

who has been privately agonizing about not having solved the crime and is dying of pancreatic cancer. Launching this outrageously merciless one-woman crusade, McDormand delivers a formidable, ferociously uncompromising performance that firmly places her on-track for another Oscar. She's adroitly supported by Oscar nominees Harrelson and Sam Rockwell, the latter as Willoughby's moronic, rage-filled deputy. The excellent supporting cast includes Caleb Landry Jones as a local ad-sales agent, Peter Dinklage as a kindly car salesman who courts Mildred, Lucas Hedges as her long-suffering teenage son, and John Hawkes as her abusive ex-husband. Irish playwright-turned-filmmaker McDonagh specializes in juggling comedy and tragedy, here deftly touching on racism and misogyny. Edgy, unpredictable, and at times morbidly funny, this is highly recommended. (S. Granger)

### The Tiger Hunter ★★★

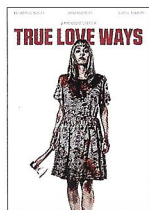
Shout! Factory, 94 min., not rated, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$29.99



Danny Pudi stars as Sami Malik, an engineer who travels from his village in India—where he runs the local electronic repair shop—to Los Angeles in order to take a high-paying position in an American firm. Sami is determined to live up to his father's reputation—a man revered in his village as a brave tiger hunter—but when he arrives, the job is no longer available. Sami is given a temp drafting job in the basement and a spot in an apartment that is overcrowded with overqualified professionals from India working as taxi drivers, waiters, and dog walkers. When his girlfriend back home informs him that her military officer father is taking her to America to interview potential husbands, his friends (Rizwan Manji, Jon Heder) team up to make Sami appear to be a big American success, complete with mansion and servants. Director/co-writer Lena Khan's *The Tiger Hunter* is a fun immigrant story with moments of comic fantasy and screwball coincidence that undercuts stereotypes (without quite transcending them) while delivering simple messages: be true to yourself, be generous with others, be honest and open. An entertaining underdog story that celebrates friendship and community, this is recommended. (S. Axmaker)

### True Love Ways ★★★1/2

MVD Visual, 102 min., in German w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$19.99

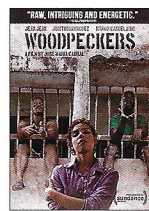


A haunting tale of obsessive love and gruesome depravity, Swiss director Mathieu Seiler's *True Love Ways*—taking its title from a Buddy Holly song—centers on beautiful young Séverine (Anna Hausburg), who wants a break from her

lover Tom (Kai Michael Müller). Going to a bar to nurse his sorrows, Tom is approached by a strangely philosophical man called Chef (David C. Bunners), who offers a solution: Chef will stage a phony abduction of Séverine and Tom will rescue her, ensuring her undying love. Chef actually has a very different plan: he and his minions will take the captured girl to a remote mansion where she will become the victim in their latest snuff movie. But she escapes their clutches, and the rest of the film follows their efforts to chase her down, as she in turn evolves into an axe-wielding avenger. There are plot holes: for example, there seems to be no reason for Chef to involve Tom in the abduction scheme, other than to have him show up at the mansion and try to act the hero, only to get his just desserts. Still, even though the film eventually slips into gross mayhem, the first half is full of luminous, beautifully composed images that are reminiscent of Hitchcock and early Polanski, marking Seiler as a director of uncommon visual sophistication. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

### Woodpeckers ★★★

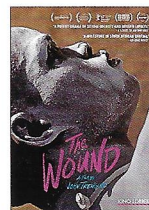
Strand, 108 min., in Spanish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99



Filmed in two prisons in the Dominican Republic and cast with a number of real inmates, *Woodpeckers* is a taut drama about a thief named Julian (Jean Jean), incarcerated in a tough cellblock, who is enlisted by a menacing drug dealer to act as the latter's surrogate communicator with a female prisoner named Yanelly (Judith Rodriguez). The dialogue between Julian and Yanelly (who is in a separate facility) takes place through "woodpecking," a type of sign language that confined men and women use to flirt from a distance. But trouble brews when Yanelly and Julian fall for one another, and the dealer's vendetta against Julian complicates a number of other already-challenged lives. Director José María Cabral captures the claustrophobic, every-man-for-himself society of prison life, which relies on deal-making and betrayal in order to function. Serving up a stark and lean narrative—benefiting from deep and passionate performances by Jean and Rodriguez—that leads to an explosive climax, this is recommended. (T. Keogh)

### The Wound ★★★

Kino Lorber, 88 min., in Xhosa w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99

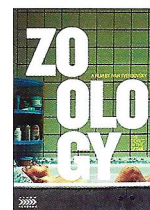


Set in rural South Africa, *The Wound* is a fictional drama about the real-life Ukwaluka ritual still practiced by the Xhosa tribe. Kwanda (Niza Jay Ncoyini), a smart, self-possessed boy raised by his mother in Johannesburg, is brought

by his father to the mountains to toughen him up for the ceremony (which includes ritual circumcision). The story, however, focuses on Xolani (Nakhane Touré), a gay "caregiver" who hides his nature (the Xhosa culture disdains homosexuality). This lonely factory worker participates in the ceremony every year in order to meet up with boyhood friend Vija (Bongile Mantsai), a married man who puts on a front of bullying machismo in public but secretly meets up with Xolani for sex—a secret that Kwanda quickly figures out. Filmmaker John Trengove directs with a straightforward, unadorned style, revealing the brutality and bullying behind the old traditions and attitudes while also exploring how homophobia shames and pressures gay men into hiding their true natures, which has destructive consequences. A provocative and often emotionally painful drama that has won numerous film festivals awards, this is recommended. (S. Axmaker)

### Zoology ★★★

Arrow, 91 min., in Russian w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99



Katya (Masha Tokareva), a frumpy, lonely middle-aged woman working in the purchasing department of a struggling zoo in a provincial Russian city, is bullied and ridiculed by her co-workers and dominated by her mother, who is a hysterical religious fanatic. Katya inexplicably grows a tail, which brings her to a handsome young X-ray technician (Dmitriy Groshev), whose romantic interest inspires a sexy makeover. Director Ivan I. Tverdovsky has plenty of sympathy for Katya, who seems to have accepted her misery (her only real joy is in communing with the animals of the zoo) until this new possibility of happiness arrives and even gives her the self-confidence to let her tail be seen publicly. The story serves as a metaphor for individuality in a conformist culture, where an overweight, dowdy woman dares to present herself publicly as a sexual being, and Tverdovsky is scathing in his portrait of small-minded, provincial attitudes as Katya's behavior brings out petty gossip and hostile judgments in her community. The film also paints a pretty dispiriting portrait of life in contemporary Russia, where the culture still seems to have a foot squarely in 19th-century superstition and intolerance. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

### Classic Films

### Death Laid an Egg ★★★

Cult Epics, 90 min., in Italian w/English subtitles, not rated, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.95

Italian *gialli* are famous for farfetched plots, but few have been quite as outlandish as the script that director Giulio Questi and