

Written by gallupsun

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By Glenn Kay

For the Sun

Welcome back to another look at the latest Blu-rays and DVDs being made available for purchase and/or rental. It seems as if just about every genre is covered in this edition, leaving plenty of options for all. So, if you can't or shouldn't, be heading out to the movies just yet, be sure to give one of these titles a try!

BIG NEW RELEASES!

THE BANISHING: A new reverend and his family arrive in an English village. As it turns out, the previous pastor and his family disappeared without a trace and the new arrivals are put up in the very same home. Supernatural events occur and the protagonist's daughter starts behaving oddly. It isn't long before the family begins to suspect demonic possession and sets out to save themselves from the monster.

This British horror flick received more positive reviews than negative ones. A sizable group did feel that the movie lost its mood and momentum as it progressed, eventually ending on a weak

note. However, the majority called it an effective and low-key creeper that would definitely send chills down the spines of horror enthusiasts. It features John Heffernan, Jessica Brown Findlay, John Lynch and Sean Harris.

CHERNOBYL 1986: Also known as “Chernobyl: Abyss,” this Russian film details the nuclear reactor explosion that occurred in 1986. The story is based loosely on an actual firefighter who was assigned to help deal with the blaze after the initial detonation. With steam building inside the structure that could expel more deadly radiation across all of Europe, the lead and his crew go on a suicide mission to prevent a complete meltdown. There aren’t many reviews available for the movie in this part of the world, but the ones that have appeared online haven’t been exceptional.

While some admit that the movie’s action is well shot, almost all complained that the pacing was slow, the romance subplot cheesy and stated that this film paled in comparison with other accounts on the subject (specifically, the 2019 HBO miniseries “Chernobyl”). The cast includes Danila Kozlovsky and Oksana Akinshina.

COME TRUE: A young woman suffering from recurring nightmares decides to take part in a university sleep study. While she initially hopes that it will help her deal with the problem, it soon becomes clear that her visions are incredibly powerful. Dreams and reality soon begin intersecting, causing grave danger for everyone involved in the process. This independent horror picture was well received by members of the press.

A small number of reviewers didn’t find the story interesting or engaging enough to pull them in. However, most said that it became eerier and eerier as the mystery of what was occurring was revealed. They also stated that the movie aspired to do more than an average genre picture. It stars Julia Sarah Stone, Landon Liboiron, Carlee Ryski and Christopher Heatherington.

THE CONVENT: This 2015 Thai film was originally released under multiple titles in its homeland and abroad, including “Senior” and “Run Phee.” After some years, it has been picked up for distribution in North America and is arriving this week exclusively on DVD. The story follows a 12-year-old girl attending school at a convent. She discovers that she has clairvoyant abilities and befriends the spirit of a deceased student.

Together they set out to solve a murder that occurred on the location some 50 years earlier. Unfortunately for the pair, there are other ghosts on the property who want the death to remain unsolved. The movie earned plenty of good reviews in Thailand and is rated well on various websites. If you're curious, you can also give it a look on Amazon Prime (where it is currently streaming). Sa-Ard Piempongsan and Kara Polasit headline the feature.

THE EAST: After the end of World War II, a young Dutch soldier is sent to Indonesia (which at this point in history was a colony of the country). He is told by his ruthless commander that their assignment is to suppress independence efforts made by local freedom fighters. The youngster initially follows his orders, but as he witnesses more abysmal behavior from his superior officers, he becomes disillusioned and attempts to resist their commands. This foreign-language feature garnered generally positive press.

A group did find the feature generic in its approach and thought it could have focused more on the Thai resistance members. Still, the majority thought the film was very well-made, calling it an authentic and effective war picture about a lesser-known piece of history. It features Martijn Lakemeier and Marwan Kenzari.

ELECTRIC JESUS: The members of a Christian hair metal band in the 1980s are the lead characters in this unusual musical comedy. Hoping to sell their message and music to the masses, the group is taken in by a flashy, fast-talking promoter who promises to make them famous. They head out on the road for a lengthy tour, but things get complicated quickly as the group deals with the personal ambitions of each member, their religious convictions and falling in love. There aren't a lot of reviews currently available for this independent production, but it played at a few film festivals over the past year.

Several write-ups from these events called it an amusing little picture. The cast includes Brian Baumgartner, Judd Nelson, Andrew Eakle, Claire Bronson and Rhoda Griffis.

EMA: This Chilean drama depicts the unraveling of a relationship. A young dancer decides to break up with her partner after the two find themselves unable to raise a child whom they adopted. Wracked with guilt, she heads to the streets and takes on new lovers. However, it eventually becomes clear that there is a method to her madness and that she may be planning a way to regain custody of the infant.

Critics responded very positively to this foreign-language feature. There was a small contingent who found the characters difficult to root for and had difficulty getting involved in their plight. Still, the consensus was that this film and the lead character were interesting and unpredictable, resulting in a fascinating and unique feature. It stars Mariana di Girólamo, Gael García Bernal and Santiago Cabrera.

THE FLOOD: Located in Australia, this western is set during World War II and tells the story of an indigenous woman who has her husband, family, and life ripped away from her by new colonialist laws. Incensed, she decides to become a gun-slinging outlaw, hunting down and taking retribution on the people responsible. This picture hasn't received many reviews just yet and there seem to be a wide variety of reactions toward it. Some call the film a bloody and effective genre effort, while others claim that the more graphic elements took away from the important issues the story was trying to address.

The film is being released exclusively on DVD, so interested parties can now pick it up and decide for themselves how effective it is. Alexis Lane, Shaka Cook, Dean Kyrwood and Dalara Williams headline the picture.

THE HIDDEN LIFE OF TREES: As many readers might have already guessed, trees are the subject of this documentary. Based on a popular book by renowned forester Peter Wohlleben, filmmakers follow this figure around as he details the history of forests and the purpose they serve. He travels to various woodlands in Germany, Poland, Sweden, and Canada, explaining how trees provide us with valuable details about life, death and regeneration. Most reviewers were taken with this picture.

One or two called it interesting, but thought that Wohlleben sounded like a bit of a crackpot, lessening the effectiveness of the picture. Still, everyone else called the movie beautifully shot and inspirational, giving viewers a new perspective on the greenery that is all around us.

NINE DAYS: A solitary man works at a remote outpost in the middle of nowhere, watching people of the world go about their lives. When one person passes away, the figure suddenly receives word that he is responsible for choosing which unborn soul will replace the deceased figure. He is given a series of interview candidates and must not only pick one, but send the other possible choices into oblivion. Responses were generally favorable for this feature, although those who panned it had major issues.

These reviewers called the movie ponderous, pretentious, and stated that it didn't effectively utilize its concept. However, the vast majority were impressed, describing it as bold and impressive, with a nice message about life and living one's days to the fullest. It features Winston Duke, Zazie Beetz, Benedict Wong, Tony Hale and Bill Skarsgård.

PAW PATROL: THE MOVIE: For those who don't have children, "PAW Patrol" is an immensely popular animated kid's program about rescue dogs with special abilities who help assist those in trouble. This feature finds the animals heading off to Adventure City to stop a sinister mayor with an evil plan to cause chaos in the metropolis. Critics didn't mind this big-screen adaptation of the TV series. Admittedly, about one-fifth of write-ups suggested that the movie was cute, but not impressive enough to warrant seeing it at the cinema.

Yet the consensus was that the flick provided simple, but entertaining old-fashioned fun that would impress kids and inspire them to act altruistically. The voice cast includes Iain Armitage, Marsai Martin, Ron Pardo, Yara Shahidi, Kim Kardashian West, Randall Park, Tyler Perry, Jimmy Kimmel and Dax Shepard.

PIG: A loner living in the wilds of Oregon with his truffle-hunting pet pig is approached by various restaurateurs to help them locate valuable mushrooms. After an interaction with one of them, the protagonist's animal is kidnapped. He heads into downtown Portland to find out who is responsible, questioning various persons from his past. More is revealed about the eccentric main character as he goes about completing his unusual quest.

The press was very taken with this picture and heaped a great deal of praise upon it. Only a scant few had criticisms, saying that the pacing and tone lacked fire and passion. All others said it was a fascinating, low-key character study about loss and grief and featured an incredible performance by the lead. It stars Nicolas Cage, Alex Wolff, Adam Arkin and Cassandra Violet.

WHO YOU THINK I AM: This French drama follows a 50-year-old divorced teacher who creates an online Facebook profile. It becomes clear that she is creating a fake identity, putting up a picture of a much younger blonde woman and writing as a 24-year-old. As time passes and she begins making friends, the reasons for her actions are slowly revealed - she suspects her lover of cheating on her and wants to see if her suspicions are correct. Critics responded well to this drama.

A small number didn't buy into the story and noted that it wasn't as compelling as the book on which it was based. But the general consensus was that the movie was intriguing, had an interesting take on the complexities of social media and benefited from an excellent lead performance. The cast includes Juliette Binoche, Nicole Garcia and François Civil.

ZONE 414: Also known as, "Zone 414: City of Robots," this title is set in a future where humanoid androids are commonplace. A private investigator is hired by the creator of the technology to find his missing daughter. After the lead accepts the job, he finds the trail going deeper into a neighborhood where these robots reside. The PI teams up with a droid to help him locate the youngster, but ends up uncovering a much deeper conspiracy.

Write-ups weren't very upbeat for this picture. A small group called it a straight-forward, but nicely shot and effective little sci-fi effort with a decent twist or two. Unfortunately, most stated that the movie was bland and a waste of the casts' talents. They also didn't think that there was anything about it that was unique or inspired.

It features Guy Pearce, Matilda Anna Ingrid Lutz, Jonathan Aris, Colin Salmon and Travis Fimmel.

BLASTS FROM THE PAST!

Looking for something a little older on Blu-ray and DVD? The studios have you covered there, too. Every once in a while, a Blu-ray doesn't meet its release date and is pushed back. This occurred with Arrow Video's 2-disc "Special Edition" Blu-ray of "Immoral Tales" (1973).

It is finally arriving this week. This is an anthology dealing with themes of sexuality. This controversial film was made by experimental filmmaker Walerian Borowczyk and individual episodes take place over various time periods. This release comes with two different versions of the feature (one of which features an extra segment).

It also arrives with an introduction from a Borowczyk historian, as well as a collection of interviews with the movie's production manager and cinematographer. There's also an archived discussion with the filmmaker on the themes in his movies, a visual essay on the picture, and a trailer.

Kino has plenty of releases this week. "Homebodies" (1974) is arriving as a "Special Edition" Blu-ray. This dark comedy involves a group of pensioners who find out their complex is about to be torn down by a greedy developer. Seeking revenge, the seniors begin murdering those who are trying to steal their homes from them.

The movie is presented from a recently transferred 2K master and includes a director commentary, an interview with the producer and lots of publicity materials like trailers and TV spots.

In addition, Kino has a Blu-ray of "The Mad Doctor" (1940) with Basil Rathbone as a crazed psychiatrist who marries and kills women for their money. "The Mystery of Edwin Drood" (1935) is based on the Charles Dickens novel and stars Claude Rains as an obsessed admirer of a local lady who will even physically eliminate romantic threats. "The Secret of the Blue Room" (1933) follows three suitors pursuing the same female. In order to win her affections, they decide to solve a mysterious, 20-year-old murder that occurred on her family's estate.

All of these films arrive with new masters, a film historian commentary, and trailers. Kino is also putting out "The Spider Woman Strikes Back" (1946), a thriller about a caretaker who discovers someone is trying to poison her. This Blu-ray includes the same bonuses as well as a recently completed documentary short about the movie.

Sony is in the mood to re-release many of its titles as double and triple-feature sets. The studio is making available an "Air Force One" (1997) / "In the Line of Fire" (1993) 2-Movie Collection, along with a "Black Hawk Down" (2001) / "Fury" (2014) / "Zero Dark Thirty" (2012) 3-Movie Collection. You can also pick up the "Cliffhanger" (1993) / "Last Action Hero" (1993) 2-Movie Collection and the family-friendly "The Dark Crystal" (1982) / "Labyrinth" (1986) 2-Movie Collection. Sci-fi fans can purchase the "Elysium" (2013) / "Looper" (2012) / "Total Recall" (2012) 3-Movie Collection, as well as a "First Knight" (1995) / "A Knight's Tale" (2001) 2-Movie Collection.

A “Ghost Rider” (2007) / “Hancock” (2008) / “Hellboy” (2004) 3-Movie Collection is being made available, as is the “El Mariachi” (1992) / “Desperado” (1995) / “Once Upon a Time in Mexico” (2003) 3-Movie Collection. Action fans can also pick up the “XXX” (2002) / “XXX: State of the Union” (2005) 2-Movie Collection.

And just in time for its 60th anniversary, Sony is releasing a 4K Ultra HD and Blu-ray set of “The Guns of Navarone” (1961), a WWII action film with Gregory Peck, David Niven, and Anthony Quinn. Besides the upgraded presentation, the discs include playback with and without the intermission card, a main title progression reel, a trailer, audio commentaries with the director and a film historian, an interactive featurette on the production, notes from the set, numerous individual featurettes on the film, and the making-of, a look at the restoration of the picture, and much more. If you like the movie, then this is a great purchase.

Criterion has a Blu-ray of “La Strada” (1954) from Federico Fellini. It deals with friction and violence between a group of carnival performers and was the first film to win the Best Foreign-Language Film at the Academy Awards. The movie has been given a 4K restoration, and includes the original audio with subtitles or an English-dubbed version. It also comes with a 2003 introduction from director Martin Scorsese, a 2004 documentary on the film, a trailer, and a 2000 documentary about Fellini that was broadcast on Italian television.

Scorpion is delivering some Blu-rays of Charlton Heston flicks with “Counterpoint” (1968) and “Number One” (1969). In the first feature, the actor plays an orchestra conductor who is captured by Nazis and forced to play concerts for them. It comes with a film historian commentary. In the second title, Heston plays a hard-drinking ex-NFL player struggling to keep out of trouble and make ends meet after retiring from football.

The disc includes a trailer.

Flicker Alley has a Blu-ray of “The Beast Must Die” (1952), a well-regarded Argentinian feature about a man seeking vengeance on the individual who hit his child with a car. The feature has been newly-restored for Blu-ray and includes an introduction featuring a film historian, a talk with the son of the director, a profile of the movie’s lead actor, a movie expert commentary and a souvenir booklet with rare photos, still, posters and lobby card for the film. “The Bitter Stems” (1956) is another notable Argentinian title about a pair of desperate men who start a phony correspondence school for would-be journalists. Their plans begin to unravel after the unexpected arrival of a mysterious woman.

It arrives in high definition with almost identical extras.

For people who enjoy collecting releases in hard-shell packaging, you can now pick up Paramount's "Indiana Jones: 4-Movie Collection" in a "Limited Edition Steelbook" set. But be warned, as it only contains the 4K Ultra HD and digital versions of the films and not the regular Blu-ray editions. They are also putting out a 25th anniversary edition of "Scream" (1996) and a remastered Blu-ray of the hilarious Eddie Murphy/Dan Aykroyd comedy "Trading Places" (1983).

There is also a new Blu-ray in the Paramount Presents line. "The Sheik" (1921) is a famous silent romance picture starring Rudolph Valentino. It has been restored and modern technology has been used to give it the best picture quality since it was originally shown in theaters 100 years ago. The release includes a 12-minute documentary about the film and its popularity. Like other pictures in this line, the slipcover box includes a fold-out of the original poster.

A digital copy of the movie is also included.

Universal is also getting on the multi-movie set Blu-ray bandwagon with a trio of releases. The first is "How to Train Your Dragon: The Ultimate Collection," which contains all 3-movies in the series. They also have the "Trolls Dance! Dance! Dance! Collection" Blu-ray. This edition contains the 2 feature films and a TV Special that aired shortly after their release.

They also have "The Original Christmas Specials Collection - 5 Holiday Favorites from Rankin/Bass" in high definition. This is a Limited Edition Steelbook Blu-ray that contains many classic holiday hits like, "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" (1964), "Santa Claus is Comin' to Town" (1970), and "Frosty the Snowman" (1969).

Lionsgate is making the WWII film "Hacksaw Ridge" (2016) available in a 4K Ultra HD and Blu-ray and Digital package. This is a Best Buy exclusive and can only be purchased at their store or through their website. It comes in a Steelbook package.

Blu-Ray/ DVD Roundup for November 5, 2021

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Finally, for those willing to join the service, the Disney Movie Club is making a few new animated titles available exclusively through its online Blu-ray ordering service. You can now purchase “Beauty and the Beast” (1991) in high definition. This Blu-ray includes 2 cuts of the movie. “Make Mine Music” (1946) is a series of shorts done to contemporary music (or at least, what was contemporary in the 1940s) and “Melody Time” (1948), which features seven classic Disney shorts that feature heavy use of music.

YOU KNOW, FOR KIDS!

There’s a lot for kids to choose from this week.

“Beauty and the Beast” (1991) Disney Movie Club Exclusive Blu-ray

“The Dark Crystal” (1982)/“Labyrinth” (1986) 2-Movie Collection

“How to Train Your Dragon: The Ultimate Collection” (3 movies)

“The Original Christmas Specials Collection - 5 Holiday Favorites from Rankin/Bass” Limited Edition Steelbook Blu-ray

“Loud House: Cooked” Season 3, Volume 2 DVD

“Make Mine Music” (1946) Disney Movie Club Exclusive Blu-ray

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“Melody Time” (1948) Disney Movie Club Exclusive Blu-ray

“PAW Patrol: The Movie”

“Trolls Dance! Dance! Dance! Collection” (2 Movies and 1 TV Special)

ON THE TUBE!

And here are all of the TV-themed releases coming your way!

“9/11: One Day in America” (National Geographic) DVD

“Baptiste” Season 2 (PBS) DVD

“The Crown” Season 4

“The Fugitive” The Complete Series DVD

“The Honeymooners Specials: A Christmas Carol” DVD

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“Jack Irish” Season 3

“Kung Fu” Season 1

“Loud House: Cooked” Season 3, Volume 2 DVD

“MacGyver” The Complete Collection (1985-1994)

“Punky Brewster” The Complete Series DVD

“Sex and the City” The Complete Series (1998-2010)

“Star Trek: Deep Space Nine”: The Complete Series

“Star Trek: Discovery” Seasons 1-3

“Under the Dome” The Complete Series DVD

“Yellowstone” Season 1 Blu-ray

“Yellowstone” Season 2 Blu-ray

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“Yellowstone” Season 3 Blu-ray

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