Blu-ray/DVD Roundup for April 30, 2021

Welcome back to another look at some of the highlights coming this week on Blu-ray and DVD. There's a big title that earned plenty of praise and won prizes at the Academy Awards on Sunday, as well as some interesting independent features. So, if you are still waiting to have a safe movie-going experience at the cinema, why not give one of these titles a try!

BIG NEW RELEASES!

BAD WITCH: A male witch whose powers have caused him nothing but trouble decides to make a change for the good and help a local teen being bullied at school. The pair becomes close and the protagonist does his best to make life better for his new friend. However, when the spells begin to backfire and cause utter chaos, the youngster starts to regret the budding relationship and finds himself in a difficult spot. This independent film is premiering this week on streaming platforms and on disc, so there aren't many reviews of the feature available just yet.

One or two have popped up online and have been complementary, stating that the performances are strong, the practical effects are well done and that the movie is generally amusing. It features Chris Kozlowski and Jackson Trent.

LIEUTENANT JANGLES: This feature was scheduled to arrive on Blu-ray back in June of 2020, but vanished from the schedule moments before its release. It is now finally coming this week. The film is an indie comedy from Australia set in the 1980s that follows a hard-nosed cop in the criminal cesspool of Brisbane (that's according to the plot synopsis … I'm sure it's a fine and lovely city). After his partner is killed by thugs, the lieutenant heads out for revenge. He shoots and blows up anything standing in his way, leaving wreckage behind as he "saves" the metropolis from an underworld boss.

There aren't many in this part of the world who have seen this picture, but it fared very well at genre film festivals over the past couple of years. Apparently, it's amusingly over-the-top with an enjoyably crude and rude hero. It has been suggested that those who enjoy '80s action flicks like *Cobra* and *Commando* will get a kick out of this parody. The movie stars Matt Dickie, Justin

Gerardin and Graham K. Furness.

MURDER BURY WIN: A trio of friends come up with a concept for a board game about getting away with murder that they believe will be a huge success and make them rich. They set up a crowdfunding site, but it fails to raise the funding necessary to make their project a reality. A man appears out of the blue and makes an offer on the condition that he gets full public credit for the discovery. The pals agree, but the relationship goes south and the leads find elements of the game actually occurring in real life.

So far, the press has enjoyed this little independent comedy. One or two complained that the movie wasn't as clever or cutting as it could have been, but most called it a sharp and funny feature that pokes fun at the gaming industry. It features Erich Lane, Henry Alexander Kelly, Craig Cackowski and Mikelen Walker.

NOMADLAND: After its Academy Award wins for Best Picture, Best Actress, and Best Director, this drama is now arriving on disc. The story follows a proud, widowed woman in her 60s. Due to financial issues, she has been forced to live out of her van and travel across the country in order to search for employment. Viewers witness her endure harsh living conditions and struggle to survive as she journeys through America looking for her next temporary position.

Critics adored this feature and gave it extremely high marks. A tiny percentage stated that the movie lacked a sense of rage or passion and was too muted in tone to engage them. However, the vast majority called it a subtle exploration of this unusual lifestyle and called the performances and direction exceptional. It stars Frances McDormand and David Strathairn.

OTTOLENGHI AND THE CAKES OF VERSAILLES: Food enthusiasts might be interested in this documentary. It details the efforts of celebrity chef Yotam Ottolenghi to put on a Versailles-themed culinary gala at the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art. The crew captures him assembling a star-studded team and captures them doing everything they can to make event the best that it can be. Notices were solid for this feature.

A group did comment that the film didn't really tell us much about the participants and felt like little more than a slick Food Channel program. However, most found it to be a sweet experience and thought that there were elements that made the viewer think about or maybe even question

the motives behind the participants. For the time being, this film is making its debut exclusively on DVD.

PIPELINE: Before buying or renting a house, always make sure to check the plumbing! This low-budget independent chiller features a group who rent an abode while they visit a nearby festival. They soon discover the strange creaks and sounds coming from the pipes are hiding a monster. The creature prevents them from leaving and presumably crawls out of bathtubs, sinks, washing machines, and toilets to attack the visitors.

This feature is debuting on DVD only and as of right now there aren't any professional critic reviews available. A couple of online ones have arisen on websites. These notices state that while it is reasonably made, there is no explanation of the monster's abilities and that the end product isn't memorable. It features Ashley Ballard, Elizabeth Cascarelli, Jason Alan Cook, Keaton Ray and Marc Goodman.

THE TINY LIFE OF BUTCHER DUKE: This low-budget comedy involves an amateur tennis player whose life falls apart after losing a highly publicized match against a local TV personality. Twenty years after the competition, the protagonist is still living at home with his mother and is estranged from his daughter. Suddenly, the son of the TV personality appears out of the blue and suggests a new match, offering a tiny home as a prize for the winner. Our hero must decide if the offer is legitimate and whether returning to the court will get his life back on track.

This indie feature is premiering on disc, so there are no reviews available for it yet and interested parties will have to go in cold. The cast includes Mike Akel, Chad Werner, Emily Hiott and Jeff McQuitty.

TWO FOR JOY: This small film from the UK tells the story of a troubled family who take a camper on vacation in a seaside town. The story implies that the patriarch of the family has recently passed away, leaving the wife suffering from grief and depression. Her teenage daughter ends up serving as the caregiver to the group, keeping her siblings in line while trying to pull her mother out of a catatonic state. It has taken a couple of years for this bleak effort to reach this part of the world, but the press was very positive about the film.

It was also nominated for and won awards at a few European film festivals. The general

consensus is that this heavy and harrowing family drama is beautifully acted, moving and authentic. It stars Samantha Morton, Billie Piper, Daniel Mays, Emilia Jones and Bella Ramsey.

TYGER TYGER: As a pandemic takes hold in their city, an eccentric woman and her mute friend decide to fight back against the system by attempting to rob a pharmacy. They steal a supply of life-saving drugs and kidnap a drug dealer to help them traverse through their lawless community and get the medication to those who need it. Reviewers really disliked this effort. While the movie hasn't received a large number of write-ups yet, all of those that have been released are negative.

They asserted that while the concept itself was interesting, the execution was deeply flawed. According to these sources, the movie is dramatically flat, doesn't have anything important to say and meanders pointlessly in too many directions. The cast includes Sam Quartin, Dylan Sprouse, Nekhebet Kum Juch and Craig Stark.

VANQUISH: After working many years as a cold-hearted drug courier, a new mother tries to quit the business and leave her past behind. Unfortunately, a retired cop locates the woman, kidnaps her baby and forces her to do his bidding. The protagonist must use all her fighting skills and her tricked-out motorcycle to complete her assignment and win back her offspring. But will surviving the job bring her true freedom?

According to critics, the answer to this question isn't worth the time or attention. Notices were generally very poor. A tiny contingent thought the action presented was entertaining to watch. However, everyone else called it a below-average B-movie with no character development, terrible dialogue and unmemorable set pieces. It features Morgan Freeman, Ruby Rose, Patrick Muldoon and Nick Vallelonga.

BLASTS FROM THE PAST!

This is another great week for older titles arriving on Blu-ray. Arrow Video is getting the ball rolling with a 2-disc Limited Edition Collector's Set of the incredible cult film, *Donnie Darko* (2001). It stars Jake Gyllenhaal as a troubled, suburban teen who begins having strange and disturbing visions of a figure in a bunny suit who tells him that the world will end in less than a month. This new Blu-ray edition includes 4K restorations of both the theatrical version and

director's cut, supervised and approved by writer/director Richard Kelly and the cinematographer.

You'll get multiple audio commentaries, a documentary on the film, deleted scenes, an archival making-of doc, featurettes and interviews from the movie's release. In fact, there is so much more included in the set that there isn't enough space to list it all here.

Last year, the distributor also put out a Special Edition of the horror B-movie-themed comedy, *Elvira: Mistress of the Dark* (1988). It was an impressive disc and now they're releasing a "Limited Edition" Blu-ray Steelbook version. It contains the movie and all the wonderful extras from the previous version in fancy new packaging.

The biggest Arrow release of the week may be the Special Edition Blu-ray of *Switchblade Sisters* (1975). This tale involves a gang of teenage girls struggling to survive on the streets and in the schools of L.A.. A bond forms between a new member and the group leader, but their friendship is tested by a jealousy and inter-gang squabbles. This disc marks the debut of the title on Blu-ray. It arrives with a high-definition presentation, a film historian commentary, an archival documentary about the flick and another segment detailing the shooting locations.

You'll also get interviews with the filmmaker and cast members from the 1990s, as well as a discussion at a screening in 2007. And all kinds of publicity materials like posters, stills and movies trailers are also included.

Kino is offering plenty of Blu-ray entertainment as well. If war movies are to your liking, you can pick up *Battle Hymn* (1957) with Rock Hudson. It's about a traumatized pilot trying to right the wrongs he carried out during a violent conflict. The movie was made by famed director Douglas Sirk (*All That Heaven Allows*, *The Tarnished Angels*) and comes with a film historian commentary.

Western fans can now pick up a new 4K Blu-ray edition of the spaghetti-western classic, *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (1966). This disc includes both the extended and theatrical versions of the film with new color

grading and superior image quality, along with dozens of extras including a making-of, featurettes on the production, deleted scenes, and more.

The distributor is also releasing Blu-rays of *Heartworn Highways* (1976) and its recent follow-up, *Heartworn Highways Revisited* (2015).
The first title is a documentary capturing performances of various country and western music artists like Guy Clark, Townes Van Zandt and David Allan Cole. It arrives with a new restoration, a producer commentary track, nearly an hour of bonus footage and trailers. As for the latter feature, it explores and examines the original film and its influence, using discussions with the musicians featured in the original, as well as the next generation of artists influenced by the movie.

The disc comes with a director commentary, additional scenes and a trailer.

Kino also has a Blu-ray of the Kirk Douglas private eye thriller, *A Lovely Way to Die* (1968). This title arrives with a film critic audio commentary and a couple of trailers for the movie.

Those who enjoy low-budget genre flicks will have plenty to choose from this week. Vinegar Syndrome is releasing limited edition Blu-rays that will only be available through their own website. If you go to the site, you can find and purchase the gritty action picture, *Death Promise* (1977). It has been given a 2K transfer and arrives with an editor interview and publicity materials.

Last Gasp (1995) with Robert Patrick (*Terminator 2: Judgment Day*) is about a nasty real estate developer who is possessed and turned into a killer. This title has been scanned in 4K and comes with extensive outtakes from the production.
Rush Week
(1989) follows a college newspaper reporter investigating a series of slayings on campus. The Blu-ray comes with a 2K image, a film authority commentary track, and interviews with cast members.

Scorpion has a Blu-ray of the sea-set thriller, *Sharks' Treasure* (1975) with Cornel Wilde and Yaphet Kotto. It follows convicts searching for goods in shark-infested waters. The movie has

received a new 2019 master, so it should look sharper than ever before.
The Time Travelers
(1964) is a drive-in sci-fi effort about scientists who go more than 100 years into the future and find a barren wasteland filled with angry mutants.

This title arrives with a 2020 2K scan and a trailer.

Code Red is delivering a Blu-ray of *Werewolves on Wheels* (1971), which tells the story of an outlaw biker gang who become hairy monsters. The HD master of the film is new and the disc comes with a trailer.

If you're looking for something, well, classier, Criterion has a Blu-ray of the award-winning drama, *Irma Vep* (1996). The story involves a Hong Kong actress who travels to France to star in a vampire flick, only to find a chaotic set filled with troubled personalities. This disc has a 2K digital restoration of the feature, an interview with the director, archival discussions with the cast and crew, an episode from the vampire serial that inspired this movie, as well as a short from the filmmaker.

Masculin Féminin (1966) is a French title from famous auteur Jean-Luc Godard (*Breathless*, *2 or 3 Things I Know About Her*
), about a young anti-establishment intellectual who meets and ultimately falls for a pop star. The movie arrives with a 4K digital restoration, archival interviews with the cast and crew, a discussion between critics about the project, as well as a segment featuring Godard directing part of a sequence from the movie.

Cohen Media has a Blu-ray double feature disc that contains the film-noirs *Cast a Dark Shadow* (1955) and
Wanted for Murder
(1955). Both titles have been given 2K restorations and come with trailers.

Bayview Films is offering a DVD of the Hong Kong musical/comedy *The Office* (2015) aka *John nie To's Office*
. The feature details the inner working of a corporate headquarters, telling its story through humorous situations and songs. The movie won numerous Hong Kong Film Awards during its

original run and is in Mandarin with English subtitles.

Dirty Dancing (1987) has a lot of devoted fans and Lionsgate is offering the film on Blu-ray as a special Steelbook. It seems that the disc itself will likely be the same as in previous editions, so it's the packaging that is the major selling point for this rerelease. The Steelbook will only be available at Best Buy.

Paramount is digging into its catalog as well, presenting some of its titles in high definition for the first time. They have the comedy, *Dear God* (1996) with Greg Kinnear, in addition to the political comedy, *Head of State* (2003). The latter feature star Chris Rock, who also directed and wrote the movie. The studio is putting out the *Saturday Night Live* spin-off flick *The Ladies Man* (2000) with Tim Meadows as the title character who is a wannabe Casanova.

They also have a Blu-ray of the comedy, *Pootie Tang* (2001). It follows an inner-city folk hero who fights against corporate America. The impressive cast includes Lance Crouther, J.B. Smooth, Chris Rock, Jennifer Coolidge, Wanda Sykes, Kristen Bell and David Cross.

Sony is going into its vaults, too. For those interested, they'll be releasing a Blu-ray of the Jane Fonda and George Segal comedy classic, *Fun with Dick and Jane* (1977). They also have the dramedy *Punchline* (1988), which stars Tom Hanks and Sally Field as aspiring stand-up comics, detailing the trials the pair face in trying to become famous.

Warner Archive has some notable made-to-order Blu-ray releases. *Another Thin Man* (1939) follows a crime-solving husband and wife who take on an investigation involving the murder of a manufacturer of explosives. *Each Dawn I Die* (1939) is a well-regarded film noir about a corrupt D.A. who decides to frame a reporter before stories about his corruption are printed and ruin his career.

Finally, my Warner Brothers highlight is the Blu-ray release of the excellent crime-comedy, *Quick Change*
(1990). This is one of those great films that didn't make an impact during its original release, but is well worth checking out. Bill Murray, Geena Davis and Randy Quaid play a trio of New Yorkers who decide to rob a bank. Their initial plan goes off without a hitch, but unfortunately every attempt they make to get themselves out of the chaotic city goes agonizingly and frustratingly awry.

Interestingly enough, the movie marks Murray's sole directing effort (technically, he co-directed with writer Richard Franklin) and shows that the star has plenty of talent in the filmmaking department. Maybe he should give it another go in the future. It's wonderful that the flick is arriving on Blu-ray and can now be seen by more people.

YOU KNOW, FOR KIDS!

It's a slow week for family-friendly entertainment, but hopefully next week will have more to offer.

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FRANCES McDORMAND NOMADLAND
A FILM BY CHLOÉ ZHAO
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