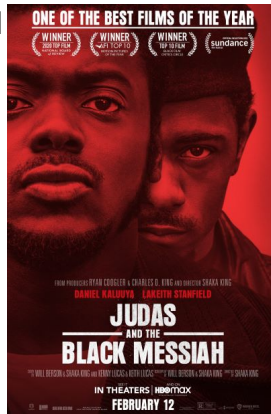


Blu-ray/DVD Roundup for May 7, 2021



It's time for another look at highlights arriving on Blu-ray and DVD. While there aren't a lot of new releases, a couple of them are award winners and there are also plenty of popular older titles debuting on disc. So, if you can't or shouldn't head out to the movies this week, be sure to give one of these titles a try!

BIG NEW RELEASES!

FOR THE SAKE OF VICIOUS: After a long Halloween shift, a nurse and single mother comes home to discover a masked figure and a hostage taking refuge there. She also discovers that the pair is being pursued by a street gang that is about to try and break in. Surrounded on all sides and desperate to protect her family, the woman must find out who these people are and find a way to fight back against the attackers. This independent action/thriller/horror received decent reviews from the press.

A small group stated that the feature was ugly and violent, calling it a chore to endure. However, the majority commented that the story was compelling and that it was a solid, gritty B-movie with impressive stunts and make-up effects. The film even won a few awards at horror film festivals over the past year. It stars Lora Burke, Nick Smyth, Colin Paradine and James Fler.

A GHOST WAITS: This little genre picture follows a handyman who is hired to clean up a dilapidated old manor. He quickly discovers that the site is haunted by a female spirit. Initially, the fearful lead does all he can to try and exorcise the unwanted ghost. After finding a way to

communicate with the woman, the lead learns that she has been assigned to keep living people out of the house.

Things become even more complicated when the two begin to fall in love. Critics really enjoyed this supernatural romantic-comedy. One or two complained that the movie was too low-key and needed more laughs. However, everyone else complimented the black and white photography, stated that the cast was charming and said it offered an interesting and sweet twist on the genre.

The cast includes MacLeod Andrews, Sydney Vollmer and Natalie Walker.

JUDAS AND THE BLACK MESSIAH: The story of Black Panther Fred Hampton is relayed in this biographical drama. Set in Chicago during the late 1960s, Hampton served as the chairman of the Illinois chapter of the organization. When a 17-year-old teenager is arrested for a petty crime, the FBI decides to manipulate the youngster. They force him to become an undercover government agent, providing information about Hampton.

The movie won two Academy Awards and earned raves from reviewers. A tiny contingent stated that the movie had difficulty in focusing its story, jumping between Hampton and the recruit so much that the film suffered. The rest were blown away by the performances and called the movie a gripping and passionate drama that had important things to say about all the individuals involved. It stars Daniel Kaluuya, LaKeith Stanfield, Jesse Plemons, Dominique Fishback, Ashton Sanders, Algee Smith, Darrell Britt-Gibson, Lil Rel Howery and Martin Sheen.

TheLittleThings.jpg

THE LITTLE THINGS: A tired and burnt-out deputy sheriff is asked to travel from Kern Country to Los Angeles to deliver evidence to detectives working a serial killer case. The small-town deputy's finicky nature proves to be an asset to the investigation and he is asked to help out. Unfortunately, his checkered past, disdain for superiors and rule-breaking behavior begins to create tension within the group. This thriller earned a Golden Globe nomination for Supporting Actor earlier in the year, but split the press.

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Almost half of the critics stated that the work of the performers was so good that it made up for the familiarity and predictability of the plot. However, a larger group thought the movie was capable of more, commenting that it was slow-moving and complaining that end results were unmemorable. Denzel Washington, Rami Malek, Jared Leto and Chris Bauer headline the feature.

PAINKILLER: After losing his daughter to an opioid addiction, a frustrated father decides to stop others from suffering the same fate. He begins a podcast campaign to interview and question Big Pharma executives and doctors. Little do they know that the protagonist is actually using his show to get close to the white-collar criminals behind the epidemic so that he can exact revenge. This little film hasn't received many write-ups so far, but the ones that have appeared have been decent, if not exceptional.

They note that the movie is heavy-handed and has pacing issues, but also suggest that it is well-acted, has a great score and ultimately serves as a reasonable little revenge thriller. It stars Michael Paré, Bill Oberst Jr., Alexander Pennecke and Scot Scurlock. For the time being, it is only available on DVD.

ROE V. WADE: This conservative-backed drama is inspired by the landmark Supreme Court case about abortion rights for women. The synopsis states that the film tells the story of Dr. Bernard Nathanson and Dr. Mildred Jefferson and their courtroom battle, while also uncovering a secret conspiracy that results in the final verdict. This movie will only be available on DVD and it received unanimous pans from reviewers. Some said it was clumsily made, others called it blunt, dishonest, over-the-top and sexist.

A few critics said it wouldn't even work as a propaganda piece. Online reviews have also warned that when the film ends and credits begin, a title card appears admitting that the events and characters portrayed in the biopic are completely fictitious. The cast includes Corbin Bernsen, Greer Grammer, Jamie Kennedy, John Schneider, Jon Voight, Joseph Lawrence, Robert Davi, Stacey Dash and Steve Guttenberg.

THE VIRTUOSO: A hitman is given information from an employer on where to track and locate his next target. Other than knowing that the person he has been hired to eliminate is a rogue assassin, the protagonist is given little other information. After being led to a small diner, he finds several potential options at the site. The killer sets out to find out who the target really is, encountering even more difficulties after meeting an alluring woman.

Reaction wasn't particularly positive toward this thriller. A few reviewers enjoyed the interplay between the characters and thought it was an enjoyable little B-movie. However, all others noted that they were consistently ahead of the plot and that the movie didn't end up providing many thrills. It features Anson Mount, Anthony Hopkins, Abbie Cornish, Diora Baird, Eddie Marsan and David Morse.

BLASTS FROM THE PAST!

There are plenty of older titles arriving on Blu-ray with spiffy new upgrades. Kino is debuting *CB 4: The Movie* (1993) in high definition. This effort stars Chris Rock as a young man who decides to become a rapper. He decides to assume the name and persona of a felon to appeal to audiences, but it draws the attention of the man whose identity he stole. The disc includes a film historian commentary, an interview with the director and a trailer.

If you're looking for more movies about music, you could give the notorious *Cool as Ice* (1991) a try. This picture starred rapper Vanilla Ice as a young artist who visits suburbia. He unexpectedly falls for a straight-A student whose family happens to be in witness protection. Outside forces attempt to stop their love from blossoming, forcing the protagonist to prove his worth.

This picture, from Universal Studios, was a massive box-office failure and a critical bomb. It was nominated for several Razzies and took home an award for Worst New Star after its release. However, over time it has developed a cult following, due to its sheer bizarreness, as well as the fact that it has been difficult to find since its disastrous release. This Blu-ray comes with a film expert commentary and a trailer.

F.T.A. (1971) is a movie about a comedy stage show with Jane Fonda and Donald Sutherland that toured various army bases in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War. The film has been out of circulation for decades and is now making its debut on Blu-ray. The movie has been fully restored in 4K and the disc includes an introduction and interview with Fonda, as well as feature-length documentary on the production, a trailer and a booklet of essays about the production.

Speaking of restorations, you can also pick up a 2K Special Edition Blu-ray of the steamy thriller, *The Hot Spot* (1990), featuring Don Johnson, Virginia Madsen and Jennifer Connolly. It's about a man who stages a robbery and then has to contend with a pair of attractive women who may be manipulating him. The new transfer has been approved by the cinematographer and the release includes a movie journalist commentary, interviews with Madsen and co-star William Sadler, as well as a trailer.

If you're looking for a comedy, you can pick up *The Last Married Couple in America* (1980), which details a messy divorce. The movie stars Natalie Wood and Peter Segal and comes with a film historian commentary and trailer. The very same bonus features come with the Blu-ray of *Sweet Liberty* (1986), a comedy with Alan Alda, Michelle Pfeiffer and Bob Hoskins about a professor and author whose life is turned upside down after a film crew arrives to turn his latest book into a movie.

Mill Creek has another set of budget-friendly Blu-rays. Typically, their discs don't feature much in the way of extras, but do provide a quick and inexpensive way for movie enthusiasts to find and collect older movies. The first title is the John Wayne flick, *Hellfighters* (1968). It follows an oil rig fireman dealing with his dangerous profession and a failing marriage.

They also have the comedy *MacGruber* (2010), based on the *Saturday Night Live* character who is a parody the 1980s TV show character *MacGyver*. This release includes both the theatrical and unrated cuts.

The distributor also has a couple of movie sets coming your way. *Scars of War: 4 Vietnam Stories* includes the titles *Casualties of War* (1989), *Alamo Bay* (1985), *Birdy* (1984) and *Summertime* (1971). There are some good films in the pack. *Casualties of War*

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and

Birdy

are particularly underrated features for those who haven't seen them.

For those who appreciate really out-of-date "social hygiene" films, *Forbidden Fruit: The Golden Age of the Exploitation Picture Vol. 10*

is arriving on Blu-ray. It contains

Wages of Sin

(1966), a less-than-subtle treatise on birth control and unwanted pregnancy. The disc offers a bonus feature in the form of

The Misery and the Fortune of Women

(1930). You'll also receive a couple of educational shorts on pregnancy, a trailer gallery, and an essay on these types of films.

If you're looking for arthouse fare, Criterion is presenting *Trances* (1981) on Blu-ray. This film is a documentary about the groundbreaking Moroccan band Nass El Ghiwane. You'll see them at the height of their popularity, performing live on stage using traditional instruments. The image has been restored in 2K and the disc arrives with an introduction from Martin Scorsese (

The Irishman

,
The Departed

,
Goodfellas

,
Raging Bull

).

It also has interviews with the movie's director and producer, as well as members of the band.

Sony is giving a 4K upgrade to the fantasy drama, *Big Fish* (2003). This title from director Tim Burton (

Sleepy Hollow, *Ed Wood*, *E*
dward Scissorhands

,
Batman

) follows a journalist visiting his terminally ill father and hearing tall tales about his pop's life experiences. It's an effective and bittersweet feature that includes some great visuals and will really benefit from the image upgrade.

Disney is also jumping onto the 4K bandwagon this week with the release of a new *Speed* (1994) Blu-ray. This movie was originally produced and released by 20th Century Fox, but since Disney has bought the company, they are now in control of the property. For those who haven't seen the movie, it was one of the best action flicks of its era. Keanu Reeves stars as a policeman who tries to help disarm a bomb on a city bus that will explode if the speedometer goes below 50 mph.

The movie also features Sandra Bullock and Dennis Hopper. It's a very entertaining chase movie with great stunts that will certainly benefit from improved image quality.

Not everyone knows this, but the studio also has a Disney Movie Club line on the distributor's website. It carries hit titles, as well as hard-to-find features from their back catalog that aren't available from other outlets. This week, they're adding to their collection with the animated features *The Black Cauldron* (1985) and *Valiant* (2005). These are "Exclusives" available only through the program and can't be found anywhere else.

The club is a little strange in that it works in a manner similar to the old Columbia House record program. Essentially, you have to sign up and pick a few free Blu-rays of your choosing (that will be mailed to you), on the condition that you promise to buy five more at regular prices over the following year. They'll also send you emails or mailings of their own curated selections - if you don't want these, you have to cancel the order before the deadline or you'll be charged for them. In the end, while you can purchase major Disney releases on the site, people normally join to obtain these rarer, Blu-ray "Exclusives."

Some of the flicks that fall under this category include *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* (1954), *Swiss Family Robinson* (1960), *The Love Bug* (1968), *The Black Hole* (1979), *Return to Oz* (1985), *Honey, I Shrunk the Kids* (1989), and *Cool Runnings*

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(1993). If you'd like to fill in some holes in your collection and decide to give it a try, you'd be wise to focus on the hard-to-get Blu-rays.

YOU KNOW, FOR KIDS!

If your kids are fans of *Sonic the Hedgehog*, then you'll have something to watch this week.

Sonic Boom: Season 1

ON THE TUBE!

And you'll find all of the TV-themed releases listed below.

Hallmark 2-Movie Collection – Just Add Romance / Love on the Menu (Hallmark)

Hemingway: A Film by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick (PBS)

PBS Masterpiece Triple Feature: The Chaperone / Flesh & Blood / Mrs. Wilson (PBS)

Sonic Boom: Season 1

VISIT: WWW.CINEMASTANCE.COM

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