

in a rundown boarding house and scraping by on the occasional booking, Claire Bloom is the delicate young ballet dancer he saves from suicide and nurses back to health. Chaplin cast Buster Keaton for a single scene as his partner in a comic duet, making this the only film in which the two silent comedy greats ever worked together. Nigel Bruce, Norman Lloyd, and Sydney Chaplin (Charlie's brother) costar, silent star Snub Pollard has a bit part, and Chaplin's longtime silent movie costar Edna Purviance made her last screen appearance here in an unbilled role. *Limelight* is melancholy and perhaps a bit mawkish, but it's also personal and heartfelt. Chaplin was once the biggest movie star in the world, but by 1952 his popularity had waned. Just as *Limelight* was being released, Chaplin was denied re-entry into the United States for suspected Communist leanings (this was at the height of Red Scare hysteria and the Hollywood blacklist) and the film was pulled. Chaplin's score went on to win an Academy Award in 1973, after *Limelight's* much belated 1972 theatrical release. Criterion presents a new 4K digital restoration with a host of extras, including a video essay by Chaplin biographer David Robinson, interviews with Bloom and Lloyd, a retrospective documentary, two Chaplin shorts (one uncompleted), and a booklet. Recommended. (S. *Axmaker*)

Mahogany: The Couture Edition ★★1/2

Paramount, 108 min., PG, DVD: \$14.99

Motown founder Berry Gordy directed this splashy vehicle for former Supreme Diana Ross (taking over from uncredited screenwriter Tony Richardson). Ross's Tracy Chambers lives on the South Side of Chicago, working as a department store secretary by day, and at night taking classes in hopes of becoming a fashion designer. Her Aunt Florence (Beah Richards), a seamstress, sews samples of her designs. A love interest enters Tracy's life in the form of Brian Walker (Billy Dee Williams), a community advocate concerned about affordable housing. "Everything's politics," he tells her, but she doesn't believe that should apply to the fashion world. Her career takes off when a photographer, Sean (Anthony Perkins), decides he likes her look. Sean hires her for a fashion shoot, which leads to a trip to Rome, where he dubs her "Mahogany." In Italy, Tracy becomes a successful model. But their working relationship suffers when Tracy uses her modeling status to promote her designs. Until that point, Gordy controls the material well, but things take a turn for the ridiculous when Sean goes after Brian, especially with nothing to gain. From then on, *Mahogany* serves up drinking, reckless driving, and wealthy benefactors with ulterior motives, all on the way to a happy, if

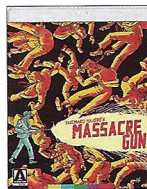


somewhat retrograde, ending. Ross designed the Halston-inspired outfits, and sang the Oscar-nominated title track, which trumped the film in popularity. A strong optional purchase. (K. *Fennessy*)

Massacre Gun ★★★

Arrow, 89 min., in Japanese w/ English subtitles, not rated, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.95

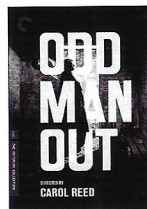
When gangster movies exploded in Japan during the 1960s, Jo Shishido—an actor with chubby, acne-scarred chipmunk cheeks—became the genre's unlikely superstar, the hippest figure in a culture of cool killers and stylish gunmen. Shishido stars in this 1967 feature as Ryūichi Kuroda—loyal lieutenant of a vindictive crime boss—who breaks with his godfather after his little brother, a rising young boxer, gets a beating from the gang. The defiance leads to a war that pits Kuroda and his two brothers against the old guard, playing out in stylish set pieces that don't make much sense but look great. The opening sequence, appearing wordlessly under the credits (aside from the single line, "kill her"), sets the tone, with a tease of romantic rebellion pitted against Kuroda's tortured obedience—a conflict that will inevitably lead to tragedy. Directed by Yasuharu Hasebe, a disciple of cult filmmaker Seijun Suzuki, and shot in black-and-white wide-screen with dynamic designs and graphic flair, *Massacre Gun* is a film where style is the substance, an entertaining Japanese gangster noir that will likely be appreciated by fans of Quentin Tarantino. Extras include new interviews with Shishido and film historian Tony Rayns, a photo gallery, and a booklet. Recommended. (S. *Axmaker*)



Odd Man Out ★★1/2

Criterion, 116 min., not rated, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.95; Blu-ray: \$39.95

Odd Man Out has been called Carol Reed's first masterpiece, with good reason. Reed's first film after World War II, the 1947 movie is drenched in darkness (both visually and dramatically) and carries a strong sense of isolation and doom. It also made a star of James Mason, playing IRA leader Johnny McQueen, who heads up a bank robbery gone wrong and ends up wounded and alone, stumbling through Belfast at night as the police and his mates alike search for him, and civilians alternately help and betray him. Although set in 19th-century Ireland, the story has much in common with American film noir, and McQueen becomes a tragic figure as he loses blood and becomes delirious—truly an odd man out at the mercy of those with their own plans for him. Reed and his screenwriters don't dwell on the politics of McQueen's mission, focusing instead on

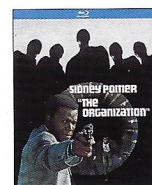


the man's passion and vulnerability—along with a rich pageant of characters who cross his path, notably an opportunistic drunk (F.J. McCormick), and an artist who sees the suffering of Christ in his face. The photography is dramatic and atmospheric, with cinematographer Robert Krasker (who went on to win an Oscar for Reed's *The Third Man*) periodically distorting the image to give us McQueen's point-of-view as he drifts in and out of consciousness. One of the great British films of the 1940s, this powerful drama of one man's long dark night of the soul receives the red carpet Criterion treatment here, with extras including scholarly interviews, new and archival documentaries, a 1952 radio adaptation of the film with Mason, and an essay by film scholar Imogen Sara Smith. Highly recommended. (S. *Axmaker*)

The Organization ★★

Kino Lorber, 106 min., PG-13, Blu-ray: \$29.95

Sidney Poitier was a bona fide movie star by the late 1960s, but he didn't heed the warning of one failed sequel when he returned to the character of Virgil Tibbs for a third time in 1971. After 1967's Best Picture-winning *In the Heat of the Night*, Poitier reprised his role as a canny police detective in *They Call Me Mister Tibbs!* in 1970, which was a mighty flop. Director Don Medford's *The Organization*, a crime drama bogged down by a complex plot and mostly leaden action, is only slightly stronger. The title refers to a murderous drug syndicate whose dealings are interrupted by an oddball crew of upright citizens bent on cleaning up the city. In a plodding, convoluted opening these self-proclaimed revolutionaries stage a kidnapping that suddenly goes bad, posing a dilemma for Tibbs and his support of the "good" criminals. What follows is a confused series of chase scenes interrupted by gabby talk, all presented with a lackluster formal style that is only occasionally enlivened by Poitier's creditable performance as a tenacious San Francisco cop. Notable for its place in Poitier's career, but not much else, this is an optional purchase, at best. (T. *Fry*)



The Premature Burial ★★★

Kino Lorber, 81 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95

The only one of Roger Corman's Edgar Allan Poe adaptations not starring Vincent Price, 1962's *The Premature Burial* features Ray Milland as Guy Carrell, an aristocrat who has a crippling fear of being buried alive, due to a family history of catalepsy. This obsession overtakes his life until the rather elderly newlywed moves into the family crypt—much to the horror of his neglected bride (Hazel Court), who observes

