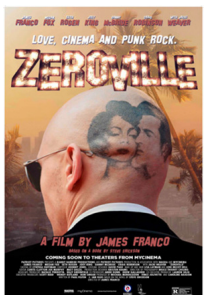


Blu-ray/DVD Roundup for June 11, 2021

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
Friday, 18 June 2021 01:29



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Welcome to another look at Blu-rays and DVDs coming your way. There's a great mix of familiar and new, interesting features being made available in a wide variety of genres. So, if you can't or shouldn't be going out to the movies just yet, be sure to give one of these titles a try!

BIG NEW RELEASES!

ASSAULT ON VA-33: This independent action feature follows a decorated army veteran visiting his local VA hospital for a routine checkup. He arrives just as a group of terrorists decides to take control of the building. They immediately take hostages, including the lead's wife. The protagonist evades capture and takes action, trying to stop the threat and save lives.

There aren't many reviews for the picture just yet, but a few that have popped up online haven't been complimentary. They describe the movie as an ineffective, predictable, low-budget *Die Hard*

rip-off that doesn't offer much in the way of exciting action or human drama. It features Sean Patrick Flanery, Michael Jai White, Mark Dacascos, Weston Cage Coppola, Abigail Hawk, Gina Holden and Rob Van Dam.

CITY OF LIES: Based on real events and set in 1997, this police procedural depicts two L.A. detectives assigned with looking into the murders of rappers Notorious B.I.G. and Tupac Shakur. As they get closer and closer to discovering the truth, their superiors begin getting in the way and threatening the investigation. This production wrapped back in 2018, but was shelved because of behind-the-scenes legal disputes. It finally got a limited release a couple of months ago and is now arriving on disc.

Critics were split on the final results. Those who disliked it stated that the narrative was too choppy and felt the story wasn't told with enough energy. Still, just as many enjoyed the work of the actors and thought that it was compelling, addressing important issues about police corruption. It stars Johnny Depp, Forest Whitaker, Toby Huss, Dayton Callie, Neil Brown Jr. and Xander Berkeley.

FLASHBACK: A man begins having strange visions from his youth involving a female friend who vanished. He encounters a mysterious and forgotten figure from the same period, inspiring him to dig deeper into what happened to his long-lost pal. It soon becomes clear that the disappearance may have had something to do with a strange and powerful drug he and his friend used to consume. In order to figure it all out, the hero embarks on a time-traveling, drug-induced odyssey.

Reaction toward this indie flick was mixed. Half said that the concept was engaging, but said that they lost interest and enthusiasm as events became more and more convoluted. Slightly more thought the movie was so ambitious and trippy that they couldn't help but enjoy the wild ride, even if some elements didn't quite come together. The cast includes Dylan O'Brien, Maika Monroe, Amanda Brugel, Hannah Gross and Emory Cohen.

THE LOVEBIRDS: Released by Netflix at the height of the pandemic, this comedy is now debuting on disc. It's about a couple who is considering breaking up while going through a

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rough patch in their relationship. When they witness a violent crime and believe they will be blamed for it, the pair goes on the run to try to prove their innocence. Critics gave the film slightly more positive notices than negative ones.

Those who panned it said that the plotting was weak and episodic, noting that the lead actors were forced to generate laughs from less-than-stellar material. They felt the jokes were too scattershot to earn the movie a pass. Still, the majority said the cast was charming enough to recommend the title as a simple, straight-forward little comedy that delivers a handful of chuckles. It stars Issa Rae, Kumail Nanjiani, Paul Sparks, Anna Camp and Kyle Bornheimer.

PUNK IN THE CAPITAL: BUILDING A SOUND MOVEMENT: This documentary examines the rise of punk music between 1976 and 1984, as well as the artists who grew from a movement based in Washington D.C. Using interviews and archival footage, viewers witness the anarchistic music trends and artists that began to thrive and find a following in a city known for its conservatism. Apparently, this feature was many years in the making and was largely crowd-funded. Members of the press who have seen it have reacted favorably.

They felt that the film did an excellent job of detailing the beginnings of the punk era and the incredible scene coming out of Washington (including a number of notable bands like Bad Brains, Minor Threat and Fugazi). They also liked the interviews with various musicians from the area, including Henry Rollins, Ian MacKaye and Darryl Jenifer.

THE STYLIST: A serial-killer hairstylist is the conceit behind this independent horror feature. It follows a young woman working in a beauty salon, giving haircuts by day and scalping customers during the evening hours. When she's hired to do the hair at a wedding ceremony, the maniac becomes obsessed with the lavish lifestyle of her employer and tries to get through the event without indulging in her darker impulses. Naturally, it isn't long before attendees find themselves being victimized.

Reviewers gave the feature high marks. A few of them did state that in addition to the lead actress, the movie was too reminiscent of straight-to-video features from the late '80s. Everyone else suggested it could become a cult film and was incredibly stylish with a stunning and memorable climax. It features Najarra Townsend, Brea Grant and Davis DeRock.

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UNDERCOVER PUNCH & GUN: Known as *Undercover vs. Undercover* in its homeland, this Hong Kong action picture involves a cop desperate to take down a major drug dealer and his team of violent criminals. To do so, he goes undercover and ends up befriending his target's biggest enemies, who also happen to be crooks. The officer finds it difficult to keep his true identity secret and hopes that his newfound revenge-seeking allies don't turn on him. Response toward this foreign-language title has been decent, if not exceptional.

Online notices suggest that the movie is a throwback to '90s action cinema. They commented that while the story isn't revolutionary, the action scenes are well-shot and edited and the final showdown is impressive. The cast includes Philip Ng, Vanness Wu, Andy On, Nicholas Tse and Wenjuan Feng.

THE UNHEALER: The mom of a bedridden teen suffering from an eating disorder decides to take extreme action after she witnesses a faith-healer seemingly cure a patient. It seems that the procedure is more successful than planned, as the youngster seems to suddenly acquire supernatural powers. These new gifts ultimately have a negative impact when the young man decides to seek revenge on those who tormented him. There aren't a lot of write-ups on this title just yet, but horror journalists who have seen it have generally been upbeat.

Most of them suggest that this little genre flick isn't a classic, but found that the performances were solid and that it offered some effective moments of gruesome fun. It stars Natasha Henstridge, Lance Henriksen, Chris Browning, Adam Beach and Gavin Casalegno.

ZEROVILLE: This feature came out in limited release just before the pandemic, but is only now being given a release on disc. The story is set in the 1970s and follows an unusual figure who shows up in Hollywood with the goal of making himself famous. A beautiful actress sees promise in the lead and takes him on a dreamlike journey through show business. There were a few who appreciated its eccentricities and thought that while the movie was utterly bizarre, it did make some interesting points that would change the way you see Hollywood.

However, more said that they couldn't make any sense of the picture. They wrote that the tone was off and that the jokes didn't work (the movie was also nominated for a few Razzies at the beginning of 2020). The cast includes James Franco, Megan Fox, Seth Rogen, Joey King, Jacki Weaver, Dave Franco, Craig Robinson and Danny McBride.

BLASTS FROM THE PAST!

Wow, it's another busy week for older titles getting high-definition upgrades. VCI has a Blu-ray of *Puzzle* (1974) aka *L'uomo Senza Memoria*, an Italian thriller about a London-based man suffering from amnesia. He travels to Italy to try to figure out who he is, only to discover that he is married. He then gets embroiled in a complicated murder investigation and begins to wonder if he isn't being manipulated by those around him.

The disc includes a 4K transfer of the feature, a film historian commentary, trailers, publicity materials and liner notes by an expert in the Italian giallo genre.

Kino is delivering a couple of French features on Blu-ray. *Cartouche* (1962) is an adventure film about a Robin Hood-like bandit stealing from the upper class. It was a big hit in its homeland some 60 years ago. This Special Edition release comes with a 4K restoration of the feature from the original camera negative, a movie critic commentary, a documentary on the production and a trailer.

They also have *Le Magnifique* (1973), a French spy comedy that pokes fun at James Bond flicks and features Jacqueline Bisset as the female lead. The disc includes a commentary and comes with a trailer.

Under the Sand (2000) is an eerie drama with Charlotte Rampling about a woman whose husband disappears without a trace while on vacation at a beach. The Blu-ray comes with an archival director commentary and interviews with star Rampling, as well as a new audio track with a film expert. You'll also get a trailer for the film. And the distributor has the silent melodrama *The Woman One Longs For* (1929), a German effort starring Marlene Dietrich.

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It comes with a commentary and a track featuring an orchestral score.

Those interested in the history of animation may be curious about *Son of the White Mare* (1981) which is arriving on Blu-ray from Arbelos. This is a Hungarian animated movie that is making its debut on disc in North America. The fantasy film is noted for its trippy and psychedelic imagery. Technical specs on the release include a new 4K restoration from the original camera negative, remastered short films from the same director, an interview with the filmmaker, newsreel footage of the figure from 1973, essays on the movie, and much more.

Mill Creek is always good for some notable Blu-rays and this week is no exception. Their discs don't come with extras, but are always reasonably priced. You can purchase the Sean Connery drama *Finding Forrester* (2000), as well as the body-switching comedy *Like Father, Like Son* (1987), starring Dudley Moore and Kirk Cameron.

The distributor has several double-feature Blu-rays arriving on store shelves, too. The first contains two Matt Damon titles, *The Adjustment Bureau* (2011) and *The Good Shepherd* (2006). Mark Wahlberg fans can get the heist flick

Contraband

(2012) and the thriller

Fear

(1996), in which the star plays the central villain. If you are feeling nostalgic for teen-based features, you can pick up

December

(1991) alongside the cheesy action picture,

Toy Soldiers

(1991).

The latter stars Sean Astin and Wil Wheaton as private school students who must free themselves after being taken hostage by a militia. And if you want more action, Mill Creek has a Blu-ray containing the film adaptation of *Miami Vice* (2006) and *The Kingdom* (2007).

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Paul Naschy's *Howl of the Devil* (1988) and Jorge Grau's *Hunting Ground* (1983) aka *Code of Hunting* are arriving on Standard Edition Blu-ray courtesy of Mondo Macabro. These are both Spanish horror pictures noted for having a great deal of graphic violence. Each has been given a 4K transfer from the original film negative and comes fully uncut with lengthy cast and crew interviews.

Full Moon has acquired the rights to the Italian B-movie, *Lover of the Monster* (1974), starring Klaus Kinski. The distributor is giving it the high-definition treatment and releasing the movie uncut and remastered, along with some genre film trailers.

Universal is rereleasing some of its Blu-ray catalog titles with price discounts. This week, you can pick up the Chadwick Boseman crime-thriller, *21 Bridges* (2019) and the fantasy sequel, *Dragonheart: Vengeance* (2000). They also have the action picture *Killer Elite* (2011), which features Jason Statham, Clive Owen and Robert De Niro. And if you haven't picked up *Jurassic World* (2015) on Blu-ray, you can do so now at a lower price.

Finally, Warner Archive is making a new made-to-order Blu-ray available to customers on its website and Amazon. *There Was a Crooked Man ...* (1970) is a prison break feature with Kirk Douglas and Henry Fonda that has received high marks from critics for its clever script and story turns. You can now own it and take in the widescreen cinematography and improved picture quality.

YOU KNOW, FOR KIDS!

Looking for something for small tykes? If they like *Sesame Street* and math, then you're in luck!

Sesame Street: Cool Counting Collection DVD

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ON THE TUBE!

And here are this week's TV-themed releases.

American Experience: American Oz (PBS)

Baseball: A Film by Ken Burns (PBS Documentary Series)

The Critic: The Complete Series

Life at the Waterhole (PBS)

Westworld: Season 3

VISIT: WWW.CINEMASTANCE.COM

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