

### Office problems

Anne Hathaway is the CEO of a successful Web startup, and Robert De Niro is a bored retiree who signs up to be an intern at her company in the 2015 Nancy Meyers comedy, **The Intern**, a Warner Home Video *Blu-ray + DVD + Digital HD* release (UPC#883929426287, \$36). Running 121 minutes, De Niro's character essentially solves several little and a couple of big emotional problems that are impacting the office (some viewers may feel that the movie glosses over infidelity a little too readily). The film has some specific comedy sequences, but they almost feel out of place (and contribute to the longish running time), since the thrust of the film is on the emotional healing that De Niro's sagely character provides, and the spiritual uplift he receives from the experience. The film does create a succinct portrait of the dichotomy between the 'old economy' and the 'new economy,' but for the most part, it is simply charming and inconsequential, providing enough entertainment to keep a viewer watching once it gets started. Renee Russo co-stars.

The letterboxing has an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1. The color transfer is unblemished, and the DTS sound has a functional dimensionality. There is an audio track that describes the action ("In an open loft, converted into an office, fashionably dressed employees sit at rows of computers. Some manipulate fashion photos, others handle computer code, and others talk into head pieces while sitting in front of sales screens."), alternate French, Spanish and Portuguese audio tracks, optional English, French, Spanish and Portuguese subtitles, and 17 minutes of pleasant promotional featurettes. The DVD included with the set is essentially interchangeable with the BD, despite the 5.1-channel Dolby Digital sound. All of the language options are the same, except for the Portuguese, and there is just one featurette, running 5 minutes.

### Variation on a standard theme

It starts out like a standard stalker thriller, and so you wonder what makes the 2015 **The Gift**, a Universal *Blu-ray + DVD + Digital HD* release (UPC#02519231837, \$35), different from the dozens of other stalker thrillers that have come out over the years, but then little things start happening and it dawns on you at some point that, yes, something different is going on. Justin Bateman and Rebecca Hall are a young, childless couple who have just moved into a new home as Bateman's character is beginning a new job. Joel Edgerton, who also wrote and directed the film, plays an old classmate of Bateman's character, who bumps into them one day in a store, and begins inviting himself into their lives, until worrisome things start happening. To say more would spoil the surprises, but the 109-minute film has a couple of passable frights and a fairly good psychological backstory that gradually gets revealed as the film progresses. The movie is no great classic or anything, but basically, if you enjoy the genre in principle, then the riff that the film takes on it is satisfying.

The picture is presented in letterboxed format, with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1. The color transfer looks fine, and the DTS sound punches at the right moments. There are English, French and Spanish subtitles, 3 minutes of quick promotional blurbs, and 18 minutes of deleted and alternate scenes, including an extended ending that was wisely trimmed back because it explains too much. The DVD platter includes all of the same special features, but has 5.1-channel Dolby Digital sound, which does not pack quite the same punch at key moments. The differences in picture quality are less significant.

Edgerton also supplies a commentary track, joined by editor Luke Doolan, and he admits that there were times when he may have bit off a little more than he could chew. "I did almost have meltdown. It was triggered by, finally, after a whole series of events, somebody getting a car that was already established as background and starting to drive it away, and an EPK, a poor EPK guy filming me right in my eye line. I had what was probably a 'sixty out of a hundred' meltdown."

They talk about the performers, the logistics of the shoot, the story, and how the film was fine tuned after the shooting was complete. Edgerton acknowledges that Hollywood tradition has more value than he had initially assumed. "I have to say that as much as I didn't think I'd be a fan of showing the movie to a test audience and learning from that experience, that I always saw it as a silly way that studios re-write the endings of movies and dumb them down, there is a lot to be learned from showing an audience. I would never have discovered, for example, those sort of unwanted moments of laughter without that, a number of other discoveries that came out of those early tests. Essentially just showing average, sort of, humans the movie who are going to be our future audience, you know?"

"And more than just the information on the sheets. Feeling the audience."

### There's always room for giallo

An Italian murder mystery with a logical story (once the solution is revealed) and plenty of sex and gore, **What Have You Done to Solange?**, has been released as a *Blu-ray + DVD* by Arrow Video (UPC#760137802891, \$40). Directed by Massimo Dallamano, the 1972 film is set in London, but the hero is Italian, a hot gymnastics teacher in a fancy girls' school. He is romancing one of his students in a boat one afternoon, when she sees a murder being committed on the shore. They investigate and unfortunately leave a few clues at the scene that lead the cops to him, and since he is married, he can't

tell them why he was there. The victim was one of the girls in the school, and as the 102-minute film proceeds, there are several more gruesome deaths. Because the hero is tainted by his own indiscretions, and a character that one is not expecting to be killed gets murdered early on, the film effectively holds the viewer in an uneasy limbo as it works its way to its climax. Featuring a musical score by Ennio Morricone, the film will be fully appealing for genre fans, and reasonably intriguing to others, delivering the style and the substance one expects from the era. There is an Italian audio track, but the English track is more appropriate and the sound levels are the same on both.

Fabio Testi stars, with Cristina Galbo and Camille Keaton, who would go on to star in **I Spit on Your Grave**. The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1. The color transfer looks great, with accurate fleshtones and lingering Carnaby Street hues. Along with a trailer, there is an occasionally interesting 29-minute analysis of the film and its sequels; a nice 21-minute interview with Testi, who shares his recollections about making the film and also goes over his entire career; a decent 11-minute interview with producer Fulvio Lucisano, who also talks a lot about Dallamano; and a 14-minute interview with actress Karin Baal, who plays Testi's wife and was not all that thrilled about the amount of nudity and hanky-panky the film contained.

Finally, there is a very enjoyable commentary with film critics Alan Jones and Kim Newman, who appreciate the movie and its genre—the film is considered one of the finest Italian 'giallo' thrillers—while at the same time getting a good chuckle out of its exploitation indulgences and narrative unlikelyhoods. In one fascinating insight on the genre as a whole, they mention a number of Italian thrillers that were set in London and, without skipping a beat, include **Blow-Up** (Mar 04). Since one of the arguments against the validity of **Blow-Up** as a great work of cinema is that some sequences are too fanciful (we maintain that nearly the entire film is a fantasy going through the hero's head as he comes home from drudgery as a factory worker), placing it in the context of the heightened stylism and narrative flights of the giallo films makes it seem all the more brilliant as a bridge between the grunge of working class movies and the loftiness of motion picture art.

But back to **Solange**. Jones and Newman provide the backgrounds of all of the primary players as well as most of the major crewmembers, and articulate effectively how each one's contribution adds to the movie's impact. They admit that a "major attraction" of the giallo films is that you can never remember who the murderer is a day or two later, thus opening the films up to many multiple viewings; and they embrace the sometimes crazy decor in the sets. "These movies tend to exaggerate things like interior decoration and fashions, but they are still credible, mostly because the people who make Italian films were themselves 'haute bourgeois.'" They quite often came from well off, moneyed backgrounds, because that's how you got connections to be in the Italian film industry. I remember assuming that all the worlds shown in giallo were fantastically invented, until I went to Rome and went to peoples' apartments and saw they really did have those huge places crammed full of books and objects d'art, and the cage lifts and the stairwells. That is a real world, and there is a kind of sense that the high-flying, jet-setting cosmopolitan world of these characters—they're all international, they're all living in other cities, in glamorous cities—was part of the reason why people went to these movies in the first place."

### The ultimate Hong Kong cop film

Do genres have a breaking point? Is it a natural law that filmmakers will push the components of a genre to make their movie stand out, and as a result, those components will each be pushed to a point of absurdity, in which case the entire genre collapses? **Badges of Fury**, from Well Go USA (UPC#812491014424, \$25), is an entertaining 2013 Hong Kong cop film that features several veteran martial arts stars, headlined by Jet Li, along with its younger cast. The trailer, which is included on the DVD and has appeared on other Well Go releases, is totally serious, and the film looks like the awesomest Hong Kong action film ever. What you discover, however, is that the movie is actually a wild comedy that spoofs everything there is to spoof about Hong Kong cop films, and it has to be, because the stunts are so outrageous and so ridiculous that no one could take the movie seriously anyway. The spoof is intentional—the film also contains gags about Hong Kong moviemaking—and for the most part, the comedy translates well. Several young men die, each while in the middle of a complex athletic performance. And each corpse is smiling. A trio of investigators, Wen Zhang, Michelle Chen, and Li, who continually mess up big busts but somehow capture criminals anyway, are assigned to the case, and discover that all of the victims were engaged to the same demure Hong Kong starlet. They also discover that she has a somewhat more aggressive older sister who likes to steal her boyfriends. Amid the clowning (Zhang, undercover at a disco, wears a miniskirt kilt), the fight sequences and stunt sequences are witty and comprehensive. Among other things, one of the film's climactic fights is staged in a 'traditional' bamboo pole and hanging curtain structure. There is a stairwell chase to end all stairwell chases, a courtyard fight in which concrete walls are demolished and lunch tables go flying every which way, an exuberant bicycle sequence involving steep hills and freeway traffic, and a three-way fight over a gun that will have you cringing with each twist and turn. Running 98 minutes, once you realize that the movie can't be the