

# THE DVD LASER DISC NEWSLETTER

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## 4K Siege

Steven Seagal became pretty much the butt of a thousand jokes in the later stages of his career, but he initially made several very entertaining action films, especially ones that were directed by Andrew Davis, and the best of the lot was the 1982 Warner Bros. *'Die Hard* on a battleship' thriller, *Under Siege*, released as a 4K Blu-ray by Warner and Arrow Video (UPC#760137198284, \$50). Seagal is a ship's cook who actually has combat skills well beyond his station, which come in handy when a group of nefarious operatives team with a traitorous executive officer to commandeer the ship and set about removing its atomic warheads. Tommy Lee Jones, whose career has also done well by Davis, is the central villain, and Gary Busey adds his own form of crazy evil as the exec. Consider Davis's *The Fugitive*. It is a better film, sure, but it runs 130 minutes, so it kind of takes up an afternoon. *Under Siege*, on the other hand, at 103 minutes, is pared to the bone. There are constantly shots of characters that readily suggest something having happened that has not been seen, but no one stops to explain. Instead, the story just barrels forward, its general unlikelihoods counterbalancing each ellipsis and excused by the enjoyable performances from the supporting actors and Seagal's spiffy fighting moves. In the meantime, you do get a thrilling tour of the insides of an American battleship (ostensibly, the U.S.S. Missouri) and a narrative that is always raising the stakes just when you think the situation can't get worse. It is an enormously fun film, overriding disbelief and convenient edits, and is easy to watch again and again, especially when it is in 4K.

We reviewed Warner's standard Blu-ray release in Apr 12 and made note at the time that the film looked grainy and was badly in need of a fresh transfer. Well, it could not have received better one than what Arrow has delivered. The 4K image is consistently smooth and sharp regardless of how dark a scene's lighting becomes. The crispness and detailed coloring not only adds to the excitement of each action scene, it generally places the viewer more vividly in the confines of the ship. It makes the surroundings more exciting, and if your heart pumps faster just seeing the ship cruise through the waves, you can imagine what it does when you watch Seagal's character knife a villain. The film defaults to a standard stereo playback, but there is also a marvelous Dolby Atmos track that surrounds your viewing environment with exhilarating noises (and a touch of Jimi Hendrix in the score), which are wider and better detailed than the 5.1-channel track on the old BD. There are optional English subtitles; a trailer; an intriguing 19-minute interview with Davis talking about how the project came to fruition and basically saying that he was brought onto the film because Warner needed someone who could handle Seagal, and then he brought in guys like Jones and Busey to keep Seagal honest; a wonderful 14-minute interview with the only actress in the cast (except for a couple of extras in the 'war room' scenes), Erika Eleniak, about her career, her character, her experiences on the set, and the stress of doing a topless scene (after you see the interview, you realize how talented her performance was, because she really isn't like her character at all); a nice 19-minute interview with costar Damian Chapa, bubbling over about how much fun he had making the movie, how much he enjoyed his own character, how great his costars were and how good the film is because of all of the talent that contributed to its creation; and a fascinating 28-minute interview with the visual effects expert William Mesa that covers some of the same material about his image insertion process that was covered in his talk on *Outland* (Nov 25), but also addresses specifically the work he did on *Under Siege*, including sharing some great footage of shooting a working model of a jet plane exploding in the air.

Even Davis can't resist going, "And there's a skinny Steven Seagal," near the opening of his commentary track when Seagal first appears on the screen. He is joined by screenwriter J.F. Lawton on the consistently informative talk, covering different material than what Davis shared in his interview as they discuss the choices that were made in the story, including expository material that was dropped for the sake of pacing. They also go over how shots of real battleships were integrated with their other footage and other shooting challenges. They describe the different concerns that the studio had (the bombs had to have parachutes on them), how some of the supporting roles were cast and what both Jones and Busey brought to their characters.

## 4K Rites

The boxoffice disappointment of the 2025 New Line Cinema feature, *The Conjuring 4 Last Rites*, a New Line Warner Bros. SDS Studio Distribution Services 4K UltraHD Blu-ray (UPC#883929837496, \$33—the '4' has been added for the disc release

and is not on the film's title card), is baffling for three reasons. First, New Line and Warner had a string of impressively marketed hits in 2025, and so it is difficult to understand why this film didn't do as well as the others in the lineup. Second, not only were the three films in the *Conjuring* series that preceded it, loosely inspired by the true story of a couple who exorcize or otherwise battle demons and evil presences, big hits, but there were spin-offs to the series that were also big hits. And finally, the film is frightening as all hell. Don't watch it unless you are wearing a belt and suspenders, because otherwise it will scare the pants off of you.

Running an ambitious 135 minutes, the story follows two separate plots lines that merge in the film's second half. In one, a family in a low income neighborhood is being harassed by malicious spirits in their house. In the other, the couple have retired and the man is having heart troubles, but their daughter has come of age and is about to be married when an exceptional ability to sense otherworldly presences that she has inherited from her mother begins to manifest significantly. The story is a great set up for one terrifying scene and incident after another as it works to get all of the characters in place. To cite just one brilliant example—the daughter is trying on a bridal gown in a fully mirrored dressing room. The saleswoman has to leave for a moment, but when the daughter is by herself, some of the infinite reflections surrounding her start to look different than the others. Then the lights dim considerably. Then there is something under her dress. And then you see what is under her dress, and it is very icky, indeed. With the sharp, finely detailed 4K image and the aggressive Dolby Atmos sound the film is a glorious assault upon your nerves and sensibilities, and never lets up. Directed by Michael Chavez, the film is set during the Eighties, with enjoyable period dressings, but even more effective is the sense it manages to convey through its art direction, staging and acting of 'real' people undergoing and combating the horrors. It is an exciting and thrilling film by itself, and an even more gratifying capstone to the series as a whole (not only are there clips of the people the film is based upon during the beginning of the end credits—accompanied by a very unnerving musical score by Benjamin Wallfisch in all of its Atmos glory—but there is a final photo and caption at the very end).

Vera Farmiga, Patrick Wilson, Mia Tominson and Ben Hardy star. The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1. There is an audio track that describes the action in American ("Passing headlights illuminate a wall-mounted shelf with porcelain jars. As the lights sweep over the rest of the living room, a petrified Heather rotates in her spot and sees an axe resting on one of the sofa chairs. A tall, demonic figure in overalls grabs the axe and swings at Heather, who dodges away. Wrenching the blade out of the floor, the man watches her scrambling backwards."), another track that describes the action in British ("Light suddenly washes across the room's walls and net-curtained windows. Heather turns slowly and cowers as she follows the light, which illuminates an axe resting on an armchair, then dies. A man appears from the wall and seizes the axe. She dodges as he swings it down towards her."), a track that describes the action in German, alternate French, Spanish, Italian and German audio tracks, optional English, French, Spanish, Italian, German, Danish, Swedish, Norwegian and Finnish subtitles, and 25 minutes of decent promotional features.

## 4K Rebirth

Another reboot of the *Jurassic Park* franchise, *Jurassic World Rebirth*, has been released as a two-platter 4K Blu-ray by Universal Studios Home Entertainment (UPC#191329280041, \$35). The opening teaser for the 2025 film is not particularly exciting, and the story turns somersaults to reset itself by claiming that the dinosaurs cannot survive in temperate zones and are allowed to run free in certain areas of the tropics where humans are forbidden to tread. Fortunately, the 134-minute feature gets better once the set up is out of the way—one set of heroes are breaking the rules to gather DNA that will help cure illnesses, and another set, including a little kid and a teenager, along with their dad and the teenager's boyfriend, just happen to be sailing in the ocean, get dunked by a swimming dinosaur and picked up by that first set of heroes. Then they all go to an island, where the viewer gets all of the suspense and terror the protagonists can handle. The filmmakers don't even bother with real dinosaurs any more. Instead, the heroes must cope with 'mutants,' which are bigger and badder than anything that has come before. It may be dumb—much dumber than most of the previous *Jurassic Park* movies, even—but it has enough thrills to compensate, and that is really the point of the exercise, after all.

## Rebirth (Continued)

Directed by Gareth Edwards, Scarlett Johansson, Mahershala Ali and Manuel Garcia-Rulfo star. The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.4:1. The standard Blu-ray included in the set looks and sounds great and makes you scream at all the right moments, but the 4K BD is even better, delivering a smoother, better detailed picture that pulls you into the film's world, such as it is, while the Dolby Atmos sound has even more crisply defined noises coming from every direction. The standard BD has an audio track that describes the action ("The pterosaur tosses LeClerc into the air, then swallows him whole."), while the 4K BD does not. Both discs have alternate French and Spanish audio tracks and optional English, French and Spanish subtitles. The 4K platter has an additional 26 minutes of featurettes, including a little piece on the movie's references to other films and such, that do not appear on the standard BD. Otherwise, the same special features are shared on both, including another 56 minutes of excellent production featurettes, 6 minutes of deleted and alternate scenes that were wisely passed over and 2 minutes of bloopers.

Edwards is joined by production designer James Clyne and assistant director Jack Ravenscroft on an enjoyable commentary that dives into the details of shooting each scene and shares the practical side of making movies.

"They were very game, the actors in this film, because, you know, going through the grass, it was actually cutting their hands and cutting their arms because it was quite sotted."

"So a lot of them are wearing, like Scarlett's wearing bandages on her arms from being cut by the grass, but we digitally removed the bandages."

Clyne delves specifically into the wide ranging choices he had to make ("The dart gun was a really fun design challenge. We'd spent a lot of time thinking about not only color and materials, but how it functioned, how that dart latched into the front of the housing of the gun."), while Ravenscroft points out his own filmmaking insights ("Usually, there's someone with a giant stick and a tennis ball on the end for the actors, to give them an eye line. I think it's really good if you're an actor if you're terrorized by tennis balls. If you've got a natural fear of tennis balls, you're going to do well in these blockbuster films.").

On a second track, Edwards talks with editor Jabez Olssen and visual effects supervisor David Vickery. It is not as rewarding as the first talk, but is still informative, and includes a few amusing passages, such as when they describe the snakes and spiders that inhabited the jungle where they were shooting, and how they avoided informing the actors at times. "We wouldn't tell the actors until it was over. We wouldn't spook them. Where they're going now, there were giant spider webs with big spiders on them, and you just wouldn't point it out to anyone." "They were like the size of your hand."

Edwards also shares a common artist's insecurities. "What you experience shooting a scene is not how it feels to everyone else. You can have a terrible time filming something and think it all went wrong, and someone who doesn't know will be happy about it. I'll be like complaining about what I didn't get and how I'm disappointed with myself."

"And that goes on for 4 months?"

## Immaculate Corpses

Francesco Rosi's outstanding 1976 murder thriller, Illustrious Corpses (*Cadaveri Eccellenti*), calls to mind the paranoia that seeped into the cinematic arts during that era. It is sort of a cross between The Parallax View and Z, with a healthy amount of Damiano Damiani's films (and locations) thrown in for good measure. Opening in a recognizable Sicily, Lino Ventura is an inspector assigned to investigate the assassination of a judge who was killed by a long distance rifle, a task that is complicated when two more judges are murdered in the same manner. Rosi employs telephoto lenses and long distance shots, and this style, blurring distances, begins to permeate the narrative when at some unidentifiable point, Ventura's character returns to the 'capitol' (it never actually looks like Rome) and more judges are shot. He identifies a very likely suspect, but is unable to obtain a photo, much less the man himself, and that quest, as well, starts to dissolve as the killings are used by the government as an excuse to play hardball with the opposition party and protestors. Running 121 minutes, the film's atmosphere at its beginning is spellbinding, and the quiet Ventura is the ideal performer to serve as the viewer's guide, while his personable rectitude enables the viewer to cling onto him in the second half when the forces turn against him. The film also has some choice supporting guest stars, including Tina Aumont, Charles Vanel, Fernando Rey and Max Von Sydow, the latter delivering (albeit in a dubbed Italian voice—Ventura did his own dialog, however) a marvelous speech equating a mass said by a priest to the justice handed down by a judge. In both instances, the literal facts have no realistic link to the act itself, and thus reinforce the necessity of absolute faith, something that could also be said about narrative cinema.

The United Artists feature (produced by Albert Grimaldi, the film also has similarities in presentation to Last Tango in Paris, and tangos, too) has been released on Blu-ray by Radiance (UPC#760137200932, \$40), and the transfer is beautiful. Fleshtones are rich and finely detailed. Letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1, the cinematography has touches of the graininess and realistic lighting that were common in the era, but the transition to disc is immaculate from beginning to end. The beauty of the transfer—the monophonic sound also has excellent clarity—magnifies the power of Rosi's creation and aids in the durability of the film's artistic resonance.

Along with optional English subtitles, there is a trailer, a nice collection of memorabilia from around the world in still frame, 9 minutes of terrific interviews with Rosi and Ventura, and a 29-minute overview of the film's production and meanings. Italian film enthusiast Alex Cox supplies a commentary track that is good for the first half hour or so and then subsides into a reiteration of what is happening on the screen with an occasional cross-reference. He was apparently working from a different copy of the film, because at one point he makes note of an error in the subtitle translations that is not present on the Blu-ray.

## Silent desert adventure

It has been a century since the theatrical premier of Paramount's extravagant desert drama, Beau Geste, one of the last big studio productions to come out before the advent of sound, which curtailed its replay possibilities and left it in a bit of a shambles, but now the 1926 feature has been beautifully restored and has been released by Artcraft Pictures as a *100th Anniversary Collector's Edition* Blu-ray (UPC#84041838377, \$35). Here and there, the source material is a little worn, but for the most part, the 130-minute feature looks spotless. Presented in a squared full screen format, the black-and-white picture is stunning, particularly during the many breathtaking shots of the desert, with camels, horses and riders stretched out across the white sand like ants. Directed by Robert Brenon, the film opens with several mysteries—why is every man at the fort dead, but at his post, and after the fort is opened by the relief force, where did two of those bodies and a bugler disappear to (and why is the fort suddenly on fire)?—and then flashes back to the heroes first as children in England and then as young adults to present yet another mystery—who stole the rare jewel? It could be any one of three brothers, and they each suspect one of the others, but rather than face an investigation, they run off together and join the French Foreign Legion. Methodically and with various dramas along the way, you gradually learn the answers to all of these riddles.

The cast is fabulous and many of the players are still very well known. Playing one of the brothers, Ronald Coleman is so iconic that you can hear his voice even though it is a silent film. William Powell is way out of his comfort zone as an oily Italian thief who has also enlisted, but he delivers a terrific performance. Noah Beery also gives a vivid performance as the eventual senior officer of the fort, and a young Neil Hamilton is another one of the brothers. Victor McLaglen has a smaller role. The film does run a little long—the childhood sequence is adeptly staged but probably unnecessary—but that reinforces a sense of grandeur that the desert scenes then fulfill. At its best, it is an impressive production, and thanks to the Blu-ray, it should have no problem hanging around for another 100 years.

There is an effective but nondescript orchestral score in 5.1-channel DTS (the best moment comes when a trumpeter plays *Taps* and the notes match his lip movements perfectly). An excellent 12-minute piece explains how the sources for the score—which generally followed what was originally played in theaters—were chosen. "The majority of the music is standard photoplay and classical music borrowed from the theater's music library. Audiences in 1927 had not been exposed much to classical music on the radio or in concerts, so musicians saw including major classical works in film scores as a way to expose the American public to high quality music. This dynamic has flipped in 2025, when many people are familiar with popular classic works, and their inclusion in a film score can be distracting, while much of the repertoire of photoplay music, probably the most commonly performed music on Earth in the 1920s, is unfamiliar in 2025."

In 1939, The Campbell Playhouse adapted the story for a 60-minute radio drama featuring Orson Welles (who also hosts), Laurence Olivier (whose character narrates) and Beery (vividly reprising his role again), which has been included on the disc. Also featured is a brief but interesting collection of nice-looking stills with captions, a lovely replication of the original souvenir program, and a detailed 4-minute piece on how the film's restoration was accomplished.

Beau Geste expert Frank Thompson supplies an enjoyable all-you-ever-needed-to-know commentary. He apparently got hooked on the story at a young age, and ended up writing the definitive book about the original Percival Christopher Wren novel and its many permutations. "There are more [radio serials] than you would think. When I was working on my book, I was researching just the Australian radio productions of Beau Geste and it took me 4 months of 7-day weeks to find them all. It was the hardest work I did for a chapter in that book that no human will ever read." He shares all sorts of details about the film's production, describes the few scenes that are still missing and explains how the movie was staged, going over everything from casting and location decisions to the movie's horse and camel wrangling. It is a thorough and rewarding talk.

## Reopening Pandora's Box

We opened Pandora's Box with great anticipation, and we were not disappointed. The Criterion Collection has finally released a Blu-ray presentation of the 1929 G.W. Pabst silent classic starring Louise Brooks (UPC#715515303217, \$40), upgrading the delivery medium from their DVD release (Dec 07). The squared full screen black-and-white picture has the same transfer and the same battering that the ages have imposed upon the film, but it is still substantially sharper than the DVD. The flaws are fleeting and inconsequential, while the film's demarcated eight-part structure gains even greater power from the crispness of its image. Not only does the film play well as a whole, but each part forms a compelling miniature movie of its own—the final chapter is ideal for sharing with friends who don't have time to watch the film all the way through. Brooks begins the 141-minute film as a showgirl who has struck it rich as the mistress to a wealthy publisher. The publisher then makes the double mistake of investing in one of her shows, and marrying her. From there, her character takes a downhill path, but with the story cut out in eight progressive steps, following her to the bottom is quite inviting. Brooks's performance is outstanding, and while much of it can also be credited to the eye and sensibility that Pabst brings to every shot, it is her own ability to sell her character's combination of intelligence, naiveté, strength and vulnerability that make her both the most

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grown-up character in every room and childlike in her impulses and affections. Her emotional presence is captivating, while her physical presence is iconic. Clara Bow may have been the 'It' girl, but it is Brooks's photo that appears in a dictionary under 'flapper,' or would if there were still dictionaries. It is a captivating film from beginning to end, and worth opening again and again.

The film can be accompanied by four different types of musical scores, and as we pointed out in our review of the DVD, each one is not only fantastic, but brings out a different facet in the film, like a fountain being lit by rotating lights. Our favorite is the 'Modern Orchestral,' which is probably Criterion's favorite, as well, since it is the one that plays over the menu. Composed by Peer Raben, it comes the closest to evoking Alban Berg's opera, *Lulu* (Jul 07), based upon the same story, and draws out the narrative's expressive evocation of society's advancing deterioration. Also featured is an 'Orchestral' score meant to imitate how a live orchestra would have accompanied the film in its day, thus creating a fascinating dynamic between the film's antiquity and its undeniable modernity; a 'Piano Improvisation' that brings out the film's visual adroitness by minimizing sensory distractions; and a 'Cabaret' score that may be the best for getting a viewer caught up in the desires, joys and conflicts of the characters themselves. It could be that each score is more appropriate for one of the chapters than for another, but all four drop suggestions of Kurt Weill, at least here and there. On all four, the DTS sound has a sharper and deeper presence than the playback quality on the DVD, thereby enveloping the viewer all the more in the film's world.

The intertitles are in German, accompanied by optional English subtitles. A commentary from German cultural historians Thomas Elsaesser and Mary Ann Doane is carried over from the DVD, as is a trailer, a 34-minute interview with Pabst's son, two profiles of Brooks, from 1971 and 1984, that run a total of 108 minutes, and a very sweet 5-minute talk by Richard Leacock, who shot the 1971 interview, about how he arranged the meeting with her and what interviewing her was like.

### Greek classic

A bittersweet 1956 Greek film about a mousy bank clerk mistaken for a gangster, *The Ogre of Athens* (*O Drakos*—technically, 'The Dragon,' or 'The Dragon of Athens'), has been released on Blu-ray by Radiance (UPC#760137195306, \$40). Dinos Iliopoulos plays the clerk. Set on New Year's Eve, when a photo of the gangster with the clerk's likeness is published in the newspaper, he is hounded out of his apartment and ends up in a dive bar where thieves and miscreants look upon him with awe and he does nothing to dissuade their misconceptions. They even plan a robbery simply thinking that they will succeed because he is in their presence. He also, in part because of his gentle nature, attracts the affections of a young bargirl. Long before *Never on Sunday* or *Zorba the Greek*, the film includes several substantial bar dancing sequences, set to the music of Manos Hatzidakis, and unlike those slicked up, homogenized interpretations, the dancing is raw and organic, and visually thrilling. Directed by Nikos Koundouros early in his career, the 103-minute film has some juvenile moments, such as when he speeds up the action for comedic effect, and his coverage is not consistent, but the overall appeal of the film is essentially unharmed by its inconsequential shortcomings, showing what it is like to discover life a good deal after you began living it.

The squared full screen black-and-white picture is always sharp, but the source material is in rough shape. There are times when thin vertical lines can be seen, and a few shots that are in even worse condition, although overall the vivid contrasts compensate for the occasional damage. The monophonic sound is okay and the film is in Greek with optional English subtitles. Also featured are 44 minutes of appreciations that place the film in the context of Greek cinema (suggesting that it was the beginning of modern Greek filmmaking), explore its political connotations in regard to the Greek civil war and its aftermath, and otherwise detail how long lasting the film's impact has been, although in general, the film's humor is downplayed in the featurettes in favor of its darker outlook on life and society.

### Korean action, with a Geritol chaser

Imagine John Wick as an elderly Korean woman and you have the gist of the jazzed up 2025 Korean action film, *The Old Woman with the Knife*, released on Blu-ray by Well Go USA Entertainment (UPC#810348039200, \$30). Hye-yeong Lee works for an assassination agency and Sung-cheol Kim is a flashy newcomer who appears to threaten her status as the company's best killer. Meanwhile, she has started seeing a doctor for neurological problems that are making her hands shaky, and her boss is worried that she is losing her touch. Directed by Kyu-dong Min, the 125-minute film has fantastic, revved up action scenes and fights from beginning to end—the finale is especially bloody—but what is really surprising is that gradually, flashbacks start to appear, so that what seems at first like a mindless flurry of marvelous violence with an amusing AARP attitude turns out to have a carefully delineated and readily understandable plot. The characters have histories, and so as the film works its way to its final showdown, you learn who they are, why they are doing these things, and what the climactic fights really mean for them. If you step back from it all, the premise is absurd and what happens is pretty ridiculous—Lee's character gets banged up something awful during several of the fights, but she keeps going and going anyway, as if the concept of brittleness did not exist—but the film is way too exhilarating and intriguing to quibble about the niceties of believability, and it will make you think twice before honking at the old lady in front of you who seems to be driving too slowly.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1. The image is slick and sharp, and the crispness of the Blu-ray delivery adds to the adrenaline rush provided by the action sequences. The 5.1-channel DTS sound is reasonably energetic. In addition to a Korean audio track that is supported by optional English subtitles, there is also a passable English track. A trailer is featured, as well.

### Man Ray's surreal shorts

Among his many pursuits, the American Surrealist artist, Man Ray, made several short films, all of which are in black and white and a squared full screen format. In 1923, he made the 3-minute *Le Retour à la raison* without a camera, abusing film negatives in a dark room in a number of different ways, from putting objects on the frames and then exposing them to light, to punching holes in the frames directly. The result is a flurry of shadows and images, some with recognizable shapes and some without. In 1926 he shot the 19-minute *Emak Bakia* with several companions, a pastiche of images featuring a brief reprise of portions of *Le Retour à la raison* followed by a woman driving a car and then dancing, a man primping himself in drag, a beach and fishes, and then the best parts of the film, a careful study of a wooden abstract sculpture (apparently a Pablo Picasso work) followed by the stop-motion construction of a Ray sculpture made from geometric cones, and then concluding with a montage of images and an amusing sequence in which a man is shredding shirt collars (Ray's father was a tailor). Much of Ray's 17-minute 1928 *L'Etoile de mer* mixes brief shots that are in focus with longer sequences that are deliberately off focus or otherwise distorted, as if they had been shot through glass bricks or something, integrating shots of a starfish with the action of a man and a woman who eventually go to a bedroom to have a quasi-erotic moment. The film sort of enacts the lines of a short poem written by Robert Desnos, which are repeated on the intertitles for each sequence within the film. Ray's last film, the 1929 *Les Mystères du Château de Dé*, runs 27 minutes and essentially depicts a group of friends having a good time, playing with dice and doing oddball things at a very fancy modernistic country chateau (after driving there) that sits on a rocky hillside. The chateau includes what has to be the most dangerous indoor swimming pool we have ever seen. Not only does the rectangular pool lack rounded edges, but it is surrounded with various gymnastic equipment, such as bars, ropes and rings, and is accessed from a rail-less stairwell close enough that each step can be used as a diving platform. You see at least a thousand ways to break your neck in every shot. The people look like they are having fun, however. They also participate in gymnastic activities on a lawn and workout area of sorts. Ray reverses the action at times, experiments with solarization and tints a couple of the sequences. All of the films make use of editing experimentation to emphasize the juxtaposition of objects, textures and compositional dynamics. While the greatest experimental films are more purposeful in their design and execution, Ray was not only a highly regarded practitioner of abstract art, but an experienced still photographer. The four films he made are as competent as they are larkish, and compile both intrigue and humor with offhand meditations upon the absurdity of existence and a deep appreciation of shapes and forms.

In 2014 or so, filmmaker Jim Jarmusch formed a New Age-style band with producer and composer Carter Logan, called Sqirl (at least they didn't call themselves The Chipmunks), featuring Jarmusch on an electric guitar and keyboard, with Logan operating keyboards and synthesizers, and doing some drumming. The band scored a couple of Jarmusch's films. In 2023, at their behest, the four Man Ray shorts, which had been restored with the best available elements, were combined into a single feature-length program running 70 minutes, and they took it on the road, playing a quasi-improvised score in front of live audiences in accompaniment with the film. They also recorded a rendition of the score so it could be attached to the compilation, and it is that presentation that is featured on the Criterion Collection Blu-ray release, *Return to Reason*, subtitled *Four Films by Man Ray* (UPC#715515325813, \$40).

As Jarmusch explains in an excellent 9-minute interview with him and Logan that accompanied a screening, the films are not in chronological order. The two with the strongest 'narratives,' such as they are, *L'Etoile de mer* and *Les Mystères du Château de Dé*, open and close the feature with *Le Retour à la raison* and *Emak Bakia* between them, creating a highly appealing and repeatable flow of curious activities and beguiling montages, especially if you have a passion for that whole French art scene and milieu in the Twenties. The music, in 5.1-channel DTS sound, also utilizes reverberations and even feedback. It never gets in the way of the images but adds significantly to the cohesion of the films as a single decade-long impulsive exploration by an artist who knew as much about filmmaking as Jarmusch knows about music. It's a great match.

If you wish that you could have seen the show live, that desire is also accommodated, as there is a second presentation of the film that is almost more entertaining than the primary presentation. Letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1 and running 77 minutes, the performance of Sqirl is shot in a vivid high-definition video, opening with a stage introduction by Jarmusch and something of an overture. When the film itself begins behind them, the screen splits in two, with the film progressing on the left while deftly edited images of the musicians and the film playing behind them appear on the right (it also plays on monitors in front of them). It is a great way to watch the whole show again. The sound is in a standard two-channel stereo, and unfortunately, while the feature presentation begins where it left off if playback is terminated, the concert version (and the interview) does not. On both the concert program and the feature, optional English subtitles translate the French intertitles. A trailer has also been included.

## Glorious screwball romantic comedy

In 1936, Leslie Howard, comporting himself more adequately than some of his fellow cast members, starred in an overly staid rendition of William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (Mar 97). His next film, the 1937 Warner Bros. production, *It's Love I'm After*, released as a Turner Entertainment Co. *Warner WB Archive Collection* Blu-ray (UPC#840418338445, \$25), opens with him playing Romeo once again, bickering under his breath with his Juliet, played by Bette Davis, as they profess their eternal love for one another upon a stage, while a fan barely out of her teens, played by Olivia de Havilland, watches star struck from the closest box seat. Actors have been known to lampoon their performances before, but it has rarely happened during the very next film they appeared in, and it is the first of an unfailing 91-minute string of delights in the unexpectedly glorious screwball romantic comedy. Directed by Archie Mayo, Patric Knowles plays the fiancé of de Havilland's character, who jealously confronts Howard's character but then arranges for him to spend a weekend at the mansion where de Havilland's character lives, to play up the actor's priggishness in hopes that it will spoil her infatuation with him. Davis's character soon gets wind of the plan and goes there as well, pretty much in a jealous rage. And conducting all of these schemes with an apparent innocent impulsiveness is someone whom we consider to be the first among equals in the greatest character actors of the Thirties, Eric Blore, playing the manservant of Howard's character (and when you get down to it, his character's true partner in life). Blore seems to have more screen time in this film than in his next three movies combined, and he soaks up every frame of it in all of his unctuous splendor. Meanwhile, Howard is on a tear. Rarely has he ever seemed so loose and manic as he is here, while Davis and de Havilland (we've never seen hair parted as perfectly as de Havilland's is—it's like a highway in the desert) are exquisite every moment each is on the screen, Davis as a fiery-eyed hellion and de Havilland as an impervious, dewy-eyed virgin. The film is essentially non-stop hysterical, and the more familiar you are with the actors, the more you will enjoy how sublimely they execute their craft.

The squared full screen black-and-white picture is sharp and spotless, and the quality of the image transfer adds even more pleasure to the experience of watching the film. The monophonic sound is fine, and there are optional English subtitles, along with a trailer and two 1937 black-and-white Warner Porky Pig *Looney Tunes* cartoons, the 8-minute *Porky's Building* (the pig is a contractor competing in a skyscraper building competition with another pig contractor utilizing many inventively imagined animal workers) and the 7-minute *Porky's Bedtime Story* (the pig tries to go to sleep and get up in time to go to work because he is in danger of losing his job for tardiness).

## The Colbert report

Universal Pictures Home Entertainment has released four Paramount features from the Thirties and Forties on separate Blu-rays, each top lining the Oscar-winning actress, Claudette Colbert, who generally presented a wholesome but saucy personality, both earnest and nobody's fool. Each film is in black and white and is presented in a squared full screen format. The image transfers are generally in decent shape. Here and there a stray line crosses the image, a flurry of speckles pass through, the natural grain becomes a little intense, or contrasts are slightly weak, but overall the picture is clean and the quality does not distract from the entertainment. The monophonic sound is reasonably strong and each film is supported by optional English subtitles.

The best film in the group is the 1937 romantic comedy directed by Wesley Ruggles, *I Met Him in Paris* (UPC#840418338339, \$22). Colbert is a New York fashion designer on sabbatical in Paris. Melynn Douglas is a restless playwright and Gig Young is a wealthy playboy traveling with her. The two pick up Colbert's character in a Paris bar and both fall for her. Eventually the three go to Switzerland as the two men vie for her affection and all three take part in various winter sports. One of the strengths of the film is that some of it was actually shot at a winter resort, and the stars even do some of their own stunts in the snow. There is also a legitimately harrowing bobsledding scene, and Douglas does some simple but admirable ice skating. The affections of Colbert's character bounce back and forth between the two men as they both compete to woo her, and the third guy who was waiting back in the States also shows up in the last act. Running 87 minutes, the stars are not just appealing but truly compelling, some of the slapstick is genuinely rousing (and the rest of it is at least elaborate and inventive), and all along, you really don't know which one she is going to end up with at the end. And that is even without taking into account the unspoken but quite curious relationship between the two men, who are first seen sharing a table and later a hotel suite in Paris.

From a story by Samson Raphaelson, Mark Sandrich directed the 1941 *Skylark* (UPC#840418338353, \$22), in which Colbert plays the wife of an advertising executive played by Ray Milland. When Milland's character seems to be more beholden to his job than to her, she turns her attention to a lawyer played by Brian Aherne. Milland's character then recognizes the error of his ways, at first begrudgingly, but then quite frantically, and it is only when he completely accepts change in himself that she returns to him. After the film's initial scenes, the two have to get a divorce so that the censor will allow the vague implication that she is sleeping with Aherne's character, although fortunately she doesn't have to marry him to do so. Running 94 minutes, the film thrives on Colbert's screen personality and sharp witted presence. There is one slapstick sequence, in which she tries to make coffee on a rocking boat, that is overdone and tiresome, but otherwise the film's humor is urbane and sophisticated, while never letting go of its suburban American setting and attitude. The production designs are exceptional, and Colbert's outfits are appealing. It is a very nice showcase for her talents, allowing her to be avidly determined but vulnerable, and bringing a genuine humanity to what could easily be a romcom stereotype part.

George Cukor was of course famous for making 'women's films,' which in essence meant that the ratio in his films of gowns to guns favored the gowns, and that is the case with what could be considered quite a specific entertainment intended for female audiences, the 1939 *Zaza* (UPC#840418338360, \$22). Colbert plays a popular music hall

entertainer, and Herbert Marshall is a wealthy but reluctant suitor whom she seduces and quickly falls for. The film is set in France so that the morality of the characters can be excused, and Marshall's character has a guessable secret that prevents them from tying the knot. The narrative, based upon a stageplay, is fairly simple and direct, and the film only runs 85 minutes. Cukor's staging is excellent. Aided by Edward Dmytryk's editing (despite a couple of unusually awkward cuts), he keeps up the energy in every scene, so that the only pauses that occur are when matters of the heart are involved. Some of Edith Head's outfits are positively stunning, and Colbert is stunning in them. Colbert's performance is always focused and fresh, and Cukor seems to feed off of her presence. Marshall is more uneven, sometimes nailing the shifts in his character's feelings and sometimes falling back on the hesitations and timidity that served him so well in the past. Helen Westley and Constance Collier costar, and Monty Woolley and Ann Todd have brief appearances, but most importantly, a star who did not appear in anywhere near enough movies, Bert Lahr, has a major role as Colbert's stage partner and manager. Just seeing him on celluloid conducting his profession is a precious experience, and the film gives him plenty of playing time as a counterpoint to the advancements in the relationship between the two lovers. Hence, if you enjoy motion pictures, then Lahr's presence, Colbert's skill and Cukor's organizational mastery are all so entertaining that the romance is of secondary importance—the excuse that lets you savor it all.

Frank Lloyd's 1937 *Maid of Salem* (UPC#84041833846, \$22) is ostensibly a light-hearted drama—veering at times on romantic comedy—about the Salem Witch Trials, although its playful beginnings are a ruse that gives its later dramatic turn to darker conflicts a greater impact. Colbert is a spirited Massachusetts girl who meets a tax rebel on the run from the authorities in Virginia, played by a young and dashing Fred MacMurray (Colbert's costar a decade later in *The Egg and I*). Her community is tight laced but tolerates her impulses (such as being nice to the children), and she must keep the presence of MacMurray's character a secret because of his legal status. This leads to a number of wrong assumptions and misconceptions of who she has been caving in the shadows. The film has a fantastic cast, including Harvey Stephens, Louise Dresser, Gale Sondergaard, Beulah Bondi, Donald Meek, Edward Ellis and Sterling Holloway, but most notable of all is the one black actor in the cast, known as Madame Sul-Te-Wan. She portrays a slave living in the colony who still has memories of her life in Africa, and readily shares her potions and charms with people who come and ask her for them. Not only is her performance fresh and real, but it never feels like typecasting because she never resorts to the shtick that most African-American actors had to employ to fit in on the screen. At first, the 86-minute film seems rather silly and dismissible, as if Hollywood was trying to get mileage out of a new setting and fresh production designs while glossing over America's past. But when the community turns on Sul-Te-Wan's character, not only is it startling and deeply disturbing, it reinforces the obvious truth that America hasn't really changed all that much in the centuries between the Witch Trials and today, and the film's happy ending, when MacMurray rides in to save the day as the noose is going over Colbert's neck, is so flagrant, it does not disguise that truth, either.

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Colbert has top billing in Paramount's 1942 romantic comedy, *The Palm Beach Story*, released on Blu-ray by Universal and The Criterion Collection (UPC#715515135917, \$40), but the film's true star is its writer and director, Preston Sturges. Colbert is great, of course, delivering every scene with energy and heart, but pretty much any top grade actress would have been as good with the material and Sturges's breathless pacing. Mary Astor has a secondary role and is incongruously a platinum blonde, but even she delivers her character with the same forthright pizzazz that Colbert does. Joel McCrea plays the husband of Colbert's character, their marriage going through a rough patch because of debts. Feeling bad and thinking that she is a drag upon his career, she leaves him in New York to go to Palm Beach for a divorce. He catches up to her, but not before she meets a wealthy oil heir played by Rudy Vallee—and his sister, played by Astor—who are initially led to believe that McCrea's character is the sister of Colbert's character. The set up in the 88-minute film takes a while (and is endlessly amusing, filled with the marvelous company of character actors Sturges always employed), but most of the film is the three-way romance, with McCrea and Colbert's characters realizing they still love one another despite the promise of money if they pair off with the wealthy brother and sister. All of the performances are fantastic, and sure, the performers were at the top of their game, but it is Sturges's writing, Sturges's blocking and Sturges's directing that utilizes their best talents. The result is a timelessly funny, feel-good romance that is guaranteed to make you chuckle and smile.

The squared full screen black-and-white picture looks better than the individual Universal releases. The source material still has a couple of faint vertical lines and some other nearly invisible speckling, but the image is consistently sharp and is less overtly grainy than the other films were. The presentation is substantially better than the Universal DVD we reviewed in Jul 05. The monophonic sound is okay, and there are optional English subtitles.

An excellent 29-minute radio adaptation from 1943 by the *Screen Guild Theater* with Colbert, Scott, Vallee and what sounds like Mel Blanc trims the story down to its essentials while retaining the dialog's wit and energy (not to be confused with the *Old Gold Comedy Theater* version appearing in the *Harold Lloyd Comedy Collection* with Colbert and Robert Young that we reviewed in Jan 06). Also featured is a general 17-minute overview of Sturges's career and an analysis of the film's structure, a 10-minute appreciation of the humor and 'beautifully messy' design of the film, and a 12-minute 1941 War Department film written and directed by Sturges and featuring Eddie Bracken, Ginger Rogers and Walter Huston, *Safeguarding Military Information*, about what happens when soldiers at home can't keep their mouths shut. Whether talking to their girlfriends or writing mom, word gets out.

## 4K Friday

The Criterion Collection's Blu-ray release of the 1940 Howard Hawks Columbia Pictures adaptation of *The Front Page*, **His Girl Friday** (Apr 17), looked great, but their new three-platter 4K Blu-ray presentation (UPC#715515325714, \$60) looks even better. The squared full screen black-and-white image is smoother and brighter. With the frantic, lickety-split dialog and character blocking to match, the film thrives on concentration to keep track of everything that is being said and going on, and the 4K delivery is the ideal aid for that concentration. The image is cleaner and sharper, and so you pay even better attention to the characters, their schemes and their hustles. Cary Grant is a newspaper editor and Rosalind Russell was his best reporter except that she quit and intends to get married to an insurance salesman played by Ralph Bellamy just as a fabulous story about a convict escaping on the day he was to be executed breaks. The film's energy is half the fun, while the wit of the performances is the other half, and the 4K presentation is the best way to savor both.

The film appears by itself on the 4K platter. The monophonic sound is solid, and there are optional English subtitles. The other two platters in the set are identical to Criterion's previous Blu-ray release. The first platter has the feature film and is accompanied by 10 minutes of interviews with Hawks, 37 minutes of pieces about the film's artistry, a 3-minute piece on Hawks, a 3-minute piece on Russell, a 1940 60-minute *Lux Radio Theatre* adaptation with Claudette Colbert and Fred MacMurray and two trailers. The second platter contains the 1931 **The Front Page**, directed by Lewis Milestone with Adolph Menjou in the Grant role, Pat O'Brien in the Russell role and Mary Brian in the Bellamy part. It is accompanied by a 1937 *Lux Radio Theatre* adaptation running 59 minutes with Walter Winchell and James Gleason, a 1946 *Academy Award* radio adaptation running 32 minutes with Menjou and O'Brien, a 26-minute profile of author Ben Hecht, and a 24-minute piece on that film's restoration.

### McCrea western

Jacques Tourneur directed the 1955 United Artists western starring Joel McCrea, **Stranger on Horseback**, a Kit Parker Films MVDvisual Blu-ray (UPC#760137196723, \$25). The film was shot in a problematic color process known as Ansco Color, and while the presentation, made from the only surviving elements, has fresh hues, the image is soft looking, contrasts are often compromised and the colors don't always look like normal colors, coming across as a little redder or browner at times. Hence, the film, letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1, is to be savored for the rarity of its availability rather than the splendor of its panorama. McCrea plays a circuit judge who happens across a murder and learns that the killer is the son of the rancher who owns the town. In order to see that justice is carried out fairly, he must take the son and a pair of witnesses to another town that is a day's ride away, with the father and his men quick to follow. Based upon a story by Louis L'Amour, the narrative is a bit jumpy in spots and not entirely logical, but the cast is marvelous and Tourneur sees that everything moves quickly and efficiently, bringing in the running time to just 66 minutes. Not only do you have McCrea confidently espousing his belief in the law and American ideals, but there is Kevin McCarthy as the hotheaded son, John McIntire as the haughty father, the marvelous John Carradine as a supposedly disinterested bystander, a steamy actress named 'Miroslava' as a cousin of McCarthy's character who takes a carnal interest in McCrea's character and the wonderful Emile Meyer as the local sheriff.

The monophonic sound is fine, and there is no apparent captioning despite a jacket notation to the contrary. Also featured is a good 9-minute summary of the film's production history that includes a restoration comparison (the film looked a lot worse before) and summaries of the careers of the cast and crew; a 25-minute montage of the film's original shooting script; a minute-long montage of the music cue sheets; a 3-minute montage of ad materials; a 2-minute montage of production and promotional stills; and a trailer. Westerns expert Toby Roan supplies a commentary track, in part working off the same material presented in the 9-minute featurette (many of the phrasings are identical) but expanding upon the career filmographies of the cast and crew, McCrea's biography and Tourneur's talents. "Jacques Tourneur keeps things moving throughout. There's not a bit of fat on this picture. A look at the original screenplay shows how things were tightened up along the way, but many of Tourneur's films are rather short. He brought efficiency and movement to every picture he made. If you watch, almost every character has some sort of business they're doing, in every scene, so even when a scene is just people standing and talking, somebody's always doing something."

### Stereophonic Melody

MGM's 1955 multi-handkerchief Cinemascope musical drama, **Interrupted Melody**, has been released by Turner Entertainment Co. and Warner Bros. as a *Warner WB Archive Collection* Blu-ray (UPC#84041833-9657, \$25) in letterboxed format with an aspect ratio of about 2.55:1 and a fantastic two-channel DTS stereo soundtrack. Based upon a true story, Eleanor Parker plays a rising opera star whose career is put on hold when she marries a doctor played by Glenn Ford, and then further jeopardized when she contracts polio. Roger Moore plays her brother and manager. The romance and strain in the relationship between the two leads—it may be Parker's film, but Ford is really good—moves the story along effectively, and the music does the rest. Directed by Curtis Bernhardt, the 106-minute film goes right for the gusto with staged performance scenes from *La bohème*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Carmen*, *Götterdämmerung* and others. Each staging is decorated

a definitively traditional dressing that now feels gloriously quaint. Blu-rays may have been created for modern science-fiction action films, yet this is also the kind of movie that a Blu-ray not only preserves the original viewing experience for, but enhances it, and none of the filmmakers had any idea that is what they were doing at the time—if they did, they would have been more careful about allowing the shadow of the sound boom to pop up again and again on the right side of the screen. No matter. The spectacle of the widescreen images—the color transfer is impeccable from beginning to end—and the marvelous dimensionality of the sound make each sequence a very special treat, and those sequences pile on and on, so when the career of Parker's character is cut short and you only get traffic noises and so forth in stereo, you feel the loss internally, which then raises the thrill and starts the tears flowing all the more when she does manage to resurrect herself in the final act.

Along with optional English subtitles, there is a trailer and an MGM color Tom and Jerry cartoon from 1955, *Tom and Cherie* (a swashbuckling mouse tries to take on a swashbuckling cat), running 7 minutes and also letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1.

### Webber tries to cash in

Hoping that lightning—or the chandelier—would strike twice, Andrew Lloyd Webber composed a grandiose sequel, **Love Never Dies**, to his original mega stage hit, **The Phantom of the Opera** (May 05). In doing so, he broke a covenant, inked with his soul, to fans, after he had allowed—major spoiler alert!—the Phantom in the earlier work to simply disappear at the end, fate unknown. That was a key part of the first show's appeal, the endurance of the mystery that wafted through a fan's consciousness with the music after the curtain came down. By breaking that magic, the Devil took the hindmost, and Webber's sequel never earned back its costs.

Fortunately, during a revised stage run of the sequel in Australia in 2011, Universal backed a high definition recording of the production and that program has been released on Blu-ray by Universal Pictures Home Entertainment as **Andrew Lloyd Webber's Love Never Dies** (UPC#840418-335703, \$20). Letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1 and vividly sharp and colorful throughout, the fantastically elaborate and expensive exhibition can be had for what was probably the price of a couple of sequins and a light bulb or two. Now that is a bargain worth taking. The show's grandly engineered stagecraft is spectacular. Set in a Coney Island emporium run by the man in the mask, it is a decade after the Parisian events of the previous story, and he has amassed enough money to entice the heroine, the singer he still obsesses over from the earlier encounter, to perform for one night when she comes to New York with her husband and her—pay close attention to his age—ten-year old son. The production, which sometimes calls to mind the staging of Webber's *Starlight Express*, is a gilded carnival, full of freaks, mirrors, glitter and ramps—intentionally opposite of the opulent and elegant original. The show runs 121 minutes, and the BD is impressive even with the 5.1-channel DTS sound turned off, no more so than when the heroine, played by Anna O'Byrne, sings a number standing in a deep blue and bejeweled gown in front of a peacock backing that makes it look like her plumage is spread across the entire stage. It is truly breathtaking.

But does it provide a night's worth of music? There are certainly some hummable songs. Webber's talent for crafting billion dollar jingles may have been on the wane, but the resonance of his skills lingers, and in addition to the dazzling visual extravaganza, the show's music is soothing and sustaining. The clarity and strength of the DTS track matches the quality of the image. The music's most promising moments hint at the melodies and orchestrations of **Phantom**, but only as a disheartening tease that, perhaps as a harbinger of the show as a whole, never follow through. The story has some nice turns to it, too, but the characters are sadly humanized, watering down the iconic impact that their archetypes delivered in the original show, and despite all the money that has been so clearly expended on the stage and screen for your visual and aural indulgence, the mediocrity of its core cannot be entirely masked. That also extends to the lead actor, Ben Lewis, who generally fails to be anything but a placeholder in the part, making one wish that Webber had orchestrated the role for a genuine baritone, because someone strong enough to handle such demands could have made a real difference in the show's impact. On the other hand, we were enormously impressed with the child actor, Jack Lyall, who has a substantial role, both dramatically and musically, and more than holds his own with the others.

Anybody with the tiniest bit of curiosity about the show owes it to themselves to check it out, especially since the Blu-ray does such a gorgeous job preserving the recording. Parts of the program were shot in front of an audience so that their applause could be looped in at appropriate moments, but otherwise the cameras were on the stage with the actors. Like all such endeavors, you do lose the 'bigger' picture at times in exchange for the close-ups and isolated staging details, but the tradeoffs are generally well handled. One drawback from the close-ups is that you become aware of the microphones that are partially camouflaged on the heads of the performers. It is a minor distraction, but it is there. Along with optional English subtitles, there is a 15-minute production featurette that shares some general information about the show's creation and staging.

We also have to admit, however, that after watching **Love Never Dies** and being very satisfied with the experience, we spent the remainder of the day not singing any songs from it, but walking around our home belting out numbers from **Phantom of the Opera** instead. Some things, indeed, never die.

## Remake

We reviewed Raoul Walsh's **High Sierra** most recently in Dec 21, along with a remake Walsh himself directed repurposing the gangster story as a western, **Colorado Territory**. The script for **High Sierra** was written by novelist W.R. Burnett, adapting his own book, and Warner Bros. chose to dip into the well yet again in 1955 with a widescreen, stereophonic color remake, **I Died a Thousand Times**, which has now been released by Warner as a *Warner WB Archive Collection* Blu-ray (UPC#840418335123, \$25). For the most part, the director, Stuart Heisler, used the same script that Walsh used, but Burnett did do some nips and tucks to it, while also updating some of the cultural references and police procedures. Jack Palance has the primary role as the mobster fresh out of prison who is planning to rob the safe at a resort with a crew that has been assigned to him. Lee Marvin, who would have been great as Palance's character a decade or two later, costars as one of his young hotheaded underlings, with Earl Holliman, while Shelley Winters is effectively less glamorous than Ida Lupino in the original as the girl hanging out with them. Lori Nelson, Ralph Moody, Gonzalez Gonzalez and Lon Chaney Jr. also have major roles, while Dub Taylor, Nick Adams and Dennis Hopper have uncredited speaking parts. But it is Palance who must carry the film, and while he is a fun guy and delivers the careful balance between pathos and violence that the part requires, he just doesn't have the star power that Humphrey Bogart brought to the role in the original film to enhance sympathy for his flawed character.

Running 109 minutes, the film is scenic, exciting and entertaining, but even in color it pales in comparison to the intensity and intrigue of the original black-and-white feature. Heisler and cinematographer Ted McCord try very hard to take advantage of the widescreen image, often making sure that there are characters on the sides of the screen, or playing with the accentuations of Dutch angles, but it always feels like they are trying to catch up to Burnett's script rather than embellishing it. The letterboxing has an aspect ratio of about 2.55:1. The transfer is excellent, although the film's colors are bland at times and a few shots are out of focus. The two-channel DTS sound brings an enjoyable dimensionality to David Buttolph's constantly employed musical score, as well as to a few scattered sound effects, adding to the entertainment impact of the widescreen images more than the image framing itself does. There are optional English subtitles, a trailer and two 7-minute 1954 Warner color cartoons, the *Looney Tunes Sahara Hare* (Bugs Bunny faces off against an Arabian Yosemite Sam in the desert, with the added difficulty of mirages) and the *Merrie Melodies Hare Brush* (Elmer Fudd is placed in an asylum because he believes he is a rabbit, and Bugs exchanges places with him, leading to an amusing role reversal when Bugs is 'cured').

## Following Baker's lead

Carroll Baker had an interesting career, and her early roles were particularly intriguing, as she was often cast as characters who displayed a confused amalgam of childlike innocence and fiery lasciviousness that churned on the screen like boiling milk. She had significant supporting parts in several major films before she was in effect expected to carry by herself the grand 1959 Warner Bros. production, **The Miracle**, released as a *Warner WB Archive Entertainment* Blu-ray (UPC#840418338452, \$25). The role seems perfect for what she had been known for. She begins as a novice in a nunnery in Europe during the time of Napoleon, but falls for a wounded British officer played by the young Roger Moore. When they are separated, she has adventures with other men across the continent, becoming a famous 'gypsy' singer, before finally recognizing that she had been in her true calling all along. Fortunately, in the film's one touch of the supernatural, someone had been holding her place for her while she was gone. Directed by Irving Rapper, the film runs 122 minutes and plays very differently the first time you see it than the subsequent times, because one of its most entertaining factors the first time through is not knowing where the story is going to turn next, while the entertainment in the later visits comes from anticipating the emotional and erotic awakenings that Baker must undergo after she unsuckles her habit. Indeed, it is not until she completes her journey and understands the deepest meanings of love that she can advance to her higher calling. The film is not famous and did not do all that well, perhaps in part because Baker holds onto an aura of innocence throughout the film, despite the apparent sophistication of the men she is with. You search her eyes for a knowing flame of lust, and you don't see it. But when the film is revisited and you understand the arc her character is going to undergo, her performance feels validated.

Meanwhile, the film is also a valid treat for the eyes. Letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1, there are at least the edges of battles (they couldn't really afford to show any more than that), ballroom dances, gypsy fights and a decent bullring sequence. The colors are fresh and flesh tones are deep. The sound is monophonic and features an Elmer Bernstein score just as he was starting to hit his stride. It is not exemplary, but there are some very nice moments. There are optional English subtitles, a trailer and two color *Merrie Melodies* Bugs Bunny cartoons, the 7-minute 1958 *Hare-abian Nights* (a clip episode of sorts, as the rabbit tells an impatient sultan about his various adventures) and the 6-minute 1959 *Bonanza Bunny* (in an Alaskan Gold Rush saloon, a greasy French Canadian tries to relieve the rabbit of his sack of gold).

## Dreary Season

Vanessa Redgrave is the owner of small seaside inn on the southern coast of England, and the ever petulant Susan George is her daughter in the 1975 Lorimar romantic drama, **Out of Season**, a VCI Entertainment MVDvisual Blu-ray (UPC#089859912627, \$23). Directed by Alan Bridges, Cliff Robertson is an American traveler (named 'Joe') looking to rekindle a relationship with Redgrave's character (named 'Ann') that had ended not very ambiguously around the time that George's character (named 'Joanna'—get it?) was conceived, although only Redgrave's character knows that little tidbit and George's character, bored in the midwinter and a natural troublemaker, begins a heavy flirtation with Robertson's character. Running 89 minutes, the film's wonderfully dreary atmosphere and its enduring star appeal (all three performances are engaging) compensate well enough for the limitations of its

narrative. The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1 and the source material is somewhat bedraggled, which actually contributes to the film's dynamics. At several moments during the feature, particularly during scenes of full nudity, Bridges deliberately obscures which of the two women (or their doubles) is offering her body to Robertson's character by making the image hazy and smoky, and the transfer is more than game to accommodate the effect. There are also several splices. Consistently soft, hues and flesh tones are generally accurate and overall, the image quality sort of contributes to the mood established by the film's title, but viewers hoping for something slick and pristine had best look elsewhere.

The monophonic sound is okay. There are optional English subtitles and 9 minutes of AI-generated video profiles of the three stars ("Susan George reminds us, even out of season, true talent never fades."). Film enthusiast Rob Kelly provides a chatty commentary, pointing out how poorly the film played on broadcast television when all the naughty bits were removed, breezing over the backgrounds of the cast and crew, analyzing the film's artistry ("There is precious little color in this movie. Obviously on purpose, the walls are this incredibly drab grey, and beige and brown.") and sharing many reviews that lambasted the film upon its release. While reading one of those reviews, he serendipitously describes the use of props in the film just as George is lifting a bottle from the crotch of Robertson's character, who is reposed on an armchair in a drunken stupor.

## Beautiful designs

Letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1, the Japanese yakuza drama, **Blood of Revenge**, released on Blu-ray by Radiance Films (UPC#760137200925, \$40), makes constant dynamic use of the rectangular image to tell its story. Sometimes, three characters will be spread across the entire image. Other times, one or even two characters will be in a very small portion of the image, slightly to one side, in a rectangular-seeming pose, dwarfed by the rest of the composition. Sometimes two people will be vertical on the far right of the image, with the details of whatever set they are occupying taking up the remainder of the picture. Or one character will be on the far right and another on the far left, with a third taking up most of the picture in the middle. One shot has a gorgeous sunset over a bridge, partially framed by a tree in the distance, lighting two lovers who are slightly to the right and overshadowed by the beauty behind them (the shot is so memorable that it is given an encore later on, with different coloring, as the relationship between the characters has altered). At every moment in the film, the impeccable color transfer underscores the film's meticulous design, essentially adding the respect a viewer will feel for both the narrative and the characters.

The head of a construction firm barely survives an assassination attempt at the beginning of the film, and his hot headed son wants revenge. It is up to his second in command, played by Koji Tsuruta, to keep the peace and navigate the power struggles between the competing firms while his boss recovers. It does not go well. While the story is fully entertaining, the 90-minute presentation, directed by Tai Kato, feels like such a work of art that you can simply suppress the optional English subtitles and be entirely satisfied savoring the beauty of its designs. In shot after shot, what the characters are saying becomes less important than where they are situated on the screen relative to what else is there, with the sizes and alignments of the characters and objects, coupled with the raw emotions of the performances, telling you just as much as anything the characters are actually saying.

The monophonic sound is in decent condition. Along with a rewarding 15-minute career profile of costar Junko Fuji that includes a brief analysis of her performance in the film, there is a terrific and consistently entertaining 14-minute black-and-white public service film made by Kato in 1943, *Lice Are Scary*, about a community reluctant to take the necessary sanitary measures to subdue typhus (such as suppressing the spread of lice), including a marvelous animated sequence showing the lice in operation, and ending with the reminder that the United States and the United Kingdom are like lice, and must be defeated.

## Realistic Hong Kong action

An excellent 1988 Hong Kong police drama that ends in a bloodbath, **On the Run**, has been released on Blu-ray by Fortune Star and 88 Films (UPC#760137200246, \$30). Directed by Alfred Cheung, Biao Yuen stars as a cop looking for the killer of his ex-wife, who was also on the force, only to discover that the assassin, played by Pat Ha, was hired by other cops because the wife was getting close to discovering who was behind a big drug deal. Basically, Yuen's character teams up with Ha's character as they try to stay a step ahead of the villains while bodies pile up all around them. Running 90 minutes, the film's action scenes are brief and brutal, but the narrative is steadfastly compelling, and even though it eventually goes so far into the dark side that it can never return, by the time that happens you are hooked enough on the characters and the film's atmosphere to accept whatever fate has in store. Leigh Lo, Philip Ko and Charlie Chin costar.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1. The film has a gritty look and a lot of it takes place at night, but colors are accurate and the image looks fresh. The monophonic sound is okay and the film is in Cantonese with optional English subtitles. Along with a trailer and a minute-long alternate ending, there is a decent 21-minute interview with Cheung, talking about his career and reputation and how the film countered that in several ways, and a good 19-minute overview of the film and the context of its production.

One commentary features Hong Kong film enthusiasts Kenneth Brorsson and Phil Gillon, who react to the action scenes, talk quite a bit about the careers of the cast members and share other opinions, such as the harrowing use of a child actor in one sequence. "It's downright irresponsible what they do to these kids. Hollywood filmmakers would just have a heart attack watching what they do to this little kid. She's awfully good."

In direct contrast, however, the other commentary track on the disc, featuring Hong Kong film experts Frank Djeng and F.J. DeSanto, is much better. Djeng immediately begins speaking about the locations where the opening of the film takes place, and throughout the film, while talking about the cast and the story, they also talk about the film's innovations, it's gnarly fight scenes ("The intimacy of this. It's like there's no kung fu here, there's no technique here. It's just the brutality of these two guys beating the hell out of each other. It doesn't feel choreographed. It doesn't feel like stuntmen designed this scene. It feels like a real fight.") and how its depth and detail make it, "inherently rewatchable." As they point out, the film responds to the tension that was rising throughout Hong Kong over the specter of the Chinese takeover. "The other movies we've done commentaries for are all pure escapism, where this is really grounded in modern Hong Kong, at that moment. It really touches a nerve with the populace, the uncertainty of what's to come."

### Hell Virgin versus Demon Concubine

It's the Hell Virgin versus the Demon Concubine in the 1989 Golden Harvest extravaganza of cheap special effects, **Saga of the Phoenix**, a Fortune Star 88 Films Blu-ray release (UPC#760137194149, \$50). The Hong Kong Japanese co-production is in Cantonese with optional English subtitles and there is no alternate English track, which is a shame because the film would be an appropriate treat for family audiences. Directed by Nai-Choi Lam, Gloria Yip is the virginal spirit who has been allowed to visit Earth for a limited time, provided she does not cause any trouble. Biao Yuen and Abe Hiroshi are two protectors accompanying her, and Suet Ngai is an evil demon force who wants to drain the energy of Yip's character. Lawrence Lau is a scientist who has developed a transportation device that allows the characters access to the evil realm where Ngai's character resides, and Rachel Lee is the scientist's sister. Yuen's character, incidentally, spends the bulk of the film frozen in the evil realm so that he is only available for fighting at the beginning and the finale. Yip's character also has a little beast pet (clearly inspired by **Gremlins**) that is mostly a puppet but is also represented by a bit of stop motion animation in a couple of scenes. There are a lot of animated rays being zapped back and forth, and creatures in elaborate costumes attempting to kidnap or otherwise harm Yip's character. Shot in Nepal, the 94-minute film advances at a steady pace with continually inventive and intriguing constructs, and while sequences are inherently silly, the story is easy to follow and never becomes tiresome.

The film does not start up where it left off if playback is terminated. The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1. The color transfer is excellent, with bright hues and no apparent wear. The location shooting compromises the contrasts now and then, as do the special effects, but otherwise the presentation looks slick. The monophonic sound is strong but pushes its range at times and is best held to a moderate volume. Along with a trailer, there is good 5-minute montage of memorabilia, 12 minutes of interesting alternate scenes mostly intended for the Japanese version of the production, and a 22-minute interview with Golden Harvest's Albert Lee talking about his career at the company and how the company marketed films outside of Hong Kong.

As Hong Kong film experts Frank Djeng and F. J. DeSanto explain on their commentary track, **Phoenix** is the sequel to another Hong Kong Japanese co-production from 1988 entitled *The Peacock King*. Djeng and DeSanto did a commentary for that film, too—which 88 Films released overseas but has yet to release domestically—and they constantly refer to the earlier talk and that film as they discuss the movie at hand. The wizard who sends the heroine on her journey is played by Shintaro Katsu and Djeng makes note of a brief smirk the actor makes at one point in homage to his most famous role as Zatoichi, the blind swordsman. The first film was apparently less frivolous and they tend to speak disparagingly about **Phoenix** in comparison, although they still greatly admire the performers (Djeng admits that if he were younger, he'd have a poster of Yip on his wall) and the film's set pieces. "The shift between the darker and more adult fantasy elements, and then [this] more kid-friendly stuff, sometimes it [doesn't] really gel too well together."

### December Special Edition: Asian Blu-ray collections

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

The Blu-ray reviews featured include Arrow Video's ten-platter **Shawscope Volume Four** (UPC#760137187066, \$200) and four-platter **Akio Jissōji The Buddhist Trilogy** (UPC#760137130789, \$65); The Criterion Collection's three-platter **Eclipse Series 47 Abbas Kiarostami Early Shorts and Features** (UPC#715515-316613, \$70); and Eureka!'s three-platter **Triple Threat: Three Films with Sammo Hung** (UPC#760137199595, \$75).

### DVD News

**CRITERION CORNER:** The Criterion Collection is premiering Martin Scorsese's **Killers of the Flower Moon** on physical media, releasing a 4K Blu-ray with a documentary featuring Scorsese, Leonardo DiCaprio, Lily Gladstone, author David Grann, Osage Nation Principal Chief Geoffrey Standing Bear, Osage cultural consultant John Williams, Thelma Schoonmaker, and other members of the cast and crew; "*WahZhaZhe*": *A Song for the Osage*, a documentary illuminating the film's final shot,

featuring Scorsese, Chief Standing Bear, and six members of the Osage Nation; an excerpted archival interview with director of photography Rodrigo Prieto; excerpts from the 2023 Cannes Film Festival press conference featuring Scorsese, DiCaprio, Gladstone, Chief Standing Bear, and Robert De Niro; and a short program on Noah Kemohah's cover art. The first film from Claude Lelouch to finally make it into the Criterion Collection, **A Man and a Woman** will be issued as a standard Blu-ray with the added bonus of his wonderful short film, **C'était un rendez-vous**; an interview with Lelouch; a making-of documentary shot on location; and archival footage of Lelouch at the 1966 Cannes Film Festival. Tsui Hark's **The Blade** will be in 4K format and will have a commentary featuring Frank Djeng; **Action et vérité** (2006), a documentary featuring Hark, co-screenwriter Koan Hui, and actor Xiong Xin-xin; a video essay by filmmakers Taylor Ramos and Tony Zhou; a New York Asian Film Festival Q&A with Hark from 2011; an alternate English-dubbed track and English-version opening and end credits. Luis Buñuel's **Viridiana** will be in 4K and will feature interviews with actor Silvia Pinal and film scholar Richard Porton, and excerpts from a 1964 episode of *Cinéastes de notre temps* on Buñuel's early career. Claude Sautet's **Classe tous risque** will be in 4K and will include excerpts from *Claude Sautet, ou La magie invisible*, a 2003 documentary on the director by N. T. Binh and Dominique Rabourdin; an interview with novelist and co-screenwriter José Giovanni; and interview footage featuring Lino Ventura discussing his career. Lynne Littman's **Testament** will come with a conversation between Littman and author Sam Wasson; two documentaries by Littman, made in collaboration with anthropologist Barbara Myerhoff, *Number Our Days* (1976) and *In Her Own Time* (1985); **Testament at 20** and *Nuclear Thoughts*, archival programs featuring interviews with cast and crew members and nuclear-science experts; and an audio recording of Jane Alexander reading the short story, *The Last Testament*, upon which the film is based.

**NEW IN BLU:** The following titles have recently been released on Blu-ray—14 Ghosts, Glitch Ditch 78, Glitch Ditch 79, Glitch Ditch 80, Glitch Ditch 81, Glitch Ditch 82, Glitch Ditch 83, Glitch Ditch 84, Glitch Ditch 85, Glitch Ditch 86, Glitch Ditch 87 (Acid Bath); Krizee Kidz Video Party (AGFA); The Girl Who Cried Her Eyes Out (All Channel); The Advent Calendar, The Walking Dead Daryl Dixon Season 3 (AMD); Testament Season 1 (Angel); The Brain Hunter, Only Cloud Knows, Sen Sen (Bayview); Mr. Dressup The Magic of Make Believe, Omniscient Reader The Prophecy (Blue Fox); Marmalade, Psycho Therapy The Shallow Tale of a Writer Who Decided to Write about a Serial Killer (Brainstorm); Timeless Love (Burning Bulb); Sultana's Dream (Cartuna); The Killer, Shaw Brothers Classics V.8 (Cinedigm); In Our Day (Cinema Guild); Laurel & Hardy The Restored Features V.1 (Classictvix); David Byrne's American Utopia, I Know Where I'm Going!, Pee-wee's Big Adventure, Return to Reason Four Films by Man Ray, Salaam Bombay! (Criterion); Alarune / The Student of Prague, Norbert Pfaffenbichler's 2551 Trilogy (Deaf Crocodile); Code 3, Satisfied (Decal); The Legend of MexMan (Dekanalog); Forgotten Pistolero (Diabolik); Thank You Very Much (Drafthouse); Nevermore The Raven Effect (ETR); The Mike Diana Film Collection Blood Brothers and Baked Baby Jesus (Factory 25); Girls Town, House on Haunted Hill (Film Masters); Love's Whirlpool, Martin Roumagnac, Shall We Dance? (Film Movement); Laurel & Hardy Year Three (Flicker Alley); Gingerdead Man Murderthon (Full Moon); Jet Trash, Killer Racoons 2, Tapawingo (Indican); Gifted Pain, Soon (Indie Rights); Dan Curtis' Gothic Tales, Hanna K., Italia Fire and Ashes, Monk Complete Series & Movie, Young Violent Dangerous (Kino); Good Fortune, The Strangers Chapter 2 (Lionsgate); Good Night and Good Luck Live from Broadway, Rabbit Trap, A Savage Art (Magnolia); Borrowed Time Lennon's Last Decade (Maverick); Ultraman Yuletide Collection (Mill Creek); Chainsaws Were Singing, Christmas Eve in Miller's Point, Haunt Season, Sightseers (MPI); You Are Not Me (Music Box); Beast Wishes, The House with Laughing Windows, Legend of the Eight Samurai, Long Live the King, Monster Shark, Mutant Swinger from Mars, Night of the Sharks, O.C. & Stiggs, Psychotronica Collection V.1 Delinquent Schoolgirls, Rosa, Saga of the Phoenix, The Shark Hunter, Shawscope V.4, Splendid Outing, Triple Threat Three Films with Sammo Hung, Wild Style (MVD); Pointed Heels (Reel Vault); The Alphabet Killer, Clutch, The Dragon Gate, Hitting Licks, I Heart Monster Movies, Joke of Justice, A Light Outside, The Plastic Men, Rock Paper Death, South of the River, Trapped Alone, Vanished, Whiskey Run (Rising Sun); Dirty Work, Mannequin, The Meteor Man, My Summer Story, Peter Benchley's Creature, Return to Me, Rock-A-Doodle, Shag The Movie, Stagecoach, Stephen King's Sometimes They Come Back, Undercover Blues, Yours Mine & Ours, Zapped (Sandpiper); Hardcore Poisoned Eyes (Saturn's Core); A Bold Beautiful Journey (Sony); Death-scout Service Trinity, Gobblefoot, The Legend of the Stardust Brothers, Liverleaf, Outer Man, Truth or Dare? Legacy, A Very Flattened Christmas (SRS); Beyond the Gaze Jule Campbell's Swimsuit Issue (Tribeca); The Chain Reaction (Umbrella); Bad Words, Black Phone 2, Bugonia, I Met Him in Paris, Maid of Salem, Skylark, Zaza (Universal); Hotspring Sharkattack (Utopia); Haunted Heart (Vantage); Dead of Winter (Vertical); Psychotropic Overload (VHSHitFest); Blake's 7 The Collection Season 2, I Love Melvin, Interrupted Melody, Lippy the Lion and Hardy Har Har Complete Series, On Borrowed Time, San Antonio, Tom and Jerry The Golden Era Anthology 1940-1958, The Valley of Decision, Wally Gator Complete Series (Warner); Along with the Gods The Two Worlds, Beast of War, Delivery Run, Kombucha, Traumatika (Well Go); Model Hunger (Wild Eye); Drink and Be Merry (X4)

**NEW IN 4K:** The following titles have recently been released in 4K format—Omniscient Reader The Prophecy (Blue Fox); The Emperor's New Groove (Buena Vista); The Grey, The Killer, Leaving Las Vegas, Rabid (Cinedigm); David Byrne's American Utopia, Pee-wee's Big Adventure, His Girl Friday, I Know Where I'm Going!, Salaam Bombay! (Criterion); Re-Animator (Ignite); Dead of Night, Enter the Ninja, Nacho Libre, Ninja III The Domination, Paul, Revenge of the Ninja, Scars of Dracula, Walking Dead (Kino); Dogma, Heart of Darkness (Lionsgate); Late Night with the Devil (MPI); Breakdown, Carlito's Way, Catch Me If You Can, Deep Blue Sea, Elvira Mistress of the Dark, The House with Laughing Windows, Kill List, Mallrats, Saga Erotica The Emmanuelle Collection, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles Trilogy, Wild Style (MVD); Airplane!, Top Secret! (Paramount); Anaconda, Awakenings (Sony); Black Phone 2, Bugonia, Jarhead, Minority Report (Universal); Boogie Nights, Ted Lasso The Richmond Way (Warner)

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### Current Attractions

*The following titles recently appeared for the first time:*

Afraid?  
 Alef (Kino)  
 The Alpha Test (Dreamscape)

The Alphabet Killer (Rising Sun)\*

Ancient Symbols 3

Animal Tales of Christmas

Magic (Film Movement)

An Aspen Christmas

Conspiracy (BMG)

Bad Faith (Despop)

Batman Gotham by Gaslight

(Warner)

Beast of War (Well Go)

Becoming Thurgood

(Paramount)

A Bengal for Christmas

(Socia)\*

Beyond Paradise Season 3

(Warner)

Bikini Blue (Dreamscape)

The Birds Who Fear Death (Syndicato)\*

Black Magic (International)

Black Phone 2 (Universal)

Borrowed Time John

Lennon's Last Decade (Maverick)\*

Bugonia (Universal)

Buoyancy (Dreamscape)

Camera (Vantage)

Capturing Kennedy

(Freestyle)

Caught in the Game (Ytinifni)

Christmas at Maxwell's

(Legacy)

Christmas for Three

(Legacy)

Christmas Wedding Planner

(Dreamscape)

Christmas with a Prince A

Royal Baby (Dreamscape)

Christmas with a View (Dreamscape)

The Clique (Warner)

Clutch (Rising Sun)

Code 3 (Decal)

Cold Betrayal (Dreamscape)

The Complete Lucille Ball

Specials (MPI)

Cradle 2 The Grave

(Warner)

Critters 4 (Warner)

Cry of Silence (Despop)

The Dark House of Mystery

(Socia)

Dark Planet (International)

David Byrne's American Utopia (Criterion)

Dead of Winter (Vertical)

Dead Voices (Dreamscape)

Death Ride (International)

Debbie Macomber's Joyful

Mrs. Miracle (Cinedigm)\*

Delivery Run (Well Go)\*

Demon Hunter

(International)

Diario Mujer and Café

(Freestyle)

Dirty Work (Sandpiper)

Divorce His Divorce Hers

(DigicomTV)\*

The Dragon Gate (Rising Sun)

Dreams Love Sex (Strand)\*

Drink and Be Merry (X4)

Earth Quake Live at Rockpalast 1978

Ellipse (Dreamscape)

An English Haunting

(Dreamscape)

Even Trade (Ytinifni)

The Exchange (Dreamscape)  
 Falling for Daisy (Dreamscape)  
 A Few Feet Away (Kino)  
 Finite The Climate of Change (Dreamscape)  
 The First Hymn (BMG)  
 Follow That Man V.8 (Alpha)  
 Forgotten Mysteries of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century (360)  
 14 Ghosts (Acid Bath)  
 The Fox and the Child (Warner)  
 From Improv to Icon The Journey of Mike Nichols (Desktop)  
 The Funny Company V.3 (Alpha)  
 Ghostfinders (Ytinifni)  
 Gifted Pain (Indie Rights)\*  
 The Gilded Age Season 3 (Warner)  
 The Girl Who Cried Her Eyes Out (All Channel)  
 Glitch Ditch 77 (Acid Bath)\*  
 Glitch Ditch 78 (Acid Bath)  
 Glitch Ditch 78 (Acid Bath)\*  
 Glitch Ditch 79 (Acid Bath)\*  
 Glitch Ditch 80 (Acid Bath)\*  
 Glitch Ditch 81 (Acid Bath)\*  
 Glitch Ditch 82 (Acid Bath)\*  
 Glitch Ditch 83 (Acid Bath)\*  
 Glitch Ditch 84 (Acid Bath)\*  
 Glitch Ditch 85 (Acid Bath)\*  
 Glitch Ditch 86 (Acid Bath)\*  
 Glitch Ditch 87 (Acid Bath)\*  
 The Good Fight (Vision)  
 Good Fortune (Lionsgate)  
 Good Night and Good Luck Live from Broadway (Magnolia)  
 Goodbye America (Ytinifni)  
 The Great Buddha Arrival (SRS)  
 The Great Escaper (Paramount)  
 Green Lantern First Flight (Warner)  
 The Handmaid's Tale Complete Series (Warner)  
 The Handmaid's Tale Season 6 (Warner)  
 Hanukkah on the Rocks (Cinedigm)\*  
 Harry Wild Season 4 (AMD)  
 Haunt Season (MPI)  
 Haunted Heart (Vantage)  
 Hazel's Heart (Samuel Goldwyn)\*  
 Hitting Licks (Rising Sun)  
 Holiday in the Hamptons (Legacy)  
 Honor Student (Despop)  
 House Shark (SRS)  
 I Heart Monster Movies (Rising Sun)  
 Icefall (Decal)  
 Innovators of Black History V.2 (360)  
 Irish Blood (AMD)  
 Israel Palestine on Swedish TV 1958-1989 (Film Movement)  
 Joke of Justice (Rising Sun)  
 Karen Kingsbury's The Christmas Ring (Pinnacle)  
 Kill the Jockey (Music Box)  
 Killing Faith (Cinedigm)  
 Kissinger (Paramount)  
 Kombucha (Well Go)\*  
 Lady in the Locket (Desktop)  
 The Lady Lies (Alpha)  
 Last Flight (Ytinifni)  
 Law and Order Complete Series (Universal)  
 Legacy (Ytinifni)  
 A Light Outside (Rising Sun)

London Calling (Quiver)  
 M30 Oxy (Despop)  
 Maddy the Model (Dreamscape)  
 The Making of Plus One (Giant)  
 Mannequin (Sandpiper)  
 The Meteor Man (Sandpiper)  
 The Mighty Oaks (Freestyle)  
 The Milky Way (Kino)  
 Murder on Flight 502 (Digicam)  
 My Name Is A by Anonymous (Wild Eye)  
 My Name Is Nobody (Ytinifni)  
 My Summer Story (Sandpiper)  
 Mystery 9-Movie Collection (Cinedigm)  
 Mystery 101 Deadly History (Cinedigm)\*  
 NASA Moments JPL and the Beginning of the Space Age (Wonderscape)  
 Negligence (Buffalo 8)  
 No Dogs Allowed (MPI)  
 The Nutty Network (Wild Eye)  
 Omniscient Reader The Prophecy (Blue Fox)  
 Path to the Dream (Ytinifni)  
 Peter Benchley's Creature (Sandpiper)  
 A Place Called Silence (International)  
 The Plastic Men (Rising Sun)  
 Pointed Heels (Reel Vault)  
 Poisoned in Paradise A Martha's Vineyard Mystery (Cinedigm)\*  
 Psycho Therapy The Shallow Tale of a Writer Who Decided to Write about a Serial Killer (Brainstorm)  
 Queen of Manhattan (Level 33)\*  
 Rabbit Trap (Magnolia)  
 The Red Admiral (X4)  
 Return to Me (Sandpiper)  
 Return to the Dark House of Mystery (Socia)  
 Reversible Reality (Wowow)  
 The River of Romance (Alpha)  
 Robin and the Hoods (Cinedigm)  
 Rock Paper Death (Rising Sun)  
 Rock-a-Doodle (Sandpiper)  
 Roy Rogers with Dale Evans V.23 (Alpha)\*  
 Royal 9-Movie Collection (Cinedigm)  
 Rule of Thrids (Buffalo 8)  
 Sandbag Dam (MPI)  
 A Savage Art (Magnolia)  
 Sen Sen (Bayview)  
 Shag the Movie (Sandpiper)  
 Sharks N Da Hood (Wild Eye)  
 Silent Witness Season 28 (Warner)  
 Sister Boniface Mysteries Season 4 (Warner)  
 Soul on Fire (Affirm)  
 South of the River (Rising Sun)  
 Stagecoach (Sandpiper)  
 Stephen King's Sometimes They Come Back (Sandpiper)\*  
 Stitch Head (Universal)  
 Stolen Girl (Vertical)  
 Stranger on Horseback (MVD)\*  
 Sugar Baby (Vantage)  
 Suicide Squad Hell to Pay (Warner)  
 Superman vs. The Elite

(Warner)  
 Table for Six 2 (International)  
 Taken from Rio Bravo (ITN)  
 Tapawingo (Indican)  
 Testament Season 1 (Angel)  
 Thank You Very Much (Drafthouse)  
 The Thistle in the Kiss (Freestyle)  
 The Tim Ritter Collection (SRS)  
 Time-Lapse NY (360)  
 Timeless Love (Burning Bulb)\*  
 To Kill for Love (Ytinifni)  
 Tom & Jerry The Golden Era Anthology 1940-1958 (Warner)  
 Trapped Alone (Rising Sun)  
 Traumatika (Well Go)\*  
 Under the Stars (Decal)  
 Undercover Blues (Sandpiper)\*  
 Van Helsing The London Assignment (Universal)\*  
 Vanished (Rising Sun)  
 Vindication Swim (Freestyle)  
 Vlad (Ytinifni)  
 The Walking Dead Daryl Dixon Season 3 (AMD)  
 Whisky Run (Rising Sun)  
 The White Moss (Ytinifni)  
 Who's the Suspect (International)  
 Witchcraft 17 (Socia)\*  
 A Witches' Ball (Dreamscape)  
 Without a Doubt God Is Always There (BMG)  
 Without Warning (X4)  
 A World Apart (Film Movement)  
 Young Blondes Stalked and Murdered  
 Yours Mine and Ours (Sandpiper)  
 Zapped (Sandpiper)

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

### Coming Attractions

*The following select DVD titles are promised for the near future. How many of them will show up is never a certainty. Logical subdivisions appear unmarked within each division. Titles which did not appear on last month's list are marked with an arrow (→) and are added to the bottom of subdivisions so that the longest awaited titles appear at the top within each grouping:*

From Acid Bath:  
 →Glitch Ditch 88  
 →Glitch Ditch 89  
 →Glitch Ditch 90  
 →Glitch Ditch 91  
 →Glitch Ditch 92  
 →Glitch Ditch 93  
 →Glitch Ditch 94  
 →Glitch Ditch 95  
 →James Balsamo Knows How to Rock 4  
 From AGFA:  
 →The Movie Orgy  
 From Angel:  
 The Senior  
 Truth & Reason  
 From A24:  
 →The Smashing Machine  
 From BMG:  
 The Ground beneath Our Feet

→Call Me When You Can A Father's Day Story  
 →The Love Doctor  
 →Tell the World  
 From Buena Vista:  
 →Tron Ares  
 →Springsteen Deliver Me from Nowhere  
 From Bullfrog:  
 →Far Out Life on & after the Commune  
 From Cardinal:  
 →What about Sal?  
 From Chemical Burn:  
 →Exorcists vs. Vampires  
 The Battle for Your Soul  
 From Cinedigm:  
 Santa Tell Me/Finding Santa  
 The Christmas Quest/The Sweetest Christmas  
 Following Yonder  
 Star/The Gift of Peace  
 Private Princess  
 Christmas' Polar Opposites/Winter Love Story/Winter in Vail/Baby It's Cold Inside/Hearts of Winter/Love in Wonderland  
 →An Unexpected Valentine/My Secret Valentine  
 →Providence Falls  
 →Deathstalker  
 →Savage Hunt  
 From Criterion:  
 Caught by the Tides  
 Captain Blood Cloud  
 →Killers of the Flower Moon  
 →Classe tous risques From Decal:  
 Icelfall  
 Orwell 2+2=5  
 →Trap House  
 →Wildcat  
 From Despop:  
 The Last Movie They Ever Made  
 American Schemers  
 →Everything You Are  
 →ArtCon  
 →Cursed Hearse  
 →Ugly Sweater  
 →Bad Voodoo  
 →Lust and Fear  
 From Dreamscape:  
 Endurance  
 Eternal Sky  
 Wild but True Season 1  
 →The Pollinators Agents for Life  
 →Don't Forget to Leave  
 From Filmlandia:  
 →VHS Maniacs V.1  
 From First Run:  
 E. 1027 – Eileen Gray and the House By the Sea  
 The Making of a Japanese  
 From Freestyle:  
 →Nobody Wants to Shoot a Woman  
 From Full Moon:  
 Sinful Strippers Pack  
 Model Behavior 3 DVD Movie Collection  
 →End of the World  
 From Indiepix:  
 Infinite Summer  
 From Pinnacle:  
 The Blind The Phil Robertson Memorial Edition  
 From Pop Twist:  
 Beyond Graceland Ladysmith Black

→Steele Wool  
 From International:  
 Sex Ritual  
 The Rage  
 Ice 3  
 Possession  
 Witchitch  
 From Jinga:  
 Darklands  
 From Ketchup:  
 Afterburn  
 From Kino:  
 Köln 75  
 ReEntry  
 Home Free  
 Put Your Soul on Your Hand and Walk  
 From Cinedigm:  
 Santa Tell Me/Finding Santa  
 The Christmas Quest/The Sweetest Christmas  
 Following Yonder  
 Star/The Gift of Peace  
 Private Princess  
 Christmas' Polar Opposites/Winter Love Story/Winter in Vail/Baby It's Cold Inside/Hearts of Winter/Love in Wonderland  
 →An Unexpected Valentine/My Secret Valentine  
 →Providence Falls  
 →Deathstalker  
 →Savage Hunt  
 From Criterion:  
 Caught by the Tides  
 Captain Blood Cloud  
 →Killers of the Flower Moon  
 →Classe tous risques From Decal:  
 Icelfall  
 Orwell 2+2=5  
 →Trap House  
 →Wildcat  
 From Despop:  
 The Last Movie They Ever Made  
 American Schemers  
 →Everything You Are  
 →ArtCon  
 →Cursed Hearse  
 →Ugly Sweater  
 →Bad Voodoo  
 →Lust and Fear  
 From Dreamscape:  
 Endurance  
 Eternal Sky  
 Wild but True Season 1  
 →The Pollinators Agents for Life  
 →Don't Forget to Leave  
 From Filmlandia:  
 →VHS Maniacs V.1  
 From First Run:  
 E. 1027 – Eileen Gray and the House By the Sea  
 The Making of a Japanese  
 From Freestyle:  
 →Nobody Wants to Shoot a Woman  
 From Full Moon:  
 Sinful Strippers Pack  
 Model Behavior 3 DVD Movie Collection  
 →End of the World  
 From Indiepix:  
 Infinite Summer  
 From Pinnacle:  
 The Blind The Phil Robertson Memorial Edition  
 From Pop Twist:  
 Beyond Graceland Ladysmith Black

Mambazo  
 From Rebellium:  
 →Cottonmouth  
 From Reel Vault:  
 King Kung Fu  
 From Rustblade:  
 Drag Me to Fest V.2  
 Tales from the Italian Horror Festival  
 From Samuel Goldwyn:  
 →Hunting Season (Mel Gibson)  
 From 7 Palms:  
 →Fragments of Us  
 →Letting Go of Jack  
 →Revenge of the Necromancer  
 →Breaking the Silence Victims of Abuse  
 From Socal:  
 →Spider Baby  
 →Kevin Kills  
 From Syndicado:  
 →Falls The Shadow The Life of Athol Fugard  
 →Fear of Flying  
 From 360:  
 Tales from the Art of the Disc  
 From Leomark:  
 →Shooting Silvio  
 →Motiv8tion  
 →What We Used to Be  
 →Bikini Mayhem  
 →Inheritance to Love  
 From Magnolia:  
 Plainclothes  
 It's Never Over Jeff Buckley  
 →The Carpenter's Son  
 From Mubi:  
 Lurker  
 From Music Box:  
 Naked Ambition  
 A Little Prayer  
 From MVD:  
 The John Wayne Gacy Murders  
 The Rubinoos Live at Rockpalast 1978  
 Rockers  
 El Cuerpazo Del Delito Heart & Soul A Love Story  
 Emergent City  
 Vampire Zombies from Space  
 Swastika  
 Knock Off  
 →The Red Book Ritual Gates of Hell  
 →Mel Brooks' Space Ball The Animated Series  
 From Nathan Hill:  
 →Bitter Desire  
 From Neon:  
 Shelly Oaks  
 →Keeper  
 From Oscilloscope:  
 →Dicianno  
 From Paramount:  
 Royal Flying Doctor Service Season 3  
 Roofman  
 →Miss Scarlet Season 6  
 →Family Recipe Jewish American Style  
 →Bookish Season 1  
 →Dexter Resurrection Season 1  
 →Regretting You  
 →Starring Dick Van Dyke  
 From Pinnacle:  
 The Blind The Phil Robertson Memorial Edition  
 From Pop Twist:  
 Beyond Graceland Ladysmith Black