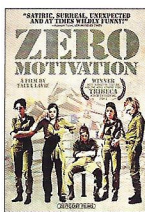


surrealism makes for a potent brew. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

Zero Motivation ★★★

Zeitgeist, 100 min., in Hebrew w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95

Serving up a satirical look at Israel's mandatory military service, *Zero Motivation* puts a unique spin on the office comedy. Here, female non-combatants run errands and bicker like other cubicle drones, but the action takes place in a remote desert outpost that feels like high school due to gossip, crushes, and jockeying for position. Director Talya Lavie divides the story into three chapters. In the first, Daffi (Nelly Tager) believes that her request for a transfer to Tel Aviv has been approved when new recruit Tehila (Yonit Tob) joins the staff. Daffi teaches her replacement the paper-shredding ropes, except that Tehila hasn't come for work, but for more personal reasons, which puts a damper on Daffi's relationship with fellow slacker Zohar (Dana Ivgy). Rama (Shani Klein), their commanding officer, finds both of the latter to be exasperating. In the next chapter, Zohar sets out to lose her virginity, but her gloomy Russian roommate, Irena (Tamara Klingon), puts a crimp in her plans. In the finale, Daffi returns to the camp after officer training and still hopes for a transfer, but first has to deal with Zohar. Once the best of friends, they are now the worst of enemies, especially after Daffi attempts to delete Zohar's favorite video game from all of the office computers (leading to a battle royale with staple guns and window blinds). An extremely well-cast film that plays like a female answer to *Office Space* in which boredom and isolation lead ordinary folk down some very strange paths, this Israeli hit film is recommended. (K. Fennessy)



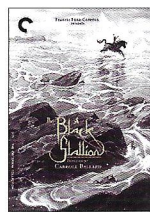
sneering, sadistic Prussian officer (Ian Holm) who is more interested in rank and respect than military preparation, after which they are sent into the muck and misery of trench warfare. Ernest Borgnine costars as the battle-hardened platoon leader who teaches Paul and his schoolmates more practical survival skills. The original 1930 adaptation of the novel, starring Lew Ayres as the young German soldier, won the Academy Award for Best Picture. This version, directed by Delbert Mann (who made the Oscar-winning *Marty* in 1955), is not as lavish or dramatically intense, but it is a faithful adaptation, features fine performances (Borgnine and Patricia Neal, who plays Paul's mother, both earned Emmy Award nominations), and serves as a reminder of the horror and futility of war. Although made for TV in the U.S., the film played in theaters in Europe, and is presented here in widescreen. Extras include a photo gallery. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

The Black Stallion

★★★1/2

Criterion, 117 min., G, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95

Walter Farley's classic children's novel was beautifully brought to the screen in filmmaker Carroll Ballard's wonderful adaptation, which features breathtaking cinematography by Caleb Deschanel. Kelly Reno stars as Alec Ramsey, a boy who escapes with a gorgeous, mistreated black stallion when a fire destroys the ship they're aboard, casting both onto a deserted island. What follows are a series of scenes in which the two come to terms with one another amidst sea and sand—stunning sequences that remain poignant and beautiful. Eventually, the pair are rescued but the stallion accidentally escapes, and is taken in by Henry Dailey (Oscar-nominated Mickey Rooney), who later convinces Alec to ride the horse in a race. *The Black Stallion* is that rare live-action family film that truly appeals to all ages. Making its high-def debut with a restored 4K transfer on both DVD and Blu-ray, this Criterion release features extras including five short films by Ballard, new interviews with Ballard and Deschanel, a featurette with Mary Ellen Mark talking about her photographs from the set, and a booklet. Highly recommended. (R. Pitman)

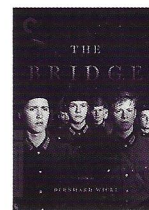


the 1940s provided entertainment to the military service members at stateside training camps and on the frontlines, as well as in the fabled Hollywood Canteen, where the reigning pin-ups danced with soldiers and sailors on leave in Los Angeles. Viewers will also see footage of the stars raising money for war bonds and providing songs and laughs for radio programming that was recorded on special V-discs that were shipped overseas and played on radio channels serving American combat areas (brief mention is made of Carole Lombard, who died in an airplane crash while returning home from a Midwest tour on behalf of war bond sales). And while segregation in the wartime military is not specifically addressed, there is footage here of Eddie "Rochester" Anderson and Lena Horne performing separately from their white peers on a black-oriented military program called *Jubilee*. A few old-time stars—including Dorothy Lamour and Mel Blanc—are interviewed, and Hope (who is seen throughout at various stages around the world) dominates the final stretch in a 1988 reunion with surviving members of his USO tour ensemble. A fine nostalgic look back at Hollywood efforts during wartime, this is recommended. (P. Hall)

The Bridge ★★★1/2

Criterion, 103 min., in German w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95

A landmark of post-WWII German cinema, filmmaker Bernhard Wicki's 1959 *The Bridge*—adapted from the semi-autobiographical novel by Manfred Gregor (pen name of journalist Gregor Dorfmeister)—was the first major German film to deal with the recent war, offering an unflinching portrait of a generation of young men who were sacrificed to a madman's fantasy of world domination. Set in a rural Bavarian town in 1945, as the Allies converge on Berlin, the story follows seven high school boys (still believing in the German propaganda of duty and sacrifice) who eagerly report for duty in the Volkssturm, which is not regular army but rather a kind of Hitler Youth militia created during the last gasps of Germany's defense. After only a day of basic training, the lads are assigned to guard a small bridge simply as a way to keep them out of combat. While *The Bridge* doesn't debate politics or acknowledge the Holocaust, Wicki explores the cultural and social climate of the German home front in the war's final days, where the only men left in the village between the ages of 16 and 50 are either wounded or unfit for combat, and women run the economy. The schoolboy shenanigans and growing pains of the first half eventually give way to panic and desperation as the boys try to act like soldiers in the face of overwhelming forces. A tautly-directed Oscar-nominated film (and

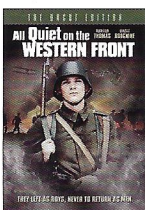


Classic Films

All Quiet on the Western Front ★★★

Shout! Factory, 156 min., not rated, DVD: \$14.95, Blu-ray: \$22.98

Richard Thomas, famous for playing John-Boy on the TV drama *The Waltons*, stars as thoughtful young German scholar Paul Baumer in this 1979 TV-movie adaptation of Erich Maria Remarque's anti-war classic. In the opening scenes, set in 1914, Paul is roused by paeans of battle glory from his patriotic schoolteacher (Donald Pleasence), and by the roar of flag-waving patriotism sweeping the city, to enlist in the German army and fight in World War I. All lofty ideals are dashed, however, when Paul and his friends enter basic training under the command of a



Bob Hope: Entertaining the Troops ★★★

MVD, 90 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.95

The title of this 1989 documentary is a little misleading, since the focus here is not entirely on Bob Hope. Instead, filmmaker Robert Mugge put together a grab bag of newsreel footage showing how the Hollywood stars of

