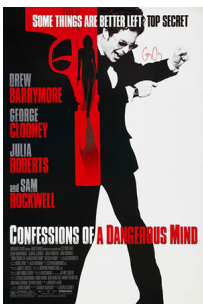
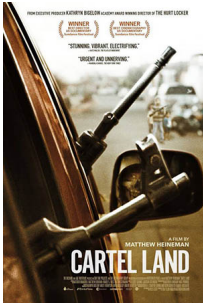


DVD/Blu-ray Roundup for April 1, 2016

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
Friday, 01 April 2016 00:53





It's time for yet another roundup of highlights on Blu-ray and DVD. Once again there are some great (and not-so-great) films coming your way. So if you can't make it out to the movies this week, be sure to give one of these titles a try!

Big New Releases!

Cartel Land - This documentary earned an Oscar nomination for its gripping tale of the drug trade in Mexico. Featuring unprecedented access to all sides, it focuses on a physician who leads a citizen's revolt against his region's Knights Templar drug cartel. As the story progresses and confrontations mount between the rogue faction, cops and traffickers, the motives and actions of many parties shift. The tension-filled movie received raves for its complexity and up-close depiction of the conflict. If you're a documentary film fan, this is a must watch.

Concussion - Will Smith leads this bio-pic as the forensic pathologist who discovered the devastating effects of head trauma in professional football players. When he attempts to present

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his findings publicity, he's met with skepticism and adversity. A few more critics liked the film than disliked it. All agreed that it was well-intended and that Smith was engaging as the doctor. However, several found the movie stilted and obvious in its drama, and felt that it was trying too hard to cater to academy award voters. It co-stars Alec Baldwin, Albert Brooks, Gugu Mbatha-Raw and David Morse.

Confession of a Child of the Century - Truthfully, I'm not sure if this 2012 drama has already been released, but I can't find any evidence of it coming out in North America. It's a French/German/UK English language co-production set in the 1830s about a socialite who learns that his lady has been cheating on him. After a severe injury, he meets another woman but struggles with feelings of suspicion. Festival reviews were awful, calling it dreary and stating that the performances weren't up to snuff. The cast includes Pete Doherty (of the band *The Libertines*), Charlotte Gainsbourg, August Diehl and Lily Cole.

Exposed - This crime/mystery tale involves a police detective investigating the murder of his partner. Evidence suggests some police corruption, putting the cop's own life in danger. Notices were very poor for this effort. It has been described as confusing and disjointed in its construction as well as a bit lofty and ponderous in its approach. Unfortunately, most felt that the storytelling really left its good cast unable to generate any suspense. Ana de Armas, Keanu Reeves, Christopher MacDonald, Mia Sorvino and Big Daddy Kane headline the film.

Forsaken - Father and son Donald and Kiefer Sutherland share the screen in this western.

It features a gunfighter who returns home to repair his relationship with his dad, only to find that a criminal gang is rampaging through the town. The family members come into conflict when the pop demands that the boy not get involved in the fight. Again, the press weren't particularly fond of this effort. They wrote that while they enjoyed the cast, the story was old-fashioned and a little hackneyed. It also features Demi Moore, Michael Wincott and Brian Cox.

The Hateful Eight - Quentin Tarantino's star-studded western involves a bounty hunter taking a captured criminal across Wyoming. When a snowstorm hits, they take shelter in a cabin populated by oddballs who may have ulterior motives. In general, it received solid reviews from critics. A few disliked the level of violence and the leisurely-pace, but most loved the nasty characters, sharp-dialogue, beautiful cinematography and majestic score (which won composer Ennio Morricone an Oscar). If you like director Tarantino then odds are you'll enjoy this little

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thriller. The cast includes Samuel L. Jackson, Kurt Russell, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Walter Goggins, Demian Bichir, Tim Roth, Michael Madsen, Bruce Dern and a surprise or two.

Mediterranea - This foreign-language drama follows African brothers from Burkino Faso attempting a perilous and dangerous journey to Europe in the hopes of starting a new life. Along the way, they face incredible hostility and violence. Reviews were very strong. While a couple of writers felt it was a little too narrowly focused, all praised the story as humanistic and timely as well as complimenting the work of the filmmakers in creating a narrative that feels completely authentic. They also suggest that the movie never resorts to cloying sentiment. It stars Alassane Sy, Koudous Seihon and Paulo Sciarretta.

Natural Born Pranksters - I don't watch a whole lot of Youtube, but apparently Roman Atwood, Vitaly Z and Dennis Roady are big stars on the service who have made their name performing pranks on random people. They've made a movie and LionsGate are releasing it direct-to-DVD. Based on trailers, it definitely has a *Jackass*-like feel to it. It features gags like the gang faking a tanning salon accident to the horror of new patrons as well as other elaborate stunts.

Point Break - This remake of the cult 1991 Keanu Reeves/Patrick Swayze surfing crime flick didn't make much of an impact at the box office over the Christmas holidays. The story follows an FBI agent who infiltrates a group of extreme sports enthusiasts that he suspects are bank robbers. Notices for the effort were as weak as the financial returns. While some admitted the stunts were impressive, almost everyone called the movie dramatically flat and dim-witted, resulting in an ultimately pointless exercise. Now viewers can decide for themselves. It features Edgar Ramirez, Luke Bracey, Ray Winstone and Teresa Palmer.

Blasts From the Past!

Well, it's another very busy week of cinema greats getting high definition debuts and upgrades. Criterion are releasing a Blu-ray of one of the best films ever made (at least in my opinion). *Bicycle Thieves*

aka

The Bicycle Thief

(1948) is Vittorio Di Sica's neorealist classic about a poor man supporting his family in Rome by posting advertising bills on the streets. When his bike is stolen, the camera follows his desperate, panicked attempts to recover it, with his small son following. This masterpiece

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arrives on Blu-ray with a 4K restoration of the film, a documentary called *Working with Di Sica*, a second 2003 documentary by one of his collaborators, a program named *Life* the details the filmmaker's entire filmic history and a track with an English dub of the flick.

Also from Criterion is another one phenomenal film. Akira Kurosawa's *The Hidden Fortress* (1958) follows a pair of greedy and at times goofy peasants who discover and escort a general and princess across enemy lines and away from an oncoming force. The Blu-ray contains a 2K restoration with a new sound mix and more accurate subtitles, a film historian audio commentary, a documentary on the making of the feature, and an interview with George Lucas - this movie was a notable influence on his classic, *Star Wars* (1977).

Way back in the day, there was a really popular variety program called *The Gong Show*. In it, various amateurs would come up and perform some kind of talent for a panel of judges who could end the performance if it was terrible (and they often were) by hitting the gong. Just before the series came to an end, show creator Chuck Barris made *The Gong Show Movie* (1980), depicting a week in the life of a producer on one of the craziest shows ever created. It tanked during its original release and has been nearly impossible to find on any home video format since. Finally, they're bringing a Blu-ray of this long-lost film. The disc includes an audio commentary from a pop-culture historian. Those interested in show create Barris should also take a look at the biopic based on his life (if his many wild stories are to be believed) called *Confessions of a Dangerous Mind* (2002).

Shout! also have a Double Feature Blu-ray of *Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1971) and *The Dunwich Horror* (1970). The first features Jason Robards and Herbert Lon in a horror tale adapted from the Edgar Allen Poe story. The second title, based on the story by H.P. Lovecraft, is about a student who meets the grandson of a warlock - he may have sinister plans for the naive young lady. It stars Sandra Dee, Dean Stockwell and Ed Begley.

Finally, Shout have a Blu-ray of the Director's Cut of *The Sicilian* (1987). From director Michael Cimino (*The Deer Hunter*, *Heaven's Gate*)

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) this tale based on the book by Mario Puzo (
The Godfather

) follows a bandit who fights corruption within the Church, landowners and the mafia in order to free his people. The movie wasn't a success and felt choppy, having suffered from numerous studio cuts for its American release (that amounted to over 30 minutes of excised footage). This title hasn't been easy to get over the years and it's great to see the complete version of the film in letterbox format for the first time in North America.

Here's an underrated little gem. *The City of the Dead* aka *Horror Hotel* (1960) is an effective UK creeper co-starring Christopher Lee. VCI Entertainment are releasing a new Blu-ray of the film, newly restored and uncut (with the assistance of the British Film Institute). It follows a young student writing a paper on witchcraft who travels to a small and creepy village for research purposes. Not a good idea. Soon her professor follows to try and help her. The movie oozes with style and atmosphere using fog-drenched sets - it is actually far more effective than you might initially expect. The Blu-ray comes with three commentary tracks, interviews and advertising materials.

Vinegar Syndrome have some B-movies arriving as a Blu-ray/DVD combo package. *Frightmare* (1983) follows a bunch of drama students who decide to steal the recently deceased body of their favorite action (because that makes perfect sense). Little do they know that the star was involved in black magic, putting the kids in danger. The disc arrives with loads of extras, including multiple commentary tracks, interviews with crew members and more.

Pigs (1972) is a really strange one about a cafe owner who owns a pen of flesh-eating porkers that he feeds victims to. The disc arrives with a newly restored transfer, featurettes, interviews and several alternate versions of scenes. Finally, they are putting out a Double Feature DVD of two cheesy efforts, *Revenge of the Virgins* (1959) and *Teenage Zombies* (1960). The first title is a nudie western co-written by Ed Wood, while the second is a hilariously bad no-budget undead flick that features a zombified gorilla.

Not to be outdone, Blue Underground are distributing a Double Feature Blu-ray of their own. It contains the British B-movie thriller *Code 7, Victim 5* (1964) and the cheesy crime flick *Mozambique* (1964).

Finally, The Film Detective are debuting a Blu-ray of the Restored Cut of an Edward G.

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Robinson film-noir called *The Red House* (1947) (the DVD has already been released). I've never seen this one, but apparently it's an underrated effort with a nifty twist or two - apparently movie-makers like Martin Scorsese speak fondly of it.

You Know, For Kids!

It's a slow week for kid stuff, but here is what is coming your way.

Life Story (BBC Earth)

Naya and Friends: Naya's Arctic Adventure

By Glenn Kay

For the Sun