



Anatomy of a Murder Blu-ray/DVD (Criterion)

Over the years, the 1959 film *Anatomy of a Murder* has been held in high esteem in the legal community, for reasons that might fascinate or lose viewers over its 160 minutes. The action carefully follows a case being built, from the point of legal counsel being retained and the defense's approach to dealing with blurry questions of guilt, through the attorneys' dance to sway a jury and down to the verdict. There have certainly been more sensational courtroom depictions committed to film over the decades,

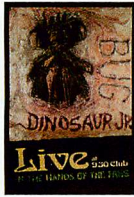
but following the gradual evolution of *Anatomy* through plotting, legal precedent, and pure luck and chance leaves a viewer feeling satisfyingly invested in the experience.

James Stewart plays Paul Biegler, a small-town lawyer engaged to represent an Army lieutenant arrested for killing a man who allegedly raped the soldier's wife. Considering the rape victim's (a memorable Lee Remick) incessantly saucy personality and her husband's history of jealous rages, Biegler has his work cut out for him, especially against the skilled big-city lawyer (George C. Scott) working for the prosecution. Against the backdrop of Duke Ellington's brilliant score, Biegler and his little team begin picking at loose threads tied to their uphill court battle.

Numerous extras include biographer interviews, newsreel footage from the set, and excerpts from a 1967 *Firing Line* episode featuring director Otto Preminger. (www.criterion.com)

8/10

By Hays Davis



Dinosaur Jr.: Bug Live at 9:30 Club: In the Hands of the Fans DVD (MVD)

It's odd that last year Dinosaur Jr. chose to revisit 1988's *Bug*, playing the album in its entirety in concerts that featured Henry Rollins interviewing the band onstage to open the show. *Bug* was essentially a document of a band imploding. Tensions were at an all-time high in the band, perhaps best exemplified in the J Mascis-penned, Lou Barlow-sung "Don't," where Mascis has Barlow singing "Why don't you like me" at vocal-shredding volume. For *Bug Live*, the band invited six fans to lend their hands at

filming the band's emotional wreck revisited. The album is played with typical Dinosaur gusto. The fact that fans filmed the show becomes somewhat lost, but it is an engaging and personal document of perhaps the most engaging and personal of Dinosaur Jr. albums. (Spoiler alert: Barlow doesn't reprise his famous role in "Don't," saying he blew out his voice doing it the first night of the tour. One of the fans sings.) By the band's next album, 1991's *Green Mind*, Barlow was gone, drummer Murph was relegated to a bit player, and the original Dinosaur was no more. Now they're back and, apparently, strong enough to revisit their demise, with the steady-handed help of their fans. (www.dinosaurjr.com)

7/10

By Frank Valish

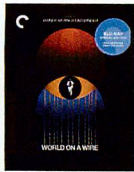


From Straight to Bizarre: Zappa, Beefheart, Alice Cooper and LA's Lunatic Fringe DVD (Sexy Intellectual)

In 1968, after releasing his first three seminal records with the MGM/Verve label, Frank Zappa, concerned with maintaining creative control over his music, began his own record labels, Bizarre and Straight, with his manager Herb Cohen. Along with releasing Zappa albums, these labels were vehicles which allowed Zappa to sign and release music from fellow L.A. oddballs, such as the all-female GTOs (featuring groupie extraordinaire Pamela Des Barres), Alice Cooper (Straight released his first two albums, before "I'm Eighteen" made Alice huge), schizophrenic street performer Wild Man Fischer, and most notably Captain Beefheart and his Magic Band. In comprehensive detail over more than two-and-a-half hours, *From Straight to Bizarre* charts the history of Zappa's labels and the acts he signed, with extensive interviews from many of the main players. Understandably, Beefheart, and especially his classic *Trout Mask Replica*, get much time, but the real story is in the electricity of the label as a whole, represented largely by the eccentricities of performers, many of whose music has been lost to time. It's a great story, and it's wonderful to have it exposed to this degree. (www.chromedreams.co.uk)

8/10

By Frank Valish



World On a Wire Blu-ray/DVD (Criterion)

Rainer Werner Fassbinder was only four years into his feature-length filmmaking career when he directed the 1973 two-part sci-fi miniseries *World On a Wire* for German television, but the young director already had 16 full-length films under his belt. (He'd go on to direct 24 more before his death by accidental overdose just nine years later.) This can't-stop, won't-stop work ethic resulted in a body of work that would be impressive for any filmmaker, let alone one whose career only lasted a decade and a half. While none of his films were perfect, very few could be considered forgettable. Fassbinder was a man with more ideas than anyone could have explored in a single lifetime.

World On a Wire is a three-and-a-half hour piece of retro-futurist weirdness dealing with conspiracies surrounding a *Matrix*-like virtual world-within-a-world. Practically unseeable for many years, it's highly laudable that Criterion even saw fit to release this for home viewing, let alone so lovingly restored and packed with educational features. For the Fassbinder neophyte, there are probably 15 of his films that should be recommended before this one. For the fan, it's a cleverly shot, stylistically off-kilter, problematic and visionary piece of cinema; in a sense, classic Fassbinder. (www.criterion.com/films/27742-world-on-a-wire)

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By Austin Trunick

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