

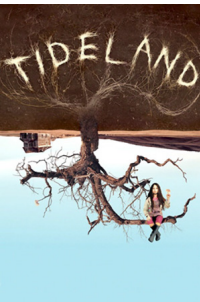
DVD/Blu-ray Roundup for Aug. 17, 2018

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Friday, 17 August 2018 05:20



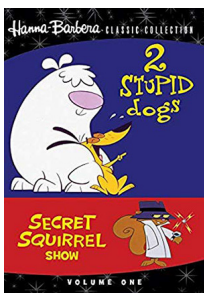
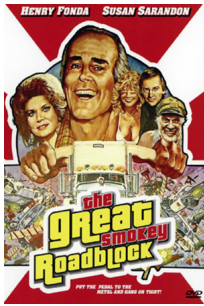
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It's time again for another look at highlights arriving on Blu-ray and DVD. This is an incredibly busy edition that features one of the year's biggest films. In general, there's plenty for all tastes. So, if you can't make it out to the movies this week, be sure to give one of these titles a try!

BIG NEW RELEASES!

Affairs of State - This independent suspense picture involves a young campaign aide in Washington, D.C. who is desperate to gain power. He makes an impression on a presidential candidate, but complicates his own life when he becomes romantically involved with both the wife and daughter of his new employer. This effort got a limited release a couple of months ago and there aren't any reviews of it as of yet. Online write-ups are terrible though, so you might be wise to go with lowered expectations. The cast includes David Corenswet, Thora Birch, Mimi Rogers, Adrien Grenier and David James Elliott.

The Avengers: Infinity War - The big release this week is the first chapter in a two-part

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superhero smorgasbord. This time out, all of the Marvel superheroes team up to save the universe against Thanos, who is collecting Infinity Stones that will grant him immeasurable power. Critics were generally positive towards the feature. Some did take issue with the overstuffed narrative and the sequel's desire to simply set up yet another sequel, but more became wrapped up in the action and admitted that the flick was as well produced as one could hope for. It stars Robert Downey Jr., Chris Hemsworth, Mark Ruffalo, Chris Evans, Scarlett Johansson, Don Cheadle, Benedict Cumberbatch, Tom Holland, Chadwick Boseman, Zoe Saldana and everyone else from the Marvel movie line.

Bad Samaritan - A car valet/burglar decides to rob a wealthy man's home while the owner is away. Upon breaking in, the intruder discovers something far beyond what he had anticipated... he discovers a woman being held captive. After trying to call the attention of the police, the lead suddenly finds himself a target of the kidnapper. Reaction was split towards this thriller from writer/director Dean Devlin (*Geostorm*). About half criticized the movie as being dumb and preposterous. Those who gave it a pass suggested it was trashy fun and enjoyed the work of the cast. It features David Tennant, Robert Sheehan and Kerry Condon.

Billy Boy - Also known as *Juvenile*, this independent crime/drama follows a poor teen in LA who takes up with a young gang of carjackers to make some money. However, after a job goes wrong, he breaks from the group hoping to begin again with a new girlfriend. It soon becomes clear that his cohorts aren't willing to let him go. There hasn't been much of a reaction to this feature as of yet, although the few write-ups that have been found aren't exemplary. A Variety review called it indulgent and suggested that it all looked like a bunch of good looking kids trying to posture and act tough. Blake Jenner, Melissa Benoist and Grant Harvey headline the film.

The Escape - In this UK production, a mother struggles with being the wife of an overworked and self-absorbed husband, not to mention dealing with demands from her children. She snaps, leaving home immediately and buying a ticket to Paris, where she tries to start again. Of course, it isn't long before her previous one begins to catch up with her. The press quite liked this small drama. A few found it too grim, moody and low-key to make an impression, but most commented that this was a well-acted film that effectively depicts a family falling apart. As of right now, this title is being put out on DVD exclusively. The cast includes Gemma Arterton, Dominic Cooper and Frances Barber.

Furlough - A penitentiary inmate is allowed a brief, weekend-long chaperoned release in order to visit her dying mother in this indie comedy. The criminal turns out to be more than a handful for the corrections officer assigned to get her to the hospital and then back to prison. Write-ups for this effort haven't been all that positive. A few believed that the leads were funny enough to

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earn a pass, but the majority complained that the film had difficulty finding its tone and that the screenplay didn't have much for its talented performers to say. It stars Tessa Thompson, Melissa Leo, Whoopi Goldberg and Anna Paquin.

Grace Jones: Bloodlight and Bami - Distinctive musician/entertainer Grace Jones is the subject of this documentary that traces her life and development as a performer, along with insight into her personal life. The feature intercuts the figure at her home in Jamaica, her time working with producers in music studios, behind the scenes touring footage, performances and private moments with family. Notices were very upbeat. There was a small group who wrote that the attempts to show her real life actually took away from her powerful persona, but almost all others found the film to be an interesting and unconventionally put together doc.

Higher Power - According to the official release for this small action/science-fiction picture, resisting the will of the universe is pointless. With his family's lives at stake, a man finds himself as the unwilling test subject of a maniacal scientist, the results of which could either save the world or destroy it. Unfortunately, there isn't much else known about this little film as of yet, so interested parties will have to just keep their expectations in check, take a chance and give it a try. The flick did earn a release in a few Asian-Pacific countries, although online reviews didn't give any accolades. It features Ron Eldard, Jordan Hinson and Colm Feore.

The House of Tomorrow - This independent, coming-of-age tale follows a teen living with his mother in a geodesic dome. She teaches him the ideals of her old mentor, architect Buckminster Fuller, while the youth decides to start a local punk band with a friend at school. When his mom gets sick, the teenager must decide which path in life he wants to follow. On the whole, critics liked this eccentric comedy/drama. A few did carp that the movie tries too hard to be quirky. Still, the majority complimented the film as having likable characters and ultimately charming viewers. The cast includes Asa Butterfield, Alex Wolff, Nick Offerman, Ellen Burstyn and the voice of Fred Armisen.

How to Talk to Girls at Parties - Set in the 1970s, this unique story involves a London-area youngster obsessed with punk music. When he crashes a big party in town, he falls for a foreign exchange student. The protagonist soon learns that the girl of his dreams is actually an extraterrestrial touring the galaxy. When another group of aliens arrive and set out to invade the city, the hero alongside punks against the attackers while trying to save the otherworldly lady from harm. This one divided reviewers. Half thought it was trying too hard to earn cult status, while the others said that it created an odd, amusing party atmosphere. It stars Nicole Kidman, Elle Fanning, Alex Sharp, Ruth Wilson and Matt Lucas.

The Last Warrior - Also known as *The Scythian* in its homeland of Russian, this period adventure follows the remainders of a famous group of warriors, whose final descendants have become mercenary assassins. A soldier heading home to rescue his family is paired with one of these killers, forcing the battlefield enemies to find common ground and accomplish their goals. There aren't many notices for the movie in this part of the world, but the ones that have popped up say the movie is an old-fashioned epic and that the scale of the film is impressive, although other elements may not work quite as efficiently. Aleksey Faddeev and Aleksandr Kuznetsov headline the feature.

The Menkoff Method - A bored, lonely bank employee working as a data processor finds relief from his job by reading manga comics. When a new head of HR arrives, and boasts of a "method" to increase productivity around the workplace and make the main character's life even more challenging, the tormented worker decides to fight back. This Australian comedy is making its debut on DVD in this part of the world and so no one around these parts have seen it as of yet. A couple of reviews that have popped up describe it as silly and weird, which might actually be a positive to a certain kind of cinema fan. The cast includes Noah Taylor, Robert Taylor, Lachlan Woods and Jessica Clarke.

Shock and Awe - This picture from director Rob Reiner (*LBJ*, *The Bucket List*, *A Few Good Men*, *When Harry Met Sally*

, *The Princess Bride*

) is set in 2003 and chronicles the efforts of a group Knight-Ridder news journalists. They investigated President George Bush's claims that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction and contradicted the claims and reasoning for the invasion. The movie earned more negative than positive reviews. Many felt that the film's intentions were good and those who liked it thought it did a good job of presenting an authentic newsroom environment, but more found the screenplay too clichéd to make an impact. It stars Woody Harrelson, Rob Reiner, Tommy Lee Jones, James Marsden, Milla Jovovich and Jessica Biel.

Snapshots - After discovering a lost roll of camera film taken in 1960, a big family secret is revealed that causes surprise and tension between a grandmother and her daughter, as well as with her grandchild. The three generations of the family are forced to confront and deal with these issues. This small, independent drama is reportedly based on a true story. There aren't many write-up available, but the ones that have appeared seem complimentary. Some have called it a bit hackneyed, yet most enjoyed the performances enough to give it a recommendation. It features Piper Laurie, Brooke Adams, Emily Baldoni and Brett Dier.

Who We Are Now - A woman recently released from prison after a 10 year sentence approaches her sister to regain custody of her child and learns that the sibling has no intention of giving the youth back. She's forced to take legal action and must work with a public defender she doesn't get along with in order to get him back. Critics were extremely taken by the drama during its limited release. They called it a powerful, unsentimental and authentic drama with a stellar lead performances that would hook any viewer. The cast includes Julianne Nicholson, Emma Roberts, Zachary Quinto, Jess Weixler, Lea Thompson, Jason Biggs and Jimmy Smits.

The Yellow Birds - Set during the Iraq war, this drama involves a friendship that forms between two soldiers. When a tragic incident affects the pair, one of them must determine what happened and come to terms with it, as well as help a mother find reconciliation. This effort earned mixed notices from the press. Almost fifty percent complimented its attempts to show how the horrors of war continue to affect those long after it all has come to an end. Slightly more thought that while well-intentioned, it didn't really have anything new to say and didn't quite come together. Tye Sheridan, Jennifer Aniston, Toni Collette, Jack Huston, Aldren Ahrenreich and Jason Patric headline the film.

BLASTS FROM THE PAST!

This is about as busy a week as you're likely to see for older films getting Blu-ray updates. Arrow Video have some notable releases. *The Cat o' Nine Tails* (1971) came out some months ago as a Blu-ray/DVD combo and now a regular edition, single disc Blu-ray is here.

They're also giving the *The Gore Gore Girls* (1972) from Herschell Gordon Lewis (*Blood Feast*, *Two Thousand Maniacs*

) a new Blu-ray. It arrives with an intro, interview and audio commentary from the filmmaker, as well as the bonus feature

This Stuff'll Kill You

(1971). That feature includes a commentary with the movie's director of photography.

Additionally, there are numerous features about Lewis from fans and genre critics.

Another noteworthy Blu-ray is the release of *Tideland* (2005) from Terry Gilliam (*Brazil*, *The Fisher King*

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12 Monkeys

). It's a very dark comedy about a little girl who escapes into a bizarre fantasy world to escape the struggles surrounding her. The disc looks incredible and comes with an impressive array of special features, including a director commentary and documentary. Finally, Arrow also have a Blu-ray of the Italian giallo,

What Have They Done to Your Daughters?

(1974). This title has been given a 2K transfer and arrives with giallo expert audio track, video essays on the film, cast and crew interviews and other extras.

AGFA have a Special Edition Blu-ray of the kung-fu flick, *Lady Street Fighter* (1981). It's about a karate cop out to beat down and take revenge on the guys who murdered her sister. The action-packed effort was almost lost for good. Thankfully, it has been given a 2K scan from the only surviving 35mm theatrical print. The disc also comes with a director commentary, genre film trailers and a bonus movie,

Revenge of the Lady Street Fighter

, which apparently is the unreleased sequel to the main feature. Sounds like a blast!

MVD have made a name for themselves putting out great Blu-rays of genre titles like *Attack of the Killer Tomatoes*

and

Black Eagle

. They've now debuted a new line of releases called MVD Marquee Collection, which appears to focus on higher end pictures. They're putting out a Special Edition of the remake of

Walking Tall

(2004) starring Dwayne Johnson and Johnny Knoxville. The release includes a couple of audio commentaries (one featuring the star and the other the crew), as well as bloopers, deleted scenes and other extras.

Shout!, as always, have a couple of notable titles arriving in high definition. They include a Collector's Edition of *Return of the Living Dead Part II* (1988), a sequel to the 1985 horror/comedy classic that features another canister of toxic fluid raising the dead and causing havoc in a small community. It's isn't in the same league as the original, but has its fan base. They'll be pleased to know that the disc includes a new 2K scan of the inter-positive, two new audio commentaries (one with a cast member and a second with a film expert), an effects featurette and new interviews with the movie's director and score composer. The disc also includes a previously released director's commentary, a documentary, archival and publicity materials as well as other behind-the-scenes footage.

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The same distributor are releasing the horror picture *The Unborn* (1991), starring Brooke Adams as a mother-to-be who may be giving birth to a monstrous, superhuman infant. This high definition release has been given a 2K scan of the original film elements, comes with a director commentary and also includes the trailer.

Kino are providing Blu-rays of *Born Yesterday* (1993) a remake with Melanie Griffith of 1950 comedy classic. They also have the films *Hope Springs* (2003), *The Inkwell* (1994)

and *Smashing Time* (1967) all arriving in high definition.

And there's more! Universal are putting out Blu-rays of the early Steve Martin effort, *The Lonely Guy* (1984). It's an amusing comedy about a, well, lonely guy giving advice on how to survive in the big city. They also have *The Pirates of Penzance* (1983) starring Kevin Kline. This Golden Globe nominated musical/comedy is finally getting an upgrade. And so is *Zoot Suit* (1981), a well-regarded musical with Edward James Olmos.

Sony are debuting the underrated Brian De Palma Vietnam picture, *Casualties of War* (1989) on Blu-ray. Alas, it doesn't appear that this edition includes the extended cut of the film, but it's better than nothing.

Criterion are releasing a Blu-ray of *The Ballad of Gregorio Cortez* (1982). The tale is based on a Mexican-American farmer wrongfully accused and of murder in 1901. He goes on the run. Edward James Olmos played the title figure and the disc arrives with a 2K digital restoration, an interview with star/producer Olmos, a feature on Chicano cinema and a 2016 panel on the film featuring the cast and crew.

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Kit Parker Films is releasing *Boss* (1975) on Blu-ray. This one is western/comedy with Fred Williamson and D'Urville Martin about two black bounty hunters who end up taking over the position of sheriff in a small town. The disc includes a conversation with Williamson and a talk with one of the film's producers.

The Great Smokey Roadblock (1977) aka *The Last of the Cowboys* is a trucker movie that is arriving on Blu-ray courtesy of Code Red. While not particularly well remembered, the film features an incredible cast that includes Henry Fonda, Susan Sarandon, Robert Englund, Eileen Brannan, John Byner and Gary Sandy. This release includes an interview with Englund about his experiences on the film.

Finally, Warner Archive are making *Home From the Hill* (1960) with Robert Mitchum available as a made-to-order Blu-ray. They also have the mega-budgeted Eddie Murphy space-comedy *The Adventures of Pluto Nash* (2002) and the drama *Waterland* (1992) available on DVD.

YOU KNOW, FOR KIDS!

Here are some titles that might appeal to kids.

2 Stupid Dogs/Secret Squirrel Show: Volume One (Warner Archive)

Arthur: D.W. and the Beastly Birthday

Steven Universe: Heart of the Crystal Gems (Cartoon Network)

ON THE TUBE!

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

10 That Changed America (PBS)

12 Monkeys: Season 3

12 Monkeys: Season 4

A.P. Bio: Season 1

Arrow: Season 6

The Blacklist: Season 5

Here and Now: Season 1

The Irresistible Blueberry Farm (Hallmark TV-movie)

Mr. Mercedes: Season 1

NCIS: New Orleans: Season 4

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SEAL Team: Season 1

Sid Caesar: The Works

Without a Trace: Season 2 (Warner Archive)

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