

THE DVD LASER DISC NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER
2023
Issue #471
\$5.00

PO Box 382, Glen Cove, NY 11542-0382 • (212) 242-3324 • www.DVDLaser.com

Perfect pink

Greta Gerwig's gloriously giddy 2023 dialectic entertainment, **Barbie**, is rendered all the more divine by its presentation from Warner Bros. and SDS Studio Distribution Services as a 4K UltraHD Blu-ray (UPC#883929801794, \$50), which replicates every shade and variation of the film's many different pinks with absolute perfection. The film's surreal world of dolls come to life is an ideal plaything for the vivid realism of the 4K format. Although there are a number of characters named 'Barbie' in the film, Margot Robbie is the central character, the 'Classic Barbie,' who mysteriously begins to feel ennuï and discovers a small patch of cellulite on her thigh. Panic time. Her character ventures, as characters in imaginative, Candide-land films can do, into the somewhat real Los Angeles, with 'Ken,' played by Ryan Gosling, in tow. In the heroine's world, the Barbies rule and the Kens are just accouterments, like dresses, shoes and cars. In the real world, well, we all know how the real world operates. Gosling's character is impressed, and makes his way back to the doll world to infect it with ideas of a new social order. Oh dear. In addition to being an utter visual delight, the film is laugh-alicious. Robbie has to play the 'straight man' role, but still manages to infuse great humor into her reactions and responses. As the less restricted supportive attachment, Gosling is the goose that lays golden eggs of comedy again and again.

The film runs 114 minutes, and frankly, its final act downshifts a little bit after all of the crazy, stimulating ideas and humor that has come before it. Will Ferrell, playing the CEO of 'Mattel,' disappears from the movie for a stretch, suggesting that Gerwig does not have a tight handle on every plot strand she is weaving. After bonding with genuine humans represented by America Ferrara and Ariana Greenblatt, Robbie's character has to go through a reconciliation with what she represents in order to reclaim her toy world. Rhea Perlman is brought in to play a sagely character that can advise her about existence, and the conversation does go on a bit. The 4K format is so crisp and resplendent, however, that impatience is stayed as the movie ignores or works its way out of the constructs it has placed to upset the happiness of its characters, delivering an ending that will go over the heads of children, feel like a 'meh' punchline to others, and will be a stamp of comedic brilliance for those who appreciate Gerwig's accomplishment. She has taken medicinal concepts about the roles and treatment of women, the function of toys and their reinforcement of stereotypes, the striving everyone feels for independence of thought and style, and the near oppressive strata that remains an integral part of gender definition, and has made it all go down with a spoonful of sugar, in pink.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2:1. The Dolby Atmos sound is crisp and energetic (and the bass isn't bad, either). There is an audio track that describes the action in American ("Barbie steps out of her heels, and her feet go flat. She tumbles to the ground. Spinning, she gazes down at her unpointed toes. Tall Ken looks her way from a lifeguard tower through pink binoculars."), a track that describes the action in British with less detail ("Barbie steps out of her stilettos and her feet remain raised at the heel. Her feet now flat on the sand she falls over, and looks at them. Lifeguard Tall Ken looks at her through binoculars."), alternate French, Spanish and Italian audio tracks, optional English, French, Spanish, Italian, Swedish, Danish, Norwegian and Finnish subtitles, and 45 minutes of enjoyable promotional featurettes that go into how the film's different design components came together and how much the cast, which includes Kate McKinnon in a significant surprise role, enjoyed themselves.

Haunting 4K

You need only have seen the 2001 haunted house story, **The Others**, once and you will never EVER forget its primary conceit, but if that stays your hand for watching it again (or multiple times thereafter), then be advised that the film, directed by Alejandro Amenábar, has a great deal more to offer than just one clever plot twist, especially now that it has been released as a beautiful 4K Blu-ray by Janus Films, StudioCanal and The Criterion Collection (UPC#715515288019, \$50). Nicole Kidman stars as a war widow living in a large mansion on the island of Jersey with her two children

immediately after World War II, the movie opening with the arrival of three servants who respond to an advertisement to aid with the upkeep of the otherwise deserted house. At night, however, the children start hearing noises and seeing things. The film's atmosphere is exquisite, from the quiet hallways to the endless outdoor fog, and in 4K on top of a beautiful transfer, every shot is transfixing, especially since things sometimes happen in corners you aren't looking at directly. The Dolby Atmos sound is delicately defined and equally fleeting with errant noises. Running 104 minutes, the film is spooky as all get out, but also offers a highly satisfying psychological exploration behind its frights. It could be interpreted that a haunted house is a head turned inside out, but using Kidman's ice queen reserve, the film creates an unnerving dynamic between the grace and polish of luxury and the horror of self-awareness. It is only when you immediately go back to watch the movie a second time after it finishes that you realize how important Kidman's scream in the very first moments of the film is to what follows. In 4K, however, you may just want to keep on watching the film over and over again.

Criterion has included a standard Blu-ray platter along with the 4K platter, and the standard Blu-ray has also been issued as a single platter release (UPC#715515288118, \$40). Letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1, the standard BD looks great, of course, but the 4K is a little bit sharper and more intricately colored, and the sound has a slightly crisper definition, enough not just to make the film more unnerving, but more elegant, as well. The cinematography's heavy grain at times adds to the atmosphere and is fully justified by the narrative. One of the other appealing aspects to the presentation on 4K is the absolute silence that is sometimes achieved between the noises. The sound is so clean it is eerie. We reviewed a Dimension Home Video DVD in May 02. The picture was fine and the sound was wonderful, but even the standard BD adds to the detail, stability and strength of the presentation. Both platters have optional English subtitles and a commentary in Spanish by Amenábar, with optional English subtitles for it, as well. He explains his thought process behind the choices he made, shares the challenges he faced to elicit the performances he was looking for, explains the story while emphasizing that it remains a 'film about questions, not answers,' and describes the technical tools he used to achieve the film's masterful atmosphere. "Taking into account that horror movies nowadays overuse surround sound and the sound jumps all over the place, we keep the sound on the screen. First, to enhance that classic feel we wanted the film to have, and second, because the film is in many ways a throwback. More than a film of screams, it's film of whispers. You'll notice that the sound actually starts behind your back, a sort of whispering, so that the viewer, if they're engaged with the scene, suddenly feels like there's someone whispering behind them. But then they realize it's just the scene in the film. That positioning of the viewer is very important to me. I need the viewer to identify visually and acoustically with the characters in the film. I think it is the most effective way to convey that suspense."

The standard Blu-ray has a multitude of additional features. Along with a trailer, longer and somewhat altered Spanish language versions of the supplements that appeared on the DVD are featured, including a 29-minute promotional featurette, a 7-minute segment on the visual effects, and 5 minutes of behind-the-scenes footage. Also featured are 8 minutes of wisely deleted scenes that are still worthwhile for understanding what Amenábar wanted to emphasize, 3 minutes of interesting audition footage for the child actors, a 3-minute piece on staging the antique photographs seen in the film, a 2-minute segment on the wonderful set and costume designs, a 6-minute segment on recording Amenábar's music for the film, an excellent 36-minute interview with Amenábar about the film's meanings and thematic underpinnings and a great 51-minute retrospective documentary that includes some nice interviews with the film's participants, including an extensive talk with Kidman.

The days the music lived

Luis Valdez's elative 1987 depiction of the brief rock and roll stardom of Ritchie Valens, **La Bamba**, has been released on a spellbinding Blu-ray by Columbia Pictures and The Criterion Collection (UPC#715515287319, \$40). Lou Diamond Phillips broke into film by starring as Valens in the Columbia production, which is at once a nostalgic, contemplative look at Hispanic life in Southern California in the late Fifties, a compelling drama about a troubled brother who feels both resentful of and drawn to his more talented younger sibling (the story that serves as the spine of the film), and a dizzyingly joyful celebration of American rock music in its youth. It is in many ways a perfect movie.

In addition to the original recordings and the deft covers—many of Valens' hits are executed by Los Lobos—Carlos Santana supplies an evocative background score that is especially haunting because of the crisp directional detail delivered by the Blu-ray's DTS audio track. With Phillips' dreamy grin making every close-up a gemstone moment, Valdez's experienced skill at guiding audiences through an entertainment blends the 108-minute film's various components together with an exquisite precision that is then accentuated by the crisp, gorgeous picture and clear, detailed audio on the BD. Esai Morales, Rosanna DeSoto, Danielle von Zemeck, Elizabeth Peña and Joe Pantoliano co-star, with Brian Setzer playing Eddie Cochran.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1. We reviewed the Columbia DVD in Jun 99, and several special features have been carried over, including two terrific commentary tracks with many members of the cast and the crew (including co-producer Taylor Hackford), a trailer and a tear-inducing 20-minute retrospective documentary that includes not only the filmmakers but Valens' family. Additionally, Criterion has included 20 minutes of impressive audition tapes featuring Phillips, Morales, Peña and DeSoto, and two excellent interviews with Valdez, running a total of 70 minutes (one conducted by Robert Rodriguez), that go over his entire career, including his stage work (he started by working closely as sort of a promotional arm for Cesar Chavez and eventually turned his group's street performances into a legitimate theater troupe—by and large his outstanding career is still largely ignored outside of Hispanic-American cultural hubs), and dissect all of his films.

Wyler home invasions

William Wyler's outstanding suburban hostage thriller, the 1955 Paramount production, **The Desperate Hours**, has been released on a gorgeous Blu-ray by Paramount and Arrow Video (UPC#760137135784, \$40). Fredric March is the father of a typical middle class family and Humphrey Bogart is the frantic prison escapee who needs to buy time before he can get the money he needs to go wherever it is he's planning on going. Dewey Martin and Robert Middleton are his two companions, while Martha Scott plays the wife of March's character, Richard Eyer is their young son, and Mary Murphy is their decade-older daughter. The performances are all terrific and Wyler's masterful staging hides the strained logic of the situation with a compelling pace. As great as March and Bogart are, however, they are even better when they are in the same shot. They are two enormously different characters, with different backgrounds, different temperaments and different goals. The thought that they might actually be two similarly lauded and successful movie stars never crosses your mind, at least not much. What really makes the Blu-ray exciting, however, is that the black-and-white feature was shot in Paramount's VistaVision, and letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1, the image is both spotless and immediate. The clarity of the picture makes the presentation indiscernible from a theatrical screening, and makes those two-shots of March and Bogart all the more gripping. This is the kind of experience you live for when you invest in home video.

Gig Young, Arthur Kennedy, Ray Collins and Whit Bissell co-star. Running 112 minutes, the film explores both the fragility and inner strength of the American middle class, and is less valued than some of Wyler's other features because the suspense genre is less valued, but its artistry is impeccable and despite the now antique Fifties setting, its entertainment is timeless. The monophonic sound is clear. There are optional English subtitles, a trailer, a nice collection of English and Spanish lobby cards in still frame, a real good 39-minute overview of the film's history and artistry, a very fine 15-minute deconstruction of the film and particularly Bogart's performance, and a 12-minute audio interview with Wyler's daughter, Catherine Wyler, sharing her recollections about the film and the players.

Film historian Daniel Kremer provides a passable commentary track, going over the backgrounds of the stars, Wyler and Paramount, and looking at what was happening with them specifically in the Fifties. He also goes over the background of the story itself, talks about the remakes and explains why Wyler's expertise was particularly suited toward a film with this sort of enclosed dynamics.

A home invasion story of a different sort, Wyler's outstanding 1942 MGM Oscar winner, **Mrs. Miniver**, is available on Blu-ray from Warner Home Video (UPC#883929264032, \$20). Greer Garson is a British housewife whose family life is upended by the onset of World War II. Walter Pidgeon plays her husband, Richard Ney is her eldest son and Teresa Wright is the son's girlfriend. May Whitty, Reginald Owen, Henry Travers and Henry Wilcoxon are also featured. Although the film builds to a strong emotional finale, much of it is subtle, examining the day-to-day life in what is apparently a London suburb, and then altering or outright tearing apart what had been previously established when the interruptions of war begin. Garson is word perfect in the role, so much so that she manages to make the normalcy of her character a glowing beacon of steadfastness, pragmatism and love. As he does in **Desperate Hours**, Wyler's staging of every scene has a compelling weight to its observation of the characters and their thoughts—again, as with Garson, turning the ordinary into beautiful perfection, like the rose that gives the film its title.

Indeed, one should probably watch **Mrs. Miniver** first and then watch **Desperate Hours** second. The full screen black-and-white picture is in

excellent condition, with the same riveting crispness and finely detailed contrasts that **Desperate Hours** has, so that the advancement to the VistaVision image on **Desperate Hours** will have an even greater impact as that film transitions a viewer to a world and attitude that have been permanently altered by the horrors of war. The monophonic sound is clear and nearly noiseless. There are alternate French, Spanish, Italian and German audio tracks and optional English, French, Spanish, Italian, German and Korea subtitles. Along with a trailer, there is a minute-long black-and-white newsreel clip of Garson receiving her acting Oscar; a 10-minute MGM Tex Avery color cartoon from 1942, **Blitz Wolf**, spoofing the Axis powers as the wolf and presenting the Three Little Pigs as the Allies, with racist stereotypes and Avery's surreal imagination abounding; a nice 22-minute black-and-white MGM **Crime Does Not Pay** short from 1942, **For the Common Defense**, featuring Van Johnson as an American agent working with Latin American governments to prevent local gangsters from helping Japanese infiltrators (the short has both atmosphere and action); and a very interesting 1942 MGM black-and-white short running 19 minutes, **Mr. Blabbermouth!**, that belittles characters who are pessimistic about America's chances in the war (which is specifically identified as, "World War II," although it was still just getting underway so far as the United States was concerned).

Transfixing Bears

A wonderful, multi-layered Iranian film with striking cinematography, **No Bears**, has been released as a *Janus Contemporaries* Blu-ray by Sideshow, Janus Films and The Criterion Channel (UPC#715515288613, \$30). The director, Jafar Panahi, also stars in the 2022 production, playing a variation of himself, spending time in a small town near the Turkish border as he attempts to direct a film being shot in Turkey over the Internet—that is when he has enough bars to communicate with his crew. Then there is the film he is shooting, and a drama involving the lead actors, those two stories—which are both about obtaining phony passports to emigrate—intertwining to the point where one cannot tell which narrative is which. Finally, there is lots of drama in the small town, as a young woman wants to run away with a young boy and not his older cousin, to whom she has been promised since birth. Unwittingly, Panahi's character steps into the middle of that contretemps, just as his assistant director is desperately trying to persuade him to sneak across the border and leave Iran, something he is reluctant to do. There is both great humor and deep tragedy in what unfolds. Running 107 minutes, the film juxtaposes metropolitan sensibilities with traditional values while presenting memorable characters caught up in a myriad of fascinating and compelling narratives, amid transfixing images.

The images come from a number of sources (is this the first film to use an automobile's backup camera for narrative advancement?), but there is a thrilling immediacy that seems to place the viewer right next to Panahi as he observes the world around him. The nighttime photography is amazing, and it comes across a little uncertainly on the image transfer, but otherwise the BD's picture looks fantastic, with crisp, vivid and detailed hues. The 5.1-channel DTS sound has a satisfying surround presence that seems to capture every noise made in the town. Letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1, the film is in Farsi, Turkish and Azari with optional English subtitles. Unfortunately, the film does not start up where it left off if playback is terminated. Along with a trailer, there is a 2-minute audio recording by Panahi—who was in jail at the time—that played at a festival where the film won an award, and a good 18-minute piece on Iran's 'poetic realism' cinema, how Panahi fits into the mix, the subversive nature of the films he has made and a dissection of the film at hand.

Here comes Mr. Jordan again

Robert Morley is Mr. Jordan, Anthony Franciosa is the fighter pulled into the afterlife prematurely by Wally Cox's squeamish spirit and Joey Bishop is the fighter's befuddled trainer trying to make sense of everything when Franciosa's character, transported into a millionaire's body, summons him and wants to train for the championship in a marvelous 1961 black-and-white CBS *Dupont Show of the Month* broadcast, **Heaven Can Wait**, which has been resurrected by Liberation Hall (UPC#089353403423, \$15). Diana Van der Vlis plays the girl that Franciosa's character(s) falls in love with, but even though she doesn't have the star presence that the others do, and really doesn't have the charisma, either, the story is so sweet and so focused on the hero's love for her that the show works just fine with her as the heroine (although we salivate at the thought of what Elizabeth Montgomery might have done in the part, considering her father had the original Franciosa role in the 1941 adaptation of the story). Frank McHugh and Elizabeth Ashley are also featured. Shot on soundstages in a mix of video and film (both made by Dupont, we are assured), there are primitive special effects that are nevertheless all that is needed to convey the narrative. Morley and Cox can just stand there and be funny as all get out, and Bishop works his butt off to deliver his comedy, while Franciosa shoulders the brunt of the narrative and its momentum effectively. It is a charming and humorous fantasy supporting the concepts of fate and true love, and its retrieval from the archives of forgotten television events is a welcome achievement.

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The DVD-Laser Disc Newsletter is edited and published by Douglas Pratt

Due to its age and source, the full screen picture is best viewed on a smaller screen. The image is soft and has occasional blips, but to some extent its antiquity helps sell the budgetary and technological limitations of the production. On the other hand, the image is so clear at times that you can see sweat dripping off of Franciosa's chin. The monophonic sound has a basic level of noise, but is workable, and there is no captioning. The show runs 86 minutes with the original Dupont commercials included (Dupont explaining how they are helping civilization with their great improvements to products, and also how they take really good care of their workers), but can also be accessed without the commercials for a 76-minute running time, if you really can't wait for **Heaven** to conclude.

The things we do for love

In the Fifties and early Sixties, romantic features were the norm for Chinese films, but that fell by the wayside with the rise of martial arts and subsequent contemporary action movies, so that by the Nineties, there was a whole generation of moviegoers who didn't realize they were hungry for romance. That changed with the 1990 Hong Kong feature directed by Benny Chan and Johnnie To, **A Moment of Romance**, which has been released on Blu-ray by Radiance (UPC\$760137130345, \$35). It begins as an action film, kind of like the initial **Fast and Furious** movies, with a hot driver played by Andy Lau being pressured into driving the getaway car in a jewelry robbery. Although he succeeds in his assignment, things go bad at one point and he grabs another car, taking a young hostage played by Jacklyn Chien-Lien Wu. They both can't admit it, but they are attracted to one another, and the romance advances parallel to the action. Near the halfway point, Lau's character forces Wu's character to participate in a particularly dangerous race (the boys race trucks, while the girls stand on top of their cabs, and whichever girl holds on the longest, the guy wins), more hoping to scare her away than anything else, but instead, when it is over, he falls head over heels for her. From that point forward, the film turns mostly into a dreamy romance, with montages set to songs as the two share one another's company away from the stresses of the world. Eventually, however, the stresses show up again, as Lau's character is pulled into a gang war while Wu's character is returned to her parents, who plan to send her far away. Thus, the end of the 92-minute film is bloody and tearful.

Although the film swings wildly between what might be characterized as a 'guy movie' and a 'women's picture,' it is that very excess in each direction that makes the film so viscerally appealing. The performances are terrific, particularly with the two stars, who sell their shared affections exquisitely, and carry the viewer along with each distinctively fond glance. There is plenty of blood, as well, and if the film achieves its goal, men will come away a little more open to romance while women will be less squeamish about violence and gore. Otherwise, everyone watching the movie is going to be burying his or her head at some point.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1. The colors are slick and glossy, and the image is sharp. The monophonic sound is reasonably clear and the film is in Cantonese with optional English subtitles. There is also an English language track, but it kind of takes you out of the film. Along with a trailer, there is a 21-minute audio-only interview with Chan, who helps to differentiate his contributions from To's and otherwise reminisces about the production, and a very good 26-minute analysis of the film's genre mixing and its place in the progression of Hong Kong features, utilizing scores of posters and film clips.

Asian film expert Frank Djeng provides a breathless commentary track, speaking rapidly to fit in everything he knows about the film and the filmmakers, as well as the impact that the movie had not only on the film marketplace, but the pop charts as well, since several numbers from the film, which segue at times into potential Eighties-style music videos, became big hits. The core of the movie's success, however, was not so much the car sequences or the rarely displayed onscreen kiss between the two stars, but rather the draw of Lau himself. "The film was not marketed as an action film or a romance, but rather as an Andy Lau film. The marketing materials had Andy in a motorcycle helmet, and later you see him embracing [Wu] in the rain that was used as the main poster image. So this is really Andy Lau at the height of his popularity."

Wrong Helen

The face of the actress who has twelfth billing in Robert Wise's 1955 historic spectacle, **Helen of Troy**, did indeed launch a thousand ships, or, at least, a thousand motorcycles straddled by paparazzi. The lead actress in the eponymous role, however, Rosanna Podesta, launches nothing but a thousand yawns. Paired with Jack Semas as the Trojan prince who runs away with her, the two have no charisma whatsoever, and while the film has other significant flaws, none cry out so badly as the need for two real movie stars in those central parts. Cedric Hardwicke, Stanley Baker and Harry Andrews are also among the cast, but buried a little further down in the list is a young actress who is so fetching as a slave girl that Wise limits the number of times she is in the same shot as Podesta, Brigitte Bardot.

Released on Blu-ray by Warner Bros. as a *WB Warner Archive Collection* title (UPC#810134941601, \$22), the film was shot in Cinemascope and was intended to join the bandwagon of grandiose Hollywood productions as the widescreen format was just taking off. If you look at the other historical epics from the day, however, they all had valid dramas to support their budgetary indulgences. If the script for **Helen of Troy** could not be fleshed out with a little more emotion and meaning to the characters being depicted, then at the very least, two big movie stars who bring persona and sizzle with them could have gone a long way to gloss over the film's shortcomings.

Running 121 minutes, the movie opens with an Overture. There is no Intermission (or Exit Music, for that matter), but there is a clear place for one at the film's halfway point. In the first half, Semas' character travels to Sparta to negotiate a peace with the Grecian states, but meets Podesta's character and also discovers that the Greeks have no intention of seeking anything but plunder. There are a couple of decent action scenes (Wise's experience with boxing films came in handy) and there is Bardot, but the convolutions of the political posturing feel static. If you can make it to the second half, where the Greeks lay siege to Troy, the battle scenes are impressive and exhilarating,

with a genuine cast of thousands, although you can't examine the logic of events too closely. The Greeks manage to get an attacking force inside the Trojan walls, and an important character is killed, but the Trojans rally and force them out. Here's the thing, though—as the Greeks are retreating, the Trojans hit their wall-breaching towers with flaming arrows. Had they done so when the Greeks were first attacking, the Trojan fortifications would never have been transgressed. What happened? It took too long rubbing the sticks together to make the fire? Again, however, if in the middle of all of this there were two scrumptious movie stars making out and grasping at each other in believable desperation, the fireworks around them might have been worthwhile. Instead, the film brings forth the shell of a colossal entertainment, with nothing inside.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.55:1. The color transfer looks great and the source material is free of impurities. The sound, including the Overture, is centered for the first 10 minutes or so, but after that the 5.1-channel DTS mix kicks in. Max Steiner, whose credit comes right before Wise's, wrote the music that receives most of the benefit from the wonderful, old fashioned separations and dimensional presence, but there are occasional sound effects coming from the edges, as well. There are optional English subtitles, a trailer, a 7-minute *Merrie Melodies* cartoon from 1956 entitled *Napoleon Bunny-Part* in which Bugs Bunny drives Napoleon so crazy he ends up in a loony bin, and 18 minutes of terrific black-and-white promotional television featurettes for the film hosted by Gig Young.

Dislocated jaws

Jaws was about the people—the shark was just a distraction. The 2018 sci-fi remake, **The Meg**, on the other hand, is about the shark, and the people are the distraction. Apparently the ocean floor has a false bottom and a group of marine scientists open it up, unleashing a prehistoric megalodon, which is to a Great White shark was a lion on steroids is to a kitten. Jason Statham is a submarine rescue expert called in by a billionaire to save the research team. The film lifts blocking, camera angles and editing straight from **Jaws**, but its characters are superficial and running 113 minutes, the film is designed just to give you thrills. But hey, so what if it is like pouring yourself a bowl of Lucky Charms and then only eating the marshmallow parts? After all, that's what the shark is doing. The movie has the spirit of a Fifties sci-fi horror film, with better looking tech and special effects that don't suck. Directed by John Turteltaub, the performances are fun and the film is a grand adventure with plenty of enjoyable excitements.

Warner Home Video has released **The Meg** on Blu-ray (UPC#88392962-3310, \$13), letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1. The color transfer looks slick and the darker underwater sequences are free of distortion. The Dolby Atmos sound has a detailed surround mix and adds to the general stimulation the film provides. There is an audio track that describes the action ("An underwater view shows the dog's little feet paddling, wearing a pink bow. She skims her chin on the surface, and wags her tail. Pippin sees the shark surface up ahead and quickly turns around. The shark aims for the boat."), French, Spanish and Portuguese audio tracks, English, French, Spanish and Portuguese subtitles, and 23 minutes of good production featurettes.

The first half of **Meg 2 The Trench**, a Warner SDS Studio Distribution Services *4K UltraHD* Blu-ray (UPC#883929801985, \$50), is an underwater science-fiction adventure, a beloved genre that recalls special effects people putting gerbil mazes into fish tanks and pretending they were an underwater city. Updated with modern special effects, the 2023 feature is still a wonderful stimulant for the imagination. The actress who was a smart aleck child in the first film, Sophia Cai, is a teenager in the sequel, and while her comebacks are not as tightly controlled by the direction and editing as they were in the initial film, her charm gradually seeps through her presence and it is very refreshing that the filmmakers stuck with her despite age having taken its toll on her innate cuteness. Statham stars, of course, and is joined by Jacky Wu (billed as Wu Jing), their characters, with a couple of others, taking two subsurface to descend and explore the hidden area where the monstrous sharks, and a bunch of other nasty creatures, reside, only to uncover an illegal—or perhaps it is perfectly legal, but the people who are running it are doing their best to keep it a secret—mining operation. This part of the 116-minute feature is a delight, full of action, lovely effects and even a tiny bit of actual character development. Then in the second half, the bad guys chase the good guys to a tropical resort island on the surface, and the monsters follow (this section basically begins when a character played by Page Kennedy, who had pretty much been a clown in the first film, announces that he has buffed up to prepare this time around, "I ain't stupid. I trained up, I learned how to fight, I learned how to swim, and I will never go anywhere without my survival pack. Yeah, I even made poison-tipped bullets, just like **Jaws 2**."). Yes, it is a cheesy double down of the stuff that made the first **Meg** so popular, but since it is only half of the movie, it is as compact as it is wildly busy with creatures and stunts. Directed by Ben Wheatley, if the promise of the film as a whole is to live up to its first part, then it fails, but if the promise is to deliver a sequel that is more and better than its predecessor, then it succeeds beyond all hope.

And everything from the special effects to the mayhem is also energized by the 4K format. The special effects on the **The Meg** Blu-ray looked terrific, but the sharper chromatic detail and smoother, crisper edges that the 4K enables makes **The Trench** even more realistic and satisfying. The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1. The Dolby Atmos sound has a full-throttled surround presence and contributes to every thrill. There is an audio track that describes the action ("In slow motion, she leaps into the air, reaching for his outstretched hand, but a tentacle wraps around the inside of the helicopter and pulls it away. The helicopter's blades slice the tentacle to pieces, but another grabs the landing skid."), alternate French and Spanish audio tracks, optional English, French and Spanish subtitles, and 23 minutes of very enjoyable production featurettes that focus on the special effects and the monsters.

Great classic westerns of the Fifties

We were flabbergasted that we had never heard of William Wellman's outstanding Westward the Women when we reviewed the DVD in Feb 14. While the film was so obviously ahead of its time, it came from someone who, despite his many social dramas, had a reputation as a 'man's director' because of his war films, and thus served as an unexpected enlightenment. Not only is the 1951 MGM movie, which has now been released on Blu-ray by Warner Bros. as a *WB Warner Archive Collection* title (UPC#810134943377, \$22), a classic western, it is a greatly underappreciated feminist masterpiece. Yes, the film stars Robert Taylor, playing a wagon train boss who is leading a hundred women across the pre-Civil War country from Chicago to California (so they can find husbands, who have arranged and funded the trip), but as much as men act like men in the film, the women genuinely act like women, and the movie gives them equal or even more than equal time as heroes.

We have always felt that Wellman was overrated as a director, but the one consistency throughout his career was his adherence to truth and reality. Thanks to Hollywood, the difference in a western set before the Civil War and one that is set afterwards (such as the technological advances firearms underwent during the war) has often been blurred, particularly in the Fifties when the genre dominated popular entertainment. Wellman was a stickler, however, for getting everything right, and so the period detail of the film is meticulous, and this in turn rubs off on the characters. Given the movie's premise, everything proceeds in a tightly logical and believable fashion. The men Taylor's character hires to help with the journey are inevitably jerks and abandon the wagon train by the halfway point, so the women readily step up to take on the responsibilities that are needed for the journey to succeed. Due to his experience, Taylor's character in charge, but this is a real world. He's not always right, and the women aren't always right. The performances are vividly real—Wellman even has one character speaking partially in Japanese and another speaking entirely in Italian. Running 116 minutes, the film gradually becomes a testament to their strength and endurance, and despite the hardships and tragedies (and excitements) that occur along the way, it becomes a joyful celebration of the undeniable fact that America was not settled by just men as Hollywood often made you think, and that women had a solidly equal share in achieving its growth and permanence.

The full screen black-and-white picture has an inherent grain but is otherwise spotless and an improvement over the DVD. The DVD was okay, but was inconsistent in its presentation, while the BD is unwavering. The monophonic sound is also stronger, so that you can hear the sounds of the cows mixed in with the horses, even though you don't see that cows were there until near the end. There are optional English subtitles. The special features on the DVD are carried over, including a trailer, a 10-minute production featurette, and an informative commentary track from film expert Scott Eyman. Additionally, the BD has added two color 7-minute MGM Tom & Jerry cartoons, *Texas Tom* from 1950 which is set on a dude ranch where the cat and mouse pester and torture each other as the cat tries to pick up a female guest, and *The Duck Doctor* from 1952 in which the mouse protects a baby duck from the duck hunting cat; and a *Hollywood Radio Theater* (not *Lux*, as is mistakenly listed on the menu and the jacket) adaptation from 1952 featuring Taylor and running 49 minutes, which captures the film's humor a little better than it is able to convey the drama or the action.

The five quick, wonderful westerns made by Budd Boetticher and Randolph Scott for Columbia Pictures in the late Fifties have been gathered in a terrific six-platter Criterion Collection 4K Blu-ray set, The Ranown Westerns (UPC#715515285612, \$150). We reviewed all five when Sony Pictures released them on DVD as the Budd Boetticher Collection (Jan 09), and to summarize what we said at the time, the three best films are set in the western wilderness and the two weaker offerings are set in a town. That being the case, we chose to watch the movies in mostly reverse order of preference, which Criterion has to some extent obliged. The films, which basically have interchangeable titles, are spread across three platters on the 4K Blu-rays and two platters on the standard Blu-rays, with the third Blu-ray platter holding supplementary materials. The two 'town' pictures, *Decision at Sundown* from 1957 and *Buchanan Rides Alone* from 1958, appear together on the second platter, which we watched first. Two of the 'wilderness' films, *Ride Lonesome* from 1959 and *Comanche Station* from 1960, appear on the third platter, which we watched next. And the best film in the group (although *Ride Lonesome* is our favorite), *The Tall T* from 1957, sits by itself on the first platter, which we saved for last (it is bundled with the 'town' pictures on the standard BD platter).

We are really glad we did it this way, too, because *Decision at Sundown* is a fantastic movie. Scott's character and his partner, played by Noah Beery, Jr., ride into a town where Scott's character intends to kill the town's most prominent citizen, played by John Carroll, who happens to be getting married that day. Scott's character crashes the wedding, announces his intentions and then holds up in a stable as Carroll's character has his men try to coax him out. Running 77 minutes, what is most striking is how vividly the characters are drawn. Every character with a speaking part has a complex psychology and full moral continuum. Scott's character is just as wrongheaded for the revenge he wants to accomplish (you discount his actions at the opening, when he stops a stage he is riding, but they are not 'heroic' by any test of the word) as Carroll's character is plausibly an upstanding businessman, although much of the town could take him or leave him and even his fiancée is not head over heels for him. It is the way that the film plays out that is so satisfying—embracing the western environment and its details (the horses sweat visibly), presenting one distinctive character after another, providing a backstory that is as rich as the story at hand, throwing in

some action and always pushing the narrative forward—giving the viewer enough time to savor each plot turn, conversation or confrontation, but not enough time to become impatient with it. In essence, it is a nearly perfect little film, and yet it is the least accomplished of the bunch. Karen Steele and Valerie French co-star, with Andrew Duggan and John Archer.

The companion feature, *Buchanan Rides Alone*, open with Scott's character entering a frontier town on the border between the U.S. and Mexico from the Mexico side. There is no ambiguity here about his moral standing. However, he soon finds himself in the middle of a bar fight where a man is killed and he ends up in jail for murder along with the young Mexican lad who pulled the trigger. It is a small town, controlled by one family—the same family the man who was killed belongs to—and tensions rise as there is almost a lynching. Running 79 minutes, the main thrust of the story is about how Scott's character expiates himself from the mess he is in, and helps to save his cellmate as well. Not only does the story constantly shift to keep pulling a viewer along, but it presents a sophisticated analogy of the American political system as the hero's chances rise and fall. Scott's character is laconic and often bemused by what he sees around him, even when his life is on the line, and that encourages the viewer to take things with the same attitude. The only flaw in the film—and it might be excused by suggesting that all of the characters, including the heroes, are very dumb cowboys—is that when the heroes tie up the bad guys and escape, they don't shoo away the extra horses, so as soon as the bad guys untie themselves, they are right on the heroes' tail again. If you come across this flagrant mistake after watching three terrific films, then it is quite a drag, but if you're just getting started with the movies, it is easier to take it in your stride without losing the mood the film has established with its wonderfully complex logic of greed and self preservation. Again, the supporting characters are all vividly drawn, and the film is wonderful escapist entertainment. Craig Stevens co-stars, with Barry Kelley, Tol Avery and L.Q. Jones.

Scott is a bounty hunter bringing back a killer in *Ride Lonesome*, with the killer's brother (played by Lee Van Cleef!) and henchmen chasing him, as are Indians. He hooks up with a couple of other bounty hunters—wonderfully played by Pernel Roberts and James Coburn (his first feature role, and he has a couple of beautiful scenes)—and the wife of a massacred stationmaster must also go with them as they cross desert sands to reach a town. Steele and James Best co-star. Running 75 minutes, the film is an ideal mix of action and drama, and this time the story logic is impeccable, right up to the tone-perfect ending. The film is exquisite escapist entertainment, once again peopled by characters who matter to you.

Scott's character rescues a woman from Indian captivity at the beginning of *Comanche Station*, but during their trip back to her hometown, they meet bounty hunters who also wanted to rescue her, their leader played by Claude Akins, and other marauding Indians also start coming after them. Running 73 minutes, the film is another lovely mix of character exploration—again, even the supporting characters have a number of terrific scenes that delve into their wants and desires—and rousing action. Nancy Gates, Skip Homeier and Richard Rust costar. The film does not quite have the stellar cast that is part of *Ride Lonesome's* appeal, but otherwise it has many of the same dynamics, and the action scenes are more elaborate.

Those four westerns are immensely entertaining, intelligent, well acted and satisfying, but *The Tall T* belongs in a higher stratum of motion picture excellence. At first glance, you could say Scott is playing the same character in all five films, but in fact there are beautiful nuances in each movie that differentiate him from one film to the next. Sometimes his character is a little dumber, sometimes he's a little more open to humor, and sometimes he is less experienced than other times. It is clear that, as an actor, he's working hard on a specific, different character in each film, but in *Tall T* the range of what he must do is widened significantly, and his delivery throughout the film is beautifully crafted.

Sometimes in movies, it has to be a given that the bad guy doesn't kill the good guy right off the bat, or else there wouldn't be a movie, and the reasons are often brushed aside or lame—it is something filmmakers have to cope with and sweep under the mat as quickly as possible. *Tall T* (which opens exactly like *Shane*) is a hostage thriller, based upon a story by Elmore Leonard, and the reason the villain, played by Richard Boone, doesn't immediately eliminate Scott's character when he assaults the stagecoach and kills all of the other passengers except for Scott, Maureen O'Sullivan, who is the mousy daughter of a wealthy mine owner (her performance is so outstanding you barely recognize her), and John Hubbard, who is playing her new husband, is that Boone's character is wearing a light blue scarf. That's all that Boetticher has to do. The dialog goes on about how Boone's character, "Takes a like'n," to Scott's character, but could still kill him at any moment, and it makes absolute logical sense, because why else would this bandit—who is riding with two young wild men and not settled down at a ranch somewhere with a family—hesitate when he meets a similarly unattached, good looking man his own age? And it is only because both O'Sullivan and Scott sell their own kiss so well that you don't wonder why he doesn't dump her and go with Boone's character once the ransom money is delivered and everyone but the three of them have been eliminated. Running 78 minutes, the film is as rich in character portraits as the other films are—that is one of the key components of the movies as a whole—but its dramatic complexity is far greater. Skip Homeier, Henry Silva and Arthur Hunnicutt co-star.

Ride Lonesome and *Comanche Station* are letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1, while the other three are letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1. On all five, the monophonic sound is clean and solid. The films come with optional English subtitling.

All five films have stronger colors and less grain than the DVDs. The two 'town' films have the most subdued hues, but colors are never overly bright (except for maybe Boone's scarf). When the colors are specifically bland, they are the most beautiful bland we've ever seen, conveying a real feel for the dust, mud and deadwood the characters inhabit. Curiously, the standard BDs have slightly brighter colors than the 4K BDs, and on smaller screens, they generally look better. On larger screens, however, the precision of the grain and the details of the hues are more compelling on the 4K playback, which makes it feel like you are watching a movie in a theater rather than something on a video screen. The day-for-night sequences are haunting and work extremely well.

Three of the films have commentaries carried over from the DVDs on both the standard BD presentation and the 4K presentation. Film historian Jeremy Arnold supplies an informative talk for *Ride Lonesome*, historian Jeanine Basinger provides an equally rewarding talk for *The Tall T*, and Taylor Hackford provides a director's viewpoint in an appreciation of *Comanche Station*.

The standard BD platters also have trailers for each film and a few special features that come with each film and were included on the DVDs—*Tall T* has a 7-minute introduction by Martin Scorsese, *Ride Lonesome* has a 5-minute introduction by Scorsese, *Decision at Sundown* has a 6-minute introduction by Hackford and *Buchanan Rides Alone* has a 9-minute introduction by Hackford. Apparently, Criterion couldn't secure the introduction to *Comanche Station* by Clint Eastwood, so instead they have provided a 20-minute 8mm abridgement of the film that was not available on the DVD. Looking faded and bedraggled, and squeezed and cropped into a square, full screen format, there is original sound, which is supplemented by a voiceover narration. All things considered, it actually does a pretty good job taking the beginning of the film, skipping over much of its middle, and then presenting the climax, including all of the great action scenes. That was home video back in the day.

The third standard BD platter opens with an excellent 84-minute biographical profile of Boetticher that also appeared in the DVD set. The other special features are specific to Criterion's collection. There is a terrific 1995 French interview, made for the TV program, *Cinéma, de notre temps*, which runs a full 60 minutes. It was shot at various locations in Southern California and captures Boetticher as a cantankerous artist who still wants to stay in the game, despite not having made a film in a couple of decades. A very young but extremely well prepared Hackford (as opposed to the French guys, who are winging it) conducts another fascinating television interview running a full 60 minutes (under the direction of Dick Davies) with Boetticher in 1971 for KCET. At the time Boetticher had finished and was promoting a documentary he made about bullfighting that pretty much defined the final stage of his career. Shot entirely at a riding school, the interview does touch on his other films, but is mostly about bullfighting, with Boetticher giving demonstrations of the different moves (including those performed on a horse), going over the history of the practice and explaining why he is so passionate about it. Looking over the spread of his life, he does open up to the French interviewers and shares quite a bit about himself, but even though he is giving more of a performance for Hackford, he is also being more of what you know in your heart is his real self. An interview with a German crew from 1999 with Boetticher was re-edited in 2018 and runs 37 minutes. There is no conversation, as he does all of the talking, speaking a bit about the Ranown films, and more about other movies he made and about Hollywood in general. He is better behaved than he is in the French interview, and he covers some of the same points that he makes in the other two talks, but there is still a lot of fresh material, and name dropping. In another great, audio-only 63-minute interview in front of a live audience from 1969, Boetticher talks extensively about working with his casts and otherwise provides good insights on the art of direction, as well as sharing anecdotes about making films and the state of the industry.

Finally, there is a very nice 26-minute overview of Scott's life and career, loaded with clips and photos, which also assesses the artistic aspects of his performances in the Ranown films. The only shortcoming to the piece is its failure to mention Gary Cooper, whose career and acting skills seem to resemble Scott's so closely that it would have been redundant to ever put them in a film together.

Speaking of perfect westerns, Warner Bros. has released a *Warner WB Archive Collection* Blu-ray of the 1955 film Jacques Tourneur made for Allied Artists, *Wichita* (UPC#810134942677, \$22), starring Joel McCrea. We reviewed Warner's DVD release in Aug 09. Letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1, the picture transfer is gorgeous. The DVD looked wonderful, but the solidity and detail offered by the Blu-ray image is invigorating. The monophonic sound is also exceptionally smooth and clear, a significant improvement over the DVD that adds to the film's atmosphere.

Boetticher's organic style made it difficult to differentiate between a soundstage scene and a location sequence. Everything was subdued and blended. Tourneur's style is more traditional. Not only are there bright hues and production designs that deliberately 'pop' with color contrasts, but there is only a nominal effort to hide the cuts between soundstage and outdoor shots for a supposedly outdoor sequence. But that is one of the compelling aspects of the film. It is a quintessential western, opening with a euphonious Tex Ritter title song, and then presenting McCrea as western legend, Wyatt Earp. (Keith Larson co-stars as Bat Masterson). If Boetticher was starting to break the path toward a new sort of western that utilized the sparseness of the settings to amplify complex adult themes, Tourneur was putting the cap on the classic western (which would soon transition to television—among others, there were series about Earp and about Masterson—and then be pretty much finished off by epics in the Sixties like *How the West Was Won* and *The Alamo*).

Wichita offers the pure joy of familiarity and satisfied expectations

(although with the surge in recent times of support for the Second Amendment, the hero's restriction of firearms within the city limits—seen within the film as evidence of civilization's progress—now poses an intriguing political anachronism). McCrea's character is clearly skilled, but is in search of a tranquil lifestyle and is only pulled into becoming the marshal of the burgeoning cattle town because circumstances force his hand. Despite these circumstances, he finds love, as well. Vera Miles, Lloyd Bridges, Wallace Ford, Edgar Buchanan and Peter Graves (ideally cast for a nice plot twist) co-star. Running 81 minutes, the film is a delightful celebration of an American myth, perfectly realized through a medium and a genre that had both come of age and were just waiting for one another to get hitched.

Along with optional English subtitles, there are two western-themed full screen (lovely) color 7-minute Tex Avery cartoons, *Deputy Droopy* (in which the dog frustrates a pair who are trying to break open a safe) from 1954 and *The First Bad Man* (which wittily transports Old West clichés to the mixed up time of cavemen and dinosaurs) from 1953.

What one might call 'bread and butter' westerns, the cowboy movies that Audie Murphy made at Universal Studios, are not on the level of the Ranown westerns when it comes to an intensity of purpose or an efficiency of storytelling (although they have been compared to them from a production perspective), but they are much stronger than the cookie cutter 'B' features promoting one western star or another that were turned out by many of the studios in the Forties and Fifties, and most of them epitomize the sheer enjoyment and escapism expected from a well made action tale set in the Old West. Murphy has a misguided reputation as an actor with limited emotions, but what you actually discover when you watch his films is that his characters keep their cards held very close to their chests, and his performances are consistently astute and subtle. Universal and Kino Lorber Incorporated have gathered nine terrific Murphy saddle dramas in three three-platter boxed sets. Each color film (and one in black and white) appears on a separate platter, in a separate jacket within each set. Throughout the sets, the monophonic sound is in acceptable condition and is supported by optional English subtitles.

A wonderful blend of story and action directed with punch by Don Siegel, the 1952 *Duel at Silver Creek* is part of the initial **Audie Murphy Collection** (UPC#738329249205, \$50). Murphy's character is a young gunslinger and gambler who teams up, albeit uneasily, with a town marshal played by Stephen McNally. Running 77 minutes, the film is narrated by McNally as if it were an urban crime feature, explaining the terror being caused by bandits murdering gold prospectors and the steps he is taking to stop them, a process that is improved considerably when he takes on Murphy's character as his deputy. We don't actually recall ever seeing any kind of film, but particularly a western, that had the same sort of dynamic between the two heroes—it's as if there were no changes to John Wayne's character in *Rio Bravo*, but Ricky Nelson's character was smarter and faster, and got Angie Dickinson in the end. One of the wonderful things about the voiceover is that McNally is wrong about things a couple of times, especially when he underestimates the resolve of Murphy's character, but the film always pushes forward with fight scenes, suspense, character conflicts and romance, and there really isn't time for contemplation, just for the blissful satisfaction that comes from an efficient execution of a smart, appealing entertainment.

Faith Domergue, who strangles a dying man with his own bandana, and Susan Cabot co-star, and Lee Marvin stands out in an early supporting role. The squared, full screen picture has very nice colors and minimal wear. The sound is a little raspy, however. Along with a trailer, there is a commentary track by westerns expert Toby Roan, who goes over the careers of the cast and crew members, talks a bit about Universal, says what is known about the film's day-to-day production (after an accident, Domergue wasn't allowed to ride a horse), and provides an interesting history of the Iverson Ranch where much of the film was shot, including a breakdown of what studios were charged for using the location.

Universal's legendary director, Jack Arnold, helmed the excellent 1959 thriller, *No Name on the Bullet*, and he staged it as if it were a horror or science-fiction film instead of western. Although the movie appears in the first set, we would strongly recommend holding off watching it until you've seen more Murphy features, because the film plays very beautifully off of his cryptic, guarded emotional delivery and his deceptively open smile. He plays a hired killer—that is established right away—who rides into town. He has always killed his victims in self-defense because they panic and try to shoot him first, and he won't say who it is he is in town to kill. So everyone thinks they are the target, and each one freaks out this way or that way over the possibility. In essence, he cleans up the town, because everyone with a guilty conscience over reacts. Technically, he is the villain of the film and Charles Drake, who plays the town doctor, is the hero, who befriends him (they play chess, but someone wasn't paying attention because Murphy castles with his queen rather than his king and Drake doesn't act like that's a problem), but the gist of the movie is that the mere fact of his devilish presence—like a monster or alien stalking humanity—eviscerates the soul of the town. Running 77 minutes, Arnold's direction is imperfect in spots (he lets co-star Joan Evans get away with a periodically lifeless performance—quite the opposite of the do-not-touch danger that Murphy projects by not projecting anything) but he manages the atmosphere of the film superbly, has the beats down precisely for a highly satisfying finale, and delivers a work that is both memorable and compelling, and is much more than just a simple western.

Virginia Grey, Warren Stevens, R.G. Armstrong and Whit Bissell co-star. The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1. The color transfer looks fresh, but the source material does have quite a few small speckles and scratches throughout the feature. Along with a trailer, film experts Steve Mitchell and Gary Gerani supply an excellent commentary track, exploring the film's symbolism, going over how the talents of the cast and the filmmakers were ideally suited for the material, and deconstructing the film's artistry.

Westerns (Continued)

Walter Matthau was already swinging for the fences with his bit parts and supporting performances in the Fifties, and he has quite a marvelous character to connect with in the 1958 *Ride a Crooked Trail*. Directed by Jesse Hibbs, the film is unusual in a number of ways, but most highly enjoyable despite its potential hazards. Not only do you have Matthau overacting like crazy, but Murphy plays bank robber—ostensibly a bad guy—who takes on the identity of the marshal who was trailing him after the marshal is accidentally killed. Added to all of that, there is a ‘cute child’ embodied by Eddie Little in the sort of role that ought to stop a movie dead, and yet every component of the film comes together in a very delightful way. Matthau is a cantankerous judge who, believing that Murphy’s character is a marshal, coerces him into staying to enforce law and order in the town. Silva—okay, now there’s two baby faced movie stars in the same film—is another bank robber casing out the bank in town, and Murphy’s character actually begins collaborating on a plan to rob the bank, a partnership complicated by the fact that the woman pretending to be the wife of Murphy’s character, played by Gia Scala, is actually the girlfriend of Silva’s character. Indeed, they do such a good job of pretending to be husband and wife that the orphaned character Little is playing moves in with them. Hibbs sustains a reasonably lighthearted atmosphere (it would be rather hard not to with Matthau doing his shtick) and cleverly keeps Murphy in a state of observational uncertainty—always amiable and friendly, Murphy’s character never seems like the cold-blooded bandit he is supposed to be. Hibbs also does wonders with Scala, a ‘bad’ girl who somehow manages to navigate the social niceties of being the ‘wife’ of the town marshal without arousing suspicions (and always looking drop dead gorgeous). And Hibbs always knows just how much a viewer can take of Little’s presence, and that is all the child is ever allowed. Running 88 minutes, the film continually defies expectations and continually succeeds, so that you are not really sure how it was accomplished, happy ending and all.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1. Colors are bright (Scala’s outfits are eye-popping) and fleshtones are accurate. There are moments—most of them during opticals or reel changes, but some seemingly out of the blue—where the focus goes soft or the image clarity degrades, but for the majority of the film the image is sharp and the presentation is pleasing. In addition to a trailer, there is another commentary track by Roan, but a number of passages, such as the history of Universal, are repeated from his talk on *Duel at Silver Creek*, modified to accommodate personnel appearing in this movie but not in that one. He has less to say about the actual details of the production shoot.

George Marshall, the director of the 1939 black-and-white classic, **Destry Rides Again** (Jun 20), mounted the story again himself for the 1954 color remake, *Destry* in **Audie Murphy Collection II** (UPC#738329263430, \$50), with Murphy in the James Stewart part and, more critically, Marie Blanchard attempting to fill the Marlene Dietrich part. Marshall doesn’t have quite the same budget and so the magnificent saloon set in the original film is somewhat compacted for the remake. Murphy, playing the son of a famous gunfighter who is called to town when a sheriff is murdered, unnerving the citizens once he arrives by appearing to abstain from using firearms himself, sometimes veers too closely into Stewart’s ‘aw shucks’ performance, but that may be how the script is written and he generally handles the part with an appealing youthfulness. Blanchard, as the corrupt chorus girl who falls for Murphy’s character, is more hard-edged than Dietrich, so that while her performance is good, dramatically, there is less sympathy for her. As for the rest of the cast, like the first film, it is peppered with reliable bit players, including Thomas Mitchell, Lyle Bettger, Edgar Buchanan and Alan Hale, Jr. Running 95 minutes, the film at first has something of a canned feel to it, and Marshall really is kind of staging it by rote, but once Murphy shows up, the whole film enlivens with its true purpose, and while it isn’t enough to achieve the status of a classic western, it is more than enough to deliver basic, fully satisfying entertainment.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2:1. Whenever there is an optical approaching, the image becomes grainier and hues a little more unstable, but otherwise the image is bright and sharp. Along with a trailer, there is a passable commentary featuring western experts Lee Gambin and Gary Frank. They tend to talk in generalities about trends and how the film fits into what was happening in movies overall and westerns specifically at the time (“This is also a story about democracy, democracy versus fascism. The bad guy is a fascist leader. He is a dictator. He tells the town what he wants and how he wants it. And here is democracy, here is George Washington, coming up to Benito Mussolini and telling him that that’s not going to work here.”), although they do go over the backgrounds of the cast and the crew, and share even more specifics about Murphy and his own relationship to firearms, which is sort of at odds with his character’s common sense attitudes.

The suspense in the 1950 *Kansas Raiders* is twisted through the many holes of its exceptionally hollow moral foundation. Since the film is set while the Civil War, although winding down, is still in play, you know that Murphy’s character, the historical figure, Jesse James, will still be alive at its end. Thus, what keeps one riveted to the film is not the plot—his nascent gang joins up with the Kansas terrorist, William Quantrill, played by Brian Donlevy—but how the 80-minute tale is going to play out without besmirching Murphy’s hero persona. Sure, in other movies he’s played an outlaw who turns good, but here he is essentially an embittered war orphan who is ready, willing and able to embrace the Dark Side of the Quantrill’s Force—without losing his pretty boy smile. Tony Curtis has a decent-sized role as ‘Kit’ Dalton, with Richard Long as Frank James. The climax cheats like mad—the gang is surrounded in a cabin, but for some reason, nobody is watching the rear door—but the film has enough action, and is otherwise so bizarrely intriguing, that it will entertain viewers who are not bothered by the history it is corrupting. The portrait that Donlevy creates of the ‘noble’ Quantrill, using the ruffians he has gathered to further his loftier goals—with Murphy’s character being the one true disciple who supposedly is not in it for the carnage and the plunder—

is at the very least rather unsettling. The film becomes a fascinating documentation not just of a lingering evil in the American psyche, but a disturbing reminder that otherwise levelheaded individuals are often quite willing to support that evil if it is marketed to them in the right way.

The full screen color picture looks terrific, with bright hues. In addition to a trailer, there is an informed and circumspect commentary from western film experts C. Courtney Joyner and Henry Parke. Along with going into the backgrounds of the cast and the crew, they also talk about how much of the film is based upon real history and how its divergence from the facts differs with other film adaptations of Quantrill’s raids. They acknowledge that the movie is generally entertaining, and take some of its moral blindness in their stride, but they don’t entirely shy away from calling out the film’s indulgences.

“Belle Starr, who was a Confederate spy as a young girl, and her brother rode with Quantrill, wrote about Jesse James, and she hated him, and thought he was crazy. She liked Frank James just fine, but she couldn’t stand Jesse, and of course, in truth, Jesse James was a psychopath.

“Yes, and boy is that not how he is portrayed here.”

“Absolutely not.”

“He’s a kid with a conscience.”

Taking advantage of the vistas suggested by the title, Russell Metty’s full screen cinematography looks gorgeous on the 1952 *Sierra*, directed by Alfred Green. From beginning to end, the Technicolor transfer is exceptionally good, and every shot is captivating. Murphy’s character lives with his father—who has been wanted for murder for over a decade—in a hermit-like existence in the hills outside of a town, corralling and taming wild horses to make ends meet. Wanda Hendrix (Murphy’s wife at the time of the shoot—though not by the time the film was released—who benefits extensively from the Technicolor treatment) is a young lawyer riding by herself in the wilderness when she is upended by the wild horses, with Murphy’s character retrieving her and taking her to his cliffside homestead. Burl Ives is a friendly, singing prospector or something, who knows everybody. Curtis has a small but engaging part in the film’s final act (James Arness also shows up but in a less prominent part), and Dean Jagger (who had just won an Oscar for his previous film) is the villain. When Murphy’s character brings Hendrix’s character back to town, people start asking who he is and that leads to misunderstandings and dustups. Running 83 minutes, the film may have one (or even two) too many songs from Ives (in one scene, he puts the guard in a jail to sleep by singing a lullaby), but otherwise it is a decently executed action thriller. The footage with the horses is impressively staged, the central characters are effectively developed and once Murphy’s character is challenged, his performance perks up nicely. Since the film’s colors are so gorgeous, you are more than willing to accept what the drama has to offer, and the Blu-ray readily delivers a sufficient justification for sticking with it.

Along with a trailer, there is a commentary track by Roan, who systematically works his way through the biographies of the cast and crew, gives another rewarding history of Universal (it is different than his previous talks), and shares plenty of details about the actual shoot. “The first week, Wanda Hendrix was stung by yellowjackets while shooting one scene. While on location, Murphy and Hendrix sometimes slept in the prop truck on the location site so Audie could fish in the stream or hunt in the woods after the picture was done for the day. On September 29th, there was a 30-minute thunderstorm that caused flash flooding in Kanab Creek where they were shooting. They say Wanda Hendrix and Audie Murphy were trapped by the steep side of the creek as the wall of water rushed toward them. Murphy hopped on his horse, grabbed Wanda and rode to safety.” Needless to say, while they ride off together into the sunset in the film, Hendrix separated from Murphy when shooting was completed.

Murphy is an innocent horse trader who is mistaken for a killer in an unambiguously entertaining adventure tale, the 1960 *Hell Bent for Leather*, one of three Sixties Murphy films in **Audie Murphy Collection III** (UPC#738329263690, \$50). Felicia Farr co-stars, making the film a nice romance, as well. Directed by George Sherman, the story is tight and consistently logical, so that it grabs you with its first exciting twist and then never lets go for its 82-minute running time. Letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1, the picture looks gorgeous from beginning to end, Murphy is not only sympathetic, but compelling in the part, and the film is exactly what you hope for when you pick up a western and settle back to enjoy an escape from the modern world. Along with a trailer, Roan provides another commentary track, again going extensively over the careers of the cast and the crew, and also over the history of Lone Pine, California locations where the film was shot. He also compares the westerns Murphy made with producer Gordon Kay (including all three in this set) with the Ranown features.

Shot in black and white, the 1963 *Showdown* is another brisk, engaging tale that pushes forward logically and relentlessly. Murphy’s character is a cowhand who is arrested when his companion, played by Drake, starts a bar fight, and is then freed when the other prisoners—they are all chained to a post in the center of town—break loose. Drake’s character steals a large sum of money during the breakout, and they use that as leverage to keep the other bad guys at bay. Kathleen Crowley co-stars. The black-and-white cinematography adds to the film’s hard edged conflicts and the purity of its staging, aided greatly by the pristine image transfer. Running 79 minutes, the film, directed by A.G. Springsteen, creates a number of compelling character relationships, unfolds its drama while keeping the viewer guessing every step of the way, and stages some terrific action scenes. A trailer has been included, but there is no commentary.

The best of the nine Murphy films in the three collections, the 1961 *Posse from Hell* opens with a dazzling visual and aural display as, in a single shot, four ruffians ride into a peaceful town at night, while on the soundtrack, drums boom in the gripping musical score (the music, cobbled together from Universal's music department, subsides to ordinary but competent for the rest of the film, but that one sequence is enough to set the film apart). And then, there is an extra surprise. Two actors who would later become enormous stars, Van Cleef and Vic Morrow, not only have supporting roles in the film, but each has a significantly exceptional performance moment, Morrow at the beginning of the movie (he's not just bad, he's crazy) and Van Cleef in his character's death scene. The villains, as we said, ride into town, and after that first shot is done, they enter a bar, hold the people there hostage, ambush the sheriff, demand money from the bank, and then ride out of town with the money and a young lady they have abducted. The next day, Murphy's character, who was supposed to have a job as the sheriff's deputy, arrives just in time to take charge of the posse. The posse is mostly a ragtag bunch, so it is a very good thing he is there to lead them, and among the men is a bank official from back East, played by John Saxon, who has barely ridden a horse before but is obligated to come along to retrieve the stolen cash.

Running 88 minutes, the film is a perfect blend of character development and action, the posse dwindling as they close in on the bandits until there are just three of them left, including Murphy's character, of course, and Saxon's character. So along with everything else the movie has going for it, it is a not just a prime example of a western with a gay subtext, it is almost flagrant about it (in contrast, there is no subtext in the relationship between Murphy and Drake's characters in *Showdown*—they may be good buddies and care about each other, but that is clearly all there is to it). Since the details of the steadily growing bond between Murphy and Saxon's characters are part of the film's exquisite entertainment, we won't go into too many of them, but it starts with Murphy's character treating Saxon's character for saddle sores, and it just accumulates in moment after moment, until the two pause near the film's climax to share what in effect is the same ointment Murphy had used on Saxon before, thus sealing their bond. Even the girl they rescue from the gang, played by Zohra Lampert, who becomes Murphy's token love interest at the end, has had her reputation destroyed by the bandits, so it is plenty clear for those who read between the lines that he is not interested in her in 'that way,' and you also start to wonder what the actual nature of his relationship with the dead lawman had been (the film is an ideal follow up to *The Duel at Silver Creek*). In any case, with or without a second reading, the 1951 film, directed by Herbert Coleman, is terrific entertainment and worth the price of the entire **Collection**.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1. The colors are fresh and accurate, and the picture looks great, although there are minor scratches and blotches popping up from time to time. Along with a trailer, there is another commentary from Joyner and Parke. They have general things to say about the film and Murphy's career, as well as the careers of the other stars, but while they acknowledge how exceptionally well made it is (Coleman had worked extensively for Alfred Hitchcock), they never dive too deeply into the dynamics of the film or the impact of its drama.

Shuffling off

A fever dream from somebody who apparently fell asleep while simultaneously reading *Moby Dick* and watching **Dances with Wolves**, the 1977 Dino De Laurentiis United Artists production directed by J. Lee Thompson, **The White Buffalo**, stars Charles Bronson and Will Sampson as the gunfighter, Wild Bill Hickok, and the Indian chief, Crazy Horse, respectively, who are both obsessed with hunting down an enormous, rampaging killer albino bison. It will be recalled that De Laurentiis also put out **King Kong** and **Orca** in pretty much the same time frame, and once again, he had Carlo Rambaldi on the pulleys, for good or for ill. If you are over the age of eleven, then the film is not for you unless you are a truly serious connoisseur of the cinematic arts. It often appears on 'Worst Films of All Time' lists, just a few notches below **Plan 9 from Outer Space**, but like **Plan 9**, there is actually poetry to its stupidity and lyricism to its earnestness.

Released on Blu-ray by MGM and Kino Lorber Incorporated as a *KL Studio Classics* title (UPC#738329263140, \$25), the release supersedes an earlier 20th Century Fox MGM Kino Blu-ray (UPC#738329160821). Okay, **Dances with Wolves** was not even a glimmer in Kevin Costner's eye in 1977, but if he had had too much vanilla ice cream topped with marshmallow sauce, he, too, might have been inspired. That may be the cause of the unexplained nightmares that Bronson's character is having, about facing off against the beast amid a fierce blizzard. He shoots his guns every which way to wake up, aerating his sleeping chambers. He points to the undeveloped land beyond the town and tells his companion, played by Jack Warden, the he is going to the 'Black Hills,' because, naturally, that would be the easiest place to find a white buffalo, except maybe in a snowstorm. The film has a reverential westerns cast in the smaller parts, including Clint Walker, Slim Pickens, Stuart Whitman, John Carradine and Ed Lauter, and Kim Novak also has a sweet scene, apparently to reinforce the idea that Bronson's character isn't into buffaloes in that way. If anyone presents you with a master's thesis suggesting that the buffalo represents God and that Bronson and Sampson's characters have teamed up—with Warden's character as the Fool—to bind America in its Manifest Destiny, tell them to take a hike in the Black Hills, preferably in winter.

To his credit, Thompson does establish a wonderful atmosphere, which is why dyed-in-the-white-wool fans of westerns will be easily smitten with the 97-minute feature. Richard Sale's screenplay, from his own novel (boy, he must have had a refrigerator filled with ice cream...), retains a quirky, period-sounding dialog that is as

fun as it is screwy, and worth activating the optional English subtitles for ("Barkeep! Two stiff horns of gin."). John Barry's percussion-heavy musical score is also appealing in an unmelodic sort of way, and is a solid presence on the monophonic audio track. The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1, and the color transfer is spotless, with hues so accurate and detailed that you can follow the adventures of the cold sore that comes and goes from Bronson's lower lip. A trailer is included that has shots not seen in the film, and there is a commentary track, featuring Bronson expert Paul Talbot. He quotes passages from both Sale's novel and his screenplay, shares many details about the day-to-day production, goes over the careers of most of the cast and a number of crewmembers, points out moments where Thompson's direction is particularly effective, talks about the historical figures being fictionalized and uses the film to expound upon life in the Old West. "In this era, the saloon stayed open 24 hours, with a constant supply of watered-down alcohol, gambling, prostitutes and occasional live music. Saloons smelled of tobacco, sweaty fur coats and unbathed patrons. The saloons were built quickly, and poorly, and often blew down during storms. There was no water to clean the drinking glasses, which were occasionally wiped with a dirty rag."

The picture on the older Blu-ray is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1, adding a little bit of picture information to the top and bottom of the image and losing a little bit on the sides compared to the subsequent release. The differences are negligible. The picture is also a little brighter, but can look overlit in some scenes. Generally, the picture quality on the newer release has a more rustic feel to it and is preferable. The older disc comes with optional English subtitles and the trailer, but does not have a commentary.

Spaghetti giallo

A combination of our two favorite movie genres—westerns and murder mysteries—and, better still, a combination of our two favorite subgenres within those genres, the 1964 Spaghetti western giallo feature, **Four Bullets for Joe**, has been released on Blu-ray by MVDVisual as an *MVD Classics* title (UPC#760137117995, \$20; the film's title card reads, *4 Bullets for Joe*). In the opening moments, a man rides off on his horse after leaving his wife and is shot in the back. But early on, the most obvious suspect is strangled by an unseen murderer wearing black gloves, and from that point forward, we were in heaven regardless of what happened next or the quality of the presentation. Directed by Augustín Navarro, Fred Canow stars as the town's marshal, who is trying to solve the crime, and Paul Piaget is a notorious gunfighter, arriving in town to take revenge. The film is by no one's definition a great work of art. There is a semblance to the story's logic as the bodies start to pile up, but plenty of holes if you really examine one scene to the next. The performances are stiff, and the dubbing only makes them stiffer. But we didn't care in the least. The western costumes and set dressings were all that was necessary to set a decent atmosphere, while the murder mystery unfolds systematically, with an adequate mix of talking and action. Running 80 minutes, every moment is an indulgent pleasure. Incidentally, not a single character in the film, at least with the English dub, is named, 'Joe.'

As for the quality of the presentation, well, it is best to watch the film on a smaller screen. Letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.66:1, the image jiggles for the first few minutes of the film, although it settles down after that. The color quality is tolerable most of the time, but it is not great, and contrasts are limited, losing details in the darker portions of the screen. While the source material is generally clean, at one point there is huge vertical line running through the image. The monophonic sound is consistently scratchy and is best held to a modest volume. The score is a random mix of stock music that surges in harshness from time to time. There are optional English subtitles.

Harlow's last film

The screenplay was written by Anita Loos and Robert Hopkins, and the performances feel more like they belong in a stage production than a film, but the basic star appeal of the 1937 MGM romantic comedy set in the horseracing world, **Saratoga**, overcomes its stageness even when it gets away from the racetrack. The film has been released on Blu-ray by Warner Bros. as a *WB Warner Archive Collection* title (UPC#810134943360, \$22) with an immaculate full screen black-and-white picture transfer. Clark Gable stars as a successful bookmaker and Jean Harlow, who doesn't always seem to be wearing undergarments—the clarity of the Blu-ray can be enticing at times—is the granddaughter of a horse breeder played by Lionel Barrymore and is engaged to a 'what Depression?' wealthy financier, played without a mustache by Walter Pidgeon (nicely filling the Ralph Bellamy part). Harlow's character wants to 'save' her grandfather's farm without the help of Pidgeon's character, while Gable's character wants to sucker Pidgeon's character into the betting game, at first to score a bankroll but then to undermine the engagement. Una Merkel, Hattie McDaniel and MGM stalwart Frank Morgan co-star. Notably, Harlow passed away during the final days of the film's production, which led the movie to be an enormous hit, but it is a predictable exercise, getting by on the affable appeal of the stars as they push out the dialog and go through the motions of tricking one another, ending immediately when the conclusion that was foreseen in the 94-minute film's opening moments finally comes to pass.

The monophonic sound can be harsh at times, but that is because the added clarity amplifies the limitations of the original recording. Otherwise, the audio is clear and strong. There are optional English subtitles; a black-and-white 1937 MGM promotional featurette (opening with a disclaimer) that begins with happy cotton pickers in the South, follows the cotton as it is used to create Kodak film, and then goes to MGM's studios to look at their various creative personnel and promote the studio's lineup for 1937 and 1938; and an original theatrical trailer that essentially excuses the film's shortcomings by promoting the audience demand to view the 'unfinished' production as Harlow's final feature.

What did you do during the Occupation, France?

Henri-Georges Clouzot's amazing 1943 mystery—it eventually concludes with a murder—about a small provincial town that is being inundated with poison pen letters, **Le Corbeau**, is available on Blu-ray from The Criterion Collection (UPC#715515277310, \$40). Shot in France under the Occupation, even Joseph Goebbels admitted the film was a superb artistic accomplishment as he nevertheless banned Clouzot from making any more features because of the bad name the movie gave to informants. Running 91 minutes, the film adeptly crosses back and forth from one character to another, with stories accumulating or intersecting through the reception of anonymous letters and the frantic, almost random accusations that one character or another is behind them. Washing blood off of his hands in the opening shot, the protagonist is a doctor who is unjustly accused of assisting with abortions. The other letters to other townspeople are more accurate, however, and present a vicious counterpoint to the seemingly pastoral community, thus building a multifaceted narrative that nevertheless retains a straightforward structure. Pierre Fresnay, Ginette Leclerc and Micheline Francey are featured.

The full screen black-and-white picture is in excellent condition considering its wartime production history. The image is crisp and smooth, and is free of wear. The monophonic sound is also reasonably clean. The film is in French with optional English subtitles and comes with an original French trailer, a rewarding 7-minute interview excerpt with Clouzot from 1975 about working under the Occupation and making the film, and an excellent 2003 appreciation of the film and Clouzot's work by Bertrand Tavernier running 22 minutes. Tavernier speaks in English and it is a shame Criterion did not provide optional subtitling, since he talks lightly, references many different names and has a fairly thick accent, but it is worth amplifying the audio and keeping your finger on the reverse button to rerun passages so that you can pick up everything he has to say.

A morose alcoholic lawyer who has been in a state of unforced retirement for two decades is roused from his inebriation when a murder occurs in his house and his daughter's boyfriend is accused of the crime. We don't know what the rules are in France, but it seems unlikely that the standards of 'conflicts of interest' would allow the lawyer to represent the boyfriend, since along with everything else, both the lawyer and his daughter are witnesses, but that is what happens in the small French town where the crime occurs in Clouzot's marvelous 1942 screenplay adaptation of a story by Georges Simenon, subsequently directed by Henri Decoin, **Strangers in the House**, a Gaumont Kino Lorber Incorporated *KL Studio Classics* Blu-ray (UPC#738329263669, \$25). Although the film is not as infinitely complex as **Le Corbeau**, it is nevertheless an impressive creation.

The French actor, Raimu, who looks like Hugh Herbert with a Fu Manchu mustache, plays the lawyer, seeming to remain in an alcoholic state as he waddles about the town making inquiries about the crime—involving a group of young **I Vitelloni** men, all of whom appear to be in love with his daughter—and then seems to sleep through most of the testimony in the courtroom sequence that takes up the final third of the 96-minute feature. Yes, the solution to the whodunit is a common trope and readily spottable, but that does not matter in the least. What is more important is Decoin's excellent command of the language of film. Murder mysteries in particular took a very long time to get away from the stagebound, static manner of their overriding need to gather and present information to the viewer, enabling, in the best films, to let personality and character blossom amid the talk. Some films insert action to liven things up, or accentuate the atmosphere, but there is no place for any of that here, so Decoin must employ every filmmaking skill at his command to keep a movie where the hero can barely stay awake both stimulating and engaging. Unless you pay attention, you don't notice the subtle camera moves, precise edits and deft lighting. None of it is showy, but on the other hand the film is so expertly constructed it is a great deal more entertaining than many other murder mysteries of its day, enabling a richer exploration of the characters (one is gay, although it is never overtly acknowledged) and a condemnation of the town's stifling social strata (with the unspoken strangulation of the Occupation echoed in the film's title).

Enhancing the impact of the film, the Blu-ray presentation enables one to savor every nuance in the full screen black-and-white cinematography (and, for that matter, the reasonably clean monophonic sound). Unlike **Le Corbeau**, the image has a basic, age-related softness, but is otherwise smooth, finely detailed and spotless, magnifying every shift in perspective and underlying psychological amplification. The film is in French with optional English subtitles and comes with a terrific original French trailer. The outstanding commentary team of Nathaniel Thompson and Howard S. Berger outdo themselves with an exceptional talk over the film. They cover the basic biographical backgrounds of the cast and the crew, but spend most of their time reflecting upon the film's genre strengths, its era (they deny the film has an anti-Semitic component, but there is one young man who stands out from the others and would be 'the kid from Brooklyn' in an American film), and the movie's exceptional craftsmanship. "There are not too many lousy courtroom films, for some reason. They're all pretty darn good, even like the lowest budget ones. But this is beyond that. This movie really is something about—which exemplifies the best aspects of both Decoin and also Clouzot—really fueled by the Occupation, it's always about the community and how that community is violated and betrayed."

Germany and Italy maintained major production studios throughout the war, but produced very few films that have withstood the tests of time to endure as motion picture classics. Except for Britain, which avoided invasion, none of the other European countries produced any kind of cinema at all in the

early Forties that has endured, except for France. As Thompson and Berger point out, there were quite a few French films made under the Occupation that have not only remained valid classics worth revisiting, but have grown in stature as the years have progressed. There is one movie, however, that by general consensus is considered the greatest movie to be made in France during the War, and that is Marcel Carné's 1945 **Children of Paradise**, which is available on a two-platter Blu-ray from The Criterion Collection (UPC#715515098311, \$40). The Frenchiest French film you could possibly imagine, the Nineteenth Century period drama, centered around theater actors, is about love—or rather, 'l'amour'—examining the different levels and nature of the emotion in four men who all pine for the same woman, and her feelings about each one of them.

Norway, Denmark, Netherlands, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Poland—all of them were conquered and controlled by Germany during World War II, but there was only one country that Germany sought consent for its dominance, and that was France. None of the other countries they cared about, but they wanted the French to like them, and made a number of compromises hoping that would happen, but not even the anti-Semites liked Germany that much. Hence, within the film, which has many rich layers of meaning and entertainment, the man who ends up with the woman is the richest and the most dominant, but he can never have her genuine love, because that is reserved for the mime.

The production is so lavish a viewer would never suspect that war or Occupation was hovering just past the elaborately decorated and hugely populated outdoor sets. The film would have been a remarkable accomplishment even if it had been made in the coddled safety of Hollywood, and in comparison, both **Le Corbeau** and **Strangers in the House** are small, intimate creations. Justifying the expense on screen, the film also runs 190 minutes, with an Intermission and the second act opening with a fresh credit scroll. The first act is entitled *The Boulevard of Crime* and the second act is entitled *The Man in White*. We reviewed Criterion's DVD in Apr 02. The film has since undergone a major restoration, so that while the DVD was a decent improvement over previous presentations of the film, it still had some lingering wear, and the Blu-ray is spotless. Needless to say, the generally pristine (once in a while, the picture softens a little bit, but that is the extent of any anomalies) full screen black-and-white image enriches the play of the film all the more. Each scene is perfectly staged, with magnetic performances that convey the thoughts and desires of every character, and each advances briskly from one beautifully decorated situation to the next, a viewer's concentration enhanced by the crisp and lovely image. Hence, despite its length, the film just breezes by.

The monophonic sound still has some background noise, but is also substantially stronger and cleaner than the sound on the DVD. The film is in French with optional English subtitles. Carried over from the DVD is a commentary by film scholars Brian Stonehill (for *Boulevard of Crime*) and Charles Affron (for *Man in White*). The second platter features more supplements, including a 5-minute introduction from Terry Gilliam and a trailer that are carried over from the DVD. Additionally, along with a 4-minute look at the extensive improvements made during the restoration, there is a very good 22-minute piece on the film's amazing production designs; an excellent 64-minute retrospective documentary shot by a German crew in 1967, interviewing many of the filmmakers (and a number of young New Wave filmmakers, asking their opinion of the film); and another excellent 51-minute retrospective shot in 2009, which takes archival interviews with some of the filmmakers and combines them with a few new interviews. Taken together, the three pieces present a clear idea of the incredible team Carné assembled (two were Jewish and could never visit the set; on the other hand, the lead actress, Arletty, was literally sleeping with a German officer), the locations in Southern France where much of the film was made, the benefits and hardships of working during wartime (costumes were easy because cloth and seamstresses were plentiful, but food was scarce and the actors would pocket what was left of the meals that were in a scene after shooting was done), and how the Occupation affected the soul of the film. As co-star Jean-Louis Barrault explains, "Everything we did at that time came from a defensive position—defense against the Occupation and against our own insecurity and fear. It is possible that the film owes its intensity to that feeling."

Exceptional French comedies

Two very funny French films from the early Eighties, directed by the exceptional Francis Veber and starring Pierre Richard and Gerard Depardieu, have been released on Blu-ray by Gaumont and Kino Lorber Incorporated as *KL Studio Classics* titles. Both films are in French with optional English subtitles and both are letterboxed with an aspect of about 1.66:1. On both, the monophonic sound is fine and both feature distinctive musical scores by Vladimir Cosma. Both films are accompanied by trailers.

In the 1981 **La Chèvre** (UPC#738329263164, \$25), Richard's character is a hapless, accident-prone accountant. When the daughter of the corporate president of his company disappears in Mexico and normal searches turn up nothing, a human resources manager realizes that the daughter was subject to the same aura of 'bad luck' that Richard's character regularly encounters, and that Richard's character should be sent to Mexico to retrace her steps. Depardieu is the competent detective who had been working unsuccessfully on the case and reluctantly agrees to accompany Richard's character on a new investigation. The slapstick involving Richard's constant pratfalls are funny enough, but combined with Depardieu's brilliant deadpan reactions, the 94-minute film is hysterical from start to finish. Even friends who dislike subtitled movies will be laughing their butts off.

The picture is a touch grainy or light in places, but for the most part the fleshtones are accurate and the image looks fresh. There is a terrific commentary track by film enthusiasts Nathaniel Thompson and Howard S. Berger (contrary to the jacket listing, their compatriot, Steve Mitchell, does not seem to be present), who talk about the brilliant performances of Richard and Depardieu, Veber's superb direction, the music, the cons and pros of the American remakes of the French comedies from the time, and the film's comedy dynamics (including its violent interludes). Even they get caught up in the humor of the movie now and then, laughing at what is happening on the screen rather than talking about it, and the track can be a great way to watch the movie again even if you have just seen it, because their amusement is so infectious. "It's a perfect little film."

It is also absolutely ideal to watch **Les Compères** (UPS#73832926-3188, \$25) immediately after **La Chèvre**, and the film is even structured to be viewed that way. Although they play completely different characters (Richard is an out-of-work teacher with severe depression issues and Depardieu is a pugnacious journalist investigating political ties to gangsters), the chemistry that they have together endures. The film opens on other characters to set up the premise—which would be a shame to spoil—so that when each star finally does appear on screen (and you have already savored their antics in **La Chèvre**), it is a giddy delight, with the joy of seeing the men again lingering well into the film. The movie does not have as many laugh out loud moments as **La Chèvre**, but that, too, is a good thing. While there is some slapstick, there is also a meatier narrative—the two men are searching for a runaway teenage boy this time, in Nice, while gangsters trail them—and so the film is more substantive and meaningful than the first movie. Like the first film, there is always a threat of serious violence, and even a dead body, but the humor coming from the characters and their foibles again transcends any language barriers viewers might encounter. Running 91 minutes, the film would be clever and rewarding with any two actors, but the connections Richard and Depardieu make with one another are so precious, it raises the humor and emotional satisfaction the film creates to an entirely fresh level.

The picture is more consistently smooth, with bright hues. There is another outstanding commentary that, contrary to the jacket notes again, features just Thompson and Berger, who expertly dissect the film's dynamics while breezily discussing the artists and the era in which the film was made. "Most comedies, at least American comedies, don't have that psychological attention to detail, something where it's slapstick, extreme slapstick. You don't think it's particularly necessary, and again, I think if certain directors just tended a little bit more to the psychology of things, you really have a very logical, complex and frequently perverse tragicomedy. And Veber understands that just so well. It's really paired off quite evenly. Never are we watching just a gag setup. We're really looking at relationships developing, and showing you slivers of the more complex, less foregrounded aspects of these characters and the way they resolve issues."

One scene is all it takes

Beginning as a lackluster French romantic comedy, **The Innocent** improves with a lengthy, brilliantly staged scene in the final act that is enough to justify the film as a whole. Released on a somewhat drab Blu-ray by Janus Films and The Criterion Channel as a *Janus Contemporaries* title (UPC#71-5515288811, \$30), Anouk Grinberg stars as an impulsive theater teacher who marries a prison inmate played by Roschdy Zem. Louis Garrel, who also directed the film, is her adult son and Noémie Merlant is the son's 'best friend,' as the son is reluctant to move forward with the relationship. After Zem's character is paroled, the son becomes annoyingly suspicious and starts following him around, eventually getting himself roped into a heist. That sets up the amazing scene where Garrel's character and Merlant's character are in a restaurant and must pretend (thanks to the mother's theatrical training) that they are having an argument about their relationship in order to distract the victim of the heist. But thanks to the brilliant performances of the two actors and Garrel's inspired direction, the argument teeters on reality, and the longer it stretches out the more it teeters, to the point that the two characters really do fall in love. And it doesn't just happen on paper. You see it and you feel it as the two break through the barriers that have been holding them back for, apparently, years. Hence, the film may open and conclude in a penitentiary, but in the interim the jail becomes a metaphor for stability and freedom.

Quite annoyingly—and the more we come across this these days, the more piqued we become—the film does not start up where it left off if playback is terminated. Letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1, the color transfer is okay but not exceptional. The 5.1-channel DTS sound has a functional dimensionality and is reasonably smooth. The film is in French with optional English subtitles and comes with a trailer, along with a good 17-minute talk by Garrel, who goes over his background (he comes from a long line of movie directors) and then describes his thinking process behind putting the film together.

Hung's first

Plentiful nudity and a fairly graphic rape scene are among the innovations Sammo Hung brought to his 1977 debut feature as a director, **The Iron-Fisted Monk**, which has been released on Blu-ray by Arrow Video (UPC#760137134695, \$40). Hung also stars as a rice peddler who trains to become a talented martial artist after his boss is killed by bullies. He eventually leaves his training and seeks revenge upon the bullies that are dominating a small town (the main villain tends to have his way with every young girl who catches his eye). Hung's character joins forces with an even

more talented monk played by Sing Chen, and they attempt to teach others in the town how to defend themselves, but after a massacre it is just the two heroes who are left to challenge the bad guys. The fight scenes are inventive and somehow, despite the overall level of destruction depicted, Hung manages to include moments of humor as well, without pushing that humor to the level of tedium occurring in some of his later features. Running 93 minutes, the film's pacing, adult perspective and vigorous fights should please most genre fans, although others may wonder how much of a victory is achieved by the end.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1. The colors are strong and fresh, and the image is free of wear, with accurate fleshtones. The default audio track in monophonic Cantonese, but there is also a 5.1-channel Cantonese track that brings a nice dimensionality to background murmurs and birdsong—the music, however, remains centered. There is also a Mandarin mono track, an English mono track, an English 5.1 track with different dubbing, all of which are supported by optional English subtitles. Along with a trailer and a good collection of memorabilia in still frame, there is an interesting 17-minute interview with co-star Casanova Wong about his background in martial arts, working with Hung and with Bruce Lee, and two interviews with Hung running a total of 16 minutes in which he talks about his strategies for the film and explains that he brought humor into the martial arts movies because he was tired of how they were always so serious.

Upset that he wasn't allowed to see the movie as a child because of its adult rating, Asian film expert Frank Djeng compensates with a generally informative commentary track. Once in a while he falls back on describing the story, but for the most part he explores the history of Hong Kong films in the Seventies and the transitions they were undergoing, and also talks about Hung's career and the innovations he brought both to his fighting scenes and his filmmaking. "Notice how the camera in many ways follows the fighting. Back then, many of the martial arts films usually have the camera as more of a stationary figure, so to have the camera following the movement of the fighting is actually way ahead of its time. You will see that the camera is always fluid, it's always moving, never stiff. In some ways, the camera is also part of the choreography."

Lost

The jetliner crashes right before the film begins, so that the 1990 **The Last Island**, released on Blu-ray by Cult Epics (UPC#881190021095, \$35), opens with the remains of the plane scattered across a tropical beach and the dazed survivors wandering about and coming to terms with what has happened. There are seven left—an elderly woman, a woman of childbearing age, a teenaged man, and four middle-aged men. What proceeds from there over the course of the film's 101 minutes is a little harsher and a little more frank than a telefilm, but not measurably different. Due to a couple of very ambiguous clues, the survivors begin to suspect that they are the last people on Earth, and they start to fret about sustaining their species. It reminded us of George C. Scott's long forgotten *The Savage is Loose*, but even the more ubiquitous **Lord of the Flies** would be a valid companion piece. Directed by Marleen Gorris, who is Dutch, the film is in English and lacks the incisive eccentricity of her Dutch features. Shelagh McLeod, Paul Freeman, Patricia Hayes, Kenneth Colley and Mark Hembrow star. Some of the performances are appealing, and some pretty much stop the film dead. Like all castaway stories, the movie conveys a basic daydream that a viewer will find engaging regardless of the quality of its execution, but it has little else to recommend.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1. The colors are fresh and fleshtones are accurate. That said, the film's source material is apparently fairly obscure, and so there is quite a bit of speckling and other obvious wear. The two-channel DTS sound has a very nice dimensionality—that would be another one of the movie's very few positive attributes—bringing life to both the music and the sounds of the island's wildlife. There are optional English subtitles, a trailer, a nice collection of memorabilia in still frame, a 17-minute collection of great behind-the-scenes footage that is silent but is accompanied by and edited to generic music (including *Tutti Frutti* for some reason), a half-minute introduction to the film by producer Dick Mass, and a 12-minute interview from 1990 with writer Annemarie Grewel generally defending the film from the negative reviews it received during its first week of release.

There is also a commentary track by film scholar Peter Verstraeten, whose talk isn't bad, although it isn't so much about the film as about how the film fits into cinema in general. Not only does he compare it to Gorris' other features, but he also spends a great deal of time going over the history of the film's production company and the accompanying acceleration of Dutch features in the Seventies and Eighties (describing many of those other films in detail), and also segues into a lengthy talk about the traditions of castaway stories and movies, including a political deconstruction of Daniel Defoe's novel, *Robinson Crusoe*, and equally detailed breakdowns of a number of other movies and TV shows (he mentions **Lost**, and even **The Beverly Hillbillies**, but never talks about or offers a specific Marxist dissection of **Gilligan's Island**, darn it). He does eventually get around to talking generally about the thematic dynamics of the film at hand, and what he as to say is valid ("The Last Island is to be regarded as a reversal in gender roles. It is often assumed that women make decisions based upon their emotions, whereas men are regarded as rational. In **Last Island**, it is the other way around. The men can behave emotionally and they act irrationally."), but it comes across more as a professorial lecture covering a larger topic than a discussion about the movie at hand.

Watching television on television until it bites you

In the early days of home video, people bought movies they were already familiar with. That was, after all, the primary impetus behind the rental market, so that you didn't have to buy a movie you hadn't seen yet. In the first years of laser disc, we only bought movies we already knew we liked, but then as we started buying more and more of them, we decided to take a chance. We bought David Cronenberg's 1983 **Videodrome**, knowing little about it other than that Deborah Harry, the lead singer of Blondie, was in it, which was enough to seal the deal so far as we were concerned. We did not watch it right away. We waited until one night when everyone else was asleep and we weren't quite as ready for slumber. We pulled the disc out of our budding collection and put it on, and it hit the spot, a hallucinogenic, Marshall McLuhan-inspired nightmare with an apparently naked Harry, all sorts of weird occurrences and an outright lecture integrated with its narrative on why we shouldn't actually be staying up late at night watching stuff like this. It was wonderful. We put the disc away and never watched it again (in those days, our collection was not so big that we couldn't watch some of our discs over and over again for a lack of alternatives), but we were very happy to have had that moment, to have been able to select that film at that time on our terms and no one else's. The corporation that owned it gave up its control of when we could see the movie when we bought it from them, and we were very happy that we spent the money. That was why we were hooked on home video and that is also, in some ways, what the movie itself is about—not the control that television has had—and, to this day, still does—over the populace, but the liberation that home video enabled, something that corporations have been striving desperately ever since to retrieve.

We did end up watching other releases of the film in order to review them (most recently on DVD from The Criterion Collection in Sep 04), but we have not seen the movie in a long while and we looked very much forward to sitting down with the two-platter Criterion 4K Blu-ray (UPC#715515287715, \$50), once again making sure that everyone else was asleep before we put it on. James Woods plays the manager of a small Toronto cable channel who is seeking unusual programming to spice up his ratings when his tech guy comes across an apparent pirate video broadcast of hooded figures whipping women who are chained to what appears to be a vaguely organic wall. Just the thing he was looking for, but as he starts his search to secure the rights he steps into a conspiracy that is seeking to control viewers through hypnotic suggestions hidden within the playback of the images. While dating Harry's character, he seeks help from a McLuhan-like professor who will only talk to him on video, but that just leads him down more rabbit holes, and since he has been exposed to the broadcast, he begins to hallucinate all sorts of wild stuff, such as that his own stomach has an opening for inserting pulsating videocassettes.

The film was designed to be seen when video playback was not all that good, since it grovels in its own degradations, but the 4K image is still highly compelling, accentuating the many textures that Cronenberg dresses Woods' surroundings in, and making each slimy, disgusting color pop with a precision of definition. Seen in an absolute purity of crispness and chromatic accuracy, the special effects are still great, icky fun, and the dingy settings are exquisitely dreary. With a few exceptions, we find that most of Cronenberg's films are clichés, hiding a fear of modernity behind tiresome complaints about soul-lessness and identity loss, blended with satire (humor is sometimes their only saving grace) and the most gruesome gore effects imaginable, but while **Videodrome** is the very epitome of this tack, the 4K presentation is so clear and appealing that it feels like a glorious celebration of all of those clichés right down to the self-referential humor. Besides, Harry never looked better.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1. The monophonic sound is solid and free of distortion, and there are optional English subtitles. The second platter presents the film on a standard Blu-ray, with the colors not quite as strikingly defined. There is no discernible difference in the sound. Two commentaries that were on the DVD have been carried over to both platters, one featuring Cronenberg intercut with cinematographer Mark Irwin, and one featuring Woods intercut with Harry. All four speakers are engaging and illuminating.

The standard BD also contains a number of other special features that appeared on the DVD, including a large collection of production and promotional materials in still frame, three trailers, an 8-minute promotional featurette, a cute 26-minute Universal marketing featurette interviewing Cronenberg, John Carpenter and John Landis, a captioned 19-minute piece compiled by Tim Lucas on the film's visual effects that has no audio accompaniment, a 19-minute audio only segment interviewing several people who worked on the film talking about their efforts, the complete presentations of three video sequences excerpted in the film running a total of 17 minutes, a good 28-minute retrospective piece, and a lovely 6-minute short film Cronenberg made in 2000 with one of the **Videodrome** actors, Les Carlson, *Camera*.

An African in Manhattan

Set in Manhattan but clearly inspired by Ousmane Sembène's **Black Girl** (Feb 18), Nikyatu Jusu's **Nanny**, an Amazon Studios Criterion Collection Blu-ray (UPC#715515288217, \$40), is about a young Senegalese woman who gets a job working with the child of a wealthy Manhattan couple living in a ritzy apartment. As she tries to earn enough money to send for her young son from Senegal, troubles between the husband and wife begin to percolate, while at the same time she begins to have hallucinations, which may endanger the girl she is looking after. Running 98 minutes, the film is slickly designed and meticulously staged, enabling the viewer to grasp the problems and failures that each character faces. It is also a romance, with a happy ending, a convenience that holds the film's different components together with a reasonable effectiveness. Contrary to its marketing, however, it is not a horror film. The hallucinations are bizarre at times, and perhaps

unsettling, but never horrific. Anna Diop and Michelle Monaghan star, with a choice supporting part filled by Leslie Uggams.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2:1. The image is consistently smooth and sharp, adding greatly to the impact of the locations. The 5.1-channel DTS sound has a reasonably pleasing surround mix. There is an audio track that describes the action ("Aisha turns back to the mirror. She finds it reflecting her backside, its movements not matching her own. She stares with an alarmed look. Now, the mirror accurately reflects her fearful expression."), optional English subtitles, a trailer and a passable 17-minute production featurette. Also featured is a really cool (and very glossy) 2019 short film made by Jusu and running 17 minutes, *Suicide by Sunlight*, about a nurse who is a vampire, frustrated because her ex-husband won't let her visit her kids. While the rules aren't entirely clear, the piece is a terrific teaser for a feature film or even a series, and an indication, if **Nanny** was not enough, that great things will come from Jusu in the future.

Arzner's talent

Dorothy Arzner is the only director who could have made the 1933 RKO Radio production, **Christopher Strong**, a tolerable film. Ostensibly a blend of dreamy-eyed longing and backhand-brow despairing, the movie is about British aristocrats agonizing over the idea of a divorce. Arzner worked with Katharine Hepburn, however, to create a striking performance of an aviatrix whose propensity for breaking records is interrupted when she meets a dynamic, married politician, played rather undynamically by Colin Clive. Some viewers will find Hepburn's mannish character alienating, but as she gradually allows her femininity to seep through her façade, it sells the truth of her inner emotions more effectively than any line of dialog imposed upon her. There was only so much that Arzner could do with Clive, but she works around him with crisp blocking and editing, never lingering long enough for Clive's emoting to become irritating. It is no accident that the film, which has been released on Blu-ray by Warner Bros. as a *WB Warner Archive Collection* title (UPC# 810134943346, \$22), clocks in at 78 minutes. Amid the scenes of breathless romance and the montages of daring aero achievements, the film does not stay in one place long enough to dwell on emotional disappointment or give time to the viewer to realize that these people have barely had enough life experience to discern love from lust, regardless of their ages. Arzner's constant awareness of how a viewer is reacting to the characters and the designs surrounding them prevents them from overstaying their welcome and undermining the pace of the narrative. Billie Burke plays the sad wife.

The full screen black-and-white picture is old, but still looks quite lovely. The image is soft, but very smooth and free of any discernible wear. The monophonic sound is reasonably clear, as well. There are optional English subtitles and three supplemental black-and-white shorts, all of which were produced in 1933. One, *Plane Nuts*, an MGM production running 20 minutes and starring Ted Healy and the Three Stooges, was previously included by Warner in **Dancing Lady** (Aug 17) but features, along with the vaudeville shtick from Healy and the Stooges, some elaborate, Busby Berkeley-style dance numbers that develop an airplane motif, with women marching about holding propellers. An interesting 7-minute *Looney Tunes* cartoon, *Buddy's Beer Garden*, has a string of gags involving the serving and drinking of beer and snacks at a restaurant, concluding with a song performed by a Mae West-like singer. Finally, there is a messy but fascinating 22-minute Vitaphone talking short with Fatty Arbuckle, *Tomalio*. Set across the border, the thrust of the humor is the spoofing of Mexican military stereotypes, mixed with occasional slapstick. Nothing in it is particularly funny—the heroes attempt, half heartedly, to flirt with a señorita played by Phyllis Holden, who has also caught the eye of a blustering general—and there isn't so much a narrative as a jumbled series of events with vaguely the same setting, but taking a measure of the fallen Arbuckle getting in front of the camera again is worth the time spent, particularly since one of his scenes features what today is known as a 'wardrobe malfunction' involving Holden. Thank goodness for the still frame function.

Limp wick

Trying to climb onto the John Wick bandwagon, the 2023 Lionsgate production, **King of Killers**, is about assassins competing against one another to kill the supposedly best assassin, who has invited them all to a building where he confronts them on different bobby-trapped floors. The hero, played by Alain Moussi, is a skillful hitman who wants to retire after his wife is killed, but he needs the money to take care of his ailing daughter. Released on a combination DVD & Blu-ray by Lionsgate (UPC#031398341291, \$25), the film turns out rather flagrantly to be the first installment of an anticipated series, but it will have to light more fires than it manages to do to attract followers. Directed by Kevin Greivoux (based upon his 'graphic novel'—he also co-stars), the fight scenes are energetic, reasonably bloody and fairly constant, but the 91-minute movie is as involving as standing behind someone's shoulder and watching the screen as they play a fight tournament video game.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1. The Blu-ray has a sharp, clear image most of the time, even when the lighting is bathed in a single color. The DVD also looks quite good, although it is a little more prone to distortion in the darker portions of the screen. The 5.1-channel DTS sound on the BD has a full dimensionality and reasonably strong tones. The mix is not aggressive, but it serves the action well enough. The 5.1 Dolby Digital sound on the DVD is not as strong, undercutting the impact of the violence from time to time. Both platters come with an audio track that describes the action ("Marcus kicks one of Rino's blades away as she blocks a strike from his knife. She kicks him in the chest and he parries and she parries and stabs her neck. Blood dribbles from her mouth. He pulls his knife free, sending an arc of blood across the wall. Marcus walks away from her body."), optional English, French and Spanish subtitles, a trailer and a fine 8-minute production featurette about Greivoux, Moussi and their collaboration.

Preserving the best of the past

A lovely, often poetic look at the remaining functional Grumman Albatross airplanes, **Flying Boat**, has been released by Outsider Pictures and MVD (UPC#760137136989, \$20). What is the difference between a seaplane and a flying boat? The flying boats are about five times as big and have about three times the range. They were the pinnacle of commercial international air transportation in the Thirties, until World War II and the development of commercial jetliners necessitated the creation of the airport system we have today. The 2023 documentary profiles several individuals who own or have restored their own Albatross planes, while going over the history of the plane and depicting how its owners make use of it today—yes, there is also an admission that it is still quite a popular airplane with drug smugglers. But since the plane can go anywhere there is a decent stretch of calm water, it is also very popular with adventurers who want to visit lakes, islands and other destinations that are, as they say, off the beaten path. It combines wonderful portraits of the quirky personalities of the enthusiasts—male and female—with gorgeous views of the planes and their destinations. Hence, running 77 minutes, the film is just as escapist itself for those who want to fantasize about having such a plane without actually making the commitment.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1, and the images are bright and vivid. The 5.1-channel Dolby Digital sound has a terrific dimensional presence for both the musical score and the sound of the plane engines. There are optional English and French subtitles, a trailer, and a terrific 22-minute collection of deleted scenes and outtakes that, by breaking the editorial rules that the film itself adheres to, expand the film's explorations and pleasures in all of the right ways.

DVD News

HOLIDAY SPIRIT: We have not raised our subscription rate in over 20 years and we have no intention of doing so, even though the price of postage has essentially doubled in the interim. However, our ability to put out a twelve-page Newsletter as opposed to an eight-page Newsletter is restricted not so much by the time we have available, but by our income. Therefore, if you enjoy the longer magazine and would like to see more of them, feel free to add a tip onto your next subscription renewal, or even if you aren't renewing but are feeling the spirit of the forthcoming holidays. We promise it will not go to waste!

CRITERION CORNER: Joel and Ethan Coen's breakthrough **Blood Simple** is being released as a 4K Blu-ray by The Criterion Collection with a conversation between cinematographer Barry Sonnenfeld and the Coens about the film's look, featuring Telestrator video illustrations; a conversation between author Dave Eggers and the Coens about the film's production, from inception to release; and interviews with composer Carter Burwell, sound editor Skip Lievsay, Frances McDormand and M. Emmet Walsh. John Sayles' **Lone Star** will be in 4K and will feature a conversation between Sayles and filmmaker Gregory Nava, and an interview with cinematographer Stuart Dryburgh. **Chantal Ackerman Masterpieces 1968-1978** will include **Jeanne Dielman, 23, quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles, Saute Ma Ville, L'Enfant Aimé Ou Je Lui à Être Une Femme Mariée, La Chambre, Hotel Monterey, Le 15/8, Je Tu Il Elle, News from Home, and Les Rendezvous d'Anna; Hanging Out Yonkers**, an unfinished film from 1973 by Akerman; film-school tests; a program on Akerman featuring critic B. Ruby Rich; a visual essay on Akerman featuring archival interviews with the director; **Autour de Jeanne Dielman**, a documentary made during the filming of **Jeanne Dielman, 23, quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles**, shot by actor Sami Frey and edited by Agnès Ravez and Akerman; interviews with Akerman, cinematographer Babette Mangolte, Aurore Clément, Delphine Seyrig, and Akerman's mother, Natalia; and an appreciation by filmmaker Ira Sachs. Satyajit Ray's **The Apu Trilogy of Pather Pachali, Aparajito and The World of Apu** is being released in 4K format accompanied by audio recordings from 1958 of director Satyajit Ray reading his essay *A Long Time on the Little Road* and in conversation with film historian Gideon Bachmann; interviews with Soumitra Chatterjee, Shampa Srivastava, Sharmila Tagore, camera assistant Soumendu Roy and film writer Ujjal Chakraborty; **Making The Apu Trilogy: Satyajit Ray's Epic Debut**, a video essay by Ray biographer Andrew Robinson; **The Apu Trilogy: A Closer Look**, a program featuring filmmaker, producer, and teacher Mamoun Hassan; excerpts from the 2003 documentary *The Song of the Little Road*, featuring composer Ravi Shankar; **The Creative Person: "Satyajit Ray"**—a 1967 documentary short by James Beveridge, featuring interviews with Ray, several of his actors, members of his creative team, and film critic Chidananda Das Gupta; footage of Ray receiving an honorary Oscar in 1992; and programs on the restorations by filmmaker Kogonada. Dee Rees' **Mudbound** will feature a commentary by Rees; a documentary featuring Rees, composer Tamar-kali, editor Mako Kamitsuna, and makeup artist Angie Wells; a documentary made on set, featuring members of the cast and crew; an interview with cinematographer Rachel Morrison; and an interview with production designer David J. Bomba. Danny Boyle's **Trainspotting** will be in 4K format and will have a commentary featuring Boyle, producer Andrew Macdonald, screenwriter John Hodge, and Ewan McGregor; nine deleted scenes with commentary from the filmmakers; **Off the Rails: The Making of Trainspotting**, a documentary featuring archival interviews with cast and crew and behind-the-scenes footage; **Memories of Trainspotting**, a documentary from 2008 featuring the filmmakers and McGregor, Kelly Macdonald, Ewen Bremner, and Robert Carlyle; and reflections from soundtrack artists Iggy Pop, Jarvis Cocker, Bobby Gillespie, Damon Albarn, Leftfield, Underworld, and more.

NEW IN BLU: The following titles have recently been issued on Blu-ray—Acid Bath Productions V.11, Mind Melters V.17, Mind Melters V.18, Trailers of James Balsamo 2 (Acid Bath); The Defilers / A Smell of Honey A Swallow of Brine (AGFA); Dark Winds Season 2, Murdoch Mysteries Season 16 (AMD); Binding Souls, Bio Raiders, Bliss of Evil, Harlow's Haunt, The Orchard, The Tag Along Devil Witch, Vampire Cleanup Department (Bayview); Cabo de Gata, Feel of Vision, Northern Grease, Not without Us, Right to Harm (Blue Water); The Channel (Brainstorm); The Mean One (Bridgestone); The Boogeyman, Haunted Mansion, The Johnstown Flood, Prey (Buena Vista); Camp Smokey (Burning Bulb); The Hard Part Begins (Canadian); Arnold, Coming Out, Curse of the Screaming Dead, Evil Judgment, The Films of Enrique Gomez Vadillo (CAV); Five More Minutes Moments Like These, The Gift of Peace, Haul out the Holly, A Magical Christmas Village, A Maple Valley Christmas, Night of the Demons 2, Night of the Demons 3, Shaw Brothers Classics V.3, Wallace & Gromit The Complete Cracking Collection (Cinedigm); What Doesn't Float (Circle); EO, Freaks/The Unknown/The Mystic Tod Browning's Sideshow Shockers, The Innocent, Nanny, No Bears, The Others (Criterion); Smokey and the Judge/Alien Thunder (Dark Force); Visitors from the Arkana Galaxy (Deaf Crocodile); Golda, Jules (Decal); Fugue (Dekalog); Slopes Game Room Sega The Complete History V.1 (ETR); Out of Time The Material Issue Story (Factory 25); Beast from Haunted Cave/Ski Troop Attack (Film Masters); Marcel Pagnol My Father's Glory/My Mother's Castle, Passion (Film Movement); Air Maine/High on Maine (Gemini); Rewind and Play (Grasshopper); Animal Crackers, Downwind, 15 Cameras, Fuzzy Head, The Haunting Lodge, Impuratus, Righteous Thieves, Seriously Red (Gravitas); Dickshark (Grimoire); 13 Miles (Habethy); The Night-Time Winds (Hollinsworth); The Dive (Image); Horror in the Forest, A Place among the Dead (Indie Rights); Will Your Heart Beat Faster? (Kani); Alien Outlaw, American Ninja, American Ninja 2, The Best of Times, Black Sabbath, The Challenge, The Dark Power, Douglas Fairbanks Double Feature The Three Musketeers and The Iron Mask, Enter the Ninja, It The Terror from beyond Space, Lorna the Exorcist, Salvation!, Two Small Bodies (Kino); Unlucky to Love You (Leomark); King of Killers, Retribution, Talk to Me, The Walking Dead Complete Collection (Lionsgate); Return of the Mothman (Marshall); Waist Deep/Drop Squad (Mill Creek); Hitman's Hero (MPI); Decision to Leave (Mubi); August Underground's Mordum, Clearcut, The Dead Mother, Deadgirl, Desperate Hours, Four Bullets for Joe, Identikit, The Iron-Fisted Monk, The Last Blood, The Last Island, Sanctified, Story of a Cloistered Nun, Tombs of the Blind Dead, Vile, Visible Secret, Witness (MVD); Anonymous Club, Sirens (Oscilloscope); Mission Impossible Dead Reckoning Part One, Rabbit Hole Season 1, Transformers Rise of the Beasts (Paramount); Black Pit of Dr. M, The Brainiac, The Curse of the Crying Woman, Fascination, Lips of Blood, The Witch's Mirror (Powerhouse); Abracadavers Season 1, Abracadavers Season 2, Beyond the Sash, The Blue Hour, Dying to Sleep, Galaxy Games, The Green Woman, Hero of the Underworld, In the Country of Last Things, Love and Love Not, Marla, No Tomorrow, Obstacle Course, One More Time before I Die, The Punished, Reveries of a Solitary Stroller, 6 Wheels from Hell, Tortured Part 2 Fluid Boy & Part 3 Visions of Filth (Rising Sun); Oklahoma, South Pacific (Samuel Goldwyn); Knight Chills (Saturn's Core); The Mary Millington Movie Collection (Screenbound); The Boys Season 3, The Crown Season 5, Rock around the Clock, Shortcomings (Sony); Anthropophagus II, Boy Makes Girl, The Slaughter (Syndicat); Blue Moon, Paula, Pussy Riot! Putin's Plague (Synergetic); Chocolate Strawberry Vanilla (Terror); A Bronx Tale (Tribeca); The Husband (2121); Day of the Panther/Strike of the Panther (Umbrella); Bad Apples, Boneless Ones, Gremlin, Out of Nothing, Pet Graveyard (Uncork'd); Blue Crush, Bring It On Cheer or Die, The Hill, Honey, The Last Voyage of the Demeter, The Lost Weekend A Love Story, My Big Fat Greek Wedding 3, Psych Complete Series, RoboDoc The Creation of RoboCop, Stealing Christmas, Strays (Universal); The Good Mother (Vertical); Barbie, Before Night Falls, Blue Beetle, Christopher Strong, Dance Fools Dance, The Devil Doll, Double Trouble, Justice League X RWBY Superheroes & Huntsmen Part 2, Mad City, Meg 2 The Trench, Mortal Kombat Legends Cage Match, Palmetto, Titans Season 4, Titans Complete Series (Warner); Creepy Crawly, Forgotten Experiment, Ride On, 3 Days in Malay (Well Go); Caddy Hack, Lycan Colony, Vampires and Other Stereotypes (Wild Eye); Tower A Bright Day & Monument, We Kill for Love (Yellowveil); Craving (Zapruderflix)

NEW IN 4K: The following titles were recently issued in 4K format—Prey, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (Buena Vista); The Blob, Night of the Demons, Pumpkinhead (Cinedigm); Terrifier 2 (Coven); Don't Look Now, The Others, Videodrome (Criterion); Cujo, Red Dragon (Kino); Le Mepris, The Mist, Talk to Me (Lionsgate); Scream 3 (Miramax); Decision to Leave (Mubi); Witness (MVD); Mission Impossible Dead Reckoning Part One, Rosemary's Baby, Transformers Rise of the Beasts (Paramount); Fascination, Lips of Blood (Powerhouse); Godzilla, The Muppets Take Manhattan, The Way We Were (Sony); A Bronx Tale (Tribeca); The Toxic Avenger Collection (Troma); The Black Phone, Bride of Frankenstein, Creature from the Black Lagoon, Frenzy, It Came from Outer Space, The Man Who Knew Too Much, M3GAN, The Mummy, Phantom of the Opera, Rope, Topaz, Torn Curtain (Universal); Barbie, Blue Beetle, The Exorcist, Justice League X RWBY Superheroes & Huntsmen Part 2, Meg 2 The Trench, Mortal Kombat Legends Cage Match (Warner)

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Acid Bath Productions V.11 (Acid Bath)
The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet V.13 (MPI)
The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet V.14 (MPI)
Agatha Christie's Criminal Games The 70s (Kino)
At Alta Nomads of the High Atlas (Green Planet)*
ALF Complete Series (Cinedigm)
Alien Contactee (Zaprudex)
Animal Crackers (Gravitas)
Anonymous Club (Oscilloscope)*
Antrophophagus II (Syndicado)*
Arnel Back to Buenos Aires (Level 33)*
August Underground's Mordum (MVD)
Back Fork (Uncork'd)
Bad Apples (Uncork'd)
Barbie (Warner)
Beast from Haunted Cove (Film Masters)
Belle (Level 23)
Beyond Existence (Indican)*
Beyond the Sash (Rising Sun)
The Big Country (Kino)
The Big House and the Little House (Dreamscape)
Bitcoin The End of Money As We Know It (Dreamscape)
Bloodscales (Freestyle)*
Bloodstirs (Lonsgate)
Blue Beetle (Warner)
Blue Collar TV Complete Series (Warner)
The Blue Hour (Rising Sun)
Blue Moon (Synergetic)*
The Boogeyman (Buena Vista)
Boat Hill (Chezy Flicks)
Boy Makes Girl (Syndicado)*
The Boys Season 3 (Sony)
Brothers in Arms WWII in HD Vietnam in HD (Lonsgate)
Bull Complete Series (Paramount)
Cabo De Gata Mediterranean (Blue Water)
Caddy Hack (Wild Eye)
Camp Smokey (Burning Bulb)*
Candela (Breaking Glass)*
The Candy Witch (Uncork'd)
Captured (Uncork'd)
Cat Daddies (Brainstorm)
Centennial Complete Series (Universal)
The Channel (Brainstorm)*
A Christmas Cookie Catastrophe (Cinedigm)
The Christmas Fleets (Bridgestone)*
A Christmas Story Christmas (Warner)
Christmas Time (Bridgestone)
Christmas with Lee Greenwood (Goldenlane)
Clove of Halloween (Wild Eye)
Code Breaker Spy Hunter (Dreamscape)
A Compassionate Spy (Magnolia)
Country Blue (Chezy Flicks)
Crawling (Zaprudex)
Creepy Crawly (Well Go)
The Crown Season 5 (Sony)
Dark Windows (Brainstorm)*
Dark Windows Season 2 (AMD)
DC-10 Farewell Tour Biman Banglades Airline (Astral)
Decay (Uncork'd)

Decision to Leave (Mubi)*
A Desperate Road (Dreamscape)
Delicious (Synergetic)
The Devil Made Me Do It (Filmhub)*
The Dive (Image)
Doing Justice A Story from Ghana (Bayview)*
Dolly Parton's Mountain Magic Christmas (Warner)
Downwind (Gravitas)
Dying to Sleep (Rising Sun)*
Earth Mother (Dreamscape)
The Edge of Paradise (Bayview)
Edison: The Invention of the Movies (Kino)
8 Found Dead (MPI)
Eismayer (MPI)
The Elderly (MPI)*
Emanuel's Revenge (Kino)
The End of Blindness (Bayview)
Endeavor Complete Series (Paramount)
EO (Criterion)
Epic Train Journeys from Above (Paramount)
Evie (Devilworks)
Fatal Attraction Season 1 (Paramount)
Feet of Vision (Blue Water)
15 Cameras (Gravitas)
1* Born (Uncork'd)
Flying Boat (MVD)
Forgotten Experiment (Well Go)
Four Bullets for Joe (MVD)
Franky and His Pals (MVD)
Freaks/The Unknown/The Mystic: Tod Browning's Sideshow Shockers (Criterion)
French for Kids by Whistlertiz (Dreamscape)
Frights and Fears V.1 (Leomark)
Futaba (Gravitas)*
Galaxy Games (Rising Sun)
The Girl behind the Door (Dreamscape)
Golda (Decal)
The Goldsmith (Kino)
The Good Mother (Vertical)
The Great Final Season (Paramount)
The Green Woman (Rising Sun)
Gremlin (Uncork'd)
Happy Valley Year 3 (Warner)
Haunted Mansion (Buena Vista)
Heaven Can Wait (MVD)
He-Man and the Masters of the Universe Complete Series (Mill Creek)
Hero of the Underworld (Rising Sun)
Heroes Complete Series (Universal)
How to Grow the Forest (Indie Rights)*
Horror Underground Extreme Horror Cinema (Bayview)
Howl of the Underdogs (Bayview)
Hunting in Packs (Dreamscape)
The Hunting Lodge (Gravitas)
I Get Knocked Down (Freestyle)*
I, Matter (Dreamscape)
Imputarus (Gravitas)
In a Jar (Dreamscape)
In the Country of Last Things (Rising Sun)*
The Innocent (Criterion)
Inside Man (Vertical)
Io Sto Bene I Am Fine (Indie Rights)
It Hatched (Rising Sun)*
Jules (Decal)
Killing Joan (Uncork'd)
The Kill of Jacob Marr (Filmhub)*
Kindling (Freestyle)
King of Killers (Lonsgate)
The Lady of Heaven (The Vision)
The Last Island (MVD)
The Last Voyage of the Demeter (Universal)*
Law & Order Special

Victims Unit Season 24 (Universal)*
The League (Magnolia)
The League of Legend Keepers Shadows (Uncork'd)
Left Behind World at War (Amcomri)
Left Behind II Tribulation Force (Amcomri)
The Life and Times of Allen Ginsberg (Kino)
Liz Momma's Little Girl (MVD)*
London Kills Season 4 (AMD)
Love and Love Not (Rising Sun)
The Love Destination Body Scan Meditations (Dreamscape)
The Love Destination Meditations for Anxiety (Dreamscape)
The Love Destination Meditations for Dealing with Big Emotions (Dreamscape)
The Love Destination The Mindful Meditations (Dreamscape)
A Magical Christmas Village (Cinedigm)
Malefic (Synergetic)
Malicious (4Digital)
Mara (Rising Sun)*
Mia Had a Little Lamb (Uncork'd)
The Matter of Life (Dreamscape)
Mayor of Kingstown Season 2 (Paramount)*
McDonnell Douglas DC-10 Simulator Classics (Astral)
The Mean One (Bridgestone)*
Meg 2 The Trench (Warner)
Metalocalypse Complete Series (Warner)
Mind Melters V.17 (Acid Bath)*
Mind Melters V.18 (Acid Bath)*
The Mistress (Breaking Glass)*
Mob Land (Lionsgate)
Monk (Digicom)*
Monsters in the Woods (Zaprudex)
Moto of the Cop (Indie Rights)*
The Mountain (Strand)
Murdoch Mysteries Season 16 (AMD)
Mutt (Strand)
My Big Fat Greek Wedding 3 (Universal)*
My Name Is Jeremy (Freestyle)*
Nanny (Criterion)
NCIS Hawaii! Season 2 (Paramount)
Neither Confirm Nor Deny (Kino)
Night Court Season 1 (Universal)
Night Explorers The Asylum (Level 23)
The Night of the 12* (Film Movement)
The Nightingale of Tibet (Leomark)
No Bears (Criterion)
No Tomorrow (Rising Sun)*
Nona and Her Daughters Season 1 (Kino)
Northern Grease (Blue Water)*
Not without Us (Blue Water)
Obstacle Corpse (Rising Sun)*
Oklahoma! (Samuel Goldwyn)
One More Time before I Die (Rising Sun)*
Oppenheimer The Real Story (101)
Out of Nothing (Uncork'd)
Passion (Film Movement)
Paula (Synergetic)
Pig Lady (Gravitas)
The Politics of Hate (Bayview)*
Praise This (Universal)
The Presidential Legacy Collection Franklin D. Roosevelt Theodore Roosevelt (Lionsgate)
Prey (Buena Vista)
Unstuffed A Build-A-Bear Pussy Riot! Putin's Plague (Freestyle)*

(Synergetic)*
Quicksand (AMD)
Quicksand (Gravitas)
Rabbit Hole Season 1 (Paramount)
Radioactive Soldiers The Oppenheimer Aftermath (Marshall)*
The Redwood Massacre (Uncork'd)
Retribution (Lonsgate)
Return of the Mothman (Marshall)*
Reveries of a Solitary Stroller (Rising Sun)*
Rewind and Play (Grasshopper)
Ride On (Well Go)
The Right Girls (Bayview)*
Right to Harm (Blue Water)*
Righteous Thieves (Gravitas)
The River You Step In (Cinemaintainment)
The Road Dog (Freestyle)*
Robert Irwin A Desert of Pure Feeling (Kino)
Rosodun (TLA)*
Rusty Blade (High Octane)*
Sanctified (MVD)
Saturn Bowling (MPI)
Saurians 2 (Wild Eye)
Scooby-Doo! and Krypto, Too! (Warner)
The Second Woman (Digicom)*
Seriously Red (Gravitas)
Sesame Street Elmo's Holiday Spectacular (Theatrical)
Seven Days in Heaven (Cheng Cheng)
Shockwave Darkside (Uncork'd)
Shortcomings (Sony)*
Shy Willow (Dreamscape)
Sirens (Oscilloscope)*
Sister Boniface Mysteries Season 2 (Warner)
6 Wheels from Hell (Rising Sun)*
The Slaughterer (Syndicado)
Slaughter Beach (SRS)
Snake People (Reel Vault)*
Sniper G.I.T. (Sony)
Spanish for Kids by Whistlertiz (Dreamscape)
Speed Is Expensive Philip Vincent and the Million (Kino)
Sri Ashi The Warrior (Cinedigm)
Stabbed in the Face (Wild Eye)
State of the Unity (Freestyle)
Stonewalling (Kino)
The Storms of Jeremy Thomas (Kino)
Strays (Universal)*
Suburban Cowboy (Uncork'd)
Swan Princess Far Longer Than Forever (Sony)*
Talk to Me (Lonsgate)*
13 Miles (Haberty)*
3 Days of Malay (Well Go)
Throw out the Anchor (Chezy Flicks)
Til Death Do Us Part (Universal)
A Time for Every Purpose (Freestyle)*
Time Sleeper (Dreamscape)
Titans Season 4 (Warner)
Titans Complete Series (Warner)
Too Late for Tears (Digicom)*
Tortured Part 2 Fluid Boy & Part 3 Visions of Fifth (Rising Sun)*
Tower A Bright Day & Monument (Yellow Veil)
Trailers of James Balsamo 2 (Acid Bath)
Transformers Rise of the Beasts (Paramount)
Treasure of Tayopa (Chezy Flicks)
UFU Target Earth (Chezy Flicks)
Ultimate Blades 2-Movie Collection (Well Go)
Unknown World (Chezy Flicks)
The Unseen Realm (Dreamscape)
Unstuffed A Build-A-Bear Story (Freestyle)*

Van der Valk Season 3 (Paramount)
VHS Godfather The VIPCO Complete Collection (Lonsgate)
Viva (MVD)
Viva Elvis (Dreamscape)
Waiting for the Light to Change (Freestyle)*
Wake Up Leonard (Bridgestone)
The Walking Dead Complete Collection (Lonsgate)
War 4-Movie Collection (Well Go)
We Are Not Alone (Uncork'd)
We Kill for Love (Yellow Veil)
The Wedding Veil Trilogy 2 (Cinedigm)
When We Walk (Bayview)
White Days (Leomark)
The Winter House (Freestyle)*
Winter's End (Filmhub)*
The Witch 2-Movie Collection (Well Go)
Wolf Pack Season 1 (Paramount)
Women of Devil's Island (Chezy Flicks)
WWE Payback 2023 (Cinedigm)
Yellowjackets Season 2 (Paramount)
You Are a Life (Dreamscape)
Your Friend, Memphis (Kino)
Zeleny (Dreamscape)
Zenith (Filmhub)*
*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:
→ Acid Bath:
→ Mind Melters V.19
→ Mind Melters V.20
→ Doc Martin Last Christmas in Portwenn Ride with Norman Reedus Season 6
→ The Chelsea Detective Season 2
→ Miss Sidhu Investigates
→ Elevator Game
→ Doc Martin Complete Series (27 platters)
→ Bad Things
→ From Angel:
Sound of Freedom
→ From Arizical:
→ From Big Day:
Dance Hall Days
The Outside Circle A Movie of the Modern West
→ From Bounty:
→ Dome House Six
→ Audition Tape 13
→ Mutt
→ One, Another
→ Foresight Killer Instinct
→ Quest for Steel
→ From Breaking Glass:
Isaac
Jump Darling
Nocturna The Collection
→ Girls on Film
→ From Bridgestones:
→ Hank's Christmas Wish
→ A Wave of Kindness
→ Silent Night in Algonia
→ Flagheart Heart
→ From Buena Vista:
→ A Haunting in Venice
→ Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny
→ From CAV:
Paranoid Garden
Flesh Contagium (with CD)
Fetus (with CD)
→ Astrakan
→ From Chezy Flicks:
Calfies
Betrayal
Island Monster
→ Queen of the Amazons
→ Werewolf Woman
→ Panic
→ From Cinedigm:
Sri Ashi The Warrior
Three Wise Men and a Baby
Time for Him to Come Home for Christmas
WWE Fastlane 2023
→ WWE Crown Jewel 2023
Shaun the Sheep The Flight before Christmas
Headcount
→ Hanukkah on Rye
→ The Holiday Stocking
→ The Last Bridesmaid
→ Among Wolves
→ Love in Glacier
National/The Dog Lover's Guide to Dating
→ A Royal Christmas Crush/Take Me Back for Christmas
→ The Kill Room
→ Weird The Al Yankovic Story
→ Showdown at the Grand
→ From Cinema Libre:
Method Sampling How to Build the Future Together
→ From ClassicFlix:
World of Giants Complete Series
→ Our Town
→ Cause for Alarm!
→ The Complete Hal Roach Streamliners Collection (4 platters)
→ From Criterion:
Godland
Tori and Lokita
The Eight Mountains
La Cérémonie
The Red Balloon and Other Stories Five Films by Albert Laorrise
Guillermo Del Toro's Pinocchio
→ From Decal:
It Lives Inside
→ What Happens Later
→ From DeskPop:
The Mean One
→ From DraftHouse:
→ Mister Oilrgan
→ From Dreamscape:
Animal Security
Baby in a Manger
Christmas Lucky Charm
Christmas on 5th Avenue
Christmas on the Slopes
Christmas Recipe for Romance
Collection Hunters
Eco Girl
How Does Water Move Around?
I Will Rise A Powerful Story of Redemption
Ivick Von Salza
Little Women
The Love Destination
The Love Destination: Confidence Meditations
The Love Destination: Gratitude Meditations
The Love Destination: Loving Kindness Meditations
The Love Destination: Visualization Meditations
Never Give Up Dr. Kati Kariko and the Race for the Future of Vaccines
Once Upon...My Story
Santa's Got Style
The Stars of the Night
The Courageous Children of the Czech Kindertransport
Two Straight Girls at a Queer Fest
Yoshi's Big Swim
→ The Apollo Experience
→ Apollo 17
→ Blood Mountain
→ Foo Fighters Then and Now
→ Hope
→ I'm a Monster

→ The Love Destination: Breathing Meditations
→ Love Spies and Cyanide
→ Moving The Millers
Minnie Moore Mine
Mansion
→ Mr. Johnson
→ The Skull
→ When Jack Came Back
→ The Terror
→ From Film Masters:
The Scarlet Letter
→ From Film Movement:
→ Return to Dust
→ Las Leonas
→ Never Too Late for Love
→ From Filmhub:
→ Khazana
→ Noise Matters
→ Jake's Closet
→ Lucas Y Atropadas
→ Neon Detroit Knights
→ Forget Me Not
→ Hate Crime
→ Stranger in the Night
→ The M
→ Tasmanian Tiger
→ Raising Flagg
→ The Penitent Man
→ The Wedding Trip
→ Dream for an Insonniah
→ Two Tickets to Paradise
→ From Flicker Alley:
French Revelations:
Fanfare D'Amour & Mauvaise Graine
→ From Digital:
The Red Shoes Next Step
→ From Freestyle:
→ Best Birthday Ever
→ Suki & Black Star
→ Bolivar
→ 5000 Space Aliens
→ Disorder
→ From Fun City:
T.R. Baskin
→ The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz
→ From Grasshopper:
→ Doc Humani Corpsis Fabrica
→ From Gravitas:
The Gamblers
→ Deep Fear
→ The Last Bumblebee
→ Halfway to Amarillo
→ The Mostly Serious History of Wine
→ Wintertide
→ Relative
→ Liberty
→ From Greenfield:
→ Megalodon The Frenzy
→ From Habethy:
13 Miles
→ From Image:
Color out of Space
Arizona
Muzzle
→ From Indiapp:
There Goes the Neighborhood
→ The Fifth Thoracic Vertebra
→ Ever, Réve, Helene
Cixous
→ From Intellectual Reserve:
→ Season of Light
Christmas with the Tabernacle Choir
→ From Invincible:
→ From Kappa:
→ I Can
→ From Kino:
Cinema's First Nasty Women
Radical Wolfe
Unrest
Scrapper
Running Scared
Homicide Hills Complete Series (12 platters)
Spin Complete Series (6 platters)
Open Plan 75
→ Magellon Complete Series (20 platters)
→ Monville Complete Series (14 platters)
→ The Passengers of the Night
→ From Leomark:
→ Back in the No
→ From Level 33:
→ Don't Look Away
→ From Lonsgate:
→ Saw X
→ The Expendables 4

→ Ancient Aliens Season 18
→ From Magnolia:
Operation Napoleon
→ Deliver Us
→ From Mill Creek:
An Angelic Christmas
→ The Blind
→ Eddie Griffin Stand-Up Spotlight
→ Alonzo Bodden Stand-Up Spotlight
→ Divine Influencer
→ From Moonbug:
→ Bizarre Curiosity Calls
→ From MPI:
Broadway
→ The Gravy
→ The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet (50 platters)
→ From Mubi:
→ Passages
→ From Music Box:
The Unknown Country
Freemont
My Sailor My Love
→ The Road Dance
→ From MVD:
The Man at the Door
Jailhouse Wardress
Rose & Frank
Hilma
Lion-Girl
The Admirer
Joysticks
→ A Bullet for Sandoval
→ The Gamblers
→ Full Body Massage
→ Horrors of the Black Museum
→ August Underground's Penance
→ Mondo New York
→ Apple Seed
→ Mickey Spillane's Encore for Murder
→ Strange Diary
→ Skymaster Down
→ A Message to the Stars
→ Follow the Money
→ Route 66 The Untold Story of Women on the Mother Road
→ I'm a Creepy Crawly
→ Holly Jolly Jingles
→ Sabotage
→ From Out of Florida:
→ Daddy Daughter Trip
→ From Paramount:
Nancy Drew Complete Series (15 platters)
Nancy Drew Final Season
Annika Season 2
The American Buffalo (Ken Burns)
→ The Good Fight Complete Series (18 platters)
Mary Berry's Ultimate Christmas
Hotel Portofino Season 2
57 Seconds
→ South Park The Streaming Wars
→ Grease Rise of the Pink Ladies Season 1
→ Joe Pickett Season 2
Murder in Big Horn
→ The Dovekeepers
→ World on Fire Season 2
→ The Fifth Thoracic Vertebra
→ Ever, Réve, Helene
Cixous
→ From Intellectual Reserve:
→ Season of Light
Christmas with the Tabernacle Choir
→ From Invincible:
→ From Kappa:
→ I Can
→ From Kino:
Cinema's First Nasty Women
Radical Wolfe
Unrest
Scrapper
Running Scared
Homicide Hills Complete Series (12 platters)
Spin Complete Series (6 platters)
Open Plan 75
→ Magellon Complete Series (20 platters)
→ Monville Complete Series (14 platters)
→ The Passengers of the Night
→ From Leomark:
→ Back in the No
→ From Level 33:
→ Don't Look Away
→ From Lonsgate:
→ Saw X
→ The Expendables 4

Cocaine Crabs from Outer Space
→ Galton Warriors
→ Yule Log
→ From Strand:
→ More Than Ever
→ From Synergetic:
→ The Hand
→ From TBM:
→ Route 66 The Biblical Highway
→ From 360:
Times Square in HD
→ Times Square in 3D
→ From Uncork'd:
The Curse of Willow Song
The Hanged Girl
Three Blind Mice
→ Allegiance of Powers
→ Besetment
→ Blindsight
→ Blood Brothers
→ Blue My Mind
→ Bunnyman Vengeance
→ Closer to God
→ Coven
→ Crossbreed
→ Dead Sound
→ Deep in the Wood
→ Deliver Us
→ From Uncork'd:
Entanglement
→ Evangeline
→ Goran
→ Hans Crippleton
→ Human Persons
→ Judas Ghost
→ Krampus Origins
→ Krampus The Reckoning
→ Lifechanger
→ Lone Wolves
→ Metastace
→ Minutes to Midnight
→ Monsternado
→ A Perfect Host
→ Sequence Break
→ From Universal:
Shogun
I Heard the Bells
→ The Bell Keeper
→ The Expanse Complete Series (15 platters)
→ Mrs. Brown's Boys
→ Holly Jolly Jingles
→ Oppenheimer
→ Monsters of California
→ From Vertical:
All Fun and Games
→ The Retirement Plan
→ From Vision:
→ Lock and Load
→ Luther vs. Rome
→ Transformation
→ The Christmas Project
→ Reunion
→ Mother of Normandy
→ Norm Geisler Not Qualified
→ Ancient Bible Destinations of Overseas
→ Paul's Road to Damascus
→ Travis A Soldier's Story and The Luckiest Man
→ Good Guys! Doing
→ A New Spirit
→ From Warner Bros.:
→ The Nun II
→ Respect
→ Riverdale Season 7
→ Riverdale Complete Series (29 platters)
The Sandman Season 1
→ Spy in the Ocean
The White Lotus Season 2
→ The Winchesters Season 1
→ From Well Go:
Warhorse One
Crocodile Island
→ Mercy Road
→ The Ghost Station
→ From Wild Eye:
→ Meathook Massacre 2
→ Meathook Massacre 3
→ Meathook Massacre 4
→ From Wownow:
Treasure Hunting and the Pirates of the Caribbean
Legal Ladies Pioneers of Law
Legal Ladies Pioneers of Law 2
Mermaids
The Galaxy
Fast Speed
→ From Yellow Veil:
→ Ashkhal The Tunisian Invasion