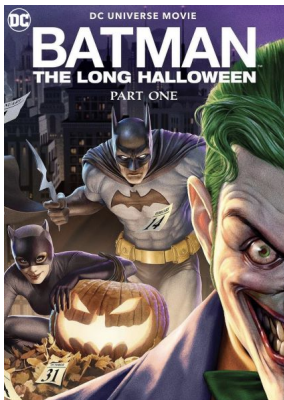


By Glenn Kay

For the Sun

Welcome back to another look at highlights arriving on Blu-ray and DVD. This time, there's an interesting mix that includes one reasonably high-profile feature along with several interesting independent efforts. So, if you can't, or aren't quite ready to head out to the movies this week, be sure to give one of these titles a try!

BIG NEW RELEASES!



BATMAN: THE LONG HALLOWEEN, PART ONE: The latest in DC's animated, direct-to-disc superhero series follows Batman in his early years. While helping Commissioner Gordon take down the ruthless Falcone family, he begins investigating a series of slayings that occur on holidays. It becomes clear that an unknown serial killer is ravaging Gotham and must be identified before anyone else is harmed. This is the first half of a two-part story and reportedly the next and final chapter will be released on disc in a month.

The film is premiering on disc and reviews are only beginning to appear online. They have generally been positive thus far. Write-ups say that it is a solid adaptation of the original comic book story and stands as one of the better entries in DC's animated universe. The voice cast includes Jensen Ackles, Josh Duhamel, Jack Quaid, Titus Welliver, Alyssa Diaz, Billy Burke and Naya Rivera.

HUNTER HUNTER: A family living in the remote wilderness discovers that their traps are being ravaged by a wolf or some other animal. The family patriarch decides to head out and hunt the creature down. While he is away, his daughter discovers a wounded man near their home. She takes him in and treats him.

However, as time passes family members become paranoid and ponder whether this mysterious figure may be a threat to their safety. This independent horror flick was very well received. A small group found the movie mean-spirited and had a difficult time identifying what it was trying to say. However, almost everyone else was impressed by the performances and called it an engrossing, disturbing, slow-burn of a film that really gets under the skin.

It stars Camille Sullivan, Summer H. Howell, Devon Sawa and Nick Stahl.

NIGHT OF THE SICARIO: A young Colombian girl in the witness protection program prepares to testify against a powerful drug cartel. As the trial approaches, she's taken in by the manager of an assisted living facility. It isn't long afterward that assassins arrive to murder the youth. Naturally, her protector must try to save her from the team of sicarios until assistance arrives.

This "inspirational" independent production has nothing in common with the Benicio del Toro *Sicario* film series. It premiered as a limited release/streaming title a few weeks ago and is now arriving on disc. There aren't many write-ups available, but the ones that have appeared have been negative. They all describe it as a predictable and forgettable effort that features less action than one would hope for and too much talk about religion and faith.

The cast includes Natasha Henstridge, Costas Mandylor, Manny Pérez and Addison Kendall.

NOBODY: This tale follows an average, put-upon man living an uneventful and unexciting life. When his house is broken into, he fights back against the intruders, but his attempt at heroism creates a divide between himself and his family. His act of defiance also draws the attention of a local mobster behind the crime, who targets the brood. Further estranged and feeling unappreciated, the protagonist snaps.

He uses untapped resources to violently fight back against the mafia and those who have taken him for granted. Reaction was very positive toward this action picture with a darkly humorous tone. A tiny contingent called the movie too violent and thought it was nihilistic in tone. Still, the overwhelming majority called it flashy, exciting, darkly humorous and fast-paced with great performances from the entire cast.

Bob Odenkirk, Connie Nielsen, Aleksey Serebryakov, Christopher Lloyd and RZA headline the film.

THE PAPER TIGERS: Three kung-fu prodigies turned middle-aged men play the leads in this action comedy. Life hasn't turned out the way they had planned and the friends find themselves struggling with family duties and dead-end jobs. When their old trainer is discovered dead, members of the trio vow to find out who is responsible and mete out justice ... if they can just spare enough time and work it into their schedules. Critics really seemed to enjoy this independent feature.

There currently is only one negative review for it. This one dismissal complains that the film could have done more with the concept and the storytelling to engage viewers. Everyone else admitted that while the plotting was uncomplicated, the leads were charming and that the movie delivered plenty of low-key laughs. It stars Alain Uy, Ron Yuan, Mykel Shannon Jenkins and Jae Suh Park.

SIBERIA: A damaged man searching for himself decides to visit an isolated cabin in the wintry wilderness. After taking a job running a café, he still finds himself lacking an authentic feeling of peace. The man begins an unusual dogsled journey that takes him into his own memories, dreams and imagination, with the intention of finding himself. The latest collaboration between Abel Ferrara and Willem Dafoe (who have teamed on *New Rose Hotel*, *Go Go Tales*,

4:44 Last Day on Earth

,
Tommaso
and
Pasolini

) split the press right down the middle.

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Half of them stated that the movie was completely inaccessible and unrelatable to the average viewer. Yet the same number was impressed by the pair's willingness to explore uncharted territory and go down a different and trippy path with this narrative. It also features Dounia Sichov and Simon McBurney.

THE UNHOLY: In this horror flick, a hearing-impaired girl sees a vision of the Virgin Mary. She immediately regains her hearing and suddenly has the ability to heal the sick. Naturally, the public begins to mob the youngster, asking her to grant them miracles. In the meantime, a journalist arrives to do a story of the youngster and investigate the claims.

When strange and disturbing events follow, he begins to question who or what has really imbued the girl with powers. Reaction was not particularly good toward this genre film. A small group thought it had some atmosphere and would entertain fans of scary movies. Sadly, the majority claimed the story was dull, the jump scares didn't jolt viewers and the visual effects were unconvincing. The cast includes Jeffrey Dean Morgan, Cricket Brown, William Sadler, Katie Aselton and Cary Elwes.

BLASTS FROM THE PAST!

There are a great many older films getting high definition upgrades this week. Arrow Video has / *rezumi* (1966), a Japanese production about a woman who is kidnapped and turned into a geisha. It isn't long before she decides to use her newfound skills and abilities to manipulate visitors and soon get revenge on those who have done her wrong. The Blu-ray includes an introduction to the feature and commentary track by a Japanese film scholar, a visual essay on the genre, as well as publicity materials.

Many horror fans are familiar with the bloody Italian murder/mystery movies that are identified as giallo pictures. However, not as many are aware that there was also a series of crime movies during this period made in the mold of *Dirty Harry* flicks. These tales were called poliziotteschi films. This week, Arrow is putting out a Blu-ray box set called *Years of Lead: Five Classic Italian Crime Thrillers*. It contains some of the genre's more notable projects, including, *No, the Case is Happily Resolved* (1973), *Savage Three*

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(1975),
Like Rabid Dogs
(1976),
Colt 38 Special Squad
(1976) and
Highway Racer
(1977).

In addition to improved picture quality (the first film listed has been given a 2K upgrade), there are some enlightening extras. They include bonuses like a featurette on the genre, as well as interviews with some of the filmmakers, cast and crew. You'll also get an alternate ending for *No, the Case is Happily Resolved*, in addition to trailers, poster galleries and essays on these titles.

MVD Visual has plenty of fascinating titles as well. *Adam Resurrected* (2008) from writer/director Paul Schrader (*Affliction*

,
First Reformed

) is a drama about Holocaust survivors struggling with the past and living in an asylum. It stars Jeff Goldblum and Willem Dafoe and the movie is considered an underappreciated gem. The Blu-ray includes a director commentary, behind-the-scenes featurette, deleted scenes, a film festival Q & A, and a trailer.

Camino (2015) is an action/thriller about a group of missionaries in the jungles of Colombia who accidentally witness a murder and find themselves being hunted by drug dealers. This Blu-ray comes with plenty of behind-the-scenes featurettes and publicity materials. The distributor also has the bigfoot-themed horror picture *Feed the Gods* (2014). A production featurette and trailer are included on this Blu-ray.

Shout! has some new titles worth mentioning. *Human Nature* (2001) is a comedy from writer Charlie Kaufman (*Being John Malkovich*, *I'm*

Thinking of Ending Things

) and director Michel Gondry (*Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*

) involving an extremely quirky love triangle. It stars Tim Robbins and Patricia Arquette. The Blu-ray arrives with a Gondry interview and other discussions with crew, as well as a trailer.

The distributor has also been rereleasing Studio Ghibli titles from Japan in special Blu-ray Steelbook packaging. This week, they are putting out *The Secret World of Arrietty* (2010) and *The Wind Rises* (2013). All features are the same as in previous releases, but in new metallic cases.

Kino is readying some comedies for the Blu-ray market. One of them, *CB4: The Movie* (1993), was supposed to have been released a few weeks ago, but a production slowdown caused a delay. The Chris Rock comedy is arriving this week and comes with a film historian commentary, as well as interviews with the director and co-writer.

John Hughes completists will be pleased to see *Career Opportunities* (1991) making its Blu-ray debut. It stars Jennifer Connelly and Frank Whaley and is about a young man who finds himself locked in a department store overnight with the girl of his dreams. They end up discussing their personal problems as the night passes. It isn't nearly as good as other movies written by Hughes, but still has its share of fans.

A commentary with a Chicago Critics Film Festival Producer is included on the disc, as well as a trailer.

Stoner-comedy fans will also be happy about the Blu-ray debut of *Half Baked* (1998), starring Dave Chappelle and Jim Bruer. It's about a group of friends who learn that one of their pals has been arrested for unintentionally causing the death of a NYC police horse. They begin selling stolen pot to raise money for his release. This disc comes with a director commentary, ten deleted scenes, an alternate ending, humorous guides for pot-smokers, as well as a trailer and other extras.

On an entirely different note, arthouse label Criterion is putting out *The Signifyin' Works of Marlon Riggs*. This is a package containing seven documentaries and shorts made between 1981 and 2003. They all have an experimental slant from the noted gay, black filmmaker and detail life from his perspective. The press release notes *Tongues United* (1989) and *Black Is ... Black Ain't*

(1994) as being landmark efforts from the director.

All the titles included have been given new high-definition digital masters, a featurette which details the filmmaker's work, four new programs featuring talks with crew members, the Rigg's thesis film, a 1996 documentary on the moviemaker and more.

They also have a Blu-ray of the documentary, *Visions of Eight* (1973). This effort contains a series of shorts on the Munich Olympic Games in 1972. While tragic events involving terrorists occurred during the event, the filmmakers didn't have access and instead were focusing on the games themselves. Directors Miloš Forman, Kon Ichikawa, Claude Lelouch, Juri Ozerov, Arthur Penn, Michael Pfleghar, John Schlesinger and Mai Zetterling all present their takes on various sports featured.

The release comes with a documentary on the collection and background of how it was made, a film historian commentary, a short promotional film, and more.

Genre movie fans can pick up a Blu-ray of the rare 1980s horror film, *The Strangeness* (1985), courtesy of Code Red. It's about a man-eating monster luring victims inside its cavernous home. The movie is noted for its use of stop-motion animation techniques from the '50s when depicting the creature. It has been remastered from its original 16mm vault elements and arrives on Blu-ray with interviews and a commentary track featuring the director and cast.

The disc also includes six short films from the group, a stills gallery, and trailers.

Scorpion has managed to acquire the rights to *Fool for Love* (1985) from director Robert Altman (*M*A*S*H*, *McCabe & Mrs. Miller*, *The Player* , *Gosford Park*). It's a steamy drama starring Kim Basinger and Sam Shepard about a woman's struggling to escape her old-flame. They also have the surfing flick, *For Those Who Think Young* (1964). The story follows a bunch of kids trying to save their club hangout from being closed.

James Darren, Pamela Tiffin, Paul Lynde, Tina Louise, Nancy Sinatra and Bob Denver headline the film.

Horror fans will be thrilled about *The Eurocrypt of Christopher Lee Collection* Blu-ray set from Severin. It contains six titles starring the legendary actor. Specifically, *Sherlock Holmes and the Deadly Necklace* (1962), *Challenge the Devil* (1963), *Castle of the Living Dead* (1964), *Crypt of the Vampire* (1964), and *The Torture Chamber of Dr. Sadism* (1967), as well as *Theater Macabre* (1971-1972), an anthology horror TV series that Lee hosted. Everything has been given either a 2K or 4K restoration and the set comes with multiple film historian commentary tracks and interviews with various participants, as well as plenty of promotional materials.

Looks like a great set for genre fans.

Severin also has some B-movie action pictures coming your way on Blu-ray with upgraded 2K transfers. *Invaders of the Lost Gold* (1982) is about a group of treasure seekers looking for loot hidden by a Japanese platoon during the last days of WWII. Unfortunately, instead of riches, the team discovers cannibals. *Strike Commando* (1986) is an Italian knock-off of the hit *Rambo: First Blood Part II*.

The story follows a one-man war machine as he fights Vietcong soldiers and merciless Russians in the jungle. This effort was written by Claudio Fragasso (*Troll 2*), so expect some unintentional laughs.

Strike Commando 2 (1988), finds the same cast and crew heading abroad and taking on diamond and drug smugglers, as well as rogue CIA and Russian agents. All three of these films have been given

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new 2K restorations.

Both *Strike Commando* flicks contain the theatrical and extended cuts and there are numerous interviews with talent behind the scenes and in front of the camera. Sounds like it could provide some cheesy fun.

The low-budget genre picture *Hanger* (2009) is also arriving on Blu-ray as a 2-disc Collector's Edition through Uearthed Films. It's a revenge/exploitation picture about a fetus who survives an abortion and returns as an adult to enact vengeance on those who attempted to terminate him. The disc includes 16 hours of bonuses featuring commentary tracks, deleted scenes, outtakes, a making-of, and other extras.

Finally, Warner Archive is delivering a couple more titles in their made-to-order Blu-ray line. *Cha in Lightning*

(1950) is an adventure film with Humphrey Bogart about a test pilot who is suspicious that his company's new fighter isn't up to snuff. Of course, the possibility of dying makes him uncomfortable about taking it into the air and finding out if he's right.

And if you're a fan of Elvis Presley and/or musicals, you can also pick up *It Happened at the World's Fair* (1963) in high definition. In it, Presley heads to Seattle and visits the famous event, trying to earn some money playing poker to pay off his debts while he's there. Apparently, a very young Kurt Russell appears briefly as an angry child who kicks the musician in the shins. Soundtrack songs include "Relax," "Take Me to the Fair" and "Cotton Candy Land."

YOU KNOW, FOR KIDS!

If you need something to entertain the kids, it looks like Studio Ghibli is the only way to go.

The Secret World of Arrietty (2010) Steelbook

ON THE TUBE!

And here are all the TV-themed releases coming your way!

Halifax: Retribution (PBS)

Human: The World Within (PBS)

Nature: The Leopard Legacy (PBS)

The Umbrella Academy: Season 1

When Calls the Heart Double-Feature: What the Heart Wants & Before My Very Eyes

VISIT: WWW.CINEMASTANCE.COM