

# THE DVD LASER DISC NEWSLETTER

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## The grain is gone

The first Warner Home Video LD release of Robert Altman's 1971 **McCabe & Mrs. Miller** (Oct 91) was massively grainy. Vilmos Zsigmond's cinematography had a limited amount of augmented lighting and since the film is set in 1902 on the edge of civilization in the overcast Pacific Northwest, mostly during winter, there isn't all that much light to go around. Nevertheless, by the time The Criterion Collection released the film on Blu-ray (Dec 16), the grain had miraculously been resolved. The image was still quite dark because the interiors, realistically, just don't have that many oil lamps (how in the world did people read books in those days?), but the grain was finessed and the presentation was very satisfying. Now Warner and Criterion have upped the ante even more with a beautiful two-platter 4K Blu-ray (UPC#715515292313, \$50). The second platter is the same standard BD that was released previously. The 4K presentation has colors that are a touch more subdued—this seems to be endemic of many Criterion color 4K releases—but the basic illumination is a touch brighter, so you can see more details amid the shadows and the rain. Because the colors are not pushed as much, whatever lingering grain remained with the standard BD is smoothed over on the 4K presentation. When you toggle back and forth, while the standard BD is prettier, in this case the 4K presentation feels not just more correct, but more satisfying, more in keeping with the dramatic tone of the film itself and its remarkable staging.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.4:1. There appears to be no difference in the quality of the monophonic sound. Some of the dialog is accompanied by some vague background noise on both versions, but the three Leonard Cohen songs (which, Altman admits in the special features, guided his subconscious during the composition of the film) that stretch throughout the 121-minute movie are solid and clear. There are optional English subtitles and both versions come with the commentary featuring Altman and producer David Foster. As we reported previously, the standard BD also contains a marvelous 55-minute retrospective documentary; a 36-minute appreciation of the film's artistry; a 10-minute 1971 production featurette; a 38-minute talk in front of an audience by art and production designers Al Locatelli, Leon Erickson and Jack De Golia from 1999; a 12-minute interview with Zsigmond; a great collection of production photos in still frame; a 1971 *Dick Cavett Show* interview with film critic Pauline Kael running 11 minutes; and an 11-minute Cavett interview with Altman also from 1971.

As we have stated previously, for more than a half of a century now, of the fifty thousand or so motion pictures we have seen, **McCabe & Mrs. Miller** remains our favorite film. Since we have written about the movie extensively in the past, we will avoid redundancies and just point out that while artistic excellence is a key component, a favorite film is an emotional response, a fusion between the viewer's inner being and the beheld work of art. With humor, with an incredibly innovative approach to direction (the extras are acting as much as the principals, which is why an accurate and clear rendition of the background dialog, which the BDs do provide, is so critical to the entertainment), and with a production design process that, by mirroring the drama, pulls the viewer through the story's advancement in both a tactile and an emotional manner, **McCabe & Mrs. Miller** is as rich in inference as it is in presentation. The stars, Warren Beatty and Julie Christie, bring their established screen personas and the film histories behind those personas to burn brightly in the center of the complex shades of ambition, desire and limited Nineteenth Century educations that Altman devises for their characters. No matter how much obfuscation he throws their way, the souls of their characters are still palpable. Finally, there is Cohen, a Canadian whose music, being ever present, speaks to the complex and vastly underappreciated legacy of entwined pioneering that America and Canada shared, something the movies usually overlook in favor of America's sexier history with Mexico. It is Altman who weds Cohen's music not just to the locale, but to the climate, as a reminder that the past is always present in our surroundings just as Cohen's music quite readily imbeds itself with permanence in the mind of the listener. The atmosphere created by the film's aural and visual components thereby, through the outstanding Criterion 4K BD release, create a perfect storm of longing for the past, celebrating the present and looking forward to a future where the movie can be shared again and again.

## A Robinson triple play

Kino Lorber Incorporated continues to push forward their wonderful **Film Noir the Dark Side of Cinema** three-disc Blu-ray sets, dredging up a seemingly unending display of forgotten treasures from the days when movies made for weekly or bi-weekly theatrical play were America's primary form of entertainment, even though television was beginning to loom over the industry in the same way that the atomic bomb had brought a cloud to the complacency of American life itself. Embracing desperation became a theme for both, and who better embodies desperation than the great iconic motion picture star, Edward G. Robinson, who under the shadow of the Cold War blacklists (he was 'grey listed') was obligated to grab ready cash with every deal that came his way. Three fantastic black-and-white Robinson features from United Artists have been gathered by MGM and Kino for the latest terrific installment in the *KL Studio Classics* series, **Film Noir The Dark Side of Cinema XVII** (UPC#738329264246, \$50). The films are so good that is best NOT to watch the set as a triple bill, but to allow time to savor each movie before its pleasures are superseded by the next. Each monophonic film is accompanied by optional English subtitles.

The 1953 *Vice Squad* is so jam-packed with delights it is hard to know where to begin except that obviously, Robinson is the *capo di tutti capi* of the film's pleasures. He plays a 'captain' of detectives in Los Angeles overseeing crimes of all different sorts—the only reason the film has the name it does is because prostitutes play a role in solving one of the crimes and the marketers wanted to make sure potential audiences knew that sin was part of the storyline—while also doing community outreach work such as television interviews about his job. Running 88 minutes, the film actually has three separate plot strands and crimes, although two of them are inter-related, and plays as if it were a television pilot ahead of its time. In one crime, a policeman happens upon two men hotwiring a car and is shot when he tries to stop them. In the second, a stoolie reports to Robinson—after having been arrested in a 'misunderstanding'—that he knows about a bank robbery that is supposed to go down soon. Finally, girl with connections comes to Robinson to complain that an Italian 'count' is romancing her widowed mother and not paying for anything. Oh, and there is also another little tiny (but very 'meta') story when another character wants to see Robinson's character because he is being haunted by 'television shadows' when he walks on the street. Since the film crosscuts between the investigations and all of these characters trying to see Robinson's character in his office, it is a wonderfully busy movie, with Robinson serving as sort of a commanding master of ceremonies as you bask in his authoritarian flair.

And, it is full of stars. Remember Paulette Goddard? She broke out as one of Charlie Chaplin's better discoveries, and came this close to playing Scarlett O'Hara (her screen test rocked) while scoring with a few more comedies and then settling back into secondary dramatic roles and television. Well, you can't imagine the peals of joy that you will emit when you see her playing a bordello (excuse us, 'escort service') madam who has information about one of the bank robbers. She clearly brings her comedy skills to the role just as clearly as she suppresses them, and she is unafraid to show why youth-obsessed Hollywood is passing her by for the bigger parts. Her scenes with Robinson, whether on the phone or supposedly in the same room, are hold-your-breath worthy. And then guess who is hotwiring the car in the very first scene of the film? None other than Lee Van Cleef! He reappears throughout the movie, being the first man to commit a crime and the last man busted, and of course, you are riveted to him every moment he is on the screen glowering at his fellow bandits. The other players may have less familiar names, including Peter Hall, Edward Binns, Adam Williams, Jay Adler, Percy Helton and Barry Kelley, but you will recognize them as old friends the instant you see them. A delightful starlet named Mary Ellen Kay has an important role and is dressed in an impressive sweater that would not be out of fashion today, except that she wears glasses (which are necessary for a plot advancement), something she clearly has never done in real life although she still is quite fetching whether she is wearing them or not.

### Robinson (Continued)

Technically, the film is a procedural, but what a procedural! Under the instructions of Robinson's character, the cops arrest witnesses on phony charges to pressure them, burgle offices to find leads, smash down doors of suspects without knocking and organize the most cringe-inducing, modern-practices-defying, citizen-endangering bank stakeout imaginable. Every moment of the film is a blast. There is also a terrific jump scream near the end, during the grand suspense finale. The full screen source material is somewhat regularly visited by small scratches and speckles, but otherwise it looks terrific, with sharp contrasts and minimal grain. The monophonic sound is a little noisy as well, but workable.

Opening on Death Row, *Black Tuesday* is 'pure cinema' in the best sense. Yes, there is dialog that advances the narrative, but it is always part of the poetry of the film's sound mix, which is blended and rhymed with the poetry of the film's striking images and the full miasma of the film's no-nonsense performances. Directed by Hugo Fregonese with cinematography by Stanley Cortez, the 1954 'B' feature should be studied for how brilliantly its economic staging and beautiful artistry are constructed to push forth a compelling and engaging narrative. Even the performances are part of the film's synergistic impact. Robinson is first seen pacing in his cell like a caged lion, and you know instantly that his character is irredeemably evil and deserves to die. Hence, every moment he is part of the frame he brings his entire legacy of villains and confused protagonists to his role, and then doubles down on their presence in his eyes and his gritted teeth. Peter Graves is in the next cell. His character is more stoic, his soul is more ambiguous, and sitting on a stash of money that is hidden somewhere in the outside world, he remains that way until the end. To say any more about the plot would undermine the thrills the 81-minute entertainment delivers, but rest assured there is action, there is drama, there is suspense, there is spiritual uplift and there is the subliminal excitement of cinematic expression in every scene.

Again, there are a number of supporting cast members that you will readily recognize, even if you don't know their names, including Jean Parker, Warren Stevens, Jack Kelly, Milburn Stone, William Schallert and Russell Johnson (of *Gilligan's Island* fame). Using a bare minimum of sets, Fregonese and Cortez continually enhance every moment of the film by their blocking and lighting choices. The images, which are letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1, are never showy, but they are never boring or mindlessly composed, either. From overly tight close-ups to shots from the sidewalk looking up, the film has one visual confection after another. While there is a general grain to the image as a whole, the transfer has clearly coaxed every intention the filmmakers had with the budget they were given onto the screen. We spotted one faint and fleeting mark, but otherwise there appears to be no actual flaw in the presentation, although frankly we were too bedazzled by the story to look for them. The sound mix is a model of perfectly inserted effects to convey a sense of the outside world, and the soundtrack is clean and strong. A trailer is included.

Film historian Gary Gerani provides very good commentary tracks on both *Vice Squad* and *Black Tuesday*, going into details about the backgrounds of the casts and the crews, pointing out the nuances within each narrative and explaining how the films reflect popular entertainment tropes of their day (summarizing one of the appeals of *Vice Squad*, he explains, "Movie viewers have always gotten a thrill out of seeing minions of the Law behaving like the ruthless criminals they pursue, perhaps reinforcing some perverse awareness that the jungle is indeed all around us, with law and order, maybe even humanism and civilization itself, hanging by the most slender of threads."). For *Black Tuesday*, he obtained access to much of the film's production files and is able to share everything from budget details to censor complaints, as well as the intentions of the shooting script. He also has time to ponder the film's meanings. "'I didn't want to put on a party for the state,' he rants, 'That's why I'm nuts, because I want to keep on breathing...' is pretty much what his philosophy amounts to, with the gangster defending in an almost elemental and existential way his right to life itself. This pretty much underscores the theme to *Black Tuesday*. Does the very act of living justify the taking of other lives? Given the callous response to execution we've just seen dramatized, are all of us part of the same hypocrisy, one way or another?"

Robinson is billed above the title in the 1956 *Nightmare*, but he actually has a supporting part. Based upon a marvelously quizzical story by Cornell Woolrich, a very young Kevin McCarthy stars as a jazz clarinetist who dreams that he has killed a man and then discovers indications that the murder may have actually happened. Robinson is the brother-in-law of McCarthy's character, and is also a New Orleans homicide detective. Whatever you do, try not to look at the jacket cover as you are removing the disc for play (each BD comes in an individual jacket in the set) or on the rear of the box jacket, where it also appears, because it contains a horrendous spoiler (it's not really Kino's fault, since the jacket is a replication of the film's original ad artwork) and once you see it you will be two steps ahead of the heroes as they try to figure out what is going on. Directed by Maxwell Shane, there is a wonderful mirrored closet set that gets used several times to good effect, and the Herschel Burke Gilbert and Billy May jazz score complements the film's visual designs efficiently. Running 89 minutes, the film is a great deal of fun, with Woolrich's plotting justifying the convoluted puzzle at least from a cursory perspective. The time that Robinson is on the screen (it is a decent sized part, and he has a few scenes without McCarthy) makes your heart go pitter-patter in a way that McCarthy's screen presence, for all of his eager youth and subsequent legacy, never replicates.

Letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1, the image is often soft and the stock footage of New Orleans is a bit rough, but it still appears that the transfer is the best that could possibly be extracted from the source material. The audio has a strong bass presence for its day and has smooth,

clean tones. Film historian Jason Ney provides an excellent commentary track, deconstructing the original Woolrich story and the variations that have made it to the screen, going over the careers of the cast and the crew, examining the nature of consciousness and other topics explored by the film and talking about the resurgence of United Artists in the early Fifties because of the unrestrictive deals they offered to various filmmakers.

### Vintage western

Time has been kind to Don Siegel's 1976 Paramount production, *The Shootist*, released on Blu-ray by Paramount and Arrow Video (UPC#760137144885, \$40). Almost intentionally created as John Wayne's swan song, it seemed too purposeful upon release, too self-aware and, behind that self-awareness, too artificial in its constructs. Wayne is an aging gunfighter, first seen from afar with mountains looming behind him, who knows he has cancer and takes up residence in his doctor's town to spend his final days, ultimately arranging a showdown with three other gunfighters who have grudges against him. The film is set pointedly in 1901—Wayne's character studiously reads a newspaper report about the death of Queen Victoria—and the town he has settled in 'Carson City, Nevada,' has automobiles, telephones and plans to electrify its trolley system. Clearly, his character's time and era are over. But now, not only Wayne, but a majority of his co-stars, including Lauren Bacall, James Stewart, Hugh O'Brian, John Carradine, Richard Boone, Scatman Crothers, Harry Morgan, Sheree North and Bill McKinney, have passed away, while the young Ron Howard (who has the most ambiguous and intriguing performance) is permanently retired from acting. The film no longer feels urgent, and at the same time, its initial seeds have flowered. Wayne's performance is beautiful. He is calm, affecting, wise and quite adeptly channeling his own sense of mortality into his character. He only resisted portraying a caricature of his iconography in a handful of films during the Sixties and Seventies, which made this final effort all the more touching. Bacall is wonderful, too, also free of the self parody she brought to many of her later roles, and the others are all having a great time doing their gigs. The period setting is indeed lovely, while there is just enough action to give the 99-minute feature momentum and foreboding as it enables the performances to reflect the essence of the era. At one point, Bacall's character is sitting at a piano, playing and singing a Gilbert & Sullivan tune, when Wayne's character walks into the room and begins to sing along. Not only does the moment capture the home entertainment of the era perfectly, but the song, *Tit Willow*, is a wonderfully wicked lampoon of death and dying, which wittily seems to be going over the heads of the characters. The film has become the elegiac western it strove to become, because Siegel astutely assembled all of its parts with an assured compositional finesse, and just needed more years to go by until those parts could age comfortably into one expression, the way that a telephoto lens brings objects that are far apart together to share the same field of view.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1. The cinematography is grainy at times, depending upon the amount of available light and the editing choices that enhance some close-ups, but the transfer looks beautiful, with fresh colors, and when the image is sharp, particularly in the outdoor sun, the image is smooth. The mix of grainy and less grainy images also underscores one of the film's themes regarding the transition from the Nineteenth to the Twentieth Centuries in a way that communicates with the subconscious of the viewer, particularly because the transfer is so clearly accurate. The monophonic is okay, and there is an elaborate Elmer Bernstein score, although it is not one of his best efforts. There are optional English subtitles; a very good collection of memorabilia from around the world in still frame; a trailer; an 18-minute retrospective documentary that is buried near the end of the Special Features menu but ought to be watched first as a general introduction to the film's production particulars; a nice 24-minute rumination over Wayne's talent that touches briefly on his political views; an interesting 40-minute profile of author Glendon Swarthout, the many films made from his books and how *The Shootist* aligns with the novel; and an excellent 27-minute deconstruction of Bernstein's score (Bacall's character and Wayne's character have specific themes, but at one point, Bacall's theme is performed with the instruments used for Wayne's theme). Also featured is a highly entertaining 28-minute look at the making of the film and the careers of Siegel and Wayne, with lots of great clips (although it mistakenly claims that Wayne's characters never died on the screen until the Seventies) and great insider information (Wayne had face lifts).

While it is not as improvisational or as giddy as his best talks, film enthusiast Howard Berger provides a thoroughly researched commentary track, diving into the problems surrounding Wayne's health while making the film and Wayne's difficulties accepting orders from Siegel. He articulates the film's strengths ("An elegantly purposeful piece of work, it may contain familiar western tropes, but more powerfully, it makes them bend to emotions not typically examined in stories about men as hard as [Wayne's character]."), pays tribute to the other members of the cast and the crew and shares plenty of anecdotes about the production.

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## Mann entertainment in 4K

Michael Mann is a romanticist. His films (and TV shows) are among the most modern being made, but as much as they are streamlined and ‘cool,’ they also have constant flourish. With pulsating music and a tendency to dwarf individuals within their surroundings, he embellishes the atmosphere around his characters even as he appears to strip down the details of their lives. They seem to melt into the mood of the film itself. It is no wonder that one of his first cinematic hits was based upon an early Nineteenth Century novel, because he has never really left that period of literature even as he shifted to modern settings. When he tries to make an important work he often falls short because he places too much focus on the core emotions, underlining his messages (his most honored films are invariably overrated), but when he is just creating entertainment, the results are as dazzling as they are indulgent. As for his 2015 international procedural thriller from Universal, *Blackhat*, it has a very silly story about the FBI arranging the release of a computer hacker, played by Chris Hemsworth, so he can team up with a pair of Chinese computer experts played by Leehom Wang and Wei Tang, and an FBI agent played by Viola Davis, to—as it turns out—save the world from an evil master criminal bent upon making millions. So this movie you don’t have to take seriously, and as a result, every moment of it is enthralling fun, and all the more so because Universal and Arrow Video have released a fantastic two-platter 4K UHD Blu-ray (UPC#76013712-3774, \$50).

The colors on the 4K presentation are exact, and that precision is hyper-magnified because of what Mann is doing with the images to begin with. The film opens like an adult version of *Tron*, diving into the circuits behind a flashing light on a panel and then descending deeper and smaller until you are following the molecular bits that are making the decisions to become zeros and ones to send the signal. In 4K, the crispness of the image and the delineation of the hues are especially captivating, so that the film has already won you over by the quality of its images and its sound alone. When it pulls back to depict Wang’s character, a high ranking officer in the Chinese military, explaining that he recognizes the code he is looking at as being a garbled up version of the code Hemsworth’s character once wrote when they were buds in college, you are totally on board for the ride they are going to take together. Shot in America and Asia, the location visuals on the letterboxed image, which has an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1, don’t just give you a tour of exotic locales, they transport you there, as Mann’s intoxicating atmosphere leaves you just clearheaded enough to register what is happening at every moment within the film. Other than a fistfight in a restaurant, the first action scene doesn’t occur until well into the 133-minute feature, but when the gunshots start going off, the already smooth and finely detailed 5.1-channel DTS sound suddenly starts whacking you from every direction, and you really wonder when it was the last time you had so much grown up fun.

The platter also contains a 122-minute ‘International’ version, but the only difference it has is the removal of a few specific references to the Hispanic backgrounds of some bad guys. Along with optional English subtitles and a very small collection of publicity photos in still frame, there is a decent 19-minute interview with cinematographer Stuart Dryburgh in which he talks about the digital cameras he was using and their lighting capabilities, as well as what it was like working with Mann; a 31-minute interview with production designer Guy Hendrix Dyas; and a terrific 40-minute collection of promotional featurettes that include interviews with Mann, Hemsworth, other members of the cast and crew, and the hackers who consulted on the production.

Film enthusiasts Bryan Reesman and Max Evry supply a very good commentary. They make no bones about the film’s flaws, but still analyze its artistry, go over the backgrounds of Mann and Hemsworth in detail and the other cast and crew members in a more cursory fashion, and talk extensively about real computer hacking, what the film gets right and what it doesn’t. On the whole, they have more enthusiasm for Mann’s qualifications than we do, but we would concur entirely with their assessment of the movie at hand. “What Mann did here is make a perfectly serviceable programmer. It’s a B movie, but I mean that with the most affection. You can poke all these holes in the characters and the narrative because it doesn’t matter. It’s a modest B programmer with maybe a little sly commentary and, of course, many of Mann’s signature obsessions. It’s not him on autopilot, but rather him servicing a more conventional, more by-the-numbers experience.”

The second platter is a standard Blu-ray that contains an alternate 132-minute *Director’s Cut* that is substantially different than the theatrical version. There is very little in the way of added footage, but Mann moves a significant sequence from the beginning of the movie to near the end of the second act, and adjusts other references accordingly. Why he does this is a mystery (apparently, it was the order that was originally intended), since the film works much better the other way around, giving substantially more justification to the involvement of Wang’s character, but it does provide a good excuse to go on the thrill ride with him again. Since it is a standard Blu-ray, the image, while it still looks terrific, is not as crisp as the 4K presentation, making the film less involving as a result. The 5.1-channel DTS sound also has a slightly less aggressive presence, although overall the film remains an enjoyable globetrotting action feature. Reesman and Evry detail the major and minor changes Mann made to the movie near the end of their commentary on the theatrical version, and explain why he felt compelled to go back and take another stab at it.

## History from the other side

There were two types of people in the world in February of 2020, those who were going about their regular business and those who had locked themselves in their closets and were frantically trying to buy HAZMAT suits online because they had seen Steven Soderbergh’s remarkably prescient 2011 feature about an unrestrained virus spreading around the globe, *Contagion*. We reviewed Warner Home Entertainment’s Blu-ray release in Jan 12. Now that we are on the other side of history, however, Warner and SDS Studio

Distribution Services have released a 4K UltraHD Blu-ray (UPC#883929-820856, \$34), which is well worth watching again, since it got so very many things right and so very little not right (the website tracking the deaths in each state was non-existent in the film, where a character complains about the lack of a central organization for that information, and however inaccurate it may have been, it was adeptly maintained and a viable information tool in real life). What the film gets right is just about everything—it begins in China (although the fault is an international company that Gwyneth Paltrow’s character works for, cutting down forests), spreads haphazardly around the world as people who understand the true threat take precautions while others are oblivious until it is too late, causes massive shortages of goods and services (not toilet paper specifically, but the movie still conveys the idea), is subject to fantasy cures encouraged by the Internet (through a character played by Jude Law) which grab hold of the imagination of the populace as actual cures take much longer to develop, and that things do finally subside to a semblance of the old normal once a vaccine is fast tracked and disseminated. It gets many smaller details right as well (first there’s a cough, then there’s a fever...), and some of the exaggerations (things fall a little too quickly into chaos; the disease appears to be partially transmitted by touching things) are more of a dealer’s choice (Chicago gets hit big instead of New York) than an actual failure of insight on the part of Soderbergh and screenwriter Scott Z. Burns.

Matt Damon plays Paltrow’s husband, who tries to get on with life and protect his daughter after his wife succumbs to the disease. He represents a ‘common man’ thread running through the 106-minute film, which intercuts his experiences with the experiences of medical investigators—Laurence Fishburne plays a CDC official, Elliot Gould is an independent doctor, and Marion Cotillard, Bryan Cranston and Kate Winslet are also featured—in America and China. The film, which had the aura of a TV disaster movie, was entertaining on the standard BD, but it is even more transfixing as a 4K release after the fact. Paced by the pulsating Cliff Martinez musical score, the film is more involving because people now very much understand concepts like the R0 contagion rates and why masks are such a good idea, but also because the subliminal precision of the 4K image is ideal for the structure of the film. It takes less time to focus on what is happening because the images are literally better focused, so while the standard BD is still great entertainment, you can’t quite keep up with the nuances as you can on the 4K presentation. The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1.

The DTS sound was really nice on the BD, but the Dolby Atmos audio on the 4K version is even better, with a more elaborate separation mix and stronger tones to keep your excitement up. There are alternate French, Spanish, Italian, German and Czech audio tracks, 15 optional subtitle tracks including English, and the same 18 minutes of worthwhile featurettes that appeared on the BD.

## Colorful Renoir

Following on Laurence Olivier’s cute theatricalization of *Henry V*, Jean Renoir did a somewhat more sophisticated twist of the same gimmick with his wonderful 1955 farce, *The Golden Coach*, which has been released on Blu-ray by Rare Video and Kino Lorber (UPC#738329265526, \$30). Like *Henry V*, the film opens and closes looking at a theatrical stage and the players upon it, but as it gets underway, the stage’s setting transitions to movie sets until the finale. Renoir’s addition is that the characters seem to be at least partially aware of their metaphysics. They react to one another emotionally, but they also acknowledge or half-acknowledge their status as characters on a stage. “Where does the theater end and life begin?” the heroine asks at one point. It complicates matters that many of the characters are stage performers, an Italian troupe that has crossed the Atlantic to play in the capital of a Spanish South American territory in the Eighteenth Century. Anna Magnani stars as the troupe’s headliner and Duncan Lamont is the viceroy who becomes smitten with her (she has other suitors, too), causing a ruckus when he gifts her the titular coach. The film has other characters and bounces back and forth between the stage antics within the film and the characters wooing Magnani’s character. The film is in English (there is also a French audio track, but the default is English and matches the lip movements) and the performances of Magnani and Lamont are wonderfully loose and modern. Renoir chose Anton Vivaldi pieces for his musical score, but Magnani and Lamont play their parts like jazz musicians, riffing their emotions while they say their lines, and somehow, thanks to Renoir’s magical command, everything remains in perfect harmony. Not only does the film seem fresh despite its period setting, it still seems fresh today and will continue to do so as long as there is acting and romance.

The full screen picture looks lovely. The colors are bright and fleshtones are accurate. Featuring compositionally engaging cinematography by Renoir’s nephew, Claude Renoir, the image does not have the slickness of a Hollywood production, but otherwise it is smooth and accurate. Color detail is critical to the film’s expressiveness and is conveyed effectively. The monophonic sound is okay. Renoir expert Adam Nayman supplies a serviceable commentary, although he starts speaking less in the film’s second half. He touches base on the background of the story itself, the careers of the cast and the crew, and the history of the film’s production, but he focuses primarily on the plot and Renoir’s direction. “One of the critical common places about Renoir is his mastery of the moving camera, creating space as he moves the camera, creating these incredible visual relationships, these networks of relationships as he moves through space. You’ll notice here how incredibly static the compositions in this film are, and this is very deliberate. That obviously is tied to this idea of theatricality. The static-ness of the camera—it will move, it will pan back, it will sometimes explore space—that static-ness is a real break in Renoir’s style. And so, in lieu of the dynamism created by movements—the dynamism is created by color, by the use of color to activate different parts of the screen, the use of color to symbolize different feelings and ideas for the characters.”

## Garfield

Abraham Polonsky's remarkable 1948 crime film, **Force of Evil**, has been released by Paramount and Kino Lorber Incorporated as a *KL Studio Classics* Blu-ray (UPC#738329263362, \$25). John Garfield is a lawyer who is assisting in the organization of a numbers consortium when the big move to consolidate independent dealers backfires. The film is unlike almost all gangster films up to that point in that while there is a gunfight near the end, violence only hangs over everything as a threat, with the drama relegated to the sweaty worries and changes that the characters go through as they try to advance their interests. Polonsky wrote the script, too, and the dialog ("The money has no moral opinions.") is as thrilling as the action. While the film was not the first to utilize wiretapping as a plot device, it was the first to understand how it actually works and to depict it from the point of view of those being tapped, using it as one of the many symbols in the film for how the world cannot be trusted to give you a square deal. The film also made fantastic use of Manhattan locations, some of which have never been used again in the same manner. If casting the pugnacious Garfield as a smart lawyer sounds contradictory, it is in fact perfect. He clearly belongs in the milieu where his character is doing business, and he conveys enough intelligence to not just understand, but to communicate to the viewer that he understands, what the red lines are that he must not cross, until filial obligations compel him to go further. There is also a lovely romance woven into the background, with Beatrice Pearson as a secretary who needs a job and, in counterpoint, Marie Windsor as the wife of the partner in the law firm. What is stunning is that the film runs just 79 minutes. Polonsky's mastery not just of the scripting but of the mechanics of filmmaking turns every scene into a dazzling exploration of morality, guilt and conflict, in effect compacting a longer movie's dramatic power into a tightly wound, lyrically spoken, visually gripping and perfectly structured detonation of artistry and emotion.

Thomas Gomez, Stanley Prager, Howland Chamberlain and Roy Roberts co-star, with a nice single-scene appearance by Paul Fix near the end. The full screen black-and-white picture is gorgeous. The image is spotless and contrasts are finely detailed, accentuating the film's already captivating imagery. The monophonic sound is solid and clean, and there are optional English subtitles, a trailer and a 4-minute introduction by Martin Scorsese.

Film noir expert Imogen Sara Smith provides a highly rewarding commentary track, exploring the film's many thematic intricacies while surreptitiously wrapping in biographical profiles of the cast and the crew as reflected in the film's art. For example, look at what she says at one point about Windsor, "Her entire role amounts to less than 5 minutes, but she does more with those 5 minutes than many actresses do with a leading role. She favors her dialog like someone swirling fine brandy around in a snifter. Her scenes with Garfield crackle. Her smooth, slinky delivery contrasts beautifully with his taut, hard-edged style." The entire commentary is laden with that same sort of rich, poetic insight.

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Garfield's other great non-boxing role was as the owner of a charter boat who gets behind on his payments and starts taking on risky charters in the second of two great films that were made from what was said to be Ernest Hemingway's worst novel. Directed by Michael Curtiz with snappy dialog and unrepentant darkness—the movie has the most stunning final shot of any Curtiz movie, if not the most stunning final shot in all of cinema, and makes the end of **Force of Evil** seem like a daisy blooming in the sunshine—the 1950 Warner Bros. production, **The Breaking Point**, released on Blu-ray by Warner and The Criterion Collection (UPC#715515202114, \$40), is based upon Hemingway's *To Have and Have Not*. Patricia Neal exposes a surprising side of herself as the classic sassy blonde who can give as good as she takes playing a passenger on the first trip that goes wrong for Garfield's character, and Phyllis Thaxter is his mousy wife, except that she not only holds her own in her one scene with Neal, she wins. Nevertheless, Neal is amazing, as if the movie was indeed being directed by Howard Hawks, or part of it, anyway. As for Garfield, he is a little tighter than he is in **Force of Evil** because his character is not as intellectually tainted, but he still does an outstanding job, in 97 minutes, of taking a character from wholesome goodness down into the pit of purgatory and then back to redemption again. Juan Hernandez, whose character is not so lucky, and Wallace Ford co-star.

The full screen black-and-white picture is in excellent condition, an improvement over the somewhat soft Warner DVD (Nov 11). There are sequences in the image that look washed out, but that is an intentional attempt, in several different scenes, to replicate a morning fog in Newport Beach Harbor in Los Angeles. Otherwise, the contrasts are sharp, blacks are deep and the image is finely detailed. The monophonic sound is also cleaner than the sound on the DVD and is reasonably clear. There are optional English subtitles, a trailer, an excellent 21-minute piece on Curtiz's career and the film's artistic brilliance, an excellent 10-minute segment that deconstructs Curtiz's specific filmmaking strategies in the film, a lovely 17-minute 2017 reminiscence of Garfield by his daughter, Julie, going over his biography and career, and an interesting 5-minute black-and-white look at Hemingway's memorabilia by NBC newscasters shortly after the writer passed away in 1962 (essentially, in their perusing, acting far more literate than any so called TV reporters would act today).

## Cagney

Tapping into not only times passed, but a genre that had passed with it thanks to the Production Code, the Warner Bros. 1939 gangster film directed by Raoul Walsh, **The Roaring Twenties**, sought to tug on memories of the past's blazing glories with a narrative that is sort of structured to be outside of the immorality, looking in. The hero, a bootlegger played by James Cagney, even drinks milk. Released on a very nice looking two-platter 4K UHD Blu-ray by Warner and The Criterion Collection (UPC#715515202610, \$50), the 106-minute feature begins in a crater in No Man's Land during World War I, with Humphrey Bogart and Cagney meeting cute, as it were, as bombs go off around them. Later, Bogart becomes something of a standard villain, the gangster who is willing to push the rules and ignore common decency to unseat Cagney's character and rise to the top, and his demise performance is almost clichéd, but in that opening scene, his command of the space and the emotions in the image is stunning, and Cagney can barely keep up with him. Fortunately for Cagney, Bogart's character disappears for a long while after the war is over and Prohibition begins. Frank McHugh plays Cagney's sidekick, as they start with a single cab, delivering booze, and gradually build an empire, not with violence but with hustle. Cagney's character fixates on a young singer, played by Priscilla Lane in a plot device that Walsh would return to with gusto in **High Sierra** (Dec 21), but his downfall is more a result of the stock market crash, and it is only to protect her that he meets the ending the Production Code demands. In the meantime, the film evokes the real gangster movies of the past, populated with many of the same players (beginning with Cagney) and celebrates the general carefree spirit of days gone by as it pokes around trying to find a way to relive the thrills those days enabled without the incumbent censorial responsibilities.

The full screen black-and-white picture is entirely free of wear. The cinematography goes out of focus once in a while, and the image has a little grain at times that shows up in the faces of the actors, but otherwise, the presentation is immaculate. There is very little difference between the 4K presentation and the standard Blu-ray presentation. The standard version is a little brighter, but the 4K looks a bit smoother. Either one is fine, and on both, the monophonic sound is almost noiseless. Once in a while, there is a touch of background fuzz, but at other times, it is completely clean. The tommy guns sound great, too. We reviewed a Warner DVD release in Mar 05 that looked darn good, but the added crispness that both the standard BD and the 4K presentation enable makes the already briskly flowing narrative move even more engagingly. There are optional English subtitles. A viable commentary by film historian Lincoln Hurst is carried over from the DVD. Additionally, the standard BD has a trailer, a passable 22-minute appreciation of the film and its historical context by Gary Giddens (although he forgets to mention Arthur Penn when he suggests that Francis Coppola was the father contemporary gangster movies), and a 5-minute interview with Walsh from 1973.

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After leaving Warner and setting out on his own, Cagney made a gutsy anti-Japanese film in 1945 that was released through United Artists, **Blood on the Sun**, which has been issued by Paramount and Kino Lorber Incorporated as a *KL Studio Classics* Blu-ray (UPC#738329265625, \$25). Directed by Frank Lloyd, the film lacks the subtlety that Sam Fuller would soon bring to Americans-in-Tokyo thrillers, but cannot be entirely discarded for its wartime racism. Set in the late Thirties, Cagney is a newspaper reporter in Tokyo who is displeasing the Japanese government with stories about the Japanese intentions in Manchuria. Antiwar forces try to slip papers to him that prove the government's intentions are dishonorable, and agents for the military forces try obtain the papers, murdering the reporter's contacts, throwing him in jail for a bit and otherwise following and harassing him. Sylvia Sidney plays a half-Chinese, half-American who is working for the Japanese and is actively attempting to seduce Cagney's character. The portrayal of some of the Japanese characters are wincingly bad (an unrecognizable Robert Armstrong plays Hideki Tojo), but the story's twists and turns are serviceable and the 94-minute film does convey an edginess to its subject and setting (it is doubtful Warner would ever have given the movie a green light), with Cagney's breathless, rapid-fire performance leaving little time to ponder nuances of any sort. It is **One Two Three** meets **Mishima**. Additionally, the climax of the film is a magnificent and underappreciated warehouse fight scene between Cagney's character and the most vicious Japanese character. Cagney's character is seen earlier in a judo class, and he fights using judo and karate, only to surprise his opponent by switching to some good old American boxing and roughhousing to seal his win. The raw crudeness of the scene is thrilling.

The full screen black-and-white picture looks crisp and grain is minimal. The source material does have occasional scratches and speckling, but the flaws are not distracting. The public domain feature has had many iterations on DVD, but the BD has been mastered from decent source materials and is far and away better looking. The monophonic sound is okay (there is a worthy Miklós Rózsa musical score) and there are optional English subtitles, along with a trailer. WWII film historians Julie Kirgo and Peter Hankoff supply an excellent commentary track, dissecting the film's pluses and minuses while also talking about the context in which it was created (Germany had been defeated but the atomic bomb had yet to drop) and why it is still not just a valid feature, but good entertainment despite its obvious deficiencies.

### **Twain classic**

Errol Flynn stars in the 1937 Warner Bros. adaptation of Mark Twain's **The Prince and the Pauper**, although because of the narrative's structure, there are long periods in which he does not appear. He doesn't even show up until more than 50 minutes into the 118-minute feature, which was directed by William Keighley and has been released by Warner Bros. and Turner Entertainment as a *WB Warner Archive Collection* Blu-ray (UPC#81-0134949041, \$22). The script was taken from a stage adaptation, so it was already structured to tone down the crosscutting, but that would be a reason why, while still enjoyable as almost any swashbuckler featuring Flynn is, it is not one of Warner's strongest efforts. Clearly preserved because of the enormous portion of the budget it ate up, the coronation sequence at what ought to be the film's breathtaking climax is interminable, and there isn't a single cutaway to Flynn's character until nearly the end of it. On the plus side, twins Billy and Bobby Mauch were cast as the young, look-alike title characters, which was a surprisingly effective choice since there are subtle differences between them that would not be accomplished with the same actor playing both parts. Alan Hale delivers a terrific performance as the captain of the guard who becomes conscience-stricken as he attempts to carry out an order to kill the true prince, and Barton MacLane is terrific as the pauper's cutthroat father, but Claude Rains is underutilized as the primary villain, with some wonderful moments but no follow through. In that Twain's original story is irresistibly enjoyable, so is the film a reliable pleasure, but its limitations prevent it from exceeding the basic expectations one has of it.

The full screen black-and-white picture is free of wear and is sharp most of the time. The monophonic sound is strong in support of the Erich Wolfgang Korngold score. There are optional English subtitles and an original trailer, along with three lovely 1937 color Warner *Merrie Melodies* cartoons—the 7-minute *A Sunbonnet Blue* about mice having fun in a hat store (and adapting the orientations of the hats); the 7-minute *Plenty of Money and You* about an ostrich in a barnyard that is hatched by a chicken and doesn't know where he fits in; and the 8-minute *Streamlined Greta Green* about a little car that sneaks into the city and then races trains after drinking some high-powered motor fuel.

In 1977, Alexander and Ilya Salkind produced an all-star presentation of the Twain story that had to be titled **Crossed Swords** because marketing mavens persuaded the producers that nobody knew who Twain was any more. Originally distributed by Warner, it is now available from Kino Lorber Incorporated as a *KL Studio Classics* Blu-ray (UPC#73832945221, \$30). Directed by Richard Fleischer, the film is flawed in a number of ways and is just partially redeemed by the effort that some of the stars put into it. Somebody had the bright idea of getting that cute kid from *Oliver!* to play the dual roles, and while his performance is viable, Mark Lester went through an, um, growth spurt by the time the film was shot and in effect towers over every other movie star in the film, except Charlton Heston. Fleischer's biggest error comes when the two characters Lester embodies exchange clothes—for some unexplained and physically impossible reason, they exchange hairstyles, as well, breaking the spell the film worked hard to establish with its innovative visual effects.

On the positive side, most of the stars are genuinely enjoyable presences on the screen, and give performances worthy of their stature. Oliver Reed is marvelous in the part that Flynn played, Ernest Borgnine is suitably swinish in the Barton MacLane role and intriguingly, Rex Harrison (who did not make enough movies) takes on the Claude Rains part except that he is charmingly benign, with an underling, played by Harry Andrews, doing the dirty work. David Hemmings plays the evil brother of Reed's character, a character that is not present in the 1937 film but establishes a nice parallel to the difficulty that Lester's characters have found themselves in. Heston is terrific as Henry VIII, and George C. Scott is equally wonderful as a king of thieves. Raquel Welch is silent at first as the wife of Hemmings' character, but eventually speaks up. Sybil Danning and Graham Stark are also featured. Running 108 minutes—the plot does leap forward awkwardly at a couple of points—the film's flourish—money was well spent on costumes and castles—and the essential intrigue of the basic plot are enough to justify the presences of the stars and make the film somewhat worthwhile, but Fleischer's heart does not seem to be in it the way that Reed's is, and a specific disinterest in how the story points come together undercuts the true potential that the film—and the story—have to entertain.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1 and the color transfer looks wonderful, with accurate fleshtones and lush surroundings. The DTS sound has a basic 2-channel mix that brings a satisfying dimensionality to some of the sound effects and, more consistently, to Maurice Jarre's elaborate musical score. There are optional English subtitles. Buried in the 'Bonus' menu right above the trailer is something identified as, 'International Cut (SD)', which turns out to be a 122-minute presentation of the film. The picture quality is adequate, although weaker with lighter colors and a lot of displacement, and the sound is monophonic and blander, but there are optional English subtitles. The added footage does not entirely fix the 'leap forward awkwardly' problem, but it adds some nice humor and texture to the film (including an embellishment of Heston's death scene and more time with the other stars—even more so than the other version, Scott's scenes are staged like an unorchestrated musical), expands Barry's score a little bit and, on the whole, would be preferable if it could

match the quality of the other presentation. Also featured is a very nice 19-minute interview with Lester, who retired after shooting it (he had expected his career to end earlier, so he was in effect playing with house money) and has fond memories of the cast and the shoot.

Finally, there is an excellent commentary track by Sixties and Seventies film enthusiasts Howard S. Berger, Steve Mitchell and Nathaniel Thompson, who like the film substantially more than we do, although they admit it was generally dismissed when it first came out. They talk about everything from the experience of seeing the film in Radio City Music Hall to the shattered expectations that it would repeat the vibe set by the Salkinds' **The Three Musketeers**.

Although they admit that Twain's story has a younger protagonist, they do not take issues with Lester's size or the ridiculous swapped hairdos. Instead, they have nothing but praise for what Fleischer accomplished and the various examples of his skill. "The details in this with the characters, the way they grow and their character arcs—they're not maybe as obvious as one would think right off the bat. There is an arc that moves through this film, every character. Every character changes deliberately. They're dealing with identity changes throughout. Identity's a big theme in this movie. What you're owed because of what your identity provides you is a big theme. Another theme in nearly every Richard Fleischer film is the idea of family and how the family unit, whether literal or figurative, plays a huge, huge part, the ultimate landing point of each character's arc."

They also share many great stories about the cast and the crew, not only during the shooting of the film, but the reputations they brought to it, and they point out how fabulous—particularly with this transfer—the Jack Cardiff cinematography looks. "Look at that shot. Beautifully composed. Great storytelling. It could have been a painting. And every shot in this movie to some degree, because of the way the color is used and the production design, feel like they could have been oil on canvas. This movie, I have to say, I enjoyed it more now than I think I did at the time."

They use twins again, Jonathan and Robert Timmins, in the 2000 Hallmark Entertainment telefilm directed by Giles Foster, **The Prince and the Pauper**, which is available from Sterling Media (UPC#887936807961, \$25). Unfortunately, the twins are not very skilled actors, but that is about the only negative thing we can say for the production. Alan Bates, who can do no wrong, plays Henry VIII in one of his final roles, and Jonathan Hyde balances a nice mix of evil and humor as the duke who tries to manipulate the boy. Aidan Quinn does not have the screen presence that either Flynn or Reed delivers, but his performance is still very engaging and carries the film effectively. Like **Crossed Swords**, it was filmed in Eastern Europe, so it gets a lot of value out of the locations and the handful of matte paintings that embellish them. The important thing is that running 90 minutes, the film never dawdles and conveys the story's pleasures in a brisk and enthusiastic manner, getting right to the heart of the story's appeal and carrying it through efficiently. The movie is geared slightly toward younger viewers, but like most anything created for television, once you start watching it, you don't want to stop. The full screen picture has fresh colors and only seemed to smear in a couple of darker sequences. The 2-channel stereo sound is really nice, giving the music in particular a very enjoyable dimensionality. There is no captioning. Text profiles of Bates, Quinn and Hyde are included.

### **Life in the South**

Best remembered as part of the talented **Hogan's Heroes** ensemble, Ivan Dixon stars as a laborer in Alabama who enters into a relationship with a schoolteacher played by Abbey Lincoln in the wonderful 1964 independent production released on Blu-ray by The Film Desk and The Criterion Collection, **Nothing but a Man** (UPC#715515292917, \$40). Shot in Birmingham and its outskirts, the film conveys a vividly accurate sense of what life in the Sixties was like in low income communities. The performances are uniformly excellent—a young (but still with an old soul) Yaphet Kotto plays a coworker of Dixon's character—to the point where nobody seems to be acting, just living. The way in which racism permeates the lives of the characters, affecting not just their economic stability but their psychologies and the psychologies they pass to their children, becomes clearer and clearer as the 91-minute film advances, wrapping itself around the romance like a kudzu vine. It is only through the deft choices made by the director, Michael Roemer, and the exquisite manner in which the drama is conveyed by the film's stars that it can manage to be so bitterly realistic and still convey a viable hope for tomorrow, even if it is a hope that the world is still waiting to see realized.

The full screen black-and-white picture looks gorgeous. The image is so sharply detailed that the pores on the faces of the actors are meticulously delineated. The monophonic sound is fine, and the film also had the advantage of grabbing a number of Motown hits well before their prices reached the stratosphere, adding another sense of permanence to a culture that is always resisting suppression. There are optional English subtitles, a great 26-minute talk by Roemer from 2024 about his career and the details of the film's shoot, another fascinating 23-minute talk with Roemer and collaborator Robert M. Young from 2004 (particularly about their experiences as white Jewish men trying somewhat blindly to find their way through the subject matter; and the difficulties of marketing the film in the Sixties), and a 2004 interview with Dixon, Lincoln and co-star Julius Harris about their lives, how they found their way into making the film and how they related to their characters.

### The world in the courtroom

About the physical, psychic and spiritual links between mothers and daughters, Alice Diop's 2022 *Saint Omer* is ostensibly a courtroom drama, and that is where most of the 123-minute film, released on Blu-ray by The Criterion Collection (UPC#715515293716, \$40), is set. There are no histrionics, no witnesses rushing in at the last minute, no sudden twists or turns, and even the lawyers are mostly irrelevant. Instead, following what we can only assume is an accurate representation of how a French courtroom operates, the defendant, played by Guslagie Malanda, an African immigrant accused of leaving her baby girl in the surf one night to be washed away to the sea, is interviewed by the presiding judge about the circumstances surrounding her malfeasance. The film is in French with optional English subtitles, and this is one situation where the presence of subtitling alters the impact of the film in substantial ways. Diop does not move her camera in the courtroom, so there are very lengthy shots of Malanda standing in the defendant's docket, unmoving and with almost no change in her expressions, answering the questions posed off screen by the judge. It is an entirely different movie if you are busily reading the subtitles at the bottom of the sparsely decorated screen than if you are just staring at Malanda and listening to what she says. Kayije Kagame is featured as the film's framing device, a courtroom observer whose life the film follows during adjournments and so on, bringing inevitable parallels to the conflicts she sees on the stand. Despite the simplicity of its construction and design, the film is wholly engrossing, and its conflicts are penetrating. Most courtroom dramas thrive upon performances and fiery exchanges. This one is entirely about oral narrative, about ignoring the presence of images and just listening to what the characters are saying about their lives, their histories and their interactions, and yet ultimately it is just as effective as, say, *Anatomy of a Murder*, demonstrating that courtrooms are a place in real life that are not part of literary tradition or hierarchy but perform the same storytelling functions. To paraphrase Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, the courtroom is the finite, and literature is the infinite.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1. The color transfer looks great. The 5.1-channel DTS sound puts the audio mixes of big budget action films to shame. There are no explosive moments, of course, but the meticulous separations and surround effects are clear and precise, placing the viewer within the same environment that the characters are in and doing so in an involving and entertaining manner. Along with a trailer, there are 115 minutes of interviews with Diop. Although there are some redundancies in the talks, she explains how she took the transcripts from an actual trial and fictionalized the parameters slightly in order to place emphasis on what fascinated her about the proceeding, as well as how she staged the film, and with the extended talks she gets into discussing the limiting and defining nature of language (a popular French topic) and other peripheral matters. While the film begins where it left off when playback is terminated, the special features do not.

### Summer vacation

Reminiscent of an Eric Rohmer film, the 2023 German feature, *Afire*, released on Blu-ray by Janus Films, Sideshow and The Criterion Channel (UPC#715515293112, \$30), is a very dry comedy with secondary tragic overtones and, glancingly, a romance. At least the hero wishes it was a romance, but he has trouble acting on his wishes. Thomas Schubert plays a young writer who is spending the summer with a friend at a house near a beach that turns out to also have another guest, a woman who works during the afternoons at a nearby ice cream stand, played by Paula Beer. It is also a 'working' vacation for the writer, who is trying very hard to put together a second novel. His friend strikes up a relationship with a local lifeguard, but whenever the four characters are together, Schubert's character always feels like the odd man out. He is essentially shy, but also feels intimidated by the others, a sense of inadequacy that is worsened by the course that his novel is taking. Meanwhile, as seems to be happening all over the globe these days, a forest fire, held back by the sea breezes, nevertheless becomes a threatening presence. Running 102 minutes, the film, directed by Christian Petzold, is fully engrossing and very enjoyable, because it manages to vividly communicate the thoughts and feelings of the characters. Schubert's character ineptly stumbles through his initial attempts to connect with Beer's character, but as the film progresses and it becomes clear that he can never catch a break, each disappointment becomes funnier than the last. Like Rohmer's several summer vacation movies, it is the way that the film enables the viewer to share a holiday with the characters that turns what are ostensibly mundane incidents into a pleasant and memorable adventure.

The film does not start up where it left off if playback is terminated. The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1. The color transfer is bright and sharp, and the film's cinematography has a calm and assured presence that adds to the movie's atmosphere. The 5.1-channel DTS sound has a pleasing dimensionality and some very nice directional effects. The film is in German with optional English subtitles and comes with a 16-minute interview with Petzold, who immediately identifies Rohmer as his inspiration, talks about the traditions of summer movies, and steps his way through his ideas for the film.

### Samurai movies mixing James Bond with Spaghetti

Like Italy, Japan was late in creating a television market, and so action films featuring a returning character were more common than they were in America in the Sixties and Seventies (spy films excepted) and the films had the advantage of including somewhat unrestricted sex and violence. A gloriously hip samurai series, *The Bounty Hunter Trilogy*, has been released in a two-platter Blu-ray set by Radiane (UPC#760137147886, \$65). Tomisaburô Wakayama of *Lone Wolf and Cub* fame stars as a swordsman whose outfit has more gadgets than a James Bond car. Indeed, while the climax of the first film, the 1969 *Bounty Hunter: Killer's Mission*, may be lifted straight from the Sergio Leone playbook (trumpets and extreme close-ups as the hero and his antagonist face off), most of the movie is James Bond in the Eighteenth Century, flicking out knives and arrows every which way, seducing every

woman who comes within arms length of him and listening patiently as the villain announces how the hero is going to be put to death after the diabolical plans have been explained. And all of this happens to music that is just, constantly, a note or two off of a typical James Bond background score and orchestration. But it is also Japanese, so the widescreen cinematography, letterboxed like its two companions with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1, is beautifully lit and meticulously composed. Oh, and blood sprays freely in every sword fight. A Dutch ship arrives in the capital's harbor to sell some advanced weaponry. When it is turned away, it sails to another part of Japan and offers the guns to group of rebels (anachronistically, the hero has a gun with a repeating bullet chamber). As the rebels decide whether or not to do the deal, and spies from the capital attempt to disrupt the proceedings. The hero is in the middle, with the viewer unsure of where his loyalties are, but willing to follow along as he copes with each situation that he faces. Wakayama was the brother of Shintaro Katsu, who played Zatoichi, and in one scene he pretends to be blind, doing a spot-on impersonation of his brother that is highly amusing. Running 89 minutes, you can't really call the film exploitation in the normal sense, despite the terrific violence and wonderful sexual innuendo, because the narrative is not only complex, but backed up by genuine philosophical arguments about duty and loyalty. That is what makes all Japanese exploitation films so gratifying, the refusal to 'dumb down' the plot to give way to the action, and *Killer's Mission* is a wonderful example of the genre at its best.

*Killer's Mission* appears by itself on the first platter and was directed by Shigehiro Ozawa, who would go on to make the *Street Fighter* movies. The color transfer looks wonderful. The image is a touch soft now and then, but is otherwise sharp and free of wear or aging. The monophonic sound is clear and strong, and all three films are in Japanese with optional English subtitles. There is a general commentary by Japanese scholar Tom Mes, going over the historical context for the film while explaining the narrative (which he also relates to the events depicted in *Shôgun*), pointing out the anachronisms, and discussing the careers of the cast and crew. He places the film within the history of Japanese action features as well ("Toei, by this time, had consciously decided that they were going to appeal to basically an audience of working-class men, and this allowed them to increase the amount of sex and violence in their films.") and points out its James Bond and Spaghetti western allusions. There are gaps in the second half of his talk, however, and the volume level for the film's playback during these gaps is significantly higher than the volume when he is speaking, leading one to frantically raise and lower the volume of playback accordingly as the talk proceeds (he also mistakenly identifies the Eighteenth Century as the Seventeenth Century). Along with a trailer, there is also a good 16-minute piece on Ozawa, Wakayama and the films. It is also admitted that the movie's misogyny is a little out of date now, suggesting that the series might have been more successful and more enduring if the female characters had been treated better.

The other two *Bounty Hunter* films appear on the second platter, and the first sequel, *Bounty Hunter: The Fort of Death* from 1969, is perhaps even better than *Killer's Mission*. The plot is somewhat easier to follow and is clearly derived from *The Magnificent Seven* (oh, excuse us, *The Seven Samurai*), as peasants from a small farming village who are literally being taxed to death approach the hero with what savings they have left and beg him to help them defend their homes from an aggressive lord while they wait for a courier to reach the central government with an appeal. Wakayama's character, who had been biding his time as a doctor, gathers a trio of comrades and they travel to the village—which, topographically, is well situated on a hill and surrounded by makeshift but effective fortifications—to organize and defend it against the villain's attacks. The Eighteenth Century appears to have been thrown out the window, because not only are there repeating rifles and revolvers, but the hero even unleashes a Gatling gun at an appropriate moment, Django-style. Blood sprays, ribald comedy that American films might still never touch abounds, and the film, directed by Eiichi Kudo, is another outstanding mix of action and thematic exploration, framed once again in magnificently composed rectangular images. Running 98 minutes, the film does not disguise the price that economic exploitation and war incur upon an innocent populace, but somehow is able to mix its bitter lessons with an action film exhilaration, which will have fans coming back to it again and again. The image is a little soft at times and hues are not as bright as in *Killer's Mission*, but the color tones match the film's inevitable bloodletting, and the picture is otherwise free of distortion.

A film that is even more like a Spaghetti western than the other two, *Bounty Hunter: Eight Men to Kill* from 1972 is about stolen gold. One piece of the gold turns up when a patient is stricken with pain after swallowing it and Wakayama's character, performing his doctor skills, removes it. Wakayama's character then agrees to help the government get the rest of the gold back in return for more funding for his health clinics, and following that initial lead, he tracks down the various bandits who have double crossed one another and have hidden it pretty much at its source—another gold mine. As the various parties continue to betray one another to obtain the gold—and the women he meets decide that he would be the best one to get it for them—he wrangles his way around the different villains who attempt to stop him and get the gold for themselves. He is also working under a deadline—an expected solar eclipse—and the change in lighting and color during the progress of the eclipse is very striking. Running 88 minutes, the film, directed by Ozawa, is the weakest of the three features, but it is still an entertaining blend of action, sex and samurai warriors acting like cowboys. The widescreen images remain compellingly balanced. The image is a little sharper than *Fort of Death* and flesh tones are reasonably accurate, although the hues do seem a touch dark at times. Overall, it still looks wonderful, and like the other two films, the monophonic sound is quite strong, while distortion to the music is limited.

All three films are in Japanese with optional English subtitles. In addition to the two films, the second platter contains trailers for the two sequels, a brief section of memorabilia for all three films in still frame, and an enjoyable 18-minute piece on the thematic progressions of samurai films in the Sixties and Seventies, and how Kudo's films were influential in guiding the transition, with lots of great clips.

### Martial arts display

Indoors and outdoors, the picture quality on the 1970 Golden Harvest martial arts feature, *The Shaolin Plot*, released on Blu-ray by Arrow Video (UPC#760137142966, \$40), looks fantastic. The image is without a blemish and colors are bright and crisp, enhanced by the period décor and gorgeous costumes. Directed by Feng Huang, the film, which has no women in it whatsoever, is about a prince, played by Sing Chan, obsessed with martial arts, who goes undercover to steal fighting manuals from a monastery. Sporting a Chester Alan Arthur beard, Sammo Hung plays one of the prince's tougher enforcers. The film goes through a series of heroes, but the primary one is played by James Tien, who is beaten by Hung's character, finds sanctuary with a monk who is himself estranged from the monastery, and trains with him. When the monk is murdered, Tien's character goes to the monastery to encourage revenge and aids the monks when Chan's character abducts the monastery's leader. That is a rough outline of the plot, which has many more turns and details. Running 110 minutes, the story is resolute, although the scenarists write themselves into a corner emotionally. Nevertheless, there is enough continual plot activity to keep a viewer engaged, and from there, the many hard-edged and acrobatic fight sequences are sufficient to make the film a satisfying experience. Casanova Wong, Yeong-moon Kwon and Wang Ho are also featured.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1. The monophonic sound has a natural bit of noise in the background, but is otherwise solid and clear. There is a Mandarin track and an alternate English track, with optional English subtitles. Alternate English language opening and closing title sequences running a total of 2 minutes are included, along with two trailers and a passable collection of memorabilia in still frame.

There are also two commentary tracks, a sensible one featuring Asian film experts Frank Djeng and Michael Worth, and a more esoteric conversation by martial arts enthusiasts Mike Leeder and Arne Venema. Leeder and Venema supply interesting background information about the cast members, particularly the ones they know personally, but where their past talks have always been anchored by sensible comments about the film at hand, here they tend to go overboard using *Star Wars* references and feeling frustrated because the movie—which they still admire because the fight scenes are awesome—does not conform to normal martial arts film templates. Djeng and Worth also talk about the cast and crew, share more details about the film's Korean locations, and dive deeper into the film's production history, the movie's narrative and the film's cultural contexts. They, too, make note of how the film differs from the standard fare, but are more appreciative of the nuances in Huang's direction. "Again, here's this moment, they just sort of sit and pause. You're not getting this sort of rapid fire guys walking in, say a few words and fight. He's not afraid to just drag these things out. I say, 'Drag them out,' as a compliment. I actually like the pacing of this."

### Past glories revisited

While it looks like he was using Steven Spielberg's storyboards, James Mangold directed the—in all likelihood final—2023 installment in the popular Eighties fantasy action film series, *Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny*, a LucasFilms Walt Disney Video release (UPC#786936893700, \$30). Harrison Ford returns in the opening, battling Nazis and obtaining the title object, and he is the Ford of the Eighties, but then the film advances in time by a pair of decades and Ford ages twice that for the film's best gag. The object gets retrieved from storage and Nazis longing for the past are after it again, with Phoebe Waller-Bridge, who came to prominence creating the radical sitcom, *Fleabag*, squeezed into the somewhat confining role as the spunky young woman who helps Ford's character. There are so many times when the film cheats to advance the action (one of many examples—Ford and Waller-Bridge have difficulties climbing a sheer rock face, but then the villains, who are dragging along a kid, surmount it off screen) that it becomes a feature rather than a bug, and where there are no Spielbergian storyboards, Mangold drops the ball. Neither the eels nor the centipedes live up to their potential squeal factors. Like all of the films in the series, the movie has a science fantasy component, in this case involving time travel, justifying the somewhat longish 154-minute running time. On the whole, the film isn't serious, but it is a pleasing reprise of past glories. The elderly Ford remains a viable screen presence, the Rube Goldberg action sequences are great fun, and the film's ending is lovely to the nth degree. While the movie may not accrue any new fans for the series, it provides established enthusiasts a fleeting and longed for return to the past.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1 and an accommodation for enhanced 16:9 enhancement. The color transfer looks fine. The 5.1-channel Dolby Digital sound has a workable surround presence and some decent directional effects. There is an audio track that describes the action ("The colonel aims his pistol. Using his whip, Indy lashes the gun from the Nazi's hand."), alternate French and Spanish audio tracks, and optional English, French and Spanish subtitles.

### DVD News

**CRITERION CORNER:** Barry Jenkins's TV series, *The Underground Railroad*, is being released by The Criterion Collection with a commentary featuring Jenkins and, on select chapters, cinematographer James Laxton and lead editor Jo McMillon, with an introduction by the director; a graphic-novel adaptation of *Genesis*, an unfilmed chapter of *The Underground Railroad* written by Jenkins and Nathan C. Parker, with an introduction by Jenkins; *The Gaze*, a companion film by Jenkins, with a new introduction by the director; deleted scenes; seven teasers made by Jenkins, with a new introduction by the director; and *Building The Underground*

*Railroad*, a short program featuring Jenkins and production designer Mark Friedberg discussing the creation of the train-station sets. Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *Querelle* will include an interview with critic Michael Koresky on Fassbinder's aesthetics and visual storytelling and *Rainer Werner Fassbinder—Last Works*, a 1982 documentary by Wolf Gremm. The Wachowski siblings' *Bound* will be released in 4K format with an audio commentary featuring Lana and Lilly Wachowski, Gina Gershon, Joe Pantoliano, Jennifer Tilly, editor Zach Staenberg, and technical consultant Susie Bright; a video essay by film critic Christina Newland; and six interview programs featuring Gershon, Pantoliano, Pope, Staenberg, Tilly, actor Christopher Meloni, composer Don Davis, title designer Patti Podesta, and film scholars Jennifer Moorman and B. Ruby Rich. David Lynch's *Blue Velvet* will also be in 4K format and will include *The Lost Footage*, 53-minutes of deleted scenes and alternate takes assembled by Lynch; *Blue Velvet Revisited*, a feature-length meditation on the making of the movie by Peter Braatz, filmed on-set during the production; *Mysteries of Love*, a 70-minute documentary from 2002 on the making of the film; an interview from 2017 with Angelo Badalamenti; *It's a Strange World: The Filming of Blue Velvet*, a 2019 documentary featuring interviews with crew members and visits to the shooting locations; and Lynch reading from *Room to Dream*, a 2018 book he coauthored with Kristine McKenna. Terry Gilliam's *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* is being issued in 4K format and will have three audio commentaries—one with Gilliam, one with Johnny Depp, Benicio Del Toro and producer Laila Nabulsi, and one with Hunter S. Thompson; deleted scenes, with optional commentary by Gilliam; a selection of Thompson correspondence, read on camera by Depp; *Hunter Goes to Hollywood*, a short documentary; a program about the controversy over the screenwriting credit; a profile of Oscar Zeta Acosta, the inspiration for Dr. Gonzo; a collection of artwork by illustrator Ralph Steadman; an excerpt from a 1996 *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* audio recording featuring filmmaker Jim Jarmusch and actor Maury Chaykin; a documentary from 1978 featuring Thompson and Steadman; and storyboards, production designs, stills, and trailer.

**NEW IN BLU:** The following titles were recently issued on Blu-ray—*Karat Cops*, *Mind Melters 31*, *Mind Melters 32*, *Mind Melters 33*, *Mind Melters 34*, *Mind Melters 35*, *Mind Melters 36*, *Mind Melters 37*, *Mind Melters 38*, *Mind Melters 39*, *Mind Melters 40* (*Acid Bath*); *Snakeeater* (All Channel); *Midsomer Murders Season 24*, *When Evil Lurks* (AMD); *Stice's Satyricon* (Art); *At 23000 Feet*, *The Monster Mash* (Bayview); *Manhattan Zodiac '77*, *Trench* (Bounty); *Poor Things*, *Wish* (Buena Vista); *Tortu*, *Saving the Ice* (Burning Bulb); *Réjeanne Padovani* (Canadian); *5 Card Stud*, *The Playgirls and the Vampire* (CAV); *Over the Edge* (Cinedigm); *All That Money Can Buy*, *All the Beauty* and the *Bloodshed*, *Lynch/Oz*, *The Runner*, *Saint Omer*, *To Die For* (Criterion); *A Cold Grave* (DBS); *Bubble Bath* (*Deaf Crocodile*); *Ferrari*, *I.S.S.*, *Out of Darkness*, *The Royal Hotel* (Decal); *Herencia Diabolica* (*Degausser*); *Double Blind* (Epic); *Everything to Entertain You* *The Story of Video Headquarters* (ETR); *Totally Wired 3 Films* by Nathan Silver (Factory 25); *Downtown Heat* (*Full Moon*); *Phobophobia* (*Gatorblade*); *The Contender*, *Revolution X* (Giant); *Attention Attention*, *Bardejov*, *Cover Your Ears*, *Embodied*, *Fully Realized Humans*, *Good, Jonah*, *The Killing of Kenneth Chamberlain*, *Meander*, *Snow Valley*, *Sweet River*, *Twenty Pearls*, *Unbranded*, *Who Are You People* (Gravitas); *Man on the Brink* (Kan); *Archangel*, *Brain Doners*, *Death Rides a Horse*, *Driving Madeleine*, *Film Noir The Dark Side of Cinema XVIII*, *A Fistful of Dynamite*, *The Lincoln Conspiracy*, *A Lion in Winter*, *The Little Girl Who Sold the Sun & Le Franc*, *Monk Season 5*, *The President's Analyst*, *Rent-A-Cop*, *The Soldier's Tale*, *Target*, *The Whip and the Body*, *The Wind of Ayahuasca* (Kino); *Ancient Empires*, *The Iron Claw* (Lionsgate); *Immediate Family*, *Lord of Misrule* (*Magnolia*); *Ghost Samurai* (Media Blasters); *Carpet Cowboys* (Memory); *Anaconda*, *Hollow Man*, *I Know What You Did Last Summer*, *Icons Unearthed Star Wars*, *Rad* (Mill Creek); *Nightsiren*, *Simon Killer* (MPI); *The Crime Is Mine* (Music Box); *Bloodmoon*, *The Bounty Hunter Trilogy*, *Closed Circuit*, *Dracula* *Prisoner of Frankenstein*, *Impulse*, *The Inspector Wears Skirts 2*, *Punto Rojo*, *The Shootist*, *The Spider Labyrinth*, *Stir* (MVD); *Moon Garden* (*Oscilloscope*); *All Creatures Great & Small Season 4*, *Good Burger 2*, *Star Trek Lower Decks Season 3* (Paramount); *The Bat Woman*, *The Panther Woman*, *Santo vs. The Riders of Terror* (Powerhouse); *Al-yah and the Cove* (Rainbow); *Freelance* (Relativity); *Andie the Great*, *Anonymous 616*, *Christmas Couple's Retreat*, *Dead Fred*, *Don't Say Its Name*, *A Small Fortune*, *A Space in Time* (*Rising Sun*); *Blueberry* (Samuel Goldwyn); *The Zombie Army* (*Saturn's Core*); *Amsterdam Open Air Festival*, *Armin Only Intense*, *Awakenings*, *Creamfields* (Shoreline); *Amelie*, *Anyone but You*, *The Book of Clarence*, *Cocktail Hour*, *Shadow Magic* (Sony); *Malum* (*Terror*); *Stranded & Cosmic Psychos* (*Umbrella*); *The Act Complete Series*, *Heroes Complete Series*, *The Prince of Egypt* (*The Musical*), *Suits Complete Series* (Universal); *Blind Faith* (VHShitfest); *Appaloosa*, *Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom*, *Blazing Saddles*, *The Boob/Why Be Good?*, *The Color Purple*, *Colt .45 Complete Series*, *Doctor Who* (*The Daleks in Color*), *The Little Drummer Girl*, *Looney Tunes Collector's Choice V.3*, *Money Talks*, *Stand and Deliver*, *They Drive by Night*, *The 3 Godfathers*, *Wednesday Season 1* (Warner); *Born to Fly*, *One-Percent Warrior*, *Polar Rescue* (Well Go); *Where the Devil Roams* (*Yellow Veil*).

**NEW IN 4K:** The following titles were recently released in 4K format—*The Abyss*, *Aliens*, *True Lives* (Buena Vista); *Phase IV* (CAV); *To Die For* (Criterion); *Carrie*, *Child's Play*, *K-19 The Widowmaker*, *Quigley Down Under*, *The Ring Collection* (Cinedigm); *Changing Lanes*, *The Long Riders*, *The Manchurian Candidate*, *North Dallas Forty*, *Paint Your Wagon* (Kino); *Burial Ground*, *Dark Water*, *Night of the Blood Monster*, *The Spider Labyrinth* (MVD); *Dragonslayer*, *Event Horizon*, *Primal Fear*, *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valence*, *The Running Man* (Paramount); *Patrick*, *Snapshot* (Powerhouse); *Kung Fu Panda*, *The 355* (Universal); *Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom*, *The Color Purple* (Warner)

**BDs**

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 (Black Tuesday) p2  
 Blackhat 4K p3  
 Blood on the Sun p4  
 The Bounty Hunter Trilogy p6  
 The Breaking Point p4  
 Contagion 4K p3

**Current Attractions**

The following titles recently appeared for the first time:

Acorn (Bayview)  
 Acquired by Faith (Green Apple)  
 The Act Complete Series (Universal)  
 After Desert Storm (Digicam)\*  
 Al Evolution (Gravitas)\*  
 Alien Insurrection (Alchemyn)  
 Alien Paranormal Dark Intruders and ET Enigmas (Alchemyn)  
 Alien Paranormal UFOs and Bizarre Encounters (Alchemyn)  
 Alien Rulers The Third Phase (Alchemyn)  
 Alien Sniperess (Green Apple)  
 Alien Top 20 Mind Bending UFO Encounters (Alchemyn)  
 All Creatures Great and Small Season 4 (Paramount)  
 All the Answers Season 1 (Dreamscape)  
 All the Answers Season 2 (Dreamscape)  
 All the Answers Season 3 (Dreamscape)  
 All the Beauty and the Bloodshed (Criterion)  
 Alone among the Taliban (Dreamscape)\*  
 Alyah and the Cove (Rainbow)\*  
 American Bully (Green Apple)  
 Ancient Giants of Babylon The Nephilim on Earth (Alchemyn)  
 Andie the Great (Rising Sun)\*  
 Andriess (Sinister)  
 Anonymous 616 (Rising Sun)  
 Anywho but You (Sony)  
 Apollo Astronauts Training NASA's Moon Men (Dreamscape)  
 Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom (Warner)  
 The Archive of War The True Glory and Conquest by Air (Digicam)\*  
 Assignment Outer Space (Sinister)  
 Automata (SP)\*  
 Bad Girl (Green Apple)  
 Bad Homes (Universal)  
 B4 (Filmbhub)\*  
 A Balance (Film Movement)  
 Bardejov (Gravitas)\*  
 Before the Dark (Filmbhub)\*  
 The Black Nun (ITN)  
 Blitz (SP)\*  
 Blue Lightning (Green Apple)  
 Bobcat Moretti (Stonecutter)  
 Bombs over Burma (MVD)  
 The Book of Cursive (Sony)  
 Bone 2 Race (AC)  
 The Breaking Ice (Strand)  
 Bruce Lee's Deadly Kung Fu (Shoreline)\*  
 A Brush with Love/When Love Springs/Wedding Season (Cinedigm)  
 Bunker of Blood V.6 Zombie Lust Night Flesh (Full Moon)  
 Carnival of Blood (Sinister)  
 Carver (Filmbhub)\*  
 Charming the Hearts of Men (Gravitas)\*  
 Christmas Couple's Retreat (Rising Sun)  
 The Clairvoyant (Sinister)  
 Classic Cars of the 1930s & 1940s V.2 (Alpha)\*  
 Clown Motel Vacancies (Filmbhub)  
 A Cold Grave (DBS)\*  
 Cold Meat (Level 33)\*  
 The Color Purple (Warner)  
 The Contender (Giant)  
 Cover Your Ears (Gravitas)  
 Craig before the Creek (Paramount)  
 The Crime Is Mine (Music Box)  
 Cross-Roads (Sinister)  
 Cult Killer (Sony)  
 Curious Cafetera 3-Movie Collection (Cinedigm)  
 The Cursed Mansion (Sinister)  
 Day by Day (Utopia)  
 Deacon (Filmbhub)  
 Dead Fred (Rising Sun)  
 Death by Invitation (Sinister)  
 Decision of Faith (Green Apple)  
 The Demon (Sinister)  
 The Demon of Mount Oe (Sinister)  
 The Desiring (Freestyle)\*  
 Don't Say Its Name (Rising Sun)  
 Dr. Tony Fauci (Paramount)  
 Dragonfly (Filmbhub)  
 Driving Madeleine (Kino)  
 During Party's Party (Sinister)  
 Embodied (Gravitas)\*

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**DVDs**

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Extreme Ghostbusters Complete Series (Sony)  
 Fast Speed (Wownow)  
 Fear Level (Filmbhub)\*  
 Ferrari (Decal)  
 4 Presidents Oval Office Conspiracies (Green Apple)  
 45 Days to Be Rich (Green Apple)  
 The Fox (Kino)  
 Francesca Quinn PI (Cinedigm)\*  
 Freelance (Relativity)  
 Freud's Last Session (Sony)  
 From Dust (Filmbhub)\*  
 From the Shadows (Stonecutter)  
 The Funny Company Collection (Alpha)\*  
 The Galaxy (Wownow)  
 Game of Freedom Mestre Bimba and the Art of Capoeira (Dreamscape)  
 Gap K One Step at a Time (Freestyle)\*  
 Geheminis des Blauen Zimmers (Sinister)\*  
 Ghosts Complete Series (Warner)  
 The Giant of Marathon (Sinister)  
 The Giant of Metropolis (Sinister)  
 Go for Broke! (Digicam)  
 Good (Gravitas)  
 Good Burger 2 (Paramount)  
 Good Guy with a Gun (Freestyle)  
 Gospel (Paramount)  
 The Great Pyramid Ancestors from Above (Alchemyn)  
 The Great Pyramid Enoch's Prophecy in Stone (Alchemyn)  
 The Great Pyramid Lost Portal to the Future (Alchemyn)  
 Gunfight at Cold Cross (4Digital)  
 Hande with Care The Legend of the Nostic Streetball Crew (Gravitas)  
 Here's Flash Casey (MVD)  
 Heroes of the Empire (Dreamscape)  
 History Kids The Industrial Revolution (Wonderscape)  
 Hoovey (Ocean Avenue)  
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 Inshallah A Boy (Kino)  
 Inside the Yellow Cocoon Shell (Kino)  
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 Jack the Ripper (Sinister)  
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 Jonah (Gravitas)  
 Jurasic Triangle (Unocor'd)  
 Karate Cops (Acid Bath)\*  
 The Killing of Kenneth Chamberlain (Gravitas)  
 Killing Season (SP)\*  
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 Late August at the Hotel Ozone (Sinister)  
 Legal Ladies Pioneers of Law (Wownow)  
 Legal Ladies Pioneers of Law 2 (Wownow)  
 A Life with JFK Inside Camelot (Alchemyn)  
 Lila Greer Teacher of the Year (Dreamscape)  
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 Lord of Misrule (Magnolia)  
 The Lost End (Indican)  
 Love's Twist (AC)  
 Lunar New Year Surprise (Dreamscape)  
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 Mamal! (Freestyle)\*  
 Mambar Pierrette Film (Movement)  
 Man in the Attic (Sinister)  
 Manhattan Zodiac '77 (Bounty)  
 Maya (Freestyle)  
 The McMasters (Cheesy Flicks)  
 Memories of Anne Frank (SP)\*  
 Mermaids (Wownow)  
 Merry Christmas Officer Hansel (Filmbhub)  
 Midsumers Murders Season 24 (AMD)  
 The Mighty Crusaders (Sinister)  
 Mind Melters 31 (Acid Bath)  
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Star Trek Lower Decks Season 3 (Paramount)

The Stone Flower (Sinister)

Supermen Doniyor (Sinister)

Tek Sing China's Titanic (Digicam)\*

Tender Dracula (Sinister)

The Terror of Dr. Hichcock (Sinister)

Terror of the Master (SRS)

The Texas Streak (Sinister)

They Drive by Night (Sinister)

Thousands Yard State SP\*

3 Blind Sintals (Filmbhub)

Tortu (Burning Bird)

Tread (Gravitas)

Treasure Hunters (SP)\*

Treasure Hunting and the Pirates of the Caribbean (Wownow)

Trench (Bounty)

Twenty Pearls (Gravitas)

2xUno (Yinfini)

Uakan Secrets of the English Monkey (Buffalo 8)\*

UAP Death of the UFO (Alchemy)

UFOS over Phoenix Confessions of a 911 Operator (Alchemy)

Unbranded (Gravitas)

Uncle Silas (Sinister)

Unde Was a Vampire (Sinister)

The Upturned Glass (Sinister)

The Vampire's Lover (Sinister)

A Virgin among the Living Dead (Sinister)

Vulcan Son of Jupiter (Sinister)

The Wedding Party (AC)

Wednesday Se)

Zizi and Hannibal V.3 (Dreamscape)

Zizi and Hannibal V.4 (Dreamscape)

Zombae (Indican)

\*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 AMD:**

Perpetrator → Immortal Universe Season 2

→ Destroy All Neighbors

**From Aquideck:**

Flynn → Subject 101

**From Burning Bulb:**

→ My Life with the Living Dead

The Story of John A. Russo → Cal Turner:

Final Fight → Cheesy Flicks:

Werewolf Woman → The Sex Machine

From Cinedigm: → Sesame Street Mecha Builders Complete Series (3 platters)

→ Love in the Great Smoky Mountains A National Park Romance/3 Bed 2 Bath 1

Ghost → Battle over Britain

→ Betty's Bad Luck in Love

**From Cinema Guild:** → Trenue Laquen

From Cinema Libre: → I Am Gifto

From Classicflix: → Meet John Doe

From Criterion: → The Set Up (AC)

Werkmeister Harmonies

Three Revolutionary Films

from Ousmane Sembène (Xala, Ceddo, Emítai)

→ Anatomy of a Fall

→ Querelle

→ Victims of Sin

→ The Underground Railroad

→ All That Breathes

**From Decaf:**

→ Which Brings Me to You

**From Deskip:**

→ Cary Grant The Man He Dreamed of Being

**From Digicam:**

→ Behave Yourself!

**From Dreamscape:**

→ Apex Survival

→ Asteroids A New Horizon

→ Do I Love You Robot Do I?

Elephants in Motion

The 14th February and Beyond

The Girl Who's Allergic to Herself

The Great Banned-Books Bake Sale

Iconicity

India's Forgotten People

Legend of the Crystal Skulls

Mad Max Explored

Pirates of the Mediterranean Season 1

Ria Rabbit

Scars

With Wonder

→ After the Storm

→ Alto

→ Art of Falling in Love

→ Best Friend from Heaven

→ The Brown Hyena of Makgadikgadi

→ Dance Together

→ Eating Up Easter

→ The Empire Builder

→ Eternity

→ Exploring the Known

→ Fluffy Gardens V.1

→ Fluffy Gardens V.2

→ Fluffy Gardens V.3

→ Fluffy Gardens V.4

→ Inferno without Borders

→ Love Actually

→ My Perfect Romance

→ The People's Games

→ Sunset Bunnies Get Busy Season 1

→ Sunset Bunnies Get Busy Season 2

→ The Wedding Planners Season 1

**From Duke:**

→ TT Isle of Man Official Review 2023

**From Film Movement:**

Before, Now & Then

Fear Level

Bushman

Household Saints

→ Spare Keys

→ Yuni

→ Mambar Pierrette

→ Bushman

**From Flicker Alley:**

→ Never Open That Door

**From Film Chest:**

→ Colonel March of Scotland Yard

**From 4Digital:**

The Jack in the Box Rises

**From Freestyle:**

→ Subject 101

**From Full Moon:**

Aimee The Visitor

Seedpeople

→ Bad CGI Gator

**From Fun City:**

Deep in the Heart

**From Giant:**

→ Deep Well

**From Gravitas:**

→ Last Man Standing Suge Knight and the Murders of Biggie and Tupac

→ The Manson Brothers

Midnight Zombie Massacre

→ Night of the Tommymknockers

→ Above the Shadows

→ A\*\*holes A Theory

→ The Mayberry Effect

→ Easter Bloody Easter

→ Armstrong

→ Finding Kendrick Johnson

→ Some of Our Stallions

→ Do Not Reply

→ Fioretta

→ The Night Watchmen

→ God's Waiting Room

→ The Reaper Man

→ Exploited

→ Faith Based

→ As Yet

→ Fat

→ Last Night in Rozzie

→ Aloha Surf Hotel

→ 40 The Temptation of Christ

→ The Legend of Baron To'a

→ The Star City Murders

**From Indipix:**

→ Which Brings Me to You

**From Indiepix:**

→ Cary Grant The Man He Dreamed of Being

**From KDMG:**

→ Girl in Red

→ Haunted

→ Torment

→ TrolledSOS

**From King:**

→ The Coffee Table

Apocalypse

→ Fragile King

**From Invincible:**

→ Hail Caesar

**From KODMG:**

→ Girl in Red

→ Haunted

→ Torment

→ TrolledSOS

**From King:**

→ The Coffee Table

Apocalypse

→ Fragile King

**From Rising Sun:**

→ Between Waves

→ Deinfluencer

→ On the Line

→ Sexy Babble Girls

→ A Christmas Wish

→ Jack the St. Ripper

→ Another Day to Live Through

→ Beyond the Wasteland

→ London Gangsters

→ Taped-Up Memories

→ Deep Hatred

→ Ninja PussyCat

**From Ruthless:**

→ Haunted Stories and Tales of Horror

→ Space Masons and the Alien Conspiracy

→ From Power to Prison The Trump Story Part 1

**From Samuel Goldwyn:**

→ Payback

**From Smokin:**

→ Depeche Mode Backbeat to Glory

**From Sony:**

→ The Teachers' Lounge

→ The Peasants

→ Madame Web

**From SRS:**

→ Amityville Ripper