

Welcome to another look at some of the highlights arriving on 4K Ultra HD, Blu-ray and DVD. This week consists of independents and upgrades of older titles, which means if you're looking for something fresh or a well-regarded classic, there should be plenty of options. So, if you can't make it out to the movies this week or need to stay indoors for a while, be sure to give one of these titles a try!

BIG NEW RELEASES!



AFIRE: A writer decides to visit his holiday home on the Baltic Sea to finish his latest novel. A friend accompanies him, but they are surprised to find another associate already at the house. She is a blunt figure who begins questioning the lead and his work. When the writer's editor arrives wanting to read his finished manuscript, tension escalates even further. All four characters are then put into danger when a large forest fire threatens the scenic locale.

This foreign-language film from noted German director Christian Petzold (*Phoenix*, *Transit*, *Undine*) earned plenty of praise from critics. A small number found the central character difficult to like

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and the plotting too slow for their tastes. Regardless, everyone else stated that the comedy/drama was extremely well-acted and that the script was sharply written and ultimately moving.

It stars Thomas Schubert, Paula Beer, Langston Uibel and Enno Trebs.

DARKGAME: This independent horror feature was produced in the UK and involves a game show that takes place on the dark web. Contestants on the live broadcast are captives and anyone who doesn't win is executed on air. A detective and his task force set out to interrupt the program as it is being played out. While the hero intends to arrest the host and save those involved, he ends up finding himself on the show fighting for his life.

This effort is from the co-director of the 2010 Africa-set zombie picture *The Dead* as well as recent chillers like

The Ledge

. The title is premiering on disc in this part of the world and there are no reviews of the picture yet. So, interested parties will have to go in cold and hope for the best.

The cast includes Ed Westwick, Andrew P. Stephen, Natalya Tsvetkova and Lola Wayne.



GRINGA: Being a social outcast at a high school is bad enough. This tale begins with an unpopular teenage girl also having to deal with the sudden and unexpected death of her mother. She gets in contact with her estranged father, an ex-athlete now coaching a ladies' soccer team in Mexico. The two butt heads immediately, but try to form a connection and make a start fresh with each other.

Reaction towards the comedy/drama was split. Half thought the characters were interesting, but that they were trapped in a bland and forgettable story that didn't offer any surprises or insights.

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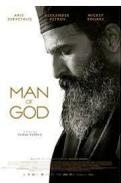
The very same number did think that the cast made up for any plot deficiencies and called it a sweet, genuine and enjoyable film that would have you rooting for the two main characters to make amends.

It features Judy Greer, Roselyn Sanchez and Steve Zahn.

LAST WORDS: Set in the year 2086 after an ecological disaster has essentially ended the world, a cinema-obsessed man of African descent and his sister travel across Europe. In Italy he encounters an old man who keeps a film vault. The two connect over movies and set out to share their love with any survivors they encounter, as well as shoot a story chronicling the potential last days of the planet.

This Italy/France co-production was completed in 2020, but failed to find a North American distributor and was released exclusively on streaming platforms in 2021. It is finally being put out on disc. Unfortunately, many consider the title to be an epic misfire. One-third of notices did think the movie was an effectively grim and poignant look at the end of the world. However, the vast majority wrote that the script was jumbled and confused in its intent. They also asserted that the script had distasteful elements and featured too many scenes of characters sitting around and watching superior films.

Nick Nolte, Kalipha Touray, Charlotte Rampling, Alba Rohrwacher, Stellan Skarsgård and Maryam d'Abo headline the feature.



MAN OF GOD: Here is another title that was made a few years ago and struggled to reach North American audiences (although for different reasons than the previous film). This Greek

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effort is a biopic of Saint Nectarios of Aegina. The priest fought with bishops and other superiors, defying them and facing exile while choosing to care for the poor and uplift citizens in his homeland. He became a renowned saint in the process.

The film won some awards at various festivals, but reaction was mixed in other parts of Europe. It didn't land a US distributor for three years. A few reviewers did think it capably told the story of the figure and appreciated the film, but slightly more felt the man's story was bluntly told and that it was obvious in its attempts to convert viewers.

It features Alexander Petrov, Tonia Sotiropoulou and Mickey Rourke.

THE MASTER CHIEF: PART ONE: This independent drama involves a Filipino sailor who enlists in the US Navy. The protagonist finds himself dealing with various forms of racism and ends up crossing paths with a tight-knit group known as the Filipino Mafia. In order to rise in the Navy ranks, he forms an unexpected alliance and teams up to go undercover and help arrest a sinister arms dealer.

This picture played at some festivals in San Diego (where it was filmed), but for many in other parts of the continent this Blu-ray release will be the first opportunity to check it out. There are currently no notices available for the picture, so curious parties will have to go in cold. And yes, as the title suggests, there are plans for a follow-up movie in the near future.

It stars Chris Soriano (who also wrote and directed the picture), Jon Awit, Ryan Barrier.



MY BABYSITTER THE SUPERHERO: A teenage boy gets into big trouble with his mother after playing his guitar in the backyard and receiving a costly fine for excessive noise. The lead is shocked to learn that an elderly babysitter will now be watching over him. His frustration turns into amazement when he finds out that the old lady is actually a superhero named Agent Action and that he must help her save the planet.

This independent family-feature has been available for months on streaming services, but is now arriving on Blu-ray and DVD. Despite it being around for some time, critics have yet to watch or review the picture. Online viewer reviews suggest that if you keep expectations in check, it's an innocent and reasonable enough effort that may amuse little tykes. Oddly enough, some sites list the title as *My Babysitter the Super Hero*.

The cast includes Mo Collins, Jim O'Heir, Maile Flanagan and Justin Ellings.

LA SYNDICALISTE: When the head union representative of a French multinational nuclear energy corporation learns staggering details about backroom deals between various nations, she decides to become a whistleblower and report the transgressions to the world. The protagonist ends up being targeted by some of the figures and not only is physically attacked, but set up as a suspect in the crimes. She must fight to clear her name and survive the ordeal.

Based on a true story, this tale from France earned more positive response from the press than negative feedback. A limited number did think that the movie was talky, yet still failed to deliver important details and left them wanting to understand much more about the real story. However, most credited the film as being a tense and effective display of the threats and misogyny carried about against the informer.

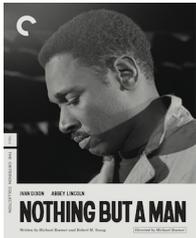
Isabelle Huppert, Grégory Gadebois and François-Xavier Demaison headline the picture.

BLASTS FROM THE PAST!

As mentioned, there will be plenty of interesting older titles arriving on shelves.

Criterion will be giving Hong Kong action cinema fans a treat with their double-feature release of *The Heroic Trio* (1993) and *Executioners* (1993) in a 4K Ultra HD and Blu-ray set, as well as a stand-alone Blu-ray.

The first title is set in a grim future world and involves a team of women (Michelle Yeoh, Maggie Cheung and Anita Mui) hunting down a baby kidnapper. The other title is a sequel in which the leads attempt to protect their city from a military coup. As noted, both films have been given 4K restorations and arrive with an interview with co-star Anthony Wong, as well as a film critic discussion on the features and trailers.



The distributor is also putting out a Blu-ray of the drama *Nothing But a Man* (1964). It follows an African-American man who marries the school-teacher daughter of a preacher in a racist town. The pair must deal with the ire of locals and conflicts within their own family. The picture has been restored in 4K and includes a feature on director Michael Roemer, a 2004 conversation between the filmmaker and his cinematographer, archival interview with cast members and an essay by a movie critic.

In *The Swiss Conspiracy* (1976), David Jansson plays a man hired as a security consultant for

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a Swiss bank. When its wealthiest clients are blackmailed, the lead attempts to figure out who is responsible. Film Masters is delivering a “Collector’s Edition” Blu-ray of this title, which also features John Saxon, Ray Milland and Elke Sommer. There’s a 4K picture restoration, documentary on the late career films of director Jack Arnold ([It Came from Outer Space](#)

,
Creature from the Black Lagoon

,
The Incredible Shrinking Man

), a visual essay on Arnold, a film historian commentary, trailers and liner notes on the movie.

Kino is presenting the drama Drifter (1974) on Blu-ray. The story involves a bisexual hustler and his various relationships over the course of the story. The UCLA Film and Television Archive is presenting a new 2K restoration of the film. It also arrives with a film historian commentary and several shorts from director Pat Rocco.



King: A Filmed Record... Montgomery to Memphis (1969) is a powerful documentary constructed from archival footage that tells the story of Martin Luther King, Jr. from 1955 to 1968. This Blu-ray comes with two trailers.



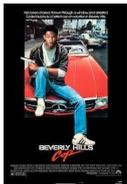
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The Last Castle (2001) is receiving a 4K Ultra HD and Blu-ray combo release from the distributor. It's about prisoners rising against an evil warder. The picture stars Robert Redford, James Gandolfini and Mark Ruffalo. Extras include a director commentary, a pair of featurettes on the production, deleted scenes, a discussion on the alternate ending and a trailer.

The underwater monster movie Leviathan (1989) is also arriving in a 4K Ultra HD and Blu-ray combo pack, in addition to a standalone Blu-ray. Peter Weller, Ernie Hudson, Richard Crenna, Amanda Pays and Hector Elizondo play deep sea miners who find a Soviet sub on the bottom of the sea that is housing a mutant creature. Besides the picture upgrade, there are bonuses like a film historian commentary, a lengthy featurette on the production, a pair of cast interviews and a trailer.



Anyone who enjoys the work of Eddie Murphy will be excited to learn that Paramount is delivering the 4K Ultra HD set Beverly Hills Cop: 3-Movie Collection (no Blu-rays are included as a Blu-ray only version is currently available. It contains

Beverly Hills Cop

(1984),

Beverly Hills Cop II

(1987) and

Beverly Hills Cop III

(1994) with improved audio and visuals. The third picture is also being put out on its own in 4K Ultra HD.

