



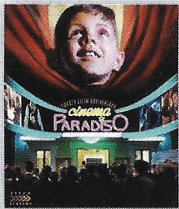
## FASTSCANS Top Foreign & Indie Picks

By Jeff T. Dick, Davenport, IA

**Cinema Paradiso.** 2 discs. color. 174+ min. In Italian w/English subtitles. Arrow Video, dist. by MVDvisual. 1988. Blu-ray UPC 760137976981. \$39.95. Rated: R.

Screenwriter/director Giuseppe

Tornatore's semiautobiographical homage to the cinema—a beloved classic—finally debuts on Blu-ray in restored “director’s cut” form. Fifty minutes longer, this extended version shows the middle-aged Salvatore (Jacques Perrin) rekindling an adolescent romance thwarted by his film-projectionist mentor Alfredo (Philippe Noiret), whose funeral has brought the native-son-made-good back to his cherished hometown. Enhanced by a telling filmmaker interview, plus the 124-minute original cut, the open question is which version is preferable.



**Fatima.** color. 78+ min. In French & Arabic w/English subtitles. Kino Lorber. 2015. DVD UPC 738329211837. \$29.99.

An Algerian-born divorced mother (Soria Zeroual) living in France works hard as a cleaning lady to provide a better life for her teen daughters—the eldest relatively respectful and going into medical school, the youngest

insolent and floundering in class. Director Philippe Faucon delves into the frustrations of a disenfranchised immigrant by favoring quiet moments of revelation instead of the usual histrionics. Winner of the César (France’s equivalent of the Oscar) for best picture, this topical “slice of life” drama errs on the side of underplaying but is unexpectedly poignant.

**The General/Three Ages.** 2 discs. 143+ min. 1926/1923. DVD UPC 738329211615. \$24.95; Blu-ray UPC 738329211622. \$29.95.  
**Steamboat Bill, Jr./College.** 2 discs. 134+ min. 1928/1927. DVD UPC 738329212094. \$24.95; Blu-ray UPC 738329212100. \$29.95.  
ea. vol: 2 discs. b/w. Lobster Films, dist. by Kino Lorber.

A pair of Buster Keaton double features debut in newly remastered editions. The top-billed four-star *General* finds the silent-era comic genius codirecting himself as a train engineer who “loves his engine and his girl.” During a series of hilarious misadventures, he loses, then regains, both. *Steamboat* shows the Great Stone Face close to the top of his game in this tale of an old ferryboat pushed aside by a newer one, presaging Keaton’s career as a silent filmmaker in the emerging era of talkies. The lesser but worthy cofeatures are icing on the cake of these delectable releases.

**Ixcanul (“Volcano”).** color. 91+ min. In Spanish & Kaqchikel w/English

subtitles. Kino Lorber. 2015. DVD UPC 738329211806. \$29.95; Blu-ray UPC 738329211813. \$34.95.

A 17-year-old Guatemalan coffee plantation worker (María Mercedes Coroy) with hopes of a better life gets pushed into an engagement to an estate manager, but her awkward romantic liaison with another field laborer who shares her dreams leads to pregnancy. When superstition in the mystical power of a nearby volcano fails to provide a solution to her predicament, the young woman resorts to more desperate measures. First-time filmmaker Jayro Bustamante’s slow-burning drama unfolds at a measured pace, incrementally gathering force toward an unforeseen conclusion.

**The Tree of Wooden Clogs.** 2 discs. 186+ min. In Bergamasque w/English subtitles. Criterion Collection. 1978. DVD ISBN 9781681432199. \$29.95; 1-disc Blu-ray ISBN 9781681432182. \$39.95.

Over the course of a year, several tenant farming families in fin de siècle Italy work, eat, play, procreate—but mostly work—in Ermanno Olmi’s paean to the peasant life, in which the lion’s share of the harvest goes to the landowners. Fittingly told in an unflashy style without professional actors, the largely plotless story details rituals from pig slaughter to courtship in leisurely fashion that paradoxically proves involving while taxing patience. Restored to immaculate condition, this lauded film generally earns its considerable status. [See Trailers, *LJ* 9/1/16]

film also discusses the economics of student athletics. Men and women who participate in college sports provide their institutions with millions of dollars annually. However, 80 percent of athletes receiving scholarships live below the federal poverty level. In addition, academics often take a backseat, with students steered into watered-down curricula and programs intended to maintain their eligibility to compete. More than half of student athletes fail to graduate. The film includes interviews with former players, family members, physicians, and others connected to college athletics. No one from the NCAA or associated with a major university appears in the film. **VERDICT** Recommended to viewers interested in college sports.—Stephen L. Hupp, West Virginia Univ. Parkersburg Lib.

**Free To Run.** 104+ min. Pierre Morath, dist. by IFC Films, www.ifcfilms.com. 2016. DVD UPC 030306946993. \$24.98. SDH subtitles. **SPORTS** Strange as it may seem, as recently as the

1960s, running was not something the average person did for exercise or pleasure, at least not in public. *Free To Run* follows the progression of the distance running movement from those early days to the present, when every major city worldwide hosts a marathon and anyone can participate. The story features innovators such as Fred Lebow, tireless promoter and architect of the New York City Marathon as we know it today; Kathrine Switzer, who broke through the gender barrier and paved the way for women’s participation in distance running; and others such as Noël Tamini and Steve Prefontaine, who fought for the rights of runners. Director Morath’s (*Chronicle of a Forgotten Death*) use of sound bites along with film clips makes this a convincing testament to the joy that running brings to many peoples’ lives. **VERDICT** Will appeal to fans of sports history and those who love running (or want to).—Sara Holder, Univ. of Illinois Libs., Champaign

**The Monkey...and Her Driver: America’s Only All Women Sidecar Road Racing Team.** 23+ min. Ned Thanhouser, dist. by Dreamscape Video, www.dreamscapeab.com. 2016. DVD UPC 85736006236. \$19.99; public performance \$199.99. **SPORTS**

It is almost impossible to resist watching this video if only to discover the meaning behind its title. As it turns out, sidecar racing is akin to motorcycle racing, but this motorcycle has a platform attached to its side upon which perches the “monkey,” who leans perilously out from the side and back of the cycle to aid the driver in achieving optimal angling, balance, and corrections to win. This short film tells the story of Betty “Steady Betty” Herlocker (the driver) and Kendra “Red Fury” McDonald (the monkey)—the only all-female team in this relatively unknown high-speed sport. It follows them through the ups and downs of their 2015 racing year as they move from being novices to fully integrated members of the