

video

FICTION

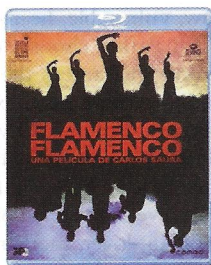
The Activist. color. 90+ min. Cyril Morin, Media in Sync, www.theactivistfilm.com. 2015. DVD UPC 088057980391. \$19.99.

F/LAW

In 1973, during Richard Nixon's second term, there was a lengthy confrontation in Wounded Knee, SD, between federal authorities and members of the American Indian Movement (AIM) who occupied the historic site. *The Activist*, though fictional, borrows from those real events. Marvin, a lawyer and sympathizer whose Native American wife had died a few months earlier, and Bud, an Indian, are unjustly arrested and detained. Much of the action occurs in their small cells where they are visited repeatedly by a member of the Nixon administration and harassed by one of the sheriffs. As the story plays out, Nixon's political machinations and nefarious motivations are exposed as are the suspicious circumstances of Marvin's wife's death. By confining the action to the jail, writer/director Morin manages to evoke the dark paranoia associated with the Nixon years. Unfortunately, the portrayals lack nuance. Bud feels too much the noble savage, and the Nixon representative is smarmy and creepy. The women here don't fare much better. Bud and Marvin's lawyer is a pretty blonde with—you guessed it—oversize spectacles. **VERDICT** The intriguing political drama at the core of this film would have been better served by more complex character development. There may be some interest among students of the Wounded Knee occupation.—**Joan Pedzich, formerly with Harris Beach PLLC, Rochester, NY**

★**Agatha Christie's Partners in Crime.** 2 discs. color. 355+ min. Edward Hall, Agatha Christie Prods., dist. by Acorn Media, 888-870-8047; www.acornonline.com. 2016. DVD UPC 054961244997. \$39.99; Blu-ray UPC 054961245598. \$39.99. SDH subtitles. F/TV

Tommy and Tuppence Beresford (David Williams and Jessica Raine) are an ordinary British husband and wife who discover they have a talent for detection. This set features *The Secret Adversary* and *N or M?*, both adapted from Agatha Christie's best-selling novels, with some modifications made to the original source material. In *Adversary*, the sleuthing couple have already been married for nearly a decade when the viewer first meets them, and



Nick & Nora who? Come meet the Beresfords; a visual and aural treat for your feet

both programs are now "updated" to the Cold War era of the 1950s. However, both films remain true to the spirit of Christie's books while adding some nice plot touches of their own. Though the Beresfords have appeared on the television screen before (James Warwick and Francesca Annis played them in the 1980s), Raine and Williams bring their own distinctive brand of witty charm to Christie's sleuthing couple.

VERDICT With its spot-on production values and superior performances from the entire cast, this set will be an essential addition to the collection of any fan of British mysteries.—**John Charles, formerly with Scottsdale P.L., AZ**

Contamination. color. 95+ min. Luigi Cozzi, Cannon Group, dist. by Arrow Films c/o MVDvisual, www.mvdb2b.com. 2015. DVD UPC 827058103992. \$14.95; 2-disc Blu-ray UPC 760137736899. \$39.95. F/SF

An abandoned ship floats into New York harboring strange pulsating green eggs that burst open with alarming regularity, causing anyone who gets splattered to explode, reducing them to so much dead ham. A no-nonsense scientist (Louise Marleau) is on hand to lead the fight against the pending contamination threat, along with Ian McCulloch of Lucio Fulci's *Zombie*. They soon uncover the trail from the port at which emerald death pods originated, and they discover a conspiracy that reaches around the world and into the cold depths of outer space. Cozzi's exploitation film is an extended feature-length riff on the infamous chest-burster scene from Ridley Scott's *Alien*, with alien slime-induced bodily explosions repeated throughout. This gory visual motif is then narratively attached Frankenstein-style to the traditional 1970s-era environmental disaster film along with the ever popular invaders from outer space genre. **VERDICT** If it weren't for the gore, this film would almost be enjoyable family viewing. Non-essential, but an interesting, lesser-known film for libraries with robust sf or horror collections.—**Douglas Rednour, Georgia State Univ. Lib., Atlanta**

Results. color. 104+ min. Andrew Bujalski, Burn Later Prods., dist. by Magnolia Home Entertainment, www.maggpictures.com. 2015. DVD UPC 876964008839. \$26.98; Blu-ray UPC 876964008846. \$29.98. SDH subtitles. Rated: R. F

Fitness guru Trevor (Guy Pearce) owns his own business in Austin, TX, advocating a holistic approach to exercise. Businesslike Kat (Cobie Smulders) is one of Trevor's trainers. She and Trevor also have a previous romantic relationship. Former New Yorker Danny (Kevin Corrigan), lonely, newly divorced, and the recent recipient of a pile of inherited money, decides he wants to get fit enough to "take a punch." What results is a romantic triangle of sorts as the vulnerable and socially awkward Danny inevitably falls for his attractive trainer Kat, while Kat and Trevor deal with their unresolved issues. The relationships become further tangled when Danny invests in the expansion of Trevor's business. While the end of this indie rom-com is fairly predictable, getting there is entertaining as the three characters shape their lives while trying to reshape Danny. **VERDICT** The performances by Pearce, Smulders, and especially the low-key Corrigan make this gentle comedy worth watching. Recommended for larger film collections.—**Joan Greenberg, Warminster, PA**

Rosamunde Pilcher's Shades of Love. 4 discs. color. 366+ min. Giles Foster, Gate Television Prod., dist. by Acorn Media, 888-870-8047; www.acornonline.com. 2015. DVD ISBN 9781621724346. \$59.99. SDH subtitles. F

This production is glamorous, the camera-work expansive, the settings richly textured, and the characters upper crust, but there the similarities to *Downton Abbey* and other captivating British TV dramas end. In *Shades*, the plots are contrived, the dialog is banal, and the characters are one-dimensional. In the first episode, "Family Secret," Laura Aird, beloved daughter of the Aird family who just might be illegitimate (the secret), falls madly in love with a chap named Guy, whose surname, background, family, and circumstances are never questioned or even mentioned. Toward the end of the episode, Laura and Guy, both Oxford students, move into a luxury apartment together and hint at marriage. Does that bear any resemblance to reality—even fictional reality? **VERDICT** Fans of Acorn's British soap operas will likely fall for *Shades of Love*, despite its flaws. Recommended for large library collections.—**Sheila S. Intner, professor emerita, Simmons GSLIS at Mt. Holyoke Coll., South Hadley, MA**