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New on DVD: ‘Lunchbox’ is a satsfying simple, love story

By [Amy Longsdorf](#), The Mercury

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With the tasty arthouse hit “The Lunchbox” (2014, Sony, PG, \$30) first-time writer/director Ritesh Batra manages to make a simple love story between two lonely strangers feel heartstoppingly fresh and new.

A mistake in Mumbai’s lunchbox delivery system connects neglected housewife Ila (Nimrat Kaur) to a grumpy, about-to-retire insurance adjustor named Saajan (Irrfan Khan). As Ila and Saajan pass notes back and forth in lunch containers, they reveal how trapped and isolated they feel.

Never once does this exhilarating movie tip over into easy sentimentality. Superbly acted and paced, “The Lunchbox” leaves you hungry for more. Extras: commentary by Batra.

Also New This Week

The Unknown Known (2014, Anchor Bay, PG-13, \$25) Even though politicians from both parties have admitted the Iraq War probably wasn’t a great idea, regret is not in the wheelhouse of Donald Rumsfeld, who sits down with filmmaker Errol Morris (“Fog of War”) to answers questions about his stint as George W. Bush’s Secretary of Defense. Free of self-doubt, Rumsfeld comes off as both smart and slippery. Regardless of your political affiliation, it’s likely you’ll find the match of wits between Morris and Rumsfeld fascinating to watch. Extras: featurette and Morris commentary.

Two Lives (2014, IFC, unrated, \$25) In the vein of the 2006 Oscar-winner “The Lives of Others” comes a Norwegian film about a sleeper agent (Juliane Kohler) for the Stasi — or East German police — who is suddenly forced to face up to a lifetime of deception. The layers of the story are peeled away slowly and suspensefully, as the action builds to a deeply moving confrontation between the outed spy and her adopted mother (Liv Ullman). With its wintry backdrops and hypnotic flashbacks, “Two Lives” exerts a hold on you that you won’t want to break. Extras: none.

Afflicted (2014, Sony, R, \$28) Just when it seemed as if found footage horror movies had run their course, Derek Lee and Clif Prowse give the tired genre a much-needed transfusion with their spooky vampire thriller. Lee and Prowse play a pair of pals who are touring the world for a video travelogue. After Lee is attacked in Paris by a mystery woman (Baya Rehaz), he begins to transform into a bloodsucking beast. But he never stops filming himself. The special effects are freaky and the characters are well-defined enough to make you care what happens to them. Extras: deleted scenes and featurette.

Vinyl (2014, Shout Factory, unrated, \$14) Loosely based on the story of a 2004 hoax perpetrated by Mike Peters of the Alarm, this rock ‘n’ roll comedy has just enough scruffy charm to make you forget the film’s flaws, which include a tendency to end each scene with an screaming match. A game Phil Daniels (“Quadrophenia”) stars as a former punk rocker who, with his old bandmates, writes what he believes is the perfect pop single. When Daniels’ one-time record company rejects him for being too old, he invents a Welsh band to carry the tune up the charts. It’s not in the same league as “This Is Spinal Tap” or “Still Crazy,” but it still manages to hit the right notes. Extras: none.

The Jewish Cardinal (2014, Film Movement, unrated, \$25) Beautifully directed by Ian Duran Cohen, this absorbing biopic about Jean-Marie Lustiger (Laurent Lucas) begins in 1981 when the Jewish convert to Catholicism was named the Archbishop of Paris by Pope John Paul II (Aurelien Recoing). Lustiger and the Pope enjoy a wonderful camaraderie at least until Lustiger finds himself in the middle of a bitter battle between Carmelite Nuns and Polish Jews. Lustiger’s inner struggle takes center stage in a film that’s so humorous and resonant that it will restore your faith in religious biopics. Extras: none.

B.B. King: The Life of Riley (2014, MVD, unrated, \$17) Jon Brewer’s documentary tribute to the King of the Blues gets off to a riveting start as the guitarist recalls his harrowing childhood working as a sharecropper in the Mississippi Delta. He survived tough times to wind up a big hit on the Chitlin Circuit before opening for the Rolling Stones and transitioning to one of the top-selling blues artists of all time. Brewer assembles an array of performers, including Bonnie Raitt, Eric Clapton and Bono, to sing King’s praises. But the most affecting interviews are from King’s family members who bear witness to the bluesman’s rags-to-riches triumph. Extras: additional footage.

Tim’s Vermeer (2014, Sony, PG-13, \$30) After making a fortune in computer software, Tim Jenison sets out to investigate the mystery of how Dutch master Johannes Vermeer managed to paint so photo-realistically 150 years before the invention of photography. Jenison’s detective work takes him all over the world, including Buckingham Palace, where a prized Vermeer hangs. Directed by Teller and narrated by Penn Jillette (of the magic team Penn and Teller), this engaging documentary is both a celebration of one man’s decade-long obsession as well as an attempt to blur the lines between art and science. Extras: deleted scenes and commentaries.

A Hard Day’s Night (1964, Criterion, unrated, \$40) It’s time to meet the Beatles again. John, Paul, George and Ringo’s first film is a fictionalized look at a day in the life of the Fab Four as they race around London, dodging fans, hopping trains and performing on a British TV show. As if seeing the lads in their prime wasn’t reason enough to check out this 50th anniversary DVD/Blu-ray combo pack, the soundtrack is stuffed with irresistible tunes, including “I Should Have Known Better” and “Can’t Buy Me Love.” Born movie stars, the Beatles are so funny and cheeky and adorable, you could go on watching them for hours. Extras: commentaries and featurettes.

Kissing Jessica Stein (2002, Fox, R, \$17) For the provocative questions it asks about sexuality, this small miracle of a romantic comedy deserves to be rediscovered on Blu-ray. It’s laugh-out-loud funny too, especially the first half involving a Manhattan fact-checker (Jennifer Westfeldt) who, on a whim, answers a personal ad from Helen (Heather Juergensen), a gallery owner looking to hook up with a woman. Sure, the humor is derivative of Woody Allen but “Kissing” has much to recommend it, including zesty chemistry between Westfeldt and Juergensen and a willingness to upend clichés in surprisingly touching ways. Extras: outtakes, deleted scenes and commentaries.