

More Minnelli Blu-rays

We reviewed a bevy of widescreen color Vincente Minnelli MGM films as Warner Bros. *Warner WB Archive Collection* Blu-rays in Jul 22. Few directors have works more consistently suitable for the Blu-ray medium. Minnelli's eye for design and for the dynamic between composition and drama (or comedy) are ideally suited for the clarity and intricacy of a well-mastered Blu-ray delivery, and fortunately, Warner goes out of their way to do the best job possible with his titles.

But not all of Minnelli's MGM films are in glorious Technicolor or stupendous widescreen. Minnelli's highly admired 1952 black-and-white melodrama about moviemaking, **The Bad and the Beautiful**, is also available as an *Archive Collection* Blu-ray (UPC#883929699933, \$24), and it looks as gorgeous in its own way as the color films do. Presented in a squared full screen format, the film feels like its images have been supercharged to depict their topic, imparting a self-awareness of Hollywood glamour and expression in every high-contrast shot. Told in flashback, Kirk Douglas is a film producer so desperate to get a project going that he turns to the three individuals he stepped on to achieve success in the past, a director played by Barry Sullivan, an actress played by Lana Turner and a writer played by Dick Powell. Another former producer who was shafted by Douglas's character, played by Walter Pidgeon, organizes the meeting. Running 118 minutes, the film then segues into lengthy flashbacks from each of the three characters as they recall their own rise to success and how the Mephistophelean Douglas character ruthlessly enabled each one to get ahead, while at the same time profiting on his own, as well. It would be easy enough to read a gay subtext into the film (between the Douglas and Sullivan characters, and the Douglas and Powell characters), but then you can do that for almost all of Minnelli's movies. What we find discouraging about the story is that while the ending is at least a little bit ambiguous, it does seem to say that the material success those three characters achieved was of greater value than the emotional wealth they gave up in the process. In any case, it is a wonderfully cynical film, well suited for its often stark cinematography, which becomes downright thrilling in its best, most abstract moments, especially with the spotless, finely detailed perfection that the BD delivers.

Gloria Grahame earned an Oscar for her supporting part as the wife of Powell's character, and Paul Stewart, Gilbert Roland and Leo G. Carroll are also featured. The monophonic sound is fine, and 27 minutes of audio-only recording sessions for David Raksin's musical score are presented in the Special Features. The film comes with optional yellow English subtitles, and a trailer. Also included is an excellent 86-minute biography from 2001, *Lana Turner A Daughter's Memoir*, narrated by Robert Wagner, which works its way systematically through her life and her career, as well as the entwined life of her daughter, Cheryl Crane. Because of her daughter's involvement in creating the program, you get the inside story all the way through (including a definitive take on the famous scandal when Crane murdered Turner's abusive boyfriend), along with wonderful film clips from many of Turner's best movies and lots of archival and newsreel footage.

Warner's *Archive Collection* DVD (UPC#883929712274, \$13) has the same special features with a much better designed menu. The picture quality is okay, but it is softer than the BD, weakening the impact of the film's best moments (there is this one marvelous crane shot that moves from Turner up to a spotlight, which then cuts to another spotlight at the premiere of the movie she was shooting) and the vitality of the stars.

Minnelli's groundbreaking 1943 musical, **Cabin in the Sky**, was the first all-black motion picture backed by a major film studio. There were previous all-black films made in America, but the budget for **Cabin in the Sky** was in all likelihood larger than what it cost to make all of them, combined. We reviewed Warner's DVD in Mar 06, and it looked fairly decent, but the *Archive Collection* Blu-ray (UPC#810134949065, \$24) has eliminated every last scratch and speckle from the squared full screen black-and-white image. Simply photographing black faces was a challenge for cinematographers in the day, who had to relearn their lighting strategies and contrast levels to pull it off, and the BD captures the facial details of every cast member with clarity and precision. Ethel Waters and Eddie 'Rochester' Anderson star, with Lena Horne, Rex Ingram, Butterfly McQueen, Willie Best, Kenneth Spencer, Mantan Moreland and plenty of other significant African-American performers of the day. Duke Ellington appears as a band leader in scenes set in a crowded roadhouse, and Louis Armstrong has an actual part as one of the Devil's assistants, although he also plays his horn. His comedic acting is exceptionally sharp, and demonstrates that he could easily have taken his career in that direction if he so desired. Spencer has a role as a preacher but also plays an angel who is passing judgment on Anderson's character after Anderson's character is shot in the roadhouse, and Ingram is the devil's representative, eager to claim him. Waters plays the wife of Anderson's character, whose prayers enable him to have a second chance. The very young Horne plays a temptress. There is actually less music in the 98-minute feature than one might hope for, but there are several recognizable songs, plenty of impressive dancing, and perhaps most importantly, the presence of the musical format provides leeway for the story's fantasy elements. It is simplistic and playful, much like the short featurettes where many of the performers often found themselves, but if this is what Hollywood had to do to begin the long, difficult climb in achieving a viable economic justification to making films that highlight or emphasize African Americans, then it was a timid first step that nevertheless deserves to be enjoyed for what it achieved and not chastised for not stepping

farther. Minnelli and producer Arthur Freed took an enormous chance, and could probably only have gotten away with it because of the wartime economy and culture, but from a technical standpoint, they made no compromises (except allowing a few child actors to stare at the camera now and then), and that is what is conveyed the strongest on the BD. The film looks beautiful and is staged with the energy and precision Minnelli brought to all of his features.

The monophonic sound is also improved over the DVD, and achieves an impressive range at times, with minimal noise or wear. There are optional English subtitles and several extras carried over from the DVD, including a trailer; a 1946 *Pete Smith Specialty* short running 10 minutes, *Studio Visit*, that has a clip of Horne singing in a bubble bath along with a couple of other vaudeville acts; a 6-minute deleted Armstrong number reworked as a music video with shots from the film aligned with its rhythm; and an excellent commentary track by an authority on black films, Todd Boyd, with inserted reflections and reminiscences by film expert Drew Casper, Horne, Anderson's heirs and Fayard Nicholas, who wasn't in the film but was very close with many of the performers.

The Bad and the Beautiful was preceded by two purely commercial endeavors in squared full screen black-and-white formats that are both available as *Archive Collection* Blu-rays, the enormously successful 1950 **Father of the Bride** (UPC#888574389505, \$24) and the immediate 1951 sequel, **Father's Little Dividend** (UPC#810134942622, \$24). Both films have the same primary cast, featuring four principle stars, Spencer Tracy, Joan Bennett, Elizabeth Taylor and Don Taylor (they are not related), along with Billie Burke, Moroni Olsen and, as Elizabeth Taylor's younger brother, Russ Tamblyn. Carroll also has a marvelous part in the first film. The crux of each movie's appeal, however, is the scenes between Tracy and Elizabeth Taylor. Minnelli gives each dramatic duet between them the same attention he would give to a song in one of his musicals. Each interlude is staged differently, with different lighting, a different composition (it is never just two people standing and talking) and a different tempo, and each scene goes straight to your heart. Taylor was still very young, but she was a veteran in front of the camera. The two were very comfortable with the dynamic they established and you hold your breath every time they play out a sequence together. It is that very magical thing that happens in movies. The two are ultra famous movie stars, and yet every frame of their performances is immediately and unquestionably believable, even when Tracy turns, as he does several times, and talks directly to the camera.

Minnelli's design approach in both films is not exaggerated as it is in his serious melodramas, nor is it playfully elaborate as it is in some of his other comedies, but it is studiously 'normal' and clean. There is a heightened convergence of chaos that is used at times for comedic effect, but he is in essence presenting the ideal suburban existence that America was striving for after World War II and, here and there, had actually achieved. In order to sell the movie's emotions, he is careful not to undercut, ridicule or banalize its sentimentality. While the productions do not flirt with film noir the way that **The Bad and the Beautiful** does, they are nevertheless meticulous.

From the montage of former suitors to the amazingly surreal dream sequence, **Father of the Bride** has scenes that few other filmmakers could have staged and integrated so creatively. The jam-packed reception sequence turns the bodies of the extras into a single living organism that Tracy's character is constantly attempting to navigate. Running 93 minutes and following the stresses and joys generated from the moment Tracy's character learns that his daughter has a serious beau to the two youngsters leaving on their honeymoon, the film's potent emotional peaks soar higher and pierce the viewer's sensitivities more profoundly because of Minnelli's guidance to the performances and choices in design, and his timing at every moment in the film. It is because of the care with which he approaches each scene that the broader slapstick sequences and more predictable moments of humor do not feel tiresome.

While the picture has a vaguely grainy texture throughout, it is otherwise free of wear or distortion and looks lovely, adding to the strength of the performances and the subliminal effectiveness of Minnelli's designs (that dream sequence is truly striking). The monophonic sound is okay. There are alternate French, Spanish and Polish audio tracks, optional English, French, Spanish, Polish and Czech subtitles, a trailer, and two terrific minute-long newsreel clips—one of Elizabeth Taylor, looking and presenting herself no differently than she does in the film, getting married for real, and another where she, Tracy and Bennett meet the quite fatherly Harry Truman.

Father's Little Dividend has long been in the public domain, and most versions on home video are wracked with speckles and other impurities, such as the Madacy Entertainment DVD we reviewed in Dec 00, but the Blu-ray's image is lovely. Beginning like the first film did with a teaser, followed by the flashback that presents most of the 82-minute feature, the film spans a little over a year from the perspective of Tracy's character, learning about his daughter's first pregnancy, helping her prepare along with his wife and in-laws, coping with the magnified emotional conflicts that occur along the way, and then adjusting to the adorable but invasive baby. It is easy enough to dismiss the formula aspects of the film when it is presented in a degraded fashion, but with the pristine image, one more readily becomes involved in the movie's humor and the engaging performances of the entire cast.

The monophonic sound is also solid and clean. There are optional English subtitles; a trailer; a 9-minute black-and-white *Pete Smith Specialty* short from 1951 entitled *Bargain Madness* about housewives fighting over a department store sale (not exactly a flattering portrait of the female experience); and two vividly colorful Tom and Jerry 7-minute cartoons from 1951, *Just*

Ducky, about a baby duck who can't swim and bonds with the mouse, while the cat tries to catch both of them for a meal, and *Jerry and the Goldfish*, in which a goldfish in a bowl bonds with the mouse while the cat tries to prepare the fish as lunch.

People who have never seen an Alfred Hitchcock film before and then watch **Topaz** are utterly baffled by the enthusiasm it garners. Even people who have seen Hitchcock movies are initially perplexed by the film's popularity with enthusiasts, but people who are real Hitchcock enthusiasts and have seen the film a couple of times cannot get enough of it, because as aimless and uneventful as the narrative seems to be, the film's 'Hitchcockian' style is not only pervasive throughout the feature, it appears to be the point of the film, that rather than Hitchcock presenting a tale of international intrigue, a tale of international intrigue is presenting Hitchcock. We think of Minnelli's 1962 feature, **The Courtship of Eddie's Father**, in much the same way. It is too lighthearted to be a melodrama, but not humorous enough to be a romantic comedy. Glenn Ford is the recently widowed title character and Ron Howard is his pre-adolescent son. Shirley Jones, who gives the most magnetic performance in the film, is the divorced nurse living across the apartment hallway, who was a good friend of the late wife and still very friendly with the child. Dina Merrill is a wealthy unmarried socialite that you know is going to send Eddie off to boarding school as soon as she gets her hooks into his father, regardless of how elegantly and coolly she pretends that is not the plan, and in a really, really bizarre subplot Jerry Van Dyke is a disc jockey and Stella Stevens is kind of a beatnik who starts dating him after Ford's character introduces the two of them to each other. To a casual viewer or perhaps even a Minnelli fan seeing the film for the first time, it is predictable, uneventful and sleep inducing. Ford and Howard give decent performances, as does Merrill for that matter, but for 118 minutes, you're better off watching the sitcom spinoff with Bill Bixby.

Yet after you watch the movie a couple of times, you stop really paying attention to the characters except during the important moments and start noticing their clothing instead, and the amazingly subdued but color coordinated production designs surrounding them. From the very start, Merrill's outfits, while gorgeous, never match anything in any room, while Jones's outfits are always perfectly blended wherever she goes. You start contemplating the knickknacks on the shelves and counters, and pondering their individual symbolism, and then suddenly, you want to watch the film again and again because, like **Topaz**, you cannot get enough of it.

Thankfully, Warner has released the film as another *Archive Collection* Blu-ray (UPC#810134940284, \$24). The DVD (Apr 05) looked terrific, but the BD is even cleaner and sharper, so that the hues, while they already looked fantastic, look even more fantastic and solid. The monophonic sound is also stronger. The presentation is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1 and comes with the trailer and the excellent commentary track featuring Jones, Merrill and Stevens that appeared on the DVD. Additionally, there is a color Tom and Jerry cartoon from 1963 running 7 minutes, *Penthouse Mouse*, in which the cat, luxuriating on a penthouse patio, catches the mouse falling from a skyscraper under construction and decides the mouse would make a good snack. Lots of Chuck Jones gags about falling from high places ensue.

Minnelli's 1955 color Cinemascope melodrama, **The Cobweb**, has been issued as another *Archive Collection* Blu-ray (UPC#840418328989, \$25), this time with an aspect ratio of about 2.55:1 and modest but periodically engaging two-channel DTS stereo sound. It may be the cinematography and not the transfer, since the widescreen process was still quite new at the time, but there are a couple of shots that look a little on the soft side, and instances where details are lost in the darkness, such as the lines of an all-black costume. Otherwise, however, the image looks lovely and fleshtones, though not quite as gorgeously intense as those in **Courtship of Eddie's Father**, are accurate. The sound effects and dialog remain centered, but Leonard Roseman's music—which, in hindsight, should have been more aggressively scored (one cannot help but think that the drama would play better if it had Elmer Bernstein's music from **Some Came Running** applied to it)—has a lovely dimensionality now and then, giving the film an enhanced sense of life.

Running 124 minutes, the story is set in a nursing home for emotionally disturbed patients. It is not an asylum—the patients are free to come and go as they please—and it sort of functions like a dormitory with nurses walking the hallways. The film has a grand cast, with Richard Widmark as the head of operations, Grahame as his frustrated wife, Lauren Bacall as the activity director, Charles Boyer as the aging doctor who has less authority than he once had and Lillian Gish delivering a marvelous performance as the institution's financial officer, who can perform elaborate calculations in her head and is something of a skinflint. John Kerr, Susan Strasberg and Oscar Levant are among the patients, Stewart is another doctor, and Fay Wray has a single but very lovely scene as Boyer's spouse.

To say that the narrative is centered on choosing the draperies for the institution's library would be a disservice, but that is the engine that fuels the plot. Widmark's character, in an attempt to build up the confidence of the patients, allows them to choose what sort of drapes should be hung, while Gish's character wants to obtain the cheapest drapes she possibly can and Grahame's character—because she never gets to talk to her husband much—orders some really nice, expensive drapes (which look gorgeous, btw), thus causing a crisis when they are unexpectedly installed. Making good use of the Cinemascope framing, Minnelli often places characters in conversation at the far edges of the screen—it must have been a real delight for the movie directors first working in

the format to toy with things like that—thus underscoring the gaps in understanding between them. Despite the setting's potential, however, the film does not have the intensity of design that enables Minnelli's best melodramas to exceed the entertainment of their premise and indeed, despite its colors and widescreen framing and stereo sound, the movie is drabber than **The Bad and the Beautiful**. Because of the presence of all of the movie stars and the fact that Minnelli never makes any blatant errors, the film is fully entertaining, but you come to it expecting the thrills, intrigues and bloodsucking dangers of a movie entitled **The Cobweb**, and what you get instead is, 'The Drapes.'

There are optional English subtitles, a trailer, a letterboxed color Tom and Jerry cartoon from 1956 running 8 minutes called *The Egg and Jerry* in which a woodpecker egg rolls underneath the mouse and opens so that the baby woodpecker identifies as a mouse rather than a bird and then the cat takes nutritional interest, and a fantastic 17-minute MGM featurette from 1955 in the same letterboxed format as the film and glorious color promoting many upcoming Cinemascope releases and including a talk by **Cobweb** author, William Gibson (no, not the cyber guy, he was just starting grade school then), who also introduces the film's cast.

Royal appeal

Normally, we would hold off reviewing a limited TV series until the third and final season was released, especially since we know all of the main characters are going to be killed by the time that season is over, but **Marie Antoinette Season Two**, a two-platter BBC Canal+ PBS DVD (UPC#84188704-8491, \$40), is so good, we just can't wait to share our enthusiasm for it, especially since, at this point in time, it is unclear as to whether there will be a third season at all (fingers crossed that we help boost sales and encourage the powers that be).

Marie Antoinette Season One, another PBS two-platter DVD (UPC#841887047234, \$40), isn't bad. Produced in 2022, Emelia Shüle stars, with Louis Cunningham as Louis XVI, along with James Purefoy, Gaia Weiss, Jack Archer costarring, and Marthe Keller, with her unique accent, as the Austrian Empress and Antoinette's mother. Each season has eight episodes and is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1. The color transfer is great and the costumes and set decorations are opulent. The 5.1-channel Dolby Digital sound has a workable dimensionality, and there are optional English subtitles, although viewers should be warned that a few choice four-letter words are bleeped (and 'XXX'd' out in the subtitling), while lascivious drawings and other naughty bits are blurred out and may even have been scissored. **Season One** runs 439 minutes and **Season Two** runs 443 minutes. Neither has a 'Play All' option. **Season Two** also has an audio track that describes the action ("In Louis's office, Provence takes the key and unlocks the desk drawer. He lifts out the file and sets it on the desk, leaning over to read it.")

The show brings genuine empathy to the characters as it explores the power struggles and nasty gossip that went on in Versailles and essentially got out of hand, feeding a hungry populace which, at the end of the 2025 **Season Two**, has just stormed the Bastille. The first half of **Season One** is about Shüle's character, so young that she has yet to begin menstruating, sent away from home to marry the similarly young and naïve French Dauphin, and by the end of the season she is the Queen of France. There have been a number of TV shows that have done well exploring the lives of European nobility (notably the streaming series *The Empress*, and *Victoria*), and this program has the same appeal, sharing time with characters who are important enough that their choices and preferences altered history, but who are also fallibly human, with psychological blocks and sexual desires. What raises the quality of **Season Two** is that while the royal couple are both emotionally stunted during much of **Season One**, the need to create an heir opens them up to one another (the brother of Shüle's character, actually the Emperor of Austria although his mother is running things, sneaks into France to play marriage counselor), and they genuinely fall in love. In **Season Two**, their love blossoms, but a brilliant confidence artist (it actually didn't take much to wander into Versailles back in those days, since security was not like what it is now) sets about convincing an important cardinal that the queen wants him to be her go-between with a jeweler. Even though Shüle's character has nothing whatsoever to do with the scam (it was because the cardinal was out of her favor that he was the perfect mark), the resulting scandal embroils the crown and became another factor in its downfall. As it plays out in **Season Two**, however, you get all of the great dynamics that were present at the closing of **Season One**, plus a terrific, suspenseful (and totally true) crime story, followed by an equally engrossing trial, revving up both the entertainment and the excitement as the world of the characters begins to crumble.

A quintessential Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer production of the Thirties spearheaded by Irving Thalberg as a vehicle for his wife, the lavish 1938 **Marie Antoinette**, produced by Hunt Stromberg (Thalberg passed away before the film was completed) and directed by W.S. Van Dyke (the great Julien Duvivier worked as a second unit director), is presented with its Overture, Entr'acte and Exit Music on the Turner Entertainment Warner Home Video *Warner Archive Collection* DVD (UPC#883316860212, \$14). The film runs 157 minutes and its studio staging calls to mind the excess and unrestrained expenditure glorified by its topic. The grand sets and amazing costumes are nearly unparalleled in their splendor and elaborate detail, surprisingly aided by the squared full screen black-and-white cinematography, which is deftly transferred on the DVD and encourages the viewer's imagination to compensate for the lack of color. Norma Shearer plays the wife of the dauphin, and Robert Morley delivers an exceptional

performance (in a rare starring role) as her husband, with a youthful Robert Taylor as her lover. Extravagance and romance highlight the film's first half, and then history takes over for the second half, utilizing the opportunity in that first half of having built up the characters so that what happens to them is meaningful. There is suspense and action, and the sets, the innumerable extras and the costumes are still impressive. As a whole, it is an exhaustive motion picture experience that does a reasonably effective job at humanizing aristocratic figures who are usually held up for ridicule and scorn.

The monophonic sound is a little aged but is in reasonably good condition. The image is free of wear and is fairly sharp, with well defined contrasts. There are optional English, French, Spanish and Portuguese subtitles, a trailer, a 9-minute black-and-white short from 1938 entitled *Hollywood Goes to Town* about the preparation for the film's Hollywood premiere and what happened on the red carpet that night; and an 11-minute black-and-white *Another Hollywood on Parade* short from 1938 promoting MGM's forthcoming releases that includes a clip from the Oscars and footage behind the scenes from the **Marie Antoinette** set.

Nothing like color to compensate for budgetary limitations. Sophia Coppola's appealing 2006 interpretation of the story, **Marie Antoinette**, is available on Blu-ray from Sony Pictures Home Entertainment (UPC#04339649-0789, \$30). Running 123 minutes, its focus, too, is on the relationship between the young princess, played by Kirsten Dunst, who becomes the wife of the still immature dauphin, played by Jason Schwartzman, with her eventual lover, played by Jamie Dornan, appearing briefly in the film's second half. The movie is loaded with terrific actors, with Rip Torn delivering an especially fine performance as the dauphin's grandfather, the king, along with Asia Argento, Marianne Faithfull, Rose Byrne, Aurore Clément, Tom Hardy, Mary Nighy, Judy Davis, Molly Shannon, Steve Coogan and Danny Huston. While she doesn't have the resources to create ornate ballrooms, like the miniseries, Coppola makes effective use of location substitutes, and even more so than the miniseries, she loads up individual scenes with costumes, jewelry and décor (and food—the film is a gastronomic orgy), which are so dazzling on the gorgeous Blu-ray that the film is a feast for the eyes from start to finish. The miniseries effectively addresses the friendships that the Queen formed and the movie just sort of takes those bonds for granted, but the emotional ride that Dunst's character experiences is still adeptly communicated and forms the heart of the narrative. The musical score ranges from Jean-Philippe Rameau to Bow Wow Wow, underscoring the intention of the film to be an evocative portrait not beholden to detailed accuracy. Along with telling an abridged but viable story from history, Coppola conveys the essence of what the lives of the characters were like—the luxury, the abstract rules and protocols of the court, and the suggestion that perhaps these things had reached their apex and it was therefore inevitable that the structure would crumble.

The film does not start up where it left off if playback is terminated. There is a stray speckle here and there, but the hues are precise and, letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1, the image is finely detailed and absolutely gorgeous. The 5.1-channel DTS sound is terrific, with an engaging dimensionality that is particularly effective at the end, when Coppola makes use of the environmental noises as an economical way to convey that a revolution is going on beyond the view of the characters. There does not appear to be any captioning and there is no subtitled. The disc's awkward Special Features menu forces the viewer to stop and restart the disc after each selection concludes. There are two interesting deleted scenes that run a total of 4 minutes, an excellent 26-minute production featurette with lots of interviews (including Sofia's father) and an amusing 4-minute tour of the location hosted by Schwartzman in costume.

Eschewing a grander view of events for the minutiae of a single experience, Benoit Jacquot's engaging 2012 **Farewell, My Queen** (*Les Adieux à la Reine*), available on Blu-ray from Cohen Media Group and eOne Entertainment (UPC#741952738190, \$30), focuses on just the few days after the fall of the Bastille as it examines the confusion and panic in Versailles through the eyes of one of Antoinette's low level employees, played by Léa Seydoux, whose job is to read books to the queen (among other things, the film is a fascinating look at the genuine analog version of where today's automated 'smart' homes are heading). She does do a little reading, but she is also asked to run other errands (such as contacting the queen's female mistress), as the queen's focus and attention deteriorate. Played by Diane Kruger, the queen is still youthful, but she is rapidly aging both physically and emotionally while the world crumbles around her. Jacquot often utilizes long takes with hidden edits to depict Seydoux's character wandering in and out of the chaos. Although it is not necessary to have seen the other programs beforehand, the familiarity with names, places, secondary characters and the court dynamics that such experience enables enhances the film's entertainment significantly. Running 99 minutes, the film is a very compelling look at how artificial and fragile the court had become once the impetus of power was removed from it (like paper maché around a then deflated balloon), and what remained of the humanity in those who depended upon it.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1. The color transfer is solid and fleshtones are accurate. The film does take advantage of the original locations to impart glimpses of luxury, but it is more about the grimy backrooms and hallways that only the servants ever see. The 5.1-channel DTS sound has a satisfying dimensionality and delicate tones. The film is in French with optional English subtitles, and comes with a trailer, 22 minutes of terrific interviews with Jacquot and members of the cast on the film's set, and a

very good 20-minute interview with Jacquot about the film's creation.

Another week's relaxation

With each season, the format itself becomes more addicting on the marvelous HBO dramatic travel series, **The White Lotus**. Each season is about a week's stay at a high-end resort chain that has locations all around the world. With seven or eight episodes apiece, each episode represents a day (except when it takes two episodes to cover a full day), beginning in the morning with the resort workers tidying things up for the day and concluding late at night as the last of the characters drifts into slumber. The first episode always has a glimpse of some sort of disaster that occurs in the final episode before jumping back to then building up to it over the subsequent episodes. There are new characters each season—yeah, in a way, the show can trace its roots back to a cross between *The Love Boat* and *Fantasy Island*, but with more serious consequences—and it is not necessary to have seen previous seasons if for some reason you want to just jump into the latest one. Although one or two characters are carried over from one season to the next, enough references are included to understand what is going on if you are unfamiliar with them. Meanwhile, more and more, it is the excitement of the show itself, adapting its music to the season's locale and providing luscious inserts of exotic sights, that pulls you in at the beginning and captivates you until the characters have a day or two to really show themselves. It is just like traveling itself, where you arrive, unwind and take your time before you really begin to understand the new atmosphere you have entered.

We reviewed the first two seasons in Oct 22 and Jul 25. **The White Lotus The Complete Third Season**, released by HBO Home Box Office and SDS Studio Distribution Services as an *HBO Original* three-platter DVD set (UPC#883929838455, \$25), originally broadcast in 2025, is set on an island in Thailand (although there are visits to Bangkok and elsewhere). There are three sets of vacationers—a couple and their three college-age children, three females including a film star who were childhood friends, and a man and his younger but devoted girlfriend arranging to meet an important Thai businessman—as well as two sets of staff—a gate security man who starts dating a spa worker, and an employee character from the first season who is on a complimentary visit to study how the spa services are set up. Now you could count us in under any circumstances since the cast includes both Walton Goggins and Parker Posey—they are both every bit as magnetically enjoyable as one would expect—but while the season has less humor than the previous seasons, and more than one story is rather anxiety-inducing, the stories gradually build to several terrific crescendos entirely because the interwoven narratives have had room to gradually explore and embellish the characters and their conflicts while you enjoy the scenery and get to know them. And in the meantime, there is the disc's outstanding 5.1-channel Dolby Digital sound. The sound is practically another character. Taking its cues from the percussion-oriented nature of traditional Thai music, the characters are constantly underscored by quizzical tones, teasing bells and resolute thumps. The environmental sounds of the tropics are also ever present. The sounds and musical instruments come from every direction and make every moment of the program a delight, even when the camera is simply staring at an empty hallway. Whatever stress the characters initiate is countered by the show's escapist atmosphere.

An elderly Scott Glenn makes a brief but gutsy appearance near the end. Carrie Coon, Michelle Monaghan, Aimee Lou Wood (who has kind of a Shelley Duvall thing going), Jason Isaacs (with an oddball accent for a character whose grandfather was supposedly the governor of North Carolina), Sarah Catherine Hook, Patrick Schwarzenegger and Natasha Rothwell are also featured. One sequence includes topical political conversations that are intended to enrich an understanding of the characters but may be interpreted as ridicule. If you are disturbed by snakes, watch out for the final act in the third episode.

The eight episodes run a total of 514 minutes. Each platter has a 'Play All' option, and the chapter encoding takes you reliably past the opening credits. The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1 and an accommodation for enhanced 16:9 playback. The image is a little soft at times, particularly in lower light situations, but colors are fresh and fleshtones are accurate. There are optional English subtitles. Curiously, the occasional passages of dialog between the Thai characters are supported by permanent English subtitles, with an outline of Thai writing beneath the lettering. Also featured are 41 minutes of interviews with the cast talking about their characters and themselves, a 5-minute interview with creator Mike White talking about the characters, 6 minutes about the location and Thai culture, and a 3-minute piece on the costumes.

The new Matlock

A primetime network TV series is different than a streaming series. The idea behind the streaming series is closest in similarity to a soap opera, presenting a continuing narrative that encourages viewers to watch it sequentially and in bulk, if possible. Network TV, however, began by presenting individual playlets with concurrent and therefore familiar characters. Once a viewer began watching the series, a specific episode could be missed without harm, or if one was desperate, caught during the summertime repeat broadcast. When continuing narratives eventually began to creep into primetime, there was still a concerted effort to enable each episode to stand on its own, and to advance the narrative in such a way that an episode or two could be missed without harm. That is the strategy being used by the very enjoyable 2024-2025 CBS Studios and Paramount series released on a five-platter DVD, **Matlock Season One** (UPC# 840418327050, \$33).

The less said about the continuing narrative, which is revealed in the immensely clever *Pilot* episode, the better. Kathy Bates plays a retired lawyer who applies to work at a fancy New York law firm and manages to land the position because of both her law experience and her people skills. Like the first episode, where a convict sues the NYPD for knowingly ignoring evidence several decades earlier, each subsequent episode features a case of some sort in which the heroes usually represent an underdog against greater forces, even though the firm she is working for is one of those greater forces. When she is representing an apparent corporate entity, such as the pharmaceutical company being sued by test subjects in a test gone awry in the show's cute Christmas episode, *Belly of the Beast*, there turns out to be a greater villain involved. The court cases are brief and breathless, however, since each 43-minute episode runs just 42 minutes before the closing credits and must squeeze in not only the case of the day, but an advancement of the continuing narrative, the opening recap and innumerable flashbacks (which tend to accumulate as the season advances) that explain for the uninitiated why certain things are happening. In other words, a viewer can step into a later episode and still be up to speed enough to enjoy the humor and the court story and, hopefully, get hooked on the greater narrative.

Bates is wonderful. The show has lots of old people jokes, but her character works with two younger hotshots just starting out, played by David Del Rio and Leah Lewis, and there is humor in their bickering and competition as well. Beau Bridges plays the head of the firm, Jason Ritter is his son and Skye P. Marshall plays his daughter in law, the immediate boss of Bates's character. Julie Haggerty shows up in a couple of the later episodes in a very witty part. While the initial episodes may seem superficial, once you understand the motivation of Bates's character and her vulnerabilities, then when a case brings out her own buried emotions, the moments are exceptionally powerful thanks to her performance. As the season nears its conclusion, the last half dozen or so episodes really ramp up the continuing narrative and it becomes especially exciting, although beware—the final episode has serious cliffhangers for each of the four central characters (played by Bates, Marshall, Del Rio and Lewis), and while there is important advancement in the story, nothing is resolved.

Each platter has a 'Play All' option. The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1. The image is always sharp and colors are fresh. The 5.1-channel Dolby Digital sound has a basic dimensionality and is functional. There are optional English subtitles, 3 minutes of deleted scenes that can be found by selecting the individual episodes rather than the 'Play All' option, and a cute 3-minute blooper reel.

For the record, the case in the second episode, *Rome, In a Day*, is about a mentally limited boy accused of murdering a girl behind a deli. *A Guy Named Greg* involves a sexual harassment suit, and in *The Rabbit and the Hawk*, a landlord corporation settles with the husband of a woman who died because of their neglect, but then declares bankruptcy, and to make matters more complicated, different lawyers in the firm represent both sides of the case. On the second platter, in the fifth episode, *Claws*, the witness in a suit against a prison has a drug addiction relapse, bringing out bad memories for Bates character, so that she almost quits during the next episode, *Sixteen Steps*, in a retrial involving contaminated baby formula. The excellent *Belly of the Beast* is next, followed by *No, No Monsters*, in which a nanny is fired because of photos taken out of context that are posted on the Internet, and the mystery concerns discovering who posted them.

In the opening episode on the next platter, *Friends*, a pregnant delivery worker is fired after her truck is stolen. In the tenth episode, *Crash Helmets On*, there are two cases, an elderly man being evicted by his coop board for noise, and a nursing home being sued because one of their patients died unattended of a stroke. In *A Traitor in Thine Own House*, a tech firm is suing a rival over apparent corporate espionage. The ending of the twelfth episode *This Is That Moment*, does not really resolve the core emotional impetus for the conflict, involving the custody of a Hispanic child, but that is likely because there just isn't enough time to fit it in.

It is with the thirteenth episode, *Pregame*, opening the fourth platter, that the story really begins to rev up, beginning with the death of a coed at a sorority party because another girl spiked her drink. There are also a number of amusing sequences involving the celebration of Easter and 'Family Day' at the office, but the episode leads into *Game Day* and then *Game Face* (which has a terrific cliffhanger of its own), where the heroes sue the company that made the spiked drink. In the sixteenth episode, *The Johnson Case*, they manage to clear a convict who has been incarcerated for murder. The fifth platter opens with *I Was That, Too*, in which the heroes have to get a pregnant woman an emergency divorce from her abusive husband before the child is born. The last two episodes are a two-parter, *Tricks of the Trade*, about a fighter who accidentally kills his partner in a gym ownership, during an altercation.

Is You Is or Is You Ain't? With Baby

The first season of **You** (Jun 20) was set in New York City and captured the youthful zeitgeist of the dating scene with ironic perfection as it followed the adventures of a serial stalker played by Penn Badgley. **You Second Season** (Mar 21) moved to Los Angeles, but otherwise picked up the spirit of the first season with exquisite advancement, bringing it to a brilliantly joyful conclusion that made the two seasons together a perversely perfect, complete narrative experience.

Now it is hard to talk about any season of **You** without undermining the previous seasons of their inherent, inevitable and nevertheless exhilarating

surprises, so we will do our best in navigating the two-platter Netflix Warner Bros. DVD release of **You The Complete Third Season** (UPC#883929799572, \$25) without spoiling either it or the previous seasons. The 2021 **Third Season** relocates to a suburb of San Francisco, where Badgley's character has moved with his bride, played by Saffron Burrows, and infant. His expertise, other than stalking, is restoring rare books, and his wife's is baking. She opens a local bakery catering to the community's high tech and startup population base, while he finds employment at the local library. Yes, **You** has followed the zeitgeist of the generation it was tracking to their latest ensconcement, but the suburbs have long been a target for resentful satire, essentially because sacrificing the freedoms of bachelorhood for the chains of family responsibility has long endured the brunt of mocking humor along with its many other indignities. In any case, while **Third Season** does not quite achieve the same subversive thrills that the combined brilliance of the first two seasons delivered, the story still holds many genuine and delightful surprises. Like the previous seasons, Badgley's voiceover narration is nearly constant (there are times when the story switches over to the experiences of Burrows's character, and now and then, her voiceover kicks in), creating what comes close to a radio play with engaging visuals. The season is not just snarking the suburbs, it is taking a direct aim at marriage itself, and while it may seem to go overboard at the point where Badgley and Burrows's characters, hoping to spice up their relationship, agree to a foursome with another couple, that is only necessary to set the final act of the plot in motion, as what might have been an ideal happily ever after all starts falling apart. The finale is lively and segues into an intriguing although less surprising teaser for the season to come.

Ten episodes are spread across the two platters running a total of 489 minutes. Each platter has a 'Play All' option, and there are optional English subtitles. The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2:1. Although there are many sequences set in semi-darkness, the picture is sharp and clear, and colors are solid. The 5.1-channel Dolby Digital sound has a moderate dimensionality. There are optional English subtitles.

If for whatever reason **Third Season** begins to feel a little redundant or less interesting than the previous two seasons, there is no reason to abandon it, especially since you need at least some of its context in order to appreciate the outstanding **You The Complete Fourth Season**, a three-platter Warner DVD set (UPC#883929838585, \$25). The dizzying narrative holds one fantastic surprise after another and contains so many wonderful red herrings that even the supposed public service warning at the beginning of the final episode turns out to be valid, yes, but misleading nevertheless. Set in London and in the English countryside, there is no longer a concern for tapping the pulse of popular culture as Badgley's character begins schmoozing with a group of extremely wealthy youngish adults. For a while, the show even embraces the concept of the classic whodunit, partly in celebration of its locale and partly because one of the appeals of the season is that while not changing anything on one level, the story remakes itself over and over again, several times. Like satirizing the suburbs, satirizing the wealthy is easy, but that just gives the show a viable milieu. The plot turns are euphoric, and yet fortunately, the one thing the series does not abandon with its altered format is romance, which is embraced as wholeheartedly as its darker crimes. We are dying to say more, but it is much more exhilarating to discover it for yourself.

The ten episodes are spread to three platters and run a total of 481 minutes. The letterboxing, sound and subtitling are the same as **Third Season**. The image quality is again fine, although darker scenes look a little soft at times.

Cathartic crime thriller

The home video equivalent of a great summer read, just start out early on a quiet, sultry day, put on the wonderful two-platter eight-episode 415-minute HBO Home Entertainment crime thriller DVD, **Sharp Objects** (UPC#88392982-9538, \$25), and spend the day in transcendent murder mystery bliss, with a Southern gothic chaser. Amy Adams delivers a gutsy performance as a functional alcoholic newspaper reporter from St. Louis who is sent to the small rural Missouri town where she grew up, to cover the disappearances and subsequent murders of a couple of young girls. Patricia Clarkson, who is a delight every moment she is on the screen, plays her estranged mother, the queen belle of the town (she owns the town's only industry, a hog slaughterhouse), and Adams's character stays at home while she is there, with her mother, her stepfather and her stepsister. Hence, with the crime investigation percolating in the background (as the editor tells Adams's character, it is not up to her to solve the crimes, just to tell the story of how the town is coping with them), the 2018 show can explore family history and suppressed resentments, the town's social and economic dynamics, the split between the kids in the town and their parents (and how it mirrors her own experience) and many other intricate and captivating details, with Adams's character scraping some of the dirt from under every fingernail that comes near her. The conclusion is so cathartic we ended up watching it twice (and don't turn off the show when you reach the end credits, because there is another montage buried in them that you will want to still-step through). That is the advantage and one of the supreme accomplishments of the cable limited series format, that it can take a novel such as this one from author Gillian Flynn, and truly do it the justice it deserves without being abridged to a theatrical running time. You just need to spend longer to get through it, but then the payoff in atmosphere, narrative, character, intrigue and emotion is exponentially advanced by the extended running time, especially when you get so wrapped up in it you don't want to take a break.

Each platter has a 'Play All' option. The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1 and an accommodation for enhanced 16:9 playback. The chapter encoding takes you reliably past the opening credits. The image is sharp and colors are accurate, conveying an engrossing sense of immediacy in each shot that further pulls the viewer into the story's world. The 5.1-channel Dolby Digital sound has many pleasing directional effects, and somehow the producers managed to land a couple of Led Zeppelin tunes. There are alternate French and Spanish audio tracks, optional English, French, Spanish and Chinese subtitles, and a decent 5-minute featurette about the show's locations and atmosphere.

Lighthearted murder

Not to be confused with the very serious and gritty BBC police drama, *Happy Valley* (Jul 25), the 2025 BBC **Death Valley**, a two-platter Warner BBC Video DVD (UPC#883929838653, \$30), is a lighthearted episodic murder mystery comedy. Even Hong Kong film experts, Mike Leeder and Arne Venema, on **Martial Law Lo Wei's Wuxia World** (Sep 25) during their commentary for the 1968 martial arts feature, *Death Valley*, in a digression concerning other programs with the same title, take a moment to express their delight with the series. The wonderful Timothy Spall stars as a retired television crime detective trying to live obscurely in a small town in Wales, who finds himself, in the first episode, to be the neighbor of a disliked land developer who was murdered in his office. The investigating detective, played by Gwyneth Keyworth, an enormous fan of the show from her childhood, finds that the skills of Spall's character as an actor, at recognizing 'inconsistencies in character,' are enormously helpful at sussing out liars and suspects, which coupled with his skills at pretense, make him an ideal partner, provided she keeps the arrangement a secret from her supervisor.

In the second episode, a woman from a hiking group is found at the bottom of a waterfall and someone in the group is likely responsible, so the heroes go undercover to join them for their 'memorial walk' along the same path. Not only is there mystery in sorting out the characters and their lies, but the vistas of the Welsh wilderness are gorgeous. In the third episode, the body of the best man at a wedding is found behind the church.

In the fourth episode, there is a murder in a local theater group during the rehearsal of *Hamlet*, so Spall's character offers takes the place of the victim and play Claudius. Along with a passable mystery, the episode provides a very nice exploration of theater from the inside. Nevertheless, the series was starting to feel a bit stale, but the fifth episode turns out to be the best of all. It involves another 'theater' death, this time at a 'dinner murder mystery' mansion venue, where the detective in the act is actually murdered. Spall's character goes to help the sister of the victim, whom he knew previously, and then there is a bad rainstorm and all of the suspects have to stay in the mansion overnight. The piece is laugh aloud funny, particularly when one guest can never be persuaded that everything happening is all still not just an act. It is delightful from beginning to end. In the sixth episode, Spall's character finally becomes an official consultant, assisting in the investigation of a murder at a class reunion that appears to have links with an unsolved murder where a body of a Dutch tourist was found in a roadside drain. There is also a very cute cliffhanger.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1 and an accommodation for enhanced 16:9 playback. Each episode runs 47 minutes and each platter has a 'Play All' option. There are optional English subtitles and 17 minutes of nice promotional featurettes.

Keaton on TV

The everlastingly funny execution of basic, brilliant comedy is on display in the terrific two-platter Blu-ray set from Liberation Hall, **The Buster Keaton Show** (UPC#810177214625, \$30). The episodes come from the earliest days of television (we are continually amazed at how older TV shows lacked a consistent opening credit sequence, its very format changing from one episode to the next) and include two restored kinescopes from February of 1950 that were recorded in front of a smallish live audience for broadcast in Los Angeles and have never been disseminated before, and then seven episodes produced by Consolidated Television Productions that were recorded in 1951 on film without a laugh track. There are also some very choice extras.

While the episodes have the advantage of sound, they also call forth Keaton's incredible skills as a visual comedian, and sort of straddle the traditions of vaudeville skits and silent features, although they are most similar to the live action comedy shorts that the studios would produce as program filler before television undercut the economics of their creation. All of the programs and extras are in a squared full screen format and have monophonic sound that is in reasonably workable condition with just a little background noise and minimal distortion. There is no captioning or subtitling. The filmed episodes from 1951 look absolutely fantastic. The images are crisp and finely detailed. There are a couple of thin vertical lines running through one or two of them, and a handful of splices, but otherwise, they are spotless. The two 1950 episodes have the slightly smeared edges one associates with kinescopes, but actually look quite decent, and what impediments there never interfere with the humor.

The 1950 episodes appear on the second platter with two of the 1951 episodes. What is inexplicably identified as a 'pilot' episode appears at the end of the first platter and does not in any way feel like a pilot episode, as it works on situations that were established in the previous episodes. In any case, we are reporting upon them as they are presented on the two platters. Most of the 1951 episodes are set in a sporting goods store where Keaton's character, who is

named, 'Buster Keaton,' works as a fumbling clerk, his character ever at war with objects and decorations in the physical world. The strongest humor comes from the unexpected disasters that compile upon the expected disasters. While the series is in some ways a very dated record of how TV was just starting to find its way as an entertainment medium (see our remarks above about the opening credits), it is also a precious and captivating record of Keaton's superb skills as a comedian, and how, time and time again, he could, in an instant, turn a bland or tiresome situation that is straining for laughs into one riotously funny moment after another.

The opening episode on the first platter begins with Margaret Dumont in a guest starring role as a customer who wishes to purchase a riding outfit. There is plenty of amusing business between the two of them, but it reaches a crescendo when he has to put on and take off her boots. It may be a classic bit, but it is being performed by two masters of their craft, and the result is mesmerizing. It is comedy at its purest. That is followed by another very funny sequence in which he tries to persuade her to 'practice' on a mechanical horse. In the second half of the episode, looking to better himself, he goes to a fortune teller, which is a great vaudeville bit, and then visits a bakery he is thinking about buying, which leads to a great skit of him battling a sticky mound of dough.

In a rush to make an appointment at lunchtime, Keaton's character must first show a customer how to play golf to inevitable results in the next episode. Afterward, he finally goes to the cramped office of a theater he wants to open. There are a number of great gags about the cramped space, and then a very funny bit in which he tries to break a piggy bank against a wall, followed by an extended sequence where he and a partner attempt to paste up a large outdoor billboard promoting the theater, a lengthy essentially silent slapstick routine with some very funny moments. Most of the episodes run 26 minutes, but this one stretches to 27.

The next episode is pretty much one entire skit, closer to an actual episode-length narrative. It begins in the sporting goods store, where adventurers ask for supplies, including a raft. He blows one up, but has trouble when darts fall on it. Then the story cuts to him in Africa on the adventure, where he eventually meets a gorilla with a British accent and plays table tennis with him. Despite the use of black actors as natives, performing a dance for him, it is a cute concoction.

After an amusing bit in which he tries to stack bowling balls for a display in the next episode, he goes to get his drivers license but because there is a mix up with the signs on the door, he ends up enlisting in the Army instead. The piece has many classic boot camp comedy routines. The best moment is when he is placed on guard duty and KP duty at the same time, and so he peels potatoes with his bayonet while marching back and forth in front of an entrance.

The final episode on the platter is one of the best. In the first part, he attempts to put up a tent in the store, causing trouble with a pair of customers who turn out to be genuine professional wrestlers, 'Great Scott' and 'Lord Bear.' This leads to Keaton and a fellow clerk facing off against them in an amusing tag team match at a local auditorium. The episode runs 25 minutes.

The second platter opens with a cute episode set in the old West, as Keaton tells the story in flashback to a nephew. Set in a saloon, at one point his holster has no gun in it, so a girl hands him a derringer and he drops it in the holster, and then can't get to it once it is in there. There are lots of amusing card game gags and shoot out gags, and Dub Taylor is one of the supporting players.

The last 1951 episode, however, is the weakest, as he dreams about being a detective, sent to a bar to hand off a bird statuette for a client. There are a couple of Marx Bros. gags, and some surreal effects with the dream, but the comedy is limited and the story is too convoluted to gel. The episode runs 27 minutes.

The two live 1950 pieces sponsored by Studebaker (with its attractive, aerodynamic design! Not.) are outstanding. Keaton still plays himself but each episode is an extended, self-contained skit, compiling gag upon gag with great abundance. In the first half of the first episode, which runs 27 minutes, he is in a gym and works out with different pieces of equipment, so that you are eventually laughing in anticipation before he even gets around to touching them, and then, after the commercial, a boxing ring is set up and he has a sparring match with a guy who is mad at him from the previous act. At one point his assistant, adjusting his glove, accidentally ties it onto one of the ring ropes. That the entire episode is being executed live, including all of the boxing (at one point Keaton tries to ring the bell and it doesn't ring, but they pretend it does, anyway), is both amazing and adds to the humor. There is also a fantastic meta gag, where the audience is laughing because they can see trick being done while the viewer only sees the humor of the result, where regardless of how Keaton's character throws a basketball at a hoop, it always drops through.

The second live episode, which runs 31 minutes, is even better. Keaton and his sister, Louise (playing his wife), arrive at a hotel room on New Years Eve, and proceed to work their way through dozens of gags about getting dressed as maids and bellhops come and go. In the second half, they are in an inebriated state and trying to get undressed. It feels like it must have taken weeks to rehearse, and every perfectly timed gag is wonderful.

Also featured on the platter is a 7-minute reworking of the billboard skit on a 1957 show entitled *Circus Time*; two of Keaton's best shorts presented with poor transfers, the 1922 *Cops* (Aug 00) running 18 minutes and the 1921 *The Goat* (Aug 00) running 19 minutes; and a 1957 episode about Keaton on the gloriously teary biographical TV series hosted by Ralph Edwards, *This Is Your Life*, shot in front a live audience (the image quality is excellent; don't miss the

technician desperately and almost comically trying to stay out of the camera's view in the opening shot) and running 29 minutes with commercials for Crest and Prell, and featuring guest appearances by Louise Dresser, Donald Crisp, Red Skelton and Donald O'Connor (the episode was also promoting the 1957 biographical Paramount film in which O'Connor plays Keaton).

Finally, there is an astounding 16-minute conversation between Keaton, Bert Lahr and Eddie Foy, Jr. on a TV talk show, *Closeup*, in which they legitimately and insightfully analyze the art of comedy, followed by Keaton giving another legitimate and insightful talk on how pie throwing is actually done (for example, they make the pies with two crusts so that pie tins will not complicate the gags).

Fresh Eyre

Many film adaptations have been made of one the greatest English novels, Emily Brontë's **Jane Eyre**, but none are as good as the 2006 PBS *Masterpiece Theater* production (the original show's four parts have been blended into two), which is available as a two-platter DVD from WGBH Boston Video (UPC#783421416192, \$35). It is not just that the program, which runs a total of 228 minutes, has time enough to take on the entire novel instead of just its central conceit, but the dialog throughout the show is spellbinding, particularly as it is performed by the stars, Ruth Wilson and Toby Stephens. Each scene contains terse but insightful comments about human emotion and the dynamics of emotional exchange, and no matter how well you may know the story ahead of time, the show's exploration of its characters is revelatory. You feel with them, and through their conversations, you understand more about life and your own feelings. At the same time, the program is adept at sustaining the story's wonderful, gothic atmosphere, which creates a seemingly impenetrable barrier to its romantic intentions. Wilson's character is hired as a governess for the ward of Stephens's character, but when, after an engaging number of false hopes and disappointments, she not only falls in love with Stephens's character but learns that in no uncertain terms she cannot marry him, she goes off and has another adventure with another broken family, where she almost marries a minister who aspires to become a missionary. It is only after her lengthy stay in that situation that she is able to return to Stephens's character and learn that the conditions preventing their union have been removed. The period setting, the engaging cast (Lorraine Ashbourne, Pam Ferris, Francesca Annis, Rebekah Staton and Cosima Littlewood costar) and the lovely locations are enough to make the show attractive for fans of such classic tales, but the brilliantly conceived (the heroine's last name has multiple homonymic meanings) and enduring narrative, which calls to question the very notion of male entitlement even as it allows the heroine to endorse the same social structure that has frustrated her, creates an enriched romantic drama that remains captivating and stimulating at every turn.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1 and no 16:9 enhancement. The image is a little soft in darker sequences, but colors are bright and fleshtones are accurate. The 5.1-channel Dolby Digital sound has a basic but workable dimensionality. There is no subtitling, but there is closed captioning.

Ends justify the means

Even by the superior standards of British miniseries adaptations of great novels, the four-episode 2017 BBC Starz production of E. M. Forster's **Howard's End** is exceptionally well directed by Hettie MacDonald. Released on a single platter DVD by WGBH and PBS as a *Masterpiece* title (UPC#84-1887043250, \$35), it isn't just that the cinematography is both captivating and clever, capturing London at the Turn of the Century and the beauty of the countryside with its location shooting, but the performances are just amazing. With more overlapping dialog than Howard Hawks or even Robert Altman could ever imagine, the guarded and distracted emotional lives of the characters are brought vividly to life in every scene, turning potentially stogy dialog and off-putting references to the popular culture and political arguments of the day into a whirlwind of realistic conversations and impulsive thoughts. The result is not only delightful, but it gives the story a palpable immediacy. The wonderful plot twists still arise out of the cacophony, but are all the more compelling because they seem to happen unintentionally rather than as a component of an author's master plan. MacDonald's timing and blocking are not just exquisite, they are brilliant, at once compelling a viewer to concentrate on what is happening, creating great and genuine comedy out of the quips and confusions that ensue, and exposing the hesitations and fears of the characters as you watch them think on their feet. Although comical in spirit, as the 229-minute program proceeds, it becomes a bit darker and loses a little bit of its magic, but that is only because it is so invigorating at the beginning. Hayley Atwell, Matthew MacFadyen, Joe Bannister and Bessie Carter star, with Tracey Ullman playing a significant supporting part as a doting aunt. Julia Ormond is also featured.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1 and an accommodation for enhanced 16:9 playback. The color transfer supports the lovely cinematography. The 5.1-channel Dolby Digital sound has a passable dimensionality, and there are optional English subtitles.

The lovely 1992 James Ivory adaptation of **Howard's End**, scripted with Oscar-winning expertise by Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, is available on Blu-ray from The Criterion Collection (UPC#715515051019, \$40). Running a still hefty 142 minutes, the film rushes past the exploration of the characters that makes the first half of the miniseries so delightful, and focuses instead upon the primary story that eventually arises, a relationship between the heroine, here played by Emma Thompson, and a widower played by Anthony Hopkins. Helena Bonham

Carter plays the sister of Thompson's character and is given just enough screen time to enable her major contributions to the plot, but, understandably, not enough to make her feel as central as she does in the miniseries (until the story calls for her to disappear for a while). The family members surrounding Hopkins' character are also less embellished, except for an impressive performance by Vanessa Redgrave as his first wife. It is worth noting, however, how well Jhabvala constructed her tale. The miniseries is so enjoyable at first that when the story turns a bit darker later on, it becomes a little alienating as well, while the feature is paced better to prepare one for the drama that eventually arises. Nevertheless, each version is an admirable and enjoyable rendering of Forster's creation, weaving together a complex and engaging set of characters that reflect the strata of British society and its partial dissolution in the advancement of modern times.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1. Despite a slight touch of grain now and then, the color transfer is beautiful, as is Ivory's eye for the period décor, costumes and locations (the locations make a much stronger impression, however, in the miniseries, since more time is spent exploring them). If we were to quibble with the feature, there are a couple of dramatic sequences that make use of an editing choice—cutting continually to black and back to advance the emotional flow—that just doesn't work, interrupting the mood instead, but the performances, even the often overrated Thompson, are quite good, and the film has a great deal more to admire than to condemn. The DTS sound has a terrific dimensionality and many surround effects. The audio designers are always intensely aware of background noises and distant sounds, and these have a much greater presence on the Blu-ray than they do on the Criterion's two-platter DVD (UPC#715515055314, \$25) and its 5.1-channel Dolby Digital audio. The picture on the DVD has the same color transfer, but the image is noticeably softer and less rigorously detailed.

Both presentations have optional English subtitles. Except for the trailer on the first platter, all of the special features appearing on the BD appear on the second DVD platter. There are 52 minutes of excellent retrospective interviews from 2005 that summarize how the film was made and also capture the wonderful prickly relationship between Ivory and producer Ismail Merchant as they sit together talking about its creation, occasionally disagreeing over a minor point or two. Ivory also talks about his approach to directing at length. "I'm a great one for letting the actors show me what it is they want to do, because they're the ones—each actor is developing his or her part and working it out for themselves. All actors are artists, and they have an idea about what it is they want to do. They analyze the part, they think it through in a way I really think the director can't do. I don't think the director's got the time. It's the actors who really go deeply into their parts, so I think a director who doesn't allow an actor to show him what it is they want to do, what it is they've thought out for themselves, what it is they want to bring to the performance—you don't let them do that, I think it's a terrible thing and a great mistake. Usually, they're making a great gift to you and to the film. I'm not one of those kinds of directors, and I don't know, there may be some who can visualize the whole film from beginning to end, from first frame to last. I mean, there are people who do that. I've never been like that. I don't have a specific idea of how the movie is going to be before I shoot it or before it's edited. It's a thing that just built up as we go along, and when we have all the footage at the end and we're beginning to assemble the film, I'm very surprised sometimes by what comes about, and things that do come about then suggest other things, which, perhaps, you hadn't really planned in that way when you were shooting, but that's part of the joy and the pleasure of being in the editing room for month upon month, that you are fiddling around with the movie and trying this, that and the other." There is also a lovely 12-minute reflection on Merchant by Ivory from 2009 after Merchant had passed away. Finally, there is a 50-minute look at the team's productions up to 1984 that goes into detail about the creation of many of their early films and includes lots of great clips.

Home Vision Entertainment released a two-platter DVD as part of their *The Merchant Ivory Collection* series (UPC#037429198223, \$30), which has the same special features as the Criterion presentation on its second platter. The image transfer is not as nice as the Criterion version. The presentation is serviceable, but the sharpness and richness of the Criterion image, and the clarity of the sound, particularly on the BD, is much better.

Wyatt hits Bottom

We admit we were not overly enthusiastic about Robert Wyatt's 1974 album, *Rock Bottom*, when it first came out. We found it a little dull and aimless (he may or may not have known it, but he was essentially regurgitating what Charles Ives and Virgil Thompson had been doing to choral music several decades earlier, only with a blander 'rock fusion' sound), reinforcing to us the idea that rock and roll was on the wrong track, a belief that would finally be altered a couple of years later with the advent of punk. In any case, a coalition of Polish and Spanish animators, also utilizing the work of animation teams in a number of South American countries and even Ukraine, using hokey rotoscope animation with lots of male and female nudity, intermingled with colorful impressionistic bursts of forms and images and manipulated photographic passages, have put together a cartoon presentation of how Wyatt came to create the album. Since the animation is as mediocre as the music, the program, also called **Rock Bottom** and released on DVD by Cleopatra Entertainment (UPC# 889466456897, \$20), ought to be a bust, but quite the opposite is true. Directed by Maria Trénor, what is lacking in each component—audio, visual and

narrative—is filled by the others and the program becomes the artistic equivalent for two or three wrongs making a right.

The narrative is told partially in flashback, but Wyatt's experiences during the composition of the album, with the artistic license enabled by the cartoon, goes something like this—he was hanging out in Majorca with his girlfriend after breaking up with a band and tooting around on a piano in his rented flat as the two were mainly seeing the sights, swimming, and spending what money they had on getting wasted (the girlfriend was also shooting an avant garde film); he meets a couple of former mates who have recording equipment with them and they record several numbers; since he has otherwise run out of money, he leaves the cash they give him with the girlfriend and flies to New York to record some more, while continuing to get high; he sends a ticket to the girlfriend and she arrives just in time to cause him to panic and accidentally fall off the window ledge of an upper story walk up apartment; he wakes up in a hospital with his girlfriend at his side, no longer having the use of his legs, finishes the album and sobers up. Running 87 minutes, it is a trippy show that reinforces the basic creative energy Wyatt brought to his music while at the same time giving it the counterintuitive context of reality—it wasn't precisely what actually happened, but in spirit it is. And with the music and the narrative providing a foundation, the colorful images can be simplistic or repetitive or barely disguised filmed footage and they enliven the other components without competition or distraction. Not only is it an enjoyable experience, the animation is detailed enough that the program becomes an enjoyment open to many repeat visits.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1 and an accommodation for enhanced 16:9 playback. Some of the colors are by nature soft and blurry, but they will be followed by an animated passage that is sharp and solid, so that one assumes the transfer is accurate. The 5.1-channel Dolby Digital sound does not have much power, but it is consistently dimensional. There are optional English subtitles, a 3-minute montage of images from the film and a trailer.

End of the line

Remember French science-fiction movies in the Eighties? Lots of neon and fluorescent paint, ambisexual people with bizarre hairdos and makeup, vague and innocuous dialog placed over a lackadaisical plot that uses existentialism as an excuse for its aimlessness? Well, one such feature, the 1986 **Terminus**, has been resurrected in a fairly nice collector's edition on an MVDVisual *MVD Rewind Collection* Blu-ray (UPC#760137147954, \$40). Directed by Pierre-William Glenn, the film opens wonderfully, with Karen Allen driving a very cool-looking souped up bus that is being chased by smaller, cool-looking trucks. Unfortunately, she is replaced after the first half-hour by Johnny Halladay, and never seen again. Jürgen Prochnow has three different supporting roles. Now Halladay is sort of cool, sure, but Allen is a revelation, and clearly ahead of her time as a genuine female action star, not just the damsel in distress she had to play for others. It is a shame she and Halladay couldn't have swapped roles. Anyway, the film is trying to cash in on **Road Warrior** and that is where its best moments come from, with the bus crashing through buildings and other trucks, but that comprises very little of the movie's running time, which is taken up mostly by oddball characters sitting at primitive computer screens (the nostalgic aspect of the hardware on display cannot be discounted) connected by elaborate tubing, giving Halladay's character advice and monitoring his progress. Other weirdos send out the villain trucks to stop him. There is also another large truck that turns out to have a bunch of large, icky, partially grown fetuses in big beakers in its container. The film is poorly directed, without enough coverage for the action scenes or other key moments. The entire endeavor is motion picture gibberish, but the point of it is to be eccentric and different, and that is what it succeeds at being.

Two different versions of the film are included. The *European Director's Cut*, in French with optional English subtitles, runs 116 minutes. The picture has an aspect ratio of about 1.66:1. The colors are very fresh and fleshtones, when real, are finely detailed. Glowing hues are stable and the image is free of impediments. It looks terrific. The Dolby Stereo sound has a token dimensionality and is adequately delivered. Allen's voice is dubbed.

The *U.S. Version* is in English, with Allen's original voice (but not Halladay's—Prochnow's voice is on both versions), and runs 84 minutes. The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1. The image has steady speckling. Hues are workable but nowhere near as fresh as they are on the *Director's Cut*, and the image is softer. There are optional English subtitles. The stereo sound is actually a little stronger with more pronounced separations than on *Director's Cut*. Since the story is streamlined while retaining most of the action scenes and canning the most obnoxious esoterica (and diminishing the DayGlo), and the dubbing tries to clear up the some of the ambiguities in the plot, *U.S. Version* is pretty much the preferred version unless you are exceptionally high. Although still fairly obnoxious, it is less incoherent.

Also featured is a trailer, a nice 3-minute montage of memorabilia, a great 16-minute interview with Prochnow talking about his career (with lots of clips & photos) and about the film (he suggests that his characters are clones of one another), and an excellent 49-minute retrospective documentary that explains the film's meanings and history, intercutting the childhood memories of Glenn's son, Vincent, and his daughter, Julie (who, as a child, also had a major part in the film), as they talk about what went into the production, and how badly it affected their father's life when it was a flop. Vincent is especially thoughtful in

assessing the film's quality from a personal perspective. "At the time, I was both fascinated when the film was released, by the energy, and at the same time I was skeptical that it was a good film. And especially when it's a public failure, at some point you have to accept that it doesn't work. So there was this thing of an ambiguity, almost a conflict of loyalties. I felt I had to support all these efforts, all this time-consuming implementation, and then, on the other hand, a feeling of a cinema that was still once again cold, lacking in feeling and emotion, and rather limited by a dimension that is too rational, too cerebral."

Barr and the The Planet of the Apes

Sitting in an armchair in some sort of den, Roseanne Barr works her way chronologically through her life in a stream-of-consciousness autobiographical spiel that is presented on the Highway Entertainment DVD, **Roseanne Barr ★Is★ America** (UPC#760137177937, \$15). Her talk is interspersed with a wealth of clips, from home movies to broadcast archives and running 91 minutes, the program is a viable profile not only of Barr but, as the program's title implies (though perhaps not with the same purpose), a profile of the gradual social disintegration in America that has counterintuitively accompanied the rise of connectivity. Her early stories about her life growing up (her family was Jewish and lived in Salt Lake City) are fascinating, and her rise to success as a comedienne has an inevitable appeal. It also seems entirely believable, based upon how film and TV companies have conducted themselves in other situations, that while they cashed in on her talent, they missed opportunities by not giving her more involvement in the creative aspects of her hit TV show, especially when it came to including the sympathetic mixed-race characters she wanted to incorporate. It is something she speaks of with an understandable resentment.

The best comedians are always testing the thoughts that flow through their heads, trying them out on audiences big and small. Some become completely absorbed by that process. The development of the Internet and social media brought a megaphone to Barr's raw ideas, and she was unprepared for the magnified response she would receive. The 1972 *Conquest of the Planet of the Apes* (Sep 00) ought to be talked about more often in this day and age, because it presented an easy to understand and digest depiction of how a functional totalitarian government can be overlaid upon a formerly democratic society. When Barr in 2018 referenced a political figure with partial African heritage and referred to the figure as an 'ape,' she has claimed repeatedly that it was **Planet of the Apes**—but, obviously, *Conquest of the Planet of the Apes*—that she was referencing. She suggests, "Liberals in Hollywood are so racist that when they hear the word, 'ape,' they automatically think of a black person," and she believes that she was being censored when she was fired from her show and lost her contract with the TV network because of her original 'ape' comment. The remainder of the documentary is about the split that the reaction to her comment created, which indeed mirrored a political split to extremes that the entire country was undergoing. At one point, she ran for president, as comedians sometimes do, and she recognized, well before others did, how a comedian's skills can speak persuasively to a populace, although she never really acknowledges the difference between campaigning and governing. The irony in all of this is to return to *Conquest of the Planet of the Apes*, which she felt represented the oppression she was experiencing, and to ask if that film's messages were more pertinent before 2018 or afterward.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1 and an accommodation for enhanced 16:9 playback. The colors are fresh and most of the clips are in good shape, but the image is soft now and then. The Dolby Digital sound has an occasionally dimensional background score but is mostly centered. There is no captioning.

Softcore nostalgia

A softcore exploitation feature from 1972, **Class of '74**, has been given a caring image transfer by Allied Vaughn Entertainment and Film Masters as an *Archive Collection Limited Edition* (UPC#840418326916, \$26). Letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1, the picture quality is at the mercy of the cinematography, but it is strikingly fresh and sharp, bringing a vivid immediacy to scenes with controlled lighting, a viable replication of sequences with less dependable lighting, and even a smooth and richly colored rendition of the Los Angeles nightlife street inserts. The monophonic sound is often a little raspy, but is otherwise reasonably solid. There are optional English subtitles.

Shot around Santa Monica and Malibu, and on the USC campus, the film was directed by Arthur Marks, but utilizes sequences from a hardcore feature directed by Mack Bing, intercutting that footage with conversations between college coeds about love and relationships. There is never a sense that the footage doesn't belong with the film, but the narrative takes on a disorienting stream of flashbacks within flashbacks to account for everything. There is topless nudity and sensuality (notably, a very lengthy and erotic kissing scene), but there is mostly just talking about being 'free' and enjoying love. The dialog is from the previous decade (they use 'ball' as a verb, a distinct demarcation between adults and youths of the time) and there is no real sense of how college kids in 1972 were actually reacting to the clashing cultures surrounding them—and the actresses are noticeably older than the actual students behind them—but the general spirit of the film is in keeping with the drive-in movies of the day that were promoting the new generation's uninhibited explorations. Although it is almost entirely talk, there is also a gay male scene. The film will be of interest to exploitation nostalgia enthusiasts, and the 81-minute running time wraps things up before tedium can set in, but its accomplishments are limited. Marki Bey,

who would go on to be the title character in **Sugar Hill** (Sep 15), Pat Woodell, who'd had a major role in *Petticoat Junction* and Sandra Currie are featured, along with star Barbara Caron.

Exploitation film maven Heath Holland supplies a decent commentary track, duly noting that the filmmakers had previously been involved in TV productions in the Fifties and Sixties (Marks had been a primary showrunner on **Perry Mason**) and were indeed from a different generation than the one they were depicting. He goes over as much as can be known about the production, and he unravels the narrative while pointing out as best he can what was shot in 1970 for the porn film and what was shot in 1971 for the feature. He also talks about every member of the cast he can identify, and he analyses how the film was intended for drive-ins, but is more that just another sex farce. "She's telling her where she comes from, who she is, what she wants. She's motivated to use her relationship to acquire the nice things in life. It's not about love, it's about leveraging affections into a lifestyle. And that's the era we're in. And that's what the challenging themes of this movie are saying. You've got to use your body, you've got to use your sexuality to get what you want from men. It's an aggressive feminism, or is it, or is it? I'll leave that up to you."

Class of '74 was indeed designed for the distracted attention of drive-in film viewing, with its emphasis on dialog and its ambling narrative. The 1992 **Bikini Carwash Company** was designed for videotape rental, sporting a comical burlesque narrative—a young man is running his uncle's carwash in Los Angeles during the summer, and juices up sales by employing girls in skimpy bikinis until a district attorney tries to shut the place down—and endless montages of topless frolicking (and a few couplings) set to a bland rock score. You could fast forward if you wanted to, or not. The film is included in an MVDVisual *MVD Rewind Collection* single-platter Blu-ray, billed as a *Bubble Feature*, **The Bikini Carwash Company I & II** (UPC#760137169994, \$25; in very small print, the production year for the first film is misidentified on the jacket as 1998). Running 81 minutes, there really isn't much more to the story than that. There are slapstick sequences mixed in with the nudity montages, and the acting skills of the cast are rather limited. Directed by Ed Hansen, Joe Dusic stars with Kristi Ducati, Neriah Napaul and Suzanne Brownie.

Although bright colors are fuzzy at times, fleshtones on the squared full screen picture are accurate and the image often errs in the other direction, looking so sharp that lines sometimes have outlines along side of them. The periodically energetic sound is technically stereophonic but is generally centered.

Holland is joined for a commentary track by Eighties exploitation director Jim Wynorski, who came in to do a small roll in the film and ended up being put in charge of shooting the montages. "The script was incredibly short and when they got done, they needed this footage. This footage, all my stuff here, is helping them make 80 minutes." He describes what he remembers of the entire production (blankets were put up around the carwash to hide the week-long shoot, but they only made people more curious and caused traffic jams) and the cast members, while Holland weighs in with more information about the participants and the film's history. Wynorski also talks extensively about his own career, and he mentions that the market has dropped out of the softcore business, so he is obligated not to include nudity in his more recent films.

Ducati, Napaul and Brownie return in *II*. They lose control of their carwashes and rent a TV network for a week to get the money to buy them back, broadcasting lingerie promotions with topless sequences set to music. Running 94 minutes, the story has moderate momentum, the acting is very broad, but the film, directed by Gary Orona, delivers what it promises, essentially repeating the first film's mix of slapstick and nudity. The squared full screen image is very sharp and colorful throughout. Like the first movie, the bland 'rock' musical score is nominally stereophonic but generally centered, and is reasonably clear.

An alternative 'Standard Definition' (SD) version of each film is also offered, as opposed to the primary 'High Definition' (HD) default version. Apparently, die hard fans dislike the manipulation that accompanies the restoration of the HD presentations, although we find that the sharper image and more precise hues make the films play better. The SD versions are much softer and fuzzier, and while the colors are fresh, we became impatient with them fairly quickly after watching the HD versions. On both films, the HD versions run about a half-minute or more longer due to additional opening and closing logos. On both films, only the HD versions have optional English subtitles.

Softcore exploitation

The hero of Jack Hill's 1966 softcore **Mondo Keyhole** is a serial rapist, but he gets his in the end after attacking the girlfriend of a dominatrix skilled in judo. The film has been released in a *DVD Blu-ray Combo* two-platter set, **Psycho Tronica Collection Vol 2 Mondo Keyhole**, a VCI Entertainment MVDvisual release (UPC#089859930225, \$30). Running 78 minutes, the film begins with the manager of a mail order porn house, played by an actor called 'Nick Moriarty,' bored with the busty woman who lives with him because she wants him and is also a heroin addict, and he only wants to have his way with women who don't want him. With abundant topless nudity, the film follows those two narratives. The girlfriend mopes around the apartment a lot in flimsy outfits or nothing at all, and later she goes to a very wild party where everyone wears masks and tries their best to debauch whatever they can get their hands on, including lettuce and shaving cream. Meanwhile, Moriarty's character goes after one gal too many and awakens to find himself tied up to a contraption and at the mercy of a victim. The film was shot silent with all of the dialog added later, and is in black and white, letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.8:1. There is

one striking and unique sequence where a supine woman caresses her image in a horizontal mirror, and the camera goes underwater for a bevy of swimming pool shots during a party, but such invention is limited. Befitting the film's chintzy budget, scenes are stretched with a lot of padding, so passages in the film are often drawn out and tedious, interrupted with bursts of activity. Even the party scene becomes monotonous after a while. Viewers who are enamored with exploitation films of the past will be tickled by the movie's intentions, but others will feel that if you've seen two, you've seen them all.

The source material was battered and inelegant to begin with, and its condition kind of adds to its atmosphere of forbidden naughtiness anyway. The presentation is often soft, with weak contrasts and scattered markings, but it is tolerable enough to follow and detailed enough to present images with clarity when that is the intention of the filmmakers. The monophonic sound has a limited range but is reasonably stable. The DVD presentation is a little weaker than the Blu-ray presentation, and the sound is not quite as sharp. There are optional English subtitles, which are advantageous since the dialog recording is often obscured, but then disadvantageous when you learn that what the characters are actually saying is claptrap. A 4-minute montage of memorabilia for eccentric 'psychotronic' films is also included.

Hill supplies an enjoyable commentary track prompted by film expert Elijah Drenner. Hill is in the film, in some of the bondage scenes, and they get a laugh out of that while he explains the circumstances surrounding the production—Hill has made better films and worked early on with Roger Corman (and from there, Francis Coppola), but when a film he had made wasn't released he was in bad straights and took the assignment from producer John Lamb, largely doing what he was told. He has a marvelous story about an earlier film he made at a nudist colony, lugging around his equipment in the altogether, and he shares what he remembers about the shoot and the people he worked with. "They wanted to try to cover all the bases in the audience and that's really not the way you do it. Porno audiences are specialized. There's people who like bondage and that's what they want. They don't want anything else. People who like rapes, and that's what they want. And they had the idea to try and get a little bit of everything in here, and you ended up spread a little too thin for any particular niche."

A second track features softcore film enthusiast Rob Kelly, but he really doesn't have much to add. While he is able to give the film a little more context, throw in some trivia ("It played in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with *The Erotic Circus*, Binghamton, New York, with *Fanny Hill Meets the Red Baron*.") and a couple of details Hill missed, most of what he has to say, and certainly the most interesting and pertinent material, is covered in the other talk.