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3D's Christopher Columbus

The granddaddy of popular 3D films, **Bwana Devil 3-D**, has been released as a 3D Blu-ray by 3-D Film Archive, MGM and Kino Lorber Incorporated as a *KL Studio Classics* title (UPC#738329267216, \$30). There were Europeans who had been to North America before Christopher Columbus, but his expedition was the tipping point, the point where everybody in Europe found out that the American continents were there. Similarly, 3D filmmaking had been around for a while, but it was the production and distribution of **Bwana Devil** that created the first 3D boxoffice hit, the first time the general public became cumulatively aware of the format's entertainment value. The film set off a cycle and industry feeding frenzy of 3D movies that ate itself up all too quickly, but from the point of the release of **Bwana Devil** in 1952, 3D films became a part of the public's consciousness, opening the way for periodic revivals and resurgences of existing 3D films and new ones, as well as indelible news photos of early Fifties audiences in packed theaters, all wearing 3D glasses.

Directed by Arch Oboler, the film is based upon a genuine incident in the late Nineteenth Century that is best known today as the inspiration for **Ghost and the Darkness**, about the British effort in Kenya to build a railway in the hinterlands, which is seriously delayed when lions begin treating the railway laborers like goodies at a snack bar. Robert Stack and Nigel Bruce star as the British site managers of the project, using mostly Hindu workers, with a few African workers in support and tribesmen visiting now and then. Barbara Britton shows up after the 79-minute film's Intermission (needed in the early days to handle the projection requirements and preserved on the Blu-ray for academic sake) as the wife of Stack's character.

Oboler is not a very good director but he at least had a vision of what could be accomplished with the format and he saw it through. Those who are steeped in film lore will tear out their hair at the many shots of the train approaching the camera and wonder why one such shot was not used in the very opening of the film, as a tribute to the Lumiere Brothers (one of whom was still alive at the time...). As it is, the shots are broken up with the editing and negate the effect. To give Oboler credit, he never goes overboard with gimmicks, outside of one scene where both Stack and Britton are intercut closing in on the camera to smooch. Ewww—good thing that never became a trend. There are a couple of spears flying toward the camera, and a lion leap or two, but for the most part, what Oboler delivers and audiences thrilled at were simply the juxtaposition of people and objects, be it bushes, trees, tents or so on, within the same shot.

While the opening credits claim that the movie was photographed in Kenya and other African locations, along with California, that is because Oboler had his own library of African stock footage and just put his actors, who never left Southern California, in front of a rear projection screen. The 3D effects nicely separate the actors from the flat background, and no one in the day cared, because it is still thrilling to see the actors popped forward from the locale. The genuine California location footage, which provides a decent substitute for African grassland, always has foreground or background objects to give it perspective, and even in our present day, it is a marvel. The squared full screen color image has an immaculate transfer and the combination of bright, clearly accurate hues and depth perception makes your heart flutter with every new shot.

Perhaps the most interesting retrospective aspect to the film, however, is the contrast between its two stars. Stack, of course, found his greatest success on television, particularly when screens were small and in black and white. In color and 3D, he just sort of sinks into the background, with his performance matching his visual presence. Bruce, on the other hand, dominates every frame in which he appears. With his round face and vivacious personality, he swells within 3D image and gobbles up everything else that is there, particularly the gaunt Stack. Even the lions are no match for him.

The narrative lumbers through its suspense and thrills in a sufficiently brisk manner and builds to an adequate climax. While the awkward staging and limited character development make it difficult to justify watching the 2D version that has been included on the platter, despite the great color, the addition of the 3D effects is enough to turn such blandness into a thrilling spectacle.

A third presentation of the film is also available on the platter, utilizing the red/cyan shift to create its 3D effects (note—as with other Kino 3D releases, the two 3D

versions appear on the disc's initial menu, while the 2D version is accessed by choosing the standard 3D option first). A single pair of red/blue glasses is included with the platter. The advantage of the red/cyan option is that not everybody has access to the more sophisticated 3D playback systems, so that while the colors are suppressed—you can see yellows and light blues clearly, greens and fleshtones vaguely, but reds are nonexistent—the 3D effects are there in nearly all of their glory, more than enough to sustain the film's fun.

The 86-minute program opens with a black-and-white introduction that originally accompanied the film, featuring Lloyd Nolan and Beany & Cecil puppets explaining the 3D system and revving up the excitement for the feature, making the first color title card of the film itself all the more thrilling. Three versions (matching the three viewing options for the film) of a 21-minute audio history of the film's creation and popularity are included, accompanied by a montage of press materials, archival photos and ad artwork, which are flat but bob around the screen as if they were floating and include a handful of actual 3D snapshots taken on the set of the film. Three 2D trailers are included, as well. Accompanied by optional English subtitles, the film's monophonic sound is not one of its strengths. Slightly scratchy, the audio is flat and cheap sounding, and the quality of the orchestral score is occasionally cringe worthy.

Lovely Rita

Orson Welles's enigmatic crime thriller starring Welles and Rita Hayworth, the 1948 Columbia Pictures **The Lady from Shanghai**, has been released as a 4K Blu-ray by Sony Pictures Home Entertainment (UPC#043396637122, \$31). We reviewed two standard Blu-rays in May 05, one from Mill Creek Entertainment and one from Turner Entertainment, but there really is no comparison of either one to the 4K. The squared full screen black-and-white picture looked great on the standard BDs, the Mill Creek version offering more detail and the Turner version offering deeper blacks, but the 4K presentation looks like a real film. It essentially combines the best aspects of both previous BDs, and then improves upon that. Smooth and finely detailed, every moment is utterly captivating and aids the 87-minute movie—which is, in effect, a series of breathless individual scenes strung together to create a vaguely coherent narrative about infidelity and an insurance and murder scam—by tuning each scene into an individual gem and then stringing them together like a priceless necklace. But as captivating as the picture is, the real improvement offered by the 4K version is with its monophonic audio track. The audio tracks on the standard BDs pale in comparison, seeming wispy where they 4K audio is full-throated. True, the film has a convoluted audio mix in places—a voiceover narration done by Welles to help tie everything together identifies a specific date at one point, and then has the film taking place several months earlier than that date shortly thereafter—but like the fabulous cinematography, it is still crafted with great skill within each scene, from the vocal intonations of the cast members to the offhand sound effects and background score, and the 4K Blu-ray delivers every dazzling sequence, gloriously.

Along with a trailer, the commentary by Peter Bogdanovich that appeared on the Turner release has been carried over. Also featured is a 21-minute interview with Bogdanovich from 2000 that is essentially an abridged version of his commentary, although it does contain one very interesting montage of the film's musical score to demonstrate how a single theme is used over and over again with various modifications.

Hayworth and Glenn Ford portray a couple whose gravitational pull is so strong that perfect strangers are inexorably drawn to their orbit in the 1946 Columbia production, **Gilda**, a Sony Criterion Collection Blu-ray (UPC#715515165914, \$40). George Macready portrays one such individual in what was probably his most accomplished role, as the owner of a casino in Buenos Aires who not only hires Ford's character, an itinerant gambler, but clearly has a crush on him that appears at times to be mutual (Ford fully anticipates what Dirk Bogarde would later become), and then marries Hayworth's character, perhaps because he subliminally connects with the attraction Ford's character has for her. Crime hovers on the periphery of the narrative—their gravity attracts that, too—but the film is predominantly a

Rita (Continued)

compelling three-way romance that goes in every direction. Hayworth's performance is on the level of supernova when it comes to stardom, and yet when you go back to rewatch the film—the gravity extends to the viewer, as well—you can immediately see how intricately and carefully considered her acting is, even as the film, directed by Charles Vidor, is showcasing her glamour and pizzazz. Running 110 minutes, the film is a masterful blend of movie stars and narrative, and its attractions show no indication of ever collapsing.

The squared full screen black-and-white picture looks gorgeous. The opening reel or two are a touch soft, but thereafter, the image is always very crisp, while contrasts are well defined and there is not a blemish to be seen. Sony's DVD (May 01) looked terrific, but the BD is even crisper and better detailed. In point of fact, thanks to the clarity of the BD, Hayworth is wearing a sheer negligee a little after the film's halfway point, and when the light hits it and you have a decent sized screen, ooh la la. The monophonic sound is also reasonably strong, and among other things, Hayworth performs a couple of musical numbers—indeed, another indication of how well the film is working is that one of those numbers, reasonably lengthy, occurs right as the final act is picking up speed, and yet there is not the least feeling of impatience for letting her work her way through it before continuing with the story. There are optional English subtitles, a trailer, an intercut 16-minute appreciation and deconstruction of the film from Martin Scorsese and Baz Luhrmann, a 22-minute appreciation by Film Noir expert Eddie Mueller (since the film is set in Buenos Aires, he postulates that the conclusion is an intriguing symbol for America coming home after the war) that also provides some interesting production background details, and a great 1964 episode of a half hour (25 minutes) TV series entitled *Hollywood and the Stars* about Hayworth's career, *The Odyssey of Rita Hayworth*, narrated by Joseph Cotten (with some voiceover by Hayworth herself) that has loads of wonderful movie clips (including—cringe—Hayworth or her double sliding into second base, in shorts, in a baseball film) and archival materials, concluding with a promotion for **Circus World**.

Richard Schickel supplies a relaxed but informative commentary, going over the backgrounds of the major cast and crew members, placing the film in the context of post-WWII cinema, and deconstructing the story's dynamics. He also draws extensive comparisons between *Gilda* and *The Lady from Shanghai*, speculating the Hayworth's performance in the latter is significantly enhanced by the breakup she was going through with Welles. Part of what makes *Gilda* work so well, however, is that there are constant glimpses of Hayworth's character as a genuine innocent—not a femme fatale, but a wide-eyed, eager young woman who just wants to have the love she feels returned in kind. Her performance was in effect playing off the more wholesome roles she had been cast in up to that point. "I don't know what particular Hollywood genius decided that she would be this sexually energized woman who is capable of breaking hearts at the sort of intense, dark level of this movie. It's possible that her fairly colorful romantic life off the screen suggested these possibilities."

"Let's play!" in 4K

In 1993, Robert Rodriguez burst onto the filmmaking scene with a shockingly inexpensive and fantastically well staged action thriller, **El Mariachi**. The film may have been cobbled together on a few credit cards, but the story has a consistent and relentless A-to-B-to-C logic, the Mexican locations and cast enabled the exploration of a setting and culture that is normally glossed over or embellished by larger movies, the gore is unflinching, and there is a decent sense of humor guiding every conflict and confrontation. Carlos Gallardo is a guitar player who wanders into a small contemporary town looking for work and is mistaken for a drug dealer who carries guns in his guitar case and dresses similarly, in mariachi attire. Then the drug dealer accidentally grabs the hero's guitar case and the hero, who is fortunately quick on his feet, is stuck with the guns. The primary villain is another drug dealer that the first one is targeting, and the barmaid in a tavern he owns, played by Consuelo Gómez, takes a fancy to the hero. Running 81 minutes, the film is a joyful embrace of cinema's potential and delivers as much satisfaction with its entertainment as it does with its demonstration of what a skilled and enthusiastic filmmaker can accomplish with a camera and a few friends.

Rodriguez screened the movie at festivals and Sony grabbed it immediately, allowing Rodriguez to punch up the sound and fix a couple of other details. The film easily turned a profit and so Sony came back to Rodriguez with a much larger wad of cash to make a slick, Hollywood sequel, the 1995 **Desperado**, with Antonio Banderas replacing Gallardo as the mariachi player and Salma Hayek as a new barmaid, of sorts. Steve Buscemi, Cheech Marin, Quentin Tarantino and Danny Trejo, among others, also show up in smaller roles. Running 104 minutes, the film discards the momentum of logic in favor of style, but there is so much glorious style in the film, visually and aurally, that the trade off does no harm whatsoever. The action and gore remain, and Rodriguez doubles down on the humor, but it seems as if he can do no wrong. Staged to a musical score by Los Lobos and others that is pretty much the greatest driving at night music ever recorded (there is even a dream sequence where Banderas performances a kick butt musical number), the film is positively giddy with a glorious blend of machismo and panache, and is an ideal motion picture for playback in 4K.

But as sometimes happens when the sublime is reached, Rodriguez attempted to go further in 2003 and fell short instead with **Once upon a Time in Mexico**. Banderas returns, Hayek has a couple of scenes, Trejo and Marin are sort of back, and joining them are Johnny Depp, Rubén Blades, Mickey Rourke, Eva Mendes, Willem Dafoe and Pedro Armendáriz, Jr.. If **Desperado** is opera, then **Once upon a Time in Mexico** is opera buffa. Rodriguez abandons the strengths of logical storytelling that served **El Mariachi** so effectively to create a confusing tale about an attempted coup involving

drug dealers, the CIA and several independent forces, including the hero. Running 102 minutes, the action scenes are fabulous—which, mind you, is enough to justify spending time with the film—but rarely grounded in reality, and everyone acts, vigorously, as if they are in on the joke. While there is music, it almost always feels like underscoring and never carries the film forward as it does in **Desperado**. Rodriguez basically got even more money to make **Once upon a Time in Mexico** than he got for **Desperado**, and he lets it all show with a spectacle of explosions, stunts and stars, but nobody paid him to come up with a coherent narrative before he started, and after the legitimate high of **Desperado**, it is a mild letdown that is better than nothing at all but disappointing when you consider all of the potential that was abandoned.

The three films have been bundled in a terrific four-platter Blu-ray set by Sony and Arrow Video, **The Mexico Trilogy: El Mariachi, Desperado & Once upon a Time in Mexico** (UPC#760137145950, \$100). Two presentations of **Desperado** are included, a standard Blu-ray and a 4K Blu-ray (the other two films are only available as standard Blu-rays), and those two platters are also available as a single title release (UPC#760137145967, \$60). All three films have optional English subtitles.

Letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1, **El Mariachi** has naturally pronounced grain, but the colors are bright and the image is manageable. Indeed, once the story gets moving, you forget about the grain, which becomes just one more component in the film's depiction of its impoverished setting. The stereo sound gives the music a generalized dimensionality and adds to the impact of the action scenes.

Letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1, the 4K presentation of **Desperado** is an ideal rendering of what is already near perfection. Colors are rich and meticulously detailed. The standard Blu-ray looks fine, but is slightly grainy in places where the 4K BD is smooth. It is the combination of the film's stylism and the 4K delivery that help to subliminally reinforce what might otherwise feel like silly playacting turning it instead into operatic excitement. The 5.1-channel DTS sound has terrifically detailed separation effects and plenty of punch, again with the 4K delivery providing an additional crispness for the subconscious.

Whatever shortcomings **Once upon a Time in Mexico** may have, they do not extend to the film's production values, and so it is baffling as to why Arrow is not offering the film in 4K. The Blu-ray looks fantastic (fleshtones teeter at times on a reddish pink, but that is because of what Rodriguez is doing with the lighting and magic hours) and is very sharp, but the subliminal force that helps seal the argument on **Desperado** is not there. Like **Desperado**, the 5.1 DTS is super, with many directional details and lots of power. When the music does rise to the occasion (frankly, there are moments when it seems to be trying to imitate **Lawrence of Arabia**), the louder you raise the volume, the better. The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1.

The commentary tracks that Rodriguez made for all three films on earlier DVDs have been carried over, and each is outstanding, as he goes into the logic behind every choice he made and explains the practicalities of moviemaking (indeed, **Once upon a Time in Mexico** has a messy story because he had to put something together quick to get it in the can ahead of a strike—he also got to play with an HD camera, which was still very new at the time).

Our Fortieth Anniversary!

Welcome to our *Fortieth Anniversary Issue* and the beginning of our forty-first year of publication! Our deepest thanks to all of our readers for their continued support and favor. Additionally, thank you to the many people in the home video industry who have gone out of their way to support our efforts. Your faith in us is greatly appreciated. Thank you also to everyone at GMPC for always printing the Newsletter in a timely and efficient fashion. And a special thanks to Rudy Romero and Terence Tran for their gracious support.

As we mentioned earlier this year, the only thing that is preventing us from putting out a twelve-page newsletter every month is the frightful increase in postage and other expenses that we refuse to compensate with a rise in subscription prices. However, if you would like to see more twelve-page newsletters and fewer eight-page newsletters, any gratuity that you could share with us would be greatly appreciated and would go directly to ensuring that a larger newsletter will show up in your mailbox.

And as you might be aware, we compile all of our DVD and BD reviews into a single source book, *DVDs*, which is now up to its hundred-sixty-seventh iteration and is available on CD-ROM or as a .pdf file that can be downloaded from the Internet. Feel free to contact us for more details by writing VDLaser@rocketmail.com. You can also find it in Kindle format on www.amazon.com, or at www.kobo.com, though not with the same freshly updated content—more than 16,000 reviews—that we offer directly.

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Additionally, **El Mariachi** comes with a trailer; a TV commercial; Rodriguez's 1991 *Bedhead*, a cute fantasy 9-minute short Rodriguez made with his siblings as he was developing his filmmaking skills that also appeared previously on the DVD (Apr 99); an excellent 15-minute guide to filmmaking by Rodriguez using the movie for his examples that appeared previously on the DVD; a 14-minute interview with Rodriguez from 2024 that summarizes his experiences making the film and includes a few more valuable lessons about filmmaking (amateur actors are more at ease when there is no crew); a 15-minute interview with Gallardo from 2024, who shares some great reminiscences primarily from his activities as the film's producer, arranging locations and so on; and a good 13-minute piece about the creation of the film's music.

The 4K platter for **Desperado** has the same special features as the standard Blu-ray platter. There is a chance to watch the spellbinding 3-minute opening credit (dream) sequence without the credits; two trailers; a TV commercial; another 11-minute piece by Rodriguez using the film while sharing filmmaking tips that appeared previously on the DVD (Apr 99); a good 7-minute appreciation of the film; a 2024 interview with Rodriguez running 17 minutes talking about the creation of the film (he was the first to recognize Banderas and Hayek's potentials as Hollywood action stars) and how his career was ramping up as he made it; an 11-minute interview with producer Bill Borden talking about adjusting to Rodriguez's makeshift style and how some of his innovations (don't worry about the film trucks, just point over them) have become industry practices; a good 8-minute interview with stunt coordinator Steve Davison about the challenges the film presented; and a 9-minute interview with gun and explosion expert Bob Shelley who admits he came onto the set with a fixed idea of how to do things and was enlightened by Rodriguez's filmmaking acumen.

The material appearing previously on the **Once upon a Time in Mexico** DVD (Mar 04) includes 8 minutes of good deleted scenes; another one of Rodriguez's great 9-minute filmmaking tutorials; an 11-minute look at the production facilities Rodriguez set up in his home; a 6-minute piece on how to cook one of the meals depicted in the film; a 13-minute talk from 2003 by Rodriguez in front of a live audience about shooting in digital (as we pointed out in our DVD review, the clips he uses for his demonstration are letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1); an 18-minute overview of the trilogy and shooting the film; a 19-minute segment on the film's effects; and two trailers. Also featured is a new 10-minute interview with assistant editor Ethan Maniquis about his career and his experiences working on the film; and a 2024 interview with Rodriguez running 13 minutes, talking about the rush he went through to make the film and why he kept it at 1.78:1 for home video instead of the masked 2.35:1 framing for theaters ("Back in the day...").

Italian police action

The first 11 minutes of Enzo Castellari's 1973 **High Crime** is a single frantic chase scene, first on foot and then in cars, as the hero, a police commissioner played by Franco Nero, tries to follow a suspect through the docks, highways and streets of Genoa. The film, said to be the first in the Italian police action genre, has been released in an impressive three-platter 4K Blu-ray set by Blue Underground (UPC#827058803496, \$60) and never really slows down or gives you a chance to breathe after that, as Nero's character tries to break up a drug smuggling mob only to have every witness and every lead murdered or destroyed once he zeroes in on a target. James Whitmore has a surprisingly substantial role as Nero's supervisor (we're used to seeing Whitmore show up in a day or two's worth of footage, but here he was definitely on set quite a bit more) and Fernando Rey is an aging mob boss who is nudging Nero's character along to break up the conspiracy that has replaced his own operation. The story is complex and takes several viewings to really sort out, with the pessimism of its drama offset by the exhilaration of its action. Running 103 minutes, not everyone will embrace its sour tone, but the pleasure of seeing the stars work their magic, combined with the frantic and plentiful action sequences, can make the film an acquired taste that improves with repetition.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1. While it is grainy at times and the fleshtones are pale, that was clearly the purpose of the cinematography to begin with to underscore the film's darker vision of fighting crime, and the transfer looks fantastic. The standard Blu-ray included in the set looks fine, but it is the 4K presentation that creates a crisp precision the standard BD cannot manage and makes the film look incredibly colorful even when it isn't. Nero has no tan whatsoever, but on 4K, his complexion is nevertheless captivating. The film defaults to an English language track, with Nero and Whitmore both supplying their own voices. There is also an Italian track with optional English subtitling. Both platters hold a trailer, a 2-minute alternate ending that in effect truncates the conclusion of the film with a more suitable downer ending, and three commentary tracks.

Blue Underground's Bill Lustig sits with Castellari and Castellari's son, Andrea Girolami, for a great 2004 commentary track, talking about the details of the film's production and the pleasures of the genre. Lustig tells a terrific story about one of Castellari's extras on another film who was the most polite and sweet person on the set, but was arrested later for a gang murder—demonstrating the power of the film director to turn the toughest hombres into pussycats. Girolami adds a lot of details about what went on during the shoot and in the Italian film industry. Castellari admits right away that the film was inspired by **French Connection** and **Bullitt**, and later explains that he wanted to end the film one way but his producers wouldn't let him, so he kind of got around it in another manner. "I did two versions and in the end, I used both."

Lustig, his voice noticeably aged, also sits for a 2024 commentary with Nero and Italian crime film expert Mike Malloy. During one location shoot, Nero got a ride back into town with one of the stunt drivers, who drove very slowly and methodically, quite the opposite of how the man drove in the wild but carefully staged chase scenes. Nero gets very emotional at one point, talking about the passing of Natasha Redgrave, who had earlier been considered for a role in the film. He also talks a lot about his career, his interaction with Quentin Tarantino, his adventures in the Philippines and many other anecdotes, going back to the start of his career. Interestingly Nero points out a very clever

panning shot that Castellari employs turning night into day, and Lustig suggests that it might have a dissolve, even though Castellari explained to Lustig how he staged the shot (without a dissolve) on the other commentary, a couple of decades earlier.

Finally, Seventies film enthusiasts Troy Howarth, Nathaniel Thompson and Eugenio Ecolani provide the third talk, deconstructing the film, sharing what they know about the production from a more objective perspective and also delving into an overview of Italian crime films, including an interesting analysis of how the genre was more readily Italian than westerns or even gialli.

Additionally, the standard BD has a decent collection of promotional materials from all around the world in still frame and a number of featurettes, including a 13-minute summary of all the different European crime films that appear to have sprouted from the seeds of **The French Connection**; a good 25-minute interview with Castellari intercut with Nero, talking about the creation of the film; a very nice 28-minute interview with Castellari about his career (he has some interesting stories about working with Chuck Connors) and his memories of the different people who collaborated with him on **High Crimes**; an interesting 19-minute interview with stuntman Massimo Vanni talking about his life and career (he was Castellari's second cousin, who gave him his start), and the demands of the job ("Stuntmen back then were exceptional. Today's stuntmen are also good, but back then we didn't have all the safety precautions they have now and the risk was higher."); a 21-minute interview with camera operator Roberto Girometti who mainly talks about the different people he met during his career although he does have a great story about shooting the car chase scenes at full speed; and an enjoyable 23-minute interview with composers by Guido and Maurizio De Angelis talking about their careers and how they approach a film they are hired to score, and sharing amusing tales about all of the pseudonyms they had to use to avoid saturating their marketplace presence.

The third platter in the set is a CD with the De Angelis musical score—the pair give their regards on the first track. The rest of the 59-minute disc is fortunately just music. Last month we reviewed an enclosed CD of the audio track for **The Guyver**, and while the music was not very appealing within the film, it made for an excellent CD. Here we have the opposite. While the music on the CD feels dull and repetitive, it is an ideal, satisfying underscore for the film's intensities and thrills.

True crime thriller

A terrific 1985 MGM crime thriller directed by Roger Donaldson and marketed as a social drama, **Marie A True Story**, has been released by Warner Bros. as a *Warner WB Archive Collection* Blu-ray (UPC#840418307656, \$22). Both the film's title card and the title on the trailer that has been included on the disc use just 'Marie,' which is unfortunately generic but less misleading about the nature of the drama. Yes, the movie is based upon a true story as told by Peter Maas in his bestseller, but it has many moments of suspense, as well as a wonderful third act courtroom sequence, while a subplot involving the medical condition plaguing one of the heroine's young sons just adds to the movie's tension and excitements. Sissy Spacek stars as a struggling single mother who lands a job in the Tennessee government and encounters graft and corruption that she cannot turn a blind eye to. In a wonderful piece of casting, Fred Thompson portrays himself, the lawyer Spacek's character hired to clear her name. Jeff Daniels is also featured. Running 112 minutes, the film has a brisk and determined pace under Donaldson's guidance, with terrific performances and a constant reminder that the most frightening stories are those that have actually happened.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1, adding significantly to the film's cinematic impact in contradiction to the telefilm ambience the disc's title gives off. The color transfer looks great, with detailed fleshtones and bright hues. The monophonic sound is fine and there is a Francis Lai musical score that doesn't entirely work for the movie, but becomes fairly addicting by the time the end credit scroll finishes. There are optional English subtitles.

Action comedy with Chan

A cute 2002 spy movie comedy starring Jackie Chan, **The Tuxedo**, has been released on Blu-ray by Paramount (UPC#840418305386, \$20). The creators actually come up with a reasonably decent plot for the villain—sort of like **Goldfinger**, only with drinking water instead of gold—and plenty of good gags for Chan, who plays a chauffeur to a wealthy espionage agent and takes over the assignment when the agent is put out of commission. Jennifer Love Hewitt plays his partner, a rookie who thinks she's working with the real guy and not a substitute. Chan's character also inherits the titular suit, which functions pretty much like one of those weaponized alien armor suits heroes are always bumbling into in fantasy action stories. The rest is up to Chan, and while in 2002 he was not quite the spry acrobat he'd been in the previous decades, he still had a unique skill set that was, if you will pardon the witticism, perfectly tailored for the part. Running 99 minutes, the film, directed by Kevin Donovan, sort of bumbles its way through the story, rather like the hero, but there is enough humor and energy to deliver an adequate entertainment.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1. The cinematography is workmanlike and the color transfer looks solid. The 5.1-channel Dolby sound has a basic dimensionality and is reasonably busy. There are alternate French, German and Japanese audio tracks and optional English, French, German and Japanese subtitles, a passable 13-minute promotional featurette, 8 minutes of cute bloopers (some of which also appear on the end credit scroll) and 19 minutes of deleted and extended scenes that were sensibly removed but still fill in a few pertinent story points and also share some great footage of James Brown on stage with Chan—his cameo in the film is much smaller and is only explained in the deleted scenes.

Bowie

David Bowie was a man of many talents, and along with his singing career—which, it should be noted, incorporated more taking on of ‘characters’ and ‘roles’ than many singing careers—he was an accomplished actor and movie star, veering much closer in motion picture status to Bobby Darin than to Ricky Nelson. One of his films, a 1992 romantic comedy co-starring Rosanna Arquette, **The Linguini Incident**, got lost on the shelf at the time of its creation, but thanks to home video, director Richard Shepard managed to go back and restore the film with a few nips and tucks in 2024, and both versions now appear on the single platter MVDvisual Blu-ray (UPC#760137148036, \$35).

Bowie plays a bartender and Arquette is a waitress in a (comically decorated) trendy Manhattan restaurant. Both are desperate for money and develop a very sweet on-and-off collaboration as they seek a quick score, including a plan to hold up the restaurant. The film has an exceptionally good cast, with the wonderful pairing of Andre Gregory and Buck Henry as the venal, joined-at-the-hip owners of the restaurant, Eszter Balint as the best friend of Arquette’s character, Marlee Matlin as a hatcheck girl and Viveca Lindfors in another key role. Arquette’s character also has an escape artist act she wants to take on the stage, and Balint’s character is busily designing multi-function brassieres. The 2024 cut runs 93 minutes and succeeds primarily through the appeal of the actors and their specific performances, with the central focus being Arquette’s captivating comedic energy and her magnetic physical dexterity. Her scenes with Balint have exquisite timing from both actresses and are delightful. Bowie’s character is deliberately inscrutable, but the gradual revelation of his true emotions is methodically and expertly paced across the play of the story. While any comedic actor might have done fine in the role, none would have brought the unique blend of statuesque mystery and able, easygoing co-worker that Bowie brings to the part, and none would have the same riveting, iconic presence. Taken at face value, the story is rather silly and dismissible, but viewed as a showcase for the magnetism of Arquette and Bowie, the refined humor of the supporting players and the quirky, inspired production designs, the film is a real treat.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1. The colors look very fresh, adding to the immediate presence of the stars and the funkiness of the film’s sets and costumes. The sound is centered, despite the Ultra-Stereo logo in the closing credits. There are optional English subtitles, a 2-minute introduction by Shepard, two trailers, a 6-minute montage of behind-the-scenes snapshots adeptly narrated by Shepard, and a solid 104-minute retrospective documentary that goes over every aspect of the movie’s creation and includes a terrific interview with Bowie promoting the film on *The Today Show*.

Shepard’s original 1991 version is included in the special features without subtitles or letterboxing. The squared full screen image adds picture information to the top and bottom of the image and loses only a sliver on the sides in comparison to the updated version, but the screen compositions are less compelling. The colors are fine, but not as pristine as the colors on the newer version. On the other hand, the film’s Ultra-Stereo sound is preserved and is more engaging, giving the musical score an appealing dimensionality. It is a shame that mix wasn’t brought over to the newer cut. The original version runs 98 minutes. Nothing major has been removed, except for the explanation of the film’s otherwise obscure and nonsensical title. That point aside, the trims are beneficial and Shepard’s adjustments are serviceable, making the newer version the preferred presentation despite the flat sound.

Shepard provides an enlightening commentary track on the new version, going into detail about how the film came to be, his struggles as a rookie filmmaker (he would become more established a decade later, but he went through a long draught after the film slumped at the boxoffice), working with the cast (he replaced Shelley Winters with Lindfors and then threatened to release Winters’s inebriated dailies when she started bad mouthing the production), pointing out the location footage, and talking about his quest to resurrect the film after he gained enough power to swing it.

Shepard is also on a second commentary track with Arquette, Balint and other members of the crew, although the film’s audio is louder, a couple of the Zoom audio connections are weak and it is more difficult to hear some of the conversations that ensue. Everyone shares their memories of shooting the film, and frankly, you get pretty much everything said on both commentaries if you watch the documentary (which also has Matlin, who is naturally unavailable for the commentary), but there are a few additional insights, particularly as the people who speak separately in the documentary share in conversation with each other on the commentary. And everyone has nothing but wonderful things to say about Bowie, who was always eager, cooperative and friendly with everyone. “He was enjoying himself. He was pushing himself to do something he hadn’t done. He was glad to be part of the process as opposed to being the main focus of the process.”

Presley

Aided immeasurably by its absolutely gorgeous Blu-ray transfer, the 1965 MGM Elvis Presley vehicle, **Harum Scarum**, which has been released by Warner Bros. as a *Warner WB Archive Collection* title (UPC#840418307632, \$22), is irresistible fun. None of the songs were hits (in fact, Presley’s batting average for songs from his movies on the whole is pretty dismal) but there are a couple of very pleasant numbers and, more importantly, the pacing of the songs is steady throughout the 86-minute film. They never wear out their welcome, and you never have to wait long for another to show up. As for the movie, it may all be baubles, bangles and beads, but it has the atmosphere and construct of a Bud Abbott and Lou Costello film, mixing together humor and absurdity, while throwing in dreamy eyed romance for good measure. Presley is a famous singing star who is invited to a Middle Eastern land so remote they have had no contact with the West for two millennia. Fortunately, everyone speaks English. Presley’s character falls for a girl not realizing she is the daughter of the king and he is being manipulated to assassinate her father. Or something like that. What is

important is that, directed by Gene Nelson, the story moves smoothly; along with the songs there are plenty of adeptly staged fights and chases; the supporting cast is game; and whether it is the lustrous MGM sets or the tacky backyard locations, the costumes, flesh-tones and décor all are impeccably presented.

Mary Ann Mobley and the sizzling Fran Jeffries co-star, with Michael Ansara, Jay Novello, and Billy Barty. The film is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1. The monophonic sound may be missing the stereo processing that was brought to Presley’s most popular features, but the delivery is smooth and clear. There are optional English subtitles, a trailer and two Tex Avery color 6-minute 1965 *Tom and Jerry* cartoons, *The Cat’s Me-Ouch* (an amusing piece where the mouse obtains a miniature but ferocious dog) and *Of Feline Bondage* (in which the mouse gains invisibility and torments the cat, for a while).

Cash

A terrific 1961 exploitation film that stars Johnny Cash of all people, **Door-to-Door Maniac**, has been released by Film Masters as a two-platter *Special Edition* Blu-ray (UPC#760137157274, \$30). Also known as *Five Minutes to Live*, Cash plays an accomplice in a bank robbery in the film, whose job is to invade the home of a bank officer, played by Donald Woods, and terrorize his wife, played by Cay Forester, with the threat to kill her if Woods’s character doesn’t give his partner a large sum of money from the vault. Cash plays a total psycho, and sensitive viewers should be warned that there is an extended rape sequence that is emotionally graphic even if the provocative editing consistently suggests more than it reveals. Directed by Bill Karn, the film runs a brisk 75 minutes, effectively intercutting between the progress of the man in the bank and Cash’s character unraveling as he starts getting a kick out of frightening Forester’s character with violence, and then decides to have his way with her. At one point, they proceed to the master bedroom for the first time and Forester’s character, embarrassed, goes to straighten out the sheets of the unmade bed. Cash’s character stops her and, with an intonation that only he could deliver, tells her, “I like a messy bed.” An extremely young Ron Howard delivers an excellent performance as the couple’s child, who comes home from school for lunch at just the wrong time. Vic Tayback, Merle Travis and Pamela Mason are also featured. Cash’s performance is positively maniacal, and Forester is superb at conveying the vulnerability and emotional devastation that her character experiences. The film may be rough hewn, but it succeeds at precisely what it sets out to accomplish, digging under the skin of Fifties suburban complacency.

The pretty much spotless and crisp black-and-white picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1. The film is also offered in a squared full screen format, adding picture information to the top and bottom of the screen and losing very little from the sides in comparison, although that option is misleadingly identified in the menu as a ‘Play TV’ version. Brother, if you tried to run that movie on the TV in the Sixties, it wouldn’t fit into an hour slot, with commercials. Nevertheless, the compositional framing on that latter version is preferable. The monophonic sound is fine and Cash, whose character brings his guitar along on the job, sings two songs with a psychotic gleam. Since one of them is replayed at the end and sounds very similar to *Five Feet High and Rising*, it is difficult to extract from your head after the film is ended.

The companion film featured on the second platter, *Right Hand of the Devil*, is an equally funky and satisfying 1963 black-and-white heist film, which also features another lovely performance by an older actress whose character is seduced by the protagonist. Aram Katcher wrote, directed and stars in the film as a mastermind who plots the robbery of an arena, and Lisa McDonald is the arena’s bookkeeper. Katcher intercuts the two activities of gathering a gang and romancing McDonald’s character. It is best not to spoil what happens next because the story takes a different pathway than most heist films, but the movie is steadily entertaining. Other than McDonald, the performances are a little rough—even Katcher seems to be reading cue cards at times—but the pacing and inventiveness of the film is admirable and it is an ideal companion piece to the main feature.

Unfortunately, the film runs 67 minutes, while Internet references suggest that it ought to be 8 minutes longer and there are shots from a sequence that appears in the original trailer and an 11-minute retrospective featurette, but are missing from the film, which appears to leave the sequence out at a key moment about halfway through. The film also comes with a commentary track by the Internet film commentary group, the Monster Party Podcast (not ‘Monstery,’ as the jacket mistakenly claims), who acknowledge the missing scenes and suggests that the print used for the disc was edited for television, which seems plausible. They also point out that Katcher later became obsessed with destroying all copies of the film he could get his hands on, so this may be all that survives. The commentary has plenty of wisecracks about the film but also fills in the backgrounds for the cast and crew, most of whom remained on the periphery of Hollywood, and delves substantially into Katcher’s continually self-sabotaged acting career, as he often got fired from both TV and film productions, and was even replaced on **Topaz** by Alfred Hitchcock after filming had been completed.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.66:1, and again there is a second option to present it in a squared full screen format, removing minor picture information from the sides of the image while adding nothing to the top or bottom. The image has some wear, particularly on the left, and is a little soft at times, but overall it is in good shape. The monophonic sound is okay if held to a reasonable volume. Both films and commentaries are supported by optional English subtitles. The commentary subtitles on *Right Hand of the Devil* misspell the name of Orson Welles, leaving out the second ‘e.’

Gable

It is a dependable rule of thumb that by the 20-minute mark in a theatrical film, you know what it is going to be. You don't necessarily know how the plot is going to play out, but you know the movie's genre, you know its strengths (its weaknesses can be more deceptive and take longer to discern) and you know its tone. Directed by Clarence Brown, the 1939 MGM production, **Idiot's Delight**, released by Warner Bros. as a *Warner WB Archive Collection* Blu-ray (UPC#840418307649, \$22), is an exception to this rule. Running 107 minutes, it takes twice as long as usual to establish what the film is actually up to, but it needs the extra time it takes at its beginning in order to deliver its payoff so fabulously. Clark Gable plays a WWI vet trying to make a living for himself on the vaudeville circuit and Norma Shearer, who has top billing, is an acrobat that he hooks up with one night. But then Shearer's character disappears, and not just years but decades pass by in the lives of the characters. And that is what takes up more than the first third of the film.

When they meet again, Gable's character is still a second rate theater man, touring the dives of Europe with a sextet of young blondes. War tensions have risen, and they are on a train to Switzerland in hopes of returning to America. But the train is held up in an unidentified country (Liechtenstein, perhaps) because the border has been closed, and so everyone spends the night in a ski resort, nestled high above an airfield. To put it obliquely, Shearer's character has had a makeover, and is the traveling companion to a shady arms manufacturer played by Edward Arnold. Since this was 1939, Hollywood was in its hedging-its-bets mode, and so there is no specific aggressor, but as the planes below leave on a bombing run, the discussions turn to the threat of another destructive world war (thus justifying beginning the film where Gable is still in uniform from the last one) and the morality of participation and non-participation. Charles Coburn is a famous scientist, Burgess Meredith is a radicalized student, and so on. Based upon a stageplay by Robert Sherwood, the film therefore takes on the shell of a concerned think piece about war and peace, but within that shell there is this hysterical romantic comedy, like a tootsie roll in the middle of a lollipop. Gable's character does song and dance numbers with his girls to entertain the hotel guests (and help cover his unexpected room charges), but he eventually zeroes in on Shearer's character. Without spoiling much more, suffice it to say that Shearer's performance, especially in the context of the film's burlesque sequences, is so funny that you can't take your eyes off of Gable, his lips quivering as he struggles desperately not to wreck each take with a smile.

Stock footage aside, the squared full screen black-and-white picture looks great, with crisp edges and smooth blacks. The monophonic sound is strong and there are optional English subtitles. Along with a trailer, there are two Warner cartoons—*The Good Egg*, a *Merrie Melodies* effort in color from 1939 running 8 minutes (an eggless hen grabs a turtle egg and hatches it—and the turtle takes to his chick siblings) and *It's an Ill Wind*, a black-and-white *Looney Tunes* piece with Porky Pig from 1938 running 7 minutes (he and a Donald Duck-like companion runs into a fishing shack during a storm and thinks it is haunted).

Finally, there is a fascinating 3-minute original ending to the film, which was initially used until the actual outbreak of war necessitated a more serious and pious conclusion. We actually prefer that second, revised ending, because the film swings so wildly from one position to the next that it is a perfect capstone on the movie's attempt to place, symbolically, America's heartland in the middle of Europe's destruction, but this initial 3-minute piece is joyfully irreverent and very much in keeping with Sherwood and Brown's actual intentions before a real war got in the way.

While he didn't make too many of them, like most male movie stars from his generation, Gable had to do a western on occasion, and naturally he filled the saddle with majestic perfection. He stars in Vincent Sherman's enjoyable and intriguing 1952 MGM production, **Lone Star**, a Warner *Archive* DVD release (UPC#883316351697, \$13). He plays a rancher who is aiding the effort to corral the Republic of Texas and join it with the United States—in an unexpectedly delightful turn, Lionel Barrymore, with his hair just right, portrays the retired Andrew Jackson, who sends Gable's character off on his mission. Broderick Crawford plays a ranch owner who is against unification and envisions Texas eventually unifying with the slave states and stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific (he even has a wonderful map in his conference room that shows this, although the film's production designers, who, on the whole, keep to the period when it comes to single-fire guns and so on, split Virginia in two on the map, something no one actually saw coming for at least another decade). Ava Gardner runs the Austin newspaper and supports the position of Crawford's character and more, but succumbs to the charms of Gable's character. Yes, the politics surrounding Texas independence and America's formations are more frowned upon now than they were in the previous century, with good reason, and Gable's allure may in some ways be too tied to Rhett Butler (his character is clearly drawn in imitation of his most famous role) to survive the social transition that still is occurring, but the 95-minute film has a number of well-staged action sequences, a different type of plot that nevertheless makes full use of western tropes, and wonderful, commanding performances by all of the stars, with Gable towering above them all as the epitome of the strong, righteous and supremely competent American man.

The squared full screen black-and-white picture is in excellent condition. The image is sharp and free of wear, with finely detailed contrasts. The monophonic sound is solid, and there is no captioning. A trailer is included (Gable and Crawford speak directly to the camera) that sells the film as an exciting, sexy western without giving any hint as to its actual time setting and topic.

America's colorful past

A fantastic transfer enhances the attractions of the 1940 MGM Technicolor adventure directed by King Vidor, **Northwest Passage**, as it has been released by Warner Bros. as a *Warner WB Archive Collection* Blu-ray (UPC#840418307663, \$22). The film's title card and the original ad art displayed on the disc jacket give the film a subheading, *Book 1 – Rogers' Rangers*, thus allowing the movie to discard the sweep of the Kenneth Roberts novel upon which it has been based

(unless it would be successful enough to spawn a sequel—it wasn't) and focus on a single foray into the wilderness of what is now upstate New York and Vermont. Set during the French and Indian War, Spencer Tracy plays the leader of a commando group attached to the British who takes a contingent of more than a hundred men to raid a French fort on the border of what is now Canada and massacre the indigenous natives living there, in response to massacres that the natives in all likelihood incurred. Robert Young is a budding artist and Walter Brennan is his buddy, who avoid jail by joining up with the commandos. The film runs 128 minutes, so it really gets the most out of its production values as the group marches through swamps, crosses raging rivers, climbs hillsides with boats, and so on. They obliterate the Indians and then have to work their way back to safety with diminished supplies while avoiding the French. In a few years, the film's creation will only be twice as long removed from the era it is depicting as it is from the era in which it is being observed, and the elements of the drama that seem archaic already parallel with great accuracy the attitudes of the characters being depicted. So the only thing that rescues the film from social oblivion is its exceptional color cinematography, which not only enhances the thrill and immediacy of the action scenes, particularly since the squared full screen transfer is equally vivid and spotless, but remains captivating during the lulls in the drama, as the film believably resurrects America's problematic past and the beauty of its spacious skies.

The monophonic sound is in decent shape with minimal noise. There are optional English subtitles, a trailer and a fine 9-minute black-and-white promotional featurette about shooting the film in Idaho, which stood in very effectively for the paved-over trail ways of the more populated Northeast.

The Kraken is released in 4K

The 2010 remake of Ray Harryhausen's Greek mythology mashup and its 2012 sequel have been released as a two-platter 4K Blu-ray set by Warner Bros. and Arrow Video, **When Titans Ruled the Earth: Clash of the Titans & Wrath of the Titans** (UPC#760137158326, \$65). The films have also been paired in a standard Blu-ray set (UPC#760137158318, \$55). Both films have optional English subtitles.

Clash of the Titans forsakes the quaintness of Harryhausen's stop motion models and puppets for hard hitting computer graphic effects, and the movie would now be one more forgotten display of apocalyptic destruction were it not for a single phrase, spoken with exquisite clarity by Liam Neeson (otherwise buried in a beard and toga as Zeus), immediately and permanently imbedding itself within the popular lexicon, "Release the Kraken!" Movies are famous for less.

Sam Worthington portrays the mostly human hero who must retrieve the head of Medusa because that is the only way to stop said Kraken from destroying his hometown. Ralph Fiennes plays Hades, trying to stir up trouble, and Worthington's character and his group have to pass through the underworld before they can get to the lady with the hissing coif. Directed by Louis Leterrier and running 106 minutes, the film may seem like it is a bit of an overkill with its quick cutting and impossibly formidable creatures (a lot of giant scorpions, in particular), but there are enough fantasy images and furious action sequences to form a decent Saturday afternoon romp, to the point where, by the time Neeson utters his indelible line, you're game for whatever the film is going to throw at you.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1. The colors on the 4K presentation are slightly flatter than the colors on the standard Blu-ray, but the sharpness of the image is more gripping and overall the presentation is preferable. Both versions are a touch sharper than the Warner BD we reviewed in Sep 10, but that said, all three ultimately look quite similar and all are fully entertaining. The 5.1-channel DTS sound has terrific bass effects and a crisp separation delivery, adding to the film's entertainment, and again, all three are relatively similar in this regard, although ultimately the 4K delivery is sharper.

The 18 minutes of deleted scenes that appeared on Warner's BD have been carried over, along with the 5-minute alternate ending and 43 minutes of production featurettes. Additionally, the Arrow BD has a trailer, a few promotional photos and some ad art in still frame, and a very good 21-minute interview with producer Basil Iwanyk, who describes his own childhood enthusiasm for the Harryhausen film and how he was eager to stage it with upgraded effects, speaks openly about the problems the production encountered along the way and goes over how his team surmounted each difficulty to make the movie a worldwide blockbuster.

Wrath of the Titans has no line of dialog to cement its fame and sort of lingers from one sequence to the next until it reaches the grand spectacle of its conclusion. Directed by Jonathan Liebesman, there is a segment with giant cyclopes that is a bit of fun, and an intriguing sequence involving an enormous, cubed labyrinth. Worthington had a crisp crew cut in the first film, but looks younger and wussier in the second with his hair grown out. Neeson and Fiennes return, and actually have more to do, with Danny Huston as their third brother, Neptune, and Edgar Ramirez as the real villain, Aeries, who wants to see everything destroyed. By itself, the film is a little abstract, while as an immediate sequel to **Clash of the Titans**, it can make for a long afternoon, but running a merciful 100 minutes, it does wrap up everything appropriately, and gives your speakers and subwoofer a good run for their money while doing so.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1. Again, the colors on the 4K Blu-ray are a touch more subdued than the colors on the standard Blu-ray, but it is less pronounced than it is on **Clash of the Titans**, and otherwise the sharpness, once again, makes the action and spectacle more involving. Both presentations have slightly richer colors than the previous Warner Blu-ray (Aug 12), which didn't look bad. The 5.1 DTS sound is consistent with the previous film and worth amplifying for its full effect. Along with a trailer and a nice gathering of production photos in still frame, the 11 minutes of non-action deleted scenes and 35 minutes of decent production featurettes have been carried over from the earlier BD. Additionally, there is a very nice 14-minute interview with Iwanyk, who contemplates the initial reactions to both films (and to Harryhausen's work), shares a little bit about the personalities that went into creating the second film and allows as to how, now that time has passed and the politics of popular film criticism have receded, the movies can be appreciated for what they are.

Soviet Ukraine

“When I watch a film or read a book, the women and the men are so beautiful, their feelings and actions are so meaningful and complete. Even when they suffer, everything is logical and correct. There is cause and effect, a beginning and an end. Here, everything is so vague.” So says the female protagonist of Kira Muratova’s vague and disjointed 1967 Soviet film, *Brief Encounters*, part of the Criterion Collection’s two-platter Blu-ray release of a Muratova double bill, **Brief Encounters • The Long Farewell** (UPC#715515300315, \$40).

Fortunately, the second film, the 1971 *The Long Farewell*, which viewers unfamiliar with Muratova would be advised to sample first, is a substantially more accessible feature. Both films are in Russian, with optional English subtitles, but were shot in Ukraine (in Odessa, apparently), and *Farewell* in particular could be read, even if it was not Muratova’s intention at the time, as a metaphor for the Ukraine and Russian relationship (Muratova grew up in Moldova). Zinaida Sharko portrays a translator and single mother who wants to prevent her teenage son, played by Oleg Vladimirovsky, from leaving her and moving in with his divorced father, who lives in another city. Both films are reminiscent of the Czech New Wave features that brought a humanistic face to the Communist bureaucracy, but *Farewell* is especially impressive for its depiction of the believable desperations of the characters (and equally impressive, frantic performances) and the fragmented society that prevents them from proceeding with their desires in anything close to an orderly fashion. Running 94 minutes, the film is organized in a traditional and distinctive three-act structure, and while some scenes feel overly improvised (the actors hem and haw a lot, and repeat stuff before getting to the point of the scene), thanks to Sharko’s all-in flamboyance, it becomes one of those rare meldings of camp and true artistic integrity.

Nina Ruslanova stars in the 96-minute *Brief Encounters* as one of those bureaucrats, a city planner and building inspector who is being pressured to certify a housing complex that has no running water because people want to move in anyway and the builder wants to go on to his next project. The sequences involving this dilemma are what make the film worth watching, but there are also elaborate and confusing segments involving two roommates who are staying at the inspector’s spacious apartment, one apparently a relative and one a worker who has arrived from the countryside seeking employment. All three seem to have some sort of relationship with a geologist who is in town between excavations, and flashbacks depict their experiences before they moved to the city. None of it is clearly articulated (it will become moderately clearer upon multiple viewings), and while the snippets of life observed among the women are an effective record of their society at the time, even the jacket text suggests that the film is ‘uncategorizable,’ which is as good a euphemism as any.

Both black-and-white movies are in a squared full screen format and are in very good condition. While limitations in the cinematography prevent a consistency in the transfer’s visual tone, the images are nevertheless appealingly composed and, as befits Russian traditions, intensely edited. The monophonic sound is fine. Spread across the two platters, there is a 25-minute interpretation of *Brief Encounters* that explains its representations of women’s roles in society and also goes over the hassles Muratova encountered making it; a 15-minute piece that provides more scattered interpretations of the *Brief Encounters*’ various sequences; a very good 29-minute analysis of *Long Farewell* and Muratova’s career; another decent 16-minute examination of the artistic dynamics at work in *Long Farewell*; and a nice 5-minute interview with Muratova, talking about her experiences making films in the Soviet Union. “Indifference in a Soviet audience, a rather uncultivated one, is sometimes very aggressive, contrary to a, let’s say, Western audience, which leaves the theater if the film bores them. The Soviet audience grabs their director by the collar and screams, ‘That’s the people’s money!’”

Chiba karate action

Two invigorating Toei Sonny Chiba martial arts action films directed by Kazuhiko Yamaguchi, based (sort of) on the life of karate champion Masutatsu Oyama and are presented in the two-platter Eureka! Blu-ray release, **Beast Fighter: Karate Bullfighter and Karate Bearfighter** (UPC#760137156154, \$50). Both films have gorgeous picture transfers that greatly add to the pleasure of their entertainment, and both are letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1. The monophonic films are in Japanese with optional English subtitles, and the audio quality is reasonably solid.

Chiba’s character tries to lead a humble life but keeps getting pulled into conflicts the 1975 *Karate Bullfighter*. Set in the immediate post-War period, at one point he saves a village from a rampaging bull by taking it on with just his bare hands (and some deft editing). When he is confronted by gangsters who are terrorizing a friend’s bar, he kills one of them while defending himself. Let go by the cops because it was a justifiable homicide, he is nevertheless guilt ridden because the gangster’s widow and young son are upset. He ends up helping them for a while, until there is a final showdown with everybody who is jealous of him. Running 88 minutes, the film may have its maudlin moments, but the moments are staged with such classically Japanese earnestness that no saccharine is generated. Chiba’s performance is appealing even though he tries to keep a low profile and let his fellow performers do all of the acting (one character is a dated gay stereotype). The fights are plentiful and well paced throughout the film, and there is plenty of the bloody gore that gained Chiba his international following. Supported by the reliable Japanese feel for the metaphorical underpinnings of natural scenery, the locations are lovely and add to the exhilaration of both the fight scenes and the drama’s emotions. And, like we said, everything looks gorgeous.

Naturally, since the first film is so enjoyable, it was tempting to extend the pleasures with a second film, and so Chiba carried his character forward in the 1975 *Karate Bearfighter*. In the film’s first half, the hero meets a hustler who has been

impersonating him, but eagerly becomes a student when he meets the real deal. Gangsters become increasingly irritated by the hero’s presence, which leads to a tragedy. In the final act, he travels to Hokkaido in the north, which gives him an opportunity to fulfill the demands of the film’s title, albeit with a guy in a bear suit, and unlike the previous film, there are no shots of him in the same frame with a real animal. The gangsters follow him (aided by the publicity surrounding the bear encounter) and there is a final showdown again. There is also a child, the son of an alcoholic logger, who befriends the hero. Running 87 minutes, by the end of the two films the potential for the series feels exhausted, but that does not negate the appeal of the energetic action scenes and the basic attractiveness of the screen compositions, particularly since, once again, the image transfer looks so nice.

While the films do have compositional symmetry some of the time, and a strong awareness of the natural environment, they also have the sort of anarchic fight choreography associated with Chinese martial arts features. Hence, it seems quite natural that Hong Kong martial arts experts, Mike Leeder and Arne Venema, provide enjoyable commentary tracks for both films. They explain how liberally the movies are based upon incidents in Oyama’s life, talk about the story and the supporting players, and speak elaborately about Chiba’s prowess and screen presence.

“Chiba, there’s this mischievous sense to him.” “You know? You can always see he’s having fun.” “Yeah.” “He’s having fun doing this, and that makes it more enjoyable for the audience, as well.” “When I first met him, I was really drunk, and I ran after him. And that’s how he was, he was like, ‘Ohhhhhh.’ I think his character in *Kill Bill*...” “Yes.” “...Is kind of very much that was how he was. He didn’t take things very seriously despite being this hard core dude.”

They tend to digress a bit more on the second film, going on about Tokyo real estate, sushi, bears and other topics, but it remains an enjoyable talk and still manages to fit a lot in about the film and the players.

Additionally, *Bullfighter* has an alternate English dubbed track that has its own awkward charms, and comes with a trailer, a TV commercial, a 2-minute alternate opening title sequence and a very good 21-minute segment about the post-War setting, karate, Oyama, Chiba and the two films. *Bearfighter* comes with a trailer.

The first Flash

Before the DC Universe was even a twinkle in the eye of Warner Bros. executives, an attempt was made to move beyond the starting team for a TV series—i.e., Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman—and try out the bench. So, in 1990, a series was created around the ultra-speedy superhero, **The Flash**, which ran on CBS for a single season of twenty-two episodes in 1990 and 1991. Alas, the world wasn’t really ready for it. The special effects were terrific, but there was still a chasm between such effects and reality that had yet to be crossed by computer graphics. While the comic book genre had scored some success in the motion picture boxoffice—again with members of the starting team—the genre’s batting average was still fairly low, and few had an inkling of how the genre would come to dominate in the next few decades once those computer effects got up to speed. That said, for the still small cadre of comic book adaptation fans, the series was a true delight. While it has elements of humor, it still took itself seriously, with an attractive lead in John Wesley Shipp, and decent science-fiction plots that may not reach the level of **Star Trek: The Next Generation** in terms of intelligence, but still belong in the same conversation. At one point, a villain claims, “Well, it’s not my responsibility to be the conscience of the human race. I’m only a scientist,” which encapsulates what is wrong with the world today as much as anything.

DC and Warner Bros. have released a six-platter Blu-ray set, **The Flash: The Original Series**, as a Warner WB Archive Collection title (UPC#840418306130, \$50). Each platter has a ‘Play All’ option and the chapter encoding takes you reliably past the opening credits, except for the nineteenth episode (*Done with Mirrors*), where someone slipped up and didn’t place the marker. The picture is presented in a squared full screen format and the colors are absolutely gorgeous, amplified even more by the show’s wonderful production designs. You can always tell when the hero is going to use his ‘Flash’ powers, because the image suddenly becomes slightly grainy, in anticipation of the special effects, but that is only a testament to how fantastic the image looks overall.

In addition to the generally witty and creative fantasy and science-fiction plots as befits a comic book show, the program’s primary appeal is its fabulously original designs. Set in one of DC’s fictionalized American cities, the show is ostensibly set in 1990 (in one of the best episodes, *Fast Forward*, the hero is thrust a decade into the future—the year 2000—to see what his town would be like if he wasn’t there). But the automobiles, the architecture, the costumes, the technology and the knick-knacks are just as easily from the Thirties, Forties, Fifties, Sixties and so on (TVs are just as readily in black and white as they are in color), as if the different eras were blended together rather than superseded. The designs are not confined, either. One episode, *Double Vision*, is set largely in the town’s Hispanic neighborhood during the Day of the Dead, while another, *Child’s Play*, embraces the psychedelic side of the Sixties. Displayed in a continually creative manner, the time period that the show actually seems most settled upon is that brief early Sixties era before the Kennedy assassination, which would, we suspect, align with the childhoods and initial comic book discoveries of the creators.

The two-channel DTS sound is wonderful. The mix for the pilot episode feels somewhat more intricately detailed than the mixes for the other episodes, but whatever moment in the series that a viewer brings up, there are an enthusiastic dimensionality and separation effects in keeping with the joys and playful delights of the series as a whole. Danny Elfman was responsible for the primary musical score, with other composers contributing effectively to its variations. There are optional English subtitles.

Amanda Pays, appearing in every episode except one, co-stars as a scientist who assists the hero, a police lab technician, and Alex Desert is his co-worker, who is unaware of his alternate identity. M. Emmet Walsh appears in a couple of episodes, including the pilot, as the hero's father. Dick Miller and Richard Belzer show up in a number of episodes as, respectively, a street snitch and a TV reporter. Among the more memorable guest stars are Bryan Cranston, Denise Crosby, Robert Z'Dar, Jeffrey Combs, Angela Bassett, Ian Buchanan, Billy Mumy and David Cassidy. As you may be aware, the most indelible guest star the series landed, in all likelihood more famously associated with the series than Shipp himself, was Mark Hamill, who appeared in two separate episodes (including the season closer) as a Joker-like villain, 'The Trickster.' While all of the episodes have pronounced elements of humor, Hamill's two episodes accentuate the clowning exponentially and succeed entirely because of the show's creative designs and Hamill's unfettered energy.

In general, however, the show is satisfying because the stories are essentially intelligent and embrace engaging science-fiction concepts. After the pilot, the subsequent seven episodes are entertaining and work on establishing the character and his world, but then the ninth episode, *Ghost in the Machine*, bring the series to the next level, with a story about a villain who was obsessed with televisions in the Fifties and awakens from cryogenic freezing to discover excitedly how much the device has come to dominate society. There are direct references to *Videodrome*, as well as a seeming echo of the original *Watchmen* comics. From that point forward, every episode is outstanding, taking a trope—an invisible villain, a villain who puts people to sleep with sound, the hero is cloned, etc.—and fitting it cleverly, smartly and adeptly into the series format. The two most exceptional episodes are *Beat the Clock* (the Bassett episode), in which the hero has an hour to find the proof that a jazz saxophonist (hence, a Fifties vibe) is innocent of murder and stop his electrocution, and *Alpha*, in which a female android created as a weapon begins questioning her purpose. Both utilize the series premise to create a unique twist on a dependable thriller construct, with interesting characters and solid emotional payoffs.

DVD News

CRITERION CORNER: We aren't the only ones celebrating our Fortieth Anniversary. Every year The Criterion Collection puts out a big Christmas box of some sort, and this year, rather than celebrating an event, series or filmmaker, they are celebrating themselves with an eclectic forty-film collection, **CC40**, in honor of the 40 years they have been putting out discs—we reviewed Criterion's premiere 1984 release, *Citizen Kane*, in Jan 85 ("The *Citizen Kane* laser disc is the *Citizen Kane* of laser discs."). The set, which is made up entirely of previous Criterion individual Blu-ray releases, including the special features and represented on forty-nine platters, is priced at \$800 (\$20 a film), although it is obviously being discounted by retailers. The set is designed to attract people who may have a couple of the titles but will find the other ones to be not just an enhancement to their libraries of films, but an opening to new avenues of cinematic pleasures, and includes 8½, *Tokyo Story*, *All That Jazz*, *Bicycle Thieves*, *Repo Man*, *Naked*, *Jules and Jim*, *Being There*, *Weekend* (1967), *Yi Yi*, *The Night of the Hunter*, *Pickpocket*, *Sweet Smell of Success*, *On the Waterfront*, *Do the Right Thing*, *Ratcatcher*, *Sunday Bloody Sunday*, *Mirror*, *Barry Lyndon*, *Safe*, *Seconds*, *His Girl Friday*, *Mishima: A Life in Four Chapters*, *Y tu mamá también*, *My Own Private Idaho*, *Love & Basketball*, *Night of the Living Dead*, *Ace in the Hole*, *3 Women*, *The Red Shoes*, *Down by Law*, *La Ciénaga*, *Wanda*, *House*, *Sullivan's Travels*, *The Battle of Algiers*, *A Woman Under the Influence*, *Cléo from 5 to 7*, *Persona* and *In the Mood for Love*. Also coming soon from Criterion is a 4K presentation of Akira Kurosawa's *The Seven Samurai* accompanied by two audio commentaries, one featuring film scholars David Desser, Joan Mellen, Stephen Prince, Tony Rayns, and Donald Richie, and the other with Japanese-film expert Michael Jeck; a making-of documentary, created as part of the *Toho Masterworks* series *Akira Kurosawa: It Is Wonderful to Create*; *My Life in Cinema* (1993), a 2-hour conversation between Kurosawa and filmmaker Nagisa Oshima; and *Seven Samurai: Origins and Influences*, a documentary looking at the samurai traditions and films that helped shape Kurosawa's masterpiece. William Wyler's *Funny Girl* will be in 4K and will come with a new interview with Barbra Streisand; a conversation between Wyler's son David and author Alicia Malone; *Directed by William Wyler* (1986), a documentary on Wyler's life and career; an archival interview with Omar Sharif; a deleted scene featuring Streisand and Sharif; and featurettes from the original theatrical release. Ishirō Honda's original *Godzilla* will be in 4K format and will include a digital restoration of *Godzilla, King of the Monsters*, Terry Morse's 1956 reworking of the original, with an uncompressed monaural soundtrack; an audio commentary for both movies by film historian David Kalat; interviews with actors Akira Takarada and Haruo Nakajima and special effects technicians Yoshio Irie and Eizo Kaimai; an interview with legendary *Godzilla* score composer Akira Ifukube; a featurette detailing *Godzilla*'s photographic effects, introduced by special effects director Koichi Kawakita and special effects photographer Motoyoshi Tomioka; an interview with Japanese-film critic Tadao Sato; and *The Unluckiest Dragon*, an illustrated audio essay featuring historian Greg Pflugfelder describing the tragic fate of the fishing vessel Daigo Fukuryū Maru, a real-life event that inspired *Godzilla*. Peter Bogdanovich's *Paper Moon* will be in 4K and will come with a commentary featuring Bogdanovich; an introduction to the film by Bogdanovich; a video essay by Bogdanovich biographer Peter Tonguetto; a three-part making-of documentary featuring Bogdanovich, production designer Polly Platt, associate producer Frank Marshall, and cinematographer László Kovács; an archival interview with Platt; and excerpts from a 1973 episode of *The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson* featuring Bogdanovich and Ryan and Tatum O'Neal. Howard Hawks's *Scarface* will be in 4K and will have an alternate ending from the censored version of the film; a conversation between author Megan Abbott and Bill Hader; and an interview with film scholar Lea Jacobs on Hawks's innovative use of sound and editing. Finally, Guillermo del Toro's *The Shape of Water* is being issued in 4K and will include a conversation between del Toro and

filmmaker David Lowery; *A Fairy Tale for Troubled Times*, a documentary highlighting the film's production design, performances, special effects, and score; *Anatomy of a Scene: Prologue and Anatomy of a Scene: The Dance*, both featuring on-set footage and interviews with del Toro; *Shaping the Waves*, an interview with illustrator James Jean; and *Masterclass* from 2017 on the film's technical aspects, featuring del Toro, director of photography Dan Laustsen, visual-effects supervisor and co-creature designer Shane Mahan, visual-effects supervisor Dennis Berardi, costume designer Luis Sequeira, and production designer Paul D. Austerberry.

NEW IN BLU: The following titles were recently released on Blu-ray—Breast Friends Club 2, Catch of the Day, Glitch Ditch, Glitch Ditch 2, Glitch Ditch 3, Glitch Ditch 4, Glitch Ditch 5, Glitch Ditch 6, Sexy Time 9, Sexy Time 10, Slasher Fetish (Acid Bath); Amanda and the Alien (AGFA); Creepypasta (Alberta); You'll Never Find Me (AMD); Way Bad Stone (Bleeding Skull); Gassed Up (Brainstorm); Scalene (Breaking Glass); Wanda and Sully, The Wrong Crowd (Bounty); Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes (Buena Vista); Insect (Burning Bulb); The Bitter Ash (Canadian); Nuts! (Cartuna); Rat Man, Top Line (Cauldron); Death to Smoochy, Not a Pretty Picture, Observe and Report, Pee-Wee's Playhouse Complete Series (Cinedigm); I Am Gitmo (Cinema Libre); Brief Encounters / The Long Farewell, Mother, Real Life (Criterion); Night Caller, Scab Vendor (Dark Star); Babes, Handling the Undead, Treasure (Decal); Blood Cult (Degausser); Mami Wata (Dekalog); The Hangman (Epic); Nintendo Quest (ETR); Shifted (Fable Forest); Go Down Death (Factory 25); Marcel Pagnol My Father's Glory My Mother's Castle (Film Movement); The Gingerdead Man, Swedish Boarding School Girls (Full Moon); Bad Company (Fun City); Pictures of Ghosts (Grasshopper); The Accursed, Air Force the Movie Selagi Bemyawa, American Highway, The Argument, Changeland, Diving Deep The Life and Times of Mike DeGruy, The End of Medicine, The Exiles, 1521, The Food Cure, The Friendliest Town, It's a Good Day to Die, The Lonesome Trail, The King of North Sudan, Mama Bear, The Mouse Trap, The Oak Room, On Our Way, On These Grounds, Only People, Orders from Above, Outpost, The Palindromists, Population Purge, Queens of Pain, The Real Cost, Return to Hardwick, Ride Till I Die, The Rise of Jordan Peterson, The River and the Wall, Sam and Mattie Make a Zombie Movie, Sidemen, Snapshots, Streetlight Harmonies, Tethered, Tomorrow Before After, Triple Threat, Trust in Love, Tune into the Future, A Very Sordid Wedding, Walking against the Rain, The War and Peace of Tim O'Brien, Wind Riders, Wolf Hollow, The Wraith Within (Gravitas); Only the Brave, 30 Years of Garbage The Garbage Pail Kids Story, Valley Heart (Indican); Hell's Coming for You (Indie Rights); Aces High, Annie Laurie, The Apartment, Banel & Adama, Bless Their Little Hearts, Empire of the Ants, The Food of the Gods, Frogs, Green Border, June Zero, Kingdom of the Spiders, Navajo Joe, Nicholas Nickleby, 99 River Street, Squirm, White Dawn (Kino); Amar Akbar Anthony, Ankhon Dekhi Now I See You, Hum Hain Rahi Pyar Ke, Ishqiya, Ishqiya 1½, Kathā, Khakee, Mujhse Shaadi Karogi Will You Marry Me, Phir Hera Pheri Monkey Business, 3 Deewarein 3 Walls, Welcome (Leomark); Boneyard (Lionsgate); What You Wish For (Magnolia); Horror Noire Nightmares Collection (Media Blasters); Bastards (MPI); The Bat Whispers, A Chinese Torture Chamber Story 1 & 2, Cocaine Werewolf, Dick Tracy RKO Pictures Collection, Door-to-Door Maniac, Eight Eyes, High Crime, Hillbillies in a Haunted House, In the Line of Duty III, In the Line of Duty IV, Interrogation, Intrepid Punks Vengeance of the Punks, The Mexican Trilogy El Mariachi Desperado Once upon a Time in Mexico, The People's Joker, Terror Firma, Tokijiro Lone Yakuza, Viva La Muerte, When Titans Ruled the Earth Clash of the Titans Wrath of the Titans (MVD); Indigo Girls It's Only Life after All (Oscilloscope); If, Ladybugs, Proof, Star Trek Discovery The Final Season, Star Trek Discovery The Final Season (Paramount); Proud Rebel (Reel Vault); Bloodmania, Decrypted, End of Term, Father of Lies, Heretic, Ship of the Damned, Sinema, Sister Tempest (Rising Sun); Living a Zombie Dream/Kitty Killers (Saturn's Core); African Recipes, The First Ladies of Africa, Inganzo A Day of Art, Isaiah Washington Passport to Sierra Leone, Vanity Fair Africa Edition, Women in Film (Shoreline); The China Syndrome, The Garfield Movie, The Three Stooges 20-Disc Blu-ray Collection (Sony); Camp Blood 8 Revelations, Revolt of the Empire of the Ants (Sterling); America's Deadliest Home Video, Blood Car, Copperhead, Dante's Inferno, Dawning, Dead Air, Dream Stalker, Door, Door 2 Tokyo Diary, Escape from Hell Hole, Family Dinner, The Head, Hell's Highway, Hollow Gate, In the Woods, The Jar, Lost in the 89's The Joe Zaso Collection; Killer, Love & Saucers, The Nail Gun Massacre, The Newydeads, Night of the Bastard, Popopolis, President's Day, Psycho Sisters, River, Satanik, Slashers, An Old Kung Fu Master, What Happens Next Will Scare You, Woodchipper Massacre (Terror); Heavenly Sword (Tricoast); Pencils vs. Pixels (Uncork'd); The Bikeriders, Chucky Season 3, La Brea Season 3, La Brea Complete Series, Resident Alien Season 3 (Universal); Femme (Utopia); Lost Prophet (VHShiffest); The Alaskans Complete Series, Alex and Me, Anchors Aweigh, Going the Distance, Every Day, Furiosa A Mad Max Saga, Fahrenheit 451, Harum Scarum, Justice League Dark, Mammals, Marie A True Story, The Stars Fell on Henrietta, Scooby-Doo! and the Witch's Ghost/Scooby-Doo! and the Alien Invaders, Succession Complete Series, Supernatural Season 1, Three Little Words, True Detective Season 3, Vikings Valhalla Season 1, Watchmen Chapter 1, The Watchers, Words and Music (Warner); Ride (Well Go); She's Allergic to Cats (Yellow Veil)

NEW IN 4K: The following titles were issued in 4K format—Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes (Buena Vista); Bill & Ted's Bogus Journey, Bill & Ted Face the Music, The Delta Force, The Last Unicorn, Poltergeist II The Other Side (Cinedigm); The Last Emperor, Mother, Real Life (Criterion); Mirror Mirror (Dark Force); Alphaville, Bob Le Flambeur, Last Year at Marienbad, Le Doulos, Peril & Distress: And Soon the Darkness / Sudden Terror, Prime Cut, Sudden Death (Kino); Castle of Blood, Demons, Demons 2, Desperado, Goin' South, High Crime, Reptilicus, When Titans Ruled the Earth Clash of the Titans Wrath of the Titans, The Woman & Offspring (MVD); Anchorman The Legend of Ron Burgundy, Collateral, Double Jeopardy, Halo Season 2, If (Paramount); Drive, Can't Hardly Wait (Sony); The Bikeriders, Let Him Go, Red Eye (Universal); Black Mass, Focus, Furiosa A Mad Max Saga, Game Night, Just Mercy, Justice League Dark, Superman Man of Tomorrow, Watchmen Chapter 1 (Warner)

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Current Attractions

The following titles recently appeared for the first time:
 The Accursed (Gravitas)
 Acidman (Brainstorm)
 Adventures at the Chocolate Factory (SP)
 Air Force The Movie Selagi Berryawa (Gravitas)
 Alterscape (SP)
 An American in Austen / Rip in Time / Love Strikes Twice (Cinedigm)
 The American Indian before the White Man (Alpha)
 America's Most Deadly Police Chases (360)
 Ancient Astronauts 2 (360)
 Ancient Symbols 2 (360)
 Angel/Avenging Angel (MVD)
 Archives of War V.2 (Alpha)
 Automata The First A.I. (360)
 Babes (Decal)
 Banel & Adama (Kino)
 Barber (Brainstorm)
 The Bat Whispers (MVD)
 Batman Long Halloween Part 1 (Warner)
 Batman Soul of the Dragon (Warner)
 The Beastmaster (MVD)
 The Better Half (SP)
 Better Off Dead (SP)
 Beyond Paradise Season 2 (Warner)
 The Big Ask (Tibeca)
 Big F***ing Snake (Social)
 The Bikeriders (Universal)
 Blue Lights Season 2 (Warner)
 Boneyard (Lionsgate)
 Breast Friends Club 2 (Acid Bath)
 Brennan (SP)
 Brief Encounters / The Long Farewell (Criterion)
 Bullets for the Dead (SP)
 The Case for Christmas (Cinedigm)
 Catch of the Day (Acid Bath)
 Changeland (Gravitas)
 Charismata (SP)
 Chicago Fire Season 12 (Universal)
 Chicago Med Season 9 (Universal)
 Christmas Freak (Gravitas)
 Chucky Season 3 (Universal)
 Chum (SRS)
 Clara Bow Collection V.2 (Alpha)
 Classic Cars of the 1930's & 1940's Collection (Alpha)
 Cobra Rebellion Season 3 (Paramount)
 Cocaine Werewolf (MVD)
 Concussed The American Dream (Gravitas)
 The Conqueror Hollywood Fallout (Breaking Glass)
 Crossroads A Story of Forgiveness (Cinedigm)
 D.I. Ray Season 2 (Paramount)
 Daddio (Sony)
 Dance Rivals (Vision)
 Dare to Be Me (Dreamscape)
 Darrow and Darrow Body of Evidence (Cinedigm)
 Decrypted (Rising Sun)
 Destruction on a Periodic Basis Hab Theory (360)
 Die Daisy Die (Alpha)
 Diving Deep The Life and Times of Mike DeGruy (Gravitas)
 Don't Fall in Love with Yourself (Gravitas)
 Don't Turn Your Back on Friday Night (Gravitas)
 Door-to-Door Maniac (MVD)
 Dragonkeeper (Cinedigm)
 The Egyptian Origins of Christianity (360)
 Elisabeth Season 1 (Paramount)
 End of Term (Rising Sun)
 The Escort (Indiepix)
 The Exiles (Gravitas)
 The Face on Mars (360)
 The Falconer (Gravitas)
 The Falls Covenant of Grace (Breaking Glass)
 Father of Files (Rising Sun)
 1521 (Gravitas)
 Firelight (Cinedigm)
 500 Days of Silence (Freestyle)
 The Food Cure (Gravitas)
 For Proghet (Vision)
 Force of Nature The Dry 2 (MPI)
 Forgotten Mysteries of the 19th Century (360)
 Freedom Fighters The Ray (Warner)
 The Friendliest Town (Gravitas)
 Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga (Warner)
 The G (Lightbulb)
 The Garfield Movie (Social)
 The Bikeriders (Universal)
 Gassed Up (Brainstorm)
 Get Your Man (Alpha)
 The Gingerdead Man (Finger)
 Glitch Ditch (Acid Bath)
 Glitch Ditch 2 (Acid Bath)
 Glitch Ditch 3 (Acid Bath)
 Glitch Ditch 4 (Acid Bath)
 Glitch Ditch 5 (Acid Bath)
 Glitch Ditch 6 (Acid Bath)
 Mr. Robinson Crusoe (Alpha)
 Murder Motel (Deskpopp)
 NCIS Season 21 (Paramount)
 Not a Pretty Picture (Criterion)
 The Oak Room (Gravitas)
 Olympians at Heart (Dreamscape)
 On Our Way (Gravitas)
 On These Grounds (Gravitas)
 Orders from Above (Gravitas)
 Outpost (Gravitas)
 Paris 1900 (Alpha)
 Part-Time Killer (Random)
 The People's Joker (MVD)
 Pictures of Ghosts (Grasshopper)
 Plastic Earth (Gravitas)
 Population Purge (Gravitas)
 Prey (Vertical)
 Queens of Pain (Gravitas)
 Rally Caps (BMG)
 The Range Busters Ultimate Collection V.2 (Alpha)
 Rehab Cabin (Gravitas)
 Reign Complete Season (Warner)
 Return to Harwick (Gravitas)
 Ride (Well Go)
 Ride Till I Die (Gravitas)
 The River and the Wall (Gravitas)
 Samantha An American Girl Holiday (Warner)

If (Paramount)
 In Control (SP)
 In My Dreams (Cinedigm)
 Indigo Girls Its Only Life after All (Oscilloscope)
 Innovators of Black History 1 (360)
 Insect (Burning Bulb)
 It's a Good Day to Die (Gravitas)
 Johnny Fluff Secret Mission (Wownow)
 June Zero (Kino)
 Justice League Dark (Warner)
 Justice League Unlimited Season 1 (Warner)
 Killer Ex (Marital Arts)
 The King of North Sudan (Gravitas)
 Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes (Buena Vista)
 La Brea Complete Series (Universal)
 La Brea Season 3 (Universal)
 Lego DC Comics Super Heroes Justice League Gotham City Breakout (Warner)
 Lego DC Super Hero Girls Brain Drain (Warner)
 The Lonesome Trail (Gravitas)
 Looney Tunes Golden Collection V.4 (Warner)
 Love at Sea (Cinedigm)
 The Luckiest Man (Dreamscape)
 The Madame Blanc Mysteries Season 3 (AMD)
 Mama Bear (Gravitas)
 Mammals (Warner)
 Man in Space Documentary Double Feature The Astronauts / The Mission of Apollo-Soyuz (Alpha)
 Marguerite's Theorem (Film Movement)
 Max 2 White House Hero (Warner)
 Mermaid's Lament (Indie Rights)
 The Midnight Gag (Freestyle)
 Monster High 2 (Paramount)
 The Mouse Trap (Gravitas)
 Mr. Robinson Crusoe (Alpha)
 NCIS Season 21 (Paramount)
 Not a Pretty Picture (Criterion)
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 Rehab Cabin (Gravitas)
 Reign Complete Season (Warner)
 Return to Harwick (Gravitas)
 Ride (Well Go)
 Ride Till I Die (Gravitas)
 The River and the Wall (Gravitas)
 Samantha An American Girl Holiday (Warner)

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 Acid Bath:
 →Of Dice and Men
From AMD:
 The Walking Dead The Ones Who Live Season 1
 The Brokenwood Mysteries Season 10
 →A Wounded Fawn
 →In a Violent Nature
 →Baghead
 →Anne Rice's Interview with the Vampire Season 2
 →Harry Wild Season 3
From BMG:
 Something Good Coming
 →Grace Wins
From Bounty:
 After the End Hang on to Your Hanger-Ons
 →Little Johnny
From Buena Vista:
 →Inside Out 2
 →Kinds of Kindness
From Burning Bulb:
 →Broken
 →Paradise
From Cheng Cheng:
 July Rhapsody
From Cinedigm:
 Blind Date Book Club / Lifelong Love
 The Secrets of Bella Vista / Mystery Island
 →The Passing On
 →A Long Way Off
 →Pimpville USA The Official Players Ball
 →My King
 →Justice Is Mind
 →Little Cooper
 →Mind Games
 →Strong Hawk My Sister's Keeper
 →Thieves
 →Timeless
 →Bounty
 →RxCall
 →Bad Kill
 →Sprska The Struggle for Freedom
 →Habitual
 →Fireplace
 →Miles in the Life
 →She's Out of His Mind
 →Buffalo
 →The Return
 →US and the Game Industry
 →The Boo
 →41
 →e-Demon
 →Science Friction
 →Redemption Value
 →Darkest Hour
 →Annihilation
 →My Little Friend
 →Hustle on Lombard
 →Shadows on the Road
 →Abducted
 →My Father's Keeper
 →22 The Unforgotten Soldier
 →Ephemeral Eternity
 →The Garden's Keeper
 Tesoros
 →The Love Destination Courses Soothing Forestscapes for Deep Sleep
 →The Love Destination Courses Soothing Oceanscapes for Deep Sleep
 →A Maleta Full of Treasures
 →Riot Island
 →Summer Snow
From Excel:
 →Escape from Germany
From Filmhub:
 →Looking for Mr. Miyagi
 →Christina Aguilera Pop Diva
 →The Girl
 →God's Love Saved Me
 →Creating Christ
 →Mike Muratore Crowd Work
 →Unsolved History Life of a King
 →Street Soccer New York
 →The Godfathers of Hardcore
 →Exegesis Lovecraft
 →Sister
 →By No Means
 →Tormented Revenge
 →The Next 24 Hours
 →Easy Land
 →Abort
 →Rio Grande Air
 →Waterfall 1 No Words No Sex Just Relax
 →Storied Streets
 →Superstorm A Love Story
 →Mahjong and the West
 →Haunted Indiana State Sanatorium
 →Be Careful What You Wish 4
 →Goblin
 →A Lonely Woman
 →Breaking the Science Barrier
 →The Passing On
 →A Long Way Off
 →Pimpville USA The Official Players Ball
 →My King
 →Justice Is Mind
 →Little Cooper
 →Mind Games
 →Strong Hawk My Sister's Keeper
 →Thieves
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 →Habitual
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 →Darkest Hour
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 →My Little Friend
 →Hustle on Lombard
 →Shadows on the Road
 →Abducted
 →My Father's Keeper
 →22 The Unforgotten Soldier
 →Ephemeral Eternity
 →The Garden's Keeper

From Film Movement:

Before, Now & Then
 →Midwives
From Found Footage:
 →The Found Footage Festival V.8
 →Found Footage Festival V.10
From Freestyle:
 →Off Ramp
 →Nobody's Home
 →The Life of Peter Gottlieb
 →Wild Genius
From Full Moon:
 The Primevals
 Doll Graveyard
From Full City:
 →Paradise
From Gemini:
 El Hombre Bestia
From Giant:
 →Lost in the Shuffle
From Gravitas:
 →Great White Summer
 →Charlie Tango
 →Studio One Forever
From Indicant:
 13th Summer
From Indiepix:
 Blue Desert
 →Family
From Invincible:
 →Peter Five Eight
From Kino:
 Call My Agent!
 Complete Series
 Arctic Circle Seasons 1-3
 How to Come Alive with Norman Mailer
 Link Mom and Dad's Nipple Factory
 Sorry / Not Sorry Going to Mars The Nikki Giovanni Project
 13 Notes in Red
 →First Love
 →Brigitte Bardot Collection: Naughty Girl, Please Not Now, Two Weeks in September, Les Femmes
 →Babylon Berlin Season 4
 →All This I Will Give to You
 →Made in England The Films of Powell and Pressburger
 →Terrestrial Verses
 →Coupe
 →Close to You
 →The Falling Star
 →The Boy in the Woods
 →Happy Clothes A Film about Patricia Field
From Leomark:
 →Hot Hotel Nights Noches Del Sol
 →At the End of Eight
 →Darkheart Manor
 →Love Blood And Aztec Demons - The Lost Films Of Juan F Moctezuma II
 →The Syndrome
 →Path to Pain
 →Inbred
From Lionsgate:
 →Kill
From Magnolia:
 The Grab
 →The Convert
 →Thelma
From Mark:
 →Mark A Call to Action
From Maverick:
 →Murder Company
From MPI:
 Late Night with the Devil
 The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet Video Scrap Book
 →#NTRUTH: The Psychology of Trumpism
 →American Pop Flashback! Great

Hits of the 60s and 70s
From MVD:
 My Love Affair with Marriage
 Intensely Independent
 The Micro-Budget Films of Blake Eckard
 →I'll Be Your Mirror
 →Creature with the Blue Hand
 →Behind the Bucket A Garrison Story
 →The Profane Exhibit
From My Way:
 →The Forest Hills
From Oscilloscope:
 →God & Country
From Paramount:
 Pompeii The New Dig
 In The In Between
 CSI Vegas The Final Season
 Reacher Season 2
 PBS Kids Four Seasons of Fun
 →Fire Country Season 2
 →Belgravia The Next Chapter
 →Knuckles
 →The Equalizer Season 4
 →A Quiet Place Day One
 →NCIS Hawaii! Final Season
 →NCIS Hawaii! Complete Series (15 platters)
 →Ridley Season 2
 →Odysseus Returns
 →Mary Berry's Highland Christmas
 →PAW Patrol Ultimate Film & TV Collection (10 platters)
 →SpongeBob The Best 300 Episodes Ever (3 platters)
 →Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles Classic Series Complete Collection (23 platters)
From Progleft:
 →CIA Drugs R Us!
From Rising Sun:
 →Eric Clapton Standing at the Crossroads
 →Counter Histories Rock Hill Lafayette
 →The Viking Sisters
 →Essex Boys Retribution
 →Forget Me Not
 →Danny. Legend. God.
 →Fields of War
 →Fixed
 →Faye
From Roundtable:
 →#AMFAD All My Friends Are Dead
From Ruthless:
 →From Power to Prison The Trump Story Part 2
From Sandpiper:
 The Hound of the Baskervilles (Cushing)
 Moby Dick
 Marat/Sade
 Lady in White
 Saving Grace
 Blame It on Rio
 Clive Barker's Lord of Illusions
From Scream Team:
 →The Pumpkin Man
From Social:
 →Cocaine Cougar
From Sony:
 →The Crown Season 6
 →Bad Boys Ride or Die
From SRS:
 Ring Shark
 Yuzo The Biggest Battle in Tokyo
 →The Great Yokai War Guardians
From Stonecutter:
 →Woman in the Maze
From Strand:
 Rhinegold
 →I'll Be Your Mirror
 From TLA:
From Tribeca:
 In Her Name
From Universal:
 Monsters of California Blacklight / Memory / The Marksman
 →Chicago P.D. Season 11
 →Buck Rogers in the 25th Century Complete Series (9 platters)
 →Las Vegas Complete Series (25 platters)
From Utopia:
 →Chestnut
 →Trilogy New Wave
 →The Good Half
From Vertical:
 →The Exorcism
 →Chief of Station
From VMI:
 House of Dolls
 →The Ballad of Davy Crockett
From Warner:
 →Amos & Andrews
 →Babylon 5 Complete Series (31 platters)
 →Captain Planet The Complete Franchise
 →Curb Your Enthusiasm Season 12
 →Curb Your Enthusiasm Complete Series (24 platters)
 →Dangerous Game
 →The Gilded Age Season 2
 →A Guy Thing
 →Horizon An American Saga Chapter 1
 →House of the Dragon Season 2
 →Kinjite Forbidden Subjects
 A Midsummer Night's Sex Comedy
 →Serengeti III
 →September
 →Speechless
 Super Friends Complete Series (9 platters)
 →Together
 Valkyrie
 Young Sheldon Complete Series
From Well Go:
 →The Outlaws
 →Exthma
From Wild Eye:
 Harawata Man
 →Before Dawn
 →Once upon a Time in Amityville
 →Jurassic Excort
 →Mummy Shark
From Wonderscape:
 →Science Kids Orcas vs. Great White Sharks
 →Science Kids Microbes Living Inside of Us
 →History Kids What Is a U.S. Representative to Congress?
 →History Kids What Is a U.S. Senator?
From Zapuderflix:
 →The Diet Deception
 →A Kingdom for a Crown