, Head over Heels (Cinedigm), Heavens to Betsy 2 (Dreamscape), Hell Hike 2 (Acid Bath), Hellmington (Uncork'd)*, Homewrecker (Uncork'd), Hotel of the Damned (Uncork'd)*, Hover (Uncork'd)*, Hype! Vision Studios V.1 (Leomark), I Want to Jump (Burning Bulb), In Search of Edgar Allan Poe (East Rock)*, In the Summers (Music Box), Indie Horror Double Feature And Then There Was Blood / Haunted Ground (Alpha)*, Inhabitants (Gravitas)*, Inner Ghosts (Uncork'd)*, Inserts (Warner)*, Into the Spotlight (Freestyle)*, The Island Monster (Digicom)*, The Jets Making It Real (Deskpop), JFK Conspiracy Part 2 Going Deeper (Wownow), Juror #2 (Warner), Just a Bit Outside (Random), Kaiju Glam Metal Shark Attack (SRS), King Lear (Criterion), Kingdom of Judas (Burning Bulb), Knight Life (Vision), Know Mercy (Gravitas)*, Krampus Unleashed (Uncork'd), Lady Ballers (Sol Deo Gloria), Last Summer (Criterion), The Last Voyage of the Demeter (Cinedigm), Legend of the Lost Locket / For Love & Honey / Pearl in Paradise (Cinedigm)*, Lego DC Super Heroes 11-Film Collection (Warner), Lessons from the Sunflower (Green Planet)*, Life after Prison (ITN)*, A Life of Purpose (Burning Bulb), Little Bites (AMD), The Lord of the Rings The War of the Rohirrim (Warner), Lost in the Maze (BMG), Love at the Shore (Cinedigm)*, The Lullaby (Uncork'd), Man Vs. (Uncork'd)*, Mapantsula (Film Movement), Master Crimes (Kino), Mia and Me Season 1 (Dreamscape), Mick Jagger The Ultimate Performer (Rising Sun), Migram and the Fastwalkers 2 (Filmhub), Miss Scarlet Season 5 (Paramount), Mom (MFI)*, Monster High Season 2 (Paramount), Glitch Ditch Cyber Casket Collection V.2 (Acid Bath)*, Monster on the Ocean Floor (MVD)

- Mum Said (BMG), Nadia (Indiepix), Naked Acts (Kino), NASA Explores Other Worlds Planets Europa Titan (Wonderscape), Night of the Dead (Filmhub) 1915 (ITN)*, Nosferatu (Universal), Not a Clue (Burning Bulb)*, Obsessed with Light (Film Movement), Oh Canada (Kino), Omar and Cedric If This Ever Gets Weird (Oscilloscope), 100 Yards (Well Go), The Order (Vertical), Oscar Micheaux The Superhero of Black Filmmaking (Kino), The Other Widow (Kino), Outpost in Malay (Warner)*, Painted in Blood (Rising Sun), Panda Plan (Well Go), Papiyos (Shoreline), Pealers (Uncork'd), Penn's Seed The Awakening (Dreamscape), The Price of Death (Rising Sun), Project Silence (MPI), QAS (Burning Bulb), Quantum Leap Complete Series (Universal), Regular Show Complete Series (Warner), Replace (Uncork'd), Restoration (Uncork'd), Rideshare (Filmhub), Riley (MFI), The Rizen (Uncork'd), The Road to Elatic (Kino), Rubble and Crew On the Job (Paramount), Safehouse 1618 (Rising Sun), Saturday Night Live 50th Anniversary Collection Seasons 1-5 (Universal), Scarecrows (Uncork'd), Screaming Skull (Digicom)*, September 5 (Paramount)*, 7 Welcome to London (Burning Bulb)*, The Shepherd (Rising Sun), The Shepherd Code (ITN)*, Ship of Dreams Titanic Movie Diaries (Freestyle)*, Shit (Bounty), Sitch (ITN)*, Silver Woods (Filmhub), Singing in My Sleep (Gravitas)*, Single Car Crashes (Freestyle), Smurfs Season 1 (Paramount), The Snare (Uncork'd), Something in the Woods (Filmhub), Space Boobs in Space (Filmhub), St. Patrick's Day Massacre (High Flyers), Stay (Filmhub), Stockade (Sterling)*, Success Camp (Burning Bulb)*, Swede Caroline (Gravitas), Taxi 121 (Burning Bulb)*, The Temptress (Sterling)*, Terra Nova (Rising Sun), Terra Nova Complete Series (Rising Sun), The Touchstone (Filmhub), Trap (Filmhub), 20th Century Icons JFK The Assassination (Dreamscape), 20th Century Icons Lewis Hamilton (Dreamscape), 20th Century Icons The Kennedy Legacy (Dreamscape), VHS/Beyond (AMD)

- Vic the Viking Season 1 (Dreamscape), Voices in the Deep (Burning Bulb)*, Watch If You Dare To (Wownow), The Wayans Bros. Complete Series (Warner), We Believe (Burning Bulb)*, Weed Man (Filmhub), Obsessed with Light (Ketchup), Welcome Danger (Reel Vault), Werewolves (Universal), What Did Diddy Do? (Wownow), What You Can't Promise (Filmhub), Wicked (Universal), The Wild Adventures of Blinky Bill Season 1 (Dreamscape), Wochigii Lo End of the Peace (Green Planet)*, Woody Woodpecker and Friends Classic Collection (Universal), Year-Round Metal Enjoyment (Gemini), Zombie Wars (Filmhub), *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 AMD: →Dalgliesh Season 3, From Bounty: →Brunswick Dance Club, →Wolf, →Hank's Christmas Wives 2: The Nutcracker, →Apocalypse Love Story, →It's a Doll's World, →Time Rewind, From Brewer: →Confession of an Assassin The Murder of JFK, From Buena Vista: →Moana 2, →Mufasa The Lion King, →A Complete Unknown, From Cinedigm: Morning Show, Mysteries Complete Movie Collection, The Real West, Guns of Redemption, An Easter Bloom / The Blessing Bracelet, →Elmo's World Elmo Loves to Giggle, →For the Love of the Game 6-Movie Collection

- Junebug / His & Hers, →The Cases of Mystery Lane 2-Movie Collection, From Cineverse: →A Girl Like Him, From Criterion: A Woman of Paris, Anora, →Room 666/Room 999, From Deskpop: →Sleepers, →Topper, →Do I Shock You Like Lightning, From Dreamscape: →First Lady, →Heidi Season 1 V.1, →King of Glory, →Tashi Season 1, →20th Century Icon, The Kennedy Curse, From Duke: T T Isle of Man 2024 Review, From Film Movement: Joseph Campbell and the Power of Myth with Bill Moyers, →Mother, Couch, From First Run: →Trinity, →Without Arrows, From Freestyle: →Pomegranate, →Don't Get Eaten, From Full Moon: Death Streamer, →The Young Seducers 1-3, From Kino: Carville Winning Is Everything Stupid, World Series Champs The 2023 World Series (Texas Rangers), Rose, UnBroken, Women Who Run Hollywood, Every Little Thing, The Klezmer Project, Gladiators, Meth Gator, Ex-Husbands, Gunner, →Liza A Truly Terrific Absolutely True Story, →Aum The Cult at the End of the World, →There's Still Tomorrow, →Ape x Mecha Ape New World Order, →The Sidewalks of Bangkok, →Mogwai If the Stars, →The Art of Crime Seasons 6 & 7, From Leomark: →Treasures of Terror V.3, →The Dogmatics A Documentary, →Crazy Broke Asians, →Skinford The Curse, From Level 33: →Drained, →Timestalker, From Lionsgate: Den of Thieves 2, Pantera, →Flight Risk, From Magnolia: Lake George, Ernest Cole Lost and Found, →Night Call, From MPI: →The Astronaut Lovers, →Get Away, From Music Box: →Good Bad Things

- From MVD: Motorpsycho, Russ Meyer's Up! Eat the Night, Quackser Fortune Has a Cousin in the Bronx, →Trick or Treat, →Standing on the Shoulders of Kitties, The Bubbles and the Shitrockers Story, From My Way: Hanukkah, From Ocean Avenue: →The Way, From Paramount: Star Trek The Lower Decks Final Season, 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 →Fraser 2023 Season 2, →Big Cats Small World, →Sonic the Hedgehog 3, →What Are UFOs?, From Oscilloscope: →Wildcat, From Random: →The Imposter, From Rising Sun: →Overkill, →McCartney Now and Then, →Kat and the Band, →Among the Willows, →Funny Cow, →Crocodylus Mating Gunner, →Abduction The Harvesting, From Rustblade: Drag Me to Fest Tales from the Italian Horror, From Samuel Goldwyn: →The Sidewalks of Monte Cristo, From Sony: Kraven the Hunter, →The Room Next Door, →One of Them Days, From SRS: War of the Ninja Monsters, Jaron vs Goura, The Girl Who Wore Yellow Lace, →Unde Slezao's Toxic and Temifying TV Hour, →The Final Possession, →Amityville Backrooms, From Strand: Marcellio Mio, From Tuff Gong: →Marley, From Uncork'd: Warriors of Peace, →Limbo, →Johnny Gruesome, →Rebound, →Landing Lake, →It Watches

- Ravenswood, →The Ouija Exorcism, →Prodigy, →Playground, →Maul Dogs, →Southern Pride, →Seeds, →Reaper, →Mobile Homes, →Soldier of War, →Silencio, →Rock & Roll the Movie, From Universal: →Quantum Leap Season 2, →Wolf Man, →Dog Man, →Love Hurts, →Valiant One, From Vision: →Altered Reality, From Warner: →Abbott Elementary Season 3, →Batman Ninja vs. Yakuza League, →Companion, →Dune: Prophecy Season 1, →Mr. Show Complete Collection (6 platters), Red One, Shameless Complete Series (34 platters), →Superman & Lois Season 4, →Superman & Lois Complete Series (12 platters), →Waiting for the Light Women Talking, From Well Go: Eye for an Eye 2 Blind Vengeance, Devils Stay, →Laws of Man, →Customs Frontline, →Devils Stay, →Harbin, →Into the Deep, →Striking Rescue, From Wonderscape: Social Studies Kids, Telling the Difference between Rules and Laws, History Kids Abraham Lincoln, From Wownow: →Kung Fu Masters, Zodiac Way The Bears Come to Town, →Strange Events Sim, →Zapruderflix: →How to Clear a Cluttered Mind, →Who They Are, →Celestial Deceptions Aliens, Entities & Apparitions, →In Their Words, Stories of Alien Contact, →Mysteries of the Southern Wild, →Superconsciousness The Power Within, →Shadow Operations, UFO Crash, Retrieval Evidence & Cover Up, →The Secret Cup, →Bigfoot Isn't Real, →Dye Hard, →Have a Nice Trip Micro vs. Macro Dosing for Healing