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Never say never again

Every so often, we like to relax with a cool, refreshing glass of chocolate milk. We pour regular milk into the glass, leaving a little room at the top, and then take a separate bottle of chocolate syrup to fill the glass the rest of the way, leaving just enough of a gap so that when we stir the chocolate around, none goes flying over the side. When we come to the end of the chocolate syrup, however, rather than trying to squeeze the last little bit out of the bottle, we take the glass of milk, pour the milk into the syrup bottle, close the syrup bottle's lid, and shake it like crazy. Then we remove the lid on the syrup bottle and pour the contents back into the glass. The taste is exceptional, both a great deal smoother and substantially more blended than the drink is when it is just stirred, and we savor every moment of the beverage. Hence, we understand completely when James Bond says that he prefers his martinis, 'Shaken, not stirred.' We know of what he speaks.

Originally produced by United Artists and long under the home video control of MGM, the initial Bond movies have appeared on various videodisc formats close to a dozen times each, and usually each iteration is an improvement in quality over the previous presentation. Now, Amazon MGM Studios and SDS Studio Distribution Services have released a curiously designed and titled six-platter 4K UltraHD set, **Sean Connery 6-Film Collection** (UPC#883929835195, \$100), a pastiche that is shaken, not stirred. Above a splash of Japanese lettering that takes up almost a quarter of the jacket's front cover artwork, in tiny lettering after the "Connery," it says, "As Ian Fleming's James Bond 007," an explanation that does not appear on the jacket spine. Since there is also a bracket of French in the opposite corner, it appears that the idea is to convey how global the James Bond craze became, but it is not exactly eye-catching. The artwork, however, is a suitable harbinger for what is inside (the platters also do not stay on their spindles once they have been removed).

With one partial exception, we never got around to reviewing the six Blu-rays that MGM and 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment released individually of those same Connery Bond movies, **Dr. No** (UPC#883904333838, \$15), **From Russia with Love** (UPC#883904333876, \$15), **Goldfinger** (UPC#883904137368, \$15), **Thunderball** (UPC#883904334071, \$15), **You Only Live Twice** (UPC#883904334118, \$15) and **Diamonds are Forever** (UPC#883904266419, \$15), but they were startling improvements over MGM's previous DVD releases. On each film, the image is sharper and the colors more precise, while the sound, often remastered to 5.1-channel DTS, had a richer and stronger presence. For the most part, the 4K image presentations are a slight step backwards, although the sound is somewhat more improved. The colors on the 4K presentations are slightly darker and fleshtones are a touch more olive, so that the improved sharpness that the 4K process offers is negated by the blander hues. The 4K discs have Dolby Atmos sound, still retaining the basic centrality of the original monophonic audio mixes as the DTS mixes on the standard BDs did (the later films have more active separations), but usually enabling an even more enveloping presence. In comparison to the DVD releases, either one of the presentations of each film is utterly thrilling, but that said, because of the differences in the color and a few other image presentation quibbles listed below, the individual standard BDs remain preferable to the 4K **6-Film Collection**.

The standard BDs and the 4K BDs have alternate Spanish audio tracks and optional English and Spanish subtitles. In addition to that, the 4K BDs have an audio track that describes the action ("Bond is thrown across the room next to the live wire and the top hat. Oddjob casually struts to Bond with a smug grin. The timer reaches '126.' Oddjob motions for Bond to get up. Bond picks up the hat and rises. Oddjob drops his grin and backs up in a defensive stance. Clutching the brim, Bond aims the hat at Oddjob. He hurls it. Oddjob ducks and it sticks to the steel cage. Oddjob shoots Bond a boastful smirk, then turns to retrieve the hat. Bond grabs the live wire and connects it to the cage. Holding the hat's brim, Oddjob is electrocuted. Sparks spray out like fireworks and Oddjob collapses."), alternate French, Italian and German audio tracks and optional French, Italian, German and Dutch subtitles. Each 4K platter also contains a good 3 to 4-minute deconstruction of the respective film's locations, narrated by Maud Adams, that does not appear on the standard BDs, and each standard BD has an excellent collection of various memorabilia and production photos in still frame that does not appear on the 4K platters. The standard BDs do not start up where they left off if playback is terminated, while the 4K BDs do.

Connery begins as an athletic detective in the 1962 **Dr. No**, following up clues in Jamaica after a government agent, looking for the source of interference with American

rocket launches, is assassinated. He himself avoids several attempts on his life, each one leading him closer to the solution of his investigation. Connery was still finding his way with his character, who is often simply a blatant sexual harasser and overly bad tempered. In the 1963 **From Russia with Love**, Connery is a true secret agent, participating in a mission based upon his character's supposed sexual attractiveness, and deftly accommodating the mission's double crosses, in Turkey and on a train in Yugoslavia, with quick thinking, handy gadgets and a reasonable set of physical skills. In the 1964 **Goldfinger**, visiting Switzerland but working mostly on American soil, he acts more like a cop than a detective, essentially hassling and irritating the villain while using just enough wit and charm to avoid being killed until he can find out what the villain is up to. By then, Connery was entirely comfortable in his character, and his conveyance of cool thinking in pressure situations is both believable and highly appealing. Although his character's propensity for sexual harassment reaches its peak in the 1965 **Thunderball**, by then Connery was so commanding in the part that even the villainous females he hits on put up no more than a mild resistance, holding off trying to kill him until they can get a taste of him first. What makes the film, set in Florida and the Bahamas, our favorite of the series is that his character does true detective work, following up on leads that he has uncovered (albeit out of sheer coincidence, but a relatively logical coincidence) and that his superiors dismiss as inconsequential—indeed, the one thing we find lacking in the movie is a quick scene during the approach to the climax where his bosses acknowledge that he was right all along. Then came the disaster of the 1967 **You Only Live Twice**, set in Japan and based upon a snide screenplay by Roald Dahl that makes fun of the enormous popularity of the series and the tropes it had established (a character hands Connery's character a martini that has been stirred, and he has to politely accept it) without care for the underlying strengths that can support those tropes. The producers mistakenly believed that the film needed to be 'bigger' and wilder, because that is what had made **Thunderball** successful after **Goldfinger**, but without an effectively executed mystery story beneath it, the film is more hollow than the dopey empty volcano holding the rocket launching pad that the villain somehow managed to construct without the knowledge of the Japanese authorities (or bribing every last one of them) or the curiosity of the local peasants. Connery goes along with everything because he's getting paid a bundle, but his character is no longer a seducer—he is simply pliant royalty accepting the pleasures being offered to him. After a hiatus and another misinterpretation of the series' popularity by the producers (what an outstanding film **On Her Majesty's Secret Service** would have been with a few small adjustments and Connery playing the part opposite Diana Rigg...), Connery came back for the 1971 **Diamonds Are Forever**. By that time, even spy spoofs had pretty much run their course. Set in Las Vegas, the 120-minute film is still a satire, to be sure, but unlike **You Only Live Twice**, it never makes fun of Connery's character, just his environment, even when he enters a casino in a dinner jacket while everyone else there is dressed in casual attire. He does slap Jill St. John at one point, and even though she is working for the villains at the time, it is hardly the action of a 'gentleman agent,' though otherwise he is well behaved and her character sort of deserved it. The film is every bit as tacky as Vegas was in the Seventies, but as a scaled down, inventive action film (Connery's character is tracking a very large collection of contraband diamonds, although the logic of why they are traveling such an elaborate path, a path that nevertheless anticipates every random choice the hero makes, is best left unexamined) it is less hollow than **You Only Live Twice**, simply because it is smaller. The story does not matter in the least because it is a showcase for Connery doing his Bond shtick and as Mae West might say, you're just happy to see him.

The standard BD on the 1962 **Dr. No** has a correct aspect ratio of about 1.66:1, while the 4K presentation blows the image up to about 1.75:1, removing some picture information from the top and bottom of the image. On both versions, the 102-minute film comes with four trailers, two TV commercials, six radio spots and supplements that originally appeared on the DVD release (Jun 00), including a 42-minute retrospective documentary celebrating the beginning of the Bond series, an 18-minute profile of director Terence Young (who was critical in helping Connery find his character), the original 9-minute black-and-white production featurette, and an effectively compiled commentary featuring many members of the production team. Additionally, there is a fun 13-minute piece about the premiere celebrations for every Bond movie up to **Die Another Day**, and a great 5-minute black-and-white segment with Connery (shot around the time of **Goldfinger**) about the guns his character used in the first three films. The standard BD also has a feature that is tellingly left off the 4K BD, a terrific 12-minute piece on the restorations the films underwent.

Never again (Continued)

Like **Dr. No**, the 1963 **From Russia with Love** also has a correct 1.66:1 aspect ratio on the standard BD, while it is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1 on the 4K presentation, losing picture information above and below. The 115-minute film has many scenes set at night or in the dark, and the detail of each such scene is invariably precise and clear amid the shadows. The sharpness also makes the villains, Lotte Lenya and Robert Shaw, feel even more menacing. The standard BD has an additional French audio track and French subtitles. Both carry over the excellent commentary from the DVD (Mar 01), along with a 34-minute retrospective piece and a 27-minute profile of producer Harry Saltzman. Additionally, there are three trailers, three TV commercials, three radio spots, a minute-long presentation of the storyboards for the boat chase sequence and 18 minutes of terrific archival interviews with author Ian Fleming, including a spellbinding audio conversation with Raymond Chandler.

The 4K presentation on the 1963 **Goldfinger** is hazier in darker sequences and hues are a little blander, while the standard BD is bright with accurate fleshtones and deeper, more glowing gold tones. Again, the standard BD has a correct aspect ratio of about 1.66:1, while the 4K version is about 1.75:1, losing picture information on the top and bottom. Both are a great improvement over the DVD (Dec 99). We also reviewed a Blu-ray that was part of **James Bond Blu-ray Volume Three** (May 09), which has a picture and sound quality similar to the standard BD release. The standard BD does not have French subtitles, but does have Spanish, Cantonese, Mandarin and Korean subtitles. Both the 4K and the standard BD have the two commentary tracks carried over from the DVD, one featuring director Guy Hamilton and one that follows the format of the previous commentaries, grabbing reflections and remembrances from a number of cast and crew members. Also lifted from the DVD are two excellent retrospective documentaries, running a total of 55 minutes, an original 2-minute production featurette, thirty-two radio promos running a total of 31 minutes and including an interview with Connery, three TV commercials and a trailer. The two releases also share the 3-minute on-set interview with Connery, the 4-minute interview with costar Honor Blackman, 10 minutes of screen tests for Theodore Bikel and Tinto Vandos (who were passed over in favor of Gert Fröbe), and a 12-minute segment on the promotion of the movie's star automobile with the previous BD.

The standard BD for **Thunderball** presents the opening credits in windowboxed format before segueing to being letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1, while the 4K presentation just carries the letterboxing all the way through. The 130-minute **Thunderball** had two original soundtracks, as the producers tweaked the audio a little bit, changed some of the music cues, and even altered a couple of gag lines. The standard BD only has the audio track that is usually utilized, but the 4K gives you a choice of the two versions, both on the original mono tracks and the Atmos tracks. When Connery's character exits a shark-filled swimming pool in Chapter 18, he quips, "Sorry old chap, better luck next time," off camera on the standard BD and the default 4K tracks, but on the alternate 4K tracks, it is changed to, "Now you can tell about the one that got away." A 4-minute piece in the 4K version's special features delineates more of the differences between the two tracks, which also summarizes some of the film's deleted scenes. The standard BD has a French audio track. Only one of the DVD (Dec 99) commentaries is carried over to both discs, featuring reflections by editor Peter Hunt, screenwriter John Hopkins and others, but the 4K BD also has the second talk, featuring Young, who returned as director. Both BDs carry over the three theatrical trailers, five TV commercials and ten radio spots (with a brief introduction) from the DVD. The 4K BD also has the two retrospective featurettes running 28 minutes and 31 minutes that were included on the DVD. Both BDs also include a number of features that didn't appear on the DVD, including a substantially alternate 3-minute cut of the underwater battle that was used in a boat show promotion and contains some really cool moments unavailable elsewhere; a wonderful collection of three TV Bond-themed commercials for a raincoat, slacks and a toy 'James Bond 007 Action Pen' that can supposedly project secret messages and so on; a great 13 minutes of location scouting, location set construction and behind-the-scenes home movie footage; an interesting 4-minute piece on the jetpack sequence with lots of behind-the-scenes footage; a jokey 17-minute look at how a car explosion sequence was staged; and a 1965 NBC promotional special, *The Incredible World of James Bond*, running 51 minutes and stuffed with film clips from those first four films.

The bass on the standard BD's DTS track for the 117-minute **You Only Live Twice**, has a better rumble than the Atmos track on the 4K version, especially during the lengthy finale. Every explosion has a greater impact (and don't miss the villain's cat, by the way, who does not take kindly to explosions and frantically tries to get out of his arms). Both versions are letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1. The standard BD has additional French, Portuguese and German audio tracks and additional French, Portuguese, German, Dutch, Danish, Swedish, Norwegian and Finnish subtitles. The excellent commentary track featuring director Lewis Gilbert, title song singer Nancy Sinatra and others has been carried over from the DVD (Mar 01) on both releases, as have the three trailers; a TV commercial; seven radio spots; a 30-minute production documentary; a minute-long animated storyboard sequence; and a 23-minute piece about title-designer Maurice Binder. Both BDs also contain another 14-minute collection of marvelous home movies scouting the locations and capturing behind-the-scenes activity, an interesting 5-minute black-and-white collection of unfiltered clips from a production documentary shot during the making of the film; and an elaborately constructed 52-minute promotional TV special (in gorgeous color) from 1967, *Welcome to Japan Mr. Bond*, including substantial fresh footage of Lois Maxwell in character as 'Miss Moneypenny' framing the various clips from different Bond movies as ruminations upon Bond's relationships with other women (Desmond Llewelyn, as 'Q,' also does his thing).

The audio track on **Diamonds Are Forever** has a robust separation mix, including dialog, and it is better distributed on the 4K Atmos than on the standard BD's DTS track. At one point, voices of off-screen characters come from the far left while another character is sitting in a chair. The characters then appear on the right, but you realize after a beat that the man in the chair is looking into a mirror to see them. The standard BD has the same audio and subtitle additions that **You Only Live Twice** has. Again, the rewarding commentary including director Hamilton and others is carried over

from the DVD (Mar 01), as are the two trailers; five TV commercials; three radio commercials; a decent 31-minute retrospective featurette; 8 minutes of terrific deleted scenes; and the exceptional 41-minute profile of producer Albert Broccoli. Both releases also share the Adams location piece; a very nice 5-minute 1971 interview with Connery; 4 minutes of special effects tests; another 2 minutes of deleted footage; and a terrific 5-minute behind-the-scenes look at the staging of a fight sequence. The standard BD also has an awkwardly designed 16-minute segment that lets you observe five action sequences from different camera angles (when those angles are available) by using an exotic button on the remote. The 4K BD simplifies it into a rewarding 33-minute segment that shows each segment in split screen with the different angles and also replays some of the scenes with the alternate angles (some of which are better than what the editor chose).

4K Harry

Shifting political winds and a fabulous 4K transfer make Don Siegel's 1971 Warner Bros. production, **Dirty Harry**, a relevant and thrilling WB SDS Studio Distribution Services **4K UltraHD** Blu-ray (UPC#883929813667, \$30). Not only is the image precision sharp in the San Francisco sunlight, and smooth and finely detailed in the night sequences, but the Dolby Atmos sound has a compelling bass and crystalline tones. When the late Lalo Schiffrin's musical score kicks in with the first cut to the Cross in the park, it becomes a goosebump moment entirely because of the disc's image and sound delivery. Throughout the film, Schiffrin's music is meticulously separated and dimensionally engrossing, while the subtlest audio effects—the structures that whish by during a chase, and so on, are also distinctive enough to contribute significantly to the entertainment. Clint Eastwood plays a cop who finds himself hamstrung by the rules of law, and Andrew Robinson gives a marvelously unrestrained performance as the pathetically snotty serial killer villain who takes advantage of those same rules. It is worth noting that after the film's famous opening sequence where Eastwood's character dares a black perpetrator to try for his gun, the next scene is Eastwood's character amiably being treated by a friendly black doctor, and throughout the film, Siegel does attempt to mitigate the movie's obvious political messages with a variety of counterpoints (the gay baiting that both Eastwood and Siegel had a history of incorporating is less allayed). The loveliest and most forgotten scene in the 102-minute feature, in fact, is a conversation between Eastwood's character and his injured partner's wife as they descend an outdoor stairwell after visiting him, which speaks to the humanity of working for law enforcement, the randomness of life, and the true understanding Eastwood's character has of his profession's limitations. That scene, too, is made more profound and touching by the clarity of the BD's delivery.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1. We reviewed Warner's standard BD in Aug 08, and while the quality of the hues are about the same, the smooth, sharper image on the 4K presentation is substantially more inviting, just as the Atmos sound is crisper and more involving than the standard BD's 5.1 DTS audio track. The 4K BD has alternate French, Spanish, Italian and German audio tracks, and eleven subtitles options including English. The special features appearing on the standard BD are carried over, including the Richard Schickel commentary, an 87-minute PBS *American Masters* program about Eastwood, a 58-minute profile of Eastwood's career, a 27-minute collection of reminiscences by other stars about Eastwood (and Eastwood talking about the **Dirty Harry** movies), an original 7-minute promotional featurette and a 30-minute retrospective documentary about the film and its immediate sequel. Additionally, there is an 18-minute appreciation of (and promotion for) Eastwood's cop movies and the **Dirty Harry** films, a 6-minute look at the enduring popularity of the original film, and a terrific 8-minute appreciation of the work cinematographer Bruce Surtees did on the film.

High on 4K

They say that Hollywood marriages don't last, but clearly there is one May-December coupling that will be forever blessed, and that is the union of VistaVision and the 4K Blu-ray. They are a perfect match. The VistaVision image has more picture information stored within its frame, and the 4K Blu-ray has the ability to best convey that information to your home video screen. It is true love, made in motion picture enthusiast heaven for our earthly delights, and the latest demonstration of this nuptial bliss is the Warner Bros. *Warner WB Archive Collection* two-platter **4K UltraHD** Blu-ray release of the 1956 MGM musical, **High Society** (UPC#840418325667, \$28). The film, directed by Charles Walters, is a remake of **The Philadelphia Story** with original music from Cole Porter; two male stars who were essentially passing the torch as the kings of popular song, Bing Crosby and Frank Sinatra; a female star who would soon find herself personally participating in a matrimonial event that would make the social splendor surrounding her character's marriage seem like a Vegas wedding, Grace Kelly; and a catalytic supporting character played by a musical figure whose greatness exceeded Crosby and Sinatra combined, Louis Armstrong.

The second platter in the set is a standard Blu-ray, which has also been released separately (UPC#840418325674, \$24). Running 111 minutes, the movie may not be anything like **The Wiz** (see page 5), but its rhythm changes are the same, relying on the appeal of the stars to sell songs that go on for too long but take up time sacrificed from narrative. Sinatra's character is a press photographer invited to the wedding of Kelly's character, turning her head just enough that Crosby's character, her ex-husband, can step in

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to reclaim her before she goes down the aisle again. It can be a dull experience, especially if the stars lack familiarity and your pulse does not quicken when you hear *True Love* or *What a Swell Party*. Letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1, the colors on the standard Blu-ray are rich and the Dolby Atmos sound, which has a pleasant but subdued dimensionality and a few basic directional effects, is smooth and clear, but although it is a great improvement over the DVD (May 03), the film appears to remain a product of its time, vaguely bland and intermittently charming, unable to transcend its Fifties topicality.

On the 4K presentation, however, the film's meticulously coordinated pastels are captivating. In a direct comparison, the standard BD looks somewhat grainy. Hues are bright, but they don't seem as organized, while the smooth, impeccable image on the 4K looks perfect. Suddenly, you don't need to know who the stars are to be utterly mesmerized by their presence and talents. Kelly was one of those rare actresses whose porcelain beauty did not interfere with the vector of her career as a dramatic performer (until it truncated it altogether), and she is wonderful and organic in the part, while Crosby and Sinatra exude a rivalry in the very nature of their ages, manners and styles. And Armstrong is so different from everyone else in the film, he is riveting every moment he is on the screen. The comedy is funnier, the romance is sweeter and the music is more intoxicating thanks to the improved image. The colors are so dynamically integrated in the costumes and the décor that with the 4K playback, moments that drag on the standard BD are instead enlivened, and the film becomes the fabulous soiree MGM wanted it to be.

Along with optional English subtitles, both platters have the same special features, which originally appeared on the DVD, including a 9-minute retrospective documentary hosted by costar Celeste Holm (the 4K processing, incidentally, does wonders with her bare backed gown in the film...), 16 minutes of audio-only radio interviews with the three stars (featuring just their side of the interviews), the 1956 letterboxed MGM Cinemascope cartoon, *Millionaire Droopy*, three trailers and a minute-long newsreel clip.

De Niro does double duty

To hold down costs while at the same time generating some publicity with the stunt casting, Robert De Niro plays the two main characters in Barry Levinson's very entertaining 2025 historical drama about Fifties mob bosses Frank Costello and Vito Genovese, *The Alto Knights*, a Warner Bros. SDS Studio Distribution Services Blu-ray (UPC#883929816224, \$28). The publicity wasn't enough, since the film failed so badly that the disc does not come with any special features and does not start up where it left off if playback is terminated, but it is shame, because the film deserves a great deal more recognition than it received and hopefully the BD will contribute to its word of mouth. The period dressing is continually pleasing and the film has a great deal of wit while honing quite closely to its historical accuracy. It is the same story, to some extent, that was fictionalized in *The Godfather* films. As Costello (and given a rather large nose), the central character, De Niro is excellent. When the film's narrative essentially begins, he has been the head of the organized mob families throughout America for more than a decade, his cool headed wisdom keeping the peace and generating an impressive stream of revenue by keeping law enforcement and politicians greased enough that nothing important ever sticks. As Genovese (and given an odd chin), who is released from prison after a lengthy stay and believes he rightfully should inherit the spot that Costello has ostensibly been holding for him, De Niro is less convincing. The dialog constantly reiterates what a temper his character has or how explosive he can be, but you don't really see it and worse still, you don't feel it when you're in his presence. If the producers had splurged and gotten, say, Al Pacino instead, the film might have done much better. De Niro differentiates himself from his other character, but not enough to make the film soar. That said, however, the 123-minute feature is enormously satisfying as it works its way through the record—Costello is more than happy to retire and turn things over to Genovese, but Genovese keeps trying to jump the gun when it comes to the transition—and the film is filled with the sort of Mafia lifestyles and Mafia lore that make such programs so fascinating and compelling. And like all of the best mob movies, without ever breaking the mood or placing comedy where it does not belong, there are many laugh aloud moments.

It is perfectly believable that the two characters share the same genes and maybe even a great-great-grandfather or something, and there are plenty of two-shots where you can gorge to your heart's content on seeing them sit across the table from one another. Debra Messing co-stars, with Cosmo Jarvis, Kathrine Narducci and Michael Rispoli. The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1. The color transfer is sharp, the special effects, as we mentioned, are flawless (including the wonderfully modified New York skylines). The Dolby Atmos sound has a pleasing dimensionality and smooth tones, particularly when the period songs waft across the soundtrack. There is an audio track that describes the action in American ("Anna feeds Vito a slice of the cake and then gives him a peck on the lips. While Frank claps alongside her, Bobbie just puffs on a cigarette. A beaming Vito feeds his new bride a piece of the cake and then takes another bite himself"), another track that describes the action in British ("Guests applaud as Anna feeds Vito a piece of the cake and they kiss. Bobbie smokes a cigarette and watches with disdain as Vito feeds cake to his new wife."), alternate French, Spanish and Italian audio tracks and eleven subtitled options, including English.

4K kills

Back in the Eighties, before first-person shooter games took over, young men gathered on couches to watch crime and action films where the body count was, for them, the purpose of the entertainment. One such film was the 1986 Warner Bros. production directed by George Cosmatos and starring Sylvester Stallone, *Cobra*, which has been released as a 4K Blu-ray by Warner and Arrow Video (UPC#760137184812, \$50). For the sake of the film's marketing, Stallone plays a cop, but the movie really isn't about catching criminals, it is about a good guy wasting bad guys who have knives and guns. The villains have no perceptible psychology—oh, near the climax, the primary villain admits that he is insane, but that was a given—and no internal emotions other than homicidal rage. At 87 minutes, the film doesn't mess around. Brigitte Nielsen is an innocent bystander who sees the villain getting his quota of murders for the night, and for some reason he thinks he ought to eliminate her because she is a witness, although by the time he's finished killing a bunch of other people while he tries to get to her, there surely are plenty of witnesses being stockpiled in case this one falls through. Anyway, Stallone's character attempts to protect her by taking her out of town, but the villain, who has a whole

cult of homicidal maniacs doing his bidding, follows them on motorcycles. The last 20 minutes or so is one big battle, and that is what you came for anyway. In 4K, the mayhem is especially invigorating. Warner Home Video has released the film on Blu-ray (UPC#88-3929839278, \$15), but the picture is softer, the sound is blander and it just doesn't deliver the same thrills. In fact, when it comes to the 4K's 5.1-channel DTS sound, we don't think we've ever come across a mix that has so many noises so far away from the center. It's like your rear speakers have somehow been pushed back an extra five feet. The 5.1 DTS sound on the standard BD suggests the same dynamic, but it does not achieve the same clarity. In any case, the film's audio track adds to the vigor of the slaughter.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1. There is nothing particularly wrong with the image on the standard BD. The colors look accurate and the picture is reasonably sharp. But the image on the 4K presentation is invigorating. It is sharper, more detailed and the colors are richer. Again, all the better to see the exploding flesh, and if you toggle between the two, the 4K keeps you involved with the entertainment in a manner that the standard BD cannot.

Both presentations come with an enjoyable commentary by Cosmatos and an 8-minute featurette, along with a pair of trailers, all of which originally appeared on the Warner DVD (Apr 98). Additionally, the Arrow release has a decent 10-minute introduction to the film; a 14-minute analysis of the film's artistry, such as it is ("What we really do have is a work that harks back to the silent days, where the images told the story, not the dialog. It is the realm of pure cinema."); a good 17-minute interview with composer Sylvester Levay about his career and experiences working on the film; a marvelous 26-minute interview with the wonderfully over-the-top villain, Brian Thompson, about his character's lack of logical motivation and the director's lack of guidance ("Yes, we did call him George 'Comatose.'"); a 24-minute interview with costar Marco Rodriguez, the villain in the prolog, who shares his memories about the shoot and what it has meant for his career; a great 14-minute interview with Andrew Robinson (the villain in *Dirty Harry*—another star from *Harry*, Reni Santoni, plays another cop), who played one of the hero's nastier bosses (he bought his house with the payment he got); an enjoyable 9-minute interview with costar Lee Garlington, who also shares her recollections about the production and Stallone; and an engaging 8-minute interview with costar Art LaFleur, who shares his memories.

A 95-minute television version of the film has been included, as well. Presented in a squared full screen format, the image is a little murkier than the pristine feature presentation, but not to the point of distortion, and the sound, although it is just in Dolby Stereo, is still rousing, with a lively dimensionality. There is no subtitled. Obviously, the most flagrant violence has been removed, but plenty has been left in, and there are a number of bland scenes or scene extensions that have been added to fill in the running time, which will be of interest to fans or other curiosity seekers.

Two more commentary tracks have also been added. It is helpful to watch the interviews first, so that you know which actors the commentators are referring to when they talk about them. One track features film experts Kim Newman and Nick De Semlyen, who give an entertaining talk, discussing the actors, the film's production history, its oddball plot (a lot of which was removed, including scenes that led to an initial NC-17 rating and the revelation, made somewhat obvious in the casting, of a master villain) and Stallone's legacy.

Another track, featuring film historians Josh Nelson ("One of the benefits of being a child of divorce was that custody weekends with my dad almost always began with a trip to the video store where I was basically given carte blanche to pick whatever I wanted off the shelves. Looking back now, I often wonder if I actually just got into film to justify my love of these films, to find a way to sort of socially validate my kind of obsession with Eighties action cinema.") and Martyn Pedler, who proceed, indeed, to provide a cogent and enjoyable analysis of the film's artistry, often on a scene-by-scene basis (as Stallone's character cleans his gun, a toy commercial appears on his television; the film's Christmas setting is used entirely to convey a sense that crime is desecrating and violating our lives). "Just in terms of the shape of the narrative, it really does take [a crime action film] and refine it even further. There's no pretense here whatsoever about, you know, 'what this film really needs is more fully developed characters or more backstory or more intricate plot twists.' It's just, 'Prolog: America is overrun with crime. Boom. Hostage scenario. Brief exposition. Montage. Chase scene. Kill. Kill. Attempted kill. Rescue. Kill, kill. Chase scene. Brief romance. Shoot out. Confrontation. End. Done. Roll credits.'"

Not a moment passes in David Ayer's 2025 action film, *A Working Man*, that is not a cliché, but we wouldn't have it any other way. A throwback to the days of *Cobra* (and Stallone is listed as one of the producers), Jason Statham stars as a British Special Forces veteran employed on a Chicago construction site as a foreman. When his boss's daughter is abducted at a nightclub, the boss enlists him to get her back, and scores of corpses blown every which way later, that's what he accomplishes. Released by Amazon MGM Studios, WB and SDS Studio Distribution Services as a 4K UltraHD Blu-ray (UPC#883929837601, \$33), the film runs 116 minutes and, with its simple but coherent narrative, is one marvelous action and fight scene after another. What is interesting—and *Cobra* contains hints of the strategy, as well—is that while Statham is dressed like a normal guy, the villains and the populations in the worlds the villains inhabit dress outlandishly and absurdly. Two Russian hit men, for example, walk around in sequined purple and gold jumpsuits with matching fisherman's hats. Hence, it never really feels like Statham's character is murdering real people, he's just wasting clowns as they pile out of their cars to face him. The ending is fully satisfying, but there are also enough loose ends for a sequel, if there is any ammunition left.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1. The night scenes are inherently soft here and there, but colors are precise and the image is always finely detailed, while the Dolby Atmos sound is solidly enveloping. The net result of the disc's quality is that you can just let go, lose yourself in the film's glorious stupidities and have a wonderful time without having to work for your pleasures with a game controller. There is an audio track that describes the action ("Levon elbows the thug, and ducks as another swings a pipe at him. Grabbing a bull skull from a wall, he slams it into multiple attackers. A thug tries to kick Levon, but he snags his leg and knees the thug's crotch. Levon grabs a man's ear and throws him to the ground."), an alternate Spanish audio track and optional English and Spanish subtitles.

A pair of martial arts action features

A mainstream film needs complexity and artistic finesse to succeed, but a genre film does not, because it only needs to reiterate genre tropes to entertain, and that is the situation with the enormously entertaining 1971 Shaw Bros. production directed by Teddy Yip, *The Eunuch*, part of a wonderful twofor released by Eureka! as a *Eureka! Classics* Blu-ray, **Exact Revenge The Eunuch / The Deadly Knives** (UPC#760137182337, \$40). Both films are letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1, have lovely and meticulous color transfers and are monophonic in Mandarin with optional English subtitles.

The story for *The Eunuch* is much easier to follow than it is to describe, but essentially, the title character has assassinated the emperor and taken his place on the throne. He intended to kill the prince, but the prince was lured away by an elderly kung fu master. The title character also discovers that, before he had the you-know-what, he fathered a daughter, and he sends assassins out to kill both the mother and daughter, but another elderly—this time, female—kung fu master rescues the daughter. The fugitives eventually unite and the prince and the daughter fall in love as they are both trained by the older experts. The daughter doesn't know what her heritage is, and accompanies the prince when he is ready to take back his throne. Pai Ying, Lisa Chiao Chiao and Wa Chung are featured.

In one sequence during the final fight, the cinematography is grossly out of focus, but that is not the fault of the transfer, which is impeccable and lovely from start to finish. The film's editing is almost textbook-worthy in the basic nature of its compilation, advancing with one competently composed and lit shot after another. The costumes and décor are not lavish, but colors are exquisitely placed and balanced. The audio transfer is also free of any distortion whatsoever, and the sound editing is just as good as the image editing, so that every noise is precisely applied to advance your knowledge of what is occurring in a scene. There is nothing particularly special about the martial arts on display (except that the women give as good as they get), but there is nothing inept about the fights, either. They've got wild leaps, blood and plenty of clashes. Yes, you can see a minion at one point hovering back and forth behind the hero because the hero's attention is elsewhere and god forbid the guy just stab him in the back and be done with it, but like any other shortcoming the film may actually have, that is fully excused as a typical genre quirk. It is because of the utter strength of the martial arts and wuxia genres themselves—of the many happy memories one has of other such features—that the 98-minute film can sustain its captivating and transporting entertainment from start to finish. It is doing everything right, and you are once again basking in genre pleasures and adding the film to an ever-lengthening list of favorites.

An enjoyable commentary is included that features Hong Kong film enthusiasts Mike Leeder and Arne Venema, who talk a lot about the cast members and story, but can't resist getting their digs in when it comes to the eponymous character.

"He represents the lust for pure and absolute power, even willing to cut off your own bits."

"That's something I don't think you could really get away with in a Western movie. Can you imagine like if you had the emperor in *Star Wars* going, 'Darth Vader, come and join me, but first, cut your bits off.'"

"Well I think Darth Vader probably lost a lot of his bits."

"They were burnt off. Because of Obi Wan Kenobi. That's why Darth Vader's so upset."

"Was Darth Vader a eunuch?"

"I don't know."

The companion film, *The Deadly Knives*, a 1972 Shaw Bros. film directed by Il-ho Jang, is in some ways better made. The direction is more creative, with interesting camera angles at times, a few very heavily populated fight scenes, strong thematic undercurrents and there is also some terrific gratuitous nudity, so that while the narrative is not quite as viscerally satisfying as *The Eunuch* and is less deliberate in its progression of conflicts, the film is still very entertaining and good fun. Set as the Japanese were preparing for their occupation in the early Thirties, Yun Ling is a student who has been honing his martial arts skills and returns to his rural town just as his father is being pressured to sell forestry land to the Japanese. When the father refuses, the villains resort to underhanded methods, aided by greedy turncoat servants and politicians. Running 87 minutes, there are plenty of bloody fights and although one of the Japanese bad guys has a single revolver, the hero figures out his way around it. Li Ching and her father, Miao Ching, costar.

The image is a bit soft at first, but colors are rich and fleshtones are accurate, while later sequences are generally sharper. Again, the production designs are very appealing and add to the film's pleasures. An English language track, with classically awkward dubbing, is also offered. A fine 13-minute appreciation of the film is included that points out the parallels between the movie's various rape scenes, the forestry theme and the whole Japanese exploitation of the Chinese setting, explaining that it was likely inspired by the success of *Fist of Fury*. Hong Kong film expert Frank Djeng reiterates these insights in his audio track, also going over the history of Japan's occupation and sharing detail about the backgrounds of the various cast members. Having originally recorded the talk for a British release of the film, incidentally, he cites a number of titles as having been released on disc by Eureka when in fact they were released by other distributors, even with his commentaries on them, in America.

Japanese occupation

A *Jules & Jim* drama set at the beginning of World War II, **Hong Kong 1941** features a magnificent movie star performance by Yun-Fat Chow, with Alex Man and Cecilia Yip as the other corners of the triangle. Released by Eureka! as a *The Masters of Cinema Series* Blu-ray (UPC#760137182344, \$40), the Japanese do not arrive until the second half of the 100-minute feature, with first part establishing the characters and their relationships with one another. Directed by Po-Chih Leong, there is action and harsh violence in the 1984 film, but it is a genuine melodrama and not an exploitation feature. It is smartly made, sustaining an interest in both the characters and their society before everything comes crashing in on them with the arrival of the occupiers. The two men are not street gangsters, but they are sort of outsiders, essentially poorer relations to wealthier families, and engage in street hustles as they try to get ahead. Lip's character is the daughter of an important merchant, and beyond their reach until the war puts everyone on an even footing.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1. The colors are smooth and bright, and the image is in very good condition. The monophonic sound is okay. The film is in Cantonese, with optional English subtitles and an alternate English track that is good in scenes involving the three stars, but more awkward when other characters chime in. Along with two trailers, there is a 30-minute talk by Tony Rayns about the backgrounds of the filmmakers and how Britain's ceding of Hong Kong to Red China led to a rise of interest in films about the occupation; a very good 21-minute interview with Leong by three film journalists in front of an audience about his strategies in making the film and a 22-minute interview with Leong talking about his career as a whole (he has funny things to say about Steven Seagal); 45 minutes of interviews with Yip talking about her character, her fellow cast members and how she got into making films; 19 minutes of interviews with Chow, who shares some interesting background about the film and also talks extensively about his work with John Woo (he says Woo tells him things Woo won't tell his own wife); and a good 9-minute interview with costar Paul Chun about making the film and working with his fellow actors.

Hong Kong film expert Frank Djeng provides a commentary track, also referencing *Jules & Jim* as he talks about the story, the cast and the crew. He remembers as a youngster being on the same airplane flight to Honolulu as Chow, who was then on his honeymoon. Djeng also provides a substantial and rewarding historical background to the Japanese invasion of Hong Kong, which is not negated by his one flagrant error, stating that the Japanese bombed Hong Kong 2 days after Pearl Harbor when in fact it was 2 hours later.

Surinam

Watching movies can be like stamp collecting—you learn about the different countries of the world and their cultures through the presence and design of the stamps, and you absorb these lessons into your consciousness. We recall the stamps well enough, but we don't remember ever seeing a movie before set in Surinam, the former Dutch colony on the north coast of South America, nestled between the former British and French colonies of Guyana, but now that shortcoming has been rectified. Cult Epics has released a wonderful 1976 film on Blu-ray not just shot in Surinam, but presented in its narrative as a metaphor for its relationship with its former mother country, and celebrating, at times backhandedly, its unique cultural mix, **Wan Pipel** (UPC#88119002-2191, \$35), which can be readily translated as, 'One People.'

Borger Breeveld plays a student one year away from obtaining his graduate degree in Holland who is called back to Surinam because his mother is dying. He has a serious romantic relationship with a Dutch woman played by Willeke van Ammelrooy, and their social life appears to have effectively weathered his Creole heritage—her friends accept him enthusiastically even though they cannot help being self-conscious about his background. When he arrives in Surinam, however, he hooks up with a Hindu girl who has set her sights on him, played by Diana Gangaram Panday, and decides not to go back. His family is exasperated, for while they would welcome the Dutch woman with open arms, they want nothing to do with the Hindus. Directed by the late Pim de la Parra, Jr., the 112-minute feature clearly has a limited budget—characters in a conversation are often isolated with close-ups, and the editing leaps at times from one story situation to the next—and it begins leisurely, grabbing just a bit of The Netherlands to establish the contrast, and then savoring the tropical communities and marketplaces as Breeveld's character reacclimates himself (it takes a few days before he ditches his white shirt in favor of lighter shirts with fanciful prints). Once the romantic triangle shifts into high gear, however, the film becomes utterly captivating. The characters are uniformly appealing—you actually feel sorry for the predicament Breeveld's character finds himself in, rather than resentful of his lusts, and yet you feel sympathetic for the women, as well, and even for the father of Breeveld's character, who is so frustrated by the turn of events that he wishes he had never told his son the mother was dying. What the film achieves, however, extends well beyond its wonderful entertainment, and even its use of visual metaphors, such as river rapids, to underscore its emotional conflicts, as it truly intends to use the characters to present a lasting impression of the country as a whole, and succeeds magnificently in that regard. We knew of Surinam before because of its postage stamps, but now we know its soul.

The picture has an aspect ratio of about 1.66:1. The source material is a little aged, with some stray speckles, and the cinematography is haphazard at times, but colors are fresh and details are clear. The monophonic sound is in passable condition. The film is played out in the languages of the land, with optional English subtitles. There is a really good collection of memorabilia in still frame; a great 25-minute Dutch report on the shooting of the film that includes footage of de la Parra directing a scene and then a terrific interview with him and Ammelrooy; an interesting 38-minute interview with Ammelrooy from 2024 talking about her entire career (she made close to a hundred films, including the Oscar-winning *Antonia's Line*, for which she is glad somebody in England edited rather than in the Netherlands, because she thinks her acting was not as good as it came out looking); her friends in the Dutch film industry (including de la Parra) and the challenges facing an actor; and a cute spirit-of-the-Sixties 1965 de la Parra film running 27 minutes, *Aah Tamarra*, mixed in black-and-white and very lovely color, with a squared full screen format, about a tour boat guide in Amsterdam who attracts the attentions of a few male tourists, much to the consternation of her filmmaker boyfriend.

De la Parra's daughter, Bodil de la Parra, and Dutch film expert Lex Veerkamp provide a good commentary. Although she was only a child at the time, her father's work on the film was a major event that she remembers vividly, particularly the scenes that were shot while she was on the set, and she is also subsequently familiar with the fate of the film, which premiered, by design, in conjunction with Surinam's independence. It was a hit in Surinam, of course, but was a disappointment elsewhere. "At that time, when it came out, it flopped totally in Holland. My father was really disillusioned and he told us as a family, 'Nobody wants to watch a movie with black people in it living in Holland.'" Fortunately, it has since become a recognized classic.

Panday has a prominent birthmark on her neck, which was deftly managed in the script by have Breeveld's character tell her he thinks it is sexy. Nevertheless, she was an amateur, and although her performance is wonderful and the camera loves her, she could not find further work as an actress in Holland, and her return to Surinam was just as disappointing, eventually leading her to alcoholism, as Bodil explains. "Panday had a really tough time, because the audience, they couldn't make the difference between the part she played and the person she was, so her private situation got mixed up. People on the streets of Surinam shouted things like, 'Whore!' to [her]."

4K **Wiz**

The criteria for judging a 4K Blu-ray is fairly simple—does the technology improve the entertainment? With the Universal Criterion Collection release of Sidney Lumet's 1978 stage musical adaptation, **The Wiz** (UPC#715515314213, \$50), the format at least gives the film an honest chance to succeed. The film has never been home video friendly. Many of the musical numbers are dependent upon strongly hued lighting, which is beyond the delivery capabilities of the standard Blu-ray that is included in the two-platter set. Not only is the image grainy, it is outright fuzzy in the most accentuated shots. The 4K playback, however, is amazing. The grain completely vanishes and details are smooth and clear at every moment. The 134-minute feature can still be a strain, but image quality is no longer a detriment contributing to that strain.

The stage musical was an urban adaptation of **The Wizard of Oz**, and there is no way to watch the film without internally comparing it to the 1939 MGM feature. The basic concept is a welcome one. The cast is entirely black, and like the other film, there are more elements of horror within it than many are willing to acknowledge. With grotesque character designs and threatening situations, parts of it are the stuff of nightmares, but while the original film juxtaposes its frights with an idyllic fantasyland, the production designs in **The Wiz** are bleak and disturbing even when the characters are not frightened. In the other film there is a specific antagonist. In this one, the environment is the antagonist, and the figure who is identified as 'evil' only appears near the end, to finally invigorate the narrative. The show does have a couple of catchy songs, and the cast—Diana Ross, Michael Jackson (!), Nipsey Russell and Ted Ross, with Richard Pryor and Lena Home showing up mainly in the finale—are terrific performers. Their singing, dancing and interacting with one another is often masterful, but much of the score is bland, a problem that is acerbated when the song numbers go on and on. Nothing in the movie is hip-hop, and yet parts of it are staged in anticipation of the burgeoning genre, creating a thematic dissonance that gradually turns into dismissal. In 4K, every moment of the film looks like it should look, so those who are predisposed to enjoying the production will feel ecstatic with how it has been preserved, but converts will still be few and far between.

Although the differences are not as distinctive, even the Dolby Atmos sound is sharper and better detailed on the 4K presentation than it is on the standard BD. The mix does not exceed the parameters of the original audio design, with limited separations, but it sustains a dimensional presence. There are optional English subtitles. The presentation is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1.

One of the supplements, rather amusingly, is an 8-minute coverage of the elaborate premier that includes a thoughtful interview with Ross, although before they get to that, the announcer throws in his two cents. "I have to tell you, not everyone loved it, and I must confess that I, myself, am in that category. I didn't exactly hate it, either, but there's a lack of energy and focus to the wizardry of this widescreen **Wiz** that somehow takes some of the life out of what was a totally spirited entertainment on stage." Along with a trailer, there is also an excellent 12-minute interview from 2001 with Lumet about the scoring strategies music supervisor Quincy Jones utilized in each of the four films they made together (although, for other reasons, Lumet also badmouths the musical). The film starts up where it left off if playback is terminated, but the supplements do not.

Finally, there is a commentary track featuring film experts and **Wiz** enthusiasts Michael B. Gillespie and Alfred L. Martin, who along with going over the contributions of the cast and the crew in extensive detail, examine the film as a touchstone of black cinema and what the movie's fate says about the film industry and its acceptance of the African-American market. "Is the film a failure, or [does] the failure lie with the failure of our imagination?"

Life in the 'hood

An ideal companion film for **Menace II Society** (Feb 22), Charles Burnett's 1977 **Killer of Sheep**, a Milestone Film & Video Criterion Collection two-platter 4K Blu-ray (UPC#715515315515, \$50), is about a family living in South Central Los Angeles. Burnett has neither the resources nor the marketing drive that guided the Hughes Bros. film. There is no violence (other than the day-to-day bruising that the characters receive) or recognizable narrative arc, and the characters have yet to discover hip-hop (moderately believable, since the primary characters are past their youth), but the film's encapsulation of its location in the late Seventies is so rich in accurate detail and vivid characterizations that it serves as an appetizer for any more sophisticated urban exposé set in the same era. Henry Gayle Sanders stars as a worker in a slaughterhouse (anytime the film cuts to a shot of sheep

being herded or slaughtered, the metaphor is both deliberate and compelling) who barely has enough income for his wife and two children. The older boy, played by Jack Drummond, wiles away his time with his friends roughhousing and rabble rousing in construction sites and empty lots. You cringe every time you see him 'playing.' Running 80 minutes, the story amounts to little more than depicting Sanders's character, or the other members of his family, in different domestic situations over the course of a summer, scraping together cash and fending off others who want to borrow it. It is about life in the neighborhood and coping with limited means. The movie even has one terrific scream—not a scare, but an 'Oh no!' moment—while the realism of every sequence and every slice of life that is shown is gripping, because you can see quite clearly that **Menace II Society** is taking place at, like, the next block over, and you understand why.

The black-and-white picture is in a squared full screen format and is inherently grainy, although the consistency of the film's style and essentially crisp cinematography mitigates the presence of the grain, especially on the 4K presentation, which looks nicer (because the grain is better controlled) than the standard Blu-ray presentation on the second platter. The monophonic sound features an impressive plethora of unexpected music clips, including Paul Robeson and Dinah Washington tunes, George Gershwin and even classical music pieces, with just a touch of Motown era pop. There are optional English subtitles.

The supplementary materials on the standard Blu-ray platter do not start up where they left off if playback is terminated. The best segment in the supplement is a 56-minute piece with Robert Townshend in which he and Burnett walk around the neighborhood where the film was shot, talking about the movie and his motivations, as well as going over his other work and including clips from his Honorary Oscar reception. Also featured is a trailer; a 13-minute introduction to the film by Burnett, explaining why he made it because he felt at the time there were no films about everyday urban life, along with another 19-minute interview where he talks about his experiences as a black student filmmaker in the Seventies; a wonderful 17-minute interview with Sanders, who talks about how he got started in acting and his experiences involving the film and its resonance; a nice 19-minute appreciation of the film by Barry Jenkins; and a cute 6-minute clip of the cast reminiscing at a diner after a 2007 screening.

Prompted by film expert Richard Peña, Burnett shares many of the same stories he told in the interviews in an easygoing commentary track, going over the actual process he went through to create the film (he also describes a sequel that was never made), identifying the film's locations (they had to go way upstate for the slaughterhouse, because the ones in Los Angeles had been 'burned' by PETA-leaning filmmakers), talking about how performances were coaxied from some of the actors, and discussing his reasoning behind the inclusion of certain scenes. They both kind of cringe at some of the things the kids were doing (jumping from roof to roof) but Burnett confesses that he did the same when he was young. They also talk about attempts to develop a black filmmaking culture that did not revolve around action movies, although they do not acknowledge the way in which streaming has greatly enabled that dream.

Finally, two of Burnett's stunningly good student films are included. Both are in a squared full screen format and have surprisingly good monophonic audio tracks. The first, *Several Friends* from 1969, runs 22 minutes in black and white, and is in reasonably good condition. Like **Killer of Sheep**, it pretty much depicts a group of friends hanging out in their neighborhood and talking, but the progression of activities and experiences that occur, and the incredibly realistic nature of the conversations, are jaw-droppingly good, simultaneously rough and sophisticated in their manifestation. The film is an amazing document of an era and a place that had previously gone undocumented.

The Horse, from 1973, is in color that looks reasonably fresh despite the natural grain and softness of the source material. At one point in *Several Friends*, the characters talk about being cowboys, and that is clearly a suppressed desire on the part of Burnett himself, since the 14-minute film is set far away from the inner city, on a farm, where several white characters are sitting on a porch, bored and talking, while a young black kid is tending to a horse. Essentially, the characters are waiting for another character to arrive, bringing something that will then serve as the film's conclusion. Here, Burnett demonstrates both his versatility and his remarkable command of the medium, so that the dual banality and tension of the waiting is felt with every frame. As Burnett explains in a minute-long afterward, the movie was inspired by William Faulkner, but more compellingly, Burnett seems to have absorbed Faulkner into the soul of his own art.

Old time religion

An impressive microbudgeted 1941 feature with an all-black cast, **The Blood of Jesus**, has been released on Blu-ray by Film Masters as an *Archive Collection* title (UPC#840418325544, \$22). Directed by Spencer Williams, who also takes a principal role, Cathryn Caviness is the heroine, who is baptized in the morning, but killed in a gun accident later in the day. Her soul must then choose between the apparent dullness of going to heaven and the much more lively and intriguing path to Hell, a choice made all the more compelling when the Devil tricks her into getting a job with a pimp in a dance hall. The film's soundtrack is stuffed with music—much of it classic church choir numbers, but also some earthier blues. Running 57 minutes, and presented in a squared full screen format, the black-and-white feature contains some simple but viable special effects and is a potent reminder that there is more to American film than what Hollywood created. All things considered, the plot of **The Wiz** isn't that much different when you remove the glitz. The source material has a few splices, and the cinematography is somewhat ragged to begin with, but the presentation is viable, and the monophonic sound, although rough hewn, is coherent. There are optional English subtitles, too, which help when attempting to decode some of the songs.

Another 1939 classic

A brilliant comedy script written by Charles Brackett and Billy Wilder, and then deftly directed by Mitchell Leisen but somewhat shuffled aside amid the excitement over so many other stellar features in the greatest year movies ever had, 1939, the Paramount production, **Midnight**, released on Blu-ray by Universal Pictures Home Entertainment and The Criterion Collection (UPC#715515314510, \$40), has a wonderful cast and is at times hysterically funny thanks to the skills of those performers. Claudette Colbert is a destitute party girl who arrives in Paris in a rainstorm in an evening gown, initially receives assistance from a very sweet cab driver played by Don Ameche, and then gives him the slip by sneaking into a ritzy party. When she is about to be discovered as a fraud at the party, a wealthy aristocrat, played with delightful deviousness by John Barrymore, rescues her and enlists her in a scheme to save his marriage, which is then almost disrupted when Ameche's character finds her again. Running 94 minutes, the film is an utter joy. The sophistication of the writing guarantees that the dialog is always stimulating, while the performances and the timing build to one witty or amusing situation after another. Mary Astor, Francis Lederer and Elaine Barrie costar, with Monte Woolley re-energizing the humor in the final act.

The squared full screen black-and-white picture has a basic but enhanced grain at times, with the stability of the image compensating for whatever softness the grain creates, since the presentation is otherwise free of wear. The monophonic sound is fine and there are optional English subtitles. A *Lux Radio Theatre* adaptation from 1940 is included, hosted by Cecil B. DeMille and running 55 minutes, with Colbert, Ameche and Gale Gordon in Barrymore's part. The essence of the story is conveyed and it is still amusing, although it can't match being able to see the actors and their reactions to one another. Also featured is a trailer and an interesting 14-minute audio-only interview with Leisen from 1969, sharing stories about the production and gossip about Colbert. The supplements do not start up where they left off if playback is terminated.

Film historian Michael Koresky supplies a studious commentary track, suggesting that although he made a number of classics, Leisen is less celebrated than other great film directors because he was gay. He goes over Leisen's entire and impressive career (he also made **No Man of Her Own**, among others—his filmography, like that of the similar **High Society**'s Charles Walters, is startling, reinforcing Koresky's thesis), and also shares stories about the film's production and reception, and briefer backgrounds on the other members of the cast and the crew.

We like a Gershwin tune, how about you?

Made 8 years after his death, the 1945 Warner Bros. production, **Rhapsody in Blue**, released by Warner and Turner Entertainment as a *Warner WB Archive Collection* Blu-ray (UPC#840418326473, \$25), is a celebration of the music of George Gershwin, dressed in an ill-fitting biographical suit with the hopes of appearing respectable. Including an Overture that lasts a full 10 minutes, the film runs 161 minutes, and the lengthy title number, abridged but still hefty, is played twice. There are really only a handful of popular songs in the film, as it focuses instead upon Gershwin's quest to be recognized as a legitimate composer. Like so many Hollywood portraits of famous songwriters, the details are dubious, but the film is intended to be a guide and orientation, so that one comes away with an understanding of the vector and scope of Gershwin's accomplishments, regardless of the dramatic bypasses, with audiences at the time entertained by memories of their own youth, kindled by the music. Directed by Irving Rapper, a surprising number of genuine historical figures play themselves in the movie in an attempt to prop up the guise of veracity, including Paul Whiteman, George White, Oscar Levant and Al Jolson (whose vocal performance, albeit in blackface, has an aged richness and mastery that his original, youthful recordings had yet to achieve). Robert Alda handles the keyboard impressively as Gershwin, with Joan Leslie and Alexis Smith as the women he doesn't really have time for because he's so busy composing. Since the squared full screen black-and-white picture looks beautifully smooth and spotless, and the monophonic sound has a solid delivery, the disc becomes a welcome journey into the past—not the Twenties and Thirties, but the Forties, and how commercial artists at that time were processing and treasuring their immediate cultural heritage. Besides, the music is wonderful, and marvelous.

There are optional English subtitles, and an original trailer is also included. Charles Coburn, Hazel Scott and Anne Brown are also featured.

4K heist

Dominic Sena's high energy Warner Bros. action thriller from 2001, **Swordfish**, has been further supercharged with a fantastic single-platter 4K Blu-ray rendering by Warner and Arrow Video (UPC# 760137175780, \$50). We reviewed Warner's original DVD in Nov 01 and, while generally absurd, the film has an exceptionally attention-getting opening sequence and then uses the 'Four Days Earlier' bit to take up most of the 97-minute film showing how things got to that point, before concluding with another, even wilder sequence. Hugh Jackman is the hero, a computer programmer who does his gobbledygook really, really well, and John Travolta is a mad genius who manipulates him into participating in a deadly and explosive bank heist. Halle Berry is part of the team Travolta's character has put together, who takes a liking to Jackman's character, and Don Cheadle is a cop trying to figure out what is going on. The rest is gunfire, explosions and wild car chases that somehow, for all the corpses piling up in downtown Los Angeles, don't seem to make the evening news. No matter. The 5.1-channel DTS sound has a sheer, solid impact from every direction, while the image is slick and crisply detailed. The DVD was great fun, but the precision of the image and the strength of the sound on the 4K BD enhances every aspect of the film's playful appeal. Travolta's character is morally ambiguous, kind of like

a Robin Hood who has no problem with peasants becoming collateral damage, and that is pretty much all of the intellectual heft the film requires to justify its action and silliness. The stars do their best to sell the ridiculousness of the situation, and the pyrotechnics seal the deal.

Letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1, the image design emphasizes subdued yellow and brown tones, and the 4K playback is so smooth and sharp that each shot looks gorgeous anyway. There are optional English subtitles. The commentary Sena made for the DVD is carried over, as are the two alternate endings running 6 minutes, which Sena also provides a commentary for, a trailer, a 15-minute promotional documentary, and an 8-minute piece on the film's special effects. Additionally, the BD comes with a passable 13-minute interview with composer Paul Oakenfold, talking about his career and the experimenting he did with the film's music, such as taking dialog from the movie, manipulating it electronically and integrating it with other sounds, along with a 4-minute music video for one of his numbers; a decent 21-minute interview with production designer Jeff Mann (the owner of one the locations he redressed liked it so much that a decade later he called Mann back to spruce it up); and a great 13-minute collection of interviews with the cast (Berry: "One day the three of us were on the set, John, Hugh and myself, and we were spewing out all these computer words, right? And I'm thinking in my mind, 'Oh my god, I'm the biggest idiot. I don't even know what I'm saying.' And I thought surely, they know what they're saying, so finally at the end of the scene, I said, 'You know what, I don't even know what I'm saying. Do you guys understand this stuff?' And they're like, 'Oh, god, no. We don't even know what we're saying. We're just sayin' it.' And I thought, 'Well good, I'm not the only one that is like clueless.'")

TV lampoon

A ribald pastiche comedy from 1976, **Tunnel Vision**, has been released as an MVD Rewind Collection Blu-ray (UPC#760137157106, \$30). Ostensibly presenting excerpts from a day's broadcast cycle at an uninhibited TV network a decade into that future, using a wraparound narrative suggesting that the excerpts are being presented at a Congressional hearing, the film is a string of not entirely unfunny spoofs of commercials, game shows, news broadcasts, sitcoms and so on. Although many of the cast members are long forgotten, Al Franken (who had a greater involvement in the production), Chevy Chase, Laraine Newman and John Candy appear in some of the sketches (the film was shot before **Saturday Night Live** got started), along with Phil Proctor, William Schallert, Steven Feinberg, Ron Silver, Edwina Anderson, Gerrit Graham, Gene Pistilli, Lois Samuels, Betty Thomas, Pat Proft, Ron Prince, Beans Morocco, Tom Davis, Leonard Goren, Ernie Anderson, Rebecca Brooks, Bob McClurg, Ira Miller, Mary McCusker, Michael Popovich, Edward Markley, Kurt Taylor and quite a few more, with Tim McIntire (his named misspelled in the credits) doing several voiceovers. Many of the skits involve unrestrained sexual innuendo, and some attempt to create humor from derogatory ethnic terms and phrases (including Jewish references). Meanwhile, the film, conceived and directed by Neal Israel and Bradley R. Swinoff, is so old that it also makes Eisenhower jokes. At 68 minutes, the concoction will be tolerable for those seeking irreverent silliness and off color antics, but beyond that, curiosity for the past is its only other attraction.

The picture is offered both with an aspect ratio of about 1.66:1 and in a squared full screen format. On occasion, images in the former are slightly squeezed to accommodate the latter, but in that MVD's entire marketing concept is wrapped around the idea that a movie such as this had a cult following in the early days of home video, the squared image is probably the most appropriate. The picture itself is quite grainy and faces sometimes have a red shadow on their edges, but that comes entirely from the nature of the production and its limited budget. Otherwise, colors are clearly fresh and flesh tones look reasonably accurate. The monophonic sound is garish but adequately presented. There are optional English subtitles, montages of photos running a total of 7 minutes, 5 minutes of radio commercials, a trailer and an 8-minute montage of the film's continuity script.

There is an excellent commentary track by cult film enthusiast Edward Heuck, who breathlessly deconstructs every quick skit as it appears, while also identifying each player and encapsulating his or her career. He lauds the film for how closely it replicates the feel of a TV network (the creators had a specific beef with CBS and skewered it the most, including the film's once-you-see-it-you-can't-forget-it logo of a woman's lips surrounding an eyeball) and how efficiently it composed its little blackout gags to create a very profitable and enduring venture. "What I love most about **Tunnel Vision** and what keeps me coming back is that of course not every sketch holds up—in fact, some play downright sour today—but the whole movie is really interesting in that its use of so much comedy talent happily working in threadbare conditions, shooting on the fly with whatever props they had available, it predicts the ethic of the first viral Internet shorts, of TikTok, and of other online creators, who quickly shoot and post their short bits without regard for money or fame just because they want to get their ideas out there. And bizarrely, many of the dated jokes are actually relevant again. That's how this damned 'human comedy' turns around."

Finally, there is a wonderful 45-minute conversation between Israel and producer Stuart Shapiro that builds on Heuck's talk as the two go over their backgrounds ("I would punk my mother. Like when I was sixteen, I said, 'Mom, I got a girl pregnant.' And she went, 'Are you kidding! You've ruined your life!' And I let her go, for about 5-10 minutes, just because it amused me. And then I said I was kidding. 'I hate you! You're kidding. Who kids like that?'"), how Israel put the film together, and the success the movie found. They also talk about the changing tastes in humor and how people's sexuality or racial makeup are now verboten topics, although in reality, that pendulum may have started to swing back again, which means that **Tunnel Vision** will probably continue to be enamored by fans for years to come.

Beware of Convict's

Beware of the Film Masters *Archive Collection* Blu-ray release, Convict's Code (UPC#840418326275, \$22). The black-and-white image is horizontally squeezed, making the actors look elongated and creating an aspect ratio of about 1:1.01. The distortion spoils what is otherwise a decent, very low budget 1939 crime drama. Robert Kent is a former football player paroled from prison, who wants to discover who framed him. In order to keep a close eye on the hero, the mobster who actually did the crime hires him as a driver, and Kent's character soon falls in love with the mobster's naïve sister, played by Anne Nagel. The sets are minimal, the acting is stiff and the story is simple, but directed by Lambert Hillyer, the 63-minute film is interesting enough to hold a viewer's attention as its suspense gradually accumulates, or it would if the distorted image were not such a distraction. The source material is also a little worn here and there, with brief splices, scratches and a general softness, although contrasts are reasonably well defined. The monophonic sound is adequate and there are optional English subtitles. The program does not start up where it left off if playback is terminated.

June Special Edition: A few Asian films

Our Jun 25 Special Edition featured a selection of TV programs 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 Warner Bros. and HBO's 4K Blu-ray release of The Penguin (UPC#883929835447, \$45) along with their Blu-ray release of Dune Prophecy The Complete First Season (UPC#883929834303, \$30) and DVD releases of White Lotus The Complete Second Season (UPC#883929815555, \$25), Gentleman Jack The Complete First Season (UPC#883929689507, \$24), Deadwood The Movie (UPC#883929689682, \$15), Elizabeth I (UPC#026359445927, \$20); Sony Pictures Entertainment's DVD release of Justified Primeval City Season 1 (UPC#04339663-4459, \$35); Warner and BBC's DVD releases of Blue Lights (UPC#883929825509, \$25), Blue Lights Series 2 (UPC#883929832439, \$25), Happy Valley (UPC#883929-838752, \$30), The Hound of the Baskervilles (UPC#794051173126), Wives and Daughters (UPC#794051267627, \$40) and the BBC *Literary Collection* version (UPC#883929514700, \$40), Cranford (UPC#883929318360, \$35), Cranford Return to Cranford (UPC#883929099481, \$25), North & South (UPC#883929514656, \$35); the RJI Entertainment and Acorn DVD releases of North & South (UPC#054961896493, \$50), Aristocrats (UPC#054961843190), A Place to Call Home Season 1 (UPC#054-961233199, \$60), A Place to Call Home Season 2 (UPC#054961240494, \$60), A Place to Call Home Season 3 (UPC#054961247196, \$60), A Place to Call Home Season 4 (UPC#054961247295, \$60), A Place to Call Home Season 5 (UPC#054961260492, \$60), A Place to Call Home Season 6 (UPC#054961269693, \$60), The House of Eliott Series 1 (UPC#054961214891, \$50), The House of Eliott Series 2 (UPC#05496121-4990, \$50), The House of Eliott Series 3 (UPC#054961215096, \$50); the BBC Acorn DVD, Clarissa (UPC#054961788590, \$40); the BBC DVD releases, The Way We Live Now (UPC#794051162021, \$25) and Daniel Deronda (UPC#794051288523, \$15); the BFS Entertainment DVD releases, Land Girls Series 1 (UPC#066805310096), Land Girls Series 2 (UPC#066805310676) and Land Girls Series 3 (UPC#06680531-0973); the BBC PBS DVD release, Land Girls The Complete Collection (UPC#84-1887045759, \$60); the ITV PBS DVD release, Dancing on the Edge (UPC#8418870-24211, \$35); the PBS DVD releases, Funny Woman (UPC#841887048729, \$40) and Funny Woman Season Two (UPC#841887049542, \$30); the Screen Media releases, Fleabag Season 1 (UPC#814838016023, \$30) and Fleabag Season 2 (UPC#81483801-6276, \$30); the ClassicFlix DVD, World of Giants The Complete Series (UPC#85-0049732055, \$30); the Hallmark Channel Cinedigm DVDs, Chesapeake Shores Season One (UPC#767685154137, \$25), Chesapeake Shores Season Two (UPC#76768515-7398, \$25), Chesapeake Shores Season Three (UPC#767685164471, \$25), Chesapeake Shores Season Four (UPC#767685164877, \$25), Chesapeake Shores Season 5 (UPC#767685166932, \$20) and Chesapeake Shores Season 6 (UPC#767685-168271, \$20); and Delta Entertainment's DVD releases of Judith Krantz's Princess Daisy (UPC#018111249898) and Judith Krantz's Dazzle (UPC#018111276993).

DVD News

INDEX AVAILABLE: Our annual Index to the DVD and BD reviews in The DVD-Laser Disc Newsletter, identifying all titles reviewed between Apr 97 and Jun 25, can be obtained for \$24 by writing DVD-LDN Index, PO Box 382, Glen Cove NY 11542. You can also receive a downloaded version of the complete Index for free. Just email DVDLaser@rocketmail.com and indicate if you would like the Index in PDF format or Microsoft Word format. A complete set of Back Issues, from Sep 84 to last month, is available on two DVD-ROMs for \$74.95 plus \$4 S&H US, \$15 S&H foreign. Write to: Back Issues, DVD-LDN, PO Box 382, Glen Cove NY 11542.

CRITERION CORNER: Gints Zilbalodis's Oscar winning cartoon feature, Flow, is being released with Zilbalodis's first film, Away, in 4K format by The Criterion Collection, and will also feature a commentary from Zilbalodis; a full feature-length animatic; interviews with Zilbalodis and cowriter-coproducer Maffes Kaža; Dream Cat (2025), a making-of documentary produced for Latvian Television; Aqua (2012) and Priorities (2014), short films by Zilbalodis with commentaries by the director; an unused-shot reel, with new commentary by Zilbalodis; and trailers, TV spots, and proof-of-concept teasers. As a remake and a sequel appear in theaters, Criterion is going to their library to call up 4K presentations of Akira Kurosawa's High and Low, and Rob Reiner's This Is Spinal Tap. High and Low comes with a commentary featuring Kurosawa scholar Stephen Prince; a documentary on the making of High and Low, created as part of the

Toho Masterworks series Akira Kurosawa: It Is Wonderful to Create; and interviews with Toshiro Mifune and Tsutomu Yamazaki. **This Is Spinal Tap will have three commentaries: one with Christopher Guest, Michael McKean, and Harry Shearer, one with Reiner, producer Karen Murphy, and editors Robert Leighton and Kent Beyda, and one with band members Nigel Tufnel, David St. Hubbins, and Derek Smalls; a conversation between Reiner and Patton Oswalt; The Cutting Room Floor, featuring outtakes, alternate takes, and abandoned subplots; Spinal Tap: The Final Tour (1981); and trailers, promotional spots, media appearances, music videos, and commercials. Jacques Audiard's Read My Lips will be in 4K format and feature an afterword by Audiard; a commentary with Vincent Cassel and Emmanuelle Devos; a program about the making of the film featuring interviews with Audiard, Vadeplid, and coscreenwriter Tonino Benacquista; an interview with composer Alexandre Desplat; and deleted scenes with a commentary by Audiard. Audiard's The Beat My Heart Skipped will include an interview with Audiard; interviews with Benacquista and Desplat; a press conference from the 2005 Berlin International Film Festival, featuring members of the cast and crew; deleted scenes featuring commentary by Audiard; and rehearsal footage. Lizzie Borden's Born in Flames will have an introduction by Borden; a commentary featuring Borden, cast members Adele Bertie, Hillary Hurst, Sheila McLaughlin, Pat Murphy, Marty Pottenger, and Jeanne Satterfield, and camerapeople DeeDee Halleck and Chris Hegedus; and Regrouping (1976), Borden's directorial debut, an experimental documentary about a New York City women's group.**

NEW IN BLU: The following titles were recently issued on Blu-ray—Glitch Ditch 55, Glitch Ditch 56, Glitch Ditch 57, Glitch Ditch 58 (*Acid Bath*); The Scare Film Archives V.2 *Danger Stories* (AGFA); The Creep Tapes Season 1 (AMD); The Monopoly of Violence / A German Youth (*Big World*); The Soultangler (*Bleeding Skull*); Carl Barron *Whatever Comes Next* (*Bounty*); Consumed, Unit 234 (*Brainstorm*); A Wu-Tang Experience Live at Red Rocks Amphitheatre (*Breaking Glass*); Snow White (*Buena Vista*); Amnee and Albert *The Early Years*, The Don Reed Story, John Brown The Advocate, A Life of Music (*Burning Bulb*); Action The October Crisis of 1970 (Canadian); Ohry's Project (*Cardinal*); Dr. Jekyll and the Werewolf, Female Perversions, Jack the Ripper, Joy of Sex, Slave of the Cannibal God (CAV); Dan Da Dan Season 1 (*Cinedigm*); Midnight, Sorcerer, Thelonious Monk Straight No Chaser, Thirty Two Short Films about Glenn Gould, The Wiz (*Criterion*); The Cathedral of New Emotions, Freckled Max and the Spooks, Gwen and the Book of Sand, I Married a Strange Person, Signals A Space Adventure / In the Dust of Stars (*Deaf Crocodile*); The Friend, The Wedding Banquet (*Decal*); Die Star Pictures V.1, Garbage Night (*Die Star*); Satan Wants You (ETR); Crass The Story of Free Speech The Story of Reality Asylum (Factory 25); The Blood of Jesus, Convict's Code (Film Masters); A Life in Dirty Movies, Red Island, The Wait (Film Movement); Bad Channels, Crash and Bum, Evil Bong-a-thon! (*Full Moon*); Breaking Glass (*Fun City*); Absolute Dominion (*Giant*); Garden of Eden, Hardcore Never Dies, The Haunting of the Tower of London, Jeannette, The Karamazovs, The Legacy of Cloudy Falls, The Moor, The Picture of Dorian Gray, Serpentine Pink, So Fades the Light, Thirsty, Trafficking, Vengeance, When We Went MAD! (*Gravitas*); The Clouds (*Indican*); The Bunny Game (*Jinga*); Alien Terror, The Annihilation of Fish, Audie Murphy Collection V, Beware of Mr. Baker, The Blues under the Skin, Handsome Harry, I Madman, Law and Order, Made in New Jersey Films from Fort Lee, Murder by Decree, Promise Her Anything, Rock Pretty Baby!, Rustler's Rhapsody (*Kino*); The Fourth Musketeer, Jekyll and Hyde, Mera Gaon Mera Desh, Sachaa Jhutha (*Leomark*); The Assessment, Borderline (*Magnolia*); Rad (Mill Creek); Be Cool, Sleeping Beauty (MPI); Ephus (*Music Box*); The Bride of Hades, Dark City, Eaten Alive, Exact Revenge The Eunuch / The Deadly Knives, The Ghost of Yatsuya, The Invisible Swordsman, Last Cannibal World, The Little American, Hong Kong 1941, One Tough Cop, Palindromes, Sleep, The Snow Woman, Sour Party, The Tale of Oiwa's Ghost, Teminus, Unknown World (MVD); The Monkey (Neon); The Cruise (*Oscilloscope*); Dexter Original Sin Season 1, Novocaine (Paramount); A Day at the Beach, The Gentle Gunman, The Ship That Died of Shame (Powerhouse); Brother Nature Takes America, Chasing Sunshine, Good Neighbors, The Last Deal, Mantervision, Marionette, Maternal Sin, Redistributors, Road to Terzetto, The Sand, Shadow Fighter, Unburied Tales, The Way Out, Who Killed Cooper Dunn (*Rising Sun*); The Charge of the Light Brigade, Great Balls of Fire, Leaving Las Vegas, Life Stinks, Malice, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Roller Boogie, Rush (Sandpiper); You Are Alone (Saturn's Core); Channel 99, Madhoshi, Odd Noggins (*Shoreline*); Experiment in Terror, On Swift Horses (Sony); Gondola (*Syndicado*); Egghead & Twinkle, The Featherweight, Wild Goat Surf (Tribeca); The Ballad of Wallis Island, Drop, Murder She Wrote Complete Series, Pirate Radio (Universal); In the Lost Lands (Vertical); Another Cinderella Story, The Citadel, Cobra, A Date with Judy, Doctor Who Jon Pertwee Season 1, Doctor Who Season 1, Doctor Who The War Games, The Enchanted Cottage, Executive Action, Final Destination 2, Get Carter, Grumpy Old Men, Heartbreak Ridge, High Society, His Kind of Woman, JFK, Looney Tunes Collector's Vault V.1, Looney Tunes Platinum Collection V.1, Looney Tunes Platinum Collection V.2, Lord of the Rings Animated, A Minecraft Movie, 9½ Weeks, The Pusher, Sphere, Splendor in the Grass, Sucker Punch, A Working Man (Warner); 11 Rebels, Riki Rhino The Bird Kingdom, Soul Reaper, Stowaway, Zero (Well Go); Things Like This (X4)

NEW IN 4K: The following titles have recently been released in 4K format—When Evil Lurks (AMD); Snow White (*Buena Vista*); Dr. Jekyll and the Werewolf, Jack the Ripper, Slave of the Cannibal God (CAV); Bring It On, Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia, Lord of Illusions, Monkey Shines (*Cinedigm*); Brazil, Thirty Two Short Films about Glenn Gould, Mishima A Life in Four Chapters, Sorcerer, The Wiz (*Criterion*); Gwen and the Book of Sand (*Deaf Crocodile*); Career Opportunities, Daleks' Invasion Earth 2150 A.D., Deep Star Six, Doctor Who and the Daleks, Mouse Hunt, Murder by Decree, The Peacemaker, Road Trip, Sabrina (*Kino*); Dark City, Eaten Alive, Last Cannibal World, Palindromes, Swordfish (MVD); Longlegs, The Monkey (Neon); Novocaine (Paramount); Fascination, The Gentle Gunman, The Ship That Died of Shame, The Shiver of the Vampires (Powerhouse); St. Elmo's Fire (Sony); Drop (Universal); High Society, Lethal Weapon, A Minecraft Movie, Sean Connery 6-Movie Collection, A Working Man (Warner); 11 Rebels (Well Go)

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Exact Revenge The Eunuch / The Deadly Knives p6		Dune Prophecy The Complete First Season p7	Land Girls Series 3 p7	Wives and Daughters p7
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Hong Kong 1941 p6		Funny Woman p7		
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The Penguin 4K p7				
Rhapsody in Blue p6				

Current Attractions

The following titles recently appeared for the first time:

Aimee and Albert The Early Years (Burning Bulb)
The Annihilation of Fish (Kino)
Archives of War The War in Korea (Alpha)*
The Assessment (Magnolia)
Atlantic / Mystery Liner (Gemini)
Authentic or Not The Philippine Food Revolution (Gravitas)*
Autumn (Deskpop)
Bad Company Inc
Performance (Shoreline)*
Band on the Run (Freestyle)
Bare Knees (Alpha)*
Be Cool (MPI)*
Beerfest (Warner)*
Beth & Jeremy & Steve (Freestyle)
Big Sky River 2-Movie Collection (Cinedigm)
Blood Creek Woodsman (Shoreline)
The Blood of Jesus (Film Masters)
Bloody Nun Last Rites (SRS)
Book of Joshua (AMD)
Boonie Bears The Adventurers Childhood Treasure (Wownow)
Borderline (Magnolia)
Bound (Freestyle)
Broke (Sony)
Brother Nature Takes America (Rising Sun)*
Bugs That Rule the World (Paramount)
The Bunny Game (Jinga)
The Burnt Half (Deskpop)
Call the Midwife Season 14 (Warner)
Cannibal Tick (SRS)
Carl Barron Whatever Comes Next (Bounty)*
The Case (7 Palms)*
Cecil B. DeMille Silents Collection V.2 (Alpha)*
Channel 99 (Shoreline)
The Charge of the Light Brigade (Sandpiper)
Chasing Sunshine (Rising Sun)*
The Clouds (Indican)
Cora Bora (Brainstorm)*
The Corridors of Power (Paramount)
Creedence Clearwater Revival In Performance (Shoreline)*
The Creep Tapes Season 1 (AMD)
The Cruise (Oscilloscope)
Darkened Rooms (Alpha)*
Dead on the Vine (MVD)
Death in Paradise Season 14 (Warner)
Deep Purple Live (Shoreline)*
Dexter Original Sin Season 1 (Paramount)

Die Star Pictures V.1 (Die Star)*
Doctor Who Season One (Warner)
The Don Reed Story (Burning Bulb)*
Don't Die (X4)*
Dracula's Drive-In Invasion of the Bee Girls (Wownow)
Dracula's Drive-In Phantom from Space (Wownow)
Dragon League (Wownow)
Drop (Universal)
Ephesus (Music Box)
11 Rebels (Well Go)
Enter the Devil / Ghosts That Still Walk (Gemini)
Filthy Rich Asians (Wownow)
Forbidden Cinema Collection 6 (Alpha)*
Four Nights in Fear Forest (SRS)
The Fourth Musketeer (Leomark)
The Friend (Decal)
Garden of Eden (Gravitas)*
Glitch Ditch 55 (Acid Bath)*
Glitch Ditch 56 (Acid Bath)*
Glitch Ditch 57 (Acid Bath)*
Glitch Ditch 58 (Acid Bath)*
Gondola (Syndicado)*
Good Neighbors (Rising Sun)*
Great Authors Masters of Science Fiction (Wonderscape)
Great Balls of Fire (Sandpiper)
Guardians (AMD)
The Gunslingers (Lionsgate)
Hallmark Channel 9-Movie Collection (Cinedigm)
Hardcore Never Dies (Gravitas)*
The Harvest (Freestyle)*
The Haunting of the Tower of London (Gravitas)
Holy Cow (Kino)
Horse Healing (AMD)
I for Icarus / Mille Millions of Dollars (Kino)
In the Lost Lands (Vertical)
Jeannette (Gravitas)*
Jekyll and Hyde (Leomark)
John Brown The Advocate (Burning Bulb)
The Karamazovs (Gravitas)*
Kara (Ytinfini)
Katavi Africa's Fallen Paradise (Paramount)
Kung Fu Masters Zodiac Cool the Dragon Down (Wownow)*
Land's End (Freestyle)
The Last Deal (Rising Sun)*
The Last Round Up (Alpha)*
The Legacy of Cloudy Falls (Gravitas)*
A Life in Music (Burning Bulb)*
Life Is a Carnival (Ytinfini)
Life Stinks (Sandpiper)
A Light through Coloured Glass (Freestyle)
Long Lonesome Highway The Story of Michael Parks (Lonesome)

Love's Second Act (Rising Sun)*
Malice (Octane)
Malice (Sandpiper)
Mantervision (Rising Sun)*
Marcella (Kino)
Marionette (Rising Sun)*
Maternal Sin (Rising Sun)*
Maxie LaVow Drag Super-Shero (Breaking Glass)*
Mercy Land (Octane)
A Midsummer Night's Dream (Sandpiper)
A Minecraft Movie (Warner)
Miss Julie (MVD)
The Monkey (Neon)*
The Moor (Gravitas)*
Mummy Resurrection (Wownow)
Mutabaruka: Say It Like It Is (Shoreline)*
My Motherland (Film Movement)
Mysteries / Pastorale 1943 (MVD)
Mystery Science Theater 3000 XVII (Cinedigm)
NASA Explores X-59
NASA's Quest for Silent Supersonic Flight (Wonderscape)
Naughty Pack (Full Moon)
New Life (Brainstorm)*
Night of the Strangers (SRS)
Novocaine (Paramount)
Nowhere Land (Octane)
Ohrly Project (Cardinal)*
On the Go (MPI)
One Tough Cop (MVD)
Phantoms (Deskpop)
The Photographers (X4)*
The Pickleball Exorist (SRS)
The Picture of Dorian Gray (Gravitas)
Potluck Teacher (AMD)
The President's Wife (Kino)
Private Blue (SRS)
Pusherman Frank Lucas & The True Story of the American Gangster (MVD)
Raise Your Hand (Freestyle)
Reality Killers (Treasured)*
Recipes for Love and Murder Season 2 (Henry Myers (Ocean)
Redistributors (Rising Sun)*
RFK Conspiracy (Wownow)
Riki Rinko The Bird Kingdom (Well Go)*
The River A Songwriter's Stories of the South (Dolly Sez)
Road To Terzetto (Rising Sun)*
Roller Boogie (Sandpiper)
Roseanne Barr Is America (MVD)
Rush (Sandpiper)
Saint Catherine (Vertical)
Salt Water (Breaking Glass)*
The Sand (Rising Sun)*
A Season for Live (Vision)*
Serpentine Pink (Gravitas)*
Shadow Fighter (Rising Sun)*
Shark Warning (Kino)

Signed, Sealed, Delivered A Tale of Three Letters (Cinedigm)
Sister of the Bride (Cinedigm)
Sneaks (Universal)
Snow White (Buena Vista)
So Fades the Light (Gravitas)*
Soul Reaper (Well Go)
Sour Party (MVD)
Spark (Freestyle)
Stowaway (Well Go)
Tales of Dracula 2 Dracula Meets the Werewolf (Alpha)*
Terminus (MVD)
Things Like This (X4)
Thirsty (Gravitas)*
Tim Travers and the Time Traveler's Paradox (Immortal)
Tonight She Comes (Jinga)
Trafficking (Gravitas)
Trail of Vengeance (Cinedigm)
Transmission (Jinga)
Tulpa Demon of Desire (Jinga)
Unburied Tales (Rising Sun)*
Uncontained (Cineverse)*
An Unfinished Film (Film Movement)
Unit 234 (Brainstorm)*
Vainilla (Indiepix)
Vampire at Midnight (MVD)
Vanilla (MPI)
Vengeance (Gravitas)
VHS Violence Bootlegged (Socal)
The Way Out (Rising Sun)*
We Want the Funk! (Paramount)
The Wedding Banquet (Decal)
When We Went MAD! (Gravitas)*
Who by Fire (Kino)
Who Killed Cooper Dunn (Rising Sun)*
Wild Malibu Weekend (MVD)
Without the Perpetual Light (7 Palms)*
Wolf Hall Complete Series (Paramount)*
A Working Man (Warner)
Worth the Fight (Deskpop)
Young Hearts (Strand)
Zero (Well Go)

*Did not appear on last month's Coming Attractions listing

Coming Attractions

The following select DVD titles are promised for the near future. How many of them will show up is never a certainty. Logical subdivisions appear unmarked within each division. Titles which did not appear on last month's list are marked with an arrow (→) and are added to the bottom of subdivisions so that the longest awaited titles appear at the top within each grouping:

From AMD:
The Rule of Jenny Pen Murdoch Mysteries Season 18
Ash
→ Dark Match
→ The Last Anniversary
→ Art Detectives
From Angel:
→ The King of Kings
From BGM:
The Greatest Thing Ever A Garden Cartoon Movie
Doc Holly's Christmas
Pastor's Kid
Guardians
Candlelight My Way
Wisher Maddox
→ White Wanderer
→ Boardwalk Winter
→ Second Chance
From Brainstorm:
→ Gator Lake
From Breaking Glass:
→ How Thoughts Become Things
From Buena Vista:
→ Thunderbolts
From Canamedia:
→ Andy Warhol's Factory People
From Cinedigm:
Countdown to Christmas 6-Movie Collection (Take Me Back to Christmas, Where Are You Christmas?, A Kiss before Christmas, Christmas on My Mind, Christmas Comes Twice, Next Stop Christmas)
Love on the Danube (Love Song, Royal Getaway, Kissing Stars)
→ 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)
From Criterion:
All We Imagine As Light
Cairo Station
Shoeshine
Compensation
→ Flow
→ Vermiglio
From Decal:

The Monkey Hell of a Summer
Rust (Alec Baldwin)
From Dekkoo:
→ Thoupie
From DeskPop:
Blood Tulip
Bearing Witness Native American Voices in Hollywood
The Wolf in the Chute
→ Chasing Zombies A Tribute to George Romero
→ The Long Hollywood Night
→ Mayberry Man Season 1
→ Only Ones
From Dreamscape:
The Imago
Girl Clock
→ Alice in Wonderland Season 2
→ Wisper Season 1
From Fenix:
→ Club Habana
From Film Masters:
The Fabulous Dorseys A Life at Stake
From High Filers:
→ Crown of Shadow
From Image:
→ Neighborhood Watch
From Indican:
→ In the Fire of War
From Indiepix:
→ The Tundra Within
→ Wolf and Dog
From ITN:
→ Asteroid
From Jinga:
Iconic Darklandsx
The Protos Experiment
→ A Game in the Woods
From King:
Dames and Dreams
Black Tea
Blur to the End
Northern Lights
Bonjour Tristesse
→ French Noir
Collection (Speaking of Murder, Back to the Wall, Witness in the City)
→ The Falling Sky
→ Hiding Out
→ Rent Free
→ Delegation
→ Single Out Season 3
→ Simple Minds
Everything Is Possible
→ Shikun
From Leomark:
Gone with the Dead
Werewolf Castle
→ A New Breed of Criminal
→ Wrath of Dracula
→ The Highwayman
→ Executions The Rise and Fall of Capital Punishment
From Mill Creek:
Tim Travers and the Time Traveller's Paradox
From MPI:
→ Daydreamers

→ Original Sin
From Music Box:
The Trouble with Jessica
→ Just the Two of Us
From MVD:
Lost Country
Hard Rock Zombies Sex and Satan Double Feature
Sidekicks
Queens of Drama
Tammy and the T-Rex
→ Lost Country
→ His Motorbike Her Island
→ Anantha A Man from Earth Story
→ Fear Cabin The Last Weekend of Summer
→ Beyond Transpotting The World of Irvine Welsh
→ Dark Mind
→ What Lives Here
From Neon:
→ Hell of a Summer
From 101:
Give Me a Word The Collective Soul Story
From One Tree:
→ Bloodstorm
From Paramount:
Patience
Revolutionary War Weapons
Matter of Mind ALS
Parkinson's Alzheimer's
Simon Schama The Holocaust 80 Year On
Granchester Season 10
Secrets of the Forest
Cooking with Legends
Hummingbirds of Hollywood
→ PBS Kids 15 Cool School Stories
→ Critical Condition
Health in Black America
→ Caregiving
→ 1923 A Yellowstone Origin Story Season 2
→ NCIS Origins Season 1
→ Locked
From Pop:
→ More More More
Andrea True Collection (Devils Due, Meatball, Sweet Wet Lips)
From Rustblade:
→ Sotto Il Vestito Niente
Nothing Underneath
From Samuel Goldwyn:
→ Ride Above
From Socal:
→ Beyond the Gates of Hell
From Sony:
→ The Boys
From SRS:
→ Four Nights in Fear Forest
From Strand:
→ Meeting with Pol Pot
From 360:
Greatest Mysteries of Ancient Egypt, The Sphinx,

Tutankhamun
From Universal:
Rosario
→ Until Dawn
→ Juliet & Romeo
From Vertical:
→ Fight of Flight
From Vision:
→ Sound of the Surf
From Warner:
→ Death Valley Season 1
Fallout Season 1
→ Final Destination
Bloodlines
→ A Good Girl's Guide to Murder
→ The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks
The Last of Us Season 2
→ LEGO DC Super Heroes Aquaman
Rage of Atlantis
→ The Newsroom
Complete Series (9 platters)
→ Renaissance The Blood and the Beauty
Rick and Morty Season 8
Sinners
→ Toys of Terror
Walking with Dinosaurs
Complete Series (2 platters)
The White Lotus Season 3
From Well Go USA:
→ The Last Spark of Hope
→ Fear Below
→ Nine-Ring Golden Dagger
→ Kryptic
→ Desert Dawn
→ Dark Nuns
→ The Priests
From Whole Grain:
→ 25 Cats from Qatar
From Wild Eye:
Cheeseballs
Race War
Fisted
From Wonderscape:
NASA Explores Far Out
Building and Eating in Space
From Wownow:
Kung Fu Masters
Zodiac Way Copy Cat
→ Kung Fu Masters
Zodiac Way A Hero Has Come
→ Kung Fu Masters
Zodiac Way Evil Genius
Westland
All Out
→ Lords of the Dragon
→ Mother Goose's Scarytales
→ Invisable Cop
→ Muay Thai
→ League of Thrones
→ Death Cult
From Ytinfini:
→ Combat Q Complete Series (2 platters)
→ Space Kids
→ Beneath the Blue