

DVD/Blu-ray Roundup for Jan. 6, 2017

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
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Happy New Year! Hope you enjoyed your time off, because the year has started with a number of big new releases on Blu-ray and DVD. We've got the highlights right here. So if you can't make it to the movies this week, be sure to give one of these titles a try!

Big New Releases!

Ace the Case - In this family-friendly mystery, a young girl takes her dog for a walk on the streets of Manhattan and witnesses a kidnapping. When no one believes her, she decides to investigate it on her own, befriend an adult detective along the way. It received a limited release earlier in the year and critics weren't fond of it. They stated that it was too dark and violent for tykes and the predictable plot wasn't interesting enough for grownups. The movie stars Ripley Sobo, Lev Gorn and Susan Sarandon.

At the Fork - The subject of this documentary is how animals are raised for human consumption. The interviewers do this by visiting various farms and talking with the families who raise cattle. Interestingly, the subjects also have complicated emotions about their work. Reviews were very strong, stating that the movie's balanced and sensitive handling of the various ethical conundrums involved made for an effective and subtle film. They praised it for advocating humane treatment towards all living things.

Blair Witch - Wow, it has been 17 years since the original found-footage horror flick *Blair Witch Project* became a phenomenon. This direct sequel involves a new group of young kids investigating the history of the woods. Of course, they come across the same nastiness and must fend for their lives. Sadly, this follow-up didn't create the same buzz among the press or audiences. While a few found it effectively creepy, most called it a predictable affair that followed the same beats and didn't offer enough new twists. The cast includes James Allen McCune, Callie Hernandez and Corbin Reid.

Denial - Based on a true story, this tale revolves around author and historian Deborah E. Lipstadt, who was sued for libel by a Holocaust denier. Shockingly, she must go to court and prove that the Holocaust actually happened against the defendant's high-priced attorneys. Notices were very good for the drama. Some suggested that it was a bit low-key and understated for their liking, but the vast majority described the movie as exceptionally

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well-performed, adding an unexpected sense of drama to the proceedings. Rachel Weisz, Tom Wilkinson, Timothy Spall and Andrew Scott headline the feature.

The Hollow - This independent thriller harks back to neo-noirs of the past. The story involves the strange death of US Congressman's daughter in a small town. When the FBI is sent in to solve the crime, they must not only contend with their own psychological issues, but a town full of sinister figures with duplicitous motives. There are only a couple of reviews up for the movie, with most feeling that the lengthy running time dulls some of the suspense. At least it features some great performers, including William Sadler, Jeff Fahey, William Forsythe and James Callis.

Middle School: The Worst Years of My Life - An introverted and creative teenager decides to strike back against his school's rigid formatting by setting out to break all the rules and add a little spice to life. The Principal soon becomes the lead's rival, attempting to stop the chaos. The press were split on the final results. About half referred to it as harmless fun in the spirit of 80s teen flicks, while the remainder complained that the story veered into sentiment and that the young cast deserved better than the gags they were given. It stars Griffin Gluck, Lauren Graham and Rob Riggle.

Mr. Pig - This small, independent drama involves a pig farmer who decides to take a road trip to Mexico. He's joined by his estranged daughter and the two attempt to reconcile after he becomes ill. Reaction was reasonable for this little film. Several thought that it was an effectively modest and honest character study that featured an authentic look at real towns south of the border. However, a few found it slow and dull. All depends on your expectations, one guesses. The cast includes Danny Glover, Maya Rudolph and Joel Murray.

Natural Selection - A newly arrived high-school student has trouble fitting in. He's befriended by a studious female student as well as a popular girl who appears sociable and takes him under her wing. Of course, she has sinister intentions. This is a faith-based drama and it didn't go over well with those reviewers who saw it. They called it stiff and stilted with some ridiculous twists amidst its soap-opera dramatics. It features Katherine McNamara, Anthony Michael Hall and Mason Dye.

Operation Avalanche - Set in 1967, this low-budget thriller adopts a found-footage approach. It involves CIA agents who pose as a NASA documentary crew to find a Russian saboteur within the space program. As events progress, they begin to uncover a deeper conspiracy. It garnered

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decent press from audiences at film festivals and with critics. Some found the premise silly and the shaky-cam photography irritating, but more believed that it was a fun “mockumentary” with a clever sense of humor that convincingly recreates an earlier era. It stars Matt Johnson (who also directed) and Owen Williams.

Run the Tide - A young man goes on the run with his little brother after the pair learn that their abusive, drug-addicted mother has been released from prison and is trying to locate them. They head for the California coast with their mom and her ex-husband in pursuit. Reaction wasn't great for this independent drama. Unfortunately, most felt that while competently put together, the conflict felt forced and the feature played like a Lifetime TV-movie of the week. Taylor Lautner, Constance Zimmer and Kenneth Johnson lead the cast.

The Shelter - This small horror picture involves a homeless widower down on his luck and looking for a shelter. Unfortunately, the welcoming home he discovers won't let him leave; he finds himself locked in and trapped within its walls. Surprisingly, reviews weren't half bad, complimenting the effort. Those who have seen it say that it's a slow-burn, but features better-than-average performances. They also mentioned that the deeper themes resonate more strongly than most genre fare. It stars Michael Pare and Rachel G. Whittle.

Blasts From the Past!

There's plenty of older titles arriving on Blu-ray this week. Enjoy movies that fall into the category of so-bad-they're-good? Some would classify *Glitter* (2001) as one of these. It stars Mariah Carey as singer who struggles with the difficulties of being a superstar. Mill Creek are releasing the disc, which means that while there won't be many extras, it will be inexpensive to own (under \$10, normally).

They also have *Gone in 60 Seconds* (1974), the cult driving flick that features some of the most dangerous car stunts ever created. They're all the more scary because a few of them were done on the fly in real traffic. It isn't an incredible movie, but the driving is both thrilling and terrifying. This Blu-ray is newly restored, remastered and actually includes bonus interviews and rare footage behind-the-scenes.

Kino have some interesting flicks debuting in high definition. *The Internecine Project* (1974)

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stars James Coburn as a newly promoted government advisor who plots to have the four persons who know about his shady past unwittingly kill another.

Loophole

(1954) is a film-noir about a bank teller who is wrongly accused of theft.

On the B-movie front, *Stryker* (1983) is a *Mad Max/Road Warrior* rip-off about a post-apocalyptic warrior who decides to help a group of Amazonian women fend off some nasty characters. It also features a low-rent car chase in just like the much-better films that inspired it. Might be good for a laugh, though. On a different note,

Who?

(1974) is a thriller starring Elliott Gould about a noted scientist who is kidnapped and taken to East Berlin. He escapes, but the hero must determine whether the man is who he says he is, or is a double agent with plastic surgery.

Speaking of *Mad Max* inspired titles, Scorpion are releasing three action films on DVD that are also knock-offs of the hit film - and they're all coming out under the banner of the *Roger Corman's Post-Nuke Collection*

. These flicks were made in the Philippines (taking advantage of tax breaks during the 80s) and include the interchangeable

Wheels on Fire

(1985),

Equalizer 2000

(1987) and

The Sisterhood

(1988). They'll probably serve bad movie fans just fine, while others should stay far away.

YOU KNOW, FOR THE KIDS!

If you like animated Barbie adventures, it looks like this is your big week. You'll find the various titles intended for kids listed below.

Ace the Case

Barbie and the Diamond Door

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Barbie and the Magic of Pegasus

Barbie: Princess Charm School

Barbie as the Princess and the Pauper

Barbie and the Secret Castle

Barbie of Swan Lake

Barbie and the Three Musketeers

Little Charmers: Ultimate Collection: Pose

Little Charmers: Ultimate Collection: Hazel

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