

Blu-ray/DVD Roundup for May 28, 2021

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Welcome to another look at new releases arriving on Blu-ray and DVD. There aren't a great many major Hollywood films arriving on disc this week, but there is a lot of interesting and exciting material coming around. So, if you can't or shouldn't be heading out to the movies this week, be sure to give one of these titles a try!

BIG NEW RELEASES!

AMERICAN FIGHTER: A college wrestler desperate to help pay medical bills for his ailing mother decides to earn extra cash by joining an underground fighting circuit. Initially, it doesn't go well and the protagonist is injured during his first match, but a trainer takes a shine to this new competitor. The experienced figure decides to train the lead and turn him into a lean, mean

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athlete for the next tournament. This independent feature earned more positive write-ups from the press than negative notices.

A portion thought the fights were well-shot, but complained that the drama ultimately missed the mark. However, slightly more appreciated the sincerity on display and found it charming overall. It features George Kosturos, Tommy Flanagan, Sean Patrick Flanery and Bryan Craig.

BENNY LOVES YOU: In this dark comedy from the UK, a 35-year-old man still living at home must deal with tragedy after his parents pass away. He decides to make a new start in life by tossing out some of his childhood toys. This includes the lead's favorite childhood plush animal, Benny. Unfortunately, Benny doesn't take kindly to being thrown away and goes on a murderous rampage to let his owner know that they should not be separated.

Critics were amused by what they saw unfold. A small number of them couldn't get on the film's wavelength and stated that the events depicted were sophomoric and unfunny. Yet the vast majority described the feature as an entertaining black comedy. They found Benny hysterical and thought the mix of laughs and gruesomeness generally worked.

The cast includes Karl Holt, Claire Cartwright, George Collie and James Parsons.

DELIVER US FROM EVIL: A South Korean hit man decides to retire after completing his latest assignment. Unfortunately, the assassin learns that an ex-girlfriend from Thailand has been murdered and her child has been kidnapped. Believing that he may be the father of the infant, the protagonist decides to find the responsible party and rescue the child, while the vengeance-focused brother of his previous victim chases after him. The press really took a shine to this action picture.

In fact, there haven't been any negative write-ups for the movie. All of the reviews complimented the performances, stating that the actors added a level of humanity to the proceedings. They also complimented the pacing, the impressive action sequences, and admired the stylish cinematography. Hwang Jung-min, Lee Jung-jae and Park Jung-min headline the feature.

KINKY BOOTS: THE MUSICAL: *Kinky Boots* was a 2005 movie based on a true story about a shoe manufacturer who befriends a drag queen and creates high-heeled boots for men that end up saving his business. It was turned into a hit Tony-winning musical production in 2013 (with Cyndi Lauper writing the songs) that ran for several years. This feature is a filmed version of the West End London stage adaptation. There aren't many reviews available for the disc, but a few have popped up online.

They all suggest that it's a solid production that does a good job of capturing the stage show. However, a few did complain that the movie frequently cuts to audience reaction shots, which did take them out of the story. Matt Henry, Killian Donnelly, Natalie McQueen, Sean Needham and Cordelia Farnworth headline the feature.

MARTHA: A PICTURE STORY: Photographer Martha Cooper is the subject of this documentary. She was one of the first to capture graffiti art with her camera in New York City during the 1970s. The filmmakers interview the figure and discuss her career and how her popular images have not only impressed those in her field, but inspired new generations of graffiti artists around the world to create works of art. The press uniformly enjoyed this non-fiction feature.

The reviewers all admitted that the material on the figure had been presented in a typical and ordinary way. However, they still called it a joyous and upbeat examination of the life of an influential figure, who was well ahead of her time and helped popularize an underground art movement during its earliest days.

BLASTS FROM THE PAST!

Blue Underground is getting the ball rolling with the release of *The Final Countdown* (1980), a fascinating little science-fiction picture involving a battleship carrier that finds itself transported to the Pacific Ocean a day before the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Those onboard are forced to figure out how to respond and react to the unusual situation. This cult movie was shot on a working U.S. Navy vessel and has a great cast that includes Kirk Douglas, Martin Sheen, Katharine Ross, James Farentino and Charles Durning.

The title is being released as a Limited Edition 3-disc 4K Ultra HD Blu-ray and Blu-ray. It also includes a CD featuring the film's score. The extras are plentiful, too. They include a commentary track from the director of photography, an extended interview with crew member Lloyd Kaufman (who dishes plenty of dirt on what happened during the production).

You'll also get interviews with members of the flight crew, all kinds of publicity materials, a lengthy booklet giving more background information about the movie, as well as more extras!

Arrow has some great Blu-rays, as well. If you didn't pick up their exceptional Blu-ray of *12 Monkeys*

(1995) a year or so ago, you can now pick up a Steelbook edition with fantastic new cover art. This edition of the sci-fi classic comes with all the remarkable extras from the distributor's previous edition.

If you like spaghetti westerns, you can also purchase a 4K Blu-ray 2-disc Limited Edition of *Django*

(1966). This is an incredible flick about a mysterious man out for revenge who drifts into town dragging a coffin. The movie inspired the title of the 2012 Quentin Tarantino production *Django Unchained*

and it's easy to see how this flick made an impression on the filmmaker. The set also comes with the film

Texas, Adios

(1966), which featured the same lead actor and was released in some territories as a sequel to the marquee feature.

Django comes with a film historian commentary, an interview with the assistant director, a discussion with the director's wife, an archival talk with both of the co-writers, another interview with a stuntman and performer from the movie, an appreciation of the feature with a western film scholar, an archival featurette with director Alex Cox (*Repo Man*, *Sid & Nancy*) about the movie's historical importance, publicity materials, and much more.

And that's not all! Arrow is also putting out the box set *Weird Wisconsin: The Bill Rebane Collection*. This independent filmmaker created all sorts of drive-in B-movies and this Blu-ray collection includes *Monster a Go-Go!* (1965), *Invasion from Inner Earth* (1974), *The Alpha Incident* (1978), *The Demons of Ludlow* (1983), *The Game* (1984) and *Twister's Revenge!* (1988). You'll also receive the feature-length documentary, *Who is Bill Rebane?* (2021), which goes into more detail about the life of the man behind the camera.

The set features new restorations of all the movies, interviews with Rebane about each of the titles included, as well as additional discussions about his career, visual essays about some of the flicks, short films, and industrial shorts by the director. It also comes with stills, trailers and much more. Sounds like a great set for fans of low-budget, do-it-yourself horror filmmakers.

Shout! Factory has a trio of big Blu-ray titles. *City Slickers II: The Legend of Curly's Gold* (1994) was a follow-up to the 1991 Billy Crystal/Jack Palance Oscar-winner, *City Slickers*. It reunites the cast of the first film as they take part in a new adventure across the American West. The release arrives with an audio commentary with the director and co-stars Daniel Stern and Jon Lovitz.

You'll also get a making-of documentary and a trailer.

One of the most exciting releases of the week is the Blu-ray debut of the cult film, *Explorers* (1985). The feature follows three kids (played by Ethan Hawke, River Phoenix and Jason Presson) who receive a message from space and attempt to make contact with otherworldly forces. This film from director Joe Dante (*Gremlins*

,
Innerspace

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The 'Burbs

) didn't fare well at the box office during its original release, but has built up a massive fan following over the years. It is arriving as a Collector's Edition that includes the theatrical and TV cuts of the feature, as well as an hour-plus long documentary about the production featuring recent interviews with Dante, Hawke, the screenwriter and others.

You'll also get deleted scenes with an optional director commentary, an interview with the director of photography and a trailer.

And the distributor is putting out a Blu-ray of *The Hand* (1981), an early feature from Oliver Stone (*Platoon, Wall Street, JFK, Natural Born Killers*

). This horror flick stars Michael Caine as a man who loses his hand in a traffic accident, only to have the severed appendage go on a murderous rampage. The disc includes a 2K scan of the movie from the inter-positive, a new interview with Stone himself, discussions with co-stars Bruce McGill and Andrea Marcovicci, in addition to the film's producer. You'll also get a previously recorded commentary track with Stone.

Kino is releasing plenty of noteworthy Blu-rays. The all-star comedy *Honky Tonk Freeway* (1981) is a satire about a town that tries to buy an interstate ramp to their community and will do anything to get what they want. The movie has received a 4K Blu-ray restoration from the original camera negative and comes with a producer commentary and a trailer.

Lights of Old Broadway (1925) is a classic silent technicolor drama with Marion Davies that has been given a 2K restoration, a new orchestral score and a film historian commentary. If you're looking for more wacky comedies, you can pick up *Million Dollar*

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Mystery (1987). It's about a bunch of travelers in a diner who are told by a dying customer that his massive fortune is buried in four locations across the country. Naturally, they end up racing against each other as they scramble to locate the cash.

It's not a great movie, but does feature a lot of familiar faces partaking in the wackiness. This Blu-ray includes an entertainment journalist audio track and trailer.

The Night of the Following Day (1969) is a thriller with Marlon Brando and Richard Boone about a gang of men who take the daughter of a millionaire hostage. Their plans go awry as they fight among themselves over how to split the money. The Blu-ray comes with a critic commentary, a discussion of the trailer with director Joe Dante (*Gremlins*, *Explorers*, *Innerspace*

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The 'Burbs

) and a second trailer. And Kino also is making a Blu-ray available of the French drama, *Ponette* (1996).

Criterion has an interesting film-noir. *Nightmare Alley* (1947) is about a conman working at a carnival who makes a life for himself telling lies. As time passes and those around him threaten to reveal the truth, his life begins to fall apart, and he takes some extreme risks. The film has received a 4K digital Blu-ray restoration and comes with a 2005 film historian audio commentary, a critic interview, a discussion with others included in the production, numerous featurettes with critics discussing the film's importance, as well as audio recordings with the cast and crew and much more.

And Cinema Guild has a Blu-ray of the well-regarded South Korean comedy/drama, *Yourself and Yours* (2016).

If you're looking for B-movies, you've got plenty to choose from this week. Vinegar Syndrome is having a "Halfway to Black Friday" sale on their website this weekend. Besides discounts on many titles, they will also release some new Blu-rays. One of them is the cult action/comedy *Six-String Samurai* (1998), which contains a 4K transfer, multiple director commentary tracks, an extended

making-of documentary and tons of other bonuses.

Apparently, the Eddie Deezen comedy, *Surf II* (1984) is also arriving on the site. All of these Blu-rays and a few surprise releases will be announced. All of the company's products come chock full of extras, so if you are a genre film fan, be sure to check the sale out!

Smile (1975), was a very well-reviewed satire of beauty pageants from the '70s that starred Bruce Dern. Fun City Editions is presenting the film on Blu-ray with a 2K restoration. It also includes a new interview with the lead, an audio commentary with film authorities talking about the feature and some publicity materials. They also have a 4K restoration of the Robert Forster action picture, *Walking the Edge* (1985).

You'll get numerous cast and crew interviews, multiple audio commentaries, and more.

Lionsgate has a Target Exclusive Steelbook title called the *Schwarzenegger Double Feature*. The new packaging contains previously released Blu-rays of *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* (1990) and *Total Recall* (1991) inside elaborate new packaging.

And finally, Warner Archive has made-to-order Blu-rays of a pair of musical comedies. They have *Athena* (1954) and the Frank Sinatra/Debbie Reynolds feature *The Tender Trap* (1955), both of which can be bought through the studio website or on Amazon.

YOU KNOW, FOR KIDS!

If you child likes Japanese monsters, then there is a classic TV series arriving on disc courtesy

of Mill Creek.

Ultraman Leo: The Complete Series (1974-1975)

ON THE TUBE!

And here are some of the TV-themed releases coming your way.

The Big Bang Theory: The Complete Series

The Bureau: The Complete Series

Everybody Loves Raymond: The Complete Series

The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air: The Complete Series

One Lane Bridge (Sundance Now)

Supernatural: The Complete Series

Ultraman Leo: The Complete Series (1974-1975)

The Waltons: The Complete Series

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