



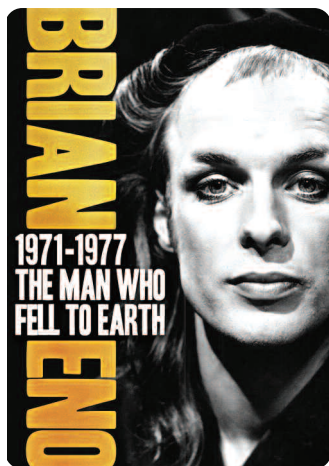
# QUEUED UP

Picking the most rockin' discs of the month.

BY BRYAN REESMAN

## (RE)DISCOVERING BRIAN ENO

— While most mainstream people know Brian Eno for his time with Roxy Music, his producing work with U2 and Coldplay and his collaborations with David Bowie, far less know of his pioneering ambient work that influenced everything from movie soundtracks to the “electronica” movement of the ‘90s. So we have a novel item here: A music documentary that’s actually about music. I’m being facetious, of course, but *Brian Eno – 1971-1977: The Man Who Fell To Earth* is a two-and-a-half hour British examination of Eno’s early years that features the kinds of talking heads that you never see on VH1-style music docs anymore. In other words, not airheaded celebs but respected music journos (like Simon Reynolds and Robert Christgau), musicians (Robert Rich and Cluster), an Eno biographer and others. Because this is not an authorized documentary, Eno himself only appears very briefly in clips

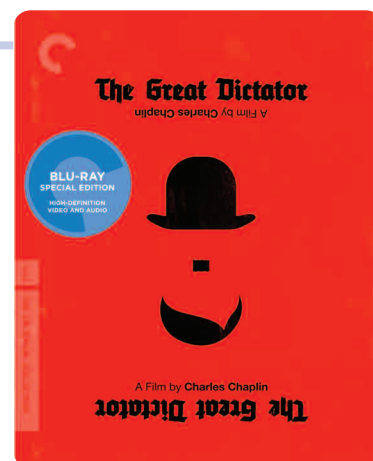


licensed from British TV interviews. Don’t let the authorized part dissuade you. Eno allegedly discusses little of his early ambient work in interviews these days, so that makes this piece important and accessible to both newbies as well as fans who want to revisit his early days. This in-depth doc may be too heady to absorb in one sitting, but it’s definitely worthwhile.

## CRAVING CRITERION

— The Criterion Collection has become so well known for its painstakingly restored and souped-up releases of classic and cult movies that it commands its own section in Barnes & Noble and various online stores. This month Criterion offers a plethora of Blu-ray debuts, including *Something Wild*, *Diabolique* and *The Great Dictator*. The latter is Charlie Chaplin’s great anti-war satire in which he plays both a buffoonish dictator as well as the Jewish barber who is mistaken for him. Clearly riffing on Hitler and the Nazis when this was made during World War II, Chaplin mocks them in grand slapstick style.

*Something Wild* is a black comedy from the ‘80s that was one of Melanie Griffith’s early breakthrough roles. She plays a woman who seduces an ordinary banker (Jeff Daniels) into taking a wild road trip and fun adventures with her, but when estranged, psycho, ex-con hubbie (Ray Liotta, in his breakthrough role) shows up, things get ugly. Fun for us, not fun for Daniels’ character.



And the original *Diabolique* (1955) is a classic psychological thriller in which a woman and her husband’s mistress kill him, but when his body disappears, all sorts of weird things happen. This twisted little tale influenced *Psycho*. All three of these Blu-Ray DVD releases feature booklets as well as the original DVD bonus material plus new features. The price tags on Criterion titles are higher than other new releases, but you can easily find good deals on them online (Deep Discount, Amazon, even the Criterion site). If you’re a true collector, they are valuable.

## ARGENTO ANEW

— There are few companies putting cult movies out on Blu-ray, and thankfully Blue Underground is one of them. While both *The Cat O’Nine Tails* (1971) and *Deep Red* (1975) have been out on DVD for a decade or so, they have finally gotten their Blu-ray DVD debuts. Both are gruesome giallos, the former starring Karl Malden (*Streets Of San Francisco*) as a blind crossword puzzle writer who teams up with a newspaper reporter after he overhears evidence of a killing at a pharmaceutical company where genetic experiments are being conducted. Once they stick their noses into this dirty business, they naturally become targets for a killer. *Deep Red* features David Hemmings (star of the Antonioni classic *Blow-Up*) as a musician who witnesses the bloody murder of a psychic and is intent on tracking down the killer with the help of a reporter. (Heyyyyyy, wait a minute...) Don’t be fooled. These are very different movies. But I have noticed that Argento likes to get his protagonists involved in things that could easily lead to their



deaths. (Hey, life is short, so why not take chances, right?) The director’s early films were ripe with unhinged killers, plenty of innovative camera work and introduced the world to the superlative soundtrack work of Goblin. *Deep Red* particularly is essential viewing, and both feature the kind of devious plotting and saturated colors that Italian’s maestro of horror is known for. Now the carnage is in HD.



## BRING OUT YOUR DEAD

— The medieval thriller *Black Death* got a bit of a buzz when it was released theatrically in March; well, in very limited release. Set in 1348 at the start of the titular plague, the film stars Sean Bean (*Lord Of The Rings*, *Game Of Thrones*) as a knight who, along with a novice monk, seeks out a village untouched by the plague and where an alleged necromancer can reanimate the dead. It is equally a tale of horror and of clinging to one’s faith in the midst of horrible events. With all of the craziness going on in our world now, cinematic stories like this actually have more resonance today than ever before. *Black Death* also features Eddie Redmayne (*The Other Boleyn Girl*, *The Good Shepherd*), David Warner (*Time After Time*, *Titanic*, *Tron*) and Carice Van Houten (*Repo Man*, *Valkyrie*).

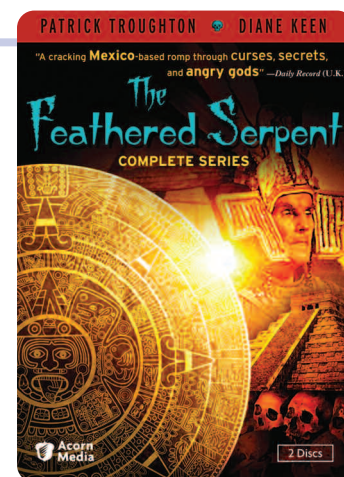
## PHYSICAL OR DIGITAL?

As the Blu-ray “revolution” slowly unfolds, the question for many consumers is whether to stick with a standard def DVD player with their HD TV, upgrade to a Blu-ray (or BD) player or simply start streaming from Netflix and other services. Being old school, I already have a BD player (and even bought an all-region DVD player), but it all depends on how you view movies. Some people love to collect discs and have the packaging, others merely consume things and then forget about them. The slow rise of BD has led to falling prices both for DVDs as well as Blu-ray discs themselves as they proliferate more (and also

do not sell as well as the studios expected). So there are plenty of bargains to be found, especially for collectors. On the flip side, streaming and downloads are more environmentally friendly, convenient and instantly gratifying, although for movie and TV buffs there is that lack of special features for some to consider. The one thing to be careful of with some downloading services is that you’re not getting a full-frame version of a movie instead of the true widescreen one, unless you’re dealing with older films. Watching *The Lovely Bones* in full-frame kind of pissed me off.

## AZTEC INSANITY

— Evidently back in 1976, British network ITV, a competitor to the BBC, produced an unusual period piece called *The Feathered Serpent*, a costume drama that takes place during Aztec times and stars Patrick Troughton (who also played Dr. Who and Father Brennan from *The Omen*). As malicious high priest Nasca, he is determined to overthrow the peaceful emperor Kukulxhan and bar a marriage that will unite two kingdoms under the benevolent god Quala, aka the “Feathered Serpent.” The 12-episode series also features Tony Steedman, who later played Socrates in *Bill & Ted’s Excellent Adventure*. (That kind of makes sense actually.) Having only seen little bits of this show on YouTube, it looks like it walks the line between serious



drama and high camp, but hey, how many other shows feature an evil, bloodthirsty Aztec priest hell bent on doing bad things? That’s what I thought.