

By Glenn Kay

For the Sun



Welcome back to another look at some of the exciting new Blu-ray and DVD releases that are coming your way. There is a high-profile title arriving on shelves, as well as other impressive features starring plenty of familiar faces. 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!

DEAD AGAIN: This extremely low-budget, independently-produced British horror/comedy follows a bored cop who is nearing retirement. Stationed in a small village, he is tasked with training an overly-enthusiastic new recruit to take over his position. However, circumstances change when the town is overrun by zombies. The two leads try to survive the assault and save their community from the monsters.

This little movie is being promoted as having been shot over a total of four days. There aren't a lot of reviews available, but the articles that have appeared online have been mixed. Most have written that the movie is well-paced, the cast is engaging and individual elements do work. However, they also note that it has many issues resulting from the tiny budget and limited resources available to them.

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This title is being released exclusively on DVD and stars Mark Wingett, Tony Fadil and Elliot Cable.

FINAL ACCOUNT: The makers of this chilling documentary have sought to interview everyday individuals who participated in Adolf Hitler's Third Reich. Interviews are conducted with seemingly ordinary citizens and ex-SS officers to find out why these people became involved in this appalling movement. It also shows the techniques that were used to lure them in. Some of these participants attempt to come to terms and grasp the ideology they became aligned with.

The film garnered excellent reviews from the press. A very small contingent thought the end results were superficial and stated that the movie could have dug deeper into the minds of those being interviewed. However, the majority called it a powerful and important first-hand account of the ordeal that displays humanity's capacity for unthinkable cruelty. For the time being, the feature will only be available on DVD.

HERE TODAY: A veteran TV comedy writer realizes that he has trouble relating to younger audiences. He agrees to attend a lunch meeting with a fan who has bid on the opportunity to meet him. But as it turns out, the winner's ex-girlfriend appears in his place. Despite a rocky meeting and a large generation gap, the two eventually become friends.

They inspire each other to make significant changes and take new chances in their lives. Critics were generally split on this comedy. Almost half of them said that despite the story being corny, the leads were so charismatic that they couldn't help but have a good time watching them interact. Yet just as many stated that while its heart was certainly in the right place, the movie was emotionally manipulative and came across as forced and awkward.

It features Billy Crystal, Tiffany Haddish and Penn Badgley and also features cameos from Kevin Kline and Sharon Stone.

LUCA: The latest animated feature from Pixar follows a young sea creature living off the coast of the Italian Riviera. He sneaks away from his family to visit the surface, only to run into another water-based being who has taken up residence on land. While the family scrambles to find their offspring, the two kids experience human life in a nearby coastal village. For the most part, response was very strong for this family film.

A few did complain that the story felt ordinary and lacked pizzazz, following a traditional arc. However, the vast majority countered this viewpoint. They stated that the film looked remarkable and that while low-key in approach, there was an interesting message about finding one's own path and how personal relationships evolve over time. This movie is arriving on Blu-ray in a couple of editions, including a 4K version.

Jacob Tremblay, Jack Dylan Grazer, Emma Berman, Maya Rudolph and Jim Gaffigan lend their voices to the film.

LUCKY: A self-help author requires some assistance when a threatening figure begins skulking around her home for several nights. After no one comes to help her, the protagonist is forced to take matters into her own hands and confront the potentially dangerous stranger. This horror flick was initially picked up by the Shudder streaming service and has been available on their website for a while, but is now making its debut on disc (although only on DVD). Overall, write-ups for the movie were positive.

A few suggested that the concept was great but the end result wasn't particularly tense and the film's message was overstated. Still, most thought the satire was clever. Many were also impressed by the performances and appreciated the points that the story was trying to make. It stars Brea Grant, Leith M. Burke and Dhruv Uday Singh.

SÉANCE: This horror/mystery movie is set at a prestigious boarding school out in the country. Six youngsters residing there decide to have some fun one night, conducting a séance to communicate with a deceased former student. Unfortunately, one of the friends is found dead the next morning and the others begin to wonder if they haven't raised a malicious spirit from the dead. Response was mixed towards this creeper.

Some reviewers described it as being an entertaining genre film with impressive visuals and a few exciting moments. Yet the majority of critics didn't like the story, grumbling that there wasn't anything presented here that hadn't been done before, and in a more effective manner. The cast includes Suki Waterhouse, Madisen Beaty, Inanna Sarkis, Ella-Rae Smith and Stephanie Sy.

TAKE BACK: A husband and wife live a seemingly perfect life with their kids in a picturesque small town. When the family matriarch foils an attempted robbery, it draws attention from the media. Without warning, a gang of criminals suddenly arrives and kidnaps the couple's daughter. It soon becomes clear that the parents have been hiding a violent and storied past.

They square off against the bad guys and do whatever it takes to reunite family members. There aren't a great many reviews available for this action film just yet, but a few have appeared online. So far, reaction toward the movie has been middling. All of these critics say that the film starts off extremely well, but gets bogged down by slow pacing and doesn't end up delivering a satisfying finale.

It features Michael Jai White, Gillian Iliana Waters, Mickey Rourke and James Russo.

THOSE WHO WISH ME DEAD: A daredevil wildland firefighter is stationed at a remote tower after a job-related tragedy. Alone, the woman deals with feelings of guilt over what occurred. However, a blaze begins to rage in the area and a young boy being pursued by assassins suddenly appears at the tower. The protagonist has her hands full trying to address her personal issues and keep the boy safe from killers and the raging inferno surrounding them.

This picture generated more positive reviews than negative ones. Those who disliked the movie said it borrowed heavily from disaster and action pictures from the '90s and was riddled with plot holes. Still, the overall consensus was that the film was impressively staged and had no fat on its bones, delivering thrills and an emotional payoff for its characters. Angelina Jolie, Finn Little, Jon Bernthal, Aidan Gillen, Nicholas Hoult and Jake Weber headline the film.

UNDER THE STADIUM LIGHTS: Described as an uplifting underdog story, this tale is said to be based on a true story. After a talented high school football team experience several setbacks and is considered out of contention for a state title, a pair of unusual individuals steps in to help guide the students. One is a chaplain and the other an eccentric father figure with whom the youngsters slowly form a relationship. They lead the team to an incredible comeback.

The press panned this sports drama. A few wrote that it was sweet and although it reminded them of a "Hallmark" TV-movie, it entertained thanks to its talented cast. Almost everyone else said that the story was too predictable and sentimental, also noting that the clumsy cinematic

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techniques on display didn't add any drama or thrills. This movie is a DVD-only release and stars Laurence Fishburne, Milo Gibson, Abigail Hawk, Acoryé White and Carter Redwood.

THE UNTHINKABLE: This Swedish picture was completed and released in 2018, but is only now being distributed in North America. The plot involves a group of citizens who wake up to learn that the country is under attack. Without knowing what is occurring or why, they are told that their city is being invaded. The central protagonist is forced to try to resolve numerous family issues and assist those around him in getting out before it's too late.

Despite the delay with this film reaching this part of the world, it earned solid reviews. About a quarter of critics thought that the movie became more and more melodramatic as events progressed, losing their attention in the process. Still, the consensus suggested this is an intimate and engrossing disaster picture that wisely focuses on characters over spectacle. The title will be a DVD exclusive. It features Christoffer Nordenrot and Lisa Henni.

BLASTS FROM THE PAST!

It's another impressive week for older features receiving picture and sound upgrades. Arrow Video is putting out "The Daimajin Trilogy" (1966) on Blu-ray. This 3-disc "Limited Edition" series is a Japanese take on the "Golem" legend. All three movies were made the same year and involve an enormous clay statue of an ancient warrior that is given life and goes on the rampage.

You'll get audio commentaries on all three movies from Japanese film experts. Among the many other extras, the discs come with video essays about the series, an interview with cinematographer Fujio Morita, a discussion with a professor about the series, alternate opening title cards for the U.S. releases, trailers and much more. This set also includes a 100-page book on the movies and contains images featuring the poster art from all three films.

Those who are fans of the Italian/Spanish western, "Django" (1966), will be happy to see that the movie is receiving a new "Special Edition." This tale follows a mysterious figure on the warpath, dragging a coffin behind him wherever he travels. Customers can choose between a 4K edition and a regular Blu-ray release that present the film with a cleaner, sharper picture. You can watch the feature in either English, or Italian with English subtitles.

The disc contains a film historian commentary, an interview with star Franco Nero, interviews with the director's wife, the assistant director, both co-writers, a stuntman who worked on the project, and a spaghetti western authority. It also comes with a great many trailers and promotional materials.

The distributor also has the nifty Blu-ray box set, "The Sergio Martino Collection." It's a 3-disc "Special Edition" that includes three Italian "giallos" (violent and pulpy crime films) from director Marino. All of them have been previously been released on their own, but this package collects a few of them together. You'll receive "The Case of the Scorpion's Tail" (1971), "Your Vice is a Locked Room and Only I Have the Key" (1972), and "The Suspicious Death of a Minor" (1975). As you might have guessed, the discs include identical extras from the previous Blu-ray releases.

Shout! Factory is delivering a huge cult film. It is based on a popular toy line and animated TV series that many kids adored back in the day. "Transformers: The Movie" (1986), takes all of the famous Autobot and Deceptacon characters and raises the stakes. The story has them not only fight each other, but square off against a new foe out to wipe out the home planet of the transformers.

If memory serves, not all of them survive the battle. The movie wasn't a huge hit in North America during its original run, but the franchise remains popular today and has built an ever-growing fanbase. The movie is arriving on Blu-ray in elaborate "Steelbook" packaging with a 4K restoration. It includes a director commentary track, an acoustic performance of original songs written for the film, a comprehensive making-of documentary featuring interviews with most of the cast and crew, a feature-length early storyboard version of the movie, as well as all sorts of publicity materials.

Kino has plenty of Blu-rays coming your way this week. The first is the Oscar-winning Claudette Colbert and Ray Milland romantic comedy, "Arise, My Love" (1940). It comes with a film historian commentary and a trailer.

Clint Eastwood fans will be thrilled to see a "Special Edition" Blu-ray of the period thriller, "Coogan's Bluff" (1968). The grizzled star plays a straight-arrow Arizona deputy sheriff sent to New York City to investigate a crime, infuriating local detectives in the process. This disc

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includes a commentary with director/western authority Alex Cox ("Repo Man"), another track with fan Alan Spencer (who created the '80s TV-show "Sledge Hammer!"), an interview with co-star Don Stroud, tons of trailers, stills and posters for the flick, and a "Limited Edition" slipcase.

Moving back to actress Claudette Colbert, the distributor has more Blu-rays of her pictures. "Four Frightened People" (1934), is a jungle set adventure and "No Time for Love" (1943), teams the actress in a comedy with Fred MacMurray. Both discs come with a film historian commentary and a trailer. You can also purchase the Barbara Stanwyck western "Union Pacific" (1939), on Blu-ray.

The extras on this particular disc are identical to the two previous titles.

Additionally, Kino is putting out a "Special Edition" Blu-ray of the western, "The Valdez Horses" (1973), aka "Chino." Charles Bronson takes the lead in this effort as a Native-American horse breeder who falls for a local woman, causing rage from her brother, a local cattle baron. The disc arrives with a new 2K widescreen master of the movie and a restored European master in a different aspect ratio. There's also a movie expert commentary, alternate opening titles and trailers from various countries, 8mm film taken on the set during production, not to mention a ton of trailers for other Charles Bronson movies.

The disc itself comes in limited edition slipcase packaging.

Code Red has a "Special Edition" Blu-ray of the horror flick, "Butcher, Baker, Nightmare Maker" (1982), about an unstable cop (played by Bo Svenson) hunting down a maniacal killer. The movie is presented in HD from a 2K scan of the original camera negative and includes a commentary with co-star Jimmy McNichol, a second track with the writers and co-producers, on-camera interviews with more cast and crew members, a trailer, reversible cover art and a "Limited Edition" slipcase.

And discount outlet Mill Creek is releasing the "Randolph Scott Western Collection" Blu-ray set. It includes 12 movies starring the performer. The set has "The Desperadoes" (1943), "The Nevadan" (1950), "Man in the Saddle" (1951), "Santa Fe" (1951), "Hangman's Knot" (1952), "The Stranger Wore a Gun" (1953), "A Lawless Street" (1955), "Decision at Sundown" (1957),

“The Tall T” (1957), “Buchanan Rides Alone” (1958), “Ride Lonesome” (1959), and “Comanche Station” (1960). That’s a lot of westerns!

YOU KNOW, FOR KIDS!

Here are some films that may appeal to children ... and older kids who remember the 1980s.

“Luca”

“Transformers: The Movie” (1986)

ON THE TUBE!

And you’ll find all of the week’s TV-related releases listed below.

“I Dream of Jeannie” : The Complete Series

“It Was Always You” (Hallmark) DVD

“Mix Up in the Mediterranean” (Hallmark) DVD

“NOVA: Great Electric Airplane Race”

VISIT: WWW.CINEMASTANCE.COM

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