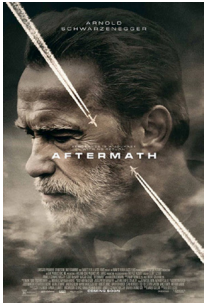


DVD/Blu-ray Roundup for June 9, 2017

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
Friday, 09 June 2017 10:55





Holy cow. When it comes to Blu-rays and DVDs, some weeks are quiet while others are filled with a seemingly endless supply of films. This happens to be one of the latter examples, with a massive supply of new releases that include the most popular film of the year (so far). 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

Aftermath - An air traffic controller's mistake results in a tragic plane crash. Suffering from tremendous guilt, things get even worse when the man must confront the enraged widower husband of one of the passengers, who is seeking revenge for the death of his wife and daughter. This heavy independent drama earned split notices from reviewers, with a few more negative responses than positive. Most were impressed with the first half of the film and admired the performances, but many felt the story became too rushed and melodramatic as it progressed. It stars Arnold Schwarzenegger, Scott McNairy and Maggie Grace.

All Nighter - In this oddball indie comedy, a musician is forced to endure an awkward dinner with his girlfriend's father, who is an uptight workaholic businessman. Some time later after the pair have broken up, the woman disappears and the dad attempts to secure the help of the musician to locate her. Together, these very different people begin to open up to one another and start to find common ground. Notices were quite poor, with many critiquing the screenplay for veering into formula and slapstick, leaving its talented cast with little to salvage. It features Analeigh Tipton, Emile Hirsch, J. K. Simmons and Kristen Schaal.

The Assignment - An assassin is double-crossed in this action-thriller. He ends up under the care of a surgeon who performs gender reassignment surgery. Now a female, the hitwoman

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attempts to find the parties responsible and figure out exactly why all of this happened. This low-budget effort comes from director Walter Hill (*The Warriors*, *48 Hrs.*, *Streets of Fire*

). Unfortunately, the press didn't think it was as effective as some of the filmmaker's previous works. As few called it amusingly pulpy and polished enough to recommend, but the majority didn't think that it allowed its characters and situations to get outrageous enough and found the film a bit of a slog. The cast includes Sigourney Weaver, Michelle Rodriguez, Tony Shalhoub and Anthony LaPaglia.

The Axe Murders of Villisca - In this scare flick, a group of teenagers are compelled to break into a house where a series of unsolved axe murders took place in 1912. Guess what happens? Yep, the kids are terrorized by some sort of malevolent force looking to add them to the victim list. Critics weren't particularly impressed with this independent feature. A couple felt that some of scares worked, but most called it a very middle-of-the-road effort that does little new or inventive with the teens-in-peril horror formula. Robert Adamson, Jarrett Sleeper and Alex Frnka headline the feature.

Beauty and the Beast - Here's one some of you may have heard of. The highest grossing movie of the year to date is this live-action update of the 1991 animated Disney flick. Belle is a young girl who ends up in the castle of a prince cursed to live as an ill-tempered beast. As a relationship blooms, villagers learn of the creature and venture out to kill it. Reviews were decent for this effort. Several did feel that it didn't add much to the original, but others admired the lavish, elaborate production and commented that the entertaining cast made this new take on the material enjoyable enough to recommend. It stars Emma Watson, Dan Stevens, Luke Evans, Josh Gad, Kevin Kline and plenty of other familiar faces.

A Cure For Wellness - Looking for a future cult film to rent? This horror/thriller involves a young executive who is sent to a strange retreat in the Swiss Alps to find a corporate executive. Once he arrives at a bizarre "wellness center" that is housing his boss, the youngster finds leaving much harder than anticipated. This is one of those love-it-or-hate-it experiences. It split the press, with slightly more opponents than advocates. Those who hated it described the film as pretentious and overlong. It's supporters called it gorgeously shot and completely unhinged, tackling some taboo elements in outrageous fashion. It features Dane DeHaan, Jason Isaacs and Mia Goth.

A Good American - NSA (National Security Agency) Cryptologist Bill Binney is the subject of this documentary from Executive Producer Oliver Stone. It details his work on a simple yet sophisticated program he developed in the late 90s to counter terrorism threats. Unfortunately,

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business contracts between the NSA and other developers led to the project's dismissal weeks before the 9/11 attacks; this film purports the software would have easily stopped the event from occurring. Reviews were very good, suggesting that while it sometimes gets bogged down in technical details, the film was stunning in its exposé of government ills.

Land of Mine - Based on real events, this wartime drama is set after the close of WWII and involves a group of captured teenage German POWs. As part of their sentence, they are tasked with clearing thousands of mines from Danish beaches. The story follows the relationship that develops between a tough Sergeant and the prisoners. This one was nominated for Best Foreign Language Film at the Academy Awards and earned strong reviews. There were a few who critiqued it as being overly sentimental, but the vast majority found it a unique and incredibly tense feature. The cast includes Roland Moller, Louis Hofmann and Joel Basman.

The Last Word - A successful but controlling businesswoman employs a young writer to help write her life story. After recounting her experiences and being less-than-impressed with the final product, she forces her employee to massage and reshape the biography, causing a bit of conflict between the pair. This comedy/drama didn't earn much love from critics. A few enjoyed the performances of the leads, but the greater part complained that it became more and more sappy and tiring as it progressed. It features Shirley MacLaine, Amanda Seyfried, AnnJewel Lee Dixon, Philip Baker Hall and Anne Heche.

Political Animals - This documentary details the struggles of four female Californian legislators fighting for LGBT rights. Among their noted accomplishments are a partnership registry and an anti-bullying bill enacted to protect gay students. The distributor who picked up the film are debuting it on disc so there aren't any reviews available as of yet. However, it did make the rounds at various festivals and earned plenty of significant accolades, including wins for Best Documentary at the 2016 Los Angeles and San Diego Film Festivals as well as awards from several LGBT events.

The Sense of an Ending - An older man reminisces about the decisions he made as a youngster in this UK drama based on the popular book of the same name. Unfortunately, they weren't all great choices. This leads to various revelations about the character and the pain he caused others. Notices were quite good for the feature. While there were a few who felt it didn't do its source material justice, significantly more complimented the low-key performances and weighty characterizations. It comes from the director of *The Lunchbox* and stars Jim Broadbent, Charlotte Rampling, Harriet Walter, Michelle Dockery, Matthew Goode and Emily Mortimer.

The Ticket - In this independent drama, a blind man has his sight restored. Yet, as the bright colors of the world open up to him, it changes his personality. A synopsis states that he becomes obsessed with superficial and pretty things, contrasting his previous life philosophy and experiences. Reviews were evenly mixed for the production. Compliments went to the lead performance and visuals on display although some found that while well-intentioned, the themes were handled in too blunt and obvious a manner. Dan Stevens, Malin Ackerman, Kerry Bishe and Oliver Platt headline the feature.

A United Kingdom - Based on a true story, this biopic tells of how King Seretse Khama of Botswana fell for a British white woman. Their relationship caused scandal and uproar in 1940s society and the film tells how the pair dealt with the opposition to their union. While there were some comments about the story being predictable, reaction was very positive towards this recreation of real events. The cast were praised for being warm and likable without events being played in too sugary or unrealistic a manner. This one is from the director of *Belle* and stars David Oyelowo, Rosamund Pike, Tom Felton and Jack Davenport.

Voice from the Stone - A sculptor hires a nurse to come to his estate and help care for his inwardly drawn son in this thriller. Soon after arriving and falling for the artist, she begins to hear stories of voices in the walls and wonder if the man's late wife is really deceased. Set in Tuscany during the 1950s, this period effort was complimented for its photography, but little else. Most wrote that it was poorly paced, lacking in suspense or thrills that resulted in an effort more silly than chilling. The cast includes Emilia Clarke, Marton Csokas and Caterina Murino.

BLASTS FROM THE PAST!

Shout! Factory have a cult movie coming your way on Blu-ray. *Where the Buffalo Roam* (1980) tells the drug-addled adventures of author Hunter S. Thompson (who was also the subject of the 1998 feature

Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas

). Bill Murray takes on the lead role in this adaptation, depicting the reporter as he attempts to cover the Superbowl and Presidential election while on various narcotics. The "Collector's Edition" includes all of the original background music from Bob Dylan and Jimmy Hendrix used in the film which hasn't been present on previously released versions due to licensing issues. There's also an interview with the screenwriter and a theatrical trailer.

Ugetsu (1953) is a venerated Japanese film arriving on Blu-ray from Criterion. Set during the country's 16th century civil war, the plot involves two villagers doing their best to survive the chaos occurring around them and falling prey to temptation - apparently, ghosts are also involved in the proceedings. The release includes a 4K digital restoration of the film, a movie scholar audio commentary, a documentary on the director, an interview with the cinematographer as well as the first assistant director and many other extras.

Paramount is celebrating the 25th anniversary of *Juice* (1992) with a new Blu-ray. This film involves four Harlem teens who decide to make a name for themselves by robbing a corner store. Things don't go as planned, leading to turmoil and backstabbing within the group. Tupac Shakur and Omar Epps star. Currently, there aren't any bonuses listed so we'll have to wait and see if any new material comes with this release.

Also, celebrating a big birthday is Universal Pictures' *Fahrenheit 451* (1967). It's about an oppressive society where books and information is outlawed by the government and set ablaze by firemen. Directed by Francois Truffaut and based on the Ray Bradbury novel, the 50th Anniversary Edition Blu-ray includes documentaries on the film's production, publicity material and an interview with Bradbury himself.

YOU KNOW, FOR KIDS!

Looks like there's some primate entertainment arriving for kids on disc.

Curious George: Fun With Friends

ON THE TUBE!

And here are some of the TV-themed releases.

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American Masters: Jacques Pepin: The Art of Craft (PBS)

American Masters: James Beard - America's First Foodie (PBS)

Becker: The Complete Series

CHiPs: The Complete Series

CHiPs: Season 6

The Convenient Groom (Hallmark TV-movie)

Fairy Tale: Collection 8 (Japanese Animated TV series)

Father Dowling Mysteries: The Complete Series

Gender Revolution: A Journey With Katie Couric (National Geographic)

Last of the Summer Wine: Vintage 2007 (BBC)

Numbers: The Complete Series

NOVA: Building Chernobyl's Megatomb (PBS)

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Sound of the Sky (12 Episode Japanese Animated TV series)

Van Helsing: Season 1

Wentworth: Season 3

When Calls the Heart: The Heart of the Community (Hallmark)

The Young Pope: Season 1 (HBO)

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