

DVD/Blu-ray Roundup for July 19, 2019

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
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Welcome back to another edition of new release highlights on Blu-ray and DVD. As always, there's plenty to choose from in a wide variety of genres. 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!

Abduction - A SWAT team member wakes up in a park fountain in the Far East, believing it is the year 1985, and having no memory of who he is or how he got there. After trying to put fragmented memories together, he determines that he was out searching for his kidnapped young daughter. He then teams up with a gangster who is hunting for his own missing wife and the pair try to solve the mystery. What they soon discover may be more bizarre than they ever thought possible. This Chinese sci-fi action B-movie is making its debut on disc, so right now there are no reviews available. It features Scott Adkins, Andy On, Truong Ngoc Anh and Lily Ji.

Ash is Purest White - Set against the backdrop of the Chinese criminal underworld, this tale

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follows the lives of a wannabe mobster and his sharp-witted girlfriend as they attempt to make their mark and take down common enemies. The story follows them over several time periods as their lives and duties change over the years as new situations and conflicts arise. This picture received great notices from the press. They called the characters interesting and performances great, as well as stating that the movie does a superb job of showing viewers the criminal world from a wide and up-close-and-personal point of view. The cast includes Zhao Tao, Liao Fan and Xu Zheng .

The Big Bad Fox and Other Tales... This French animated effort from the team behind the extraordinarily well-regarded 2014's *Ernest & Celestine*, includes three stories about forest animals with psychological troubles. There's a fox who thinks he's a chicken, a rabbit that acts like a stork, and a duck looking to take the place of Santa Claus. Those who follow the tales will see how their unusual lives play out. Critics were very, very upbeat about this production. It's difficult to find anything bad written about the film. Most called it a charming and entertaining piece of traditionally drawn animation with entertainingly quirky animals and a lot of laughs. Apparently, this release includes the original French version with English subtitles, as well as an English-language audio track.

Blood Paradise - Looks like it's a great week for foreign-language titles. In this low-budget horror/comedy, a crime-writer depressed over bad reviews and sales for her latest book, heads to the Swedish countryside to recharge. Unfortunately, she soon begins to suspect sinister goings-on at the farm and nearby village, where she experiences uncomfortable encounters with obsessed fans, a violently jealous woman and a psychotic local. Guess at least she'll get material for her next book. There are only a few write-ups available for this title and they're fairly mixed, suggesting it has some funny moments, but is wildly uneven. Andrea Winter headlines the film.

Breakthrough - A teen from St. Louis falls through the ice of a local lake. After almost drowning, he is pulled from the waters in a near-death state. After his mother prays for his recovery, the kid begins to respond to emergency workers and miraculously survives the ordeal. As you might have already guessed, this drama is a faith-based film.

The press gave the effort mixed reviews. Those who enjoyed it stated that the strong cast for this type of film helped to sell the story and supporters would find it to be better than others of its ilk. The others suggested that the performers couldn't salvage the clunky and predictable script, also finding the message rather bluntly delivered. It stars Topher Grace, Josh Lucas, Chrissy Metz, Mike Colter and Dennis Haysbert.

Dogman - In this foreign-language crime film from Italy, a poor and timid dog groomer from the wrong side of the tracks finds himself involved with violent acquaintances who pose a threat to the entire neighborhood. The man first chooses to ignore the problems and meekly follows the orders given to him, but complications arise that force him to take action. This feature earned excellent notices. It was in competition for the Palm d'Or at Cannes and the lead won the festival's Best Actor Prize.

Admittedly, a few critics in this part of the world found the events overly grim and didn't care for the protagonist's passive nature, but the vast majority thought it was a gritty and tense character study. The movie is being released exclusively on DVD right now, but hopefully a Blu-ray will follow in the coming weeks. Marcello Fonte plays the lead.

Fast Color - A young woman finds herself on the run from authorities after discovering she has unusual and very powerful abilities. With various pursuers on her tail, she decides to hide out with her estranged family at their farmhouse. Once there, she attempts to mend relationships and begins to strategize her next move. Reviews were generally positive for this independent, low-key, sci-fi take on a superhero movie.

A few thought that the movie could have done with more conflict and needed better pacing to make a stronger impact. However, most complimented the film's unique approach and thought it built momentum as it progressed and ultimately came together in a satisfying manner. It features Gugu Mbatha-Raw, David Strathairn and Lorraine Toussaint.

Relaxer - Set on the verge of Y2K, two brothers await an impending apocalypse. The older one challenges his younger sibling with an impossible (and ridiculous) task...to stay on the couch and continue playing Pac-Man until he reaches the 256th level. As the challenge continues and the deadline looms closer, events gets decidedly more surreal and strange.

This independent comedy feature received more praise than it did pans. A segment of reviewers did find it something of an ordeal to sit and couldn't relate to the leads. However, the consensus was that the movie was a wild, totally unique experience that certainly felt like a cult film in the making. Joshua Burge, David Dastmalchian and Andre Hyland headline the flick.

Shazam! - Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman may be some of the most popular DC characters, but that isn't stopping the comic book publishing house from giving some other superheroes a shot. This effort follows young Billy Batson, an orphan who accidentally finds himself bestowed with a magical gift enabling him to transform into a muscular, caped do-gooder. Unfortunately, that means he also has to square off against some very dangerous and clever adult super-villains.

Reaction was quite good towards this take on the comic book character. There was a group who criticized it for being tonally imbalanced. But overall, it seemed that most thought it was heartfelt, funny and a significantly better flick than recent entries from more famous DC characters. It stars Zachary Levi, Mark Strong, Asher Angel, Jack Dylan Grazer and Djimon Hounsou.

Teen Spirit - A shy teenager from a small town wants to take part in a singing competition. An acquaintance who used to be a famous opera singer decides to help coach and manage the youngster in the contest. Together, they strive to beat the odds and win. Critics gave the film a passing score. A small percentage liked the cast but found the story by-the-numbers and didn't think the filmmakers did much to generate excitement. Still, more found the cast very likable and thought the movie was sweet and heartwarming enough to recommend. The cast includes Elle Fanning, Rebecca Hall, Zlatko Buric and Agnieszka Grochowska.

Blasts from the Past!

Plenty of curious older titles are arriving on Blu-ray. MVD Visual is releasing *Shortcut to Happiness* (2003) as part of its Marquee Collection line. Based on the short story *The Devil and Daniel Webster*, this little-seen film follows a writer who makes a deal with the Devil for fame and fortune. He eventually comes to regret his decision and goes to court to reclaim his soul. The movie shot back in 2001, stars Alec Baldwin, Anthony Hopkins, Dan Aykroyd, Jennifer Love Hewitt, Kim Cattrall and many others. A studio bankruptcy caused the feature to be shelved for many years. Now it's getting the high definition treatment.

Arrow is delivering a Special Edition Blu-ray of the hard-to-find horror picture, *The Chill Factor* (1993). It involves some snowmobile enthusiasts and snowboarders who accidentally come across an Ouija board and release an evil force that possesses victims. This flick has pretty

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much disappeared since its initial VHS release and is hitting Blu-ray with a new 2K restoration from the original film elements, a commentary with the special effects artist and a horror writer, interviews with other make-up team members, the production manager, the stunt coordinator and publicity materials.

Arrow's arthouse line, Arrow Academy, is releasing a Special Edition, as well. It's for *Hold Back the Dawn*

(1941), an immigrant drama with Olivia de Havilland, that was co-written by Billy Wilder (*The Apartment*

,
Some Like It Hot

). This Blu-ray includes a transfer from the original film elements, a film scholar audio commentary, a video appreciation of the film, a career spanning interview with the star, an hour-long radio adaptation of the story from the same year as its release, as well as stills and promotional materials.

AGFA also has some quirky gems in the form of a Blu-ray/DVD Special Edition double feature release. The first title in this set is *Satanis: The Devil's Mass* (1970), a documentary about the Church of Satan formed by Anton Szandor LaVey. That's followed by the narrative feature *Satan's Children*

(1975), about a runaway teen who joins a cult of Satanists, but soon tries to leave the group. Both of these pictures have been given a 2K scan from a theatrical print and come with trailers and features connected with the subject matter.

Shout! is putting out the Ronald Reagan western *Law and Order* (1953), about a marshal turned cattle rancher out to stop some sinister rustlers. This Blu-ray has a film historian commentary, a trailer and image galleries as bonus features. They are also releasing *The Leopard Man*

(1943) in high definition. This classic from producer Val Lewton (*I Walked With a Zombie*

) and director Jacques Tourneur (*Cat People*

,
Curse of the Demon

) is a mystery about a series of murders that may or may not have been the work of either an escaped animal or a monster. The movie has been given a new 4K scan from the nitrate camera negative. Extras include a film historian commentary, a second audio track with director William Friedkin (who's a fan of the flick), as well as a trailer and still gallery.

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If you're looking for a more recent horror effort, you can also pick up a Blu-ray of the killer cat flick, *Strays* (1991), which features stars Timothy Busfield and Kathleen Quinlan being terrorized by malevolent kitties. Apparently, many believe it provides some B-movie fun and is noted for having been written by pop star Shaun Cassidy.

Kino also has some noteworthy Blu-ray releases. They include a 2K transfer of the Katharine Hepburn/Nick Nolte comedy *Grace Quigley* (1985). It comes with a film historian commentary and a trailer. You can also pick up another comedy in the form of *Hello Again* (1987). This one stars Shelley Long as a housewife who dies choking on a meatball and comes back from the dead to put things right in her personal life. It arrives with a critic commentary and some trailers.

Nolte fans will also be happy that the distributor is releasing a Special Edition Blu-ray of the Merchant/Ivory period drama, *Jefferson in Paris* (1995). This release includes a James Ivory commentary track and trailer. And you can also pick up a Special Edition of the comedy *Mumford*

(1999) from writer/director Lawrence Kasdan (*Body Heat*

,
The Big Chill

,
The Accidental Tourist

and many others). This one is about a mysterious psychologist who arrives in a small town to help locals with their personal issues.

However, he may not be what he initially seems, and also falls for one of his patients. If memory serves, this is a pretty decent, low-key comedy and features a great cast that includes the likes of Loren Dean, Mary McDonnell, Jason Lee, Martin Short, Alfre Woodard, Elisabeth Moss, Robert Stack, Zooey Deschanel and many others. The disc comes with a director commentary, a making-of featurette and a trailer.

Criterion is delivering the French comedy/drama *The Baker's Wife* (1938) on Blu-ray. The movie arrives with a new 4K digital restoration, a selected-scene film scholar commentary, an archived intro to the movie from the director and a lengthy TV-interview with him, a news short about the feature's picturesque locations, and an essay.

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Thriller fans should be pleased to see Criterion presenting *Klute* (1971) in high definition. Jane Fonda won an Oscar for her work as a call girl caught up in a missing person investigation. The movie has received a 4K digital transfer supervised by the camera operator. It also comes with a new interview with Fonda, as well as one with the writer, a recently completed program about the film featuring talks with many members of the cast and crew, a documentary about the shoot and other extras.

If you like science-fiction pictures, the small but fascinating film *Moon* (2009) is one of the best in recent years. Sony has given the title a 4K upgrade for its 10th Anniversary Edition. So not only does it arrive with all of the previously released bonuses, but it'll also look sharper than it ever has before.

B-movie enthusiasts will be happy to see the very '80s Italian slasher picture, *Murder Rock* (1984) on Blu-ray courtesy of Scorpion Releasing. This is also a Special Edition that will include a film historian audio commentary, as well as a few interviews with cast and crew members, including director Lucio Fulci (

Zombie

). Fulci fans can also pick up another one of his titles this week,

The Psychic

(1977). This Blu-ray Special Edition comes with a 2K scan of the film and a similar assortment of extras to what buyers will find on the other release.

Redemption is also putting out a Blu-ray of the Jess Franco spy parody, *Attack of the Robots* (1966).

Finally, Warner Archive is making the James Cagney musical/comedy *Footlight Parade* (1933) available to order on Blu-ray through their site and other online retailers. It's one of those old Hollywood films that features incredibly elaborate numbers on enormous sets with dozens of dancers pulling off some incredible choreography.

You Know, For Kids!

These are some titles that may be of interest to children.

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The Big Bad Fox and Other Tales

Garfield & Friends: Season 1

Titans: Season 1

On the Tube!

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

American Masters: Robert Shaw: Man of Many Voices (PBS)

The Crossword Mysteries: A Puzzle to Die For (Hallmark TV-movie)

From the Earth to the Moon (1998 HBO Series)

Garfield & Friends: Season 1

Luther: The Complete Series (BBC)

Mister Rogers' Neighborhood: Would You Be Mine Collection (PBS)

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Nazi Megastructures: America's War (National Geographic)

NOVA: First Horse Warriors (PBS)

NOVA: Saving the Dead Sea (PBS)

Signed, Sealed, Delivered: To the Altar (Hallmark TV-movie)

Space: 1999: The Complete Series

Superstructures: Engineering Marvels (National Geographic)

Titans: Season 1

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