

DVD/Blu-ray Roundup for July 26, 2019

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
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Hello and welcome to another look at highlights arriving on Blu-ray and DVD. Some interesting material is coming your way this week, including everything from big studio films to privately financed, independent fare. 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!

Alita: Battle Angel - Based on the Japanese manga series, this sci-fi/action picture follows a cyborg who wakes up with no memory of who she is or where she came from. A scientist attempts to replace parts and restore the teen to her full potential. She soon develops incredible abilities and sets out to uncover the truth about her past. Critics were a bit mixed on the final results, although it did earn slightly more praise than criticism.

Those who didn't recommend the film stated that it looked great, but found the CGI lead a bit distracting and also described the story as weak. Others who gave it a pass thought the dystopian world was intriguing and enjoyed the elaborate spectacle on display. It stars Rosa Salazar, Christoph Waltz, Jennifer Connelly, Mahershala Ali, Ed Skrein and Jackie Earle Haley.

Assimilate - Taking inspiration from classics like *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, this tale involves three teen friends who decide to create a web-series and tell the story of their neighborhood. Their research goes in an unexpected direction when they begin to realize that families are being killed and replaced with perfect copies. The kids must not only identify the real monsters, but do their best to stop them. So far, this title has only played at a few festivals, so most people will be seeing it for the first time on disc. There aren't many reviews available, but the ones that have appeared state that while the film is a bit derivative, the cast is likable and the plot delivers a few thrills. It features Joel Courtney, Calum Worthy, Andi Matichak and Katherine McNamara.

The Book of Birdie - This unusual arthouse feature is described as a fantasy about a fragile and imaginative teenager who is placed in a convent. Her obsessions begin to upset some of the nuns and when the lead begins to experience strange hallucinations, the religious order must determine whether her visions are saintly or that of a sinister, satanic influence. So far, this title has only played in a few cities on the indie circuit, but response has been quite upbeat. There have been some minor complaints suggesting the story is difficult to follow in spots, but the

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majority have complimented the production as being beautifully shot and effectively moody. The cast includes Suzan Crowley, Kymberly Mellen and Kathryn Browning.

Critters Attack! - Those who remember their monster movies might have a soft spot for *Critters*, a low-budget effort from 1986 about a family at a farm who comes under attack from small and prickly alien invaders. This, the fourth sequel in the series, was made by the SyFy network and is premiering on disc and via digital viewing on their website. The plot involves a college student babysitting for extra cash. When another batch of sinister Critters crash land in the backyard, the guardian must save the kids for whom she is caring. Tashiana Washington, Dee Wallace, Jaeden Noel and Jack Fulton headline the flick.

Geek, and You Shall Find - This documentary follows a trio of filmmakers who begin to produce a feature chronicling a local comic book convention. After meeting several cosplayers and hearing their moving personal stories, the group decides to investigate the comic-con culture in more detail. The gang visits several events and talks to both fans and creators about why superheroes and other fantasy shows are so popular, and how these tales inspire people to combat real issues. This non-fiction feature is making its debut on disc. As such, those with an interest in the material will just have to take a chance on it if they feel so inclined. The movie includes interviews with celebrities like Kevin Eastman, Stan Lee and George R.R. Martin.

Master Z: Ip Man Legacy - This spin-off of the popular *Ip Man* martial arts series tells the story of a villain who fought and lost a battle with the legendary Chinese folk hero. Things go from bad to worse for the weakened character when he starts working as a waiter and comes into conflict with a powerful foreigner. The lead attempts to change his ways and turn the tide so that he can help both himself and his neighbors avoid dangerous new threats. Reviews were very good for this foreign-language action effort. It seems that almost everyone appreciated the story's focus on a bad guy trying to turn his life around, and stated that the fight scenes were extremely well-shot and choreographed. The movie features Zhang Jin, Dave Bautista, Michelle Yeoh, Tony Jaa and Kevin Cheng.

Missing Link - Families with an interest in cryptozoology and monsters may appreciate this animated effort from Laika Studios (*Coraline*, *ParaNorman*, *Kubo and the Two Strings*). The plot involves an explorer desperate to earn the approval of his peers. He receives a mysterious note telling him where to find Bigfoot in the Pacific Northwest and heads out to capture the beast. However, after encountering the Sasquatch, plans change and the pair travels across the globe on an exciting adventure. The press gave this flick high marks. One or two critics didn't think that this title matched the studio's previous effort, but just about everyone else called the movie

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gorgeously animated, charming and a whole lot of fun. The voice-cast includes Hugh Jackman, Zoe Saldana, Zach Galifianakis, Emma Thompson, Stephen Fry and Timothy Olyphant.

Blasts from the Past!

Shout! Factory is presenting a new Blu-ray of the Burt Lancaster and Yvonne De Carlo film-noir thriller, *Criss Cross* (1949). This well-regarded flick is about an armored car heist that faces added and unexpected complications. Classic film fans should be pleased that the disc includes a 4K scan of the original nitrate negative and comes with a film historian commentary, as well as a trailer, still gallery and poster and lobby card images.

Criterion has some great new arrivals, too. They include the timely George Orwell adaptation of *1984*

(1984). This movie stars John Hurt as man struggling to survive in a right-wing, totalitarian society that suppresses free thought and those who stand against Big Brother. The movie was also shot by Roger Deakins (*The Shawshank Redemption*

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Fargo

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Skyfall

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Sicario

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Blade Runner 2049

) which means it looks pretty darn fantastic, as well.

They also have a Blu-ray of the Spike Lee classic, *Do the Right Thing* (1989). Set in a Brooklyn neighborhood, this tale follows the interactions of various locals. Tensions about racism escalate and give way to violence as the night progresses. This release comes with a new 4K digital restoration supervised by cinematographer Ernest Dickerson, an introduction from writer/director Lee and a 1995 audio commentary with Lee, the film's production designer and a cast member.

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