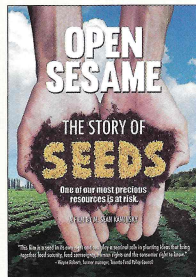


## Open Sesame: The Story of Seeds ★★★1/2

(2015) 82 min. DVD: \$24.98. True Mind/TDC (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-939517-33-3.

This disturbing documentary from filmmaker M. Sean Kaminisky examines the crisis surrounding the corporate patenting of seeds—our most crucial source of food, fuel, and fabric. Despite millennia of dependence on seeds without any proprietary claims on the thousands of extant varieties of plants, vegetables, grains, and fruits (most now vanished), the last century has seen a rise in legal claims by corporate agriculture that a growing number of seeds are covered by patents. *Open Sesame* details how businesses such as Monsanto tweak the genetic structure of seeds and then insist that their entire DNA—no matter how long those seeds have existed or that they were originally developed by gardeners or small farmers—is company property. The film visits many farmers adversely affected by patent law, whose lawsuits are almost predictably dismissed by courts. On the plus side, representatives of organizations such as SaveSeed.org, Seed Savers Exchange, and Hudson Valley Seed Library talk about efforts to both preserve heirloom seeds that are free of genetic modification and distribute them. But there is still much reason to feel discouraged by the deep pockets of agribusiness and the voracious appetite of corporations in their bid to control our food. Extras include bonus interviews and deleted scenes. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (T. Keogh)



as four times larger now than in the 1950s), how eating at restaurants changes our habits, and the American obsession with doing things big. Along the way, the program offers insights into the ways that size, age, and gender can affect one's dietary needs, and provides several helpful tips to avoid negative effects such as obesity. Viewers are advised to opt for drinking water (even enhanced with fruits or veggies, or green tea) instead of sugary stuff; avoid supersizing while also considering splitting meals when eating out; use MyPlate.gov guidelines and hand/plate size to gauge good portions for eating at home; and adopt other ideas to curb unhealthy eating. Providing solid guidance in a clear and compelling presentation that features zippy music and pertinent visuals, this is highly recommended. Aud: E, I, J, H, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

## The Great Chicken Wing Hunt ★★★1/2

(2013) 72 min. DVD: \$14.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).

There may be more noble causes in the world than identifying the best chicken wing in upstate New York, but there's no denying the fervor with which a busload of "judges" set about that quest in the documentary *The Great Chicken Wing Hunt*. Led by an eccentric former Reuters journalist named Matt Reynolds (who also directed the film), the volunteer tasters are determined to find the ultimate wing in the U.S. region where it was born: Buffalo, and surrounding environs. Reynolds's mission begins, curiously, in Slovakia, where he introduces friends and a future fiancée to his own wings recipe, as well as his passion for the dish. Reynolds looks at the origins of Buffalo wings, including the Sicilian restaurateurs who, in 1964, found a way to make use of chicken parts that were ordinarily tossed away as useless. Going from

eatery to tavern to specialty wings joints, Reynolds and his team taste hundreds of recipes, rating and hotly debating everything they try. While this feels like a fun novelty for a while, it soon grows a little tedious: for most of us, there's only so much interest we can muster about chicken wings. A strong optional purchase. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

## BUSINESS & ECONOMICS

## Master of the Universe ★★★

(2013) 88 min. In German w/English subtitles. DVD: \$29.99. KimStim (avail. from most distributors).

Taking a low-key, quietly moody approach, German filmmaker Marc Bauder employs a vast, empty Frankfurt bank building (made obsolete, we ultimately learn, in a colossal merger) for a one-man interview/soliloquy with former investment banker Rainer Voss (after Voss clears things with his lawyers). The rumpled, middle-aged businessman (laid off, we later discover) recalls the staid, regimented world of European high finance before the dizzying Reagan/Thatcher era of deregulation and globalization. The advent of computer spreadsheets and digital trading would usher in a new generation of young traders such as Voss (more cautious seasoned older guys simply weren't able to handle the new technology), and enormous wealth transfers in tiny spans of time quickly became commonplace. But so did high-risk ventures, bad debts, and junk-finance peddling that brought down entire nations. Archival clips cover the Goldman/Sachs, Lehman Brothers, and Jérôme Kerviel scandals, as traders faced inhuman pressures to create "growth" (real or not). The economic lessons and warnings that Voss attempts to impart here are not as simple

as those found in polemical agit-prop pieces from the left, but the documentary does convey a strong sense of looming financial *gotterdammerung*, as incomprehensibly huge corporate entities fail to take up reform. Following a predicted upcoming collapse of France, says Bauder, it will be "game over." A disturbing overview of the continuing recipe for global economic doom, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

## COMPUTERS & TECHNOLOGY

## Rise of the Hackers ★★★1/2

(2013) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62789-126-4.

This episode from PBS's award-winning NOVA series explores the rise of computer hacking while also profiling the scientists and mathematicians on the frontlines in the effort to keep data safe. The opening establishes a sober tone as it recounts the experience of a writer for *Wired* magazine who lost most of his digital life when a group of teenage hackers broke into his Amazon account and then followed up with a chain of other invasions, moving from Amazon to Apple to Google to Twitter. Of course, the specific holes exploited in this case have been closed—a benefit of hacking is that the safety of computer systems tends to increase—but the ongoing battle is a game of digital whack-a-mole. As personally devastating as such intrusions can be, it's even worse when nations get into the game (this documentary was made before the Sony debacle and the high-profile brouhaha surrounding North Korea's protest over the movie *The Interview*), where there is a potential for compromising computer-controlled machines that run such things as a country's nuclear program. In addition to sounding the alarms, director Kate Dart covers the "good guys"—those who are working in the field called "ultra-paranoid computing" to develop unbreakable codes and other defenses against cybercriminals. Viewers learn about key elements of online security (such as how prime numbers are used for the encryption techniques we take for granted every time we shop online) and developments that promise big changes, not just through advanced data technology, but also using physics and photons. Eye-opening and scary, but also ultimately somewhat reassuring, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Block)

## The Singularity ★★★

(2012) 75 min. DVD or Blu-ray: \$295. Doug Wolens Films. PPR.

Subtitled "Will We Survive Our Technology," filmmaker Doug Wolens's *The Singularity* is a four-part talking-heads presentation that is punctuated briefly with CGI and stock-footage inserts. The "singularity," proposed