

By Glenn Kay

For the Sun

Welcome to another look at some of the highlights arriving on Blu-ray and DVD. This is a very busy week featuring award-winning pictures, well-reviewed independent features, as well as some great family fare. So, if you can't make it out or shouldn't be heading to the movies this week, be sure to give one of these titles a try!

### ***BIG NEW RELEASES!***

***ABOVE SUSPICION:*** Based on a true story, this drama follows a young FBI agent who recruits a female informant in small Kentucky town. She begins providing information on illegal activities in the area and the two begin an illicit affair. Unfortunately for both of them, their activities lead them down a murderous path that results in a major scandal. The movie wrapped production back in 2017, but is only being released on disc now.

Critics called this production a missed opportunity. A small group did compliment the performances and felt that the cast's work was reason enough to give it a try. However, most thought that the film couldn't generate thrills or tension, suggesting that a true story doesn't always make for dynamic entertainment. The movie stars Emilia Clarke, Thora Birch, Jack Huston, Johnny Knoxville and Kevin Dunn.

***COSMIC SIN:*** After an intergalactic skirmish with a new alien species from another planet, a group of seven rogue soldiers travel through the galaxy to try to find the creatures' home planet. Fearing that human colonization of space will cause an interstellar war with the aliens, the team plots a massive strike against the civilization in order to prevent future conflict. Reaction was extremely poor toward this independent science-fiction production. One or two reviewers stated that the flick was well-paced and delivered a few B-movie thrills.

Sadly, all others stated that the ideas and themes on display were poorly handled, the dialogue was clunky and the end results were a bit of a mess. It features Bruce Willis, Frank Grillo, Brandon Thomas Lee, Corey Large, C.J. Perry and Costas Mandylor.

**THE FATHER:** An elderly man living at home finds his grip on reality weakening and his relationship with his family strained when his daughter announces her intentions to move away and hire a nurse to help care for him. The protagonist struggles to process what is occurring around him and his emotions begin to boil over as more information about his plight is slowly revealed. This film received raves from the press and won Academy Awards for Best Actor and Best Adapted Screenplay. Only a couple of write-ups had issues with the feature, finding the storytelling gimmicky and the events disorienting.

The rest said that this technique was the very point of the film and noted that the exceptionally performed movie truly helped viewers understand the fear a person experiences while losing control of their mental faculties. The cast includes Anthony Hopkins, Olivia Colman, Mark Gatiss, Imogen Poots, Rufus Sewell and Olivia Williams.

**HUNTED:** This thriller involves a woman who meets a charming man in a bar. Unfortunately, after leaving with him, the protagonist discovers that her new man is a psychopath. She escapes his clutches and tries to find safety in a nearby forest. The man pursues her and she is forced to fight back using whatever she can within the rugged natural environment.

Response toward this English-language Belgian/French/Irish movie was slightly more positive than negative. Those who didn't care for the production thought its attempts to merge horror with fantastical elements were ineffective and tonally unbalanced. Slightly more stated that while uneven, this was still an interesting update on the legend of *Little Red Riding Hood*. Lucie Debay, Arie Walthalter and Ciaran O'Brien headline the feature.

**MINARI:** Inspired by the filmmaker's childhood and personal experiences, this drama tells the story of a Korean man who uproots his family from California, moving them to rural Arkansas in order to start their own farm specializing in unique fruits and vegetables. However, it's a tough road with many setbacks. The financial strain eventually causes great tension within the family. Reaction toward the film was almost uniformly excellent.

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A small contingent said that the movie was sweet but slowly paced and tied things up too neatly at the close. However, everyone else asserted that it was a beautifully acted, slice-of-life feature that paints an accurate picture of the difficulties of moving to a new place. The movie won ultimately an Oscar for Best Supporting Actress. It stars Steven Yeun, Han Ye-ri, Noel Cho, Alan S. Kim, Youn Yuh-jung and Will Patton.

**THE NEST:** Set in the 1980s, this tale features an ambitious entrepreneur who moves his family from the U.S. to a large manor in England while he explores new financial opportunities. As we learn more about the businessman, it becomes clear that he is financially strapped and is keeping up appearances while the family lives a financially unsustainable lifestyle. As the bills pile up, the spouses begin to turn on each other. The press consensus for this drama was very upbeat.

A tiny contingent found the characters difficult to like and their downward spiral frustrating to watch. Still, the vast majority said it was a low-key, but compelling watch that delivers a sense of unease as it details an upper-class family coming undone. The cast includes Jude Law, Carrie Coon, Oona Roche and Charlie Shotwell.

**THE PRINCE'S VOYAGE:** This animated film from France involves an old, bipedal simian prince who washes up on the shore of a distant and unknown land. He's found by an ape-boy who takes him into a modern city of monkeys and delivers the traveler to his parents, who are scientists at a local museum. The prince tries to learn the language and ways of these people, but becomes concerned by some of their conservative attitudes. This movie is based on a novel by Pierre Boulle called *Monkey Planet* and was nominated for an award a couple of years ago at a European film festival.

Unfortunately, it seems as if it got lost in the shuffle due to the pandemic and is only now being released in North America. There aren't many write-ups for it, but most online suggest it's a decent film with great visuals that effectively uses the leads to address topics like prejudice. The movie is presented in French with an English subtitle track.

**RAYA AND THE LAST DRAGON:** Disney's latest animated adventure takes place in a

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fantastic world in which people and dragons once coexisted, until the serpents sacrificed themselves to protect the land from an evil force. In the following years, human communities began fighting to gain control of the creature's ancient powers. One girl discovers a surviving dragon and asks the monster to help her return the land to its former glory. Overall, critics were very impressed with this family flick.

There were a few who thought it was gorgeous to look at, but formulaic with underdeveloped characters and themes. Regardless, the majority opined that this was solid entertainment that looked incredible and featured some standout vocal work. The voice cast includes Kelly Marie Tran, Awkwafina, Gemma Chan, Daniel Dae Kim, Benedict Wong, Sandra Oh and Alan Tudyk.

**S--THOUSE:** A lonely college freshman thinking about giving up on his education and heading back home decides to attend a frat party. While there, he meets a sophomore who has just experienced a tragic loss and needs company. These two very different people discuss their problems and concerns, sparking up an unexpected friendship over the course of a single evening. This independent feature earned plenty of upbeat write-ups.

A limited number said that the dialogue between the students felt real and honest, but thought this authenticity didn't necessary lend itself to interesting storytelling. However, the overwhelming majority said that the title of the feature was something of a misnomer and stated that the film was a touching and well-acted coming-of-age gem. It stars Cooper Raiff and Dylan Gelula.

**SON:** Eight years after a pregnant woman escapes from a cult, she and her son are visited by members of the sinister sect who are determined to take her child away. The protagonist and the boy go on the run and try to get assistance from a police detective. But when the youngster unexpectedly takes ill and starts behaving strangely, his mother is forced to take a stand against the cult and protect her child. This independent horror flick received more positive reviews than negative ones.

Articles that panned the movie complained that the story wasn't very original and the attacks felt repetitive. Still, the consensus was that movie was well acted and provided the required gross-outs, while also addressing issues like paranoia. The cast includes Andi Matichak, Emile Hirsch, Luke David Blumm and Cranston Johnson.

***SUPERNOVA***: After a man is diagnosed with dementia, he and his partner decide to travel across England in an RV and visit people and places from their past. It is all planned out in an attempt to make the most of what little time they have left together. However, when one of the men tries to add unexpected elements to the journey, it adds drama and tension to the trip. This little UK production received plenty of raves during its limited release early in the year.

A handful of reviewers thought that the story was obvious in its attempts to manipulate the emotions of viewers and ultimately didn't make a lasting impression. Yet most thought that while the movie was subtle, the acting was incredible and the tale created a lot of intimate and relatable drama. It features Colin Firth, Stanley Tucci and Pippa Haywood.

***TOM & JERRY***: This adaptation of the famous cartoon cat and mouse places the famous animated characters in a live-action setting. The story involves a celebrity wedding in a fancy New York hotel. When the mouse Jerry breaks into the hotel to enjoy the food and luxuries being offered to guests, Tom the cat is hired to eliminate the pesky rodent.

The two create chaos as the wedding unfolds, threatening to take down the entire building. The press disliked the end results. There was a contingent who claimed that some of the sight gags worked and that the film would effectively distract and entertain young tykes. Yet the majority complained that this was a poor update and also thought that it spent too much time focusing on the humans instead of the lead animals.

The cast includes Chloë Grace Moretz, Michael Peña, Rob Delaney, Jordan Bolger, Patsy Ferran, Pallavi Sharda, Colin Jost and Ken Jeong.

### **BLASTS FROM THE PAST!**

It's another jam-packed edition if you happen to be looking for high-definition upgrades of classic titles. Universal is presenting a 4K Blu-ray (which also comes with a regular Blu-ray) of the madcap comedy, *Animal House* (1978). This feature from director John Landis (*The Blues Brothers*, *An American Werewolf in London*, *Trading Places*),

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*Spies Like Us*

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*Three Amigos!*

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*Coming to America*

) deals with a college fraternity of losers getting into politically incorrect hi-jinx and taking down the school's snobs and arrogant dean. It boasts an incredible cast that includes Tom Hulce, Stephen Furst, Jim Belushi, Kevin Bacon, Karen Allen, Tim Matheson, Peter Riegert, Donald Sutherland, John Vernon and musician Otis Day.

Besides the picture upgrade, you'll also receive a reunion featurette, an alumni update, a couple of Scene It? games on the disc that are based on clips from the movie. In addition, it comes with trailers.

The studio is also releasing the Blu-ray set *Dragonheart: 5-Movie Collection*. It contains all of the flicks in the series from the original in 1996 to the most recent straight-to-disc sequel from 2019. Personally, I haven't seen any of the follow-ups, but the original is now old enough that it likely has a following from adults who might have originally seen the film as kids. Now, fans can own the entire franchise in one package.

MVD has a Blu-ray of *Mackintosh and T.J.* (1975). This feature marked the final film appearance of Roy Rogers. He plays a cowboy looking for work who befriends and comes to the assistance of a runaway teen. The disc includes a 4K restoration of the feature, an audio commentary with the movie's co-stars Clay O'Brien and Andrew Robinson, and a reunion with these cast members.

You'll also get an interview with co-star Billy Green Bush and some original footage that was taken on set during production.

Kino is presenting the French drama *Madame Rosa* (1977) on Blu-ray. It won an Academy Award for Best Foreign-language feature and arrives with a 4K restoration and an audio commentary with a film historian.

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Shout! Factory has some notable Blu-rays on the way. *Eyes of a Stranger* (1981) is a slasher known for its unusual cast.

Specifically, the movie marks the feature film debuts of Lauren Tewes (from TV's *The Love Boat*) and

Jennifer Jason Leigh (*Fast Times at Ridgemont High*

,  
*Miami Blues*

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*The Hudsucker Proxy*

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*eXistenZ*

,  
*The Hateful Eight*

,  
*Possessor*

). The film's inter-positive has received a 2K scan for this edition and the disc comes with a film historian commentary, a director interview, a discussion with the man who played the psychopath, a talk with the make-up effects team, as well as an audio interview with the composer. Besides all of these new features, the rare original trailer is also presented along with a still gallery.

*He Knows You're Alone* (1980) is another slasher of note. This one is about a maniac who stalks and murders women who are about to be married. Honestly, the real reason this movie is so noteworthy is that it features the first motion picture role for Tom Hanks, who plays a psych major offering his take on who the killer might be. This movie arrives on Blu-ray with a 2K scan, an interview with the director, another with the writer, and other discussions with various cast members.

It also comes with a previously recorded commentary track featuring the director and writer, as well as publicity materials.

Perhaps the distributor's most notable title this week is the comedy, *Wildcats* (1986), which has been out-of-print forever and is finally making its Blu-ray debut. The movie stars Goldie Hawn as a woman who takes on the role of football coach at an inner-city Chicago high school. Remarkably enough, two of the students on her team are played by future stars Wesley Snipes and Woody Harrelson. This movie has also been given a new restoration from a brand-new 2K scan and comes with a screenwriter interview, as well as a training montage music video and a trailer.

Severin also has some amusing genre films hitting Blu-ray. The first is a Special Edition of the nature-run-amok flick, *Day of the Animals* (1977). It follows a group of tourists being led into the mountains on a wilderness tour. They are soon attacked by just about every animal they encounter on the trail.

This entertainingly pulpy item is perhaps most famous for its supporting turn by the late, great Leslie Nielsen, whose character eventually goes mad, rips his shirt off and wrestles a grizzly bear to the death. The release includes a film critic commentary track and interviews with some of the actors, as well as the stunt coordinator. There is also a 30-year retrospective special on the movie and all sorts of publicity materials.

Speaking of angry bears, the distributor also has a Blu-ray of *Grizzly* (1976), which actually was made by the same people who produced the previous title. This Special Edition features a 2K transfer of the killer grizzly movie with loads of new bonuses. The features include a film writer/fan commentary, new interviews with the producer and a cast member, a discussion with a movie critic about the career of the director, a few vintage behind-the-scenes making-of featurettes, radio spots, trailers and more.

Additionally, Severin is releasing a 4K Blu-ray of the Alejandro Jodorowsky arthouse horror picture, *Santa Sangre* (1989). This is a visionary, well-regarded and very odd chiller about a mentally unhinged circus performer who teams with his armless mother to start a religious cult. This unusual movie arrives in a 4-disc package that includes a CD of the soundtrack and more extras than can possibly be listed here. If you're looking for something more affordable, you can also pick up a 2-disc version which contains most of the bonuses, but no soundtrack.

Naturally, it comes with a director commentary and several interviews with Jodorowsky himself.

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There are also discussions with just about every behind-the-scenes crew member involved in the production. If you're a fan of the filmmaker, this is a must-own Blu-ray.

Scorpion also has some enjoyable Blu-rays headed your way. The first one being offered is the French movie, *Baxter* (1989), a very, very dark comedy that takes viewers inside the mind of a sadistic bull terrier. The disc includes a director's commentary and trailers.

You can also pick up a Blu-ray of *The Daydreamer* (1966). Directed by Jules Bass (of Rankin/Bass fame) it's a movie that delivers plenty of impressive stop-motion animation tricks. The story depicts a young Hans Christian Andersen dreaming up all of the characters who would become famous in his written stories. A film historian audio commentary is included that details how this work fits in with Bass's more famous late '60s and early '70s stop-motion animated TV specials like *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*

,  
*Frosty the Snowman*  
and  
*Here Comes Peter Cottontail*

Criterion also has an impressive Blu-ray coming your way in the form of the Taiwanese period drama, *Flowers of Shanghai* (1998). Using impressive long takes, the story details the relationships between courtesans and their high-ranking, wealthy clients. The movie arrives on disc with a 4K digital restoration, a critic introduction, a new documentary on the making of the film, excerpts from a 2005 interview with the director, and a trailer.

*It Happened Tomorrow* (1944) is a well-regarded comedy with Dick Powell about a reporter who gets details about tomorrow's big new stories from a mysterious old man – of course, getting a look at the immediate future soon causes unanticipated problems and concerns for the protagonist. Cohen Media Group is presenting this film on Blu-ray restored with a 4K scan. It also comes with a trailer.

And there's more! Sony has decided that people really need an updated 4K Blu-ray edition of the Arnold Schwarzenegger box office flop, *Last Action Hero* (1993), so they're making it available to the public. Who knows, maybe the movie holds up a little better than I remember?

Paramount also is delivering some impressive new titles. The first is a 25th Anniversary Edition of the Tom Cruise action/adventure thrill ride, *Mission: Impossible* (1996). Yes, it has been that long since the original film graced cinema screens and the star continues to keep pumping out more sequels. The disc includes a newly re-mastered version of the film, all of the extras from previous editions and a collectible car decal.

The previous title was directed by Brian De Palma and Paramount also has a Blu-ray of his thriller, *Snake Eyes* (1998) starring Nicolas Cage. The actor plays a shady police detective who finds himself in the middle of a conspiracy while attending a boxing match. This movie has some great camera work (including a ten-minute plus opening master shot that establishes the setting and the major incident that sets off the plot). The studio cut out the entire climax of the film as it was being completed, meaning that the ending doesn't work as well as it should, but there's still some fun to be had with this picture.

It'd be nice (providing the material still exists) if Paramount would one day pay to reinsert the elaborate climax into the film.

*The Snoopy 4-Movie Collection* is a remarkable Blu-ray set that includes four feature-length Peanuts flicks. The titles included are:

*Brown*

*Come Home*

(1972),

*Race for Your Life, Charlie Brown*

(1977) and

*Bon Voyage, Charlie Brown (and Don't Come Back!!)*

(1980). Today's kids might find the movies a little slow and pensive for their tastes, but perhaps they'll appreciate them. If not, they'll be a real nostalgia kick for those who grew up with them.

It should be almost impossible for fans of Peanuts to pass up this impressive collection of movies.

Paramount is presenting a 4K edition of the crime/comedy *The Sting* (1973), which was a massive hit during its original release and ended up winning seven Academy Awards. In addition to the improved picture quality, the disc also arrives with plenty of extras about the

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picture and its new restoration.

And, in case you were a fan of the recent war movie, *The Outpost* (2020), there will be a new Extended Director's Cut Blu-ray of the movie arriving on store shelves this week courtesy of Screen Media.

Finally, Warner Archive is delivering an impressive quantity of titles through their made-to-order service. For those who enjoy martial arts features, *Drunken Master II* (1994) is considered one of Jackie Chan's finest films. The studio is presenting the original Hong Kong version of the feature on Blu-ray for the first time in North America and apparently the image quality is very strong – I'll be sure to pick it up when the opportunity arises. The studio is also delivering the William Holden western, *Escape from Fort Bravo* (1953) in high definition.

Many will also be happy to see a Blu-ray of the Cary Grant comedy, *Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House* (1948). This comedy follows a family from the city who decides to have a country home built to their specifications, only to find things literally falling apart. To be frank, this one isn't a personal favorite, but the movie has a massive fan base who will be thrilled to finally be able to pick it up. Warner Brothers is also making the historical drama *The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex* (1939) available on Blu-ray.

This feature from Hollywood legend Michael Curtiz (*The Adventures of Robin Hood*, *Casablanca*, *White Christmas*) stars Bette Davis and Errol Flynn as Queen Elizabeth and the Earl of Essex.

### **YOU KNOW, FOR KIDS!**

There's plenty of entertainment arriving for kids. Check out all of the options below!

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*Hey Arnold! The Ultimate Collection* (Nickelodeon)

*The Loud House: Road Tripped! Season 3, Volume 1* (Nickelodeon)

*PBS Kids: 15 Sports Stories!* (PBS Kids)

*The Prince's Voyage*

*Raya and the Last Dragon* (Disney)

*Rugrats: The Complete Series* (Nickelodeon)

*The Snoopy 4-Movie Collection - A Boy Named Charlie Brown* (1969) / *Snoopy, Come Home* (1972) /

*Race for Your Life, Charlie Brown* (1977) /

*Bon Voyage, Charlie Brown (and Don't Come Back!!)* (1980)

*Tom & Jerry*

**ON THE TUBE!**

And here are all of the TV-themed releases coming your way!

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*The Alienist: Angel of Darkness* (aka *The Alienist: Season 2*)

*Beverly Hills 90210: The Ultimate Collection*

*Charmed: Season 3 Blu-ray*

*CSNY: NY: The Complete Series*

*Hey Arnold! The Ultimate Collection* (Nickelodeon)

*The Loud House: Road Tripped! Season 3, Volume 1* (Nickelodeon)

*PBS Kids: 15 Sports Stories!* (PBS Kids)

*Shadow Lines: Season 1*

*Star Trek: Lower Decks: Season 1*

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