

## Blu-ray/DVD Roundup for May 12, 2023

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun  
Friday, 19 May 2023 04:13

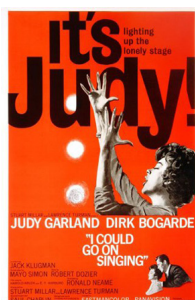
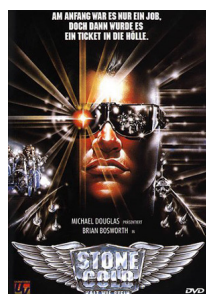
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Welcome to another examination of some of the highlights arriving this week on Blu-ray and DVD. Once again, it's an interesting edition with plenty of intriguing titles in a wide variety of genres. So, if you can't make it out to the movies this week or need to stay indoors, be sure to give one of these titles a try!

### ***BIG NEW RELEASES!***

***CHILDREN OF THE CORN***: Based on the Stephen King short story (which was previously adapted into a film in 1984 that spawned several sequels), this new update was filmed back in 2020 during the pandemic. After sitting on the shelf for a while, it received a limited theatrical run a couple of months ago.

The story involves a group of children in a small village who become possessed by a sinister spirit in a cornfield. They rise up against their parents and violently murder their guardians and any adult who arrives in town. One high school student finds the bloody rampage horrifying and decides to try and stop it.

Response towards this feature was poor overall. A small number wrote that the movie was disturbing, had some interesting ideas and was an improvement over the 1984 original. Unfortunately, the vast majority complained that it was predictable and didn't offer anything new to the original story. Some even commented that the final product was silly rather than scary.

***HEAVEN SENT***: In this faith-based romantic comedy, a woman gives up on love after some bad personal experiences and focuses all her attention on her grandson and her small business. She is eventually convinced by a friend to attend a speed dating event and meets a widowed pastor who has been dealing with the loss by devoting himself to his quirky congregation. The two unexpectedly hit it off and begin seeing each other.

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This movie has been available on streaming sites since February and is now being released exclusively on the DVD format. There aren't many reviews available for the feature and those that have appeared online are from reviewers who specialize in promoting faith-based entertainment. These individuals have stated that the movie is well-meaning and presents authentic characters dealing with personal issues.

***A HOUSE MADE OF SPLINTERS***: This documentary was filmed in Ukraine on the Russian border and follows the work done by employees at an institution that takes in children who have been removed from their homes while awaiting custody claims to be processed. The crew captures the staff attempting to help the youngsters feel safe. It also details the thoughts and concerns of the kids, who not only have to deal with personal losses but a war raging all around them.

The film earned rave reviews and was nominated for Best Documentary Feature at the Academy Awards earlier in the year. One reviewer found the movie too painful to endure given that it doesn't provide any sense of closure to the trials being endured by the youngsters. Everyone else wrote that it was powerful, raw and wrenching, but also hopeful as the children featured try to keep moving forward.

***KNOCK AT THE CABIN***: The latest from writer/director M. Night Shyamalan ( *The Sixth Sense*,

*Unbreakable*

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*Signs*

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*The Village*

,  
*The Visit*

,  
*Split*

,  
*Old*

) involves a young girl vacationing with her parents at a remote cabin in the woods. All of a sudden, they are taken hostage by a group of armed strangers. The leader demands those being held make a shocking decision which the captors believe will avert an impending apocalypse. The parents attempt to figure out if what is being relayed is the truth and how to respond.

This picture earned a wide variety of responses from the press, but the majority recommended it. About one-third stated that after a dynamic opening, the movie became sidetracked with subplots and couldn't deliver on its early promise. However, the consensus was that the movie was incredibly tense and compelling from beginning to end. They also praised the cast and thought their performances were excellent.

**UNICORN WARS:** Ever wanted to see a bloody conflict between teddy bears and unicorns? This foreign-language animated Spanish film depicts just that, as told from the perspective of two brother bears training at a bootcamp. One is an aggressive fighter, the other a sensitive and withdrawn figure. Despite their differences, the two animals try to support each other and survive basic training before being put on a brutal combat tour by their superiors.

The film won many awards in its homeland including Best Animated Film and is finding a cult following in North America. The press in this part of the world has been more positive than negative. Those who disliked the picture wrote that it was trying too hard to shock viewers and that the end results didn't resonate emotionally. Still, most found it visually impressive and were taken aback by the distressing things being depicted through bright and cuddly bears. They called it an impressive antiwar statement that wouldn't be easily forgotten.

**UNWELCOME:** A young couple inherit a large estate in the Irish countryside and are thrilled to move out there. It all seems lovely until a local reminds them to leave out a meaty food offering nightly for Redcaps living on the property. For those not up on their Irish/Scottish folklore, Redcaps are goblins named for their vibrant headwear soaked in the blood of their enemies. Naturally, the two forget one night and find themselves under attack by these brutal and

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unforgiving creatures.

Overall, critics were amused by this Irish feature, which was co-written and directed by the figure who also made *Grabbers*, a well-received 2012 horror/comedy. A percentage of them did call the story predictable and complained that the movie was drained of chills by showing the villainous creatures too frequently. Regardless, two-thirds called it an entertaining genre picture with a ton of scares and laughs in equal measure.

### ***BLASTS FROM THE PAST!***

If you're looking for something older, there are plenty of feature options as well.

Arrow Video is releasing *Hand of Death* (1976) aka *Countdown in Kung Fu* on Blu-ray. This period martial arts feature from Hong Kong marks the first effort from famed action director John Woo ( *The Killer*, *Hard Boiled*

, *Hard Target*

, *Face/Off*

) as well as early screen appearances from Sammo Hung and Jackie Chan. The disc includes a 2K picture restoration from the original film elements, a martial arts expert commentary track, an archival featurette on Woo's early career, a never-before-seen discussion with star Tan Tao-Liang, an archival interview with Sammo Hung, an alternate credits sequence, publicity materials, as well as a poster with original and newly commissioned art for the movie.

Criterion is giving the classic Japanese title *Branded to Kill* (1967) a 4K Ultra HD and Blu-ray presentation. This stylish and entertaining gangster flick involves a Yakuza assassin who

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messes up an assignment and ends up with a price on his own head. Extras include a recent interview with the director and assistant director, a new discussion with the star, a talk with the director from 1997, a trailer and a booklet with a lengthy essay on the title.

Dark Force is presenting a double-feature Blu-ray of *Whose Child Am I?* (1976) and *Weekend Murders*

(1976). The first tells the story of a couple who want a baby and experience terror after the artificial insemination process. The second film involves members of a British family being picked off while attending the reading of a will. The latter picture arrives with an interview and commentary track with the star and the disc also includes trailers and upgraded picture quality on the titles.

Kino is also presenting several Blu-rays. *The Experts* (1989) is a comedy starring John Travolta and Arye Gross about two pals who are kidnapped by the KGB and forced to train Russian spies how to be hip like Americans. The disc contains a 4K image restoration from the original camera negatives. It also arrives with an interview with director Dave Thomas (perhaps best known as Doug McKenzie from SCTV) and a trailer.

*Kamikaze* (1986) is a slick French thriller co-written and produced by Luc Besson (*La Femme Nikita*, *Leon: The Professional*

, *The Fifth Element*

) about a mad scientist who invents a device that uses television airwaves to kill irritating TV show hosts. It comes with a film critic commentary, an interview with the director, a documentary on the production and a trailer.

*Stone Cold* (1991) is one of those guilty pleasures – a B-movie so over-the-top and strange that it is entertaining in a surreal way. The flick stars ex-NFL player Brian Bosworth as an undercover DEA agent who sets out to eliminate a drug-dealing biker gang that are also plotting to raid the State Capitol. This Blu-ray presents a 2K restoration, plus new interviews with Bosworth, co-stars Lance Henriksen, Arabella Holzbog and Sam McMurray. It also arrives with an action film historian commentary track and a pair of trailers.

For those who enjoy stand-up comedy, Mill Creek Entertainment is making *Maria Bamford – Stand-up Spotlight* available on DVD. It contains two entertaining specials featuring the popular comic.

Sandpiper Pictures is presenting the out-of-print UK musical *Absolute Beginners* (1986) on Blu-ray. This is a period feature about a Soho photographer fighting to win his girlfriend back after she becomes famous and falls in with the wrong crowd. The movie features some catchy tunes and stars Eddie O'Connell, Patsy Kensit, David Bowie and Ray Davies (from the band The Kinks).

Additionally, the distributor is releasing the Judy Garland drama, *I Could Go on Singing* (1963). Garland plays an American performer in London who tries to reclaim the child she gave up for adoption. Both of the titles featured above are bare bones with no disc bonuses.

Finally, Warner Bros. is making the *Superman I-IV 5-Film Collection* set available. It features 4K Ultra HD discs and Blu-rays of all four movies in which Christopher Reeve played the title character. As you might have guessed given the name of the set, it includes both the Richard Lester and Richard Donner versions of the second film in the series. In addition to the improved picture quality, all previously released extras appear to be included.

### **ON THE TUBE!**

And you'll find the week's TV-themed releases listed below.



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*NCIS: Hawai'i* Season 1 (Paramount) Blu-ray

*NOVA: Ancient Builders of the Amazon* (PBS) DVD

*UFOs" Seasons 1 and 2* (MHz Networks) DVD

*Yellowstone" Season 5 – Part 1* (Paramount) Blu-ray

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