

THE BLARG

THE SITE OF JUSTIN SHADY + WAYNE CHINSANG

A few quick DVD reviews...

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...right here:

"A Very Brave Witch... And More Great Halloween Stories For Kids!" (Scholastic)

Fall is my favorite season, Halloween my favorite holiday. So what better way to gear up for that most wonderful time of the year than by enjoying a few Halloween-themed children's classics. All eight of the stories on this disc are worthy of being there, but my favorite is a tie between Tomi Ungerer's "The Three Robbers" and the absolutely classic Robert Bright tale "Georgie." Ungerer's illustration work on "The Three Robbers" is an art school nerd's dream, and Bright's sweet tale about a ghost looking for a new house to haunt in "Georgie" is children's book storytelling at its best. Kids will enjoy each of this set's eight tales, but these two stories in particular will resonate with both the children of today and the kids of yesterday.

"Chicka Chicka 1-2-3... And More Counting Fun!" (Scholastic)

If you grew up in the early eighties, chances are some of the first books you cracked open were written by Bill Martin, Jr. We may be adults now (reluctantly), but we can pass on the writing of Martin with DVDs like this. Collected here are four stories about numbers and counting, starting off with Martin's "Chicka Chicka 1-2-3" (which is illustrated by Milwaukee-based artist Lois Ehlert). Also included are Rosemary Wells' "Emily's First 100 Days Of School" and David M. Schwartz's "How Much Is A Million?" and "If You Made A Million." Still, I have to play favorites here and admit that Martin's story is the best, mostly because of its nostalgia.

"Bad Boy Bubby" (Blue Underground)

If you've never heard of this movie its premise alone should be enough to grab your interest: After spending 35 years locked in an apartment by his deranged mother, the "demented man-child" Bubby has finally broken free of his prison and is ready to discover the "wonders of sex, crime, rock & roll, and pizza." Christ, that describes the life story of some people I know. Anyway, the end result is as demented

as you hope it to be, so if you're looking for something you've never seen before (If you *have* seen something like this before, WHERE?!?), give it a try.

“Circle Of Iron” (Blue Underground)

Did you know that Bruce Lee co-wrote a screenplay with James Coburn shortly before his death in 1973? Yeah, me neither. But he *did*, and the result is this marriage of martial arts and magic starring David Carradine, Christopher Lee and Roddy McDowall. Released in 1978, some five years after Bruce's death, viewers definitely get a sense from the film's style that we're getting dangerously close to the 1980s, and away from the Golden Age of kung fu cinema. It's definitely dated, but still holds up as a solid action film some thirty years later.

“Tokyo!” (Liberation Entertainment)

An anthology film that collects the work of three directors: French directors Michel Gondry (“Eternal Sunshine Of The Spotless Mind”) and Leos Carax (“The Lovers On The Bridge”), and South Korean director Bong Joon-Ho (“The Host”). All three directors used the city of Tokyo as the backdrop for their tales of transformation (Gondry's “Interior Design”), anarchy (Carax's “Merde”) and rebirth (Joon-Ho's “Shaking Tokyo”). Similar in theme to films like “Four Rooms” and “New York Stories”, it's not *entirely* fair to judge this movie in anything but its entirety. And, as a *whole*, the film does work. But, just as is the case with those earlier comparisons, some of the stories are stronger than others. Oddly enough, the segment I enjoyed the most was from the director I knew the least about: Leos Carax. Still, check it out for yourself; your favorite (and *least* favorite) story might surprise you.

“Billie Holiday: The Life And Artistry Of Lady Day” (Idem Home Video)

A fairly narrow history of Lady Day that seems to use more footage and audio of the *era* than it does of the woman herself. If you're not familiar with Billie Holiday or her work, this will serve as a good 101 course to bring you up to speed. But if you're a fan of her work and have even a general knowledge of her life story (fame/addiction/death), this disc might not be *as* essential to your collection. Extras include a discography and bibliography, as well as select lyrics from some of her more well-known songs. Also collected are a handful of scenes from the 1947 film “New Orleans” in which Holiday appears as a maid. Starring in a few scenes alongside Louis Armstrong and other jazz musicians, these extras were a nice addition that I hadn't seen before. But if you're a huge fan of Holiday and that era of jazz, chances are you already own “New Orleans” in its entirety.

“History On My Arms w/ Dee Dee Ramone” (MVD Visual)

Three separate documentaries are collected here to look into the life and times of late Ramones bassist Dee Dee Ramone (Douglas Glenn Colvin). The first is director Lech Kowalski's 2003 documentary “Hey Is Dee Dee Home.” The footage was originally filmed in 1992 for Kowalski's documentary “Born To Lose: The Last Rock And Roll Movie”, but after Dee Dee's overdose in 2002, the director pieced together what footage he had of the bass player and released this hour-long documentary. More about his addiction than his music, the film is now merely documentation of what fate Dee Dee would face just a decade later. Next up is the half-hour “History On My Arms” short, which is essentially some of the more light-hearted segments that were taken out of the full-length. These 27 minutes concentrate more on the music than any other segment. And finally, the 22-minute short “Vom In Paris” is an interview with drummer Vom Ritchie about a night he spent with Dee Dee in Paris in 1989. Also included is an audio CD titled “Dee Dee Blues” which collects a handful of live blues recordings Dee Dee made himself with nothing more than a guitar and a microphone.

“My Breakfast With Blassie” (Video Service Corporation)

In 1983, less than a year before he succumbed to cancer, Andy Kaufman made a parody of “My Dinner with Andre” called “My Breakfast with Blassie.” Shot at Sambo's restaurant in Hollywood, Kaufman meets with legendary wrestler “Classy” Freddie Blassie (who, of course, is “The King of All Men”) to

discuss personal hygiene, fame, and why eating pancakes is bad for you. As incredibly boring as that may sound, you'd be surprised at how entertaining it truly is. It's like sitting next to two insane men in a diner and listening in on their equally-as-insane conversation. Of course, I'm a fan of both Kaufman and Blassie, so I admittedly go into this review with a bit of bias. But the real shock for me was how Blassie steals the show from Kaufman, providing more hilarious one-liners and anecdotes than the comedian himself. At one point he refers to their Thai waitress as having come from "the Orient." And he does it to her *face*! Blassie's brash attitude plays along well with Kaufman's attentive interest in all things wrestling, resulting in a bizarre mixing of the minds in a short film we'll probably never see the likes of again.

"Porn Stars Of The 80's" (Blue Underground)

There was seriously a late-night cable talk show about porn? Sadly, *yes*, and its name was "Midnight Blue." Collected here are the "best" (?) clips of that show from the decade we'd all like to forget: the 1980s. Cameo "appearances" and interviews with well-known stars of the era ([Ron Jeremy](#), Nina Hartley, et al.) are interspersed with smart-assed commentary from magazine publisher/TV host/porn czar Al Goldstein (who is as slimy a human being as you'd expect a porn czar to be). I have to be honest here: this disc left me feeling embarrassed for anyone who actually ever watched this show. Seriously, if you want porno, *watch porno*. Don't watch some gold chain-wearing sleazeball interview ghastly gutter-hookers as he tries to justify the legitimacy of pornography. It's *sex*, Al! It doesn't *need* a commercial!

"Porn Stars Of The 90's" (Blue Underground)

Exactly like the review above only with slightly better production quality, Christy Canyon, and a fatter (and even *more disgusting*, if you can believe that) Al Goldstein.

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