

Blu-ray/DVD Roundup for June 17, 2022

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Welcome to another exciting look at some of the new Blu-rays and DVDs headed your way. This edition is jam-packed with major releases in addition to some interesting independent fare. There's certainly something here that will appeal to everyone. So, if you can't make it out to the movies or shouldn't be out in public this week, make sure you give one of these titles a try!

BIG NEW RELEASES!

AMBULANCE: The latest action extravaganza from director Michael Bay ("The Rock,"

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“Armageddon,” “Transformers”) involves a decorated veteran in need of cash who asks his adoptive brother for a very big favor. The man begs the family member to help him pull off a bank heist that will yield them 32 million dollars. Of course, it doesn’t go according to plan and the pair end up stealing an ambulance in order to make their escape.

This elaborate chase feature earned more positive write-ups than negative ones. Those who disliked the flick said that the characters needed more fleshing out and that it all felt choppy and chaotic. However, the consensus was that while the movie didn’t qualify as high art, it did deliver the action goods and was a wild and fast-paced effort that would please casual viewers. It stars Jake Gyllenhaal, Yahya Abdul-Mateen II and Eiza González.

BENEDETTA: Set in the 17th century, this tale is about a nun who begins having erotic visions. After falling for another woman helping her at the church, the two begin a torrid love affair. Obviously, this causes great conflict that only intensifies when the protagonist begins speaking out and arguing against other long-held Catholic beliefs.

This provocative foreign-language film from Paul Verhoeven (“The 4th Man,” “Robocop,” “Total Recall,” “Basic Instinct,” “Showgirls,” “Elle”) was well-received by critics and earned awards from various critic groups. The small contingent who gave it a negative review either called it crude or, strangely enough, complained that it was too low-key. All others complimented the film as pure Verhoeven, pushing buttons and often providing lots of dark humor and shocks in a unique manner. Virginie Efira, Charlotte Rampling, Daphné Pataxia and Lambert Wilson headline the film.

FAREWELL AMOR: An immigrant to the US from Angola spends 17 years in his new home country working and fighting to get the rest of his family across the border. After succeeding, his significant other and teenage daughter finally arrive. It's a tough reunion and transition after so many years apart and the trio struggle to reconnect and start anew with one another.

This independent production won many awards at film festivals and earned raves from the press. There were only a couple of downbeat notices, which critiqued the movie for being a surface-level examination of immigration issues.

Just about everyone else called it a slow-moving but beautiful and gripping picture. They also noted the authentic performances of three individual characters with different points of view. It features Ntare Guma Mbaho Mwine, Zainab Jah and Jayme Lawson.

FATHERHOOD: After his wife dies the day after giving birth, a man must raise his newborn child completely alone. Totally unprepared, he must deal with the unexpected loss of his wife, in addition to adjusting to a life without sleep that consists of constant feedings and diaper changes, as well as other tasks essential to parenting.

This comedy/drama initially debuted last summer on Netflix and is now arriving on disc. Write-ups were generally favorable towards the picture. About a third of them felt that the movie was schmaltzy, bland and missed an opportunity to really delve into being an overwhelmed single parent. Still, most suggested that while formulaic, the lead performance was very engaging and that the film had some sweet moments.

The movie stars Kevin Hart, Alfre Woodard, Melody Hurd, Lil' Rel Howery, DeWanda Wise and Anthony Carrigan.

FATHER STU: Inspired by a true story, this drama involves a tough-talking former boxer who decides to move to Los Angeles. After attempts to become an actor flounder, he wanders into a church and becomes a convert to Catholicism. He then suffers horrible injuries in a motorcycle accident and becomes convinced that the priesthood is where his future lies.

Slightly less critics were inspired by the picture than those who had a negative reaction. As mentioned, a contingent did find the tale unique, They called it an interesting religious picture with strong performances that focused on a flawed individual finding redemption. But it seemed that many thought the movie lacked subtlety and found it odd that the lead character's motivations weren't examined in a more realistic and complex manner. It features Mark Wahlberg, Mel Gibson, Jacki Weaver, Teresa Cruz and Niko Nicotera.

INFINITE STORM: A park ranger heading up Mount Washington decides to turn back when signs of an imminent blizzard emerge. She notes new footsteps in the snow and decides to scout the area before returning to the base of the mountain. Shockingly, the woman discovers an injured man nearby. He doesn't initially appear responsive or want help, but she insists on getting the figure (and herself) to safety.

Based on a true story, this biopic received split notices, with a few more recommendations than pans. Those who gave it a negative write-up were frustrated by the behavior of those involved and thought the events depicted were predictable. Slightly more were impressed by the performances, the photography and slow reveal of who these people were and what inspired

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their actions. The cast includes Naomi Watts, Billy Howle and Denis O'Hare.

MORBIUS: This standalone Marvel comics superhero feature introduces viewers to a doctor suffering from a blood disorder. With little time left to save himself and others suffering from the condition, he takes an experimental concoction of his own making. His condition improves dramatically, until a nasty side effect is revealed. The doctor now possesses an irresistible urge to suck blood and has, in essence, become a vampire.

Alas, most write-ups for this fantasy/action feature were terrible and blasted the final product. Only a tiny number of viewers appreciated it, saying they had fun with the flick and calling it an interesting twist on the vampire genre. Everyone else complained that the plot was generic and that the film itself was dull and unmemorable. It stars Jared Leto, Matt Smith, Adria Arjona, Jared Harris, Tyrese Gibson and Michael Keaton.

NINJA BADASS: A cabal of evil ninjas head to the state of Indiana and kidnap an attractive local woman whom they are preparing to sacrifice in a violent ceremony. A young man and a few others are none-to-pleased with the news and decide to train themselves in order to fight back and save the lady.

This low-budget comedic homage to martial arts films of the 1980s has been making the rounds on the festival circuit for the past couple of years. In fact, it has won numerous awards at grindhouse and genre film events.

Reviewers have called it outrageous fun and said that while it is something of a hodgepodge, they still found it charming and admired its willingness to do just about anything to shock audiences and get a laugh. The cast includes Ryan Harrison, Mitch Schlagel, Tatiana Ortiz and Dan Holmes.

OFFSEASON: This horror feature begins with a woman receiving a letter saying the burial site of her mother has been desecrated. Naturally, she immediately returns to the island where her mom was laid to rest. After trying to find out what occurred, the woman learns that the land mass has been cut off from the mainland and that she is stranded. The locals begin to act strangely, leaving the protagonist to try to find an alternate route home.

Reviews were slightly more positive than negative for this indie feature. Those who disliked it stated that the story was weak, borrowing from too many other genre pictures. Regardless, the majority thought it was well made and atmospheric, delivering enough chilling moments to earn it a recommendation. It features Jocelin Donahue, Joe Swanberg, Richard Brake, Melora Walters and Larry Fessenden.

TURBO COLA: Here's another independent comedy vying for your attention. This tale is set on New Year's Eve in 1999 and follows a young man working at a gas station. He shocks his friends and acquaintances when he announces that he's skipping a huge party and instead working an extra shift.

However, as the story progresses it becomes clear that the lead and his best friend are planning to steal all the money from the shop's ATM. Of course, numerous people show up over the

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course of the evening, potentially foiling their plans.

This feature is debuting on streaming platforms and on disc at the same time. There are a couple of reviews floating around that call it a slick, amusing and exciting effort that impressed them. It stars Nicholas Stoesser, Jared Spears, Jordyn Denning and Brooke Maroon.

WE NEED TO DO SOMETHING: When a tornado hits, a family decides to take refuge in a nice but empty house. Unfortunately, a large tree falls in front of the door and traps them inside. They wait for help, but can't seem to get out or attract attention. After days pass, they become fearful that there might be something else after them - their paranoia causes them to confront each other about past deeds.

This independent horror flick earned mixed notices. Nearly half complained that beyond a jolt or two, the movie wasn't scary. According to them, the drama felt forced and the characters didn't resonate. A few more found the plot surprising and were impressed that the story was all set in one room. They praised it as being claustrophobic and chilling. The cast includes Sierra McCormick, Vinessa Shaw, Pat Healy, John James Cronin and Lisette Alexis.

BLASTS FROM THE PAST!

If you're looking for some older titles, this edition is just as busy on that front.

American Arcana is releasing a Blu-ray double-feature containing the genre flicks "The Bushwhacker" (1968) and "The Ravager" (1970). The first exploitation picture is about a plane crash in which the survivors are hunted by a maniac. Feature number two features a disturbed war veteran who stalks and watches couples in their most intimate moment... before blowing them up with dynamite. The set comes with HD transfers of the movies and some trailers.

Those looking for family fare who are a part of the "Disney Movie Club" subscription ordering service can now collect a couple of double-feature Blu-ray and DVD combo sets courtesy of Disney. The first is "The Emperor's New Groove 2-Movie Collection," which contains the well-regarded original 2000 animated feature. You'll also get the 2005 direct-to-disc sequel, "Kronk's New Groove," which was not as well-received.

They are also releasing "The Rescuers 2-Movie Collection" which contains the effective, original 1977 title and its follow-up, "The Rescuers Down Under" (1990).

The western "The Horse Soldier" (1959) with John Wayne and William Holden is arriving on Blu-ray from Kino. You'll get improved picture quality with a new 4K master of the movie, as well as a film historian commentary and a trailer.

Additionally, you can pick up the more modern bounty hunter western "Last of the Dogmen" (1995). This one stars Tom Berenger and Barbara Hershey. The Blu-ray presents two versions of the feature. One cut has narration and the other does not (this is the filmmaker preferred version). You'll also receive a commentary with the writer/director and the producer. It also comes with a trailer.

Kino is also presenting a Blu-ray of the adventure flick, "Love Slaves of the Amazon" (1957), which includes a 2K master, as well as an entertainment journalist commentary track and trailers. In addition, you can pick up a double-feature Blu-ray of "The Mysterious Dr. Fu Manchu"

(1929) and “The Return of Dr. Fu Manchu” (1930), which contains similar bonuses.

And you can now purchase “The UFO Incident” (1975) starring James Earl Jones. It’s a dramatization of a real claim of alien abduction and is based upon sworn testimony. The disc comes with a 2K master of the feature, a film historian commentary, a featurette on the composer for the movie, as well as trailers.

The “Unrated” edition of the teen comedy “Eurotrip” (2004) is arriving on Blu-ray through Paramount. And for those who have a 4K television set-up, they are also releasing “Raiders of the Lost Ark” (1981) in a Steelbook containing a 4K Ultra HD disc of the movie (please take note that no regular Blu-ray is included in this edition).

Shout! Factory has a huge Blu-ray box-set from a major filmmaker hitting shelves this week. “Herzog: The Collection, Volume 2” presents another selection of various titles from the acclaimed movie-maker. You’ll get “Signs of Life” (1968), “The Great Ecstasy of Woodcarver Steiner” (1974), “How Much Wood Would a Woodchuck Chuck” (1976), “La Soufrière” (1977), “God’s Angry Man” (1981), “Huie’s Sermon” (1981), “The Dark Glow of the Mountains” (1985), “Herdsmen of the Sun” (1989), “Echoes from a Somber Empire” (1990), “Wheel of Time” (2003) and “The Wild Blue Yonder” (2005).

Sony is releasing a Blu-ray of the “Unrated Director’s Cut” of “Love and Human Remains” (1993), a well-regarded comedy/drama about twenty-somethings looking for companionship. It’s from Canadian filmmaker Denys Arcand (“The Decline of the American Empire,” “Jesus of Montreal,” “The Barbarian Invasions”) and stars Thomas Gibson. They are also presenting a high-definition of the biopic “Wilde” (1997) featuring Stephen Fry as the famous poet/playwright.

Finally, Warner Bros. is distributing a Blu-ray box set called the “Final Destination 5-Film Collection.” It contains “Final Destination” (2000), “Final Destination 2” (2003), “Final Destination 3” (2006), “The Final Destination” (2009) and “Final Destination 5” (2011). These are a series of horror movies that feature a group of youngsters narrowly avoiding a violent death, only to learn that they had been fated to die. Many begin meeting with tragic accidents as events progress.

The first film is extremely effective and I have a soft spot for the fifth and final chapter, which delivers an impressive bridge collapse and a clever homage to the original title. Still, even the

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lesser efforts all have elaborate and impressively graphic opening sequences and most horror fans will appreciate the entire franchise. The set comes with bonus material, but it doesn't look like it includes 3-D editions of the fourth and fifth titles (which were released to theaters in 3-D, with items popping out of the screen for maximum effect).

YOU KNOW, FOR KIDS!

Here are some titles that may appeal to children.

"The Emperor's New Groove 2-Movie Collection" (Blu-ray and DVD) Disney Movie Club Exclusive

"The Little Rascals Volume 6 Restorations" – (ClassicFlix) Blu-ray

"The Rescuers 2-Movie Collection" (Blu-ray and DVD) Disney Movie Club Exclusive

"The Smurfs" (2021 Series): Season 1, Volume 1 (Nickelodeon) DVD

ON THE TUBE!

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

“Billions” Season 6 (Paramount) DVD

“Charmed” The Complete Series (Paramount) Blu-ray

“The Chelsea Detective” Season 1 (Acorn) DVD

“Curb Your Enthusiasm” Season 11 (HBO) DVD

“Great Performances: Now Hear This” Season 3 (PBS) DVD

“Hacks” Season 1 (Universal) Blu-ray

“MacGuyver (2016 – 2021 Series)” Seasons 1 – 5 (Paramount) DVD

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“NATURE: American Arctic” (PBS) DVD

“Ragdoll” Season 1 (AMC) Blu-ray

“Rutherford Falls” Season 1 (Universal) Blu-ray

“The Smurfs (2021 Series)” Season 1, Volume 1 (Nickelodeon) DVD

“Titans” Seasons 1 & 2 (Warner Bros.) Blu-ray

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