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When villains become heroes

Once abhorrent villains like the Klingons, Predators, or Yautja as they are known in their own language, are now heroes so far as movies are concerned, or, at least, one, embodied by Dimitrius Schuster-Koloamatangi, is in the marvelous 2025 20th Century Studios science-fiction adventure, **Predator Badlands**, a two-platter 20th Century Studios 4K UltraHD release (UPC#043396647282, \$50). It should be noted right off that the second platter in the set, a standard BD, which is also available separately (UPC#043396647275, \$41), looks and sounds nearly as good as the 4K presentation. Unless you have a really large screen or really sensitive sound equipment, the standard BD has the same chromatic detail, the same awesome bass and the same overall thrills that the 4K presentation delivers. Sure, the 4K version is probably better, but the film is so enjoyable it hardly needs the extra subliminal boost.

Part of the joy the 107-minute (actually about 98 minutes before the end credit scroll starts rolling, although the music is so engaging the temptation to sit through it entirely is strong) film provides is the many surprises it holds in its narrative, and so sharing almost any of these would not be fair. It can be said that Schuster-Koloamatangi's character travels to a planet to kill an enormous beast, that others are interested in the beast as well, and that he grudgingly bonds with a character he meets there engagingly played by Elle Fanning. One of the advantages of this is that you don't have to always be staring at his ugly double-jawed puss (even Klingons, without dreadlocks, are prettier), because she is there, smiling a lot, to make the journey more palatable. The planet has all sorts of terribly deadly creatures and plants, so there is excitement practically every moment as the characters cope with the various dangers. And that is just the beginning of the problems they encounter. Directed by Dan Trachtenberg, the film is a truly glorious, modern computer graphic effects science-fiction action film. It is witty, imaginative, energetically paced and it delivers a constant bombardment of excitement and thrills.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1. The Dolby Atmos sound is fantastic. Not only is it energetically directional with a compelling dynamic range, but the subwoofer action is exceptionally elaborate and well worth amplifying. There is an audio track that describes the action ("Dek looks up to see a bone bison charging straight at them. The bison's face pleats open up to its antlers, freeing its hideous trunk. Standing his ground, Dek hurls his plasma sword in slow motion at the oncoming foe. The blade pierces the bison's forehead and runs through the length of the body, cleaving the giant torso in two. The bison's momentum carries it forward as the two halves split around Dek. The animal's carcass founders, leaving Dek holding two halves of the severed spine."), alternate French and Spanish audio tracks, optional English, French and Spanish subtitles, 24 minutes of good production featurettes that reveal how many of the special effects were accomplished and 28 minutes of fascinating deleted and alternate scenes that were modified or discarded before the effects were completed.

Trachtenberg supplies an informative commentary track over the feature and the deleted scenes, accompanied by several members of the production team. They explain that in a film that has fourteen hundred twenty shots, only twenty of those did not have special effect components, and so a lot of the talk goes over how those effects were achieved and what went on during their creation and staging. He also speaks about the choices that were made in the story, the other artists who contributed to the film and what the actors had to face. "We give awards to actors for tears and for dramatic reconceptions of who we think they are, but there's things like, how do you perform like you're poisoned? Like, how someone knows to move their body in that way. Sometimes it's those kinds of things that I find even more impressive than the more powerful stuff."

Ben-Hur in 4K

The Warner Bros. Blu-ray release of William Wyler's 1959 MGM Biblical epic, **Ben-Hur** (Oct 11), was seemingly as close to perfection as it could get, but Warner's 4K UltraHD release (UPC#883929842674, \$30) is even more perfect. In a side-by-side comparison, the massive crowd scenes on the standard Blu-ray are mildly blurry, while on the 4K image, every individual is distinctive. Throughout the film, the details are even sharper and colors are more intricate, so that the standard BD seems disposable in comparison. Darker sequences on the standard BD are ever so slightly lighter, revealing details that are not obscured on the 4K, but are less noticeable, and since the original filmmakers lowered the light in the scenes on purpose, nothing is really gained. The 4K presentation's one exception-that-proves-the-rule flaw, a hidden splice at the 96:10 mark, is also on the older BD. As for the sound, technological advances have upgraded the 5.1-channel DTS sound on the standard BD to a Dolby Atmos mix on the 4K presentation, which brings a greater sense of encompassment to the Miklós Rózsa musical score, while delivering the old-fashioned directional dialog and sound effects in all of their glory. The outstanding thunderstorm (or an upending of Heaven) at the finale will shake you out of your chair.

Charlton Heston stars as the title character, who begins the film as a wealthy Jewish prince, is thrown into slavery and then works his way up through the echelons of Rome after he saves the commander of a galley fleet, returning to Jerusalem to search for his family, all during the same era that Jesus Christ rose to prominence and was executed. Their paths cross on several occasions.

Letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.75:1 (an effect that feels astonishing during the leper cave sequence where it is further enhanced by the ceiling and floor of the cave), the 4K presentation is a thrilling representation of what Hollywood could accomplish before the advent of computer graphics, as it smartly shifts between the grandeur of spectacle and simple human drama, and between the excitement of its action scenes and the splendor of its costume dressings. Hugh Griffith's makeup as an Arabian sheik is especially embarrassing with the awkwardness of its application in full 4K clarity, but that does not undercut the wit of his line deliveries. Jack Hawkins and Stephen Boyd costar (the special features, and many essays elsewhere, go into detail about the unspoken homoerotic relationships both characters have with Heston's character), with Haya Harareet in a part as the love interest for Heston's character that could have benefited from a stronger stellar presence. Nevertheless, it is the variety of the performers opposite Heston that sustains the film's appeal while it plays out its magnificent adventure.

The 223-minute film could easily fit upon a single platter, but like the standard Blu-ray, the 4K presentation is split to two platters at the Intermission to make full use of the disc's capacity to enhance the quality of its playback. The first platter, which opens with an *Overture*, runs 142 minutes, while the second platter, which opens with the *Entr'acte* and features the ideal-for-demonstration chariot race, runs 81 minutes. Like the standard BD, there is a Dolby stereo audio track with just Rózsa's music, and there is an informative commentary track featuring Heston intercut with film historian T. Gene Hatcher. The 4K presentation has alternate French, Spanish, Italian and German audio tracks, and twelve subtitled options, including English.

The third platter included in the set is a standard Blu-ray holding special features. Sadly, Warner has dropped Fred Niblo's outstanding 1925 silent version, *Ben-Hur A Tale of the Christ*, from the special features platter that was part of the previous Blu-ray release, and the Oscar clips have also been eliminated (so if you are thinking about discarding the previous BD in favor of the 4K, you'll probably want to swap the two special features platters first), but the 78-minute profile of Heston is included, along with the 58-minute retrospective documentary, the 5-minute montage of production photos and 29 minutes of intriguing screen tests. Two new brief featurettes have also been included, a simple 7-minute retrospective look at the film's legacy and a more satisfying 8-minute appreciation of the film's cinematography.

Time to play in 4K

An endlessly rewatchable film, Jacques Tati's 1967 **PlayTime**, has been released by Studio Canal and The Criterion Collection as a two-platter 4K Blu-ray (UPC#715515329613, \$50), thus enhancing its captivating audio and visual stimulations and making it all the more rewatchable. We reviewed Criterion's Blu-ray as part of **The Complete Jacques Tati** in Aug 25, and it looked fantastic, with precise, accurate colors. The colors are the same on the 4K presentation, but they are sharper and better detailed, and the image is smoother. The greatest improvement is with the sound. The standard BD had a 3-channel DTS audio track that was a great deal of fun, but on the 4K presentation, it is a full 5.1-channel DTS track, with sharper, clearer and more playfully distributed noises. The film has narrative advancement, but not a story, per se, and its emotional satisfaction comes not from the superficial interactions of the characters (a tourist group arrives at an airport, visits a group of office buildings and then later attends the opening of a restaurant, while Tati's 'Monsieur Hulot' character crosses paths with them, attempts to go about his business in the office building, and after meeting one old friend who lives in a modern apartment, bumps into another who takes him to the same restaurant) but from the aesthetic satisfactions that every witty character movement, design dynamic and applied sound effect provide, in multitude. If you avert your eyes from the distractions of the center of the image, there is an equal amount of business going on in the far corners of every shot (keep an eye out in the windows of the buildings across the street), and everywhere in between. The 124-minute film was already enormous fun, and the 4K presentation, with its advanced precision, is an even greater joy.

The film is in a variety of languages, but mostly French, with optional English subtitles, and comes with a second audio track, identified as the, 'International Version,' which has a little more English. It hardly matters. After you watch the movie a couple of times, you stop reading the subtitles anyway.

In a first, Criterion has not included the standard Blu-ray presentation of the film with the 4K platter. Instead, the second platter, which is a standard Blu-ray, is filled with special features that were available in the **Complete Jacques Tati** set, including a 6-minute introduction by Terry Jones, 45 minutes of commentaries over specific sequences, a 21-minute Tati biography, a 50-minute profile of Tati conducted by the British TV program, *Omnibus*, a 26-minute visit to the **PlayTime** set by Mike Hodges, a good 7-minute piece about the film's production, a 12-minute interview with script supervisor Sylvette Baudrot, the short film by Nicolas Ribowski featuring Tati and shot on the set of **PlayTime**, *Cours du Soir*, running 29 minutes, a 1972 audio-only talk by Tati in English running 17 minutes, and an insightful 19-minute analysis of the film's artistry that we did not previously review.

4K Westworld

"We aren't dealing with ordinary machines here. These are highly complicated pieces of equipment, almost as complicated as living organisms. In some cases, they've been designed by other computers. We don't know—exactly—how they work." Michael Crichton's remarkable 1973 MGM science-fiction thriller, **Westworld**, has been released as a 4K Blu-ray by Warner Bros. and Arrow Video (UPC#76013720-0666, \$60) just as concerns about Artificial Intelligence have shifted into high gear, thus certifying how timeless and relevant the film has remained. It is a beautifully conceived entertainment, not just running 89 minutes, but packing smaller stories within its bigger story so that it feels to unfold at an even faster pace. When it concludes, you are surprised that an hour and a half have passed. In 4K, this is even truer, because the sharp, smooth, flawless picture and the marvelous multi-directional soundtrack (there are a number of options, which we will address momentarily) enable a greater focus on the film's immediate sequential pleasures.

Crichton would of course use his basic idea again for **Jurassic Park**, but it was with **Westworld**, which he both wrote and directed, that he initially conceived the concept of a resort inhabited by android robots in human form, when through a virus or some other unexplained, cascading malfunction, the attractions turn on the human guests. The story would later be revived in an outstanding epistemological epic series from HBO (Dec 17), but none of these elaborations can undercut the direct, gripping excitement that Crichton's original film achieves. Richard Benjamin and Josh Brolin are the well-heeled guests, who have chosen the American West-themed resort out of the three (a Medieval castle resort and an early Roman resort) available. The film's greatest cheat is not the technology, which is rapidly coming to pass (robot sex, by the indications of every science-fiction movie we've ever seen on the topic, is going to become a very big thing, potential downsides be damned), but the idea that there is actually enough variety in the three 'worlds' to entertain people for a week, because the glimpses you get of the guests enjoying themselves before the mayhem begins is pretty much all that there is possible to fantasy play, and a week of it would get pretty stale. But like we said, the film only runs 89 minutes, so you get snippets of how much fun it would be to abuse replicas of your fellow humans, or sexually exploit them, and not pay the consequences, and before that can become tiresome, you have Benjamin's character running for his life across the different landscapes, chased by a robotic gunslinger exquisitely embodied by Yul Brynner, while every other human in the site is slaughtered. Hence, as a viewer, you get to live through that fantasy, as well, and thanks to advances like 4K processing, it becomes more real with every iteration.

Dick Van Patten is also featured, along with Norman Bartold, Alan Oppenheimer, Victoria Shaw and Majel Barrett. The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1. Arrow has also released a standard Blu-ray (UPC#760137200673, \$50). The image on the standard BD looks good, but in a direct comparison, it feels blander than the image on the 4K

presentation, because of the enhanced detail presented in the latter. The cinematography is never luscious, and so it becomes the crispness of the lines in the actor's faces and the precise play of shadings on the sets and costumes that stimulate your response to the action.

The default audio track is a four-channel DTS track, but there is also a mono track, a two-channel track and a 5.1-channel track. The two-channel track has a stronger volume, but the separations on the four-channel track are very pleasing. Nevertheless, the 5.1 track is the most satisfying, with many nice directional sound effects and an enveloping dimensionality for Fred Karlin's musical score. There are optional English subtitles, a very nice 12-minute interview with Benjamin from 2025; a good 17-minute interview with Brolin from 2025, talking quite a bit about horses as well as about making the film; a terrific 34-minute interview with producer Paul Lazarus III, who has some great anecdotes about working with MGM head James Aubrey (Crichton 'camera cut' the film so there was no extra footage for Aubrey to recut the movie), how he later became buddies with Aubrey when they collaborated on getting the sequel made ("He went from my enemy to a good friend"), Brynner (he took the part because he was broke), Crichton, and his experiences making other movies; an interesting gender analysis of the film and the nature of the fantasies the resort is fulfilling running 13 minutes; an original 9-minute production featurette that has some marvelous behind-the-scenes footage and an interview with Brynner; the 48-minute pilot episode for the wonderfully awful MGM 1980 TV spinoff, **Beyond Westworld** (Oct 14); a trailer; and a decent collection of production photos and promotional materials in still frame.

Film historian Daniel Kremer supplies an informative commentary track although, as with other talks he has given, he tends to use an annoying past conditional tense, which is correct when he describes scenes that would have appeared in the film but were deleted, but is not correct—and just causes your brain to explode when he keeps doing it—when citing an actual occurrence such as another film that an actor appeared in and so forth. In any case, ignoring his bad habits, he talks extensively about Crichton's career, his experience making films (he picked up a lot of tips on directing by watching Robert Wise work on **The Andromeda Strain**), and why **Westworld** was not a novel first (the story was too closely based upon motion picture experiences, and he could not make it work in novel form). He also talks about the sequel, **Futureworld** (May 11), which MGM had to relinquish for budgetary reasons, but he does not mention either **Beyond Westworld** or HBO's show. He does go into detail about MGM's other science-fiction films at the time, and also goes over the backgrounds and careers of the cast and the crew, explains how the special effects were achieved, and shares many insights about the film's creation and impact.

Greek tragedy

As Christopher Nolan's summer blockbuster about the ancient Greeks waits in the wings, an opportunity has arisen to explore some of the backstory with the excellent Radiance Films Blu-ray release of Michael Cacoyannis's 1977 MGM production, **Iphigenia** (UPC#760137203438, \$40). An enormous army dawdles on a beach in the doldrums of summer, waiting for a breeze so the soldiers can set off in the boats idling offshore, to attack Troy. When the King, Agamemnon, asks the oracles what needs to be done to get the wind to start blowing, the answer is that he must sacrifice his daughter. After some hemming and hawing, he sends his wife a message, telling her to send his daughter to him because she is to be married in secret (to Achilles, no less—the hunkiest guy on a beach sweltering with men), but the mother, Clytemnestra, will have none of it, and arrives at the camp instead with a full procession. A lot of screaming arguments ensue. Running 129 minutes, it is a wonderfully entertaining melodrama and deftly executed by Cacoyannis, who spent just enough money to gather his extras for impressive group shots that he could then intercut with the intimate exchanges of the central characters, set amid the dusty dried foliage and makeshift huts of the Greek countryside. He also landed Irene Pappas for Clytemnestra, who plays fury with the full force of her soul. Kostas Kazakos and Kostas Karras costar.

The film is in Greek with optional English subtitles and has an aspect ratio of about 1.66:1. The colors are very fresh and fleshtones are accurate, but the source material does have scattered scratches and other markings, and is mildly grainy from time to time. On the whole, however, the quality of the hues and the sharpness of the BD image add to the exhilaration of the dramatic exchanges. The story is simple and easy to follow, and in Cacoyannis's hands, it conveys the universality of its founding myths while keeping the viewer fully engaged with the characters and their conflicts. The monophonic sound is solid, and there is a stimulating musical score by Mikis Theodorakis. Also featured is a passable 25-minute overview of the film's creation and thematic intentions; a nice 11-minute clip from a Cannes panel featuring Cacoyannis, Pappas and the young Tatiana Papamoschou, who plays the title character, and another 6-minute interview with Cacoyannis and Pappas.

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The perils of resale

Although it is not apparent during the first hour, Kiyoshi Kurosawa's 2024 **Cloud** is a suspense thriller that gradually turns into an abstract allegory about materialism and the emotional disconnect between men and women. Released on Blu-ray by Janus Films, Sideshow and The Criterion Channel (UPC#71551533021, \$30), the 124-minute feature begins amiably, depicting a young man who makes a decent profit buying items in bulk and then selling them on the Internet. He does so well that he and his girlfriend move out of their cramped apartment in the city to set up shop in a kind of combination warehouse office and living space in the countryside. As he becomes more focused on turning a profit, he fails to notice that some of the items he is peddling are not what they claim to be, while at the same time his girlfriend becomes bored being away from the city, particularly since he is so unresponsive and obsessed with his business. She leaves him, and shortly afterward, masked strangers who are upset about the deals he has made arrive to exact retribution. Fortunately, he has a very loyal assistant. There is one really good scream that kind of marks the turning point in the film, and then lots of chases and gunfights. Viewers approaching the movie superficially, while they may enjoy the action, will be inclined to dismiss it as ridiculous or pointless, but the film has a very precise atmosphere at all times, and is essentially as earnest at depicting reality in its first half as it is at depicting absurdity in its second half. Thanks to the appealing performances from the stars, Masaki Suda, Amane Okayama and Daiken Okudaira, not only is there more to the film than meets the eye, but it is consistently pleasurable to be in their company as their characters cope with the challenges confronting them.

The picture has an aspect ratio of about 1.66:1. The color transfer is sharp and the cinematography has an appealing, airy quality. The 5.1-channel DTS sound has a terrific dimensionality that effectively conveys each environment. The film is in Japanese with optional English subtitles, and comes with a trailer and a 16-minute talk by Kurosawa about what he wanted to achieve with the film (the talk does not start up where it left off if playback is terminated).

Nobody's Hart

First, for context and for pleasure, watch the lovely 1948 MGM biographical musical, **Words and Music**, released by Warner Bros. as a *Warner WB Archive Collection* Blu-ray (UPC#840418309834, \$22). Mickey Rooney plays lyricist Lorenz Hart (not to be confused with playwright Moss Hart) and Tom Drake, who is in more than half the film but has eighth billing, plays composer Richard Rodgers. It is an old school biopic that never broaches the true emotional, let alone sexual, dynamics of its subject. At first, Rooney's character is hyperactive and beset by attention deficits. When he first tastes success, he becomes self-conscious about his height, and afterward he never seems mature enough to settle down with someone, tagging along with Drake's willing character and his eagerly tolerant wife, played by Janet Leigh. And then finally, he sinks into undefined doldrums and an equally vague malady, to which he succumbs just as a stage revival of one of the pair's old shows is a hit again. The film runs 121 minutes, but using its story as momentum, it is packed with more than a dozen songs and with stars so stellar they earned a notice ahead of Drake, including Judy Garland, Gene Kelly, Lena Horne, June Allyson (listed first in the credits because they are in alphabetical order), Perry Como (who has a reasonably sized role) and Ann Sothern. Also featured, but listed lower than Drake, are Marshall Thompson, Betty Garrett, Mel Torme, Vera-Ellen and Cyd Charisse.

Directed by Norma Taurog, the film has one other major star, so magnificent that the film is made entirely worthwhile by its presence, and that is Technicolor. Presented in a squared full screen format, MGM goes all out with its designs and color coordination, and not only is every frame fabulously hued back to the smallest corner in the rear of each set, but the Blu-ray is stupendous in the flair and accuracy of its delivery. We reviewed a DVD in Sep 07, and of course it looked terrific, but the Blu-ray is stunning, coming across as much sharper and better detailed than the DVD could ever hope to achieve. The monophonic sound is also stronger and clearer, enhancing the delivery of every wonderful number. The special features have been carried over from the DVD, including an informative 20-minute retrospective documentary that lifts the veils on the film's biographical disguises, a further breakdown of the movie and the history it is representing on a commentary track by film historian Richard Barrios, 13 minutes of deleted songs that were filmed, 20 minutes of audio-only songs that were not, a 21-minute black-and-white *Theater of Life* documentary short from 1947 entitled *Going to Blazes!* about firefighters, a 7-minute 1947 MGM color Tex Avery cartoon entitled *The Cat That Hated People*, and a trailer.

Then, after you have familiarized yourself with the not inaccurate outline of Hart's life and gained an appreciation for his skills as a wordsmith, you can turn to **Blue Moon**, released on Blu-ray by Sony Pictures Classics (UPC#04-3396646957, \$27), Richard Linklater's outstanding 2025 real time portrait of Hart on the day of his career's myocardial infarction, March 31, 1943, the opening night of the show Rodgers composed with Oscar Hammerstein II, *Oklahoma!*. It is set in the famous New York bar in the Broadway district, Sardi's, where Hart, played by Ethan Hawke, has retreated without watching the curtain calls after the final, "Yo!" When he first comes in, there is only the bartender, hatcheck and cigarette girls, a soldier at the piano (picking up some cash while on leave) and nestled in a corner like a benign spider, E.B. White. He has conversations mostly with the bartender, played by Bobby Cannavale, but also with the soldier and White, and then, after a half hour or so, other members from the show's production company begin coming in and milling about. He is waiting for a Yale coed, played by Margaret Qualley, the daughter of one of the producers, with whom he has had a flirtatious relationship spanning a number of months (the story is actually based upon their correspondence), and later they retreat to the hatcheck room and share intimate stories about each other's lives. His goal is to become even more intimate with her, while her goal is to meet Rodgers, who is played by Andrew Scott in a perfect pull-away-the-veil transition from Drake. Eventually, the gathering at Sardi's breaks up as various

individuals head to other late-night parties and Hawke's character, who isn't able to score with Qualley's character or the soldier, is left to find his way home on his own. Screen cards explain that he passed away a few months later, under the circumstances pretty much depicted in **Words and Music** (including his fatal collapse, which is also shown in **Blue Moon**'s opening prologue). The film runs 101 minutes.

The key to Hart's lyrics was his interior rhyming, sometimes to the point of rhyming one word with the second syllable of another word, and then letting that word's third syllable begin the next phrase. Not only do many of his lyrics, then, come across as witty, they are subliminally witty, because the rhymes are heard even if they are not consciously recognized. American musical theater during the time of **Words and Music** was made up primarily of romantic musical comedies, at least the shows that tried to do more than just present variety acts and revues. Hart was content with this, because he was a master of the form, but Rodgers wanted more (he also wanted a dependable, sober partner). George Gershwin and Jerome Kern had created musical melodramas that verged on opera, and Rodgers knew he could do the same thing, especially after he got together with the more grounded and workmanlike Hammerstein, who could eschew wit in service of character and lyricism. Yes, what they created wasn't operatic, but it wasn't a disposable confection, either, and beginning with *Oklahoma!*, they altered the standards of American musical theater forever (the closest Rodgers and Hart had come to that was *Pal Joey*).

Letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1, the picture is smooth and sharp, with accurately rendered hues and glossy lighting. The 5.1-channel DTS sound has a constant and heavenly dimensionality, with the piano playing steadily in the background (and around the viewer like an aural halo), with an emphasis on Hart's songs, but also many other standards of the day. There is an audio track that describes the action in brief snippets amid the nearly constant dialog ("Andy toasts with his martini. Larry lifts an empty glass, then glances at Eddie behind the bar"), optional English, French and Spanish subtitles and a trailer. Two other character cameos are worth noting. At one point, Hart meets an insufferably precocious pre-adolescent Stephen Sondheim in one of the film's most amusing conceits, and at another point, he meets another Yale student who is with Qualley's character, George Roy Hill, and he advises the aspiring director to focus on stories about friendship, which, OMG, is what every single one of Hill's films centers upon. Finally, the Oscar-nominated Hawke does an outstanding job pulling you away from Rooney's endearments and seeing the man for the brilliant but skeezy, combed over boozier that he was, desperately human and feeling, empowered by his past success and reputation, erudite and conversationally astute, but completely lost when it came to the true challenge of life, which is to realize happiness regardless of one's circumstance. One method for achieving that is watching movies such as these.

Best fight in a moving car ever

The best fight in a moving car scene we've ever seen comes in the middle of one of the five best car chases we've ever seen—and we have seen quite a few in our day—in the 2013 Clarence Fok action thriller, **Special ID**, a Well Go USA Entertainment Blu-ray (UPC#812491014608, \$30). Donnie Yen stars as an undercover Hong Kong cop sent to Mainland China where a mobster is trying to eliminate his competition. The plot is a stretch, if not outright ridiculous, but film is slick enough to sell its presumptions, and the story is just there to set the stage for the many outstanding fight and chase sequences, including the car chase. The primary villain is played by Andy On, who has a Brad Pitt thing going, and Tian Jing is another cop. The fights are raw and brutal, based more on street fighting than on any specific discipline, and you don't have to wait too long in the 99-minute feature for another action scene to break out. The car chase is actually a 14-minute combination of a foot chase (Jing jumps off an overpass onto a bus and then from the bus onto On's car, car chase (Yen's character follows them frantically in his car), the interior car fight during the chase between Jing's character and On's character in crowded traffic (On's character switches on the car's automatic driving functions), and then once Jing's character is thrown off, more car chasing on a highway under construction that terminates with an unfinished overpass, concluding with a final, bloody knockdown brawl between On's character and Yen's character. Every moment of it is amazing.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1. Opening on Hong Kong at night, the camera begins by pointing at the water, with ripples depicting the colored lights of the city in a near-rainbow array, and on the BD, every tiny variation of hue in each ripple is vividly rendered. The film's opening shot is gorgeous, and the precision of the picture instills even more adrenaline upon its excitements. Add to that the glossy metropolitan views not only of Hong Kong, but the Mainland Chinese metropolitan of Nanhai, which look spectacular on the BD, and the film is dazzling even during the few breathers between the fights. As for the stunts, thanks to the crispness of the image delivery, every moment is thrilling and when everything finishes, you want to start over immediately and watch it all again.

The 5.1-channel DTS sound is also terrific, with great directional effects and a heightened dimensionality that adds to the excitement. The film is in Mandarin with optional English, French and Spanish subtitles, and there is also an English language track, along with a rewarding 4-minute production featurette that shows how a number of the most spectacular moments were achieved, and a trailer.

Happily ever before

It took almost a half century, but the clever and engaging Stephen Sondheim musical, first staged (and rapidly closed) in the early Eighties, but revived in 2022, recorded in 2024 and released theatrically in 2025, **Merrily We Roll Along**, has been issued on Blu-ray by Sony Pictures Classics (UPC#043396647701, \$31). Daniel Radcliffe has top billing, although he has the second lead, with Jonathan Groff playing the primary character, a song composer—Radcliffe is the lyricist. Lindsay Mendez, Krystal Joy Brown and Katie Rose Clarke costar. The show's gimmick, which originated with a George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart stageplay, is that its scenes move backwards in time, so that it begins in the mid Seventies, when everyone is a success and their lives are miserable, and then works its way back as the characters are steadily poorer and happier. Among the many interesting changes this causes is that you first meet Clarke's character when she sings her big gut-wrenching bow-out number, and then gradually come to know her afterwards. Stepping sort of year by year through the Seventies, Sixties and late Fifties, the show also has great fun with its décor and costumes, even though the scene changes are efficient and relatively simple. The show was shot before a live audience that is heard but never seen. And as a musical, it is wonderful, wrapping the viewer in webs of melody and harmonies as it draws the viewer from their completions into their formations, while delivering a sometimes comically witty narrative tease full of foundational revelations and emotional disrobing. Running 145 minutes—there is no indication of an intermission or any sort of pause other than the brisk scene changes—the show is highly entertaining and musically satisfying. While the chapter setup on the disc discourages one from attempting to step backward/forward through the story chronologically (it would be helpful if the disc's scene guide used words rather than just pictures), the temptation to watch the opening scene again once the show is over is highly compelling and, since it is a Blu-ray and not a live show where the actors have to go home afterwards, readily possible.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1. Shot in high definition video, the image is immediate and impeccably colored. Here and there, the video director, Maria Friedman, chooses a close-up that misses business elsewhere on the stage, but such moments are rare and fleeting. It is a clean, direct and involving replication of the stage production. The 5.1-channel DTS sound provides a pleasant and uncomplicated dimensionality. There are optional English and Spanish subtitles and a trailer.

4K Van Damme

The immensely entertaining 1991 Hollywood Hong Kong action film from MGM starring Jean-Claude Van Damme in a dual role, **Double Impact**, is energized by its release in 4K format in the two-platter MVDvisual *MVD Rewind Collection 4K LaserVision Collection* Blu-ray (UPC#760137193548, \$50). Van Damme portrays separated twins who are reunited as adults (one was raised in America, the other in Hong Kong) and team up, although reluctantly at first, to take down the Hong Kong businessman and gangster who killed their parents. Directed by Sheldon Lettich, it is the pacing and simplicity of the 110-minute feature that makes it so unabashedly enjoyable. Coming from the height of the action film 'body count' era, there are fights, chases and explosions are regular intervals, and corpses aplenty. What there is of a plot is bent around just enough to accommodate each thrill, with the duplicate Van Damme gimmick providing all of the flavor the film needs to stand out from its peers. He even fights himself when one of him gets drunk and jealous. The impeccable picture on the 4K image is finely detailed and consistently smooth, so that instead of just being a film that is not boring, it becomes a film where you look forward to the action and excitement in each new scene exactly because, in 4K, the pleasure of the experience is twice what it is in a blander delivery.

Geoffrey Lewis, in a rare appearance as a good guy, costars, and Alan Scarfe and Bolo Yeung are also featured. The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1. The colors on the standard Blu-ray included in the set look fine, but the image is grainier and does not have the same heightened impact that the 4K presentation delivers. The 5.1-channel DTS sound is both vigorous and crisp, delivering wonderful, clear, energetic noises from every direction, making the presentation even more fun than it already was. There are alternate English, French and Spanish subtitles. The standard BD just has a standard stereo track, which is not as enveloping as the 4K's audio track. There is an alternate Spanish audio track.

An excellent retrospective documentary is included on the standard BD running 112 minutes that features interviews with Van Damme, costar Lynne Langdon, several of the body doubles and members of the production staff, going over how the film originated (it was initially supposed to be a period adaptation of *The Corsican Brothers*), how the production was put together, their experiences during the shoot, and what went on after the film was completed. One of the reasons that there wasn't a sequel was that the original movie was sold separately to too many territories, and a sequel would have required making deals with each one. Also featured are a comprehensive 54 minutes of deleted scenes and alternated takes, including lots of extra mayhem and occasional plot embellishments; 15 minutes of raw behind-the-scenes footage; an excellent 8-minute breakdown of a specific, lengthy stunt sequence; 6 minutes of cast interviews; and a trailer.

Rob Schneider stars with Van Damme as exporters of cheap imitation fashions in the 1998 Tsui Hark action film written by Steven E. de Souza and shot in Hong Kong for Columbia Pictures, **Knock Off**, another two-platter MVDvisual *Rewind Collection* Blu-ray (UPC#760137156482, \$50). Villainous Russians try to replace the buttons on the jeans with tiny but powerful, remotely controlled explosives (something like what Israel actually did to Hamas pagers a few decades later), and the CIA enlists the two men to aid in stopping the terror plot. Paul Sorvino delivers an entertaining performance as a CIA boss, and Lela Rochon, Michael Fitzgerald Won and Carman Lee are also featured. You have to do a lot of editing to make Schneider appear like he knows martial arts, but the film is edited like crazy anyway, making it especially challenging to follow even the simple fights, much less the more elaborate action sequences. Hence, the 4K presentation helps at least somewhat in comprehending what is going on.

Letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1, the film looks fine on the standard Blu-ray platter included in the set, and running 91 minutes, the film squeezes in

just enough character material to justify all of the wild fights and chases. Colors are actually slight brighter on the standard BD, although generally they are still fairly drab, since Hark's grab-it-and-move-on style is more interested in obtaining enough footage for the editing room. Nevertheless, the image is smoother on the 4K presentation, even if fleshtones come across looking a bit more olive. It is the crispness and solidity of the details that enable your subconscious to better understand how each shot is compiling with the next, as you frantically glance back and forth across the screen watching Van Damme punch and kick his way out of each impossible challenge. Under Hark's direction, the constantly creative and elaborate stunts are invigorating, unhindered by the occasional stabs at slapstick humor. You don't even have time to stop and realize how ridiculous the story really is, since everything in the movie is secondary to the rapid flood of mayhem drenching your senses. The 5.1-channel DTS sound has a fairly basic but enjoyable separation mix and seems interchangeable on the two platters. Neither the sound nor the image contributes as much on the 4K presentation to the entertainment as it does on **Double Impact**, but it still adds to the exhilaration felt in the film's showiest moments.

Regardless of whether he is embellishing his tale or not, the first 20 minutes of a talk by de Sousa on the standard Blu-ray is totally captivating, as he describes his path to success, from being in high school to writing scripts in Hollywood. It is a wonderful story that would make a delightful film in itself. In the rest of the 41-minute talk, he goes on to speak specifically about working on **Knock Off**—how the idea originated, his amazement at Hong Kong filmmaking practices and strategies, aspects in the films he has written that turned out to be accurate predictions of the future (he mentions the Hamas thing) and other great anecdotes and tidbits. There is also an additional 10-minute interview where he explains what was originally supposed to happen in the film, who he thought as going to produce it and more rewarding insights about the film's creation. Producer Moshe Diamant talks for 18 minutes about how he became involved with Van Damme and spearheaded most of his early hits, as well as describing the creation of **Knock Off** from his perspective. Also featured is a 23-minute production featurette with lots of great behind-the-scenes footage, and a trailer.

Hong Kong film enthusiasts Mike Leeder and Ame Venema supply a very enjoyable commentary track on both platters. Leeder even worked on the film for a while until he was fired for insulting a producer, but he also hung out on the set afterward, so he is filled with stories about the stuntmen who actually got hurt, pointing out where one guy broke two legs and another got a bad concussion. They have plenty to say about all of the performers, the stunt crew and other technicians working on the film, and they ruminate upon the movie's somewhat misleading blend of humor and action and how it likely dampened the film's popularity outside of Asia. They also have interesting things to say about Schneider. "Unfortunately, Robert at times, on set, would be pulling what everyone assumed was slant eyes and making jokes and then the stunt team was like, 'He's being racist,' and I think at times they maybe changed the choreography on him." "One-two, one-two. Oh, you got it wrong, bang!"

The mouths of babes

A clever psychological puzzle film that comes up a bit short, Jonathan Glazer's 2004 New Line Entertainment production, **Birth**, has been released as a two-platter 4K Blu-ray by Warner Bros. Pictures and The Criterion Collection (UPC#715515327510, \$50). When a woman and her fiancé hold a birthday party at their ritzy Manhattan apartment for her mother, a schoolchild sneaks in, confronts her, claiming to be her previous husband—who died a decade earlier—and urges her not to remarry. Not only does he have the same first name as the husband, but he knows private details about her life, although vaguely. Jean-Claude Carrière contributed to the script, along with Glazer, although Glazer's approach is both elegant and flawed. Disregarding the intimations of pedophilia in one sequence, which are inconsequential but still create an uncomfortable atmosphere, there is a point in the story where, not to spoil things, one character erupts in anger, which ought to be taken as a game-ending red flag and is not. Otherwise, though, the 100-minute film is both intriguing and transfixing, taking advantage of its classy cast, while parceling out the clues to sustain the mystery and, perhaps, the mystical.

Nicole Kidman (with a pixie haircut) stars, with Danny Huston as her character's fiancé and Cameron Bright as the boy, along with Lauren Bacall, Arliss Howard, Peter Stormare, Ted Levine and Zoe Caldwell. The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1. Fleshtones tend to look a little ashen on the 4K presentation, but it is still preferable to the presentation on the standard Blu-ray also included in the set, which has bland fleshtones and looks grainy. The image on the 4K version is smooth, and the carefully delineated, subdued colors are in keeping with the film's tone. The 5.1-channel DTS sound has a pervasive dimensionality. There are optional English subtitles; a trailer; a pretty good 30-minute production featurette explaining how Carrière became involved, interviewing the actors about the story, and admitting that Glazer was making up some things as he went along; an excellent 25-minute examination of the film's impressive cinematography (the film's opening scene is especially compelling), going over how it often pushed the limits of what is acceptable for light exposure and framing, and breaking down how various shots were accomplished; and a quasi-promotional 28-minute interview with Glazer and Kidman from a 2004 episode of *The Charlie Rose Show*. The special features do not start up where they left off if playback is terminated.

Lorre-palooza

Sure, lots of black-and-white films look great on Blu-ray, but you rarely ever come across a bargain basement movie that looks as good as what Warner Bros. has done with the inexpensive 1940 RKO Radio Pictures thriller, **Stranger on the Third Floor**, a Warner WB Archive Collection Blu-ray (UPC#840418342978, \$25). The film may only run 64 minutes and take place on a handful of existing sets, but the image is both sharp and spotless, with finely detailed contrasts and not a blemish or speckle in sight. John McGuire is a reporter who testifies at a trial after he sees a destitute stranger, played by Elisha Cook, Jr., standing over the dead body of a diner clerk in

front of an open till. His girlfriend, played by Margaret Tallichet, however, doesn't believe that Cook's character is guilty, something that becomes readily apparent when an annoying neighbor who lives in the apartment next to McGuire's character, across the street from the diner, is killed in the same manner. Of course, everybody in the audience also knows he isn't the murderer, nor is the red herring of McGuire's character having a nightmare about being arrested and maybe being a madman himself persuasive, because topped billed in the movie and slinking around in the shadows a couple of times before the final 10 minutes is Peter Lorre, at his most bug-eyed. It is a simplistic work of by-the-numbers suspense (drawing, however, from German Expressionist designs that would later develop into film noir), but the performances are more entertaining and the film is a great deal more exciting entirely because the picture looks so fantastic.

The monophonic sound is clean, and there are optional English subtitles, a 1940 color Warner *Merrie Melodies* cartoon entitled *Ceiling Hero* (9 minutes of Tex Avery gags spoofing the airplane industry) and a 1938 *Merrie Melodies* cartoon running 8 minutes entitled *Wacky Wildlife* (spoofing animal documentaries).

Accompanying **The Verdict** (Feb 26), Warner included two additional radio drama episodes starring Lorre, and for **Stranger on the Third Floor**, they have included three more. All three episodes of the 1947 NBC radio series, *Mystery in the Air*, star Lorre and, sponsored by Camel Cigarettes, adapt literary tales of suspense with Lorre in the lead role. In the 29-minute *Beyond Good and Evil*, Lorre is an escaped convict who kills a pastor and takes his place, ostensibly helping another pastor who has had a stroke. Just exactly why he changes his plans at the end is not entirely clear, but it has something to do with religion. A much stronger entry, the 26-minute (no commercials) *Crime and Punishment* is a surprisingly good adaptation of the Fyodor Dostoyevsky tale about a man who kills a pawnbroker because he wants to give money to a girl that he likes, and the mind games that a police detective plays to coax him into admitting his guilt (it was the show's final episode). *The Mask of Medusa* is an entertaining effort running 29 minutes with a **House of Wax** vibe, using a voiceover by Lorre as one of the figures on display, who are actually paralyzed humans and seek revenge upon the proprietor.

Bing on Blu

Universal Studios Home Entertainment has released four separate Blu-rays of less well known Paramount Bing Crosby films from the late Thirties and early Forties. Each one has a squared full screen black-and-white picture, and reasonably strong monophonic sound, although the edges of the music are compromised by the age of the recordings. Each has optional English subtitling.

In the amazing 1937 **Double or Nothing** (UPC#840418341162, \$22), directed by Theodore Reed, Crosby is backed up by three wonderful screen comedians, Martha Raye, William Frawley and Andy Devine, but the talent doesn't stop there. The film turns out to be a variety feature disguised as a screwball comedy, and it is really unlike any other film in existence. As its narrative plays out, every supporting character is a vaudeville performer doing shtick while contributing to the narrative. The plot, as it is presented at the beginning of the 91-minute feature, is about four strangers—the stars—who will inherit a great deal of money if they achieve a specific goal in a week's time. The family who ought to get the money, played by Samuel S. Hinds, Fay Holden, William Henry and Mary Carlisle, does everything they can think of to upset the efforts of the heroes, and they nearly succeed, except that Carlisle's character falls in love with Crosby's character. If there were no musical numbers at all, the story would be enjoyable, but the film is continually enhanced by its music. Crosby is reasonably young and gung ho, not only carrying the story with energy, but delivering his songs with an equal earnestness. And the vaudeville is everywhere. During one number early on, before you really understand what is happening in the film, Crosby sings a song to Carlisle and does a shadow puppet performance with his hands while he is singing. Now of course, it isn't really Crosby doing the shadow puppets, it is some unnamed person who probably made a living doing it, but it is just there, as part of the pleasant song, and it isn't until the acts start to accumulate (shortly afterwards, as Crosby and Carlisle's characters are dancing on a sidewalk and a cop approaches—they think they are going to get busted, but instead, the cop starts dancing, too) that you even realize what is happening. Don't get us started about the costume designer character, ostensibly making outfits for the nightclub Crosby's character wants to open, who can drape a woman in a gown in less than a minute with a single bolt of fabric. And yet, through it all, the narrative not only persists, but concludes with a very clever and impressively staged happy ending.

The film definitely deserves more attention than it has received heretofore, and hopefully, the Blu-ray will disseminate its charms far and wide. The image is somewhat aged and grainy, and has a number of speckles and scratches, but nothing that interferes with its inherent entertainment.

Celebrating the advent of modern music in more ways than one, Crosby is a clarinetist (at one point he refers to it rather intriguingly as, 'my flageolet') in *Tum of the Century* New Orleans in the 1937 **Birth of the Blues** (UPC#840418341155, \$22). He preferred jamming with the black musicians to taking music lessons when he was child, and has his own band of similarly inclined white musicians as an adult, although they can't get any gigs because the clubs prefer Viennese tunes. Brian Donlevy is a coronet player and Mary Martin is a broke newcomer who can sing, and it is with these two pieces that the band manages to score a success in a gangster's club. Once they are a hit, however, the gangster won't let go of them. J. Carrol Naish and Edward ('Rochester') Anderson are also featured, and the film does manages to slip in a lovely vocal by Ruby Elzy when Anderson's character is recuperating from a beating. But the film is about the success of white people adapting and popularizing jazz, and there is truth to that as much as there is an attempt to downplay who really started it all—in a summary montage of popular jazz musicians of 1937, there are two black performers—Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington—slipped in with the white stars—Ted Lewis, Tommy Dorsey, Jimmy Dorsey, Benny Goodman and George Gershwin—because it is never a matter of outright

erasure, just sublimation. In any case, the 86-minute film is reasonably entertaining, with plenty of music (they do a jazz interpretation of *By the Light of the Silvery Moon*) and enough narrative (Crosby and Donlevy's characters fight over Martin's character, who also has a young relative she is taking care of played by Carolyn Lee, upping the film's cuteness rating) to string the music numbers together, along with, as Crosby schools Martin, an instructive explanation of what jazz is, worthy of, cough, Damien Chazelle. A couple of passages have some minor wear, but for the most part the picture is in excellent condition, with clearly defined contrasts. There is also a very clever segment with colored drawings presented as still projections while Crosby's character sings in a movie theater for entertainment between films.

Crosby, Fred MacMurray and the barely adolescent Donald O'Connor play a very believable set of brothers in the 1938 **Sing You Sinners** (UPC#840418341186, \$22), directed by Wesley Ruggles. Elizabeth Patterson plays their mother and Ellen Drew is the perpetual fiancée of MacMurray's character, the conscientious brother, who is working hard to keep his mother and brothers fed and continues to postpone the wedding until things can settle down. Crosby's character is a ne'er-do-well, who loses every penny that falls into his pocket on alcohol and crazy schemes. To make extra money, the three brothers also have a singing act, and their numbers are peppered throughout the film, most notably *Small Fry*, which Paramount also allowed Max and Dave Fleischer to use, although quite certainly not that recording. In any case, the dramatic performances are impressive. MacMurray falls back onto some bad habits here and there, particularly when he is trying to be funny, but he sells the 'responsible big brother' persona to perfection. O'Connor is amazing and Crosby is believably unreliable. Running 91 minutes, the film is to a certain extent episodic (Crosby's character takes Drew's character on a date; MacMurray and Drew's character plan the house they want to build in a grassy lot), building up to an exciting horse race (and fisticuffs with mobsters) in which O'Connor is the jockey. The film's star appeal is compelling and the music pads out the narrative effectively. The picture is in reasonably good condition, with minimal wear. The most interesting shot occurs near the beginning, where MacMurray, Crosby and O'Connor are framed standing together, but at an angle. Crosby is in crisp focus in the middle, while the other two are just soft enough out of focus to let you know who has top billing.

Mark Sandrich directed the 1944 **Here Come the Waves** (UPC#84041-8341179, \$22), and its most impressive component is a dual role by Betty Hutton as twin sisters, one blonde and one brunette, with different personalities. She and Sandrich pull it off so well that if you didn't know any better, you would think two different actresses were playing her parts. The blonde is infatuated with a crooner played by Crosby, who becomes smitten with the aloof brunette when he meets the two women at a nightclub, accompanied by his buddy, played by Sonny Tufts. All four are in show business, and Crosby's character can only get into the Navy after they lower the recruiting requirements to allow for his color blindness, but as soon as they do, he signs up. Tufts is already enlisted, and when the blonde learns what Crosby's character has done, she, and her sister tagging along, enlist in the female branch known as the Waves. She then concocts a plan to get Crosby's character transferred to an entertainment unit, and although he is irritated that he is not in combat, he arranges for the sisters and Tufts character to join him, creating a show that will encourage enlistment in the Waves—he's a big draw. Unlike Sutton, who genuinely does double duty in the film, Crosby just walks through his part, hitting his emotional marks but little else. Even his singing is lackluster, and speaking of color blindness, he performs the film's only well known number, *Accentuate the Positive*, in an especially inept blackface. Running 99 minutes, the one genuine appeal of the film is its obscurity, so that most viewers will find the uniqueness of its wartime atmosphere and the many convolutions in the plot stemming from the blonde's scheming to be sufficiently fresh, escapist entertainment, especially for Forties enthusiasts. Noel Neill also shows up in the last act and rivals Hutton with her screen presence in the production numbers. The picture looks smooth, with well defined contrasts, but there are a few stray scratches.

Time is unforgiving

In 1962, Vincente Minnelli made **Two Weeks in another Town** (Jul 22), about an aging film director, played by Edward G. Robinson, whose feature being shot in Rome is in trouble because he no longer had the mental capacity to oversee such an elaborate production. Just a decade and a half later, Minnelli was again in Rome and was himself no longer capable of shepherding an elaborate motion picture production, although he soldiered forth nevertheless, the result being a 1976 American International Pictures feature titled with all too accurate an irony, **A Matter of Time**. His daughter, Liza Minnelli, plays a hotel maid and Ingrid Bergman plays an elderly countess who lives in the same establishment. The two strike up a friendship, with the maid nursing the countess through her final days while the countess instills the maid with a sense of confidence and good grooming habits. The story is told in flashback after the maid becomes a famous movie star. All of that is well and good. There are even a couple of songs by John Kander and Fred Ebb on the audio track, which feel like they were tacked on after the fact, but are still highly appealing. But the film, which runs 99 minutes, is an unforgiving, incoherent mess and will be of no interest to anyone save for those with a pre-established affection for the two actresses. Released on Blu-ray by Amazon MGM (UPC#840418317440, \$22), the film is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1, and the normally reliable Geoffrey Unsworth's cinematography is all over the map. Much of the film is drenched in gauze, although the numerous tourist shots of Rome are perfectly sharp and clear. Hues and fleshtones are accurate most of the time—the image transfer is admirable—although once in a while the haze is so great that colors bleed with the excessive over saturation. Parts of the story are incoherent—apparently shots of the maid being escorted by a very wealthy man are actually her imagining of the countess's memories, or something, but such scenes then call into question whether anything in the film is real. The poor actresses are left in the lurch and their performances are often uneven or embarrassing because the director was unable to guide them with consistency. The sound is centered but adequately delivered, and there are optional English subtitles. Charles Boyer, Fernando Rey, Tina Aumont and Isabella Rossellini costar.

Movie magic

“Weren’t you always worried that it’s a fake story?” asks the Japanese monk, played by Shota Sometani to the Chinese scribe and poet played by Xuan Huang at the end of the fabulous 2017 Chinese fantasy film, **Legend of the Demon Cat**, released on Blu-ray by Well Go USA Entertainment (UPC#810348031242, \$30). “But the emotions are real,” Huang’s character replies. That could be the mantra for every great motion picture.

Directed by Kaige Chen, **Demon Cat** is a breathless spectacle latched onto a speedy narrative that never slows down at any moment during its 120-minute running time. After a preamble about finding a treasure, the film follows the two heroes, who team together after attending an expiring emperor to determine the true cause of his death. The film becomes a detective movie, inspired, perhaps, by Edgar Allan Poe, as the two systematically research events that have occurred in the palace. They rather quickly discern that it is the cat that has caused the death not only of the emperor, but several other individuals, past and present, and uncovering the motive becomes their quest. Then, at about the halfway point, the film flashes back to an earlier generation to show how a grand romance between another emperor and his concubine, celebrated by the entire nation, was turned into a curse. Visually, the film, letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1, is not just spectacular, it is continually spectacular. There is no real attempt to disguise its blending of computer animation (the cat seems to have jumped straight out of **Flow**) and reality, but there is never time to find fault with a particular image since they pass by so quickly and bombard the viewer’s imagination with one captivating vision after another. Wrapped in an appealing and suspenseful romance, the narrative’s entertainment is augmented by the wide-eyed visual stimulation bombarding the viewer in every shot. Even simple set ups, such as the two heroes walking through a marketplace, are so incredibly intricate that if you pause each frame, you can see dozens of details in the background that you hadn’t noticed before. There is a sense from the very first that if the filmmakers are going to take advantage of visual manipulation to tell their story, they are going to go all in, and it is with that spirit—who cares what parts of the movie were made with actors and what parts were animated—that the film demonstrates how utterly bewitching and stimulating to the imagination a motion picture can be.

In some sequences colors appear a little pasty, but that seems to be a deliberate choice of cinematography Yu Cao, to offset the reality of these moments, and besides, the images still look absolutely gorgeous. The details in every corner of the screen in every shot are transfixing (there is a particularly allusion to the cliff side cave where King Kong dwelt, but with a cherry tree that appears to be in a permanent state of blossoming). The 5.1-channel DTS sound is highly enjoyable, as well, supplying many separation and directional effects, along with a rich bass and full energy for key sequences. The film is in Mandarin, with optional English subtitles, but there is also a passable English language track. While there are vague references to sexual activities at a couple of points, and a smattering of grotesque horror effects, the film would be worth sharing with older children, to demonstrate that like a child’s mind, the potential held by motion picture entertainment is infinite.

Female Hong Kong action

A Hong Kong police action film that at least gives lip service to a genuine female slant in its narrative, Cory Yuen’s 1990 **She Shoots Straight**, has been released on Blu-ray by Fortune Star and 88 Films (UPC#76013720-1090, \$30). This is not just take a script designed for actors and then tweaked for actresses. Rather, there are genuine ‘chick flick’ elements incorporated in the narrative, requiring a healthy supply of tissues, and up to a point, those elements are effectively mixed with a number of decently staged action scenes, and even a few gory fights. When a standard Chinese action film disregards its narrative and simply concludes when the final fight is over, however, it is no big deal, because you’re watching the film for the action and not the story so much. But **She Shoots Straight** betrays the trust it establishes with female viewers by ending the film in the same manner, without updating the viewer on the medical and emotional status of the characters after the fight is concluded. Hence, the film sweet talks the viewer a little better than most, but it is still just an action film and not a movie you can take home to show your mother.

Joyce Mina stars as a Hong Kong cop who marries a co-worker that comes from a family of cops. They do their best to adjust their relationship to their work, and they prevent a gang of Vietnamese hoodlums from robbing a nightclub. One of the hoodlums is killed, but a couple of the others escape and vow revenge, making attempts on the lives of both cops. The remainder of the 92-minute film is about tracking down and capturing those two villains, and about the family coping with the responsibilities of duty. The action scenes are vigorous, and while they may be reworked versions of stunts that have been done before (notably **Eastern Condors**), they are plentiful, sustaining a viable amount of excitement throughout the feature. Producer Sammo Hung also has a nice supporting part as a police supervisor, and Tony Leung costars.

The film does not start up where it left off if playback is terminated. The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1. The cinematography is distinctively grainy much of the time, but the BD’s image is sharp and colors are accurate. The stereo sound has a bland mix. The film is in Cantonese, with optional English subtitles, and there is a more robust 5.1-

channel DTS English dubbed track. Along with a trailer, there are 2 minutes of alternate English language credits, a 2-minute montage of promotional materials, and a good 16-minute interview with screenwriter Kai-chi Yuen (“Screenwriters are crucial, they are as important as directors”), talking about the film and working for Hung. Hong Kong movie expert Frank Djeng supplies a commentary track, noting that the story is based upon a traditional legend about female warriors and focusing primarily on the careers of the cast and the crew, and the film’s production history. He also reiterates the narrative as it unfolds, and he is emphatically apologetic when the action is interrupted for a while by what he terms ‘soap opera’ elements.

Half dozen, all Black

A half dozen NFL stars from the Seventies star in the 1973 blaxploitation feature, **The Black Six**, released as an *Archive Collection* Blu-ray by Film Masters (UPC#840418339114, \$27). How do we know the actors, playing vets who travel together on motorcycles, are NFL players? Because, after a prolog, the opening credits depict each actor on his bike with an identification not only of his name, but the team he was associated with during the time of the production, to wit: Gene Washington San Francisco 49ers, Carl Eller Minnesota Vikings, Lem Barney Detroit Lions, Mercury Morris Miami Dolphins, Willie Lanier Kansas City Chiefs, and Joe Green Pittsburgh Steelers. Can they act? Does it really matter? They can read the cue cards behind the camera, what more do you want? Washington has substantially more screen time than the others. When his character learns that his brother has been killed, he immediately leaves to investigate, and his buddies back him up. Running 85 minutes, the story is fairly straightforward. Washington’s character noses around town, learns that the brother was killed by a white motorcycle gang, confronts them, and then meets them for a big rumble. A lot of the action is cleverly staged at night, so that you can sort of see what is going on, but not really examine it too closely, and otherwise the film is a celebration of the explosion of African-American culture that began in the late Sixties, embracing an attitude that is defiant but not exclusionary. The film may seem cheap and simplistic, but it is competently constructed and economically executed, conveying both nostalgia and some decent kick butt entertainment.

Ben Davidson is also featured, although his team (the Oakland Raiders) is not identified in the credits. The film does not start up where it left off if playback is terminated. The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1. We mentioned the abundance of dark sequences, which often provide very little detail, but the transfer is still admirable. Colors are at the mercy of the cinematography, but in well-lit scenes, details are very clear. Costar Rosalind Miles wears a skintight outfit and every crease in her flesh is delineated. The monophonic sound is adequately delivered, but David Moscoe’s musical score, while embracing the period wholeheartedly, still leaves something to be desired. It mostly sounds like variations on the Rare Earth single, *I Just Want to Celebrate*, except for one scene, where it comes closer to the theme from *Woody Woodpecker*. There are optional English subtitles. Film fans Robert Kelly and Daniel Budnik supply an enthusiastic commentary track, accompanied by a second set of optional subtitles as the speakers supply a thorough appreciation of the film while also talking about blaxploitation features, biker movies, the football achievements of all six stars, the locations (“The post office now is not one thin building that almost looks like a trailer that got left behind. Like, it’s now a kind of gorgeous triangular wooden post office kind of building.”), the film’s production history and many other interesting tidbits.

Missing person

An engrossing 2025 crime thriller, **Reverence**, has been released on Blu-ray by Saban Films and Well Go USA Entertainment (UPC#81034803-9897, \$30). Written and directed by Kyle Kauwika Harris, the film plays like a cable series based upon a crime novel, except that it is an original composition and it runs just 126 minutes. Indeed, there are some plot strands and red herrings that would definitely be fleshed out if the show had been longer—and for that reason alone, we wish it had been—but it still plays superbly just as it is, and every ellipsis obligates the viewer to concentrate harder and be more involved with what has happened on the screen. The acting, again under Harris’s unfailing direction, is fantastic, and all the more so because the cast is made up entirely of unknowns. We wish every last one of them a long and prosperous career.

A high school senior leaves a Christmas party at her grandparents’ house and is never seen again. The same night, her older boyfriend is found in a daze, stumbling down the highway half dressed, with bruises on his face. The local detective, played by Whit Kunschik, must follow the rules as she goes about her investigation, while the girl’s father, a former vet played by Adam Hampton, has no such restrictions. Shot in Lincoln County outside of Oklahoma City, the film captures the tone and atmosphere of the community with perfection as it savors the flaws in the characters, the many secrets and mysteries surrounding their behaviors and the limitations that inhibit law enforcement even when they have access to the most advanced investigation technology.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1. The color transfer looks fine. Harris has a habit of cutting somewhat indiscriminately between day scenes and what seem to be night scenes, but it often turns out just to be another ellipsis. In any case, even the darkest sequences are solid and sharp. The 5.1-channel DTS sound has a pleasing dimensionality, and there are optional English subtitles.

Remind us never to get a job as a Thai stunt man

A gritty Thai action film with a refrigerator magnet title, **Vengeance of an Assassin**, is available on Blu-ray from Well Go USA Entertainment (UPC#812491015223, \$30). It begins in a garage where a group of men are apparently playing some sort of soccer match in and around all of the loose equipment, shelving and so on, and while it turns out to be a dream sequence (don't worry, we're not spoiling much here), what happens to the stunt men, getting bashed, bruised and even burned as they pass around the ball will either have you shouting at your screen at the delight of seeing people getting hurt, or cringing up into a little ball hoping it will stop soon. The game ends, but the violence does not. Running 90 minutes, the 2014 feature, the final film by Thai action director Panna Rittikrai, is an absolutely glorious progression of fights, squibs, chases and explosions. Fortunately, there is a coherent and sympathetic plot to justify—just barely, but validly—the action scenes. Two brothers live with their uncle and help out in his garage. Their parents were cops who were murdered, and they obsessively practice martial arts and weapons handling in secret. One brother has a spat with the uncle and leaves, getting a job as a hitman. He is assigned to protect a young woman and it turns out to be a set up, but he is better than what the villains expected and he saves her, bringing her back to the garage. From that point forward, it is all about the villains trying to get the girl and kill the brothers, and the bodies pile up with each confrontation. There is a sequence on the top of a train that is clearly augmented with computer effects, but it is so exhilarating that you don't mind the cheats. Bad guys get crunched, stomped, bludgeoned, pierced (the gore effects are plentiful, too, and quite believable), and whacked. In our favorite moment, one gets his face pushed into a fan. We laughed aloud. But there are so many terrific, inventive and sometimes all too believable stunts that unless you are curled up into a ball begging that someone turn off the film, you will definitely want to share its thrills with all of your bloodthirsty friends.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1. The image often has a specific and deliberate yellowish tone, but has clearly been transferred accurately and is consistently sharp. The 5.1-channel DTS sound is wonderful, brining a vivid immediacy to the gunshots, explosions and the many, many clangs of human bodies smashing into metal objects. The film is in Thai with optional English subtitles, and is accompanied by a trailer.

February Special Edition: Robert Altman and more

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

The reviews featured include the Radiance Blu-ray release of Robert Altman's **O.C. and Stiggs** (UPC#760137198734, \$40); Warner Bros. **Warner WB Archive Collection** Blu-ray releases of **Brewster McCloud** (UPC#888574722586, \$23), **A Prairie Home Companion** (UPC#840418310830, \$23), **On Moonlight Bay** (UPC#88-3929737109, \$23), **By the Light of the Silvery Moon** (UPC#840418341261, \$25), **Out of the Fog** (UPC#840418304358, \$25) and **On Borrowed Time** (UPC#840418335086, \$25), along with the **Archive Collection** collections, **6-Film Collection: Broadway on the Big Screen**, also identified as **Broadway on the Big Screen Collection** (UPC#88392984-1196, \$60), **4-Film Collection: Doris Day**, also known as **Doris Day Collection** (UPC#883929841011, \$40), and **4-Film Collection: James Stewart**, also known as **James Stewart Collection** (UPC#8839298443077, \$40); the Anchor Bay Entertainment DVD, **Beyond Therapy** (UPC#013131222098, \$15); The Criterion Collection's 4K Blu-ray release of **David Byrne's American Utopia** (UPC#715515326513, \$50), **The Three Musketeers / The Four Musketeers** (UPC#715515313810, \$70), and standard Blu-ray releases **True Stories** (UPC#715515223713, \$50), **Martin Scorsese's World Cinema Project No. 5** (UPC#715515327213, \$100), and **Black God, White Devil** (UPC#71-5515299114, \$40); Film Masters's Blu-ray release of **The Second Woman** (UPC#8404-18322093, \$22); Arrow Video's Blu-ray release of **American Yakuza** (UPC#76013719-9977, \$40); Well Go USA Entertainment's Blu-ray releases of **Revolver Lily** (UPC#81-0199990316, \$30) and **The Hyperions** (UPC#810348039477, \$30); Eureka's Blu-ray releases of **King of Beggars** (UPC#760137201076, \$40) and **Flaming Brothers** (UPC#760137206453, \$30); Shoreline Entertainment's Blu-ray release of **Renegades** (UPC#84-0418336878, \$21); Leomark Studio's Blu-ray releases of **Aakrosh** (UPC#84041834-3166, \$24), **Mahaan** (UPC#840418343272, \$24) and **Aan: Men at Work** (UPC#8404-18343173, \$24); Universal's DVD release of **Downton Abbey The Grand Finale** (UPC#191329283134, \$23); HBO Video's DVD release of **The Gilded Age The Complete Third Season** (UPC#883929841905, \$25); the BBC DVD releases of **Outrageous** (UPC#883929841769, \$30) and **Renaissance The Blood and the Beauty** (UPC#883929838851, \$20); the PBS DVD release of **Beecham House** (UPC#84188-7043359, \$40); Paramount's DVD releases of **Tulsa King Season One** (UPC#19132924-6481, \$32) and **Tulsa King Season Two** (UPC#191329272855, \$26); and Cleopatra's Blu-ray release of **Cinderella in Concert** (UPC#889466715587, \$25).

DVD News

CRITERION CORNER: The Criterion Collection is releasing Akira Kurosawa's **Stray Dog** in 4K format with a commentary by Stephen Prince, author of *The Warrior's Camera: The Cinema of Akira Kurosawa*; and a short documentary on **Stray Dog**, from the series *Akira Kurosawa: It Is Wonderful to Create*, featuring interviews with Kurosawa, production designer Yoshio Muraki, actor Keiko Awaji, and others. Bob Fosse's **Lenny** will be in 4K and will feature a commentary from 2015 with film historians Nick Redman and Julie Kirgo; an interview with Dustin Hoffman and Valerie Perrine; and an interview with editor Alan Heim. Lawrence Kasdan's **Body Heat** will be

in 4K and will have an interview with Kasdan; a conversation between editor Carol Littleton and film historian Bobbie O'Steen; archival programs featuring Kasdan, Littleton, William Hurt, Kathleen Turner, Ted Danson, cinematographer Richard H. Kline and composer John Barry; and deleted scenes. Joachim Trier's **Sentimental Value** will be in 4K and will include a conversation between Trier and filmmaker Mike Mills, selected-scene commentaries by Trier, co-screenwriter Eskil Vogt, production designer Jørgen Stangebye Larsen, and sound designer Gisle Tveito; interviews with Renate Reinsve, Stellan Skarsgård, Inga Ibsdotter Lilleaas, and Elle Fanning; and deleted scenes. Ira Sachs's **Peter Hujar's Day** will have a director interview. Sachs's **The Delta** will feature a commentary from 2001 with Sachs; an interview with Sachs, conducted by film critic Keith Uhlich; and two short films by Sachs: *Vaudeville* (1991) and *Lady* (1993). Shu Lea Cheang's **Fresh Kill** will have interviews with Cheang and Sarita Choudhury; a program highlighting the 2024 theatrical re-release of the film and Cheang's self-distribution; a discussion with Cheang for the film's 30th anniversary, moderated by scholar Jigna Desai, and presented by the Carsey-Wolf Center at the University of California, Santa Barbara; and an LG Guggenheim Art and Technology Initiative profile of Cheang, recipient of the organization's 2024 award for artist achievement.

NEW IN BLU: The following titles have recently been released on Blu-ray—Party Patrol, Party Patrol 2, Party Patrol 3, Party Patrol 4, Party Patrol 5, Party Patrol 6, Party Patrol 7, Party Patrol 8, Party Patrol 9, Party Patrol 10, Party Patrol 11, Party Patrol 12, Party Patrol 13 (Acid Bath); Blast-Off Girls also The Girl the Body and the Pill (AGFA); Knock Knock Ghosts Season 1 (Alan Ferguson); Dark Blue, The Dark Half, Dillinger, Jack & Sarah (Amazon); The Dead Thing (AMD); Almost Love, Pretty Heart (Bayview); Birthrite (Brainstorm); Sway / Welcome (Breaking Glass); Predator Badlands, Rental Family (Buena Vista); Level Up, A Paralyzing Redemption (Bumping Bulb); Ghostkeeper (Canadian); Conceiving Clara, State of Emergency (Capital Motion); At Close Range, I Hate My Body, Made in Hong Kong, The Power of Darkness, New Rose Hotel, The Snow Creature, Tank Girl (CAV); The Big Heat, Deathstalker, Prison on Fire I & II (Cinedigm); The Visitors (Cosmic); Cloud, Lubitsch Musicals, The Man Who Wasn't There, Network (Criterion); The Short Films of Yuri Norstein Treasures of Soviet Animation 3, 3 x Teuvo Tulio (Deaf Crocodile); 5683 (Deskpop); She Came from the Woods (ETR); Domsdays (Factory 25); The Black Raven, The Black Six, Bombs over Burma (Film Masters); The Early Films of Lee Isaac Chung, Stranger Eyes, An Unfinished Film (Film Movement); Focus on Louise Brooks (Flicker Alley); Sheepdog (Freestyle); End of the World, Head of the Family / Hideous, Last Foxtrot in Burbank (Full Moon); Accelerate Complete Series, Comfort Food Essential Collection, Killer Profiles Complete Series, Tiresias (Gemini); Trigger Man (Glass Eye); The Way (Gravitas); He Loves Me Not, Kill Me Deadly (Indican); Steele Wool, They Will Be Done (Indie Rights); The Flesh & Blood Show, Trifole, The Vultures (Kino); Christina Lindberg (Klub); Aakrosh, Aan Men at Work, Aap Aye Bahar Aayee, Aarakshan, Amir Garib, Anita, Chhaila, Dead White and Blue, El Pacto, Inheritance to Love, Jamai Raja, Jangal Mein Mangal, Karz Chukana Hai, Kasme Vade, The Legends of Nethiah, Mahaan, Naya Kadam, Neel Kamal, Rajnigandha, (Leomark); The Dealer, A Girl Who Loves a Girl, Kickflip, Wolf (Liminal); Now You See Me Now You Don't (Lionsgate); The Carpenter's Son, Man Finds Tape (Magnolia); Evolver 62 (Maverick); Hanky Panky, 10 Rillington Place (Mill Creek); Afterschool, A Desert, The Last Mistress, Love Kills / Between Us, Someone's Knockin' at the Door/The Deep Ones (MPI); American Yakuza, Date with a Vampire, Duel to the Death, Excalibur, Exorcismo Defying a Dictator & Raising Hell in Post-Franco Spain, Force: Five, Garden of Love, The Ghost, Heaven A Film by Diane Keaton, Iphigenia, The Japanese Godfather Trilogy, Lookin' Italian, Loop De Loop Complete Series, Martial Law Lo Wei's Wuxia World; Mogambo, Retribution, Rockers, The Secret Lives of Bill Bartell, She Shoots Straight, Smoke and Mirrors The Story of Tom Savini, Stranger on the Third Floor, The Visitor, Westworld (MVD); Urchin (1-2); Dexter Resurrection Season 1, Regretting You (Paramount); The Films of Hisayasu Sato V.3 (Pink Line); Cliff in Color! (Powerhouse); Cottonmouth (Rebellion); Airborne The Last Stand, Black Snow, Built 2 Kill, Cursed Land Fate, Dames and Dreams, Dead County, Derelict, The Magician, Motorpsycho Maniacs, Oy Vey! My Son Is Gay!, Pablo, Paradise, Parasite, Patient, Science Boy's High School Reunion, Parasite, Pounce, The Signal, Sneezing Baby Panda, The Surface, That's Not Me, The Time Vortex, Uncle Potato, The Unwelcome, The Walking Dead Girls, Werewolf Massacre at Hell's Gate, The Whole World at Our Feet, Your Local News (Rising Sun); Cruel Intentions, Get the Gringo (Samuel Goldwyn); The Story of Skids (Screenbound); Your Life Is on the Line! A Joe Christ Anthology V.1 (Saturn's Core); 7 Walks with Mark Brown (Several Futures); D.E.B.S., Nuremberg, Sisu Road to Revenge (Sony); Black Scarab, Den Ace Chaos, La Llorona (SRS); Pink Narcissus (Strand); House of Abraham (Suicide); Dance or Die, Out There Halloween Mega Tape (Terror Vision); Birth of the Blues, Double or Nothing, Five Nights at Freddy's 2, Here Come the Waves, Ma and Pa Kettle Complete Comedy Collection, Sing You Sinners, Song Sung Blue (Universal); In Our Blood (Utopia); The Curse of the Clown Motel, The Devil's Trap (Vantage); 4-Film Collection: Fred Astaire, 4-Film Collection: Spencer Tracy, 6-Film Collection: Broadway on the Big Screen, Tarzan and His Mate (Warner); The Encampments (Watermelon); Big Brother, Frontier Crucible, Ghost Train, Rescue at Donji, Revolver Lily, Row 19, The Surface (Well Go); A Grand Mockery (Yellow Veil); Evidence Unknown, Miles from Nowhere, Secrets in the Spotlight, Thought Thieves (Zapruderflix)

NEW IN 3D: The following title was recently released in 3D format—Dragonfly Squadron (Olive)

NEW IN 4K: The following titles have recently been released in 4K format—Predator Badlands (Buena Vista); At Close Range, The Phantom of the Opera, Tank Girl, Terror Firmer (CAV); The Big Heat, Dead Silence, Nightcrawler, Prison on Fire I & II (Cinedigm); The Man Who Wasn't There, Network, Playtime, 3:10 to Yuma, A Woman under the Influence (Criterion); The Great Silence (Film Movement); Now You See Me Now You Don't (Lionsgate); The Eurocrypt of Christopher Lee V.3, Excalibur, The Ghost, The Girl Who Leapt through Time, Knock Off, Retribution, Rockers, Westworld (MVD); Friday the 13th, Friday the 13th Part II, Mean Girls, Small Soldiers (Paramount); Richard Pryor Here & Now, Sisu Road to Revenge (Sony); A Beautiful Mind, 50 Shades 3-Movie Collection, Five Nights at Freddy's 2 (Universal); All the President's Men, Ben-Hur, Se7en (Warner); Frontier Crucible (Well Go)

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Current Attractions

- The following titles recently appeared for the first time:
After All (Brainstorm)
Airborne The Last Stand (Rising Sun)
Alas French Gertie (Alpha)*
And Just Like That Season 3 (Warner)
ArtCon (Deskpop)
The Astronaut (Vertical)
Bad Voodoo (Deskpop)
Big Brother (Well Go)
The Birth of Motion Pictures (Alpha)*
The Black Raven (Film Masters)
Black Snow (Rising Sun)*
Bloodsuckers and the Grimoire (Cineverse)*
Bo Diddley All Star Jam (Vision)
Bookish Season 1 (Paramount)
Brother Unknown (X4)*
The Buccaneers V.10 (Alpha)*
Cactus Pears (Strand)*
Call Me When You Can A Father's Day Story (BMG)
The Carpenter's Son (Magnolia)
Cloud (Criterion)
Conceiving Clara (Capital Motion)*
Cottonmouth (Rebellion)
Cruel Intentions (Samuel Goldwyn)*
The Curse of the Clown Motel (Vantage)
Cursed Hearse (Deskpop)
Cursed Land Fate (Rising Sun)*
Dames and Dreams (Rising Sun)*
Dangerous Paradise (Alpha)*
Dark Blue (Amazon)
The Dark Half (Amazon)
Dead White and Blue (Leomark)
The Dealer (Liminal)
Death by Fruitcake (Deskpop)
Deathstalker (Cinegridm)
Deep Water (Social)*
Derelict (Rising Sun)*
The Devil's Trap (Vantage)
Dexter Resurrection Season 1 (Paramount)
Dillinger (Amazon)
Don't Forget to Leave (Dreamscape)
Earthquake Underground (Kino)
The Echo Murders (Reel Vault)
El Pacto (Leomark)
End of the World (Full Moon)
Evidence Unknown (Zapruderflix)*
Evolver 62 (Maverick)*
Exorcists vs. Vampires The Battle for Your Soul (Chemical Burn)
Family Recipe Jewish American Style (Paramount)
Far Out Life on & after the Commune (Bullfrog)
Fear of Flying (Syndicated)
Five Night at Freddy's 2 (Universal)
5683 (Deskpop)
Flathead (Indiepix)

- Frontier Crucible (Well Go)
Get the Gringo (Samuel Goldwyn)
Ghost Train (Well Go)
The Girl Who Leapt through Time (MVD)
A Girl Who Loves a Girl (Liminal)
The Go-Getter (Reel Vault)
Goldmine (X4)
Good Grief (Freestyle)*
Great Old Short Subjects (Alpha)*
Grindhouse Double Feature (Alpha)*
He Loves Me Not (Indican)*
Hearts around the Table 4-Movie Collection (Cinegridm)
Heaven A Film by Diane Keaton (MVD)*
Hollywood Oddities and Bloopers (Alpha)*
House of Abraham (Suicide)*
How to Save Democracy (X4)*
I Am Living Proof (BMG)
I Am Rage (Uncork'd)
I Don't Love You Anymore (Freestyle)*
Inheritance to Love (Leomark)
Jack & Sarah (Amazon)*
Jack Randall Double Feature (Alpha)*
John Wayne Triple Feature V.2 (Alpha)*
John Wayne Triple Feature V.3 (Alpha)*
John Wayne Triple Feature V.4 (Alpha)*
Kicklip (Liminal)
King Ivory (Sony)
Knock Off (MVD)
Last Tour Home (Freestyle)*
The Legends of Nethiah (Leomark)
Level Up (Burning Bulb)*
The Love Doctor (BMG)
Lust and Fear (Deskpop)
The Magician (Rising Sun)*
Man Finds Tape (Magnolia)
The Man I Love (Reel Vault)
Mandarin Mystery (Alpha)*
Mel Brooks' Spaceballs The Totally Warped Animated Adventures! (MVD)
Miles from Nowhere (Zapruderflix)*
The Miracle of Tonya Pinkins (Rainbow)
Miss Scarlet Season 6 (Paramount)
Model Behavior 3 DVD Movie Collection (Full Moon)
The Mounted Stranger (Alpha)*
My Mystery Romance (BMG)
NASA Moments The Stuff of Dreams (Wonderscape)
New Orleans after Dark (Reel Vault)
No Survivors Please (Reel Vault)
Now You See Me Now You Don't (Lionsgate)
Nuptials (Freestyle)*
Once upon a Texas Train (Reel Vault)
Oy Vey! My Son Is Gay! (Rising Sun)*
Pablo (Rising Sun)*
A Paralyzing Redemption (Burning Bulb)*
Parasite (Rising Sun)*
Party Patrol (Acid Bath)
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Party Patrol 13 (Acid Bath)*
The Passing of the Third Floor Back (Reel Vault)
Patient (Rising Sun)*
Pig Hill (Cineverse)*
Plight (Indie Rights)
The Pollinators Agents for Life (Dreamscape)
Pounce (Rising Sun)*
Predator Badlands (Buena Vista)
The Prospect (X4)
Providence Falls (Cinegridm)
The Red Book Ritual Gates of Hell (MVD)
Regretting You (Paramount)
Rescue at Dongji (Well Go)
Revolver Lily (Well Go)
Rio Rita (Reel Vault)
Rockers (MVD)
Row 19 (Well Go)
Royal Runaways (Legacy)
Savage Hunt (Cinegridm)
Science Boy's High School Reunion (Rising Sun)*
Scurry (Brainstorm)
The Secret Lives of Bill Bartell (MVD)
Secrets in the Spotlight (Zapruderflix)*
Shakespeare & Hathaway Season 5 (Warner)
Sheepdog (Freestyle)*
Show of Shows (Reel Vault)
The Signal (Rising Sun)*
Sisu Road to Revenge (Sony)
Sneezing Baby Panda (Rising Sun)*
Someone at the Door (Reel Vault)
Starring Dick Van Dyke (Paramount)
State of Emergency (Capitol Motion)*
Steele Wool (Indie Rights)
The Summer Book (Music Box)
The Surface (Rising Sun)*
Tell the World (BMG)
That's Not Me (Rising Sun)*
The Thirteenth Chair (Alpha)*
This Time (Freestyle)*
Thought Thieves (Zapruderflix)*
Thy Will Be Done (Indie Rights)
The Time It Takes (Film Movement)
The Time Vortex (Rising Sun)*
Trap House (Decal)
Trifole (Kino)*
Ugly Sweater (Deskpop)
Uncle Polato (Rising Sun)*
The Unwelcome (Rising Sun)*
VHS Maniacs V.1 (Filmandia)
VHS Violence Afterlife (Social)*
The Visitors (Cosmic)*
The Walking Dead Girls (Rising Sun)*
The Way (Gravitas)*
Werewolf Massacre at Hell's Gate (Rising Sun)*

- The Whole World at Our Feet (Rising Sun)*
Wildcat (Decal)
Wolf (Liminal)
You Can't Win (X4)*
You Gotta Stay Happy (Reel Vault)
Your Local News (Rising Sun)*

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

Coming Attractions

- The following select DVD titles are promised for the near future. How many of them will show up is never a certainty. Logical subdivisions appear unmarked within each division. Titles which did not appear on last month's list are marked with an arrow (→) and are added to the bottom of subdivisions so that the longest awaited titles appear at the top within each grouping:
From Ace Spectrum:
Tax Broke
From Acid Bath:
→From Dusk Till Bong
→I Spill Your Guts
→Bite School
→Killer Waves
→It Wants Blood!
→Cool As Hell
→Cool As Hell 2 The Quest for God's Bong
→The Litch
→Hack Job
→What's In the Locker
→Party Patrol 14
→Party Patrol 15
From Amazon:
→The Young Doctors
From AMD:
Murder before Evensong
Talamasca The Secret Order Season 1
Good Boy
→Midsomer Murders Season 25
→The Assassin Season 1
From Angel:
→David
→I Was a Stranger
From Big Picture:
The Earthing Movie
From Black Bear:
→Christy
→Shelter
From BMG:
God & Beer
After All
→The Brighton Miracle
→Operation Fernsby
From BSX:
The Passion Oratorio
From Buena Vista:
→Zootopia 2
→Is This Thing On?
From Bullfrog:
From Sea to Shining Sea Katharine Lee Bates and the Story of America the Beautiful
From CAV:
→Steam Room Stories

- The Movie
From Chemical Burn:
Bigfoot Massacre No. 1
One Gets Out Alive
→Full Zombie Jacket
Marathon of the Living Dead
From Cinegridm:
Little Amelie or The Character of Rain
Villa Amore / Blind Date Book Club / The Perfect Bride / 3 Bed 2 Bath 1 Ghost / Legend of the Lost Locket / Make Me a Match
Journey to You / The Easter Bloom / The Blessing Bracelet
→Hats Off to Love / Taking the Reins / Big Sky River
→To Barcelona with Love / To Barcelona Forever
From Cineverse:
→Killer Rental
→The Things You Kill
→Misdirection
From Classicflix:
The Ad-Libbers
Surviving Episodes
→Fabulous Studios
Champion Collection
From Criterion:
Killers of the Flower Moon
Classe tous risques
Resurrection
→Sentimental Value
→Peter Hujar's Day
→Stray Dog
From Davis:
→Return to Silent Hill
From Deskpop:
Lone Wolves
Skate to Hell
Vice and Virtue
→Epiphany
→Gloria
→First Haunt
From Dreamscape:
Wow I Never Knew That Season 2
→FIA Formula One World Championship 2025 End of Year Review
From Electric:
→Somewhere in Montana
From Filmhub:
Agent Kelly
All 4da Green Bedroom Story Chariot
Dark Legacy
Dirty
Don't Let Me Stay
Elenore Makes Love
Elvis & Priscilla
Conditional Love
Endgame 2050
Equality U
Every Thing Is Both Eye for Eye
Forgetting Dad
The Girl in the Cornfield
Girl/Girl Scene 1984
God's Not Here
Half Moon
Happy Birthday
I'm Haunted
Inside the World's Most Haunted Houses

- JFK X Solving the Crime of the Century
Jurica Road
Life Love Dogs
Maverick Manhunt Brazil
No Such Thing As Loyalty 3
Nora's Hair Salon 3
Ombis Alien Invasion
Operation Anaconda The Battle of Roberts' Ridge
Oxy Morons
Plato's Reality Machine
Rescue from Gilligan's Island Trivia Edition
Risky Business A Look Inside America's Adult Film Industry
Satin
Secret Space UFOs Fast Walkers
Severe Clear
Shackleton's Captain The Shadows
Sin
Square One Michael Jackson
Stolen Breath The Truth Revealed
Therese
357 Six Bullets for Revenge
Tomcat Tales
Transparent
Travis The True Story of Travis Walton
Underground Comics Up on the Woottop
From Filmandia:
→Celluloid Cult V.1
Carnage Galore
From Freestyle:
→The Big Johnson
From Image:
Muzzle 2 City of Wolves
From Indiepix:
Poppy
→Smother
From Jinga:
Darklands
→Ketchup: Not without Hope
From Kino:
Little Trouble Girls
The Names of God She Was Here
My Neighbor Adolf
Timestamp
Continental Split
The Business of Fancysdancing
→She Was Here
→Evil Nun
→Mr. Nobody against Putin
From Leomark:
→No One Will Hear You Scream
→Malditas
From Level 33:
→Reawakening
From Liminal:
→Remotely Famous
→Radio Man
→Assault on Sacred Mountain
From Lionsgate:
→Greenland
→Greenland 2 Migration
→Shadow Force
→The Housemaid
From Maelstrom:
→American Magick
From Mubi:
Lurker
The History of Sound

- Die My Love
From Music Box:
Zodiac Killer Project
→Suspended Time
From MVD:
The Rubinoos Live at Rockpalast 1978
El Proceso de Las Senoritas Vivanco
Quantum Supremacy
Creatures of the Night
Amityville Aliens
Quakesaurus
Night of the Rats
→Something Better Change
→VD
→Don't Play with Fire
→Girls
→The Mysterious Gaze of the Flamingo
→Midnight Monster
→Night of the Howling
→The Crawling Hand / Slime People
→Dinogeist
→Day of the Wicked
→Watch Me Sleep
From Myrad:
All the Names of God
From Not So Sane:
→Lady Lawman
From Oscilloscope:
→Peacock
From Paramount:
The Running Man
Star Trek Strange New Worlds Season 3
All Creatures Great & Small Season 6
→Primate
→The SpongeBob Movie Search for SquarePants
→Of the People Women of the Civil Rights Movement
→Black and Jewish America An Intervenon History
→The Forsytes Season 1
→The Count of Monte Cristo
From Pop:
→Dr. Jekyll & Mistress Hyde
From Reel Vault:
→The Fail Guy
→The Benson Murder Case
→The Young Land
→Condemned
→Feet First
→Operation X
→The July Group
→The Bold and the Beautiful
→Magnificent Melody
→Death of a Salesman
From Rising Sun:
→Wrestling Alligators
→Reputation
→World War I All Quiet on the Western Front
The True Story
→Animal Within
→Bad Boy
→Dead Woman Walking
→Diamond Sky
→Event Zero
→Glyndebourne The Untold Story
→God Game of Death
→History of the Gun
→Illicit Content
→Raising Hitler
→Siné
→Skinford Chapter 2
→Sons of God

- Tale of the Forest Unicorn
→The Mill Killers
→The Worst Film Festival Ever
→All American Bikini Car Wash
→Paranormal Asylum
→Alta
→Our Winter
→The Maid
→Night Has Settled
→No Beast So Fierce
From Samuel:
Goldwyn:
→Oscar Watch
From Shoreline:
→Repeater
From Sony:
Cobra Kai Season 6
→Merrily We Roll Along
→The Choral
→Anaconda (remake)
→Nuremberg
From Syndicado:
The Princess and the Dragon
From 360:
→Messenger 666 3D
→The Messenger
From Universal:
Resident Alien Season 4
Resident Alien Complete Series
Song Sung Blue
→Hamnet
From Vantage:
→Escape from ISIS
→Bonus Trip
→Junction
→Fungus
From Vertical:
→Thieves Highway
From Vision:
→Love the Skin You're In
From Warner:
→Absolutely Fabulous Complete Collection (10 platters)
The Closer Complete Series (28 platters)
→Father Brown Season 13 Kingdom
→Lois & Clark The New Adventures of Superman Complete Series (24 platters)
→Task Season 1
The Thorn Birds The Collector's Set
From Well Go:
Special ID
Lone Samurai
→Grizzly Night
→Relentless
→Blazing Fists
→The Forbidden City
From Wonderscape:
America 250 Boston Tea Party / Revolutionary War / George Washington
America 250 The Louisiana Purchase / Lewis & Clark / Sacagawea
America 250 Alexander Graham Bell / Thomas Edison / The Wright Brothers
From X4:
→Censor Addiction
→Crybaby Bridge
From Yellow Hat:
The Life after Death Project 2 Personal Encounters