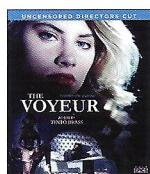


she didn't commit, while her mother, freed after serving a 15-year prison sentence, goes off in search of her. *The Undesirable* serves up star-crossed romance, mistaken identity, arrogance, prejudice, and tragedy while on the way to a happy ending. It's also utterly silly and quite naïve—compared to films being made in the U.S. and Western Europe at the time—but still a curious time capsule, as well as one of the first films by Mihály Kertész, who would go to Hollywood and change his name to Michael Curtiz, later directing *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, *Casablanca*, and *Mildred Pierce*, among other classics. Long believed lost, a print was discovered in a New York City basement and repatriated to Hungary, where it was restored and given a superb new musical score by composer Attila Pacsay. Although hardly a lost masterpiece, *The Undesirable* is an interesting artifact from a country whose silent film legacy is not well represented. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

The Voyeur ★★1/2

Cult Epics, 104 min., in English & Italian w/English subtitles, not rated, Blu-ray: \$29.95

Falling somewhere between soft- and hardcore porn, the movies of prolific director Tinto Brass feature plenty of titillation, but also strive for an arty look. *The Voyeur* (1994) boasts a distinguished pedigree, being based on a novel by Alberto Moravia (the credits make no mention of this fact since the author's estate deemed the film unworthy of bearing his name). This adaptation does retain something of its source's main theme of alienation, but mostly it's concerned with fairly explicit exhibitions of the human anatomy engaged in sexual activity, some involving obviously artificial enhancement (the Italian penchant for prosthetic penises). The story focuses on Eduardo (Francesco Casale), a literature professor whose wife Sylvia (Katarina Vasilissa) has left him, although she visits periodically for amorous interludes. Eduardo watches with envy as those around him—his students, the general public—enjoy the sensual pleasures he longs for. Eduardo also spends time with his wealthy father—bedridden after an accident—who is ministered to by a beautiful nurse in ways that reveal the old man's prodigious equipment. In narrative terms, *The Voyeur* is about Eduardo's struggle to understand the reason that his wife abandoned him, but this is mostly an excuse for Brass to serve up shots of breasts, buttocks and genitalia—albeit presented in gorgeous, lush, widescreen color cinematography complemented by a bubbly music score. Extras include an interview with Brass, and a photo gallery. While not for all tastes, *The Voyeur* is a solid example of '90s art erotica and should be considered a strong optional



purchase for more adventurous collections. (F. Swietek)

What Have You Done to Solange? ★★★

Arrow, 107 min., in Italian & English w/English subtitles, R, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.95

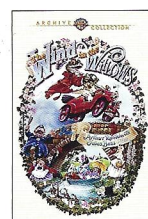
An Italian thriller set at a private girls school in Britain where teenage girls are being brutally killed in a sexually violent manner, this cult film stars Fabio Testi as Enrico "Henry" Roseni, an Italian physical education teacher (engaged in an affair with one of the students) who becomes a prime suspect and is forced to turn detective with his wife (Karin Baal) to find the real killer. This 1972 film is considered a classic of the Italian horror genre known as giallo, which distinctively combined brutal murders (mostly against women), mysterious killers (usually in disguise), and (at its best) creatively choreographed spectacles of violence. For all the characteristic sloppiness of the screenplay, this film remains unusual and surprising, with some well-directed murder scenes and startling imagery. It is also shamelessly salacious in its exploitation of girls as sexual objects and unsavory in that these minors are assaulted in a vicious, sadistic, and hateful manner by (no spoiler here) an adult male. The film ultimately explains the motivation for this particular brand of murder (which is terribly distasteful), but the extreme violence against young women makes it hard to enjoy. Extras include an audio commentary by film critics Alan Jones and Kim Newman, cast and crew interviews, and a video essay by giallo expert Michael Mackenzie. Optional. (S. Axmaker)



The Wind in the Willows ★★★1/2

Warner, 95 min., not rated, DVD: \$17.99

Produced for TV by Jules Bass and Arthur Rankin Jr., this 1987 animated feature is a largely faithful adaptation of Kenneth Grahame's oft-filmed 1908 classic novel. Charles Nelson Reilly voices the obsessive Mr. Toad, who is so smitten with the modern new automobile that he keeps buying and smashing them with no regards to the consequences, while his friends Ratty (Roddy McDowall), Moley (Eddie Bracken), and the very private Badger (José Ferrer) stage a kind of intervention to curb his behavior before it can land him in serious trouble...which it finally does. Like most of the Rankin/Bass productions, *The Wind in the Willows* features big, broad characterizations, as well as bouncy (if ultimately unmemorable) songs, and solid hand-drawn animation. The designs of the animal characters are actually quite engaging (the humans less

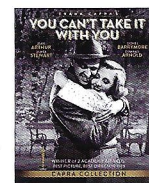


so), while the scope of the action—featuring a riverboat, a locomotive chase, and an assault on Toad Hall by a gang of ill-behaved weasels—is wide-ranging. Although made for kids, this might seem flat and sluggish to children raised on Pixar and Disney features, but may well appeal to animation buffs and fans of the Rankin/Bass style. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

You Can't Take It With You ★★★

Sony, 126 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$19.99

James Stewart and Jean Arthur star in Frank Capra's adaptation of the 1937 Pulitzer Prize-winning Broadway play by Moss Hart and George S. Kaufman. The pair make a delightful romantic couple (and were reunited in Capra's next film, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*), while Lionel Barrymore costars as Alice Sycamore's (Arthur) wonderfully eccentric grandfather—the patriarch of a creative, crazy extended family (which includes Ann Miller, Spring Byington, and memorable character actors Donald Meek and Mischa Auer). Stewart plays Tony Kirby, the son of a businessman (Edward Arnold) who refuses to accept these added free spirits as future in-laws. Capra directs the household scenes with high energy, creating spirited screwball comedy from their shenanigans, but he and screenwriter Robert Riskin replace the unhinged anarchy of the play with sentimental Capra-corn. Now, the story turns on a battle of wills between embrace-the-moment-everyman Barrymore and bitter king of capitalism Arnold, spending so much effort hammering home Capra's own populist point that it misses the spirit of the original material. The film won Best Picture and Best Director Oscars in 1938—Capra's third and final gold statue for directing—and it was a popular hit upon release, but it hasn't aged as well as Capra's superior films, including *It Happened One Night* and *It's a Wonderful Life*. Even so, the snappy dialogue, fine cast, and energetic direction still make this an entertaining film, one sure to appeal to fans of classic Hollywood comedies. Extras include audio commentary by Frank Capra Jr. and author Catharine Kellison, and a retrospective featurette. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



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