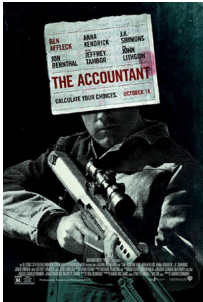


DVD/Blu-ray Roundup for Jan. 13, 2017

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun  
Friday, 13 January 2017 04:32

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Welcome back to another edition highlighting the newest DVDs and Blu-rays coming your way. There's an interesting mix this time out with plenty of curiosities. 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!**

*The Accountant* - Ben Affleck stars in this action/thriller about an assassin with autism who hides his illegal activities while working as a registered accountant. When he's called in on a big corporate account, he and his coworker become targets. Reviews were split for the final product, complimenting the performances but suggesting that the story was contrived and that the enterprise came across like a B-movie action flick. The cast includes Anna Kendrick, J.K. Simmons, Jon Bernthal and Jeffrey Tambor.

*The Birth of a Nation* - This period drama tackles real life subject Nat Turner, a slave and preacher who was hired to give sermons on plantations in order to pacify. After witnessing various atrocities, Turner leads the slaves on a revolt. Notices were mixed, although it received more positive write-ups than negative ones. Some found it on difficult footing tonally and stated that it occasionally comes across as uneven and occasionally corny, while others believed that the high energy level made up for its deficiencies. It stars Nate Parker, Armie Hammer, Penelope Ann Miller, Jackie Earl Haley and Colman Domingo.

*Closet Monster* - A closeted teen in Newfoundland dreams of becoming a special effects artist. However, he must deal with the complications arising from "coming out" in his small town community. Helping him navigate troubled waters is his pet hamster (who talks and is voiced by

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Isabella Rossellini). Critics generally liked this little, independent drama. They commented that it was an amusing first feature for its director and was a completely unique take on the coming-of-age film. It also features Connor Jessup, Aaron Abrams, Aliocha Schneider and Joanne Kelly.

*Deepwater Horizon* - This biopic drama is based on the 2010 real-life offshore oil rig accident in which a large and violent explosion resulted in one of the worst spills in history. It depicts the many workers on-site who struggled to survive the man-made disaster. The press were complimentary towards the film. Although many wanted it to be harsher towards the parent company pressuring the workers, most thought the movie itself was suitably tense and thrilling. It stars Mark Wahlberg, Kurt Russell, John Malkovich, Gina Rodriguez, Dylan O'Brien and Kate Hudson.

*Kevin Hart: What Now?* - If you're a fan of popular comedian Kevin Hart and haven't been able to see him live, this concert film presents an good opportunity. Recorded at Lincoln Financial Field in Philadelphia before an audience of 50,000, the performer riffs on subjects like family life and his own newfound fame and celebrity. Reviews were generally good, suggesting that if you liked the performer, you would certainly find the film funny. Halle Berry and Don Cheadle also appear in some brief comedy sequences that open the movie.

*Max Steel* - Here's a weird one. This science-fiction superhero film got a wide release in theaters last October but received little to no publicity. Based on the Mattel action figure toy line, the story involves a teenager named Max who befriends a techno-organic alien force named Steel. Together, the two become symbiotic and use their combined powers to fight crime. As expected, write-ups were absolutely terrible. It has been described as a complete misfire; flat, unexciting and lacking in any sense of joy or fun. The cast includes Ben Winchell, Mario Bello, Anna Villafane, Josh Brener and Andy Garcia.

*Under the Shadow* - This well-regarded, independent horror picture sounds very intriguing. It's a UK/Jordan/Quatar co-production about a medical student and her daughter living in a war-torn Tehran apartment complex in the 1980s. After a missile hits their building and kills an upstairs neighbor, the pair begin to witness strange phenomena and believe an evil spirit is stalking them. This one received near unanimous praise from the press, who called it an extraordinarily unnerving and well-crafted creeper that also resonates with deeper themes. It stars Narges Rashidi, Avin Manshadi and Bobby Naderi.

## BLASTS FROM THE PAST!

Wow, there are some incredible older titles hitting high definition this week. Shout! Factory have the prickly, atmospheric thriller *Dead of Winter* (1987) with Mary Steenburgen and Roddy McDowall. Directed by Arthur Penn ( *Bonnie and Clyde* , *Little Big Man* ), this one involves an actress who takes a job at the remote home of an unstable psychologist. Soon, she is kidnapped and made part of an elaborate blackmail plot. The Blu-ray includes a new interview with star Steenburgen about the making the film, as well as some publicity materials. If memory serves, it's a decent little picture that should entertain those who enjoy suspense films.

Sony Pictures Classic are debuting the fantastic animated effort *The Triplets of Belleville* (2003); it's coming to Blu-ray for the first time in North America. This unique French effort is about an elderly woman out to rescue her cyclist son after he gets involved with some criminal figures. The story is told almost entirely through song and pantomime and the visuals really pack a wallop. It comes highly recommended.

*Band of the Hand* (1986) is a pulpy little action flick produced by writer/director Michael Mann (who was riding the success of *Miami Vice* at the time). Mill Creek Entertainment are releasing an inexpensive Blu-ray of the film that will give viewers a neon-tinged, 80s fix. The story is about a group of juvenile delinquents who are retrained as an elite strike squad - they are eventually instructed to take down a local drug cartel. It stars Stephen Lang, Lauren Holly, Leon, Lawrence Fishburne and James Remar. Boy, am I looking forward to catching up with this one.

Not to be outdone, Criterion have a couple of big movies on the way. *The 400 Blows* (1959) is a French arthouse classic and the first effort from director Francois Truffaut (who also helmed *Jules and Jim* as well as *Day for Night* ). The plot involves a poor young boy who is enticed into the world of petty crime as he hopes to make a better life for himself. It's a great film and the Blu-ray comes with numerous extras. The movie comes restored and the package features two audio commentaries. Additionally, there is audition footage, a Cannes newsreel and interviews with Truffaut about the movie.

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*His Girl Friday* (1940) is another classic; this one is a comedy with Cary Grant and Rosalind Russell. She's a hard-nosed reporter who butts heads with her editor (and ex-husband) while working on a story. Criterion delivers the film in another impressive package. It also features as new restoration of the film and a second feature - *The Front Page* (1931), which was based on the same source material. You'll also get interviews with film scholars, a piece of director Howard Hawks, making-of featurettes, the radio adaptations of the film as well as a couple of radio plays of *The Front Page* and movie trailers.

Warner Archive have plenty coming as well from their made-to-order line. They have a Blu-ray of the Van Johnson war film *Battleground* (1949). Additionally, they're releasing plenty of features arriving on DVD. These titles include *The Harvey Girls* (1946), *I'll Cry Tomorrow* (1955), *In the Good Old Summertime* (1949) and *Libeled Lady* (1936).

And there's still more. Kino have three Blu-rays arriving this week. The first is the Gregory Peck historical drama, *David and Bathsheba* (1951). If you like all-star comedy capers, *Scavenger Hunt* (1979) may do the trick. Made in the spirit of *It's a Mad Mad Mad Mad World*, this one has another group of varied, greedy characters racing to uncover a hidden fortune. It stars Richard Benjamin and is full of famous faces - the movie even features an early appearance by Arnold Schwarzenegger. If Spaghetti Westerns are more to your liking, you can pick up *The Unholy Four* (1970) in high definition. The movie is about an amnesiac who wanders aimlessly until he's recognized as being one of the fastest guns in the land.

And there are a couple more titles. If odd disaster movies are your thing, *The Survivor* (1981) should fit the bill. It's an Australian film about a pilot who walks away from the wreckage of a horrific passenger airline crash. He doesn't remember anything about what happened and attempts to learn why he was the only one to survive. It's a strange one with supernatural overtones, but the opening plane crash is quite impressive. Perhaps the most notable aspects

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of the film is that was directed by actor David Hemmings and features the last onscreen appearance of Joseph Cotton. Synapse are bringing this one to Blu-ray.

Finally, Sony have a 15th Anniversary Edition of *XXX* (2002) to coincide with the release of the upcoming sequel in a couple of weeks. Yeah, this Vin Diesel action picture wasn't all that great to begin with and one expects that it probably will look even more ridiculous now than it did back then. There aren't any extras listed; if any exist, they'll probably involves promos for the new film.

### YOU KNOW, FOR KIDS!

Here are some titles that kids might enjoy!

*Bob the Builder: Building Fun at the Zoo*

*The Gruffalo and The Gruffalo's Child* Double Feature (PBS)

*Miraculous: Tales of Ladybug and Cat Noir: Be Miraculous*

*Power Rangers: Dino Charge Roar*

### ON THE TUBE!

Here are some TV-themed releases, including another Michael Mann eccentricity, *Crime Story*.

*Black America Since MLK: And I Still Rise* (PBS)

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*Broad City*: Season 3

*Crime Story*: The Complete Series

*Homeland*: Season 5

*Mr. Robot*: Season 2

*Nova: Treasures of the Earth* (PBS)

*Star Trek: Enterprise*: The Complete Series

*Swamp People*: Season 7

***By Glenn Kay***

***For the Sun***