

# THE DVD LASER DISC NEWSLETTER

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## Eastwood westerns in 4K

Philip Kaufman co-wrote the script and was then scheduled to direct **The Outlaw Josey Wales**, but he had a sort of falling out with the star, Clint Eastwood, and so Eastwood completed the 1976 film himself. It was immediately apparent that the film was much better than any movie Eastwood had directed since getting help from Don Siegel for his first feature, **Play Misty for Me**. Eastwood's cinematographer at the time, Bruce Surtees, shot the film, but Kaufman's pre-production choices clearly enriched the fabric of the movie in many ways, from its casting and location scouting to its western décor, and Eastwood's skills as a director improved significantly afterwards. It is entirely possible that without the immersive directorial experience Eastwood had with **The Outlaw Josey Wales**, he would never have achieved the balance of texture, humor, action and heart that earned him the Oscar for directing **Unforgiven**.

In the meantime, **Outlaw Josey Wales** turned out to be a terrifically entertaining movie and a big hit, and has now been released by Warner Bros. as a WB SDS Studio Distribution Services **4K UltraHD** Blu-ray (UPC#883929815111, \$30). Running 136 minutes, the episodic film follows Eastwood's character, a Missouri farmer whose family is murdered by a Union raiding party near the beginning of the Civil War, as he joins Confederate raiders, and is then chased by bounty hunters once the War is over. He travels across the Southwest, first in the company of a fellow raider he befriended played by Sam Bottoms and then subsequently bonding with an elderly Indian who has struck out on his own, played with a wonderful wit and exquisite timing by Chief Dan George. Later they help the survivors of a wagon train massacre, including a young girl played by an actress who would become a strong influence on Eastwood's career for a substantial period, Sondra Locke. Following the arc of time it takes for the animosities of war to give way to the necessities of post-war life, and sprinkled with the excitements of ambushes and showdowns, while crossing fascinating and often uncommon landscapes, and adapting to the environments they provide, the film's characters grow, feel and connect both with one another and with the viewer. It is a wonderful film.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1. We reviewed Warner's DVD in Jan 02, and Warner has since released the film on Blu-ray a couple of times, including a **35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary** release (UPC#883929146666, \$30), that has a small book-like jacket containing photos and text about the film and Eastwood's career. The colors on the Blu-ray are brighter and more realistic, but there is no way we would ever choose the BD's presentation over the 4K's presentation. Hues are accurate enough on the 4K version, and the image is incredibly smooth and film-like, so that in direct comparison, the standard BD looks oversaturated and grainy—the DVD had a weaker image with even more grain and instability. While the colors on the standard BD are fun, the weaknesses in the image are a distraction after the 4K presentation, while the 4K presentation is unaffected by the differences in color intensity and remains completely captivating as a motion picture experience.

The 5.1-channel DTS sound on the standard Blu-ray has nice environmental separations and brings a worthy dimensionality to Jerry Fielding's musical score, but it is no match for the Dolby Atmos mix on the 4K presentation, which makes the separations wider, stronger and more distinctive, and brings a greater swell to the music, too. There are alternate French, Spanish, Italian and German audio tracks; eleven subtitling options, including English; an 8-minute production featurette that originally appeared on the DVD; a 30-minute retrospective documentary that also appeared on the DVD; a good 29-minute piece about Eastwood's westerns that also serves to promote his other Warner westerns and another 18-minute piece about how Eastwood has left his imprint on the western that has the same agenda and uses a lot of the same material, although it inserts a few different talking heads (the first one, for example, has Frank Darabont, while the second has Mel Gibson, but they both have Kevin Costner); a simplistic 7-minute piece on the film's depiction of an 'anti-hero'; and a very good 8-minute analysis of the shadow-dominant cinematography, although it gives the misguided impression that Eastwood and Surtees first developed the style with this film—the truth of it is, they perfected it with this film, but they developed it, badly, in **High Plains Drifter**.

There is also a commentary by Eastwood biographer Richard Schickel that progresses systematically through the film as he speaks about the narrative, the movie's artistry, incidents on the set ("Clint is not absolutely enamored of horses, especially at that time, he was having some, you know, kind of sinus troubles. He was always sneezing

around them. On the other hand, he was a wonderful rider and completely at home with them. It wasn't the happiest thing he ever did in his life."), the cast and the crew (Schickel's insights on Eastwood's relationship with Dan George are precious), the film's success despite hesitation on the parts of some critics ("It could have been a much more generously received movie had Clint made it some years later."), and how the film fits so significantly into Eastwood's development as a filmmaker. He talks about Kaufman's involvement with the script and the improvements he made to it, and delves more deeply into Kaufman's firing during the main scenes that Kaufman directed, depicting the wagon train massacre and is aftermath. "Clint was unhappy with the way this sequence was proceeding under Kaufman's direction. He felt, to some degree, that the director had lost control of the sequence, particularly in the way that Sondra Locke was treated in the course of this passage." (Although, because of Eastwood's impatience with Kaufman, there was never a specific shot of his character with the sun behind him when there should be one.) There are longish gaps between comments in the second half, but it is still a reasonably thorough talk. Rather bizarrely, the standard BD also has the commentary track, although there is no menu option for it so that, intentionally or unintentionally, it is an Easter Egg that must be accessed by manipulating a player's audio controls.

The standard BD also has alternate French, Spanish, Italian and German audio tracks, ten subtitling options including English, the 29-minute piece on Eastwood's westerns, the 30-minute retrospective documentary (it's a minute longer, but it's the same documentary), the 8-minute production featurette, and a trailer.

Eastwood's 1985 **Pale Rider** has a mediocre plot, but excellent resources. Not only does the cast costarring with Eastwood, particularly Carrie Snodgrass, Michael Moriarty, Richard Dysart and Christopher Penn, have a terrific presence, but they all give lovely performances. The Surtees cinematography is gorgeous and the locations are captivating. The film is a good example of how Eastwood was growing as a director, bringing a greater sense of texture and detail to the environment. The production designs do more than just establish the western setting. The period dressing is both extensive and carefully considered in every scene. Even the unimpressive Lennie Niehaus musical score is beautifully recorded, creating a reverberation that heightens the entertainment considerably at the right moments. All of this becomes very clear on the Warner WB SDS **4K UltraHD** Blu-ray (UPC#883929815128, \$30). The film has had staying power over the years not just because it is one of only a dozen feature films set in the Old West that Eastwood starred in, but because it resonates as a western, and there is just enough of a plot to justify its presentation and to exercise its genre. Moriarty and Snodgrass play gold miners living in a community encampment that is being harassed by the owner of a mining operation and his son, played by Dysart and Penn. Just as it looks like the community is going to be bullied out of their claims, Eastwood's character, a gunfighter traveling as a preacher who may also actually be a mystical spirit, shows up and gives the bullies a taste of their own medicine. Running 116 minutes, the film is a competent blend of atmosphere and action, enlivened by the stars and unhindered by the film's quasi-fantasy elements, however silly they may seem.

The image, letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1, looks as lovely as the **Outlaw Josey Wales** in 4K. It is smooth and finely detailed, with accurate colors, and feels more like a projected film than a video presentation. The sound quality is even better than **Wales**, because it is a later recording that has more elaborate separations and a stronger bass. Once again, the Dolby Atmos track brings out every nuance and throws each noise wide across the viewing space. Since the film is so viscerally thrilling, and there aren't that many Eastwood westerns, who cares about the ridiculous story? There are alternate French, Spanish, Italian and German audio tracks; eleven subtitling options including English; a really nice 7-minute retrospective interview with costar Sydney Penny, who was a teenager during the shoot; an analytical 9-minute piece on the cinematography in the film and its meanings; the 18-minute piece on Eastwood's westerns; an excellent 62-minute overview of Eastwood's career as a director compiled by Schickel in 2013 entitled *Eastwood Directs: The Untold Story*, and featuring interviews with many of the artists who have worked with him as it goes over not just the development of his themes and successes (and yes, promotes many more Warner titles), but looks at the dynamics of his sets and how he makes his choices; and yet another presentation of the 88-minute profile documentary, **The Eastwood Factor**, which Warner once released as a free-standing DVD (Jul 10).

## Nichols and Nicholson

Crossing two decades of American culture and the unchanging attitudes of men toward women over that time, Mike Nichols's dryly constructed 1971 adaptation for Avco Embassy of a script about relationships by Jules Feiffer, **Carnal Knowledge**, has been released by MGM, StudioCanal and The Criterion Collection as a two-platter 4K Blu-ray (UPC#715515316019, \$50). The film begins in the late Forties and concludes in the late Sixties, with the pop music on the soundtrack following along in a somewhat subdued fashion. Jack Nicholson is the central character that the film follows from beginning to end while the women he meets across that period of time drop by the wayside. Art Garfunkel is his roommate in college, and a character who lasts through most of the 98-minute film, off and on, although not to the end, while Candice Bergen and then Ann-Margret have lengthy sequences as the most significant women in his life, and toward the end, Cynthia O'Neal, Carol Kane and Rita Moreno come and go. Letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1, the film is comprised of a series of relatively static and rather sequestered scenes, although the camera certainly moves around at times within them, depicting key moments in the emotional life of Nicholson's character. His attitudes toward the women he is romancing are devastating, but if you look past his posturing and stubbornness, he reveals vulnerabilities and genuine longing. Even empathy will flash for a microsecond or two. While the viewer's sympathy goes to the other characters, all of whom are emotionally abused by his treatment of them, it is to the film's credit that they have fully developed personas and sometimes give as good as they get. In 1971, the film was saying that even though the Sixties have brought enlightenment to sexual relationships, nothing has actually changed, and it is a lesson that is still true a half a century later, and counting.

The performances are outstanding. Nicholson's energy is allowed to explode over and over, with Nichols preventing him from exaggerating his reality, while Bergen and Ann-Margret are both vivid in displaying the complex satisfactions and frustrations they are feeling. It is the intricacy of their emotional exchanges, the still rather shocking openness of their sexuality, and the vividness of their dramatic presence in what are generally inconsequential moments, coupled with Nichols's aggressively challenging visual style (made up largely of isolated shots that reinforce the isolation that the characters feel), that has enabled the film to endure as a genuine masterpiece in the depiction of the adult experience.

A standard Blu-ray is included as the second platter, and hues are brighter than on the 4K presentation, although there are times where they can feel slightly over saturated and flesh tones can look a little too pink. In comparison, colors are more subdued on the 4K version, but the image is much smoother and is generally more satisfying. There are earlier Criterion 4K releases where the colors on the 4K versions have looked so dampened down that the standard BD playback was preferable, but the balance utilized on **Carnal Knowledge** is a great deal more satisfying. There is one shot of Nicholson and Ann-Margret at a restaurant (they appear to be on a spindle so that their background is moving while they remain still) that is mostly dark, with bright red roses in the foreground. On the standard BD image, they are a captivatingly bright red, but on the 4K image, they are clearly roses, still red, and are otherwise integrated with the scene, adding to its flavor as a whole rather than pulling the viewer away from the characters. On both discs, the monophonic sound is solidly delivered, and the music sounds terrific.

Filmmaker Neil LaBute provides a running commentary, speaking a bit about the film's production background and its success, but talking mostly about the cast and how each scene is staged. He mistakenly claims that **Contempt** was released in the Criterion Collection, and he forgets about **Five Easy Pieces** when talking about Nicholson's rise in stature after **Easy Rider**, but the talk is moderately informative, serving mostly to reinforce the brilliant moments in the film that you probably already have noticed.

The standard BD platter has additional special features, which do not start up where they left off if playback is terminated. Along with a trailer and a radio commercial, there is an outstanding 36-minute talk between Nichols and Ivan Reitman from 2011, all about the film and about the changes that have happened in American culture since then; an equally outstanding 43-minute audio-only interview with Feiffer from 2019, whose insights about male-female relationships are devastatingly true, particularly in the way that not only do men shy away from intelligent women, but that women downscale their intelligence to interact with men (in taking questions from an audience, incidentally, Nichols's one flaw in the film is revealed when a questioner asks if Ann-Margret did her own ice skating—the skater is not her character and was not intended to be her character, but is too easily mistaken for her character and should have been cast differently); another good 29-minute analysis of the film's production history and its artistry; and a superb 19-minute analysis of the film's editing and the strategies of the editor, Sam O'Steen, by his wife, film historian Bobbie O'Steen.

Nichols worked with Nicholson again in the 1975 Columbia Pictures comedy, **The Fortune**, although by then the director's wunderkind reputation was beginning to tarnish, and **The Fortune** did not help matters, which is a shame since, thanks to its star power, it has held up reasonably well. Set in the early Thirties, Nicholson and Warren Beatty are hustlers who are waiting for an heiress, played by Stockard Channing, to come of age so they can cash in and dump her. Beatty is the suave one, relatively speaking, and Nicholson is the impulsive dunderhead. Nichols unleashes Nicholson for this film, and while at the time it may have seemed like one more instance of him doing his crazy man shtick (**One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest** came out the same year), in retrospect the set-up is ideal for his uninhibited emotional mayhem. Set in a grimy Los Angeles bungalow, the film is definitely an acquired taste and was far too eccentric for audiences in its day, but the opportunity, to watch the cast let it all hang out—Channing was just getting started, but handily holds her own with the two superstars—under Nichols's watchful eye and impeccable timing, makes it more of a unique showcase now, since it can never be replicated. Indeed, Beatty's marvelously underplayed slapstick also turns the film into an ideal companion to another star-heavy comedy boxoffice bomb with Beatty made by Nichols's former partner, Elaine May, **Ishtar**, and we mean that in a good way.

The film is available from Twilight Time as a *Limited Edition Series* Blu-ray (UPC#811956020307). The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1. The color transfer is bright and the image is sharp. The monophonic sound is fine, and David Shire's jaunty period musical score is isolated with the sound effects, some of which are also rather amusing, on an alternate audio track. There are optional English subtitles.

## Suddenly that name will never be the same

The MGM 20th Century Fox Blu-ray release of Bernardo Bertolucci's 1972 United Artists feature, **Last Tango in Paris**, that we reviewed in May 11 was an improvement over the previous DVD but still had shortcomings. The rich, carefully articulated Vittorio Storaro lighting was cleansed of its earlier flaws, but remained compromised by the challenges of replicating its glowing hues with precision. The blandness of the image affected the very heart of the delicately balanced film, which is intended to mitigate the outrageousness of its premise with both the humanity of its characters and the legacies of its two male stars, Marlon Brando and Jean-Pierre Léaud. Thus, the new MGM Distribblix Inc. two-platter 4K Blu-ray release (UPC# 810161482870, \$50) is more than thrilling, because it doesn't just rectify the errors of the past, it rebalances the film and presents it as the masterpiece it truly is.

Maria Schneider, barely out of her teens, is the object of the two men's affections. Brando's character, whose wife has just committed suicide, meets her by chance when they are both perusing an empty, available Parisian apartment, and they immediately have sex as a release from the stress in their lives. There is also genuine and deliberate humor in their interplay, adding to the believability of their mutual attraction. She is engaged to Léaud's character, a filmmaker (clearly patterned upon the filmmakers Léaud has known) who insists upon shooting their wedding preparations as a movie. As an escape, she returns several times to the apartment to have sex again and again with Brando's character, while he tries to wrap his head around why his wife killed herself. It isn't romantic sex, it is purgatorial sex, and so if the lighting is not perfect and the accuracy of the hues is not perfect and the clarity of the image is not perfect, the compositional artistry of the film is overwhelmed by the spectacle of a famous movie star pretending to have kinky sex, a situation made even more problematic because Brando is in one sense playing himself. Not only is he using stories from his own childhood for his character, but the clarity of the 4K presentation enables you to savor every bump, hollow and crease on his movie star face. Brando and Léaud never share a scene, but the presence of Léaud's character and his vocation reinforces the concept that the film is celebrating the deep psychological bonds between a motion picture and its audience, and how there is never a clear boundary between the emotions of cinema and the emotions of the cinema viewer. Indeed, on one level, Schneider's character represents that hazy cusp, as does the climactic ballroom dance sequence and Brando's antics therein.

The source material is Italian, so the title card reads, *'Ultimo Tango a Parigi.'* Letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1, the 4K presentation achieves a near replication of how the film once looked in theaters, and its autumnal beauty pervades every shot. The monophonic Gato Barbieri saxophone combo musical score weaving the film's disparate parts into a whole also has a freshness and precision that the soundtrack on the previous BD was unable to achieve. The film is partially in French and partially in English, defaulting to a subtitling option that translates just the French, although there is another option that transcribes everything.

The second platter is a standard Blu-ray that still has more accurate colors than the older BD, but does not look as smooth as the 4K presentation, allowing the image to appear grainier. As a consequence, the film loses some of its power. Also featured on the standard BD is an excellent 30-minute interview with Bertolucci talking specifically about the difference between direct recorded sound and dubbed sound (which Bertolucci refers to as, "This horrible perversion.") in his films and other Italian films (including the challenge of dubbing Brando); a fun 30-minute interview with Bertolucci's friend from childhood, Francesco Barilli, who was involved with several of his films and shares all sorts of great anecdotes; a contemplative 12-minute interview with editor Roberto Perpignani (he had to step in when the official editor, Franco Arcalli, took an extended medical leave) and a further, marvelous 28 minutes with Perpignani about his career (he apprenticed with Orson Welles!), his work on Bertolucci's earlier films and on other innovative films in the early Sixties ("The nouvelle vague had opened the vents and everyone scammed out, like cats."); and an irresistible 6-minute then-and-now itemization of the film's Parisian locations (the apartment's '1 rue Jules Verne' address was actually 1 rue de l'Alboni) set to Barbieri's music.

Any fan of **Last Tango in Paris** is going to want to see the StudioCanal Kino Lorber Incorporated *Kino Classics* DVD release of Jessica Palud's 2025 **Being Maria** (UPC#738329270100, \$20; the film's title card is just, *'Maria'*), a dramatization that is partially about shooting **Last Tango**, the principal turning point in the Schneider's life. The illegitimate daughter of French film star Daniel Gélin, she did not meet him until she was a teenager and, according to the film, only aspired to become an actress herself afterward, lusting out by landing an agent due to her familial connection, and then with the role in **Last Tango** because Bertolucci wanted a naïve actress who could be manipulated. The film's notorious 'butter' scene, in which Brando's character sodomizes her character, was not scripted, and what Bertolucci ended up doing to her with Brando in front of the camera was tantamount to using tripwires on horses, but a hundred times worse. The assault and humiliation, subsequently magnified by the film's success, coupled with the insecurity of her upbringing, eventually sent her on a pathway to heroin addiction. While the 103-minute film ends on an up note, with her promoting Jacques Rivette's *Merry-Go-Round* (Jul 21), it is primarily about her victimization and lost joy. The scenes replicated in **Being Maria** are not carbon copies of the scenes in **Last Tango**, but they are close facsimiles, altered primarily for the sake of artistic condensation. Anamaria Vartolomei stars as Schneider (Matt Dillon is cute as Brando), adeptly presenting what in effect is an argument that even though she is responsible for the path her life took after being catapulted into stardom, the men who exploited her are not innocent in her downfall.

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The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1 and an accommodation for enhanced 16:9 playback. The image is always a little soft, but fleshtones are accurate. The 5.1-channel Dolby Digital sound is mostly centered, although some of the music has a moderate dimensionality. The film is in French, and while there are some English conversations during the **Tango** shoot, everything is covered by the optional English subtitles. Along with a trailer, there is a good 11-minute interview with Vanessa Schneider (Maria's cousin), who wrote the book upon which the film is based, about writing the book and working with Palud; and an excellent 28-minute interview with Vartolomei and Dillon in front of a live audience. Perhaps because our awareness of it is heightened by the film and the discussions, but Dillon, who is very knowledgeable about the power dynamics the film is exploring, nevertheless dominates the conversation, speaking not just more, but more forcefully, than either the female interviewer or Vartolomei. In any case, they talk about the challenge of portraying historical figures, how the odd position that knowledge of what went on alters **Last Tango's** artistic status (it is still a masterpiece, but Bertolucci was dead wrong in how he made it), and the challenge of recreating what went on during the original shoot. "There are a lot of people that have a knee-jerk reaction to like the intimacy coordinator. 'It's against cinema. It's against creativity.' I don't think it has to be and I think there's a place where that job could be really good, because it helps people feel safe and they can take risks. It can encourage people to take risks."

### Bait and switch

One of the best bait and switch movies was Robert Rodriguez's **From Dusk till Dawn** (Jul 98), which began as a crime film but ended up being a vampire movie. Ryan Coogler's 2025 **Sinners** is a far more sophisticated bait and switch film, but with a similar level of thrills and the same destination. It, too, begins as kind of a crime film, with two gangsters, twin brothers both played by Michael B. Jordan, arriving in a small Mississippi town from Chicago in the Thirties, hoping to use the cash they had accumulated up north to open up a roadhouse. They also grab a nephew, played by Miles Caton, who still lives in town and has become proficient at the guitar, to help set up the place and provide the entertainment. Right away, it is a gorgeous film, especially on the Warner Bros. WB SDS Studio Distribution Services Blu-ray (UPC#883929835676, \$30). The period production designs transport the viewer into history, and the film begins to play out not just as a gangster movie but, in a different bait and switch, as an exploration of American folk music, in both its African roots and its Irish roots. But something else is also going on. The gorgeous, crisp picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.75:1, and periodically, during moments of accentuation, the image suddenly shifts into an even crisper and brighter presentation, shot in IMAX and letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1. And it is in association with these hyper-articulate images that the vampires show up.

Running 137 minutes (the film continues to have epilogues throughout its end credits), and aided by a fantastic Dolby Atmos audio track that matches the finely articulated images with an equally distinct and impactful array of noises and music, the film's intelligence is matched by its thrills, creating a rousing and rewarding spectacle on the Blu-ray, with guitar licks to match. The film develops a number of characters and several very nice romances, and in yet another bait and switch, contemplates the way in which spirituality long preceded the development of Christianity. Haile Steinfeld, Wunmi Mosaku, Jayme Lawson, Jack O'Connell and Delroy Lindo co-star.

Speaking of guitar licks, the Dolby Atmos sound has a terrific punch and energy coming from every direction. The film has an audio track that describes the action in American ("Later, Stack drives with Slim beside him and Sammy in the backseat. They near white officers on horses supervising a chain gang of black prisoners digging at a ditch alongside the road."), another track that describes it in British ("The sun climbs as Stack drives Slim and Sammy through cotton fields, approaching a chain gang breaking rocks by the roadside."), alternate French, Spanish and Italian tracks and optional English, French, Spanish and Italian subtitles. There are 19 minutes of extended scenes that would have slowed the film's pace but enhance the atmosphere wonderfully, even when viewed separately, although the final segment demonstrates that intercutting two separate scenes is not always the best choice in a climax (Coogler smartly chose to present them sequentially instead). Also featured are 97 minutes of satisfying production featurettes that go into every aspect of the film's creation ("The way people of color are photographed in this, shot on 65mm and IMAX cameras, I don't think there's a movie that is going to look like this with people of color. I don't think we've had the combination of resources that this movie has. It's beautiful, it's really beautiful."), including the fascinating breakthroughs in technology that enabled Lang to inhabit two characters on the screen at the same time so seamlessly (thanks to his performance, you always know which character is which, too).

### 4K Heat

Fritz Lang's spectacularly violent 1953 Columbia Pictures crime drama, **The Big Heat**, has been released as a two-platter 4K Blu-ray by Sony Pictures Home Entertainment and The Criterion Collection (UPC#715515315616, \$50). We reviewed Sony's DVD in Aug 10, and it didn't look bad, but the 4K presentation is thrilling, and even the standard Blu-ray included as the second platter in the set, which is a bit less detailed, looks terrific. Every aspect of the film's excitement, and even its sentimental moments, are felt more sharply and deeply because the squared full screen black-and-white image is so distinctive. Lang was a master of movement and imagery, and every moment in the 89-minute film is arresting.

Glenn Ford is a homicide detective following up on the suicide of another cop, because although it is clearly a suicide—that's the film's opening scene—there is no note. When he tracks down the dead man's mistress and talks to her, she is subsequently murdered, and the more he starts nosing around, the more heat he begins to catch from his superiors. Lee Marvin, a combination of lanky and fierce, is the primary henchman to the city's mob boss and likes to bum women with cigarettes, coffee, or whatever is hot and available. Gloria Grahame is a party girl who gets burned once too often. Freed from the restraints of decorum that had begun to erode during World War II and accelerated after the War, the film is blunt and harsh, but the narrative advances at a steady and involving pace, while the stars, even the ones playing nasty characters, are very appealing. Jeanette Nolan, Carolyn Jones, Alexander Scourby, Jocelyn Brando (Marlon's big sister) and Peter Whitney costar. It is an exquisite, compact film that packs a terrific punch, one that is made all the more stinging by the 4K presentation.

The clarity of the monophonic sound is also enhanced on both platters, adding

to the crispness of the dramatic exchanges and the excitement of the pacing. There are optional English subtitles, and both platters have an excellent commentary track from noir experts Alain Silver and James Ursini. They talk about the careers of the major players (although they don't mention one pertinent point, that like so many great Fifties villains, Marvin played the hero in a hit TV series during the same era), describe alterations of the plot in the film from both the source novel and the shooting script, and supply a bit of background about the production (Columbia was far more interested in promoting **From Here to Eternity** and considered **Big Heat** an assembly line effort—it was subsequently 'discovered' by European critics), but they spend most of the talk analyzing the film's artistry and its meanings ("In this odd angle and in these two cuts, where the camera is at a different level, you have the equation of these characters for the first time. The sidelight on Glenn Ford's face is the visual equivalent to [Grahame's] bandage on hers, so that they mirror each other, and there's a transference here that is also very typical of classic period noir. It's the transference of his burden onto her."). They point out that while Ford appears to be a plain bread hero, he is actually very dismissive of all of the women he meets (heck, he even knocks down his young daughter's block tower because he's not paying attention to her) and representative of the male hierarchical society America was trying to maintain (like us, they also get a kick when the theme song from **Gilda** plays in the background at a bar).

The standard Blu-ray contains several additional supplementary features, which, unlike the main feature, do not start up where they left off if playback is terminated, including a trailer, a good 11-minute appreciation by Michael Mann, another 6-minute appreciation by Martin Scorsese, a reasonably good 28-minute analysis of the film focusing on the dynamics involving the female characters, and 23 minutes of thoughtful audio-only interviews with Lang, talking about his films and his narrative strategies.

### 4K Weapon

The cinematography in the original 1987 **Lethal Weapon** is functional, but not especially striking. It captures the action scenes, which is what it is meant to do, and provides plenty of close-ups of the two stars, Danny Glover and Mel Gibson, but otherwise, the film's spectacle come from the action and the stunts (and the surprises, like the house blowing up while a plane can be seen landing in the background). There is a shoot out near the end, in the discotheque, where the colored ceiling lights look especially smooth and cinematic on the Warner Bros. WB SDS Studio Distribution Services 4K UltraHD Blu-ray (UPC#88392983269, \$30), but otherwise the greatest advantage of the improved image is that you can see the action clearly and without distortion, no matter how quickly it unfolds. As for the sound, well, you may or may not recall that the guitar solos in the Michael Kamen musical score are executed by Eric Clapton, and on the disc's Dolby Atmos audio track, it is electrifying. Crystal clear and smooth as silk, every time Clapton kicks in, the hairs on your arms stand up. The rest of the audio track is less exceptional, delivering the gunshots, tire squeals, sirens and explosions adequately, but still held down a bit by the Eighties recordings. That only makes the music seem all the more impactful.

Both versions of the film are available on the single platter, the original 110-minute 'Theatrical Cut' and the 117-minute 'Director's Cut.' With the advances in action filmmaking, even the 'Theatrical Cut' now feels like it has some mild pacing issues, but there is so much going on that it hardly matters—it was in the sequels where the necessary emphasis on the relationship between the two leads and their off duty lives started to take its toll—and the 'Director's Cut' opens with a fantastic action segment that is not in the 'Theatrical Cut.' Glover deservedly became a big star thanks to the film, and Gibson's stardom was substantially reinforced—they play Los Angeles cops tracking down the drug dealers responsible for the death of a young woman living in a fancy high rise. The story can barely be pieced together, but it is sufficient connective tissue for the action scenes, which were innovatively frantic and profuse for their day. It is a very enjoyable film, and whatever aspects of it had begun to age, the 4K presentation has rejuvenated.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1. There are alternate French, Spanish, Italian and German audio tracks and twelve subtitle options, including English. Also featured is a nice 6-minute retrospective piece about the teaming of Glover and Gibson, and a very lovely 7-minute retrospective piece about Donner's work on the film.

### In the mouth of madness

A gorgeous widescreen black-and-white MGM thriller from 1965 directed by William Conrad, **Brainstorm**, has been released by Warner Bros. as a **WB Warner Archive Collection** Blu-ray (UPC#840418328965, \$25). Around the same time he was making the **Star Trek** pilot, Jeffrey Hunter, who has a Ray Liotta thing going, stars as a computer researcher who rescues his boss's wife, played by Anne Francis, from a suicide attempt, eventually plotting with her to kill her wealthy husband, played by Dana Andrews. Their plot involves having Hunter's character feign insanity, and so the 106-minute feature subsequently turns into the ideal double feature candidate for **Shock Corridor**, with Viveca Lindfors playing the doctor who assigns him to an asylum.

The film may have been too eccentric for audiences in its day, but it is an apt and welcome entertainment for the modern world. Letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1, the outstanding image transfer is pristine. The picture is ultra sharp, with meticulously defined contrasts, and Conrad uses the widescreen framing in many devious ways, whether it is to allow the ornate décor of the husband's mansion to reflect the convoluted psychology of the characters, or to slip in his own eerie cameo using a setting Alfred Hitchcock would never have dared to attempt. The performances are all fantastic. Francis was a distinctive movie star with a limited range, but this could very well be the best performance she ever delivered. You want to stop the show and applaud her in every scene. Hunter is wonderful, unafraid of letting himself go, and Lindfors is downright unnerving. Strother Martin is also featured. It is because the Blu-ray looks so nice, however (the monophonic sound is solid and clear, as well), that the film sustains its power even after abandoning the catnip melodrama of its first half for the punishment of its second half.

The film has optional English subtitles and is accompanied by a trailer and two 7-minute color Warner cartoons, the 1949 **Merry Melodies** *The Hypo-chondri-cat* (two mice take advantage of a cat's health phobias, leading to an elaborate and fantastical dream sequence, followed by an even more bizarre sequence in which the mice persuade the cat that he has died) and the 1965 **Looney Tunes** *Well Worn Daffy* (the duck tries to stop three thirsty mice, including the speedy one, from drinking water at his oasis well).

## Early German classics

The phrase, ‘German comedy,’ may seem like an oxymoron, but indeed such movies have existed throughout the history of film, and four examples from the earliest days of the sound era have been collected in an interesting two-platter Blu-ray set from Flicker Alley, **Champagne & Caviar: Four Weimar Comedies (1931-1932)** (UPC#61-7311008993, \$50). All four black-and-white features are in a squared full screen format and are in German with optional English subtitles. On all four, the monophonic sound is pointedly ancient, but otherwise tolerable, and the music is never overly distorted, which is important since all four movies, technically, are musicals, with song sequences being an intrinsic part of their entertainment.

We recommend beginning with the second platter, since the films it contains are more immediately accessible and intriguing, and will essentially acclimate the viewer to the more challenging, although still worthwhile, films on the first platter.

The opening feature on the second platter, the 1931 *Die Koffer des Herrn O.F. (The Trunks of Mr. O.F.)*, is a comical allegory about the economics of the world at the time, and runs just 79 minutes. Directed by Alexis Granowsky, it is set in a small rural town—the hotel only has five rooms—which literally becomes a thriving metropolis almost overnight when the villagers, believing a wealthy man is coming to stay at the hotel, initiate a series of civic improvements that rapidly snowball. The film’s abstractions are sufficiently intriguing to carry the loosely compiled narrative, while at the same time providing a visual parable of deficit spending and inflation. Integrating a number of jaunty tunes and constructed around scenes that spoof or otherwise comment upon contemporary urban life, the visually invigorating film is a unique concoction that is too brisk and eccentric to let its silliness be alienating. As an added bonus, a very young and cherub faced Peter Lorre, fresh out of *M*, has a major role playing a newspaper man—including a series of scenes where ‘interview’ is used as an apparent double entendre for sex, or maybe it isn’t. Hedy Lamarr is also featured, billed as Hedwig Kiesler.

The picture is generally in passable condition, enough to convey the often expressionistic camera angles and image designs. There are some splices and plenty of scratches—the film was severely cut up when the Nazis came to power and has been put back together from a number of sources, so a few scenes are in worse shape than the others—but in general the image is clear and details are fully discernible. There is a commentary by German film expert Anjeana Hans, who describes the narrative as it goes along, goes over the basic filmmaking techniques being employed, speaks a little bit about the cast, analyzes the film’s reflection of Germany’s economic uncertainties and summarizes the film’s primary thematic points.

The best film in the set and the only one that achieves parity with a well-made Hollywood production from the same era, the 1932 *Ich bei Tag und du bei Nacht (I by Day, You by Night)*, directed by Ludwig Berger, stars Willy Fritsch and Käthe von Nagy. He is a waiter at a fancy restaurant and she is a manicurist. Expenses and housing in Berlin being what they are, he sleeps in a room during the day and she has it at night. They have never met, although they are continually tripping over and abusing one another’s belongings. When they do meet on the street, each one believes the other to be wealthy, and there are elaborate complications and misunderstandings in the 97-minute tale that keep them apart until the very end. Cleverly, there is a movie theater right next to the apartment building, and Fritsch’s character hangs out in the projection booth in the morning until it is his ‘time’ to go to his room, so that the grand productions depicted on the movie screen comment ironically on the realities of romance. Again, the songs are catchy, and at one point the pair go sightseeing in Potsdam, treating the viewer to a time traveling view of almost a century into the past. The film is energetic, smartly staged and evocatively lit, and every aspect of it is a pleasure.

The picture is in better shape than any of the other films in the set. It does have some markings, and there is a passage in the first half that is missing its sound (the subtitled carries on, regardless), but otherwise the presentation is in good condition, with sharp contrasts and clear details. The title for the disc’s set comes from a line in a song in the film (‘Every day champagne and caviar, and a castle and a car...’). German movie expert Christian Rogowski supplies a very good commentary track, dissecting the film’s scenes (‘The use of crosscutting between various events that take place simultaneously in different locations propels the plot swiftly and efficiently, while always shifting the focus back to the main storyline.’) as he talks about the social history of Weimar Germany (including a brief summary of how women were gradually entering the workforce) and how it is reflected in the status and aspirations of the hero and the heroine, goes over references to a greater history of Germany in the film, meticulously tracks what happened to every member of the cast and crew with the rise of the Nazis, examines trends in German films at the time, including the differences between artistic features and popular film, and tracks the film’s production history, which was in part the basis for a British roman à clef novel about the German film industry in the waning days of Weimar.

The first platter begins with the 1931 *Die Privatsekretärin (The Private Secretary)*. Arriving in town from the sticks, a maiden played by Renate Müller gets a job as a secretary by first flirting with the desk manager—played by Felix Bressart, who would subsequently go on to have a long and successful career as a character actor in Hollywood, notably in the films of Ernst Lubitsch—and then with the personnel manager, played by Ludwig Stössel (the ‘What watch?/Such much!’ guy in *Casablanca*), who gives her a job as a typist under ‘wink, wink’ conditions. When it comes time to cash in on the winks, however, she is affronted and refuses him, so he forces her to work overtime after everyone else, including him, has left the building...except for the handsome and relatively young big boss played by Hermann Thimig, who sees her working late when he is about to leave and strikes up a friendship with her. She thinks he is just another worker, but they go out, have a great time, and when the personnel manager tries to have her fired the next day for coming in late, he is overruled. From there, the romance plays out as expected. Running 84 minutes, the film, directed by Wilhelm Thiele, is a musical, with brief but catchy tunes, and while it is both predictable in its manner and primitive in its execution, it does have a certain

general charm even as it continually undercuts its sweetness with its overbearing approach and blunt slapstick. There is nothing smooth about the way scenes build or transition, but that was endemic with almost all early sound films. The awkwardness just seems more exaggerated because everything plays out with German sensibilities.

The picture is extremely soft and rather battered, which does not help with the movie’s pacing or tone. German film critic Lukas Foerster supplies an informative commentary track, going over the careers of the cast and the crew, noting which performers would soon be leaving and which would be staying, discussing how the film fit into commercial cinema at the time, dissecting the narrative and pointing out Thiele’s approach to the material. ‘A film like *Private Secretary* is proof that a lot of so-called weaknesses of early sound cinema are not weaknesses at all, at least not when the right kind of talent is involved. Yes, parts of *Private Secretary* might feel stagey, but the lack of sophisticated editing techniques also gives us the chance to see complex social situations unfold in real time.’

Unable to assemble the cash and get to the train station (in a bad rainstorm) before their boss leaves for Vienna, a clerk, played by Max Pallenberg, and his assistant, played by Karl Witteck, board another train to deliver the money to his hotel in the 1931 *Der brave Sinder (The Upright Sinner)*. Wanting to hand it over in person, they learn the boss is going to a nightclub that evening and so they take it with them to the nightclub, where the *maitre d’* assumes they are part of the boss’s party. Meanwhile, the boss, inebriated and elsewhere, never shows up, while they have a wild time, and later, lose most of the cash at a crooked casino. Running 92 minutes, the film is a comedy of anxiety, with Pallenberg’s amplified frustration shtick, throwing his arms around and shaking his head, intended to endear him to viewers and mitigate the terrors of his mounting problems—which, thank goodness, work out quite well, and very logically so, by the end. The fact that the characters are drinking a lot through much of the film doesn’t help, but that, again, is a universal comedy path that many viewers enjoy strolling. There is a lengthy interlude with an African-American nightclub singer, played by Rose Poindexter, that is genuinely unique (you’d never see such casting in an American film of the day) and relatively charming. Directed by Fritz Kortner, the film once again has a rudimentary sense of scene construction, so that even as one appreciates the bits of slapstick that are genuinely amusing, one’s patience can be strained in the interim.

The picture is in better condition than *Die Privatsekretärin*, but it is still rough going in places, with splices, scratches and weak contrasts, which again works against the lighthearted tone the film hopes to impart. Film professor Nadine Rossol provides a commentary track intercut with added thoughts from Foerster, although there are still gaps in the talks during the film’s second half. The two speakers reiterate the narrative, go over the careers of the players, talk about the advent of sound in German film and provide an overview of the film’s themes.

## Two romantic Cromwell classics

The adroit Hollywood remake of Julien Duvivier’s spellbinding **Pepe le Moko** (Feb 16), John Cromwell’s 1938 United Artists feature, **Algiers**, has been released by Film Masters as an *Archive Collection* Blu-ray (UPC#840418326282, \$26). Charles Boyer, who even sings at one point, is the ‘master criminal’ living in a slum area of Algiers (‘Rotten with vermin and decay from the filth of centuries...’) that is too labyrinthine for the police to nab him, until the arrival of a wealthy tourist’s fiancée, played by Hedy Lamarr, lures him out. Joseph Calleia, Gene Lockhart and Alan Hale are among the supporting cast, with Sigrid Gurie as the ill-fated rival to Lamarr’s character. Duvivier’s film was brilliantly composed, and Cromwell was intelligent enough not to mess with what worked. The first half of the 95-minute film is a gripping mix of excitement and exotic adventure, and while it bogs down a little after that to give the romance a chance to be established, that is what is needed for the eternally memorable finale.

Presented in a squared full screen format, the black-and-white image is always soft looking, but that said, it is in fairly good condition, with no other significant shortcomings. The monophonic sound is adequately presented, with minimal distortion, and there are optional English subtitles. Lamarr scholar Roy Windham and film enthusiast Karie Bible provide an informative commentary track, delving extensively, of course, into the biography of the amazing Lamarr (she also conceived and patented the foundational structure that served as the basis for modern wireless communication, among other applications), but also going into detail about the film’s path to production after Duvivier’s feature appeared, and discussing the specific similarities and differences between the two films.

Cromwell (the father of James, incidentally) also directed the 1945 cult classic, **The Enchanted Cottage**, which has been released with a lovely squared full screen black-and-white transfer by Warner Bros. as a *Warner WB Archive Collection* Blu-ray (UPC#840418327531, \$25). Either people are utterly captivated by the RKO Radio Pictures production, or they utterly despise it, but one way or another, it is a memorable feature. Ostensibly set in Massachusetts although it constantly feels like it is actually set in England, Dorothy McGuire is a ‘homely’ housekeeper in what today we would call a bed and breakfast, built out of the ruins of a much larger edifice and run by a widow played by Mildred Natwick. Robert Young is a flyer badly injured in the war who is staying at the cottage, and when he and McGuire’s characters fall in love, they magically turn into their glamorous movie star selves, but only when nobody else is looking. Their friend, a famous pianist played by Herbert Marshall, is blind. Now obviously, when you fall in love with somebody, that person is incredibly attractive to you regardless of what others may think or believe. That’s just how it works, even as you age. But to have it thrown in your face under the guise of a fantasy or quasi-fantasy or psychological exploration, particularly when the model for this emotional idealization is Hollywood glamour, just doesn’t feel right. It is presumptuous in its very premise that the two aren’t still attractive—him with his disfigured face and her with her mousy appearance—if they have enough curiosity and interest in life, art and the world around them to bond intellectually, especially if the imposition of Hollywood standards as the ‘ideal’ must be used as the guiding metaphor. Anyway, it is a challenging film that has plenty of fans buying into its sorcery for the sake of its romance, because sometimes you have to take it wherever you can find it.



The image is crisp and spotless, and the monophonic sound is solid. There are optional English subtitles, a trailer and two radio adaptations. The *Lux Radio Theatre* broadcast ("Every fighting man feels grateful to the women of America who kept the home fires burning, and kept themselves as tender and as lovely as the day they said goodbye. If a product like Lux Toilet Soap has helped a little, helped those women guard their feminine loveliness, then that is another tribute to their good sense and discrimination.") from 1945 runs 60 minutes and stars Young and McGuire. Without the visual underscoring, the story is more effective as a light romantic fable, but it is also less ambiguous, and they still toss around the word, 'ugly,' a bit too much. A much better *General Electric Theater* adaptation of the original Arthur Wing Pinero story (both characters are physically disfigured, for one thing) broadcast in 1953 stars Joan Fontaine with William Johnstone and runs just 30 minutes. Fontaine delivers an especially vivid and arresting vocal performance.

### Big band siblings

Big band siblings, Jimmy Dorsey and his more charismatic brother, Tommy Dorsey, star together in a 1947 musical biography vaguely based upon their lives, ***The Fabulous Dorseys***, released on Blu-ray by Allied Vaughn Entertainment and Film Masters as an *Archive Collection* title (UPC#840418326237, \$22). Directed by Alfred E. Green, the 88-minute film begins with the boys' childhood—Arthur Shields (kind of a low rent Barry Fitzgerald) and Sara Allgood play their parents—while the brothers constantly fight with each other because they disagree about rhythm when they are practicing. That segment concludes with a cute sequence at a local dance where, still youngsters, they enliven the event with swing. As adults and played by their actual selves, they go through the usual tough times and then gradually become successful, with their bickering splitting them apart so that their respective bands are rivals in popularity when they hit the top of the charts. A woman who grew up with them, played by Janet Blair, then schemes with the real Paul Whiteman to get them to perform together again. The highlight of the film and unlike anything else in it is a jam session with Art Tatum, but the drama is harmless, the music is enjoyable and the rarity of seeing both men on the screen together enacting their lives and playing their music is a unique eccentricity that more than justifies the production.

The squared full screen black-and-white picture is slightly soft but otherwise in very good condition. There are some hidden splices, but the image is generally smooth and mostly clean (the occasional stray line is almost invisible). The monophonic sound is reasonably clear and the Tatum sequence, in particular, sounds terrific. There are optional English subtitles.

### Manhandling Pickford

Cecil B. DeMille's lively silent melodrama about the Great War starring Mary Pickford, ***The Little American* (1917) *Mary Pickford***, set in the days when America was still a neutral player but appearing in theaters in 1917 just as the country was entering the conflict, has been released in a combination DVD & Blu-ray set by the Mary Pickford Company, VCI Entertainment and MVDvisual (UPC#089859912122, \$30). The wonderful Raymond Hatton, who would later serve as Johnny Mack Brown's sidekick in a string of marvelous Monogram westerns, delivers an exquisite 'silent film' performance as the French officer in love with Pickford's character, and Jack Holt is his rival, a German officer who has her heart. When war is declared, the two return to their home countries from the States, but then Pickford's character inherits a chateau in France and by the time she arrives it is right on the frontier between the two sides, and naturally, both men are close by, unaware of her presence. DeMille's feel for spectacle may have just been getting started, but the film has several grand moments—the sinking of a passenger liner by a U-boat, the exchange of destruction by big guns, and an exploration of the war's devastation where the only recognizable structure is a life sized replication of Jesus on The Cross—along with a great deal of suspense and excitement.

Pickford is terrific, a spunky combination of innocence and determination, but we could never get enough of Hatton. While embodying a 'Frenchman' to perfection, his every thought and nuance is projected with succinct clarity. A lot of fun is made over silent film acting, but most of it did not conform to the exaggerations that were ridiculed. Pickford, for example, delivers a deft, calm performance that allows her character's situations to communicate what is going on inside of her while she, as best as her vulnerable character can, remains 'cool.' Holt kind of disappears into the woodwork and it is often difficult to differentiate him from all of the other Teutonic mustachioed invaders. Hatton, however, stands out even before his character loses an arm, magnifying his feelings for the sake of the camera, but never crossing the line into lampoon. It was an art that disappeared once sound substituted its requirements (and Hatton continued to be wonderful in his westerns, although his performances were less consistently controlled, we would be the first to admit), but if you want to see a demonstration of how silent film acting in supporting parts had to be done, his presence is pedagogic.

The squared full screen picture is mildly tinted without color to differentiate day from night and indoor from outdoor. The image is soft but details are still reasonably clear. There is a grand and mildly stereophonic orchestral score that is very effective if it is held to a modest or even quieter volume. The Blu-ray is inherently stronger than the DVD in both the image presentation and the sound, but the differences are minimal. Film historian Marc Wanamaker provides a commentary track, although there are numerous gaps between comments. He summarizes the backgrounds and careers of some members of the cast and the crew, explains the narrative and talks about the film's timing in regard to World War I and how it became a virtual recruiting film. "In the next few scenes we see Angela being manhandled by the German troops. This, of course, is manhandling

America's sweetheart. Remember, she is the icon of America, freedom, etc., and she is being manhandled. So this is, of course, again to make audiences just horrified that they could do this to 'quote' Mary Pickford."

Also featured along with an excellent 5-minute montage of memorabilia is a fantastic 14-minute D.W. Griffith film from 1912, *A Lodging for the Night*, starring Pickford and including a very impressive performance by Charles West, who looks like Sam Shepard. Sporting an amazing electric guitar musical score that would not be out of place in *Desperado*, the film depicts West as a tourist trying to protect his bankroll when he spends the night at an inn in a small border town. Pickford is a maid who tries to help him. The film has a terrific sense of atmosphere, aided all the more by the music, and a clearly executed narrative that demonstrates Griffith was a master of his craft.

### The ugly Americans

We reviewed MGM's DVD release of the 1961 United Artists military courtroom drama directed by Gottfried Reinhardt, ***Town without Pity***, in Sep 02. Kirk Douglas plays the defense attorney in the court martial of four American soldiers in Germany who have raped a local girl. Shot in Germany, the 103-minute film is engrossing—the goal of Douglas's character is to prevent the soldiers from being hung, although in doing so he has to besmirch the victim. It is unexpectedly good storytelling, which is therefore enhanced by any improvement in its presentation. The DVD was in decent shape for its day, but now MGM has released the film on Blu-ray (UPC#840418301944, \$22) and while no particular effort has gone into upgrading the image transfer, which has a fleeting, faint vertical line or two, the basic enhancement to the image detail that the Blu-ray provides is thrilling. The details in the faces of the actors are sharpened and the textures around them are clarified, embellishing the intrigue and excitement of every dialog exchange. The wonderful performance by Douglas, as a man who must suppress his conscience to do his job, is aided in many ways by the sharpened image, creating a stronger, more vivid connection between his thoughts and the viewer. The monophonic sound retains the harshness of its original recording, and dialog is still raspy at times, but the track's solidification adds to the clarity of the dialog (some of the German conversations are translated by a voiceover narrator who is supposedly telling the story). Like ***A Summer Place*** and ***Love Is a Many-Splendored Thing***, one of the film's greatest claims to fame is the constant, earworm presence of its title tune, written by Dimitri Tiomkin, which plays over and over in many different guises, including the Gene Pitney single, throughout the film. That, too, is enhanced by the BD's playback. The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1. There are optional English subtitles. Robert Blake, Richard Jaeckel and E.G. Marshall costar.

### Yu to the rescue

The Steve McQueen-ish Jimmy Wang Yu is a roving protector with a spiritual air, much like Clint Eastwood's character in ***Pale Rider***, in Wei Lo's 1973 martial arts film set in Thailand, ***The Tattooed Dragon***, a Golden Harvest production released on Blu-ray by Fortune Star and Eureka! (UPC#760137183983, \$40). Gangsters set up a gambling house in a small rural town in order to bankrupt the peasants and accumulate their property deeds. In their first run in, the leg of Yu's character is severely injured, so he convalesces on a peasant's farm, during which time the gangsters manage to establish themselves before he and his newfound companions can take the town back. In one disturbing scene, a woman commits suicide with her children because her husband has lost all of their money and hits her when she complains—not only is the husband otherwise a sympathetic character, but he somehow survives the film's mayhem while a more appealing character does not. In a more entertaining scene, Yu's character demonstrates an ability to hear how the dice have fallen inside the cup, which makes him unbeatable at the gaming table—surprisingly, the gangsters aren't cheating, they're just using the odds that favor the house to clean up. Running 94 minutes, the film is reasonably straightforward and the fights include elements of Thai boxing. There is also a great moment where a fighter's outfit catches on fire, but he continues to spar with the hero for quite a while before being thrown out a window (and presumably into the arms of extinguishers). Samuel Hui, Sylvia Chang, James Tien and Simon Hsu costar.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1. The image is sharp and colors are fresh, adding to the film's appeal. The monophonic sound is okay—a lengthy piece of Ennio Morricone score is used at one point—and the film is in Mandarin with optional English subtitles. An English language track is also included, with typically awkward dubbing. Along with two trailers, there is a 3-minute alternate opening credit sequence in English, and a passable 16-minute overview of Lo's career.

Hong Kong film experts Frank Djeng and Michael Worth provide one of the film's two commentary tracks, going over the backgrounds of the cast and crew, discussing the film's setting (apparently present day, although the use of technology is virtually non-existent in the film) and how the cast members get sunburns and tans as the shooting proceeds. They also speak at length about Lo's career and his skills as a director. "You can look at how all these people are lined up, and basically, you're getting a piece, just a prominent piece of everybody's faces, but when our lead characters sit down, you're also getting the light from outside. If you notice, in that light, it was basically hitting their faces, the most prominent piece, so it drew your eye toward them. It's just little subtleties of framing, staging, lighting that can sometimes make a scene, an aesthetic, draw you to it, even if you're not being aware of it."

And Hong Kong film enthusiasts Mike Leeder and Arne Venema provide a jovial second track, speaking excitedly about the Thai locations as they also go into detail about the backgrounds of the stars and the nature of the fight sequences, some of which they point out are restrained while others are uninhibited. They also do a much deeper dive into Yu's offscreen antics and legacy, and they talk in detail about the narrative premise and Lo's habits. "I will say that in the West, we have more issues with alcoholism, but in the East, it is gambling."

### Where being square is cool

The human imagination is a wonderful thing. It has given us **A Minecraft Movie**, via Warner Bros., as a WB SDS Studio Distribution Services Blu-ray (UPC#883929834327, \$30). Integrating animation and live action, the movie stars Jason Momoa, Jack Black and Jennifer Coolidge. Directed by Jared Hess, it may not be as creative or stimulating as the fully animated films of Hayao Miyazaki and such, but it is still wildly inventive, very energetic and often quite amusing. Inspired by a popular video game, the film depicts a paracosm dominated by the geometry of cubes. Everything, mineral, fauna, flora and whatever else, is cube shaped, as if the entire universe was forced to operate with a finite amount of pixels. It should be understood that this is the precise opposite of cubism, which strove to include all perspectives of an object on a single geometric plane. The **Minecraft** world instead strives to re-craft all objects following the simplified rules of its dimensional geometry.

Black's character discovers a passageway from our world to this one and likes it so much he stays there. A number of years later, Momoa's character, who owns a failing video game store business, and three companions played by Emma Myers, Sebastian Hansen and Danielle Brooks, are thrust into the world and have to bond with Black's character to find their way out. Connolly's character meets a man from that universe who has been popped into ours during the hubbub, and becomes enamored with him (a subplot that has little bearing on the primary narrative, but is used for comical cutaways). The spectacle of the cubed world is ideal for Blu-ray playback, with its bright, solid colors, crisp lines, and detailed inventiveness. Momoa delivers a solidly comical performance and Black, who has less characterization to work with, is consistently amusing, while the others do their parts as the sensible ones—Hansen is, ostensibly, the hero—having to battle dark forces in order to return to the real world. Running 101 minutes (93 before the end credits start rolling, and there is another epilog/sequel prolog bit at the very end), the film sustains its momentum effectively. Most of the time, the special effects are seamless, but even when you can tell that the human actors are running around in front of a blue screen, the material brought forth on that screen is stimulating enough to make you forget it isn't real, at least for the characters doing the running.

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 Dolby Atmos sound is reasonably boisterous. There is an audio track that describes the action ("A cube-headed man with a unibrow and a rectangular proboscis peeks out from behind a tree. With the sleeves of his tunic completely covering his folded arms, he approaches the active portal and steps through."), alternate French and Spanish audio tracks, optional English, French and Spanish subtitles, and 56 minutes of enjoyable promotional and production featurettes.

### Classy home invasion thriller

A classy, slightly satirical and very unnerving home invasion thriller, **Crumb Catcher**, has been released on Blu-ray by Arrow Video (UPC#760137180050, \$40). A young author, played by Rigo Garay, and his editor and bride, played by Ella Rae Peck, are spending their honeymoon in an isolated upstate New York vacation home owned by the bride's boss. A waiter from their reception shows up, ostensibly to return the missing top of their wedding cake, but will not leave, trying to sell them an investment in his invention, a glorified dust pan for cleaning up crumbs. Impressively directed by Chris Skotchdopole, the 103-minute film sustains an atmosphere of realism despite the mounting suspense, which is why the movie works so well. It could just as easily be a penetrating drama about the unease between the married couple as the dynamics of their relationship crystallize after the wedding—she has an upper-middle class background and a proactive personality, while he grew up on the streets and tends to go with the flow—or the waiter, played by John Speridakos, and his companion, played by Lorraine Farris, could just be missing a couple of screws. It is only through the logic of each step in the narrative that things go seriously downhill. In the meantime, the atmosphere is superbly rendered. The 5.1-channel DTS sound has an excellent directional design that gets the volume level of background noises just right and continually feeds the atmosphere of every scene—instead of music over the closing credits, there is a wonderful thunderstorm. Letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2:1, the image is smooth and glossy, also contributing to the immediacy of the characters and their thoughts. The ending is ambiguous and it seems that Skotchdopole missed the opportunity to include a gag about how great the book sales are, regardless of how things turned out, because of what has happened, but otherwise it is an expertly constructed portrait that brings you inside the feelings and frustrations of four disparate people and the unfortunate path their interactions take.

Along with alternate English subtitles and a trailer, there is a terrific 38-minute production featurette that showcases all of the filmmakers and how the film was staged (it was a very elaborate and interesting low budget effort). Skotchdopole also supplies a good commentary track, speaking a little bit about the production logistics but talking mostly about the cast and how they interact with one another (Farris came in very late when another actress dropped out, but her unfamiliarity with the rest of the cast and the crew added perfectly to the tone of her character), the characters, and how the performances informed his approach to the shoot, such as when he chose to shoot a scene very much in the faces of the actors. "I would never want to shoot a whole movie like this, but I think when you find these moments and

be inspired by the performances and the rhythm, just like this kind of handheld thing can be so cathartic when you're watching a movie, that the drama of it is just pushing to go off the rails in this way."

Finally, two of Skotchdopole's shorts have also been included on the disc. **Camp Out**, from 2010, running 13 minutes, is another outstanding character piece, about a young boy having to spend his birthday party at his divorced mother's house. He runs away from his party to hang out with a neighbor, but over the brief time you spend with him, you can see the stress of his parents' breakup begin to take root in his own emotional decisions and moral choices. It has an aspect ratio of about 2:1. Letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1, **The Egg and the Hatchet**, from 2016, runs 21 minutes and is not as good, although it does build effective portraits of its two characters, a young man and a young woman—in the past, one would have characterized them as 'hippies'—sort of fighting and arguing with one another. While there is no significant narrative, the individual sequences—she keeps the car keys from him, they fool around in an empty bowling alley—demonstrate genuine talent in the visual appeal and character construction. Both shorts have the same production quality as the feature film.

### Die Hard on a yacht

A street punk nicely embodied by Ruby Rose is for logical reasons sleeping aboard an impounded sixty-foot yacht one evening when it starts to leave the harbor, and soon she is playing hide and seek with several mercenaries who want to take the boat out to sea and raid its elaborately protected strongbox in the 2022 Saban Films production directed by Declan Whitebloom, **Stowaway**, a Well Go USA Entertainment Blu-ray (UPC#8103-48038333, \$33). Running 94 minutes, the film is a decent blend of luxury fantasy and hard-punching suspense, and while the narrative requires a certain disregard of believability, it does follow its own rules well enough and comes through with a satisfying conclusion. Letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1, the picture is reasonably smooth and accurately colored. Darker sequences are a bit soft, but not to the point of distraction, and the 5.1-channel DTS sound has an engaging surround mix with some very pleasing directional effects. There are optional English subtitles and a trailer.

### Motorcycle delinquents

An ineptly made 1975 Japanese biker movie, **Detonation! Violent Riders** (*Bakuatsu! Bōsōzoku*), has been released on Blu-ray by 88 Films (UPC#760137184058, \$40). Directed by the usually reliable Teruo Ishii, who in this film doesn't seem to know a good camera angle from a bad one, the film is about conflicts between rival biker gangs and contains more than one allusion to **Rebel without a Cause**. Sonny Chiba is top billed but has essentially a cameo as the older brother of the hero's girlfriend. Koichi Iwaki stars, with Tomoko Ai as the virtuous girlfriend and Junko Matsudaira as the temptress, who plays around with Iwaki's character even though she is the main squeeze of his rival, played by Yusuke Natsu. Iwaki's character is a loner, but he is such a competent rider that some of the other bikers flock to him and kind of form a gang around him, which irritates Matsudaira's character to no end. In the final third, Ai's character is abducted and the plot coalesces around getting her back and taking revenge, but before that, the story kind of jumps all over the place. Running 86 minutes, the film is put together in fragments, using a lot of footage of real biker gangs (who wear bright colors and are a lot wussier than their American counterparts), incorporating some harrowing footage shot in live or minimally controlled traffic, and staging fights with minimal pieces of action. There is also plenty of topless nudity and gore (during the rumbles, the biker run over one another with their motorcycles), so fans of the biker genre will have plenty to soak up, but otherwise, the film's appeal is limited.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1. The quality of the image shifts between the quasi-documentary footage and the staged footage, but it is clear that the colors are fresh and the transfer is reasonably sharp. The monophonic sound is adequate. At times there is a promising jazz score, but at other times, there is generic and weakly recorded classical music. The film is in Japanese with optional English subtitles and comes with a trailer, a nice 3-minute montage of memorabilia, and a fairly good 20-minute introduction to the film that goes over its production history and the biker genre it was embracing (like the yakuza films, the genre was initially based on true stories).

Genre enthusiasts Ashley Darrow and Jonathan Greenaway supply a rewarding commentary track, pointing out some of the story's sillier moments, but also do a good job at deconstructing its dynamics and explaining why they think the film is so much fun. They also talk about the history not just of biker movies, but the American biker aesthetic, which was a combination of two social factors. One was that soldiers returning from World War II had a lot of money but difficulty fitting back into everyday life, and the other was the Hispanic culture of slick hair and leather jackets, which Hollywood homogenized for its initial delinquent movies, and the look caught on. The musical, **Grease**, would eventually be the ultimate distillation of that cultural abduction. Having been occupied by Americans in that same initial period, the Japanese also picked up the fad and absorbed it themselves. "There's something about the biker exploitation movie. It's so very American, but it's an Americanism which is sort of like a generation or two behind, you know, these old, classic road bikes, the leather jackets. It's American cultural exports finding new, fresh articulations in mid-Twentieth Century Japanese culture."



### Another Life at Stake

We reviewed a very good Film Detective Blu-ray release of the enjoyable low budget 1954 thriller starring Angela Lansbury, **A Life at Stake**, in Oct 21. Now, Allied Vaughn Entertainment and Film Masters have also released a Blu-ray (UPC#840418325520, \$22). The picture quality is essentially the same. The full screen black-and-white image is clean and fairly sharp, with well defined contrasts, but there are a few hidden splices and the image sometimes wobbles for a split second. The monophonic sound is in decent condition. The Film Detective Blu-ray did not have optional English subtitles, and the Film Masters release does. The Film Detective release did, however, have a couple of rewarding supplementary features, including a commentary, while the Film Detective release is the movie and nothing more.

Set in Los Angeles, Keith Andes is an architect who feels sorry for himself because his last partner gambled away his investor's money. Lansbury's character is the wife of an older business man who wants start a housing development and thinks Andes's character is the perfect man for the job. She and her husband also want to take an enormous life insurance policy out on the architect, however, just in case... Directed by Paul Guilfoyle, the 75-minute feature has a few shortcuts in its dramatic development, but it is still plenty of fun, with equal measures of steamy romance and decent suspense. Douglass Dumbrille, Claudia Barrett and Jane Darwell costar.

### July Special Edition: Some French films

Our Jul 25 Special Edition featured a selection French films and is available for free as a PDF file for download, which can be requested by writing Special Edition at DVDLaser@rocketmail.com. You can also sign up to get each month's Special Editions as a PDF file if you have a regular snail mail subscription, by writing the same email address. Those who already have an email subscription receive them automatically. If you have no access to a computer and want a hard copy, we unfortunately have to charge \$10 to cover our expenses for each individual Edition (\$15 outside of the U.S.). Please write to Special Edition %The DVD-Laser Disc Newsletter, PO Box 382, Glen Cove NY 11542, and include a check or credit card details.

The reviews featured include the Criterion Collection Blu-ray set releases of **The Complete Jacques Tati** (UPC#715515128315, \$125), **Marcel Pagnol Marseille Trilogy Marius • Fanny • César** (UPC#715515199018, \$100), **Eric Rohmer's Six Moral Tales** (UPC#715515240116, \$100), **Eric Rohmer's Tales of the Four Seasons** (UPC#715515292214, \$125), **Pierre Etaix** (UPC#715515105118, \$60), **The Red Balloon and Other Stories** (UPC#715515290616, \$80), Criterion's Blu-ray release of **PlayTime** Blu-ray (UPC#715515047616, \$40) and DVD releases of **The Red Balloon** (UPC#715515028820, \$15) and **White Mane** (UPC#715515028929, \$15), Criterion's 4K Blu-ray release of **The Adventures of Antoine Doinel** (UPC#715515315814, \$125) and DVD release of **The Adventures of Antoine Doinel** (UPC#715515013529), Criterion's **Jules and Jim** DVD & Blu-ray presentation (UPC#715515113519, \$40), **Jules and Jim** two-platter DVD set (UPC#037429184226, \$35), **Jules and Jim Essential Art House** series DVD (UPC#715515056717, \$30), **The Soft Skin** Blu-ray (UPC#715515141116, \$40), **The Soft Skin** DVD (UPC#715515141215, \$30), and **Shoot the Piano Player** DVD (UPC#037429212721, \$40), Criterion's 4K Blu-ray releases of **Jean de Florette | Manon of the Spring** (UPC#715515312011, \$70) and **La Haine** (UPC#715515294515, \$50); Criterion's standard Blu-ray releases of **La Haine** (UPC#715515093712, \$40), **La Cérémonie** (UPC#715515289719, \$40) and **Irma Vep** (UPC#715515258111, \$40), and Criterion's DVD releases of **L'Enfance Nue** (UPC#715515061612, \$30) and **Casque d'Or** (UPC#037429202326, \$40); Arrow Video's Blu-ray collections, **Lies and Deceit Five Films By Claude Chabrol** (UPC#760137858485, \$100) and **Twisting The Knife Four Films By Claude Chabrol** (UPC#760137101130, \$100); Cohen Media's Blu-ray releases, **Loulou / The Mouth Agape / Graduate First** (UPC#741952816492, \$40), **Paulette** (UPC#741952807193, \$35), and **Rose** (UPC#738329269553, \$30), and Cohen's DVD release of **Under the Sun of Satan** (UPC#741952817093, \$45); Kino Lorber Incorporated's Blu-ray releases of **Bluebeard** (UPC#738329255381, \$25), **Blue Panther** (UPC#738329255404, \$25), **The Bride Wore Black** (UPC#738329261795, \$25), **The Story of Adele H.** (UPC#738329261818, \$25), **Mississippi Mermaid** (UPC#738329261801, \$25), along with Twilight Time's Blu-ray release of **Mississippi Mermaid** Twilight Time (UPC#81-1956020598) and Kino's DVD release of **We Won't Grow Old Together** (UPC#738329134723, \$30); Film Movement's Blu-ray release of **The Marquise de O...** (UPC#810161482665, \$37); Sony Pictures Home Entertainment's DVD release of **Van Gogh** (UPC#043396173590, \$25); Olive Films' DVD release of **Police** (UPC#88709033008); and Radiance Films' Blu-ray of **Rosa La Rose, Fille Publique** (UPC#760137184355, \$40).

### DVD News

**CRITERION CORNER:** David Lynch's **Fire Walk with Me** will be released by The Criterion Collection in 4K format with the 90 minutes of deleted scenes and interviews with Sheryl Lee, Ray Wise, Grace Zabriske and Angelo Badalamenti. Ken Russell's **Altered States** will be in 4K and come with a commentary featuring film historian Samm Deighan; interviews with Russell and William Hurt; and an interview with special-visual-effects designer Bran Ferren. David Cronenberg's **A History of Violence** is being released in 4K format with a commentary featuring Cronenberg; an interview with screenwriter Josh Olson, conducted by writer-producer Tom Bernardo;

excerpts of Cronenberg and Viggo Mortensen in conversation at the 2014 Toronto International Film Festival; **Acts of Violence**, a documentary on the making of the film, featuring behind-the-scenes footage; three featurettes; and a deleted scene with commentary by Cronenberg. Cronenberg's **The Shrouds** is also being released, with a featurette. Arturo Ripstein's **Deep Crimson** will be in 4K and will include interviews with Ripstein and screenwriter Paz Alicia Garciadiego, and a panel discussion from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences featuring Ripstein and Garciadiego, hosted by film scholar Cristina Venegas. Georges Franju's **Eyes without a Face** will be in 4K and will feature **Blood of the Beasts**, Franju's 1949 documentary about the slaughterhouses of Paris; interviews with Franju on the horror genre, cinema, and the making of **Blood of the Beasts**; an interview with actor Edith Scob; and excerpts from **Les grand-pères du crime**, a 1985 documentary about screenwriters Pierre Boileau and Thomas Narcejac. Both the color and an extended black-and-white **Director's Cut** versions of Guillermo del Toro's **Nightmare Alley** will be released in a four-platter 4K set along with a commentary on the **Director's Cut** featuring del Toro; a documentary on the film's performances, visual language, costume and production design, and score; a conversation between del Toro and Bradley Cooper; and a conversation between del Toro and co-screenwriter Kim Morgan.

**NEW IN BLU:** The following titles were recently issued on Blu-ray—Scarecrow in a Garden of Cucumbers (AGFA); Ash, Destroy All Neighbors, In a Violent Nature, Murdoch Mysteries Season 18, The Rule of Jenny Pen, Sissy (AMD); Death of a Unicorn, The Legend of Ochi, Warfare (A24); Suroh Alien Hitchhiker (Bleeding Skull); Limbo (Brainstorm); The Amateur, Thunderbolts (Buena Vista); Aladdin 3477 The Jinn of Wisdom, Dig Me No Grave (Buffalo 8); The Devil at Your Heels (Canadian); Cash Cow (Cartuna); Bohachi Bushido Code of the Forgotten Eight, Café Flesh, Charley-One-Eye, The Dark Half, Drop Zone, Girl Slaves of Morgana Le Fey, Last of the Red Hot Lovers, Naked Came the Stranger (CAV); The Jet Li Collection, Strangers with Candy (Cinedigm); Creeping Death (Cineverse); Hopalong Cassidy The Legacy Collection V.1 (Classicflix); Jacob (Crazed); The Adventures of Antoine Doinel, All We Imagine As Light, Barry Lyndon, The Big Heat, Carnal Knowledge, You Can Count on Me (Criterion); The Actor, Rust (Decal); Criminally Insane (Degausser); Men of Deeds (Dekalog); Stand Your Ground (Epic); Kill the Moonlight (Factory 25); See Complete Series (Fifth Season); Algiers, The Fabulous Dorseys, A Life at Stake (Film Masters); Sisi & I, Tahara (Film Movement); Champagne & Caviar Four Weimar Comedies (Flicker Alley); Arcade (Full Moon); Automotons (Glass Eye); Never Blink, On Guard A Story of American Youth, 7 Days to Hell (Gravitas); In the Fire of War, 2121 (Indican); Made in Vancouver (Indie Rights); Black Tea, Exclusive, Curdled, The Diabolik Trilogy, Hiding Out, Little Buddha, Ma Mère, Northern Lights, Nudie-Cutie Triple Feature, Sands of the Kalahari, Sugar Hill, The Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill (Kino); Avtaar, Bazaar, Gone with the Dead, The Highwayman, Jab Jab Phool Khile, Jab Pyaar Kisise Hota Hai, Jeet, Kya Khenā, A New Breed of Criminal, Sanam Teri Kasam, Werewolf Castle, Wrath of Dracula (Leomark); Raging Midlife (Level 33); Shadow Force (Lionsgate); Man on Wire (Magnolia); Bewitched Complete Series, Ultraman U.S.A. (Mill Creek); Capote, Dandelion, Enter the Void, Let's Start a Cult, Original Sin (MPI); Rounding (Music Box); The Beast to Die, Bloody Legend The Complete Cliff Twemlow Collection, Crumb Catcher, Detonation! Violent Riders, First Love, Hand of Death, Lost Country, Lovers Lane, The Nightwatch Collection, Psychotronica Collection 2 Mondo Keyhole, Queens of Drama, Rosa La Rose Fille Publique, The Tattooed Dragon, Warriors Two (MVD); Hell of a Summer, The Monkey (Neon); Give Me a Word The Collective Soul Story (101); Black Daruma (105ive); Dig! XX (Oscilloscope); The Late Game (Random); Appleton Ladies' Potato Race, An Irish Angel, Lou, People You May Know, Pure Grit, Queen of the Morning Calm, Secrets of a Wallaby Baby (Rising Sun); Sotto Il Vestito Niente Nothing Undemeath (Rustblade); David "The Rock" Nelson Collection 2 (Saturn's Core); Apaatakal, Hooray for Hillywood (Shoreline); The Original Three Stooges Stop! Look! And Laugh! (Sony); Empire State of the Dead, She Kills (SRS); The Haunting of Heather Black (Sterling); Vacation Plantation (Syndicado); Stealing Pulp Fiction (Tribeca); Final Cut (Umbrella); The Phoenician Scheme, Self/Less, Until Dawn (Universal); Fight or Flight (Vertical); The Killing Tide (VHSift); Brainstorm, Bright Leaf, Chasing Liberty, The Cobweb, Dark Victory, Detroit Rock City, Every Which Way But Loose, Fallout Season 1, Final Destination Bloodlines, Generation Kill, The Invention of Lying, John Q., Knights of the Round Table, The Little Things, Lois & Clark The New Adventures of Superman Complete Series, Manifest Complete Series, Melinda, Music & Lyrics, My Dog Skip, The 100 Season 1, The Prisoner of Zenda, Sinners, They Died with Their Boots On, This Is Where I Leave You, A Town without Pity, Two Weeks with Love, Walking with Dinosaurs (Warner); Dark Nuns, Desert Dawn, Fear Below, The Jurassic Games Extinction, Kryptic, The Last Spark of Hope, Nine-Ring Golden Dagger, The Priests (Well Go).

**NEW IN 4K:** The following titles have recently been released in 4K format—In a Violent Nature (AMD); Warfare (A24); The Amateur, Thunderbolts (Buena Vista); The Dark Half, Dirty Work, Drop Zone, The Golden Child, Jade, Let's Scare Jessica to Death, The Naked Stranger (CAV); Abigail, Ace Ventura Pet Detective, Alexander Revisited, Battle beyond the Stars, Fade to Black, The Jet Li Collection, Primary Colors, Wallace & Gromit The Complete Cracking Collection (Cinedigm); The Adventures of Antoine Doinel, Barry Lyndon, The Big Heat, Carnal Knowledge, You Can Count on Me (Criterion); The Beyond (Grindhouse); Billy Madison, Curdled, Danger Diabolik, Little Buddha, Shane, Silent Scream (Kino); The Blood of Fu Manchu, The Castle of Fu Manchu, Cobra, The Stuff (MVD); The Monkey (Neon); Clueless, Small Soldiers (Paramount); Earthquake, Knight Rider Complete Series, Madagascar, Until Dawn (Universal); The Alto Knights, Fury (Sony); The Phoenician Scheme (Universal); The Alto Knights, Batman Ninja Fallout Season 1, Final Destination Bloodlines, Sinners (Warner).

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## Current Attractions

The following titles recently appeared for the first time:

A Por Todas (Shoreline)\*  
 Akwaaba Ghana Welcomes the Obamas Part 1 (Shoreline)\*  
 Akwaaba Ghana Welcomes the Obamas Part 2 (Shoreline)\*  
 Aladdin 3477 The Jinn of Wisdom (Buffalo 8)\*  
 All Out (Wownow)\*  
 All We Imagine As Light (Criterion)\*  
 American Meltdown (X4)\*  
 Anthony Bourdain A Cook's Tour (Alan Ferguson)\*  
 Appleton Ladies' Potato Race (Rising Sun)\*  
 Ash (AMID)\*  
 Asteroid (ITTN)\*  
 Bearing Witness Native American Voices in Hollywood (Deskpop)\*  
 Before the Sunset (Freestyle)\*  
 Beneath the Blue (Ytiniini)\*  
 Beyond the Gates of Hell (Socal)\*  
 Black Tea (Kino)\*  
 Blood Tulip (Deskpop)\*  
 Bloodstorm (Distribution)\*  
 Bonjour Tristesse (Kino)\*  
 Boxing before the Bell (Shoreline)\*  
 Candlelight My Way (BMG)\*  
 Carnival Story (Digicom)\*  
 Catch Me a Spy (Digicom)\*  
 Chasing Zombies A Tribute to George Romero (Deskpop)\*  
 Chessballs (Wild Eye)\*  
 Club Habana (Fenix)\*  
 Combat Q Complete Series (Ytiniini)\*  
 Concerto for Abigail (Buffalo 8)\*  
 Cooking with Legends (Paramount)\*  
 Count Me In (Level 33)\*  
 Countdown to Christmas 6 Movie Collection (Cinedigm)\*  
 Critical Condition Health in Black America (Paramount)\*  
 Currency of Wealth (Shoreline)\*  
 Dames and Dreams (Kino)\*  
 A Dance in the Snow (Cinedigm)\*  
 Dark Nuns (Well Go)\*  
 Daydreamers (MPI)\*  
 Daylight to Dark (Random)\*  
 Desert Dawn (Well Go)\*  
 Diary of a Butterfly (Shoreline)\*  
 Diwana Tere Dil Ka (Shoreline)\*  
 Dig XX (Oscilloscope)\*  
 Doc Holly's Christmas (BMG)\*  
 Down the Aisle (X4)\*  
 Edgar Kennedy Collection V.2 (Alpha)\*  
 Evangeline (Alpha)\*

Every Day (Buffalo 8)\*  
 Executions The Rise and Fall of Capital Punishment (Leomark)\*  
 The Fabulous Dorseys (Film Masters)\*  
 The Falling Sky (Kino)\*  
 Fallout Season 1 (Warner)\*  
 Fear Below (Well Go)\*  
 Feral Female (Frolic)\*  
 Fight or Flight (Vertical)\*  
 Final Destination Bloodlines (Warner)\*  
 Firebreather (Warner)\*  
 Fisted (Wild Eye)\*  
 Flight (Alpha)\*  
 Forbidden Cinema V.7 (Alpha)\*  
 Found Footage of Fear (Socal)\*  
 Four Nights in Fear Forest (SRS)\*  
 French Noir Collection (Kino)\*  
 Gangs of Shanghai (Wownow)\*  
 Gator Lake (Brainstorm)\*  
 Gentlemen of the Press (Alpha)\*  
 Girl Clock (Dreamscape)\*  
 Give Me a Word The Collective Soul Story (101)\*  
 Gone with the Dead (Leomark)\*  
 Grantchester Season 10 (Paramount)\*  
 The Greatest Thing Ever A Garden Cartoon Movie (BMG)\*  
 Guardians (BMG)\*  
 Guitar Lessons (Freestyle)\*  
 Hallmark Channel 6-Movie Collection (Cinedigm)\*  
 Hard Rock Zombies (MVD)\*  
 Hell of a Summer (Neon)\*  
 The Highwayman (Leomark)\*  
 Hitler's Secret Missions Complete Series (Syndicated)\*  
 How Thoughts Become Things (Breaking Glass)\*  
 How to Ruin the Holidays (Buffalo 8)\*  
 Hummingbirds of Hollywood (Paramount)\*  
 Iconic (Jinga)\*  
 If I Could Ride Again (Vision)\*  
 The Imago (Dreamscape)\*  
 The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks (Warner)\*  
 In a Violent Nature (AMID)\*  
 In the Fire of War (Indican)\*  
 The Invention of Lying (Warner)\*  
 An Irish Angel (Rising Sun)\*  
 Jane Austen Wrecked My Life (Sony)\*  
 Jimmy in Saigon (MPI)\*  
 Juliet & Romeo (Universal)\*  
 Jurassic Games Extinction (Well Go)\*  
 Justice League The Flashpoint Paradox (Warner)\*  
 Kryptic (Well Go)\*  
 Kung Fu Masters Zodiac Way A Hero Has Come (Wownow)\*  
 Kung Fu Masters Zodiac

Way Copy Cat (Wownow)\*  
 Kung Fu Masters Zodiac Way Evil Genius (Wownow)\*  
 The Last Spark of Hope (Well Go)\*  
 LEGO DC Super Heroes Aquaman Rage of Atlantis (Warner)\*  
 A Life at Stake (Film Masters)\*  
 The Little Things (Warner)\*  
 Lost Country (MVD)\*  
 Lou (Rising Sun)\*  
 Love Don't Cost a Thing (Warner)\*  
 Love on the Danube (Cinedigm)\*  
 Magnetosphere (Freestyle)\*  
 Matter of Mind ALS Parkinson's Alzheimer's (Paramount)\*  
 Modern Warfare 2.0 (Syndicated)\*  
 The Monkey (Neon)\*  
 Mulan Princess Warrior (Level 33)\*  
 Murdoch Mysteries Season 18 (AMID)\*  
 My Kind of Wife (Random)\*  
 NASA Explores Far Out Building and Eating in Space (Wonderscape)\*  
 Never Blink (Gravitas)\*  
 A New Breed of Criminal (Leomark)\*  
 The Newsroom Complete Series (Warner)\*  
 Nine-Ring Golden Dagger (Well Go)\*  
 No Regrets (X4)\*  
 Northern Lights (Kino)\*  
 Oblivion (Freestyle)\*  
 On Guard A Story of American Youth (Gravitas)\*  
 Original Sin (MPI)\*  
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 Pastor's Kid (BMG)\*  
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 Pure Grit (Rising Sun)\*  
 Purebred Spanish The Origin (X4)\*  
 Queen of the Morning Calm (Rising Sun)\*  
 Queens of Drama (MVD)\*  
 Race War (Wild Eye)\*  
 Remember Us (X4)\*  
 Rendition (Warner)\*  
 Revolutionary War Weapons (Paramount)\*  
 Ride Above (Samuel Goldwyn)\*  
 Road Head (Freestyle)\*  
 Rosario (Universal)\*  
 The Rule of Jenny Pen (AMID)\*  
 Rust (Decal)\*  
 A Second Love (X4)\*  
 Secrets of a Wallaby Baby

(Rising Sun)\*  
 Secrets of the Forest (Paramount)\*  
 Self/Less (Universal)\*  
 7 Days to Hell (Gravitas)\*  
 Sex and Satan Double Feature (MVD)\*  
 Shadow Force (Lionsgate)\*  
 Simon Schemata The Holocaust 80 Year On (Paramount)\*  
 Sinners (Warner)\*  
 Slaughterhouse (Indican)\*  
 Sotto Il Vestito Niente Nothing Undereath (Rustblade)\*  
 Sound of the Surf (Vision)\*  
 Space Kids (Ytiniini)\*  
 Spanish Olive Grove (X4)\*  
 Spooky Action (X4)\*  
 A Star without a Star (Freestyle)\*  
 Street Heroines (Buffalo 8)\*  
 Summer Lights (7 Palms)\*  
 Sweet As (Freestyle)\*  
 Take the Lead (Warner)\*  
 Tales of Babylon (Buffalo 8)\*  
 Tammy and the T-Rex (MVD)\*  
 The 13 Ghosts of Scooby-Doo Complete Series (Warner)\*  
 Thunderbolts (Buena Vista)\*  
 Tim Travers and the Time Traveller's Paradox (Mill Creek)\*  
 To Have and to Holiday (Cinedigm)\*  
 Toys of Terror (Warner)\*  
 Trading Up Christmas (Cinedigm)\*  
 The Trouble with Jessica (Music Box)\*  
 Trust Nobody 3 The Final Chapter (Buffalo 8)\*  
 The Tundra Within Me (Indiepix)\*  
 2121 (Indican)\*  
 Until Dawn (Universal)\*  
 Vacation Plantation (Syndicated)\*  
 The Veil (Buffalo 8)\*  
 Walking with Dinosaurs Complete Series (Warner)\*  
 We Could Still Be Pen Pals (Freestyle)\*  
 Werewolf Castle (Leomark)\*  
 Westland (Wownow)\*  
 Wild Beauty (Alpha)\*  
 Wisner Maddox (BMG)\*  
 The Wolf in the Chute (Deskpop)\*  
 A Woman Scorned (Random)\*  
 Wrath of Dracula (Leomark)\*

## 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:**  
 Dark Match  
 The Last Anniversary Art Detectives  
 →Clown in a Cornfield  
 →Dark Winds Season 3  
 →The Brokenwood Mysteries Season 11  
**From Angel:**  
 The King of Kings  
**From BMG:**  
 White Wanderer Boardwalk Winter Second Chance Mayberry Man Season 1  
 →Stan the Man  
 →The Loved & Lost  
 →Christmas Romance at the Roanoke Ranch  
**From Breaking Glass:**  
 →F.L.Y.  
**From Brainstorm:**  
 →Consumed  
**From Canamedia:**  
 Andy Warhol's Factory People  
**From Cardinal:**  
 Desert Racer (Steve McQueen documentary)  
**From Cinedigm:**  
 Hallmark Channel 6-Movie Collection (The Magic of Lemon Drops, Love Strikes Twice, My Dreams of You, Timeless Love, An American in Austen, The Birthday Wish)  
 →Sesame Street Elmo's Happy Halloween Party  
 →Hallmark Channel 6-Movie Fall Collection (Falling Together, Falling for You, Notes of Autumn, Sweet Autumn, Pumpkin Everything, Under the Autumn Moon)  
 →Autumn at Apple Hill / Haunted Wedding  
**From Classicflix:**  
 →The Unexpected Complete Series V.1  
**From Creative Alley:**  
 →What Lives Here  
**From Criterion:**  
 Cairo Station  
 Shoeshine  
 Compensation  
 Flow  
 Vermiglio  
 →The Shrouds  
**From Decal:**  
 →The Ritual (Al Pacino)

**From Dekkoo:**  
 Thouple  
**From DeskPop:**  
 The Long Hollywood Night  
 The Only Ones  
 →I Curse This Land  
 →Uranus Attacks  
**From Dreamscape:**  
 Alice in Wonderland Season 2  
 Wissper Season 1  
 →All Aboard for Love  
 →The Sunset Six  
 →Tailgate  
 →The Broken Ones  
 →Ernest & Celestine Winter Tales  
 →The Gods  
 →When I Was Your Age Season 1  
 →A Very Country Wedding  
 →This Is Christmas  
 →The Shroud Face to Face  
 →Last of the Big Tuskers  
 →Fat Legs  
**From Film Masters:**  
 →Patterns  
 →The Amazing Mr. X  
 →Invasion U.S.A./Rocket Attack U.S.A.  
 →Tarzan of the Apes  
**From Film:**  
 →The Gullspång Miracle  
 →Block Pass  
**From Firerock:**  
 →The Artist & The Astronaut  
**From Freestyle:**  
 →The Last Mixtape  
 →Sisters of Ukraine  
 →Between the Lights  
 →A Spartan Dream  
**From Gemini:**  
 →The Jester from Transylvania  
**From Giant:**  
 →Rather  
 →Cosmic Dawn  
 →Rebel (Sylvester Stallone)  
**From Gravitas:**  
 →Treading Water  
 →Killstreak  
 →The Scars of Our Hands  
 →Day of a Lion  
 →The Rooster  
**From High Fliers:**  
 Crown of Shadow  
**From Image:**  
 Neighborhood Watch  
**From Indiepix:**  
 →Dial M for Maya  
**From Jinga:**  
 Darklands  
 A Game in the Woods  
**From Kino:**  
 Blur to the End  
 Hiding Out  
 Rent Free  
 Delegation  
 Single Out Season 3  
 Simple Minds Everything Is

Possible Shikon  
 →A Photographic Memory  
 →The Jolly Monkey  
 →Summer Solstice  
 →The Jewish Nazi?  
 →Night of the Juggler  
**From Leomark:**  
 →Son  
 →Grave Men  
 →The Evil Rises  
 →Static Codes  
 →Bloody Anniversary  
 →The Compass  
 →Plaga  
**From Magenta:**  
 →Bride Hard  
**From MPI:**  
 →Eternal  
 →Zenithal  
**From Music Box:**  
 Just the Two of Us  
**From MVD:**  
 Sidekicks  
 Lost Country  
 His Motorbike Her Island  
 Anantha A Man from Earth Story  
 Fear Cabin The Last Weekend of Summer  
 Beyond Trainspotting The World of Irvine Welsh  
 Dark Mind  
 What Lives Here  
 →Dakota  
 →Best Christmas Movies Ever  
 →Santos Contra Hombres Infeles  
 →The John Wayne Gacy Murders  
 →Tulsa Terrors  
 →Hotel  
**From One Tree:**  
 Bloodstorm  
**From Oscilloscope:**  
 →The Universal Theory  
**From Paramount:**  
 Caregiving  
 1923 A Yellowstone Origin Story Season 2  
 NCIS Origins Season 1  
 →NCIS Sydney Season 2  
 →NCIS Season 22 Locked  
 →Matlock Season 1  
 →Paw Patrol Fire Rescue  
 →Unforgotten Season 6  
 →Professor T Season 4  
 →The Marlow Murder Club Season 2  
 →Watson Season 1  
**From Pop:**  
 More More More  
 Andrea True Collection (Devils Due, Meatball, Sweet Wet Lips)  
**From Reel Vault:**  
 →King Kung Fu  
 →So This Is College  
 →Pointed Heels  
**From Socal:**

→Found Footage of Fear Digital Terror  
 →The Clown Chainsaw Massacre  
**From Sony:**  
 The Boys Season 4  
 →Karate Kid Legends  
**From SRS:**  
 →Venus Die-trap  
 →The Door of Sin  
**From Strand:**  
 Meeting with Pol Pot  
 →Wild Diamond  
**From 360:**  
 Greatest Mysteries of Ancient Egypt, The Sphinx, Tutankhamun  
**From Universal:**  
 →How to Train Your Dragon  
 →Sovereign  
 →M3gan 2.0  
 →Chucky Complete Series (6 platters)  
**From Vertical:**  
 Fight of Flight  
 →Ice Road: Vengeance (Liam Neeson)  
 →Guns Up  
**From Warner:**  
 →The Accountant 2  
 →Aztec Batman Clash of Empires  
 →Ben 10 Complete Collection (41 platters)  
 Death Valley Season 1  
 A Good Girl's Guide to Murder  
 The Last of Us Season 2  
 Renaissance The Blood and the Beauty  
 Rick and Morty Season 8  
 →The Unholy Trinity The White Lotus Season 3  
 →You Season 4  
**From Well Go USA:**  
 →Barron's Cove  
 →Resurrection Road  
 →Against the Spread  
 →Ghost Killer  
**From Whole Grain:**  
 25 Cats from Qatar  
**From Wonderscape:**  
 →Cosmic Dawn The Untold Story of the James Webb Space Telescope  
**From Wownow:**  
 Kung Fu Masters Zodiac Way Evil Genius  
 Lords of the Dragon  
 Mother Goose's Scarytales  
 Invisible Cop  
 Muay Thai  
 League of Thrones Death Cult  
 →The History of Trick or Treating  
 →All Hallows' Eve Inferno  
**From X4:**  
 →Danny Goes Aum  
**From Ytiniini:**  
 →Eye of the Dolphin