

Welcome to another look at highlights coming your way on Blu-ray and DVD. After a quiet edition, things have certainly picked up again. There is plenty of new material in a wide variety of genres. So, if you can't make it out to the movies this week or you shouldn't be out in public, be sure to give one of these titles a try!

BIG NEW RELEASES!

9 BULLETS: In this action/thriller, a woman retires from her career as a burlesque dancer after landing a publishing deal to write her memoirs. When her neighbor is killed by mobsters, she agrees to drive the son of the deceased to surviving family members in South Dakota. The lead doesn't like kids, but begins to feel some sympathy for the boy while on the road and must protect him when assassins appear, including the head of the criminal organization (who happens to be a man she once dated). This title appears to be debuting on disc in North America. A few reviews from abroad have popped up online, but they haven't been positive. Most have called the film dull, routine and awkwardly put together, suggesting it wastes a good cast and unique concept. It features Lena Headey, Sam Worthington, Dean Scott Vazquez and Barbara Hershey.

ALIENS, CLOWNS & GEEKS: Many know of film composer Danny Elfman and his work scoring and writing songs for popular films like "Batman," "Good Will Hunting," "The Nightmare Before Christmas," "Big Fish," and many others. His brother Richard Elfman is also an independent filmmaker who specializes in very quirky and oddball cult pictures. This effort follows an out-of-work actor who stumbles upon a dimensional portal and ends up caught in the middle of an epic war between clowns and aliens. Those in the press who wrote up the movie got a kick out of it. They called it a completely unique and totally outlandish comedy that was a whole lot of fun to watch. The title is arriving this week exclusively on DVD and a Blu-ray will follow on June 21. The cast includes Bodhi Elfman, Rebecca Forsythe, French Stewart, George Wendt, Malcolm Foster Smith, Martin Klebba and Verne Troyer.

ASCENSION: Finding purpose in life and what it means to be living the "Chinese Dream" is the subject of this documentary. It explores some of the contrasts between China's political system and the wants of its citizens. In particular, the contrast between a country that wants to prioritize productivity and innovation and its somewhat individualistic citizens who are seemingly pursuing wealth and power. Critics wrote very highly of this feature. It has only received one negative

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review in this part of the world. That particular write-up complained that the movie didn't make its point as strongly and ultimately felt like a travel advertisement. Everyone else stated that the film was intriguing throughout and offered some interesting and humanistic insights about the country and the current attitudes of its citizens.

CATCH THE FAIR ONE: A former championship boxer sets out on a personal mission after learning that her younger sister has disappeared. After two obsessive years of searching, she discovers that her sibling was likely the target of human sex traffickers. To find out exactly what happened, the lead goes undercover on the streets, hoping to be kidnapped by those responsible. Along the way, she comes into conflict with shady personalities who don't know about her hidden physical abilities. Response was very positive towards this independent feature. A small contingent complained that after a powerful first half, the story lost its momentum and left them disappointed. Still, the overwhelming consensus was that the movie was an authentic and powerful drama with a great lead performance that effectively addressed a horrible and disturbing issue. It stars Kali Reis, Daniel Henshall, Tiffany Chu, Michael Drayer, Kimberly Guerrero and Kevin Dunn.

COMPARTMENT NO. 6: Set largely aboard a train, this tale involves a Finnish woman who decides to leave her lover in Moscow. In order to make a hasty exit from the city, she boards a train heading to the arctic port of Murmansk. It's a long ride and the protagonist is forced to spend her time with other travelers in her compartment, including a Russian miner. The group discuss their personal histories and the conversations force all of them to face truths about themselves and their personal relationships. Reviews were strong for this foreign-language title. A handful did comment that the film was contrived and that they had difficulty finding real meaning in the events presented. All others stated that the characters were very well-written and believable, noting that the movie was charming and that they quickly warmed up to all of the individuals involved. Seidi Haarla and Yuriy Borisov headline the film.

THE CONTRACTOR: In this espionage movie, a Special Forces Sergeant is unceremoniously discharged from the US Army. Desperate for cash to support his family, he agrees to join a private underground military force. The job he is hired for doesn't go as planned and the protagonist is soon being hunted by the very same men who hired him. Notices for this picture were split down the middle. Almost half stated that the film was efficient, tense and featured some decent action scenes. They also complimented the lead performer for his work as a soldier wracked with guilt for past mistakes. Just as many (and a few more) suggested that the script wasn't unique enough to engage them and that the overall results were bland and unmemorable. It stars Chris Pine, Ben Foster, Gillian Jacobs, Eddie Marsan, JD Pardo and Kiefer Sutherland.

DEFINING MOMENTS: This independent comedy presents a series of eight individual stories featuring characters dealing with life-altering decisions that will ultimately change who they are. A few examples include a man who has to decide whether to settle down or leave his girlfriend, a woman who visits her estranged father in the hopes of reconnecting, and a lady who receives unexpected news that she is pregnant. There aren't a lot of write-ups available for the movie and critics weren't particularly kind to it. The ones that have appeared online and in print suggest that the humor doesn't work and that the movie is a misfire. They say it wouldn't have been released at cinemas were it not for a lack of available titles to put out during the pandemic. This is a DVD-only release. The cast includes Burt Reynolds (in his final film role), Sienna Guillory, Graham Greene, Tammy Blanchard and Shawn Roberts.

ERASER: REBORN: Some 25 years after the 1996 Arnold Schwarzenegger film "Eraser," this direct-to-disc action picture attempts to reboot the franchise with an all-new cast. A US Marshal who specializes in Witness Protection and making people disappear must protect the wife of a mafia boss who is testifying against the crime organization. The lead must use every trick in the book, as well as a few new ones, to keep her safe while assassins hunt them down. Again, there haven't been many write-ups for this title yet and the ones that have appeared online from international territories aren't upbeat. They suggest that the action is capably shot but that the story is routine and that the characters aren't memorable enough to make the flick worth watching. Dominic Sherwood, Jacky Lai, McKinley Belcher III and Eddie Ramos headline the feature.

THE FEAST: A businessman and a neighboring farmer are invited to dinner at the home of a wealthy Welsh family who are trying to sell their mine. After an unexpected guest arrives, the situation becomes increasingly distressing as the strange individual starts to unintentionally unravel everyone's plans. Things become increasingly violent as events progress. The press gave this independent horror flick high marks. A handful suggested that while the concept was interesting, what followed was predictable and simplistically delivered. Regardless, most complimented the mood and atmosphere as being disturbing and unsettling. They also were impressed by the performances and called the film an effective critique of corporations destroying the environment. It features Annes Elwy, Nia Roberts, Julian Lewis Jones and Lisa Palfrey.

FORTRESS: SNIPER'S EYE: This is a sequel to the 2021 direct-to-disc feature "Fortress," which followed a retired CIA agent and his adult son hiding in a high-tech bunker and fighting off their old enemies. After escaping with their lives, the two men decide to rebuild their relationship. Things go haywire when the younger man's wife is kidnapped. The heroes team up

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once again to track her down and wipe out the threat. Like the previous entry, reviews for the movie were generally terrible. The majority have called the film badly written and dim-witted from beginning to end. One or two even suggested that the follow-up is harder to watch now, because it feels like producers were exploiting the co-star's illness and need for cash. Jesse Metcalfe, Bruce Willis, Chad Michael Murray and Ser'Darius Blain take on the lead roles.

MARVELOUS AND THE BLACK HOLE: A teenage delinquent is at the center of this coming-of-age comedy. With no one willing to deal with the troublemaker, the youngster finds an unlikely friend in a surly magician. While assisting the gruff performer, the lead deals with her inner demons and finds new purpose in life after years of acting out. Notices were pretty strong for this independent feature. There was a small contingent who called the movie out for not dealing with the issues raised or characters in a funny, deep or realistic manner. Still, the majority said that while the story itself was simplistic, the performances were good and that the movie ultimately won them over with a few memorable moments and plenty of charm. The cast includes Miya Cech, Rhea Perlman, Leonardo Nam and Kannon.

MIDNIGHT: After finishing work for the evening, a young and hearing-impaired woman decides to head back to her mother's home. As she walks through the dark streets, she accidentally witnesses a serial killer murdering a local. The protagonist flees into the city with an ax-wielding maniac in pursuit. This South Korean feature is apparently notable for having almost no dialogue (the lead character doesn't speak at all). Critics in this part of the world were very impressed by the movie. As of right now, it has yet to receive a single negative write-up. They all commented that while the story was far from complex, the lead was extremely likable, the editing and photography were top-notch and there were plenty of surprises as events played out. For them, these elements made the film a thrilling and pulse-pounding experience. Wi Ha-Joon and Ki-joo Jin headline the movie.

THE NORTHMAN: The big new release of the week is this violent Viking opus based on a legendary Scandinavian folk tale (which was also the basis for "Hamlet," the famous play by William Shakespeare). It follows a noble prince who becomes infuriated when his father, King War-Raven, is murdered by his uncle. He decides to seek revenge on the family member, fighting and bringing down all those who oppose him. Critics got caught up in this period action/drama and rated it highly. A limited number were overwhelmed by the sword-fighting and bloodiness on display and found it difficult to focus on the human drama. Everyone else thought it was a grim but powerful look at honor and vengeance among Vikings and couldn't help but be entertained by the spectacle. It stars Alexander Skarsgård, Nicole Kidman, Claes Bang, Ethan Hawke, Anya Taylor-Joy, Willem Dafoe and Björk.

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BLASTS FROM THE PAST!

Looking for something a little older? This is an incredibly busy week with plenty to choose from. Criterion has a Blu-ray of “The Tales of Hoffmann” (1951) from Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger (“The Red Shoes,” “A Matter of Life and Death,” “Peeping Tom”). This Oscar-nominated operatic drama is about a melancholy poet reflecting on three women he loved and lost in the past. The disc includes a 4K digital restoration of the movie, a commentary from filmmaker and enthusiast Martin Scorsese, an interview with director and fan George A. Romero on the picture, a short made by Michael Powell, as well as many more bonuses.

Director Richard Elfman has a new film just being released on Blu-ray. This week, he also seems to be making another of his older titles available on the format. “Forbidden Zone” (1980) is a wild and crazy film with numerous musical numbers about a woman who travels to an underground kingdom. This version is a director’s cut and “Collector’s Edition” that fixes some of the technical glitches in the movie. You’ll also get a new introduction from the director and featurette with Richard and Danny Elfman (who wrote most of the music for the movie). And it comes with all of the previously released extras from earlier editions, like a filmmaker commentary, a behind-the-scenes documentary, deleted scenes and much more.

Flicker Alley are releasing a Double-Feature Blu-ray containing the film noir titles “The Guilty” (1947) and “High Tide” (1947). Both pictures have been given new restorations and there are documentaries on the features, as well as movie historian commentaries.

If you like low-budget B-movies, Full Moon Features have “Gore in Venice” (1979), a bloody giallo flick about a couple being stalked in Italy by a psychopath. Apparently, this edition contains the fully uncut version of the film.

Kino is delivering the “Film Noir: The Dark Side of Cinema Vol. VII” Blu-ray box-set. It contains “The Boss” (1956), “Chicago Confidential” (1957) and “The Fearmakers” (1958). The titles included have been given 2K upgrades and arrive with film historian commentaries and trailers.

The distributor also has a Blu-ray of the B-movie “Savage Sisters” (1974), in addition to an extras-packed version of the Aussie exploitation flick, “Stunt Rock” (1979). The latter film follows a crazy stunt man who breaks out of the hospital and is hired by a rock band to perform

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outrageous acts while they tour. The movie has been given a new 4K restoration and comes with a director commentary, interview footage from the “Not Quite Hollywood” documentary on Australian exploitation films. You’ll also get multiple interviews and conversations with the filmmaker, select songs from the soundtrack and a trailer.

Mill Creek has a pair of cost-effective Blu-rays hitting store shelves. The first is a “George Clooney Double Feature” containing “The American” (2010) and “Leatherheads” (2008), while the second is the “Martin Short Double Feature” which contains the rom-com “Cross My Heart” (1987) and the comedy, “Pure Luck” (1991) with Danny Glover.

MVD is presenting “The Fabulous Baker Boys” (1989) on Blu-ray. This well-regarded drama about a musical trio and their complicated relationships stars Jeff Bridges, Michelle Pfeiffer and Beau Bridges. The disc includes multiple commentary tracks, behind-the-scenes featurettes, deleted scenes and much more!

They are also putting out a Blu-ray of the ensemble comedy “Highball” (1997) from Noah Baumbach (“The Squid and the Whale,” “Francis Ha,” “Marriage Story”). This early effort involves the goings on at a New York party and features a cast that includes Justine Bateman, Peter Bogdanovich, Rae Dawn Chong, Annabella Sciorra, Ally Sheedy and Eric Stoltz (among many others). Included in this release is a feature-length making-of documentary about how the movie came together.

Paramount is presenting the sequel “Grease 2” (1982) on Blu-ray in special Limited Edition Steelbook packaging. This feature is a retelling of the first movie that essentially swaps the genders of the protagonists. It stars Michelle Pfeiffer and Maxwell Caulfield. Additionally, you can pick up the popular drag-queen comedy “Kinky Boots” (2005) with Chiwetel Ejiofor, as well as the Brad Pitt/Julia Roberts feature, “The Mexican” (2001) in high definition.

The distributor is also putting out a standard Blu-ray edition of the John Hughes production “Pretty in Pink” (1986), alongside “She’s Having a Baby” (1988) and “Some Kind of Wonderful” (1987). The latter title has the very same story as “Pretty in Pink,” but again the story switches the genders of the main characters. And they are releasing the Nicolas Cage comedy/drama “The Weather Man” (2005) on Blu-ray.

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Scorpion has some interesting Blu-rays as well. You can pick up the comedy, "Clifford" (1994), in which Martin Short plays a 10-year-old troublemaker causing great danger for his uncle (played by Charles Grodin). It was not well-received when it first came out, but has slowly developed a cult following over the years. "The Heavenly Kid" (1985) is a coming-of-age drama about a teen who gets coached in the ways of the world by the ghost of a 50s greaser who died in a car crash. This disc includes a director commentary and other bonuses.

You can also purchase the Charles Bronson action picture, "The Mechanic" (1972) on Blu-ray. This edition contains a 2K scan of the movie, multiple commentary tracks and more. And if you're a completist wanting every Dario Argento ("Deep Red," "Suspiria") title, you can now pick up his... bizarre take on "The Phantom of the Opera" (1998) starring Julian Sands and Asia Argento. The Blu-ray includes a film historian commentary, an interview with Dario Argento and some discussions with crew members.

Shout! are presenting a number of Japanese animated features on Blu-ray. "5 Centimeters per Second" (2007) is one effort that includes interviews with the voice cast, storyboards as well as two bonus shorts, "Voices of a Distant Star" and "She and Her Cat," which are all from the same filmmaker. They also have "Children Who Chase Lost Voices" (2011) on Blu-ray. "Only Yesterday" (1991) is arriving from the distributor as a 2-disc Blu-ray and DVD pack. You can also purchase "The Place Promised in Our Early Days" (2004), as well as a "The Tale of The Princess Kaguya" (2013) set which includes both a Blu-ray and DVD of the film. All come with extra features too.

Sony has decided to give two classics the 4K Ultra HD treatment. Both are famous David Lean films and the sets include the 4K versions and a Blu-ray of the film including numerous bonus features. You can now purchase The Bridge on the River Kwai (1957) and Lawrence of Arabia (1962) with the highest-grade picture that has ever been made available for these masterpieces. These sound like must-owns for those with 4K playback systems

While it may not be quite as prestigious as the previous two movies, "The Living Dead at Manchester Morgue" (1974) aka "Let Sleeping Corpses Lie" is a fantastic zombie film and one of the best genre films of its era. Synapse Films are giving it a great new Blu-ray. When a new experimental agricultural process causes the dead to rise in a small town, a hippy couple get blamed for the violence that follows. This Blu-ray includes a new 4K restoration of the feature from the original camera negative. You'll also receive various sound mixes for the movie, two film scholar commentary tracks, a feature-length documentary on the director, multiple discussions on the movie and its importance, as well as tons of publicity materials.

Independent outfit Troma are presenting “Beyond Evil” (1980), “Combat Shock” (1984) and “The First Turn-On!” (1983) on Blu-ray for the first time ever. All of their discs include upgraded image quality and come with tons of bonus features, making them a treat for any B-movie enthusiast.

Universal is delivering a box set called “The Bourne Complete Collection 20th Anniversary.” It’s a Limited Edition that is supposed to contain 4K Ultra HD and Blu-ray discs for all 5-movies in the series (four starring Matt Damon and one with Jeremy Renner).

And Warner Archive are making a few catalog titles available as made-to-order Blu-ray discs. This week’s releases include “The Clock” (1945), “For Me and My Gal” (1942) and “Ziegfeld Girl” (1941). You can order them all through Amazon.

YOU KNOW, FOR KIDS!

There are plenty of options for kids as well. Here is a listing of just some of them...

“The Land Before Time” The Complete TV-Series (Universal) DVD

“Paw Patrol: Rescue Knights” (Nickelodeon) DVD

“Potty Time Plus! Getting Ready with Elmo” (Sesame Street) DVD

“SpongeBob SquarePants” Seasons 5 – 6 (Nickelodeon) DVD

“SpongeBob SquarePants” Seasons 6 – 7 (Nickelodeon) DVD

ON THE TUBE!

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

"Aftertaste" Series 1 (Acorn) DVD

"The Harper House" The Complete Series (CBS Made-on-Demand) DVD

"History's Greatest Mysteries" Seasons 1 & 2 (History) DVD

"La Brea" Season 1 (Universal) Blu-ray

"One Summer" (Hallmark) DVD

"SpongeBob SquarePants" Seasons 5 – 6 (Nickelodeon) DVD

"SpongeBob SquarePants" Seasons 6 – 7 (Nickelodeon) DVD

"Temple" Season 2 (Universal) DVD

"The Wedding Veil Unveiled" (Hallmark) Blu-ray and DVD

Blu-ray/DVD Roundup for June 10, 2022

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