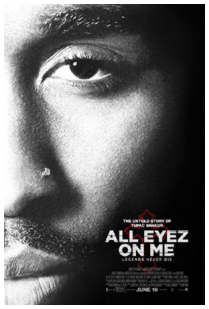
Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
Friday, 08 September 2017 03:02











Another edition, another busy slate of releases on Blu-ray and DVD featuring all kinds of flicks. Don't worry, we've got all of the highlights right here. 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!

All Eyez on Me - This biopic chronicles the short life of rapper/actor/poet/activist Tupac Shakur. Starting with his early days in New York, the story charts his rise to fame in the music industry as well as the events that ultimately led to his untimely death. Unfortunately, notices were quite poor for the drama and the film wasn't even screened for critics before its theatrical run. Those who did see it commented that while the lead actor was solid, the screenplay was flat and the movie felt like a rushed, superficial effort that didn't offer any new insight into the artist. It stars Demetrius Shipp Jr., Kat Graham, Lauren Cohen, Hill Harper, Jamal Woodward and Danai Gurira.

Austin Found - A mother who yearns for fame and celebrity takes extreme action in this dark comedy. She decides to fake her daughter's kidnapping for publicity, enlisting the help of her ex-boyfriend and his ex-con buddy. Of course, these actions result in unexpected consequences. Reviews were weak for this feature. There were compliments directed towards the lead actress, but complaints that the tone was never clear or consistent, muting many of the attempts at humor. The cast includes Linda Cardellini, Skeet Ulrich, Jaime Pressly, Kristin Schaal, Patrick Warburton, Chris Parnell and Craig Robinson.

Band Aid - The plot of this music-themed indie release involves a couple who can't stop

bickering and fighting. In an attempt to save their relationship, they take the advice of a therapist and start a band, writing and dealing with their issues specially through a collection of tunes. Critics really enjoyed this independent feature. A few called the concept gimmicky. However, the vast majority liked the couple, found the approach unique and enjoyed the amusing story turns. Sounds like this could be a fun one. It features Zoe Lister-Jones, Adam Pally, Fred Armisen, Susie Essman, Hannah Simone and Ravi Patel.

A Dark Song - This indie horror feature from Wales involves a bereaved young mother who decides to take up black magic in order to establish contact with the dead and have her deepest wish fulfilled. She befriends an occultist and after performing a few rites, the pair end up raising something far more dangerous than they imagined. The press didn't mind this chiller and had many positive things to say about it. Apparently, it does a decent job of creating tension and a creepy mood. And two leads were said to be engaging enough to hold attention through a story set, for the most part, within one locale. Steve Oram and Catherine Walker headline the picture.

First Kill - A Wall Street broker tries to reconnect with his estranged son by heading out for a vacation at a cabin in the woods and do some hunting... if you're ever seen a movie before, you know that is always a bad idea. They run afoul of some crooks, witness a murder and must survive in the elements with bad guys on their tail. That's one way of bonding, I suppose. Reviews were very poor for this little action flick. Terms like unmemorable, run-of-the-mill, bland and generic were used in write-ups to describe the action flick. The cast includes Bruce Willis, Hayden Christensen, Ty Shelton, Megan Leonard and Gethin Anthony.

The Ghoul - In this independent UK thriller, a homicide detective goes undercover in order to investigate a psychiatrist that he believes is linked to a bizarre double murder. Posing as a patient, he begins to question everything as his therapy sessions bend reality and cause mental instability. Notices were pretty decent for this low-budget effort. Not everyone was charmed, but it was stated by many that the movie does an excellent job of creating a strange, trippy atmosphere and that it stays with the viewer after the credits roll. It features Tom Meeten, Alice Lowe and Rufus Jones.

The Last Face - This effort features some big names but didn't get much publicity during its limited run a month or so ago. Set in Liberia, the plot involves a love affair between a member of an international aid organization and a doctor, all set against the backdrop of war. The majority of reviewers hammered this movie (that was directed by Sean Penn), calling it a well-intentioned project, but one that was also confusing, heavy-handed and at times pretentious. Now viewers can make up their own minds. It stars Charlize Theron, Javier Bardem, Adele Exarchopoulos, Jarrid Harris, Jean Reno and Denise Newman.

Lowriders - Set in East LA, this tale involves car enthusiasts; specifically, a talented young artist who finds himself trapped between his aesthetic interests and those of his vehicle-obsessed father and ex-con brother. He decides to design spray paint art for their cars in order to help them win a competition. Reaction to this drama was split down the middle. Half thought it was a bit too low-key and uneventful, but just as many believed the movie was earnest and provided a curious look into a very specific cultural scene. The cast includes Gabriel Chavarria, Demian Bichir, Theo Rossi, Tony Revolori and Melissa Benoist.

Megan Leavey - This true life war story tells the tale of a marine corporal deployed to Iraq. She is assigned to train an aggressive military combat dog for bomb retrieval. The two form a bond and help save numerous soldiers on over one hundred missions. However, a tragic accident in the line of duty threatens the lives of both heroes. Reviews were quite good for the drama. A few complained that it tried to emotionally manipulate viewers in too obvious a fashion, but most found it a sweet and heartfelt tribute. Kate Mara, Ramon Rodriguez, Tom Felton, Bradley Whitford, Common and Will Patton headline the movie.

Paris Can Wait - Eleanor Coppola (wife of filmmaker Francis Ford Coppola) directs this romantic comedy about an American woman who decides to take a little trip to the south of France while her workaholic husband tends to business in Paris. She meets a charming local who agrees to take her around the countryside for some good food and discussion. Critics were mixed on the final result. Some thought that the locations and food were beautiful, but a few more criticized the movie for offering little in the way of deep conversation and having a very passive heroine. It stars Diane Lane, Alec Baldwin and Arnaud Viard.

Queen of the Desert - The latest narrative feature from acclaimed director Werner Herzog (*Fitzc arraldo*

,
Grizzly Man
and too many others to list here) involves a turn-of-the-century woman who decides resist the social codes of the day and head out on a lifelong adventure across the Middle East. Along the way, she encounters various romantic interests and unique personalities. This one didn’t make much of an impact with the press. Reviewers called it pretty to look at, but slow-moving and they didn’t find themselves emotionally invested in the proceedings. The cast includes Nicole Kidman, James Franco, Damian Lewis, Robert Pattinson and Jenny Agutter.

Raw - This French-language horror flick tells the story of a vegetarian veterinarian who is forced

to eat animal flesh during a student hazing ritual. Unfortunately, it has a strange effect on the woman, who begins to develop and insatiable hunger for raw flesh. Extreme creepiness ensues. Critics were very disturbed by the end results and gave it strong marks for its efforts. They called it an effectively shocking and occasionally funny coming-of-age tale that tackles deeper themes between the graphic bloodshed. It features Garance Miller, Ella Rumph and Laurent Lucas.

Rough Night - A group of college friends reunite for a wild bachelorette party in Miami. They hire a male stripper whom they accidentally kill and spend the remainder of the trip attempting to cover up the mishap and the complications that follow. Notices were not particularly strong for the comedy. There were a few who admitted it had enough laughs here and there to grant it a pass. However, while liking the cast, most referred to the movie as badly-paced and mentioned that the jokes generally missed the mark. Some suggested that it ultimately came across as too formulaic to be funny. It stars Scarlett Johansson, Kate McKinnon, Zoe Kravitz, Ilana Grazer, Jillian Bell and Demi Moore.

Score: A Film Music Documentary - Numerous movie music composers are interviewed for this documentary feature about the process of scoring. They talk about how the notes elevate emotional investment in features and what makes a piece of music coupled to a film not only memorable, but occasionally iconic. Reviews were excellent from those who saw it. While they admitted that it detailed a very brief look at the history of compositions created for movies, the write-ups said that all of the genial participants offered up interesting tidbits and thoughts about their professions. Danny Elfman, Hans Zimmer, Quincy Jones, John Williams and Trent Reznor are just some of the featured interviewees.

The Wedding Plan - This foreign-language comedy from Israel is about a fiancé who receives a shocking message from her husband-to-be a month before their wedding. He has decided to bow out of the ceremony. While most beg her to cancel, the young woman decides to go ahead, believing that fate will provide her with a new husband in time for the event. Notices were very good for this feature. While all suggested that it was a fairly straight-forward comedy, they complimented the movie’s sweet and charming approach to the material. The cast includes Noa Koler and Oz Zehavi.

BLASTS FROM THE PAST!

There’s plenty of classic titles arriving in high definition as well. Shout! Factory have

the Michael Keaton comedy *Mr. Mom* (1983). While it certainly wouldn't be a big deal today, the plot of this feature is centered on a man who gets laid off and decides on being a househusband. Humor is derived from his clueless attempts at taking care of the home and family. The movie arrives as a Collector's Edition that includes a documentary on the film with its producers and co-stars. There's also a theatrical trailer included.

Kino are releasing a Blu-ray of the Oscar-winner, *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* (1969). Jane Fonda and Michael Serrazin star in this Depression-era tale of a group of desperate contestants trying to win a cash prize at a competitive dance marathon. If memory serves, it's a really tense film that maintains an effectively rough and gloomy tone throughout. This one hasn't gotten as much recognition as some of its contemporaries over the years, so it's nice to see this excellent film getting some attention with a nice high definition upgrade.

Universal are putting a couple of notable flicks out on Blu-ray as well. *Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid* (1982) is a funny, comedic homage to Film-Noir that stars Steve Martin as a gumshoe detective. Incorporating footage from movies of 40s and 50s, he interacts with Humphrey Bogart, James Cagney and other classic film stars as he attempts to unravel a mystery. It's quite funny and may also provide some enjoyment by picking out all of the different titles that have been incorporated into the narrative.

They also have the comedy sequel, *Fletch Lives* (1989). In it, the title character (played by Chevy Chase) heads down to Louisiana after inheriting property from a deceased relative. After arriving, he ends up trying to solve a local murder. Honestly, in my opinion this effort isn't nearly as hilarious and sharp as the 1985 original. However, looking online it appears that there are some out there do prefer this sequel to its predecessor. They'll be happy with its release, as will anyone who wants to own both *Fletch* features.

Criterion always do their best to give classics their proper due. This week, they have a Blu-ray of the Alfred Hitchcock mystery, *Rebecca* (1940). It comes with a 4K restoration, a film historian analysis, an interview about the special effects, multiple making-of documentaries, screen tests, notes from Hitchcock about the production, interviews with the stars and director, multiple radio versions of the film being performed for broadcast and many other bonuses.

And finally, ClassicFlix have a Blu-ray of the Film-Noir, *Crime of Passion* (1957) starring Barbara Stanwyck, Sterling Hayden and Raymond Burr.

YOU KNOW, FOR KIDS!

Here are some titles children may enjoy.

Curious George: Spooky Fun

Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood: King Daniel for a Day

Gumby: The Gumby Movie

LEGO NINJAGO: Masters of Spinjitzu: Season 7

Little Wolf's Book of Badness

ON THE TUBE!

And here are the week's TV-themed releases.

Criminal Minds: Season 12

Endeavour (PBS - BBC)

The Flash: Season 3

Hawaii Five-O: Season 7

Just Shoot Me: The Complete Series

LEGO NINJAGO: Masters of Spinjitzu: Season 7

Poldark Revealed (PBS)

Rare: Creatures of the Photo Ark (PBS)

South Park: Season 20

Supernatural: Season 12

A Time To Dance (Lifetime)

When Calls the Heart: Healing Heart (Lifetime)

By Glenn Kay

For the Sun