

Blu-ray/DVD Roundup for Feb. 4, 2022

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
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Welcome to another look at highlights arriving on Blu-ray and DVD. This is another great week, with some high-profile titles and some interesting smaller films arriving. So, if you can't, or shouldn't be heading out to the movies this week, be sure to give one of these titles a try!

BIG NEW RELEASES!

AILEY: This documentary explores the life of Alvin Ailey, an American dancer, director, choreographer and activist who founded his own performance company. He also created a school famed for nurturing black artists that detailed African-American experiences. Using

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archival footage and interviews with those who knew the man, the movie attempts to give a detailed portrait of the private figure and his many accomplishments. Critics found this non-fiction feature to be interesting and illuminating.

A small handful complained that the filmmakers were too much in awe of their subject and that the film could have delved deeper into his personality. Still, the overwhelming majority called it an impressive portrait that contained incredible dancing footage and some enlightening, never-before-heard audio from the man himself. For the time being, this is a DVD only release.

CLIFFORD THE BIG RED DOG: Based on the famous children's book series, this tale follows the adventures of a giant red pooch. The story involves a young girl who lives in New York City. After visiting an animal rescue tent and being told by the owner that a puppy there will grow based on how much love he receives, the dog stows away in her bag and expands to massive proportions. Naturally, this causes plenty of problems for the girl, especially when a biotech company decides to kidnap the dog for study.

The press was split on this title, although it earned slightly more recommendations than pans. Those who disliked it wrote that the CGI effects weren't convincing and that the story was bland and predictable. Slightly more called it an effective and straightforward family flick that was well-paced and offered a few laughs. It stars Darby Camp, Jack Whitehall, Tony Hale, Izaac Wang, John Cleese and Sienna Guillory.

DEADLOCK: The latest low-budget, direct-to-disc (and streaming sites) action feature involves a group of mercenaries out for vengeance against the government. They decide to accomplish their goal by breaking into a power plant, taking the entire staff hostage and threatening to cause a disaster. Little do they know that a retired, elite army ranger is nearby to stop them and save the day. There aren't a great many write-ups for this title yet, but the ones that do appear online haven't been favorable.

Some of them simply call it a "Die Hard" rip-off. Other articles note that while the movie may feature the star of the previously-mentioned action classic picture in a major role (as the villain), this was a flat and unmemorable thriller that isn't worth anyone's time. It is being made available

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exclusively on DVD. The cast includes Patrick Muldoon, Bruce Willis, Matthew Marsden, Michael DeVorzon and Ava Paloma.

GHOSTBUSTERS: AFTERLIFE: Serving as a sequel to the 1984 and 1989 films “Ghostbusters” and “Ghostbusters II” and directed by the son of original filmmaker Ivan Reitman, this feature begins with a single mother arriving in a small town with her two teenage children. After some strange supernatural events are witnessed, the kids discover that they have a connection to a member of the original team of paranormal researchers and end up hunting down a malevolent spirit. Reaction was upbeat toward this follow-up, although it did have its detractors. About a third of reviews called it overly sentimental and holding the original films in too high a regard.

Still, the majority thought that the film was an enjoyable and heartwarming sequel that paid proper tribute to the original cast while introducing some enjoyable new elements. It seems as if those who were especially fond of the first movie appreciated more of what this title delivered. Carrie Coon, Paul Rudd, Finn Wolfhard, McKenna Grace, Logan Kim, Celeste O'Connor, Bill Murray, Dan Aykroyd, Ernie Hudson, Annie Potts and Sigourney Weaver headline the film.

HIVE: Based on a true story, this drama follows a woman whose husband is declared dead after serving in the war in Kosovo. Struggling to get by, she decides to unite a community of widows in her hometown, so they can launch their own business together. They are successful, but are met with open hostility from a group of nasty men in the village. Tensions rise as the widows attempt to empower themselves and fight back.

Reaction was very positive toward this foreign-language drama. At present it is hard to find any negative reviews for the picture. They have all praised the lead performance and described the movie as a stark and powerfully-made feature about the mistreatment and struggles of women. For the time being, this picture is only being released on DVD.

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It features Yllka Gashi, Çun Lajçi, Aurita Agushi and Kumrije Hoxha.

BLASTS FROM THE PAST!

If you're looking for something a bit older, there are plenty of options. Criterion is presenting "Written on the Wind" (1956) on Blu-ray. This drama stars Rock Hudson, Lauren Bacall, and Robert Stack. The story involves a geologist who arrives at the estate of an oil-rich Texas family and falls for the matriarch of the household.

It leads to tension and threats from others within the family. The movie won an Oscar for Best Supporting Actress and received nominations in a few other categories, too. This disc contains a 2K restoration of the film, a 2008 documentary on the production and its director, Douglas Sirk ("All That Heaven Allows"), a discussion with a film scholar about the movie, and other melodramas, as well as some trailers.

Kino recently put out "Invasion of the Body Snatchers" (1978) in a 4K Ultra HD / Blu-ray package. In this remake of the 1950s feature, Donald Sutherland, Brooke Adams, Jeff Goldblum and Veronica Cartwright square off against the sinister alien pod-people. The distributor is now also making a regular Blu-ray of the title available for those who don't want the set with the 4K version. This Blu-ray disc comes with director and film historian commentaries.

If you haven't seen the feature, it is a great science-fiction/horror flick well worth seeking out.

If you have an elaborate 4K Ultra HD set-up at home, Warner Brothers is releasing the "Mad Max Anthology" 4K Ultra HD + Digital box set. It includes upgraded picture quality on the film and loads of extras. If you simply want to stick with Blu-ray, they are also putting out "The Road

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Warrior” (1981) aka “Mad Max 2” separately in a 4K Ultra HD and Blu-ray package.

YOU KNOW, FOR KIDS!

If you’re looking for entertainment for small tykes, there’s plenty to choose from this week.

“Baby Shark’s Big Show! Super Shark” (Nickelodeon) DVD

“Blaze and the Monster Machines: Dino Derby” (Nickelodeon) DVD

“Clifford the Big Red Dog”

“Gabby’s Dollhouse: Cat-Tastic Dance Along” DVD

“Peek Zoo” DVD

“Sesame Street: Elmo’s World – All Around the Neighborhood” (DVD)

ON THE TUBE!

And you'll find all of the latest TV-themed releases listed below.

"The 27-Hour Day" (Hallmark Channel Movie) DVD

"The Baker's Son" (Hallmark Channel Movie) DVD

"Doctor Who: The Web of Fear" (BBC)

"Midsomer Murders" Series 22 (Blu-ray)

"Peek Zoo" DVD

"Power Book III: Raising Kanan" Season 1 DVD

"Vienna Blood" Season 2 DVD

VISIT: WWW.CINEMASTANCE.COM

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