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One Battle in 4K

The most sophisticated American comedy since maybe **Dr. Strangelove**, Paul Thomas Anderson's loose 2025 adaptation of a novel by Thomas Pynchon, **One Battle after Another**, has been released as a 4K Blu-ray by Warner Bros. and SDS Studio Distribution Services (UPC#883929838813, \$35). While the film is ultimately about a father searching for his daughter, it is placed in a dryly satirical vision of Sixties radicalism transplanted to the Twenty-first Century. Roughly, to create a hologram, you split part of the amplified light you are using to record an object away from that object and then, in a projection of the image, you reunite that 'other' portion of the light, creating an ephemeral three-dimensional replication of the object (and even more roughly, the light that is split away is akin to Georg Hegel's concept of God). This is also, roughly, the pattern for the narrative's melodramatic component (one character is separated from the others and never returns, while others are split apart for long periods of time), as well as the key to the constantly understated and bemused sense of humor imbedded in every aspect of the film, taking things like product marketing or political movements that have long been split asunder and reuniting them.

Leonardo DiCaprio, who spends the final two-thirds of the film running around the countryside in his bathrobe, stars as a former domestic terrorist and immigrant detention site liberator who has been keeping off the NSA surveillance grid as a Pynchonesque paranoid stoner somewhere in the Southwest and raising his teenage daughter, played by Chase Inffiniti (even her real name is Pynchonesque). Sean Penn, magnifying exponentially everything you can't stand about him, is some sort of military officer who is still trying to track down the fragmented terrorist organization (at an appropriate moment, DiCaprio's character is watching **Battle of Algiers** on the TV). After a lengthy opening, enough to call attention to the performance of Teyana Taylor as the mother of Inffiniti's character, the plot is essentially set in motion by a breakthrough in the investigation, which sends DiCaprio's character and Inffiniti's character running in different directions. Benicio Del Toro is also featured, as a martial arts teacher ("Get off the tatami!") who operates a modern day immigrant underground dispersement network, and helps DiCaprio's character evade the authorities. That portion of the film is set of in the modern day, but there are still payphones, and the cars don't have airbags. While the film runs a whopping 162 minutes, it sustains its momentum with chases and occasional confrontations, and at nearly every moment that is not action-based, there is some sort of exaggerated cultural displacement that would be hysterical if you only had time to stop and think about it, which is why owning the movie on Blu-ray and watching it a million times is such a great idea.

And once Anderson was finished working on the movie at his editing bay, it, too, was split apart, never to be reunited. The picture on the disc is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1, evocative of its IMAX presentations, although it was also screened in theaters in other aspect ratios, so that there cannot be a 'definitive' version of the film. The version presented is as good as any, and better than any other home delivery format unless you have an IMAX projection system set up in your basement. The film has a deliberately dusty, on-the-run look, but the 4K image quality is impeccable, enhancing every detail in the film except for the cringe-inducing Penn, who needs to be blurrier (contrarily, Anderson seems to keep him in extra-sharp focus). In any case, the image presentation removes any distraction to absorbing the film and all of the thrills and amusements it has to offer (very weirdly, the film also qualifies as a Christmas movie, and not just because of the classic family reunification trope). The Dolby Atmos sound has a comprehensive surround presence and a very pure musical score combining choice pop hits with tense, momentum-filled minimalist music by Jonny Greenwood that nevertheless veers off at one point to almost sounding like bicycle ride underscore in **The Wizard of Oz**. There is an audio track that describes the action in American ("They hit traffic, and the driver squeezes between cars, scraping against them and nudging them aside before weaving past more vehicles. As they cross an intersection, an SUV T-bones the sedan. Now missing the front bumper, the sedan forges on."), another track that describes the action in British ("He snakes into narrow gaps between other vehicles, colliding with several as he goes. In the backseat, Deandra grimaces while clinging to the seat in front.

Accelerating to a junction, a car slams into them. Shattered parts of the bumper and front headlight spill into the road and the saloon pushes on."), an audio track that describes the action in German, alternate French, Spanish, Italian and German audio tracks, and optional English, French, Spanish, Italian, German, Danish, Swedish, Norwegian and Finnish subtitles.

The stuff of future memory, in 4K

Across the past millennium, the stories of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table have entertained the populace in literature, song and even opera. That entertainment accelerated in the Twentieth Century with movies, revisionist modern poetry, bestselling paperback books, comic books, television shows, Broadway musicals, cartoons (including one from Walt Disney) and even French and German art films. It is sometimes the case that a genre dies when it turns to satire and parody, and Arthurian mania appeared to reach a comedic zenith in the hands of Monty Python in the Seventies, but in 1981 John Boorman revitalized the story once again with his remarkable Orion Pictures fantasy film, **Excalibur**, which has now been released in an equally remarkable three-platter 4K Blu-ray set by Warner Bros. and Arrow Video (UPC#760137200741, \$60).

Boxoffice success is not a reliable measure of a film's artistic integrity, but for the superbly marketed **Excalibur**, it was an unmitigated endorsement of Boorman's directorial acumen and storytelling sensibility. Running a full 141 minutes, the film can still only manage to tell the legend in piecemeal, constantly leaping forward by years in its narrative with little preliminary indication before each advancement sets forth. The special effects are often no better than what is accomplished in a Hong Kong supernatural action film, and the swordfighting is not nearly as good, but Boorman nails every story point, which had enabled the tale to endure across centuries, with a clean, direct thrust—the magical powers of Merlin, the appearance of the Lady in the Lake, the withdrawal of the sword from the stone, Arthur's romance of Guenevere, his fearless battle to unite his kingdom, his founding of the Round Table, his bonding with Lancelot, the subsequent infidelity of Guenevere with Lancelot, the conception of Arthur's son with his demonic half-sister, the loss of and search for the Holy Grail as the kingdom flounders in arid misery, Perceval's successful retrieval of the Grail and the final battle between Arthur and his son. Beautifully envisioned with every shot, the film is a brilliant, speed-reading presentation of the sword's journey, combining the macho visions of the early Middle Ages, when men labored and fought amid dirt and grime, with the heightened feminine flourish of costumes, cleanliness, manners and gallantry. Long before **Game of Thrones**, the film was also the first to embrace how entertaining characters in armor could be if you didn't flinch from the sex and the blood.

Nigel Terry manages the task of portraying Arthur across decades, from a young man to an aging monarch. Cherie Lunghi and Nicholas Clay play Guenevere and Lancelot, Fernand Fox is Perceval, and a number of future notables are sprinkled throughout the cast, including Ciaran Hinds, Gabriel Byrne, Liam Neeson, Patrick Stewart and Corin Redgrave. The film also represented another major early performance by the always-in-plain-sight future star, Helen Mirren, as the half-sister. Central to the film, however, and a key to appreciating how carefully Boorman balanced the theatricality of the material with the unforgiving immediacy of the cinema is Nicol Williamson as Merlin. His performance is arch and mannered, but he is an otherworldly figure and—in a way, although not literally—the film's narrative host ("I was not born to live a man's life, but to be the stuff of future memory"), and so what he provides is one more piece of expressionistic exaggeration in the film's designs to counter the realities of human emotion that the other characters are struggling to understand and control (just as the world they are in is struggling with the transition from paganism to Christianity). Although Williamson's character interacts with the other characters, he is more a part of the scenery, and as such, his performance is more enjoyable excess in a film that is abundant in such pleasures.

Stuff of future memory (Continued)

Always within an arm's reach of the surreal, the film is a dazzling miasma of ideas and images, gripped by time-honed folktales and treated with the confidence of cinematic mechanisms. One of these mechanisms was the evocation of impressionistic hazes, which could sometimes render home video presentations of the film more taxing than satisfying. In 4K, however, Boorman's intentions are fully realized. The haze and fog dabble the image without forcing a viewer into strain to recognize the dynamics or content of the composition. Fleshtones are consistently accurate and hues are carefully detailed. When the focus is sharp and the knights are in their splendor, you can see the camera crew reflected in their shiny armor. This is as it should be. Presented in an aspect ratio of about 1.66:1, the glowing points of light within each shot have the perfect balance of clarity and expression, and capture the thrill of the film's embrace of legend and myth with the same visceral excitement that first sent audiences to fill the theaters and marvel at the movie's accomplishments.

The film was created for monophonic playback because Boorman was unimpressed with the capabilities of stereo playback at the time. Indeed, one of the classical music pieces that Boorman utilizes to augment Trevor Jones's musical score was recorded in the early Sixties and would not have been chosen if an eventual multi-channel playback were intended. Nevertheless, although the film defaults to mono, there is a 5.1-channel DTS track that occasionally brings a dimensional presence to the environment. It is fun, but inconsequential. The film's most memorable scoring is the lifting of operatic themes from Richard Wagner, which, except for the excerpt from *Parsifal*, is as incongruous as the use of Scott Joplin's music in *The Sting*, and just as perfect. There are optional English subtitles. Arrow has also released a three-platter standard Blu-ray (UPC#760137200758, \$60—same price as the 4K release). The grain that is so deftly smoothed out on the 4K presentation is more pronounced on the standard BD, although otherwise, the two versions have the same color intensity and accuracy. While the 4K version remains the most captivating of all, the standard BD is still an exhilarating presentation of an exhilarating film.

On both releases, the movie appears on the first platter, along with three commentary tracks. One commentary track, featuring Boorman, appeared on the DVD we reviewed in Dec 99. It was informative, explaining how he staged some of the sequences and explaining why he made various choices, but it was not exceptionally enlightening. Combined with the other two talks, however, the three commentaries create a comprehensive understanding of the film's creation and enduring resonance.

Boorman expert Brian Hoyle provides an outstanding discourse, talking about Boorman's entire career (and finding Arthurian references or allusions in every one of his films), discussing the careers of Boorman's cast and collaborators, covering the production itself in enlightening detail (the final battle was shot in a parking lot with minimal dressing and a lot of fog), and speaking extensively about the complete history of the legend itself and the many different classical writings that grew from it, as well as how Boorman took what he wanted from each of them and made appropriate adjustments to suit his own needs (and the needs of a movie that had to have a practical running time). He describes not only earlier drafts of the film's screenplay, but other screenplays Boorman prepared but did not shoot that also evoke or draw from some of the same material. And he analyzes the effect the story itself has had on Western culture and politics. "Boorman is aware of these things. These are powerful legends and powerful legends can be used for good, to help one connect with one's culture, to connect with the land, with what we've lost, but can also be used for ill, for darker, nationalist purposes. And the film isn't afraid of exploring those tensions. It's one of its great complexities, in fact."

An enthusiast who has made a documentary about Boorman's *Exorcist* sequel, David Kittredge, provides a gossipy talk to fill in the details that Hoyle didn't have time to go into (he also names the first cinematographer, who was fired, while Hoyle discreetly avoided naming him). He doesn't get everything right (he mistakenly suggests that Emeric Pressburger was involved with *Age of Consent*), but he shares all sorts of details about the shoot and the people involved, points out how many of the film's expertly staged practical effects were achieved, and examines why the film has such a mesmerizing appeal. "It is meant to be dreamt."

The other two platters are the same standard Blu-rays in both releases. The second platter opens with a superb 48-minute production documentary made by Neil Jordan, his first effort as a director (he also earned a closing screen credit for the feature as a 'Creative Associate'). Hoyle explains that Boorman had met and mentored Jordan, working with him on another fantasy script that was never shot, and essentially helped him get started in his filmmaking career. Not only is there a wealth of behind-the-scenes shots showing how the film was staged, and interviews with some of the people working on it (including Williamson and Mirren), but there is an introduction to Boorman, talking about his philosophies, his passion for the project and what he thinks it has to offer. Additionally, as the production progresses, Boorman begins to have doubts that he is achieving what he wanted to achieve, and speaks of how illusive film directing can really be. Also featured is an interesting 25-minute interview with Jordan talking about both his and Boorman's careers.

A lovely 28-minute piece combines a sweet interview with the elderly Boorman and a richly felt interview with his son, Charley Boorman, who had a part in the film as a child (playing the villain as a boy, he says he fell in love with Mirren because, while scantily clad, she rubs his bare chest with oil in a scene) and reminisces about his experiences growing up as Boorman's son and what Boorman's career has meant to him.

Also featured is a 26-minute interview with production designer Anthony Pratt (great-nephew to Boris Karloff!) talking about his career and reflecting upon some of the designs he did in the film; a 76-minute interview with second unit director Peter MacDonald, sharing fascinating anecdotes about many of the films he worked on over the years, including *2001*, *Blow Up* and *A Bridge Too Far*, with his stories about *Excalibur* held back until the first hour is passed; an interesting 37-minute rumination upon Boorman's films interwoven with an interview with screenwriter Rospo Pallenberg about collaborating with Boorman on some of those films and working on the *Excalibur* script with him; another stimulating 30-minute analysis of Boorman's films and themes with great clips from many of his movies, advancing to a more elaborate examination of *Excalibur* (suggesting an interesting parallel at one point to *Splendor in the Grass*) and a natural analogy between the magic wielded by Williamson's character and that wielded by Boorman; two astutely designed trailers; and an elaborate still-frame section containing more than two hundred production and promotional photos, twenty-seven examples of marketing artwork, a twenty-seven-page press kit essay about the production, and a hundred-seventeen-page draft of the screenplay.

The third platter contains a 120-minute 'PG' cut of the film that was intended for television broadcast. There is one shot that is squared while the rest remains in a 1.66:1 aspect ratio, and Williamson provides some extra voiceover narration at the beginning. Otherwise, it is simply an abridgement, with most of the trims that are not looking to hide the sex and the gore shortening the final act. Kittredge explains on his talk that this was the version HBO would broadcast during the day in the early Nineties (while running the longer version at night) and so this was the version that he became enamored with as a child. Until the final act starts really whipping by with the plot changes, it is a workable presentation of the film, highlighting how energetic and engaging the story truly is.

Finally, there is a fine 2016 52-minute retrospective documentary, which managed to include an interview with Terry, who passed away in 2015, as well as interviews with Boorman, Mirren, Neeson, Byrne, Stewart and many others who worked on the film. There are some great stories that aren't shared elsewhere (they shut down the electricity in a good slice of an Irish county to shoot a scene, with the cooperation of the power company but unbeknownst to the citizens), and many gratifying reflections upon what the film meant to those who worked on it, and what has enabled its creativity and vision to endure. "I suppose it is old fashioned, given the technology we have now. I think its 'old fashioned-ness' is a part of its charm. It's like a hand-painted storybook as opposed to a sort of a modern, contemporary storybook. The illustration of it, the visuals of it, match the subject, actually. They have a feeling of like the illuminated texts of the monks."

Thank you for the lovely evening

John Huston's exquisite 1987 Vestron adaptation of James Joyce's *The Dead*—his own final film—is as simple and straightforward as it is perfection. Running just 83 minutes, it depicts a dinner party in Dublin shortly after the Turn of the Century, with a coda. It begins with music and dancing in the parlor, followed by the serving of dinner. There is an ellipsis to dessert, and then another to the guests departing, as the film then follows one pair of guests to their hotel room. And there is conversation throughout, about their lives, about music, about Ireland and about the meal. That is all that there is to the film, but it is a jewel of a movie, intricately textured, richly performed and crafted with precision. Perhaps if the source story had not been written by Joyce the film would not have the same subtle power—the coda turns to a discussion about the brevity of life and the ambiguities of existence—but it is a magnificent accomplishment. And perhaps even more importantly, the film achieves everything it strives to achieve, in part by sharing the lives of the characters with the viewer and in part by capturing, for a motion picture, the uncapturable, leprechaunish nature and soul of Joyce's prose.

Anjelica Huston and Donal McCann star, with Helena Carroll, Cathleen Delany, Marie Kean, Donal Donnelly, Katherine O'Toole (Peter's daughter), Colm Meaney (was there an Irish film in the Eighties that he did not appear in?) and Dan O'Herlihy among the wonderful cast. Released as a two-platter 4K Blu-ray by Vestron Video, Lionsgate and The Criterion Collection (UPC#715515327015, \$50), whenever we so much as hear the name, 'Vestron,' grain materializes before our eyes. The company's video releases were always hopelessly disintegrated, and *The Dead*, with Fred Murphy's evocative cinematography capturing the gas and candlelight of the era, stood out among their releases as awash in a sea of colored sands. Indeed, the presentation of the film that appears on the standard Blu-ray included in the set harks back to how the film once looked, although with the control that the Blu-ray delivery offers. The grain remains pervasive. The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1. The 4K presentation is not quite as colorful, although it seems to conform more uniformly to the color strategies of the filmmakers in this regard, hues and fleshtones being subdued by the nature of the lighting, while in comparison these hues feel artificially boosted on the standard Blu-ray. More importantly, however, the 4K image is entirely free of even a hint of grain. The picture is smooth and still finely detailed. Without the distractions that the grain inadvertently creates, a viewer is enveloped by the characters and conversations to, in effect, become another guest at the party.

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The 5.1-channel DTS sound has clear, smooth tones and a functional dimensionality. On the few occasions when Alex North's underscore kicks in, it fills the viewing area with an invigorating sweetness. There are optional English subtitles. The special features appearing on the standard BD platter do not start up where they left off if playback is terminated. There is a rich and loving 23-minute analysis of the film and its creation by Irish author Colum McCann, a very nice reading of excerpts by Anjelica Huston of her autobiography talking about her experiences during the making of the film and supported by behind-the-scenes images and appropriate sequences from the film, and an excellent 1987 production documentary—which Anjelica complains about in her memoirs as being too intrusive during the shoot—running 60 minutes and featuring lots of behind-the-scenes footage as well as terrific interviews with many members of the cast and the crew, including many insightful reflections on the project by the ailing but vigorous John Huston himself. “The only question is, I suppose, in the minds of the queriers: How many people wanna go in and see a picture called **The Dead**, in all seriousness, thereby furthering their realization of the falsity of the concept of immortality?”

Bury our hearts in 4K

Michael Apted often infused his films with a wisp of mysticism, but like Philip Kaufman, these touches enhanced his dramas by embellishing the atmosphere without derailing or otherwise undermining the narrative. Reminiscent of a Tony Hillerman crime story, Apted's 1992 TriStar Pictures thriller, **Thunderheart**, written by John Fusco, is set on a South Dakota reservation near Wounded Knee. Val Kilmer in an FBI agent brought in on a murder investigation by another agent, played by Sam Shepard, because his father was Native American, although he himself knows very little about the culture. Despite meeting plenty of antagonism at first, however, the locals do indeed begin to warm up to him after awhile, albeit cautiously. The reservation is undergoing something of a civil war between those who reject cooperating with the federal government and those who do not, and at first it appears that the killing arose from that conflict, although of course, this being a reasonably decent murder mystery, it did not. As always, Graham Greene delivers a wonderfully humorous performance, playing a reservation cop, and Fred Ward is also present, although he has less screen time to make a significant impression. He's very scary, though. Fred Thompson and David Crosby are briefly seen. The late Kilmer had an uneven career but he is terrific in the part, underplaying his character's naiveté and reacting believably to his experiences. In the hands of many directors, the film would either be a dull, perfunctory paranoid thriller that piles up corpses in the place of character resolution or a ridiculously self-conscious fawning over the otherworldliness of Native-American culture that equates evil with authority, but the masterful Apted achieves the perfect balance through the beauty and steadfast confidence of his cinema, and this is especially true when the film is presented in 4K format.

Released on a 4K Blu-ray by Sony Pictures Home Entertainment (UPC#043396646872, \$31), in addition to its precise color transfer and consistent clarity, the film's textures are vivid. The lined faces of the Native-American performers, which Apted delivers in loving close-ups, letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.8:1, are riveting, and the contrast to Kilmer's complexion, occasionally dotted with beads of sweat, is equally gravitational. The helicopter shots are magnificent, and the beauty of the intricately rocky, arid landscapes becomes a compelling reflection of the community that has been relegated to eke out a barely sustainable existence within its crags and flats. When the action scenes kick in, the crisp precision of the image enlivens the thrills significantly. Running 119 minutes, in 4K, the film is captivating from its first shot to its last, never letting go of its dramatic intensity, but always sustaining a seductively alluring cinematic composure. It is lyrical, but exciting, just as it is culturally enlightening, but grounded in reality. Sony released a standard Blu-ray (UPC#043396635876, \$27), which also looks terrific, although it can't match the detail or the pleasure of the 4K release.

The 5.1-channel DTS sound provides an engaging dimensional presence. There are optional English subtitles, a trailer and a good 12-minute collection of interviews with the cast and the crew.

Fusco also served as producer and was on the set every day. He supplies a very rewarding commentary track, going over how he came to write the film, the research he did and the people he met while doing the research, and then how the film came to fruition. He shares many stories about the production, the people involved (“Val had just come off of playing Jim Morrison in **The Doors**, and I have to tell you, that was an interesting transition. I think we had to de-Morrison him a little bit in the early rehearsals.”) and the historical basis for many of the story's components, making it plain that the uneasy relationship between the federal government and the Indian nations has never settled down entirely and is unlikely to do so. He mentions that the film has become a favorite on reservations, and that every house he visited would have an old VHS copy or DVD near the TV. He also explains how he was involved with Apted's **Incident at Oglala** documentary (Apr 99), about Leonard Peltier, which was shot simultaneously with the film and also reflects, in a number of ways, the film's narrative. The standard BD has the commentary and the trailer, but not the other interviews.

##\$%@!! in 4K

Man has discovered that nature holds certain immutable laws. $E=MC^2$. The square of the hypotenuse is equal to the sum of the squares of the other two sides. What goes up must come down. Samuel L. Jackson will always curse in a movie. And a new law has become apparent with the advent of 4K Blu-rays: The better a transfer and delivery of a film is on Blu-ray, the more you will enjoy it. A case in point would be the schlocky 2006 New Line Home Entertainment comedy thriller, **Snakes on a Plane**, which has been released as a 4K Blu-ray by Warner Bros. and Arrow Video (UPC#760137198710, \$50). We reviewed the DVD in Feb 07 and enjoyed it well enough, finding the plot's set up to be awkward, if not downright ludicrous, and the performances perfunctory, but that once everything was in place, as it were, and the jump scares start lunging out as the viewer, the film can pretty much do no wrong. On 4K,

however, the image is so crisp that from its very opening moments you are on board for the ride. Nathan Phillips is a surfer in Hawaii who witnesses a mob killing and Jackson is an FBI agent who wants to take him to Los Angeles to testify. It is not clearly explained at first, but the mobster has somehow learned that the pair will be taking a commercial flight back rather than a private jet, and so he arranges for a mother load of exotic, poisonous snakes to be released from a crate in storage once the plane is in the air, and that flowered leis have been distributed to the passengers laced with a scent that will attract the slithering menaces. The stereotypical passengers are comically constructed and you can't wait for some of them to die horrible deaths. With a sharper picture and a punchier audio track, the 4K presentation makes everything both funnier and more exciting. If, on the DVD, the absurdity of the situation undercut the impact of its pleasure, on 4K it does not.

Warner and Arrow have also released a standard Blu-ray presentation (UPC#760137198727, \$40), which is a little grainier and no more than a touch brighter. Generally, because of the grain, the 4K version is preferable, especially during the deliberately distorted ‘snake point of view’ shots, but the differences are minor and both versions look fresh and sharp, as does Warner's early New Line Home Entertainment Blu-ray (UPC#794043131530, \$15), which is a bit softer than the two Arrow releases, but still reasonably bright and an improvement over the much softer DVD. The 5.1-channel DTS soundtracks on the two Arrow releases are pretty much interchangeable and have a stronger impact than the 5.1-Dolby TrueHD sound on the New Line BD. The New Line BD carried over the special features from the DVD, including a terrific commentary track featuring Jackson, director David Ellis and others, 12 minutes of deleted scenes with an optional commentary from Ellis and others, 46 minutes of informative featurettes, a music video and its 9-minute production featurette, 5 minutes of bloopers, three trailers and five TV commercials.

Arrow replicates those features and has added a small collection of promotional materials in still frame, an excellent 18-minute piece about novelizing films in general and **Snakes on a Plane** specifically, and a terrific commentary track with well-researched enthusiasts Max Evry and Bryan Reesman going over the history of the film's production, the differences between deliberate camp and accidental camp, snakes on planes, and many other engaging topics, talking about the film's ultimately disappointing box office returns and analyzing what is good about the movie and what comes up short.

Flynn's first swashbuckler, in 4K

Errol Flynn begins as a doctor, is arrested for giving medical aid to a rebel, becomes a convict who is sold across the ocean into slavery and escapes to become a pirate in the grand 1935 black-and-white Warner Bros. swashbuckling adventure film directed by Michael Curtiz, **Captain Blood**, released as a two-platter 4K Blu-ray by Warner and The Criterion Collection (UPC#715515327312, \$50). He ends the film in yet another position, but that would be spoiling things. Olivia de Havilland is his owner at one point and his prisoner at another. Fun stuff. The film runs a full 119 minutes and never really settles into being just one type of movie. It will seem even extra surreal for today's audiences, since all of the slaves seen on the Caribbean island plantation are white. Flynn looks very young and takes his part earnestly, while a bevy of Warner character actors fill in the gaggle around him, including Guy Kibbee, Donald Meek, Lionel Atwell, Henry Stephenson and J. Carrol Naish. Basil Rathbone plays a French pirate who forms a brotherly bond with Flynn's character, for a while. The ship battle scenes are impressively staged, and the squared full screen black-and-white image is cramped to all four edges in bodies, fire, bits of mast and rigging, swords, water and mayhem.

Like the transfers of many older films, the presentation is excellent, but imperfect. Some scenes are immaculate, while others are a bit softer or a bit grainier. The grain, however, is way more intrusive on the standard Blu-ray that has been included in the set, and is less involving and escapist than the 4K presentation as a result. The monophonic sound is clear and smooth, and there is a lovely and elaborate Erich Wolfgang Korngold musical score. There are optional English subtitles.

Curtiz expert Alan K. Rode supplies an excellent commentary track going into great detail about the production and quoting memos from producer Hal Wallis, describing the careers and capabilities of the cast and the crew, and doing a deeper dive into the lives of Curtiz, Flynn and de Havilland, all of whom were rocketed to stardom by the success of the feature. And yet, he also has time to talk about the movie's artistic dynamics and supply the sort of arcana you can only learn by listening to great commentary tracks. “‘Pieces of eight’ are historical Spanish dollar coins minted in the Americas from the late Fifteenth Century through the Nineteenth Century. Made of silver, they were in nearly worldwide circulation by the late Nineteenth Century and they were legal currency in the United States until 1857. The Spanish dollar coin was worth eight reals and could be physically cut into eight pieces, or ‘bits,’ to make change. Hence, the colloquial name, ‘pieces of eight.’ The dollar coin could also be cut into quarters, and ‘two bits,’ became American slang for a quarter dollar. ‘Pieces of eight’ have long been associated with pirates because they were a common target for the outlaws, as large amounts were regularly shipped from the American colonies to Spain. Just the term, ‘pieces of eight,’ invokes imaginings of pirates, swashbucklers, treasure hunters and a romantic bygone age, captured in **Captain Blood**.”

The standard BD has additional special features, which do not start up where they left off if playback is terminated, all of which appeared on the DVD we reviewed in May 05, including a trailer, a good 23-minute retrospective documentary, and a 60-minute *Lux Radio Theatre* adaptation from 1937 hosted by Herbert Marshall with Flynn, de Havilland and Rathbone.

Ichikawa's warscape

As much a horror film as it is a war film, Kon Ichikawa's outstanding 1959 journey across the hell of the battlefield, **Fires on the Plain**, has been released as a two-platter 4K Blu-ray by Janus Films, Kadokawa and The Criterion Collection (UPC#7155-15316811, \$50). Separated from his group, Eiji Funakoshi is a soldier wandering across the Philippine island of Leyte, halfheartedly attempting to reunite with his retreating company. His journey is reminiscent in a vague sort of way of **Apocalypse Now**, in that he witnesses different aspects of the desperations caused by war as he goes along, experiencing a descent of humanity to its lowest bestial forms. While there are occasional explosions and bursts of gunfire, you never see battles, only their aftermath. Sustenance and even water is scarce, and that becomes not only his own focus, but the focus of those he meets. The 104-minute film's episodic structure holds a viewer's attention with the fascination of each new situation and experience, but Ichikawa never holds back in his depiction of violence and worse, with the only mitigation being that the film is in black and white, although even that forces a viewer to imagine what the specific colors might be.

Intensely composed, the picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1. The 4K presentation is superb, with sharply defined contrasts and crisp details. The image on the standard BD included in the set is blander, with weaker differentiations between the lighter and darker portions of the screen, and it takes away some of the film's visceral impact. The monophonic sound is clear, and the film is in Japanese with optional English subtitles. Japanese film expert Donald Ritchie provides a good 12-minute overview of the film and Ichikawa's artistry, and a very rewarding 20-minute intercut set of retrospective interviews with Ichikawa and costar Mickey Curtis about the shoot is also included.

A musical of sorts with lengthy passages of choral expressions, Ichikawa's 1956 **The Burmese Harp**, released as a two-platter 4K Blu-ray by Janus, Kadokawa and Criterion (UPC#715515317016, \$50), is set at the end of World War II in Burma, where a group of Japanese soldiers have surrendered and are interred, waiting to go home. One soldier, played by Shoji Yasui, is assigned to talk a group of holdouts into surrendering and it is assumed that he is killed when he is MIA, but the experience unnerved him and he begins dressing like a local priest and burying dead soldiers. He played a harp, and his former buddies sang as a chorus with his accompaniment during their down time. It is when they hear wisps of the harp in the wind that they start to suspect he is still alive. Running 116 minutes, the film will seem slow going to some, but after taking a while to establish its premise, the narrative becomes a thoughtful exploration of responsibility, duty and the bonds created by art. The locations are fascinating, while the music creates an unexpected contrast to the setting. It can also be rather uplifting after the shock and degradation of **Fires on the Plain**.

The squared full screen black-and-white picture is in excellent condition, especially for a Japanese film of that age. The image is free of impediments and is often crisp and bright. It is nearly impossible to discern any difference between the presentation on the 4K platter and the presentation on the standard platter that has also been included in the set. In marked contrast, the DVD that Criterion released previously (UPC#71551502-2729, \$30) is more in keeping with what one would expect from an older Japanese film. While presentable, the source material has vague markings throughout, and contrasts are much weaker. Sunlit scenes look washed out and darker scenes lose detail in the shadows. The film is also less dynamically framed than **Fires on the Plain**, as Ichikawa seems less interested in punctuation and more interested in transposing the ethereal. The image is also softer on the DVD, and the monophonic sound, which is aged but smooth and solid on the BDs, is also weaker and hollower. The film is in Japanese with optional English subtitles. The 4K presentation has just the film. The standard Blu-ray and the DVD both come with a trailer, a great 16-minute interview with Ichikawa talking about his experiences making the film (he explains how he tried to convey the humidity of the tropical setting through his camera angles since he couldn't actually shoot in Burma) and a good 12-minute interview with costar Rentaro Mikuni, talking about his thought process while acting and about his own experiences in the war.

Greenstreet and Lorre, in abundance

A wonderful 1946 Warner Bros. locked room murder mystery set in London at the Tum of the Century (with fog abounding), starring Sydney Greenstreet and Peter Lorre and directed by Don Siegel of all people (his first feature), **The Verdict**, has been released by Turner Entertainment Co. and Warner as a **Warner WB Archive Collection** Blu-ray (UPC#840418341506, \$25). But that's not all! In the disc's supplement, along with two marvelous cartoons that use Lorre as a character, Warner has included, as an audio-only feature, three more marvelous murder mysteries, performed on radio in the Forties, one with Greenstreet and two others with Lorre.

As for the feature, Greenstreet is the retired head of Scotland Yard who discovers the body of a neighbor in the aforementioned locked room after breaking down the door, and Lorre is his companion of sorts, an illustrator who is collaborating on a book of famous cases that Greenstreet's character is putting together. Greenstreet's character agrees to assist his replacement in solving the crime. Running 86 minutes, the film's story is very clever and keeps you guessing right up to the murderer's confession, with plenty of red herrings to sway your suspicions this way and that way. The performances are good fun and Siegel blends the action and the drama with an efficient but energetic approach that is not above pushing the camera straight into Greenstreet's massive midsection for effect. He captures an atmosphere that is ideal for the story and guides the performances through the ambiguities and secrets every character is hiding. The film is even more fun after you know all of its secrets and can take full pleasure in how Siegel and the cast unveil them.

The squared full screen black-and-white picture looks terrific. Even the ubiquitous fog looks smooth and sharp and completely free of distortion. The interiors are even sharper and smoother. The monophonic sound is clear, and the film is supported by optional English subtitles.

In the two carefully chosen Warner color **Merrie Melodies** cartoons, Bugs Bunny is lured to a castle in the classic 1945 **Hair-Raising Hare** running 8 minutes, where Lorre, as a mad scientist, has created a large hairy orange monster (and including the

indelible meta moment when the rabbit, breathless after being chased by the monster, calls for a doctor in the house and a male voice arises from the audience identifying himself as a doctor to which the rabbit, suddenly less breathless, pulls out a carrot from somewhere and responds, 'Eh, what's up, Doc?'), and Daffy Duck persuades a dog to let him stay in a house for the winter rather than migrating in the 7-minute 1956 **Birth of a Notion**, only to discover that the house is owned by a homicidal madman who looks and talks like the same manifestation of Lorre as in the other cartoon.

Greenstreet is the ideally cast as the portly (you can hear his girth), misanthropic hero in the 29-minute **The New Adventures of Nero Wolfe** episode from 1950, **Stamped for Murder**, in which a woman is trying to retrieve a phony treasure map her father bought from swindlers. There are a couple of dead bodies by the time Greenstreet's character figures out why everyone is in such a fuss over a counterfeit document. When he sets some papers on fire in front of the suspects, everyone rushes to put the fire out, except the murderer!

Lorre is featured in a terrific 1942 episode of **Suspense** running 30 minutes, **Till Death Do Us Part**, a John Dickson Carr story, playing a professor living in an isolated British farmhouse who devises what he believes is a foolproof way to murder his wife and her lover. There are several marvelous plot twists, and Mercedes McCambridge has a small supporting part. It is the best offering of three selections.

Lorre also guest stars in a 29-minute episode of **The Inner Sanctum** (sponsored by Carter's Little Liver Pills) from 1943, **Black Sea Gull**. When the love of his life dies in his arms, he begins hearing her call to him in different situations. The potential is there for a good, Poe-style story twist at the end, but they play it straight, as it were.

Jungle romance

A terrific pre-Code romance set on a rubber plantation in Indochina, made all the more engaging with its stellar cast, MGM's 1932 **Red Dust**, has been released as a Turner Entertainment Co. Warner Bros. **Warner WB Archive Collection** Blu-ray (UPC#840418341520, \$25). Clark Gable is the plantation manager, Jean Harlow, falling out of her blouses as usual, is a dance hall girl (to be polite) who becomes smitten with him after she is stranded up river, Gene Raymond is a fresh-faced surveyor who comes down with malaria on his way to his new posting at the site, and Mary Astor is the surveyor's wife, whose guard is lowered after Gable's character nurses her husband back to health and then sends him off into the jungle for a few weeks, much to the chagrin of Harlow's character. Running a brisk 83 minutes, the performances are as fun as they are captivating, while the steamy, damp setting adds to the uninhibited atmosphere in every way imaginable. Except for the presence and demeaning portrayal of the 'coolies' working on the spread and serving in the rickety house, the story is as modern as what you might see on any soap opera today. Directed by Victor Fleming, the film also includes a rewarding demonstration of how rubber is harvested and prepared for shipment, even imbuing that process with a gooey sexual undertone. It was an early effort for Gable, Harlow and Astor, and the frankness they display, as well as the desire the two women communicate towards Gable's character and vice-versa, sent the boxoffice appeal of each player into the stratosphere.

The squared full screen black-and-white picture has the natural aged appearance one is apt to find in a 1932 film, but otherwise it is in excellent condition. Here and there, footage looks a little worn, but otherwise, beyond the natural softness associated with its age, the film is in excellent shape. The monophonic sound is also reasonably strong and clean. There are optional English subtitles, a Spanish trailer (*Tierra de Pasión*) with English dialog and Spanish text ("Hombres...despojados del barniz de la civilización / Mujeres...tan impulsivas como Eva...") and two fantastic MGM two-tone color shorts from 1932, a witty 18-minute concoction featuring Sidney Toler and Franklin Pangborn about a department store that boosts its sales when it exchanges its workforce for chorus girls called **Over the Counter**, and a nearly as inventive 17-minute piece in which burlesque comedians Harry Jans and Harold Whalen play present day radio announcers putting on a musical show with Stone Age performers entitled **Wild People**.

We love I Love

Ever since we first saw **Singin' in the Rain**, we have been obsessed with... **I Love Melvin**, a 1953 musical Donald O'Connor and Debbie Reynolds made for MGM a year after their classic collaboration as supporting players in the other film. Directed by Don Weis, **Melvin** is an oddity, in many ways the most nondescript musical MGM ever created, but on the other hand, it captures the essence of MGM musicals in the Fifties and is irresistible especially if you have already played all of the famous ones to death. It also has a number of idiosyncrasies. It runs just 78 minutes and an appreciable amount of it was shot on location in Manhattan, mostly in Central Park. And the entire 78 minutes is in some ways a commercial for Look Magazine, when it is not shilling MGM product (Robert Taylor has a cute cameo) or referencing **Singin' in the Rain** (not only is Gene Kelly mentioned during the intro to a song number, but a receptionist at Look has the same last name as Reynolds's character in **Singin' in the Rain** had—okay, it's a stretch, but still, it's there. O'Connor plays a photographer's assistant—the photographer is played by Jim Backus, who delivers a positively demonic comedy performance, as if he were the emcee at a burlesque house—who bumps into Reynolds's character, a chorus girl, and falls in love with her. She is about to be engaged to a stiff played by Richard Anderson and O'Connor's character has to hustle to compete with him, so he creates a mock up of a Look Magazine issue with her on the cover, but when he shows it to her, she mistakes it for the real thing and her family (Allyn Joslyn and Una Merkel play her parents) goes gaga before he can correct her. There are some still great nondescript musical numbers in the film, including one with O'Connor doing knockout things with props all by himself in a cluttered photography studio and another where he bounces up and down stairs to a gazebo and then goes around its interior on roller skates, and there is one truly great number where Reynolds, dressed in a brown body suit with a slightly pointed brown cap with threads, plays a football on a Broadway stage, kicked, passed and otherwise flown about the stage in acrobatic glory. It is truly an amazing number.

So, to summarize, we are overly enamored with the film because 1) it encapsulates with brevity the essence of MGM's unique skills at creating what was an all too brief popular genre (the 'original' musicals) 2) it stars two joyous performers who brought energy to every frame of film they ever graced and 3) it is largely forgotten and therefore unfamiliar to potential fans, qualifying as a 'guilty pleasure' for those in the know. This last point can now be addressed since Turner Entertainment Co. and Warner Bros. have released the film as a *Warner WB Archive Collection* Blu-ray (UPC#8404-18339732, \$25). The gorgeous squared full screen Technicolor picture is indeed gorgeous on the Blu-ray presentation from the beginning to the end. Colors are bright and finely detailed, fleshtones are lovely, and the designs, costumes and Central Park look fantastic. The monophonic sound is solid and smooth, and there are optional English subtitles. Along with a trailer, there are two 7-minute color MGM cartoons from 1952, a terrific Tex Avery concoction entitled *TV of Tomorrow* that presents conceptualizations of various television sets, and MGM's attempt to create popular animal characters, *The Impossible Possum*, about a bear trying to grab and eat a sleepy but wily opossum.

"I bet your father spent the first year of your life throwing rocks at the stork!"

One of the greatest pleasures of the 1939 Marx Bros. feature directed by Edward Buzzell for MGM, *At the Circus*, is that it is less popular than a number of their other features and, hence, is less readily disseminated or available for screening. Released on Blu-ray by Turner Entertainment Co. and Warner Bros. as a *Warner WB Archive Collection* title (UPC#840418338407, \$25), that imbalance can now be corrected. Dedicated Marx Bros. fans will still have the dialog memorized, but casual fans will find nothing but serendipity in the film's antics and exchanges ("You're the man I've been dreaming of! 'What do you eat before you go to bed?"). The film may not be as good as the best Marx Bros. comedies, but it is still a top-tier motion picture comedy, with engaging musical numbers (Groucho sings *Lydia The Tattooed Lady*, Harpo plays *Blue Moon* on the harp), MGM's incredible budgetary allowances and production designs (the window in a large dining hall at a Newport mansion opens up to reveal the inside of a massive circus tent, while in the next shot an orchestra on a concert stage set up on a dock begins floating out to sea), circus animals (lions, elephants and on the trapeze, a gorilla) and the three wonderful sibling comedians, Groucho, Chico and Harpo, doing their reliably amusing and well-practiced routines. Kenny Baker is the circus manager, pressed for funds after a villain steals his boxoffice cash, Margaret Dumont (you should never take your eyes off her, even when Groucho is in the shot) is his wealthy aunt, Florence Rice is his fiancée, Nat Pendleton is a dumbbell strongman, the diminutive Jerry Maren is a villain (living in a tiny house, which makes for a wonderful skit when all three brothers come to visit him) and Eve Arden, in one of her best screen roles, is another villain, who walks on ceilings. For 87 minutes, the film is total comedic joy.

Additionally, the squared full screen black-and-white picture transfer looks fantastic. The image is so sharp you can see all of the wires you aren't suppose to see, but that is a good thing. The picture is completely free of wear or impurity of any sort. Contrasts are sharp, and in addition to energizing the humor, the crisp picture enhances the stunning effect of MGM's production expenditures. The dollars are on the screen. The monophonic sound is solid and clear, and there are optional English subtitles, along with a trailer, an 11-minute radio promotion for the film (although instead of tantalizing listeners with dialog, it is all musical excerpts, including a lengthy orchestral piece), a 9-minute 1939 black-and-white MGM Milt Gross cartoon called *Jitterbug Follies* (a mix of humans and anthropomorphic animals perform mostly swing music acts on a stage in a 'talent contest') with an audio track that has a fair amount of distortion, and a cute 1939 black-and-white *Our Gang* short running 11 minutes called *Dog Daze* (the kids collect lost dogs—and a penguin—to earn money, only to find out the dogs—and the penguin—were stolen).

Opera excerpts and more

MGM never actually made a complete opera film, but somehow, in bits and pieces, they managed to cover all of opera's greatest hits during the course of their production history, especially after they signed up Mario Lanza in the Fifties. Lanza stars in the gorgeous 1959 production, *For the First Time*, and it is, yet again, peppered with several of the great arias a successful tenor might come across during his career, including passages—some staged in costume—from *Aida*, *Rigoletto*, *Così fan Tutti*, *Otello* (don't worry, his makeup looks more like a slightly heavy tan than actual blackface) and *Pagliacci*. To avoid coming off as total highbrow, he also sings a couple of Fifties MOR tunes, as well as a German beer hall number. In this film, released by Turner Entertainment Co. and Warner Bros. as a *Warner WB Archive Collection* Blu-ray (UPC#840418329078, \$25), he meets a famous author's niece, played by Johanna von Koczian, and is completely smitten, even though she is deaf. Unlike the blackface, which is relatively justifiable in context, the film's approach to deafness will likely appall anyone who takes such matters seriously. Von Koczian's character does not use a hint of sign language and always speaks articulately, but both she and Lanza's character will consider her incomplete until she gets that magic movie operation that cures such matters. Directed by Rudolph Maté and running 97 minutes, the narrative comes up with a couple of twists to keep the emotions flowing, but the outcome is fully predictable.

In the meantime, however, and replicated with perfection on the Blu-ray, the color transfer utterly beautiful and flawless, and the film is a genuine treat for the eyes. Not only are there the dressings for the opera scenes, but there is a decent amount of actual location footage shot in Salzburg and even more extensively in Capri. Letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1, the establishing shots are breathtaking, and are often then supported by detailed shots on the streets and at the cafés. The image is so sharp that you really become aware of how MGM's costume

department had to work overtime to hide how portly Lanza was becoming—Kurt Kaszner, who plays his character's agent, looks positively svelte standing next to him. Zsa-Zsa Gabor is also featured. The monophonic sound is solid and smooth, and there are optional English subtitles, along with a trailer and a gloriously appropriate 1958 squared full screen color *Looney Tunes* cartoon running 8 minutes, *Long-Haired Hare*, which isn't quite *What's Opera, Doc?*, but serves the same purpose, with Bugs Bunny causing an opera singer conniptions as the latter tries to practice at what appears to be a Palm Springs ranch and then ramping up his sabotage later during the singer's concert on stage.

Mexican comedy anthology

A colorful three-part 1970 saucy Mexican comedy anthology, *El Cuerpazo del Delito* (*The Body of Crime*), has been released by VCI Entertainment and MVDvisual as a *Classics del Cine Mexicano* Blu-ray (UPC#089859912825, \$15). Hues are very fresh and the image is mostly quite sharp, although the source material does have prominently damaged or faded segments in a couple of places, and can look a little softer at times. The monophonic sound is especially poor on the first episode, which has quite a bit of buffeting, although thereafter it is adequately presented and the music is not distorted. The film is in Spanish and the optional English subtitles must be activated manually. They contain curious translation oddities now and then, particularly in regards to pronouns, although for the most part they are intelligible.

The film runs 114 minutes in total. The first segment, *La Insaciable*, was directed by Rene Cardona Jr. and stars Enrique Rambal as a nosy voyeur and Silvia Pinal as his apparently nympho neighbor. She lives in a generally glass house and he spends a lot of time standing on his toilet, watching with binoculars. He then goes about trying to come up with an approach that will get him into her bedroom. He finally lands one, only to discover that the result is not what he expected. The second episode, *La Rebelde*, is directed by Rafael Baledon. Angelica María is the grown up daughter of a wealthy man played by José Gálvez, who constantly interferes with her love life, playing practical jokes, until she is kidnapped by mobsters and falls in love with the main gangster, played by Mauricio Garcés. Roberto Gómez Bolaños plays one of the gangsters. They devise a scheme to squeeze the father for a big ransom, and his plan to upset their scheme goes awry. In *La Seductora*, directed by Sergio Vejar, a provocatively dressed customer played by Elsa Aguirre seduces a store manager played by Fernando Luján with an eye on what is kept in the store safe. She is juggling several other relationships as well, some of which are profitable and some of which are for the heart. As those relationships begin to accelerate, so do the betrayals, in an amusing manner.

In all of the segments, the acting is clownish and exaggerated, but not entirely without humor. While individual slapstick bits can be a little tiresome, and the program's appeal will definitely depend upon the comedic tastes of the individual viewer, there are amusing moments throughout the three segments, a lot of erotic teases. Combined with the early Seventies style and pop colors, the film will be worthwhile to those with accommodating standards. Also included are 3 minutes of informative featurettes, presented in Spanish and separately again in English, although the artistic value of the film is somewhat overstated. "*El Cuerpazo del Delito* is more than just a film. It is a time capsule of Mexican cinema at the close of the 1960s, an era of experimentation, star power and shifting formats, a fantastic body of work assembled by the finest actors and filmmakers of its generation."

Caught by Tides

A mesmerizing blend of documentary and fictional compositions, including leftover footage from the director's previous films, Zhang-ke Jia's 2024 *Caught by the Tides* has been released on Blu-ray by Janus Films, Sideshow and The Criterion Channel (UPC#715515327916, \$25). A dour fashion model played by Tao Zhao has difficulties with her boyfriend and decides to move to a more remote city. The boyfriend, played by Zhubin Li, comes across her there a couple of decades later, where she is a cashier but has a sunnier disposition. Most of the earlier footage Jia shot with Zhao for other films. Running 111 minutes and supported by an engaging pop music score, the film's sense of presence is established by the documentary footage of the inhabitants of the cities where the film is taking place and the passengers on the train traveling between them, a sense that bleeds profusely into the vaguely narrative material. You would have to be a resident yourself to really appreciate the environmental changes that occurred during the same passage of time (while much is made of an area being submerged after the construction of a dam, the visual depiction of its impact is minimal), although footage of active robots and high-tech video displays underscore the film's latter half. In the film's best moments, Jia is just pointing his camera at people on the street and hoping they don't stare back for too long. The disc's Dolby Atmos sound does more than just present the songs, it constantly recreates the environmental sounds of almost every shot and locale, and while in one sense, those are the noises you try to get away from by retreating into a movie, the sounds place you vividly at each location and, in essence, transport you across time and space.

The picture has a variety of aspect ratios depending upon which cameras Jia was employing. Regardless, however, the image is consistently sharp and accurately colored, constrained only by the variations in available lighting. The film is in Mandarin with optional English subtitles and comes with a trailer and an excellent 19-minute interview with Jia explaining what he wanted to accomplish and how he set about doing it. The interview does not start up where it left off if playback is terminated.

Korean effects extravaganza

A 2017 Korean Lotte Entertainment special effects extravaganza about the afterlife, **Along with the Gods: The Two Worlds**, has been released on Blu-ray by Well Go USA Entertainment (UPC#812491019689, \$30). A firefighter played by Tae-hyun Cha dies while saving the life of a child and must confront a series of trials regarding various sins before he can be reincarnated. He has three eager defenders, played by top billed Ha Jung-woo, Hyang-gi Kim and Ji-hoon Ju, and each trial has an elaborate fantasy setting evocative of various earth environments, such as a forest (with blades for branches), water (with nasty flying fishes), sand and so on. The film runs a full 140 minutes, and effectively explores the drama of the firefighter's childhood and life—his mother is a mute, and his brother, working to become a lawyer, had some trouble during his military enlistment—while also gradually revealing the political conflicts in the netherworld and friction among the three defenders as the trials advance. By shifting between these many stories and jumping back and forth between real life and the fantasy settings, the film's pace never slackens, but it also achieves a secondary purpose of encouraging the viewer to contemplate not so much life and death, but moral self-reflection in the past, present and future. At times genuinely touching, the film also has its moments of humor and suspense amid its spectacle.

While the film resolves many of its conflicts by the end, it also leaves many other story points open, and it was indeed followed by a sequel that one can only hope will appear on BD soon. Letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1, the image transfer is crisp and while the effects are wild, they are sharp and seamless. Colors are bright and solid. The 5.1-channel DTS sound is energetic and in keeping with the film's grand scope. The movie is in Korean, with optional English subtitles. Also featured are two trailers, a 2-minute overview of the main characters and a decent 4-minute featurette about making the film.

Hong Kong police action comedy (and romance)

A 1996 Golden Harvest Hong Kong police action comedy and romance, **Rosa**, has been released on Blu-ray by Fortune Star and 88 Films (UPC#760137192244, \$50). The disc does not start up where it left off if playback is terminated. Biao Yuen and Lowell Lo are rookie cops who are partnered together even though they get on one another's nerves. They are assigned to locate an informer who has photos of a mob hit, and they almost catch him at his girlfriend's apartment. The girlfriend is the title character, played by Hsiao-Fen Lu, and she eventually pairs with Lo's character, while Yuen's character is paired with the sister of Lo's character, played by Kara Hui. The four spend much of the 97-minute film evading mobsters, especially after they obtain the film negatives. The action scenes are fantastic. They are inventive and hard hitting. Letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1, the picture quality is superb, with a consistently sharp, brightly colored image, and it adds to the thrill of each athletic move and counter move. When someone hits the pavement, you feel the tingle of pain go through you. Most of the film, however, is comedy, not action. At one point, Lo is dressed in blackface, pretending to be an American gangster, and as charming as the basic romance is, the foibles and bickering are less invigorating. Directed by Joe Cheung, the film would probably play best as a highlight reel (in the best moment, Lu distracts an attacker by flashing her décolletage at him), but for viewers who are enthusiastic enough to gorge upon the chaff as well as the grain, the core of the film's entertainment is wholly invigorating.

The monophonic sound is reasonably strong, and the film is in Mandarin with optional English subtitles. There is also an alternate English language track, 3 minutes of opening and closing credits in English, a trailer, a good 2-minute montage of promotional materials, and a 23-minute interview with Cheung and assistant director Benz Kong, talking about their careers, their love of movies and what the production was like.

Hong Kong film experts Frank Djeng and F.J. DeSanto provide one commentary track, talking about the history of the film, the careers of the players and the film's emphasis on humor. Even Djeng admits, "So now, we have come to the requisite final warehouse fight that is our reward for watching 75 minutes of sexist, politically incorrect jokes."

On the second track, Chinese film expert David West covers much of the same ground, explaining that the film's Chinese title suggests that it is a sequel to a popular film even though it has nothing to do with the earlier feature beyond sharing the same production heads and a 'similar vibe.' He also talks about Lo's prolific music career and, like Djeng and DeSanto, marvels at the two Hong Kong film powerhouses who wrote the script. "You could argue that **Rosa** doesn't feel like the work of two such important figures as Barry Wong and Wong Kar-Wai. It, I think, follows a pretty familiar blueprint for a Hong Kong comedy action movie of the 1980s. Is there more to this film than meets the eye? There's definitely some cynicism about authority figures. The movie consistently snubs its nose at authority, but otherwise I think it's fair to say that the portrayal of the odd couple dynamic is pretty familiar stuff."

Gender equality

The right to vote is an abstract concept, because it is only a means to another end, which is to alter or enhance existing laws. The 2025 Focus Features docudrama, **Suffragette**, released on Blu-ray by Universal Studios Home Entertainment (UPC#840418336014, \$20), is based upon a true story in England in 1912 (women did not get the vote in England until after WWI) where a woman stepped onto a horse racing track as the animals were coming down the stretch because the King was at the race and she wanted to call attention to her cause, sacrificing her life in the process. Directed by Sarah Gavron, the film builds a fictionalized story around this incident that makes use of other historical occurrence happening at the same time. Carey Mulligan plays a worker in an industrial laundry who leads a fairly miserable life, but she has a little boy and a husband who apparently loves her, so things are going well enough until she gets roped into attending a demonstration by

some co-workers and is arrested. She can't even say why she wants the vote, just that it appears to be the most viable remedy to the suffering she sees around her. After her second arrest, her husband locks her out of her house and refuses to let her see her child—and title cards at the end imply that mothers only gained the right to have a say in their children's lives after they got the vote. Running 107 minutes, a few similar dramas also play out among her companions, who range socially from being even more destitute than she is to being comfortably upper class, and thus the drama, which has no romantic component (beyond the friendships between the women), becomes something of a cautionary tale of what happens when women have absolutely no say in how they may live their lives and are at the mercy of whatever whims the men around them entertain. Helena Bonham Carter and Anne-Marie Duff costar, with Brendan Gleeson and Ben Whishaw. Meryl Streep has a single scene as an outlawed leader of the movement. While Mulligan's character is fictional, the events and many of the characters she comes into contact with are based upon history.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1. The color transfer is fine and the film does its best to convey the squalor and dreary nature of the women's lives while still sustaining an attractively photographed atmosphere. The 5.1-channel DTS sound has a general dimensionality and reasonably strong tones. There is an alternate French audio track, optional English, French and Spanish subtitles, and 23 minutes of good promotional featurettes that go over details of the shoot, including the revelation that it was the first dramatic film ever allowed to shoot in the Parliament building.

Gavron and screenwriter Abi Morgan provide a fine commentary track, going over the research they had done, the difficulty of finding locations in London that, "Look like London," their experiences with the cast, and working out the story. They also share details and embellish the viewing experience, pointing out, for example, that a scar on the arm of Mulligan's character came from the fire that killed her mother at a workplace when she was a child, although otherwise that is left unexplained in the film. Making the film was cathartic for both of them ("When you watch those newsreels, which often are in silence, and there's a huge intimacy in the sense that you are treading on history and invading, being allowed to see over the shoulders of the past time, and that's always for me what this moment for me feels like.") and unlike Mulligan's character, they are able to articulate in detail what the movement accomplished. "What was interesting was that when they did get the vote, there was a lot of legislation that got passed that did change their lives. I mean, not radically enough, because it's still an ongoing fight. But in 1925 they got access to a lot of spheres they'd been denied before."

It's a marvelous night for a moonance

It takes a few minutes to really get into the 2012 Universal horror feature directed by Louis Morneau, **Werewolf The Beast Among Us**, a Universal Pictures Home Entertainment Blu-ray (UPC#840418336076, \$20), because it is kind of messy and discombobulated. The film is set in the late Nineteenth Century, although one character uses a flamethrower, which suggests the setting is a decade or two later. It was shot in Transylvania, which is kind of cool, and uses modern computer graphic effects, which is very cool. A town is being plagued by a werewolf, and corpses are littering the area every full moon cycle. A doctor played by Stephen Rea and his young assistant, played by Guy Wilson, are examining the corpses and drawing some conclusions about the beast using the empirical evidence. Wilson's character also has a girlfriend living in a fancy villa, but he has to sneak around to see her, because her father disapproves. The mayor offers a reward to kill the creature and a pack of werewolf hunters arrive, with Ed Quinn playing their leader. By this point, there have been oodles of marvelous gore, and that, combined with the weapons the hunters have, Wilson's personable presence, and the atmosphere of it all, obliterates any resistance one might have to the entertainment. Yes, it's ridiculous, archly performed at times, and a bit incoherent as well, but it's a werewolf movie and, like some of the best werewolf movies, it is also a murder mystery, since you don't find out which one of the townspeople is the werewolf until the beginning of the last act. There is simply no point in disliking it, since the rousing action, the decent effects and the rampant gore and guts spilling out all over the place are all there to service the entertainment. That was why we put it on in the first place.

The disc does not start up where it left off if playback is terminated. There is an 'unrated' version that runs 94 minutes and a 'rated version' that runs 93 minutes, but in for a penny, in for a pound. The extra guts are definitely worth it. In either case, the closing credits last a full 8 minutes. The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1. The image is bright and sharp, and the effects are adequately integrated with the live action. The werewolf transitions may not be perfect, but the days of cutaways and dissolves are long past. The 5.1-channel DTS sound is loud and energetically dimensional. There is an alternate Spanish audio track, optional English and Spanish subtitles, 4 minutes of deleted scenes that contain a few interesting story details, and 19 minutes of good production featurettes.

Morneau and producer Mike Elliott supply a passable commentary track, which they recorded before they even knew what the film was going to be titled. They talk about the Romanian locations, the cast and their experiences with the weather while they were making the film, as well as filling in a background on how they came to be involved in the project and what they wanted to accomplish. "I've never had a film where people came up to me, including the actors, and said, 'What exactly kind of film are we making here?'" One scene, it seems like a Gothic romance, and then the next scene, you're chopping up bodies, um, and in the end, I think it wasn't until the very end I realized we were making a good, old fashioned creature feature with a little more modern take on it."

Cheesy martial arts

A Los Angeles lawyer would rather attend his kendo classes than go out dancing with his hot girlfriend until she is abducted and he follows her into an alternate dimension in a cheesy 1994 martial arts fantasy film, **The Dragon Gate**, released on Blu-ray by Shoreline Entertainment (UPC#840418339459, \$21). Dan Coplan stars, with Geoffrey Lewis as a mystical figure who guides him. Courtney Taylor and Hang S. Ngor are also featured, the latter in a blink and you will miss him moment. The film's fight sequences are rudimentary, but are embellished with some nice gore effects that will assure at least some eagerness among its basic constituency. The alternate dimension is set at night and was shot partially in Hawaii, amid smoke machines and colored lights, and much of the film consists of the hero running down illuminated pathways following guys in all-black outfits and hoods, occasionally chopping off an arm or a head when the running stops. To pad out the 79-minute running time (nowhere near the 88 minutes listed on the jacket), he has an interlude with a sorceress of some sort and they have an eating scene that appears to have been inspired by **Tom Jones**. If you don't get the hint from the camera angles and the editing, the Nineties electronic music score briefly shifts over to a harpsichord vibe to underline the sequence. Coplan's fighting skills leave much to be desired, but the most amusing moment comes at the end, when he takes off his shirt to meditate by a waterfall and you get a full, lingering shot of his otherwise well hidden paunch. It was a wonder he was even able to run after the guys in black, much less slice them and dice them. Coplan wrote and produced the film, which was credited on the jacket as directed by Michael Oliver and on the Internet as directed by Mike Marvin using the 'Oliver' name.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1. The image is hazy and smeary, even during scenes set the real world. Colors are moderately strong, but bland, and there is a speckle or a scratch here and there. The sound is centered but somewhat aggressive. There is no captioning. A trailer has been included, along with an advertisement for Coplan's novels. Coplan also supplies a commentary track that has to be accessed manually using the audio controls. He introduces himself on the track as the movie's director, although later in the talk he refers to the director as someone else, presumably Marvin. He admits that he is not a very chatty person and that there is a lot of dead space in the commentary, and he pretty much reiterates the narrative and shares his memories of what happened during the shoot. The costume designer, for example, had given him karate shoes, which turn out to be not so great for running in the woods.

A film sampler

Running just 57 minutes, **The Cinema A Brief History of World Cinema**, released on Blu-ray by Shoreline Entertainment (UPC#840418337967, \$21), was conceived by Wins Deus in 2022 and is narrated in English with permanent English subtitles. It apportions a third of its running time to the very beginnings of film, and then sort of rushes through everything else, concluding with a longish segment on digital theaters and streaming services. That first part is also the most informative, looking at the different devices that were developed and sharing clips of some early films we have never seen elsewhere. Produced partially in India, the generalities that progress later are less informative, and even mistaken—**Sunrise** is identified as a German film and not a Hollywood production—and the narration occasionally mispronounces common words (there are misspellings in the subtitling, as well). Deus seems to like westerns, because no matter what the topic is later in the documentary, clips from westerns abound. On the whole, the program is little more than a visual sampler, supporting a kind of disorganized summary of motion picture technical advancements, but if you are a movie enthusiast, it will still tickle your fancy now and then. The clips are shown in their original aspect ratios, and while the linking material is crisp, some of the clips are less than pristine. The sound is centered.

January Special Edition: **Cheyenne**

Our Jan 25 Special Edition featured a review of the multi-platter Warner Bros. Blu-ray box set, **Cheyenne The Complete Series** (UPC#840418319604, \$140), 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.

DVD News

BRIGHTER SIEGE: In addition to releasing **Under Siege** as a 4K Blu-ray (Jan 26), Warner Bros. and Arrow Video have also released the entertaining film as a standard Blu-ray (UPC#760137198291, \$40), which actually gives the 4K presentation a run for its money. The image on the 4K version is a little smoother at times, but the standard BD is brighter, bringing out more detail in a film that is set mostly at night or in low light corridors. The brighter image also adds accuracy to hues that look a little dull on the 4K version in direct comparison. It is almost worthwhile to get both versions. The Dolby Atmos sound is pretty much the same on both, and along with optional English subtitles, the standard BD has the same special features, including a great commentary with director Andrew Davis, a trailer and 80 minutes of terrific retrospective interviews.

CRITERION CORNER: The Criterion Collection is releasing John Boorman's **Point Blank** in 4K format, and after watching **Excalibur**, frankly, we can't wait. The release will also have a commentary with Boorman and Steven Soderbergh; an interview with Boorman conducted by author Geoff Dyer; an interview with critic Mark Harris; reflections on the film by Jim Jarmusch; a program on the mid-century Los Angeles architecture featured in the film, with historian Alison Martino; **The Rock** (1967), a short documentary on Alcatraz and the making of the film; and an interview with Lee Marvin from a 1970 episode of **The Dick Cavett Show**. Gan Bi's **Resurrection** will come with a director interview. **Eclipse Series 48: Kinuyo Tanaka Directs** will contain *Love Letter*, *The Moon Has Risen*, *Forever a*

Woman, *The Wandering Princess*, *Girls of the Night* and *Love under the Crucifix*. Charles Vidor's **Gilda** will be in 4K format and will come with a commentary by Richard Schickel; an interview with film-noir historian Eddie Muller; a program featuring Martin Scorsese and Baz Luhrmann discussing their appreciation for **Gilda**; and *The Odyssey of Rita Hayworth*, a 1964 episode of the television show *Hollywood and the Stars*. Ernst Lubitsch's **Trouble in Paradise** will include a commentary featuring Lubitsch biographer Scott Eyman; an introduction by Peter Bogdanovich; and a video essay by critic David Cairns. **John Singleton's Hood Trilogy** will contain **Boyz n the Hood**, **Poetic Justice** and **Baby Boy** all in 4K and will come with commentaries on all three films featuring Singleton; a conversation between Ryan Coogler and Regina King; a documentary on Singleton's filmmaking process featuring publicist Cassandra Butcher, casting director Kimberly Hardin, and collaborator Paul Hall; audio interviews with actors Taraji P. Henson and Tyrese Gibson; archival interviews with the cast and crew; a press conference from 1991; deleted scenes; audition footage; music videos; and trailers. Terry Gilliam's **Monty Python's Life of Brian** will be in 4K and will feature two audio commentaries with Gilliam, John Cleese, Eric Idle, Terry Jones, and Michael Palin; *The Story of Brian* (2007), a making-of documentary; *The Pythons* (1979), a documentary about Monty Python, filmed on location for **Life of Brian**; a behind-the-scenes Super 8 film shot by Palin; five deleted scenes with commentary by the Pythons; original British radio ads starring Mrs. Cleese, Mrs. Gilliam, Mrs. Idle, and Palin's dentist; original illustrated recording by the Pythons of an early version of their screenplay; and animated stills gallery.

NEW IN BLU: The following titles have recently been released on Blu-ray—Breast Friends Club 6, Glitch Ditch 88, Glitch Ditch 89, Glitch Ditch 90, Glitch Ditch 91, Glitch Ditch 92, Glitch Ditch 93, Glitch Ditch 94, Glitch Ditch 95, Glitch Ditch 96, Glitch Ditch 97, Glitch Ditch 98, Glitch Ditch 99, Glitch Ditch 100, James Balsamo Knows How to Rock 4, Sexy Time 14 (Acid Bath); *The Movie Orgy* (AGFA); *The Senior*, *Truth & Treason* (Angel); *A Matter of Time* (Amazon); *Bad Things*, *Slapface* (AMD); *Smashing Machine* (A24); *Hang in There Kids*, *My People My Homeland*, *Nahual*, *Rick Nelson Guntersville* (Bayview); *The Creepy Janitor* (Bill Zebub); *A Candle for the Devil* (Bizarro); *Fuji Jukai*.mov (Bleeding Skull); *Fackham Hall* (Bleeker Street); *North Hollywood* (Brainstorm); *Springsteen Deliver Me from Nowhere*, *Tron Ares* (Buena Vista); *Missed Opportunities* (Burning Bulb); *What about Sal?* (Cardinal); *The Reveries Trilogy* (Cartuna); *Forgotten Gialli V.7*, *Forgotten Gialli V.8*, *Gang Related*, *The Garbage Pail Kids*, *King of the Gypsies*, *Timecrimes*, *Troll 2* (CAV); *Bullet in the Head*, *Once a Thief* (Cinedigm); *Birth*, *Captain Blood*, *Caught in the Tides*, *The Dead*, *House Party*, *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, *Martin Scorsese's World Cinema Project 5* (Criterion); *Heroic Times* (Deaf Crocodile); *Icefall*, *Orwell 2+2=5* (Decal); *Blue Sun Palace* (Dekalog); *Doriana Gray* (Delirium); *The House From...* (ETR); *No Sleep Till* (Factory 25); *The Gods of Times Square* (Film Desk); *Hercules and the Captive Women*, *The Second Woman* (Film Masters); *Courtesans and Criminals* *The Underworld of Hideo Gosha*, *100 Yen Love* (Film Movement); *Goodbye Columbus*, *Ladies and Gentlemen The Fabulous Stains* (Fun City); *The American Southwest / Borderland Jaguar* (Giant); *Satan Hates You* (Glass Eye); *Fear Pharm 2-Movie Collection*, *100 Acres of Hell*, *Shed of the Dead* (Indican); *AFTERBURN* (Ketchup); *The Door in the Floor*, *The Flesh & Blood Show*, *The Godless Girl*, *Hold That Blonde!*, *Köln 75*; *K-Pax*, *The Left behind Daughters Trilogy* *The Films of Huang Ji* and *Ryuyi Otsuka*, *Man in a Cocked Hat*, *Put Your Soul on Your Hand and Walk*, *Rolling Stones Let's Spend a Night Together*, *Sabrina*, *Trifole* (Kino); *The Doll* (Klubb Super 8); *Bikini Mayhem*, *Blood in the Walls*, *Castle of the Damned*, *The Covenant*, *Mar.ia*, 1978, *Stickman's Hollow* (Leomark); *Maryam Pagi Ke Malam*, *Rain Town* (Liminal); *It's Never Over* Jeff Buckley, *Plainclothes* (Magnolia); *Vampire Slayer* (Mega Reel); *Pulse*, *Suspect* (Mill Creek); *George A. Romero's Resident Evil*, *Gnome Sick 7 Slays til Mithras*, *Shine* (MPI); *Kill the Jockey*, *Naked Ambition* (Music Box); *Blood of Revenge*, *Cheap Thrills*, *Choice of Arms*, *The Eel*, *Exorcismo*, *Fearless Dragons*, *Fighting Back*, *Frightmare*, *House on the Edge of the Park*, *Illustrious Corpses*, *The John Wayne Gacy Murders*, *King of Beggars*, *Long Live the King*, *Luther the Geek*, *On the Run*, *Police Python 357*, *Série Noire*, *Shinobi*, *Snakes on a Plane*, *Taxi Zum Klo*, *Under Siege*, *Vampire Zombies from Space!*, *Wild Beasts* (MVD); *Bitter Desire* (Nathan Hill); *Keeper*, *Shelby Oaks* (Neon); *Diciannove* (Oscilloscope); *Roofman* (Paramount); *The Films of Hisayasu Sato V.2* (Pink Line); *The Blind The Phil Robertson Memorial* (Pinnacle); *King Kung Fu* (Reel Vault); *Specter's Rock* (Satum's Core); *Bronco Bullfight* (Seventy Seven); *Blue Moon*, *Ladder 49* (Sony); *Dummy* (SRS); *Falls the Shadow* *The Life of Athol Fugard* (Syndicado); *The Parish* (Uncork'd); *Ma and Pa Kettle Complete Comedy Collection*, *The Thing with Feathers*, *Wicked for Good*, *The Woody Woodpecker and Friends Golden Age Collection* (Universal); *Hung Up on a Dream* *The Zombies Documentary* (Utopia); *Ganymede* (Vantage); *Twin Cheeks* (VHShiffest); *By the Light of the Silvery Moon*, *Doctor Who Tom Baker Complete Season 2*, *Falling Skies Complete Series*, *For the First Time*, *Lucifer Complete Series*, *Manpower*, *The New Fred and Barney Show Complete Series*, *One Battle after Another*, *Red Dust*, *Roots*, *Shameless Season 11*, *Shameless Complete Series*, *The Verdict* (Warner); *Altered*, *Exit Protocol*, *The Perfect Gamble*, *Reverence* (Well Go); *Asylum of Darkness*, *Ozone Attack of the Redneck Mutants*, *Violent New Breed* (Wild Eye); *Aftermath* (X4)

NEW IN 4K: The following titles have recently been released in 4K format—*Smashing Machine* (A24); *Dangerous Animals* (AMD); *A Candle for the Devil* (Bizarro); *Springsteen Deliver Me from Nowhere*, *Tron Ares* (Buena Vista); *The Garbage Pail Kids*, *King of the Gypsies*, *The Stendhal Syndrome*, *Timecrimes*, *Troll 2* (CAV); *Bullet in the Head*, *End of Watch*, *Once a Thief* (Cinedigm); *Birth*, *Captain Blood*, *The Dead*, *Dead Man*, *House Party*, *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, *Yi Yi* (Criterion); *The Dam Busters* (Film Movement); *Ladies and Gentlemen The Fabulous Stains* (Fun City); *Babe*, *Babe Pig in the City*, *Dante's Peak*, *Death on the Nile*, *Divya*, *Evil under the Sun*, *The Mechanic*, *The Mirror Crack'd*, *The Pink Panther*, *The Pink Panther Strikes Again*, *Revenge of the Pink Panther*, *Rolling Stones Let's Spend the Night Together*, *A Shot in the Dark* (Kino); *Shine* (MPI); *Crusing*, *Evil Dead Rise*, *House on the Edge of the Park*, *Snakes on a Plane*, *Thor*, *Under Siege*, *Wild Beasts* (MVD); *Keeper* (Neon); *Bringing out the Dead*, *Roofman* (Paramount); *Thunderheart* (Sony); *Mary Me*, *Wicked for Good* (Universal); *One Battle after Another* (Warner); *Altered* (Well Go)

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Current Attractions

The following titles recently appeared for the first time:

Abled The Blake
 Leeper Story (X4)
 Addy Daddy (Synergetic)*
 Afterburn (Kino)
 Aftermath (X4)*
 Altered (Well Go)
 American Clown (Vision)
 American Schemers (Deskpup)
 The American Southwest / Borderland Jaguar (Giant)*
 Apocalypse Bigfoot (Wild Eye)
 Arachnado (Wild Eye)
 Beyond Graceland
 Ladymsmith Black Mambazo (Pop Twist)
 The Bezuidenhout Bombing (X4)
 Bikini Mayhem (Leomark)
 Bitter Desire (Nathan Hill)
 The Blind The Phil Robertson Memorial Edition (Pinnacle)
 Blood on the Walls (Leomark)*
 Blue Lights Season 3 (Warner)
 Blue Moon (Sony)*
 Blu-ray The Art of the Disc (360)
 Breaking the Silence Victims of Abuse (7 Palms)
 Breast Friends Club 6 (Acid Bath)*
 Captain Blood (Criterion)
 Castle of the Damned (Leomark)*
 Caught by the Tides (Criterion)
 Charlatan (Alpha)*
 The Christmas Quest/The Sweetest Christmas (Cinedigm)
 Come Closer (Kino)
 The Confessions (Uncork'd)
 The Covenant (Leomark)*
 A Dangerous Woman (Alpha)*
 Darbie's Scream House (Wild Eye)
 The Days of Dylan Thomas (Green Planet)*
 Diciannove (Oscilloscope)
 Dolphin Summer (Vantage)
 Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Shark (Wild Eye)
 Drag Me to Fest V.2
 Tales from the Italian Horror Festival (Rustblade)
 E. 1027 - Eileen Gray and the House by the Sea (First Run)
 El Cuerpazo Del Delito (MVD)
 Emergent City (MVD)

Endurance (Dreamscape)
 Eternal Sky (Dreamscape)
 Everything You Are (Deskpup)
 Exit Protocol (Well Go)
 The Eye (Freestyle)*
 Fackham Hall (Bleeker Street)*
 Falling Skies Complete Series (Warner)
 Falls The Shadow The Life of Athol Fugard (Syndicado)
 Following Yonder Star/The Gift of Peace (Cinedigm)
 Fragments of Us (7 Palms)
 The French Italian (Level 33)*
 Front of the Class/Beyond the Blackboard/A Smile As Big As the Moon (Cinedigm)*
 Ganymede (Vantage)
 The Gatehouse (Uncork'd)
 The Girl in the Snow (Alpha)*
 Glitch Ditch 100 (Acid Bath)*
 Glitch Ditch 88 (Acid Bath)
 Glitch Ditch 89 (Acid Bath)
 Glitch Ditch 90 (Acid Bath)
 Glitch Ditch 91 (Acid Bath)
 Glitch Ditch 92 (Acid Bath)
 Glitch Ditch 93 (Acid Bath)
 Glitch Ditch 94 (Acid Bath)
 Glitch Ditch 95 (Acid Bath)
 Glitch Ditch 96 (Acid Bath)*
 Glitch Ditch 97 (Acid Bath)*
 Glitch Ditch 98 (Acid Bath)*
 Glitch Ditch 99 (Acid Bath)*
 Great Mysteries of Akhenaten (360)
 The Ground beneath Our Feet (BMG)
 Guardians of the Formula (Synergetic)*
 Half Way to Heaven (Alpha)*
 Heart & Soul A Love Story (MVD)
 Heaven's Murderer (SP)*
 Hellhounds (Uncork'd)
 Home Free (Kino)
 House of Ka (Freestyle)*
 Hunting Season (Samuel Goldwyn)
 Ice 3 (International)
 Icefall (Decal)
 Inconceivable (Giant)*
 Infinite Summer (Indiepix)

Intrusive Thoughts (Freestyle)*
 It's Never Over Jeff Buckley (Magnolia)
 Jack and Ava (Freestyle)*
 James Balsamo Knows How to Rock 4 (Acid Bath)
 The John Wayne Gacy Murders (MVD)
 Keeper (Neon)
 Kevin Kills (Socal)
 King Kung Fu (Reel Vault)
 Köln 75 (Kino)
 La Puerta Verde (Synergetic)*
 The Last Movie They Ever Made (Deskpup)
 Letting Go of Jack (7 Palms)
 Libertate (Synergetic)*
 A Little Prayer (Music Box)
 Lynley (Warner)
 The Making of a Japanese (First Run)
 Man Eater (Socal)*
 Mar.ia (Leomark)*
 Maryam Pagi Ke Malam (Liminal)*
 The Meathook Massacre (Socal)*
 Mexicali Rose (Alpha)*
 Missed Opportunities (Burning Bulb)*
 Motiv8tion (Leomark)
 The Movie Orgy (AGFA)
 Naked Ambition (Music Box)
 NASA Moments JPL and the Space Age Mission to Mars (Wonderscape)
 1978 (Leomark)*
 Nobody Wants to Shoot a Woman (Freestyle)
 The Nude (Indiepix)
 One Battle after Another (Warner)*
 Orwell 2+2=5 (Decal)
 Outlaws & Lawmen: 10 TV Westerns Collection (Warner)
 The Perfect Gamble (Well Go)
 Plainclothes (Magnolia)
 Polar Opposites/Winter Love Story/Winter in Vail/Baby It's Cold (Warner)*
 Inside/Hearts of Winter/Love in Wonderland (Cinedigm)
 Possession (International)
 Private Princess Christmas (Cinedigm)

Put Your Soul on Your Hand and Walk (Kino)
 The Rage (International)
 Rain Town (Liminal)*
 ReEntry (Kino)
 Revenge of the Necromancer (7 Palms)
 Reverence (Well Go)
 Roofman (Paramount)
 Royal Flying Doctor Service Season 3 (Paramount)
 Santa Tell Me/Finding Santa (Cinedigm)
 The Senior (Angel)
 Sex Ritual (International)
 Sexy Time 14 (Acid Bath)*
 Shaka A Story of Aloha (Freestyle)*
 Shine (MPI)*
 Shooting Silvio (Leomark)
 Sinful Strippers Pack (Full Moon)
 The Smashing Machine (A24)
 Spider Baby (Socal)
 Springsteen Deliver Me from Nowhere (Buena Vista)
 Stickman's Hollow (Leomark)*
 Suro (Synergetic)*
 Swastika (MVD)
 Terezin (Vantage)
 The 13th Friday (Uncork'd)
 The Trouble I See... (Freestyle)*
 Trifole (Kino)
 Tron Ares (Buena Vista)
 Truth & Treason (Angel)
 An Unexpected Valentine/My Secret Valentine (Cinedigm)
 Vampire Slayer (Mega Reel)*
 Vampire Zombies from Space (MVD)
 VHS Maniacs V.1 (Filmlandia)
 We Are Not Alone (Uncork'd)
 What about Sal? (Cardinal)
 What We Used to Be (Leomark)
 Where the Wind Blows (Level 33)*
 Wicked for Good (Universal)
 Wild but True Season 1 (Dreamscape)
 Witchbitch (International)
 Women on Mars (Green Planet)*
 You're All Doomed (Wild Eye)

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 Ace Spectrum:
 →Tax Broke
From Acid Bath:
 →Party Patrol
 →Party Patrol 2
 →Party Patrol 3
 →Party Patrol 4
 →Party Patrol 5
 →Party Patrol 6
 →Party Patrol 7
From Amazon:
 →Dark Blue
 →The Dark Half
 →Dillinger (Leomark)*
From AMD:
 →Murder before Evensong
 →Talamasca The Secret Order Season 1
 →Good Boy
From Big Picture:
 →The Earthing Movie
From BMG:
 Call Me When You Can A Father's Day Story
 The Love Doctor Tell the World
 →God & Beer
 →I Am Living Proof
 →My Mystery Romance
 →After All
From Brainstorm:
 →Scurry
 From BSX:
 →The Passion Oratorio
From Buena Vista:
 →Predator 2
From Bullfrog:
 Far Out Life on & after the Commune
 →From Sea to Shining Sea
 Katharine Lee Bates and the Story of America the Beautiful
From Chemical Burn:
 Exorcists vs. Vampires The Battle for Your Soul
 →Bigfoot Massacre No One Gets Out Alive
From Cinedigm:

Providence Falls
 Deathstalker
 Savage Hunt
 →Hearts around the Table 4-Movie Collection
 →Moby Dick
 →Little Amelie or The Character of Rain
 →Villa Amore / Blind Date Book Club / The Perfect Bride / 3 Bed 2 Bath 1 Ghost / Legend of the Lost Locket / Make Me a Match
 →Journey to You / The Easter Bloom / The Blessing Bracelet
From Classicflix:
 →The Ad-Libbers Surviving Episodes
From Criterion:
 Cloud Killers of the Flower Moon
 Classe tous risques
From Decal:
 →Resurrection
 Trap House
 Wildcat
From Deskpup:
 ArtCon
 Cursed Hearse
 Ugly Sweater
 Bad Woodoo
 Lust and Fear
 →Lone Wolves
 →Skate to Hell
 →Vice and Virtue
 →Death by Fruitcake
 →5683
From Dreamscape:
 The Pollinators
 Agents for Life
 Don't Forget to Leave
 →Wow I Never Knew That Season 2
From Film Movement:
 →The Time It Takes
From Filmhub:
 →357 Six Bullets for Revenge
 →Agent Kelly
 →All 4da Green
 →Bedroom Story
 →Chariot
 →Dark Legacy
 →Dirty
 →Don't Let Me Stay
 →Elenore Makes Love
 →Elvis & Priscilla Conditional Love
 →Endgame 2050
 →Equality U
 →Every Thing Is Both
 →Eye for Eye
 →Forgotting Dad
 →The Girl in the Cornfield
 →Girl/Girl Scene 1984
 →God's Not Here
 →Half Moon
 →Happy Birthday
 →I'm Haunted
 →Inside the World's Most Haunted

Houses
 →JFK X Solving the Crime of the Century
 →Jurica Road
 →Life Love Dogs
 →Maverick
 Manhunt Brazil
 →No Such Thing As Loyalty 3
 →Nora's Hair Salon 3
 →Ombis Alien Invasion
 →Operation Anaconda The Battle of Roberts' Ridge
 →Oxy Morons
 →Plato's Reality Machine
 →Rescue from Gilligan's Island Trivia Edition
 →Risky Business A Look Inside America's Adult Film Industry
 →Satin
 →Secret Space UFOs Fast Walkers
 →Severe Clear
 →Shackleton's Captain
 →The Shadows
 →Sin
 →Square One
 →Stoael Jackson
 →Stolen Breath The Truth Revealed
 →Therese
 →Tomcat Tales
 →Transparent
 →Travis The True Story of Travis Walton
 →Underground Comics
 →Up on the Woottop
From Filmlandia:
 VHS Maniacs V.1
 →VHS Resurrection
From Full Moon:
 Model Behavior 3
 DVD Movie Collection
 End of the World
From Image:
 →Muzzle 2 City of Wolves
From Indie Rights:
 Steele Wool
 →Thy Will Be Done Season 6
 →Plight
From Indiepix:
 Flathead
 →Poppy
From Jinga:
 Darklands
 From Ketchup:
 →Not without Hope
From Kino:
 Earthquake
 Underground
 Little Trouble Girls
 All the Names of God
 She Was Here
 →My Neighbor Adolf
 →Timestamp
 →Continental Split
 →The Business of Fancypancing
From Legacy:
 Royal Runaways
From Leomark:
 Inheritance to Love

→Dead White and Blue
 →El Pacto
 →The Legends of Nethiah
From Liminal:
 →A Girl Who Loves a Girl
 →Kickflip
 →Woif
 →The Dealer
From Lionsgate:
 →Now You See Me Now You Don't
From Magnolia:
 The Carpenter's Son
 →Man Finds Tape
From Mubi:
 Lurker
 →The History of Sound
From Music Box:
 →The Summer Book
 →Zodiac Killer Project
From MVD:
 The Rubinoos Live at Rockpalast 1978
 Rockers
 Knock Off
 The Red Book
 Ritual Gates of Hell
 Mel Brooks' Spaceballs The Animated Series
 →The Girl Who Leapt through Time
 →El Proceso de Las Senoritas Vivanco
 →Quantum Supremacy
From Myrad:
 →All the Names of God
From Paramount:
 Miss Scarlet Season 6
 Family Recipe Jewish American Style Bookish Season 1
 Dexter Resurrection Season 1
 Regretting You
 Starring Dick Van Dyke
 →The Running Man
 →Star Trek Strange New Worlds Season 3
 →All Creatures Great & Small Season 6
From Rainbow:
 →The Miracle of Tonya Pinkins
From Rebellium:
 Cottonmouth
From Reel Vault:
 →The Man I Love
 →The Passing of the Third Floor Back
 →The Go-Getter
 →New Orleans after Dark
 →Once upon a Texas Train
 →Rio Rita
 →Show of Shows
 →You Gotta Stay Happy
 →Someone at the Door
 →The Echo Murders
 →No Survivors Please
From Sony:
 →King Ivory
 →Sisu Road to Revenge
 →Cobra Kai Season 6
From Syndicado:
 Fear of Flying
 →The Princess and the Dragon
From Uncork'd:
 →I Am Rave
From Universal:
 Five Night at Freddy's 2
 →Resident Alien Season 4
 →Resident Alien Complete Series
 →Song Sung Blue
From Vantage:
 →The Curse of the Clown Motel
 →The Devil's Trap
From Vertical:
 The Astronaut
From Vision:
 →Bo Diddley All Star Jam
From Warner:
 →The Closer Complete Series (28 platters)
 →Kingdom
 →Shakespeare & Hathaway Season 5
 →The Thorn Birds The Collector's Set
From We Got Power:
 The Secret Lives of Bill Bartell
From Well Go:
 Frontier Crucible
 →Ghost Train
 →Row 19
 →Big Brother
 →Revolver Lily
 →Special ID
 →Rescue at Dongji
 →Lone Samurai
From Wild Eye:
 →Creatures of the Night
 →Amityville Aliens
 →Quakesaurus
 →Night of the Rats
From Wonderscape:
 NASA Moments The Stuff of Dreams
 →America 250 Boston Tea Party / Revolutionary War / George Washington
 →America 250 The Louisiana Purchase / Lewis & Clark / Sacagawea
 →America 250 Alexander Graham Bell / Thomas Edison / The Wright Brothers
From X4:
 The Prospect
 →Goldmine
From Yellow Hat:
 →The Life after Death Project 2 Personal Encounters