

Blu-ray/DVD Roundup for Nov 19, 2021

By Glenn Kay

For the Sun

Welcome to another look at some of the new titles arriving on Blu-ray and DVD. This week is chock-full of big Hollywood blockbusters and interesting independent fare. So, if you can't or shouldn't be heading out to the movies right now, be sure to give one of these titles a try!

BIG NEW RELEASES!

THE BEE GEES: HOW CAN YOU MEND A BROKEN HEART: Most are familiar with brothers Barry, Maurice and Robin Gibb as The Bee Gees, one of the world's biggest and most successful bands. This documentary chronicles their beginnings and meteoric rise to the top of the charts during the disco era. The last surviving member, Barry, shares his memories along with archival interview footage of his brothers. Overall, critics were very taken by this picture.

A lone voice or two complained that the movie couldn't effectively distill their lives and 50-year career into two hours. However, everyone else stated that the film was a wonderful tribute and that it did an excellent job of displaying how the subjects wrote material and dealt with success, as well as how their family relationship changed over time.

CANDYMAN: The iconic horror icon returns in this follow-up that sets events in the present day. An artist in Chicago decides to investigate the history of Candyman (including the events depicted in the 1992 original film), traveling to the now gentrified neighborhood of Cabrini Green. He begins creating new work inspired by the figure, but his acts test his own sanity and inspire a series of slayings with a similar bent. The press generally enjoyed this chiller.

A small contingent complained that it didn't quite match the original and thought that while the ideas were intriguing, they weren't executed in an effective manner. Still, the majority stated that the film was tense, had important things to say about class and social justice and was strikingly photographed. It stars Yahya Abdul-Mateen II, Teyonah Parris, Nathan Stewart-Jarrett and Colman Domingo.

CAVEAT: A loner with memory issues finds some work doing a very unusual job for his landlord. He is asked to attend to the man's niece for a period of time. The lead accepts and immediately finds himself in a very strange situation. He is asked to dress in a leather harness that prevents him from entering other rooms.

Events quickly take a disturbing turn and the lead finds himself trapped in the home and searching for a way out. Notices were generally good for this independent thriller from the UK. A handful of reviews did complain that the story felt stretched out and that it didn't make a lasting impression. However, everyone else said that the film maintained an eerie atmosphere and provided enough chills to earn it a recommendation.

The cast includes Ben Caplan, Jonathan French and Leila Sykes.

CRYPTOZOO: This unique, trippy animated feature for adults follows a team of cryptozoologists hunting down fascinating and bizarre lifeforms. A group set out to capture a dream-eating hybrid creature called a baku. Their work is challenging and they begin to discuss exactly what they should do if they find the creature. Some state that the baku should be in a zoo, while others begin to think it should be left on its own in the wild.

This picture earned more positive reviews than negative ones. Those who were downbeat about it, suggested that the animation style didn't appeal to them and that they struggled to see the point of it all. Still, more said that the movie was completely unique and strange, transfixing them for the entirety of the running time. The voice cast includes Lake Bell, Zoe Kazan, Michael Cera, Louisa Krause, Peter Stormare, Thomas Jay Ryan and Grace Zabriskie.

THE EYES OF TAMMY FAYE: Popular televangelist Tammy Faye Bakker is the subject of this biopic. It chronicles her life with Jim Bakker and their rise from obscurity into wealthy and famous religious show hosts who run their own network. Naturally, their time at the top is short-lived as secrets are revealed and the pair becomes embroiled in criminal investigations. More critics enjoyed this drama than disliked it, although there were a wide variety of opinions on the final results.

Some thought that the subjects were impossible to like and didn't appreciate the movie trying to soften Tammy Faye's image. Regardless, the majority said that despite its tendency to forgive its central character for her misdeeds, the movie was intriguing and the lead performance was phenomenal. It features Jessica Chastain, Andrew Garfield, Cherry Jones, Fredric Lehne and Vincent D'Onofrio.

FLAG DAY: Based on a true story, this tale involves a father living a wild and reckless lifestyle as a counterfeiter, bank robber, and con artist. He does this in order to make ends meet and provide for his daughter. While the youngster is initially taken by her dad's incredible criminal skills and ability to make life seem like a thrilling adventure, she soon begins to question his actions. The daughter must eventually find a way to move forward on her own.

Write-ups were mixed for this drama. A sizable number commented that the two leads worked extremely well together and that the picture was an interesting character study. Yet slightly more found the story predictable and thought the drama was over-baked and unconvincing. Dylan Penn, Sean Penn, Josh Brolin, Norbert Leo Butz, Dale Dickey and Eddie Marsan headline the feature.

JUNGLE CRUISE: A Disney ride gets a feature film adaptation in this adventure flick. The story follows a researcher desperate to be taken seriously in her search for a tree with incredible medicinal abilities. In order to find it, she and her brother travel to the Amazon and hire a boat captain with a questionable past. Together, they venture into uncharted waters while being chased by others hoping to find the amazing tree.

Reviews were slightly more pleasant than ungrateful for this feature. A portion panned the movie as being an overlong and unmemorable adventure with corny jokes that miss the mark. Still, a larger group thought the performers were entertaining to watch and that despite its flaws, it was enjoyable to watch. It stars Dwayne Johnson, Emily Blunt, Edgar Ramirez, Jack Whitehall, Jesse Plemons and Paul Giamatti.

THE LOST LEONARDO: This documentary details the wild story of the painting known as “Salvator Mundi” by Leonardo da Vinci. It was considered the first painting by the artist to be discovered in more than a century. Apparently, a piece of art was initially purchased from a New Orleans auction house for a small sum before a restorer noticed older brushstrokes underneath. The work was identified as a da Vinci and quickly put on an auction block again (selling for \$450 million dollars), but soon questions began to arise about its authenticity.

Filmmakers detail exactly what happened and ultimately whether or not the painting was forged. Reaction toward this picture was fantastic. One or two claimed that the movie failed to grab them. But literally everyone else called it exciting and stated that they felt like they were watching an elaborate art heist movie as the characters and their motivations were revealed.

NEVER BACK DOWN: REVOLT: The original “Never Back Down” was a martial arts film released back in 2008. It didn’t make a big splash during its initial run, but apparently sold well enough to spawn a few direct-to-disc sequels. This is the fourth in the series and follows a new set of characters, specifically, a woman who is kidnapped by sinister forces. She is forced to compete in a series of underground fights and must win in order to find freedom.

Of course, one assumes that after doing so, she would also likely have to beat up the villains in order to escape their clutches. The movie is debuting on disc and there aren’t many reviews available for it yet. So, like others of its kind, one should approach the picture with caution. The cast includes James Faulkner, Hannah Al Rashid and Olivia Popica.

OUR LADIES: Due to the pandemic, some international films appeared to get lost in the shuffle and are only now arriving on shelves. One example is this coming-of-age comedy from the UK that has been waiting to be noticed since 2019. Set in Scotland during the 1990s, the plot involves a group of Catholic school girls who are sent to Edinburgh to compete in a choir competition. However, they instead use the trip to party and hook up with boys in the big city.

The picture from writer/director Michael Caton-Jones (*Scandal*, *Rob Roy*) received excellent reviews. There were only a couple of reviews that dismissed the movie as amusing, but little more than that. All others wrote that it was a zippy and laugh-filled ride with plenty of entertainingly wince-inducing moments and great performances. It stars Abigail Lawrie, Rona Morison, Marli Siu, Tallulah Greive and Alex Hope.

PRISONERS OF THE GHOSTLAND: An incarcerated bank robber in a violent and dystopian frontier town is broken out of prison by a powerful warlord. It seems that the leader's granddaughter has gone missing and the criminal has been recruited to locate her. To make sure he doesn't simply flee the scene, the protagonist is strapped into a leather suit that will explode within a few days, if he doesn't complete his mission. The press appeared to generally enjoy this action B-movie.

A number of write-ups noted that the story had plot holes and that the movie didn't end up making the most of its wild and crazy concept. Still, most wrote that while it failed to match the same heights as some of the star's more recent features, it managed to provide a few memorably wacky moments worth witnessing. Nicolas Cage, Sofia Boutella, Nick Cassavetes, Bill Moseley and Tak Sakaguchi headline the feature.

RUNT: A bullied high school student becomes frustrated and upset after enduring endless torment. He asks a student out on a date and is turned down, but manages to make a connection with another classmate. After the nasty students take action and do damage to the lead's new friend, the infuriated lead plots revenge. His acts impress some local hooligans, but with no helpful support or individuals to turn to, the protagonist ends up unleashing an even uglier and more violent side.

Some critics thought that the film didn't work and needed a lot more nuance in handling some of the heavier story elements. Still, slightly more reviewers thought the feature was well-intentioned, felt authentic, made some good points about its topic and benefitted from good performances. The cast includes Cameron Boyce, Brianna Hildebrand, Nicole Elizabeth Berger, Aramis Knight and Jason Patric.

WIFE OF A SPY: This Japanese feature is set in Kobe just before the start of World War II. A local merchant and filmmaker fears that his country is headed in the wrong direction, after witnessing and filming disturbing content on the streets. He and his wife are then visited by an old friend who has become a member of the military police. The guest immediately charms the wife and warns her that her husband is a seditionist.

This leads to a serious of confrontations between the three characters. Reaction toward this picture was very positive. A handful of reviewers believed the movie was too melodramatic and

that the narrative needed tightening. However, the consensus suggested that the film was a beautifully shot and interesting meditation on how paranoia and fear influence behavior.

It features Yu Aoi, Issei Takahashi and Masahiro Higashide.

YAKUZA PRINCESS: Set in Sao Paulo, Brazil, this tale follows an orphan who learns that she is the heiress to half of the big Yakuza crime syndicate operating in the city. Naturally, the other half is less-than-pleased by this news and decides to kill the woman. She forms an unlikely alliance with a sword-wielding stranger with amnesia. Together, they fight off the mob so that the lead can take her rightful place within the organization.

The press largely panned this action picture. A few thought that while the story was weak, the impressive fight sequences did enough for it to qualify it as a guilty pleasure. Everyone else said it tried to squeeze too much into its story and did nothing well enough, resulting in a choppy and ineffective action picture. It stars Masumi, Jonathan Rhys-Meyers and Tsuyoshi Ihara.

BLASTS FROM THE PAST!

If there wasn't enough to choose from in the new release category, there are also some great older movies receiving new transfers and discs. Blue Underground is presenting "Maniac Cop 2" (1990) and "Maniac Cop 3: Badge of Silence" (1993). These are both two-disc special editions that include 4K Ultra HD and Blu-rays of the films. For those unfamiliar with the titles, they are sequels to the 1988 cult hit "Maniac Cop" about a disfigured and vengeful ex-cop roaming the streets of New York and murdering just about everyone he comes across (often overreacting to misdemeanors in a big way).

In the first sequel, the title figure is still rampaging on the streets, but makes a friend of a local homeless person. When his pal is arrested, the maniac goes on a killing spree to break him out of jail. This is actually a very well-made B-movie filled with impressive action and stunts that are as good as any big Hollywood production. If memory serves, it's the best movie in the franchise.

Besides the stunning new transfer, the disc includes a commentary track with director William

Lustig and filmmaker/fan Nicolas Winding Refn (“Drive”). There’s also a making-of, a Q&A session with the moviemaker, a deleted scene, as well as all kinds of publicity materials.

The third movie follows the psychotic police officer as he tries to clear the sullied name of an innocent female cop. This title suffered from some behind-the-scenes issues and director Lustig was unhappy with the end result, but at least completists can now pick it up with improved picture quality. The bonuses include a new commentary track with Alan Smithee (presumably, William Lustig) who explains and details all of the troubles that occurred on set and in the editing room. It comes with a making-of, deleted and extended scenes, a trailer, poster and still gallery and more.

Arrow is putting out a Blu-ray of the Jimmy Stewart western, “The Far Country” (1954). It follows cattle farmers facing off against a sinister judge. This release includes a 2019 restoration of the film from the original camera negative, a film scholar commentary, a documentary on the movie, and an appraisal of the movie and the work of its director by a critic. You’ll also get a stills gallery and a trailer.

The distributor also is releasing a Blu-ray of the Japanese feature, “Sailor Suit and Machine Gun” (1981). It’s a wild one about a teenage delinquent schoolgirl who inherits an entire Yakuza clan and causes plenty of trouble for all who interact with the new leader. You’ll get the original theatrical version and a director’s cut that includes an extra 20 minutes of footage. There’s also a lengthy featurette that discusses the film’s legacy, trailers and TV spots, an image gallery, the original press kit for the movie and a booklet with essays on the title.

Shout! has a Blu-ray of “M. Butterfly” (1993) from noted director David Cronenberg (“The Dead Zone,” “The Fly,” “A History of Violence,” and “Eastern Promises”). It stars Jeremy Irons as a French diplomat who falls for a Peking opera singer and ends up entangled in espionage. The disc comes with a film expert commentary, an interview with Cronenberg, and a trailer.

Kino is making Blu-rays of the thrillers “The Accused” (1949) and “Among the Living” (1941) available. Each comes with a film scholar commentary and a trailer.

They also have a 2K restoration of the Charles Bronson action picture “Breakheart Pass” (1975). It’s a well-regarded mystery/western set aboard a speeding locomotive and the disc

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includes a film historian commentary. Speaking of westerns, you can pick up a Blu-ray of “Chato’s Land” (1972) starring Bronson and Jack Palance. Bronson plays a man with Apache heritage who kills a vicious sheriff in self-defense.

He is forced to go on the run and clear his name. This Blu-ray presents a 2K master of the feature, a movie expert commentary, and an interview with the screenwriter.

You can also pick up Blu-rays of the gangster movie “Deported” (1950) and the thriller, “Night Has a Thousand Eyes” (1948). Both of these titles include commentary tracks with movie experts and trailers.

“The Deceivers” (1988) is being made available on Blu-ray from the Cohen Media Group. It’s a drama set in India during the 1820s and details the work of William Savage, a man who located and stopped a secret cult of Thugees from murdering and robbing many in the country. The film stars Pierce Brosnan and has been given an all-new restoration. It comes with original trailers.



Criterion is proud to deliver a Blu-ray of the David Lynch drama, “Mulholland Drive” (2001). This surreal flick follows an aspiring actress who gets in over her head after moving to Hollywood. The strange and eerie picture earned Lynch an Academy Award nomination and the film won various awards after its premiere. This release includes a 4K Ultra HD disc and a regular Blu-ray of the film, interviews with the cast and crew, and on-set footage.

If you enjoy Hong Kong martial arts films, then you can’t go wrong with the “Once Upon a Time in China: The Complete Films” Blu-ray boxed set. It includes five features made between 1991 and 1994 that detail the adventures of a mythic heroic figure named Wong Fei-hung. These

period movies are excellent, particularly the first three that star Jet Li as the main character. The set includes with multiple audio tracks for all the features, as well as a documentary on the series, interviews with cast and crew and much, much more.

It even comes with a sixth bonus title from 1997, "Once Upon a Time in China and America," that sees Jet Li return to the Wong Fei-hung role and leave China for the Old West.

Code Red has a Blu-ray of "National Lampoon's Movie Madness" (1983), also known as, "Movie Madness." It's a parody featuring various shorts based on popular films of the era and has plenty of familiar faces in the cast, including Peter Riegert, Diane Lane, Rhea Perlman, Christopher Lloyd and Fred Willard.

Milestone is releasing a Blu-ray of the documentary "The Mystery of Picasso" (1956), a collaboration between Picasso and acclaimed filmmaker Henri-George Clouzot ("Les Diaboliques"). The director captures the artist creating real works of art, often placing the camera behind the canvas with light pouring through and capturing each brush stroke. The movie has been given a 4K restoration and comes with two commentaries from art experts, an interview with Picasso's daughter and a trailer.

Discount line Mill Creek Entertainment is presenting a 20th anniversary of the teen musical comedy, "Josie and the Pussycats" (2001). It's a live-action adaptation of the popular Saturday morning cartoon series from the 1970s. This film was a box office flop, but seems to have gained a following over the years due to numerous cable airings. The disc contains a director and producer commentary, behind-the-scenes featurette, deleted scenes, music videos, and more.

Horror fans will be thrilled to see "The Evil Dead Groovy Collection" boxed set from Lionsgate. It contains the first two "Evil Dead" feature films and all three seasons of the cable show "Ash vs Evil Dead" on both 4K Ultra HD and Blu-ray. All of the discs include hours of bonus materials that will thrill fans. The only thing that this set doesn't have is "Army of Darkness" (1992), the third movie in the series from Universal Pictures.

Paramount is presenting the "Brady Bunch: 2-Movie Collection" on Blu-ray. It contains both the 1995 and 1996 comedies based on the early 1970s TV series. The first movie in particular is a

great deal of fun, especially for those familiar with the original show.

The studio is also delivering a 75th Anniversary Edition Blu-ray of the holiday classic, "It's a Wonderful Life" (1946). It contains two cuts of the movie, 45-minutes of previously released bonuses, as well as an unusual extra. According to press releases, this disc includes 10 collectible recipe cards from publisher Insight Editions' "It's a Wonderful Life: The Official Bailey Family Cookbook," featuring cuisine inspired by the film.

Additionally, the high-end Paramount Presents line has a couple of new additions. The first is the period epic "Ragtime" (1981) from Oscar-winning director Milos Forman ("One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" and "Amadeus"). The story involves a black pianist who becomes embroiled in the lives of an upper-class white family in New York. For its 40th anniversary, the feature has been re-mastered from a 4K film transfer.

This 2-disc Blu-ray contains a sparkling new transfer and a never-before-seen director's work print of the movie. It also comes with deleted and extended scenes, a new conversation about the film, a previously recorded director's commentary and more.

The same line is also presenting a new edition of the trippy Tom Cruise drama, "Vanilla Sky" (2001). It also features a 4K re-master, a special focus on writer/director Cameron Crowe ("Say Anything," "Jerry Maguire," "Almost Famous"), a commentary with Crowe and composer Nancy Wilson, an alternate ending, numerous featurettes, a discussion with Paul McCartney on the Oscar-nominated song he wrote for the movie, a gag reel and much more.

Samuel Goldwyn Films is rereleasing "The Passion of the Christ" (2004), which has been out-of-print on Blu-ray for a few years. Sony is presenting the comedy, "Christmas with the Kranks" (2004) on Blu-ray. Additionally, they have upgraded "Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within" (2001) and are putting out a 4K Ultra HD and Blu-ray combo package.

With the recent Blu-ray release of "Fast 9: The Fast Saga," Universal has decided to put together the "Fast & Furious: 9-Movie Collection" boxed set which contains all of the movies in the series (with the exception of the 2019 spin-off, "Fast and Furious Presents: Hobbs & Shaw"). The features should be the same, but it all comes in a compact boxed set.

Speaking of boxed sets, Warner Bros. is making the “Mad Max Anthology 4K Ultra HD and Blu-ray” boxed set available to customers. It contains extra sharp transfers of all four films in the series. And, if there’s one title in particular you happen to be fond of, you can buy each one separately.

Finally, Warner Archive has a couple of new made-to-order titles that you can pick up through Amazon. They include the classic “National Velvet” (1944) with Elizabeth Taylor and the war veteran drama “Some Came Running” (1958), starring Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, and Shirley MacLaine.

YOU KNOW, FOR KIDS!

Here are some titles that may appeal to youngsters in the household.

“Barbie Dreamhouse Adventures” (TV series) DVD

ON THE TUBE!

And here are some new TV-themed releases coming your way.

“Barbie Dreamhouse Adventures” (TV Series) DVD

“Charmed” The Final Season

“Deliver by Christmas” (Hallmark TV-movie) DVD

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“Hinterland” The Complete Series

“Kevin Can F**k Himself” Season 1

“This is Us” Season 5 DVD

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