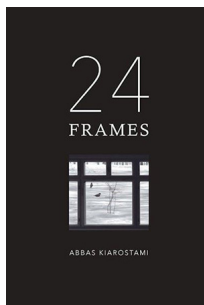


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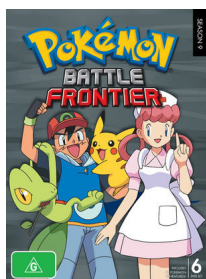
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Happy New Year to all! It's time for another look at highlights arriving on Blu-ray and DVD. There are plenty of interesting and eccentric choices being made available this week. So if you can't make it out to the movies this week, be sure to give one of these titles a try!

### Big New Releases!

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*24 Frames* - This experimental documentary feature is the final effort from the late Iranian filmmaker/photographer Abbas Kiarostami. For this project, the creator attempts to bridge his still-image work with film by chronicling the moments before and after a photo is taken. The press greatly enjoyed this piece. There were a couple of reviewers who didn't think the experiment worked, but the vast majority gave it a pass. They admitted this was a very slow-moving intellectual exercise, but many felt it was an interesting piece that made one aware of everything happening within and around a photograph.

*An Evening with Beverly Luff Linn* - A woman in a horrible marriage plots to murder her husband. When the attempt fails, she escapes to the desert, where she comes upon a man from her past who happens to be putting on a stage show. Strangeness abounds as the lead decides to attend the bizarre show and encounters some unusual people. This independent effort from the director of *The Greasy Strangler* appears to be a love-it-or-hate-it kind of movie. It also received split reactions from critics. About half found it unfunny and disliked the characters. The others called it a weirdly funny satire that is probably more truthful about the human condition than many of us would like to admit. It stars Aubrey Plaza, Emile Hirsch, Jemaine Clement, Craig Robinson and Matt Berry.

*The Great Battle* - Epic clashes are the centerpiece of this South Korean historical picture. It depicts the attempted siege of the Ansi Fortress, which is now part of modern China. An eight-day fight ensues, as Yang Man-chun and the Goguryeo soldiers fight and defend their home against an invading Tang army of 500,000. As of right now, there are few reviews in this part of the world. However, the film was successful in its homeland and earned decent reviews. There were a few complaints that the movie wasn't historically accurate, but most thought it was an impressive-looking spectacle.

*Hell Fest* - A group of college students decides to head out to a horror-themed amusement park. After arriving, they find themselves under attack from a psychotic killer. Unfortunately, other visitors to the park think it's all part of the show and don't step forward to help, leaving the kids to fend for themselves. This terror flick earned mixed notices. A percentage liked the creepy appearance of the park and thought it made for a new and interesting fright film setting. Slightly more suggested the screenplay was lacking and the leads and the antagonist didn't stand out. It features Cynthea Mercado, Stephen Conroy, Amy Forsyth, Reign Edwards and Tony Todd.

*Kusama: Infinity* - Perhaps best known for her work involving polka-dots as well as mirrored rooms, artist Yayoi Kusama is the subject of this documentary. It details her life growing up in a conservative Japanese home and how she became a successful artist whose popularity rivaled

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Andy Warhol's. Now 80 and an internationally renowned artist, we catch up with the woman, who is now residing in a mental institution in Japan. The doc earned plenty of praise. It has been described as an enlightening portrait featuring some incredible images and remarkable work.

*Let the Corpses Tan* - This French-language Belgium/France co-production is a thriller about a gang who steals 250 kilos of gold and hides it at a tiny bohemian artist village near the Mediterranean Sea. When they return to collect their loot, they find cops and some unexpected guests, leading to plenty of bloodshed at the commune. The press generally reacted positively to this feature. A group did take issue with the piece, calling it style-over-substance and lacking in subtext. However, more complimented it for its striking camerawork and technique, calling it a wild and crazy ride. Elina Löwensohn, Stéphane Ferrara and Bernie Bonvoisin headline the film.

*Matangi/Maya/M.I.A.* - Sri Lankan musician M.I.A. is the subject of this documentary, which uses a great deal of never-before-seen camcorder footage of the artist that spans several decades and details her life in London. It is also said to give insight into what inspires and motivates her work and songwriting. Reviews for this non-fiction feature were also very strong. A small percentage complained the movie didn't do its subject justice and wasn't particularly well edited. Still, the majority thought the artist was a fascinating figure and complimented the picture for being earnest and honest in its approach.

*Memoir of War* - In France during WWII, a woman and her husband join the Resistance. After her spouse is taken away by the Gestapo, the wife becomes friendly with the enemy in order to extract information. Now putting the Resistance at great risk, she begins to feel pulled between her husband and the movement. Critics were divided over this foreign-language picture. Several complained that the approach taken by the filmmakers was far too ponderous and the pacing slow. Still, slightly more liked its personal story and thought that it accurately depicted the trails of such a situation. The cast includes Mélanie Thierry and Benoît Magimel.

*Mid90s* - Jonah Hill makes his directorial debut with this tale about growing up in California during the titular time period. A 13-year-old makes new friends with kids at a skate shop and becomes more and more estranged from his mother and brother as the summer progresses. Notices were good for this drama. A group critiqued the film for creating interesting characters and then not doing enough with them — eventually losing its mojo. However, more enjoyed this coming-of-age drama, calling it an authentic and honest representation of life during the period. It stars Sunny Suljic, Katherine Waterston, Lucas Hedges and Na-kel Smith.

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*Monsters and Men* - In this drama, a bystander records a cop wrongfully shooting and killing a black man on the street. Unsure of how to proceed, he contemplates the unwanted exposure of releasing the video against being complicit in a criminal act. The film also shows how the video will affect and change the lives of two other men. This feature earned strong reviews. A small group thought the movie had too much on its plate and didn't resolve things as effectively as it could. However, most found it to be tense, compelling and stated it didn't pander to audiences. The cast includes John David Washington, Anthony Ramos and Kelvin Harrison Jr.

*The Oath* - Thanksgiving turns violent in this dark indie comedy about a family getting together for the holiday. When the White House demands that citizens sign a loyalty oath to the President by the end of the evening, politics come to the forefront resulting in clashes between clan members. Write-ups were more positive than negative for this satirical effort. Several believed that while it brought up pertinent ideas, it didn't develop them effectively enough to recommend. Yet more felt that while it whiffed on a few jokes, the zingers that hit made up for the misses. It features Ike Barinholtz, Tiffany Haddish, Nora Dunn, Chris Ellis, Jon Barinholtz, Carrie Brownstein, Jay Duplass, Billy Magnussen and John Cho.

*The Party's Just Beginning* - After her best friend commits suicide, a young woman struggles to cope with the loss. As the cold Inverness, Scotland winter slowly grinds forward, the lady drowns her sorrows in alcohol, chips and meaningless relationships. This UK comedy/drama earned solid reviews. There was a small group who felt it eventually succumbed to clichés by the close and could have done more with its supporting characters. Regardless, most admired the lead performance (she also served as director) and thought the movie had dramatic punch, sharp humor and impressive visuals. Karen Gillan, Lee Pace, Paul Higgins and Matthew Beard headline the film.

*What They Had* - When their Alzheimer's-suffering mother wanders away from the family home and into a blizzard, her children return home to try and convince their father to put her in a nursing facility. The heartbroken dad refuses, not wanting to end their life together. This drama received raves from the press. A few complained the movie didn't feel as realistic as it should have given the circumstances and also thought it had some trouble juggling various elements. But the overwhelming majority found the performances fantastic and called it a moving and well-made tearjerker. It stars Hilary Swank, Michael Shannon, Robert Forster, Blythe Danner, Taissa Farmiga and Josh Lucas.

**Blasts from the Past!**

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Some interesting older titles are also arriving on Blu-ray. Arrow Video has *Willie Dynamite* (1974), a well-regarded and hard-hitting story about a New York pimp whose success ultimately leads to a big downfall. For this Special Edition Blu-ray, the movie has been transferred to high definition from its original film elements at Universal. It also comes with a film critic and lecturer commentary track, publicity materials and a collector's booklet with an additional essay on the picture.

Shout! Factory has the dark thriller, *8MM* (1999), which stars Nicolas Cage as a man hired to authenticate a horrific snuff film. This Blu-ray includes a commentary track with director Joel Schumacher, an interview with the filmmaker, vintage behind-the-scenes featurettes as well as trailers and other marketing materials.

The Shout Select line has a 30th Anniversary Edition Blu-ray of the Billy Crystal/Meg Ryan rom-com, *When Harry Met Sally* (1989). The movie has been given an updated 4K transfer, a new interview with director Rob Reiner and Crystal, as well as multiple audio commentaries, a documentary on the production, featurettes, deleted scenes, a trailer and a music video with a song from the film by Harry Connick Jr.

Scorpion's putting out a Blu-ray of *Blind Date* (1984). This is a B-movie thriller about a man who is given experimental technology to help with his eyesight, while a serial killer targets women in his neighborhood. This release includes the unrated cut (as well as the theatrical version in SD), music videos, a still gallery, trailer and other bonuses.

Kino's releasing a Special Edition of *The House That Would Not Die* (1970). This ghost-story thriller arrives on Blu-ray with a film historian commentary, a new interview with the director and plenty of trailers. The distributor also has a Special Edition Blu-ray of *What Ever Happened to Aunt Alice?* (1969). This suspense picture about a widow hiding a dark secret arrives with a new 4K scan of the original camera negative. It also includes a film historian audio commentary and a trailer.

Mill Creek are releasing a DVD called *The Laurel and Hardy Comedy Collection*. It contains 24 classic shorts starring the duo as well as interviews and home movies featuring the pair.

Finally, Code Red are bringing *Street Law* (1974) to Blu-ray in a Special Edition package. This

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Italian Death Wish knock-off presents the US cut and the longer, Italian version in HD, along with an interview with star Franco Nero and a trailer.

### You Know, For Kids!

Here is the listing for kid-friendly titles.

*Pokemon Battle Frontier: The Complete Collection*

### On the Tube!

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

*Castle Rock: Season 1*

*A Chef's Life: The Final Harvest* (PBS)

*Dogs on the Job - Seven Part Documentary Series*

*Frankie Drake Mysteries: Season 1* (PBS)

*Frontline: The Facebook Dilemma* (PBS)

*Nature: Super Cats* (PBS)

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*NOVA: Addiction* (PBS)

*NOVA: Volatile Earth: Volcano on Fire & Volcano on the Brink* (PBS)

*Poetry in America: Season 1* (PBS)

*Sinking Cities* (PBS)

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For the Sun