

Blu-ray/DVD Roundup for September 17, 2021

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It's time for another look at some of this week's Blu-ray and DVD highlights. This is another busy edition, packed with Hollywood blockbusters and interesting independent fare. So, if you can't or shouldn't be heading out to the movies right now, be sure to give one of these titles a try!

BIG NEW RELEASES!

BLACK WIDOW: The latest Marvel comic book adaptation is a prequel of sorts that follows the popular Russian super soldier Black Widow. Following the events of "Captain America: Civil War," the Avengers have been temporarily disbanded. Black Widow goes on the run, returning to her homeland to reunite with her surrogate family. She also squares off against the sinister general who raised and trained her to be a killer.

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Overall, reaction to the feature was positive. About a quarter of reviewers complained the film felt formulaic, wasn't focused enough on the title character, and didn't generate the required thrills. However, the majority described the movie as an entertaining popcorn flick that benefited from amusing bickering between the lead and her eccentric family members. It stars Scarlett Johansson, Florence Pugh, David Harbour, Olga Kurylenko, Ray Winstone and Rachel Weisz.

CENSOR: A film censor is a person who watches movies for the general public, putting a rating on the content and occasionally demanding cuts if they deem the material too graphic or offensive. This chiller film details one such figure, a woman with a mysterious past who spends her days imposing edits on horror pictures. She sits down to watch her latest assignment and is chilled by the plot's similarity to a real and traumatic past event involving her sister. The censor's grasp on reality slowly begins to erode.

Critics were appropriately disturbed by this British feature. A small contingent said the movie emphasized form over content and believed that the payoff wasn't satisfying. Still, the majority were gripped by the story, calling it eerie, original, and very clever. They also said the tale was bolstered by some fine performances by the cast. The movie stars Niamh Algar, Michael Smiley, Nicholas Burns and Vincent Franklin.

ZOLA: Based on a series of popular tweets, this comedy/drama follows a Detroit waitress who befriends one of her customers. The lead is invited to take a trip to Florida with the female patron and enjoy some dancing and partying. It all starts out as fun, but the situation rapidly deteriorates as the pair becomes mixed up with a pimp, an idiot boyfriend, Tampa-area gangsters and other bizarre figures. Most enjoyed this unique little independent effort.

A small contingent complained that the movie was stylish, but that its characters weren't well-developed and that some of the scenarios missed the mark. Still, the general consensus was that the leads were engaging. They also thought the movie oozed charm, while also providing the odd uncomfortable, but effective shock. It features Taylour Paige, Riley Keough, Nicholas Braun, Ari'el Stachel and Nelcie Souffrant

BLASTS FROM THE PAST!

If you enjoy goofy horror B-movies from the 1950s, Arrow Video has you covered with, "Cold

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War Creatures: Four Films from Sam Katzman.” The set contains the entertainingly kooky picture, “Creature with the Atom Brain” (1955), which involves a mad scientist using atom-powered zombies to take over the world.

A couple of weeks back, Shout! began re-releasing Blu-rays from Laika studios, which is responsible for some incredible animated features. This week, the distributor is presenting the Academy Award nominated fable, “Kubo and the Two Strings” (2016), in addition to “ParaNorman” (2012), a wonderfully cute, horror-themed tale. Both of these discs come with all the bonuses that were on previous discs, as well as some new featurettes that present all the storyboards for the feature. You’ll also get extras that detail the animator’s work on the characters and stop-motion puppets used in the production.

Sounds like another excellent disc and hopefully we’ll get an upgraded Blu-ray of “Missing Link” (2019), Laika’s most recent title, in the near future.

Additionally, they have “Blue Panther” (1965), a French Euro-spy romp inspired to some degree by the popularity of the James Bond character. This title involves a secret agent trying to prevent a mad doctor from releasing a deadly virus. The Blu-ray contains a 4K restoration of the film, a commentary with movie authorities and some trailers. And Kino is releasing a Blu-ray of “Rififi in Paris” (1966), aka “The Upper Hand,” a crime movie about gold smugglers.

Despite the title, this does not appear to be a direct sequel to the legendary 1955 French crime film, “Rififi.”

“The Devil in Maddalena,” (1971) aka, “Maddalena,” is arriving courtesy of One 7 Movies. It is considered a controversial and hard-to-come-by Yugoslavian/Italian coproduction. The story details a woman who begins to torment and flirt with a priest, questioning his profession and vow of celibacy. The film’s score was composed by Academy Award-winner Ennio Morricone.

This release doesn’t offer many extras, but the film has been fully restored from the original negative for Blu-ray.

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Warner Bros. is presenting a new updated version of one of their most beloved titles. They have a 4K Ultra + Blu-ray + digital set of “The Shawshank Redemption” (1994), with improved picture quality on the 4K edition, along with the previously released regular 2008 2K Blu-ray with all of the excellent, if already familiar, bonuses. For those who weren’t around when the movie was originally released, it was nominated for seven Oscars (although it didn’t end up winning any), and is currently the highest rated movie of all time by IMDb users.

YOU KNOW, FOR KIDS!

Kids certainly have plenty of material to choose from this week.

“Blue’s Clues & You! Story Time with Blue” (Nickelodeon)

“The Boss Baby: Family Business”

“Molly of Denali: Molly and the Great One” (PBS Kids)

“Straight Outta Nowhere: Scooby-Doo Meets Courage the Cowardly Dog”

“Ultraman 80” The Complete Series

“The Ultraman” The Complete Series

ON THE TUBE!

And here are all of the TV-themed titles arriving on store shelves.

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“Eli Roth’s History of Horror” Season 2

“Exhumed: A History of Zombies” (PBS)

“Lucy Worsley’s Royal Myths and Secrets” Volume 2 (PBS)

“Mare of Easttown” (HBO series)

“Masterpiece Mystery: Guilt” (PBS)

“Molly of Denali: Molly and the Great One” (PBS Kids)

“Sweet Autumn” (Hallmark) DVD

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