



30 Days of Night DVD (Sony)

The sheer amount of crappy horror movies these days is off the scale, but sometimes a good one slips through and goes largely unnoticed. *30 Days of Night*, based on the

graphic novel by Steve Niles and Ben Templesmith, is a stylish and scary tale of vampires that attack a small Alaskan town where the sun doesn't rise for 30 days during the winter. David Slade (*Hard Candy*) and company have unleashed an impressive production that resembles a Western and is epically bleak in tone. Of particular note is the stellar cinematography by Jo Willems; which helps add to the dread in showing a snowy town that, despite its openness, manages to remain a claustrophobic labyrinth of human flesh and gallons of blood (which always looks great against snow). The DVD should impress with eight behind-the-scenes featurettes and an audio commentary featuring stars Josh Hartnett and Melissa George, and producer Rob Tapert. (www.sonypictures.com) **7/10**

By Nick Hyman



A Hundred Dollars and a T-Shirt DVD (Microcosm Publishing/MVD)

This homespun little documentary about the zine community in the Pacific Northwest is much like a zine itself with its amateur lo-fi feel, and that's part of its charm. In it you'll see mostly denizens of Portland, Oregon discussing what goes into putting out self-published material. It involves scamming copies from work or Kinko's, putting your heart into it, and expecting to make no profit whatsoever.

Unfortunately, there's really no great history of zines in the region, and it sometimes comes off as a doc that would ultimately please those who will see their friends on camera. Seeing creators like Dave Roche and his zine about being a substitute teacher (*On Subbing*) makes you wish that more time was spent on certain characters. In addition to the main feature, the DVD has several other interviews and a couple of commentaries. There hasn't been a definitive document about the history of zines, and this will hold you over until someone has the ambition to cover such a great underground genre. (www.microcosmpublishing.com) **6/10**

By Nick Hyman



American Gangster: 3-Disc Collector's Edition DVD (Universal)

Having already put out the ultimate DVD set last year with the *Blade Runner Five-Disc Ultimate Collector's Edition*, Ridley Scott is moving on to his most recent theatrical release and has put out a 3-disc version of *American Gangster*. The story of real-life drug lord Frank Lucas (Denzel Washington) and the cop (Russell Crowe) who pursues him is a bit like Michael Mann's *Heat*, but it doesn't come close to that film's greatness. Part of the problem is that there's so much story and so many characters that even at the original running time of 2 hours and 40 minutes, it feels like the film is missing giant gaps. The new unrated extended version reaches a full three hours and definitely benefits from the extra breathing room.

As with most of Scott's films, the performances are great and the production is handsome, but with this subject matter, it's really nothing you haven't already seen before in several drug films from *New Jack City* to *Scarface*. The *Collector's Edition* will both keep fans at bay and still entertain those who didn't really fully dig the movie. Ridley and writer Steven Zaillian contribute a commentary to the theatrical ver-

sion of the movie and deleted scenes, a feature-length making-of, music videos from Jay-Z, *Dateline* specials, and more make up the countless hours of material produced for this set. Oh, and there's a pretty book inside too. It's almost enough to make you think that this film is some kind of masterpiece. (www.universalstudioshomeentertainment.com) **7/10**

By Nick Hyman



Beowulf: Director's Cut DVD (Paramount)

"I AM! BEOWULF!" It would be a great drinking game to have a sip every time Beowulf says that in the movie. Robert

Zemeckis' bravura motion-capture animated movie really must be seen in IMAX 3-D for full effect, but it can be appreciated at home. Unfortunately, this DVD doesn't really pass muster. It was originally supposed to be a 2-disc set, but that was ultimately cancelled. The HD-DVD version (which will be moot since Blu-ray just won the new format battle) has several featurettes that don't show up here. If they're anywhere as good as the ones on here, it's definitely a loss.

Zemeckis and co-writers Neil Gaiman and Roger Avary are not featured on a commentary and we see no sign of co-star Angelina Jolie being filmed, which gives credence to the rumors that she only contributed her voice to the project. What you do get is amazing footage of the making of this technical wonder (all shot on one soundstage) with incredible acting from the likes of Crispin Glover as the sympathetic monster Grendel and Ray Winstone as the titular character. The unrated version doesn't add any new footage, but does add even more blood and gore to the already unbelievable violent PG-13 film. (www.paramount.com/homeentertainment) **6/10**

By Nick Hyman



Burn to Shine Seattle, WA 01.27.07 DVD (Trixie)

Shot in January of 2007, Seattle joins D.C., Chicago, and Portland to become the next city documented by Brendan Catty and Christoph Green in their excellent *Burn to Shine* series. The stated mission of the beautifully shot and sonically brilliant DVDs is to gather local bands in a house that will be destroyed at the end of the day (although this one is surreally trucked down the street and "recycled"), record them live, and then present them in order as the sunlight gradually dims through the windows. *Seattle* was curated by Death Cab for Cutie's Benjamin Gibbard, who presents a solo performance of his own alongside Tiny Vipers, Blue Scholars, Kinski, Dave Bazan, Minus the Bear, Jesse Sykes, Triumph of Lethargy Skinned Alive to Death, and a ukulele-wielding Eddie Vedder. Highlights are the captivating vocal performances by The Cave Singers, The Long Winters' unleashed guitars, and the genius combination of French horn and a "Paradise City" breakdown on the Harvey Danger contribution. (www.trixiedvd.com) **7/10**

By Nate Daly



The Darjeeling Limited DVD (Fox)

Wes Anderson called on some of his real-life friends to help him write his latest opus about three brothers on a train in India dealing with their repressed emotions. Roman Coppola (also second unit director) and film co-star Jason Schwartzman co-wrote the film that also starred frequent Anderson collaborator Owen Wilson and group newcomer Adrien Brody. The freewheeling spiritual

journey is funny, visually gorgeous, and surprisingly heartfelt at times. Several Kinks songs represent Anderson's British New Wave fetish, and they're accompanied by ebullient music from Indian cinema stalwarts such as Satyajit Ray and Merchant-Ivory productions. Unlike the DVD releases of Anderson's last three films, this one is not from Criterion, and thus suffers greatly from that. In addition to the film's short film prequel *Hotel Chevalier*, all that's included is a featurette on the making of the film, with no deleted scenes or commentary. As much as I hate double-dipping, I do hope that Criterion rescues this worthy and underrated film. (www.fox.com)

The Darjeeling Limited: 8/10
DVD Extras: **3/10**

By Nick Hyman



Darkon DVD (Porchlight Entertainment)

Darkon is a land occupied by warring tribes. Laconia wants to bring Keldar, leader of the Mordomian Empire, to trial. War ensues. The war is fought with foam swords by live action role players (LARP). The land of Darkon occupies parks and woods in Baltimore, but it truly lives in the imaginations of the enormous group of warriors and knights who take time from their children and 9-to-5 jobs to draw maps, make coins, tape their swords and armor, and practice their fighting techniques.

The battles are shot by directors Andrew Neel and Luke Meyer like an epic on the level of *Braveheart*, with crane shots and hectic handheld. The rest of the film, outside of Darkon, flows like a traditional documentary.

Neel and Meyer manage to make a film that helps the viewer understand the allure of Darkon while exploring its many interesting sociological aspects—there's very much a caste system, and those who aren't cool or popular in real life may also not be cool or popular in Darkon. But the directors themselves never make fun of their subjects, instead treating the film like a project that would make Darkon proud. (www.darkonthemovie.com) **8/10**

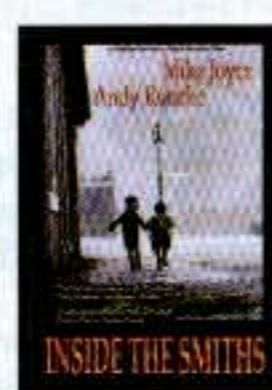
By Jim Scott



Robyn Hitchcock: Sex, Food, Death...and Insects DVD (A&E Home Video)

Sex, Food, Death...and Insects chronicles the creation of Robyn Hitchcock's 2006 album *Olé Tarantula*, and the U.S. tour that followed the album's release. Video of band rehearsals at Hitchcock's London home and live performances in Hoboken, N.J. and Seattle, alongside commentary from Hitchcock and all of the major players (with bit parts by John Paul Jones, Nick Lowe, Gillian Welch, David Rawlings, and Morris Windsor), *Sex, Food, Death...and Insects* works to illuminate some of Hitchcock's artistic processes and many of his eccentricities. Far from an extensive documentary, the film succeeds in the moments when it offers a glimpse at the man behind the charming wit and clever wordplay. (www.robynhitchcock.com) **6/10**

By Frank Valish



Inside The Smiths DVD (MVD)

When most people think of The Smiths, they think of Morrissey and Johnny Marr. Most seem to forget the rhythm section of Andy Rourke on bass and Mike Joyce on drums. Since having sued Morrissey and Marr over their share of the royalties earned from mostly album sales, they've been discarded as has-beens. *Inside The Smiths* is their attempt to reclaim some of their past glory. It documents their DJ tour across Europe, the U.K., and the United States a few years ago.

Interviews with Peter Hook (Joy Division, New Order), Mark E. Smith (The Fall), and Matt Osman (Suede) break up the tedium of what amounts to a sad and sort of pathetic tale of

two guys who have nothing to talk about other than the band they used to be in. What makes the movie even weirder is the constant presence of co-director Mark Standley, who tries to make himself a part of the story. His voiceover is even ickier. The doc is kind of crap but if you're a Smiths fan, the Mike Joyce content is worth watching, as he seems to be a halfway decent guy. Andy Rourke's tales are all cautionary, with him telling the familiar story of heroin addiction and loss of finances. Better to just listen to the past albums and watch the videos and be done with it. (www.MVDvisual.com) **4/10**

By Nick Hyman



Into the Wild: 2-Disc Collector's Edition DVD (Paramount)

Sean Penn's films have always left me cold, but his latest and best film as a director stands very high in the great films released in 2007. This is a huge achievement as the songs of Eddie Vedder (whose voice I can't stand) populate *Into the Wild* and the film still succeeds in spite of it. The story of Chris McCandless and his abandonment of his suburban life leading to his final journey into the Alaskan wilderness has been a passion project for Penn ever since he read the bestselling 1996 nonfiction book by Jon Krakauer.

Emile Hirsch plays McCandless in a stunning performance. It's a crime that he wasn't nominated for an Oscar when he carries the viewers' interest alone on screen for the majority of this film. I can't wait to see Hirsch as *Speed Racer*. Unfortunately, this DVD is a MAJOR disappointment. Bafflingly, it's packaged as a 2-disc set, even though the second disc only includes two brief featurettes and a trailer. No commentary from Penn, and the wonderful *Iconoclasts* episode with Penn and Krakauer is nowhere to be found. The film deserved better during awards season, and sadly this DVD only continues the half-assed treatment. (www.paramount.com/homeentertainment) **8/10**

Into the Wild: 8/10
DVD Extras: **3/10**

By Nick Hyman



Justice League: The New Frontier: 2-Disc Special Edition DVD (Warner Bros.)

Darwyn Cooke's brilliant reimagining of Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, The Flash, Green Lantern, and Martian Manhunter set during the Cold War in the 1950s has now been made into a straight-to-DVD movie. Warner Premiere has now become an outlet to produce more comic-fan specific entertainment that wouldn't necessarily appeal to a mass theatrical audience. Their first release was the okay *Superman: Doomsday*, but with this new adaptation of Cooke's comic book miniseries *DC: The New Frontier*, they've significantly raised the bar.

The source material is much stronger than the "death of Superman" story and everything from design to voice talent is top-notch. Cooke's art deco Golden Age design has been used as a template for the way the characters are drawn in the movie. The cast is a who's who of cool cult figures. For instance, you've got Kyle MacLachlan (*Twin Peaks*) as Superman, Lucy Lawless (*Xena, Battlestar Galactica*) as Wonder Woman, David Boreanaz (*Buffy, Angel*) as Green Lantern, and Neil Patrick Harris (*Doogie Howser*) as The Flash. While some of the comic material has been cut out to accommodate the 75-minute running time, the film retains the more sophisticated and adult feel of the source material.

This 2-disc edition will most likely impress fans and newcomers alike with its gorgeous packaging and the bonus material found within. In addition to the cool movie, you get a comprehensive documentary on the history of the Justice League, two audio