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Tragedy and comedy

When Peter Bogdanovich made The Last Picture Show under Columbia Pictures in 1971, he was depicting a recent transition that many small towns, first in America and then all over the world, underwent as television brought a common culture and community everywhere, inadvertently stifling whatever individual cultural outlets those communities had. As the years have passed, however, and that transition has begun to look simply like one of many that occur from one generation to the next, what has endured in his remarkable film is the blunt honest truth that there is not only no privacy in a small town, there are not enough romantic choices for everyone, a problem that leads to almost everyone being unable to achieve an emotional equilibrium for their lives. The drinking doesn't help, but it is the starkness of the limited choices in partners that will continue regardless of what century it is, or what new technology or industry passes through. That starkness was, famously, amplified by the Robert Surtees' black-and-white cinematography, and now that cinematography is being delivered by Sony Entertainment and The Criterion Collection as a three-platter 4K Blu-ray (UPC#715515289313, \$60).

Criterion released The Last Picture Show previously on Blu-ray as part of the America Lost and Found The BBS Story collection (Jan 11) and it was a welcome improvement over earlier releases of the film. Letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1, the BD, which is replicated on the second platter, looks terrific and amplified the film's already compelling artistry. In addition to making things sharper, what the 4K presentation brings to the fore are the film's people. We once had a conversation on an airplane with a gentleman who lamented the passing of black-and-white films, because he claimed that color movies looked 'less natural.' We pointed out the obvious contradiction in his statement and he laughed, because what he was really lamenting was the nostalgia for youth in a maturing artform. Black and white is less natural than color, but it focuses a viewer's attention on how light reflects upon a human face. The greater detail in the 4K presentation brings more life to the performers and their characters. You lose yourself in their emotions, in their psychologies, in their guilts and in their exuberations. Based upon a novel by Larry McMurtry, who collaborated closely on the script with Bogdanovich, Timothy Bottoms, Jeff Bridges, Cybill Shepherd, Ellen Burstyn, Randy Quaid, Cloris Leachman and Ben Johnson star (the latter two won Supporting Oscars), playing the frustrated characters in a near-empty Texas town in the early Fifties (over the course of a year), who follow impulses and desires, relationship experimentations and the comforting or numbing repetitions of routine. On the standard Blu-ray, you are dazzled by the technological replication of the original filmmaking, but on the 4K presentation, you are completely absorbed by it. The characters become real, and you know the inner feelings and impulses of each one. The film is brought to life.

This is the 'Director's Cut' version, running 126 minutes. The theatrical version, which was trimmed to accommodate theater screen availabilities, has never been released on DVD or Blu-ray. The crisp monophonic sound is terrific on both presentations, providing a showcase for the many wonderful country-western tunes (mostly Hank Williams, but not entirely) that fill the movie's background as indelibly as the grey sky. There are optional English subtitles. Two commentary tracks, one featuring just Bogdanovich that he made for a DVD release and one with Bogdanovich and other members of the cast and crew that Criterion originally recorded for LD, have been carried over to both platters. The standard BD platter also has the special features that appeared in the BBS release, an excellent 42-minute retrospective documentary made by George Hickenlooper, another terrific 65-minute retrospective piece, a 13-minute interview with Bogdanovich, a 5-minute appreciation of the film by François Truffaut, 6 minutes of silent location footage, 2 minutes of silent screen tests accompanied by a Williams song, and a two trailers.

One of the impressions you get from the supplements on Last Picture Show is that Bogdanovich never did as much prep work and never tried as hard with any other film that he made as he did with that one. As his career advanced he developed a special flair for comedies, but became rather tone deaf in determining what could work as a film and what couldn't. Last Picture Show has moments of rich humor (and Burstyn is particularly funny as all get out), but it is a true dramatic tragedy. It was Steve Allen, apparently, who coined the expression, 'Tragedy plus time equals comedy.' McMurtry followed that formula when he wrote a his comical sequel, exploring the lives of the surviving characters 30 years later, and Bogdanovich brought everyone (except McMurtry—this time Bogdanovich wrote the screenplay by himself) back together to make the 1990 sequel, Texasville, two versions of which are presented on the third platter, a standard Blu-ray.

The problem is that Last Picture Show isn't just another drama. It is an exceptional and even profound work of cinematic art. The theatrical version of Texasville, with its overabundance of shades of blue and its untethered farcical narrative, seems almost sacrilegious in comparison. Running 126 minutes and set in the same but somewhat modernized locale in the early Eighties, the film is centered on Bridges' character, by now a successful oilman whose business is tanking because oil prices are tanking and whose home is filled with a gaggle of sons, daughters, their spouses and their children, as well as his own wife, played by Annie Potts in the one major new role. Leachman's character is now his secretary. Bottoms' character is running a small store and is the town's mayor, but he is starting to have cognitive difficulties and while it is never brought up directly, there is an implication that the problems stem from the fight his character had with Bridges' character in the first film. Shepherd's character is an actress who has returned from living in Rome after a personal tragedy, and essentially adopts the family of Bridges' character (although told through the eyes of Bridges' character, the film is actually about Shepherd's character coming to terms with her heartache). Quaid is the president of the local bank, which is also in trouble because of the oil prices. Burstyn, sadly, did not return and, of course, Johnson isn't there, either. Not only does the movie feel like a blatant attempt to cash in on a film general audiences would not remember in the first place, nothing significant really happens in it. Thanks to McMurtry's sensibilities, the characters never act in an expected manner—Shepherd and Bridges' characters, for example, do not rekindle their old romance—but, redeemed only by Bogdanovich's touch for comedy (there is a shot of Bridges holding a pickle at the bottom of the screen that is hysterical), the film gives you nothing to hold onto yourself and it just seems like an aimless mess.

Ah, but this was not really the version Bogdanovich wanted to present, and so there is a second version on the platter, running 150 minutes and in black and white, a Director's Cut. We reviewed Bogdanovich's black-and-white rendition of another major flop, Nickelodeon, in May 09 and found it to be particularly disappointing, since the film's lovely color cinematography was one of its strongest assets. Fortunately, that is not the case with Texasville. As calming as they are, getting rid of all those blues does the film a world of good. It is not a perfect transition, as faces, especially in the first half of the film, can look washed out or just strange because they haven't really been lit for black and white, but the process tones down the distractions and lets you concentrate more on the characters. The added footage also lets the story breathe a little more, so you get to know the characters and their relationships better and can better savor the ups and downs they go through. It also allows Bogdanovich's humor, which grows on you anyway as the film progresses, some more wiggle room (the pickle shot is even funnier in black and white, too). The film is not entirely successful since there is still a sense of a mood being destroyed by putting it on directly after Last Picture Show. Anchored to the laconic befuddlement with life that Bridges' character is experiencing, however, it is another exploration of how lives in small towns are compromised by their limited choices, made in some ways better and some ways worse by the unbound amplification that information technology has brought to their world.

Tragedy and comedy (Continued)

On both versions, the sound is centered and is reasonably strong, making it worthwhile to raise the volume and catch all of the songs that are playing on the radio in the background, one of the ways in which the movie does play off of **Last Picture Show** effectively. Produced by Nelson Entertainment and Columbia Pictures but now part of MGM's library made available to Criterion, both presentations have optional English subtitles and both are letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1. The black and white has occasional smearing, but the color tends to smear even more, although otherwise hues are fresh and fleshtones are accurate. There is a 4-minute introduction of sorts to the film and a trailer. Hickenlooper's outstanding documentary about **Last Picture Show** was shot on location during the making of **Texasville**, and the program's final 16 minutes, which were not included in the **Last Picture Show** segment, are about **Texasville** and is included on the **Texasville** platter. It is an amazing segment, too, delving into everything from the irritation the locals were feeling about Hollywood invading their space to Bogdanovich's personal and career problems (and McMurtry proposing another sequel).

Two Conformists

Once in a while more than one version of a movie will be released on a DVD or Blu-ray. Sometimes it is a 'Director's Cut' or alternate release version, sometimes it is a TV version with a different aspect ratio and sometimes it is a version in a different presentation format, such as a 3D version or the inclusion of both a DVD and a Blu-ray in one set. We have never before encountered a release, however, like Raro Video's new two-platter Blu-ray presentation of **The Conformist**, identified as a *New 4K Restoration* (UPC#738329264635, \$35). One platter contains the Blu-ray presentation of the Bernardo Bertolucci 1970 cinematic masterpiece that Raro already released and that we reviewed in Jan 15. It is the identical platter, with the same artwork and menu design, and the same transfer. Contrary to what one might misconstrue from the jacket identification, the other platter is not a 4K platter but another standard Blu-ray platter with an upgraded transfer. That said, the upgraded transfer is outstanding and a significant improvement in many ways over the previous release, but except for the excellent 57-minute retrospective documentary that is only available on the older version (along with the film's original American trailer and a 2013 re-release trailer), what possible reason does Raro have for including the platter? Did they just have so many lying around that they decided to throw one in?

Well, no matter. The important thing is that the new image transfer is outstanding, making the older Blu-ray nearly unwatchable. The image is sharper and smoother, colors are better defined and more detail is present. In one iconic scene after another, where the older BD was bland or discomfiting, the new BD delivers the dynamism that Bertolucci and cinematographer Vittorio Storaro intended in their designs. Set before World War II, Jean-Louis Trintignant plays a fresh Italian Fascist enrollee who travels to Paris ostensibly on his honeymoon to meet and assassinate an expatriate professor he knew from college. Stefania Sandrelli plays his new bride, Enzo Tarascio is the professor and Dominique Sanda is the professor's wife, the four socializing on the night before the assassination. The 113-minute film, which like all releases in the past several decades includes a scene depicting blind people at a birthday party that was not in the original American theatrical release, is told with flashbacks and flashbacks within flashbacks (most viewers will require a couple of screenings to get a handle on what is happening, but the rewards for such an investment of time are endless). At one point, Trintignant and Tarascio's characters discuss Plato's cave parable, which was meant to describe man's relation with God, but can also be interpreted within the film as speaking to political blindness, and can be interpreted outside of the film, as well, presenting an overpowering metaphor for film projection itself. On the older BD, shadows throughout the film are present but not particularly distinctive except in key moments. On the new BD, every shadow Storaro employs from the beginning to the end of the film is distinctive and readily enforces the 'Plato's Cave' motif. We should also mention that the optional English subtitles, along with acquiring a new, easier-to-follow typeface, have also been upgraded, and for the first time, among other things, the antique song that plays over the film's end credits and into what would technically be described as Exit Music is translated, "Tired shadow, you step away from me..."

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.66:1. The differences in the monophonic sound between the older version and the new version are negligible. The older version might be a touch crisper, but the new presentation is fully acceptable. The film is in Italian and French. The alternate English dubbed track is also presented, but since you lose the nuances that occur in the incidental shifts between the other two languages, it is not worthwhile. Along with a new 2023 re-release trailer, there is a wonderful 28-minute talk by the head of the Bernardo Bertolucci Foundation, Valentina Ricciardelli, speaking a little bit about the restoration and what the Foundation wants to accomplish, but talking mostly about the great stylistic and artistic breakthroughs that Bertolucci accomplished with the film (and—if you don't think the movie is also about undermining film conformities—she also reveals that Tarascio's character in the film has the same Parisian address that Jean-Luc Godard had).

Film expert Bilge Ebiri supplies a commentary track for the movie, which he says is his favorite film. He doesn't speak much about the cast and the crew, but does talk extensively about Bertolucci's themes and approaches,

and he breaks down the movie itself from that perspective as it proceeds, and even compares it to **Citizen Kane**. "Here's another one of my favorite shots from the film. The way that she walks, in the light, catching the light, you know, the way that she turns to catch the light when she walks, she's very aware of it, I mean she's walking like a model. It's totally unrealistic, but what makes it **The Conformist** so special is that it creates a world where these kinds of gestures can exist. This heightened style of Bertolucci's is both melodramatic and dreamlike, and these are two things that cinema can do so well. And in many ways it is a summation of everything that has come until now, not just in the film, I mean in film history, really. **The Conformist** is almost a compendium of the cinematic styles and techniques that had come before it."

Enduring fantasy

For the past couple of decades, special effects in fantasy films have become so good that the demarcations on screen between fantasy and reality have vanished. This has come at a price, however, which is being paid by older, beloved fantasy films. Spoiled viewers are more quick to dismiss a movie in which the special effects, however creative, are obvious, allowing such shortcomings to disrupt concentration on the story or the film's intended magic. That need not be the case, though, since it is the very effort that the filmmakers are putting forth to embrace a viewer's imagination that can be met, much like love, with an equal emotional embrace on the part of the viewer.

A case in point would be Tod Browning's outstanding 1936 MGM fantasy thriller, **The Devil Doll**, which has been released on Blu-ray by Warner Bros. as a *WB Warner Archive Collection* title (UPC#810134945807, \$22). Lionel Barrymore is an escaped convict who obtains the power to shrink people, and then to control their actions with his mind, a power he uses to extract revenge upon the men who framed him. First off, the film would be great fun even without the special effects, since in order to dodge the police, Barrymore's character dresses as an elderly lady, and has no compunction, when nobody is around, of doing tasks half in his old woman makeup and half not. Rafaela Ottiano, as his demented servant, has black curly hair with a pronounced white streak, just like Elsa Lanchester in **The Bride of Frankenstein**, and since the plot involves miniature people (a brief but memorable subplot in **Bride**), the allusion is undoubtedly deliberate. From there, it is thank god for MGM, whose production department had the bucks to create enormous sets that not even Universal could match two decades later with **The Incredible Shrinking Man**. So sure, there are transitions in the black-and-white film where the composite shots cannot balance focus or contrast levels inside and outside of the matte, because the technology just wasn't there at the time, but the film as a whole is so delightful and so thrilling that it would be foolish not to take such moments in stride and savor where they lead, since they enable fantasy scenes that are as astounding as they are exciting, and every moment is believable if you are not fretting over how the movie got there. Indeed, if it were made today, it would be less interesting, because no one would care about the work that went into staging the fantasy sequences, and as a corollary, no one would be gripped by the world the movie has created. Running 79 minutes, the film does have a following, but it is difficult to understand why **Devil Doll** is not as popular or famous as **Bride** and **Shrinking Man**, since it is otherwise every bit as satisfying and fantastic.

Maureen O'Sullivan has a sweet supporting part. The squared full screen picture is reasonably sharp and spotless, which adds greatly to the film's vitality. The monophonic sound is relatively strong, and there is a wonderful musical score by Franz Waxman. Along with optional English subtitles, an original trailer and two strongly plotted 8-minute black-and-white *Looney Tunes* cartoons from 1936, *Milk and Money* (an early manifestation of Porky Pig has difficulties on his farm and trying to execute a milk delivery because a horsefly is biting his horse, until they wander onto a racetrack) and *The Phantom Ship* (a dog pilot with two puppy stowaways flies to the Arctic to examine a haunted frozen shipwreck).

Two Browning experts, Bruce Haberman and Constantine Nasr, provide an excellent commentary track for the feature, talking about the cast and the crew, the film's ever rising popularity, and going into detail about the film's production and the evolutions the script went through to get around the censors, as well as discussing Browning's career, his unique artistic approach, and the challenges he faced along the way. "It's unfair to compare Todd Browning of the 1920s, or even the early, pre-Code films. His style could not be replicated, it could not be tolerated. The Code is essentially saying, 'We don't want you to make movies.' Here, he's found a way to make really one of the peak films of his Thirties career, and I think, of his filmography."

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A marvelous movie and a terrific supplement

Gangsters, reporters and spoiled rich kids make an entertaining mix in the 1931 pre-Code MGM feature, **Dance, Fools, Dance** a Warner Bros. *WB Warner Archive Collection* Blu-ray (UPC#810134945791, \$22). Joan Crawford and William Bakewell are the party-happy brother and sister whose wealthy father succumbs to a heart attack on the day of the stock market crash. Left on their own, Crawford's character finds work at a newspaper and Bakewell's character falls in with a bootlegging gangster played by Clark Gable in an early and rare—but very effective—appearance as a villain. Directed by Harry Beaumont, the film runs just 81 minutes and clearly had some transitional scenes removed during its initial editing, but whether it is the uninhibited flapper dancing, the quick-talking newsroom jabber or the muscular tough guy scheming, not to mention the meteoric trajectory that Crawford and Gable both clearly deserved as presences on the screen, the movie blends it all together in a way that is as exhilarating as it is irresistible, even if its ending does fly in the face of feminist sensibilities (all of the choices Crawford's character faces at the supposedly 'happy' end are lamentable).

The full screen black-and-white picture is in very nice condition for the film's age. Details are clearly defined, there is no significant wear and grain is minimal. The monophonic sound is somewhat aged and the dialog can be raspy, but there are always the optional English subtitles if you don't want to push the volume up.

Along with two 1931 Warner Bros. Hugh Harman and Rudolf Ising 7-minute black-and-white *Merrie Melodies* cartoons, *One More Time* (imaginatively spoofing the activities of gangsters and cops on city streets) and *Smile, Darn Ya, Smile!* (spoofing the imaginative antics of a trolley car operator and his passengers)—both of which veer perilously close to imitating Mickey Mouse—there is an outstanding 1972 telefilm documentary, *Hollywood: The Dream Factory*, that is clearly a warm up for 1974's **That's Entertainment**, conceived by Irwin Rosten. The documentary's producer, Bud Friedgen, who also contributed to the editing, was then one of the two editors credited on **That's Entertainment**, although other than having been produced by MGM, that is the sole shared credit between the two programs (oh, the song, *That's Entertainment*, also plays at the end of both shows). Where the focus of **That's Entertainment** was musicals, the focus of **Dream Factory** is on everything—there are clips in it from **Dance, Fools, Dance**, which one supposes is the justification for including it on the disc—bookended with the notion that the glory era of Hollywood has passed and that MGM's soundstages and outdoor sets are being torn down and sold off. Narrated by Dick Cavett, it is the choice of clips that makes the show so riveting. Along with lots of behind-the-scenes footage (and the newsreels of the lengthy, star-jammed lunch tables at MGM's anniversary celebrations), the actual film clips are often unexpected and delightful, including some great scenes from the original **Ben-Hur A Tale of the Christ**. Yes, there is Gene Kelly doing *Singin' in the Rain*, but the Marx Bros. doctor's office clip from **A Day at the Races** is rarely anthologized and captures the individual humor of the three men (and Margaret Dumont) with vivid exhilaration. There is a proto Mickey Rooney-Judy Garland 'let's put on a show' montage that Friedgen would refine for **That's Entertainment**, and there is a gloriously disturbing montage of Elizabeth Taylor growing up, from a little girl hugging Lassie to a woman in her underwear trying to hug a recalcitrant Paul Newman. Running just 50 minutes, the show genuinely communicates its theme—that a certain era and format in motion picture entertainment is passing before our eyes—lucidly and captivately. Thus, **That's Entertainment** became its wake.

Corman classics done right

Languishing in the public domain and featuring, along with its headliner, an actor who would go on to become an even greater movie star, Roger Corman's **The Terror** has seen a plethora of releases on home video, nearly all of them in pretty bad condition. We reviewed a couple of such DVDs in Feb 98 and Mar 98. Even Peter Bogdanovich took advantage of the movie's ready availability to utilize it as the film within the film in his outstanding 1968 thriller, **Targets** (Jun 23). At long last, however, Film Masters has gone to the sources as best as can be done, and has issued a two-platter *Special Edition* Blu-ray (UPC#760137137566, \$30), coupling the film with another Corman public domain classic, **Little Shop of Horrors**. Each film appears on a separate platter and comes with optional English subtitles, subtitles for a commentary and an upgraded trailer.

Jack Nicholson not only co-starred with Boris Karloff in the 1963 **Terror**, he also worked on the screenplay and directed a few scenes. Francis Coppola, Monte Hellman and Jack Hill were also involved in the film's creation. Presented in its original 1.85:1 aspect ratio, the color transfer looks terrific. The image deteriorates noticeably during dissolves, but that simply testifies to how cheaply the film was being put together. There is one truly fabulous set—the central room of a castle (which Corman had been using for another movie)—that takes on added power with the sharp color details and the wider image. Corman may have worked fast—he clearly didn't care when shots didn't match, so long as the general idea was being conveyed—but again and again, the film has beautifully rendered moments and appealing imagery. The picture can look soft at times, and will distort with color washes and rushed contrasts, but the basic freshness of the source material is clearly maintained, adding greatly to the appeal of the film's environments, and when the lighting is controlled, hues are bright and fleshtones are gorgeous.

As Bogdanovich serendipitously presented, the film is probably best viewed in a drive-in movie environment, and even from the comfort of one's home, one tends to savor the film by imagining the responses of viewers

huddled in their cars as they watch the ghost story (perhaps intermittently) unfold. Set at the beginning of the Nineteenth Century, the very young Nicholson is a French officer who has been separated from his command and is wandering along the beach, attempting to make his way back when he encounters a beautiful woman who may be shapeshifting into a raven, and a castle where Karloff's character apparently pines for the same woman, claiming that she was killed a couple of decades earlier. Running 79 minutes, the film follows a mesmerizing dream logic as Nicholson's character explores the mysteries of the castle, engages in edgy conversations with Karloff's character, and chases after the girl, played by Sandra Knight, during the fleeting moments when she appears. Corman was a big fan of Sigmund Freud and the film is steeped in imagery that suggest phalluses, wombs, and all the other mysteries of life. If you're the kid with the glasses in the front seat, analyzing every plot turn, then the movie doesn't really make much sense, if you're in the back, only paying half attention and looking up during the scream moments, then the film is great entertainment and well worth returning to see again.

Like the cinematography, the sound recording is uneven, with the dialog being louder and softer from one scene to the next, but the BD's audio is solid and can be set at a reasonable volume level that captures most of what needs to be heard. An excellent 44-minute analysis of the film by genre expert Howard S. Berger is included. While it teases at the beginning that it is going to delve into the film's convoluted production history, it focuses primarily on a thematic analysis of the film and Corman's career. That said, it is a highly rewarding endeavor, filled with great clips and stills, spelling out exactly what happens in the complicated plot, and sharing insights about the artistic resonances of every turn, such as when Berger raps poetically about one of his favorite topics, the 'falling movie dummy': "Now, with no voice or vision, Gustaf topples off the edge of a nearby cliff, but in a meta-cinematic moment of substitution, the actor portraying Gustaf is replaced with a prosthetic dummy replica that plummets onto the jagged rocks below. Like the witch's rotating lantern, the dummy facsimile foregrounds another aspect inherent to the cinematic phenomenon, that movies present only an insubstantial, abstract illusion of life; that the characters that appear to spring to life on the screen are actually just inert, lifeless pieces of celluloid projecting colored ghosts in a darkened room. In this way, the actor and his prosthetic twin [are] an illustration of the dichotomy between the real actor and his celluloid double, the real world versus the abstract illusion that constitutes the celluloid one."

Additionally, there is a very good commentary track by film experts Steve Haberman and C. Courtney Joyner. The two go into detail primarily about the actual shoot, including the contributions and reminiscences of each participating director and how Corman conceived in stitching everything together (secretly charging American International Pictures for the time and crew, and then releasing the movie independently).

We reviewed a cheap presentation of **Little Shop of Horrors** in Apr 98, a manipulated presentation in Dec 04 that took advantage of the movie's tight sets (and a wonderful chase through a junkyard) to deliver it in an artificial 3D format, and a colorized version (included as an extra with **Cry Baby Killer**) in Apr 07. The version presented by Film Masters is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1. The black-and-white image is sharp, but grainy. There was one sequence where a couple of vertical lines ran through the image for a moment, but otherwise, the presentation is clean and viable, with well-defined contrasts. The monophonic sound has some basic background noise but is reasonably strong, overall.

Corman says the 1960 film was made in a single workweek, but the witty script was clearly labored upon for a more extended length of time beforehand. About a schlemiel working in a flower store who grows a man-eating plant that brings financial success to his employer, Corman's control and execution of the comedy, much of it ribbing Jewish stereotypes in the same burlesque manner that Jewish comedians had been doing for years, is beat perfect (especially with the nice Blu-ray transfer), thus accommodating the absurd and cheaply constructed horror elements in its stride. If **The Terror** is ideal for drive-ins, **Little Shop of Horrors**, while intended initially as theatrical filler, is ideal for television, where its simplicity, episodic humor and 72-minute running time were perfect for distorted black-and-white playback and commercials. Nicholson has last billing for a cameo part in a scene involving a dentist and proves that he can clown with the best of them. Jonathan Hayes (who also appears in **Terror**), Mel Welles and Jackie Joseph star, with **Terror** co-stars Dick Miller and Dorothy Neumann. With the ravenous, unrelenting the-more-you-feed-it-the-more-it-grows plant monster as its centerpiece, incidentally, the film can easily stand as a political metaphor depicting any sort of entity that continues to grasp for power unabated.

The monophonic sound is strong and clear, with limited extraneous noise. There is a jolly 17-minute overview of Corman's budget-conscious early Sixties pictures and a 2023 trailer.

Film historian Justin Humphreys provides a nice commentary with the top-billed Haze. They talk about all aspects of the production and Humphreys pumps Haze with one question after another.

"Now what do you remember about the huge, the big plant? Was it, did it function properly when you were filming?"

"Yeah, I mean, it was very simple. It was not a very 'special' special effect. It was more just, 'get somethin' done.'"

"Yeah, was it just like paper mache, something like that?"

"Yeah, it was all kinds of paper mache and straw and other stuff."

A Hollywood trilogy

Three films produced by Paramount about Hollywood, all based upon novels by American literary titans and helmed by legendary motion picture directors, have recently been issued on Blu-ray. The temptation to watch all three as a triptych of how Hollywood sees itself is beyond compelling, and a sure-fire daylong party of glorious indulgence for any fan of the movies.

Let us begin with the Paramount Kino Lorber Incorporated *KL Studio Classics* release of the final film from the masterful director of actors, Elia Kazan, **The Last Tycoon** (UPC#738329264864, \$25), based upon an unfinished novel by F. Scott Fitzgerald, via a script by Harold Pinter. Robert De Niro stars as the young head of production for a major studio in the Thirties, his character based quite clearly on MGM's Irving Thalberg. The film was a bit too academic for general audiences at its release, and it does have a few basic problems, but for those who love Hollywood, it is still a joy. For one thing, the show is jam-packed with legendary actors nearing the ends of their careers, including Robert Mitchum, Jeanne Moreau, Tony Curtis, Ray Milland, Dana Andrews, John Carradine, Donald Pleasence (along with Moreau, one of the best performances in the film), Tige Andrews, Seymour Cassel and Jeff Corey. Jack Nicholson has a surprise appearance near the end, running circles around De Niro, Theresa Russell plays the daughter of Mitchum's character (although it looks like the apple fell so far from the tree it landed in a different orchard) and Angelica Huston has a brief, pre-fame part. Ingrid Boulting is also featured, as a young Hollywood habitué that De Niro's character fixates upon, believing that she resembles his late wife. Kazan and Pinter are from different worlds, but he guides the cast through the precision dialog and dry humor with an earnest efficiency. De Niro can be a lazy actor, and there are moments where he doesn't try as hard as he ought to be trying, something Kazan would likely not have allowed in his earlier days, but there are also plenty of moments where he is a delight to watch and a worthy guide through the world the film is exploring. He is by no means a romantic motion picture star himself, which is another reason the film came up short. Nevertheless, the romance is believable and compelling, which is the most important factor in enjoying the 123-minute film, since not even Fitzgerald had any idea where the story was actually headed. In the end, there is neither a fade to black nor a cut to black, but a stroll into black. If that frustrates you, then the film probably isn't for you, but if you find the wit of the choice to be exquisite, then the rest of the film, on the whole, will be just as satisfying.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1. The color transfer is impeccable, and the film's designs are often pleasing. The big surprise, however, is the film's default 5.1-channel DTS sound, which not only has a subtle but enormously pleasing separation design, and also delivers a wonderful bass during the earthquake scene. The John Barry musical score also benefits greatly from the dimensionality, and rarely has the sound of the surf so perfectly underscored a scene of romantic passion. There are optional English subtitles. Paramount's DVD (UPC#032429342867) also defaults to the 5.1-channel Dolby Digital track and the sound isn't bad at all, although the BD's sound is more clearly detailed. The colors on the DVD, however, are pale and greyish in comparison to the richer and more solid colors on the BD. The DVD also has optional English subtitles.

On the BD, film historian Joseph McBride supplies quite a good commentary, going over both the history of the film and the backgrounds of the filmmakers, but also the history of Fitzgerald's novel, Thalberg's life, Kazan's career, the challenges of acting, and even a rumination on the similarities between the Hollywood Blacklist and what is known these days as 'cancel culture.' He suggests that Boulting's character was actually set up by other members of the studio to distract De Niro's character from their projects and talks about the novel's unfinished status (not even its title was a certainty), which bled into aspects of the film. He deconstructs some of the film's flaws, including shortcomings in some of the performances, but he also admires the movie greatly, and he says rather poignantly at the end that that final shot of darkness was the last image Kazan himself ever filmed. "Hollywood nostalgia became a hot trend, but these films didn't do well at the boxoffice. People don't want to see their illusions dashed—too much—about Hollywood. They have a romantic investment in Hollywood and the glory of the past. The public wasn't interested in this film. I think part of it is its kind of low energy, pallid production, in a sense, which is not a usual Kazan style, but I actually like that. It's meditative, thoughtful."

Paramount was looking for another romantic hit after **The Great Gatsby** when it turned to John Schlesinger in 1975 to adapt Nathanael West's Hollywood novel, **The Day of the Locust**, to the screen, but apparently nobody in the front office actually read the novel or else they would have known that it could not be sold with dreamy photos of movie stars longing for one another. Paramount and Arrow Video have released the Blu-ray (UPC#760137139997, \$40) with a rewarding array of special features, a viable justification for obtaining a film that is otherwise kind of tough to watch. Donald Sutherland is top billed, portraying West's most indelible contribution to Western civilization, a character named 'Homer Simpson.' This would be the first of two times in a very short period that Sutherland would star in a movie where his character brutally and graphically murders a child, but somehow his career was not overtly impacted by these choices. Schlesinger would go on to make more movies, including several enjoyable ones, but his crowning achievements were behind him and the film sort of helped to shut the door on his backside. In that he managed to actually adapt a seemingly unfilmable literary classic is in itself an admirable accomplishment, but neither he nor anyone else was ever going to make it a viable audience pleaser. **The Last Tycoon** has fun moments and suggests that while the gloss

and glamour that make it onto the movie screen may actually be tarnished when the cameras aren't running, there is still a foundation for envy and aspiration in the structures of the movie business. West (who died, as McBride points out, the day after Fitzgerald died, both residents of Hollywood at the time), on the other hand, finds nothing but rot and decay beneath the phony facades, and **Day of the Locust** pretty much rubs your face in the waste.

Set in the Thirties, William Atherton plays an art designer who lands a job in a studio and gets a bungalow in a seedy apartment complex. Karen Black has the central and most exhausting role, as the daughter of a burnt-out vaudeville comic played by Burgess Meredith. They are both neighbors of Atherton's character and Black's character makes ends meet parlaying her looks to get jobs as an extra. Ostensibly the young, dashing hero, Atherton's character tries to rape her at one point, and she ends up moving into a small house nearby, owned by Sutherland's weak-willed character, who pines for her but is prevented by his religious upbringing from doing anything about it. Richard Dysart, Jackie Earle Haley (as the awful child), Bo Hopkins, Paul Stewart and Geraldine Page co-star. The wonderful Natalie Schafer has a nice little part as a Hollywood madam, Billy Barty is great as another ornery neighbor in the complex and William Castle plays a movie director. Running 144 minutes, the film has two big set pieces in its second half, one where a soundstage re-creation of Waterloo collapses, and one where the crowd outside of a huge studio premiere riots after the child is killed (the kid had it coming, but it's still brutal...). Hence, the stars (Black is terrific), the action and the drama are all there, but gone is the romance that was elsewhere so divine, and what is left is broken and cannot be mended.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1. The colors are fresh and fleshtones are accurate. That said, the cinematography is very irritating and the transfer can do nothing about it. The image is enormously grainy much of the time. There are stray scratches, too, but only at the beginning, so that what first looks like a muffed transfer soon, when the source material stabilizes, becomes quite clearly the result of filmmaking choices and unreliable film stock. The sound defaults to a monophonic track but a 5.1-channel DTS track can be activated. Another lovely Barry score is the chief benefit of the enhancement, since environmental sounds generally remain centered. Although not to the same effect as the earthquake in **Last Tycoon**, the crumbling stage in the Waterloo scene offers a pretty decent rumble. There are optional English subtitles.

Along with two radio commercials and a nice collection of memorabilia and behind-the-scenes photos in still frame, there is sort of a 25-minute introduction to the film by critic Glenn Kenny, who sits in a chair and reads from notes and excerpts of other writings, including passages from the novel, as he talks about the pros and cons of 'Hollywood self-loathing,' the arguments for and against the book, the array of artists, particularly the performers, who appear in the film and why it is worth viewing ("Watching it again, this is a movie that bears up. It's got a real integrity to its construction. The acting is spectacular. All the parts of it are brought together by Schlesinger with great care and attention to detail, and despite its horrific and apocalyptic ending, it's not without compassion."); a great 18-minute piece specifically about Ann Roth and her fantastic costume designs that includes audio interview clips with Roth herself about how specifically oriented the film's period costumes were; and a decent 24-minute analysis of the film's themes and artistry by Lee Gambin. "When we get amongst what truly is a metaphysical landscape in Schlesinger's film, this meta aspect of the film feeds the characters, but it also starves them of any grip of reality, which would lend them a portion of sympathy. Instead, they are cretins, poised at one another like serpents while a fantasy unfolds punching the air with grimy, sweaty industry, flooded with contract players on the make and break."

Finally, Gambin also curated an excellent commentary track from interviews with secondary members of the cast and the crew. We wish that other discs had commentaries like this one. The individuals talk about their memories of the shoot and what happened on the set, as well as offering their technical perspectives of the film and describing their contributions. It is especially engaging because the film itself is about the movie business, so that the hubris within the film is inadvertently reflected by the hubris unintentionally being described by the workers recalling the production. It is also an inspired reflection of West's theme, focusing not on the headliners, but on the denizens who labor outside of the spotlight, something that has been done on a few contemporary Blu-ray supplements, but never before as a retrospective.

Now tell an English professor that Harold Robbins is an American literary titan and his head will probably explode, but in the early days, before he just started mumbling into a Dictaphone to pay his gambling bills, Robbins genuinely tried his hand at writing the great American novel, and while he might not have succeeded to the same artistic degree as Fitzgerald and West, his greatest works are valid efforts in literature that left an enduring impact upon the reading public and the writers who learned from and followed his inventions. In the tradition of Fitzgerald, he wrote several books about the romances and boardrooms of Hollywood, not just to tantalize his readership but to establish his perspective on the actual history of the beginning of the motion picture business in Los Angeles. One of those novels, **The Carpetbaggers**, was thought to be unfilmable for entirely different reasons than **The Day of the Locust** was unfilmable, but was just too darn hot to avoid attempting anyway, so Edward Dmytryk tried his hand at it for Paramount in 1964 and created an enormous boxoffice success, which has been released by Paramount and Kino as another *KL Studio Classics* title (UPC#738329264857, \$25).

The film was so popular that it spawned a prequel, *Nevada Smith*, which we reviewed in Sep 23, and yes, as we said at the time, the two films make a natural and very satisfying double bill. But *Nevada Smith* was a western (Brian Keith played the character in *Nevada Smith* that would be the father of George Peppard's character in *Carpenters*, and Steve McQueen played the character that became, in the second-billed role, Alan Ladd's character, all of which is based upon the life of Howard Hughes, who inherited his father's successful mineral company and invested in many endeavors, including Hollywood, where Ladd's character becomes a cowboy star) and *The Carpenters* is pure romantic and corporate melodrama. Yet, it is such a relief to dive into the movie's gloriously trashy passions after the deadening realities of *Day of the Locust* that it becomes a better film from the contrast. It helps enormously that the movie's art direction is grand and that the Blu-ray's color transfer is gorgeous. One shot appears to be out of focus, and there is some compromised day-for-night stuff, but otherwise every frame is sharp and fresh, allowing one to soak in all of the details, from the draping and knickknacks on the walls of the offices to the furs and jewels on the girlfriends of the characters. The film defaults to mono, but there is a 5.1-channel DTS track, which doesn't do much with the sound effects but turns Elmer Bernstein's musical score into pure silken ecstasy.

When reading a book, a writer can only offer the poetic beauty of his words, and it would be that command of vocabulary and its lyricism that separates Fitzgerald and West from Robbins. A film, on the other hand, offers up narrative, acting, images and sound, and this is where Dmytryk evens the playing field. Barry's scores on the other two films are very rewarding, but Bernstein's music is gripping and reinforces the take-it-or-leave-it emotions of melodrama in a way that allows only one real choice. Letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1, the drama is constantly upgraded by the widescreen framing. When Ladd and Peppard are about to fall into their climactic fistfight, they are shown at the very opposite sides of the screen, just waiting for the elasticity that the shot suggests to throw them at one another. This would be Ladd's final film, and it is a grand and touching swan song. Carroll Baker plays the 'stepmother' to Peppard's character in a wonderful screen-grabbing appearance that pushes the sexual decorum of the day. Yet despite the heavily implied off screen sex and on screen lust, the film's most thrilling sequences are the ones of Peppard's character in the boardroom, figuratively doing to his business competitors what he is otherwise doing to his mistresses. Having found success with the airplane industry, Peppard's character turns to Hollywood, primarily so that he can make Baker's character a star. Bob Cummings, Elizabeth Ashley, Martha Hyer, Martin Balsam and Lew Ayres are also featured. Peppard's performance is one of the film's few weaknesses, and part of that is due to Dmytryk—during that final fight with Ladd, for example, his character clearly fractures an elbow, but it is working just fine when the fight is over—but running an absorbing 150 minutes, the film offers up the sort of giddy, decorative escapism that few other feature films from the era ever managed to achieve.

In addition to a trailer there are two commentary tracks that complement one another nicely. Film historian Julie Kirgo shares some gossip, but focuses mostly on the trends in popular culture that were occurring in the early Sixties and how the book and then the film fit into a rising enthusiasm for adult drama. She also goes over the careers of the stars and the filmmakers, and how their artistic strengths came together for the production.

In the second track, film enthusiasts David Del Valle and David DeCoteau also touch on the history and the backgrounds of the filmmakers but focus more on the gossip—both Kirgo and Del Valle claim that according to his reputation, Peppard absorbed the character he played in the film and never let go of it, something that his wife, whom he met on the set, Ashley, concurred with during their subsequent divorce proceedings. They speculate upon what might have happened if the film had been made a couple of years later, after the dam of on-screen propriety burst, but fail to acknowledge that there is the perfect example of that—*The Adventurers* (Jul 05), which did not achieve the buzz that *Carpenters* achieved in part because it did not have a charismatic lead, but also in part because it let it all hang out. They also go into more detail about Hughes and the parallels between the film and history, and continually remark upon the film's many rousing moments of passion and melodrama. "You gotta give credit to these actors for fearlessly tackling the most absurd situations as if it were sense/memory time at Lee Strasberg's."

What is most amusing, however, is that while they both think the film is fantastic (as does almost anyone who came of age around the time it was made), the two commentators, Kirgo and Del Valle, have opposing opinions about many of its components. Like us, Kirgo believes that Peppard is a weak link in the feature, while Del Valle thinks it is his greatest role. Del Valle, on the other hand, is irritated by Ashley's character, while Kirgo believes that the actress is the heart of the film, and that her acquiescence at the end spoke to the very soul of American women at the time, for good or for ill.

Let us now go halfway around the world to that other great city of motion picture production, Rome, with the fortuitous StudioCanal Lionsgate 4K Blu-ray release of Jean-Luc Godard's glorious 1963 nose-thumb at studio filmmaking, based upon a novel by Italian literary titan Alberto Moravia, *Le Mépris Contempt* (UPC#031398341208, \$25). We reviewed Lionsgate's standard Blu-ray (which was called *Contempt (Le Mépris)*) in Feb 11, but it was a very early Blu-ray release and was annoyingly glitchy. The 4K release, on the other hand, is exquisite in every way. Every frame of the image transfer is precise. Someday somebody will develop an AI program that can make George Delerue's score sound as warm and smooth as Bernstein's music on *Carpenters*, but for now we must be content with the bland monophonic recording and its slightly flat upper limits, which still sounds stronger than the audio on the standard BD. As for the color transfer, it is improved so much that each detail, no matter how minute, looks precisely as it was intended by Godard and cinematographer Raoul Coutard. In comparison, the older BD looks slightly pale and fuzzy. The presentation is

letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1. The film is accompanied by a 6-minute introduction (the only holdover from the standard BD's nice special features) that goes over the movie's production history (producer Joseph Levine would also produce *The Carpenters* the following year) and offers a thumbnail sketch of its primary themes.

Quoting André Bazin as the camera points straight at the viewer at the end of the film's lengthy opening shot, Godard in voiceover says, "The cinema substitutes for our gaze a world more in harmony with our desires." That is why *The Carpenters* can stand shoulder to shoulder with *Day of the Locust*, because movies are working more closely with our emotions than other forms of art—which have less sensory output—can achieve. *Le Mépris* is an acquired taste because it takes several viewings to understand what its intentions and limitations are, but every movie must be accepted on its own terms for better or worse, and once the viewer does understand what is important about the film—its careful staging, its playful self-awareness and glorification of cinema, and its meticulous deconstruction of a collapsing marriage—then the film can become irresistible, something that occurs all the more rapidly when the movie's elements are offered up on 4K.

Michel Piccoli is a screenwriter hired by a boorish producer, embodied by Jack Palance, to beef up a screenplay based upon the famous story by that great literary titan of antiquity, the other Homer, about Ulysses' return from the Odyssey, which Fritz Lang, playing himself, is in the middle of filming. Brigitte Bardot plays the screenwriter's wife, a former typist, and the one other character of significance is a secretary to the producer, played by Georgia Moll, who translates the different languages being bandied about as the characters attempt to communicate with one another. The film is mainly in French and there are optional English subtitles, but Palance and, to a lesser extent, Lang, speak English, so there is also a reasonably clever English dubbed track, where the dialog is altered to hide the translations when both Piccoli and Bardot's characters are also speaking English (there are a couple of sequences that are still in French with English subtitled because they did not appear in the original English dubbed version). That said, the miscommunication gags and lyrical language transitions are lost on the English track, and it is better utilized simply as an excuse to watch the movie again.

At the beginning of the 104-minute film, the screenwriter and his wife appear to be very much in love, but by the end they have separated, and it is the gradual compilation of irritated responses and hesitations that build the film's emotional power. That those difficulties then seep into the movie that is under production is a profound truth not only about how movies are made but, from the days of Homer (Bardot peruses a coffee table book to this effect) and even before, how history itself is shaped. Taking place over the course of what appears to be a couple of days—at Rome and the Cinecittà studio, and then in Capri at a to-die-for villa on the sea—the film has only a handful of extended scenes, but Godard's basic enthusiasm for staging and experimenting is relentless. With the purity of the 4K delivery, the excitement of being let into his perspective of the filmmaking process is everything any film enthusiast could desire.

See Paris for the first time

Having accidentally slipped into the public domain, there are umpteen versions of the 1954 MGM romantic melodrama, *The Last Time I Saw Paris*, available on DVD (a new one appeared just this month). The last time we saw a couple of typical examples was in Dec 00. But now Warner Bros. and Turner Entertainment Co. have gone to the source to release a gorgeous *WB Warner Archive Collection* Blu-ray (UPC#810134941618, \$22). This is not just a spotless, error-free, perfectly-colored-from-start-to-finish presentation, it is a spotless, error-free, perfectly-colored-from-start-to-finish presentation of an MGM movie, which has already undergone the original production rigors of impeccable costumes, impeccable décor, perfect coifs, and otherwise lavish and intricate creative attentions.

Directed by Richard Brooks, the 116-minute feature is an adaptation of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Babylon Revisited*, as if it had been written by Irwin Shaw. Van Johnson is writer lingering in Paris after the War who falls for a happy-go-lucky American played by Elizabeth Taylor. Walter Pidgeon, Donna Reed, Eva Gabor and a young Roger Moore costar. The story spans a number of years, as Johnson's character, frustrated over the path of his career, starts drinking to the point that his marriage dissolves. Frankly, we could be dead drunk and we still would want to please Taylor anyway we could, but maybe after a decade that wears off or something. You'd have to ask Richard Burton. Anyway, the film, which appears to have grabbed at least a couple of day's worth of Parisian location shots with Johnson, has romance, elegance and tragedy, with a running time that lets you feel you've gotten a drama's worth for your money. It could be said that Taylor was at her loveliest, but that was true for quite a span of years. In any case, not only is she gorgeous, which is duly amplified by the BD, but her performance is exquisite, and it carries the film past every shortcoming.

Letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1, even the color stock footage of Paris being liberated is gorgeous, and there is not a moment in the film that is anything less than perfect. This does draw attention to one irritation, however. Johnson has a very high forehead, and the MGM makeup crew appears to have only dusted his lower brow. With the vivid transfer, not only are the stage lights constantly glaring from the upper portion of his head, but you would swear that on occasion you can see the reflection of the camera itself. The aesthetic opposite of Taylor, Johnson is hardly appealing to look at anyway, and this just makes it all the worse, especially in the shots that Taylor does not share, to distract you from him. The monophonic sound is strong and clean, and the musical score manages to feed off the title song a dozen different ways without feeling redundant. There are optional English subtitles, a trailer and a particularly violent, 7-minute widescreen Tom and Jerry cartoon, *Touché, Pussy Cat!*, letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1 and also looking spotless, which is set in Paris, as well, where the mouse and a young nephew practice swordplay with the cat, often amputating and re-amputating the cat's tail as they washbuckle.

Iceland adventure

The first half of **Godland**, a Janus Films Criterion Channel Blu-ray (UPC#715515289917, \$30), is a simple, straightforward adventure, and the second half is an equally simple but more psychologically complex drama, flavored by the lingering sense of adventure that the 2022 film, as a whole, conveys. Set sometime in the late Nineteenth Century in Iceland, a priest undergoes an arduous journey across the harsh landscape to build a church in a small Danish coastal community, as tensions with his Icelandic guides (he can barely communicate with them) steadily rise. He also has a photography hobby and ostensibly chose not to take a boat straight to where the church would be built because he wanted to snap pictures of the landscape. The film is immediately compelling, calling to mind the opening of **The Piano** (the camera and its paraphernalia are quite bulky) and then proceeding in some ways with the same sort of cultural antipathies.

Presented not just in a squared full screen format that matches the aspect ratio of the photographs themselves (something the director, Hlynur Pálmason, claims did not occur to him until he was well into shooting the film), but fully windowboxed with rounded corners, just like a photograph, the color cinematography is often riveting. The film runs 147 minutes so that the journey can fully convey the strain it places upon the characters (even the horses—which are not Hollywood horses—are irritable), and the animosity that grows between the priest, played by Elliott Crosset Hove, and the lead guide, played by Ingvar Sigurdsson. By the time they reach the community and begin to build the church, Hove's character is well on the way to a nervous breakdown, despite the eager friendliness of the teenage girls living next door to where the church is being constructed. While the image transfer is lovely and very fresh, there are small, scattered speckles from time to time. The 5.1-channel DTS sound has a wonderful dimensionality, servicing both Alex Zhang Huntuai's musical score and the many carefully recorded environmental sounds. The film is in Danish and Icelandic with optional English subtitles, and comes with a trailer and a 17-minute interview with Pálmason, who deftly summarizes his creative process for the film while also talking about his career (he is still just getting started) and the adventure of shooting the feature.

Germi of inspiration

In the opening of the great Pietro Germi's terrific 1959 Italian police procedural, **The Facts of Murder**, a Radiance Blu-ray (UPC#760137-141051, \$40), a man chasing after a thief in an apartment building fires a gun above his head, only to have plaster fall on him—it's a great gag that we've never seen before in such a context. Germi also stars as the police inspector called in to assess the crime, quickly discerning that the victim, who lives alone, has a habit of inviting young men to his apartment at night. Nevertheless, the cops do eventually track down the stolen jewelry, but in the interim, a couple of days after the robbery, a woman who lives in a flat next to the victim is murdered, and the inspector is called back again. The 115-minute feature is wonderfully methodical and engaging, with memorable characters—playing a maid, a very young Claudia Cardinale, projecting a palpable vulnerability, is one of the suspects—and an ideal mix of mystery, underplayed humor and excitement. For fans of crime films, it will seem flawless.

The full screen black-and-white picture is flawless, as well, with crisp contrasts and no evidence of wear at any point. The monophonic sound is reasonably strong and Carlo Rustichelli's music is exquisite. The film is in Italian with optional English subtitles and comes with an interesting and fairly comprehensive 19-minute analysis of the evolution of crime films in post-War Italy; a fascinating 39-minute oral history about Germi featuring many different individuals going over his working methods, personality and artistry; and a passionate 47-minute talk about Germi's career, how the film fits into his career, and how his career fit into Italian cinema of the Fifties and Sixties, which also speaks to the frustration and excitement of knowing a movie is really, really good and trying to persuade others to see it.

Germi's most famous feature was his follow-up film, the 1961 **Divorce Italian Style**, which is available in a two-platter DVD set from The Criterion Collection (UPC#037429202524, \$40). Where **The Facts of Murder** is a serious film with incidental comedy, **Divorce Italian Style** is a comedic film, with incidental seriousness. In fact, the more people die, the funnier it becomes. Set in Sicily, and in some ways echoing precisely the interviews about infidelity that Pier Paolo Pasolini would later record there in his documentary, **Love Meetings** (Dec 23), Marcello Mastroianni is an aristocrat who has the hots for his cousin, embodied by the delectable Stefania Sandrelli, and schemes to get rid of his attentive but slightly mustachioed wife, bravely represented by Daniela Rocca, nudging her into an extramarital affair so that he has an excuse to shoot her. The film won a nearly unheard of Oscar for Best Screenplay, but it is obvious that under any hand less finely tuned to the nuances of the story than Germi, the film would have gotten nowhere. Running 104 minutes, it does take a while for the viewer's resistance to Mastroianni's primping and undeserved sense of privilege to lower, but he is so industrious in his plans and schemes that you eventually have to give him credit for the effort, since you know quite well he will get what is coming to him in the end.

The black-and-white picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1 and an accommodation for enhanced 16:9 playback. The picture is generally in very good condition. There are a handful of stray scratches (including a small black lump at the bottom of one shot) and a mild softness now and then, but generally the image has sharp contrasts and is free of wear. The monophonic sound is okay and there is another appealing Rustichelli score. The film is in Italian with optional English subtitles.

The second platter has several special features, including the same 39-minute testimonial to Germi that appears on **The Facts of Murder**. Also featured are 5 really nice minutes of screen tests for Sandrelli and Rocca, a pleasing 7-minute interview with screenwriter Ennio De Concini, and an additional 31 minutes

of rewarding intercut interviews with Sandrelli, co-star Lando Buzzanca and film critic Mario Sesti about the film, working with Germi and his career.

Two films from pre-War France

Blackhawk Films and Flicker Alley have released a **Flicker Fusion** Blu-ray double bill of full screen black-and-white Thirties French features, **French Revelations: Fanfare D'Amour / Mauvaise Graine** (UPC#617311-600593, \$27). The reason the two films are paired on the single platter, if one does not know already, will be obvious once one recognizes each film's claim to fame. The 1934 **Mauvaise Graine** was Billy Wilder's first directing effort, before he decided that he was still living too close to the Nazis for comfort. The 1935 **Fanfare D'Amour**, which was directed by Richard Pottier, is about two out-of-work musicians, played by Fernand Gravey and Julien Carette, who grab a job by dressing in drag and joining an all-girl band. Get it now? There are no gangsters lurking in the background and basically, Pottier and his collaborators have no idea what to do with their great idea. Running 115 minutes, the story is a mess, veering this way and that way. Both musicians fixate upon one of the other band members, played by Betty Stockfeld, although her buddy, played by Gaby Basset, also tags along on the dates so that they can pair off in the end. Nevertheless, the film is made up mostly of different incidents and gags involving randy showmen, strict fraternization rules, and the stunts Gravey and Carette's characters play on each other so they can be alone with Stockfeld's character as their genuine selves. It is a reasonable amount of fun, but after watching it, one is even more impressed by what Wilder and I.A.L. Diamond were bright enough to keep from it, and what they discarded.

The picture is soft at times and a bit aged, but workable, with no major distractions. The monophonic sound is reasonably strong and there are some nice songs here and there (along with a couple of embarrassing dance numbers). There is a commentary track from film expert August Ventura. It has a steady number of gaps, but when he does speak up he goes over the film's history, the subsequent adaptations, a survey of other cross-dressing films, a history of all-female bands, a bit about the cast and the crew, and the film's individual quirks. We should also note that Flicker Alley's menu design is exceptional, providing coherent summaries of each chapter at a glance, while offering the commentary in a second column on the same screen.

Mauvaise Graine is a French *Gone in Sixty Seconds* tale, set in Paris. Spurned by his wealthy father, a young man falls in with a group of car thieves. Running 77 minutes, most of the film depicts the different schemes the gang uses to filch the cars. There are automobile chases (one harrowing sequence is staged in the countryside at night) and touches of comedy here and there, and the conclusion is reasonably satisfying. Pierre Mingrand and Danielle Darrieux star.

We reviewed an Image Entertainment DVD in Jan 03, and the Blu-ray is moderately improved. The full screen black-and-white picture has some mild wear (after the opening credits, which are heavily damaged) now and then, but is in reasonably good condition for its age and history. The image is a bit soft, but generally clear, with well-defined contrasts, and is much sharper and more solid than the DVD. The monophonic sound is also aged but workable, and is stronger than the DVD. Much of the film is staged as a silent movie anyway. Film historian Jan-Christopher Horak supplies a very good commentary track, going over the backgrounds of the cast and the crew (Franz Waxman did the music), touching on the film's themes, and talking at great length about Wilder and the many German filmmakers who stopped off in Paris (like Wilder and Waxman) before continuing to Hollywood. "Like Billy Wilder and countless other German Jewish exiles attempting to flee Nazi terror in Europe, the film's heroes face an uncertain future. Even their relationship remains open to question. **Mauvaise Graine**'s mixed emotional messages would become typical for Wilder's later career, where he often freely mixed genres and emotional moods in a single film."

Dutch brothel

An easy-to-follow and reasonably entertaining 1984 Dutch film, **Broken Mirrors**, released on Blu-ray by Cult Epics (UPC#881190020890, \$35), has two parallel narratives. In one, a serial killer abducts his latest victim and takes snapshots of her as she gradually starves to death. In the primary narrative, a struggling housewife begins working in a bordello to make ends meet. Running 110 minutes, the film is primarily about the dynamics of the bordello, and the friends the heroine makes there among the other workers. The two stories intersect at the end, but not conclusively, so that while there is enough offered to impart a sense of resolution, the fates of the characters are still left largely up in the air. Despite a lack of eroticism, the appeal of the film is not where the stories are going but just the intrigue of their unfolding, with the character development being sufficient for sustaining a viewer's attention.

The film was directed by Marleen Gorris, who also made **A Question of Silence** (Jul 23), and is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.66:1. The footage of the serial killer is deliberately drained of color and has greyish hues. In contrast, the scenes in the bordello are, if anything, over saturated, with warm, bright colors. On the whole, the presentation is a touch grainy, but generally looks fresh and accurate. The monophonic sound is reasonably strong and the film is in Dutch with optional English subtitles. Also featured is a passable collection of memorabilia in still frame and an excellent 8-minute 1984 Dutch TV interview with American prostitute rights activist Margot St. James. There is also a basic commentary track by film teacher Peter Verstraten, providing the backgrounds of the cast and crew, supplying a history of feminist film theory and the Dutch New Wave, summarizing a trend in depicting housewives as prostitutes (the film is fairly specific in drawing parallels between the two vocations) and analyzing the artistry of significant scenes. Although rarely insightful, his talk is certainly a starting point for an analysis of the film, its historical impact and its meanings.

Cavalier's Combat

Jean-Louis Trintignant's character, the rebellious son of a wealthy industrialist, smacks his wife, played by Romy Schneider, near the beginning of the 1962 black-and-white French feature, **Le Combat Dans L'Île**, a Radiance Films release (UPC#760137138204, \$40). The thing is, because he is Trintignant, you still follow him as if he were the hero of the movie, and it isn't until almost the end, well after he attempts to assassinate a political figure with a bazooka, that what is in front of you the entire time becomes clear. The first film directed by Alain Cavalier (produced by Louis Malle), it has the feel of a Sixties French café movie, and while technically it is a crime film, it is more about relationships. The discoveries that occur as the 105-minute film advances, however, are part of its appeal and are best left to be revealed, delving into leftwing and rightwing politics and the reflection of those attitudes on romance. The important thing is that while at first the film feels like an aimless, messy conflagration of genres, incinerating the talents of its stars, it turns out to be meticulously plotted and executed, so that when the title sequence finally ignites at the film's finale, it is utterly engrossing and satisfying, illuminating every emotional nuance in the narrative.

Henri Serre and Jacques Berlioz co-star, and Jean-Pierre Melville also has a cameo part. The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.66:1. The image is spotless and contrasts are crisply defined. The monophonic sound is clear, and the film is in French with optional English subtitles. We reviewed a Zeitgeist Films DVD in Jun 10 that looked pretty good, but the greater solidity of the BD image is noticeable and the sound is stronger. There is a lovely 8-minute interview with Trintignant from 1983 about his start as an actor, the film and working with Schneider; 23 minutes of interviews with Cavalier talking about his start in films and what his thematic interests were in the movie (including the esoteric piece he made for Zeitgeist using stills from the film); and a decent 37-minute analysis of Cavalier's filmmaking and the movie's artistry. Along with a trailer, there is also a 1958 black-and-white film made by Cavalier (Maurice Pialat worked as an assistant) running 17 minutes, *Un Américain*, about an expatriate sculptor loafing around Paris as he gradually comes of age and recognizes his responsibilities.

Live Manga

Back in the Nineties, there were a number of highly entertaining Japanese live action adaptations of Manga and Anime tales shot on video, often with an English language market in mind. They had great action, viable special effects and great sex, but most importantly, they had imagination. Except that they were adapted from animated programs, they were unlike any other movies around, and they were awesome. The fresh 2022 Toei Video production, **Lion-Girl**, released on Blu-ray by Cleopatra and MVDVideo (UPC#889466469480, \$20), may be a throwback to those productions, but it is a highly welcome and exhilarating entertainment. Jamming together so much narrative at the start that it relies on Manga stills to explain the context (the rest of the world is underwater and only Japan, or 'New Nippon' is left), nasty mutants created by nastier meteor fragments are running around killing people, the ruling human dictator is trying to eliminate them, and there are a few 'good' mutants who battle both the bad mutants and the dictator's forces. Tori Griffith is the heroine, a 'good' mutant who journeys with her uncle to help another good mutant reach a band of rebels. The action is creative and vigorous, referencing **Scanners**, **X-Men**, **Road Warrior** and who knows what else. Japanese nudity rules have advanced since the last time we saw this stuff. Men are allowed to run around in the altogether. The naked women have essentially had their genitals erased, covered over with flesh-colored padding, so they look like dolls with anatomically correct breasts. It's wild, but it's an eye-ful. The film's narrative advances while at the same time cutting back to different moments in the heroine's life and development. She eventually faces off against a powerful villain and has to summon all of her strength to succeed. The film is gloriously ridiculous and outright silly, but it runs an awesome 122 minutes and is terrific fun every step of the way.

Damian Toofek Raven, Derek Mears and Stefanie Estes co-star. The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.9:1. The colors are bright and crisp, and most of the effects look great, while the more fanciful effects are deliberately outrageous. The 5.1-channel Dolby Digital sound is aggressive and lively. The film is in English—it was actually cast and shot in California—and there is no captioning. There is a minute-long introduction by the creator of the original Manga, Go Nagai; a trailer; a nice 2-minute montage of promotional photos; a 31-minute question-and-answer segment at one of the first screenings for the film (Griffith had not seen the film previously) with the cast and director Kurando Mitsutake; and an excellent 60-minute collection of behind-the-scenes footage and interviews with the cast and crew.

Mitsutake sits for a 28-minute conversation with Nagai in which they talk about the Manga, but also about Mitsutake's efforts to make the film. Mitsutake explains that he turned down American financing, because it would have meant toning down the sex and violence, and they both agree that Griffith was heaven sent. "Because it was a low budget film, we couldn't afford to hire star actors. From the beginning, you said it would be fine if Lion Girl was played by an unknown and I probably looked at around five hundred photos and selected the best candidates, who I then saw on video. At the time, it was still the era of COVID-19, so we couldn't audition in person until the very end. We relied heavily on video auditions and, in the final round, two candidates remained. One of them was Tori, who ended up playing the role, and the other was someone who was a bit hesitant about nudity or had some concerns, and negotiations had to be done through her

manager. Tori, on the other hand, was completely fine with it and said, 'I don't mind at all.' This is her first feature-length leading role. She put her heart and soul into it."

Mitsutake also provides a commentary track, having plenty of time to talk about the his earlier films, his effort to get the movie made, its references to both the political atmosphere and the pandemic in 2020, and to share many more production details. "The golden armor of Lion-Girl is the most expensive piece of props/costuming in the movie. This was done by the metalsmith in Hollywood, and this brass golden armor is actually the same material they made a gauntlet for [in] **The Avengers** movie. They had leftover brass from that production, so they used it for Lion-Girl's armor. This brass armor was heavy as hell, and every time Tori had to wear it, she gets a headache. I don't blame her. It took four people to dress her in this thing. After she puts it on, she's like a robot. She couldn't move freely. Derek is a seasoned costume actor, so he gave Tori this wonderful advice that when you put on the heavy costume, in order for the weight to be distributed the other way, she needs to lay down. Between the takes she laid down to not have to hold the whole weight on her body, and with that wonderful advice, Tori was able to do this picture with this amazingly beautiful but amazingly heavy golden armor as fully-formed Lion-Girl. I love the costume. For some reason, Toei Video didn't want us to ship it back to Japan so it's actually at my home. When my career goes down the toilet and I need some cash, I will be selling it on eBay."

Frankenheimer folly

More so than many of the great directors, it appears that John Frankenheimer was at the mercy of his shooting scripts. When he had a good script, his movie was fantastic (and it is beginning to look more and more as if **The Train**, and not **The Manchurian Candidate**, is his masterpiece, although he made at least a dozen certifiably great movies), but if the script was flawed and for whatever reason the project still got a green light, he would barrel ahead anyway. Sometimes his filmmaking pizzazz would be enough to gloss over the more severe problems and the film would still be a success (see **Grand Prix**). But there are also times when he would give the story all he has and it wouldn't matter, the film still came up short, and such is the case with his 1982 Paramount feature, **The Challenge**, which has been released on Blu-ray by Paramount and Kino Lorber Incorporated as a *KL Studio Classics* title (UPC#738329264550, \$25).

Right off the bat, the film has a problem because the lead actor is both perfectly cast and badly cast. Scott Glenn, who would go on to do great work in movies like **Silence of the Lambs** and **The Hunt for Red October**, plays a mediocre boxer who is hired to transport a ceremonial sword from Los Angeles to Japan. The problem with Glenn is that yes, he fulfills the role of the dumb boxer to perfection, but in doing so he robs the film of the charisma and heroic dynamism the movie really needs to hold a viewer's interest in his fate. A less persuasive but slicker performer would have made the character's subsequent mistakes more palatable. Spending the whole movie with him is not pleasant.

The film is well directed, but the script leaves much to be desired. Avoiding the specific story twists, Glenn's character ends up living in Japan in a compound run by Toshiro Mifune (who had worked with Frankenheimer in **Grand Prix**) where the ancient Japanese martial arts are practiced and adhered to, as opposed to the brother of Mifune's character, a corporate leader who covets the sword, but doesn't mind that his minions use Uzis rather than arrows and ninja stars. The bulk of the 108-minute film concerns the arc of Glenn's character as he re-trains to fight the Japanese way. There really isn't that much action in the movie, and the final battle, which then leaves the movie concluding with a lets-not-see-the-characters-get-arrested freeze frame, is more cringe worthy than exciting. Many poor, innocent security guards at the corporate headquarters are sliced and diced, with blood spewing every which way, as Mifune and Glenn's characters make their way up to the penthouse office for a final showdown. One witty fight with a villain is set amid cubicles, where the fighters make use of everything from desk lamps to staplers, but the movie would have needed quite a bit more of that kind of invention to succeed.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1. For the most part, the color transfer is excellent, adding to the immediacy of the images and the thrill when Glenn's character first lands in Japan and the cherry blossoms are in bloom. Once in a while there is a scratch or another marking on the image, but such flaws are few and far between. The monophonic sound tends to dampen Jerry Goldsmith's promising score, one of his wonderful mixtures of Asian and Western motifs. There are optional English subtitles and a trailer. The dependable commentary team of Steve Mitchell and Nathaniel Thompson supply an informative talk, going over Frankenheimer's rollercoaster career, savoring Goldsmith's music, admiring Glenn and Tifune's talents, explaining Steven Seagal's participation (he trained Glenn for the part) and looking at the film's artistry in a somewhat more positive light than what we are able to offer (they have no problem with all of the guards getting slaughtered—the thing is, it is a regular office building, not some maniacal mastermind's lair). While they don't bring it up during the scene where Glenn's character is buried in the ground up to his neck (they have plenty of other things to talk about during that sequence), they explore the film in terms of Japanese society and how it is reflected in Frankenheimer's designs. "This is a story about a society where space actually meant something. It wasn't just about ownership but it was about a certain amount of freedom."

Four Spaghetti westerns more

Continuing with their ecstasy-of-gold quest to dig up every Spaghetti western imaginable, Arrow Video has gathered a quartet of rough hewn horse operas for the Blu-ray release, **Savage Guns: Four Classic Westerns Volume 3** (UPC#760137140160, \$100). One film is outstanding, one is interesting and the other two not so much, but each has components that will certainly appeal to fans of the genre, from lightning-fast gunplay to thundering musical scores.

What is a western, exactly? Supposedly a movie set in the United States or Mexico during the Nineteenth or early Twentieth Centuries. But no definition is ironclad, and Spanish director Mario Camus' exceptional *The Wrath of the Wind* (*La Collera del Vento*) plays out as if it were a western, in the appropriate time setting, with horses, trains and guns, except that, due primarily to the European costume designs, but also to the blatantly Spanish locations, it is set in Spain and not the Americas. No matter, the 1970 feature is exceptionally well directed and is offered in three different formats, an English language version that runs 98 minutes, an Italian language version that also runs 98 minutes, and a Spanish language version that runs 106 minutes and adds, as a menu card explains, "mostly extensions to existing shots." Due to the obviousness of the setting and Camus' assured hand in every frame, the Spanish version is preferable, giving the scenes more time breath and the viewer a greater chance to absorb the film's emotional impact. All three versions can be accompanied by optional English subtitles.

Eschewing any sort of comedy in his performance, Terence Hill stars with Mario Pardo, portraying a pair of assassins who are hired to undermine labor unrest that is disturbing a group of wealthy landowners at harvest time. Pardo's character joins with a band of rowdy troublemakers who are out to bully the workers, while Hill's character goes undercover to find out who is organizing the peasants. Fernando Rey is perfectly cast as the central landowner and his presence is felt throughout the film, even though he does not show up until its second half, when Hill's character begins to have qualms about his assignment. The methodical nature and content of the narrative reminded us most of all of Gillo Pontecorvo's **Burn!** (Feb 06), which also wasn't a western, but felt like one. The two would make a satisfying double bill. Rich in metaphors (a scene that is a turning point is set a beach), the film is so good because it works on a macro level—exploring political and moral conflicts, demonstrating the economic clashes at work in the exploitation of labor, and even evoking the life of Jesus Christ—and on a micro level—despite its extended format, every scene is crisply executed and highly involving, with character growth and consistent visual appeal. After some energized gunplay, there is a scene near the beginning, when one of the villains forces a teenage girl in a cantina to do a dance, that is absolutely riveting, and while things were promising before that point, after that sequence, the film can do no wrong.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1. The color transfer looks great. The Spanish version has one or two moments where the quality of the image subsides, but otherwise all three presentations have bright hues, accurate fleshtones and a minimal amount of grain. The monophonic sound is strong and Augusto Martelli's musical score supports the atmosphere effectively. Along with a 4-minute alternate opening title sequence (for versions where the entire opening segment was excised) and a small collection of German memorabilia in still frame, there is a cute 9-minute homage to Spaghetti westerns from 2022 by Francisco Lacerda about two men bickering over gold in a graveyard, *Once upon a Time in the Azores...or Red Cemetery* (it has two title cards); a fine 19-minute interview with camera operator Roberto D'Ettore Piazzoli about his career and his reminiscences of the shoot; and a very good 17-minute analysis of the film's political undercurrent and challenging categorization, as well as the careers of Camus (who didn't want to make a western) and co-star Maria Grazia Buccella.

Film historian Howard Hughes supplies a commentary track, but it isn't very good. He mostly talks about Hill's career, although he does go over the many different versions of the film that have appeared over the years (it was often promoted as a 'Trinity' title because of Hill's presence), talks a bit about the other members of the cast and the crew (particularly Rey), reiterates the basics of the plot, and provides a few details about the Spanish locations and how the film was staged. "We're getting blood squib shots, blood splatters when guns are fired, which even, and this was post-Sam Peckinpah, this was just the following year after **The Wild Bunch**, but still, it's a new thing. Spaghetti westerns didn't really use special effects like that that much. There were two ways of doing it. There was the bag of red liquid that was exploded with an electrical charge, and the other way was a blood pellet that was fired in the gun, so sometimes they fired a blood pellet and sometimes they fired a very, very small, wooden pellet, which would do a 'kick up the dust' in an action sequence."

Michael J. Pollard landed a gig in Lucio Fulci's 1975 *Four of the Apocalypse* (*I Quattro Dell'Apocalisse*), which stars Fabio Testi and, filling out the titular quartet, Harry Baird and Lynne Frederick. They play four vagabonds who are in jail when a band of outlaws enters the town and slaughters everyone on the street. Effecting their release, they climb onto a mule-drawn wagon and begin to cross the countryside. Testi is a gambler, Pollard is a drunk, Frederick is a pregnant prostitute (Testi's character pretends to be her husband when they meet strangers, and starts feeling the responsibility of the role), and Baird is a half-crazy gravedigger. Tomas

Milian is the sadistic villain. The film runs 104 minutes and is episodic in structure, as the four cross paths with different groups of characters and have different interactions with them. The violence is sporadic, but Fulci being true to form, the gore is exhilarating. Pollard's performance is worth whatever the producers sprang to get him, and his death scene is especially touching. Indeed, while the film's story (which is based upon a couple of short tales by Bret Harte) is aimless, it builds up genuine emotions as the adventure progresses and particularly as the baby comes to term, an event that serves as the movie's spiritual climax. Hence, while the film is structured as if it was made up while the filmmakers went along, ignoring the occasional loose ends, it achieves an emotional crystallization that justifies the effort. It's messy, but what Fulci movie isn't?

There are a number of songs on the soundtrack—Seventies-style love ballads often describing the action—and they are all in English on both the Italian version of the film and the English version. Both versions can be supported by optional English subtitles. Since Pollard and Frederick also do their own voices on the English version, however, and the songs are there, it is the preferable choice. The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1. We're sure that those responsible for the film's image transfer tried as hard as they could to get something nice, but the cinematography is often soft and hazy, and contrasts are often weak, so the picture looks pretty grungy much of the time. Fleshtones appear reasonably accurate. The monophonic sound is fairly sharp and relatively clear. Along with a trailer and a good collection of memorabilia in still frame, there is a very good 15-minute overview of the film and its cast; a more elaborate and detailed 43-minute analysis of the film and its contributing artists, deconstructing the narrative and Fulci's techniques; a comprehensive 37-minute analysis of the film's music and the careers of the three musicians who contributed to it, Franco Bixio, Vince Tempera and Fabio Frizzi; and a nice 35-minute interview with production manager Roberto Sbarigia who worked on many of Fulci's films and talks about the various members of Fulci's crew, as well as what went on during the shoot.

Fulci expert Kat Ellinger supplies an excellent commentary track, talking a lot about Fulci's early career and how the film fits into his oeuvre, as well as going over the backgrounds of the other members of the cast and the crew, analyzing the use of sex and violence in the film, and discussing the various adaptations of the same Harte stories used in the film.

The music on *El Puro* (*La taglia è tua... l'uomo l'ammazzo io*) is heaven sent. It is sort of lifted from the three scores Ennio Morricone did for the Clint Eastwood Sergio Leone movies, but it was composed by Alessandro Alessandrini, who did the arrangements for many of Morricone's scores and was closely involved with the music for those films, so it is a legitimate steal and it is like finding a lost Beatles tune or Richard Halley's Fifth Concerto. There are pan flutes and whistling and choral passages and strumming guitars and all that great stuff, mixed with guys who have guns and beards. It takes a while to figure out what is going on in the 1969 Edoardo Mulargia feature, although the story turns out to be fairly simple. Robert Woods is a gunfighter who has seen better days and is awash in alcohol to drown his sorrows. Six very, very psychotic villains are looking for him, and cause trouble everywhere they poke around. Eventually he sobers up and takes them on. The acting is over the top by all who are involved, but the atmosphere, the gunfights and most importantly, the music, are sufficient to carry fans through the familiar twists and turns. It should be noted that although the film has the same narrative conclusion that *The Wrath of the Wind* presents, where that story point is fully satisfying in *Wrath*, it is simply a random occurrence at the end of *El Puro*, although that, in itself, has metaphysical resonance. The film is also notable for a scene in which two men kiss one another—after one of them has brutally murdered a woman.

There are four versions of the movie presented. The basic film runs 98 minutes, and is presented in English and in Italian. There is also a longer version, which has more character development and more music, that runs 108 minutes, in English and in Italian, with the new footage dubbed in Spanish and subtitled. Otherwise, there are optional English subtitles for everything else.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1. The color quality varies, but is usually bright and sharp during the standard part of the film, and noticeably paler and softer during the added footage. The monophonic sound is reasonably strong. A viable 15-minute summary of the film's attributes is included ("But it's not just the Brecht-like detached acting, it's borderline creepy, because characters that on paper didn't look to have that much depth, thanks to the acting acquire more nuances that are both existential and psychological in nature, which is something you wouldn't expect from an allegedly straightforward western."), along with a lovely 28-minute interview with Woods about the film ("I'm sure I was acting my butt off for the drunk scenes.") and his career as an Italian movie star, and an excellent 36-minute appreciation of Alessandrini's career and his contribution to the film.

A perfect demonstration of how the movie doesn't have to be good for the commentary to be rewarding, while we wish that genre experts Troy Howarth and Nathaniel Thompson had given their attention to *Wrath of the Wind* instead of Hughes, their talk for *El Puro* is highly engaging. Where Hughes talks on and on about Hill's career to limited effect, Howarth and Thompson go over the backgrounds and careers of each player and artist, but they continually point back to the film at hand for examples of the talent involved. Hence, even their digressions have a purpose. Because of the conversational tone they use, the talk is consistently entertaining and fully rewarding.

All of the characters in the wonderfully violent 1968 *I Want Him Dead* (*Lo Voglio Morto*), including the hero, are dumber than cactus. Directed by Paolo Bianchini, the film is set in a kind of bizarre Civil War landscape, where Texas and Virginia cohabit the same space. An arms manufacturer wants to keep the war going or else his investments are in trouble, so he plots to upend the surrender at Appomattox by, um, blowing up the officers who are meeting from each side to make the final arrangements. Okay. So, the villains that he hires dress themselves in Confederate uniforms and approach a Confederate guard with the explosives in their cart, announcing, “We’re from the 15th Illinois Cavalry Regiment, reporting for duty.” Apparently everyone is too stupid to realize that Illinois is not part of the Confederacy. The hero, played by Craig Hill, wants to kill one of the villains because that villain and his companion killed his character’s sister. For some reason, the hero doesn’t seem to care about the companion villain, even though no one, including the viewer, knows which one of the two actually did the horrific deed. Anyway, Hill’s character is lightning quick on the draw and deadly accurate with his aim, even after the bad guys put his face in the fire and leave a bad scar by one of his eyes. Didn’t seem to affect his depth perception. As quick as the hero is, however, his hearing doesn’t seem to be too good, because the villains are forever sneaking up behind him and bonking him on the head. It happens once, shame on the hero, but when it happens over and over, shame on the writers. There is a derivative and garish but fully appealing musical score by Nico Fidenco, full of guitars and choral chants and that sort of thing. Running 87 minutes, the action is terrific, the actresses (including Lea Massari) and Hill are attractive, and the atmosphere is wonderful, so fans will be excused for enjoying the film thoroughly (at least until the umpteenth time the hero gets clobbered on the head), but Ken Burns will be rolling his eyes.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1. Despite a grainy texture that adds to the film’s period setting, the color transfer looks reasonably good, with sharp, accurate fleshtones and minimal wear. The monophonic sound is also reasonably strong. The movie is in Italian with optional English subtitles. The opening song is sung in Italian, but there is also an alternate English version of the film, with the same running time, and its opening song is in English. The optional subtitled is also different on the English version, and the bandits are a little smarter, as well, explaining that they are a regiment from Charleston. Along with a trailer, there is a nice collection of memorabilia in still frame; a 30-minute interview with Bianchini from 2023 explaining how he backed into doing commercial films, recalling and characterizing the various cast members (and how everyone would scheme to blow a take so a stuntman could pay his mortgage), and breaking down the locations to describe them and explain what was shot where; a pleasing 21-minute interview with Fidenco from 2013 about his career and the technical aspects of scoring a film, although he also offers a somewhat skewed opinion that seems to be aimed (hopefully) only at the post-modern westerns (“I’ve seen Tarantino’s films. Honestly, and this will anger some people, but I didn’t really like them. They’re like a mishmash. I don’t think Americans really know how to do westerns. We’re better, there’s no comparison. Ours are meatier, more virile.”); an 18-minute interview with editor Eugenio Alabiso from 2023 about the art of editing and working with Bianchini; and a 13-minute overview of the film’s production history and attributes.

On a commentary, Spaghetti western experts Adrian Smith and David Flint think that, “This is one of the better Spaghetti westerns.” While not as informed as the contributors to the individual special features, they cover the general backgrounds of the cast and crew, and cheer the film’s strengths.

“The supporting cast are all pretty much, you look at the eyes, you look at the facial expressions.”

“They’ve all got the faces.”

“It’s why Italian cinema works so well, you know. I can’t get enough of it.”

“I think films of the this period—it makes me sound like one of those, kind of, you know, old farts, complaining about films that aren’t as good as they used to be. But I think you don’t get those characters in movies any more. You don’t get those faces in the same way.”

Enjoyable crime thrillers

Three Universal black-and-white 1957 crime films of distinctively different artistic quality that are nevertheless equal in their capacity to entertain have been collected in the terrific Universal Kino Lorber Incorporated Blu-ray set, **Film Noir The Dark Side of Cinema XV** (UPC# 738329260804, \$50). Indeed, when you include some of the ‘A’ pictures that were produced at Universal that same year, including **The Incredible Shrinking Man**, **The Man with the Thousand Faces** and **The Tarnished Angels**, it appears the studio was on quite a roll. All three features have passable monophonic audio tracks and come with optional English subtitles.

The most intelligent and emotionally compelling of the three, *Man Afraid*, has no big stars, and one of the primary actors, Eduard Franz, does not say a single word throughout the film. George Nader is a minister who inadvertently but legally kills a burglar in his house after his wife, played by Phyllis Thaxter, is injured and his son is terrorized. Reta Shaw is also featured, as a don’t-mess-with-me nurse. Following the incident, the father of the burglar begins to stalk the family. When Nader’s character goes to the police, however, the detective explains that they need concrete evidence before they can do anything about it—an unstated but pointed reference to the difference between faith and empirical knowledge. Directed by Harry Keller with widescreen cinematography by one of the inventors of ‘noir,’ Russell Metty, and a lively musical score from Henry Mancini, the 84-minute film has a consistently simple, logical plot and an emotionally compelling narrative that is thrilling, engrossing and ultimately uplifting.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1. The image is sharp and speckling is minimal. Although film historians David Del

Valle and David DeCoteau disparage Franz’s casting and performance, and otherwise misinterpret some of the film’s intentions, they still provide a decent and knowledgeable commentary track, going over the history of the film’s production and the backgrounds of the cast and crew. They would prefer that the movie go full-on **Cape Fear**, but that is a different film and this one has other goals. They also spend a great deal of time sharing gossip about the Hollywood closet of the Fifties and the relationships between the different stars at Universal—the ones that were willing to play the game and the ones that were not. “There is no point avoiding it. The problem with George Nader and his career in motion pictures was the fact that he was actively homosexual in a time when it was absolutely the most destructive thing you could do to your career in Hollywood, and people would go to great lengths to conceal this, and blackmail was very, very prominent at that time. George’s career was going nowhere. [In] 1957, he knew, while he was filming this, that this was it.”

A marvelous courtroom thriller starring Jeff Chandler, it is best not to share too much of the story for *The Tattered Dress*, because the plot turns are what make it so much fun. Chandler is a lawyer whose specialty is getting killers off the hook in jury trials, but he succeeds once too often, and there are consequences. Directed by Jack Arnold, the film runs 93 minutes and is pretty steadily nerve wracking, with most of the action set in a desert county run by a deceptively easygoing sheriff played by Jack Carson. Jeanne Crain, Gail Russell, Elaine Stewart, Edward Platt, Edward Andrews and George Tobias co-star. Letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1, the widescreen image is sharp and clean, despite an occasionally fleeting scratch, and adds greatly to the impact of the drama. Under Arnold’s assured hand, the film leads the viewer from one unexpected turn to the next, and relies upon the stars to sustain the story’s momentum. While the plot lacks the refreshing realities of *Man Afraid*, the film’s mix of movie stars and high concept dilemmas makes for ideal entertainment. A trailer is included.

Film historian Jason Ney supplies an excellent commentary track, covering every knowable detail of the film’s creation and placing it in many different contexts. When he explains that it was the first Universal black-and-white Cinemascope film, he also delves not just into a history of Cinemascope, but of specifically black-and-white Cinemascope and of Universal’s Cinemascope efforts. He goes over the backgrounds of the primary cast members and Arnold, pointing out how the film was an important shift for a number of them (Chandler wanted better roles; Arnold had been stuck in science fiction; Carson, who is bare-chested at one point, had never before played a villain so well) and the specific dynamics of a courtroom drama (“There will always be an audience for courtroom dramas because of the way they lend themselves to an easy-to-follow narrative structure that guarantees a resolution at its end. This film was no exception.”). He is not shy about examining the film’s shortcomings, but is very persuasive (not that we needed it) in explaining why, as an entertainment, it is still worthwhile.

If it were better known, the outrageous spy thriller, *The Girl in the Kremlin*, would easily land on everyone’s ‘Worst Movies of All Time’ lists, but in a good way. You long to see what **Mystery Science Theater** would do with it. Lex Barker is an American detective with an espionage background, working in Berlin a couple of years after the death of Josef Stalin, and Zsa Zsa Gabor is a client who hires him to find her twin sister, a doctor’s assistant in the Kremlin who has been missing since the day Stalin supposedly passed away. Jeffrey Stone is a one-armed American intelligence operative and good buddy of Barker’s character, who helps on the case, and William Schallert (who also had a bit part in *Tattered Dress*) acts up a storm as Stalin’s missing eldest son. It should be noted that Gabor, eventually facing off with herself, also has some choice moments. Traveling from Moscow to Berlin to Greece (without ever leaving the Universal lot), they become the target of forces that want to prevent their discovery of the big secret—Stalin simply retired and had some plastic surgery, it was his double who died. Directed by Russell Birdwell, the filmmaking itself is giggle inducing. There will be a normal, back-and-forth conversation when, to emphasize a particular dramatic point, the camera angle suddenly switches to a shot from behind a fire within a fireplace. Stone’s prosthetic arm is a continual point of amusement, there is an assassin dressed as a nun who switches sides when he is caught, and the 81-minute film begins, inexplicably but impressively, with a young woman having her head shaved in Stalin’s office (played by Natalie Darryl, who actually delivers, far and away, the best performance in the film). Stalin, played by Maurice Manson, rubs his hand over her bare head as soon as it is done, and then goes in for the surgery. The fun is just beginning.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1. Again, despite the periodic presence of stray speckles, the black-and-white image is lovely, with smooth contrasts and a sharp focus. Along with three TV commercials, film enthusiasts Emma Westwood and Paul Anthony Nelson provide a jovial commentary track, sharing everything you want to know about Stalin, his children and his doubles, as well as all sorts of arcana about the production (Darryl was actually paid more for having her hair chopped off than for acting in the film), its cast (they do digress at times, such as going into a biography of George Sanders only because he married not one but two of the Gabor sisters) and its crew (Birdwell’s greatest claims to fame was as a publicity genius—he guided Jane Russell to stardom—than as a director). While they don’t pick up on every delightful quirk, they seize upon the main head scratchers with enthusiasm. “I feel like this film smacks of too many chefs, or things being tacked on. Someone starting something. Someone doing another bit. I don’t feel that those credits, hearing those names they have, anyone would feel like they had great ownership over this film, or possibly even want it.”

Part One

The script was written long beforehand, and even the shooting was interrupted by the pandemic, so we can forgive the opening tease sequence in the 2023 **Mission: Impossible Dead Reckoning Part One**, a Paramount release (UPC#191329250082, \$26), even though it made us giggle. The film begins on what is declared to be a brand new ultra-sophisticated stealth submarine, which is in and of itself believable, of course, except that it is 'Russian.' As the world found out after 2022, every piece of military equipment built by Russia is put together with chicken wire and duct tape, so we had our chuckle and then settled into the 163-minute film. It is a science-fiction story, or at least that is how it is presented in **Part One**, with a sentient computer program busily taking control of every other online computer, and the heroes chasing after a fancy Rococo key, which is apparently the only device that can shut it down (here the writers lucked out, since 2023 became the year that A.I. entered the public consciousness). Now many viewers may look at the **'Part One'** in the title and surmise that they should wait for the sequel and watch the whole thing at once; and indeed, the opportunity to gorge upon 5-plus hours of a single **Mission: Impossible** story is a great temptation. But being long and simple, the film at hand is a lot of fun as it is. There is an opportunity for every action scene—a car chase through Rome, a train crash on a collapsed bridge, a foot chase through the ultramodern Abu Dhabi Airport, innumerable fist and gun fights—to stretch out its frantic pleasures and get its money's worth. Beginning to age appreciably, Tom Cruise stars, with Ving Rhames and Simon Pegg settled in nicely as his two sidekicks. To confuse things a little bit—it wouldn't be a **Mission: Impossible** movie if things weren't confusing—there are two 'good' females and two 'bad' ones. Naturally, the good ones, played by Hayley Atwell and Mariela Garriga, are brunette and the bad ones, played by Vanessa Kirby and Pom Klementieff, are blonde, except when Atwell's character puts on a mask and pretends to be Kirby's character. That's about as complicated as it gets. There have been a couple of really good **Mission: Impossible** movies, and this is not one of those, but it is still a fully enjoyable, mindless spectacle with an ever-catchy musical score (again, not as well orchestrated as the last time out, but still hitting an easy bulls eye) and more destruction and near-misses than you would ever want to experience in a multitude of real lives.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1 and an accommodation for enhanced 16:9 playback. The DVD longs for the sharpness that an upgraded format could provide, but otherwise the picture looks fine, with accurate hues and well-defined contrasts. The same is true of the 5.1-channel Dolby Digital sound, which has a terrific bass and many great separation effects, but would be easily bested by a more sophisticated delivery format. There is an audio track that describes the action ("He pops the clutch, and rides. The bike drops away, and Ethan follows it into space. Ethan flattens out his body to guide himself away from the cliff."), alternate French and Spanish audio tracks and optional English, French and Spanish subtitles.

American vigilante

Vigilantism in America goes in cycles and we seem to be in an upswing at the moment, thus matching the mood in 1982 when Dino De Laurentiis brought out the Lewis Teague film for Paramount, **Fighting Back**, which has now been released on Blu-ray by Paramount and Arrow Video (UPC#760137123767, \$40). Tom Skerritt is a deli owner in a small Italian niche of Philadelphia, who forms a neighborhood association when the city's services are too slow to react to a local increase in crime. The members use walkie-talkies—this was the Eighties, after all—and purchase a vehicle of their own to accelerate ambulance response rates, but they also carry around bats and Skerritt's character upgrades his car's front grill with a steel girder. Michael Sarazin co-stars as the more rational cop brother of Skerritt's character, and Patti Lupone is worth the price of the disc herself for her performance as the hero's wife—it is a real shame she didn't dabble in exploitation more often. Yaphet Koto is also featured, as a good guy, but in what is nevertheless a tenuous racial simplification. Running 98 minutes, the film avoids the 'lone wolf' narrative (mostly) to present instead an intriguing political portrait of the superficial forces at odds in urban neighborhoods (it does not address the underlying schemes of wealthy developers) and how the balance of power can be upset if citizens take matters into their own hands. There are action scenes, but these sequences are thoroughly integrated with a depiction of how the politics of a city function. The movie's continuity teeters uneasily at times as it leaps from placing the hero in one situation and then quickly moving him into a different dilemma, but the film's working class spirit definitely captures a certain social mood that many are embracing, and will continue to embrace, off and on, as long as American communities struggle with change.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1. The cinematography has an appropriate Eighties urban griminess but the transfer is sharp and as flat as the light is, the colors are accurate. There are shots on snow-covered streets that have a wonderful and vivid sense of realism to them, which adds greatly to the film's populist tone. The monophonic sound is reasonably clean and clear. There are optional English subtitles; a trailer; a TV commercial; a small collection of memorabilia in still frame; a terrific 29-minute interview with Teague, reflecting upon his career, working with De Laurentiis, and making the film (the credits say the film had locations in Philadelphia and in Camden New Jersey, but he is fairly persuasive in citing specific New York City locations that were also used); and a 22-minute interview with Italian camera operator Daniele Nannuzzi, who was part of the crew De Laurentiis brought over to shoot the film, talking about the shoot (it was so cold cinematographer Franco Di Giacomo had him do most of the outdoor work), sharing his thoughts about the locations ("The Italian American community was a bit stuck in the past, so to speak. They're a bit 'agée,' vintage if you will."), describing the

problems that popped up, and recalling the people he worked with (he also thinks Lupone was a really good actress).

Gordon gets a shot

A staple on television in the Fifties and Sixties, Don Gordon broke into features as Steve McQueen's partner in **Bullitt**. He earned top billing in his next film, a 1970 caper movie shot in Dubrovnik, **The Gamblers**, which has been released on Blu-ray by VCI Entertainment and MVDVisual (UPC#089859910326, \$20). He then had a brief flurry of other significant supporting screen roles in the early Seventies, but soon found himself mostly back on TV for the remainder of his career. It's a shame, because he has a nice screen presence and plenty of skills to carry a decent movie. **The Gamblers**, however, is kind of a mess and only worth watching if you like him a lot, or you like Dubrovnik, or you like Suzy Kendall, who plays his love interest. Rated 'G,' the 93-minute film features Gordon as a card cheat who plots with several other travelers to swindle a wealthy financier. The only reason you cannot see the twist coming a million miles away is that it is so obvious you assume that another twist will be coming in behind it, but the end of the movie arrives instead. The scenes between Gordon and Kendall are pleasant, and Massimo Serato and Faith Domergue aren't bad as the financier and his wife, but the rest of the performances are terrible, and the direction, by Ron Winston, is just as bad. The camera placements are dull and awkward, and the lighting changes the intensity of the colors from one shot to the next. Letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1, the transfer is probably accurate and actual wear to the source material is limited to a handful of sequences, but picturesque shots of Dubrovnik aside, the film is not pretty to look at. The monophonic sound is adequately transferred but badly recorded and we found ourselves at times relying on the optional English subtitles to decode the conversations. Film expert Robert Kelly supplies a passable commentary track, except that, taking the film at face value, he thinks that it is a comedy and not simply inept filmmaking, and he likes the movie very much. He does fill in details about the movie's history (the jacket copy on the back of the disc compares the story to a famous Fyodor Dostoyevsky novel, *The Gambler*, which is absolutely baffling, but Kelly suggests, smartly, that the original publicist who coined the blurb—that the jacket copy has been lifted from—was confusing the Dostoyevsky novel with a Nikolai Gogol short story, *The Gamblers*, that does line up more closely to the narrative), goes over the careers of the cast and the crew, mentions other films and TV shows that were shot in Dubrovnik, and continually points out moments that he finds delightful. "I mean we like watching guys like James Bond or Danny Ocean, just super-smooth operators, but it's kind of fun to see a guy who's more like us, doin' his best." That easily could describe Winston's direction just as readily as it describes Gordon's character.

Monk in Blu

Every one of us has a little bit of Monk inside themselves. It's just that Tony Shalhoub's Monk has it all in one place. Universal and Kino-Lorber Incorporated have released **Monk Season One** as a four-platter *KL Studio Classics* Blu-ray (UPC#738329263652, \$40). Originally broadcast in 2002, the show is a clever murder mystery series, yes, but it thrives on the humor of Shalhoub's performance and how recognizable his many phobias and obsessions are, because you may not have this one or that one, but you definitely have the other one, at least once in a while. It is the comedy of self-recognition, transposed by a supremely talented actor into a character who is vulnerably human and superhuman at the same time.

We reviewed the DVD release of **Season One** in Oct 04, and while it was perfectly adequate, the BD is greatly improved, both in the sharpness and precision of the image and the fullness of the DTS surround sound—particularly Jeff Beal's jazz musical score, which was never better than it was during the initial season. As for the image, which is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1, we would highly recommend you go directly to the first episode on the second platter, *Mr. Monk Goes to the Carnival*. Much of it, including the murder, is set at night, and the carnival colors are so varied and gorgeous, it gives the finale of **Some Came Running** a run for its money. Even during the day, the carnival location is brightly colored with crisp, varied hues, and every moment is riveting. The DVD's presentation is bland in comparison. And of course, the reactions of Shalhoub's character to the massive Petri dish represented by the carnival grounds are a delight. It is as much fun as the mystery, about who stabbed the victim on the Ferris wheel when the man who was sitting with him claims to be innocent (the solution is obvious, but completely unexpected). Bitty Schram plays the hero's nurse and assistant, Ted Levine is the skeptical chief police detective (he becomes friendlier in the subsequent seasons) and Jason Gray-Stanford is another detective, who took the hero's place on the force after his emotional difficulties led to a semi-retirement.

The first platter opens with the 79-minute pilot episode, *Mr. Monk Meets the Candidate*, in which the bodyguard to a political candidate is killed during an assassination attempt at an outdoor rally. A slight variation of that episode (with a recap and added credit sequences, including the Randy Newman song that didn't otherwise appear until a later season) is then presented in two 43-minute parts as the actual first two episodes of the season, introducing the characters, their relationships and the hero's many phobias. Each subsequent episode also runs about 43 minutes. A psychic discovers a dead body in *Mr. Monk and the Psychic*, and Shalhoub's character doesn't believe that the spirit world guided her there. A recurring villain is introduced in *Mr. Monk Meets Dale the Whale*, with Adam Arkin as a morbidly obese man who demonstrably cannot fit through his own apartment door, but was seen committing a murder elsewhere.

A lovely episode that places the hero as one of the more sensible and sane characters, *Mr. Monk Goes to the Asylum* has Shalhoub's character, who is still grieving over his wife (an unsolved murder from several years previous) voluntarily committing himself after an incident. He meets a number of colorful inmates and very quickly determines that a murder that had occurred before he came there was not resolved correctly, putting him in a great deal of danger. The episode is both suspenseful and quite humorous. A billionaire dresses up as a mugger, tries to rob a couple on the street and is killed in *Mr. Monk and the Billionaire Mugger*. In *Mr. Monk and the Other Woman*, a lawyer is killed and one of his files is taken, but rather cleverly, each obvious suspect turns out not to be the one who did it, while Shalhoub's character, ever so delicately, gravitates towards one of the suspects who looks like his own deceased wife. In *Mr. Monk and the Marathon Man*, a runner somehow manages to slip away from a highly publicized and observed event to kill his girlfriend. You know who did it right off, but how he did it is the engaging question. During **First Season**, the show's creators were constantly experimenting with format, seeking to learn what combination of regular characters would work the best. Thus, like *Asylum*, Levine does not appear in *Mr. Monk Takes a Vacation*. Building on the gag that Shalhoub's character doesn't know how to relax, he is at a resort with Schram's character and her son when the son sees a murder committed in one of the hotel's rooms, through a telescope. The hero enlists the help of a comical but gung-ho hotel security guard to find out what happened. The actual mystery is reasonably clever and the show is satisfying, but it is also clear that there wasn't much more the creators could do with that alternate premise. In *Mr. Monk and the Earthquake*, a woman takes advantage of a natural event to murder her husband, and that same event is so traumatic for the hero that he begins speaking gibberish. Another character also appears, apparently interested in Schram's character, and the stories entwine cleverly. Willie Nelson, playing himself, is accused of murder in *Mr. Monk and the Red-Haired Stranger*, and no, he didn't do it. Finally, in *Mr. Monk and the Airplane*, Shalhoub's character is forced to go on an airplane trip but despite his neurotic panic, he also notices that another passenger has committed a murder in the airport. Brooke Adams is marvelous as a stewardess, Garry Marshall plays a put-upon fellow passenger and Tim Daly plays himself, as another passenger.

The 20 minutes of promotional featurettes that were included on the DVD have also been carried over on the last platter.

Remember the Eighties

A sort of travelog, the 1988 **Mondo New York**, released as an *MVD Re-wind Collection* Blu-ray by MVDvisual (UPC#760137134480, \$40) in a two platter set that also includes a soundtrack CD, dabbles in various alternative arts and entertainments that could be found in Manhattan in the mid-Eighties, adding several make-believe sequences to spice up the tour. There are performances (some live and some staged) by bands that were well into the transition from punk to glamrock (the best clip is a glam cover of *A Hard Day's Night*), visits to performance art pieces that make ready use of nudity or gore to attract attention, incoherent glimpses of an S&M nightclub and a Chinatown 'white slavery' auction, a recitation by a street poet who equates reading and writing with rape (it is actually one of the more thoughtful efforts in the film), a look at a supposed voodoo ritual that includes chicken heads being bitten off of live chickens, a cockfight, a junkie shooting up, and so on. The highlight is the outdoor performance by two street comedians who base their humor on ethnic and racial stereotyping that is shunned today but can still be appreciated for the precision of their deliveries and the raw enthusiasm of the crowds cheering them on. Just as some sequences (a performance artist in another sequence bites off the heads of two mice) are nauseating, others, however much they use sex and nudity to attract attention, sustain the intellectual pretense of raging against the system. Somehow, the system survived, but the film is now a precious cultural time capsule of the attitudes and impulses that accompanied what was essentially the disintegration of the Sixties, as 'do your own thing' morphed into 'do things because nobody else does.'

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1. Some of the darker sequences are a little blurry, but all in all, the transfer looks very nice and is a substantial improvement over the grainy LD we reviewed in Aug 97. The audio is even better, with a two-channel stereo that brings a nice dimensionality to much of the music and clear, well-rounded tones (the LD was in mono). There are optional English subtitles, a good collection of promotional photos and press materials in still frame, a trailer and several lovely interviews from 2022 with the film's participants, all now much older and wiser. The guy who bites off the heads of mice, for example, Joe Coleman, talks for 50 minutes about the troubled childhood he had, how that led him to his performances (he was even arrested at one point; Bob Barker also tried to ban him from, well, entertainment), and what maturity has taught him about art and life. The most thoughtful interview is with Joey Arias, who performed *A Hard Day's Night* in quads. He talks with great frankness about his compulsion since early childhood to dress up theatrically, the transitions he has undergone over the decades, the transitions the world has undergone and what he thinks about it, and why nothing will ever be like the moments that the film captured. "Everything was colorful and different. The garden of artistry was everything. These days, I think the Internet [messed] everything up. I think the social media thing [messed] everything up. We had to do this to show who we were, to be exposed, to meet people, so you create art. These days, they don't do that. Stop looking at the phone, because that's not going to help you." The film's sequences are linked by a braless blonde in a t-shirt, Shannah Laumeister, appearing to stroll from one performance space or interlude to the next. She talks for 36 minutes, describing how she lied about her age to get the gig and the impressions it left with her, along with describing her subsequent career as an actress and art curator, and talking about the fluid nature of art. Finally there is a 27-minute interview with producer Stuart Shapiro, who conducted all of the other interviews and here talks about his own career, about the film and about his game attempt to capture the zeitgeist.

The CD, sadly, does not include *Hard Day's Night*. Running 36 minutes, it mixes the film's background music with a few of the music performance, but also interrupts the flow of music with selections of the comedy routines.

DVD News

CRITERION CORNER: The Laura Poitras documentary, **All the Beauty and the Bloodshed**, will come with an interview with Poitras and two conversations from the 2022 New York Film Festival, one featuring Poitras, artist Nan Goldin, co-producer and PAIN activist Megan Kapler, PAIN activist Harry Cullen, and lawyer and PAIN member Mike Quinn discussing the making of the film, and the other featuring Goldin on art and activism. Amir Naderi's **The Runner** will include a conversation between Naderi and filmmaker Ramin Bahrani; an audio interview from 2022 with Naderi and actor Madjid Niroumand, moderated by curator Bruce Goldstein; and **Waiting**, a 1974 film by Naderi, featuring an afterword by the director. Alice Diop's **Saint Omer** will have interviews with Diop; a conversation between Diop and author Hélène Frappat; and a conversation between Diop and filmmaker Dee Rees from a 2023 episode of *The Director's Cut – A DGA Podcast*. Gus Van Sant's **To Die For** will be issued in 4K format with a commentary featuring Van Sant, cinematographer Eric Alan Edwards and editor Curtiss Clayton; and deleted scenes. William Dieterle's **All That Money Can Buy (a.k.a. The Devil and Daniel Webster)** will feature a commentary by film historian Bruce Eder and Steven C. Smith, biographer of composer Bernard Herrmann; a restoration demonstration; a reading by actor Alec Baldwin of the short story by Stephen Vincent Benét on which the film is based; an episode of the Criterion Channel series *Observations on Film Art* about the film's editing; a comparison of the differences between the July 1941 preview version of the film, *Here Is a Man*, and the film's 1943 re-release as **The Devil and Daniel Webster**; and The Columbia Workshop's radio adaptations of Benét's short stories *The Devil and Daniel Webster* and *Daniel Webster and the Sea Serpent*, both featuring music by Herrmann.

NEW IN BLU: The following titles were recently issued on Blu-ray—Mind Melters 21 (Acid Bath); Shredder Orpheus (AGFA); Creepshow Season 4 (AMD); Life Is Cheap but Toilet Paper Is Expensive (Arbelos); The Dark Room, Never Say Never, Raid on the Lethal Zone, Return of the Theatre of Terror, Scream of the Lagoon, Stitches, War Movie the American Battle in Cinema (Bayview); The Sacramento at Current Speed (Blue Water); Foresight Killer Instinct, Scam, Some Happy Day, White Blood (Bounty); The Creator, Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny, The Mandalorian Season 1, The Mandalorian Season 2 (Buena Vista); The Christmas Martian (Canadian); War Movie The American Battle in Cinema (Cantilever); Kill Butterfly Kill (Cauldron); Bollywood Horror Collection, Fögi Is a Bastard, Men behind the Sun, Men Behind the Sun 2 Laboratory of the Devil, Men Behind the Sun 3 A Narrow Escape (CAV); The Kill Room, Last Man Standing, Masaaki Yuasa Five Films, Onyx The Fortuitous And The Talisman Of Souls, The Red Balloon and Other Stories Five Films by Albert Laorisse, Shaun the Sheep Complete Series, Showdown at the Grand, Weird The Al Yankovic Story (Cinedigm); 35 Shots of Rum, Walk Up (Cinema Guild); Our Town (ClassicFlix); Blast of Silence, Guillermo Del Toro's Pinocchio, The Red Balloon and Other Stories Five Films by Albert Laorisse (Criterion); Benny's Bathtub (Deaf Crocodile); What Happens Later (Decal); I Blame Society (Dekalog); Death Athletic (Encode); Satanic Hispanics (Epic); Warm Blood (Factory 25); The Terror (Film Masters); Blue Rita (Full Moon); Better Days, Chick Flick, A Disturbance in the Force, One Road to Quartzsite (Giant); Elemental Reimagine Wildfire (Go); Fireline (Gravitas); Rape Is a Circle (Grimoire); Token Taverns (Indie Rights); Journey to the West (Kani); The Ballad of Little Jo, Colombo The 1970s Seasons 1-7, The Exiles, Goodbye Dragon Inn, The Hills Have Eyes Part 2, House of the Long Shadows, I... for Icarus, Les Vampires, Made in Hong Kong, The Man Who Wasn't There, Mille Milliards de Dollars, Monk Season Two, The Quatermass Experiment, The Questor Tapes, Running Scared, Sinner The Secret Diary of a Nymphomaniac, Story Ave, Suspect Zero, Tokyo Pop (Kino); Grave Image (Leomark); Distant Tales (Lifesize); Rumble Through the Dark (Lionsgate); Eternal Spring (Lofty Sky); Robotica Destructiva (Lushy Lemming); Battle Kaiju Series 02: Ultraman Vs. Alien Baltan (Mill Creek); Pig Killer (MPI); Passages (Mubi); Fremont, OSS-117 (Music Box); Apple Seed, August Underground's Penance, The Blue Jean Monster, Cushing Curiosities, The Day of the Locust, Elegant Beast, Hail Caesar, Horrors of the Black Museum, The Inspector Wears Skirts, Jailhouse Wardress, The Kinji Fukasaku Collection, Mike Hammer's Mickey Spillane, Savage Guns Four Classic Westerns, Stella Maris, That Uncertain Feeling, The Warriors (MVD); Cats of Malta (Nexus); The Odd Couple Complete Series, Paw Patrol The Mighty Movie, Pet Sematary Bloodlines, Star Trek Strange New Worlds Season Two, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles Mutant Mayhem (Paramount); A Spectrum of Theatre The Story of Carl Clay (Rainbow); The World Is a Beautiful Place and I Am Not Afraid to Die (Rising Sun); The Lost, There's Nothing Out There (Ronin); Blacula, Breakin', Breakin' 2 Electric Boogaloo, High Spirits, The Sure Thing, Thunder Road (Sandpiper); The Killing of Bobby Green (Saturn's Core); Butcher's Crossing, Dumb Money, Pollock (Sony); Top Knot Detective (Umbrella); The Exorcist Believer, Five Nights at Freddy's; Northern Exposure Complete Series (Universal); The Retirement Plan (Vertical); AmericanEast, Anna Christie, Babylon 5 Complete Series, Black Mama White Mama, The Cutting Edge Going for the Gold, De-Lovely, Eureka, Gentleman Jim, The Great Ziegfeld, Looney Tunes Collector's Choice V.2, Madame Bovary, A Midwinter's Tale, Pajama Party, The Rachel Papers, Respect, Saving Grace, Tarzan The Ape Man (Warner); The Ghost Station, Mercy Road, The Wandering Earth II (Well Go); The Runner (Yellow Veil); I Want to Believe, The Town That Loved Bigfoot, Why We Fight (ZapruderFlix).

NEW IN 4K: The following titles were recently issued in 4K format—The Creator, Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny, The Mandalorian Season 1, The Mandalorian Season 2 (Buena Vista); Clue, The Dead Zone, JFK, The Kill Room, The Man in the Iron Mask, Point Break, Stephen King's Silver Bullet, Weird The Al Yankovic Story (Cinedigm); Days of Heaven, Guillermo Del Toro's Pinocchio (Criterion); Clive Barker's Underworld, Face/Off, Suspect Zero (Kino); Young Guns (Lionsgate); Mondo New York, The Warriors (MVD); Office Christmas Party, Pet Sematary Bloodlines, Star Trek Strange New Worlds Season Two, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles Mutant Mayhem, Titanic (Paramount); School Daze, Stand by Me (Sony); The Exorcist Believer, Five Nights at Freddy's (Universal); The Color Purple (Warner); The Man from Nowhere, The Wailing (Well Go)

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(I Quattro Dell' Apocalisse) p8
(I Want Him Dead) p9
(La Collera del Vento) p8
(La taglia è tua... l'uomo l'ammazzo io) p8
The Last Picture Show 4K p1
The Last Time I Saw Paris p5
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Current Attractions

The following titles recently appeared for the first time:
Adventures in Game Changing (Filmhub)*
The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet Complete Series (MPI)
Alistair 1918 (Filmhub)*
All Aboard (Alpha)*
Alonzo Bodden Stand-Up Spotlight (Mill Creek)
An American Ballet Story (Random)
America's Freestyle (Freestyle)
AmericanEast (Warner)
The Apollo Experience Apollo 17 (Dreamscape)
Apple Seed (MVD)
August Underground's Penance (MVD)
Baby Animals Top 10 (Paramount)
Back in the No (Leomark)
Bad Things (AMD)
Barrio Boy (Breaking Glass)*
Bear (Filmhub)*
Better Days (Giant)
Bitch Splat (Samuel Goldwyn)
Black Mama, White Mama (Warner)
Blacula (Filmhub)
Blind Eye Artist (Buffalo 8)*
Blippi's Curiosity Calls (Moonbug)
Blood Mountain (Dreamscape)
Bodyshop (Breaking Glass)*
Boggy Creek The Series (Retro)
Boggy Creek The Series (Retromedia)*
Brackenhore (Filmhub)*
The Brain That Wouldn't Die (Filmhub)*
Breakin' (Sandpiper)
Breakin' 2 Electric Boogaloo (Sandpiper)
Butcher's Crossing (Sony)*
Cats of Malta (Nexus)
Censurado Ode to Love (Filmhub)*
Chest (Filmhub)*
Chick Flick (Giant)
The Chimera Effect (Filmhub)*
A Christmas without Snow (DigiComTV)*
City of Love (Freestyle)*
Cold Play (Filmhub)*
The Complete Hal Roach Streamliners Collection (ClassicFix)
Continuum (Filmhub)*
Convict's Code (Film Masters)
Cordially Invited (Filmhub)*
The Creator (Buena Vista)
Creepshow Season 4 (AMC)
The Cutting Edge Going for the Gold (Warner)
Daddy Daughter Trip (Mill Creek)
Damien (Ram)*
Dangerous Hours (Alpha)*
Deliver Us (Magnolia)
De-Lovely (Warner)
Devil Times Five (Alpha)*
Dhogs (Filmhub)*
The Dick Van Dyke Show Complete Series (MVD)
The Dirty South (Cinedigm)
A Disturbance in the Force (Giant)
Divine Influencer (Mill Creek)
Do Not Disturb (MPI)
Doc Martin Complete Series (AMD)
Don't Let the River Beast Get You! (Filmhub)*
Dumb Money (Sony)
Eddie Griffin Stand-Up Spotlight (Mill Creek)
The Eden Theory (Indican)
The Elderly (MPI)
Elevator Game (AMD)
Eternal Spring (Lofty Sky)*
Eureka (Warner)
Evolution Earth (Paramount)
The Exiles (Kino)
The Exorcist Believer (Universal)*
Far from the Apple Tree (Kino)
Fearless Faith (Green Apple)*
Ferryman (Random)*
The Fifth Thoracic Vertebra (Indiepix)
Fireline (Gravitas)
Five Nights at Freddy's (Universal)
Fogi Is a Bastard (CAV)*
Follow the Money (Dreamscape)
Foo Fighters Then and Now (Dreamscape)
Foresight Killer Instinct (Bounty)
The 4biden Fables (Filmhub)*
Fremont (Music Box)
Galaxy Warriors (SRS)
Get Close (Filmhub)*
Ghost Hunters V.2 (DigiComTV)*
Ghost Hunters V.3 (DigiComTV)*
The Ghost Station (Well Go)
Ghosts (Alpha)*
Ghosts 2 Electric (Warner)
Ghosts Season 4 (Warner)
Gigolette (Alpha)*
Golden Twilight Off Classic Tractor: Trolleys in The 1930s And 1940s (Alpha)*
Groundbreakers (Paramount)
Guillermo Del Toro's Pinocchio (Mudbound)
The Hand (Synergetic)
High Spirits (Sandpiper)
Hitman (Lonestar)*
Hope (Dreamscape)
Horrors of the Black Museum (MVD)
House of Temptation (Filmhub)*
Hunting Humans (Filmhub)*
I Can (Kappa)
I Want to Believe (Zapruderfix)
I'm a Creepy Crawly (Dreamscape)
I'm a Fish (Dreamscape)
I'm a Monster (Dreamscape)
Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny (Buena Vista)
Inheritance (Leomark)
Into the Weeds (Film Movement)
Invaders from Mars (Sandpiper)
Invisible Beauty (Magnolia)
Jailhouse Wardress (MVD)
Jules Verne's Mysterious Island (Green Apple)*
Kamp Korral
SpongeBob's Under Years Season 1 V.2 (Paramount)
The Kangaroo Kid (Alpha)*
Kenneth (Filmhub)*
The Kill Room (Cinedigm)
Killer (Gravitas)*
La Soga 3 Vengeance (Freestyle)
Lacrimosa (Leomark)
Let's Not Meet (Filmhub)*
Life Insurance Lottery (Filmhub)*
Lighthouse (Film Masters)
Little Bird (Paramount)
Loud Than Rock (Green Apple)*
The Love Destination Breathing Meditations (Dreamscape)
Love in Glacier National/The Dog Lover's Guide to Dating (Cinedigm)
Love Spies and Cyanide (Dreamscape)
Meathook Massacre (Wild Eye)
Meathook Massacre 2 (Wild Eye)
Meathook Massacre 3 (Wild Eye)
Meathook Massacre 4 (Wild Eye)
Megalodon The Frenzy (Greenfield)
Mercy Road (Well Go)
A Message to the Stars (Dreamscape)
Mickey Spillane's Encore for Murder (MVD)
Mike Hammer's Mickey Spillane (MVD)*
Mind Melters V.2 (Acid Bath)
Mondo New York (MVD)
Morning Show Mysteries (Cinedigm)
Moving The Millers' (Minnie Moore Mine Mansion (Dreamscape)
Mr. Johnson (Dreamscape)
Mrs Sidhu Investigates (AMD)
Never Too Late for Love (Film Movement)
Newsreels Of World War II V.1 1939-1943 (Alpha)*
Newsreels Of World War II V.2 1943-1945 (Alpha)*
Nothing in Los Angeles (Filmhub)*
On Fire (Cinedigm)
One Road to Quartzsite (Giant)
The Other Zoey (Brainstorm)*
Our Town (ClassicFix)
Outlaw Johnny Black (Samuel Goldwyn)*
The Oyster Shucker (Random)*
Pajama Party (Warner)
Panic (Cheesy Flicks)
Passages (Mubi)
The Passengers of the Night (Kino)
The Patrick Star Show Season 1 V.2 (Paramount)
Paw Patrol The Mighty Movie (Paramount)
The Penalty (Alpha)*
The Persian Version (Sony)
Pet Sematary Bloodlines (Paramount)
Phantom Fun-World (Deskpop)*
The Phantom of the Opera 1925/1930 (ReelClassic)
The Plastic Age (Alpha)*
Private Buckaroo (DigiComTV)*
Provo (Giant)
Puppetry of the Penis (Bounty)
Queen of the Amazons (Cheesy Flicks)
Quest for Steel (Bounty)
The Rachel Papers (Warner)*
Radical Wolfe (Kino)
The Red Balloon and Other Stories Five Films by Albert Laroisse (Mudbound)
Respect (Warner)
The Retirement Plan (Vertical)
Reveille (Buffalo 8)*
The Road Dance (Music Box)
Robotica Destructiva (Lushy Lemming)*
Route 66 The Untold Story of the Women on the Mother Road (Dreamscape)
A Royal Christmas Crush/Take Me Back for Christmas (Cinedigm)
Rubble & Crew (Paramount)
The Runner (Yellow Veil)*
Sabotage (MVD)
The Sacramento at Current Speed (Blue Water)
Scam (Bounty)
Scorpion Complete Series (Paramount)
Scream Blacula Scream (Warner)
Screwdriver (Buffalo 8)*
Seeking Oblivion (Green Apple)*
Showdown at the Grand (Cinedigm)
The Skull (Dreamscape)
Skymaster Down (Dreamscape)
Soft Liquid Center (Giant)
Some Happy Day (Bounty)
Something Walks in the Woods (Filmhub)*
A Spectrum of Theatre The Story of Carl Clay (Rainbow)
SpongeBob SquarePants Season 13 (Paramount)
Spy in the Ocean (Warner)
Sri Ashi The Warrior (Cinedigm)
Star Trek Strange New Worlds Season 2 (Paramount)
Story Ave (Kino)
Strange Diary (MVD)
The Subdivision (Bosco)
A Taste of Praise (BMC)
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles Mutant Mayhem (Paramount)
The Terror (Film Masters)
That Girl Complete Series (MVD)
35 Shots of Rum (Cinema Guild)*
Thunder Road (Sandpiper)
Token Taverns (Indie Rights)*
A Towing Task: The Story of the Peace Corps (Kino)
The Town That Loved Bigfoot (Zapruderfix)
Tribal (Vision)*
The 211 Home (Mill Creek)*
Un Milagro Para Navidad (Green Apple)*
Una Fe Sin Miedo (Green Apple)*
Under the Boardwalk (Paramount)
Union Pacific Super Railroad (Alpha)*
Walk Up (Cinema Guild)
War Movie The American Battle in Cinema (Bayview)
The War on Disco (Paramount)
Weird The Al Yankovic Story (Cinedigm)
Werewolf Woman (Cheesy Flicks)
What Happens Later (Decal)
When Jack Came Back (Dreamscape)
The Winchesters Season 1 (Warner)
White Blood (Bounty)*
The White Devil (Filmhub)*
Why We Fight (Zapruderfix)*
WWE Crown Jewel 2023 (Cinedigm)
WWE Survivor Series 2023 (Cinedigm)
Yule Log (SRS)
*Did not appear on last month's Coming Attractions listing
Coming Attractions
The following select DVD titles are promised for the near future. How many of them will show up is never a certainty. Logical subdivisions appear unmarked within each division. Titles which did not appear on last month's list are marked with an arrow (→) and are added to the bottom of subdivisions so that the longest awaited titles appear at the top within each grouping:
From Acid Bath:
→Karate Ghost 2 Dojo of Death
From Alchemy:
→Aliens and the New World Order The Cosmic Conspiracy
→Ancient Alien Origins Science and Legend
→Alien Intervention UFOs over Nuclear Bases
→Alien Agenda Into the Future
→Alien Chronicles Antarctic Worlds Below
→Forbidden Knowledge Cities Lost in Time
→Strange Secrets Alien Artifacts Cryptic Codes and End Times
→Illuminati Matrix
→Aliens at Loch Ness
→UFO Paranormal Overlords
→Alien Outer Space UFOs on the Moon and Beyond
→Top 25 Alien Encounters UFO Case Files Exposed
→Demonic Aliens UFOs from Inner Space
From Amcomri:
→Fortunes of War
From AMD:
Harry Wild Season 2
→The Puppetman From Big World:
→My Happy Family
→The Walking Dead Daryl Dixon Season 1
From Bounty:
→Myall Creek Day of Justice
From Brain Power:
→Far Haven
From Breaking Glass:
→Cascade AC-3
From Burning Bulb:
→Tell Me about It
→Crossing Paths
→Not for Sale
→Drop the Beat
→Losing to Win
From Candy:
→Candy Land
From CAV:
→Twilight
From Cheesy Flicks:
Werewolf Woman
Mysteries from Beyond Earth
Mad Dog Killer
→The Pirate of the Black Hawk
→The Head
From Cinedigm:
A Maple Valley Christmas
Haul Out the Holly The Gift of Peace Five More Minutes The Wedding Cottage Welcome to Valentine/A Picture of Her
The Dancing Detective
A Deadly Tango
→Into the Abyss
→The Canterville Ghost
From Cinema Libre:
→I Am Gilmo
From ClassicFlix:
Cause for Alarm!
→The Abbott and Costello Show Season 2
From Cloud 10:
War Blade
From Corgan:
→The Secret Cities of Mark Kistler
From Criterion:
Mudbound
Nothing But a Man The Roaring Twenties Afire
→All the Beauty and the Bloodshed
→The Runner
→Saint Omer
From Decal:
The Royal Hotel
From Distribution Solution:
→The Exorcist Untold
From Dreamscape:
Animal DNA Season 1
→Animal DNA Season 2
→Animal DNA Season 3
Battle of Britain 80
Allies at War
Discover London Season 1
Discover London Season 2
Fumpy Facts
The Funeral Director
Hardwiring Happiness V.1 Rick Hanson
Hardwiring Happiness V.2 Rick Hanson
Mind Science in Action Dan Siegel
→The Miracle of Sinners Pins and Nettie V.1
Pins and Nettie V.2
Stress Reduction Jon Kabat-Zinn
12 Months
Vlad El Vampiro
Fabuloso
→Dasher Can't Wait for Christmas
→Date While You Wait The Series
→Fanarchy
→50 Liters Life
→Ground War
→Honeybee The Busy Life of Apis Mellifera
→How Do You Share with Your Friends?
→The Laps Tasmania
→Mindful Families To Meditate or Meditate? V.1
→Mindful Families To Meditate or Meditate? V.2
→Miniature
→Moon Landing World's Greatest Hoax?
→No Friends but the Mountains
→Norm Geisler Not Qualified
→Off Earth
→Paddles V.1
→Paddles V.2
→Persona
→Sight Seers Season 1
→Storytime with Ms. Booksy V.1
→Storytime with Ms. Booksy V.2
→Storytime with Ms. Booksy V.3
→Surviving Sex Trafficking
→Wow! I Never Knew That Season 1
From Film Masters:
The Devil's Partner
→The Swiss Conspiracy
From Film Movement:
Before, Now & Then
→Millie Lies Low
From Filmhub:
→A Stranger among the Living
→Urban Myths
→Fang
→Moorhouse Road
→Tomorrow's Today
From 4Digital:
→Contagion of Fear
From Freestyle:
→Merry Good Enough
→Burning Land
From Full Moon:
Demonic Toys Jack-attack
Puppet Master The Legacy
→Scream of the Blind Dead
→The Seduction of Rose Parrish Jones
From Fun City:
The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz
Radio On
From Gemini:
→Totally Vegetarian
→The Essential Collection V.1
→Totally Vegetarian The Essential Collection V.2
From Giant:
Killer
From Grasshopper:
De Humani Corporis Fabrica
From Gravitas:
→The Agnostic
→The Mummy
→Murders
→Everyone Will Burn
→The Mental State
→They Turned Us into Killers
→Spring Lakes
From Green Apple:
→Amar De Nuevo
→On Angel's Wings
→24 Seven
→Love Again
From Green Planet:
→The Church with an Overshot Wheel
→Taking Notes The Secret World of Mountain Lions
From Greenfield:
The Exorcists
From Harth:
→The Book of Harth
From High Fliers:
→Alice in Terrorland
From Image:
Suitable Flesh
From Indican:
The Eden Theory
→The Highest of Stakes
From Indiepix:
Ever, Réve, Helene
Cixous
Token Taverns
Sisters (Mázas)
→Peacock
From Inspiration:
→Women Want Everything!
From Invincible:
Hall Caesar
→Alice in Wonderland (erotic)
From Kino:
Cinema's First Nasty Women
Subject Ever Deadly Pianoforte
Four Daughters Witness for the Prosecution
Fireworks
Desperately Seeking Susan
Smoke Sauna Sisterhood
S&M Hunter Begins
From Leomark:
→INSight
→Out Past Dark
From Level 33:
→Adventures of the Naked Umbrella
→Plan C
→Waikiki
From Lionsgate:
→The Happytime Murders
→Bad Moms
→A Bad Moms Christmas
→Bad Moms Party Like a Mother
→Den of Thieves
The Foreigner (Jackie Chan & Pierce Brosnan)
→Mile 22
→I Feel Pretty
→The Edge of Seventeen
→The Gift
From Magnolia:
Joan Baez I Am Noise
→The Stones & Brian Jones
From MPI:
Broadway
From Music Box:
My Sailor My Love
From MVD:
Skymaster Down
A Message to the Stars Follow the Money
Route 66 The Untold Story of Women on the Mother Road
I'm a Creepy Crawly I'm a Fish
Cutting Class
The Trial of Lee Harvey Oswald
→Pistoleros: Death, Drugs and Rock 'N' Roll
→Mean Guns
→Hardware Wars
From Outsider:
→Elis & Tom:sozinha De Ser Som Voce
From Paramount:
Magnum P.I. Final Season
Magnum P.I. Complete Series (24 platters)
Native America Season 2
American Outdoor with Baratunde Thurston Season 2
PBS Kids Book Buddies
Billions Final Season
Billions Complete Season (28 platters)
Special Ops Lioness Season 1
→Spector
→In Too Deep
→Supreme Team
→The Battle to Beat Malaria
→Lee and Liza's Family Tree
→Miss Scarlet and the Duke Season 4
→Monster High Season 1
→The Black Demon
From Relativity:
→Hypnotic
From Samuel Goldwyn:
→Playback
From Sony:
→Thanksgiving
From Stonecutter:
→Condition of Return
From Strand:
→And the King Said What a Fantastic Machine
From 1091:
→Deep Woods
From Uncork'd:
The Curse of Willow Song
The Hanged Girl
Three Blind Mice
From Universal:
The Bell Keeper
Monsters of California
From Vision:
→Our (Almost Completely True) Love Story
From Warner:
→Beyond Paradise Season 1
→Electra
→Ghosts Season 5
→Kingdom of the Spiders
→Planet Earth III
→Romantic Comedy
From Well Go:
→The Flying Swordsman
→A Creature Was Stirring
From Wild Eye:
→Meathook Massacre 5 The Final Chapter
→Meathook Massacre 6 Bloodline
→Meathook Massacre 7 Bubba's Dead
→Meathook Massacre Mayhem
From Wonderscape:
Space Kids from Hubble to the James Webb Telescope
Social-Emotional Learning My Well-Being Making Good Decisions
From Wownow:
Legal Ladies Pioneers of Law
Legal Ladies Pioneers of Law 2
Mermaids
The Galaxy Fast Speed
Treasure Hunting and the Pirates of the Caribbean
From Yellow Veil:
→Ladywood
From Zapruderfix:
→The Other Side of the Ring
→I Want to Believe 2 UFO & UAPS
→The Campus 2