

By Glenn Kay

For the Sun

Welcome back to another look at some of the highlights arriving on Blu-ray and DVD. This is a very busy week with a number of notable and high-profile releases coming your way. So, if you can't make it out to the movies this week, be sure to give one of these titles a try!

BIG NEW RELEASES!

LIMBO: In this comedy/drama, a Syrian refugee arrives in Scotland hoping to make a new start. First, he and other asylum seekers attend comically odd classes on adapting to life in the UK. Then, the protagonist makes new acquaintances while waiting to find out who will be accepted into the country. Sitting around also leaves the lead contending with feelings of guilt about leaving his family behind.

Most of the press gave this picture rave reviews. There was a small contingent who couldn't get on the movie's wavelength and didn't care for the quirky characters. However, the majority stated that the film had great performances and deftly woven humor with insightful observations about the difficulties immigrants go through when arriving in a new country. It stars Amir El-Masry, Vikash Bhai, Ola Orebiyi, Sidse Babett Knudsen, and Kenneth Collard.

THE MONSTER COLLECTION: THE FRANKENSTEIN COMPLEX & PHIL TIPPETT: MAD DREAMS AND MONSTERS: "Phil Tippett: Mad Dreams and Monsters" is a documentary on the career of the visual-effects supervisor, who designed creatures for titles like "Robocop", "Willow", "Honey, I Shrunk the Kids", "Jurassic Park", "Starship Troopers" and "Jurassic World". The movie includes interviews with the man himself, alongside filmmakers like Joe Dante and Paul Verhoeven, who discuss collaborating with him. This film played at a few festivals in 2019 before the pandemic and is now debuting on Blu-ray. In order to sweeten the deal, this release also contains a 2015 documentary from the same filmmakers called "The Frankenstein Complex" aka "Creature Designers: The Frankenstein Complex."

This flick goes of the history of monsters in cinema and how various iconic figures were created. There aren't many reviews available for the flicks, but they'll likely be entertaining and informative for genre fans.

MORTAL KOMBAT: A mixed-martial arts fighter discovers that he has a strange and unusual heritage after he is hunted down by a fighter from the "Outworld." The heroic figure soon discovers that he will have to compete in a deadly competition to save the universe. He stands with Earth's greatest champions in the ring against strange and supernatural opponents. Many will be aware of the fact that this film is based on a very popular arcade game.

Critics were generally split on this adaptation. Nearly half of them said that the central story wasn't interesting and that the repetitive nature of the violent fights actually became increasingly dull as the movie progressed. A few more wrote that they were expecting much worse from the feature and had a great time seeing some of the familiar game characters beat each other up. It features Lewis Tan, Jessica McNamee, Josh Lawson, Joe Taslim and Mehcad Brooks.

THE NIGHT: This horror picture follows a married Iranian couple who go out to visit some friends with their newborn. When they have trouble getting home, they decide to stop at a hotel in downtown L.A. Eerily enough, the place is almost empty and the two soon begin experiencing strange supernatural phenomena that seem related to events from their past. Tension rises as the family struggles to find their way out of the building.

Reaction was very upbeat towards this chiller. There was a small group of reviewers who complained that the movie didn't frighten them and state that the ending was unsatisfying. Still, the consensus on the film was that the cast were engaging, it had great atmosphere and that the events depicted were consistently unsettling. The cast includes Shahab Hosseini, Kathreen Khavari, Niousha Noor and Leah Oganyan.

NO MAN'S LAND: Members of an American family living on the Mexican border decide to join a vigilante patrol. When they encounter a group of migrants, a confrontation leaves one immigrant boy dead. The young man responsible for the tragedy flees from authorities on horseback into Mexico. Once there, he experiences life on the run.

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After coming to a clearer understanding of the suffering of others, he attempts to find the victim's father in the hopes of being forgiven for his previous acts. Write-ups weren't particularly positive for this drama. A number of them did admire what the movie was trying to accomplish in teaching empathy to viewers and appreciated the work of the cast. However, far more found the movie to be clichéd and poorly paced, saying it didn't deal with its themes in an effective manner. It stars Jake Allyn, Frank Grillo, Andie MacDowell, Jorge A. Jimenez and George Lopez.

THE SPONGEBOB MOVIE: SPONGE ON THE RUN: The third feature based on the popular animated TV series deals with a mysterious disappearance under the sea. When SpongeBob learns that his pet snail Gary has gone missing, he sets out with his best friend Patrick to locate the shelled creature. Clues suggest that the nefarious King Poseidon is the kidnapper and the protagonists attempt to rescue the snail. Reaction was generally positive toward the movie, although it wasn't quite as highly-rated as previous films in the series.

Some took issue with the story and called the flick a series of little sketches with hit-and-miss gags. Still, the general consensus was that, while flawed, there were enough wild and loony laughs on display to earn the flick a recommendation. The voice cast includes Tom Kenny, Bill Fagerbakke, Clancy Brown, Rodger Bumpass, Carolyn Lawrence, Awkwafina, Matt Berry and Keanu Reeves.

WRATH OF MAN: A newly-hired armored car security driver shocks his coworkers when he foils a heist with his exceptional fighting skills. The man's boss takes an immediate shine to the employee, but several coworkers become suspicious of the figure. As it turns out, some of the individuals working for the firm are involved in some criminal activities on the side. Viewers soon learn that the lead may have a personal score to settle with some of those involved.

Overall, response was upbeat towards this gritty crime flick. A significant portion of critics did state that the movie didn't offer much in the way of surprises and delivered little more than the expected story beats. Still, the majority thought that it provided pulpy thrills and noted that the lead was charismatic enough to overcome any story issues. It stars Jason Statham, Holt McCallany, Jeffrey Donovan, Josh Hartnett, Laz Alonso and Eddie Marsan.

BLASTS FROM THE PAST!

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There are a great many older titles receiving high-definition upgrades this week. Shout! Factory is putting out a Blu-ray/DVD combo of the French/Belgian animated feature, "Ernest & Celestine" (2012), about a hardworking mouse who makes a new and unexpected friend in a large, grumpy bear. The feature received an Academy Award nomination for Best Animated Feature. This Blu-ray includes an interview with the director, an early animatic of the feature and a making-of.

They are also releasing a "Collector's Edition" Blu-ray of the remake of the horror film, "House of Wax" (2005). It follows a group of friends who find themselves trapped in a small town after their car breaks down. They discover a wax museum and soon become the victims of a mysterious killer. The movie has been given a 2K scan from the inter-positive.

Extras include an interview with co-star Paris Hilton, discussions with other cast members, the makeup effects artist, and score composer. You'll also get bloopers with cast commentary, a number of featurettes for the movie, an alternate opening to the film, vintage promotional materials and more.

The Shout! Select line is putting out "The Pianist" (2002) on Blu-ray. This Oscar-winning film (which earned prizes for Best Actor, Best Director and Best Adapted Screenplay) tells the true story of a Jewish pianist in Warsaw, Poland during the Nazi occupation. Viewers witness his attempt to evade capture and survive in the war-torn ruins of the capital city. The disc includes a behind-the-scenes featurette, an interview with the screenwriter, a talk with the son of the man who the film is based on, and a trailer.

Kino is digging into its vaults to release the film noir "Alias Nick Beal" (1949,) with Ray Milland. This Blu-ray comes with a film historian audio commentary and a trailer. "The Great Gabbo" (1929) is a musical arriving in high definition through the Kino Classics subheading. This picture has received a 2K restoration from 35mm materials provided by the Library of Congress.

It also comes with a movie expert commentary track giving trivia and notes about the production. Those looking for more film noir entertainment can pick up Blu-rays of "Larceny" (1948), and "The Web" (1947), starring Edmund O'Brien. Both of these Blu-rays include a film scholar commentary and trailers. Criterion also has some intriguing Blu-ray titles arriving on store shelves.

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“Deep Cover” (1992) features Lawrence Fishburne as an undercover agent out to stop a drug trafficker (played by Jeff Goldblum). This well-regarded crime film was seen by many as a clever modern-day film noir. The movie arrives on disc with a 4K restoration, a new interview with the director, a conversation between film scholars on the movie and its significance, and a second discussion on the hip-hop music featured on the soundtrack. Also included is a panel discussion between the director and star, Fishburne, as well as a trailer.

They also have a Blu-ray of “Working Girls” (1986). Not to be confused with the 1988 Melanie Griffith/Harrison Ford comedy “Working Girl,” this well-received independent film tells the story of a working prostitute. It attempts to show an authentic portrait of workers at a Manhattan brothel. The movie has received a 4K restoration supervised by the director.

The disc includes a 2007 director’s commentary track, a new conversation with the filmmaker, a talk with the stars of the movie and interviews with actual sex workers about the title.

Scorpion has a Blu-ray of the TV-movie, “The Two Worlds of Jennie Logan, (1979). It’s a romantic thriller starring Lindsay Wagner (“The Bionic Woman”), as a woman who buys an old Victorian home with a portal into the past.

Discount outlet Mill Creek is also delivering some affordably priced Blu-rays this week. They don’t come with much in the way of extras, but are inexpensive. First, they have the Jason Biggs/Steve Zahn/Jack Black comedy “Saving Silverman” (2001), which features an appearance by music legend Neil Diamond.



Speaking of legends, this company is releasing a lesser-known title from famed writer/director

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Blake Edwards ("Breakfast at Tiffany's" "The Pink Panther," "A Shot in the Dark," "The Party," "The Great Race"). "Skin Deep" (1989) stars John Ritter as an alcoholic womanizing writer. The movie gained some notoriety during its original release for a comedic scene involving the use of a glow-in-the-dark condom. Mill Creek is also presenting the rom-com "Two If by Sea" (1996) on Blu-ray, which features Sandra Bullock and Denis Leary as art thieves on the run from authorities.

The Paramount Presents line is adding a new Blu-ray title this week in the form of "Almost Famous" (2000). It's a fantastic movie set in the early '70s about a high-school student who ends up talking "Rolling Stone Magazine" into letting him tour with a major rock band. He is assigned to write an article about his experiences with the group on the road. The movie was based loosely on the real experiences of writer/director Cameron Crowe ("Say Anything", "Jerry Maguire") and is a real winner.

This disc boasts a 4K restoration of both the theatrical and extended cuts of the film. It comes with a recent interview with Crowe, as well as a new featurette, extended scenes and newly discovered footage. In addition, all of the previously released extras from earlier editions are included. You'll receive a director's commentary, a making of, discussions about the music of the late '60s and early '70s, the actual article that Cameron Crowe wrote for "Rolling Stone" and dozens of other bonuses.

You can either buy the Blu-ray in the regular Paramount Presents packaging or get a Steelbook edition of the title.

Paramount is also rereleasing some of its Blu-rays at discounted rates. The titles being offered are "El Dorado" (1966), "Into the Wild" (2007), "Planes, Trains & Automobiles" (1987), "Scrooged" (1988), "Selma" (2014), and "The Warriors: Ultimate Director's Cut" (1979). Personally, I'm a much bigger fan of the theatrical version of "The Warriors" and hope that the studio will one day release that version of the feature on Blu-ray.

Grasshopper has a Blu-ray of the Italian drama, "Sicilia!"(1999) aka "Sicily!" This 20th Anniversary edition comes with a digital restoration of the film, as well as a second narrative feature from the era (also made in the region), called "Where Does Your Hidden Smile Lie?" (2001).

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Disney is digging into its Marvel superhero catalog and putting out multi-disc Blu-ray sets based around individual characters. One assumes they are for those who don't want to pick up every single movie in the franchise. You can now purchase the "Ant-Man 2-Movie Collection" and the "Guardians of the Galaxy 2-Movie Collection." As you might have expected, they also have an "Iron Man 3-Movie Collection" and a "Thor 3-Movie Collection," as well.

Sony has a new 4K Ultra HD disc/Blu-ray edition of the crime/comedy, "Snatch" (2000). Apparently, this new restoration is from the original camera negative. Besides the upgraded picture quality, it also comes with all of the previously released extras from older editions.

Universal is giving some made-for-video sequels the Blu-ray treatment. You can now pick up "Tremors 2: Aftershocks" (1996),
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Tremors 3: Back to Perfection" (2001), and
"
Tremors 4: The Legend Begins" (2004), in high definition.

Finally, Warner Archives is making the war picture "Objective, Burma" (1945) available as a made-to-order Blu-ray that can be ordered either through the studio site or through Amazon and other retailers.

YOU KNOW, FOR KIDS!

If you're looking for family-friendly entertainment, there's one major release. However, if you're also looking for something for slightly older kids, you can also pick up a few PG-rated titles listed below the first selection.

"The SpongeBob Movie: Sponge on the Run"

"Ernest & Celestine" (2012)

“Ant-Man” 2-Movie Collection (2015 - 2018)

“Guardians of the Galaxy” 2-Movie Collection (2014 - 2017)

“Iron Man” 3-Movie Collection (2008 - 2010 - 2013)

“Thor” 3-Movie Collection (2011 - 2013 - 2017)

ON THE TUBE!

And there are the week’s TV-themed releases.

“Charmed” Season 5 Blu-ray

“Charmed” Season 6 Blu-ray

“Pennyworth” Season 2 (Warner Archive)

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