

Blu-ray/DVD Roundup for March 5, 2021

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Welcome back to another busy week running through all of the highlights coming out on Blu-ray and DVD. This edition includes several big studio pictures and independent features. So, since you can't or likely shouldn't, be going out to the movies this week, be sure to give one of these titles a try!

BIG NEW RELEASES!

AFTER THE REIGN: A social media prankster is the protagonist of this dark comedy. The narrative follows the character's rise to prominence pulling increasingly edgy stunts and hoaxes that eventually land him in legal trouble. After being arrested and incarcerated for his gags, his online following explodes. The protagonist becomes a popular hardcore rapper upon his release, taking on the stage name, Lil Tito.

Unfortunately, his obsession with maintaining the attention of the public leads him down a dark path when his fans turn on him. This feature is premiering on disc, so as of right now there are no notices available for it. It features Rene Rosado, Lisa Roumain, Tiffany Daniels and Scotty Tovar.

ARAGNE: SIGN OF VERMILLION: Anime enthusiasts may be curious about this 2018 effort from Japan that is finally being released in North America. The story involves a young woman living in an apartment frightened by news of a series of murders occurring in her neighborhood. She begins seeing disturbing visions of worms, moths and beetles and tries to figure out how these images and the crimes she's hearing about are intertwined. Despite its limited release, the movie has received a few screenings at places like the Fantasia International Film Festival.

Most of those who have seen it described the film as visually interesting and intriguing, although they did warn that the story eventually runs out of gas and that the ending was a little disappointing.

FATALE: In this thriller, a successful sports agent makes the mistake of cheating on his wife with a woman he meets in a bar. After their one-night stand, he learns that she is a police detective working a case that he has now embroiled himself in. As he tries to salvage his personal relationships and figure out what's going on, he begins to suspect that he is actually being used and manipulated by the sinister cop. Reviewers were lukewarm on this feature, with the majority of write-ups being negative.

Those who gave it a pass called the movie cheesy fun and a guilty pleasure. Yet the overall consensus was that the picture was a tedious, eye-rolling effort that didn't even provide the B-movie thrills it promised. The cast includes Hilary Swank, Michael Ealy, Mike Colter, Danny Pino and Tyrin Turner.

PINOCCHIO: The tale of a wooden puppet that comes to life is retold in this Italian production. The protagonist, who wants to be a real boy, travels and gets mixed up with bandits and other nefarious types as he attempts to turn his dreams into reality. In 2002, Roberto Benigni starred in another Italian adaptation as the title character. The movie was well regarded in its homeland, but its North American release suffered from atrocious English dubbing and flopped.

This time out, the actor plays puppeteer Geppetto and the distributor has avoided trying to rerecord the dialogue into English. Notices were quite strong for the film. A few couldn't connect with the wooden protagonist. However, all others said that despite a few bumps in the road, the movie was compelling, beautifully shot and managed to tell the familiar story in an original manner.

It also features Federico Ielapi, Rocco Papaleo, Massimo Ceccherini and Marine Vauth.

SCARE ME: Two strangers in the Catskills take refuge in a cabin during a power outage. To pass the time, they each begin telling scary stories and attempt to out-frighten one another. However, as the various tales are relayed, the line between reality and fantasy become blurred and the characters soon face their own darkest fears. This little independent horror/comedy earned a lot of good press.

The few reviewers who didn't like it suggested that this anthology eventually ran out of gas,

suggesting that the running time was far too long for its own good. However, the vast majority was pleased by the performances and the mood generated, calling the picture a small gem that would impress indie horror enthusiasts. The cast includes Josh Ruben, Aya Cash, Chris Redd, Rebecca Drysdale and Lauren Sick.

ZAPPA: The late Frank Zappa was a legendary singer/songwriter and musician who created incredible experimental works and satirized American culture. Filmmaker Alex Winter (perhaps best known as Bill from the *Bill & Ted* movies) has gained complete access to Zappa's family, as well as the artist's personal vault filled with unseen footage and new works. He uses new interviews and the recently uncovered material to present a fuller and more complete picture of the man. The press was very taken with the movie.

There were only one or two reviewers who did not care for the film. It seems that those who weren't big fans of the artist said that the movie couldn't pull them in to Zappa's world. Everyone else was impressed by this character study and appreciated seeing the wide range of surreal art and ideas presented in the movie.

BLASTS FROM THE PAST!

If you're looking for some older flicks, there are plenty of titles hitting high-definition. Kino has a trio of Bob Hope pictures arriving on Blu-ray. The first is the Bob Hope/Dorothy Lamour comedy, *Caught in the Draft* (1941). Hope plays a movie star with a fear of loud noises, who accidentally joins the army in the hopes of wooing a lady.

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The movie has been given a 4K restoration and includes a film historian commentary, a special with the comedian entertaining troops, some performances from 1944 and 1945, a Hollywood newsreel about the picture and a trailer.

The second feature being released on Blu-ray is *My Favorite Blonde* (1942). This one is about a performer meeting a spy on a train and getting wrapped up in adventure. This feature has been restored in 2K and arrives with a critic commentary.

Nothing but the Truth

(1941) teams Hope with Paulette Goddard.

He plays a man who bets that he can tell the truth for 24 hours, leading him into uncomfortable situations as other wagerers attempt to force him into a lie. This picture has also received a 2K restoration and similar extras as the previously mentioned title.

Dark Tower (1989) follows a woman who witnesses a worker fall from a Barcelona high-rise and becomes convinced that a monster is responsible for the death. It stars Jenny Agutter and Michael Moriarty. This movie has also been restored in 2K for its worldwide Blu-ray debut and includes an interview with the man who created the special effects and a promotional stills gallery. *Satan's Blood* (1978) follows the horrific acts of a sinister cult.

The movie has been newly scanned and restored in 4K for its Blu-ray release. This disc includes the English and Spanish language tracks, a documentary on the production, a film historian commentary, and a still gallery.

Families will be happy to see Disney is releasing a series of double feature Blu-rays containing some of their most successful titles. Many of the discs include the animated and live-action versions of these hits. You can now purchase the *Aladdin: 2-Movie Collection* (1992 and 2019) and *Beauty and*

the Beast: 2-Movie Collection

(1991 and 2017), as well as the

Cinderella: 2-Movie Collection

(1950 and 2015). They also have

The Incredibles: 2-Movie Collection

(2004 and 2018) and

The Lion King: 2-Movie Collection

(1994 and 2019).

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Additionally, you can pick up a *Sleeping Beauty and Maleficent 2-Movie Collection* (1959 and 2014). As if that wasn't enough, Disney is presenting the *Toy Story: 4-Movie Collection*, which contains every single movie in the series.

There are other big studios putting together Blu-ray combo packages. Universal has the *Everyday Heroes 4-Movie Collection*, which contains *Apollo 13* (1995), *Backdraft* (1991), *Erin Brockovich* (2000) and *Lone Survivor* (2013). Personally, I'm not sure how the astronauts from the first movie fall under this category, but those are the titles being included. You can also purchase the *Fearless Females 4-Movie Collection*.

Finally, Paramount is presenting a 15th Anniversary 4K Steelbook edition of Steven Spielberg's update of the H.G. Wells science-fiction classic, *War of the Worlds* (2005). This version stars Tom Cruise, Dakota Fanning and Tim Robbins.

YOU KNOW, FOR KIDS!

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It looks like Disney is taking the lead this week with their various animated/live-action double feature Blu-ray sets.

44 Cats: Meet the Cats

Aladdin: 2-Movie Collection (1992 and 2019) Disney

Beauty and the Beast: 2-Movie Collection (1991 and 2017) Disney

Cinderella: 2-Movie Collection (1950 and 2015) Disney

The Incredibles: 2-Movie Collection (2004 and 2018) Disney

The Lion King: 2-Movie Collection (1994 and 2019) Disney

Rainbow Rangers: Wild for Wildlife (Nick Jr.)

Sleeping Beauty / Maleficent 2-Movie Collection (1959 and 2014) Disney

Toy Story: 4-Movie Collection (1995, 1999, 2010, 2019) Disney

Victor and Valentino: Folk Art Foes (Cartoon Network)

ON THE TUBE!

And here are all of the TV-themed releases.

44 Cats: Meet the Cats

The Best of Cher - 5-Disc Collection (Time-Life release featuring Cher TV appearances, etc.)

Christmas Under the Stars (Hallmark Channel)

Crossword Mysteries: 3-Movie Collection (Hallmark Channel)

Doctor Who: Revolution of the Daleks (aka Season 12) (BBC)

Imma Tataranni: Season 1 (MHz Choice Channel)

The Mallorca Files (BBC)

The Reagans (Showtime)

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Rick and Morty: The Complete Seasons 1 - 4

Victor and Valentino: Folk Art Foes (Cartoon Network)

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