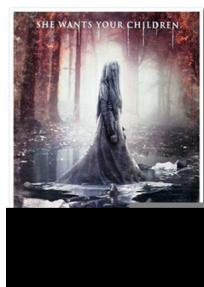


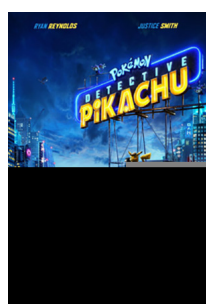
DVD/Blu-ray Roundup for August 9, 2019

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Friday, 16 August 2019 01:27



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Welcome to one of the busiest editions of Blu-ray and DVD highlights we've had in some time. It's full of both Hollywood blockbusters and small independent features that you've likely never heard of. All in all, a lot of interesting stuff is arriving for your perusal. 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!

American Hangman- A judge who presided over a botched criminal case finds himself kidnapped in this independent thriller. With cameras all around, he's prosecuted for his part in the trial, with viewers watching the streaming video on multiple social networks. As the details unfold, those watching are told that they are the jury and are left to decide the fate of the official. This picture earned split notices.

About half thought that the cast was good, but that the screenplay was obvious in its attempts to criticize media, as well as corruption within the court system. The rest suggested that the lead

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was so good that he made up for the story hiccups. It features Donald Sutherland, Vincent Kartheiser and Lucia Walters.

Attrition - Another week, another Steven Seagal direct-to-disc action flick. However, this effort was actually written and produced by Seagal himself, suggesting that he may have put more attention into this particular feature. The martial arts hero stars as an ex-military man determined to save a young Thai girl with mythical powers, from a nasty gang of human traffickers. This title has appeared rather suddenly with little fanfare and is making its debut on disc.

That means that there are absolutely no reviews for it just yet. As always, one would be wise to have a little trepidation going in. The cast also includes Rudy Youngblood, Siu-Wong Fan and Kat Ingharat.

Batman: Hush - This direct-to-disc animated feature follows the titular DC superhero as he faces off against a new foe. Adapted directly from a comic book storyline, it involves a secretive villain plotting against Batman from afar, manipulating foes such as the Joker, the Riddler and Ra's al Ghul into doing his bidding and taking down Batman. Notices were generally positive towards this title. While a few did complain about alterations to the original story, most complimented this effort as being quickly paced, tense and having an interesting mystery at its center. The voice talent includes Jason O'Mara, Jennifer Morrison, Peyton List, Jerry O'Connell, Rebecca Romijn and Rainn Wilson.

Changeland - A man decides to spring a surprise Thailand vacation on his wife, only to discover that she's having an affair. Instead, the protagonist calls up his best friend and the two head out themselves, attending the events he had planned with his significant other. Although they bicker at first, the two travelers are soon changed by this impromptu trip to another part of the world. Generally, reviewers were slightly more positive about this comedy/drama than they were negative.

Some stated that while it was a pretty trip to watch, the revelations weren't as deep or meaningful as hoped for. However, most stated that the movie was sweet and worked thanks to the likeability of the two protagonists. It stars Seth Green, Breckin Meyer, Brenda Song, Rachel Bloom, Rob Paulsen and Macauley Culkin.

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Charlie Says - This biopic drama focuses on the infamous Manson family and the crimes committed in 1969. Specifically, three All-American women who were transformed by the figure into cold-blooded killers. The story follows a graduate student who visits them after their incarceration and attempts to make them come to terms with the severity of their crimes.

Notices towards this picture were generally mixed. A group thought that the movie was well-intentioned but played it safe and didn't do enough to explain just how these women were brainwashed. Others thought it was uneven, but appreciated the focus on these women and how they were unwittingly victimized. The cast includes Chance Crawford, Suki Waterhouse, Merritt Wever, Annabeth Gish, Hannah Murray, Susie Bacon and Matt Smith.

The Command - Anyone out there remember the 2002 Harrison Ford film *K-19: The Widowmaker*

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This movie, which was released in some markets as *Kursk*

, tells a very similar story about a real-life incident that occurred aboard another Russian craft. After a series of accidental explosions starts to sink a submarine, the crew of the vessel struggles to survive as the boat falls further into the depths. Their plight is complicated when the Russian government refuses help from other countries in rescuing the sailors.

Overall, the press didn't mind this biopic. While a percentage did critique some of the visual effects as being sub-par and thought the script used too many disaster picture clichés, the consensus was that the able cast helped sell this tragic and unfortunate tale. It features Matthias Schoenaerts, Léa Seydoux, Max von Sydow and Colin Firth.

The Curse of La Llorona - This spin-off of *The Conjuring* involves a sinister spirit who takes children. When a social worker investigates a child abuse case, she inadvertently comes into contact with La Llorona, who targets her own kids. To fight the supernatural force, she enlists the assistance of an eccentric priest to help protect them. Reviews for this picture weren't nearly as strong as others in the franchise.

While a few suggested that the movie provided enough jump scares to satisfy horror fans, others thought that the screenplay didn't do the mythic figure justice and griped that the movie resorted to the same old formula. Linda Cardellini, Raymond Cruz, Patricia Velasquez and Tony Amendola headline the feature.

Do Something, Jake - This dark comedy from the UK features a lead who is seen by others as introverted, illiterate and having no job prospects. But as events progress, it is discovered that he is intelligent, spending most of his time looking out for the woman he loves from afar. He attempts to save his crush's future by pulling off an elaborate scheme that will remove her from the clutches of her dangerous criminal boyfriend. Of course, things don't end up going exactly to plan.

This independent feature has made the rounds at film festivals, even winning Best Feature at a couple of them. Still, it has yet to be seen in these parts and is making its debut on disc, so interested parties will have to go in cold. Jamie Alderson, Mia Mills, Tom Loone and Ed Bergfold take on the lead roles.

Double Eagle Ranch - Attempting to poke fun at various rom-com tropes, this feature tells the story of a narcissistic man whose grandmother dies. The deceased woman requests that the protagonist spread her ashes with his ex-girlfriend. Remarkably, the ex agrees and the pair head off, bickering and arguing to their destination. Things get more complicated when they realize they've been double-booked at their accommodations with a free-spirited couple who challenge the lead's negativity.

For most, this release will be their first introduction to this title. Internet reviews suggest that the performers are very good, but that viewers will have to prepare themselves to endure the hero's awful behavior. It features Kyle Cooper, Lyndsey Doolen, Joe Hartzler and Melissa Hunter.

Girls of the Sun - This multinational arthouse war film is inspired by the true story of a Kurdish battalion composed entirely of female resistance fighters. A French journalist decides to make her way to Kurdistan and eventually tags along with the warriors, covering a three day offensive in which they attempt to take the city of Corduene back from extremist invaders. Alas, the assault didn't win many accolades from the press.

While a small contingent admired the film for recognizing the struggles of these women, more found the end results well-meaning, but awkwardly put together, veering into corny melodrama to make its points. The cast includes Golshifteh Farahani, Emmanuelle Bercot and Zübeyde Bulut

The Iron Orchard - Set against the backdrop of the Great Depression, a young man in Texas decides to make his mark in the oilfields. The movie follows his progression as he rises to a prominent position as a wildcatter, exploring and searching for his fortune. His stakes cause great consternation and even violence as he expands in the region. Reaction towards this independently produced drama was not as positive as might have been hoped for. A limited selection of reviews praised the cinematography and enjoyed the work of the main actor. Still, almost all others called it dramatically flat, stated that it failed to generate much tension and concluded that it felt too soapy for its own good. Lane Garrison, Ali Cobrin, Austin Niclos and Lew Temple are prominently featured.

Penguin Highway - Anime fans may be interested in this Japanese production. It's about a fourth-grader with an interest in science who discovers penguins suddenly appearing all over his little village. Determined to understand the reason why, he investigates and determines that it may have to do with the strange abilities of a woman working at a nearby dental clinic. Based on a popular coming-of-age novel, this effort earned raves from the press.

In fact, I have yet to find a negative review. They called it an incredibly sweet narrative that also delivered potent emotional beats. They remarked that the movie resonated long after the finale and some even stated that the film marks the debut of a compelling new voice in the animation world.

Perception - This title follows two parties who meet under unusual circumstances. A real estate developer still reeling over the death of his wife encounters a mysterious small-time psychic. The mystic asserts that she can reconnect the man and his late spouse if he takes her guidance. Desperate to see his partner again, the lead agrees, only to uncover secrets about his new acquaintance that make him believe that she may actually be after his fortune.

There aren't a great many notices for this indie feature yet, but the ones that have appeared haven't been overly complimentary. One or two call it an effective little thriller, but most suggest that the script doesn't take full advantage of its interesting concept. Wes Ramsey, Meera Rohit Kumbhani and Caitlin Mehner headline the film.

Plus One - Here's another little romantic comedy hitting shelves this week. Two longtime single college friends decide to help each other out when they both get invited to numerous nuptials.

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They decide to be each other's plus one at every event in order help each other with speeches and various awkward and uncomfortable encounters. But over the course of the summer, the pair begin to develop their own chemistry.

Critics were quite kind to this indie effort. While one or two called it too forgettable to recommend, the majority thought it was a very charming and funny little film. They mentioned that the picture was better than many other titles of its ilk and noted that sparks really flew between the two leads. The cast includes Maya Erskine, Jack Quaid and Ed Begley Jr.

Pokémon Detective Pikachu - The hugely popular Japanese multi-media phenomenon involving cute little creatures gets a film adaptation in this live-action adaptation. When a youth learns that his private investigator father has gone missing, he heads out to the big city to find out what happened. He soon encounters his father's Pokémon and the two decide to team up to solve the disappearance.

The press gave this unusual flick decent marks. A smaller group couldn't get on its wavelength and didn't find the story or characters interesting. Still, most admitted that the unusual buddy picture set-up worked and found that there were enough laughs and impressive visuals to grant it a pass. It stars Ryan Reynolds, Justice Smith, Kathryn Newton, Bill Nighy, Ken Watanabe and Suki Waterhouse.

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