

beginning to end. A few darker sequences have some grain, and otherwise the image is crisp and smooth. The monophonic sound is also richer and sharper. There is an alternate Polish audio track, optional English, French, Spanish and Polish subtitles, and all of the special features that appeared on the DVD, including the trailer, the 1946 6-minute Tex Avery cartoon, *Bacall to Arms*, an 11-minute retrospective featurette, and the 59-minute *Lux Radio Theater* audio adaptation of the film, starring Bogart and Bacall.

Game remake

The first of umpteen remakes of **The Most Dangerous Game** (Aug 99), RKO Picture's 1945 **A Game of Death**, has been released on Blu-ray by Paramount and Kino Lorber Incorporated as a *KL Studio Classics* title (UPC#738329211218, \$30). John Loder stars as the experienced adventurer washed ashore on an island after a shipwreck, and Edgar Barrier is the island's diabolical lord, who takes pleasure in staging hunts with humans as the prey. Audrey Long and Russell Wade are two other guests being prepared for the sport. Running 72 minutes, the film, which uses footage from the first movie, is not as primal as the earlier feature, but, directed by Robert Wise, the story is inevitably entertaining no matter how it is dressed up, and the feature is reasonably engaging.

The black-and-white picture is presented in full screen format, and is in slick condition when not relying on the archival footage. Contrasts are sharp and the image is smooth. The monophonic sound is okay and there are optional English subtitles. Film historian Richard Harland Smith supplies a commentary track, going into extensive detail about the backgrounds of the cast and crew, and everything that is known about the production. He also forays into a history of the film's premise—although he fails to mention **Hard Target**, which was a fairly significant reworking of the premise, he does cover everything from **The Tenth Victim** to **The Hunger Games**—and points out that, among other things, the game of paintball probably owes its conceptual beginnings to the original film.

Surviving

A leisurely post-apocalypse tale from 2014, **The Quiet Hour** is set in a farmhouse where a young woman and her blinded brother have been surviving off the land after aliens appeared in the sky and eliminated most of the populace. The science-fiction aspects of the tale are primarily decoration, with just enough inexpensive effects to justify the premise, but the 85-minute program, released by Vision Films and Monarch Entertainment (UPC#7239-52079503, \$20), is primarily about the tensions between the groups of humans who have survived, as the heroes and another character must hold their ground against another group that covets their food supply. Even then, however, the action is limited, and the film is mostly about the moods and feelings of the characters as they cope with their new reality. Dakota Blue Richards stars, with Karl Davies and Jack McMullen. If one's expectations are not too aggressive, then the film is reasonably satisfying. It does not really cover any new ground, particularly since television programs as well as films have now been exploring the territory for some time, but it is a compact and viable dramatic rendering of the basic speculations over what will happen when civilization collapses, something more and more people seem to believe will occur any time now.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1 and an accommodation for enhanced 16:9 playback. The color transfer is okay, and while the special effects have a very limited budget, there is still a lot that can be done with that in this day and age—provided civilization doesn't collapse—and the cinematography has an intentional softness and a calm beauty. The film was shot in Ireland. There is one terrific moment on the 5.1-channel Dolby Digital track, and otherwise there is a general dimensionality. Beware, however, because the program defaults to the standard stereo track and the 5.1 track has to be specifically selected. There are optional English subtitles.

Chinese action comedy

A marvelous 2010 Chinese action comedy, **Let the Bullets Fly**, has been released by Well Go USA (UPC#812491012970, \$24). Jiang Wen is a bandit who takes the place of an incoming governor killed during a raid, and arrives at a remote town with his gang to see what they can loot by pretending to be bigwigs. He's the hero. The villain, played with great delight by Chow Yun-Fat, is the town's boss, who immediately anticipates the various ways he will soak the newcomers, only to find the tables continually being turned. The humor is mostly lowbrow, but it is not flagrantly exaggerated—well, not too flagrantly exaggerated—the way some Chinese comedies can be, and combined with the reasonably complex plot and solid performances, the film remains amusing no matter how bloody parts of it become. The action scenes are inventive and wild, but again not so wild that they distance the viewer from the entertainment. Running a full 132 minutes, the film is an invigorating and satisfying production that is a touch silly at times, but never to a point where the magic is spoiled.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1 and an accommodation for enhanced 16:9 playback. The color transfer looks sharp. The 5.1-channel Dolby Digital sound has limited separations, but a reasonable amount of energy. There is a Chinese track, with optional English subtitles, and there is an English language track. The only reason we would recommend the latter is that the dialog flies by so quickly at times it can be

easier to keep track of what is going on if you don't have to read the subtitles while you're watching the characters. Otherwise, however, the Chinese track is preferable. Three trailers have been included.

Three Japanese crime comedies

It is said that comedy doesn't translate well from one culture to another. That is not entirely true. Some sorts of comedy, such as slapstick, are pretty much universal, while other forms, such as puns, obviously, do not travel all that well. The real linchpin in comedy, however, is silly behavior. It is kind of like slapstick, but less physical, so there is a certain amount of translation involved. One culture's silly is another culture's just plain weird. There are, however, universal aspects to humor, even beyond slapstick, and so, the three rather silly Japanese crime film comedies released by Arrow Video on the DVD + Blu-ray, **Nikkatsu Diamond Guys Volume 2** (UPC#760137864691, \$50), have something to offer the funny bones of adventurous fans, although none of the three movies will ever be mistaken for a classic.

All three films are letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1 and on all three, the color transfers looks gorgeous, with bright, crisp hues and accurate fleshtones. The monophonic sound may be overly loud, but at a modest volume, it has clarity and detail. The films are in Japanese with optional English subtitles. All three appear on a single Blu-ray platter, and are spread across two DVD platters, with the same special features.

Opening on a musical number, there are several additional song-and-dance interludes in *Tokyo Mighty Guy*, directed by Buichi Saitō. Actually, the most sober and satisfying film of the three, Akira Kobayashi stars as a young graduate who has returned home from abroad and opens a French restaurant in Tokyo. When it becomes a success, mobsters try to muscle their way in on the profits, but Kobayashi's character is always smarter and tougher than they are, and spoils their various shakedown schemes (there are actually a few fight sequences, although it is hard to take them too seriously). The hero also befriends a powerful politician, and this leads to the 79-minute movie's best scene, a climactic wedding where the hero manages to marry the girl he loves despite her parents' opposition, because of a well-timed intrusion by the politician. On the whole, the 1960 film has a certain amount of self-awareness, even beyond the musical numbers, and a loose tone that is reasonably inviting if a viewer is not too demanding.

The tone of the second film, *Danger Pays*, a 1962 production directed by Kō Nakahira, is relatively serious—a crime syndicate hijacks currency paper and makes arrangements with an elderly engraver to create plates for counterfeiting. Other crooks, including the film's star, Jō Shishido, figure out the scheme and try to grab the old man for themselves. The characters, however, are all kind of goofy, and although there is violence, there are also a lot of jokes strewn through the 82-minute program—the old man designs a dollar bill so that if you look on it at a certain angle, George Washington is sticking out his tongue.

The third film, *Murder Unincorporated*, from 1965, directed by Haruyasu Noguchi, is as messy as it is cute. Shishido stars again. From what can be discerned of the narrative, the leaders of a crime gang, after holding auditions, hire a number of assassins to kill both another mobster and the assassin that mobster has hired. Each of the assassins has a different skill, and a flamboyant personality. They sort of pair up as they go out to search for their target, while the wily target sometimes manages to pit them against one another. From an objective observation, they are all clowns (including a midget and a guy with a Hitler/Chaplin mustache), even though they do hit their targets at times, through creative means. Running 85 minutes, the film is not going to generate a hearty guffaw, but you can appreciate its comedic spirit if you're feeling loose. It's a totally dopey movie, but its anarchy lingers.

Also featured are trailers for the films, a nice still frame segment containing promotional materials for all three movies, a good 9-minute profile of Shishido, and a very good 13-minute profile of Kobayashi, which also looks at the traditions of films set in Hokkaido, where the previously released Kobayashi **Diamond Guys** film, *The Rambling Guitarist* (Mar 16), took place.

Blu Trackers

Started by Sam Fuller and concluded by Barry Shear, the messy 1973 western starring Richard Harris, **The Deadly Trackers**, has been released on Blu-ray by Warner Home Video as an *Archive Collection* title (UPC#888574396008, \$22). Richard Harris stars as a pacifist lawman who changes his tune when his own wife and son are killed by bandits, tracking them across Mexico to seek revenge. Rod Taylor is the villain, and Al Lettieri gives an exceptional performance as the Mexican lawman who wants to take in Taylor's character as well, but wants to prevent Harris' character from executing justice on his own. Running 105 minutes, the film is reasonably engaging as it plays out, but it writes itself into a corner and the 'let's just get this over with' ending lacks the creativity that the rest of the film displays.

The presentation is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1. In comparison to the DVD (Jul 08), colors are richer and deeper, and contrasts have more detail, adding to the film's general appeal. The monophonic sound is also stronger. There is an alternate French audio track, two types of Spanish audio tracks, optional English, French and two types of Spanish subtitles, and a trailer.