

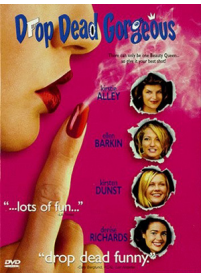
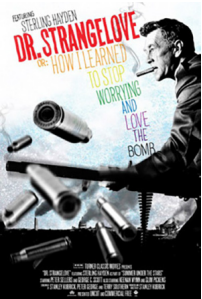
DVD/Blu-ray Roundup for July 1, 2016

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
Friday, 01 July 2016 06:12



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Wow! It's an incredibly busy week for new releases on DVD and Blu-ray, with all kinds of genres and styles represented. One thing's for certain ... readers are sure to find something here to match their tastes. So if you can't make it out to the movies this week, be sure to give one of these titles a try!

Big New Releases!

Cemetery of Splendor - Soldiers suffering from a sudden and unexpected sleeping sickness are transferred to a medical facility in this arthouse fantasy film. After arriving, doctors and even mediums attempt to help the patients. This multinational production is primarily a Thai project that won numerous awards at film festivals, and praise from critics. They stated that if you allow yourself to be drawn in to its unique approach and unhurried pace, you may find it strangely haunting and atmospheric. The cast includes Jenjira Pongpas and Banlop Lomnoi.

Elstree 1976 - Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope enthusiasts may show an interest in this little documentary. It's about the numerous character actors and extras who played background roles in the original 1977 classic (which was shot at Elstree Studios in England). Reviews for the project were mildly positive. Many explained that convention fans should find the "Where are they now?" approach to the subjects being interviewed interesting, although those hoping for a behind-the-scenes documentary about the movie itself may be disappointed.

Eye in the Sky - This small war thriller earned raves from reviewers. The tale involves a government agency planning a missile strike against a terrorist threat. From within their headquarters, they use covert means to try to determine where and how to attack. Complications arise when unaware and innocent parties enter the strike zone. It has been called a riveting and tense nail-biter that subtly addresses the moral complexities of military action. It features Helen Mirren, Aaron Paul, Alan Rickman, Barkhad Abdi, Jeremy Northam, and Iain Glen.

Fastball - Baseball fans may be interested in this documentary devoted entirely to the history of the fastball pitch. It chronicles some of the greatest throws in history and includes interviews with legends like Hank Aaron, Nolan Ryan, and Derek Jeter, who talk in detail about the game. Notices were strong, with the majority feeling the film did a great job of conveying how the game changed as a result of this speedy development, as well as relating interesting stories from its

subjects. Kevin Costner narrates the film.

Francofonia - This multi-national production is a documentary in part. However, several historical elements have been recreated with actors for the cameras. Set entirely within the Louvre in Paris, France, the film tells the museum's history during the time period of the Nazi occupation. It also meditates on the works of art within. Critics were positive with a few caveats. They believed the approach, featuring lengthy, ponderous narration was a bit odd. Still, most appreciated the denseness and found the imagery striking. Louis-Do de Lencquesaing and Vincent Nemeth appear, playing important historical figures.

Kung Fu Panda 3 - The third entry in the popular animated series follows lead character Po discovering his long-lost father and a tribe of other panda martial arts enthusiasts. Together, they stand to fight a supernatural force out to defeat every master in the field. Once again, reviews were strong. While some didn't feel it was as memorable as its predecessors, almost all found the characters engaging and the animation exemplary. Jack Black, Bryan Cranston, Dustin Hoffman, Angelina Jolie, J.K. Simmons, Jackie Chan, Seth Rogen, Lucy Liu, David Cross, Kate Hudson, and James Hong provide the voices.

Precious Cargo - This action flick involves a thief who is recruited by his ex-lover to help her steal gems. She's doing so to get a mob boss off her back after an earlier heist mess-up. But can she really be trusted? Critics panned this movie, which didn't play in theaters and instead premiered on demand a couple of months back. They complained that a weak script left its cast adrift in a dull and unmemorable story. It stars Mark-Paul Gosselaar, Bruce Willis, Claire Forlani, and John Brotherton.

Rabin, The Last Day - The 1995 assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin is chronicled in this docudrama. It depicts what lead up to the man's death, as well as the aftermath that essentially ended peace talks for the region. Notices for the Israeli/French production were decent overall. Several found the two-and-half-hour effort stiff, awkwardly constructed (some of the actual persons involved play themselves onscreen) and also believed it went overboard on the detail, but more thought it was a tense and interesting look into a troubled area. The cast includes Yael Abecassis and Yitzhak Hizkiya.

Rams - Foreign film enthusiasts may want to take a look at this little drama from Iceland. Known as *Hrutar* in its homeland, the plot involves estranged brothers who are forced to speak to one another after 40 years of silence. The cause? A scrapie infection that begins to spread

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among their sheep population. The movie earned great praise from the press. They called it a surprisingly moving effort that effectively deals with loneliness and alienation, thanks to some great performances and a black sense of humor. Sigurður Sigurjónsson and Theódór Júlíusson play the brothers.

The Steps - Two adult children head out of the city to visit their newly remarried dad at his lake house in the country. They get a shock when the father announces that he and his recent bride are adopting a child to “bring the family together.” Naturally, it has the reverse effect, pitting the characters against each other. This small, Canadian comedy got mixed-negative reviews across the border — while a few complimented the cast, they knocked the screenplay for being bland and unoriginal. The movie features Emmanuelle Chriqui, James Brolin, Jason Ritter, Christine Lahti, and Kate Corbett.

Whiskey Tango Foxtrot - This adaptation of a memoir recounts a journalist’s travels and war coverage reporting from Afghanistan and Pakistan. Reaction to the comedy from most critics was somewhat muted. They stated that it has some scattered laughs here and there thanks to the charismatic leads, but suggested that the movie lacked the heft and insight one would have expected given the serious subject matter. It stars Tina Fey, Margot Robbie, Martin Freeman, Alfred Molina, Christopher Abbott, and Billy Bob Thornton.

Blasts From the Past!

There are some great older titles arriving in high definition this week. Perhaps none as brilliant as Stanley Kubrick’s *Dr. Strangelove, or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964). Criterion is giving this fantastic war satire starring Peter Sellers the deluxe treatment. Besides a 4K digital image upgrade and new soundtrack, there are new interviews with historians and crew members, an archival interview with the director, four short documentaries about the movie, Sellers and Kubrick, even more interviews and promotional and advertising materials. If you’re a fan of the movie, it’s a must-own. And on a side note, Criterion is also giving last year’s

Clouds of Sils Maria

the “Special Edition” treatment.

Shout! Factory has the Charlton Heston thriller *Two-Minute Warning* (1976) arriving on Blu-ray. It’s about a madman who plots a shooting rampage at a football game — a police captain sets out to stop him. It also features John Cassavetes, Martin Balsam, Gena Rowlands, and Beau

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Bridges. The release includes a second, TV-cut of the movie that features an extra 26 minutes of footage, a new interview with the director, and publicity materials.

Not to be outdone, Kino has a couple of interesting titles. While it wasn't a success during its original run, *Movie Movie* (1978) earned a lot of praise for critics and earned a couple of Golden Globe nominations. It presents a double feature poking fun at films of the '30s (specifically the boxing and musical genres), with a trailer for a third imagined "war" film thrown in between. Think of Quentin Tarantino's *Grindhouse* as a wacky comedy and you're on the right track. George C. Scott, Eli Wallach, and Harry Hamlin all appear.

Way back in day, members of SCTV made an HBO TV-movie inspired by the *Twilight Zone* series. The result was

Really Weird Tales

(1987), which amusingly tells three strange stories that involve telekinesis, aliens, and robots. I have fond memories of it and am glad that it is finally being released on DVD after being out-of-print for so long. Guess I can throw out my old VHS now! Catherine O'Hara steals the show, but it also features John Candy, Martin Short, Olivia d'Abo, and Joe Flaherty.

Mondo Video has an impressive, extras-loaded Blu-ray of the bizarre French/German arthouse horror flick, *Possession* (1981). It's a filmmaker-approved new edition of the director's cut, which has never before been released in North America. A strained couple (played by Isabelle Adjani and Sam Neill) begins to face serious marital issues and eventually one of them suspects the other might be an alien. It includes director commentary, a making-of documentary, and numerous other bonuses.

On a different note, *Return of the Killer Tomatoes!* (1988) is also arriving in a Blu-ray/DVD pack courtesy of Arrow Films. Not many remember that it featured a future Hollywood star in his first major movie role. Besides an impressive new high-quality transfer of the cheesy film, it features a director's commentary, an interview with the star, and publicity materials. The disc packaging also contains nifty new artwork.

Blue Underground is putting out a Blu-ray Double Feature that includes the British titles *Circus of Fear*

(1966) aka

Psycho-Circus

and

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Five Golden Dragons

(1967). The first is a pulpy little mystery/thriller starring Christopher Lee about a gang of crooks who take refuge in a traveling circus that harbors a knife-wielding killer. Lee also appears briefly in the second film, a goofy comedy action flick set in Hong Kong co-produced by the Shaw Brothers and featuring plenty of spy movie shenanigans.

Warner Archive is making plenty of their older titles available for order on DVD via their website. The discs are simple, made-to-order copies, but offer an opportunity for fans to pick up some of their lesser known and cult movies. This week's releases include the beauty pageant comedy *D rop Dead Gorgeous*

(1999), which features Kristie Alley, Ellen Barkin, Kirsten Dunst, Denise Richards, Allison Janney, Brittany Murphy, Amy Adams, and Will Sasso — quite a cast.

They've also got the Jane Fonda/Jeff Bridges thriller *The Morning After* (1986), the Julie Christie drama *Petulia*

(1968), and Alan J. Pakula's *Rollover*

(1981), which also stars Fonda. Furthermore, viewers can see an early performance from Leonardo DiCaprio as poet Arthur Rimbaud in

Total Eclipse

(1995). Finally, there's

Up the Down Staircase

(1967), a drama about a young teacher striving to make a difference in an overcrowded New York City high school.

You Know, For Kids!

Here are options for the youngsters in your home.

Adventures in Babysitting (2016 Disney Channel TV-movie)

Kung Fu Panda 3

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LEGO Friends: Always Together

Roland and Ratfink (17 Cartoons)

Tijuana Toads (17 Cartoons)

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