

CELLULOID SETS

The Criterion Collection upgrades one of Hollywood's greatest, if most underappreciated media exposes with a restored edition of Billy Wilder's 1951 **Ace in the Hole** (VS #64), starring Kirk Douglas as a ruthless newsman attempting to exploit a New Mexico tragedy, in a fresh Blu-ray/DVD three-disc edition (\$39.95). Beyond the blistering film, the set includes the 1980 documentary **Portrait of a "60% Perfect" Man: Billy Wilder**, a 1984 Kirk Douglas interview, audio interviews, a commentary track by film scholar Neil Sinyard, essays by admirers critic Molly Haskell and filmmaker Guy Maddin, and more. Essential viewing.

The same elite label rescues an excellent 1962 Italo tragicomedy from near oblivion with its three-disc dual format Blu-ray/DVD edition of Dino Risi's Vittorio Gassman vehicle **Il Sorpasso (The Easy Life)**. Gassman steals the show as a manic, unrepentant joker cruising the landscape behind the wheel of a classic Lancia shared with a recruited novice, shy med student Jean-Louis Trintignant. Our hero leads his conscripted companion on a tour of a Twist-crazed Italy decorated with bikini'd dancing girls. Also from Italy and the same year comes **L'Eclisse** (\$39.95 each), the final chapter of Michelangelo Antonioni's informal trilogy that began with **L'Avventura** (1960). Monica Vitti stars as a young woman who takes up with impulsive new lover Alain Delon in a strikingly lensed black-and-white look at attraction, money, architecture and anomie. Extras include an excellent survey of the auteur's oeuvre, **Michelangelo Antonioni: The Eye That Changed Cinema**, a separate study of **L'Eclisse**, a bonus booklet and more.

Criterion casts an appreciative eye on Britain with a gala new release of Richard Lester's 1964 breakthrough Beatles showcase **A Hard Day's Night**, available in both a Blu-ray/DVD combo pack (\$39.95) and as a single-disc DVD (\$19.95). Bounteous bonus material includes a cast and crew commentary, vintage Beatles interviews, the documentaries **You Can't Do That: The Making of A Hard Day's Night** (1994) and **Things We Said Today** (2002), Lester's pioneering short films, a booklet and much more. Criterion also shines a well-deserved light on Stuart Cooper's under-known **Overlord** (Blu-ray \$39.95), a 1975 black-and-white gem about a young British recruit's journey from civilian life to D-Day, strikingly lensed by longtime Kubrick cinematographer John Alcott. Copious extras include an audio commentary by Cooper and actor Brian Stiller, new and vintage documentaries dealing with WWII, trailer and an elaborate illustrated booklet.

In the horror arena, Severin Films celebrates

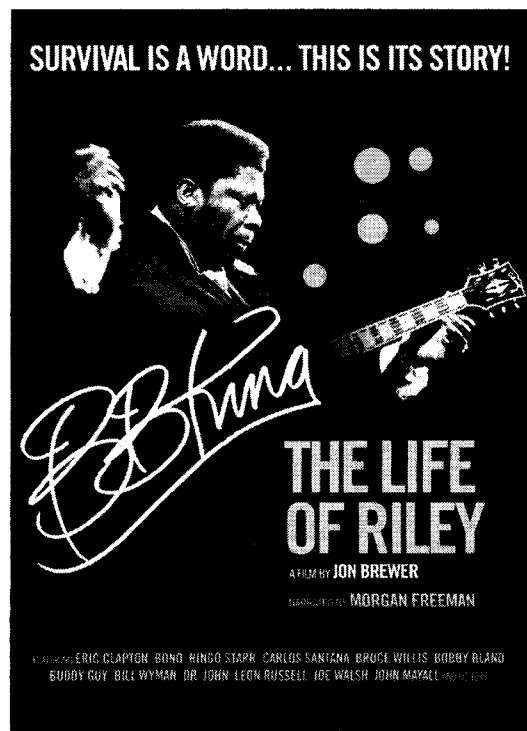
the formerly forbidden world of **Video Nasties: The Definitive Guide** (\$29.98), a 3-DVD set assembling the Brit documentary feature **Video Nasties: Moral Panic, Censorship and Videotape**, along with original trailers for all 39 titles, from **Cannibal Holocaust** to **Zombie Flesh-Eaters**, targeted for censure, plus an additional 33 trailers for films initially excoriated but later exonerated, from **The Evil Dead** to **Zombie Creeping Flesh**. In time for the drive-in season, Severin likewise resurrects and refurbishes a trio of vintage Stateside shockers in special edition Blu-rays. Ted Post's infamous 1973 aberration **The Baby**, starring Anjanette Comer and Michael Pataki, includes audio interviews with director Post and costar David Mooney, while the killer kid chiller **Bloody Birthday** (1981), featuring Joe Penny, Susan Strasberg and Michael Dudikoff, celebrates its 33rd with an audio interview with director Ed Hunt, a video chat with costar Lori Lethin, and the featurette **A Brief History of Slasher Films**. Jess Franco's schoolgirl slasher **Bloody Moon**, hailing from that same annum, completes the threesome, arriving with a Franco interview and original theatrical trailer. The discs list at \$24.98 each.

VCI Entertainment extends loving treatment to our current cover boy, Bela Lugosi, via its Blu-ray restoration of one of our vintage fear faves, the Halperin Brothers' deep and disturbing 1932 voodoo love story **White Zombie** (\$24.95). The disc includes an informative commentary by scare scholar Gary Don Rhodes, trailers and a photo & poster gallery. Cult Epics, meanwhile, unveils a later cult winner, Rene (Massacre at Central High) Daalder's literally mad 1997 terror trip **Hysteria** (\$29.98), with Patrick McGeehan, Amanda Plummer and Emmanuelle Vaugier.

On the western front, Warner Archive issues the nine-film 3-disc set **Tim Holt Western Classics Collection Vol. 4** (\$40.99), rounding up titles ranging from a young Tim's early solo sagebrush days (e.g., **Wagon Train**) and the rare western comedy **The Fargo Kid**) to his later escapades paired with Irish-Mexican partner Richard Martin (**Overland Telegraph, Trail Guide**).

VIDEO VERITE

In the documentary department, **Scarface** fans won't want to miss **Cocaine Cowboys Reloaded** (Magnet Entertainment, \$29.98), an expanded edition of Billy Corben's 2008 probe into Miami's burgeoning blow biz in the late '70s through the '80s, when true-life Tony Montanas turned that tropical city into an amped-up variation on 1920s Chicago; the doc delivers chilling testimony from survivors like local pilot smuggler Mickey Munday, NYC wiseguy emigre Jon Roberts, and, scariest of all, the very self-forgiving hired assassin Jorge Ayala, currently



doing life in a Florida pen. Director Brian De Palma and scripter Oliver Stone obviously drew a lot of their fictionalized details from these very events. On a lighter but utterly infectious note, First Run Features offers the inquiry **When Jews Were Funny** (\$24.95). Alternately earnest, provocative and dense documentarian Alan Zweig interviews a wide array of Jewish comics, from oldsters like Jack Carter and Shecky Greene to transitional figures like Gilbert Gottfried and Andy Kindler, to chart the changes (and virtual vanishing) of traditional Jewish humor and locate the ultimate Jewish joke. Zweig's occasionally annoying style leads to a classic testy exchange with Bob (Super Dave Osborne) Einstein. British invasion buffs will want to see and hear **The Dave Clark Five: Glad All Over** (PBS Video, \$29.99), a fascinating mix of rock history and promotional puffery produced by the eponymous drummer and relentless entrepreneur, with guest commentators ranging from Elton John to the ubiquitous Whoopi Goldberg (who doesn't quite convince with her rote, generic take on the band). Blues lovers will want to tune in to Jon Brewer's **B.B. King: The Life of Riley** (MVD Visual, \$19.95), a brilliant verite feature on the still-living guitar legend, who relates his lengthy tale in his own words, with vocal assists from narrator Morgan Freeman and dozens of fellow musicians and admirers ranging from Bono to Bonnie Raitt, Keith Richards to Ringo Starr. We also recommend Michel Gondry's **Is the Man Who Is Tall Happy?: An Animated Talk with Noam Chomsky** (MPI Media, \$24.98), an enlightening chat that also goes well with our new Gnome Chomsky lawn ornament. Not making that up: just google and see for yourself. We got ours at Kierkegaard Supplies next to the Food for Thought Court at our local Thinking Man's Mall. Scope it out. ☿