

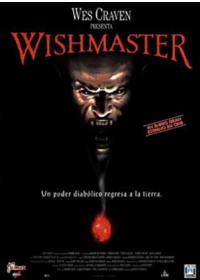
DVD/Blu-ray Roundup for March 31, 2017

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
Friday, 31 March 2017 06:51



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Welcome to another edition chronicling the highlights coming your way on Blu-ray and DVD. There are a lot of notable new releases arriving, including some big fantasy flick, Oscar nominees and eccentric fare. So if you can't make it out to the movies this week, be sure to give one of these titles a try!

BIG NEW RELEASES!

20th Century Women - Set in 1979, this drama involves a teenage boy living in a large home Santa Barbara with his eccentric single mom and their tenants. After the boys gets into some trouble, the mother persuades her younger occupants to offer advice and help guide him into adulthood. Reviews were quite strong for this effort. While a few felt it meandered and didn't care for the quirky tone, most found it to be a well-acted, thoughtful and at times funny. The earned an Academy Award nomination for Best Original Screenplay. It stars Annette Bening, Elle Fanning, Greta Gerwig, Lucas Jade Zumann and Billy Crudup.

Arsenal - Two brothers come to blows after taking different life paths in this independent action/thriller. One chooses an honest life as the owner of a construction company, while the other becomes a low-level mobster. When the racketeer is kidnapped by a rival outfit, the brother goes on a mission to try and rescue him. Notices were quite terrible, with most ripping it apart. They called it dull and uninteresting, the kind of movie that even a wild, over-the-top and exaggerated supporting performance from Nicolas Cage couldn't save. The cast also includes the likes of John Cusack, Adrian Grenier and Johnathon Schaech.

The Bad Kids - This documentary travels to an impoverished high school in the Mojave Desert

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attended by students at serious risk of dropping out. Already behind on their credits, this place of learning stands as their last chance to earn a diploma. The film follows a few of the students, detailing their personal problems as well as scholastic issues that are preventing their graduation. The press were uniformly positive about it. They gave the film high marks for its attempts to make viewers sympathize and understand the troubles that these unfortunate kids must face every day.

Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them - The biggest movie of the week is this prequel of sorts to the *Harry Potter* series. It involves Newt Scamander, a writer working on an encyclopedia of magical creatures 70 years prior to the previous set of movies. When visiting New York City, he and some of his wily beasts must stop an evil force from enacting a plot against wizardry. The press weren't quite as enamored with this effort as they were with the original Potters, but most did recommend it. A few found the entire enterprise a bit stiff, but more thought it was different enough and were entertained, enjoying the lavish visuals and amusing life forms. It features Eddie Redmayne, Katherine Waterston, Alison Sudol, Dan Fogler, Colin Farrell, Samantha Morton as well as a big guest cameo.

A Monster Calls - A 12-year old boy is visited by a giant, walking tree in this unusual drama. Troubled by his mother's terminal illness and acting out in various ways, the monster appears and returns three times to pose questions and help the child process the tragic situation. The press liked the movie quite a bit during its release over the Christmas season. Some did find it heavy-handed and wrote that it didn't have as big of an emotional impact on them as it should have, but more were impressed by the incredible visuals, unusual themes and performances. For them, it marked an affective and moving little drama. Liam Neeson voices the monster, while the family members are played by Sigourney Weaver, Felicity Jones, Toby Kebbell and Lewis MacDougall.

Patriot's Day - The horrific Boston Marathon bombing in 2013 gets retold in this film that depicts the events and aftermath. Following the point-of-view of a Police Sergeant, the movie chronicles his reaction to the events as well as the efforts of the investigators to hunt down the persons responsible before they can strike again. Reviewers generally liked the feature with a few minor caveats. There was some criticism of it being an oversimplification of events and having a tinge of jingoism at certain points, but most believed that it was a restrained and well-told adaptation of the day. It stars Mark Wahlberg, J.K. Simmons, John Goodman, Michelle Monaghan, Kevin Bacon and Jimmy O. Yang.

Silence - The latest from famed director Martin Scorsese didn't get quite as much press as

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some of his previous releases. This is a pious movie about a pair of two Christian missionaries heading to Japan (where their religion is outlawed) in order to spread their beliefs and find a fellow man of the cloth who has gone missing. They are met with great resistance from the Emperor and his troops. Reaction to the feature was positive overall, although several had issues. Those who didn't care for it found it to be a slow and repetitive trudge, but others who liked it complimented the beautiful photography and its meditative, ponderous look at religion. The cast includes Liam Neeson, Adam Driver, Andrew Garfield, Issei Ogata, Tadanobu Asano and Ciaran Hinds.

A Tale of Love and Darkness - This biographical film tells the story of the childhood years of writer and journalist Amos Oz and his time spent during the formation of the state of Israel. Personal anecdotes make up much of the experiences recreated. Reaction to the drama was mixed with a few more giving it a recommendation than telling readers to pass on it. Some complained that while specific elements were well-handled, there was an unwelcome melodramatic streak and that it came across as dramatically flat. More felt that the performances were good that that the film was nice tribute and decent first effort from star and writer/director Natalie Portman. It also features Makram Khoury and Gilad Kahana.

Why Him? - A conservative, overprotective father takes his family on a trip to visit his college age daughter in this wacky comedy. When they're introduced to her new boyfriend, the dad is less-than-impressed. A tech billionaire, the beau lacks traditional social skills and the two quickly butt heads. This wacky comedy got split reviewers, with a few more falling on the negative side. Almost all admitted that it was uneven and that the execution of the comedy was hit and miss. Some found themselves laughing just enough to earn it a nod, while others couldn't quite bring themselves to give it a commendation. It stars Bryan Cranston, James Franco, Megan Mullally, Zoey Deutch, Cedric the Entertainer and Keegan-Michael Key.

BLASTS FROM THE PAST!

Well Go USA have a great Blu-ray set arriving this week. *The Phantasm Collection* is exactly what it sounds like - a compendium of all the films in the Phantasm series. They include the original

Phantasm

(1979),

Phantasm II

(1988),

Phantasm III: Lord of the Dead

(1994),

Pha

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Phantasm IV: Oblivion

(1998) and

Phantasm: Ravager

(2016). For those unfamiliar with the series, these horror flicks involve the heroes discovering a sinister, otherworldly mortician/grave robber who possesses a dimensional portal. He has evil little grunts at his disposal along with flying spheres that drill into the skulls of victim. The movies are quite surreal, dreamlike and nightmarish in many respects. The original is a horror classic and the first sequel is a whole lot of fun as well. While, the later features aren't nearly as accomplished, fans can now own them all remastered and in high definition with an enormous bevy of bonuses. The movies all have audio commentaries, deleted scenes, promotional materials and other extras, and the set comes with a bonus disc with a new documentary and other previously unseen treats.

Speaking of box sets, the Vestron Video/Lionsgate line has one of their own with the *Wishmaster Collection*

. This series is about a nasty, evil genie who is summoned by various characters, only to have their wishes turned against them. It contains Blu-rays of

Wishmaster

(1997),

Wishmaster 2: Evil Never Dies

(1999),

Wishmaster 3: Beyond the Gates of Hell

(2001) and

Wishmaster 4: The Prophecy Fulfilled

(2002). Frankly, this horror franchise is far cheesier than many others of its ilk. I remember far more laughing than shrieking at the theater when the first movie premiered. And while the original did offer a few goofy (sometimes unintentional) laughs, the three sequels were made for the direct-to-video market and are even less proficient. Still, might be fun if you remember them fondly. They come with plenty of bonuses though, including audio commentaries, featurettes and interviews. If you enjoy the series, you'll appreciate the effort involved in compiling and releasing this collection.

Kino have some interesting titles as well arriving on Blu-ray. *Dakota* (1945) is a John Wayne western about corrupt businessmen trying to take the property of some Fargo farmers.

September Storm

(1960) is a drama about a group of men searching for sunken treasure. Ken Wuhl stars in

The Wanderers

(1979), which follows a group of Italian teens and their adventures in a local gang.

What's the Matter With Helen?

(1971) involves a series of murders at a dance studio - the owners (one of whom is unhinged) are played by Debbie Reynolds and Shelley Winters. Finally,

Z.P.G.

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(1972) is a sci-fi movie about a couple who choose to have a baby after laws outlaw the practice. It features Oliver Reed and Geraldine Chaplin.

Blue Underground have the thriller *Venom* (1981) arriving on Blu-ray. This one about a group of crooks who take a family hostage in a London flat. Unfortunately, they soon learn that a deadly snake is loose in the very same location and slithering in the vents. The cast includes Oliver Reed, Klaus Kinski and Nicol Williamson. If memory serves, it's a pretty ridiculous picture that strains credibility, but might provide a few laughs for B-movie fans.

The Michelangelo Antonioni classic *Blow-Up* (1966) is coming to Blu-ray courtesy of Criterion. David Hemmings plays a London mod photographer who begins to think he may have taken pictures of a murder. He attempts to make sense of the event by blowing up the negatives. This release includes some great extras, including a new 4K transfer, documentaries about the making-of the feature and filmmaker, conversations with the actors, trailers and a booklet about the movie.

YOU KNOW, FOR KIDS!

Here are some titles that may be of interest to young viewers.

Amazing Ape

Cyberchase: Data Collection and Analysis

Monster High: Electrified

Static Shock: Season 1 (Warner Archive)

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Swan Princess 7: Royally Undercover

ON THE TUBE!

And these are the week's TV-related releases.

Archer: Season 7

Frontline: President Trump (PBS)

Jack Taylor: Set 3

Mystery Science Theater 3000: Vol. VIII

NOVA: The Nuclear Option (PBS)

Planet Earth II

Static Shock: Season 1 (Warner Archive)

The Undertaker: Seasons 1 & 2

The Undertaker: Season 3

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