

Welcome to another look at the latest features being released on Blu-ray and DVD. There are definitely some noteworthy ones coming your way in a wide variety of genres. So, if you can't make it out to the movies this week or need to spend some time indoors, be sure to give one of these titles a try!

BIG NEW RELEASES!

ANNE AT 13,000 FT.: This Canadian drama details the life of a 27-year-old daycare worker in Toronto. Socially awkward and moody, viewers witness her bicker and fight with colleagues, as well as struggle to maintain relationships. During one celebration, she decides to go skydiving. The experience of floating above it all immediately changes her attitude... but will it alter her generally negative outlook?

The press responded well to this feature. A small contingent found the difficult lead character hard to relate to and ultimately found the experience disagreeable. However, the vast majority were deeply impressed and thought it was an impressive and complex character study with excellent performances. They also believed that it handled mental health issues in a believable and compelling way.

It stars Deragh Campbell, Dorothea Paas and Matt Johnson.



HAPPENING: Adapted from a well-regarded novel by Annie Ernaux and set in 1963, this tale involves a bright young student in France who discovers she is pregnant. With her body beginning to show a large bump, the working-class lead has to deal with the social ramifications of the situation, as well as deciding whether or not to go through with an abortion. In addition,

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she must finish her exams in order to have any hope of a career.

Notices were exceptional for this French foreign-language feature. In fact, there has only been one negative write-up for the picture. That one had issues with some of the changes from the source material. Everyone else thought that while it was a rough ride for viewers, they said it was expertly told and honest with a subject that was very relevant.

The cast includes Anamaria Vartolomei, Kacey Mottet Klein and Sandrine Bonnaire.



MINIONS: THE RISE OF GRU: This spin-off of the “Despicable Me” series and sequel to the 2015 effort “Minions” is a prequel that picks up with Gru as a 12-year-old boy aspiring to join a team of supervillains. Of course, the sinister group of double-crossing baddies he wants to befriend have no interest in accepting the youngster’s application. When Gru and the Minions find themselves in possession of a wanted artifact, they end up squaring off against the evil organization.

More critics enjoyed this follow-up than panned it. About one-third commented that the end results were uninspired and that it wouldn’t linger in the memory for very long. However, more thought that the picture was a fast-paced effort with good voice-acting that would entertain kids. The voice cast includes Steve Carell, Taraji P. Henson, Michelle Yeoh, RZA, Jean-Claude Van Damme, Lucy Lawless, Dolph Lundgren, Danny Trejo, Russell Brand, Julie Andrews and Alan Arkin.



MRS. HARRIS GOES TO PARIS: A widowed cleaning lady in London sees a couture Dior dress and decides to do whatever it takes to get one of her own. After working, gambling and starving to earn the necessary funds, she heads off to Paris in order to purchase one of these valuable dresses. Her trip becomes something of an adventure as she meets new people and changes her outlook on life.

This period comedy/drama from the UK earned a great deal of raves from reviewers. A tiny number complained that the story was too twee and good-natured, actually turning them off. However, the consensus was that the lead performer and the film itself had an irresistible charm and would leave a smile on the face. They also said that the costumes were stunning and that the cinematography was gorgeous. Lesley Manville, Isabelle Huppert, Jason Isaacs, Anna Chancellor and Lambert Wilson.

THE NAN MOVIE: Based on a popular sketch comedy show in the UK, this effort follows an outrageous, foul-mouthed grandmother and her exasperated family. It begins with her grandson attempting to reconnect the lead with her sister. The two head out on a road trip from London to Dublin, getting in crazy situations along the way as Nan causes trouble.

This title was uniformly panned by reviewers. Sadly, all of them suggested that this character had no business starring in a feature-length film, that her shenanigans wore thin quickly and that the movie was unfunny and poorly put-together. Apparently, word online is that there was trouble behind the scenes as well - the director tried to have her name taken off the film after the producers reshot large portions of the movie.

This is a DVD-only release. Catherine Tate, Matthew Horne, Katherine Parkinson and Parker Sawyers headline the film

PARADISE HIGHWAY: After discovering that the life of her convict brother is being threatened by a prison gang, a trucker is forced to bail her sibling out by agreeing to transport a mysterious load of illegal cargo. This driver is shocked to find the FBI on her trail as she travels across the country. Things become more complicated when the protagonist discovers that she is moving a little girl as part of a human trafficking operation.

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Critics were unimpressed by this crime/thriller. A few thought that while predictable, the cast were compelling enough to keep them watching. Unfortunately, everyone else wrote that while well-intentioned, the performers were wasted and that the end result was neither tense nor memorable.

The cast includes Juliette Binoche, Morgan Freeman, Frank Grillo, Cameron Monaghan, Hala Finley and Christiane Seidel.

SPITFIRE OVER BERLIN: This World War II tale is set in 1944 and involves a major American Air Force raid over Nazi Germany. Hours before the operation is set to begin, a member of British Intelligence learns that the team may be flying into a trap. He decides to go on a life-or-death mission on his own in an unarmed aircraft to Berlin and obtain photographic evidence of the enemy lying in wait.

This low-budget UK production hasn't been seen by many in North America and the reviews that have appeared online have been mixed. Most of them suggest that the aerial footage is very well shot and exciting to watch. However, they also complained about the corny dialogue, suggesting the screenplay could have used some fine-tuning before cameras rolled. Kris Saddler, Tom Gordon and David Dobson headline the film.

BLASTS FROM THE PAST!

If you're looking for something older, there are plenty of options out there.



The fantastic thriller "Blow Out" (1981) is being given a 4K Ultra HD and Blu-ray upgrade from

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Criterion. This effort stars John Travolta as a sound recordist out collecting background sound for the movie he's working on. When he accidentally records a crash, his life is put in danger and he is targeted by a hitman.

Inspired by the British/Italian film "Blow-Up" (1966), this feature from Brian De Palma ("Phantom of the Paradise," "Carrie," "Dressed to Kill," "Scarface," "The Untouchables," "Carlito's Way," "Mission: Impossible" "Femme Fatale") is a visual treat (with some great single master shots) and very exciting, with a memorable finale. This disc obviously contains a new and even better restoration of the film. It also includes all of the previously released extras from earlier editions.

Kino is presenting the French crime/thriller "The Cop" (1970) on Blu-ray. The story involves a once honest cop (Michel Bouquet) who turns bitter and goes rogue against his criminal rivals. You'll get a 4K restoration of the film, a movie critic audio commentary and a trailer.

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