

DVD/Blu-ray Roundup for April 14, 2017

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
Friday, 14 April 2017 04:25

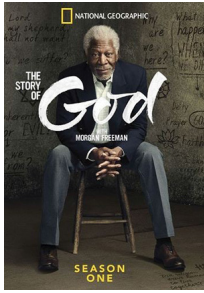


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Welcome back to another look at highlights arriving on Blu-ray and DVD. There's some really interesting stuff coming out, including everything from Best Picture nominees to small genre pictures. So if you can't make it out to the movies this week, be sure to give one of these titles a try!

BIG NEW RELEASES!

Believe - In this faith-based drama, a small town business owner faces a tough economic crunch along with other members of his community. He's forced into a difficult decision; should he keep his company's profits for himself or use them to fund the town's annual Christmas pageant. The press did not respond to this picture. While they stated that it was well-intentioned, reviewers still found it to be a rather bland exercise that simply goes through the motions. They also suggested that it was overlong at a length of two-hours. The cast includes Ryan O'Quinn, Shawnee Smith, Danielle Nicolet and David DeLuise.

Brimstone - This American-set western is actually a European production with a Dutch director. It tells the story of a troubled reverend who arrives in a small village and accuses a local woman of a crime she didn't commit. The lady is forced to become a fugitive, but takes steps to fight back against her cruel oppressor. This controversial film played very well at festivals and was a box office success in Europe. However, it only received a limited release in the US and critics here weren't as complimentary. Some did call it a dark and compelling tale, but more complained that it was nasty, violent and slow-going. Now viewers can make up their own minds. It stars Dakota Fanning, Carice van Houten, Kit Harington and Guy Pearce.

The Bye Bye Man - Don't say his name. And if you're saying goodbye to a pal, be very careful

about how you phrase it. In this horror picture, a trio of college students make the mistake of uttering the title words and raising a nasty supernatural force. They find the evil force playing games with them and causing tragic and deadly deaths. Unfortunately, no one was particularly scared by the end results. They wrote that the story was routine and predictable and stated that the central antagonist was a less than memorable foe. The movie features Douglas Smith, Lucien Laviscount, Cressida Bonas, Carrie-Anne Moss and Faye Dunaway.

Hidden Figures - This Best Picture nominee at the Academy Awards is a biopic about a group of female, African American mathematicians who played a large part in getting astronauts into orbit during the early years of the space program. While most reviewers admitted that the movie was told in a fairly straight-forward manner without a lot of subtlety, they still enjoyed what they witnessed. They suggested that this film was a well-performed and charmingly inspirational story with an important, positive message for all. The cast includes Taraji P. Henson, Octavia Spencer, Janelle Monae, Kevin Costner, Kristin Dunst, Jim Parsons and Mahershala Ali.

Lion - And here's another film that was also up for Best Picture. This biopic details a 5 year old child in India who hops on a train and soon finds himself on the other side of the country. He's eventually adopted by an Australian couple and sent to another continent, but as an adult feels compelled to try and find his lost family. The movie garnered strong notices from the press. There were a few who found it a bit melodramatic at points, but the overwhelming majority felt that the cast were exceptional, the photography beautiful and the film itself moving and powerful. I must admit, that ending even worked on me. It stars Dev Patel, Nicole Kidman, Rooney Mara and Sunny Pawar.

Monster Trucks - Here's an odd one. When an oil drilling outfit upsets an ecosystem beneath the earth and releases a subterranean creature, the life-form takes refuge in a teenager's custom-built truck. The lead attempts to drive the creature to safety with greedy company thugs on their tail. This was an expensive production (\$125 million) that didn't pan out for the studio; the movie got dumped in early January with little publicity. Critics weren't thrilled with the feature either. A minority believed that it was entertaining silliness with impressive effects and a nice message, but more stated that it would not impress anyone over the age of 10. The cast includes Lucas Till, Jane Levy, Thomas Lennon, Barry Pepper, Rob Lowe, Danny Glover, Amy Ryan and Frank Whaley.

War on Everyone - This independent UK production is a dark comedy that follows two crooked cops in New Mexico. They spend their workday looking to make extra cash by blackmailing criminals. Unfortunately, they run into a crime boss who may be even more corrupt and unstable than they are, putting everyone's life in danger. This feature boasts a talented

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writer/director in John Michael McDonagh (*Calvary*, *The Guard*). However, it didn't get as much attention and reaction was split. Some thought it was enjoyably wild and eccentric with sharp dialogue. Others complained that it was uneven and were disturbed by the nasty characters. Depends on your sense of humor, I guess. It features Alexander Skarsgard, Michael Pena, Theo James, Tessa Thompson and Paul Reiser.

BLASTS FROM THE PAST!

Arrow Video have a couple of impressive Blu-ray box sets arriving this week. The first is for the *Dead or Alive Trilogy*

. These are a series of extremely violent Japanese films about the Yakuza that come from director Takashi Miike (

Audition

). The three titles contained are

Dead or Alive

(1999),

Dead or Alive 2: Tobosha

(2000) and

Dead or Alive: Final

(2002). The movies have been newly transferred into high definition and extras include interviews with the actors and producer/screenwriter, a film historian commentary track, archival featurettes and interviews and publicity material including theatrical trailers.

The next is *House: Two Stories*, contains which contains the first two films in the popular horror/comedy series. This includes the original *House* (1985) and the first follow-up,

House II: The Second Story

(1987). Both films feature a supernatural goings on inside an old dwelling and have a strong emphasis on humor amidst the shocks. I remember seeing them both as a kid at the movies and having a great time (at least,

House

made a big impression at the time). There has been a new restoration of the films and the set comes with a bevy of great bonuses. They include lengthy new documentaries on the features with cast and crew, commentary tracks, featurettes, stills, trailers. It's an incredible package that should impress anyone who remember the movies fondly.

Shout! have some Blu-ray titles as well. *Demented* (1980) is an exploitation movie about a woman who survives a brutal assault. After the attackers are imprisoned, the trauma causes

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psychological scars that cause her to snap and seek revenge on a random group of men. On the goofier side, *Never Too Young To Die* (1986) is a cult action/spy flick about an agent trying to stop a villain planning a terrorist attack. It's most famous for its casting, which includes John Stamos in the hero role and Vanity as his partner. Gene Simmons plays the heavy, a hermaphrodite megalomaniac. Finally, the distributor also has *The Vampire* (1957), about a doctor who saves patients by day and sucks their blood at night.

Severin also have some small, cult horror titles coming your way. They include a restored Blu-ray of the Canadian horror flick, *Cathy's Curse* (1977). Some have described it as a so-bad-it's-good kind of experience. It's essentially a low-budget knock-off of *The Exorcist* and *The Omen* that attempts to push the concept of an evil, foul-mouthed child just about as far as it can go. They also have the cult feature, *Dark Waters* (1993). It's a Russian production about killer nuns on an island monastery that is inspired by the films of Mario Bava (*Danger: Diabolik* , *A Bay of Blood*). Finally, they have *The Other Hell* (1981), an Italian picture also featuring nasty nun who may be possessed by the devil.

Full Moon Features are releasing a Blu-ray of the monster movie, *Lurking Fear* (1994). It's very loosely based on an H.P. Lovecraft story and features a group of visitors to a small town who come under attack from a ghastly being - the cast includes Ashley Laurence, Jeffrey Combs and Vincent Schiavelli.

Kino have some period dramas arriving on Blu-ray. They include Oscar nominated drama *The Crucible* (1996) with Daniel Day-Lewis and Winona Ryder, about a woman falsely accused of witchcraft. Unfortunately, she happens to be living in Salem, Massachusetts during the late 17th century. *Tristan & Isolde* (2006) involves a doomed love affair between an Englishman who is second in line to Britain's throne and an Irish princess. It stars James Franco, Sophia Miles, Rufus Sewell, Mark Strong and Henry Cavill.

But that's not all. Warner Archive are releasing *36 Hours* (1964) in high definition as a made-to-order Blu-ray. It's a WWII set drama about a Army Major taken by German forces. They attempt to brainwash him into believing that he has returned home in the hopes he will give up intelligence on the Allied forces battle plans. James Garner plays the prisoner.

Criterion have Blu-rays of a couple of noteworthy French arthouse titles from director Jacques Demy. They include *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* (1964) and *The Young Girls of Rochefort* (1967). Both are musical dramas and both star Catherine Deneuve. Naturally, since this is a Criterion release, the picture quality has been upgraded and come with documentaries, featurettes and archived interviews with the late filmmaker Demy.

Daughters of the Dust (1991) is arriving on Blu-ray courtesy of Cohen Entertainment. It's a very well-regarded independent drama set among the Gullah culture; specifically, a family living on an island off of the coast of South Carolina. The disc includes bonus interviews with the director and cinematographer as well as a recorded Q&A on the feature.

And finally, after a last minute delay, the elaborate *Phantasm* Blu-ray box set (containing all of the films in the series) is now available along with the period drama, *Ludwig*. They were both written up in a previous edition.

YOU KNOW, FOR KIDS!

Here are some titles that might be of interest to children.

Let's Go Poyoco Playtime!

Piggy Tales: Third Act

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Sonic Underground: Vol. 2 Collector's Edition

ON THE TUBE!

Here are some TV-show arriving on disc.

Father Knows Best: Season 5

The Great British Baking Show: Season 1

The Great British Baking Show: Season 2

The Great British Baking Show: Season 3

Greek: Chapter 6: Season 4

Mars (National Geographic)

Silicon Valley: Season 3

The Story of God With Morgan Freeman: Season 2

Top Gear 23

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To Walk Invisible: The Bronte Sisters (PBS)

Veep: Season 5

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