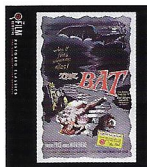


with a slew of extras, including new and archival interviews, audio recordings of Ray, documentary excerpts, behind-the-scenes featurettes, and footage of Ray receiving an honorary Oscar in 1992. Highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** (S. Axmaker)

The Bat ★★1/2

Film Detective, 80 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$14.99

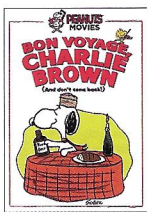
This 1959 murder mystery resurrects the oft-filmed titular 1920 stage play by Mary Roberts Rinehard and Avery Hopwood, serving up low-budget horror in the vein of William Castle's movies, right down to the casting of Vincent Price as a medical doctor and prime suspect. Price receives top billing, but Agnes Moorehead is the real star as Cornelia Van Gorder, a murder mystery novelist who goes to a summer home that turns out to be "haunted" by a mysterious killer known only as the Bat. When the local bank is robbed of \$1 million in bonds and the bank president (who also owns Cornelia's rental) goes missing, the killings begin again, as an increasingly larger number of suspects converge on the home in hopes of finding the stolen money. Director Crane Wilbur lets his stars ham it up just enough to give the film personality and he maintains a snappy pace as the deaths pile up. While no horror classic, *The Bat* is fun and Moorehead and Price are quite entertaining. Long available on poor quality discs, this public domain title debuts on Blu-ray in a well-mastered transfer from a high-quality 35mm print in its proper widescreen aspect ratio. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)



Bon Voyage, Charlie Brown (And Don't Come Back!) ★★★

Paramount, 75 min., G, DVD: \$14.98

This 1980 fourth *Peanuts* animated feature released in theaters (from the same Bill Melendez-Phil Roman team who created the classic TV specials) is a lightweight cartoon travelogue-romp, in which iconic comic-strip character Charlie Brown is, without his knowledge, volunteered—along with Linus, Peppermint Patty, and Marcie—to embark on an exchange-student sojourn in Britain and France. Snoopy and Woodstock tag along as well (fans expecting a rematch with the Red Baron may be disappointed that Snoopy dons his uniform only to hoist a few root beers). Amidst the gentle multicultural comedy, the gang find themselves mysteriously invited to (and then locked out of) a forbidding chateau owned by a grouchy French recluse (this is a rare *Peanuts* outing in which adult characters are clearly seen and heard). Extras include a bonus "making-of" featurette that touches on *Peanuts* comics creator Charles "Sparky"

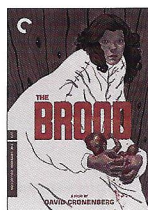


Schulz's life-changing wartime service in the 20th Armored Division in France after D-Day. Recommended. (C. Cassidy)

The Brood ★★★

Criterion, 92 min., R, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.95; Blu-ray: \$39.95

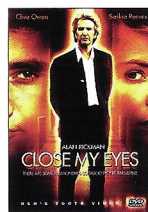
David Cronenberg once described his 1979 film *The Brood* as "my version of *Kramer vs. Kramer*, only more realistic." Most early critics missed the metaphors lying behind the visceral, primal horrors on display, but with the help of hindsight, these themes are far more apparent. Frank Carveth (Art Hindle) is the estranged husband of troubled Nora (Samantha Eggar), who is undergoing radical experimental psychotherapy devised by Dr. Hal Raglan (Oliver Reed) to help his patients turn emotional trauma into physical manifestations. When Frank's daughter returns home from a weekend visit to the clinic sporting bruises, Frank tries to stop her from going again, which unleashes a reign of terror in the form of mutant childlike creatures who kill those who have wronged Nora. This homicidal "brood" is the result of Nora's "psychoplasmic therapy," a manifestation of the emotional and psychic scars she suffered as an abused child, as well as anger caused by the impending divorce. Cronenberg's trademark visceral body horror—of flesh invaded, transforming, rebelling—serves up images that grab the viewer on a shocking biological level, while also delivering evocative metaphors for various aspects of human psychology. *The Brood* was Cronenberg's most sophisticated and insightful film until his remake of *The Fly*, which also marked the director's commercial breakthrough. Presented here in a beautifully remastered edition, extras include a behind-the-scenes documentary, new interviews, an archival clip from *The Merv Griffin Show*, and a new restoration of Cronenberg's quasi-experimental 1970 second feature *Crimes of the Future*. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



Close My Eyes ★★★

Hen's Tooth, 109 min., R, DVD: \$24.95

A minor success du scandal upon its release in 1991, this superbly-acted adult drama stars Clive Owen and Saskia Reeves as Natalie and Richard, an upscale London brother and sister who, starting as young adults, cultivate a madly passionate, consensual incestuous relationship. When Natalie marries a charming businessman (Alan Rickman), however, Richard's jealousy boils over. Writer-director Stephen Poliakoff takes an unflinching approach to a taboo lifestyle choice, but may throw some viewers off with a subplot about greedy developers failing to preserve



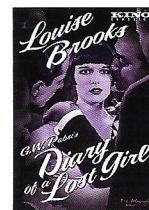
grand old London architecture—a seemingly arbitrary narrative thread here, although the city's changing environment is a running theme in Poliakoff's work for cinema and TV. *Close My Eyes* won Best Film at the Evening Standard British Film Awards, while Rickman was honored for Best Actor. Making its U.S. DVD debut, this is recommended. (C. Cassidy)

Diary of a Lost Girl

★★★

Kino Lorber, 112 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95

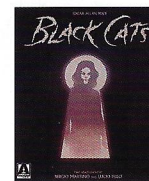
Louise Brooks, a bright, vivacious supporting player in Hollywood, became an icon of the silent era thanks to her work with the great German filmmaker G.W. Pabst. In 1929's *Diary of a Lost Girl*, their second and final collaboration, Brooks plays Thymian, a naïve, wide-eyed innocent impregnated by her father's assistant (Fritz Rasp) and sent to a repressive reform school by the family that now spurns her. No better than a prison, the school is so spirit-crushing that she escapes and drifts into prostitution. Based on a novel by Margarete Böhme, the film is a beautiful and masterfully made social drama, directed with a mix of German Expressionism and poetic realism by Pabst and elevated by the luminescent performance of Brooks, who was a unique presence in silent cinema. Brooks even makes prostitution almost seem like a noble profession due to her good cheer at a high class bordello, although the film clearly presents the dark side of such a life. Censored upon its original release, this restored and remastered version features 15 minutes of footage that was unseen until a few years ago. Extras include audio commentary by Thomas Gladysz, director of the Louise Brooks Society, and the 1930 talkie short "Windy Riley Goes to Hollywood," starring Brooks. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



Edgar Allan Poe's Black Cats ★★★1/2

Arrow, 4 discs, 187 min., in Italian w/English subtitles, not rated, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$69.95

Two Italian adaptations of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Black Cat" use the short story as a foundation for bloody horror films but otherwise share little in common. *Your Vice Is a Locked Room and Only I Have the Key* (1972), one of the better examples of the distinctive Italian horror genre known as giallo, features sadistic murders by a mysterious killer who stalks beautiful women—serving up scenes of sex, sadism, and exploitative nudity. The story, set in the decadent mansion of a cruel writer who publicly humiliates his wife, stars sexy Italian beauty Edwige Fenech as the writer's gorgeous young niece, who

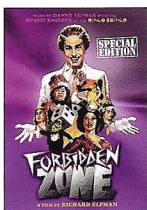


arrives for a visit and immediately stirs things up. There is a black cat, a family treasure, and a conspiracy of terror behind the murders, but the plot isn't as important as the style and spectacle provided by director Sergio Martino. *The Black Cat* (1981), directed by Lucio Fulci, throws in elements from other Poe tales. Patrick Magee stars as a psychic who can send his pet cat to kill his enemies, and Mimsy Farmer costars as a photographer and amateur detective who notices the scratches on each victim that the cops missed. It's a confusing mystery and a muddled film that features blood and nudity, but is tame compared to Fulci's infamous gore classics. Neither are essentials of the genre but both are entertaining and have been beautifully mastered for this double feature. Extras include audio commentary on *The Black Cat*, a collection of bonus interviews, behind-the-scenes featurettes, and an 80-page book. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

Forbidden Zone ★★★

MVD, 76 min., not rated, DVD: 2 discs, \$19.95; Blu-ray: \$29.95

One of the most bizarre underground films to win a devoted cult following, Richard Elfman's 1980 musical happily and recklessly combines crass low comedy with inspired Dadaist flourishes to create a tuneful sci-fi slapstick adventure. The story follows a dysfunctional family's journey through a mysterious door in their basement that leads to a warped parallel universe called the Sixth Dimension, where an oversexed little king (Hervé Villechaize) and his tempestuous queen (Susan Tyrrell) reign with sadistic glee over their imprisoned subjects. Topless women, mature adults pretending (badly) to be pre-teens, and a Cab Calloway-style Satan (the director's brother, Hollywood soundtrack maestro Danny Elfman, backed by the Mystic-Knights of the Oingo Boingo—Oingo Boingo being Elfman's former band) add to the mayhem. *Forbidden Zone* also features very politically incorrect humor (including broad black and Jewish stereotypes and a comic gang rape), intentionally ridiculous threadbare sets, and John Muto's outrageous animation. The film is far from perfect—the comedy is more silly than funny, and the zany shenanigans eventually grow tiresome—but for sheer audacity, *Forbidden Zone* is quite an experience. This new release features both the original black-and-white version and the 2008 colorized re-release, along with extras including an audio commentary, behind-the-scenes documentary, deleted scenes, and a booklet detailing the film's surprisingly tortured history (exclusive to the Blu-ray release is a bonus soundtrack CD). Recommended. (P. Hall)



Full Moon in Paris

★★★

Film Movement, 103 min., in French w/English subtitles, R, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95

The fourth of Éric Rohmer's six *Comedies and Provverbs*—a series of contemporary romantic dramas that begin with a familiar French proverb—*Full Moon in Paris* stars Pascale Ogier as Louise, a restless designer bored with her sleepy suburban life outside of Paris with lover Remy (Tchéky Karyo), a stable architect happy with a calm home and a long-term relationship. The independent-minded Louise decides to move back into her old Paris apartment during the week, losing herself in the bustle of dinner parties and nightclubs and single men, while spending her weekends with Remy. Like an inversion of Rohmer's *Six Moral Tales*, Louise here becomes briefly entangled with another man—a spontaneous musician who is the opposite of Remy—but in a neat twist on the formula Remy himself drifts into a romantic relationship at Louise's suggestion. This is the most ironic and, in many ways, judgmental of Rohmer's films. Willowy Ogier's kittenish sexuality and zest for life are wrapped in a self-absorbed determination that borders on indifference, but for the most part this is another wryly witty look at modern love from the master of the sophisticated romantic comedy. Also on hand are Fabrice Luchini as Louise's best friend and conniving confidante, and Laszlo Szabo as a café patron who pontificates on the magical effects of the full moon. Ogier, who died shortly after the film's release, designed many of the handsome sets. Extras include an archival interview with Ogier, and an essay by film critic David Thomson. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



Horror Classics, Volume One ★★★

Warner, 4 discs, 376 min., G/PG/R/not rated, Blu-ray: \$54.98

During the late 1950s, the British studio Hammer Films revived the classic monster movies in gothic style with lurid color. This boxed set presents the Blu-ray debuts of four Hammer films. *The Mummy* (1959) is the most notable, marking the fourth Hammer title to pair up its two marquee stars, Peter Cushing (as the archeologist who uncovers a lost crypt) and Christopher Lee (as a former high priest turned gauze-wrapped guardian of the tomb). This mummy is a haunted soul, rampaging juggernaut, and hugely powerful monster all in one, and the film features a notorious scene of Lee's transgressive priest having his tongue removed. *The Mummy* was helmed by Hammer's top filmmaker, Terence Fisher, who also directs this set's *Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed* (1969), the fifth entry in Hammer's



Frankenstein series and one of the best. Cushing delivers a thoroughly cold-blooded portrayal of the mad Baron, an amoral genius who blackmails a young couple into helping him with his bloody plans. And Lee stars as the malevolent Count in both *Dracula Has Risen from the Grave* (1969) and *Taste the Blood of Dracula* (1970), two lesser *Dracula* sequels. All four films—also available in separate volumes—have been newly remastered for Blu-ray and are a significant upgrade over previous DVD releases. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

The Hurricane ★★★1/2

Kino Lorber, 110 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95

John Ford directs this 1937 drama of Western civilization colliding with native culture in the South Seas, based on the novel by Charles Nordhoff and James Norman Hall (authors of *Mutiny on the Bounty*). Jon Hall plays young Polynesian hero Terangi, a native of Tahiti who has become a respected first mate on an American ship, and Dorothy Lamour is his innocent Tahitian bride. Although the pair receive top billing, the film spends as much time (if not more) with the array of other Caucasian characters in paradise: a philosophical alcoholic doctor (Thomas Mitchell), a priest devoted to the islanders (C. Aubrey Smith), and the new island governor (Raymond Massey)—the latter a strict, stiff martinet whose devotion to the letter of the Napoleonic Code allows no room for justice or compassion. Mary Astor plays the governor's wife and conscience, although he refuses to listen to either when he sentences Terangi to hard labor for assaulting a racist white man. The titular hurricane arrives in the final act, whipping up a deadly storm while Terangi struggles to get home. *The Hurricane* was a big commercial success in 1937 but remains one of Ford's lesser films. The characters are more debate positions than developed personalities, the natives are holy innocents, the film is shot largely in the studio (which does no service to the exotic setting), and the wrath of God finale makes for a confused metaphor in that it destroys innocent islanders (who are no better than extras in the drama) while sparing the Western interlopers. Still, this does feature a fine cast and a spectacular storm sequence. Extras include an audio commentary by film historian Joseph McBride. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)



I Want to Live! ★★★

Kino Lorber, 121 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.95

Based on the true story of Barbara Graham, the first woman sent to the gas chamber at San Quentin, the 1958 drama *I Want to Live!* stars Susan Hayward in her signature role. Although made under the strictures