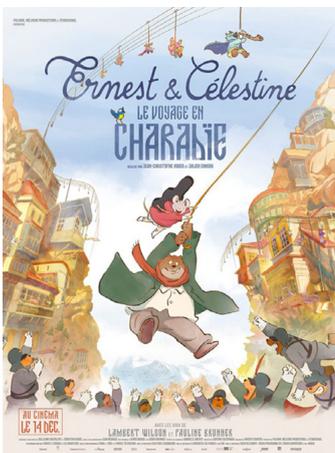
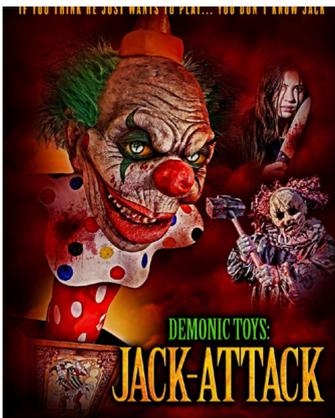
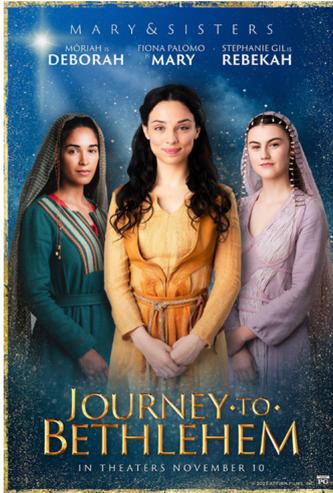


Blu-ray/DVD Roundup for January 19, 2024

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
Friday, 19 January 2024 00:00



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Welcome back to another look at highlights arriving on Blu-ray and DVD. This week, there aren't any big Hollywood releases, but there is plenty of interesting international and independent fare arriving on disc.

BIG NEW RELEASES!

THE CHILDE: After discovering that his mother needs an extremely expensive life-saving operation, an amateur boxer from the Philippines decides to track down his father. The trail leads him to South Korea, but things get dangerous for the protagonist when he finds himself being followed by an eccentric and threatening figure. Soon, the lead uncovers family secrets as more violent parties start to appear out of the blue.

This foreign-language action film from South Korea earned plenty of positive responses from critics. A few complained that the predictability of the story was too big a flaw to ignore. However, the majority were impressed by the cast, particularly the quirky but cool figure hunting down the lead. They were also thrilled by the elaborate action set-pieces.

It stars Kim Seon-ho, Kang Tae-Ju, Kim Kang-woo and Go Ara.

DEMONIC TOYS: JACK-ATTACK: The original *Demonic Toys* was released on video way back in 1992, and the latest direct-to-disc sequel is a spin-off featuring one of the title creations. A young woman goes through a major trauma that leaves her orphaned and a mute. She is taken in by a new family at a remote farmhouse. Unfortunately, a violent, oversized jack-in-the-box arrives at the home and starts picking off the characters.

So far, reaction from online genre reviewers has been more positive than negative. One did state that the series was well past its prime and that this entry didn't offer much that was fresh or interesting. Still, the majority called the flick an entertainingly campy effort that moved at a rapid pace and would please fans of the series.

It features Taylor Abigail Rice, Sean Ramey, Carson Polish, Christine Brunner, Maddie Small and Donna Steele.

ERNEST & CELESTINE: A TRIP TO GIBBERITIA: This sequel to the critically lauded and Academy Award-nominated 2012 French animated feature *Ernest & Celestine* reintroduces viewers to a pair of best friends who happen to be a mouse and a bear. After accidentally breaking his violin, the friendly bear returns to his home country to get the instrument repaired, with his small female pal joining him. They learn that music has been banned in the country and then set out to correct this injustice.

This French-language film was universally praised and has yet to receive a single negative notice. It has been described as a sweetly moving and beautiful hand-drawn film that is just as strong as the original. Reviewers stated that it features a dynamic plot structure without a wasted moment that gently stresses the great importance of creative outlets and personal expression.

The voice cast includes Andrew Kishino and Ashley Boettcher.

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FIREWORKS: Also known as *Stranizza d'Amuri*, this Italian-language effort is inspired by a true story. The tale is set in 1982 in a small village in Sicily. Two teenage boys become friends and begin to fall in love with one another. When relatives notice the kids becoming too friendly, they strive to keep them apart. The two have to deal with not only narrow-minded parents, but nasty comments and potential violence from townspeople.

The picture hasn't been seen by many members of the press in North America, but it did win awards in its homeland (as well as in Spain). Write-ups from Europe have called the film beautifully shot, noting that the movie effectively builds tension as threats arise, leading to a powerful and heartbreaking finale.

The cast includes Samuele Segreto, Gabriele Pizzurro, Simone Raffaele Cordiano and Antonio De Matteo.

JOURNEY TO BETHLEHEM: If you're looking for a faith-based musical feature, this family title may be of interest. It tells the story of Mary and Joseph, their trip to Bethlehem and the birth of Jesus, all using song and dance.

Described in the press synopsis as an "epic holiday musical," the final product received decent reviews from critics. About one-quarter wrote that this version of the story came across as gaudy and overblown, failing to move them. Still, the majority suggested that while elements were ridiculous, the music was catchy and that this modernized version of the famous story did manage to entertain them. They also commented that among recent religious films, this one was one of the stronger efforts.

Fiona Palomo, Milo Manheim, Lecrae, Moriah, Omid Djalili, Stephanie Gil, Rizwan Manji and Antonio Banderas headline the picture.

SPRING LAKES: The title location is described as "a bad place" in the trailer for this film and that seems like something of a massive understatement. The story involves a struggling filmmaker who is searching for his sister after she vanishes at the lake. He encounters a Satanic cult and soon begins to experience strange phenomena. As it turns out, the forest

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surrounding the water may be alive and the lead must locate his sister and escape before meeting a terrible fate.

This independent chiller from the UK appears to have been a part of the London-area Lift-Off Global Network, a program which strives to help young filmmakers get their start in the industry. As of this writing, no one in this part of the world has seen it.

The move features Carl Wharton, James Jaysen Bryham, Djonny Chen and Oris Erhuero.

YOU KNOW, FOR KIDS!

Unfortunately, there is the only child-friendly option arriving this week.

Pins and Nettie Volume 2 (Dreamscape Media) DVD

ON THE TUBE!

And all TV-related releases are listed below.

Billions The Final Season (Paramount) DVD

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Harry Wild Series 2 (Acorn) DVD

VISIT: WWW.CINEMASTANCE.COM

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