

Blu-ray/DVD Roundup for July 14, 2023

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Friday, 21 July 2023 04:54



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Welcome once again to this overview of Blu-ray and DVD highlights coming your way. Some weeks are quiet, while others are jam-packed. This edition certainly falls into the latter category. There are a number of major releases and just as many independent features coming your way. So, if you can't make it out to the movies this week or need to stay indoors for a little while, be sure to check out one of these titles!

BIG NEW RELEASES!

ALL MAN: THE INTERNATIONAL MALE STORY: International Male was a popular mail-order clothing company that started in the mid-1970s, offering customers the chance to order items through a catalog. During its heyday, the products offered were trendsetting and the business amassed a huge following. This documentary tells the story of Gene Burkard, the man who came up with and started the brand. Apparently, he was a closeted Midwesterner who decided to come out and began a new and successful life in San Diego.

Critics were very upbeat about this movie. One review stated that the film was blandly formatted and could have told its subject's life story in a more interesting manner. But everyone else thought it was packed with a lot of interesting information and effectively chronicled a remarkable success story. They noted that viewers would walk away with a new appreciation for the fashion business.

ARE YOU THERE GOD? IT'S ME, MARGARET: This adaptation of the 1970 Judy Blume middle-school book follows an 11-year-old who moves with her family from New York City to New Jersey. She finds the transition awkward, but becomes distracted by a year-long assignment given by a teacher in her class involving her family history. After confirming that one of her parents is Christian and the other is Jewish, the youngster ends up having to figure out her own religious identity.

The press adored this feature. One or two were irritated that the lead character came across in a more perfect light than she did in the original book. However, all others thought the movie featured well-rounded characters and was sensitive, honest, clever and impressively put together. These reviewers recommended the movie to both youngsters and adults.

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It stars Rachel McAdams, Abby Ryder Fortson, Elle Graham, Benny Safdie, Kathy Bates and Amari Alexis Price.

BEAU IS AFRAID: The latest from writer/director Ari Aster (*Hereditary*, *Midsommar*) involves a man suffering from anxiety issues who learns that his mother has unexpectedly passed away. He heads back to his old neighborhood, which brings up more panic attacks and other psychological issues. As the lead tries to deal with them, it becomes clear that the family matriarch may have been a sinister woman who caused her son's deep-rooted problems.

Reaction wasn't as exceptional for this film as it was for the filmmaker's past two projects, but the majority did give it a recommendation. About one-third of write-ups commented that the movie was an overlong, ponderous and ultimately unsatisfying thriller with a weak resolution. But the rest complimented the performances and called the picture an intriguing and unpredictable black comedy that was hard to forget.

The cast includes Joaquin Phoenix, Nathan Lane, Amy Ryan, Parker Posey, Latti LuPone and Stephen Henderson.

BENEATH THE OLD DARK HOUSE: Those who enjoy low-budget genre films may want to give this effort a look. It's an anthology film about a creepy individual called "Coffintooth," who welcomes you to his underground abode in order to share three disturbing tales of the supernatural (it appears as though one of them may involve a killer doll).

At present, no one has seen this picture and it looks to be debuting on disc. So, interested parties will have to go into the film cold and simply hope that the featured tales send shivers down their spine.

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It features real "Scream Queen" Brinke Stevens, as well as Christy Johnson, Kaylee Williams, Kalia Spargo, David S. Witt and Jared Michael Miller.

BOOK CLUB: THE NEXT CHAPTER: This sequel to the 2018 hit comedy *Book Club* finds its familiar female protagonists reuniting after a couple of years apart due to the pandemic. When one of the group members announces that they are about to be married, they decide to take a lavish trip to Italy and celebrate. Of course, the group soon gets into a series of misadventures that threaten to not only derail the vacation, but the nuptials too.

The original movie split reviewers and this follow-up received a slightly lesser reaction. Close to half thought that the cast were fun to watch, the locations were pretty and that it would appeal to its target demographic. Slightly more thought the movie wasted the talents of those involved with a dull and poorly written script that contained no surprises.

Diane Keaton, Jane Fonda, Candice Bergen, Mary Steenburgen, Andy Garcia, Don Johnson, Craig T. Nelson, Giancarlo Giannini and Hugh Quarshie headline the picture.

CLOSE TO VERMEER: Recently, the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam opened an exhibit containing the largest collection of Johannes Vermeer paintings ever assembled. This show featuring the Dutch artist was a massive success, selling out and receiving universal praise from the press and attendees. In this title, documentarians go behind the scenes to show how the exhibition was put together and all the hard work that went into it, as well as delivering a shocking revelation that one of the works included might be a forgery.

Write-ups were all positive for this feature. Everyone commented that it presented an incredible look at what goes on behind-the-scenes and all that is involved in putting together a program for a museum. They all believed it would also make viewers really appreciate the work being displayed. For the time being, this is a DVD-only release.

COCAINE SHARK: If you enjoy micro-budget horror movies, then you're likely aware that they are a great many featuring killer sharks. This effort is another title that follows the recent trend. According to the plot synopsis, the story follows the creation of a new and highly addictive stimulant called HT25 that causes monstrous side effects. When some of the illicit drugs end up on the streets, a hero must go undercover to try and stop the carnage.

This title has already been available on streaming services for a couple of months and it is now being given a DVD-only release. Notices have been hard to come by, but the ones that have appeared online aren't very strong. They made note of the fact that there wasn't actually a cocaine-addled shark in the movie and found the whole thing clumsily put-together.

It stars Ryan Dalton, Samantha Coolidge, Titus Himmelberger and Natalie Himmelberger.

SCREAM VI: The latest chapter in the long-running horror franchise finds the survivors from the previous installment making a new start in busy New York City. Of course, it isn't long before another Ghostface killer appears and begins targeting them. The leads try to find help and then set out to learn who is responsible before they are all wiped out.

Critics were more positive towards this follow-up than negative. About one-quarter of reviews noted that the series was becoming cliched and that it was all starting to feel like the kind of film that the original was satirizing. Still, the majority wrote that the movie was funny and filled with entertaining in-jokes, as well as a few memorable murder sequences.

It features Melissa Barrera, Jenna Ortega, Courtney Cox, Jasmin Savoy Brown, Mason Gooding, Hayden Panettiere, Henry Czerny and Dermot Mulroney. The flick is being released on various formats, including 4K Ultra HD and Blu-ray, so make sure you're getting the right

version for your system.

SISU: This war movie and genre film tells the story of solitary prospector in northern Finland at the close of World War II. When Nazi forces fleeing the country arrive, they invade his mine and steal his gold. Naturally, the protagonist becomes determined to hunt them down. Using skills developed as an ex-commando, he squares off against the unit seeking retribution.

This UK/Finnish co-production was very well received by the press. A small contingent thought it was overly violent and repetitive, tiring them out. Still, the vast majority were wowed by what they witnessed. They wrote that the movie would be a grindhouse classic, delivering top-notch thrills and a few chuckles as its protagonist wiped out sinister Nazis in increasingly creative ways.

This picture is available in a 4K Ultra HD and Blu-ray package, as well as a standalone Blu-ray. It stars Jorma Tommila, Aksel Hennie, Jack Doolan and Mimosa Willamo.

SPOONFUL OF SUGAR: A college student decides to spend a semester as a nanny for a secretive young family, taking care of their child who suffers from severe allergies. It isn't long before the babysitter is revealed to be psychologically disturbed. She immediately sets out to break the family apart, attempting to seduce the father and giving the youth LSD to promote some bizarre visions.

This chiller premiered on Shudder and earned split notices. Almost half stated that the movie was over-the-top and silly, lacking engaging characters or an important message. However, slightly more enjoyed the performances and described it as an interesting, if not entirely successful psychological thriller.

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For the time being, this is a DVD-only release. The cast includes Morgan Saylor, Myko Olivier, Danilo Croveti, Keith Powell and Laura Coover.

SUBSPECIES V: BLOOD RISE: The original *Subspecies* was a 1991 direct-to-VHS vampire flick from Full Moon Productions. Some 32 years later, a fifth title in the franchise has arrived. This chapter reintroduces a familiar character who is half-vampire and half-demon. After being trained by mystic monks to protect the church, the main character is asked to visit his homeland and recover an ancient relic. He learns more about his personal history in the process and soon realizes that he may be working for the wrong side.

There aren't many write-ups available for the film yet, but those that have appeared are upbeat. While admitting that the film is no classic, they suggest that if you like the series, this is one the better entries. They noted it had a solid lead performance and included nice photography.

The film features Anders Hove, Denice Duff, Kevin Spirtas and Stasa Nikolic.

TO CATCH A KILLER: An anti-social Baltimore cop with an addiction problem is called in to help look into a crime scene involving a marksman. The shootings continue and when the FBI's chief investigator arrives to take over the case, he's impressed with the lead's insights and asks for her assistance. She tries to tap into her own issues to help identify and stop the killer.

This effort split the press almost right down the middle. Half wrote that the film was an effective and atmospheric procedural thriller that benefited from the work of its two excellent leads. But the same number complained that the movie didn't make the most of its intriguing premise. They believed it provided a slick but surface-level thriller that wouldn't be remembered.

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Shailene Woodley, Ben Mendelsohn, Jovan Adepo, Ralph Ineson and Richard Zeman headline the picture.

YOU KNOW, FOR KIDS!

Denver The Last Dinosaur Complete Series (VCI) DVD

ON THE TUBE!

And you can find all of the TV-related titles listed below.

American Experience: Casa Susanna (PBS) DVD

Before We Die Season 2 (PBS) DVD

VISIT: WWW.CINEMASTANCE.COM

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