

January-February 2016

# Video Librarian

VOL. 31 ■ THE VIDEO REVIEW MAGAZINE FOR LIBRARIES ■ NO. 1

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*Video Librarian* (ISSN: 0887-6851) is published bi-monthly by *Video Librarian*, 3435 NE Nine Boulder Dr., Poulsbo, WA 98370. Subscriptions: \$64 for one year in the United States; \$69 (US) in Canada (includes GST); \$86 elsewhere. Address all correspondence to *Video Librarian*, 3435 NE Nine Boulder Dr., Poulsbo, WA 98370. Periodicals Postage Paid at Poulsbo, WA and at additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to *Video Librarian*, 3435 NE Nine Boulder Dr., Poulsbo, WA 98370. Copyright © 2016 by Randy Pitman. All rights reserved.

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### A Brave Heart: The Lizzie Velasquez Story ★★½

*Cinedigm, 78 min., PG-13, DVD: \$14.99, Jan. 5*

Born in Texas with a mysterious condition that left her with a gaunt, elongated face, as well as bodily deformities and lifelong health problems, Lizzie Velasquez persevered through school with the help of loving parents, and even became a cheerleader. Then, at the age of 17, she discovered a YouTube video posting TV footage of her that was labeled “WORLD’S UGLIEST WOMAN,” accompanied by countless hateful comments from viewers. Velasquez responded with a YouTube channel of her own, focusing on bullying and being open to all comments (including hostile ones). Although filmmaker Sara Hirsh Bordo’s documentary suffers a little from distracting pro-Lizzie celebrity cameos (Whoopi Goldberg, America Ferrara, Hillary Clinton), *A Brave Heart* quickly finds solid narrative footing, as the heroine meets the mother of another student who committed suicide due to online harassment, pushes to promote the Safe Schools Improvement Act, and finally gets an answer regarding the medical nature of her infirmity. An Audience Award winner at SXSW, this is an inspiring story of a strong and brave individual who



stood up to bullying. DVD extras include deleted scenes, Velasquez’s widely viewed TED talk, and an interview with singer-songwriter Sara Bareilles. Highly recommended. [Note: this is also available from Tugg (<http://licenses.tugg.com>) with public performance rights on DVD or Blu-ray for \$95: public libraries; \$375: colleges & universities.] (C. Cassidy)

Before *A Brave Heart: The Lizzie Velasquez Story*, filmmaker Lee Hirsch’s 2011 documentary *Bully* (VL-1/13 ★★) helped bring the bullying epidemic to national attention, opening with the alarming statistic that more than 13 million American kids would be bullied in 2012. Like *A Brave Heart*, Hirsch’s film—noted VL reviewer Susan Granger—“personalizes this pervasive universal problem that crosses racial, ethnic, sexual, and socioeconomic boundaries.” Utilizing a case-study format, Hirsch focused on five victims of bullying—12-year-old Alex, 16-year-old Kelby, 14-year-old Ja’Meya, 17-year-old Tyler Long, and 11-year-old Ty Smalley—allowing their poignant stories to be told without editorial comment.



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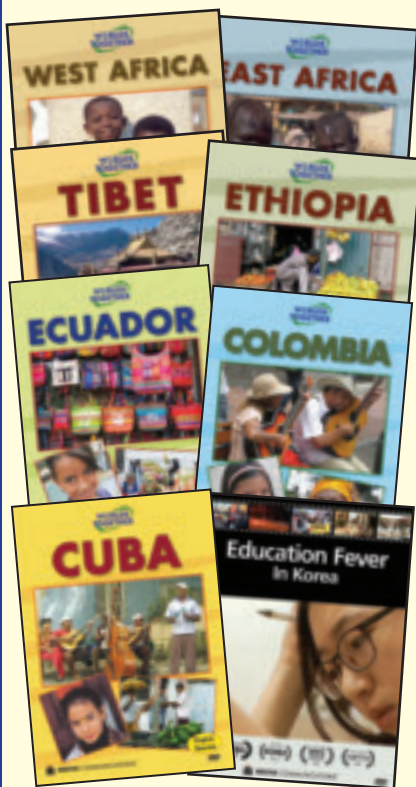
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**Video Newsbriefs**

**French Classic Fantasy "L'Inhumaine" Coming February 23 from Flicker Alley**

Flicker Alley and Lobster Films are proud to present the North American Blu-ray premiere of *L'Inhumaine* (Blu-ray: \$39.95), slated for release on February 23. Newly-restored with two original scores from Aidje Tafial and the Alloy Orchestra, director Marcel L'Herbier's 1924 visual tour de force is a fantastical sci-fi melodrama starring famous French opera singer Georgette Leblanc. Featuring the work of some of the greatest artists from the time period—including painter Fernand Léger, architect Robert Mallet-Stevens, glassmaker René Lalique, fashion designer Paul Poiret, and directors Alberto Cavalcanti and Claude Autant-Lara, among others—this collaborative cinematic experience stars Leblanc as the "Inhuman Woman" of the title, who lives on the outskirts of Paris, where she draws important men to her like moths to a flame. When it appears that she is the reason for a young devotee's suicide, however, her fans desert her, and the filming of the concert where she's raucously booed is a renowned piece of cinema history. L'Herbier invited more than 2,000 people from the arts and fashionable society to attend the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées and play the part of the unruly audience. Among the attendees were Pablo Picasso, Man Ray, Erik Satie, René Clair, James Joyce, and Ezra Pound (although none are actually visible). Scanned at 4K with a brand-new restoration, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette, a segment on Tafial's rendition of the score, and a booklet.

**"Downton Abbey" Final Season Set Slated for January 26 from PBS**

The top-rated PBS drama of all time ends with a sixth and final season on *Masterpiece*. PBS Distribution will release *Downton Abbey: Season 6* (DVD: 3 discs, \$49.99; Blu-ray: \$59.99) on January 26, bringing closure to a remarkable series as the beloved cast makes their bitter-sweet farewells, including Maggie Smith, Hugh Bonneville, Michelle Dockery, and Elizabeth McGovern. Since *Downton Abbey's* debut in 2010, the audience has grown at a phenomenal rate, more than doubling by the fifth season (which reached 25.5 million viewers). One of the most-watched dramas on American

TV, often beating all competitors in its Sunday night timeslot, the sixth season opens in 1925 with a series of crises that reflect the momentous changes that are transforming society. Women's rights have given Lady Mary (Dockery) and Lady Edith (Laura Carmichael) new positions of responsibility: Mary runs the estate, while Edith manages the magazine she inherited. Meanwhile, Tom Branson (Allen Leech) has left for Boston, newlyweds Lady Rose (Lily James) and Atticus Aldridge (Matt Barber) are trying their luck in Jazz Age New York, and Anna Bates (Joanne Froggatt) faces a murder charge (although many still suspect her husband). And for the rest of the servants, big doubts hang over their jobs. Will great houses and the fortunes that support them soon be a thing of the past? Presenting all of the episodes in their original U.K. format, bonus features include additional scenes.



**"Let There Be Light" Collection of John Huston's Wartime Docs Arriving January 19 from Olive Films**

Presented in cooperation with the National Archives and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Olive Films will release *Let There Be Light: John Huston's Wartime Documentaries* (DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95) on January 19. The collection features four documentaries directed by John Huston while he was an officer in the Army Signal Corps. Reflecting Huston's own changing attitudes toward war, the set includes the 1942 recruitment film *Winning Your Wings*, hosted by Jimmy Stewart; the Best Documentary Oscar-nominated *Report from the Aleutians* (1943); and two National Film Registry selections: the dark account of a 1945 Italian military battle *San Pietro* (which the Army chose not to publicly screen), and the emotionally devastating *Let There Be Light* (1946), narrated by Walter Huston, which depicts the medical treatment of "psychoneurotics" (now known as those suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder) through hypnosis, drugs, and psychotherapy. Bonus features include an introduction, raw camera footage from *San Pietro*, and a military re-edited and approved version of *Let There Be Light* called *Shades of Gray*.

# Best Sellers & New Releases from KINOLORBEREDU.COM



## HOW TO DANCE IN OHIO

A group of young people with autism spends 12 weeks practicing social skills in preparation for their first dance party. Witness a touching story of universal human need to grow, connect and belong, experienced by individuals facing a common developmental disability.

*"...confronting hard-to-think-about questions involving what happens to young people with disabilities once they age out of the school system and what society's obligations to them are." -New York Times*

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DSL \$499 • Single-year stream \$150**



## HOW TO CHANGE THE WORLD

In 1971, a group of friends sailed into a nuclear test zone and captured the world's imagination, giving birth to Greenpeace and defining the modern green movement. This exhilarating documentary details the dramatic rise of the world's most iconic environmental-defense organization, and the internal conflicts that nearly tore it apart.

*"Whatever your politics, this documentary...is essential viewing." -The Telegraph*

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DSL \$499 • Single-year stream \$150**



## OF MEN AND WAR

Shot over 4 years at a resident center for Iraq-War veterans recovering from PTSD, this remarkably honest and courageous film depicts with shocking clarity the heart-wrenching battle waged by returning soldiers to regain their lives after combat.

**NEW YORK TIMES CRITIC'S PICK**

*"A work of astounding sensitivity and precision, it argues for emotional honesty as a moral and psychic imperative." -Christopher Grey, Slant Magazine*

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## PIONEERS OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN CINEMA

Discover a collection of exciting landmark films from some of America's most original auteurs, confronting social themes that the Hollywood mainstream often ignored. Painstakingly digitally remastered in HD, with original musical scores for the silent films. Find out about our Early Purchase program for institutions, allowing you to receive films as they're restored, along with a second complete copy of the collection.

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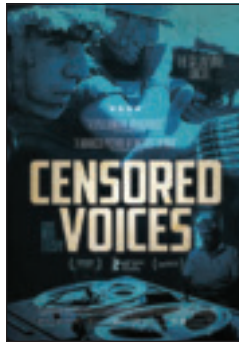


## THE MESSENGER

Jaw-dropping footage of songbirds takes us inside their world to expose a host of dangers that kill millions of birds each year. Follow scientists and activists trying to save our birds...and mankind as well.

*"Without a doubt... the most outstanding film I've seen on birds." -Steven Price, President, Bird Studies*

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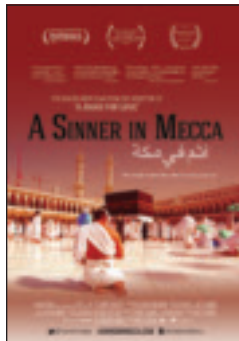


## CENSORED VOICES

Following the 6-day war in 1967, young people at a kibbutz interviewed a group of Israeli soldiers. The tapes were censored by their government until now, with revelations that deeply undermine the national narrative of heroism, glory and destiny.

*"The spectre of the Holocaust is invoked by soldiers openly wondering whether their own cause has not become monstrous, while news reports from a Palestinian refugee camp prophetically declare that 'the only thing growing here is revenge.'" -The Guardian*

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## A SINNER IN MECCA

Gay filmmaker Parvez Sharma risked imprisonment and death to secretly film his holy pilgrimage, a journey that reveals previously unseen aspects of The Hajj and one man's quest to reconcile his faith with the religion that rejected him.

**NEW YORK TIMES CRITICS PICK**

*"Wrenching...gritty...surreal and transcendent; Visceral and abstract... an undeniable act of courage and hope." -The Hollywood Reporter*

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## VESSEL

In the face of violent resistance, a crusading Dutch physician outfits an oceangoing boat to provide abortions for women in countries where it's illegal. Soon, she and her group of activists contrive a way for women to help themselves safely and privately using WHO-approved protocols.

*"A deeply moving portrait that makes palpably clear the desperation of women for whom attaining legal abortions is impossible." -Hollywood Reporter*

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## SEMBENE!

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*"An enormously moving portrait of the profound way that art can transform those who come in contact with it."*

*-Bilge Ebiri, New York Magazine/Vulture*

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## BIKES VS. CARS

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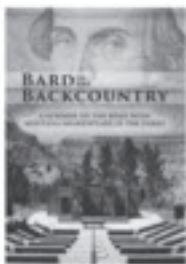


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*Bringing Independent Arts and Vision to the Classroom*

**BARD IN THE BACKCOUNTRY**

A rare glimpse into the relevance that Shakespearean theater still holds in the lives of everyday people in rural regions.



*"Shakespeare's relevance transcends place and time in this film."*

*-Mary Bunkers, Elementary Education Specialist*



**BIG MOCCASIN**

An anthropological and sociological account of life in an isolated Appalachian Valley community.

*"Highly Recommended."*

*-Video Librarian Magazine*

**AMERICAN NATIVE**

Examines the Ramapough Lenape Indians' fight for tribal recognition and respect as Native Americans.



*"Their history has been written by everybody but themselves."*

*-Steve Oritt, Director*

DVDs, PPR & Digital Site Licenses available at: [darkhollowfilms.com](http://darkhollowfilms.com)

The following films based on books are slated to open during January and February. Movie release dates are subject to change.

**Coming in January**

**The 5th Wave** (Jan. 15) is based on the 2013 first book in author Rick Yancey's alien-themed YA series. Directed by J Blakeson, the film stars Chloë Grace Moretz, Nick Robinson, and Liev Schreiber.



**13 Hours** (Jan. 15) is an adaptation of Mitchell Zuckoff's 2014 nonfiction book *13 Hours: The Inside Account of What Really Happened in Benghazi*. Directed by Michael Bay, the film stars James Badge Dale, John Krasinski, and Toby Stephens.



**The Finest Hours** (Jan. 29) is based on Casey Sherman and Michael J. Tougas' 2007 book about a 1952 Coast Guard sea rescue mission. Directed by Craig Gillespie, the disaster drama stars Chris Pine, Casey Affleck, Holliday Grainger, and Eric Bana.



**Coming in February**

**The Choice** (Feb. 5) is based on Nicholas Sparks' 2007 romance novel. Directed by Ross Katz, the film stars Benjamin Walker, Teresa Palmer, Tom Welling, Tom Wilkinson, and Maggie Grace.



**How to Be Single** (Feb. 12) is based on author Liz Tuccillo's 2008 novel. Directed by Christian Ditter, the film stars Nicholas Braun, Dakota Johnson, Alison Brie, Leslie Mann, Rebel Wilson, and Damon Wayans, Jr.



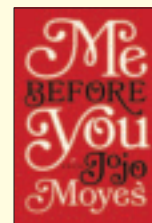
**The Great Gilly Hopkins** (Feb. 19) is adapted from Katherine Paterson's 1978

National Book Award-winning children's novel. Directed by Stephen Herek, the film stars Julia Stiles, Kathy Bates, Octavia Spencer, Glenn Close, and Sophie Nélisse as the titular Gilly.



**Looking Ahead**

Slated for March is **Me Before You**, based on British journalist and romance novelist Jojo Moyes' 2012 novel. Directed by Thea Sharrock, the film stars Emilia Clarke, Sam Claflin, and Charles Dance.



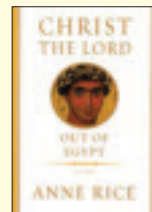
Also coming in March is **The Divergent Series: Allegiant**, based on the 2013 third novel in Veronica Roth's dystopian sci-fi YA series. Directed by Robert Schwentke, the sci-fi adventure stars Shailene Woodley, Theo James, and Octavia Spencer.



Another March title is **The Little Prince**, adapted from French aristocrat Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's 1943 novella. Directed by Mark Osborne, this stop-motion and computer-animated film features the voices of Jeff Bridges, Rachel McAdams, Benicio del Toro, and Ricky Gervais.



Also arriving in March is **The Young Messiah**, based on Anne Rice's 2005 novel *Christ the Lord: Out of Egypt*. Directed by Cyrus Nowrasteh, the biblical drama stars Sean Bean, David Bradley, Isabelle Adriani, and Adam Greaves-Neal as Jesus.



Coming in April is **The Jungle Book**, adapted from the classic 1894 story collection by Rudyard Kipling. Director Jon Favreau's animated remake of the 1967 Disney classic features a star-studded voice cast that includes Bill Murray, Ben Kingsley, and Idris Elba.



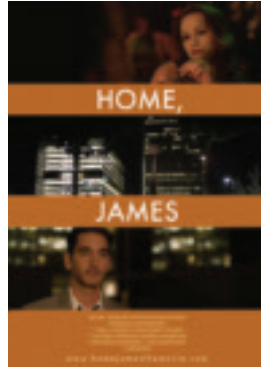
# INDEPENDENT FEATURE FILMS



## A Line in the Sand

The gripping story of one man's fall from grace on the hard streets of New York City.

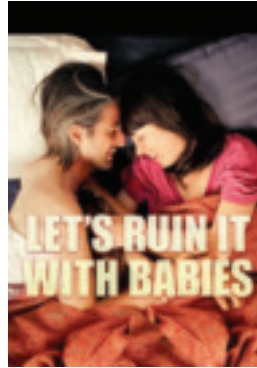
**DVD** 857063005646  
\$24.99



## Home, James

"...delivers an affecting portrait of a relationship..."  
— *Hollywood Reporter*

**DVD** 857063005738  
\$24.99



## Let's Ruin It with Babies

I feel like our relationship is finally really working.

**DVD** 857063005639  
\$24.99



## Don't Know Yet...

A feel-good road movie about a broken man who lets the hitchhikers he picks up determine his direction and destiny.

**DVD** 857063005721  
\$24.99



## White Creek

A family, separated by class, tries to stay together in the midst of their entire valley being plunged into total chaos.

**DVD** 857063005745  
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The shocking reality of Tijuana's 'Zona Norte,' created by failed U.S. immigration policy.

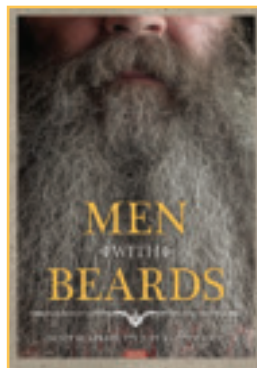
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\$24.99



## Gaming in Color

A feature documentary exploring the story of the queer gaming community.

**DVD** 857063005622  
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## Men with Beards

A strange tale of beauty and brotherhood

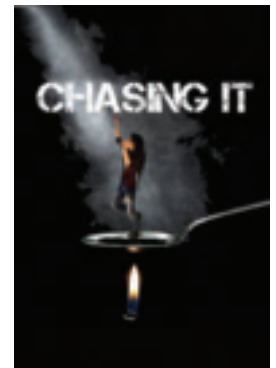
**DVD** 857063005653  
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## Bound by Sea

Four oceans. One year. A documentary about the cost of charity on a family.

**DVD** 857063005752  
\$24.99



## Chasing It

This documentary tells the story of those affected and why heroin use has such a devastating reach.

**DVD** 857063005769  
\$19.99

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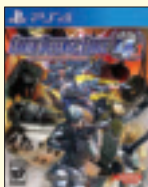
Mixed Media features new release information on upcoming video games and TV series on DVD/Blu-ray, as well as notable older titles that are re-priced or new to DVD/Blu-ray.

Video Games

Note: Entertainment Software Ratings Board (ESRB) ratings for video games are: E (Everyone), E10+ (Everyone 10+), T (Teen), M (Mature), and RP (Rating Pending). Some titles are not rated until just prior to release date.

Available Now

**Earth Defense Force 4.1: The Shadow of New Despair** (XSEED, PS4: \$49.99, Rated: M). Wild sci-fi action comes to the PlayStation 4 in this complete re-imagining of the third-person humans vs. aliens (giant bugs, robots, and other colossal enemies) *Earth Defense Force 2025*, now with next-gen graphics.



January 17—January 23

**Life is Strange** (Square Enix, PS4/XOne: \$29.99, Rated: M). In this episodic third-person adventure game, players step into the role of heroine Max Caulfield, a photography senior who discovers that she can rewind time while saving her best friend.

**Resident Evil: Origins Collection** (Capcom, PS4/XOne: \$39.99, Rated: M). This collection of classic third-person horror survival games features remastered versions of the original *Resident Evil* and prequel *Resident Evil 0*, which takes players back to 1998 to investigate unusual murders on the outskirts of Raccoon City.

January 24—January 30

**LEGO Marvel's Avengers** (Warner, PS3/PS4/WiiU/X360/XOne: \$49.99-\$59.99, Rated: E10+). In this latest entry in the popular LEGO third-person action-adventure series, Iron Man, Captain America, Thor, The Incredible Hulk, Black Widow, and Hawkeye must—as they did in the summer blockbuster film—battle to save the planet from destruction at the hands of the villainous Ultron.



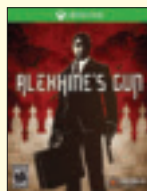
January 31—February 6

**Digimon Story Cyber Sleuth** (Bandai Namco, PS4: \$59.99, Rated: T). In this turn-based, third-person battle RPG, players must solve a digital mystery infecting both the real and digital worlds by gathering clues with over 200 Digimon.

**Megadimension Neptunia VII** (Atlus, PS4: \$59.99, Rated: RP). The latest fan-service-heavy entry in this RPG series finds players donning the revealing outfits of Neptune and her friends for three new stories and three new worlds to save.

February 7—February 13

**Alekhine's Gun** (Maximum, PS4/XOne: \$49.99, Rated: M). In this third-person action-adventure game, players step into the shoes of Agent Alekhine, a highly-skilled Russian assassin working alongside American CIA agents during the Cold War as the tension of a nuclear stand-off grows with each passing minute.



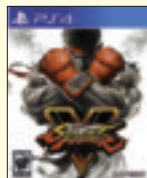
**Gravity Rush Remastered** (Sony, PS4: \$29.99, Rated: T). In this third-person action game, originally released for the handheld PlayStation Vita, players manipulate gravity as Kat, a strong-willed girl trying to protect her future in a world that is crumbling to pieces.

**Mighty No. 9** (Deep Silver, PS3/PS4/WiiU/X360/XOne: \$29.99, Rated: E10+). In this side-scrolling homage to the early 8- and 16-bit system action classics, players step into the boots of Beck, the lone member of the "Mighty Numbers" team to be unaffected by a virus, who is tasked with saving humanity.

**Naruto Shippuden: Ultimate Ninja Storm 4** (Bandai Namco, PS4/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: T). In this third-person action-fighting game based on the popular anime series, players experience the detailed anime-quality adventures of Naruto Uzumaki.

February 14—February 20

**Street Fighter V** (Capcom, PS4: \$59.99, Rated: T). The legendary fighting franchise returns with next-generation visuals and characters new and old, including long-time favorites Ryu, Ken, and Chun-Li.

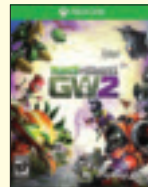


February 21—February 27

**Far Cry Primal** (Ubisoft, PS4/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: M). The latest entry in the popular third-person action-adventure franchise finds players in the role of the last surviving member of a Stone Age tribe, fighting giant mammoths and saber-toothed tigers, while also trying to outsmart enemies and save humankind.

**Mega Man Legacy Collection** (Capcom, PS4/XOne: \$29.99, Rated: E). Celebrating the 8-bit history of Capcom's iconic Blue Bomber, this compilation features six classic 2D side-scrolling *Mega Man* games.

**Plants vs. Zombies: Garden Warfare 2** (EA, PS4/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: RP). In this action-packed comical take on the third-person shooter genre, players will battle it out as either plants or zombies in a free-for-all fight.



TV on DVD/Blu-ray

Available Now

**The 10th Kingdom: 15th Anniversary Special Edition** (Mill Creek, Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$24.98). Newly available on high-definition Blu-ray, this Emmy-winning 2000 fantasy miniseries stars Kimberly Williams-Paisley, John Larroquette, Dianne Wiest, Ed O'Neill, and Warwick Davis.

**Anne of Green Gables: 30th Anniversary** (Entertainment One, Blu-ray: \$64.98). Produced by Sullivan Entertainment, this 30th anniversary edition of the 1985 beloved Canadian miniseries—based on the classic novel by Lucy Maud Montgomery and starring Megan Follows, Jonathan Crombie, and Colleen Dewhurst—is newly available on high-definition Blu-ray.



**Cracked: Pushed to the Edge** (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$19.98). David Sutcliffe and Brooke Nevin star in this final compilation of episodes from the short-lived 2013 Canadian drama series centered on a Psych Crimes and Crisis unit.

**The Merv Griffin Show: The 60's** (MPI, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.98). Beloved TV personality Merv Griffin's long-running, Emmy-winning daily talk show is showcased in



# Janson Media Celebrates

# Black History Month

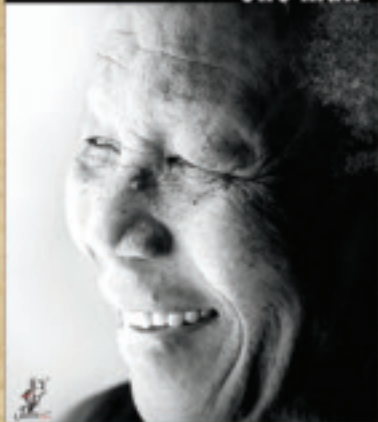
"IT ALWAYS SEEMS IMPOSSIBLE UNTIL IT'S DONE."  
-NELSON MANDELA



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"IN A WORLD OF SELFISHNESS, THIS IS A MESSAGE OF 'SACRIFICE MY LIFE FOR THE SAKE OF OTHERS,' WHICH SPEAKS VOLUMES IN TODAY'S TIMES. IT'S A LESSON THAT ALL OF US NEED TO AWAKEN TO." -TJ COLEMAN, FOUNDER OF THE THE AUBREY STEWART PROJECT



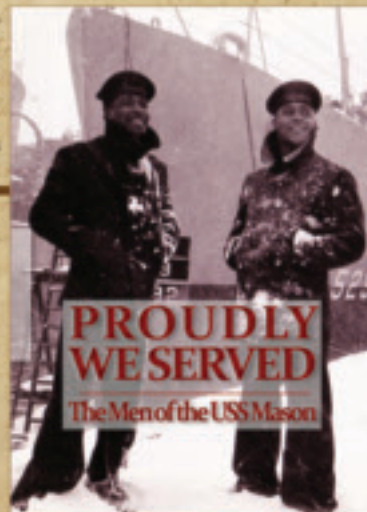
"...THIS INCREDIBLE MOVIE PROVIDES EXCELLENT HISTORICAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD, THE HISTORY OF SLAVERY AND HOW TWO BRAVE MEN BUCKED THE SYSTEM TO INSURE THAT SLAVES COULD FIND THEIR WAY TO FREEDOM AND THAT PEOPLE WOULD KNOW THEIR STORIES." HIGHLY RECOMMENDED.  
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"... ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE AND PHOTOGRAPHS TO TELL THE STORY BEHIND THE USS MASON (DE 529) AND ITS CREW, THE ONLY AFRICAN-AMERICAN SAILORS TO TAKE A U.S. NAVY WARSHIP INTO BATTLE DURING WORLD WAR II. THIS FILM WOULD BE A GREAT ADDITION TO ANY LIBRARY, PUBLIC OR ACADEMIC, OR CLASSROOM COLLECTION."  
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JULY 4, 1776

*Whispers of Angels*

A STORY OF THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

LENGTH: 60 Minutes • RRSP: \$24.95  
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• PRICE WITH PRR: \$295  
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this set containing 15 classic episodes with more than 50 guests from the worlds of entertainment, politics, music, sports, literature, and art. Also newly available are **The Merv Griffin Show: The 70's and The Merv Griffin Show: The 80's**.

**The Mind of a Chef: Season 4—Gabrielle Hamilton** (PBS, DVD: \$24.99). Narrated by executive producer Anthony Bourdain, this 2015 fourth season of the PBS-aired culinary series features NYC-based James Beard Foundation award-winning author and chef Gabrielle Hamilton.



**Mystery Science Theatre 3000: XXXIV** (Shout! Factory, DVD: 4 discs, \$59.99). This latest compilation featuring film-blasting hosts Joel Hodgson and Mike Nelson and their robot friends Tom Servo and Crow includes *Viking Women and the Sea Serpent* (1957), *War of the Colossal Beast* (1958), *The Undead* (1957), and *The She-Creature* (1956).

**Sgt. Bilko—The Phil Silvers Show: The Fourth Season** (Shout! Factory, DVD: 5 discs, \$29.99). Sgt. Ernie Bilko (Phil Silvers) and the gang transfer to California in this compilation from the 1958-59 fourth and final season of the Emmy-winning series.

**Under the Dome: Season 3** (Paramount, DVD: 4 discs, \$64.99; Blu-ray: 4 discs, \$76.99). Based on Stephen King's bestselling novel, this 2015 third and final season of the small-town sci-fi drama stars Mike Vogel, Rachele Lefevre, and Dean Norris.

### January 5

**Agatha Christie's Partners in Crime** (Acorn, DVD or Blu-ray: 2 discs each, \$39.99 each). David Walliams and Jessica Raine star as an average couple who solve crimes in this compilation of 2015 BBC adaptations of the Agatha Christie stories "The Secret Adversary" and "N or M?"



**Ancient Aliens: Season 8** (A&E, DVD: 2 discs, \$19.98). This compilation from the 2015 eighth season of the History Channel-aired extraterrestrial investigation series includes the episodes "Aliens B.C.," "The Other Earth," and "Circles from the Sky."

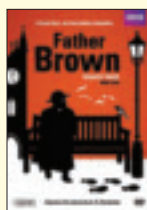
**The Birthday Boys: The Complete**

**Second Season** (Anchor Bay, DVD: 2 discs, \$19.98). Executive produced by Ben Stiller and costar Bob Odenkirk, this 2014 sophomore season of the IFC-aired sketch comedy series features guest appearances by Sandra Bernhard, Garfunkel & Oates, Jack Black, and Corey Feldman.

**Broad City: Season 2** (Paramount, DVD: 2 discs, \$26.98). NYC best friends (Ilana Glazer and Abbi Jacobson) navigate personal and professional issues in this 2015 second season of the Comedy Central series, featuring guest appearances by Seth Rogen, Kelly Ripa, and Patricia Clarkson.

**Comedy Bang! Bang! The Complete Third Season** (Anchor Bay, DVD: 4 discs, \$24.98). This 2014 third season of creator and host Scott Aukerman's Comedy Central-aired sketch series includes cameos by David Alan Grier, Zach Galifianakis, Tony Hawk, and "Weird Al" Yankovic.

**Father Brown: Season Three, Part One** (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.98). Inspired by the classic mystery stories of G.K. Chesterton, this first set of episodes from the 2015 third season starring Mark Williams as the titular crime-solving priest includes "The Man in the Shadows" and "The Curse of Amenhotep."



**Flesh and Bone** (Anchor Bay, DVD: 2 discs, \$44.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$49.99). A troubled NYC ballet dancer battles personal demons in this 2015 coming-of-age Starz-aired miniseries starring Sarah Hay, Ben Daniels, and Irina Dvorovenko.

**It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia: The Complete Season 10** (Fox, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.98). A Pennsylvania watering hole is the central location in this 2015 10th season of the FX-aired comedy series, featuring guest appearances by Wade Boggs, Keegan-Michael Key, and Dax Shepard.

**The Last Kingdom** (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.98). The story of King Alfred the Great is merged with fictional elements in this 2015 eight-part adaptation of Bernard Cornwell's historical novel series, starring Alexander Dreyfuss, David Dawson, and Rutger Hauer.



**Legend: The Complete Series** (Mill Creek, DVD: 2 discs, \$14.98). This 1995 short-lived sci-fi Western series stars Rich-

ard Dean Anderson, John de Lancie, and Jarrad Paul.

**Luther 4** (BBC, DVD: \$24.98). Idris Elba is back in his Golden Globe-winning role as dedicated and obsessive DCI John Luther in this two-episode 2015 fourth season of the compelling crime-drama series.

**Snake City: Season 2** (Warner, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.95). Aired on Nat Geo WILD, this 2015 second season continues to follow the escapades of career snake-catcher behaviorist Simon Keys and herpetologist girlfriend Siouxsie Gillett.

**True Detective: The Complete Second Season** (HBO, DVD: 3 discs, \$59.99; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$79.98). Vince Vaughn, Colin Farrell, and Rachel McAdams star in this 2015 second season of the HBO-aired crime-drama series.



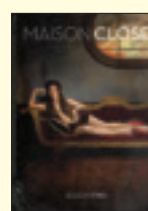
### January 12

**Craft in America: Celebration** (PBS, DVD: \$19.99). This latest episode of the Peabody Award-winning series focuses on the history of craft projects made for winter holidays and traditional festivities.

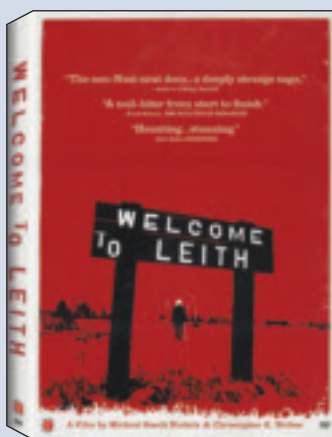
**Duck Dynasty: Wedding Special** (A&E, DVD: \$9.98). A special episode from the 2015 eighth season of the A&E reality series, this program spotlights a wedding of a young member of the Robertson duck call business clan.

**Hill Street Blues: The Final Season** (Shout! Factory, DVD: 5 discs, \$34.95). Creator Steven Bochco's acclaimed Greenwich Village police dramedy comes to a conclusion in this 1986-87 seventh and final season, starring Daniel J. Travanti, Betty Thomas, Veronica Hamel, and Michael Warren.

**Maison Close: Season Two** (Music Box, DVD: 3 discs, \$34.95; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$39.99). The lives of sex workers in a 19th-century Parisian brothel are at the center of this 2013 second season starring Anne Charrier, Valérie Karsenti, and Jemima West.



**Mr. Robot: Season 1** (Universal, DVD: 3 discs, \$44.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$49.98). Aired on the USA Network, this 2015 first



**"This could be the scariest film of the year... couldn't be more timely or essential."**

-Los Angeles Times

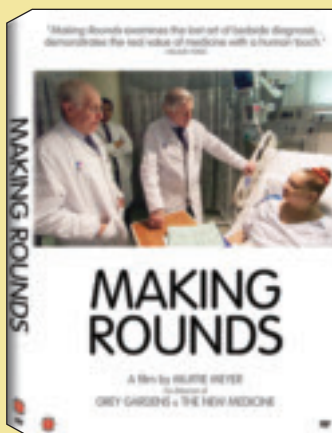
## WELCOME TO LEITH

86 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 916837D

**STREET DATE: FEBRUARY 9**

*Welcome to Leith* chronicles the attempted takeover of a small town in North Dakota by notorious white supremacist Craig Cobb. As Cobb's behavior becomes more threatening, tensions soar, and the residents desperately look for ways to expel their unwanted neighbor. With incredible access to both longtime residents of Leith and white supremacists, the film is a "gripping you-are-there portrait of a community under siege against an extremist vision...as engrossing as a fictional thriller." (Variety)

**"The neo-Nazi next door: in Welcome to Leith, the deeply strange saga of a tiny town, a white supremacist and a crazy dream unfolds. Surprising and fascinating."** -Salon



## MAKING ROUNDS

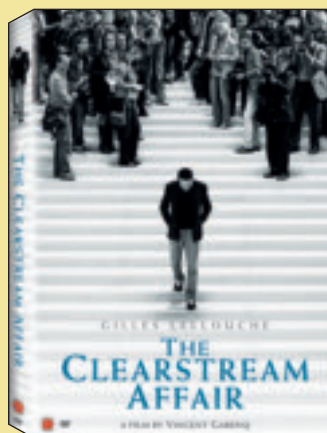
88 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 916813D

**STREET DATE: JANUARY 12**

We spend a trillion dollars a year on high-tech tests, and yet almost 20% of patients are misdiagnosed. Filmmaker Muffie Meyer (*Grey Gardens*) re-introduces the oldest diagnostic method - listening to the patient - by following two leading cardiologists from Mount Sinai Hospital over a one-month period as they care for critically-ill heart patients in the Cardiac Care Unit.

*"Making Rounds examines the lost art of bedside diagnosis...demonstrates the real value of medicine with a human touch."*

-Village Voice



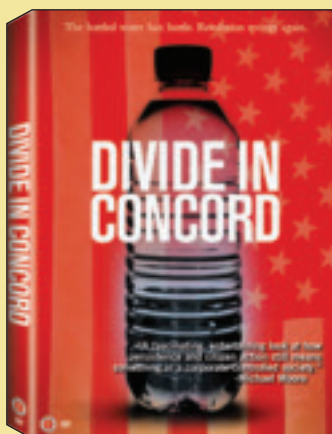
## THE CLEARSTREAM AFFAIR

102 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 916820D

**STREET DATE: JANUARY 12**

In this provocative French political thriller, journalist Denis Robert sets the world of finance ablaze when he exposes a major European bank's opaque operations. In his search for the truth, Robert uncovers a dark political financial machine of bribes and threats.

*"The Clearstream Affair teases out not only the intricacies of a scandal lasting much of the last decade, but the extraordinary human toll on journalist Denis Robert."* -Variety



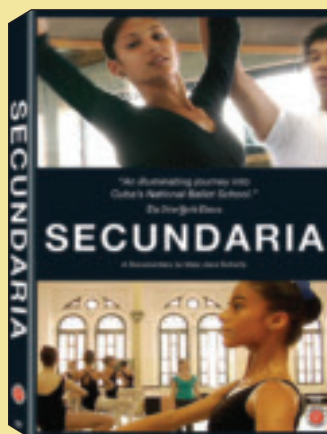
## DIVIDE IN CONCORD

82 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 916790D

**NOW AVAILABLE**

Jean Hill, a fiery octogenarian, spends her golden years spearheaded a local grassroots campaign to ban the sale of single-serve plastic water bottles. So far, her attempts have failed. As Jean prepares for one last town meeting, she faces the strongest opposition yet - from skeptical residents, local merchants and even the International Bottled Water Association. A tense nail-biter of a vote will decide.

*"A fascinating, entertaining look at how persistence and citizen action still means something in a corporate-controlled society."* -Michael Moore



## SECUNDARIA

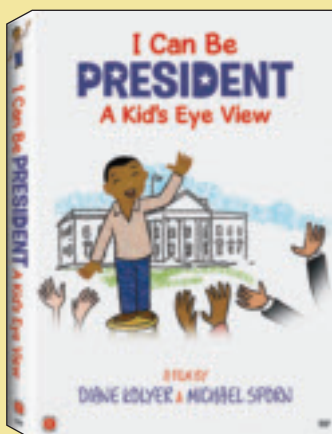
96 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 916844D

**STREET DATE: FEBRUARY 9**

*Secundaria* quietly follows one high school class on its journey through Cuba's world-famous National Ballet School. The teens love to dance, but for many of them dance is also their sole escape from a life of poverty. In their third year of school, the main character, Mayara, takes charge of her destiny in an astonishing way.

*"Don't miss Secundaria...an illuminating journey."* -The New York Times

*"A lucid, watchful portrait of young ballet dancers desperately trying to plié their way out of poverty."* -Boston Globe



## I CAN BE PRESIDENT

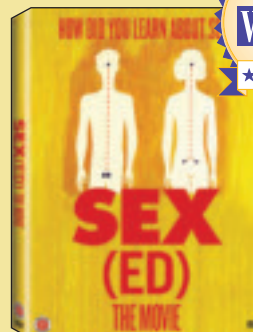
22 minutes, color, \$12.95, FRF 916851D

**STREET DATE: FEBRUARY 9**

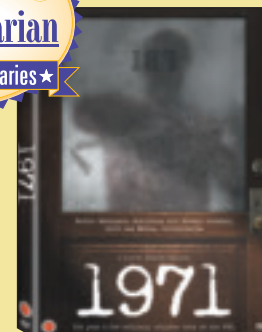
What would it be like to grow up and become president of the United States?

Combining interviews with elementary schoolers whose hopes and dreams - both hilarious and touching - come to life in animated sequences, *I Can Be President* offers a young person's view of civics and ethics, with simple yet profound observations on being a leader and becoming an adult. Affirming the importance of having dreams at any age, this delightful film is a promising vision of the nation's future.

**WINNER! NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Children's Program**



76 minutes, \$24.95, FRF 916370D



79 minutes, \$24.95, FRF 916769D

season of the cyber-thriller series following a vigilante hacker (Rami Malek) also stars Christian Slater and Carly Chaikin.

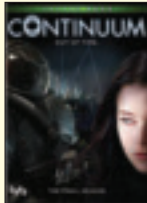
**Sherlock: The Abominable Bride** (BBC, DVD: \$22.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99). This 2016 special is from the contemporary BBC adaptation featuring Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's classic sleuth, starring Benedict Cumberbatch and Martin Freeman.



### January 19

**12 Monkeys: Season One** (Universal, DVD: 3 discs, \$44.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$49.98). Based on the 1995 feature film and aired on Syfy, the 2015 first season of this time travel sci-fi mystery drama series focuses on a mission to stop a deathly global plague, and stars Aaron Stanford, Amanda Schull, and Kirk Acevedo.

**Continuum: The Final Season** (Universal, DVD: 2 discs, \$34.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$44.98). Law enforcement officer Kiera Cameron (Rachel Nichols) goes up against Future Soldiers in this 2015 fourth and final season of the Canadian sci-fi series that also stars Ryan Robbins and Victor Webster.



**The Doctor Blake Mysteries: Season One** (BBC, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98). Secret-keeping mystery-solving doctor Lucien Blake (Craig McLachlan) returns to his Australian hometown in this 2013 first season of the drama series.

**Little House on the Prairie: Season Eight** (Lionsgate, DVD: 6 discs, \$21.98). Adapted from the classic pioneer books by Laura Ingalls Wilder, this re-mastered high-definition penultimate 1981-82 eighth season of the family series features guest stars including Ernie Hudson, Peter Billingsley, and Georg Olden. Also newly available is **Little House on the Prairie: Season Seven** (Blu-ray: 5 discs, \$29.99).

**Moveable Feast with Fine Cooking: Season 3** (PBS, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.99). Australian celebrity chef Pete Evans hosts this slice-of-America tour of regional cuisines in the third season of the public television series, which includes visits to Homer, AK; Oahu, HI; and Louisville, KY.

**Shetland: Seasons One & Two** (BBC, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98). Featuring four two-part stories starring Douglas Henshall and Alison O'Donnell, this BBC Scotland crime drama series' 2013-14 first two seasons includes "Red Bones," "Raven Black," "Dead Water," and "Blue Lightning."

**Sisters: Season Three** (Shout! Factory, DVD: 6 discs, \$39.95). Illinois siblings (including stars Sela Ward and Swoosie Kurtz) balance life and love in this 1992-93 third season of the dramedy series that also features Ashley Judd and Paul Rudd.

**Swamp People: Season 6** (Lionsgate, DVD: 4 discs, \$19.98). This 2015 sixth season of the History-aired reality series following alligator hunters includes "Bounty on the Bayou," "Gator Gridlock," and "Bait & Switch."



### January 26

**Black Work** (Acorn, DVD: \$34.99). This three-part 2015 thriller series follows a policewoman (Sheridan Smith) whose undercover work reveals dark secrets that hit too close to home.

**Downton Abbey: Season 6** (PBS, DVD: 3 discs, \$49.99; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$59.99). Bringing closure to a hugely popular series, this 2015 sixth season provides a bittersweet farewell to members of the beloved period drama that stars Maggie Smith, Hugh Bonneville, Michelle Dockery, and Elizabeth McGovern.



**The Facts of Life: Season Eight** (Shout! Factory, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.99). The penultimate 1986-87 eighth season of the coming-of-age sitcom introduces Cloris Leachman to the cast and includes appearances by George Clooney, Stacey Q, and Dick Van Patten.

**UnREAL: Season 1** (Lionsgate, DVD: 2 discs, \$26.99). Aired on Lifetime, this 2015 first season of the dark dramedy series set behind-the-scenes of a reality dating program stars Shiri Appleby, Craig Bierko, Freddie Stroma, and Constance Zimmer.

### February 2

**Falling Skies: The Complete Fifth Season** (Warner, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray:

2 discs, \$49.99). Beasts and mutants are running wild in this 2015 fifth and final season of the Steven Spielberg-produced, TNT-aired, post-apocalyptic drama series starring Noah Wyle, Moon Bloodgood, and Mpho Koaho.

**From Dusk Till Dawn: Season Two** (Entertainment One, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$49.98). Based on Robert Rodriguez and Quentin Tarantino's supernatural feature film, this 2015 second season of the Netflix original horror series stars D.J. Cotrona, Zane Holtz, and Eiza González.

**Last of the Summer Wine: Vintage 2006** (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$34.98). The cask is not yet drained for a group of elderly pals (Keith Clifford, Brian Murphy, Peter Sallis, Frank Thornton) who continue their antics in the Yorkshire Dales in this 2006 27th season of the long-running British sitcom created by Roy Clarke.



**The Man from U.N.C.L.E.: The Complete Season 2** (Warner, DVD: 10 discs, \$24.98). Robert Vaughn and David McCallum star as top agents of the United Network Command for Law and Enforcement in this 1965-66 sophomore season, which features guest appearances by Rip Torn, Eve Arden, and Martin Landau.



**Mercy Street** (PBS, DVD: 2 discs, \$49.99; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$59.99). This PBS-aired 2016 series based on real events surrounding the American Civil War homefront is executive produced by Ridley Scott, and stars Josh Radnor, Mary Elizabeth Winstead, Gary Cole, Shalita Grant, and Hannah James.

**Show Me a Hero** (Warner, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.98, Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$49.99). Based on former *New York Times* writer Lisa Belkin's 1999 nonfiction book, this HBO-aired 2015 six-episode miniseries centering on tensions over a public housing development in Yonkers, NY, stars Oscar Isaac, Peter Riegert, James Belushi, Alfred Molina, and Catherine Keener.

### February 9

**Mountain Men: The Rules of the Wild**



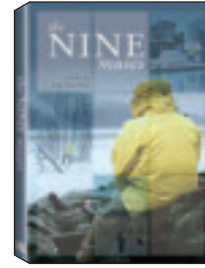
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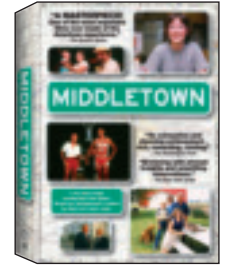
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DAVIS



DEMOTT & KREINES



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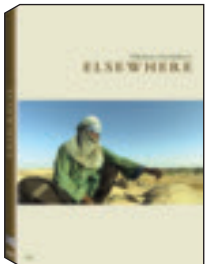
FISCHLI & WEISS



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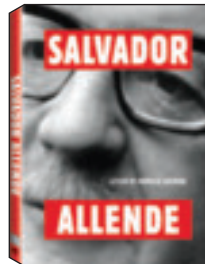
GEYRHALTER



GEYRHALTER



GUZMÁN



GUZMÁN



GUZMÁN



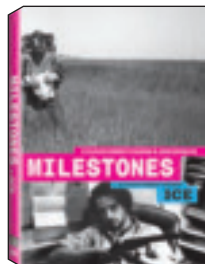
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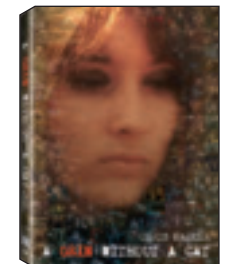
IMAMURA



KRAMER & DOUGLAS



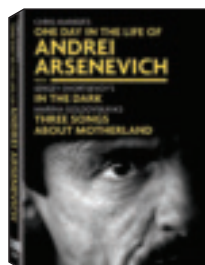
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MORRISON



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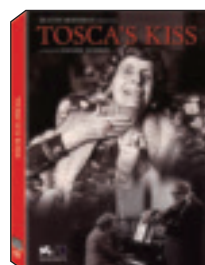
MORRISON



OGAWA & PENG



OPHULS



SCHMID



SEKULA & BURCH



WATKINS

**Have Changed** (Lionsgate, DVD: 2 discs, \$14.98). D.B. Sweeney narrates this compilation of episodes from the History-aired series that follows the daily lives of men living in the wilderness.

### February 16

**The Beast: The Complete Series** (Mill Creek, DVD: 2 discs, \$9.98). Aired on A&E, this 2009 crime drama series stars Patrick Swayze, Travis Fimmel, and Kevin J. O'Connor.

**Frankenstein: The Miniseries** (Mill Creek, DVD: \$9.98, Blu-ray: \$14.98). Based on the classic novel by Mary Shelley, this 2004 miniseries adaptation stars Luke Goss, Alec Newman, Julie Delpy, William Hurt, and Donald Sutherland.

**The Trials of Jimmy Rose** (Acorn, DVD: \$34.99). This three-part 2015 ITV-produced drama following a former career criminal who helps a young family member get back on track stars Ray Winstone, Amanda Redman, and Tom Cullen.



### February 23

**Warehouse 13: The Complete Series** (Universal, Blu-ray: 15 discs, \$199.98). Following agents who retrieve global artifacts, this 2009-14 popular Syfy-aired series starring Eddie McClintock, Joanne Kelly, and Saul Rubinek is newly available on high-definition Blu-ray.



### Looking Ahead

Slated for March are the debut seasons of **Death Valley Days** and **Humans**, the first season on Blu-ray of **The Fall**, the second seasons of **Baa Baa Black Sheep: Black Sheep Squadron**, **Silk**, and **Z Nation**, the fourth seasons of **CHiPs**, **Death in Paradise**, **Maude**, **Scott and Bailey**, and **Strike Back**, the fifth season of **Game of Thrones**, the sixth season of **The Nanny**, and the 12th season of **New Tricks**, as well as **The Bold Ones: The New Doctors**, BBC's **Life Story**, and the complete series of **Freaks and Geeks** on Blu-ray. Slated for April is the sophomore season of **Silicon Valley**, the third season of **Banshee**, and the fourth season of **Veep**.

## Re-priced or New to DVD/Blu-ray

**Art of the Heist** (Athena, DVD: 4 discs, \$59.99). Subtitled "Inside the World's Biggest Thefts," this 2006-07 14-part documentary series explores notorious thefts of renowned artworks around the globe, including the famous disappearance of the *Mona Lisa* from the Louvre. Extras include a viewer's guide with articles about the discovery of an art hoard with Nazi ties, notorious forgers, politically motivated art heists, and museum security.

**Burroughs: The Movie** (Criterion, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.95; Blu-ray: \$39.95). Director Howard Brookner's long-lost, recently unearthed 1983 documentary provides up-close footage of *Naked Lunch* author William S. Burroughs in the late '70s and early '80s in a one-of-a-kind nonfiction portrait. Extras include audio commentary by filmmaker Jim Jarmusch, new and archival interviews, footage from the 2014 New York Film Festival premiere of the restored film, rare outtakes, and a booklet.

**The Forgotten Space** (Icarus, DVD: \$29.98). Newly re-priced for home video, filmmakers Allan Sekula and Noël Burch's 2010 documentary (VL-7/13 ★★★) offers a critique of international capitalism while also analyzing how goods move from producing to consuming nations. Bonus features include a photo gallery and a booklet. Also newly re-priced at \$24.98 is *Gringo Trails* (VL-7/14 ★★★1/2).



**Keiko: The Untold Story of the Star of Free Willy** (Dreamscape, DVD: \$24.99). Newly re-priced for home video, Theresa Demarest's 2010 documentary (VL Online-10/14 ★★★) tells the true story of Keiko, the orca whale who appeared in Warner Brothers' 1993 family hit *Free Willy*. Also newly available is *Let the Good Times Roll* (DVD: \$19.99 [\$199 w/PPR]).

**The Little Zoo That Could** (Ivan's Ark, DVD: 4 discs, \$139.95 [\$399.95 w/PPR], web: ivansarkproductions.com). This collection of 13 episodes that aired on Animal Planet from 2006-07 presents nature stories from the 17-acre non-profit Alabama Gulf Coast Zoo, which was ravaged by Hurricanes Ivan, Dennis, and Katrina. Extras include deleted scenes and the bonus special "The Little



Zoo That Could: A New Beginning."

**Lighthouses of North America** (Marshall Publishing, DVD: \$19.95 [\$24.95w/PPR], web: marshallpub.com). This 2005 armchair traveler documentary (VL-5/05 ★★★) takes viewers on a tour of some of the most spectacular lighthouses on the East and West coasts, from Pemaquid Point in Maine to Point Arena in California, combining scenic tours with local history concerning shipwrecks, acts of heroism, and ghost tales.

**Lucky** (Virgil, DVD: \$19.99). Newly re-priced for home video, former journalist Laura Checkoway's powerful 2014 documentary (VL-3/15 ★★★) spends six years tracking the life of charismatic homeless woman Lucky Torres' life, beginning at a New York shelter. Also newly available at the same price is *The Girls in the Band* (VL-11/14 ★★★)

**The Quay Brothers: Collected Short Films** (Zeitgeist, Blu-ray: \$34.99). Filmmaker brothers Stephen and Timothy Quay are spotlighted in this compilation of 15 of their films made between 1984-2013, newly available on high-definition Blu-ray, which includes three titles not collected in Zeitgeist's DVD set *Phantom Museums: The Short Films of the Quay Brothers* (VL-7/07 ★★★), as well as filmmaker Christopher Nolan's short "Quay." Bonus features include audio commentary by the Quay Brothers, and a booklet.



**Triumph of the Will: Special Edition** (Synapse, Blu-ray: \$34.95). Commissioned by Adolf Hitler, filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl's landmark documentary commemorating Reich Party Day in 1934—newly available on high-definition Blu-ray—remains the textbook example of cinematic propaganda.

**The Wanted 18** (Kino Lorber, DVD: \$29.95). A strange incident (involving cows) from the first Intifada of the late 1980s is at the center of this semi-comic 2014 documentary (VL-9/15 ★★★) by Paul Cowan and Amer Shomali, newly re-priced for home video. Also newly available on home video at the same price is *Goodbye Gauley Mountain* (VL-9/15 ★★1/2).



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## Find Me

Thousands of Chinese children now find themselves in the homes of families across America. This moving, personal documentary tells the stories of those who adopt children from China as well as the stories of those who loved them first: the biological parents who feel they can't keep their children and the orphanage nannies or foster-families who must say goodbye to the children they've raised for months...or years. This emotional and uplifting story follows three families who have answered the quiet cry of China. Documentary, 77 minutes.

#501652D, \$14.99, UPC 7 27985 01652 8



## My Son, My Savior

From the makers of the award winning biblical dramas *Road to Emmaus* and *Come Follow Me* comes *My Son, My Savior*, a powerful portrayal of the life of Jesus as seen through the eyes of his mother, Mary. Using the Gospel accounts as its framework, we see how Mary responded to the events of Jesus' life and how her understanding of Jesus' mission grew over time. Starring Corrina Crade and Bruce Marchiano. Drama, 30 minutes.

#501650D, \$14.99, UPC 7 27985 01650 4



## Cody High: A Life Remodeled Project

*Cody High* focuses on the efforts of Detroit's impoverished Cody Rouge community to remove blight and create a safe environment for students at the local schools, including the hundreds of students who attend Cody High School. In 2014, residents and volunteers, in partnership with Life Remodeled, remodeled three schools and 25 homes and tore down 254 vacant houses, bringing beauty back to 303 blocks of Detroit. Documentary, 78 minutes.

#501675D, \$19.99, UPC 7 27985 01675 7



## The Week that Changed the World

The resurrection happened. It's not just the belief of Christians, it's borne out by history, archaeology, and science. This documentary takes viewers step by step through the events of Holy Week, shedding light on the key players and answering longstanding questions about what happened, and why. Professor of ancient history Dr. Paul L. Maier details the story using remarkable dramatic re-creations to bring Holy Week alive in a whole new way. Docu-drama, 33 minutes.

#501638D, \$9.99, UPC 7 27985 01638 2



## Stalingrad Madonna

In the harsh winter of 1942, Russian troops fight to hold off the advancing German Army at Stalingrad. In his frozen foxhole, German staff physician and Protestant pastor, Kurt Reuber, creates a simple charcoal drawing of the Virgin Mary and the Christ child. At the bottom of the drawing he writes an inscription, "Licht, Leben, Liebe" ("Light, Life, Love"). Reuber became a prisoner of war and died in a Russian prison camp in 1944, but his drawing has become a potent symbol of peace and forgiveness between nations. Docu-drama, 47 minutes.

#501665D, \$19.99, UPC 7 27985 01665 8



## George for Real

*George* is a fly-on-the-wall documentary capturing the energy, enthusiasm, vision, and humanity of one man's life and mission. Founder and leader of one of the world's largest missionary movements, Operation Mobilization, George Verwer takes you on his travels all over the world. Discover how his spiritual hunger was ignited during his turbulent teenage years and how he began this dynamic global missionary movement. Documentary, 55 minutes.

#501662D, \$14.99, UPC 7 27985 01662 7



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This section features reviews of current and classic studio, independent, and foreign feature films. Each review includes pricing information, as well as running time, rating, subtitling information, and street dates for yet-to-be-released titles. Most titles reviewed here are widely available through most distributors.

★★★★ = Excellent  
 ★★★ = Good  
 ★★ = Fair  
 ★ = Poor

## Current Films

### 90 Minutes in Heaven

★★★

Universal, 122 min., PG-13, DVD: \$26.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98

Seasoned filmmaker Michael Polish directed this faith-based move adapted from a 2004 memoir by Don Piper (Hayden Christensen). Piper, a Baptist minister who was pronounced dead in an auto accident but miraculously recovered, revealed after a long rehabilitation that he underwent a heavenly journey before returning to the land of the living. Although the film features better-known talent (Kate Bosworth plays Piper's supportive wife) than many similar films, this is another one that preaches to the choir, who might not be bothered by the fact that the dialogue is trite and the performances wooden. Dwight Yoakam turns up briefly as a shady, good-ole-boy publicity-seeking lawyer, and while his acting is rudimentary, he at least brings a touch of levity to the otherwise deadly-earnest proceedings. When the audience finally gets a glimpse of Piper's vision of the afterlife, it turns out to be a pretty dull affair—smiling deceased folk from his past, dressed in their Sunday best, greeting him as they walk toward the pearly gates, bathed in the glow of an otherworldly light. The effect is both distinctly underwhelming and ploddingly pious. Not a necessary purchase. (F. Swietek)



### 99 Homes

Broad Green, 112 min., R, DVD: \$26.99, Feb. 9

Set in Orlando, FL, this taut and timely thriller begins with a blood-splattered suicide as a suburban homeowner chooses death over eviction. Disposing of the mess falls to callous real-estate broker Richard Carver (Michael Shannon), whose business is to acquire



foreclosed-upon homes for resale—gaming both the real-estate market and the government. Next on Carver's list is the family home of Dennis Nash (Andrew Garfield), an unemployed construction worker cruelly forced to move his widowed mother (Laura Dern) and young son (Noah Lomax) into a shabby motel. Determined to earn enough to reclaim his home, Nash goes to work for Carver, despite Carver's ominous warning: "When you work for me, you're mine." First, Nash diligently handles clean-ups; then, he's stealing air conditioners, appliances, and water pumps from abandoned houses and posting "vacate" notices when homeowners cannot keep up payments. Before long, Nash has become unscrupulous Carver's protégé, evicting decent working people and the elderly, giving them two minutes to pack up their belongings, which are then dumped on the curb. "First one's a bitch, but you get numb to it," Carver says. Directed by Ramin Bahrani, *99 Homes* serves up a simplistic but also socially-conscious and emotionally effective commentary on the American economy—and its legal and administrative loopholes. Recommended. (S. Granger)

### 1001 Grams

Kino Lorber, 90 min., in Norwegian & French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95

Director Bent Hamer's latest film serves up a poker-faced satire of the Norwegian scientific community, while also drifting into romantic-philosophical territory. Attractive young scientist Marie (played with cool Nordic reserve by Ane Dahl Torp) is entrusted by the Institute of Weights and Measures with making sure that the Norwegian kilo prototype gets to the International Kilo Conference in Paris with its weight intact (apparently not as easy as it would seem). Marie robotically makes it through the conference but meets another scientist along the way who slowly but surely seduces her with his sneaky French suavity. *1001 Grams* nicely succeeds in its representation of a particular way of life: Marie lives the liberal Norwegian dream in a community of people who exist in boxy modernist look-alike houses, drive comically tiny electro cars, and wear drab clothing—all evoking the Scandinavian dichotomy of individuals craving recognition but not wanting to stand out from the crowd. Although ultimately the film lacks philosophical heft (faltering when it tries to turn the kilo into some sort of metaphor for the weight of life), it's still a reasonably entertaining foreign rom-com. (M. Sandlin)



### Alleluia

Doppelganger, 93 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95

Eroticism and violence are combined in

Fabrice du Welz's take on the true story of Raymond Fernandez and Martha Beck, who in the 1940s used personal ads to contact single women whom they then swindled and murdered. Their "Lonely Hearts" crimes have inspired at least five previous films, most notably 1970's *The Honeymoon Killers*, a gruesome cult classic, but du Welz's version—transplanted to modern Belgium—stands apart for its feverish intensity. Mortuary assistant Gloria (Lola Dueñas) is targeted by online seducer Michel (Laurent Lucas), who cadges money from her and then disappears. Gloria obsessively tracks Michel down and joins him, posing as his sister. Michel continues to ply his unsavory trade, but Gloria can't stand seeing him with other women, so she brutally kills three of her "rivals": a wealthy widow, a pious spinster, and a beautiful woman with a young daughter. The murders are shown with stomach-churning explicitness: Gloria wields a hammer with a vengeance, and cheerfully begins dismembering the corpse of one victim while humming a tune. And the scenes of frantic lovemaking are equally vivid in this tale of powerful sexual desire that leads to madness. Essentially a kinky horror movie, but one made with considerable artistry, this is recommended. (F. Swietek)



### American Bear

Virgil, 93 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.99

This road-trip diary from now-married filmmakers Greg Grano and Sarah Sellman tests the charge that the U.S. national mood is generally one of distrust and intolerance. The young duo (20 and 21, respectively) drive cross-country—taking an arbitrary route based on whatever town in a given state happens to be named Bear—for 60 days, asking complete strangers to put them up for the night in what amounts to an informal sample of the nation's character. They find fear/loathing in Las Vegas, and have to sleep rough in Atlanta, but most of the time the "kindness of strangers" prevails, although the pair note (seemingly crestfallen) that the statistical majority of their friendly hosts were white Christians. A mostly charming documentary suggesting that simple hospitality—especially in the off-the-beaten-track Red State territories of the Plains and Midwest heartland—still predominates, this is recommended. (C. Cassidy)

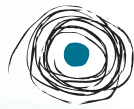


### Amour Fou

Film Movement, 96 min., in German w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95

On November 21, 1811, the German playwright and poet Heinrich von Kleist killed





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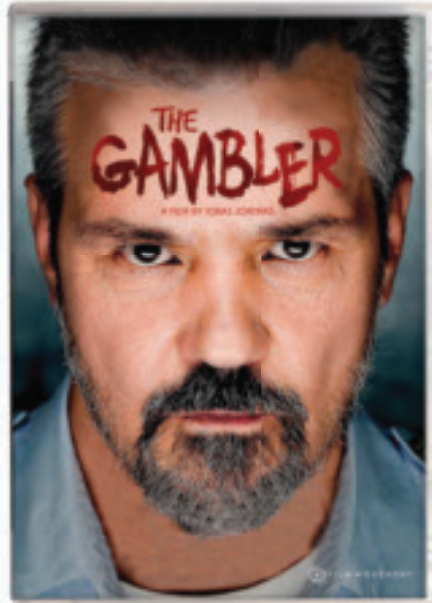
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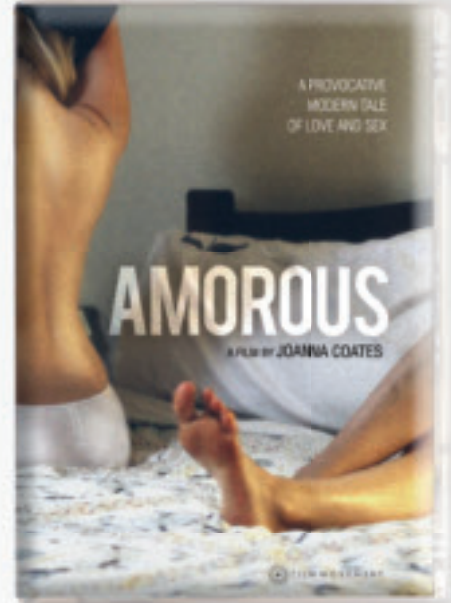
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An expert ambulance driver creates an illegal game betting on the lives of those he is trying to save, but soon finds himself addicted to this illicit new thrill.

**THE GAMBLER**

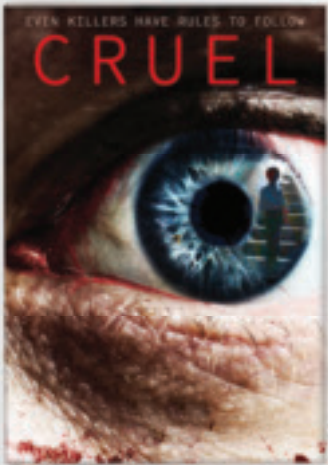
Eastern European  
DVD only: \$24.95 / PPR: \$200  
DRL: \$499 / PPR + DRL: \$599  
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Four Londoners move to an isolated cottage to test social conventions and their own inhibitions by swapping partners and exploring new boundaries of intimacy.

**AMOROUS**

English Language, Sexuality, Women Directors  
DVD only: \$24.95 / PPR: \$200  
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UPC: 857692005413



A serial killer tries to conceal his murderous inclinations from his lover until his homicidal urges drive him to the brink.

**CRUEL**

French, Thriller  
DVD only: \$24.95 / PPR: \$200  
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UPC: 857692005536



A nihilistic artist, who hides her fragility behind her promiscuous lifestyle, falls in love with a handsome young priest.

**THE MANEATER**

French, Romance, Women Directors  
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In the 19th century, a young man flees from famine and poverty in his German village for freedom in the South American jungle.

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himself in a suicide pact with Henriette Vogel, a well-to-do government official's wife who left behind not only a grieving husband but also a young daughter. Writer-director Jessica Hausner uses this story to fashion a darkly comic portrait of angst-afflicting Prussian society during the Napoleonic era, following the melancholy writer as he proposes his joint-suicide scheme to a number of women over a period of months, all of whom decline the bizarre offer before he finds a taker in Vogel, who's just been told that she is suffering from a fatal illness (a diagnosis that turns out post-mortem to be mistaken). Hausner constructs the film as a series of static tableaux, many in the form of the staid musical performances that provided domestic entertainment during the early 19th century. With its stately pacing, painterly style, amateurishly-performed music, and deliberately stiff acting by Christian Friedel as Von Kleist, Birte Schnoink as Henriette, and Stephan Grossmann as her husband, this cerebral exercise doesn't carry much emotional weight, but with its handsome sets and costumes, and meticulous attention to period detail, it will likely appeal to those who appreciate art cinema. Recommended. (F. Swietek)



### Ashby ★★1/2

Paramount, 102 min., R, DVD: \$29.99, Jan. 5

It's a cinematic cliché: lonely teenager develops bond with elderly neighbor who has a terminal illness. The twist in writer-director Tony McNamara's *Ashby* is that the senior here is a gruff retired CIA hit-man who enlists the boy in some unfinished business. Mickey Rourke plays the title character, a crusty sort visited by Ed (Nat Wolff), the new kid next door, who has been assigned to write a school essay based on conversations with "an old person." Ashby is in no hurry to talk about his past, but he agrees to be interviewed if Ed will serve as his chauffeur while he redeems himself in God's eyes by rubbing out three former associates who conned him into including among his 90-odd victims an innocent man who threatened to expose their embezzlement schemes. Ed's a bright lad, but with other pressing matters—football tryouts, romancing a pretty classmate (Emma Stone), undercutting his mother's loser dates—it takes him a while to figure out what Ashby is up to on their jaunts, and even then he's torn about whether to bow out or help his newfound friend complete his mission. Unfortunately, McNamara doesn't possess the delicate touch required to successfully juggle lighthearted teen comedy with action-movie violence, or keep all of the plot threads hum-



ming along smoothly, but the film is buoyed somewhat by Rourke and Wolff, who nicely play against one another in this reasonably diverting coming-of-age dramedy. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

### Beltracchi: The Art of Forgery ★★★

KimStim, 98 min., in German w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99

Arne Birkenstock's documentary serves up a portrait of the flamboyant Wolfgang Beltracchi, who for decades passed his own work off as long-lost paintings by famous artists—making enormous profits—before being unmasked in 2010, convicted of fraud (along with his wife), and sentenced to six years in a German prison. Much of the film is devoted to interviews with inmate Beltracchi, who was allowed to work in a friend's studio during the day and return to his cell at night. Essentially self-taught, Beltracchi is exuberantly proud of the ease with which he mimics others' styles, and he happily describes the elaborate backstory he invented to convince experts of his paintings' authenticity. Beltracchi even gives a step-by-step demonstration of his process: buying a worthless old painting at an open-air fair, transforming it into a simulacrum of another artist's work, and even placing vintage dust in the crevices of the frame to complete the illusion. Auctioneers, appraisers, and even some snookered buyers are also interviewed, but despite a few angry denunciations (and home movies that depict his family living in luxury) Beltracchi emerges here barely scathed. Partially, this is because the art market—with its emphasis on ever-escalating prices and willingness to cut corners in determining provenance—comes across as colluding in Beltracchi's crime in pursuit of profit. In the end, Beltracchi seems less a nasty con-man than a genial fellow whose talents exploited flaws in an already corrupt system. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

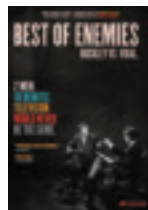


### Best of Enemies

★★★1/2

Magnolia, 88 min., R, DVD: \$26.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98

During the 1968 presidential election, ABC News—a perennial also-ran among the networks and critically short of resources—decided to forgo gavel-to-gavel coverage of the Republican and Democratic party conventions, opting instead for abbreviated broadcasts that included debates between William F. Buckley, Jr. and Gore Vidal, representing conservative and liberal viewpoints. Morgan Neville and Robert Gordon's engrossing documentary focuses on the face-off between these two celebrity intellectuals, drawing on clips from their sessions (along with other quotations



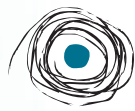
from the men, recreated by Kelsey Grammer and John Lithgow, respectively) to illustrate how each attempted to verbally eviscerate the other. Their confrontation culminated in an acrimonious exchange that was set against the street riots at the Democratic convention, when Vidal (who carefully rehearsed his *bon mots* while Buckley extemporized) called his opponent a "crypto-Nazi" and Buckley lost his temper, referring contemptuously to Vidal's sexual orientation and threatening to punch him—a meltdown that left Buckley deeply embarrassed for the rest of his life (while Vidal reveled at having effectively baited Buckley). Observations from Christopher Hitchens, Dick Cavett, and Buckley's brother Neil add to the already substantial wit supplied by the two men, and it's equally amusing to watch network anchorman Howard K. Smith try to maintain a semblance of decorum. *Best of Enemies* also suggests that the Buckley-Vidal dustup began the decline of civil discourse on TV news broadcasts, which has degenerated into today's steady diet of vitriolic punditry. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

### Black Mass ★★★

Warner, 122 min., R, DVD: \$28.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$44.95, Feb. 16

For more than two decades, James "Whitey" Bulger (Johnny Depp) was South Boston's criminal kingpin. His extraordinary power emanated from his friendship with FBI agent John Connolly (Joel Edgerton), who masterminded the destruction of the rival Italian Mafia, using information that was fed to him by Bulger. And it didn't hurt that Whitey's brother, Billy (Benedict Cumberbatch), was a powerful, highly respected politician, rising to the presidency of the Massachusetts State Senate. Back in 1975, Bulger was approached by his ambitious childhood friend Connolly to inform on other criminals. Instead of considering it "ratting," he felt it was a mutually profitable "business opportunity." "An alliance like this doesn't weaken you," Connolly assured him. "It makes you stronger." Indeed, after that, Bulger's tight-knit Winter Hill Gang engaged in extortion, loan-sharking, drug-dealing, murder, and even smuggling weapons to the IRA—with impunity—until *Boston Globe* journalists Dick Lehr and Gerard O'Neill revealed the truth about the corruption. Adapted from Lehr and O'Neill's 2000 titular book, director Scott Cooper's *Black Mass* is structured around actual court testimony, and features a powerful performance by Depp, who is totally convincing in his portrayal of this menacing mobster. Depp is backed by superb supporting turns from Julianne Nicholson, Peter Sarsgaard, Kevin Bacon, Dakota Johnson, and Juno Temple. Recommended. (S. Granger)





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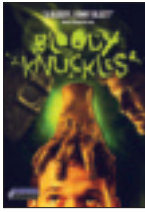
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## Bloody Knuckles ★★★

Artsploitation, 86 min., not rated, DVD: \$18.99, Blu-ray: \$22.99



Made in the gonzo-gore spirit of *Toxic Avenger* Tro-ma titles of yesteryear—which reveled in ludicrous ethnic and gender stereotypes—Canadian filmmaker Matt O's (Matt O'Mahoney) *Bloody Knuckles* revisits the disembodied crawling-hand subgenre, serving up a garish tale of transgressive comic creator Travis (Adam Boys), whose tasteless panels lampoon a Chinatown crime boss. In response, the untouchable gangster has his hordes (all four of them, reflecting the budget) cut off the writer-artist's hand. Coming to mischievous life, the severed member tries to drag an unwilling Travis along on a revenge rampage. Cult horror fans will appreciate this over-the-top flick that even includes a shoehorned-in anti-censorship message. Also featuring Matt O's early short "Electric Fence" (which has a penis-severing scene that could be a dealbreaker for some), this is recommended for more adventurous collections. (C. Cassidy)

## A Brilliant Young Mind

★★★1/2

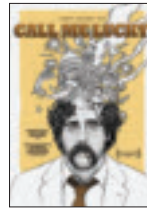
Sony, 112 min., PG-13, DVD: \$25.99, Jan. 26



Morgan Matthews uses the International Mathematical Olympiad, which he had previously covered in a documentary, as background for his first fiction feature film, which is centered on Nathan, a British boy who is diagnosed as autistic. Despite his flair for math, Nathan struggles to achieve any sort of normal socialization after his loving, supportive father dies in an auto accident. Nathan's mother (Sally Hawkins) enlists the help of a teacher at the local school (Rafe Spall)—a former IMO prodigy who suffers from multiple sclerosis—to serve as Nathan's mentor. Under his tutelage, Nathan grows into a still-skittish teen (now played by Asa Butterfield) who becomes a candidate for the British math team. At the preliminaries in Taiwan, where he falls under the stern discipline of a colorful coach (Eddie Marsan), Nathan haltingly emerges out of his shell, especially thanks to a budding relationship with a vivaciously friendly Chinese team member, which continues after the two win spots at the finals back in England. But here Nathan will be forced to make a life-changing choice. While somewhat pat and predictable, *A Brilliant Young Mind* nevertheless has sufficient quirks to compensate for its tortured genius formula story, and the expert cast helps to paper over the clichés. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

## Call Me Lucky ★★★

MPI, 105 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98



Although his record of directing scripted movies is iffy, gonzo stand-up comic turned filmmaker Bobcat Goldthwait does a polished and funny job here paying tribute to a celebrated footlights cohort (whom the hard-living Goldthwait credits with turning him sober): Barry Crimmins, now an angry old man of the mic. In Boston, Crimmins opened a comedy club in a Chinese restaurant and became an incendiary voice of left-leaning comic outrage during the conservative Reagan-Bush years that he loathed. Besides mentoring a generation of comics (even right-leaning ones) such as Steven Wright, Patton Oswalt, Kevin Meaney, and Tom Kenny, Crimmins stunned everyone with an onstage confession that he'd been molested as a youngster. With this explanation for his acerbic hatred of authority and feeling of kinship with helpless victims, Crimmins went to Congress and excoriated the early Internet (monied AOL in particular) for being a pedophile's playground. A heroic tribute to a curmudgeon with a cause, this is recommended. (C. Cassidy)

## Capital C ★★★

Kino Lorber, 86 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95

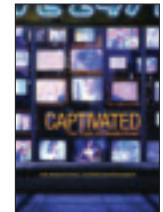


One of the most interesting money-harvesting strategies in today's digital environment is crowdfunding through sites like Kickstarter, where people use online campaigns in a pass-the-hat effort to bring in financing for a variety of efforts that require large cash infusions in a short period of time. Directors Jørg M. Kunder and Timon Birkhofer followed a trio of entrepreneurs that used crowdfunding to get their respective projects in motion: Zach Crain, creator of the Freaker USA bottle insulator; Jackson Robinson, an artist who illustrated the Federal 52 poker cards; and Brian Fargo, the driving force behind the video game *Wasteland 2*. Crain's story is the most dramatic: his product's designs were stolen by the company Urban Outfitter, but Crain lacked the money to sue his larger rival, although he eventually received national recognition after appearing on the popular *Shark Tank* TV series. Robinson's story carries deep emotional angst since his marriage is fraying while he tries to complete his playing card illustrations. And Fargo faces start-up jitters, fearing that his video game will fail when it's released. *Capital C* was itself financed through a Kickstarter campaign that netted donations from 586 people hailing from 24 countries. Although the film doesn't address the negative aspects of crowdfunding (including fraud) or discuss

the reasons why many campaigns fail, it is a mostly entertaining and often heartbreaking exploration of a contemporary phenomenon. Recommended. (P. Hall)

## Captivated: The Trials of Pamela Smart ★★★

KimStim, 98 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.99

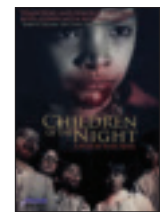


Many will still remember the case of Pamela Smart, a young and pretty high school teacher in a small New Hampshire town whose husband was murdered in 1990—a crime that Smart was alleged to have planned, recruiting a teenage lover to pull the trigger. Filmmaker Jeremiah Zagar's HBO-produced documentary *Captivated* doesn't attempt to confirm Smart's guilt or argue for her innocence, but rather it focuses on the national media madness surrounding the case, suggesting that Smart was essentially tried and convicted in the mainstream press and on tabloid television shows. Serving up an exhaustive, day-by-day overview of news coverage of the investigation and courtroom drama, the film makes a strong argument that America became entranced by the lurid details of Smart's sexual relationship with a student killer, her lack of grief for her husband during media interviews, and even photos of her in a bikini that were taken before she was married. These cumulative details added up to a kind of "Scarlet Letter" syndrome that doomed Smart regardless of the facts (it didn't help that the trial judge did not sequester jury members, who regularly went home at night and heard Smart condemned on television). Smart herself (who is currently serving a life sentence) is interviewed here, and details about her years in prison are horrifying: she was raped by a guard and became a "punching bag" for other inmates. An interesting look back at a high-profile case (which inspired both a TV movie starring Helen Hunt, and Gus Van Sant's *To Die For*, with Nicole Kidman), this is recommended. (T. Keogh)

## Children of the Night

★★★

Artsploitation, 122 min., in Spanish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$18.99



Horror fans will likely overlook the technical raggedness in Argentinean filmmaker Ivan Noel's low-budget digital feature due to its interesting twists on vampire mythology and its sly humor. Buenos Aires journalist Alicia (Sabrina Ramos) investigates a curious rural orphanage called Limbo, where the children all suffer from a "photosensitive" disorder that keeps them dormant during the day, but fully active and healthy at night. In fact, the kids—some of whom are many decades old—were all bitten

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by irresponsible adult vampires (no different than human gourmands eating veal, we're told), and had no choice but to become ageless bloodsuckers. Now they are guarded and carefully raised in an atmosphere of relative moral innocence according to Catholic Church strictures, but they remain dangerous nonetheless (although a black-clad squad of vampire-slaying grownups hovering nearby are worse). Even Dracula and Bram Stoker are woven into the premise of this film that includes some gore (not very realistic) and troubling themes of outcast children being abused and killed (although they also get delicious revenge). Recommended. (C. Cassady)

### Crimson Peak ★★1/2

Universal, 119 min., R, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.98, Feb. 9



"Ghosts are real," explains aspiring American novelist Edith Cushing (Mia Wasikowska) in director Guillermo del Toro's psychosexual thriller. "Ghosts are a metaphor for the past." In Buffalo, NY, during the early 1900s, Edith is the only child of wealthy widowed industrialist Carter Cushing (Jim Beaver). Eminently eligible, Edith is courted by optometrist Alan McMichael (Charlie Hunnam). But then she meets obsequious Sir Thomas Sharpe (Tom Hiddleston), a penniless British aristocrat seeking American backing for his mining device called "a clay harvester." Sharpe is accompanied by his icy, intimidating older sister, Lucille (Jessica Chastain). After Edith's father astutely observes, "There's something not quite right about them," a brutal murder occurs that is made to look like an accident. Heiress Edith then marries Thomas, who whisks her off to Allerdale Hall—his ancestral estate in northern England—a decrepit, four-story Victorian house with a creaking elevator, where Edith is forbidden to visit the basement. It quickly becomes obvious that Thomas is not who he seems, particularly when Edith sees terrifying apparitions that haunt the cold and cavernous hallways of the lavishly ornate mansion perched atop a heap of blood-red clay. Reminiscent of Alfred Hitchcock's *Rebecca*, del Toro insists that this is a gothic romance, not a horror film; either way, the heroine eventually discovers what the audience has already figured out in this rather traditional and predictable melodrama (albeit with stunning sets and sumptuous costumes). A strong optional purchase. (S. Granger)

### Crumbs ★★1/2

Indiepix, 68 min., in Amharic w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95

This debut feature film from Spanish director Miguel Llansó is a weird but intriguing little post-apocalyptic tale set in the magnificent wilds of Ethiopia after a

war that has nearly wiped out humanity. Gagano, or Candy (played by the diminutive Daniel Tadesse), spends his days trudging through the landscape, collecting bits of debris (the titular crumbs) from pre-apocalyptic times—among his more prized items are rubber Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle amulets, Michael Jackson records, and plastic swords, which can be traded for cash at the local pawn shop. Along the way, Candy tries to avoid confrontations with a masked figure in a Nazi uniform who wields a toy ray-gun. His partner Birdy (Selam Tesfaye) stays behind in the abandoned bowling alley where they live, experiencing strange dreams—some involving a spaceship that has been inertly hovering in the sky but appears to be powering up. When the automatic lanes of the bowling alley lurch back to sporadic life, Candy seeks answers from a witch and winds up in an argument with a surly old man in a Santa Claus suit (Candy himself is rocking a Superman shirt and a red cape). None of this makes much sense, but the parade of pop culture references raise an occasional smile, while the striking African landscapes make for evocative visuals. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)



### Dior and I ★★★

Paramount, 89 min., R, DVD: \$22.98



Filmmaker Frédéric Tcheng kibitzes on the Paris-based fashion empire founded by Christian Dior (1905-1957) in this engaging documentary. In 2012, new creative director Raf Simons—a young "minimalist"—has eight weeks to learn the mysteries of the atelier and produce a haute couture line for a vital catwalk premiere. Raf's hothouse travails (will this sleeve work with toile fabric?) and deadline stress are interwoven throughout this film that chronicles the buildup to the graffiti-influenced fashion show while also telling the story of the legendary Dior himself (including an assertion that his ghost haunts the workshop). Tcheng draws from Dior's famed published memoir, in which the designer complained that his brand-icon status had gone so far he could no longer relate (Simons says he found the book so troubling that he couldn't finish it). The underlying message here is that high fashion is hard work, and not all glamour. Undeservedly rated R for minor swearing, this is a solid profile (although Simons actually resigned from Dior in 2015, supposedly on amicable terms) that is sure to appeal to fashion buffs. Recommended. (C. Cassady)

### Do I Sound Gay? ★★1/2

MPI, 77 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.98

Writer David Thorpe directs this uneven

film essay on vocal stereotypes associated with gay men. The theory is that gay men out themselves once they begin to speak, due to an effeminate speech pattern burdened with a heavy nasality and a light lisp. Thorpe presents 1970s game show icons Paul Lynde, Rip Taylor, and Charles Nelson Reilly as examples to back up his argument, and he spends a lot of time whining with his friends about his own perceived vocal inadequacies. Thorpe employs a pair of speech therapists—both with show business clients—but his voice sounds the same after all of the exercises. He also interviews several prominent gay figures (including writers David Sedaris and Dan Savage, CNN anchor Don Lemon, *Star Trek's* George Takei, and *Project Runway's* Tim Gunn) for insight, but they offer little more than personal experiences, along with the ultimate message that a gay man should not be ashamed of his voice. Thorpe avoids obvious questions including whether the problem is the same for non-English-speaking gay populations or whether lesbians have similar concerns. Thorpe is an engaging personality—albeit in a neurotic New York sitcom way—but his filmmaking skills are shaky and this effort becomes repetitive long before the closing credits. Still, the catchy title and interesting subject make this a strong optional purchase. (P. Hall)



### The Falling ★★1/2

Cinedigm, 102 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.98



The stiflingly rigid atmosphere of a 1960s British girls' school pervades director Carol Morley's brooding film about a fainting epidemic that afflicts the student body following a tragic death. Classmates Abbie (Florence Pugh) and Lydia (*Game of Thrones* star Maisie Williams) are feeling the first pangs of youthful longing and are searching for ways to respond. After the more extroverted Abbie experiments with Lydia's older brother and winds up pregnant, she's troubled by seizures that leave her unconscious. Soon other girls are collapsing in swoons as well, sometimes in groups. The spinsterish teachers are incapable of dealing with this hysteria outbreak, while psychologists called in to consult can offer only bland bromides as an explanation for what's happening. Lydia receives no help in coping at home, where her agoraphobic mother doesn't even notice that Lydia is growing uncomfortably close to her all-too-accommodating brother. For much of its running-time, *The Falling* channels the mysteriously hypnotic mood of Peter Weir's masterful *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, telling a story of how sexual repression can cause inexplicable physical symptoms. But

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it falters in the final reel during a series of confrontations that are more melodramatic than revelatory. Still, the lovely visuals and Williams' intense performance make this a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

### Fantastic Four ★1/2

Fox, 100 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$39.99

A live-action adaptation of Stan Lee and Jack Kirby's iconic 1961 comic book series—which launched the First Family of Marvel Comics—*Fantastic Four* finds Reed Richards (Miles Teller) and Ben Grimm (Jamie Bell)—friends since childhood—joining Dr. Franklin Storm (Reg E. Cathey) on a project to devise a teleporter that will take humans to another dimension. Also on hand are Dr. Storm's son Johnny (Michael B. Jordan), adopted daughter Sue (Kate Mara), and a surly scientist, Victor Von Doom (Toby Kebbell). After the resultant machine is tested on a chimpanzee, a shadowy institute board member (Tim Blake Nelson) authorizes a manned mission. But when the team plants an American flag on alien territory, they are engulfed by a green energy field that endows them with inexplicable physical powers. Reed develops stretchy elastic limbs, Johnny can turn into a flaming torch, Ben morphs into the rocky-bodied Thing, and Victor goes berserk. Since Sue was left behind, she doesn't gain invisibility until after she's exposed when the group returns to Earth. Unfortunately, director Josh Trank's *Fantastic Four* displays little creativity, serving up a cliché-crammed, cheesy origin story. Not recommended. (S. Granger)



### Félix & Meira ★★★

Oscilloscope, 105 min., in English, Yiddish & French w/English subtitles, R, DVD: \$34.99

Occasionally hitting a few Bressonian-like notes of contemplative, spiritual angst, Canadian filmmaker Maxime Giroux's *Félix & Meira* follows a cross-cultural love triangle in Montreal. Meira (Hadas Yaron), a young wife and mother in a strict ultra-Orthodox Hasidic Jewish community, is openly disenchanted with her stifling routine, domineering husband Shulem (Luzer Twersky), and forced domesticity. She crosses paths with gentle Félix (Martin Dubreuil), a good-natured, indolent bachelor from an affluent family, and the two are drawn into an affair after the death of Félix's father leaves him in an emotionally needy state. But later in the story, more illumination is shed on Shulem, finding nobility and complexity in a character initially set up as a simplistic villain. An award-winner at numerous international film festivals, this is recommended. (C. Cassidy)



### Freeheld ★★

Lionsgate, 98 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.99, Feb. 2

Julianne Moore stars in this based-on-a-true-court-case story of a lesbian cop who takes on an entire community to demand equal rights and justice for her domestic partner. Working for the Ocean County Police Department in Seaside Heights, NJ, Laurel Hester (Moore) is quiet about her private life until she meets smart, eloquent Stacie Andree (Ellen Page). When the pair commit to one another and renovate a house, Laurel realizes that her longtime squad-car partner, Dane Wells (Michael Shannon), feels somewhat betrayed because she never confided in him. And then Laurel is diagnosed with terminal stage-four lung cancer. While receiving radiation, she tries to assign her pension to Stacie so the latter can keep their home. But the prejudiced county commissioners, who are called Freeholders, refuse to extend benefits to same-sex partners. Although Laurel's fellow officers initially fail to come to her defense, empathetic Dane becomes her staunch ally, along with civil rights activist Steven Goldstein (Steve Carell), a self-described "loud, gay Jew" who turns Laurel's appeal into a national front-page story. Laurel's case wound up changing New Jersey law, extending domestic partner benefits to all public employees (whether married or not), and helping to pave the way for the subsequent Supreme Court legalization of same-sex marriage. Formulaically directed by Peter Sollett, the film unfortunately lacks an essential spark of excitement (Cynthia Wade's Oscar-winning same-titled 2007 short documentary was more effective). Optional. (S. Granger)



### Goodnight Mommy ★★★

Anchor Bay, 100 min., in German w/English subtitles, R, DVD: \$22.98, Blu-ray: \$26.99

When their mother (Susanne Wuest) returns after cosmetic surgery—with her face swathed in bandages—adolescent twins Lukas and Elias (Lukas and Elias Schwarz) suspect that the woman beneath the mask might be a different person. No longer a sweet, loving parent, mom makes a point of conspicuously ignoring Elias. And in going through the family scrapbooks—from which all photos of their absent father have been systematically removed—the twins find pictures of their mother appearing alongside a friend who looks very much like her. Believing that a switch has occurred, the boys take the woman prisoner and resort to extreme measures to make her prove she's their mother or admit she's not. Filmmakers Verokina Franz and Severin Fiala's unsettling thriller



*Goodnight Mommy* eventually turns quite gruesome, but amidst the gore it boasts some nicely sustained suspense sequences, while the casting is spot-on. A portrait of a family who are far past mere eccentricity—every one is a bit off from the start, and all become positively unhinged—this is miles removed from most of today's cookie-cutter horror movies, serving up a genuinely troubling tale of domestic dysfunction grounded in natural causes. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

### Güeros ★★★

Kino Lorber, 111 min., in Spanish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95

With more than a passing stylistic nod to the early French New Wave, filmmaker Alonso Ruizpalacios's *Güeros* (a derogatory reference to light-skinned Hispanics) ostensibly centers on Tomás (Sebastián Aguirre), an adolescent quasi-juvenile delinquent whose constant pranks drive his mother to send him to Mexico City to stay with his slacker student older brother Sombra (Tenoch Huerta) and the latter's mate, Santos (Leonardo Ortizgris), in a dreary hi-rise apartment block. Set in 1999, against a backdrop of real-life student riots (which play a substantial atmospheric role here), the film shifts gears after Tomas joins his brother, focusing on the bumbling bohemian exploits of Sombra and Santos, who mindlessly engineer one picaresque misadventure after another. Winner of multiple Ariel awards (Mexico's Oscar), including Best Picture, this is recommended. (M. Sandlin)



### Hotel Transylvania 2 ★★

Sony, 89 min., PG, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray: \$38.99, Jan. 12

In this so-so sequel to the 2012 animated hit, amiable Count Dracula (voiced by Adam Sandler)—proprietor of a monsters-only resort—is now a grandfather, thanks to his daughter, Mavis (Selena Gomez), and her human husband, Jonathan (Andy Samberg). It appears that Drac's cherubic, red-headed grandson, Dennis (Asher Blinkoff), may be more human than vampire (if his fangs don't descend by the time he's five, it will be too late). So, once again, "vampa" Drac must seek a little help from his friends. Fearful of raising Dennis with monsters, Mavis covertly checks out her husband Johnny's California hometown, while visiting his parents (Nick Offerman, Megan Mullally). Meanwhile, Drac and his pals take little Dennis and his werewolf puppy pal Winnie (Sadie Sandler) on a "monster-in-training" trek through newly gentrified Transylvania. But when Drac throws Dennis from a tall tower to force his transformation into a bat, the outrageous





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act is filmed by campers and uploaded onto the Internet, alerting Mavis and Johnny. At Dennis's fifth birthday celebration, his great-grandfather, human-hating Vlad (Mel Brooks) appears, along with his bat-servant (Rob Riggie), furious that Drac has welcomed humans into the monsters-only lodging. Along for the ride are Frankenstein (Kevin James) with his wife (Fran Drescher), Werewolf Wayne (Steve Buscemi) and his wife (Molly Shannon), Murray the Mummy (Keegan-Michael Key), Griffin the Invisible Man (David Spade), and others. Directed by Genndy Tartakovsky, this formulaically scripted family film emphasizes silly slapstick comedy and zany sight gags. Optional. (S. Granger)

### The Human Experiment

★★★1/2

Kino Lorber, 92 min., in English & Spanish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95



Airing corporate dirty (or, more precisely, toxic) laundry, journalist-film-makers Dana Nachman and Don Hardy's *The Human Experiment*, narrated by Sean Penn, fingers ubiquitous industrial compounds as the responsible agents for a frightening rise over the last 45 years in certain cancers, infertility, autism, asthma, early onset puberty, genital deformities, and behavioral disorders. The chemical industry is a deep-pocketed group repped in Washington by a monolithic super-lobby, the American Chemistry Council, who followed the lead of the tobacco industry in the 1950s, using the PR firm of Hill + Knowlton to wield a four-stage strategy of denying/minimizing the effects of products on unwary consumers. Lead paint, cosmetics, pesticides, BPA plastics, and flame retardants are all listed as menacing. Unlike many similar documentaries, this one goes beyond hand-wringing to look at some solutions, ranging from the "green chemistry" movement to a group of housekeepers who are committed to using safe and natural cleaning methods. Also on hand are business success stories, including Tea Party-supporting fabrication tycoon Howard Williams' decision to expel harmful PVC from his building products, and Eden Organics' move to roll back technology to the 1960s in order to make safer canned goods (both companies reaped profits as a result). An effective advocacy exposé, this is highly recommended. (C. Cassidy)

### I Am the Queen

★★★ Cinema Libre, 75 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.95

Josue Pellot and Henrique Cirne Lima's documentary follows three young Latinas in Chicago during their preparation for the transgender Cacique beauty pageant. Twenty-year-old Julissa initially encountered hostility from her mother when she first self-

identified as a woman at the age of 13. Nineteen-year-old Jolizza was thrown out of her family house after coming out as a transsexual, forcing her to struggle to finish school while maintaining a part-time job to cover her expenses. Details on the third youth, Bianca, are somewhat vague—also kicked out of her family home and rejected by longtime friends, she briefly mentions that she stays with other friends but does not go into detail. The trio are courageous in talking about their emotional and social trials, both within the wider society and their Puerto Rican community. Julissa and Jolizza also display a sense of mature self-empowerment as they move into their adult lives with new identities. As for the pageant, it is something of a ramshackle affair that loses half of its initial competitors and winds up as a show for the three spotlighted youths plus a teen gay male who performs in drag. Offering intelligent insight into the problems facing transgender teens, this is recommended. (P. Hall)



### In the Courtyard

★★★ Cohen, 97 min., in French w/English subtitles, R, DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray: \$34.98



Pierre Salvadori's slight film benefits from strong performances by stars Catherine Deneuve and Gustave Kervern as two lost souls helping one another. Kervern plays Antoine, a depressed, burnt-out musician who abandons his band mid-performance and, following a series of menial jobs, is hired as the custodian at an aging Paris apartment building by Mathilde (Deneuve), a recently retired resident—despite her exasperated husband's concerns about Antoine's distracted manner. Antoine develops odd relationships with a couple locals—a former pro soccer player who now runs a stolen-bicycle racket, and a homeless cult proselytizer he lets crash in the building along with his dog—which naturally catches the eye of the building's resident scrooge. But his closest connection is with Mathilde, who has not only persuaded herself that a crack in the wall of her flat is a prelude to the building's collapse, but also tries to educate the entire neighborhood about the potential danger. Their developing friendship takes some relatively serious turns—such as an impromptu visit to Mathilde's childhood home, where she berates the current owners over new renovations—that indicate her declining grip on reality. Overall, however, *In the Courtyard* is content to meander genially, observing the lives of Mathilde, Antoine, and satellite figures with an air of gentle regret. Recommended, overall. (F. Swietek)

### In the Grayscale

★★★ Wolfe, 101 min., in Spanish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95



Set in Santiago, Chile, *In the Grayscale* is an often tender drama about a good man going through changes that significantly alter his life and jeopardize some of his core relationships. Bruno (Francisco Celhay, who bears a strong resemblance to the young Paul Newman) is an architect commissioned to design an iconic new structure in his city. In the background, Bruno—always considered a perfect husband and father—has become estranged from his wife and can't do anything to make his young son feel more secure. When Bruno develops a romantic interest in gay tour guide Fer (Emilio Edwards), the situation escalates, with no one feeling as if they truly know who Bruno is anymore. Director Claudio Marcone peppers the story with long, quiet passages, extended moments that underscore the sense of isolation Bruno experiences—which is a sudden mystery even to himself. Ultimately, the story has less to do with Bruno's relationship with Fer than an overall sense of a life in top-to-bottom rearrangement. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

### Infinitely Polar Bear

★★★

Sony, 88 min., R, DVD: \$25.99, Blu-ray: \$26.99, Jan. 5



Writer-director Maya Forbes's autobiographical family comedy is based on her own confusing childhood growing up in 1970s Cambridge, MA. Her father, Donald Cameron Forbes, was manic-depressive or bipolar, once declaring on a hospital admission form that he was "infinitely polar bear." In this fictionalized take, chain-smoking Cam Stuart (Mark Ruffalo) is impulsive, unpredictable and eccentric. Cam adores his wife, Maggie (Zoe Saldana), and their two precocious daughters, Faith (Ashley Aufderheide) and Amelia (Imogene Wolodarsky). Cam, who comes from a wealthy family, is unable to hold a job. In fact, both Cam and his patrician parents (Keir Dullea, Beth Dixon) are dependent on the matriarch of the Boston blue-blood family, so it falls to Maggie to become the breadwinner. When Maggie gets a scholarship to go after her MBA at Columbia University in New York, troubled Cam must try to hold it together to care for the spirited, grade school-age girls. Ruffalo artfully channels ruffled resentment over the hard choices the family is forced to make, leavened with a mercurial abundance of humor, love, and lithium. Deftly glossing over the darker aspects of mental illness, Forbes helms her first feature film with insight and sensitivity, nicely integrating sequences from some of her late father's Super 8 home movies. An offbeat, feel-good film that tugs



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Street Date: **Jan. 19, 2016** | SRP: **\$29.99**  
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**"HEARTFELT...  
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TEEN ROMANCE!"**

- Variety

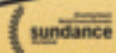
**"POETIC...  
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- The Hollywood Reporter

**"SENSITIVE...  
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- The Village Voice

Street Date: **Feb. 23, 2016** | SRP: **\$27.99**  
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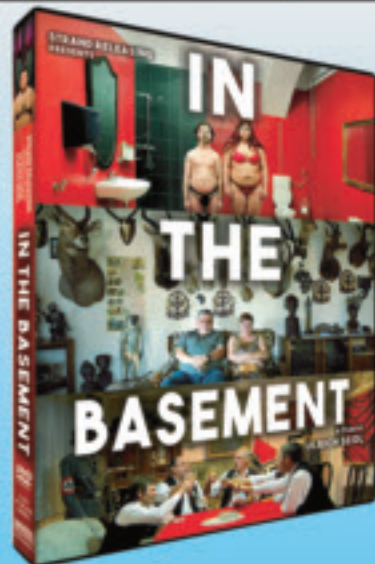
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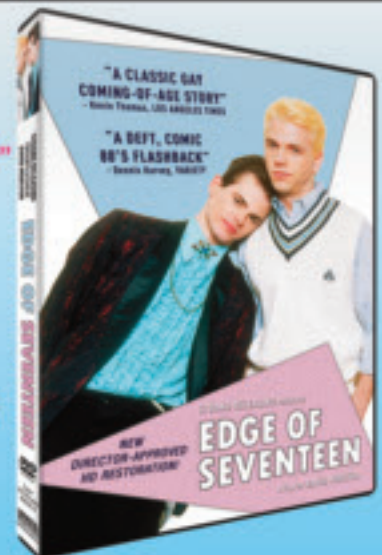
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BD #: 3608-2 | UPC: 7 12267 36083 5  
103 Minutes - Color - Widescreen - Not Rated



at the heartstrings, this is recommended. (S. Granger)

### The Intern ★★★

Warner, 121 min., PG-13, DVD: \$28.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$35.99, Jan. 19

Writer-director Nancy Meyers' *The Intern* stars Robert De Niro as 70-year-old Brooklyn widower Ben Whittaker, a man at loose ends after his retirement. Ben begins every morning with coffee at Starbucks and a tai chi class, but the rest of his day (and night) is lonely. Then he spies an ad for "senior interns" at About the Fit, a thriving e-commerce clothing start-up that is located in a nearby converted factory. Acing the interview, Ben is assigned to the company's founder: 30-ish entrepreneur Jules Ostin (Anne Hathaway). Stylish and a stickler for detail, frantic Jules is overworked and overwhelmed by the conflicting demands of job and family. Jules' husband Matt (Anders Holm) is a stay-at-home dad, caring for their precocious young daughter, Paige (Jojo Kushner), but he's obviously becoming restless. At the same time, Jules' investors are strongly suggesting that she hire an experienced CEO to run the company. While briefcase-toting Ben amiably adjusts to the new technology and an entirely different workplace environment, his younger millennial cohorts (Adam DeVine, Christina Scherer, Zack Pearlman, Jason Orley, Nat Wolff) learn what they can from his respectful, avuncular wisdom and patient dedication. And on a nuanced romantic level, Ben responds to the company's massage therapist (Rene Russo), who he takes on a unique first date. A sweetly accessible and charming comedy, this is recommended. (S. Granger)



### Jamel Shabazz: Street Photographer ★★★

Oscilloscope, 82 min., not rated, DVD: \$34.99

Although it meanders a bit, filmmaker Charlie Ahearn's *Jamel Shabazz: Street Photographer* is a valuable documentary centered on the famed titular chronicler of Harlem life over 30 years, a shutterbug who caught the rise of hip-hop culture. Shabazz talks about his decision after serving in the military to follow in his father's footsteps as a photographer, wandering the streets of New York with camera in hand. Shabazz soon found that subways were a special environment for visual subjects, in part due to good light, but also because—as he puts it—there is no such thing as a dull subway ride. But Shabazz also found a gift for scoring the telling group shot, capturing several people together in a moment that conveyed the spirit of a transformative culture, whether related to fashion, attitude, custom,



or community. Shabazz took pictures of hip-hop stars on the rise, but more importantly he focused on the details of ordinary life in which a strong undercurrent of pride and boldness—foundational attributes of hip-hop—could be detected. Much of the film finds former subjects of Shabazz's photos recalling circumstances behind the shoots, as well as footage of Shabazz training his camera on people participating in a Veterans Day parade. An interested portrait of an artist who memorialized a cultural movement, this is recommended. (T. Keogh)

### Kindness Is Contagious ★★★

Cinedigm, 75 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.95

How does one make the case that kindness and altruism can be as catching as the common cold? David Gaz's documentary brings together research and anecdotal evidence suggesting that social networks—the real kind—are built on an infrastructure of human generosity, whether between strangers or among family. Narrated by Catherine Ryan Hyde, author of the bestselling 1999 novel *Pay It Forward*, the film looks at the societal benefits of other-centeredness, from bucket brigades to positive workplaces, community gatherings, accident scenes, volunteer centers, and more. A few segments are unexpected and even bizarre; in particular a visit to a women's roller derby team, where some of the competitors talk about how they commend rivals between taking shots to the ribs. For the most part, however, the documentary substantiates its claim that kindness is both natural and essential. Along the way, viewers will learn about the "Jen Ratio," which is based on a concept of Confucius that modern adapters say helps to see the actual wider prevalence of generosity over cynicism. Hyde also explains the "Pay It Forward" idea as a "positive Ponzi scheme," derived from research suggesting that one kind act results in several more, infinitely extending outward. Tucked amidst the behavioral science talk are nice stories about people giving out free hugs or teaching homeless kids, among other examples. A solid, feel-good documentary, this is recommended. (T. Keogh)



### The Last Season ★★★

First Run, 78 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95

An unusual and touching documentary, filmmaker Sara Dosa's *The Last Season* was shot in Central Oregon during the height of the area's wild mushroom season. Mushroom hunters in search of the wild matsutake mushroom pay for a license to dig up the delicacy, which is usually hidden beneath



twigs and undergrowth. Freelance pickers then sell their harvest to on-site buyers in a cycle that goes on for a few weeks every fall. During this time, perennial returnees have a chance to interact with other mushroom hunters. The focus here is on two haunted warriors who hunt mushrooms: Roger, a 75-year-old Vietnam War veteran who was wounded in 1963, and Kouy, a 46-year-old one-time platoon leader from Cambodia who fought the Khmer Rouge and survived starvation and hardship under the latter's reign of terror. Roger and his wife become surrogate parents for Kouy—who lost his own mother and father during the war—and the emotions Roger feels for Kouy help to ameliorate his traumatized, uncaring self-image. The relationship is a special and meaningful one for both sides, and as Roger succumbs to ill health and begins talking about end-of-life decisions, everyone involved takes comfort in their collective family spirit. A low-key film that is rich with the peculiar rhythms of seasonal work and temporary community—a time when people briefly step out of their regular lives and assume a second identity—this is recommended. (T. Keogh)

### Learning to Drive ★★1/2

Broad Green, 90 min., R, DVD: \$26.99, Jan. 19

When she is abruptly dumped by her longtime husband (Jake Weber) for a younger woman, starchy Manhattan literary critic Wendy Shields (Patricia Clarkson) is bereft. After 21 years of marriage, she's forced to sell their book-filled Upper West Side brownstone and begin life anew in a small apartment—basically alone for the first time, since her grown daughter (Grace Gummer) has taken up farming in Vermont. Determined to become more self-sufficient but afraid of getting behind the wheel of a car, Wendy hesitantly decides to take driving lessons from dignified Darwan Singh Tur (Ben Kingsley), who gently but firmly refuses to allow her to quit. A devout, highly principled, Indian-American Sikh, Darwan is going through his own crises as an immigrant wearing a turban in post-9/11 New York, often harassed by taunting racists. In addition, Darwan's sister has arranged a marriage, dispatching Jasleen (Sarita Choudhury)—a bride from a neighboring village in India—whom Darwan initially meets when she arrives at the airport (carefully carrying her traditional wedding dress). Adapted from Katha Pollitt's 2002 autobiographical *New Yorker* essay, filmmaker Isabel Coixet's *Learning to Drive* is a metaphor-filled, sympathetically nuanced two-hander for Clarkson and Kingsley that is not entirely successful but still teaches some lessons about self-empowerment, reinvention, and simply moving forward. A strong optional purchase. (S. Granger)



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In a cramped row house on the border of Washington D.C., two stories of big dreams take place. Floyd and his family have raised a 1,000-pound pig in their backyard, and are determined to turn her into the team mascot for the Redskins football team. A few blocks away, Rico and Scooby, two teenage single fathers and best friends, are presented with an unexpected opportunity.



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Emily Burns is being held captive in a room with no idea as to why or how she got there. Determined to escape and return to her daughter and husband, Emily discovers clues within the room that help explain what she's doing there. They even provide clues about who she is...but will they help her escape?



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Every afternoon Noeli, a young Dominican girl, goes to the beaches at Las Terrenas to look for ways to make a living at the expense of one of the many tourists. Noeli has a steady client; a mature French woman who has found an ideal refuge on the island to spend her last years. The relationship with the old lady is one of convenience, but also love. Geraldine Chaplin stars in a career defining performance.

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Welcome to American Pie – Italian style! Edoardo is a 17-year-old virgin. This summer, he and his best friend vow to lose their virginity. There's one problem, though. Edoardo is suffering from a condition called phimosis – a painful condition in which the foreskin is too tight to be pulled back. Featuring a star-making performance by young Matteo Creatini, Short Skin is a sex comedy with heart and soul. You'll never look at an octopus the same way again!

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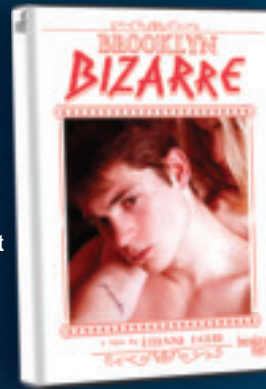


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Mark has been with his boyfriend Jonah for 3 years, but cracks have begun to show between the two. Jonah suggests Mark go back on anti-depressants but Mark makes an appointment with a couple's counselor instead. At therapy, Mark questions if he truly loves Jonah anymore. At a final therapy session, Mark ends the relationship. Months later, they meet at their friend's wedding, where Mark expresses his gratitude for their time together.

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Maurice is an 18-year old boy from France, with a dark past, who has just arrived in Brooklyn with no friends and no place to stay. He is given room and board and a job at a famous underground cabaret club, the Bizarre, where he begins to form a whole new family. When his past catches up to him, he must disappear at all costs!

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Daniel Krueger is a young successful TV journalist who is deeply haunted by his past. Suffering from panic attacks and paranoia, Daniel spends most of his days wishing he were someone else. He meets a young man named Alexander who is everything he wishes he could be: confident, carefree, and beautiful. As the two develop a relationship, Daniel realizes his mind may be more powerful than he thought.

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When singer/songwriter Jimmy Poole returns home after a stint in prison, he finds that things have changed. His partner, Tyler, is doing fine without him and the son they raised together has taken over his place as the lead singer in his country-western band. As Jimmy struggles to retake center stage in his own life, he ends up alienating those he loves most. Will their family's love for making music be enough to keep them together?

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### Liz in September ★★★

Wolfe, 100 min., in Spanish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.98



Based on Jane Chambers' 1980 play *Last Summer at Bluefish Cove*, this lesbian drama stars Patricia Velásquez as hard-living Liz, a former model who along with a group of gay friends hangs around a beach hotel on a Caribbean island. Hiding her terminal illness from most of the others, Liz unexpectedly falls for Eva (Eloisa Maturén), who recently lost her son to cancer and is spending time away from her philandering husband. Although Liz and Eva are dissimilar in personality and Eva has always identified herself as heterosexual, the two are drawn towards one another, encouraged (often comically) by Liz's friends. The twist in the relationship is Liz's limited time left in this world: will Eva stick around to see her new lover die soon? Directed by Fina Torres, *Liz in September* has a fairly light touch for such heavy themes, although Velásquez brings an intensity to her performance that makes Liz's agony both authentic and sad. Along the way, the exotic locations create a warm, photogenic backdrop, while the interplay between characters deftly balances tragedy with life-affirming buoyancy. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

### Mala Mala ★★★

Strand, 87 min., in Spanish & English w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$27.99



A timely film—considering the Bruce/Caitlyn Jenner media hysteria—Dan Sickle and Antonio Santini's documentary spotlights Puerto Rico's flamboyant transgendered underground. Most of the subjects here were born male, but thanks to hormone use and plastic surgery (performed in Ecuador, as no local doctors dare to do it) they now have feminine features (some so pronounced that they seem to be caricatures of femininity). The odd "man" out interviewed is Paxx, an androgynous woman, who is living with a girlfriend and identifying as male, but is not really sure where to fall on the gender divide. Most work as prostitutes, a choice often forced upon transsexuals as they are not accepted in any regular jobs. During the course of the narrative, the ensemble comes together to speak in favor of an anti-discrimination law, favored by the mayor of San Juan (but opposed, naturally, by the Catholic Church). A fine multicultural LGBT documentary—with colorful costumes no less—this is recommended. (C. Cassidy)

### The Man from U.N.C.L.E. ★★

Warner, 116 min., PG-13, DVD: \$28.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$44.95

Featuring characters from the popular

1960s NBC-aided TV show starring Robert Vaughn and David McCallum, filmmaker Guy Ritchie's reboot—set in 1963 during the Cold War—introduces preposterously preening thief-turned-CIA agent Napoleon Solo (Henry Cavill), who is forced to team up with gruff, no-nonsense KGB agent Illya Kuryakin (Armie Hammer). Culturally programmed to never trust one another, the pair's mission is to prevent a nuclear bomb from falling into the hands of the wrong people—in this case, the evil menace being a wealthy Italian heiress/crime boss (Elizabeth Debicki). Due to familial connections, a high-spirited East German defector/car mechanic (Alicia Vikander) is along for the ride, reluctantly posing as Kuryakin's fiancé. Lacking the humor of the original series, *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* is primarily notable for its overall visual flair and mod style: the actors look debonair in their male fashion model suits, the set design is classy, and the catchy retro-score is period-perfect. But this cliché-riddled spy flick also comes across as entirely superficial. Optional. (S. Granger)



### Marie's Story ★★★1/2

Film Movement, 94 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95



Comparisons with *The Miracle Worker* are inevitable for Gallic filmmaker Jean-Pierre Améris's historical drama set at the pioneering Larnay Institute, a school for the deaf that was managed by nuns in 19th-century France. One of the sisters, Marguerite (Isabelle Carré), is moved to help virtually unmanageable young blind-and-deaf girl Marie (deaf actress Ariana Rivoire), who is regarded by all as a hopeless case. Despite her own fragile health, Marguerite is determined to overcome Marie's feral behavior and unlock her latent intelligence and ability to communicate and function (the breakthrough moment with Helen Keller famously came with signing the word "water"; here it's "knife"). A smart, emotional drama that still yanks the viewer's heartstrings as effectively as any Hollywood tearjerker, this is highly recommended. (C. Cassidy)

### Matt Shepard Is a Friend of Mine ★★★

Virgil, 89 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.99



Filmmaker Michele Josue grew up knowing slain college student Matthew Shepard, who was fatally beaten at the age of 21 in Laramie, WY, in October 1998 in what was judged to be a homophobic hate crime. Here, Josue interviews other friends and the vic-

tim's supportive family, while also interweaving vintage home movies and photos. The words/images build a composite portrait of the low-key kid whose name became a touchstone for gay activists. Josue does not address the defense's then allegation that Shepard's murder was a drug deal gone bad, and she doesn't talk about the acclaimed stage-and-film production *The Laramie Project* that was inspired by the crime. Instead, she presents a stirring personal portrait so persuasive that by the end we are all Matthew Shepard's friends, whether we could have known him or not. Recommended. (C. Cassidy)

### Maze Runner: The Scorch Trials ★★

Fox, 129 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99



Beginning where the original ended, this derivative dystopian sequel reintroduces Thomas (Dylan O'Brien) and other survivors from *The Glade*: Teresa (Kaya Scodelario), Newt (Thomas Brodie-Sangster), Minho (Ki Hong Lee) and Frypan (Dexter Darden)—among others—who are being helicoptered to a heavily fortified, remote outpost. Greeted by Janson (Aidan Gillen), they are told that they're safely en route to the Promised Land. But their serenity is soon shattered after suspicious Thomas is alerted by skeptical Aris (Jacob Lofland), an escapee from a different Maze. Working for a mysterious paramilitary organization called WCKD (pronounced "Wicked"), Janson is supervising a top-secret laboratory in which blood from those immune to a virus called The Flare is being harvested in order to find a cure. The teens' eventual escape leads to a long chase across a post-apocalyptic desert called The Scorch, which is inhabited by vicious zombies known as Cranks. The kids are headed for the far-off mountains to join the resistance group Right Hand. Along the way, they are befriended by profiteering Jorge (Giancarlo Esposito) and his protégé Brenda (Rosa Salazar). Episodically adapted by T.S. Nowlin, who has made significant changes to James Dashner's epic YA novels, filmmaker Wes Ball's predictable film blatantly borrows from *Alien*, *Divergent*, and similar sci-fi features, while also touching on the perennial theme of whether ends justify means. Optional. (S. Granger)

### Mistress America ★★

Fox, 84 min., R, Blu-ray: \$39.98



Advertised as a screwball comedy, writer-director Noah Baumbach's superficial, self-consciously chic film is peppered with pretentious poppycock. Ambitious 18-year-old wannabe writer Tracy (Lola Kirke) has just begun her first

semester at Barnard but is already disillusioned with higher education. And then she meets egocentric, idiosyncratic 30-year-old Brooke (Greta Gerwig), a self-styled interior decorator, SoulCycle instructor, social media maven, and aspiring restaurateur. Brooke's latest passion is for opening an eatery in Brooklyn with the backing of her Greek boyfriend—envisioning a bistro combined with a hair salon and art gallery that would be called “Mom’s.” Brooke, of course, has a lot of ideas but, as someone astutely observes, “no follow-through.” Insecure Tracy immediately latches onto seemingly sophisticated Brooke, who becomes her stepsister by marriage when Tracy’s divorcee mother marries Brooke’s widower father. When deluded Brooke’s plans hit a snag and she needs \$75,000, a drive to Connecticut ensues in order to confront deceitful, malicious Mamie-Claire (Heather-Lind), who not only married Brooke’s wealthy ex-fiancé (Michael Chernus), but also stole Brooke’s most commercially viable T-shirt concept. The nervously chattering, ostensibly erudite characters unfortunately never shut up, rambling on and on to the point of viewer exhaustion. Optional. (S. Granger)

### No Escape ★★★

Anchor Bay, 103 min., R, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99



This taut thriller focuses on an American family that is accidentally caught in geopolitical crossfire after the Prime Minister of an unnamed Southeast Asian country is assassinated. Exhausted after flying from Texas to take on a new corporate job, jet-lagged Jack Dwyer (Owen Wilson), his wife Annie (Lake Bell), and their two young daughters (Sterling Jerins, Claire Geare) cannot find their driver at the airport. They are befriended by Hammond (Pierce Brosnan), a garrulous British ex-pat who is also staying at the posh Imperial Lotus Hotel. Several hours later, armed rebels begin a violent rampage through the city, determined to kill all Americans. Trying to survive amidst a parent’s worst nightmare, the family runs to the hotel’s rooftop, only to become trapped. A desperate Jack convinces Annie to jump to an adjoining roof, and then literally throws their daughters across a gap for her to catch, after which they are forced to flee through crowded streets where machete-wielding protesters are battling government forces. Directed by John Erick Dowdle, *No Escape* benefits from a suspenseful, action-packed script, as well as a fine dramatic departure for Wilson, who is best known for his comic work. Recommended. (S. Granger)

### One Cut, One Life ★★★1/2

First Run, 105 min., not rated, DVD: \$27.95

This beautiful documentary is about life lived as most of us know it: messy, full of

unresolved questions, and resonant with the haunting after-effects of loss, change, and tragedy. Specifically, *One Cut, One Life* is about several years in the lives of its filmmakers, collaborators Ed Pincus—a legendary director whose work includes the landmark *Diaries* (1971–1976)—and his much younger partner, Lucia Small. The film is bookended by themes of loss: Small is dragged down by the recent, violent deaths of two of her best friends, and Pincus’s longtime bout with leukemia finally comes to a conclusion in 2013. Along the way, several psychodramas play out between the platonic collaborators, who share an intense but chaste love that nevertheless threatens Pincus’s wife, Jane. Pincus himself has a number of decisions he must make about prolonging his life as long as possible, while Small has to contend for the first time with being the sole representative of their joint works at film festivals. Punctuating everything are gorgeous shots: of flowers (Pincus ran a flower farm), the seasons (China’s Great Wall never looked better, dusted with snow), trees, etc., all capturing the world that Pincus is not ready to leave. Highly recommended. (T. Keogh)



### One Rogue Reporter ★★★

Kino Lorber, 62 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95



Taking a big, obvious bludgeon to a big, obvious target—the worst of the sleazy British tabloid newspapers—Tom Jenkinson’s documentary certainly boasts guilty pleasure appeal, much like the sordid rags themselves. Reporter Rich Peppiatt, who co-directs, wrote sensationalist articles and performed stunts for London’s *Daily Star*, until—citing management’s chronic anti-Muslim bias—he quit. What seems like incredibly bad timing was actually, for Peppiatt, very good timing—right before the scandal of illegal phone-hacking hit Fleet Street, and some of Peppiatt’s old colleagues went to jail. Here, acting as avenger for the many transgressions and intrusions of the gutter press (which actors such as Hugh Grant and Steve Coogan say often hurt innocent people, not coddled celebs), Peppiatt calls out the shadowy, tax-dodging, right-wing press barons who determine content for the *Daily Mail*, *Star*, and other tabs. Along the way, he stages frankly juvenile pranks, one involving a dildo on a doorstep. Truth be told, one almost admires the stoicism of the grubby press barons—much as they deserve rough justice—as Peppiatt comically harasses them, paparazzi-style. Viewer enjoyment will also hinge on how much one is familiar with U.K.-specific culture and controversies, not to mention tolerance for onscreen naughty

bits, male and female. Recommended. (C. Cassidy)

### The Only Real Game

★★★1/2

Virgil, 82 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.99



Baseball is not a new sport in the northeast Indian state of Manipur—American soldiers working at a local airstrip in World War II first brought the game to the area—but it does appear to be enjoying a new cathartic relevance, as evidenced in this invigorating documentary by filmmaker Mira Bank. Manipur’s troubled history—a once wealthy kingdom that was forcibly affiliated with India in 1949—coupled with ongoing problems related to poverty, unemployment, drug trafficking, HIV/AIDS, and a regional insurgency movement, has led to tensions among residents. The arrival of two Major League Baseball coaches brings a fresh giddiness to this dismal state, especially in local women who encourage their children to play and also become involved as both coaches and players. Indian bureaucracy often gets in the way of any great progress here—including the unappealing land parcel that local government designates as a ballpark—and the fear of armed insurgents fighting with India’s military adds more stress. But love of the game and the promise of bringing the best Manipuri players to the U.S. for additional training combine to beat back the negativity. Narrated by Oscar-winner Melissa Leo, this intriguing cultural sports documentary is highly recommended. (P. Hall)

### Pan ★

Warner, 111 min., PG, DVD: \$28.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$35.99



Conceived as a prequel to J.M. Barrie’s beloved *Peter Pan*, this origin story fails miserably, turning into a grotesque, maudlin mess. *Pan* begins with a distraught young mother (Amanda Seyfried) leaving her infant son in a Dickensian-like London orphanage; the boy’s name is Peter and he wears a pendant around his neck of a tiny pan flute. During a WWII bombing raid, rambunctious Peter (Levi Miller) is sold to airborne pirates, who evade the German Luftwaffe and the Royal Air Force’s Spitfires. Under the command of ferocious Captain Blackbeard (hideously costumed/made-up Hugh Jackman), they fly into an alternate universe, known as Neverland, where Peter hopes to find his mother. Landing in a huge, open mining pit, Peter is forced to dig for Pixite—crystallized fairy dust, which Blackbeard uses to fight old age, while his slaves sing Nirvana’s “Smells Like Teen Spirit.” Befriended by adult miner James Hook (Garrett Hedlund), Peter is forced to

walk the plank, but instead of falling, he flies! Peter and Hook are then captured by Princess Tiger Lily (Rooney Mara) and her band of Indians (Mara appears to be the only Caucasian in her brightly bedecked tribe). While Hook flirts with Tiger Lily, Peter searches for his mother, as Tinkerbell leads them into a crystal cave where Blackbeard attacks fluttering fairies with a blowtorch. Amid an armada of flying frigates, there's also a huge crocodile and a mermaid trio. Hampered by a ludicrous script, director Joe Wright relies on swashbuckling sound and campy, chaotic CGI fury, none of which makes much sense beyond the heavy-handed believe-in-yourself lessons. Not recommended. (S. Granger)

### Paper Towns ★★

Fox, 109 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99



The second screen adaptation of a John Green YA novel (following *The Fault in Our Stars*), filmmaker Jake Schreier's *Paper Towns* stars Nat Wolff as Quentin "Q" Jacobsen, who has been infatuated with Margo Roth Spiegelman (Brit supermodel Cara Delevingne), ever since her family moved in across the street when he was 9 years old. Although friends during childhood, once the pair get to high school, eccentric Margo has her own cool clique, barely acknowledging geeky Q in the corridor. Then, near the end of their senior year, Margo crawls into Q's bedroom window one night, asking him to drive her around their hometown of Orlando, FL, to wreak revenge on friends who have betrayed her. Following that exhilarating escapade, rebellious Margo mysteriously disappears. Enlisting his nerdy buddies (Austin Abrams, Justice Smith), Q is determined to find Margo—who conveniently leaves clues to her whereabouts. Eventually, Q realizes that Margo has gone to Agloe in upstate New York, a "paper town" (a term used by mapmakers, who put non-existent places on their maps to ensure copyright protection). Unfortunately, this Green adaptation is a comparative disappointment, both conventionally plotted and much too contrived. Optional. (S. Granger)

### Paulo Coelho's Best Story ★★1/2

Music Box, 111 min., in Portuguese w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99



Director Daniel Augusto's bio-pic delivers the backstory of internationally popular Brazilian author Paulo Coelho (played as an adult by Júlio Andrade). On the 25th anniversary of the publication of his breakthrough bestselling novel *The Alchemist*, Coelho is determined—despite health problems—to attend a gala with his longtime wife. En

route to the affair, kaleidoscopic flashbacks of his early life unfold (the resemblance to Ingmar Bergman's *Wild Strawberries* may or may not be intentional). Rebellious, artistic, and sometimes unmanageable, young Coelho (Ravel Andrade) is actually sent to a mental institution for shock therapy by his uncomprehending bourgeois parents. Later, he becomes an actor, song lyricist, and (pseudonymous) writer/editor of a paranormal phenomena magazine. At one point, military authorities pick him up and torture him, only to conclude that he's a harmless madman rather than a dissident, letting him go. Familiarity with modern Brazilian culture and Coelho's books would help to decode the many references to pop celebrities and Catholic secret societies. Although it often suffers as compelling drama, this will likely be welcomed by readers who have made Coelho the world's most-translated living author. A strong optional purchase. (C. Cassidy)

### Pay the Ghost ★1/2

Image, 94 min., not rated, DVD or Blu-ray: \$29.98



Uli Edel's Halloween-themed horror movie is an insufferably sluggish and irredeemably silly non-thriller that commits the cardinal sin of not being remotely scary. Nicolas Cage, looking understandably dazed and confused, stars as NYC university professor Mike, who disappoints his son Charlie when he returns home too late to go trick-or-treating. Mike tries to make it up to the boy—who is incidentally troubled by a fearsome apparition outside his bedroom window—by taking him to a nearby street fair, where the kid disappears after asking his father to "pay the ghost." A year later, a still-distraught Mike encounters a group of homeless folk dwelling in underground tunnels next to graffiti featuring the same words, and he discovers a possible connection to Celtic magic involving a 17th-century mother burned as a witch after being forced to watch her three children die—a woman who threatened to return every year to take others to replace them. Thus begins Mike's effort to recover Charlie from "the crone" before the stroke of midnight, when the entrance to the netherworld where she keeps the abducted children will close. All this convoluted nonsense plays out lethargically under Edel's laggard direction, while a final twist suggests a possible sequel—easily the most frightening thing about this supernatural stinker. Not recommended. (F. Swietek)

### People Places Things ★★

Alchemy, 94 min., R, DVD: \$19.99

Filmmaker Jim Strouse's comedy stars Jemaine Clement (*Flight of the Conchords*) as Will, a middle-aged New York graphic nov-

elist and art school teacher whose marriage collapses after he discovers his wife with another man. One year after that unfortunate encounter, Will is living in an outer-borough studio apartment and only gets to see his 6-year-old twin daughters on weekends—except when his ex-wife, now pregnant from her lover and planning to remarry—unexpectedly dumps them at Will's cramped residence. Will's own love life receives a jump start when one of his students arranges a date with her mother, a Columbia University literature professor (Regina Hall). Although nominated for the Grand Jury Prize at the 2015 Sundance Film Festival, this feels like an underdeveloped sitcom pilot that serves up one benign crisis after another as clueless Will struggles to connect with his children, his students, and the wider world. Optional. (P. Hall)



### Red Lines ★★★1/2

Kino Lorber, 98 min., in English & Arabic w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95



Andrea Kalin and Oliver Lukacs' 2014 documentary on the events that led to the Syrian civil war and the brutality that arose during the conflict is certainly timely, especially considering that the repercussions currently continue to play out on the global political stage. *Red Lines* recounts how the Arab Spring movement arrived in Syria in 2011, setting off protests against the dictatorial regime of President Bashar al-Assad. The initially peaceful demonstrations degenerated into violence between the government and militant forces seeking to overthrow Assad. At the center here are efforts by activists Mouaz Moustafa and Razan Shalab Al-Sham to bring international support to the anti-Assad forces and bridge a union between a pair of rival rebel groups, the Free Syrian Army and the Syrian Emergency Task Force. The activists face considerable obstacles: a lack of media presence on the battle frontlines, distrust between the different anti-Assad camps, and pronounced reluctance by Western governments to become actively involved in the uprising. *Red Lines* provides a harrowing glimpse into the humanitarian disaster created by the civil war, while also delivering a stirring portrait of men and women who are willing to die in order to bring a change of leadership to their country. Highly recommended. (P. Hall)

### Rotor DR1 ★★1/2

Cinema Libre, 99 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$29.95

Ohio filmmaker Chad Kapper's low-budget sci-fi feature jumps on two hot bandwagons



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at once, satisfying both the appetite for YA dystopian futures and the fascination with remote-controlled “drone” camera aircraft. A future virus has wiped out 90 percent of humanity, leaving survivors in an anarchic wasteland, where the only signs of civilization are airborne drones delivering largely unused medicine from...somewhere. Kitch (Christian Kapper, the director’s son), consumed with abandonment issues connected to his absentee doctor father, tinkers with salvaged drone batteries to briefly bring old gadgets back online. Kitch captures DR1, a non-standard drone copter with an AI chip (think a flying R2D2), which he discovers is somehow connected with his AWOL dad. A glum Kitch fixes and follows the flying machine through bleak landscapes towards what he assumes will be a reunion. Despite a too-long running time and DIY production values, *Rotor DR1* is an interesting watch, not least because it was literally a crowd-sourced effort thanks to thousands of online followers in the drone-iverse who contributed story suggestions, music, props, crowd-scene extras, and general support. A strong optional purchase. (C. Cassidy)



### The Search for Michael Rockefeller ★★★

Strand, 89 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99

Filmmaker Fraser Heston, son of acting legend Charlton Heston, directed this peculiar documentary about the disappearance of Michael Rockefeller in 1961. Rockefeller, the 23-year-old son of New York governor (and future vice-president of the U.S.) Nelson Rockefeller, had gone to New Guinea with a Dutch anthropologist as part of an expedition, only to vanish and leave behind an enduring mystery. Heston discovered a trove of 16mm film shot during an inconclusive 1969 search for Rockefeller that was conducted by another (now-deceased) film director. Building on that footage, Heston re-enacts what might have happened to Rockefeller, adopting a layered approach that allows for a degree of speculation that sometimes borders on satire, even poking fun at some of the political elements (New Guinea was a Dutch colony in 1961) that might have played a part in Rockefeller’s fate. Did Rockefeller drown during a swim to shore from a capsized boat? Was he eaten by alligators? Was he consumed by the Asmat tribe of headhunting cannibals, with whom he had developed a relationship in order to acquire some of their folk art? A definitive answer may never emerge, but this documentary often makes for a fascinating what-if. Recommended. (T. Keogh)



### The Second Mother

★★★★1/2

Oscilloscope, 110 min., in Portuguese w/English subtitles, R, DVD: \$34.99, Jan. 12

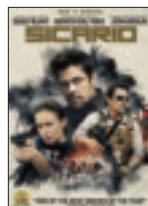
Filmmaker Anna Muijlaert’s dramedy features a remarkably nuanced performance by Regina Casé as Val, a housekeeper who has lived for years with employers Barbara (Karine Teles) and Carlos (Lourenço Mutarelli) in their elegant São Paulo home—virtually becoming a surrogate mother to the couple’s son, Fabinho (Michel Joelsas), who she is still coddling as a handsome teen about to take his university entrance exam. But Val has an estranged daughter of her own named Jessica (Camila Márdila), who was brought up by her husband in their rural hometown and is now coming to the city to take her test as well. Val’s employers agree to let the girl stay with them until Val can find an apartment, but Jessica’s presence naturally alters the situation radically. A modern, confident young woman who refuses to follow in her mother’s submissive footsteps, Jessica irritates Barbara, but Carlos is immediately smitten. *The Second Mother* essentially tells a tale of class and generational change, serving up a five-person microcosm of what is happening in contemporary Brazil. But this is no mere sociological treatise, thanks to the rich characters—especially Val, played by Casé with a marvelous mix of humor and pathos. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)



### Sicario ★★★

Lionsgate, 121 min., R, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99, Jan. 5

Along the lawless border between the United States and Mexico, drug cartels rule and “sicario” means hitman. In French-Canadian director Denis Villeneuve’s grim and grisly thriller, idealistic FBI field agent Kate Macer (Emily Blunt) and her partner Reggie Wayne (Daniel Kaluuya) discover rotting corpses stashed behind a drywall in an Arizona subdivision. Soon after, Kate is recruited by a shadowy government task force, headed by scruffy Matt Graver (Josh Brolin). She works with a covert black-ops squad led by burly, vengeful Colombian “consultant” Alejandro (Benicio del Toro), who cryptically tells Kate: “Nothing will make sense to your American ears, and you will doubt everything we do.” First on the agenda is an unorthodox trip over the Rio Grande and through the cactus-filled Chihuahuan Desert to Juarez to retrieve a prisoner in order to make him squeal on the Sonora cartel, which leads to the capture of businessman Manuel Diaz (Bernardo Saracino), a step towards flushing out the kingpin, Fausto Alarcon (Julio César Cedillo). Meanwhile, there’s a subplot involving a young



Mexican policeman (Maximiliano Hernández), his dutiful wife, and his soccer-loving son. By-the-book Kate is trying to make sense of the real purpose of their mission, not knowing whom to trust. And beneath all of the moral chaos lies a pressing question: does the end justify the means? *Sicario* evokes memories of Steven Soderbergh’s Oscar-winning *Traffic*—although this is more sinister and savage, delivering sheer brutality and suspense to maintain a sense of dread-filled anxiety. Recommended. (S. Granger)

### The Square ★★★1/2

City Drive, 109 min., not rated, DVD or Blu-ray: \$17.98

Jehane Noujaim’s *The Square* was a 2013 nominee for Best Documentary. The title references Tahrir Square, a Cairo thoroughfare that became a symbolic stronghold for dissenters protesting against the longstanding military regime of the repressive Mubarak government. In 2011, during the “Arab Spring” uprisings throughout the Mideast, a coalition across Egypt’s social spectrum gathered to demand reform. A trio of key dissenters are followed here: Ahmed, a college student; Khalid Abdalla, a celebrated actor who appeared in *The Kite Runner*; and Magdy, who is allied to the Muslim Brotherhood party, but risks his own safety along with all the others from different backgrounds in order to make a better Egypt. The Muslim Brotherhood ultimately prevails by popular ballot as the new ruling order, and nearly as quickly is judged to be as bad as the previous dictatorship. While some viewers might see this as a specifically Arab scenario, there’s a heartbreakingly universal lament delivered by Ahmed: “Enough of this! All the politicians are failures. The Muslim Brothers, the Salafis, the Socialists, the Liberals, they’re all failures!” Someone could carve that on any obelisk, including the Washington Monument. Vital election-year viewing, this is highly recommended. (C. Cassidy)



### The Stanford Prison Experiment ★★1/2

MPI, 122 min., R, DVD or Blu-ray: \$24.98

Director Kyle Patrick Alvarez examines a provocative psychological research experiment conducted in August 1971 by Dr. Philip Zimbardo, who randomly divided 24 Stanford University students into prisoners and guards before placing them in an improvised prison in the basement of Jordan Hall, paying each \$15 a day to participate. Almost immediately after the volunteers assumed their assigned roles, they began to exhibit behavior that reflected distress, despair, abuse, and degrading sexualized humiliation, proving how situations



shape conduct. Taught in journalism classes today, this notorious study offers lessons on questionable methodology/ethics, the frightening pliability of reality, and the effects of power in all its permutations. Billy Crudup stars as the imperious and often patronizing Zimbardo (who later served as an expert witness in one of the Abu Ghraib trials). Ezra Miller delivers a memorable performance as rebellious Prisoner #8612, as does Michael Angarano as a cocky, manipulative guard who adopts a John Wayne persona. The simmering class/race undercurrent is epitomized by Zimbardo's "consultant," Jesse Fletcher (Nelsan Ellis), an ex-con who spent 17 years in San Quentin. Unfortunately, the narrative carries no backstories about the students—except poor Prisoner #2093 (Chris Sheffield), who was living in his car for the summer—making it hard to emotionally connect. And the muddled third act, which wavers between ambiguity and cautionary oratory, is followed by a bewildering epilogue that seems at odds with the rest of the narrative. Overall, this should still be considered a strong optional purchase. (S. Granger)

### Stations of the Cross

★★★★1/2

Film Movement, 110 min., in German w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95

Filmmaker Dietrich Brüggemann's modern-day religious tragedy is shot in 14 long and largely stationary continuous takes, each corresponding to a different step in Christ's Passion. Maria (Lea van Acken) is a pretty 14-year-old whose family belongs to an ultra-conservative Catholic church that rejects the changes of Vatican II. Indoctrinated in ideals of sacrifice, suffering, and rejecting worldly things for God, Maria begins to languish, especially as seemingly innocent classroom flirtations and daily pleasures begin to loom as life-or-death temptations in her cosmology. The viewer is left to interpret whether the heroine's tribulations lead to a path of saintly miracle or dysfunctional, fanatical self-crucifixion. A powerful, thought-provoking film, this is highly recommended. (C. Cassidy)



### Straight Outta Compton

★★★

Universal, 147 min., R, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.98, Jan. 19

The fact that F. Gary Gray's musical docudrama about N.W.A., the five-member group that made West Coast gangsta rap a phenomenon in the late 1980s, includes among its producers O'Shea "Ice Cube" Jackson, Andre "Dr. Dre" Young, and Tomica Woods-Wright (widow of Eric "Eazy-E" Wright and current CEO of Ruth-



less Records)—ensures that the perspective here will favor three performers, who will be treated sympathetically, while others will either receive scant attention or be painted in negative terms. Even so, *Straight Outta Compton* proves to be an energetic and intense portrait of an important moment in the evolution of American popular culture. The narrative follows the standard biographical beats, fashioning a rise-and-fall story that begins in 1986, when Wright (Jason Mitchell) was a small-time drug dealer and Jackson (played by O'Shea Jackson Jr., Ice Cube's son) and Young (Corey Hawkins) were friends on the fringes of the East L.A. music scene. After N.W.A. formed, they attracted the attention of a rock impresario (Paul Giamatti) who became the band's unscrupulous manager, shepherding the birth of the titular album that served up an angry denunciation of establishment authoritarianism, one that resonated throughout the nation. But fissures appeared in their relationship, especially after predatory ex-bodyguard Marion "Suge" Knight (R. Marcus Taylor) entered the picture, and tragedy in the form of illness shortly followed. In spite of some debatable emphases and elisions, *Straight Outta Compton* is a powerful, vigorous film that captures the spirit of major and still-controversial contemporary developments in American life and music. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

### Suffragette

★★★★  
Universal, 107 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$34.98, Feb. 2

For younger viewers, it may be hard to imagine a time when women—50% of the population—were not only denied the right to vote but also were considered a husband's property (along with any children). In 1912, after 50 years of peaceful protest, London's militant Women's Social and Political Union encouraged women in subversive acts of civil disobedience, endangering property, but never human life. Although harassed laundry plant worker Maud Watts (Carey Mulligan) wasn't a suffragette, she's caught in a street skirmish, where she recognizes a co-worker, Violet Miller (Anne-Marie Duff), among the spirited agitators. Spotted by the police, meek Maud becomes a suspect, persecuted by skeptical Inspector Arthur Steed (Brendan Gleeson) and his boorish cohorts, which causes distress not only to her but also her husband/co-worker (Ben Whishaw) and their young son after she is imprisoned. Chanting "Deeds, not words," Maud's subsequent struggle is inspired and encouraged by pharmacist Edith Ellyn (Helena Bonham Carter) and upper-class Alice Houghton (Romola Garai), who galvanize exploited working-class women to join the movement. Astutely directed by Sarah Gavron, this historical drama layered



with gritty, atmospheric authenticity benefits from a subtly ferocious and uncompromising performance by Mulligan, as well as a fine cameo by Meryl Streep as a defiant Emmeline Pankhurst. During the credits, a list of dates are offered when various countries granted voting rights to women, concluding with Saudi Arabia, where women's rights have been promised but still not granted. Recommended. (S. Granger)

### A Tale of Two Thieves

★★★

Virgil, 69 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.99

Filmmaker Chris Long's documentary revisits the Great Train Robbery of 1963, when nearly £3 million pounds was stolen from a Royal Mail train running between Glasgow and London. Now-octogenarian Gordon Goody—a member of the original heist gang of 15—tells the story of the theft, finally identifying the long-unknown "inside man" who had knowledge of the train's cargo and schedule. Much of the film traces Goody's life of crime prior to the Great Train Robbery—an eclectic series of thefts that included cracking bank vaults, scooping up pay packets, business breaking-and-entering, and much else. Goody goes into detail about his career highlights and discusses the two years he spent in prison (including being flogged) before his later conviction for the 1963 robbery (for which he received 30 years). Goody also talks about Ronnie Biggs, the one gang member who escaped prison and lived as a semi-celebrity in Brazil for many years (Goody says that Biggs lied about specific details, complicating Goody's defense). Goody is eventually presented with evidence concerning the identity of the "inside man" (uncovered by the filmmakers), but he strains to remember, frustrated with the ravages of time on his memory that make it near-impossible for him to close the door on this defining experience in his life. Likely to appeal to true crime aficionados, this is recommended. (T. Keogh)



### Tap World

★★★★  
Virgil, 72 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.99

The international reach of tap dancing is explored in filmmaker Dean Hargrove's exciting documentary, which illustrates just how much the form has pervaded societies everywhere, taking on a bit of local flavor in different cities. The film initially focuses on tap in America, where young and old dancers alike talk about tap as a bonding experience between generations and a way to embrace a surrogate family. Child dancers find mentors—older men and women who



were stars in their day—who happily work in studios alongside these up-and-comers. *Tap World* also serves up some history about the origins of tap, particularly the “gumboots” style of dance from South Africa, as practiced by miners as a form of communication in underground shafts. The bottom line is that tap is musical rhythm transmitted through the feet, and anyone from Sao Paolo to Tokyo to Moscow can participate in the universality of tap while also expressing something both personal and culturally specific. An illuminating, fun documentary, this is recommended. (T. Keogh)

### The Transporter Refueled

★★★

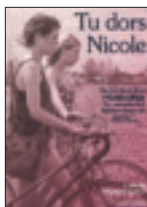
Fox, 96 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$39.99



This reboot of the *Transporter* franchise is the epitome of Eurotrash—loud, vacuous, and stupid, but also action-packed and slickly filmed in elegant locales. The sadly uncharismatic Ed Skrein steps in for Jason Statham (who starred in the initial trilogy) as Frank, a former soldier turned driver-for-hire for rich passengers in serious need of protection. Frank accepts a job from a femme fatale on the French Riviera who, unbeknownst to him, is plotting—along with some equally beautiful confederates—to destroy the Russian prostitution ring that they were all forced into. Their plan involves several intricate heists, for which they need Frank’s services both as driver and as muscleman (to ensure his cooperation they kidnap his father). What follows is a series of alternating street chases and martial arts fights, as innumerable police cars are destroyed, and Frank dispatches gang after gang of ruffians. All of this barrels towards a predictable showdown between Frank and the central villain on a picturesque Mediterranean cliff. The *Transporter* series may be refueled on paper, but it’s running on fumes. Not recommended. (F. Swietek)

### Tu dors Nicole ★★★1/2

Kino Lorber, 93 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95

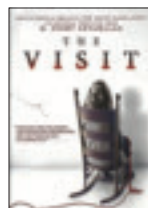


Québécoise director Stéphane Lafleur has a knack for finding the magic in everyday sights and sounds. Here, he depicts the inner life of insomniac 22-year-old Nicole (Julianne Côté), who is drifting through the summer while her parents are out of town. Shot in black and white on 35mm film, Lafleur evokes the European art house classics of the 1960s, even if Nicole’s suburban environs are more ordinary than exotic. Adopting unusual shots and angles, many common items—such as bikes and streetlamps—wind up appearing alien and strange. Nicole works in a used clothing store,

and in her off hours hangs out with a friend, Véronique (Catherine St-Laurent). When Nicole gets her first credit card, she impulsively buys two tickets to Iceland, thinking of her credit line as “free money.” Her listlessness dissipates further after her older brother, Rémi (Marc-André Grondin), returns home unexpectedly to practice with his post-rock trio. Known for being demanding, Rémi has had a hard time keeping a band together, and he worries that the bassist will leave after his girlfriend has their baby. Nicole and Véronique take an interest in new drummer JF (Francis La Haye), who is more confused than flattered by their attentions. Slowly but surely the women’s friendship begins to unravel, even as JF tries to remain neutral. Lafleur plays Nicole’s self-sabotaging misfortunes more for loopy comedy than judgmental tragedy in this finely-tuned character study. Highly recommended. (K. Fennessy)

### The Visit ★★★

Universal, 94 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.98, Jan. 5



Writer-director M. Night Shyamalan’s strangely spooky, suspenseful tale revolves around siblings spending a week at their maternal grandparents’ remote Pennsylvania farm. Realizing that their recently divorced mother (Kathryn Hahn) needs a vacation, teenage Becca (Olivia DeJonge) and her exuberant, rap-loving, younger brother Tyler (Ed Oxenbould) encourage her to take a Royal Caribbean cruise with her boyfriend. Having initially disapproved of the marriage, the grandparents have been estranged from the mother for years and have never met the grandkids but are now eager to mend the relationship. So aspiring filmmaker Becca decides to make a documentary about their time with Nana (Deanna Dunagan) and Pop Pop (Peter McRobbie), who are a bit odd. Nana’s always baking and Pop Pop can be unexpectedly curt, cautioning the siblings not to leave their bedroom after 9:30 p.m. Hearing strange nocturnal noises, the kids peek out and spy Nana wandering around nude, clawing the walls. Pop Pop explains that she is “sundowning,” a medical term referring to people with dementia. Becca functions as the compassionate commentator while the duo curiously explore their mother’s childhood home. Utilizing weird camera angles and a found footage gimmick, Shyamalan ultimately delivers a trademark final twist in this low-budget film that features a load of horror movie clichés. Optional. (S. Granger)

### The Walk ★★★1/2

Sony, 123 min., PG, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99, Jan. 5

There is much vertigo-inducing cinematography in Robert Zemeckis’ chronicle of

how 24-year-old French aerialist Philippe Petit (Joseph Gordon-Levitt) walked across a wire that he and his accomplices strung between New York’s ill-fated Twin Towers on the morning of August 7, 1974. Beginning with Petit standing atop the Statue of Liberty gazing at the World Trade Center, *The Walk* traces Petit’s early days in Paris, where he was a street mime/juggler/unicyclist, first garnering attention by wire-walking between the towers of Notre Dame cathedral. Armed with advice from a circus-trained mentor (Ben Kingsley) and having the support of his girlfriend (Charlotte Le Bon), Petit arrives in the United States to begin the planning and execution of what he calls “the coup,” an illegal caper involving suspicious gear, disguises, and the logistics of shooting a wire from one tower to another. It all leads up to a digitally-created, death-defying 140-foot stroll—1,362-feet above the ground—as Petit crosses between the 110-story buildings eight times over the course of 45 minutes. Covering virtually the same ground as James Marsh’s superior Oscar-winning 2008 documentary *Man on Wire*—based on Petit’s 2002 memoir *To Reach the Clouds*—this whimsically fictionalized version suffers from way too much voiceover narration. Still, *The Walk* is a technically impressive biopic. A strong optional purchase. (S. Granger)



### War Room ★★★

Sony, 120 min., PG, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99



In 1953, the *Ladies’ Home Journal* inaugurated its trademark column “Can This Marriage Be Saved?”—in which troubled couples related their problems and a marriage counselor suggested solutions. But I don’t recall any therapist suggesting that a psychologically abused wife pray in a closet as a remedy. Aimed at churchgoers, this proselytizing tale revolves around Elizabeth “Liz” Jordan (Priscilla Shirer), wife of Tony (T.C. Stallings), mother to 10-year-old Danielle (Alena Pitts), and a part-time realtor. A pharmaceutical rep who is often on the road, Tony has control issues at home, criticizing Danielle for jumping rope instead of playing baseball, refusing to help Liz’s sister out financially, and escaping to the gym. When Liz meets prospective client Clara (Karen Abercrombie), a friendship develops, with elderly Clara questioning unhappy Liz about her religious beliefs, and urging her to make a commitment to Jesus. Pious Clara shows Liz her “war room,” a closet she uses for praying, referring to Matthew 6:6, which is often translated, “When you pray, go into your inner room.” Somewhat skeptical at first, Liz does create her own clothes closet “war room” after becoming aware

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that Tony is on the brink of betraying her with a co-worker. In the end, filmmaker Alex Kendrick's *War Room* is a lethargically-paced, heavy-handed effort. An optional purchase, at best. (S. Granger)

### We Are Still Here ★★★

*Anchor Bay, 83 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98*



Writer-director Ted Geoghegan doesn't exactly reinvent the wheel in this old-fashioned haunted-house movie, but his cheeky deployment of familiar tropes will delight genre fans. Pleasant middle-aged couple Paul and Anne Sacchetti (Andrew Sensenig and Barbara Crampton) move into a vintage house on the outskirts of a small Massachusetts town, still grieving over their son Bobby, who died in a car crash. Anne soon senses a presence in the house, which she believes to be Bobby's, and her concern is heightened after a strangely genial elderly neighbor reveals that the home has a dark history. As it turns out, the house not only hosts some otherworldly spirits (who are not necessarily friendly, as an unlucky electrician and two couples who come to visit will learn), but the townspeople also have an agenda of their own. The explanation behind all of the scary goings-on—not fully disclosed until the final credits—winds up being pretty ridiculous, but the film boasts a fair amount of genuine suspense, and the cast shines, with special kudos to Monte Markham as the weird neighbor who proves to be the key to the town's troubled past. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

### Winning: The Racing Life of Paul Newman

★★★1/2

*Kino Lorber, 83 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95*



Radio personality turned filmmaker Adam Carolla's (co-directing with Nate Adams) engaging documentary incorporates the categories of sports, entertainment, and celebrity-bios. Based on the titular 2009 book by Matt Stone and Preston Lerner, *Winning* recounts film star Paul Newman's formidable second career in auto racing. Seen here in interview clips, Newman claims that he always wanted to be an athlete but never thought he had "grace" in any sport until he got behind the wheel for the 1969 track drama *Winning* (costar Robert Wagner is among interviewees here). Entering the arena as a serious competitor—while restricting himself to the same entry-level Datsuns as less monetarily well-off racers—Newman went from novice to expert, learning from Mario Andretti and earning the respect of motor circuit regulars and fellow drivers (a milestone moment was Newman's team gaining second place at Le Mans in 1979). At times, Newman would

have gladly left showbiz for the more honest camaraderie of the racing life. Although actress-wife Joanne Woodward is notably absent, other interviewees include Andretti, Jay Leno (billed as an "automotive journalist"), actor Patrick Dempsey, racers John Morton, Willy T. Ribbs, and Lyn St. James, and Pixar animator John Lasseter. Recommended. (C. Cassidy)

## Classic Films

### 3 Films Directed by Benoît Jacquot ★★★

*Cohen, 2 discs, 274 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$39.98, Blu-ray: \$49.98*



Benoît Jacquot is not as well-known as other French directors but he's a prolific and consistently interesting filmmaker. This collection presents three of his best films from the '90s. *The Disenchanted* (1990) is a drama starring Judith Godrèche as a sexually independent teen who has a callous creep of a boyfriend and a sickly mother, the latter surviving on the good graces of former lover "Sugardad"—whose interest now lies in bedding the daughter. Godrèche is precocious, confidant, flighty, and defiant, but Jacquot's somber view of youthful rebellion is neither titillating nor comic. *A Single Girl* (1995), Jacquot's first stateside success, stars Virginie Ledoyen as a tough young Parisian woman working her first day at a hotel, serving up a slice-of-life drama that unfolds in real time as she struggles with personal crises. Jacquot avoids melodramatic pitfalls by concentrating on the details of her activities, which entail lots of walking that is captured in long, unbroken traveling shots that are lovely to watch in their own right. *Keep It Quiet* (1999) is a satire starring Fabrice Luchini as a disgraced corporate CEO newly released from prison, Isabelle Huppert as the wife trying to fathom changes in his character, and Vincent Lindon as his brother, a talk show host who likes to stir things up. All three films show a director who is influenced by the freewheeling style of the French New Wave, interested in interior lives and conflicted characters, and driven to find new ways to tell stories through unexpected directorial choices. Extras include audio commentaries by critics Wade Major and Tim Cogshell, and interviews between Jacquot and critic Kent Jones. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

### The American Dreamer

★★

*Etiquette, 81 min., not rated, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$32.98*



After the huge success of the independently produced *Easy Rider*, Dennis

Hopper directed *The Last Movie* for Universal Pictures. While he was editing the film during post-production in California, photographer turned filmmaker Lawrence Schiller and young cineaste L.M. Kit Carson collaborated on this portrait of Hopper as a young bohemian. Although the film includes brief clips from the set of *The Last Movie* and a couple of scenes in the editing room, most of it is shot in Hopper's California home, where he plays host to rapt listeners eager to hear his philosophical rambling, and takes baths with willing young women. Hopper comes across as a counterculture guru eager for the attention, but we learn very little about his inspirations, or his aspirations as a director, or his approach to filmmaking. In fact, he's just as much of an enigma when the credits roll. Shot on 16mm, *The American Dreamer* was produced to be shown exclusively on college campuses, a lively center of film discovery in the 1970s. Unavailable for years, this new DVD edition also features a behind-the-scenes featurette, a segment on the film's preservation, a photo gallery, and a booklet. More curio than classic, this is optional, at best. (S. Axmaker)

### The Apu Trilogy

★★★★

*Criterion, 3 discs, 341 min., in Bengali w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD or Blu-ray: \$99.95*



In 1955, aspiring Indian filmmaker Satyajit Ray released his debut feature. A labor of love made independently over the course of two years, *Pather Panchali* (aka *Song of the Little Road*) was the first film in a remarkable trilogy about young Apu. Serving up a portrait of life in a small, impoverished village in rural India, *Pather Panchali* displays the texture and grace of a painting. Seen through the eyes of young Apu (Subir Banerjee), the story is really about three generations of women in his home: elder Auntie, protective Mother, and bright-eyed older sister Durga. This was India's answer to Italy's neo-realism, partially due to inspiration but also because it was made under similar conditions: with little money, non-professional actors, and a first-time director trying to capture a world that hadn't yet been seen on screens. It was followed in 1956 by *Aparajito* (*The Unvanquished*), which takes the now teenage Apu (Smaran Ghosal) and his family to the city of Benares, and 1959's *Apur Sansar* (*The World of Apu*), which tells a powerful story of love and tragedy as it follows the adult Apu's (Soumitra Chatterjee) story of loss and eventual rebirth. Over the course of the three films—adapted from novels by Bibhutibhusan Bandyopadhyay—we see Ray evolve as a filmmaker, heralding the arrival of one of the great humanist directors of modern cinema. This new boxed set presents the trilogy with beautiful restorations, along

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DIRECTED BY FRANOIS OZON

STREET DATE: **JAN. 26, 2016** SRP: **\$24.98 / \$34.98**

After the death of her best friend, Claire falls into a deep depression, but a surprising discovery about her friend's husband gives her a new taste for life.

## PAULETTE

DIRECTED BY JERMOE ENRICO

STREET DATE: **FEB. 9, 2016** SRP: **\$24.98 / \$34.98**

- Brash and opinionated retiree Paulette (Bernadette Lafont) lives alone in a housing project on the outskirts of Paris. One evening, upon observing some mysterious dealings outside her building, Paulette discovers a surprising way to supplement her meager pension - an unlikely but successful career selling cannabis.
- Includes 10 Bonus Deleted Scenes



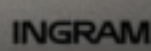
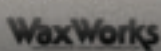
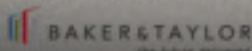
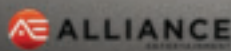
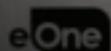
## TAVIANI BROTHERS COLLECTION

PADRE PADRONE • NIGHT OF THE SHOOTING STARS • KAOS

STREET DATE: **FEB. 16, 2016** SRP: **\$39.98 / \$49.98**

- **Padre Padrone** is the winner of the 1977 Cannes Film Festival Palme d'Or and based on an autobiography by Gavino Ledda, "The One That Got Away".
- **Night of the shooting stars** is the winner of the Grand Jury Prize at 1982 Cannes Film Festival. In it, the Taviani brothers create some of their most lyrical and poetic cinema.
- **Kaos** is a free adaptation from Luigi Pirandello's works. The Taviani brothers have constructed an ethereal odyssey into the Sicilian landscape.
- Video bonus features include a new two hour interview with the Taviani brothers

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with a slew of extras, including new and archival interviews, audio recordings of Ray, documentary excerpts, behind-the-scenes featurettes, and footage of Ray receiving an honorary Oscar in 1992. Highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** (S. Axmaker)

### The Bat ★★1/2

Film Detective, 80 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$14.99

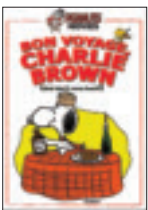
This 1959 murder mystery resurrects the oft-filmed titular 1920 stage play by Mary Roberts Rinehard and Avery Hopwood, serving up low-budget horror in the vein of William Castle's movies, right down to the casting of Vincent Price as a medical doctor and prime suspect. Price receives top billing, but Agnes Moorehead is the real star as Cornelia Van Gorder, a murder mystery novelist who goes to a summer home that turns out to be "haunted" by a mysterious killer known only as the Bat. When the local bank is robbed of \$1 million in bonds and the bank president (who also owns Cornelia's rental) goes missing, the killings begin again, as an increasingly larger number of suspects converge on the home in hopes of finding the stolen money. Director Crane Wilbur lets his stars ham it up just enough to give the film personality and he maintains a snappy pace as the deaths pile up. While no horror classic, *The Bat* is fun and Moorehead and Price are quite entertaining. Long available on poor quality discs, this public domain title debuts on Blu-ray in a well-mastered transfer from a high-quality 35mm print in its proper widescreen aspect ratio. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)



### Bon Voyage, Charlie Brown (And Don't Come Back!) ★★★

Paramount, 75 min., G, DVD: \$14.98

This 1980 fourth *Peanuts* animated feature released in theaters (from the same Bill Melendez-Phil Roman team who created the classic TV specials) is a lightweight cartoon travelogue-romp, in which iconic comic-strip character Charlie Brown is, without his knowledge, volunteered—along with Linus, Peppermint Patty, and Marcie—to embark on an exchange-student sojourn in Britain and France. Snoopy and Woodstock tag along as well (fans expecting a rematch with the Red Baron may be disappointed that Snoopy dons his uniform only to hoist a few root beers). Amidst the gentle multicultural comedy, the gang find themselves mysteriously invited to (and then locked out of) a forbidding chateau owned by a grouchy French recluse (this is a rare *Peanuts* outing in which adult characters are clearly seen and heard). Extras include a bonus "making-of" featurette that touches on *Peanuts* comics creator Charles "Sparky"

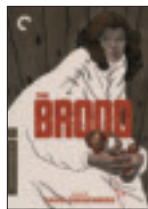


Schulz's life-changing wartime service in the 20th Armored Division in France after D-Day. Recommended. (C. Cassidy)

### The Brood ★★★

Criterion, 92 min., R, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.95; Blu-ray: \$39.95

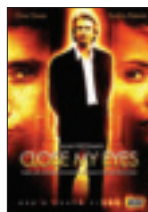
David Cronenberg once described his 1979 film *The Brood* as "my version of *Kramer vs. Kramer*, only more realistic." Most early critics missed the metaphors lying behind the visceral, primal horrors on display, but with the help of hindsight, these themes are far more apparent. Frank Carveth (Art Hindle) is the estranged husband of troubled Nora (Samantha Eggar), who is undergoing radical experimental psychotherapy devised by Dr. Hal Raglan (Oliver Reed) to help his patients turn emotional trauma into physical manifestations. When Frank's daughter returns home from a weekend visit to the clinic sporting bruises, Frank tries to stop her from going again, which unleashes a reign of terror in the form of mutant childlike creatures who kill those who have wronged Nora. This homicidal "brood" is the result of Nora's "psychoplasmic therapy," a manifestation of the emotional and psychic scars she suffered as an abused child, as well as anger caused by the impending divorce. Cronenberg's trademark visceral body horror—of flesh invaded, transforming, rebelling—serves up images that grab the viewer on a shocking biological level, while also delivering evocative metaphors for various aspects of human psychology. *The Brood* was Cronenberg's most sophisticated and insightful film until his remake of *The Fly*, which also marked the director's commercial breakthrough. Presented here in a beautifully remastered edition, extras include a behind-the-scenes documentary, new interviews, an archival clip from *The Merv Griffin Show*, and a new restoration of Cronenberg's quasi-experimental 1970 second feature *Crimes of the Future*. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



### Close My Eyes ★★★

Hen's Tooth, 109 min., R, DVD: \$24.95

A minor success du scandal upon its release in 1991, this superbly-acted adult drama stars Clive Owen and Saskia Reeves as Natalie and Richard, an upscale London brother and sister who, starting as young adults, cultivate a madly passionate, consensual incestuous relationship. When Natalie marries a charming businessman (Alan Rickman), however, Richard's jealously boils over. Writer-director Stephen Poliakoff takes an unflinching approach to a taboo lifestyle choice, but may throw some viewers off with a subplot about greedy developers failing to preserve



grand old London architecture—a seemingly arbitrary narrative thread here, although the city's changing environment is a running theme in Poliakoff's work for cinema and TV. *Close My Eyes* won Best Film at the Evening Standard British Film Awards, while Rickman was honored for Best Actor. Making its U.S. DVD debut, this is recommended. (C. Cassidy)

### Diary of a Lost Girl

★★★

Kino Lorber, 112 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95

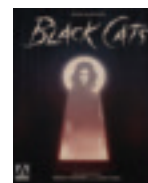
Louise Brooks, a bright, vivacious supporting player in Hollywood, became an icon of the silent era thanks to her work with the great German filmmaker G.W. Pabst. In 1929's *Diary of a Lost Girl*, their second and final collaboration, Brooks plays Thymian, a naïve, wide-eyed innocent impregnated by her father's assistant (Fritz Rasp) and sent to a repressive reform school by the family that now spurns her. No better than a prison, the school is so spirit-crushing that she escapes and drifts into prostitution. Based on a novel by Margarete Böhme, the film is a beautiful and masterfully made social drama, directed with a mix of German Expressionism and poetic realism by Pabst and elevated by the luminescent performance of Brooks, who was a unique presence in silent cinema. Brooks even makes prostitution almost seem like a noble profession due to her good cheer at a high class bordello, although the film clearly presents the dark side of such a life. Censored upon its original release, this restored and remastered version features 15 minutes of footage that was unseen until a few years ago. Extras include audio commentary by Thomas Gladysz, director of the Louise Brooks Society, and the 1930 talkie short "Windy Riley Goes to Hollywood," starring Brooks. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



### Edgar Allan Poe's Black Cats ★★1/2

Arrow, 4 discs, 187 min., in Italian w/English subtitles, not rated, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$69.95

Two Italian adaptations of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Black Cat" use the short story as a foundation for bloody horror films but otherwise share little in common. *Your Vice Is a Locked Room and Only I Have the Key* (1972), one of the better examples of the distinctive Italian horror genre known as giallo, features sadistic murders by a mysterious killer who stalks beautiful women—serving up scenes of sex, sadism, and exploitative nudity. The story, set in the decadent mansion of a cruel writer who publicly humiliates his wife, stars sexy Italian beauty Edwige Fenech as the writer's gorgeous young niece, who







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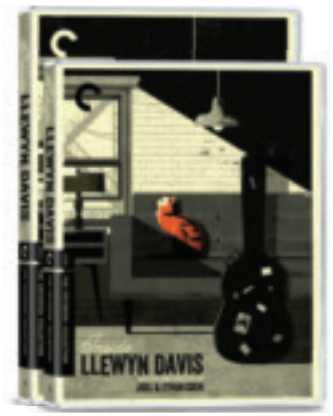
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arrives for a visit and immediately stirs things up. There is a black cat, a family treasure, and a conspiracy of terror behind the murders, but the plot isn't as important as the style and spectacle provided by director Sergio Martino. *The Black Cat* (1981), directed by Lucio Fulci, throws in elements from other Poe tales. Patrick Magee stars as a psychic who can send his pet cat to kill his enemies, and Mimsy Farmer costars as a photographer and amateur detective who notices the scratches on each victim that the cops missed. It's a confusing mystery and a muddled film that features blood and nudity, but is tame compared to Fulci's infamous gore classics. Neither are essentials of the genre but both are entertaining and have been beautifully mastered for this double feature. Extras include audio commentary on *The Black Cat*, a collection of bonus interviews, behind-the-scenes featurettes, and an 80-page book. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

### Forbidden Zone ★★★

MVD, 76 min., not rated, DVD: 2 discs, \$19.95; Blu-ray: \$29.95



One of the most bizarre underground films to win a devoted cult following, Richard Elfman's 1980 musical happily and recklessly combines crass low comedy with inspired Dadaist flourishes to create a tuneful sci-fi slapstick adventure. The story follows a dysfunctional family's journey through a mysterious door in their basement that leads to a warped parallel universe called the Sixth Dimension, where an oversexed little king (Hervé Villechaize) and his tempestuous queen (Susan Tyrrell) reign with sadistic glee over their imprisoned subjects. Topless women, mature adults pretending (badly) to be pre-teens, and a Cab Calloway-style Satan (the director's brother, Hollywood soundtrack maestro Danny Elfman, backed by the Mystic Knights of the Oingo Boingo—Oingo Boingo being Elfman's former band) add to the mayhem. *Forbidden Zone* also features very politically incorrect humor (including broad black and Jewish stereotypes and a comic gang rape), intentionally ridiculous threadbare sets, and John Muto's outrageous animation. The film is far from perfect—the comedy is more silly than funny, and the zany shenanigans eventually grow tiresome—but for sheer audacity, *Forbidden Zone* is quite an experience. This new release features both the original black-and-white version and the 2008 colorized re-release, along with extras including an audio commentary, behind-the-scenes documentary, deleted scenes, and a booklet detailing the film's surprisingly tortured history (exclusive to the Blu-ray release is a bonus soundtrack CD). Recommended. (P. Hall)

### Full Moon in Paris

★★★

Film Movement, 103 min., in French w/English subtitles, R, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95



The fourth of Éric Rohmer's six *Comedies and Provverbs*—a series of contemporary romantic dramas that begin with a familiar French proverb—*Full Moon in Paris* stars Pascale Ogier as Louise, a restless designer bored with her sleepy suburban life outside of Paris with lover Remy (Tchéky Karyo), a stable architect happy with a calm home and a long-term relationship. The independent-minded Louise decides to move back into her old Paris apartment during the week, losing herself in the bustle of dinner parties and nightclubs and single men, while spending her weekends with Remy. Like an inversion of Rohmer's *Six Moral Tales*, Louise here becomes briefly entangled with another man—a spontaneous musician who is the opposite of Remy—but in a neat twist on the formula Remy himself drifts into a romantic relationship at Louise's suggestion. This is the most ironic and, in many ways, judgmental of Rohmer's films. Willowy Ogier's kittenish sexuality and zest for life are wrapped in a self-absorbed determination that borders on indifference, but for the most part this is another wryly witty look at modern love from the master of the sophisticated romantic comedy. Also on hand are Fabrice Luchini as Louise's best friend and conniving confidante, and Laszlo Szabo as a café patron who pontificates on the magical effects of the full moon. Ogier, who died shortly after the film's release, designed many of the handsome sets. Extras include an archival interview with Ogier, and an essay by film critic David Thomson. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

### Horror Classics, Volume One ★★★

Warner, 4 discs, 376 min., G/PG/R/not rated, Blu-ray: \$54.98



During the late 1950s, the British studio Hammer Films revived the classic monster movies in gothic style with lurid color. This boxed set presents the Blu-ray debuts of four Hammer films. *The Mummy* (1959) is the most notable, marking the fourth Hammer title to pair up its two marquee stars, Peter Cushing (as the archeologist who uncovers a lost crypt) and Christopher Lee (as a former high priest turned gauze-wrapped guardian of the tomb). This mummy is a haunted soul, rampaging juggernaut, and hugely powerful monster all in one, and the film features a notorious scene of Lee's transgressive priest having his tongue removed. *The Mummy* was helmed by Hammer's top filmmaker, Terence Fisher, who also directs this set's *Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed* (1969), the fifth entry in Hammer's

*Frankenstein* series and one of the best. Cushing delivers a thoroughly cold-blooded portrayal of the mad Baron, an amoral genius who blackmails a young couple into helping him with his bloody plans. And Lee stars as the malevolent Count in both *Dracula Has Risen from the Grave* (1969) and *Taste the Blood of Dracula* (1970), two lesser *Dracula* sequels. All four films—also available in separate volumes—have been newly remastered for Blu-ray and are a significant upgrade over previous DVD releases. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

### The Hurricane ★★1/2

Kino Lorber, 110 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95



John Ford directs this 1937 drama of Western civilization colliding with native culture in the South Seas, based on the novel by Charles Nordhoff and James Norman Hall (authors of *Mutiny on the Bounty*). Jon Hall plays young Polynesian hero Terangi, a native of Tahiti who has become a respected first mate on an American ship, and Dorothy Lamour is his innocent Tahitian bride. Although the pair receive top billing, the film spends as much time (if not more) with the array of other Caucasian characters in paradise: a philosophical alcoholic doctor (Thomas Mitchell), a priest devoted to the islanders (C. Aubrey Smith), and the new island governor (Raymond Massey)—the latter a strict, stiff martinet whose devotion to the letter of the Napoleonic Code allows no room for justice or compassion. Mary Astor plays the governor's wife and conscience, although he refuses to listen to either when he sentences Terangi to hard labor for assaulting a racist white man. The titular hurricane arrives in the final act, whipping up a deadly storm while Terangi struggles to get home. *The Hurricane* was a big commercial success in 1937 but remains one of Ford's lesser films. The characters are more debate positions than developed personalities, the natives are holy innocents, the film is shot largely in the studio (which does no service to the exotic setting), and the wrath of God finale makes for a confused metaphor in that it destroys innocent islanders (who are no better than extras in the drama) while sparing the Western interlopers. Still, this does feature a fine cast and a spectacular storm sequence. Extras include an audio commentary by film historian Joseph McBride. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

### I Want to Live! ★★★

Kino Lorber, 121 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.95

Based on the true story of Barbara Graham, the first woman sent to the gas chamber at San Quentin, the 1958 drama *I Want to Live!* stars Susan Hayward in her signature role. Although made under the strictures

of Hollywood's Production Code, it is clear about exactly what kind of life Graham led before her arrest for the murder of an older woman (a crime for which she was most likely innocent). Prostitute, petty thief, grifter, perjurer, and all-around small-time criminal, Graham gave up the bad life for marriage and family, which subsequently fell apart, and she was later arrested along with her former partners in crime, who pinned the murder on her. Hayward is all passion and wit as Graham, who lives for the moment yet is honest and unapologetic and never betrays a friend or a partner. Based on newspaper coverage of the case and the letters she wrote from prison, the film is clearly on her side. Robert Wise directs with a mix of dramatic realism and film noir style, backed by Johnny Mandel's jazz-inflected score, which lends the film a jaunty energy. It's intelligent, adult, and unflinching, making a powerful case against capital punishment while also delivering a riveting drama. Hayward won an Oscar for Best Actress, and the film itself garnered five additional nominations. Simon Oakland costars as newspaper reporter Ed Montgomery, who initially smeared Graham in the press and then led the campaign for acquittal after he became convinced of her innocence. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



### Jack and the Beanstalk

★★★  
Warner, 51 min., not rated,  
DVD: \$17.99

While hardly an enduring classic (despite packaging claims), this 1967 NBC special from the Hanna Barbera factory is still agreeable children's entertainment, even if it's now more likely to serve as a nostalgia trip for older viewers. The familiar fairy tale about the boy who plants magic beans that grow into a beanstalk which takes him to a castle in the sky inhabited by a bloodthirsty giant is here recast as a vehicle for Gene Kelly, serving up a combination of live-action musical and animation that recalls the famous routine he performed with Hanna Barbera's cartoon mouse Jerry in the 1945 film *Anchors Aweigh*. Kelly, who also directed and choreographed this special, stars as a roadside peddler named Jeremy, who trades little Jack (Bobby Riha) some beans for a cow and then follows him up the beanstalk to the animated lair of the giant (voiced by Ted Cassidy, Lurch from *The Addams Family*). Once there, Jeremy and Jack experience a series of adventures that invariably lead to long song-and-dance routines with animated critters such as oddball birds, friendly mice, and a cat. The tunes by Sammy Cahn and Jimmy Van Heusen are pleasant without being especially memorable, while



the dance routines that were devised by Kelly are engaging if also sometimes protracted. The animation is typical of Hanna Barbera; acceptable, but far beneath the Disney gold standard. A nice blast from the past featuring one of Hollywood's most beloved hooper's, this is recommended. (F. Swietek)

### Je t'aime, Je t'aime

★★★  
Kino Lorber, 94 min., in French  
w/English subtitles, not rated,  
DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95

A heady time travel movie by way of a melancholy memory film, 1968's *Je t'aime, Je t'aime* was the fifth feature from French New Wave director Alain Resnais, who collaborated with Belgian author Jacques Sternberg—a writer of surreal, free-form prose—to tell the story of Claude Ritter (Claude Rich), an author who takes part in a time travel experiment. Ritter is the survivor of a suicide attempt, which is one reason that he is chosen, and he agrees to be sent back a year to relive a single minute of his life, a test successfully conducted on mice but never attempted with a human. The initial trip (which is launched from a strange blob of a capsule that looks more organic than electronic) is a success until he loses his anchor in the present and becomes lost—zigzagging through moments of his past life, especially his troubled relationship with an eccentric, emotionally unstable girlfriend (Olga Georges-Picot). This is a very different conception of time travel fiction than American and British traditions, depicting a man who is trapped in a swirl of memories and moments that are shuffled into brief, seemingly random scenes. *Je t'aime, Je t'aime* may rightfully frustrate sci-fi fans, but could intrigue those interested in foreign movies that challenge expectations. Extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette, archival interviews with Resnais and Rich, and an essay by film critic Jonathan Rosenbaum. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



### Kwaidan

★★★  
Criterion, 183 min., in Japanese  
w/English subtitles, not rated,  
DVD: 2 discs, \$29.95, Blu-ray:  
\$39.95

Masaki Kobayashi's 1964 anthology of ancient ghost stories may not be—strictly speaking—a horror film: it's neither scary nor even particularly unsettling, apart from a few exquisitely created images. But *Kwaidan* is breathtakingly lovely, featuring beautifully composed painterly visuals, and a score and sound design by Toru Takemitsu that is spare and often suffused with sadness, regret, and loss. *Kwaidan* is adapted from four classic Japanese folktales: "The Black Hair" follows a samurai who abandons his devoted wife; "The Woman of the Snow" is a forest



spirit who will spare a woodcutter so long as he keeps a promise; "Hoichi the Earless," the longest entry at over an hour, centers on the ghosts of a sea battle and a blind musician; and "In a Cup of Tea" serves up a meditation on storytelling. The four segments play out on stylized, pared-down studio sets, and are directed with a deliberation that emphasizes stillness, which can sometimes feel remote and removed. Revered as a classic of Japanese cinema from one of its master filmmakers, *Kwaidan* is a gorgeous, haunting work. Although previous American releases—both on film and home video—were trimmed by 20 minutes, this new Criterion edition presents the fully restored and remastered director's cut. Extras include an audio commentary by film historian Stephen Prince, along with new and archival interviews. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

### The Marquise of O...

★★★  
Film Movement, 103 min., in  
German w/English subtitles,  
PG, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray:  
\$34.95

Between helming his *Six Moral Tales* and *Comedies and Proverbs*—two series of films set in the contemporary world and unified by variations on a theme—Éric Rohmer made a rare foray into period drama with *The Marquise of O...*, which is based on a novel by Heinrich von Kleist and is set in Italy during the late 18th century. After a handsome and dashing Count (Bruno Ganz) saves the beautiful young Marquise (Edith Clever) from certain assault during a Russian invasion, she winds up spending the night being guarded by her chivalrous savior, who returns months later to rather insistently court her. When he leaves she discovers that she is unaccountably pregnant. Rohmer's style is both more lush (shot in rich colors by Nestor Almendros) and less intimate than in his previous romantic comedies; unlike the self-obsessed young adults of his modern films, the Count and Marquise act out of moral duty and social responsibility, with actions that reverberate through family and community. Yet this is still a Rohmer film, so it's full of carefully tooled dialogue and informed by irony. A story of innocence and corruption with a mote of delicate forgiveness and understanding, *The Marquise of O...* is presented with extras including archival interviews with Rohmer and Ganz, and an essay by film critic David Thomson. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



### Masterworks of American Avant-Garde Experimental Film 1920-1970

★★★  
Flicker Alley, 4 discs, 418 min., not rated, Blu-ray/  
DVD Combo: \$59.95

A total of 37 classics of avant-garde and experimental filmmaking from the 1920s through the 1970s are collected in this

new anthology curated by film historian Bruce Posner. Despite the title, not all are American films—Fernand Léger's *Ballet Mécanique* (1924) and Marcel Duchamp's *Anémic Cinema* (1926), which both play with the graphic elements of film, are from France—but overall the compilation represents some of the most influential American experimental films over a 50-year period, illustrating changing modes of expression over the decades. The early *Manhatta* (1920)—a lovely portrait of New York City—and *A Bronx Morning* (1931) emphasize the poetry and beauty of the city. Abstract animation is employed in *An Optical Poem* (1937) and *Tarantella* (1940), while Maya Deren's *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943) uses symbolism and dream imagery, and modern art informs *Evolution* (1954) and *Hurry, Hurry!* (1957). Also including films from prolific avant-garde filmmakers Bruce Baillie, Jonas Mekas, Lawrence Jordan, and Stan Brakhage, nine of the films featured here are part of the Library of Congress's National Film Registry list. While many fine anthologies of experimental and avant-garde films have previously appeared, this collection features HD transfers of every title (including two newly restored editions mastered in 2K). Many of the silent films also have newly-composed and/or recorded scores, while an accompanying booklet contains credits and notes on the films and filmmakers. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



## Moana With Sound

★★★1/2

Kino Lorber, 98 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95

Robert J. Flaherty is often called the father of the documentary because of his groundbreaking 1922 film *Nanook of the North*. Flaherty traveled with his wife, Frances, and their children to the Samoan island of Savai'i in 1924 to make his second film: a coming-of-age tale seen within the context of traditional village life. The story centers on the titular boy and culminates with an initiation ritual of manhood that, among other things, involves a painful tattooing. Although it was released as a silent film in 1926 to critical acclaim but public indifference, Flaherty's daughter Monica returned to Savai'i a half-century later and recorded ambient sounds, songs, and dialogue which she then added to the original. Her version premiered in 1981, but the visual quality was poor. This release, however, features a 2K digital restoration by Bruce Posner of Filmmakers Showcase and director Sami van Ingen: the black-and-white footage is lustrous, and while the dubbing is not perfect, it does add powerful immediacy to the images. Flaherty's pioneering films



raised issues that have bedeviled nonfiction filmmaking ever since. As in *Nanook*, Flaherty staged many of the sequences in *Moana*; indeed, his fabrication was even more intrusive, since the Samoans had been largely Westernized by 1924. In order to create his vision of a Polynesian paradise, he chose unrelated individuals to act the part of the native family, wearing long-abandoned styles of dress, and engaging in activities—such as the initiation rite—that were no longer practiced. While untrue to “the facts,” Flaherty's *Moana* nevertheless remains an important film in cinematic history. Extras include filmed commentaries by Posner and film historian Enrico Camporesi, a retrospective documentary, a restoration featurette, an experimental short by Flaherty, Flaherty family home movies, and an interview with Frances Flaherty. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

## Salt of the Earth ★★★

Film Detective, 94 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$14.99

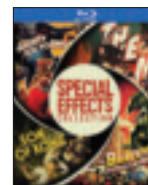
The only American film that was ever blacklisted in the U.S., this independently produced 1954 drama was inspired by a real-life strike in New Mexico by Mexican-American miners. *Salt of the Earth* takes on issues of racial prejudice, social injustice, and economic inequity, often with a didactic approach, delivering a message about the value of collective action to improve working conditions and receive a fair wage. The cast is comprised largely of non-professionals (many of them participants in the actual strike) and the film was financed by the miners' union and made by socially-motivated artists blacklisted by the House Un-American Activities Committee, including producer Paul Jarrico, director Herbert Biberman, screenwriter Michael Wilson, and star Will Geer (playing the cruel sheriff who protects the strikebreakers). Remarkably, no white movie star arrives to save the day, although perhaps the most revolutionary aspect of the film was its recognition of the participation and strength of the women, who rise to positions of leadership in the community and ask for the same respect from their tradition-bound husbands and fathers that the men have been demanding from their bosses. Made during the height of the Red Scare, the film was naturally branded as Communist propaganda. It's a remarkable portrait for its time, a landmark production that remains a powerful film (it was added to the Library of Congress's National Film Registry list in 1992). This Blu-ray debut is made from a worn print, but the transfer presents a reasonably sharp image that will be an acceptable substitute until a true restoration appears. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



## Special Effects Collection ★★★1/2

Warner, 4 discs, 335 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$54.98

Four vintage monster movies make their Blu-ray debuts in this boxed set, which spotlights the craft of special effects filmmaking in the era before computers. Director Ernest B. Schoedsack's *Son of Kong* (1933), a sequel to the original *King Kong*, was rushed into production and made on a much smaller scale. Robert Armstrong (star of the first film) returns to Kong Island in search of treasure and finds Kong's offspring, a sweet-tempered white ape. While this follow-up has none of the sweep and grandeur of the original, Willis O'Brien's special effects work on the creature is charming. Also featured here is Schoedsack's *Mighty Joe Young* (1949)—for which O'Brien won an Oscar—telling the story of a humongous African ape brought to New York City as a nightclub attraction, with disastrous consequences. Joe is a marvelous creation and the climax, in which he risks his own safety to rescue children trapped in an orphanage fire, is a magnificent set piece that remains as touching as it is thrilling. Eugène Lourie's *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* (1953), inspired by a Ray Bradbury short story, centers on a prehistoric giant—awakened by nuclear tests—that lays waste to Coney Island (it also marks the first solo creature feature work by the legendary Ray Harryhausen). Lastly, Gordon Douglas's *Them!* (1954)—arguably the most famous giant insect movie of the classic era and certainly the most serious of the 1950s atomic creature features—sports ants the size of tanks that swarm the desert. Intellectually scripted, with adult characters and at least a modicum of research into ant behavior, *Them!* inspired dozens of similar but lesser giant insect and atomic mutation films. Extras include audio commentary on *Mighty Joe Young* and behind-the-scenes featurettes spread across the discs (which are also available individually). Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)



## Video Librarian Online

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**Bates Motel: Season Three ★★★**

Universal, 428 min., not rated, DVD: 3 discs, \$44.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$49.98



The third season of this “prequel” to *Psycho*—centering on the relationship between teenager Norman Bates (Freddie Highmore) and his mother Norma (Vera Farmiga)—takes Norman from being an awkward high school boy to becoming a psychologically troubled kid with murderous blackouts and hallucinations that eventually blossom into a full-blown split personality. Along the way, *Bates Motel* explores the dark underside of a rural Oregon town where drug dealing and gun running attract the attention of the FBI. While Norman is promoted to hotel manager and starts dating Emma (Olivia Cook)—who is still awaiting a lung transplant—Norman’s half-brother Dylan (Max Thieriot) tries his hand at the legal weed business with the help of his estranged father (Kenny Johnson), and also ends up falling for Emma himself. This season adds a sinister club catering to the town elite that is located in the deep woods, a group that Sheriff Romero (Nestor Carbonell) takes on when they target Norma. The show’s producers go their own way with the story, which is ostensibly based on Robert Bloch’s novel, but also clearly inspired by Hitchcock’s classic movie. And for all of the criminal complications, the focus remains on the psychology of the characters, from a clingy and jealous Norman who is uncomfortably intimate with his mother, to the latter’s manic personality that is impulsive and needy in one scene, maternal and protective in the next. Compiling all 10 episodes from the 2015 third season, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette and deleted scenes. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

**Bones: The Complete Tenth Season ★★★**

Fox, 6 discs, 988 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.98



The long-running crime procedural starring Emily Deschanel as forensic anthropologist Dr. Temperance Brennan and David Boreanaz as FBI Agent Sealey Booth—partners in crime-solving and in life (they married in season nine)—enters its 10th season with some dramatic changes. Series regular Dr. Lance Sweets (John Francis Daley) is killed in the first episode (Daley left the show to pursue a career writing and directing films) and Booth gets a new FBI partner: sardonic but amiable Agent James Aubrey (John Boyd), who proves his worth by clearing Booth’s name after he’s been framed. And in the second half of the season, Booth succumbs to a gambling addiction, which makes for a dramatic twist

in a procedural that has been remarkably stable and consistent. *Bones* celebrates its 200th episode here with a fantasy scenario set in the 1950s that features both the regular cast and recurring costars, who take on roles out of classic Hollywood romantic thrillers such as Alfred Hitchcock’s *To Catch a Thief*. This season wraps with Brennan and Booth leaving the team for a new life, which seem like a finale but isn’t since the 11th season is currently airing. While the show sometimes pushes its recreations of human remains to goopy extremes for the sake of gallows humor, it is built on a solid foundation of easygoing character byplay, nerdy humor, and cast chemistry that has been perfected over the years. Compiling all 22 episodes from the 2014-15 10th season, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette, and a gag reel. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

**Brooklyn Nine-Nine: Season Two ★★★**

Universal, 3 discs, 495 min., not rated, DVD: \$44.98



*Brooklyn Nine-Nine* has quickly developed into the funniest workplace comedy since *Parks and Recreation*. SNL alum Andy Samberg is police squad maverick detective and resident prankster Jake Peralta, who plays out TV cop show fantasies on the job when he’s not goofing in the squad room. Andre Braugher is the team’s unflappable, no-nonsense Captain. In the episode “Halloween II,” however, the Captain engages in a practical joke competition with Jake, featuring a plan as elaborate as any heist movie, which he naturally explains without a flicker of emotion. But this is more of an ensemble comedy than a star vehicle, and every member of the cast gets a chance to shine: Terry Crews as the family man sergeant, Stephanie Beatriz as a cop with anger issues who runs a drug task force, Joe Lo Truglio as Jake’s nerdy partner, Chelsea Peretti as a smart-mouthed civilian PA, and Melissa Fumero as overachiever Santiago. The mutual attraction between Peralta and Santiago is interwoven throughout the season, as is a longtime feud between the Captain and a superior officer (Kyra Sedgwick). Nick Cannon and Eva Longoria have recurring roles and guest stars include Ed Helms, Craig Robinson, Chris Parnell, Garret Dillahunt, and Bradley Whitford (the latter as Jake’s deadbeat dad). The show has found a young audience thanks to its appealing mix of silly and witty comedy, wild sight gags, oddball character humor, and a rapid-fire pace. Compiling all 23 episodes from the 2014-15 second season, extras include deleted scenes. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

**The Code: Season 1 ★★★**

Acorn, 2 discs, 341 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.99

This Australian series serves up a solid

political thriller about a government conspiracy that is uncovered by web reporter Ned Banks (Dan Spielman), who investigates with the help of his younger brother, Jesse (Ashley Zukerman), a genius and borderline autistic hacker who is on parole for cybercrimes. *The Code* opens with a car accident in the Outback that leaves two Aboriginal students critically injured, and there’s a video recorded by one of the students that their teacher (Lucy Lawless) sends to Ned. His investigation leads him to a biotech company conducting secret illegal activities, which results in Nick and Jesse being attacked and intimidated into dropping the story. But this ultimately only makes them more determined to uncover the truth, which eventually reveals connections to the government and a cover-up. Created by Shelley Birse, *The Code* combines a drama about corporate corruption and government complicity with a journalistic high-tech investigation in the information age as the series moves back and forth between the city, the halls of Australian government, and the dusty, empty Outback. Well-written and effectively directed, this should appeal to fans of sophisticated thrillers. Compiling all six episodes from the 2014 first season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



**CSI: Cyber—The First Season ★★1/2**

Paramount, 4 discs, 545 min., not rated, DVD: \$55.98



As a franchise, *CSI* is just not going gently into that good night of snazzy TV crime procedurals. The formula wears a little thin in this third and likely last spin-off from *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*, the boffo CBS anchor series that ended its 15 season run in September 2015. In spite of the timely exploration of cyber-crime and the elite cadre of FBI specialists working the field, *CSI: Cyber* often feels derivative, lackluster, and disappointingly superficial. The marquee honcho here is Patricia Arquette as behavioral science agent Avery Ryan, a former victim of cyber-crime who has devoted her life to cracking malware, busting blackhat hackers, and shutting down evildoers who lurk in the frightening corners of the deep, dark web. Arquette is reliably appealing, leading a typically motley crew of sleuths, including alterna-hip ex-con hackers (Shad “Bow Wow” Moss and Hayley Kiyoko) who now wear white hats for the Feds, a super-hunk/superagent weapons expert (James Van Der Beek), an ultra-geek schlubby nerd (Charley Koontz) whose skill at analyzing code makes his hat the whitest, and the dedicated, pencil-pushing boss (Peter McNicol) who wrangles the team. Even with the usual *CSI*

bells and whistles—digital wizardry, flashy cuts, kinetic motion, techno-cool sets—the team rapport feels forced, while the simplistic stories are laden with logic gaps. Which is not to say that this won't be enjoyed by the many fans who still have the jones for a *CSI* fix. Presenting all 13 episodes from the 2015 debut season, extras include audio commentaries, a *CSI* crossover episode, behind-the-scenes featurettes, deleted scenes, and a gag reel. A strong optional purchase. (T. Fry)

### Fresh Off the Boat: The Complete First Season

★★★★

Fox, 2 discs, 281 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.98



Based on a memoir by renowned chef Eddie Huang, this sitcom focuses on Huang's childhood in America as the son of immigrant parents from Taiwan, serving up a rare primetime series that features Asian-American characters at the center of the story. The series opens with the family moving from the urban culture of Washington D.C., where Huang was born and raised, to Orlando, FL, where Eddie's father opens an American steakhouse in 1995. While 12-year-old Eddie (Hudson Yang) identifies with rap and hip-hop culture but doesn't quite fit into the social environment of his new school, his thoroughly Americanized father (Randall Park) struggles to become part of Orlando society while pursuing the American Dream. Eddie's penny-pinching tiger mom (Constance Wu) tries to hold onto her Chinese roots while getting sucked into American culture and suburban society, and his two overachieving younger brothers constantly show him up with good grades, extracurricular projects, and shameless brown-nosing. In short, *Fresh Off the Boat* plays with all sorts of stereotypes and situations, from ethnic tropes and suburban social cliques, to the grade school shark tank of bullies, cool kids, and outcasts—all within sitcom conventions. While Huang himself criticized the show for watering down his memoir, critics embraced it for its warmth, strong ensemble, and fresh cultural perspective. A fast-paced comedy, full of clever fantasy sequences, this is an entertaining and family-friendly series. Compiling all 13 episodes from the 2015 first season, extras include a trivia track and a gag reel. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

### Girlfriends' Guide to Divorce: Season One

★★★★

Universal, 3 discs, 550 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.98



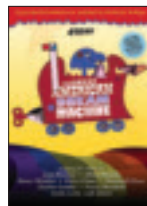
Much has been made of this alternately funny, cruel, cutting, poignant, lovable, and uncomfortable show being Bravo's first

scripted original series. But it's perfect for the cable channel's demographic, exploring themes that are more genuine than those found on many reality shows about the love lives of actual people. Lisa Edelstein is delightful as Abby McCarthy, a seriously flawed self-help author who hasn't really followed her own advice and now finds herself negotiating the choppy waters of a failed marriage. The show is too snide and snarky to be drama, but far too biting to qualify as pure comedy (there's a raunchy, in-your-face attitude to the inherent messiness of personal lives that hits very close to home). Friendship among women is the core focus here, and while every character has some kind of likability issue, Janeane Garofalo, Beau Garrett, and Necar Zadegan are terrific as the key members of Abby's support group. As Abby's soon-to-be ex, Paul Adelstein is the most sympathetic jerk since Homer Simpson. Friends, kids, work, and play are all relevant subjects—as is sex: hook-ups, long term relationships, and all manner of bedroom battles. Compiling all 13 episodes from the 2014-15 debut season, extras include deleted scenes and a gag reel. Recommended. (T. Fry)

### The Great American Dream Machine

★★★★

S'More Entertainment, 4 discs, 777 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.98



Produced for PBS in the early 1970s with an unconventional format that mixed comedy skits with documentary segments, animated interludes, and satirical shorts, *The Great American Dream Machine* was an early victim of political pressure on public television (it seems that Congress didn't like public funds spent on political or social satire). But for two years, this unusual and almost forgotten mix of variety show and offbeat TV newsmagazine presented clever comedy bits by Albert Brooks (his "Famous School for Comedians" anticipates the shorts he made for *Saturday Night Live*), Chevy Chase (one of the musical faces that opens the show), Charles Grodin, and Marshall Efron, sandwiched between profiles of fringe figures (from Evel Knievel to custom car innovator Big Daddy Roth), and visits to byways of American culture (including "Honeymoon Hotel" and "McDonalds University"). Dick Cavett recites Carl Sandburg and Mark Twain, Andy Rooney offers his kvetching opinions years before he became a staple on *60 Minutes*, and Studs Turkel discusses the issues of the day with Chicago citizens. Compared to modern shows this one is leisurely—even the animated opening credits are unusually long—but it remains a TV landmark and a fascinating time capsule of American culture in the early '70s. Compiling 13 hours worth of material (unfortunately, no broadcast dates or episode numbers appear on the cases

or in the booklet, and the DVD jacket has name misspellings), this is recommended. (S. Axmaker)

### Grimm: Season Four

★★★★

Universal, 5 discs, 944 min., not rated, DVD: \$59.98, Blu-ray: \$69.98



The fourth season of *Grimm*, the popular series about a police detective who inherits the family legacy as a monster hunter, opens with Nick (David Guintoli) losing his ability to see past the human façade of creatures known as Wesen (pronounced "ves-sen"), who live among us. Fortunately, this is a temporary condition, and in the meantime Nick has a young protégé (Jacqueline Toboni) to help out. *Grimm's* mix of dark fairy tale, modern crime, and supernatural conspiracy—all set in the city of Portland (where the motto "Keep Portland Weird" takes on a whole new dimension)—gets a little grimmer when the Wesen launch a campaign of terror and violence in response to the "mixed" marriage (human/Wesen) of Monroe (Silas Weir Mitchell) and Rosalee (Bree Turner). Also, Nick's girlfriend Juliette (Bitsie Tulloch) is cursed with powers that drive her towards chaos and a confrontation with Nick. But the camaraderie of the team around Nick—human and Wesen alike—helps to keep the show grounded and gives it a sense of hope. Along with *Once Upon a Time*, this remains one of the most popular entries in the new breed of urban fantasy series'. Compiling all 22 episodes from the 2014-15 fourth season, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette, a set tour, deleted scenes, and highlight and gag reels (exclusive to the Blu-ray release is an interactive "*Grimm* Guide"). Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

### Happy Valley

★★★★

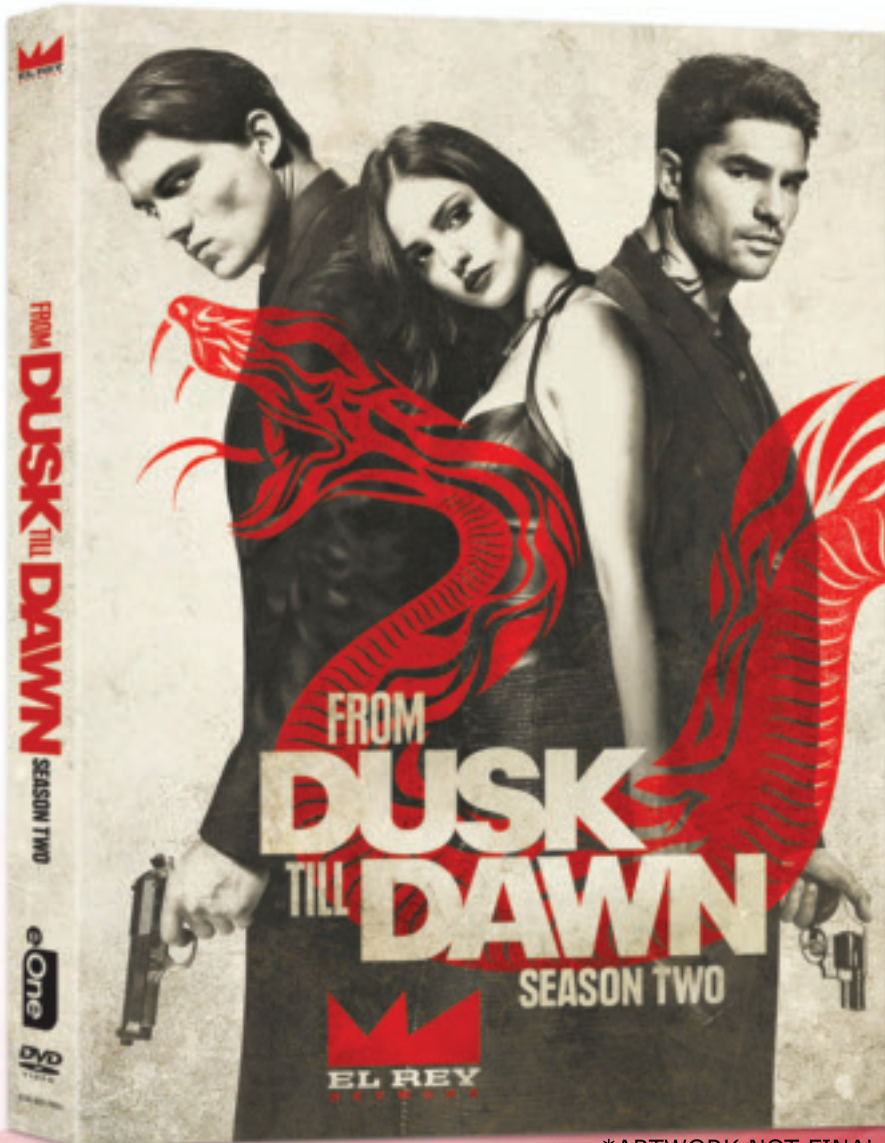
BBC, 2 discs, 352 min., not rated, DVD: \$34.98



Some American viewers might have discovered this fine BBC miniseries on Netflix, where it received well-deserved attention alongside the likes of other U.K. crime dramas such as *Broadchurch* and *The Fall*. The *Valley* in question lies in West Yorkshire, a working class region in the north of England dubbed "Happy" by the local constabulary due to the abundant use and trafficking of drugs. Police sergeant Catherine Cawood (Sarah Lancashire) is somewhat jaded as a crime fighter, following the trail of small-time criminals who manage to stumble into big-time trouble. *Happy Valley* starts with a half-baked kidnapping plot in a town full of long-simmering tensions where most everyone knows each others' business. An accountant's resentment, the money troubles of his boss,



# FEBRUARY NEW RELEASES



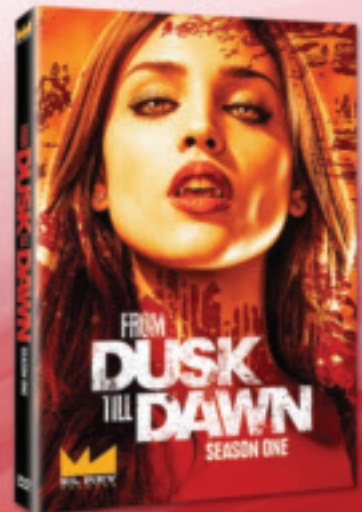
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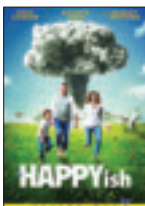
petty thievery by local drug dealers, and the tragic backstory of Catherine's dead daughter all come together in this suspenseful tale that builds to a feverish conclusion. Nicely blended in with the mystery and procedural elements are the real-life-type troubles that surface between families, friends, couples, and neighbors in a small town. Compiling all six episodes of the 2014 debut season, this is recommended. (T. Fry)

### HAPPYish: Season One

★★★

Paramount, 2 discs, 272 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.98

A problem with show creator Shalom Auslander's *HAPPYish* was that it made people kind of SADish, and



Showtime nixed a follow-up season of this caustic comedy about privileged social mores and first world angst. But it can be quite funny in its intriguing exploration of the modern middle-age gripes of depressed Thom Payne (Steve Coogan), a New York ad man with a suburban family and the ghosts of philosophers, writers, dictators, scientists, etc., riding his train of thought (each episode title refers to the names of historical figures mentioned in Coogan's offhanded and profane monologues). Coogan delivers the rants, tirades, and soliloquies in a dryly disdainful manner, peppered with vulgarity and constant swearing—sometimes to the point of the joke being lost in the middle-finger-wagging. Kathryn Hahn is fantastic as Payne's not quite so melancholic wife. The sad origin of the show casts another sort of depressing pall over the cleverness: Coogan was a replacement for a completed pilot starring the late Philip Seymour Hoffman. Still, there's a fair amount of intellectual stimulation and sharp wit here, and Coogan clearly enjoys delivering his drollisms with bitter charm. Compiling all 10 episodes from the 2015 single season, this is recommended. (T. Fry)

### Home Fires ★★★

PBS, 2 discs, 360 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.99, Blu-ray: \$49.99

Set in a rural village circa 1940, just as Britain is sending off its young (and sometimes not so young) men to fight in World War II, this PBS-aided *Masterpiece*-aired series is about life on the homefront, focusing on the women—from wives and mothers looking to fill their lonely days by contributing something to the war effort, to community leaders taking charge of the shift to a wartime society. Samantha Bond stars as Frances, who challenges Joyce (Francesca Annis), the elitist upper-class leader of the Women's Institute, transforming the organization from an exclusive social club into an open communal



society that is devoted to supporting the war effort in every way, from sending letters to the boys on the frontlines, to increasing food production, to creating an air raid shelter. The series, inspired by Julie Summers' book *Jambusters*, presents a large canvas of characters and issues, some of which feel familiar (a young woman working in the war office has an affair with a married officer), while others are less predictable, taking on themes of chauvinism and class division. Emphasizing how the communal effort overcame conflict to foster acceptance, understanding, and mutual respect, this is a handsomely-made series with convincing period detail and a fine cast. Compiling all six episodes from the 2015 first season, this is recommended. (S. Axmaker)

### Homeland: The Complete Fourth Season ★★★1/2

Fox, 584 min., not rated, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$49.99

The fourth season of this well-received Showtime series represents something of a reboot following the conclusion of the first three seasons' narrative arc centering on CIA intelligence officer Carrie Mathison (Claire Danes) and Nicholas Brody (Damian Lewis), a U.S. Marine long held as a prisoner of al-Qaeda, who was elected to Congress after being rescued but was suspected of being a terrorist tool. Mathison is now an agency station chief, first serving in Afghanistan and later in Pakistan, and the overall focus here is on her effort to kill or capture master terrorist Haissam Haqqani (Numan Acar). Working towards that end, she orders an air strike on his presumed location, but it miscarries terribly. Later, she recruits a young Pakistani named Aayan Ibrahim (Suraj Sharma), who is close to Haqqani, to provide information on the latter's whereabouts, but machinations within both the agency and Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence bureaucracy subvert her plans. In addition to Danes, Rupert Friend returns as sometimes reckless field agent Peter Quinn, as does Mandy Patinkin as Saul Berenson, former acting director of the CIA, who is now in the private security business. Once again combining action, suspense, and character complexity, *Homeland* continues to be one of cable's best dramas. Compiling all 12 episodes from the 2014 fourth season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes, character profiles, and deleted scenes. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)



### Indian Summers ★★★

PBS, 600 min., not rated, DVD: 4 discs, \$49.99; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$59.99

Viewers who have long hoped for a successor to *The Jewel in the Crown*—the acclaimed 1984 PBS miniseries set in the waning days of the British Raj—will appreciate *Indian*

*Summers*, which serves up a similar mix of romance, intrigue, and social commentary. The series is set in 1932 at an exclusive club at Simla in the foothills of the Himalayas—presided over by manipulative dowager Cynthia Coffin (Julie Walters)—where the British governing establishment and their hangers-on repair to escape the stifling summer heat. Characters and subplots abound—leading to a murder trial as the season progresses—but the focus here is on Ralph Whelan (Henry Lloyd-Hughes), the ambitious secretary to the English viceroy, who harbors a secret from his past that could destroy him both personally and politically, and Aafrin Dalal (Nikesh Patel), an Indian clerk whose family is involved in the independence movement, but who is also drawn deeper into Whelan's orbit (after Dalal foils an assassination attempt on Whelan). Both men's private lives also become more complicated as Whelan romances an American heiress (Olivia Grant) who he presumes is well-off, and Dalal becomes involved with Whelan's sister (Jemima West), newly returned to India with a baby and a secret of her own. While the soap-operatic elements of *Indian Summers* don't always comfortably fit with the series' vivid dramatization of colonial cruelties, the combination here of exquisite cinematography, focus on period detail, and strong acting easily make up for the occasionally overwrought plotting. Compiling all 10 episodes from the 2015 first season, extras include a behind-the-scenes documentary. Recommended. (F. Swietek)



### iZombie: The Complete First Season ★★★

Warner, 3 discs, 549 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.98

Developed by *Veronica Mars* creator Rob Thomas from a comic book, *iZombie* is an amusing mystery series starring Rose McIver as Olivia, a Seattle medical student who awakens after a disastrous yacht party to find that she is now a zombie. Unable to relate to friends and family, but determined to hang on to whatever humanity she has left, Olivia drops out of school, breaks up with her fiancé, and takes a job as a coroner's assistant so that she can have access to the one thing that sustains her: human brains. But devouring brain matter has a side-effect: it gives her access to the memories of the dead, who include murder victims, and she uses her insights to help a young police detective (Malcolm Goodwin) solve crimes (he thinks she's psychic). Eating brains also results in Olivia channeling the victim's personality and emotional life for a few days, which gives her something of a schizophrenic quality that is mostly played





for humor. The supernatural elements are essentially woven into real-world experiences and mystery conventions, making for a lighter tone and very different take on the zombie genre than is depicted in *The Walking Dead* and similar fare. In fact, one undead drug dealer character (David Anders) turns the whole zombie business into a money-making opportunity, selling brains like take-out to other zombies. *iZombie* features self-aware narration and a cheeky sensibility common to the youth-skewing CW network, where its mix of horror, mystery, young adult drama, and witty humor has found a welcome audience. Compiling all 13 episodes from the 2015 debut season, extras include a 2014 Comic-Con panel, and deleted scenes. Recommended. (S. *Axmaker*)

### Jane the Virgin: The Complete First Season

★★★

Warner, 5 discs, 929 min., not rated, DVD: \$49.99

Adapted from a Venezuelan telenovela, the bright, witty, self-aware *Jane the Virgin* turns a screwball situation into clever comic melodrama. Gina Rodriguez stars as the titular virgin, an aspiring writer and devout Catholic who is saving herself for marriage but ends up pregnant after her gynecologist artificially inseminates her with a sperm sample meant for another patient. To complicate matters, biological father Rafael (Justin Baldoni)—a reformed bad boy millionaire—is Jane's boss at the hotel where she waitresses. Jane once had a crush on Rafael, which is reignited after he divorces his scheming wife (Yael Grobglas) and Jane breaks up with her fiancé Michael (Brett Dier), a cop who is investigating Rafael as a possible drug kingpin. Meanwhile, Jane's fun-loving single mother (Andrea Navedo) reunites with Jane's father, a narcissistic telenovela star. As the narrator notes, "Jane's life was now the stuff of telenovelas," and the series makes good on that claim, with mobsters and identical twins, murders and affairs, and loads of secrets. Set in sunny, colorful Miami, this was one of TV's breakout hits for 2014-15. Compiling all 22 episodes, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes, deleted scenes, and a gag reel. Recommended. (S. *Axmaker*)



### The Last Man on Earth: The Complete First Season

★★★

Fox, 2 discs, 282 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.98

A familiar premise of post-apocalyptic cinema—a disaster kills all but a handful of human beings on Earth—forms the basis of this TV comedy created by *Saturday Night Live* veteran Will Forte (who also stars) along with Phil Lord and Christopher Miller (*The Lego Movie*). Forte plays Phil Miller (a play on the co-creators names), a self-absorbed jerk with little ambition and less motivation to rebuild the world, but boredom, loneliness, and desperation finally drive him to his hometown of Tucson, AZ, and he leaves behind signs for other survivors to meet him there. Kristen Schaal is Carol, an eccentric and somewhat neurotic woman who finds Phil in Tucson and pressures him to marry her before she will sleep with him (and begin their duty of repopulating the Earth). Phil has little interest in fatherhood but he is desperate for sex. In fact, lust is his major motivation, pushing him to more extreme behavior once more women arrive, as he plots to get rid of rival men, who naturally prove to be more resourceful, ambitious, and generous than self-centered Phil. The humor is built on Phil's selfishness, which borders on sociopathic behavior at its worst, and his pathological lying, which inevitably backfires. Phil wants respect; he just doesn't want to earn it. Forte is very funny in the role, maintaining an odd man out quality in the solid ensemble that forms around him in this Fox network hit show. Compiling all 13 episodes from the 2015 first season, extras include audio commentaries, behind-the-scenes featurettes, and deleted scenes. Recommended. (S. *Axmaker*)



Adapted from a Venezuelan telenovela, the bright, witty, self-aware *Jane the Virgin* turns a screwball situation into clever comic melodrama. Gina Rodriguez stars as the titular virgin, an aspiring writer and devout Catholic who is saving herself for marriage but ends up pregnant after her gynecologist artificially inseminates her with a sperm sample meant for another patient. To complicate matters, biological father Rafael (Justin Baldoni)—a reformed bad boy millionaire—is Jane's boss at the hotel where she waitresses. Jane once had a crush on Rafael, which is reignited after he divorces his scheming wife (Yael Grobglas) and Jane breaks up with her fiancé Michael (Brett Dier), a cop who is investigating Rafael as a possible drug kingpin. Meanwhile, Jane's fun-loving single mother (Andrea Navedo) reunites with Jane's father, a narcissistic telenovela star. As the narrator notes, "Jane's life was now the stuff of telenovelas," and the series makes good on that claim, with mobsters and identical twins, murders and affairs, and loads of secrets. Set in sunny, colorful Miami, this was one of TV's breakout hits for 2014-15. Compiling all 22 episodes, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes, deleted scenes, and a gag reel. Recommended. (S. *Axmaker*)

### Mad Men: The Final Season, Part 2

★★★1/2

Lionsgate, 352 min., not rated, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$39.98

AMC's signature series explored the changing culture of America in the 1960s through the perspective of employees at a Madison Avenue advertising company. The seventh and final season of the acclaimed series was split into two parts, with these last seven episodes from 2015 taking the show into the '70s and bringing closure to the characters as their firm is bought up and their freedom curtailed, a development that each deals with differently. Joan (Christina Hendricks) confronts the sexism of the new bosses directly, while Peggy (Elisabeth Moss) tries out a new attitude, and Don (Jon Hamm) simply drives off in search of himself. A critical darling from the start, *Mad Men* used the lens of the past to tackle issues of sex, race, social roles, sexual identity, marriage, parenthood, and disenchantment with the American Dream, and it here comes to a satisfying conclusion. And Hamm finally won a well-deserved Emmy for his defining performance as Don Draper, one of the most interesting characters on TV. Extras include audio commentaries, behind-the-scenes featurettes, and an interactive advertising timeline. Highly recommended. (S. *Axmaker*)



### Madam Secretary: Season 1

★★★

Paramount, 6 discs, 961 min., not rated, DVD: \$64.99

Elizabeth McCord (Téa Leoni), formerly with the CIA and currently a college professor, is not allowed to give "no" for an answer when her former mentor, now the President of the United States (Keith Carradine), taps her to be his new Secretary of State after the former office holder dies in a plane crash. "You don't think outside the box," he tells her. "You don't even know there is a box." During this auspicious first season, McCord must juggle global politics with White House office politics, not to mention those within her own family, which includes a husband (Tim Daly) and two children who feel neglected. The fine ensemble includes Bebe Neuwirth as McCord's chief of staff (who does not care for her new boss), and Zeljko Ivanek as the president's chief of staff, a career bureaucrat who resents McCord and is bent on undermining her. In addition to world crises—including two kidnapped American brothers who face execution in Syria—the show also layers in a conspiracy subplot involving the former Secretary of State's death. Was it an accident or murder? A colleague, who tells McCord that it's the latter, winds up dead. A worthy showcase for the criminally underutilized Leoni, *Madam Secretary* is a smart and witty show that feels like it takes place in the real (or at least recognizable) world. Compiling all 22 episodes from the 2014-15 debut season, extras include audio commentaries, a "making-of" featurette, a cast and crew Q&A panel discussion, and deleted scenes. Recommended. (D. *Liebenson*)



### McHale's Navy: The Complete Series

★★★1/2

Shout! Factory, 21 discs, 3,600 min., not rated, DVD: \$169.99

A service sitcom about a misfit PT boat crew in the South Pacific during World War II, *McHale's Navy* featured familiar comedy with a solid ensemble. Oscar-winner Ernest Borgnine is the fun-loving, big-hearted McHale, a former tramp steamer skipper commissioned as a Lt. Commander due to his knowledge of the islands and seaways. Tim Conway plays his lovable but incompetent executive officer, and Joe Flynn costars as the eternally exasperated Captain who hates how McHale flaunts rules despite his superb record fighting the Japanese (constantly referred to here as "Japs," which is accurate to the period but sounds offensive to modern ears). In the fourth and final season, the entire cast is relocated to a small Italian village to patrol the waters of the Mediterranean. Most of the episodes offer variations on the same theme: McHale's crew hatches some scheme or gets caught up in some activity that breaks Navy



rules and then must cover it up before the Captain catches them. Airing on ABC from 1962-66, the series was moderately popular and a syndication staple through the 1970s (giving it some nostalgia appeal), and it launched Conway's career. In addition to all 138 episodes from the four-season run, this boxed set includes the big screen movies *McHale's Navy* (1964), which plays like a feature-length episode revolving around a horse racing scheme, and *McHale's Navy Joins the Air Force* (1965), in which Borgnine is completely absent and Conway takes the lead. Extras include a cast and crew reunion featurette, and interviews. A strong optional purchase. (S. *Axmaker*)

### Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries: Series 3

★★★★

*Acorn*, 3 discs, 448 min., not rated, DVD: \$49.99



A distinctly Agatha Christie vibe is found in Kerry Greenwood's novels featuring Phryne Fisher, a glamorous, tart-tongued society woman in 1920s Melbourne who moonlights as a sharp-witted amateur detective. Boasting stylish period ambience, this solid Australian series continues with Fisher (Essie Davis) solving crimes with agreeable panache, while also enjoying romantic chemistry with Jack Robinson (Nathan Page), the police inspector she invariably outwits. The secondary characters—such as Fisher's assistant Dot (Ashleigh Cummings) and Constable Hugh Collins (Hugo Johnstone-Burt), who have likewise become a couple—are also well-drawn, and the cases remain not only clever but are set in a variety of intriguing locales (a magic show, an Italian restaurant, a tennis tournament, a scientific observatory). One episode even ventures into Dickensian territory, as Fisher investigates the deaths of several street urchins engaged in petty theft. As usual, Fisher's domestic affairs also receive some attention: Aunt Pru (Miriam Margolyes) unwisely opens her home to a psychiatrist specializing in the treatment of hysterical women in one episode, while several others feature Fisher's aristocratic father (Pip Miller), a genial old reprobate with a few secrets in his past. While previous seasons consisted of 13 episodes each, this 2015 third run only has eight (one hopes this isn't a sign that the consistently engaging series is coming to a close). Extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes, and a photo gallery. Recommended. (F. *Swietek*)

### Modern Family: The Complete Sixth Season

★★★★  
*Fox*, 3 discs, 556 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.98

The sixth season of this popular sitcom treads no fresh ground but it also hasn't lost

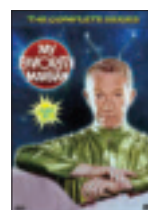
any of the smart sense of humor and affirming warmth that has come to define the series, which revolves around the extended family of patriarch Jay Pritchett (Ed O'Neill), father of Claire (Julie Bowen), a mother of three who is married to Phil Dunphy (Ty Burrell), and Mitchell (Jesse Tyler Ferguson), a gay man wed to Cameron (Eric Stonestreet) and father to adopted daughter Lily. Jay, meanwhile, is remarried to a younger woman, Gloria (Sofía Vergara), and is father to Manny (Rico Rodriguez), Gloria's son from a previous marriage, and to toddler Joe, an unexpected arrival who is younger than Jay's grandkids. The children are all growing up, which changes the character dynamics, but even the adults are evolving, especially Phil, who is still an overexcited nerd of a dad but has added a little wisdom to his impulsiveness. Haley (Sarah Hyland), the eldest Dunphy daughter, here turns 21 and takes a job while trying to figure out what she wants, and brainy middle sister Alex (Ariel Winter) looks at colleges as she prepares to graduate. The episodes revolve around young love, life decisions, birthdays, and celebrations (including the annual Halloween and Thanksgiving holiday shows), characteristically ending with a heartwarming reflection on family life. A five-time Emmy winner for Outstanding Comedy Series, *Modern Family* remains one of the highest-rated sitcoms on TV and one of the only shows that is built around the family in all of its modern diversity. Compiling all 21 episodes from the 2014-15 sixth season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes, and deleted scenes. Recommended. (S. *Axmaker*)



### My Favorite Martian: The Complete Series

★★★★1/2  
*MPI*, 15 discs, 3,000 min., not rated, DVD: \$99.98

*My Favorite Martian*, the 1960s sitcom about a shipwrecked space traveler (Ray Walston) who takes up residence in the Los Angeles bachelor apartment of Tim O'Hara (Bill Bixby), was launched in the era of *Sputnik* and early NASA, running for three seasons in a TV culture that also included *Bewitched* and *I Dream of Jeannie*. Tim, a newspaper reporter who sees the UFO land and rescues the wounded traveler, quickly gets over his culture shock, passing off the super-powered alien scientist as his Uncle Martin, a very distant relative. Martin can levitate objects (with the wave of a finger), read minds, talk to animals, turn invisible (with antennae that sprout from his head like TV aerials), and perform all sorts of tricks that fall more into the realm of magical fantasy than space science. The episodes mostly revolve around hiding Martin's secret



from dizzy landlady Lorelei (Pamela Britton) and—later—her nosy police detective boyfriend (Alan Hewitt), or Martin using his powers to right a wrong or help someone out. Nothing sophisticated here, just goofy gags and smart-aleck dialogue. Walston, a veteran of movies and Broadway, managed to remain composed and dignified while engaging in all sorts of absurdity, and Bixby (in his first starring role) proved to be likable and comically adept as the smart-talking, often sarcastic Tim. Today, it is mainly of nostalgic interest to Baby Boomers. Compiling all 107 episodes from 1963-66 (with the final season in color), extras include archival interviews, cast promo appearances, behind-the-scenes home movies, photo galleries, and pilots for two unmade shows. A strong optional purchase. (S. *Axmaker*)

### Nathan For You: Seasons One & Two

★★★★  
*Shout! Factory*, 2 discs, 340 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99



Canadian comic Nathan Fielder is an acquired taste. Some love the discomfort his humor triggers, while others cringe over his goofy shenanigans. The first two seasons of this Comedy Central hit serve up a bizarre assortment of encounters with real people in situations that bring awkward comedy to a new level. Fielder's concept is to put his college education to work creating bizarre marketing plans for small businesses just to see what happens. The outcomes are sometimes wildly unexpected, and all depend on a huge amount of social dissonance for their comedic reward. *Nathan For You* is a reality show that mocks reality, springing from Fielder's problems relating to people; in fact, it's amazing that he's gained so much success when he's clearly troubled by his inability to interact well. Two of the setups made real headlines before the show even aired: Fielder's "Dumb Starbucks" store in Los Angeles left the real Starbucks scratching its head, and the "Baby Pig Saves Baby Goat" video created for a petting zoo was a viral smash before being uncovered as a hoax. Fielder also crafts strategies for a funeral parlor, a dating website, a burger joint, an exterminator, and others, with wacky results. Fielder often comes off as condescending to his subject clients, but this is as much about him trying to confront his social anxieties. Fielder may be a jerk, but he's also a very smart and often very fun one. Just don't expect the absurd business plans to pay off for anyone but Fielder himself. Compiling all 16 episodes from the 2013-14 first and second seasons, extras include audio commentaries, extended sequences and deleted scenes, parody songs, and a press conference by Fielder. Recommended, overall. (T. *Fry*)

## Nurse Jackie: Season Seven ★★★

Lionsgate, 330 min., not rated, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$29.98



The bittersweetness of a farewell season hangs over this closing set of episodes starring Edie Falco as the titular charismatic, drug-addicted caregiver. Somehow, nurse Jackie Peyton—a reckless, passionate professional whose wanton drug abuse has driven this often funny, always moving drama—avoids serious jail time, following last season's disastrous attempt at fleeing the law. Jackie's nursing license is suspended and she mostly stays clean, maybe finally smartening up to the realization that this time she really might lose everything. Once again, Jackie is shackled up with Eddie the enabler (Paul Schulze), and on the outs with administrator Akalitus (Anna Deavere Smith), while her friendship with Zoey (Merritt Wever) hangs by a suture. But Jackie keeps on juggling lies, and her bold manipulation of people, places, and things becomes even more outrageous as she skates through a life that is clearly unmanageable. Mirroring the craziness, it sometimes feels here that the creative team is trying to jam in as much plot as possible, resulting in some logic gaps and time-compression idiosyncrasies. And the ending is as much of a cold-cock as that of *The Sopranos* (Falco's previous series)—decidedly ambiguous. All Saints' Hospital may be shuttered for good, but will pesky reality really be able to keep nurse Jackie down? That's the viewer's call. Presenting all 12 episodes from the 2015 seventh and final season, extras include audio commentaries, behind-the-scenes featurettes, deleted scenes, and a gag reel. Recommended. (T. Fry)

## Olympus: Season One ★1/2

Shout! Factory, 3 discs, 600 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$34.99



Another ancient Greek legend hits the small screen in this Syfy original fantasy series produced in Canada with a largely British cast. Tom York is our hero (named Hero), a young mercenary who seeks out the Oracle (Sonya Cassidy) in order to find his father, who turns out to be King Aegeus of Athens. *Olympus* begins with a promising situation—Hero wakes up in the cave of the Minotaur and does battle to rescue the Oracle—but the execution here is clumsy and bland. The remaining episodes follow the intertwined odysseys of Hero as he seeks to discover his legacy (he has inherited the gift of seeing the future from his father) and the Oracle, who has her own agenda. The pair cross paths with the inventor Daedalus (Matt Frewer), get tangled up in the Athenian war

with King Minos, and challenge the gods of Olympus, who treat humans as playthings. Created by Nick Willing, *Olympus* is mostly shot in a studio with CGI backdrops rather than costly sets, and it features bland actors in underwritten roles. In a TV landscape full of high quality supernatural and fantasy shows, this one fails to distinguish itself creatively, dramatically, or visually. Presenting all 13 episodes from the 2015 debut season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes. Not recommended. (S. Axmaker)

## Outlander: Season One, Volume Two ★★★1/2

Sony, 2 discs, 464 min., not rated, DVD: \$38.99, Blu-ray: \$45.99



The second half of the debut season of *Outlander*—a historical romantic time-travel fantasy based on the bestselling novel series by Diana Gabaldon—picks up on a cliffhanger as heroine Claire (Caitriona Balfe), a 20th-century British woman in 18th-century Scotland, finds herself at the mercy of brutal British soldier Black Jack Randall (Tobias Menzies), the cruel ancestor of Claire's gentle 20th-century husband, while Claire's young 18th-century spouse Jamie (Sam Heughan) arrives to the rescue. But this is not the kind of historical romance where damsels in distress are always saved by swashbuckling heroes. Claire is brave, smart, and bold, a woman who speaks her mind and acts upon her convictions, bringing her 20th-century knowledge of medicine and healing to people. Naturally, this makes her stand out, and even gets her branded as a witch and put on trial in one episode. When Jamie is captured by the British, Claire sets out to find him, returning his rescue favor by launching her own within a British prison. The Starz-aired *Outlander* boasts vivid characters, a rich sense of 18th-century culture, and stories that are full of adventure, romance, and political intrigue, while also featuring strong performances, excellent production values, and well-written scripts. Compiling all eight episodes from the 2015 second half of the debut season, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette, podcasts, and a gag reel (exclusive to the Blu-ray edition are an extended episode, a set tour with Gabaldon, a cast and crew table read, deleted scenes, and a booklet). Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

## Peaky Blinders ★★★1/2

BBC, 2 discs, 360 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$34.98



Set in North England's industrial city of Birmingham in the years after World War I, *Peaky Blinders* has been called Britain's answer to *Boardwalk Empire*. This TV gangster drama stars Cillian Murphy

as Thomas Shelby, who applies the lessons of warfare in an effort to evolve a crime family into a major criminal enterprise. Sam Neill costars as his nemesis, an inspector from Belfast who is brought in to clean up the corrupt and ineffectual police force, and stamp out the IRA presence in Birmingham. The series title comes from the name of Shelby's gang, so called because they sew razor blades into the peaks of their caps. Created and written by Steven Knight, this is a sharp, smart, and gritty show, a vividly realized period piece that is set in a volatile culture where the IRA and Communist union organizers are both targeted as terrorists; Italians and Gypsies fight to keep their piece of the underworld; and the cops are as thuggish as the crooks. The shadow of the Great War hangs over all: the friends and family lost, the women who ran things while the men were away and now aren't so quick to hand the reins back over, the victims of shellshock reliving the hell of war with every loud noise, and the disillusioned working class men who fought for their country but came back to poverty and hard times. And even though it is set close to a hundred years ago, the soundtrack is full of energetic modern rock songs from The White Stripes, Nick Cave, and others. Compiling all six episodes from the 2014 first season, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

## Penny Dreadful: The Complete Second Season ★★★1/2

Paramount, 3 discs, 544 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.98, Blu-ray: \$49.99



The second season of this acclaimed Showtime series—which places characters from iconic 19th-century British horror into a shadowy world of vampires, witches, demons, and dark magic in Victorian London—picks up where the first left off: American gunman Ethan (Josh Hartnett) has a beast within that he is unable to control, Victor Frankenstein (Harry Treadaway) keeps his promise to create a bride (Billie Piper) for his creature (Rory Kinnear), and the ageless Dorian Gray (Reeve Carney) reveals his dark side. But the primary story here revolves around a coven of witches led by cruel Madame Kali (Helen McCrory), who target the tormented but powers-gifted Vanessa (an intense Eva Green) with nightmares and visions, while Kali puts Vanessa's adoptive father, Sir Malcolm Murray (Timothy Dalton), under a spell. The team of supernatural warriors pull together to fight the witch threat, sharing a mutual devotion that is one of the strengths of this smartly-written show. Creator John Logan re-imagines iconic characters in dramatically new and creative ways, fashioning vivid personalities for these haunted, emotionally torn heroes. In a TV culture brimful of horror series, *Penny*

*Dreadful* remains the smartest, darkest, and richest. Compiling all 10 episodes from the 2015 second season, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette, video production blogs, an interview with Carney, and character profiles. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

### Reign: The Complete Second Season ★★★

Warner, 5 discs, 915 min., not rated, DVD: \$44.98



History definitely takes a backseat to soap opera in the second season of this CW-aired series set during the years that Mary Stuart of Scotland spent at the French court, first as fiancée and later as wife of King Francis II. The narrative arc takes up where the debut season ended, with a plague descending and Francis bringing his illegitimate child (and the mother) into his court, much to Mary's chagrin. But these represent only the beginning of the wild machinations that fill the season, which include assassinations and executions, political betrayals and attempted coups, constant friction between Protestants and Catholics, occasional resurgences of pagan practices, relationships that veer between passionate love and gruff dismissal, and miscarriages and rapes. Ghosts and portents also appear with alarming regularity, and one episode even finds Mary (and her manipulative mother-in-law) being taken captive by a conspirator who uses actors posing as her and Francis in order to cow the populace. This all adds up to a hilariously busy cacophony of errant nonsense, but Adelaide Kane and Toby Regbo make an almost impossibly handsome couple as Mary and Francis, sumptuously clothed in their characters' 16th-century finery, and the remaining cast members keep straight faces even as they recite ludicrously anachronistic dialogue. All in all, *Reign* continues to rule as campy fun, offering a genuine guilty pleasure. Compiling all 22 episodes from the 2014-15 second season, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette and deleted scenes. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

### The Returned ★★★

Lionsgate, 2 discs, 440 min., not rated, DVD: \$26.98



A&E has done a fine job of remaking the terrific 2012 French series about dead people resuming their place among the living. Far from being a gruesome horror thriller—no zombies here—*The Returned* is a brain-teasing psycho-philosophical drama packed with intriguing ideas, absorbing characters, and a rich, spooky atmosphere. The setting is transposed from a fantastical mountain community in the Gallic wilderness to the brooding gloom of the Pacific Northwest (the magnificent backdrop is filmed in northern

British Columbia), where random inhabitants of a small town who had died years or decades earlier gradually begin to reappear with no memory of their deaths. There's the lone high school girl (India Ennenga) who perished in a school bus tragedy; the nutty wife (Michelle Forbes) who returns to her husband 26 years later; the hunky boyfriend (Mat Vairo) whose arrival makes his grieving girlfriend (Mary Elizabeth Winstead) even more distraught; and the mute little boy (Dylan Kingwell) who may well be the key to the entire unnerving mystery. The show hews closely to the original French series (which has returned for a second season on SundanceTV), up to and including the cliffhanger finale that unfortunately will be dangling forever due to A&E's cancellation of the series. Nevertheless, this bewitchingly entertaining tale is well worth watching. Compiling all 10 episodes from the 2015 sole season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes. Recommended. (T. Fry)

### The Saint: Seasons 1 & 2

★★★1/2

Timeless, 10 discs, 1,911 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.98



Roger Moore stars as Simon Templar, the debonair modern Robin Hood from the popular novels by Leslie Charteris, in this 1960s British TV series. Templar, who was previously featured in a series of American movies starring George Sanders, was revived for this lighthearted show about a jet-setting adventurer and philanthropist who manages to become involved in a mystery pretty much everywhere he goes. The series launched in 1962, in the wake of the Cold War-influenced 007 movies and other TV shows like *The Avengers* and *Danger Man*, but Moore here is less secret agent than freelance private detective, drawn into the personal crises of people he meets (only some of which turn into international incidents). Moore plays host as well as star, speaking directly to the audience to set up each story, maintaining a degree of unflappable cool and cultured charm throughout (this could well have been his audition piece for his later role as James Bond). Viewers will spot familiar British faces throughout, but early episodes feature a few notable guests who are on their way to stardom, including Honor Blackman (*Goldfinger*), Oliver Reed, and Julie Christie. Produced in Britain by ITC, this set compiles all 39 episodes of the 1962-64 first and second seasons, with extras including audio commentaries. While hardly must-see TV, this will be a nostalgic treat for fans of classic TV. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

### Scorpion: Season One ★★★1/2

Paramount, 916 min., not rated, DVD: 6 discs, \$64.99, Blu-ray: 5 discs, \$76.99

A team of eccentric geniuses with poor

social skills and (often) self-defeating impulses is recruited by a Homeland Security agent to take on high-tech threats deemed beyond the capabilities of the department. Elyes Gabel stars as Walter O'Brien, a man with an IQ of 197 who has difficulty interacting with civilians. Walter has formed Scorpion with a group of fellow misfits: Toby (Eddie Kaye Thomas), a psychiatrist with a gambling addiction; Happy (Jadyn Wong), a mechanical engineer with a surly, aggressive personality; and Sylvester (Ari Stidham), a math genius with OCD and anxiety issues. The unlikely fifth member of the team is Paige (Katharine McPhee), a waitress and single mother whose 9-year-old son is a genius, although he has problems connecting and communicating with others. As the credit sequence explains, Paige helps the team to interact with the outside world while they help her son tap into his potential. Robert Patrick rounds out the cast as Agent Cabe Gallo, a kind of father figure who defends the group from a bureaucracy that can't relate to their unconventional manner and approach. The show combines high-tech missions with character humor and the group dynamics of a dysfunctional but loyal makeshift family. It feels like a gimmick—full of jargon, exaggerated character flaws, and sentimental storylines—but works at least partially thanks to the camaraderie of the ensemble. Compiling all 22 episodes from the 2014-15 debut season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes, deleted scenes, and a gag reel. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)



### The Secret Life of Marilyn Monroe ★★★

Lionsgate, 180 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.98



Granted, the critical bar is set pretty low for Lifetime bio-pics, but this Emmy-nominated miniseries adaptation of J. Randy Taraborrelli's bestseller is actually a prestige production, elevated by two solid performances from Kelli Garner as the doomed screen goddess and Susan Sarandon as her toxic, mentally unstable mother. Of course, there is not all that much secret about Monroe, who has been written about perhaps more than any other celebrity. The narrative here follows Monroe from her tumultuous childhood (taken from her mother and raised by a guardian) up through her teenage marriage, modeling career, and later transition to "the pictures," along with her high profile marriages to Joe DiMaggio (Jeffrey Dean Morgan) and Arthur Miller (Stephen Bogaert). Viewers are spared a portrayal of John F. Kennedy, but there is a recreation of Monroe's instantly iconic rendition of

"Happy Birthday" for the president. Monroe relates all of this and more (duplicious, manipulative studio bosses; the pills) to her psychologist (Jack Noseworthy). To her estimable credit, Garner, who portrays Marilyn from 16 to 36, embodies Monroe rather than impersonates her. "The camera loves you," she is told, and Garner nails that. For many, Monroe's life remains endlessly fascinating; this miniseries does her more justice than most. Recommended. (D. Liebenson)

### Sisters: Seasons One & Two ★★★1/2

Shout! Factory, 7 discs, 1,305 min., not rated, DVD: \$44.99



Creators Ron Cowen and Daniel Lipman's '90s NBC drama about the Reed sisters of Winnetka, IL, begins each episode with the ladies in a sauna reflecting on recent developments. In the pilot, Teddy (Sela Ward) returns to town with her teenage daughter, Cat (Heather McAdam), just as Teddy's widowed mother, Beatrice (Elizabeth Hoffman), is selling the family home. To Teddy's disappointment, her younger lawyer sister Frankie (Julianne Phillips) has been seeing Teddy's ex-husband, Mitch (Ed Marinaro), a seafood shop proprietor. Although the other Reed sisters—Alex (Swoosie Kurtz) and Georgie (Patricia Kalember)—are married, one will soon divorce. If the women deal with fairly conventional issues, the men are another matter. Alex's surgeon husband, Wade (David Dukes), likes to dress up in ladies' lingerie, and Georgie's unemployed husband, John (Garrett M. Brown), becomes a karaoke crooner and releases a CD. After their son falls critically ill, John finally puts his bathrobe away and rejoins the work force, although his fans continue to follow him around. Each episode toggles between pathos (flashbacks to the sisters' childhood) and quirky comedy, breaking the fourth wall by having the characters engage with their younger selves on a regular basis. There's even a musical sequence as Teddy gives door-to-door cosmetic sales a try, and a film noir nod when Alex suspects her insolent daughter, Reed (played by Ashley Judd beginning with the second season), of the same sort of sociopathic tendencies as the teenager in *Mildred Pierce*. *Sisters* would run on NBC for four more years, garnering an Emmy for Ward (among numerous nominations). Compiling all 29 episodes from the 1991-92 first and second seasons, extras include a multi-part interview with Cowen and Lipman. Highly recommended. (K. Fennessy)

### Sleepy Hollow: The Complete Second Season ★★★

Fox, 790 min., not rated, DVD: 5 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 4 discs, \$49.99

Fox had a surprise minor hit with the debut season of this energized, creative

reinvention of Washington Irving's tale about Ichabod Crane (Tom Mison) and the Headless Horseman, who are both brought to present day Sleepy Hollow as Ichabod teams up with police officer Abbie Mills (Nicole Beharie) to stop a coming apocalypse. The second season continues to weave supernatural mythology with real-life history and fanciful revision that re-imagines the Founding Fathers as Masonic brothers versed in magic and supernatural ritual (the better to battle the black magic of the British), while adding tragedy and romantic melodrama to the mix. Ichabod and his wife (Katia Winter), actually a witch working with Revolutionary forces, have to battle their son (John Noble), who has been recruited by the forces of darkness. The series continues to feature flashbacks with the Founding Fathers (and a Founding Mother)—including Timothy Busfield as Benjamin Franklin, Steven Weber as Thomas Jefferson, and Nikki Reed as Betsy Ross—who are portrayed in tongue-in-cheek fashion. While there is plenty of family fireworks, betrayal, forgiveness, and sacrifices, the dark drama is constantly leavened with a sense of humor and an inventive imagination, while the friendship between Ichabod and Abbie grounds the craziness. Compiling all 18 episodes from the 2014-15 second season, extras include audio commentaries, behind-the-scenes featurettes, deleted scenes, and a gag reel. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



### Tut ★★★

Paramount, 270 min., not rated, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.99; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$39.99



Spike TV's three-part 2015 miniseries is cut from roughly the same cloth/toga as *Rome* and *Spartacus: Blood and Sand*, serving up violent intrigues, palace sex, ancient power-plays, and a protagonist who kinda sorta represents "freedom," at least by comparison with others. In a liberal rewrite of history, Egypt's "Boy King" Tutankhamun (Avan Jogia) is here a youthful prince in a ruling dynasty that is endangered by internal rivals, plague, and a persistent foreign foe. Fierce—but not overly cruel—in battle, Tut is betrayed in combat and left for dead. But he survives incognito in enemy territory and returns to Egypt, taking power under the illusion of a divine "resurrection" (which, the script suggests, mirrors Christianity). Alas, this twist has left Tut surrounded by potentially disloyal types, including two wives—one of whom is his own scheming sister—and a wily Grand Vizier (Sir Ben Kingsley), who cautions the Boy King not to trust anyone, but may have his own self-serving agenda. Climaxing in an orgy of throat-slitting and bloodletting, this *Game of Thrones-*

lite period drama is mostly unremarkable. Extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes. Optional, at best. (C. Cassidy)

### Vicious: The Complete Second Season ★★★

PBS, 180 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.99



Alternately praised for the comic pairing of Derek Jacobi and Ian McKellen and criticized for presenting demeaning gay stereotypes, this PBS-aided British sitcom seems to have roughly equal numbers of admirers and detractors. But the public responded favorably, which led to this second season that—due to the stars' busy schedules—took two years to appear. Jacobi and McKellen continue to endlessly bicker as Stuart Bixby and Freddie Thornhill, respectively, who have been together for 50 years, but even though Freddie's tongue is as tart as ever, McKellen's delivery is a trifle less venomous, bringing a somewhat lighter tone to the titular nastiness between the pair. Frances de la Tour continues her scene-stealing ways as their flamboyant friend Violet, while Iwan Rheon proves to be a reliably likable lug as their dim-bulb neighbor Ash. This season spends more time outside of the duo's apartment—with sequences set at a gym and a ballroom dancing class, as well as a flashback featuring young versions of Freddie and Stuart—and it wraps with the pair finally planning to become the old married couple that they have effectively been for half a century. For all of its flaws, *Vicious* gives two distinguished icons of the British acting community the chance to go for broke, and they clearly enjoy doing so. Presenting all six episodes from the 2015 second season, extras include a "making-of" featurette, and cast and crew interviews. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

### The Full Johnny

#### Worricker: The Complete Series

(PBS, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.99; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$49.99). Starring Bill Nighy as ex-MI5 officer Johnny Worricker, David Hare's thrilling spy trilogy includes 2011's *Page Eight* (VL-1/12 ★★★1/2), and 2014's *Turks & Caicos* (VL Online-2/15) and *Salting the Battlefield*.



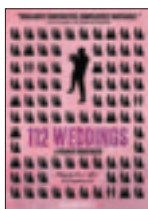
## Video Librarian Online

Visit Video Librarian Online ([www.videolibrarian.com](http://www.videolibrarian.com)) for more reviews during January and February, including: *American Horror Story: Freak Show*, *Ascension*, *Chasing Shadows*, *Chicago P.D.: Season Two*, *Harry*, *The Slap*, *Strike Back: Cinemax Season Three*, and much more!

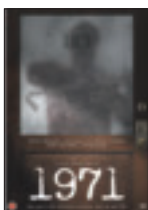


The following list, selected and compiled by Video Librarian staff, honors the best new documentaries reviewed in the magazine and online during 2015. Unless otherwise noted, titles are available from most distributors.

**112 Weddings** (Zeitgeist, 95 min., DVD: \$29.95). Director Doug Block speaks with couples whose weddings he filmed, who offer frank opinions on married life after the honeymoon. (VL-9/15)



**1971** (First Run, 80 min., DVD: \$24.95 [\$300 w/PPR from Big Mouth Productions, www.bigmouthproductions.com]). Filmmaker Johanna Hamilton's gripping documentary revisits a March 1971 break-in by activists at an FBI office in Media, PA, who found evidence of large scale illegal domestic spying. (VL-5/15)



**Banksy Does New York** (Kino Lorber, 80 min., DVD: \$19.95 [\$349 w/PPR from www.kinolorberedu.com]). Chris Moukarbel's documentary captures the social, cultural, and legal ramifications of a project by English graffiti artist and political activist Banksy, who visited New York City in October 2013 and unveiled one secret outdoor piece each day of the month. (VL-11/15)



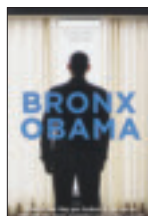
**Big Men** (Outcast Films [www.outcast-films.com], 99 min., DVD: \$29.99: individuals; \$295: institutions). Filmmaker Rachel Boynton chronicles the political and social upheaval created by the discovery of the "Jubilee" oil field in the African nation of Ghana, which brings Texas-based energy firm Kosmos in to develop the new resource, with promises that benefits will trickle down. (VL-11/15)



**Born to Fly: Elizabeth Streb vs. Gravity** (Kino Lorber, 82 min., DVD: \$29.95 [\$349 w/PPR from www.kinolorberedu.com]). Filmmaker Catherine Gund's documentary serves up an energetic portrait of NYC-based dancer-choreographer Elizabeth Streb, who has steadily pushed the boundaries of modern dance with her "Pop Action" fusion of dance, gymnastics, and machine-assisted kinetic stunts. (VL-7/15)



**Bronx Obama** (Passion River, 91 min., DVD: \$24.95 [\$249 w/PPR from edu.passionriver.com]). A film about a nobody who becomes a faux somebody, director Ryan Murdock's documentary follows Louis Ortiz, an underachieving single father whose resemblance to Barack Obama brought him notoriety during the 2008 presidential election. (VL-7/15)



**Citizenfour** (Anchor Bay, 113 min., R, DVD: \$22.98, Blu-ray: \$26.99). This Oscar-winning documentary captures director Laura Poitras and journalist Glenn Greenwald's remarkable encounters with whistleblower Edward Snowden in a Hong Kong hotel room, where he handed over classified documents that contained evidence of massive illegal invasions of privacy by the National Security Agency. (VL-9/15)



**Dinosaur 13** (Lionsgate, 100 min., DVD or Blu-ray: \$19.98). Director Todd Douglas Miller's intriguing documentary chronicles the real-life story of the discovery of the most complete *Tyrannosaurus rex* fossil—affectionately named "Sue"—followed by the legal controversy surrounding the government's subsequent seizure of the bones. (VL-5/15)



**Glen Campbell... I'll Be Me** (Virgil, 116 min., DVD: \$19.99). Directed by James Keach, this CNN-aired documentary captures country/pop superstar Glen Campbell and his family following his 2011 diagnosis with Alzheimer's disease, as the singer embarks on his "Goodbye Tour." (VL-9/15)



**The Green Prince** (Music Box, 101 min., in English & Hebrew w/English sub-

titles, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95). Filmmaker Nadav Schirman's documentary tells the amazing story of Mosab Hassan Yousef, a mole for Israeli security agency Shin Bet who also happens to be the son of Palestinian Hamas leader Sheikh Hassan Yousef. (VL-1/15)



**The Hunting Ground** (Anchor Bay, 102 min., DVD: \$22.98, Blu-ray: \$26.99 [\$395 w/PPR from Ro\*co Educational, www.rocoeducational.com]). Director Kirby Dick's harrowing documentary weaves together cinema vérité footage and first-person testimonies to offer a startling exposé of sexual assault on U.S. college campuses. (VL-9/15)



**The Internet's Own Boy: The Story of Aaron Swartz** (Kino Lorber, 105 min., DVD: \$24.95). Brian Knappenberger's documentary on Internet programming prodigy Aaron Swartz (1986-2013) tells the story of the tragic price that Swartz paid for his beliefs after he became obsessed with the issue of copyright vs. the public interest. (VL-3/15)



**The Jinx: The Life and Deaths of Robert Durst** (HBO, 270 min., DVD: 2 discs, \$19.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$24.98). Directed by Andrew Jarecki, this true crime documentary miniseries centers on Robert Durst, black sheep of a rich family, who was a suspect in the 1982 disappearance of his wife in New York, tied to a 2000 killing of a friend in California, and tried and acquitted for the 2001 murder of a neighbor in Texas. (VL-11/15)



**Last Days in Vietnam** (PBS, 120 min., DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99 [\$54.99 w/PPR from teacher.shop.pbs.org]). Rory Kennedy's Oscar-nominated documentary features interviews with Ford administration members and former U.S. servicemen who witnessed the chaotic end of America's military involvement in Vietnam while trying to save the lives of Vietnamese allies and friends. (VL-7/15)



**Life Itself** (Magnolia, 120 min., R, DVD: \$26.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98). Director Steve James's moving ode to celebrated Pulitzer Prize-win-



## BORN TO FLY: ELIZABETH STREB VS. GRAVITY

Elizabeth Streb and the STREB Extreme Action Company form a motley troupe of flyers and crashers. Propelled by Streb's edict that anything too safe is not action, these daredevils challenge the assumptions of art, aging, injury, gender, and human possibility. *Born to Fly: Elizabeth Streb vs. Gravity* traces the evolution of Elizabeth Streb's movement philosophy as she pushes herself and her performers from the ground to the sky. Revealing the passions behind the STREB dancers bruises and broken noses, *Born to Fly* offers a spectacular tale about the necessity of art, inspiring audiences hungry for a more tactile and fierce existence in the world.

**"Recommended. ★★★★★"**  
-Video Librarian

Without PPR \$149 • With PPR \$349 • DSL Streaming \$499 • Single-year streaming \$150



## THE INTERNET'S OWN BOY

Aaron Swartz was a programming prodigy who helped shape the digital landscape we all use today. He helped develop the internet protocol RSS and was a co-founder of Reddit. Chronicling his pioneering efforts crusading for open access and free speech and the resulting legal nightmare and tragedy that ensued, *The Internet's Own Boy* is a dynamic and moving portrait of a brilliant tech millionaire who renounced the values of Silicon Valley startup culture and used technology to tirelessly fight for social justice, no matter what the cost.

**"A provocative film about free speech in the Internet age, this is recommended. ★★★★★"**  
-Video Librarian

Without PPR \$149 • With PPR \$349 • DSL Streaming \$499 • Single-year streaming \$150



## STOP

Floyd vs. City of New York is the case that ended NYC's racially divisive Stop-And-Frisk policy, and *STOP* is the film that provides insider access to the people involved, blowing the lid off police denials of racial profiling. Directed by a filmmaker/attorney with close connections to the family involved, *STOP* provides a broader, historical civil-rights perspective on today's civil rights issues.

**"Arriving at a key moment when relations between law enforcement and minorities in America have reached a boiling point, STOP casts a bright light on one aspect of the turmoil. Recommended. ★★★★★"**

-Video Librarian

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## BANKSY DOES NEW YORK

On Oct. 1, 2013, the elusive British street artist known as Banksy launched a self-proclaimed month-long residency in New York City, posting one unique exhibit a day in an unannounced location, sparking a 31-day scavenger hunt both online and on the streets. Capturing this month of madness, *Banksy Does New York* incorporates user-generated content, from all kinds of social media sites for an exhilarating, detailed account of the uproar created by the mysterious artist.

**"Recommended. ★★★★★"**  
-Video Librarian

**"Moukarbel's whole premise is that the real art of Banksy's residency was in the way that New Yorkers interacted with the pieces..."**

-AV Club

Without PPR \$149 • With PPR \$349 • DSL Streaming \$499 • Single-year streaming \$150



## SEEDS OF TIME

The clock is ticking on one of the greatest potential disasters in the history of our species and one man leads a worldwide crusade to avert it. Crop diversity pioneer Cary Fowler travels the world, educating the public about the dire consequences of our inaction. The world's agriculture - and its fate - are dependent on the ability of plants to adapt to changes in climate, pests and disease - but today's crops around the globe are grown from human-engineered seeds and have lost nearly all their diversity and ability to naturally adapt. Could one massive infestation of fungus, blight or insects cause all the world's corn, wheat or lettuce to die? Is modern agriculture setting the stage for economic disaster, food riots, and global starvation? Dr. Fowler is the head of an international consortium to store seeds from every agricultural plant in the world. But is his farsighted program enough to save humanity from annihilation?

**"Recommended. ★★★★★"**  
-Video Librarian

Without PPR \$149 • With PPR \$349 • DSL Streaming \$499 • Single-year streaming \$150

ning film critic Roger Ebert (1942-2013) includes interviews with directors Martin Scorsese, Werner Herzog, and Errol Morris, along with critics A.O. Scott and Richard Corliss. (VL-3/15)



**Limited Partnership** (The Cinema Guild, 74 min., DVD: \$99.95; public libraries; \$395: colleges & universities). The recent Supreme Court ruling on same-sex marriage lends special poignancy to Thomas G. Miller's documentary centering on Richard Adams and Tony Sullivan, who in 1975 became one of the world's first legally married gay couples. (VL-9/15)



**Meru** (Music Box, 90 min., R, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95). Director/climber Jimmy Chin and his wife Elizabeth Chai Vasarhelyi's documentary chronicles a harrowing attempt to scale the titular Himalayan peak, combining observations by

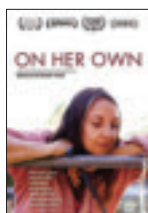


the climbers with insightful commentary from *Into Thin Air* author Jon Krakauer. (VL-11/15)

**A Murder in the Park** (MPI, 91 min., DVD: \$24.98). Filmmakers Shawn Rech and Brandon Kimber's investigative documentary explores a harrowing 1983 murder case in which a convicted killer on death row was exonerated and released thanks to the efforts of Northwestern University journalism students and their professor, David Protess, whose sloppy reinvestigation of the case wound up possibly freeing the real killer. (VL-11/15)



**On Her Own** (Passion River, 80 min., DVD: \$59.95 [\$250 w/PPR from edu.passionriver.com]). Charting four years in the life of fifth-generation rancher-farmer Nancy Prebilich, director Morgan Schmidt-Feng's documentary tells a haunting, tragic story about the fate of family farms in America today in the wake of the Great Recession. (VL-9/15)



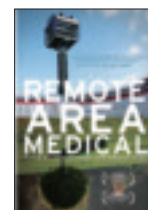
**Particle Fever** (PBS, 99 min., DVD: \$24.99 [\$295 w/PPR from Ro\*co Educational, www.rocoeducational.com]). Offering a joyous celebration of intellectual achievement, filmmaker Mark Levinson's documentary takes viewers on a behind-the-scenes tour of the biggest machine ever built: the Large Hadron Collider in Geneva. (VL-1/15)



**Red Army** (Sony, 85 min., DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99). Sports and politics meet in director Gabe Polsky's documentary centering on the titular powerhouse Soviet hockey team of the '80s—which won two Olympic gold medals and seven world championships before some members came to America and became U.S. stars. (VL-9/15)



**Remote Area Medical** (Cinedigm, 80 min., DVD: \$29.95). Directed by Jeff Reichert and Fariyah Zaman, this documentary about U.S. healthcare focuses on a three-day "pop-up" medical clinic offering free care to poor rural communities. (VL-5/15)



**The Seeds of Time** (Kino Lorber, 77 min., DVD: \$29.95 [\$349 w/PPR from kinolorberedu.com]). Filmmaker Sandy McLeod looks at the interesting efforts of individuals, organizations, and governments to create "seed banks" that preserve plant species around the world. (VL-7/15)



**Sex (Ed): The Movie** (First Run, 76 min., DVD: \$24.95). Director Brenda Goodman presents clips from sex education films to illustrate how Americans have learned about sex in this illuminating and frequently entertaining documentary. (VL-3/15)



**Stop** (Kino Lorber, 80 min., DVD: \$149 [\$349 w/PPR from kinolorberedu.com]). Director Spencer Wolff's timely documentary follows a class-action lawsuit challenging the legality of the NYPD's controversial "stop-and-frisk" policy, which unfairly targeted minorities. (VL-11/15)



"★★★½. Offering a powerful examination of the more corrosive effects of big capitalism on the global stage, this excellent documentary is highly recommended."  
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Ordering information for the titles reviewed in this section can be found in the "Distributor Addresses" listings at the back of the magazine.

★★★★ = Excellent

★★★ = Good

★★ = Fair

★ = Poor

PPR = Public Performance Rights

DRA = Digital Rights Available

Aud = Audience

K = Preschool-Kindergarten

E = Elementary (grades 1-3)

I = Intermediate (grades 4-6)

J = Jr. High (grades 7-8)

H = High School (grades 9-12)

C = Colleges & Universities

P = Public Libraries

## CHILDREN'S

### Barbie & Her Sisters in the Great Puppy Adventure ★★★

(2015) 76 min. DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$26.98. Universal Studios Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned.

Teen icon Barbie is back in this newest addition to the franchise—a more-rooted-in-reality family-focused entry (as opposed to the fairy tale/magical titles). Here, the Blonde One and little sisters Skipper, Stacie, and Chelsea head to Grandma's house, the old family homestead in Willows, WI. While the older girls have fond memories of the town, littlest Chelsea (who was only crib-age when the family migrated to Malibu) feels left out, until they come across an old treasure map that Grandpa used to be excited about and the girls decide to look for clues. A valuable cache would actually come in handy, seeing as how the town is in financial trouble and barely has enough money to put together the annual Willows Fest. Adding to the fun: Granny's dog Tiffany is a new mom with four puppies (the dogs match up with each girl, and follow along on the quest for riches). A predictably popular title with added cute animal spunkiness, this is recommended. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

### Cat Power! ★★★1/2

(2015) 40 min. DVD: \$9.99. TM Books & Video (avail. from most distributors). PPR. Closed captioned.

Offering a child's celebration of the Cat-

pillar company's numerous earth-moving, land-shaping vehicles, *Cat Power!* is both fun and informative, even for grownups who likely have no clue how engineers work to make these big machines more efficient and environmentally friendly. First, animated host Mike and his inquisitive pal Henry run through a menu of Cat equipment, beginning with bulldozers that are so nimble they can rest on a small surface, see-sawing up and down while still pushing aside boulders. After dozers leave surfaces at a "rough grade" level, big graders come in to smooth everything out for parking lots or airport runways. Excavators of all sorts are also in the spotlight, with the most interesting ones now using less diesel fuel while digging up twice as much volume. Loaders, too, have been updated, with ejector blades that push out contents. Featuring a chapter on real vs. toy Cat machines, as well as a "Cat rap," the program also includes an interesting section about Caterpillar's formation in 1925 and leap to diesel engines six years later. Sure to appeal to Cat fans—small and large—this is highly recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

### Nino Wrestles the World ★★★

(2015) 10 min. DVD: \$38.99. Dreamscape Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-63379-844-1.

Narrated by Adriana Sananes, this iconographic-animated adaptation of writer-illustrator Yuri Morales' 2013 picture book is set in the extreme and colorful world of "lucha libre" masked wrestling. *Nino Wrestles the World* finds the titular young boy imagining himself as a strongman—er, strongboy—with mad talents that allow him to take on competitors including a mummy, a "cabeza olmeca" that he bests with a skull-cracking move, "el extraterrestre" (foiled by marbles), and other colorful characters (with added old school Batman-styled exclamations like "POW!"). However, the tighty-whitie-clad youngster is not a match for a certain tag team of opponents: his bothersome hermani-

tas! Featuring a Spanish-themed soundtrack, extras include read-along subtitles and bonus segments on Nino's foes and the sport's popularity south of the border. Recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

### Once Upon a Sign: The New Stone Soup ★★★

(2015) 25 min. DVD: \$15.95. DawnSignPress. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-58121-260-0.

This entry in the titular series of children's tales performed in American Sign Language serves up a classic folk fable about travelers who create a strange soup. Featuring English voiceover and enthusiastic cast members mugging for the camera, *The New Stone Soup* follows three magician wanderers who travel with their wooden wagon in period garb to a town populated by folks dressed in 21st-century outfits. The villagers are impressed by the trio's dancing, acrobatic, and fire-breathing skills—but they don't really want to give food or money to the "hippies." Going door to door, the performers are discouraged that no one will pass the hat or feed them, but they put their heads together for another show in which the audience is encouraged to add ingredients to a special soup, taking a personal part in helping with the "magic." Wrapping up with the featured adults teaching signs such as "drum," "dance," and "eat," this adaptation joins previously released titles in the series including *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, *Little Red Riding Hood*, and *The Magic Mirror*. Recommended. Aud: E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

### Peanut Butter and Jellyfish ★★★

(2015) 8 min. DVD: \$59.95 (study guide included). Weston Woods Studios. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-0-545-85245-6.

Author and illustrator Jarrett J. Krosoczka uses brilliant acrylic colors to depict underwater neon sea creatures and plants in this fun animated tale—based on the 2014 picture book—that follows frolicking best



### Mumbet's Declaration of Independence ★★★

(2015) 16 min. DVD: \$38.99. Dreamscape Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-63379-598-3.

Narrated by Susie Berneis against a twangy soundtrack, this iconographic-animated adaptation of author Gretchen Woelfle and illustrator Alix Delinois's 2014 picture book employs realistic oil watercolors to tell the story of a slave named Mumbet, who lived in fear on the plantation of Col. John Ashley of Berkshire County, MA. Mumbet laments her lack of freedom (gazing longingly at a river) and is tormented by Mrs. Ashley (Mumbet has a nasty wound from a poker on her arm that doesn't heal well).

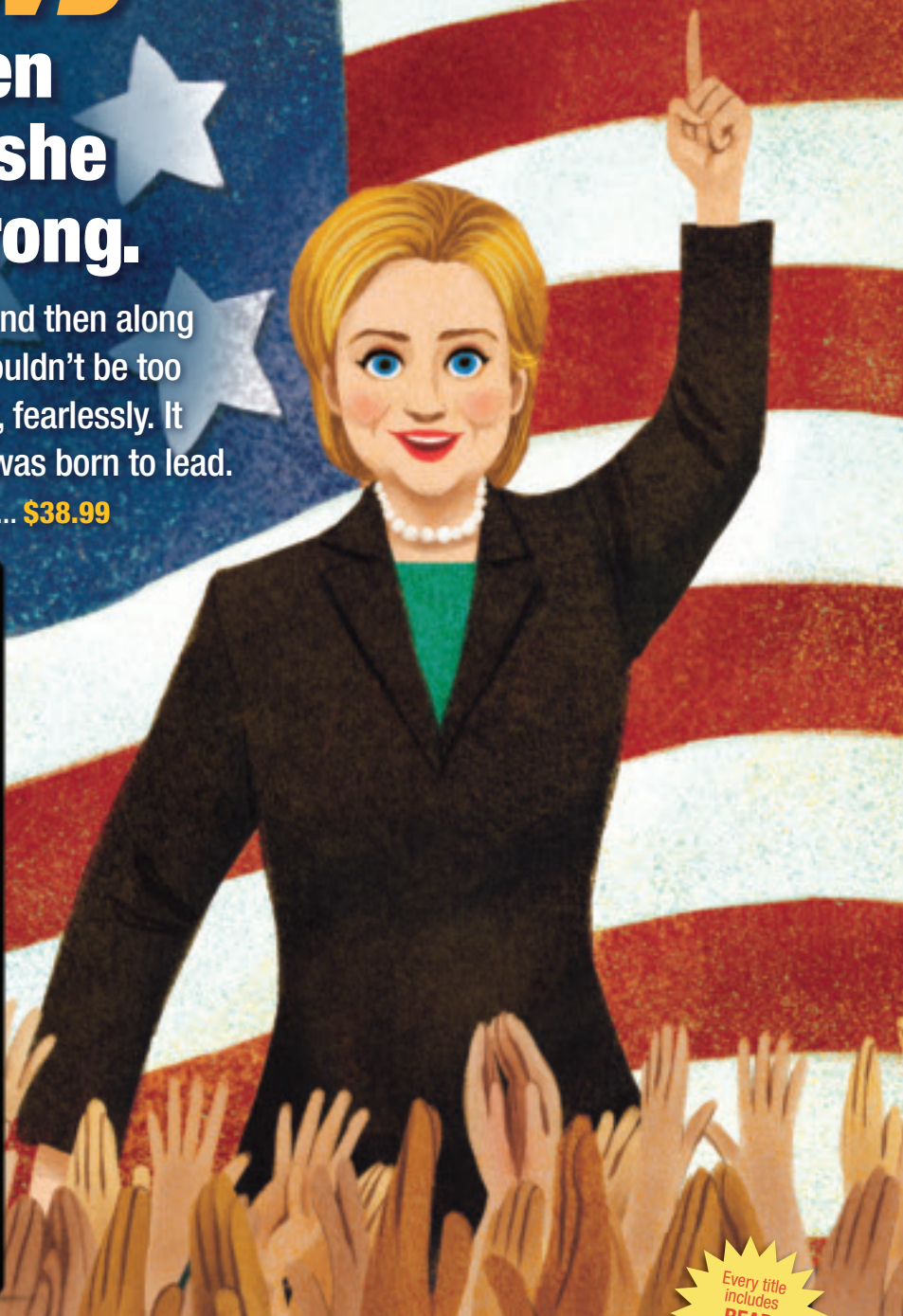
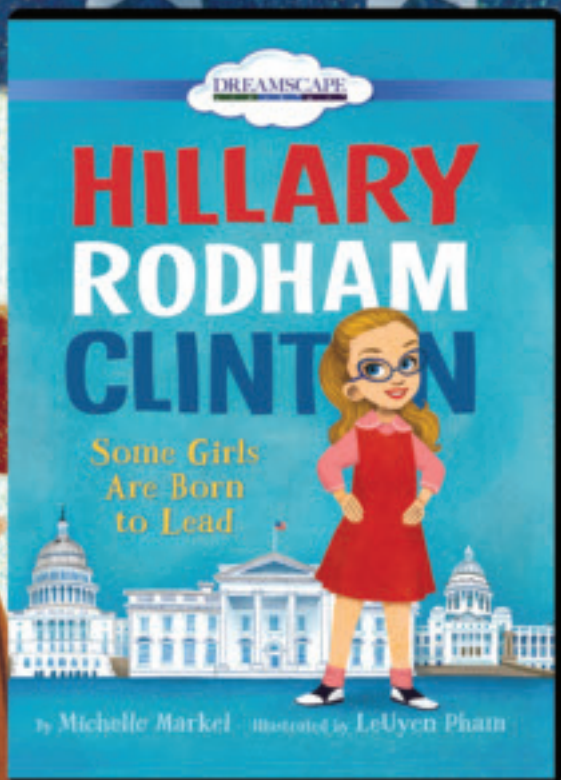
Mumbet sees a good opportunity for change when she manages to attend a political meeting and hears the words of lawyer Theodore Sedgewick, who is talked into helping Mumbet gain her autonomy. A bonus author's note on the real-life Elizabeth "Mumbet" Freeman and her 1781 court case underscore the fact that this was an important step in the burgeoning Abolitionist movement. Presented with read-along subtitles, this is recommended. Aud: E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

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### The Rocket's Red Glare ★★★★★

(2015) 19 min. DVD: \$38.99. Dreamscape Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-68141-614-4.

Sporting realistic colors, this iconographic-animated adaptation of author Peter Alderman and illustrator Bea Moritz's 2014 picture book features narration by Chris Lutkin and spirited, patriotic songs by Grammy nominee Jo Dee Messina. *The Rocket's Red Glare* tells the story behind the creation of America's national anthem "The Star-Spangled Banner." The War of 1812 saw the United States pitted against England after the British hindered American trade with Britain's enemy France. By 1814, the skirmish had traveled all the way to Chesapeake Bay, where travelers were being kidnapped from American ships. Sent to negotiate the release of prisoner Dr. William Beanes from a British vessel, Col. John Stuart Skinner and Baltimore lawyer Francis Scott Key were held captive themselves while the Brits fought the Battle of Baltimore, highlighted by the failed assault on Ft. McHenry's ramparts (or protective walls; other vocab words include "barrage" and "stanza"). In the light of dawn, Key saw that the flag still stood at the fort, inspiring him to write his famous lyrics, which were later put to music and—most assuredly a dig—set to the British pub song "To Anacreon in Heaven." Featuring brilliant colors depicting the battle, and sound effects that include sloshing ocean water and cannonball rounds, this stirring program—presented with read-along subtitles—is highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** Aud: E, P. (*J. Williams-Wood*)

buddies Peanut Butter the seahorse and Jellyfish (the jellyfish). Grouchy neighborhood bully Crabby is usually on hand to make smart remarks to the titular duo, charging them with crimes such as swimming "like humans," smelling "like rotten barnacles," and basically being "bubbleheads." Reasoning that "driftwood and seastones may break our bones," but taunting doesn't really hurt, PB and J do the right thing when they hear Crabby crying after being stuck in a lobster trap. Also featuring a "making-of" segment with Krosoczka, and a read-along option, this friendship-themed story is backed by the music of Scotty Huff and buoyant narration by Krosoczka himself (who adds a funny East Coast gruffness to illustrate Crabby's bad attitude). Recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (*J. Williams-Wood*)

### Super Sentai: Gosei Sentai Dairanger—The Complete Series ★★★★★

(1992) 10 discs. 996 min. In Japanese w/English subtitles. DVD: \$59.98. Shout! Factory (avail. from most distributors).

This 1992 Toei TV fantasy series featuring cool-for-its-day f/x and extensive fight scenes was the basis for U.S. producers Haim Saban and Shuki Levy's English-rewritten and reshot *Power Rangers* superhero franchise. The original is truly bizarre, with a group of color-coded "Ch'i Power" rangers—identified loosely with star systems—morphing into giant robots to fight the evil Gorma, who are a bunch of bad guys now bedeviling society after lying dormant for 6,000 years. Freaky villains include the in-line skating "Key Jester," plus "Funeral Figurine Ventriloquist," "Purse Monk," "Magnet Priest" (the clergy of several cultures seem to be models for monsters), and "Copy Empress," who is, of course, a walking female copy machine. Obscure Japanese

cultural references abound, such as lengthy parodies (or not) of "drunken" martial-arts fighting styles—here against an alcohol-dispensing, humanoid-ish square of tofu. Some of the imagery might be troubling for younger viewers—including scenes of child abuse/neglect, and the death of a Gorma boy villain who is killed and then retrieved from hell via a fishing reel—but this should still appeal to fans of *Power Ranger* and/or Japanese TV. Recommended. Aud: P. (*C. Cassidy*)

## PSYCHOLOGY & SELF-HELP

### (Dis)Honesty: The Truth About Lies

★★★★1/2

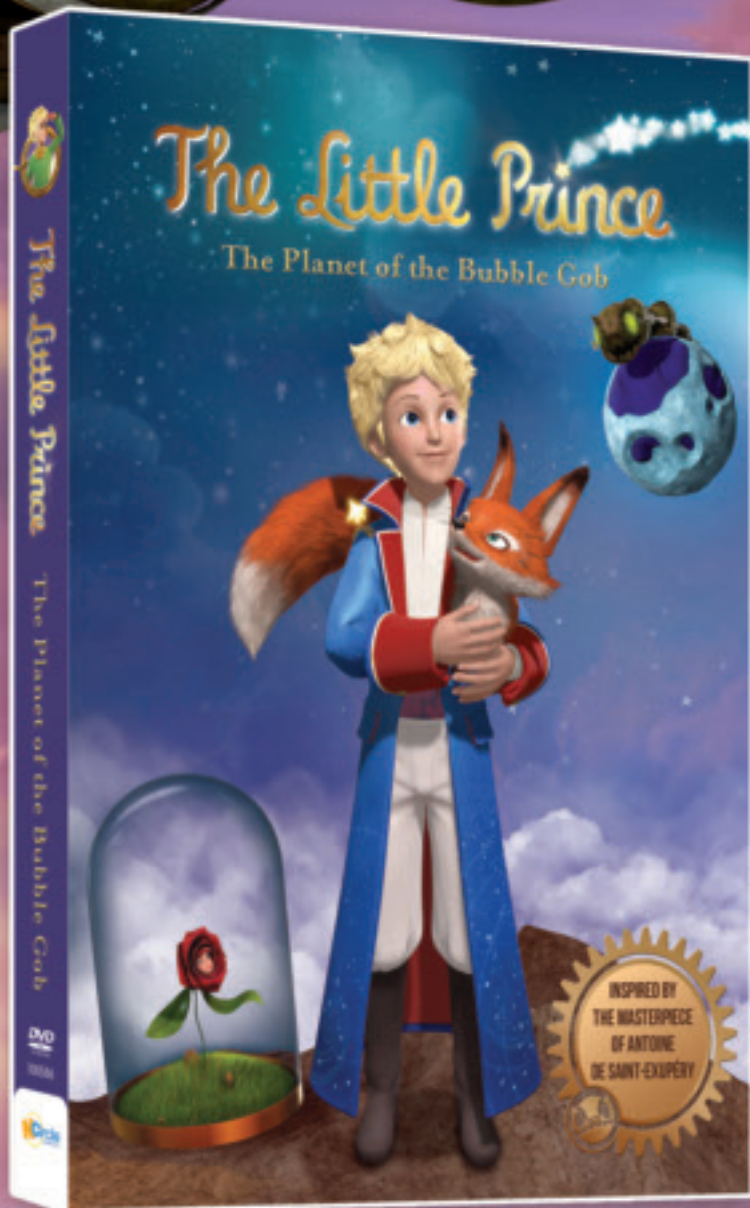
(2014) 89 min. DVD: \$24.99. Bond/360 (avail. from [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)).

Filmmaker Yael Melamede's fascinating documentary addresses the contemporary epidemic of public cheating and dishonesty, from adulterous spouses to doped-up pro athletes to Iraq-invading politicians to corporate crooks (political scorekeepers may chafe at the textbook-case omission of the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal). Academics and behaviorists—most prominently, Duke University scholar-author Dan Arieli—talk about various experiments and "behavioral economics" research undertaken regarding human deceit and rationalization, and their points are underscored with first-person narrative inserts featuring notorious unmasked liars (including two Wall Street insider traders, who were being sentenced as this was filmed). For every familiar charge (the first lie is the hardest; subsequent ones are easier), there are fresh revelations: cumulative sins of "small cheaters" hurt society more than the major crimes of big ones such as Bernie



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Madoff; bankers are statistically more dishonest than politicians; nations with stronger "social trust" (Scandinavia, specifically) are more successful than those harboring rampant suspicion (Africa, specifically). Extras include bonus interview clips with John McCain, Ashley Madison CEO Noel Biderman, and late documentarian Albert Maysles, as well as an atypical brochure insert—Etgar Keret's short story on the subject of falsehoods, "Lieland." Despite a somewhat perfunctory look at how lying and cheating are viewed outside of the USA (some attention is paid to India), this is a refreshingly systematic examination of an important behavioral subject. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

## RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

### A Courtship ★★1/2

(2015) 71 min. DVD: \$49.95 (\$250 w/PPR from *edu.passionriver.com*). *Passion River* (avail. from most distributors).

Amy Kohn's compelling documentary revolves around an extended Michigan family devoted to Christian courtship. To Ron Wright, secular dating that leads to marriage can just as easily result in divorce, so he advises courtship instead. This means no physical affection, including kissing, before marriage, as well as patriarchal control in all matters. When he isn't working as a snowplow dispatcher, Wright manages a website devoted to Christian courtship. Kelly Boggus, a 33-year-old dance teacher, has lived with the couple for seven years. Like Ron, she grew up in the South, and was devastated by her parents' divorce, even though her mother is now happily remarried. Kelly considers the Wrights her spiritual parents, and Ron screens potential husbands for her. Kohn, who spent a year documenting the process, found that the Wright daughters—Savannah and Annika, who receive homeschooling from their mother, Dawn—can't wait to get married. As Annika puts it, her first kiss will

be at the altar. The girls have no career aspirations, but fill scrapbooks with drawings of their future weddings. Like Kelly, they plan to live with their parents until they are wed. After Kelly meets Ross, who shares her belief in courtship, she invites him over in order to receive Ron's blessing, which leads to further meetings—but an unforeseen moral crisis lies ahead. Kelly is a quite sympathetic character, so it's hard not to want the best for her even if her anti-feminist approach to romance will surely discomfört many viewers, Christian and otherwise. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

### Jerusalem ★★1/2

(2013) 43 min. DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.98. MPI Home Video (avail. from most distributors).

Filmmaker Daniel Ferguson's spectacular-looking IMAX documentary *Jerusalem* offers a breathtaking armchair tourist experience, taking viewers to several fantastic ancient sites, while also—unfortunately—skirting ugly, present-day realities. Watching glorious footage of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem's Old City, one would never know that horrendous conflicts exist between Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Where *Jerusalem* does succeed, however, is in asking and answering large questions such as why the city is considered so important to several cultures and three major religions, and why some of the most sacred sites in the world are within such a small geographical area. Narrated by Benedict Cumberbatch, the film looks at family life and annual sacred rituals, along with making visits to the Western Wall, the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (where the euphoric Holy Fire ceremony is witnessed in the film's most dazzling scene). Extras include audio commentaries, crew interviews, behind-the-scenes featurettes, and deleted scenes. As much a film about hope for an ideal future of mutual understanding and tolerance as it is an appreciation of a city's past, this is a strong optional purchase. Aud: H, C, P. (T. Keogh)

### Jesus Town, USA ★★★

(2015) 79 min. DVD: \$59.95 (\$250 w/PPR from *edu.passionriver.com*). *Passion River* (avail. from most distributors).

While some viewers might understandably mistake filmmakers Billie Mintz and Julian T. Pinder's *Jesus Town USA* for a Christopher Guest-style mockumentary, it's actually the real deal: a documentary with some elements of absurdity but also quiet grace and redemption. The setting is a small town in Oklahoma where an outdoor Passion Play pageant has been staged for the past 88 years, sometimes to audiences numbering as many as 200,000. At the time of filming, crowds have grown smaller, yet the tradition continues. But then there's a crisis: the aging fellow who has portrayed Jesus for seven productions is stepping aside and a new actor must be cast. Enter Zack, an overweight man-child who lives with his girlfriend, has an overnight paper route, is something of a hoarder amidst clutter and filth, and...claims to be a closeted Buddhist. Zack's conflict over assuming the divine lead in the play challenges his sense of validation in the community and potentially puts him on a collision course with his director (a church pastor), castmates, and friends. What ultimately happens might challenge some audience assumptions about tolerance and understanding in America in this delightful, revealing film. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

### The Missions Collection ★★★

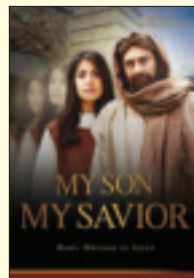
(2014) 106 min. DVD: \$14.99. *Gospel Films Archive* (dist. by Vision Video).

The latest Gospel Films Archive release of vintage short films with Christian themes presents four shorts about missionary work in the 20th century. The first three, hailing from 1960-61, are all directed by Jan Sadlo, although aside from the blending of archival and original footage each is quite different. "Africa and Schweitzer" looks at the dedicated work of Dr. Albert Schweitzer in Africa's Congo, where voodoo was predominant until Schweitzer established medical clinics, schools, and churches. Most interesting is the haunting, mysterious, black-and-white footage that was shot by Sven Nykvist, renowned cinematographer for Ingmar Bergman. "A Christian in Communist China" tells the story of a Christian pastor leading clandestine services in a Chinese village, who was arrested, tortured, and left for dead. Eventually given the opportunity to flee for Hong Kong, the holy man does, but on the way he reflects on what Christ would have done. "No Greater Love" is built around a filmed lecture extolling the virtues of American dentists volunteering their services in Africa, with an engaging wraparound story involving a gung-ho dentist who has to convince his reluctant wife to participate. Finally, "Wings to the Word" (1951) is a narrated docudrama about a minister named Rodger

### My Son, My Savior ★★★

(2015) 43 min. DVD: \$14.99. Vision Video.

Offering an overview of the life of Jesus as seen through the eyes of his mother, Mary, filmmaker Steve Boettcher's *My Son, My Savior* begins with a teenage Mary asking her father to explain the meaning of Passover and its link to the prophecy of a coming Messiah. Not long after, Mary is visited by the angel who tells her that she will bring Jesus into the world. In snapshot fashion, subsequent dramatic scenes cover the major chapters in Jesus' life: birth and subsequent flight from Herod, teachings as a boy and early miracles as a young man, and denouncement by authorities, followed by the Crucifixion and Resurrection from the grave. Throughout, Mary's efforts to understand her son's destiny give this familiar story a fresh angle, while the handsome production values add texture and a sense of historical accuracy. Recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)



Perkins, who was able to greatly speed up his work in visiting remote villages in the Brazilian mountains through the use of a flimsy-looking plane. Another solid entry in an interesting archival series, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

## SOCIAL & POLITICAL ISSUES

### Barefoot in the Kitchen ★★★

(2014) 86 min. In Spanish w/English subtitles. DVD: \$89; high schools & public libraries; \$350; colleges & universities. PRAGDA. PPR.

Critic-turned-filmmaker Diego Galán tracks the representation of women in Spanish cinema in this lively overview that eschews interviews in favor of narration and clips from some 180 films (which all receive on-screen identification). *Barefoot in the Kitchen* opens with a look at the 1930s, when Spanish women enjoyed greater autonomy than women in most other Catholic countries (abortion was even legal in some regions). In the melodramas of the time, however, women who engaged in premarital sex or bore children out of wedlock tended to meet with unhappy ends—although they were able to assert their sexuality in comedies without suffering any ill effects. After Franco came to power, women took several steps back. In the 1950s, females could appear as heroic historical figures—sometimes alongside men, sometimes on their own—but in modern-day films, they could only work or attend college until they found a husband (particularly in Technicolor musicals). While women were expected to marry, men were free to resist the call of matrimony and even to denounce women altogether. As one well-dressed gentleman in *La Violetera* (1958) says, “Women who know a lot bore me. Beauty’s the only intelligence I recognize in women.” Single women (not counting nuns) invariably were portrayed as either ridiculously comic or terribly tragic. By the 1970s, with Spain becoming a popular tourist destination, the censors loosened their grip, and bikinis soon gave way to nudity. After Franco’s death and Spain’s shift to democracy, directors such as Pedro Almodóvar arrived to give women their due. An informative documentary that will appeal to students of film, women’s studies, and Spanish history, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

### Daughters of Mother India ★★★1/2

(2014) 45 min. DVD: \$300. DRA. Film Platform (avail. from [www.filmplatform.net](http://www.filmplatform.net)). PPR.

Filmmaker Vibha Bakshi’s powerful documentary examines the aftermath of the 2012 rape and murder of 23-year-old Jyoti Singh Pandey (aka Nirbhaya) in Delhi. Indian journalist Bakshi recounts the horrific details of the attack, before interviewing activists, educators, students, Delhi police,

and people on the street to gauge the impact of the outraged protests across India that followed Nirbhaya’s death. The shock of this brutal attack occurring in the middle of Delhi brought heightened attention to the misogyny and violence suffered by Indian women, resulting in crowds of angry citizens filling the streets. Three months later, anti-rape law recommendations that had been “pending” for years were finally passed; fast-track courts were set up to quickly prosecute cases of sexual violence; and police who failed to record complaints of gender-based crimes were held criminally accountable. Public awareness also led to a sharp increase in reported cases of domestic violence. Sociologist Dipankar Gupta offers insightful background commentary here on deep-rooted cultural attitudes towards women, virginity, and rape in Indian society. Bakshi also reports on efforts to educate schoolchildren about “good touch, bad touch,” and sensitize police forces to gender issues, and he visits a Delhi street theater troupe whose performances raise awareness of sexual violence. Providing an inspiring look at initiatives meant to counteract longstanding attitudes within Indian culture that are dangerous to women, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (M. Puffer-Rothenberg)

### How to Run for Political Office ★★★1/2

(2015) 63 min. DVD: \$64.95. DRA. TMW Media Group. PPR.

New Jersey high school teacher and filmmaker Dean Greco decided in 2008 to run for Congress, representing his district in the independent “Breakfast Party.” While that might sound like a frivolous bid, Greco’s long-term ambition was to be able to tell his students and the world what the process was like. Greco quickly discovered that it was easy for any American citizen to try to get on the ballot, but everything that followed turned out to be quite challenging. After meeting the basic requirements of age and residency in New Jersey, Greco must get the minimum number of signatures required to be on the ballot—a hard-won achievement. Along the way, every conversation that the potential candidate has with a voter offers an opportunity to listen and absorb, while also being able to articulate and clarify views. The process of forging oneself into a viable politician carries over into every other phase of the campaign, from raising and spending money, to public speaking, to seeking endorsements. Not surprisingly, Greco finds that the two dominant parties, Republicans and Democrats, will do anything to scuttle a third party’s chances. But he also learns that staking out positions on smaller issues is good practice for preparing to address more serious ones as part of a platform. Ultimately, Greco loses (he garners a few thousand votes), but he does end up having a certain authority on the subject that he is able to bring back to his

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### Little White Lie ★★★1/2

(2015) 65 min. DVD: \$59.95 (\$350 w/PPR from [edu.passionriver.com](http://edu.passionriver.com)). Passion River (avail. from most distributors).

Filmmaker Lacey Schwartz was raised by white Jewish parents in Woodstock, NY, who claimed she resembled a dark-skinned Jewish ancestor. As a college freshman, Schwartz learned that her biological father was an African-American man (her mother had an affair). Schwartz talks about the impact of this denial on her childhood self-image, even as her mother's silence ensured that no one in her extended family would publicly question her parentage. In high school, she was confronted by African-American girls whose confusion matched her own: "I wasn't *trying* to be white; I was white." Not until Schwartz entered college—admitted as a black student based on the photograph submitted with her application—did she identify as black and learn how other black students experienced race in ways that she never had. Schwartz confronted her mother, now divorced from her dad, who admitted to the affair with an African-American man whom Schwartz had known all her life. Schwartz spent years recording her efforts to figure out who she was and why, keeping her white and black worlds separate throughout her 20s. She speaks directly to the camera and talks with friends and family who struggle to explain how they either failed to understand, or ignored, the obvious. With college friends, Schwartz discusses why she identifies as black despite being half white. Schwartz is a compelling on-camera presence and she has made a remarkably honest film about her quest to come to terms with her racial identity. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (M. Puffer-Rothenberg)



classroom. Offering interesting insights into the American political system, this is highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (T. Keogh)

### Nine to Ninety ★★★

(2013) 29 min. DVD: \$49: public libraries; \$149: community colleges; \$199: colleges & universities. New Day Films. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-57448-409-0.

Filmmaker Alicia Dwyer's heartbreaking, fly-on-the-wall documentary deals with familiar issues for extended families with elderly parents in need of full-time attention. Phyllis and Joe, married over 60 years and now in their late 80s, are living with the families of their grown daughters. Due to increasing medical problems—Joe is suddenly in need of dialysis three times a week—some hard choices have to be made. While Phyllis and Joe's children and grandchildren evaluate and negotiate who is going to take care of whom and what, Phyllis suddenly decides that she has had enough. Ruling out a group home, she chooses to move back East and share the burden of care with others, meaning that her and Joe will be separated—most likely for the rest of their lives—but she can't be talked out of it. Meanwhile, Joe becomes increasingly passive, accepting his spouse's choice and saying, "I love her, and I'll go on loving her." The relative question of what is "right" in this scenario is sure to spark discussion. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

### Nowhere to Call Home: A Tibetan in Beijing ★★★1/2

(2015) 84 min. DVD: \$29: individuals; \$129: high schools; \$299: colleges & universities. *Stories That Matter* (avail. from [www.tibetaninbeijing.com](http://www.tibetaninbeijing.com)). PPR.

Jocelyn Ford's excellent documentary

offers a different perspective on the fate of Tibetans under Chinese rule. Ford, a Beijing-based reporter and filmmaker, focuses on Zanta, a Tibetan widow who fled her remote village for the capital in order to secure an education for her son. But Beijing proves inhospitable: ordinary Chinese look down on Tibetans as foreigners, refusing to rent to them, and Zanta can only eke out a living by selling jewelry near a subway line, where she is often hassled by police. Zanta's son, meanwhile, not only suffers from sleep deprivation due to his mother's work schedule, but also faces discrimination in school. Ford befriends Zanta, helping her to secure a place to live, along with entrance for the boy into a cheap (but ultimately unsatisfactory) private school. She also accompanies the pair on a visit to their hometown, where she observes firsthand the power that some families wield over others (largely because they have strapping sons). Here, Zanta tries to come to terms with her father-in-law, who is holding mother and son's identity cards as a way of controlling them. Although the outcome of the familial negotiation is somewhat positive, one senses as the travelers begin the trek back to Beijing that there is little hope their circumstances will significantly improve. *Nowhere to Call Home* offers a telling view of life's realities for Tibetans living in China. A startling and affecting film, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

### Overburden ★★★1/2

(2015) 65 min. DVD: \$50 (\$125 w/PPR): public libraries; \$295 w/PPR: colleges & universities. DRA. *Collective Eye*. Closed captioned.

Assessing the ruinous legacy of dangerous

coal mining in West Virginia, filmmaker Chad Stevens' *Overburden* chronicles the efforts of grassroots activists to salvage their state from the even more drastic and devastating "mountaintop removal" method of coal extraction. Miner's widow Betty Harrah joins a push to spare endangered mountains, championing the alternative of sustainable, wind-driven electrical turbine arrays (with the ultimate aim of weaning the state off the dwindling coal production that still serves as the territory's economic basis and main employer). Lorelei Scarboro, whose family also relies on mining earnings, is initially on the pro-coal side, but tragedy makes allies of the women. The drive is to publicly expose powerful coal corporation Massey Energy and its CEO Don Blankenship, who is accused of ignoring safety for profit (Blankenship was convicted in early December 2015 of conspiring to violate mine safety rules in a 2010 WV disaster that resulted in the death of 29 miners). Telling a powerful story that will remind some viewers of Barbara Kopple's Oscar-winning 1976 documentary *Harlan County U.S.A.*, this fine film mixes gripping personal stories with a look at a larger socioeconomic issue. Extras include bonus featurettes on mountaintop removal, and a music video meditation on the beauty of West Virginia's imperiled mountains. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

### Radical Evil ★★★1/2

(2013) 93 min. In German & English w/English subtitles. DVD: \$300. DRA. Film Platform (avail. from [www.filmplatform.net](http://www.filmplatform.net)). PPR.

Commercially popular German director Stefan Ruzowitzky's gripping Holocaust documentary combines freshly rediscovered archival footage (in startling full color) with dramatic re-enactments depicting doomed Jews and young Wehrmacht soldiers during the Nazi era, together with recitations (in English) of official documents, letters, and testimony. The film skillfully poses the question of how ordinary decent people could commit the atrocities of the Final Solution—especially outside of the factory death camps, where Third Reich troops executed hundreds of victims face-to-face. Drawing on comments from modern authors (Robert Jay Lifton, Dave Grossman etc.) and Nuremberg lawyer Benjamin Ferencz, along with classic psychological experiments, the documentary describes how basic human pathologies of conformity, persuasion, propaganda, desensitization, and deferred responsibility led to "radical evil" (a phrase borrowed from Kant). What is most disquieting here is the suggestion that this wasn't some malicious sorcery unique to Hitler and European anti-Semitism, but could happen in other societies as well. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)



### Single Stream ★★★

(2014) 25 min. DVD: \$99.95; public libraries & high schools; \$250: colleges & universities. The Cinema Guild. PPR. ISBN: 0-7815-1491-6.

This wordless documentary by Pawel Wojtasik, Toby Lee, and Ernst Karel serves up an immersive audio-visual experience highlighting the operation of the massive Casella materials recovery facility in Charlestown, MA. In the "single stream" or "zero-sort" model, various types of recyclable refuse—cans, bottles, paper—are not pre-separated, but instead arrive at the plant commingled, after which they are divided up for processing on site. The film shows massive amounts of material being trucked in and dumped onto a seemingly endless loop of conveyer belts, as workers separate items into proper piles, which are in turn crushed into clumps and piled atop one another, creating virtual tunnels that the employees will go through on their way home. The documentary's sound acts as a carefully modulated complement to the visuals, with the constant hum and grinding of machines and the murmuring of the workers combining to form a kind of symphony of waste disposal. *Single Stream* wonderfully captures the ambience of the huge recycling facility, while also inviting viewers to reflect on the nature of our consumer society. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

### UnSlut ★★★

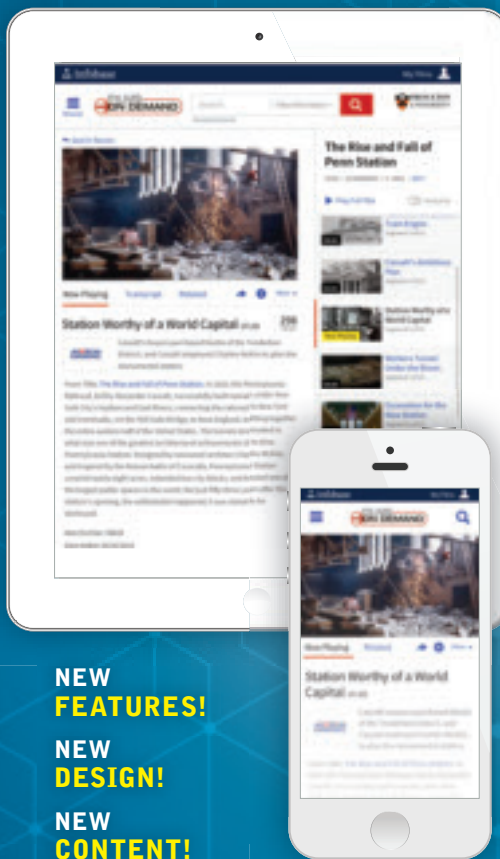
(2015) 39 min. DVD: \$200; public libraries; \$350: colleges & universities. Tugg (avail. from <http://licenses.tugg.com>). DRA. PPR.

Emily Lindin's *UnSlut* takes on slut-shaming in the Internet era, when it's easier than ever to spread lies and share incriminating photos with the click of a button. Like the women she profiles, Lindin faced bullying in middle school and considered suicide, but over time she gained back her self-esteem. As an adult, she was saddened to see how many teenage girls gave in to suicidal impulses as a result of the same sort of slut-shaming that she experienced, so she founded the UnSlut Project. Lindin shared her experience online, along with recollections from other women, in order to combat feelings of isolation and hopelessness. *UnSlut* features interviews with victims, family members, and experts in the field of human sexuality. Allyson, who lives in New Jersey, recalls that an ex-boyfriend distributed a nude photo of her to their entire school. Although Allyson worked her way past the humiliation, Rehtaeh, who grew up in Nova Scotia, did not. The latter's friends and relatives here recount a trajectory that began with a sexual assault and ended in suicide. To add insult to injury, the slut-shaming continued even after Rehtaeh's death, with offensive social media posts. *UnSlut* features an unusual array of speakers, all with something useful to add, including Melissa Jones, a Mormon sexologist; Samantha Gailey Geimer, the victim in the Roman Polanski

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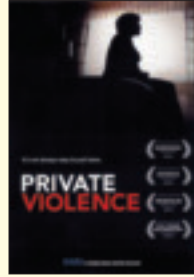
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### Private Violence ★★★

(2014) 77 min. DVD: \$89: public libraries; \$395: colleges & universities. Women Make Movies. PPR.

North Carolina domestic violence victim advocate Kit Gruelle talks about her life and career in this illuminating HBO-produced documentary from filmmaker Cynthia Hill. During a radio interview, Gruelle tells the host that she would like to see earlier protections for battered women implemented, because authorities often don't spring into action until after women have been hurt. Along with concern and dedication, she offers her clients empathy; her own husband was abusive and controlling and only his death brought that chapter of her life to a close. Here, Gruelle meets with a few women, including Candy, who moved to a women's shelter for protection from her husband, and Regina, the sister of a woman who killed her spouse in self-defense (his abuse left her blind in one eye). *Private Violence* concentrates primarily on Gruelle's dealings with Deanna, who left her trucker husband, Robbie, after he kidnapped her and beat her for four days en route to California. Their daughter had to witness the entire ordeal, and Deanna later suffered from seizures. Deanna believes that Robbie might have killed her if friends hadn't contacted the trucking company, which then alerted the Oklahoma Police Department. With their help, she was able to receive medical attention, return to North Carolina, and file charges. Due in part to the fact that the abuse crossed state lines, the trial went on to federal court. While Deanna was ultimately able to get justice, Hill offers a clear picture of the reasons why many women don't. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)



techniques with pushy parents, and making an example of the bully (well-publicized punishment as a strong deterrent). Also including weblinks for further info, as well as tips for being proactive about bullying online, this is a very helpful primer. Also including *Bully Proof Your Teen: Strategies for Parents* and *Anti-Bullying Scenarios: Play-By-Play*, this series is highly recommended. Aud: J, H, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

### Social Media Manners ★★★1/2

(2015) 20 min. DVD: \$79.95 (downloadable teacher's guide available). Learning ZoneXpress. PPR. Closed captioned.

The idea that those "born digital" are quickly adept at learning new technology receives a partial reality check here. While many young people swiftly acquire the technical skills needed to scroll through thousands of configuration options, multi-task, and multi-text on their mobile devices, a significant number still need help in the pre-technological area of manners. The proliferation of popular sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram has made it very easy for anyone of any age to unwittingly commit missteps that at best create awkward situations and at worst may ruin some aspects of their lives. Using live actors and real-life situations, this guidance production is organized around four principles related to online behavior: (1) "People come before technology," (2) "Don't interfere with others' experiences or rights," (3) "If you don't want the world to see it, don't put it out there," and (4) "What happens online stays online. Forever." Some of the advice here may seem familiar and obvious (posting embarrassing party pics may hinder future job opportunities); but other suggestions are both straightforward and thoughtful, such as thinking about others before posting (e.g., is this something that people might value or learn from, or is it just another food pic?). Although targeted at younger viewers, this primer on online manners contains valuable advice for all social media users. Highly recommended. Aud: J, H, C, P. (C. Block)

sexual abuse case; and Mick Foley, a professional wrestler who helped produce this film as a result of his work on behalf of RAINN (Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network). Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

### Vessel ★★★1/2

(2014) 97 min. DVD: \$149 (\$349 w/PPR). DRA. Kino Lorber Edu.

Dr. Rebecca Gomperts has campaigned worldwide to make abortion accessible and safe through the Dutch organization Women on Waves, which was founded in 2000 to provide shipboard abortions in international waters. Filmmaker Diana Whitten follows Gomperts and Women on Waves on their initial campaigns to Ireland (2001), Poland (2003), and Portugal (2004), before showing how the organization has expanded to encourage grassroots campaigns and disseminate information in over 23 countries. On those early trips, Women on Waves received hundreds of desperate emails and calls; but encountering hostile media coverage, public protests, and even Portuguese warships, they were unable to see any women in Ireland or Portugal. In 2004, a frustrated Gomperts appeared on Portuguese television to explain how women could end unwanted pregnancies, using pills that were commonly available worldwide. The response to this announcement changed Women on Waves' approach; in countries where abortion was illegal they could now direct women to the World Health Organization website, which explains how to use the abortion pill. This protocol is explained in detail here using simple animation that illustrates how to take the pills, what to expect, when to seek

medical help, and what to say to avoid legal consequences. Overwhelmed by the number of women contacting them for help, Women on Waves also launched Women on Web, which provides online support, establishes local groups who provide services, obtains medicine, and speaks out for legal abortion, while also training women in other countries to do the same. Excerpts from hotline calls and e-mails underscore the fact that many women seek abortions as a matter of economic (or even literal) survival. Central figure Gomperts is an eloquent and impassioned advocate for safe abortion. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (M. Puffer-Rothenberg)

## TEEN ISSUES

### The Complete Anti Bullying Kit

★★★1/2

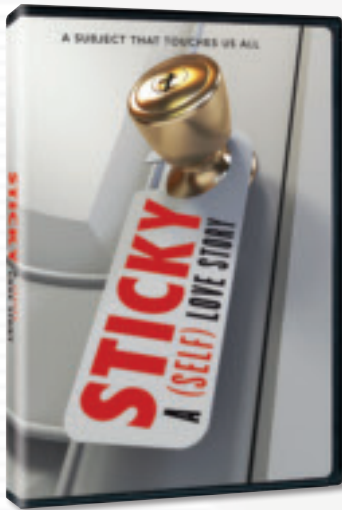
(2015) 3 discs. 175 min. DVD: \$175. DRA. TMW Media Group. PPR.

Energetic host Keith Deltano takes a spirited approach to handling bullying in this three-part lecture format informational series. In the first volume, *Bully Proof Your Classroom—Strategies for Teachers*, Deltano—who modestly describes himself as a "cross between Mother Teresa and Arnold Schwarzenegger"—uses onscreen text to illustrate points as he shares personal stories from his years of experience as a middle school teacher. Topics covered include favoritism, loving the kids who may be outcasts ("I don't know what it is about *Star Wars* and social awkwardness, but they seem to go together"), breaking up social hierarchies, using Socratic

### The Year We Thought About Love ★★★

(2015) 68 min. DVD: \$75: public libraries & high schools; \$295: colleges & universities. New Day Films. PPR. Closed captioned.

Filmmaker Ellen Brodsky shadows a youth theater troupe for eight months in this engaging documentary. The actors, ranging in age from 14-22, belong to Boston's True Colors, which focuses on stories about LGBT life. The participants, spanning the racial and cultural spectrum, bring their unique experiences to the mix, variously identifying as gay, transgender, and genderqueer. Eighteen-year-old Delandre dresses like a boy while living under his mother's roof, but plans to transition to female once he leaves home. Nineteen-year-old Giftson grew up thinking



**THEMES/ STUDIES**  
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**YOU BELONG TO ME:  
SEX, RACE AND MURDER IN THE SOUTH**

A powerful, eye-opening documentary about the sexual assault, trial and incarceration of Ruby McCollum, a black woman convicted of murdering a prominent Southern white doctor in 1952. The film delves into researching every aspect of her trial and consequent conviction, and serves as an important historical account of a tragic civil rights incident, the repercussions of which can still be felt today.

FEATURING: **Sam McCollum, Jr** (son), **Tracy Long** (granddaughter), **Henry Curtis Ave** (juror)

VF-1006 UPC# 881394122222,  
SRP: \$19.95, PPR: \$299.00, 88 Min  
STREET DATE: 2/9/16

• STUDY GUIDE AVAILABLE



**THEMES/ STUDIES - BLACK HISTORY MONTH**  
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**MACHINE GUN PREACHER  
DOCUMENTARY**

**THE "REAL" MACHINE GUN PREACHER  
AND BEASTS OF NO NATION**

Pennsylvanian biker Sam Childers overcame a life of drugs and violence to become a rebel of hope, waging a 13-year war to free enslaved children in Uganda and Southern Sudan, Africa. This film takes a peek inside the life of a missionary who preaches justice with a machine gun against the Warlords of Africa.

STARRING: **Sam Childers** a.k.a. The Machine Gun Preacher and **Gerard Butler** (title character in "Machine Gun Preacher")

VF-1002 UPC# 881394122628  
SRP: \$19.95, PPR: \$249.00, 71 Min  
STREET DATE: 2/9/16



**THEMES/ STUDIES**  
Women's Issues, Women's Rights, Social  
Issues, Health

**FIGHT LIKE A GIRL**

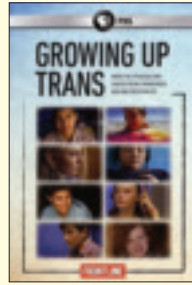
Follow Jill Morley as she delves inside the world of female boxing with the women who are passionate about fighting hard. Real emotional histories and traumas bubble up, fleshing out a compelling story about women overcoming adversity.

FEATURING: **Jill Morley, Maureen** ("The Real Million Dollar Baby") **Shea, Susan Merlucci-Reno, Kimberly Tomes** and **Melissa Hernandez**

VF-1011 UPC# 881394122529  
SRP: \$19.95, PPR: \$149.00, 82 Min  
STREET DATE: 2/16/2016

## Growing Up Trans ★★★

(2015) 90 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62789-431-9.



Filmmakers Miri Navsaky and Karen O'Connor's PBS-aired *Frontline* documentary explores the "T" in LGBT, which has received more media attention lately due to Olympic star Bruce Jenner's transition into celebrity icon Caitlyn Jenner. *Growing Up Trans* follows eight transgender children and teens who are responding to the new awareness of transgender issues by openly questioning and even changing their own gender identities. But this is hardly a smooth path: transgender teens and 'twens face an abnormally high rate of violent bullying, sometimes leading to suicide. While the young transgender people featured here are quite articulate and have supportive parents, it's still hard not to question whether the easy accessibility to pharmaceutical solutions—including drugs known as "puberty blockers" and "hormone blockers"—is truly in their best interest. And when a 9-year-old boy here expresses a desire to pursue "surgery and medicine to help me look like a girl," many may feel uneasy about a child so young contemplating gender reassignment surgery. Sure to provoke discussion, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

he was the only one of his kind, because he never met any other gay Haitian-Americans (his parents combined "gift" and "son" to create his name). Nick Bazo, the director of *True Colors*, prepares for his wedding during the film, and worries about kissing his fiancé in front of his conservative mother. Aside from the usual high school concerns, Nick's charges also deal with bullying and homelessness due to their orientation, so he doubles as a counselor and confidant. Brodsky films the troupe members at school, in rehearsal, and at home. Although many have found parental acceptance, their communities haven't always been as welcoming. Seventeen-year-old Roxas's mother, Denise, worries a lot, since a stranger once attacked him while he was walking home with his sister. Through their involvement with *True Colors*, the participants learn how to write, act, and work through their problems. Brodsky catches up with the central subjects a year later and finds that all of them, including Alyssa (formerly Delandre), are living life on their own terms. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

## EDUCATION

### Dislecksia: The Movie ★★★

(2012) 83 min. DVD or Blu-ray: \$250: public libraries; \$395: colleges & universities. Tugg (avail. from <http://licenses.tugg.com>). DRA. PPR.

Dyslexic filmmaker Harvey Hubbell V here embarks on a mission to discover what most people think they know or don't know about dyslexia, while he also explores cutting-edge research and programs that are underway to help youngsters with dyslexia become confident readers. Hubbell recalls his own painful childhood in elementary school and high school, interviewing members of

his family and others about how he was treated as a hopeless case, pushed through the education system while remaining functionally illiterate. But the documentary is less Hubbell's story than it is a look at advancements in education for dyslexic kids at various specialized schools and in laboratory initiatives: from intensive programs linking words with hands-on big-picture learning in biodiversity classes (capped by a trip to Costa Rica), to innovative computer programs and early-childhood education emphasizing new tools for using audio and visual techniques for reading and writing. Along the way, Hubbell incorporates interviews with several celebrities who have dyslexia, including actor-filmmaker Billy Bob Thornton and late television producer Stephen J. Cannell. Perhaps the most interesting point made here has to do with society needing to adjust its current view of dyslexic people as disabled (dyslexia did not even exist before the printing press). The real challenge lies not in making people with dyslexia adapt to existing technology for reading, but rather in making technology catch up with those who are dyslexic. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (T. Keogh)

### PS Dance! ★★★

(2015) 53 min. DVD: \$19.95. *First Run Features* (avail. from most distributors).

Hosted by newscaster Paula Zahn, filmmaker Nel Shelby's documentary about dance instruction in the New York City public school system makes a strong case for the inclusion of dance in every child's curriculum. The point isn't that dance programs should aim to produce professional dancers (although some participants may well choose that career path), but rather that dance classes beginning as early as kindergarten help to foster a child's imagination, self-discipline, confidence, and socializing skills (while continuing the process only

strengthens those qualities over time). In addition, the film suggests that engaging in creative group movement on a regular basis can enhance overall academic success. *PS Dance!* offers telling footage of groups at all age levels, from those who are barely older than toddlers—happily gyrating in response to a teacher's encouragement—to high school kids who have earned places in advanced programs conducted by demanding mentors. Along the way, students offer their observations about how the experience has helped them to mature and develop, while instructors talk briefly about their methods and goals. One might suspect that *PS Dance!* is a thinly-veiled plea for reallocation of resources at a time of shrinking budgets, but as Zahn makes clear, a strong recognition of the value of dance programs in NYC schools already exists. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (F. Swietek)

## LAW & CRIME

### The Life and Crimes of Doris Payne

★★★

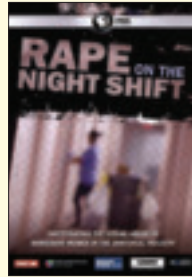
(2014) 72 min. DVD: \$99.95: public libraries; \$350: colleges & universities. *The Cinema Guild*. PPR. ISBN: 0-7815-1521-1.

Doris Payne does not fit the stereotypical image of a notorious jewel thief: an octogenarian African-American woman from West Virginia, Payne enjoyed a 60-year run that netted more than \$2 million in jewelry. Payne's unlikely story seems tailor-made for the screen—at one point, a biopic starring Halle Berry was being talked up in the Hollywood trade papers—but here filmmakers Matthew Pond and Kirk Marcolina get the real Payne to talk about her life and crimes. Awaiting a verdict in a court case involving the theft of a 1.5 carat diamond from a department store jewelry counter, Payne charmingly recalls how she became an expert in her career. If Payne is to be believed, she took up jewelry theft during her childhood as a defense mechanism against her father's violence and the crushing burden of racism in Jim Crow America (although Payne's railing against intolerance isn't exactly helped when she refers to one of her miscreant comrades as "Jew boy"). Since Payne was something of an under-the-radar figure who attracted little media attention throughout her life, the film relies heavily on dramatic re-creations to detail her most outlandish heists (Daniella Flanagan plays the youthful Payne in these stylish flashback scenes). While one can debate the moral dimensions of the documentary's strenuous attempts to turn a lifelong criminal (Payne was nabbed again in October 2015) into an underground hero, the subject's sly personality and intriguing story make for an entertaining watch. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

### Rape on the Night Shift ★★★1/2

(2015) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62789-430-2.

In this PBS-aired *Frontline* documentary, correspondent Lowell Bergman details the high incidence of sexual assault and abuse experienced by illegal immigrant women working overnight hours in janitorial jobs. Many toil in empty airport terminals, banks, and offices in the dead of night, often in areas where security is minimal, at best. *Rape on the Night Shift* focuses primarily on employers who take advantage of these women, sometimes in sickeningly violent ways. Because of their immigration status, the women are often unwilling to report these crimes to the police, and many are coerced to remain silent. The documentary calls out one of the largest janitorial employers in the nation, ABM, as guilty of putting its workers in continual risk. ABM—whose clients include the Pentagon—has been the target of more than 40 sexual harassment lawsuits over the past two decades, including multiple lawsuits by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Featuring testimony from 21 women, this report also looks at undercover operations aimed at tracking down the criminals who prey on the vulnerable. A disturbing exposé, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)



## NATURE, MATH & SCIENCE

### Bad Coyote ★★★1/2

(2013) 52 min. DVD: \$195. DRA. National Film Board of Canada. PPR.

Filmmaker Jason Young's documentary *Bad Coyote* opens with the story of Taylor Mitchell, a vibrant 19-year-old singer-songwriter mauled to death by two coyote while hiking in the woods outside Halifax. Her death prompts an in-depth conversation and investigation into the changing relationship between humans and coyote (which are animals that historically have avoided people while preying on other wildlife or domesticated creatures such as dogs, sheep, etc.). On one hand, a scientist maintains that coyote are doing nothing new, but now have inherited the reputation wolves once had for being a widespread menace. Contradicting him is a gung-ho coyote hunter who says the entire coyote population should be wiped out (although it should be noted that he has a commercial interest in encouraging hunters). Also weighing in is a low-key trapper who worries that the fears of local families are indeed warranted, and he does what he can to thin out the population. *Bad Coyote* gives all players a voice here, but doesn't take a side, allowing viewers to draw their own conclusions. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

### Operation Wild ★★★1/2

(2014) 180 min. DVD: \$24.99. PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62789-410-4.

This three-part PBS/BBC series follows dedicated volunteers, doctors, and villagers struggling to bring rare and endangered animals back from the brink of extinction.

In China, giant pandas now number only about 1,600 in the wild. Sadly, when a panda mother gives birth, she usually selects the baby most likely to survive, nurturing it while leaving another infant to die. Here, specialists formulate an intricate and risky plan to switch babies on an alternating basis, increasing the odds that both will survive if the mother is fooled into caring for them. Medical crises sometimes occur due to thoughtless or cruel behavior on the part of humans: a white rhino not only loses her tusk to poachers, but part of her face is also hacked off, while an elephant in Laos is shot in the leg by villagers (requiring an operation that must be performed in the wild without the benefit of sterile surgical instruments). Many procedures present unique challenges (the extreme weight of elephants and rhinos, for instance, mean that internal organs could be crushed while animals are motionless under sedation), while different sizes and shapes bring their own challenges, most notably when a giant Galapagos turtle requires surgery, but its enormous shell proves to be a formidable obstacle. Some animals have health issues all too familiar to humans (chimps in zoos are plagued by stress and heart disease, requiring regular monitoring, and sometimes intervention), but the goal in many cases is to return treated animals to the wild whenever possible, or as in the case of a lowland gorilla with a deformed limb or a dolphin needing a prosthetic tail, at least allow the animals to live a normal life with an ability to socialize and compete with other members of their species. Presenting interesting animal stories—about elephant dentistry, a cataract operation on an orangutan, a nosebleed plaguing a rare tiger in a zoo—this inspiring series is highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

### Uranium: Twisting the Dragon's Tail

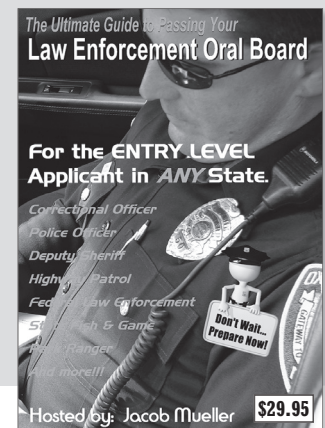
★★★1/2

(2015) 100 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62789-456-2.

Born from an exploding star, uranium was named after the then-current discovery of the planet Uranus, and was originally dismissed as worthless. Hosted by physicist Dr. Derek Muller, filmmakers Wayne Fimeri and Steve Westh's two-part PBS-aired documentary exploring this mysterious mineral takes viewers back to the turn-of-the-20th-century, when Marie and Pierre Curie enthralled the world with the "glow in the dark" properties of radium, which was quickly celebrated by outsiders as a miraculous cure-all (Marie Curie and many others would later die from complications brought on by radiation exposure). Uranium is capable of releasing a burst of energy in a chain reaction when its atom is split. H.G. Wells would coin the term "atomic bomb" in his futuristic 1914 novel *The World Set Free*, followed a few decades later by disturbing rumors that Nazi Germany was trying to harness atomic power in its quest for world domination. America would play catch-up in its "big science" Manhattan Project. Muller here visits the now desolate Trinity site, where the bombs were tested that would later be dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki,

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### Sharks ★★★

(2013) 51 min. DVD: \$12.95. Vision Films (avail. from most distributors).

Beautiful underwater footage of sharks in action is complemented by observations and opinions from shark behavior specialist Dr. Erich Ritter in filmmaker Timo Joh. Mayer's engaging documentary. The upshot: sharks are misunderstood predators who are not inherently dangerous to humans. Rather, the problem lies in situations that stimulate a shark's natural instincts. If you happen to find yourself in the company of a shark while in the water, the best thing to do is try to get vertical and not move—no doubt easier said than done—after which the shark will likely become bored and move on. One should also avoid diving in an area where someone is attempting to catch fish with bait since a shark might link the smell of bait with you. According to Ritter, the media have capitalized on demonizing sharks and creating public frenzy, which has had the unfortunate result of people not caring that there are several endangered species of sharks (in prehistoric times, we're told, sharks comprised 60% of ocean life; now it is more like 3%). An interesting documentary about a perennially popular subject, this is recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

bringing an end to WWII at the cost of many lives while also causing acute radiation sickness in survivors, as well as setting off a perilous race for nuclear supremacy. In the second part of the documentary, Muller looks at the paradox of uranium—namely, its peaceful potentials in medical use and clean energy—while also taking a sobering journey to the site of Russia's Chernobyl nuclear accident (researchers can only visit for brief periods), dropping in at an abandoned U.S. Titan missile site, and stopping at towns around Japan's Fukushima reactors. Although the film sometimes strays off message, it ultimately delivers a powerful reminder about a sleeping dragon: the "measured risk" of using uranium. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

### Weather Gone Wild: Surviving a World of Superstorms ★★★1/2

(2014) 43 min. DVD: \$250. Dreamfilm Productions (dist. by Bullfrog Films). PPR. SDH captioned. ISBN: 1-94154-543-2.

Made in association with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, filmmaker Melanie Wood's documentary examines the spate of violent rainstorms and floods that have lately spawned in the wake of rising global temperatures. The most recent news-footage-rich storms get the spotlight, especially the 2013 flooding in Calgary and Tropical Storm Sandy battering the New York/New Jersey coastline, which racked up billions of dollars in damage. Potential ways to ameliorate the impact of superstorms are addressed here, including home construction that takes basement flooding into consideration (or, in the case of the Dutch, building floating homes atop the water), giant mechanical river-control systems, and "granular resilience" offshore barriers. Moral: extreme weather is now an omnipresent fact of life, and both policy and urban design must adapt or else. A sobering documentary about the challenges of extreme weather that also offers a handful

of responsive strategies, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

## HEALTH & FITNESS

### American Heart ★★★

(2013) 96 min. DVD: \$19: individuals; \$48: public libraries; \$64.50: colleges & universities. Free Country Media (dist. by The Medicine Box Project). PPR.

Aired on PBS's *America ReFramed* series, filmmaker Chris Newberry's documentary profiles the largely unsung Center for International Health clinic in St. Paul, MN, a facility that specializes in caring for the well-being of refugee immigrants from around the world. Many of the patients have already been victims of civil strife, persecution, and genocide; now they face medical crises in an alien culture. Fortunately, Dr. Patricia Walker, chief medical director, was born in Taiwan and can speak many patients' languages. Cases include an AIDS-afflicted Ethiopian dissident, who may be mentally unbalanced and vows—no matter how dire his diagnosis—that he will return to Africa to educate and enlighten his people; a widowed Burmese farmer (and prolific songwriter), driven out of the country by the military regime, and now assailed by multiple illnesses; and an elderly Cambodian patriarch with terminal liver cancer. These individual stories of grief and resilience are interesting enough on their own terms, and while hot-button topics such as immigration reform and healthcare costs are not directly addressed, *American Heart* puts a compelling human face on these issues. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

### Cuddle ★★1/2

(2015) 67 min. DVD: \$14.98. True Mind/TDC (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-939517-40-1.

Interesting but too long, filmmaker Jason

O'Brien's documentary *Cuddle* examines the rising "cuddle" movement, along with related therapies and business practices. The phenomenon began in the U.S. as a well-meaning effort to bring human touch into the lives of more people, eventually leading to "cuddle groups" and "cuddle parties" that were directed by therapists who created safe boundaries and key words to prevent abuse. The idea took off, and soon entire practices built around paid cuddle time opened up, leading to government suspicion that a fine line might exist between paying someone to hold a client and soliciting for prostitution. Still, new iterations continue to appear, as well as more codified techniques and the usual entrepreneurs who smell potential profit. Unfortunately, the documentary is padded out with boring amateur video of people getting, well, cuddled. A strong optional purchase. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

### Nutrition Starts Here: Smart Eating on a Budget ★★★

(2015) 19 min. DVD: \$79.95 (downloadable teacher's guide available). Learning ZoneXpress. PPR. Closed captioned.

Hosted by chef Marshall O'Brien, *Nutrition Starts Here* features bite-sized (sorry) vignettes showcasing nutritious food choices and strategies for taking control of what you eat. In the longest segment, "Simple, Tasty Slow Cooker Meals," O'Brien shows viewers how to toss in a few simple ingredients and let a crockpot do the heavy lifting, while also offering food safety tips (particularly important if your dish starts with raw ingredients like chicken) and advice on test-

ing appliances for proper temperatures to ensure safe meal preparation. "Tasty Whole Grains" looks at the nutritional differences between whole grains and refined grains, while "Understanding Portion Sizes" and "Label Reading" go together like salt and pepper—helping viewers determine how much food to put on their plates, and demystifying the complexities of product labels. While the program could have delved deeper into the "budget" part of its title, this is a solid introduction, overall, to making healthier eating choices. Recommended. Aud: J, H, P. (C. Block)

### The Placebo Effect ★★★

(2014) 52 min. DVD: \$225. DRA. Film Ideas. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-60572-888-9.

The placebo effect isn't a new concept, but emerging technologies have changed the way it's studied by researchers. Primarily aimed at students of medicine and psychology, co-directors Emmanuelle Sapin and Pascal Goblot's documentary looks at the latest findings on the subject (the French-German co-production has been customized with English narration and dubbing). For context, they cite an incident that took place during World War II when U.S. Army anesthesiologist Dr. Henry K. Beecher ran out of morphine. Instead of informing his patients, he injected them with saline, and watched their pain subside simply because they believed he had given them a sedative. Placebo is Latin for "I shall please," and pain is especially sensitive to this effect. In the 1950s, studies increased as neurologists, psychoanalysts, and philosophers developed an interest in

### Edible Marijuana: Is It Safe? ★★★1/2

(2016) 18 min. DVD: \$139.95 (teacher's guide included). Human Relations Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62706-081-3.

The long-running joke about stoners and the munchies is no laughing matter in this guidance program about the real danger of edible marijuana products. Much of the risk comes not just from the significantly higher potency of modern ganja but also in the time it takes for the digestive system to register that THC (the active component) is entering the bloodstream. While pot smokers may feel the effects in as little as 20 seconds, those who ingest edibles might not notice anything until hours after the first taste. During that lengthy interval, they might consume way too much and then suffer the consequences, which can include trips to the emergency room. Another complicating factor is trying to determine the exact amount of THC present in edible products; some labels address this specifically, but others do not, leaving many home cooks essentially playing a guessing game. The food itself looks like, well, regular food—including gummy bears, granola, instant ramen, and the ever popular cookies and brownies, making them particularly dangerous to children, who would likely not be aware of the difference until it was too late. *Edible Marijuana* features health professionals who talk about the risks, as well as young people (users in states such as Colorado, where recreational marijuana is legal) who discuss their sometimes painful experiences, express their general enjoyment of marijuana, and ponder the concept of addiction—both physical and psychological. Also featuring a PDF teacher's resource guide, this is highly recommended. Aud: J, H, C, P. (C. Block)



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the phenomenon. For drug researchers, placebos have now long been part of their protocol (in the double-blind randomized technique, test subjects are not told whether they are receiving medication or a placebo). The film also covers a number of global experiments related to cortisol production (a natural adrenal hormone) in the Swiss Alps, nausea prevention in Germany, and dopamine production in patients with Parkinson's disease in Italy. In all cases, the subjects react as if doctors had administered a chemical compound, but they actually received placebos. The documentary cautions that the placebo effect is not a cure for disease, but that incorporating it into treatment plans can benefit both patient and doctor alike. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

### Resistance ★★★

(2014) 72 min. DVD: \$50 (\$150 w/PPR): public libraries; \$300 w/PPR: colleges & universities. DRA. *Collective Eye*. Closed captioned.

*Resistance* offers a critical overview of antibiotics, which can save lives, but also have become less effective over time. As one expert explains, "Antibiotics are basically poisons that kill bacteria and don't kill us." Unfortunately, many infectious diseases have developed resistance to these antimicrobial agents, an evolution that can take anywhere from a few years to several decades after an antibiotic makes its debut. Director Michael Graziano illustrates the ways in which antibiotics lose their effectiveness through overuse in the environment, medicine, and agriculture. One infectious disease specialist starts to cry as he recounts his attempt to help a leukemia patient whose infection proved resistant to antibiotics—with all options exhausted, the young woman died. A former surfer who lost the use of his legs contracted a staph infection from a marina, which caused lesions on his spine. Although antibiotics saved his life, he also believes they made him sick in the first place, ending up in the water supply. Penicillin serves as an example of an antibiotic that has lost potency through overuse—starting during the Vietnam War when so many servicemen and sex workers used it to prevent gonorrhea—and now is no longer a reliable cure. Doctors who over-prescribe penicillin and farmers who add growth hormones to their feed also contribute to the problem. In the 1990s, Denmark stopped using growth hormone promoters with no subsequent ill effects on industry, so there's hope the United States may follow suit. Other speakers here include representatives from pharmaceutical companies, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. A timely cautionary documentary about an ongoing health issue, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)



### The Trouble with Chicken ★★★

(2015) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62789-371-8.

Across America, chicken and turkey are both considered to be safe and healthy food choices. But that view has been shaken in recent years, especially after dozens of people fell sick and were hospitalized during a 2014 outbreak of Salmonella Heidelberg bacteria, a particularly virulent strain that is highly resistant to antibiotics. Hosted by David E. Hoffman, this PBS-aired *Frontline* report looks at the recent Salmonella outbreak, exploring what it reveals about both government safety inspections and the poultry industry, whose multibillion dollar enterprise has a wide distribution network with the potential to sicken consumers in multiple states. Salmonella is actually present in one out of every four pieces of chicken, but while most salmonella infections are manageable, the bacteria causes more hospitalizations and deaths than any other food-related illness. The Heidelberg outbreak was traced to Foster Farms, one of the largest poultry producers on the West Coast. The documentary notes that poultry inspection has failed to keep up with the times, relying on the old-fashioned "sniff, smell, and look" approach, along with sporadic and unreliable testing (the process is also poor at inspecting chicken parts—a consumer favorite—compared to the whole chicken). Foster Farms was not required to label salmonella an "adulterant" (unlike the E. coli virus), and government inspectors—fearing court challenges—could not force a factory recall. The poultry industry has a powerful lobby with many friends in Congress, so protective action remains difficult. A thought-provoking exposé featuring real-life stories that are likely to disturb shoppers, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)

## CHILDBIRTH & PARENTING

### Effective Parenting Strategies: Tips for Great Behavior from Kids Aged 2-6

★★★

(2015) 32 min. DVD: \$34.99. Bell Marker (avail. from Midwest Tape).

In this guidance program, mom and doctor Deborah Gilboa discusses common issues for children ages two to six, including getting along with others, sharing (she recommends teaching kids to say "you can have this in two minutes"), picky eating (let kids choose two of the food groups on a plate, and you pick the others), and interrupting when someone is on the phone (train your child to quietly place a hand on your arm as a signal), as well as hitting and biting, respecting parent privacy, and more. Gilboa also stresses the importance of using key words as praise for a child—specifically, three R's: "responsible," "resilient," and "respectful." Two other titles in the *Effective Parenting Strategies* are also available: *Tips for Great Behavior from Kids Aged 7-10*, and *Tips for Great Behavior from Kids Aged 11-15*. Sure to be welcomed by parents, this is recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

### Find Me ★★★

(2015) 77 min. DVD: \$14.99. GlobalStory2 Films (dist. by Vision Video).

Filmmakers Kathi and David Peters here build on their personal experience of adopting and raising a child from China, capturing the stories of other American families

and quickly discovering that some aspects of their own experience are universal. The deeply emotional process involves having an agency identify a child as a possible adoptee, after which prospective parents fly to China to meet with the girl or boy, as well as the child's nannies. But the families the Peters' meet wound up doing so much more, traveling back to China post-adoption to journey to the "finding place," i.e., the location in which the child had been originally abandoned. Seeing those sometimes squalid locales can be quite jarring and upsetting, but the mothers and fathers also find that it provides a fuller context for helping to understand their child. One brave soul even went to the home of her son's birth mother, which turned out to be a deeply moving and healing experience for all. A heartfelt documentary about international adoption, this is recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

## FOOD & SPIRITS

### Caffeinated ★★1/2

(2015) 81 min. DVD: \$29.95 (avail. from most distributors), \$349 w/PPR (avail. from www.kinolorbereedu.com). DRA. Kino Lorber. Closed captioned.

Part valentine to coffee and the rituals surrounding it, part informative documentary about the chain of international businesses involved in getting coffee from its source (beans grown in various parts of the world) to your corner café, filmmakers Hanh Nguyen and Vishal Solanki's *Caffeinated* tells an inter-



## The Story of Cheese ★★★

(2015) 60 min. DVD: \$24.95. *Globe Trekker* (avail. from most distributors). PPR. ISBN: 1-937103-36-1.

One of the world's most ancient edibles, cheese is also one of life's simple pleasures. Hosted by Rosie Lovell, this *Globe Trekker Planet Food* episode featuring various correspondents travels across Europe and into Greece, Lebanon, and Turkey while telling the story of cheese (which was mentioned by Homer in *The Odyssey*). The Romans spread the art of cheese making (cheese can be made from the milk of cows, goats, sheep, buffalo, and even camels) among conquered peoples as they built their empire. Some of the best cheeses come from the almost accidental discovery of the role of bacteria and curdled milk in making quality cheese, which can "hit you in the gut" with its sweet or salty flavors, or its creamy or crumbly texture. Cheeses are often named after the areas in which they were produced, whether it be Roquefort, France, where cheese is stored in temperature controlled caves, or sunny Parma, Italy, dubbed the "cholesterol capitol" of the country. Interesting itinerary stops include the Netherlands, where viewers watch as colorfully dressed workers rush back and forth carrying large cheese wheels across a town plaza, engaging in inspecting, haggling, and selling, much to the delight of tourists; Switzerland, where during each spring cheese-producing cows (considered a status symbol) are led up to graze in Alpine meadows; and Italy, where in olden days, cheese was considered so valuable that it could be used to make a down payment on a house. Visiting cheese mongers and markets, correspondents learn how to prepare a cheese board ("summer on a plate"), pair cheese with other foods, mix cheese and wine, and make a cheesecake. Recommended. Aud: P. (S. Rees)



esting tale—once it gets past product puffery. The first half features a series of interviews with coffee lovers, baristas, coffee bar owners, and franchise executives, who all decry the dullness of big-brand, grocery store coffee in the 20th century prior to the era of gourmet blends. Things changed when consumers began to realize how special a good cup of coffee can be, especially when linked to a warm personal experience alone or with a friend. Having established cultural and historical context, the film then looks at the roaster's art, illustrating the delicate process for roasting different kinds of beans and unlocking subtle flavors. Much of the latter half of *Caffeinated* concerns bean growers in different nations who face the perennial problem of being fairly paid for their crop (also complicating matters is resistance among growers to trying new farming methods, as it can take costly years to discover whether something is successful). Finally, the film features a chapter on Nicaraguan female coffee growers who represent a welcome uptick in women-owned businesses. Although somewhat scattershot, this is likely to appeal to connoisseurs of a good cuppa joe. A strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

## BUSINESS & ECONOMICS

### Banking Nature ★★★

(2014) 90 min. DVD: \$398. *Icarus Films*. PPR. Closed captioned.

What is the best way to protect the environment? According to economist Pavan

Sukhdev, erstwhile director of the Deutsche Bank, the answer lies in capitalism: specifically, placing a monetary value on natural resources and inviting companies to mitigate their damage by purchasing "nature credits." An ecosystem market is already in operation, generating substantial profits for banks and brokers. But the system is controversial, as the experts interviewed in this documentary by Denis Delestrac and Sandrine Feydel contend: some (like Sukhdev) see this approach as the key to reducing environmental degradation, while others view it as little more than a scam that allows investors to grow richer while actually permitting increased pollution, destruction of precious resources, and the gradual elimination of unprotected species. *Banking Nature* successfully outlines the theory behind "financializing nature" through interviews, graphics, and narration, while also including examples, such as the "mitigation bank" that was created around the California habitat of a species of fly placed on the endangered species list more than a decade ago, and the effect that similar tradeoffs have had on areas like the Amazon rainforests. By making this complex aspect of the modern market system comprehensible to laypeople, the documentary does a real service, especially since it also offers a balanced presentation of voices, both pro and con. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

### The Rise and Rise of Bitcoin ★★★

(2014) 96 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62789-407-4.

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Bitcoin has been described as a “Wild West in cyberspace.” Viewed as an alternative to traditional banking systems, Bitcoin is particularly attractive to libertarians, who seek monetary values that can’t be manipulated by a centralized banking system. Filmmaker Nicholas Mross’s PBS-aired documentary describes the new world of “Bitcoin fever,” which is also characterized as “nerd money for computer nerds.” Bitcoin was originated in 2009 by a possibly fictitious person or group of people going by the name of Satoshi Nakamoto. Bitcoin changes the way money works, aiming for a predictable currency governed by scarcity. Payments are sent via the web and identities remain anonymous, but transactions are available to be inspected. Also, no consumer protections are in place, and Bitcoin is vulnerable to hackers and scammers. The documentary discusses the mysterious identity of Bitcoin’s founder, as well as the appeal of Bitcoin in developing countries, where many residents lack access to banks. Despite deep suspicions of Bitcoin supporters, the U.S. Treasury insists that it is neither for nor against the system. However, officials are concerned about Bitcoin’s potential for money laundering, terrorism funding, and use in online black markets such as “Silk Road,” which trafficked in illegal drugs and items including fake passports. Viewers will learn about Bitcoin startups and the failure of these same fledgling businesses, which hardly dampens enthusiasm for Bitcoin believers. Given the fact that business regulations lag well behind innovations, Bitcoin is still a story in progress: will it prevail or merely be dismissed as a fad? Featuring interviewees ranging from Bitcoin pioneers to an (identity obscured) drug dealer, this is an informative, thought-provoking documentary on one facet of the online economy. Extras include bonus segments. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)

## SPORTS, GAMES & RECREATION

### Powerful Medicine: Simply Magic

★★★1/2

(2015) 22 min. DVD: \$19.99 (\$199.99 w/PPR). Dreamscape Media.

Filmmakers Mwita Chacha and Kevin Spencer’s short documentary makes a strong case that the magician’s craft can be an ideal pursuit for young people with disabilities. Many magic tricks require only rudimentary dexterity, giving young practitioners with disabilities a powerful incentive to use their hands as best they can. It’s the illusion that matters, and the hobbyist magician can add whatever stagecraft and flair he or she wants. Viewers see several kids, born and raised with multiple disabilities, who work hard at entertaining an audience. And, yes, these young entertainers sometimes move slowly

or drop equipment, but they mostly have inspiring moments while performing tricks, and the boost in self-esteem they feel from putting on a show is heartwarming. *Powerful Medicine* also interviews magician mentors who talk about their experiences in teaching disabled children, as well as their pride in seeing their apprentices do well with a crowd. An eye-opening, affirming documentary, this is highly recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

### Touch the Wall ★★1/2

(2015) 101 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$225; high schools & public libraries; \$450: colleges & universities. DRA. Touch the Wall. PPR. SDH captioned.

This extraordinary documentary follows two competitive swimmers—then-teenaged Missy Franklin and 25-year-old Kara Lynn Joyce—in the run-up to the 2012 Summer Olympics, counting down from 593 days before the Olympic trials to the qualifying meets and then on to the games in London. Striking underwater photography, lighthearted animation, and interviews with Franklin, Joyce, Franklin’s parents, and coach Todd Schmitz flesh out footage of practice sessions and swim meets. Filmmakers Christo Brock and Grant A. Barbeito build an element of suspense for those who are unfamiliar with Franklin’s record—she won five medals and set record times during the Olympic trials and games. There’s also some drama involving a possible rivalry between the swimmers, who met when Joyce decided to train with Franklin’s high school team and remained friends as Joyce’s swimming career waned and Franklin became a media darling. Franklin remains levelheaded and committed to her home team, while Joyce eventually moves on to train with other, older Olympic vets. Coach Schmitz, despite some attempt to cast him as a villain (he was apparently not the

right coach for Joyce), tears up when he talks about working with her. A beautifully filmed, absorbing, and inspirational portrait of two remarkable athletes, this is highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (M. Puffer-Rothenberg)

## THE ARTS

### Jeff Dunham: Unhinged in Hollywood

★★1/2

(2015) 72 min. DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$22.98. Universal Studios Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned.

Ventriloquist Jeff Dunham occupies Hollywood’s Dolby Theatre in this 2015 comedy special that originally aired on NBC in a shorter version (the disc includes both uncensored and family-friendly editions). Dunham brings out a lineup of his most popular wooden partners: the dyspeptic senior Walter, the good-natured Dixie dimwit Bubba J, the wise-cracking clone Little Jeff, the ebullient purple-skinned creature Peanut, and the turban-wearing skeleton Achmed the Dead Terrorist. Much of the comedy heavily plumbs contemporary newsmakers for obvious laughs, with pointed references to Kim Kardashian, Kanye West, Justin Bieber, and Donald Trump. Snarky riffs are also aimed at pop culture institutions such as Starbucks and NASCAR. Dunham’s buoyant enthusiasm is shared by the approving audience, although he is often funnier without his dummies, especially when he receives a wonderfully tacky Hello Kitty humidifier. Some of the show suffers from a been-there/done-that vibe: Walter’s grouchy comments about his allegedly overbearing wife feel like warmed over Henny Youngman quips, while the B.J. jokes sound too close to Larry the Cable Guy’s act. The most original material



### Myanmar: Bridges to Change ★★★★★

(2014) 45 min. DVD: \$19.99 (\$199.99 w/PPR). Dreamscape Media. Closed captioned.

Filmmakers Mark Fisher and Eric Daft’s documentary takes viewers to the southeast Asian nation of Myanmar (formerly Burma), where a 2013 expedition tackled a never-before summited mountain called Gamlang Razi, considered by some to be the highest peak in the region. A group of five Americans and two Burmese set out not just to reach the top, but also to use a special GPS unit to measure Gamlang Razi’s true height, which has been a matter of dispute. Equal parts adventure story and cultural immersion experience, *Myanmar: Bridges to Change* offers glimpses of a land closed off to much of the outside world until very recently, as the team treks through more than a hundred miles of jungle terrain just to reach the base of the mountain, meeting villagers along the way who have existed in almost total isolation and are curious about their unexpected visitors. The challenges are tremendous, ranging from the effects of extreme heat and humidity on the climbers and their equipment, to encounters with vipers, leeches, and insects, before the altitude transforms the landscape into snow, ice, and bare rock. A Grand Prize winner in the New Zealand Mountain Film Festival and winner of Best Documentary Short in the Sedona Film Festival, this is highly recommended. Editor’s Choice. Aud: P. (C. Block)

is delivered through Achmed, although the politically incorrect humor may strike many as tasteless. Extras include a "Greetings, Hollywood!" mashup by DJ Steve Porter. A strong optional purchase. Aud: P. (P. Hall)

### Love Between the Covers ★★★

(2015) 84 min. DVD: \$89; public libraries, \$395; colleges & universities. Women Make Movies. PPR.

Romance writers have their say in filmmaker Laurie Kahn's lively documentary, which offers a glimpse into the writers' processes and shares excerpts from their novels as Kahn travels to readings, conventions, and retreats. Mary Bly, a Shakespeare professor who writes under the name Eloisa James, recalls that her parents (her father is poet Robert Bly) were horrified when she became a romance novelist, but that didn't deter her in the slightest. Bly believes that romance writing is one of the few fields in which a woman's gender presents no impediment to success. Corresponding with fans, she met Kim Castillo, who became her assistant and helped launch Eloisa James's career. Nicole Peeler acknowledges that the genre doesn't get much respect, but also feels that derision brings fans together, since they long to find others who share their passion. While literary fiction tends to attract competitive types, romance writers have entered collaborative partnerships, such as Celeste Bradley and Susan Donovan's *Unbound*. While a few women faced resistance from spouses who doubted they could earn income from romantic fiction, the genre has produced plenty of heavy hitters, like the prolific Nora Roberts, and she's hardly alone. Len Barot, the former surgeon who writes lesbian romance under the pseudonym Radclyffe, has penned three books a year since 2001. Barbara Jenkins makes no case for realism, but argues that male-oriented fantasy tends to garner more acceptance than the female variant. She got into the field because there were so few authors of color, particularly in historical fiction. *Love Between the Covers* makes a solid case for an appreciation of a much maligned genre. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

### Showrunners: The Art of Running a TV Show ★★★

(2014) 88 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62789-409-8.

With the contemporary explosion of new technology and media outlets, the television medium is faced with an insatiable need for product. Most new TV shows are not only doomed to fail, but the ax can sometimes fall very quickly, making the job of series showrunner "brutally hard," akin to managing a "controlled plane crash every week." A showrunner is charged with guiding a show's creative direction, pulling together various elements, including story conferences and script writing, technical aspects such as set design and location shooting, and

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### Ballet Boys ★★★

(2014) 72 min. In Norwegian w/English subtitles. DVD: \$24.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors).

Kenneth Elvebakk's engaging documentary profiles three boys, all sons of middle-class Norwegian parents, who pursue an education in dance. Teens Lukas, Syvert, and Torgeir become fast friends after developing a passion for ballet that sets them apart from their peers—they are the only males in their dance classes. Elvebakk's camera follows them over several years, offering glimpses of their home lives and clips of them practicing routines and preparing for competitions. Along the way, the film also points to their differences, both in terms of physique (Lukas is gangly, Torgeir burlier, and Syvert—an Asian-Norwegian—complains that his appearance makes it hard to get dates) and personality. Lukas is the most serious and intense of the trio, while Torgeir and Syvert harbor doubts about aiming for a professional career in dance (Syvert even abandons ballet for a time to concentrate on schoolwork). The film culminates with high school graduation, auditions for the Oslo Academy of the Arts, and an offer for one to attend London's Royal Ballet School. *Ballet Boys* is an affectionate portrait of the trials and triumphs of three likable teens who love dance. DVD extras include bonus shorts. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)



the crucial process of selecting and working with actors. Filmmaker Des Doyle's PBS-aired documentary examines the role of showrunners, featuring interviews with directors and writers from such varied series as *Bones*, *Sons of Anarchy*, and *Rizzoli & Isles*. A typical showrunner juggles six episodes at any given time, which requires lots of meetings, with a constant eye on story arcs, character development, and—of course—the eternal need to engage and entertain audiences. Interviewees here talk about what led them to TV work, how they try to anticipate changing tastes, the difference between network and cable product, writing comedy vs. drama (all agree that comedy is more difficult), the pressures of pitching a show, sticking to schedules, and getting the details right (from sets to the question of an actor's haircut). Other issues include the role of women and minorities in the changing TV landscape, both in front of and behind the camera. The burnout rate among showrunners is high: all must deal with the question of how to end a failed series, or bring a successful, long running show to its logical conclusion. Likely to appeal to TV buffs, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)

### Tap or Die ★★★

(2013) 62 min. DVD: \$295. DRA. Filmmakers Library (dist. by Alexander Street Press). PPR.

*Tap or Die* depicts the process of bringing a tap show from Chicago to New York, but in a larger sense Jackie Paré's documentary offers a defense of tap dancing as a resilient art form that is worthy of respect. For 2006's *Imagine Tap!*, choreographer Derick K. Grant created a multimedia show with vocalists, DJs, and other dance styles, such as break-dancing. Grant credits tap for giving him a voice and helping him stay on the straight and narrow while growing up in Boston. Inter-titles cite

notable tap dancers, including Dr. Jimmy Slyde and Gregory Hines, while clips from performances showcase the work of Grant's contemporaries, such as Guillem Alonso Alcalay and Acia Gray. Tap also changes form as it moves from country to country, absorbing various cultural influences along the way. As Grant notes, "Tap has created bridges for me to travel all over the world." Dancers in the film complain, however, that tap doesn't enjoy the legitimacy of modern dance or ballet—in part due to its association with vaudeville and the working class—but they credit Hines and Savion Glover for revitalizing tap's popularity with shows like Glover's Tony Award-winning musical *Bring in 'da Noise, Bring in 'da Funk*, which featured Grant. Although Paré reached out to Glover for an interview, he declined her request, and while the dancers here praise his talent, they also regret that he hasn't done more to promote tap or mentor new dancers. An engaging overview of an original American dance form, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Femmessy)

## HISTORY & CURRENT EVENTS

### Blackout ★★★

(2015) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62789-433-3.

In the late 1970s, New York City was plagued by crime, decay, and poverty. To top it off, the city was on edge, with serial killer Son of Sam roaming around and shooting random victims. For many, rock bottom was reached on July 13, 1977, when a massive power blackout pulled the plug on all five city boroughs, setting off a 25-hour orgy of looting and lawlessness. Filmmaker Callie T. Wiser's PBS-aired *American Experi-*

*ence* documentary revisits this notable incident, examining what the "night the lights went out" said about the city's thin veneer of civilization. An intense series of thunderstorms and lightning strikes set off the chain reaction of power failures, which were made worse by a heat wave that made large demands on the city's system due to the heavy use of air conditioners. Residents recall the rapid, rolling blackout, and the power failure of November 1965, which was their only point of comparison—noting that the earlier blackout seemed more of an adventure, with little crime or social disruption. In 1977, "all hell broke loose," and the poor—driven by unemployment, and a sense of anger and abandonment—helped themselves to consumer goods of all kinds, even hitting stores that had long histories of serving the community. One resident remembers looters tying shopping carts together with nylon stockings, creating "trains" to pilfer more merchandise. Hospitals, subways, and even police stations all struggled in the dark, increasing fear-driven feelings that no one was in charge. Meanwhile, diners in the World Trade Center and residents of the posh Upper East Side diverted themselves with block parties or champagne toasts. After the looting ended, the burning of stores began, and police and firemen were powerless to stop it. Combining vivid testimony with archival news footage, this is a powerful tale of broken social contracts that also demonstrates the fragility of urban life. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

### Children of Civil Rights ★★★1/2

(2015) 59 min. DVD or Blu-ray: \$25 (\$75 w/PPR): public libraries; \$95 w/PPR: colleges & universities. *The Civil Project*.

While the 1960 sit-in protests at the Woolworth lunch counter in Greensboro, NC, marked a milestone in the Civil Rights movement, it was actually not the first successful attempt to use non-violent means to desegregate a food service operation. In 1958, a group of black schoolchildren successfully performed a sit-in at an Oklahoma City unit of the regional Katz Drug Store chain, ultimately achieving the first victory in breaking down racial barriers in that city. Filmmakers Julia Clifford and Bob Ridgley tell this long-forgotten story, tracking down several of the original participants. Much of the credit for the Oklahoma City desegregation push belonged to Clara Luper, a local NAACP youth council leader who was unable to get support from Oklahoma City's political, business, and religious leadership for ending Jim Crow in her city. The film makes liberal use of a 1982 interview with Luper, who recalls the genesis and results of this campaign—which was aided, to a certain extent, by a sympathetic police force who protected the children from hostile and potentially violent whites outraged over the

demonstration. Combining rare archival film footage and photographs with interviews of civil rights icons Rep. John Lewis and the late Julian Bond, this documentary offers an insightful and invigorating portrait of a little-known early incident in the historical struggle for equality in the United States. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

### Congo: The Doctor Who Saves Women

★★★1/2

(2014) 52 min. DVD: \$348. Icarus Films. PPR.

Senegalese filmmaker Angèle Diabang's powerful and deeply disturbing documentary serves up a portrait of a contemporary medical hero working in one of the world's most hostile war zones. Dr. Denis Mukwege is a gynecologist in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the founder of Panzi, a hospital dedicated to helping women who were raped during the country's seemingly never-ending civil war. The wide prevalence of rape perpetrated by Congolese soldiers and insurgent militias has created a reign of terror that has no equivalent elsewhere in the world—conservative estimates place the number of victims well into the tens of thousands. Mukwege and his hospital staff—consisting of specially trained doctors, nurses, and psychologists—provide the only genuine sanctuary for war-damaged women, a place where staff labor to heal the physical and emotional scars left by brutal assaults. Several Panzi patients have been rejected by both their families and communities after being raped, but Mukwege works to create a new social enclave among the patients by assigning seemingly quotidian tasks that

actually serve as tools for reestablishing normal and active lives. The Congolese war and its horrendous impact on civilians have been mostly ignored by the U.S. mainstream media, but *Congo* joins the growing list of urgent documentaries addressing this heart-breaking situation. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

### In Country ★★1/2

(2015) 80 min. DVD: \$19.95 (\$295 w/PPR).

Bond/360 (avail. from [www.incountryfilm.com](http://www.incountryfilm.com)).

Although Civil War and even WWII re-enactor events are relatively familiar, filmmakers Mike Attie and Meghan O'Hara's *In Country* centers on a more unusual living-history troupe in Oregon who are bringing back to life a crusade that was not crowned in glory. The young men of Delta 2/5(R) venture into the woods wearing the uniforms and carrying the weapons of the 1960s American military, staging skirmishes and patrols from the Vietnam War. Coordinator Joel Kinney gives recruits (whose knowledge of the subject derives largely from movies like *Platoon* and *Full Metal Jacket*) classes in the unpopular conflict's field slang and cultural backdrop, and he respectfully hosts visits from vets who inspect the squad for authenticity. Throughout, news clips of actual Johnson/Nixon-era American soldiers, both gung-ho macho and dispirited, are edited into the film and sometimes the effect is eerily seamless (although some of the longer sequences feel gimmicky). Much of the drama here lies in the Oregonians' real lives: some are thrill-seekers wanting to play soldier, while one is a Gulf War vet in a teetering marriage,

re-enlisting for the healthcare benefits. The troupe even has as its prize member a Vietnamese-American immigrant who served in the South Vietnamese Army. Reliving the doomed campaign, he explains, recalls a time when he felt stronger. That no lasting or useful lessons from Vietnam have been learned seems to be the message here. Extras include interviews with the filmmakers, behind-the-scenes footage with the re-enactors, and outtakes. An uneven documentary that should nevertheless appeal to military history buffs, this is a strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

### Meeting ISIS ★★1/2

(2014) 56 min. DVD: \$19.95. Music Video

Distributors (avail. from most distributors).

ISIS (the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) has increasingly dominated world headlines, especially in the wake of the November 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris. ISIS, which intends to create a new caliphate in the Middle East, has achieved considerable success in accumulating territory in Iraq and Syria—using the most brutal methods, including mass executions and publicly broadcast beheadings. *Meeting ISIS* is a very relevant documentary that, unfortunately, is compromised by a lack of documentation on the source material. Some locations and interviewees are identified, but many sequences appear to have been staged, and the voice of the interviewer is continuously distorted (plus, no production credits are listed). On the other hand, it does take the viewer behind the lines in Syria and briefly sketches the origin and growth of the terrorist group while also showing the divisions between ISIS and other factions such as the al-Nusra Front—making it clear that virtually all of them are well-funded and have supplanted the government in providing services to the general populace in areas under their control. Featuring grainy explicit footage of atrocities (always preceded by a viewer warning), this is an intriguing and disturbing film, but also one that suffers from lack of references and documentation. Still, given the huge current interest in ISIS, this should be considered a strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

### Blood and Glory: The Civil War in Color ★★★

(2015) 2 discs. 168 min. DVD: \$26.98, Blu-ray: \$29.99. Lionsgate Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).

The major selling point of the History channel's latest Civil War miniseries is its inclusion of colorized versions of around 500 black-and-white photographs from the period, including stills of key figures such as Lincoln and Lee, as well as shots of buildings and battlefields. Although the process has vastly improved since it was employed years ago to colorize older films, the outcome is still somewhat based on speculation, and one could argue that the results lack the haunting quality of the originals, especially when bloodied corpses are involved. But these images actually represent only a fraction of the content of this two-part series, which basically offers a straightforward chronological account of the War Between the States from its origins through its aftermath during Reconstruction. Also included are archival materials such as handwritten documents and artwork, as well as numerous modern re-enactments, sober narration, and excerpts from talking-head interviews with writers, academicians, and other commentators, including retired U.S. generals Colin Powell and David Petraeus, comedian-commentator Ben Stein, and Richard Dreyfuss, who is here identified as "actor and historian." The result is a solid series that offers nothing new in terms of interpretation but provides a competent account of the conflict that tore the United States apart and still continues to affect the national psyche. And while not quite as revelatory as the promotional materials suggest, the enhanced photos do provide some intriguing glimpses of the time. Extras include bonus featurettes. Recommended. Aud: P. (F. Swietek)



### Obama at War ★★★

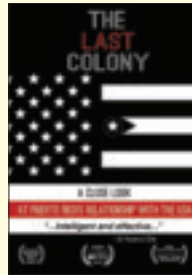
(2015) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62789-412-8.

Barack Obama was elected on a pledge to end America's involvement in wars, not begin them. Unfortunately, world events and tangled alliances and commitments have conspired to defeat the best laid plans. Hosted by Martin Smith, this PBS-aided *Frontline* report examines the highs and lows of Obama's foreign policy work, particularly during the president's second term. The "Arab Spring" of 2011 led many Americans to hope that democratic change was coming to the Middle East. The U.S. wound up supporting the overthrow

### The Last Colony ★★★

(2015) 92 min. DVD: \$24.98. The Disinformation Company/TDC (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-939517-39-5.

The financial crisis currently facing Puerto Rico lends particular urgency to this documentary by Juan Agustín Márquez. While sketching the island's history since the United States seized control during the Spanish-American War of 1898, the film centers on the plebiscite of 2012, in which voters (Puerto Ricans have been American citizens since 1917) were asked to express a preference for the future of their homeland: national independence, U.S. statehood, or continuance of commonwealth or territorial status. Much of the footage is devoted to the adherents of the three options offering opinions on why their choice is superior to the others and pointing out the flaws in the alternatives. As is often the case with political discourse, the arguments here shed little light on the issue—although statehood prevailed by a small but real margin, the number of ballots left blank almost equaled those in favor of either statehood or territorial status (independence lagged far behind). Due to the ambiguous result, Congress declined to make any change, and federal funds have been set aside for yet another plebiscite in the future. Despite the fact that it reaches no definitive conclusion, *The Last Colony* deftly illustrates the continuing incoherence of U.S. policy toward Puerto Rico, while also underscoring the need for its population—and the American government—to reach consensus about how best to resolve a festering problem. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)



of Libyan dictator Gaddafi, only to witness Libya's descent into chaos, culminating with the killing of an American ambassador. And when an uprising in Syria threatened President Assad, the Obama administration sent mixed messages, drawing a "red line" against the use of chemical weapons against rebels, but failing to follow through, which disillusioned our friends and encouraged extremists to fill the vacuum in both Iraq and Syria, ultimately leading to the rise of the terrorist Islamic State (ISIS). The documentary weighs Obama's options, choices, and leadership style, crediting his concern over whether American weapons would end up in the hands of Islamic radicals, understandable reluctance to overthrow sovereign governments, and worries about keeping conflicts from engulfing entire regions. However, the decision to not answer provocations helped embolden radicals, while ineffectiveness in gaining intelligence led to being blindsided when ISIS quickly toppled cities in Iraq and Syria, setting off a bloodbath of hostage taking, beheadings, rape, and possibly genocide, as well as the globe-shaking attacks on Paris in November 2015. Featuring some graphic war footage, *Obama at War* is an evenhanded, non-partisan assessment that points out White House mistakes, while also admitting that a war-weary America has been left with few good options. A timely addition to ongoing foreign policy dialogue, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)

### Pretty Slick ★★★1/2

(2014) 71 min. DVD: \$79; public libraries; \$149; colleges & universities. DRA. The Video Project. PPR. Closed captioned.

In 2010, the Gulf of Mexico was the site

of an environmental catastrophe due to BP's Deepwater Horizon oil spill. While news coverage of the spill dominated the media, the strategy adopted by BP—with the federal government's consent—to stop the ongoing disaster was not widely analyzed: specifically, BP's decision to use the chemical dispersant Corexit to sink the oil, rather than clean it up. Independent documentary filmmaker James Fox spent three years investigating the impact of the Corexit fix on the Gulf, arguing that BP engaged in a massive cover-up while making reckless decisions to end the situation. Fox goes out of his way to confirm charges against BP, running his own water tests to determine toxicity levels in the Gulf while also interviewing numerous scientists who discuss the ongoing effect that the spill has on the ecosystem. Fox insists that safety concerns regarding both the environment and the general public were overlooked in favor of rapidly restoring Gulf Coast tourist-driven economies, and he includes comments from fishermen and others who rely on the Gulf's waters for their livelihoods. *Pretty Slick* also does not let the government off the hook: despite massive fines against BP, no new federal safety standards have been put into place. An invigorating work of investigative filmmaking that is certain to spark much-needed discussions about environmental safety issues, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

### The Story of Women and Power ★★★

(2015) 182 min. DVD: \$34.99. Athena (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62172-442-61.

Hosted by historian Amanda Vickery, this three-part BBC documentary (originally

titled *Suffragettes Forever!*) centers on the long struggle for women's rights in England. After replaying the notorious archival footage of suffrage activist Emily Davison walking onto the track of the 1913 Epsom Derby and being struck down by King George V's horse, Vickery's energetic, wide-ranging survey begins in earnest with a look at a 17th-century march by Levellers in favor of women's legal recognition, before proceeding chronologically to cover such icons as Mary Wollstonecraft (who published *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in 1792), Hannah More (who established schools for girls and promoted philanthropic activity), and John Stuart Mill (who agitated in favor of female equality even as Queen Victoria opposed it). The radical suffragette movement is introduced near the end of the second episode, focusing on Emmeline Pankhurst, whose Women's Social and Political Union spearheaded the civil disobedience and violence that led to Davison's fatal act. The final episode continues the narrative up through the career of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, while noting that much remains to be done to truly achieve full equality. Vickery is a vibrant host who makes skillful use of archival material—artwork, cartoons, photographs, and film footage—while also visiting pertinent locations and interviewing knowledgeable scholars. Offering a fine introduction to the history of the modern feminist movement in British society, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

### War for Guam ★★★1/2

(2015) 57 min. DVD: \$80; public libraries; \$300; colleges & universities. DRA. Third World Newsreel. PPR.

Frances Negrón-Muntaner's PBS-aired documentary examines Guam's turbulent experiences during the 20th century as both a U.S. territory and as a Japanese-occupied area during World War II. The native Chamorro population of the island were first colonized by the Spanish in the 17th century, who brought with them Christianity, but also allowed the people to retain their language and most of their customs. When Spain surrendered the island to the U.S. after the Spanish-American War of 1898, the new American colonial authority enforced English and American customs—without guaranteeing the local people any American freedoms. Guam was mostly used by the U.S. government as a sleepy naval outpost and fueling station, until Japan invaded the island, hours after the Pearl Harbor attack. Most of the film details how the Chamorro successfully hid U.S. radioman George Tweed from the Japanese during the nearly-three-year occupation, and how Father Jesus Baza Dueñas led the local resistance—an act of bravery that ultimately cost him his life. The liberation of Guam ushered in a new era in which the U.S. government confiscated three-quarters of the island's land mass for

military purposes. While Guam's residents ultimately became U.S. citizens and many of its young people went on to serve in the military, the Chamorro continue to complain about being disenfranchised in their own land. Offering an intelligent and vigorous examination of a subject unknown to most Americans, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

## TRAVEL & GEOGRAPHY

### Discoveries... America National Parks: Statue of Liberty & New York City ★★★

(2015) 50 min. DVD or Blu-ray: \$24.95. DRA. Bennett-Watt HD Productions. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-60490-180-1 (dvd), 978-1-60490-203-7 (blu-ray).

Did you know that New York City and surrounding areas are home to 22 sites that are part of the National Park System? In addition to the iconic Statue of Liberty, these include Ellis Island, Federal Hall (where George Washington took the oath of office as the nation's first president), Grant's Tomb National Memorial, and the 9/11 Memorial. Combining stunning images, thoughtful narration, and informative commentary from park rangers, this latest entry in Jim and Kelly Watt's high-def filmed *Discoveries... America National Parks* series takes viewers on walkthroughs of the various sites, many of which witnessed rich history. At center stage is the colossal copper lady who stands on Liberty Island in New York Harbor, a gift from France that symbolizes new beginnings. Among the less well-known locations are Hamilton Grange, the Harlem home of Alexander Hamilton; the African Burial Ground National Monument in lower Manhattan, containing the remains of free and enslaved Africans from the 17th and 18th centuries; Castle Clinton, a circular sandstone fort in what is now Battery Park; the Colonial era St. Paul's Church and its historic cemetery; and Theodore Roosevelt's birthplace on the East Side and later home at Sagamore Hill near Oyster Bay. Epitomizing the beauty of the landscape are Fire Island National Seashore and the 27,000-acre Gateway National Recreation Area, which encompasses wildlife refuges and other features in New Jersey and New York. Highlighting an impressive and diverse array of historic and natural attractions, this is recommended. Aud: P. (C. Block)

### Switzerland ★★★1/2

(2014) 60 min. DVD: \$24.95. Globe Trekker (avail. from [www.globetrekkerstore.com](http://www.globetrekkerstore.com)). PPR. ISBN: 1-937103-27-9.

This entry in Globe Trekker's ongoing series of travelogues features American guide Brianna Barnes, who takes viewers on a tour of the small, mountainous European nation of Switzerland. Visiting a number of

cities and setting aside time for explorations on a steep mountain pass, Barnes first heads for Geneva—site of CERN's Large Hadron Collider—noting how this international city is a perfect host to the United Nations' European headquarters. Also on the itinerary are a tour of Charlie Chaplin's final home (where he lived for a quarter-century after self-imposed exile from the U.S.), a stop at an Albert Einstein museum in Bern, and a look at how cheese is made in Gruyere. Barnes also participates in the peculiar sport of clearing cow dung from pastures with something akin to a golf club, and learns some of the nuances behind politically-neutral Switzerland's self-defense during World War II. Last up is a trip to Zurich, where Barnes engages in a fascinating conversation with a bank executive whose (sometimes sensitive) job it is to locate survivors of foreigners who had secret and therefore unclaimed Swiss bank accounts. Likely to be popular with armchair travelers, this is highly recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

## BIOGRAPHY

### The Majestic Life of Queen Elizabeth II

★★★  
(2013) 90 min. DVD: \$19.95. Vision Films (avail. from *mist distributors*).

In celebration of Queen Elizabeth II's "Diamond Jubilee," this archival clip-laden laudatory program showcases the life of the current regent of the United Kingdom. Featuring commentary from Anglophiles including broadcaster Gyles Brandreth, historian Robert Lacey, royal correspondent Camilla Tominey, and actress Helen Mirren (who won an Oscar for her role as Elizabeth in *The Queen*), *The Majestic Life* offers a chronological look at "Lilibet's" upbringing as a daughter of York in Piccadilly, where the idyll of George's "Four of Us" tight-knit family was irretrievably altered with Edward's abdication, and Elizabeth went from Daddy's girl to being thrust upon the throne. Benchmarks covered here include Elizabeth's time as an inner-palace Girl Guide, wartime stint in the Women's Auxiliary Territorial Service, romance and wildly popular wedding with dreamy though black sheep-y Philip, widely televised coronation (many British subjects bought TVs for just that reason), and Commonwealth tours. Some time is spent on Charles and Di and other royal family members (with daggers directed towards Rupert Murdoch, who is supposedly bent on monarchical destruction), but the core focus remains on Elizabeth R in this biographical tribute that nicely balances her private life with her respected status as a symbol of stability. Recommended. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

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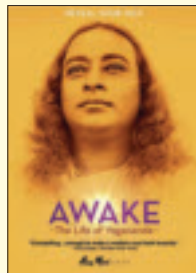
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### Awake: The Life of Yogananda ★★☆☆1/2

(2014) 86 min. DVD: \$29.95. Kino Lorber (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Filmmakers Paola di Florio and Lisa Leeman's lively documentary focuses on the life and legacy of Paramahansa Yogananda, the Hindu swami who made Vedic teachings accessible to the world—sans the dogma and rules of organized religion. As American musician Herb Jeffries says in archival footage, Yogananda's message was that you could study and meditate with him and still go out and drink, smoke, and be promiscuous—but you would likely not want to do so anymore. Yogananda taught self-realization: discovering one's link to the divine through neural pathways in the brain and spine, achieved through consciousness-raising via yoga and meditation. After developing a devoted following in India, Yogananda came to the United States in the 1920s and stayed on, despite sometimes brutal resistance in the South and being tarnished by muckraking journalists as a cult leader. Yogananda eventually amassed thousands of followers, and he established a monastery in Los Angeles where he wrote his famous *Autobiography of a Yogi* in his later years. *Awake* uses a combination of archival images and newsreel footage, as well as new and old interview clips (with George Harrison, Ravi Shankar, and others), to deliver a fine portrait of a key figure who brought yoga to the West. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)



### Raising Matty Christian ★★☆☆1/2

(2014) 80 min. DVD: \$19.95. Raising Matty Christian Productions (avail. from www.raisingmattychristian.com).

Matthew G. "Matty" Christian was born in Canton, MA, in 1983 without fully formed limbs or a tongue. His parents never treated him as disabled and did not encourage anyone to feel sorry for him. From the beginning, Matty was expected to be a part of the everyday world. Matty mastered the use of prosthetic legs, although he could walk just as easily without them, while prosthetic arms proved to be too cumbersome. Surgery enabled Matty to speak, albeit with a very slight impediment. A love of sports turned him into a trophy-winning athlete, with notable achievements in wrestling and swimming, and he went on to help inspire young people with disabilities, serving as both a camp counselor and a personal mentor. Matty's accidental death in 2009 from a mixture of alcohol and prescription medicine was a cruelly abrupt ending to a life that was full of hope. Backed by Eric Barao's subtle yet often haunting musical score, filmmaker Christian de Rezendes presents an affecting portrait of a beautiful person, taking viewers on an emotional odyssey in this profoundly moving documentary. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

### Tibetan Warrior ★★☆☆

(2015) 85 min. DVD: \$24.99. Garden Thieves Pictures (avail. from www.amazon.com).

Filmmaker Dodo Hunziker's thoughtful documentary centering on Tibet's half-century-plus struggle under oppressive Chinese rule focuses on one man: Loten Namling, a 50-year-old Tibetan exile living in Switzerland. Passionate about his homeland's plight,

Namling—a musician and activist who works at keeping Tibet in the news—grows increasingly disturbed as despairing Tibetans begin self-immolating in order to protest the loss of freedom. Believing that the world is ignoring their sacrifice, Namling spends two months walking from the Swiss city of Bern to Geneva while carting a coffin bearing the inscription "Tibet." At the end of his journey, Namling hosts and performs at a protest directly across the street from the United Nations' Swiss headquarters. Namling also travels to India to meet with the extensive Tibetan exile community, seeking opinions about how Tibetans should move forward on gaining independence: some believe that infinite patience is the answer, while other, younger Tibetans are ready to go to war. Ultimately, Namling receives an audience with the Dalai Lama, who talks to him about the way things really work in this world. *Tibetan Warrior* also covers the personal angle, as Namling meets some of his family members for the first time, and must deal with the death of his foster mother. Extras include deleted scenes, bonus interviews, and a music video. A touching, enlightening film that tells one man's story within the broader fight for Tibetan independence, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

## Video Librarian Online

Visit Video Librarian Online ([www.videolibrarian.com](http://www.videolibrarian.com)) for more reviews during January and February, including: *The Condemned*, *Everything Will Be*, *The Polygon*, *Queers in the Kingdom*, *Six Days*, *Walk On*, *Wrenched*, and much more!

## Series Update

The following titles are new additions to series that were previously recommended. Titles are available from most distributors unless otherwise noted.

**The Cathedral Films Collection** (120 min., DVD: \$14.99) is the latest Vision Video release of Gospel Films Archive vintage short films with Christian themes, and includes *Ambassador for Christ* (1949), *I Beheld His Glory* (1953), and *No Greater Power* (1960). See review of *The Christopher Films Collection* in VL-9/15. Available from: Vision Video, P.O. Box 540, Worcester, PA 19490; tel: 800-523-0226; web: [visionvideo.com](http://visionvideo.com).



Also newly available from Vision Video is **The Torchlighters: The Robert Jermain Thomas Story** (30 min., DVD: \$14.99), the latest addition to the Christian History Institute's series for ages 8-12, focusing on the life of Protestant Christian missionary Robert Jermain Thomas. See review of *The William Booth Story* in VL-3/12.

Paramount Home Entertainment's **Dora and Friends: Season 1** (456 min., DVD: 4 discs, \$21.99) features 18 episodes from the Nickelodeon animated series following bilingual traveler Dora and her 'tween pals. See review of *Dora and Friends* in VL-5/15.

**Thomas & Friends: Tales on the Rails** (58 min., DVD: \$24.99) is the newest addition to Universal Studios Home Entertainment's computer-animated series featuring Thomas the Tank Engine, based on *The Railway Stories* by the Rev. W. Awdry. See review of *Thomas & Friends: Tale of the Brave—The Movie* in VL-11/14.

Hosted by Christopher Kimball, **Cook's Country: Season 8** (345 min., DVD: 2 discs, \$29.99) is the latest season of the WGBH and PBS culinary instructional series featuring chefs from *America's Test Kitchen* as they work out the perfect recipes for "Frosted Meatloaf," "Dakota Peach Kuchen," and "Charleston Shrimp Perloo." See review of *Cook's Country: Season One* in VL Online-3/09.





## 009 Re: Cyborg ★★★

(2012) 104 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors).



Top-level anime director Kenji Kamiyama's 2012 film is an updated, amped-up, and grown-up version of *Cyborg 009*, the cherished manga franchise launched by the late comics creator Shotaro Ishinomori in 1964. Nine international human cyborgs with different superpowers were created by wizened Dr. Gilmore (the characters here are drawn realistically, not in Ishinomori's whimsical, *Astro Boy*-cute style) to fight for peace. Enhanced with abilities such as flying, hyperspeed, incredible strength, and psychic powers, they reunite (after an interval of post Cold-War estrangement) when 9/11-style suicide bombings and rogue missiles smite mankind's tallest skyscrapers, pushing the world towards Armageddon-like conflict. The aggressors claim that they are obeying the voice of God—or is it a military-industrial conspiracy between the U.S. and Israel? Key plot details may be a little fuzzy, but Kamiyama's kinetic vision carries this epic material over the sketchy patches. An included booklet explains much of the puzzling background and contains interviews with Kamiyama. Presented in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, rated TV-14, other extras include a prologue segment. (C. Cassidy)

## Danganronpa: The Animated Series ★★★

(2014) 4 discs. 335 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$64.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors).

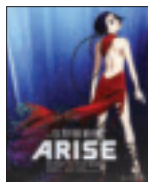


Based on a popular narrative-driven video game (with various cross-media spin-offs, including comic books and music CDs), this ultra-fast-moving whodunit fantasy anime series is set at Hope's Peak High School, an elite institution where 16 teens from various cliques and demographics (including gender-benders and sexy fan-service types) have just been admitted. But the place turns out to be a high-tech fortress of terror, whose "principal" is embodied by a malevolent robot teddy bear, who explains that the students will be trapped as prisoners for all of their lives. The only way that a pupil will be released is to murder another one and get away with it—leaving the survivors tasked with playing detective to unmask the guilty party, or else. Homicides commence almost immediately—although the violence is rendered in non-realistic fashion (corpses bleed bright lavender rather than red)—and the denouement veers from amped Agatha Christie to apocalypse-tinged sci-fi (think: *Hunger Games*) with a tongue-in-cheek, sardonic soul. Presenting all 13 episodes from 2014 in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, rated TV-MA, extras include an

audio commentary with the English-dub cast. Recommended. (C. Cassidy)

## Ghost in the Shell Arise: Borders 3 & 4 ★★★

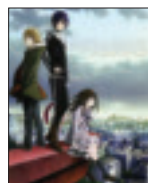
(2015) 4 discs. 116 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors).



Lightning does not strike three times—let alone four times—in these latest OVA installments from a reboot of the popular anime franchise. In *Borders 3: Ghost Tears*, protagonist Major Motoko Kusanagi returns to face a particularly puzzling crime that involves terrorists, the murder of a detective, and prosthetic legs. The sexy major finds herself at odds with a brand of cyber warfare known as Fire-Starter, and this new challenge also unleashes some bad memories that interfere with her work. In *Border 4: Ghosts Stand Alone*, the major is back in pursuit of a dangerous hacker who created a new virus to muck up computers. Viewers who come to these episodes with no previous knowledge of *Ghost in the Shell* may not fully appreciate the depth and scope of the Motoko Kusanagi character (one of the few standalone female heroes who is not a crass caricature). But even longtime fans may well find this disappointing, although the artwork remains characteristically sharp. Presented in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, rated TV-MA, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes and bonus shorts. Optional. (P. Hall)

## Noragami: The Complete First Season ★★★1/2

(2014) 4 discs. 300 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$64.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors).



It's tough being a forgotten god trying to make a new shrine for yourself at the miserable rate of one 5-yen job at a time. Yato bills himself as a Delivery God, granting small wishes and banishing interloping Phantoms from the Far Shore as a side-duty. Between a dark past and less-than-stellar personality, Yato doesn't have many friends—until high-schooler Hiyori Iki tries to save him from a traffic accident and in the process becomes a half-Phantom, which opens her eyes to the world of gods and spirits. But even Hiyori and Yato's newly acquired weapon/sidekick—sullen teen Yukine—can't protect down-on-his-luck Yato from his past mistakes. *Noragami* is a surprisingly moral and nuanced anime series in which appearances deceive, and the small number of protagonists makes it possible for each to have an arc of growth or discovery. *Noragami* boasts handsome designs, fluid animation, plenty of creepy monsters, and a solid resolution in the final episode as a united crew stands ready to move forward. Presenting all 12 episodes from the 2014 first season in a dual-language

Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, rated TV-14, extras include video and audio commentaries. Highly recommended. (L. Martincik)

## Series Additions

**Fairy Tail, Part 18** (Funimation, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: 4 discs, \$54.98). Things are back on track when Fairy Tail returns to Magnolia, and the group looks into the activities of the Sabertooth Guild in this 18th volume from the series.



**Hayate the Combat Butler: Season 2—Complete Collection** (Sentai, DVD: 5 discs, \$69.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$89.98). This sophomore season set follows Hayate Ayasaki as he protects eccentric spoiled heiress Nagi Sanzenin.



**Naruto Shippuden, DVD Set Twenty-Four** (Viz, DVD: 2 discs, \$44.98). Naruto grows as a shinobi while the Fourth Great Ninja War continues in this collection from the long-running series.



**One Piece: Season Seven, Voyage Three** (Funimation, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.98). After a skirmish with Bartholomew Kuma, pirate Monkey D. Luffy is marooned on the island of Amazon Lilly in this latest collection of episodes from the series.



**Sailor Moon R: Season 2, Part 2** (Viz, DVD: 3 discs, \$44.98; Blu-ray/DVD Combo: 6 discs, \$69.99). This second volume from the second season of the popular *Sailor Moon R* franchise finds the sinister Black Moon Clan time-traveling to contemporary Tokyo to alter the future.



**Space Brothers, Collection 6** (Sentai, DVD: 2 discs, \$49.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$59.98). Mutta stands on the verge of achieving the first major step on his journey to the stars—officially becoming an astronaut—in this sixth collection from the popular series.



**Adam Ant: The Blueblack Hussar ★★**

(2015) 99 min. DVD: \$24.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).



Many with long memories of the New Romantics period of British pop music in the 1980s—or of the early days of music videos on MTV—may recall the swaggering, playful presence of Adam Ant (“Goody Two Shoes”), whose personal story turns out to be rather horrific. He was “sectioned” (i.e., detained under England’s Mental Health Act) three times for bipolar disorder, derailing his career, and costing him some 15 years. Veteran filmmaker Jack Bond’s documentary centers on the artist’s return from the wilderness a few years ago, as he goes on a tour of small venues in the U.K., reacquaints himself with audiences, gives interviews, and connects with various random celebrities (including actress Charlotte Rampling, and producer-musician Mark Ronson). Sadly, however, most of the film is dead dull, a fly-on-the-wall look at not much at all besides Adam Ant holding forth about life and music while wearing a hat well-suited for a 19th-century British naval officer. Little is revealed here except that the 58-year-old musician has many opinions, and a sense of humor, and the sparse footage of him in performance is hampered by poor-quality audio. Presented in stereo, extras include bonus live performances (including one with Boy George) and a Q&A with Bond and journalist John Robb. Ant-music fanatics may appreciate, but for most this is an optional purchase. (T. Keogh)

**Aerosmith Rocks Donington 2014 ★★★★★**

(2014) 105 min. DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$34.98 (two audio CDs included). Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors)



With the exception of touring keyboard player Buck Johnson, the original Aerosmith members are well into their 60s, but they rock as hard as ever in this 2014 concert at the Download Festival in Leicestershire’s Donington Park. If anything, the band plays as if it has something to prove, possibly because the festival attracted a younger demographic. Consequently, instead of opening with the 1970s hits that made their reputation, the band jumps ahead to songs from their 1980s resurgence, such as “Love in an Elevator.” On the down side, “Dude (Looks Like a Lady)” has not aged well, especially in light of the strides LGBT people have made since the song’s release (what might have been intended as a jokey update on the Kinks’ “Lola” now seems particularly insensitive). On the plus side, however, lead singer Steven Tyler continues to look and sound ageless, although it’s too bad that he resorts to lame

croch grabs and sexist commentary (adding insult to injury, the program also features clips of the band preparing for the show, including a groupie-filled sequence with Tyler). Those quibbles aside, the band’s 20-song set includes many fan favorites, such as “Walk This Way,” “Sweet Emotion,” “I Don’t Want to Miss a Thing,” and “Dream On.” And guitarist Joe Perry even gets the chance to sing on “Freedom Fighter” from 2012’s *Rock from Another Dimension*. Bundled with two audio CDs, this is presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray. Sure to be popular, this is recommended. (K. Fennessy)

**Billy Elliot: The Musical Live ★★★★★**

(2014) 170 min. DVD: \$22.98, Blu-ray: \$26.98. Universal Studios Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



Mounted by the same team that created the hit 2000 film *Billy Elliot*—including writer Lee Hall and director Stephen Daldry—*Billy Elliot: The Musical Live*, winner of 10 Tony awards (including Best Musical) and now celebrating the 10th year of its run, is presented in this 2014 performance from London’s Victoria Palace Theatre. Set in 1984-85 during the British coal miner’s strike that pitted U.K. prime minister Margaret Thatcher’s Conservative government against the National Union of Mine Workers, the musical centers on one boy who trades boxing gloves for ballet shoes, suffering the scorn of his older brother and his father, both coal miners, while being encouraged by the ghost of his deceased mother. In what is likely the most physically demanding role for a child in contemporary theatre, 11-year-old Elliott Hanna is astonishing as Billy, dancing up a kinetic storm in a variety of styles, including tap, modern, and ballet, while also turning in a compelling, heartfelt performance. Hanna is ably backed by Ruthie Henshall as the small-town ballet class instructor who sees Billy’s potential; Deka Walmsley as Billy’s tortured dad, who ultimately wants the best for his son; Ann Emery as Billy’s senile Grandma; and Zach Atkinson as Billy’s best friend, Michael. Featuring the music of Elton John (with lyrics by Hall), the show boasts a number of fine songs, including the beautiful “The Stars Look Down,” the stirring anthem “Solidarity,” the touching “Grandma’s Song,” the caustic “Merry Christmas, Maggie Thatcher,” and the comic cross-dressing number “Expressing Yourself.” A special treat here is the appearance of Liam Mower (the first stage Billy) in a dance scene with Hanna as the latter imagines his future graceful self (a rousing encore also features two dozen past and present Billys). Although some might balk at the profanity spouted by pre-teens in the show—much of it played

for laughs—*Billy Elliot* is ultimately a big-hearted, spirit-lifting musical. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and Dolby Digital stereo on Blu-ray, extras include an introduction and set tour by Hanna, and a behind-the-scenes featurette with cast and crew. Highly recommended. (R. Pitman)

**Daive Penitente ★★★★★**

(2015) 73 min. In Italian w/ English subtitles. DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. C Major (dist. by Naxos of America).



A rarely performed Mozart piece is showcased in this unusual 2015 Mozart-woche (Mozart Week) presentation from Salzburg. The work itself is a cantata composed in 1785 for the Vienna Society of Musicians, while the text is derived from an Italian translation of the Psalms attributed to King David. But except for two elaborate new arias, the music simply recycles the eight sections of the two completed portions—the Kyrie and Gloria—of Mozart’s otherwise unfinished *Mass in C minor*. Although the placement of performers on different levels at the rear of the stage leads to some slight coordination problems, the cantata is beautifully performed by three excellent soloists—soprano Christiane Karg, mezzo-soprano Marianne Crebassa, and tenor Stanislas de Barbeyrac. And the Salzburger Bachchor, accompanied by the original-instrument group Les Musiciens du Louvre, play with great finesse under conductor Marc Minkowski. What sets this performance apart is the locale: the Salzburg Felsenreitschule (Riding School)—a stonewall structure previously used for opera productions, but here reverting to its original purpose as members of the Académie équestre de Versailles, under their leader Bartabas, ride their steeds in varied formations across the sand-covered stage in tandem with the music. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray release) and PCM stereo, extras include Minkowski’s reading of Mozart’s *Adagio and Fugue in C minor*. A one-of-a-kind production that should appeal to fanciers of horsemanship and/or Mozart rarities, this is recommended. (F. Swietek)

**Gone with the Wind: The Remarkable Rise and Tragic Fall of Lynyrd Skynyrd ★★★★★**

(2015) 163 min. DVD: \$19.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.



Tom O’Dell’s documentary about Lynyrd Skynyrd begins with a look at front man Ronnie Van Zant, who grew up in rural Florida and considered a career in sports until he caught a concert by the Rolling Stones, which inspired him to form a band with high

school friends (other influences included the blues-based bands Free and Hour Glass, the latter a precursor to the Allman Brothers). Drummer Bob Burns remembers practicing 12 hours a day before the band made a name for themselves, first as the One Percent, then as Lynyrd Skynyrd. After securing a manager and a recording date at Muscle Shoals, the group should have been on their way, but nine record labels would turn them down. Their fortunes changed, however, when they met Al Kooper, who produced their eponymous 1973 debut, which included the now classic rock anthem "Free Bird." Although Kooper was impressed with their talent, he found it odd that the band never improvised. As critic Robert Christgau puts it, "The Allman Brothers are a jam band and Lynyrd Skynyrd are a song band. Ronnie was a great songwriter." By the time of their 1974 follow-up, *Second Helping*, the group had started to use a Confederate flag as a backdrop, causing controversy that continues to this day. With a new manager onboard, the band toured and drank more than ever, leading to departures for Burns and guitarist Ed King, but they rallied with new additions Artimus Pyle, Steve Gaines, and three backup singers. Sadly, a 1977 plane crash that took the lives of Van Zant and Gaines would bring that lineup to an end. Offering a worthy tribute to the band's first and best incarnation, this is recommended. (K. Fennessy)

### Jeff Lynne's ELO: Live in Hyde Park ★★

(2014) 167 min. DVD: \$14.98, Blu-ray: \$19.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



The name of the band, Jeff Lynne's ELO, indicates that the entire Electric Light Orchestra wasn't present at this 2014 concert, but fans aren't likely to feel too disappointed. Playing before 50,000 people at London's Hyde Park, the frontman is accompanied by Richard Tandy on piano and keyboards (as Lynne notes, the pair have been playing together for 42 years). The rest of the band includes eight hired hands plus the BBC Concert Orchestra, who add the necessary grandeur on symphonic pop songs such as "Telephone Line." All told, the group serves up 15 tracks from the ELO catalog—including "Strange Magic," "Can't Get It Out of My Head," and "Livin' Thing"—as well as one Traveling Wilburys number, the George Harrison-penned "Handle with Care." Along with the concert, this release also features the documentary *Mr. Blue Sky: The Story of Jeff Lynne & ELO*, which traces Lynne's career from the 1960s to today. Lynne talks about earlier bands The Move and The Idle Race (the latter would become ELO, although Monty Python Eric Idle jokes here that Lynne should have kept the original name), as well as his efforts as a

producer (working with Roy Orbison, Tom Petty, and Harrison). Other speakers include Paul McCartney and Ringo Starr with whom Lynne collaborated on the John Lennon song "Free as a Bird." Also featuring an interview with Lynne, this is presented in Dolby Digital stereo on DVD, and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray. Recommended. (K. Fennessy)

### Les Contes d'Hoffmann ★★

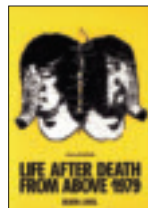
(2014) 193 min. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Bel Air Classiques (dist. by Naxos of America).



Jacques Offenbach's grand opera—unfinished at his death—identifies itself as "fantastique," but Christoph Marthaler's 2014 production at Madrid's Teatro Real might better be described as bizarre. The action is updated to what appears to be a 1940s club that is also an art studio populated by nude live models. Nicklausse, the young companion of Hoffmann—whose three disastrous past loves form the substance of the subsequent acts—is transformed into a querulous, drunken old lady (she and other characters onstage are usually shown either sitting around zombified or engaging in jerky fits across the stage). The original climaxes of the three acts are largely ignored here in favor of enigmatic endings, leading to general incoherence. Despite mostly solid vocalism—Eric Cutler is a decent if unmemorable Hoffmann, Anne Sofie von Otter does her best with Nicklausse, Vito Priante is fine as the various Mephistophelean characters, and the women in Hoffmann's life are all adequate—conductor Sylvain Cambreling's reserved reading of the score often lacks the required zest. A major miscalculation also mars the epilogue, as Cambreling literally stops the action in order to have Stella (Altea Garrido) recite an excerpt from a poem by Fernando Pessoa while everyone else stands like statues as they listen. It's a moment that accurately reflects the deadening effect of this misguided take on what should have been a scintillating opera. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and PCM stereo on Blu-ray, this is not a necessary purchase. (F. Swietek)

### Life After Death from Above 1979 ★★

(2014) 73 min. DVD: \$19.99. Passion River (avail. from most distributors).



The Canadian noise-rock duo Death from Above 1979 recounts their history—from the beginning to the end to the new beginning—in Eva Michon's engaging documentary. Singer and drummer Sebastian Grainger recalls his roots in the Toronto group Femme Fatale, which led to a friend-

ship with singer and bassist Jesse F. Keeler. The pair hit it off, recording several singles and EPs, which led to local gigs that brought them to the attention of other bands, such as Metric, and labels, like Last Gang, which released their 2004 debut, *You're a Woman, I'm a Machine*. After that, the duo played 546 shows between 2001 and 2005. During that time, Grainger says that they would ingest anything to stay awake, from energy drinks to ephedrine. But while touring with Nine Inch Nails and Queens of the Stone Age, the friendship soured, and in 2006, the band broke up. Keeler formed the electro-pop outfit MSTRKRFT and continued to drink and tour, while Grainger settled down and went solo. During the next five years, they both got married (director Michon is Grainger's wife), and one had a child, while the other bought a house. The documentary concludes with their 2011 reunion, which began with a surprise show at Austin's South by Southwest conference, where fans became so excited that they broke down the perimeter fence. Cops shut down the gig, but the band continued to tour for the next year, and in 2014 they finally released their long-awaited follow-up, *The Physical World*, although it remains to be seen whether more will follow. An interesting portrait of an oddball band, this is recommended. (K. Fennessy)

### The Motels Live at the Whisky a Go Go: 50th Anniversary Special ★★1/2

(2014) 88 min. DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98. Vesuvio Entertainment (avail. from [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)).



Captured live in 2014 at L.A.'s Whisky a Go Go—a legendary venue celebrating its 50th anniversary—Martha Davis and the Motels deliver a 17-song set that draws heavily from the New Wave band's first four studio albums (released 1979-1983). Introduced by actress Rosanna Arquette and Grammy nominee Linda Perry, front woman Davis still has the sultry chops that informed The Motels' megahits "Only the Lonely" and "Suddenly Last Summer." Aside from Davis, the only original band member here is Marty Jourard on keyboards and sax (younger bucks fill out the roster on guitar, bass, and drums). Initially, Davis's vocals are somewhat overshadowed during the more instrument-heavy tunes, such as "Mission of Mercy," after which someone shouts something and Davis does a double-take, asking "Whoa, did somebody ask me to take off my top? Do you know what birthday this is?" (Davis is here celebrating her 63rd). I might have misheard, but I actually thought the guy yelled something along the lines of "Turn your mic up." Davis sounds better on quieter entries like "Celia," "Counting," and the lovely "Mr. Grey." Also featuring the hits "Take the L" (with the classic

refrain, “take the L out of lover/and it’s over”) and “Total Control,” filmmaker Denise Faye’s relatively intimate concert documentary is moderately entertaining. Extras include a fan’s surprise backstage meeting with Davis, and an interview featurette with early band members Jeff Jourard, Dean Chamberlain, and Robert Newman recalling the group’s heyday. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 (which on my review copy simply dropped out for the final three tracks) and stereo, this is a strong optional purchase. (R. Pitman)

### Nazareth: No Means of Escape ★★1/2

(2014) 173 min. DVD: \$14.98, Blu-ray: \$19.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



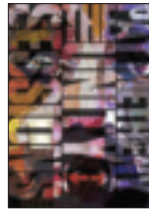
Fans of the Scottish quartet Nazareth, whose 1975 *Hair of the Dog* went platinum, will find this 2014 concert to be something of a mixed blessing. Although Nazareth performs signature songs such as “Love Hurts” during the 13-song set at London’s Metropolis Studios, the material isn’t quite the same without original lead singer Dan McCafferty. McCafferty stuck it out as long as he could, but throat problems forced his retirement in 2013, and he was replaced by Linton Osborne, who sings in a considerably higher register (recalling Richard O’Brien from *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*). Granted, the lineup had already witnessed some changes before Osborne’s arrival; after the departures of Manny Charlton and Darrell Sweet, the band added guitarist Jimmy Murrison and bassist Pete Agnew’s son, Lee, on drums. Here, in addition to “Hair of the Dog,” they serve up fan favorites including “Razamanaz” and “This Flight Tonight,” the latter a hit cover of the Joni Mitchell song from her album *Blue*. Also included here is *Made in Scotland*, a documentary recounting the band’s history. Agnew recalls meeting McCafferty in primary school, where they became fast friends, and later formed the Shadettes. When looking for a new name, they chose Nazareth, the Pennsylvania town featured in The Band’s song “The Weight.” Starting in Scotland, they conquered the U.K., Canada, and eventually the U.S., something few Scottish rockers before them had managed. For Agnew, it meant career longevity, and he also credits Guns N’ Roses for covering “Hair of the Dog,” which brought renewed interest their way. Presented in DTS 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include an acoustic version of “Sunshine,” and extended interviews with Agnew, McCafferty, and fans. A strong optional purchase. (K. Fennessy)

### Pat Metheny: The Unity Sessions ★★★

(2015) 132 min. DVD: \$14.98, Blu-ray: \$19.98. Eagle Vision (avail. from most distributors).

After playing a 150-date world tour in sup-

port of *KIN* (←→), guitarist Pat Metheny eschewed the usual concert trappings for this intimate audience-less 15-song set filmed in New York’s 5 Angels Theater. The quartet of musicians, who formed for 2012’s Grammy Award-winning *Unity Band*, includes Chris Potter (tenor and soprano saxophone), Ben Williams (acoustic and electric bass), and Antonio Sánchez (drums). They are here joined on piano and vocals by Giulio Carmassi, whose understated singing serves more as embellishment. The performance includes material from the band’s two albums, plus tracks from throughout Metheny’s career, including “Police People,” which he wrote with the late Ornette Coleman for 1985’s *Song X* (Potter’s serpentine playing also recalls Coleman on “Genealogy”). Since unity is the name of the game, every player has a chance to solo, including Metheny, who plays acoustic guitar on “This Belongs to You.” The band also provides a percussion track to “On Day One” by clapping in unison before returning to their instruments. Sound and picture are top-notch throughout, making this a safe bet for longtime fans and newcomers alike. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1, and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, this is recommended. (K. Fennessy)



### Queen: A Night at the Odeon ★★★1/2

(1975) 63 min. DVD: \$14.98, Blu-ray: \$19.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



Filmed on the cusp of mega-stardom (the band would perform before more than 150,000 people in Hyde Park the following year), this 1975 BBC-aired *Old Grey Whistle Test* concert filmed at London’s Hammersmith Odeon on Christmas Eve 1975 features rock quartet Queen playing tunes off their first four studio albums in a 17-song set (technically 12, due to a medley and a guitar solo). Full of vigor and vim, wonderfully flamboyant lead singer Freddie Mercury (who would succumb to AIDS in 1991) commands the stage in v-cut-below-the-navel jumpsuits (yes, plural; of course there’s costume changes), while guitar virtuoso Brian May serves up swirling guitar licks (including a characteristically spacey, feedback-heavy solo), backed by John Deacon’s solid bass, and Roger Taylor’s steady drums. Presented in a 4:3 standard format aspect ratio, the image is remarkably clean and sharp (especially considering the age of the source material) as the band mostly eschews the hits (which were not considerable at that point) in favor of deep album tracks. In fact, only truncated versions of “Bohemian Rhapsody” and “Killer Queen” appear (in a medley), while “You’re My Best Friend” was

performed after the BBC cut away (so it is not included here). Instead, fans will be treated to songs rarely performed by the band during their later arena rock heyday: “Ogre Battle” (think Led Zeppelin lite), “The March of the Black Queen” (ditto), and “In the Lap of the Gods...Revisited” (ditto again)—all fun, as are the somewhat more familiar “Now I’m Here,” “Keep Yourself Alive,” and “Liar.” Rounding out the evening with a vampy/campy “Big Spender” before the *de rigueur* closer “God Save the Queen,” this is a winner. Presented in Dolby Digital stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and PCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include bonus songs from a ’75 performance in Japan, and an interview with May and Taylor. Highly recommended. (R. Pitman)

### Rage Against the Machine: Live at Finsbury Park ★★★

(2009) 81 min. DVD: \$14.98, Blu-ray: \$19.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



Few free outdoor concerts have a more unusual back story than this one. Tired of seeing contestants from Simon Cowell’s *X-Factor* competition series claim the #1 song spot each Christmas, British DJ Jon Morter and his wife Tracy started a Facebook petition in 2009 to make Rage Against the Machine’s “Killing in the Name” the top song. Against all odds, the campaign succeeded, and the band played a 2010 concert at Finsbury Park to express their gratitude (they also donated the proceeds from singles sales to charity). Delivering an energetic, high-volume 12-song set, front man Zack de la Rocha—who raps like a carnival barker—bounces around the stage until he’s soaked in sweat, while his band mates work to keep up, especially guitarist Tom Morello, who wrings every possible sound from his instrument (the pair are joined by Tim Commerford on bass and Brad Wilk on drums). De la Rocha encourages the audience to look after each other, and towards the end of the set—which includes a cover of the Clash’s “White Riot”—they bring out the Morters to thank them, closing out with “Killing in the Name,” which features the anti-authority refrain, “I won’t do what they tell me.” Presented in DTS 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette, and an interview with the Morters. Recommended. (K. Fennessy)

### Rock ‘n Rhythm Collector’s Set ★★★

(2015) 2 discs. 228 min. DVD: \$19.98. Film Chest (avail. from most distributors).



This set includes two full-length music revues and one feature film. It’s clear that

the definition of rock 'n roll has changed a lot in 60 years, since the artists who appear in *The 1955 Rock 'n Roll Revue* play jazz, doo-wop, and R&B, but no rock 'n roll. A similar mix of genres is featured in *Rhythm and Blues Revue*. Both 1955 shows take place at Harlem's Apollo Theater and feature host Willie Bryant, along with comedy routines from Nipsey Russell, Mantan Moreland, and others. Backed by their orchestras, Duke Ellington opens *The 1955 Rock 'n Roll Revue* with "The Mooche," while Lionel Hampton closes things out with "Jazz Finale." Some of the artists, such as Ellington, return for a second song later in the program. Bryant also does bits with the performers, like tap dancers Coles & Atkins, who reveal a flair for comedy, and Ruth Brown who trades finger snaps with him during "The Tears Keep Tumbling Down." *Rhythm and Blues Revue* kicks off with Hampton's "Jam Session" and concludes with Count Basie's "He Plays Bass in the Basie Band." The 1956 movie *Rock, Rock, Rock* exists mostly to showcase DJ Alan Freed and musical performances from big names like Chuck Berry. The threadbare plot finds Tuesday Weld playing Dori, a high school student who frets about the upcoming prom and sings a few songs (Connie Francis provides her singing voice). In 1975, the film made history when John Lennon settled a lawsuit over lines he borrowed for "Come Together" from Berry's song "You Can't Catch Me." Recommended. (K. Fennessy)

### Soul Boys of the Western World—Spandau Ballet: The Movie ★★★

(2015) 111 min. DVD: \$24.98. MPI Home Video (avail. from most distributors).



Director George Hencken's documentary allows the members of synth-pop quintet Spandau Ballet—Tony Hadley, John Keeble, Martin Kemp, Gary Kemp, and Steve Norman—to tell their own individual stories, over archival footage of the band and clips of the artists who influenced them. As teenagers, the five Londoners bonded over a love of the pop, soul, and glam music of the 1970s. Galvanized by punk, the quintet formed a band and experimented with different styles and names (the Makers, the Gentry, etc.) before deciding to prioritize keyboards over guitars (the name Spandau Ballet came from words written on a Berlin bathroom wall). Due to their dandified fashion sense, the band gained a reputation as a New Romantic act, which led to a major label contract, a recording session in the Bahamas, and a monster hit with the ballad "True." They longed to become pop stars, but also sought respect for their musicianship. Gary Kemp's position as sole songwriter also led to power struggles, a problem that was exacerbated by his self-described control freak tendencies. By 1999, the situation had

devolved to a point where three members filed a lawsuit against him, but 10 years later the group reunited for another tour. While the rise, fall, and resurrection trajectory is nothing new, it's still hard not to get swept up in the tale. Recommended. (K. Fennessy)

### The Tsar's Bride

★★★★1/2

(2013) 152 min. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Bel Air Classiques (dist. by Naxos of America).



Except in Russia, the operas of Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov have never achieved the repertory status of Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov*, or Borodin's *Prince Igor*. But this excellent 2013 Staatsoper Berlin production of Rimsky-Korsakov's 1899 opera proves to be well worth experiencing. Loosely based on an historical incident, the story serves up a complicated romantic roundelay that ends tragically. In need of a wife, Tsar Ivan the Terrible chooses the beautiful Marfa, although she loves the naïve Lykov. Lustful Gryaznoy, one of Ivan's henchmen, also desires Marfa for himself and secures a love potion to win her. But Lyubasha, Gryaznoy's mistress, poisons her rival, and Ivan then executes Lykov—whom the tsar blames for Marfa's fatal condition—after which Gryaznoy kills Lyubasha (like I said, complicated). Director Dmitri Tcherniakov has devised a rather strange vision for his modernized telling: the tsar is actually a fictional puppet of the true governors (including Gryaznoy), media masters who have created him via special effects for TV appearances and to conduct a public competition to determine his bride. While the concept sounds patently absurd, it actually works surprisingly well, especially given that the musical side here is superb. Daniel Barenboim leads the Staatskapelle Berlin and Staatsoperchor in a rich reading of the exquisitely orchestrated score, while the singing is powerfully idiomatic, with mezzo Anita Rachvelishvili standing out as the vengeful Lyubasha, although Olga Peretyatko (Marfa), Johannes Martin Kränzle (Gryaznoy), and Pavel Cernoch (Lykov) are not far behind. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 and PCM stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and PCM stereo on Blu-ray, this is a fine introduction to a neglected Russian masterwork. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

### What's Going On—Taste Live at the Isle of Wight ★★★

(1970) 163 min. DVD: \$14.98, Blu-ray: \$19.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).

Oscar-winning director Murray Lerner (*From Mao to Mozart: Isaac Stern in China*) helmed this concert documentary featuring Irish trio Taste at the 1970 Isle of Wight Festival, where they faced stiff

competition from big name acts including the Rolling Stones and Jimi Hendrix. The band consisted of Rory Gallagher (guitar and vocals), Richard "Charlie" McCracken (bass), and former Them member John Wilson (drums). While they succeeded in impressing the 600,000-strong audience, the band broke up afterwards because of a managerial situation that pitted musician against musician. Which is unfortunate, because their eight-song set here reveals a blues-rock band with strength to spare. Taste may have shared influences with Cream, but there is less psychedelia to their minimalist sound, as exemplified by the 10-minute "Sugar Mama," which opts for the raw ache of the blues over lyrical complexity. At times, the band comes across like a precursor to Detroit duo the White Stripes, due in part to Gallagher's expressive yawp and high-pitched playing. The documentary portion covers Gallagher's years in Irish show bands, and includes comments from Lerner, Bob Geldof, the Edge, and Brian May. Presented in DTS 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include bonus performances. Recommended. (K. Fennessy)



### Music Combo Sets

**Eric Clapton: Slowhand at 70—Live at the Royal Albert Hall** (Eagle Rock, DVD: \$29.98; Blu-ray: \$34.98). Packaged with two audio CDs, this live concert spotlighting Eric Clapton's weeklong run at London's Royal Albert Hall includes hits such as "I Shot the Sheriff," "Tears in Heaven," and "Layla."



**The Rolling Stones—From the Vault: Roundhay Park, Live in Leeds 1982** (Eagle Rock, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$34.98). Presented with two audio CDs, this addition to the Rolling Stones' "From the Vault" concert series records a July 1982 show at Leeds's Roundhay Park, with performances of "Under My Thumb," "Shattered," and "Beast of Burden."



**The Who: Live in Hyde Park** (Eagle Rock, DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99). Bundled with two audio CDs, this concert captures The Who in a June 2015 50th anniversary show in London's Hyde Park, with songs including "Behind Blue Eyes," "My Generation," and "Won't Get Fooled Again."



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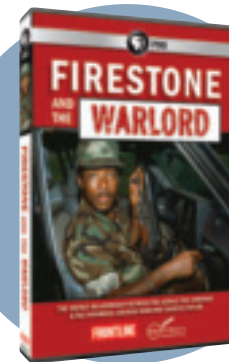
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# The Best Docs

With this year we begin our second decade of the annual “Best Documentaries” list (see pg. 54), adding 25 more titles to the already noted 275 (all featured in annotated lists online in the “Resources” section of *Video Librarian Plus!*, [www.videoliberalian.com](http://www.videoliberalian.com)).

Each year, *Video Librarian* staff fire up their coffee makers, popcorn poppers, and electric blankets and air conditioners (it’s a year-round project) to watch well over 200 documentaries that are considered.

The yearly lists mix higher-profile films (including *Blackfish*, *The Cove*, *Grizzly Man*, *An Inconvenient Truth*, *Inside Job*, *Man on Wire*, *March of the Penguins*, *Murderball*, *No End in Sight*, *Project Nim*, *Searching for Sugarman*, *Sicko*, *Taxi to the Dark Side*, *The Unknown Known*, *Waiting for Superman*, *Wordplay*, and *Young @ Heart*) with lesser-known titles (such as *51 Birch Street*, *Best Kept Secret*, *Big Enough*, *The City Dark*, *Dear Zachary*, *Four Seasons Lodge*, *The House I Live In*, *The Learning*, *A Life Without Pain*, *Menstrual Man*, *Monster Camp*, *Nursery University*, *The Revisionaries*, *Sister Helen*, *Somm*, and *Sunset Story*).

This year’s selections once again offer a blend of incredible personal stories, timely issues-oriented films, and just plain fun docs.

No personal story was more fascinating than that of real estate scion and accused murderer Robert Durst, chronicled in Andrew Jarecki’s chilling HBO-aired miniseries *The Jinx: The Life and Deaths of Robert Durst*. Also of note: Ryan Murdock’s documentary *Bronx Obama*, which offers a moving profile of struggling single father Louis Ortiz’s efforts to seize the moment as an Obama impersonator during the 2008 presidential election; filmmaker James Keach’s heartrending *Glen Campbell: I’ll Be Me* on the beloved singer-songwriter’s final tour while coping with Alzheimer’s disease; director Steve James’s profile of Pulitzer Prize-winning film critic Roger Ebert, *Life Itself*; and Morgan Schmidt-Feng’s sobering *On Her Own*, following fifth-generation rancher-farmer Nancy Prebilich as she faces family tragedies and Great Recession realities.

Memorable ripped-from-today’s headlines documentaries on the list include director Spencer Wolff’s *Stop*, which explores race-related tensions between police and minorities while covering NYPD’s controversial “stop-and-frisk” policy;

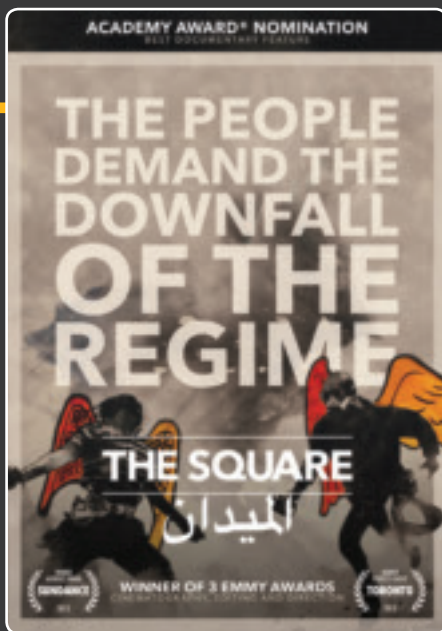
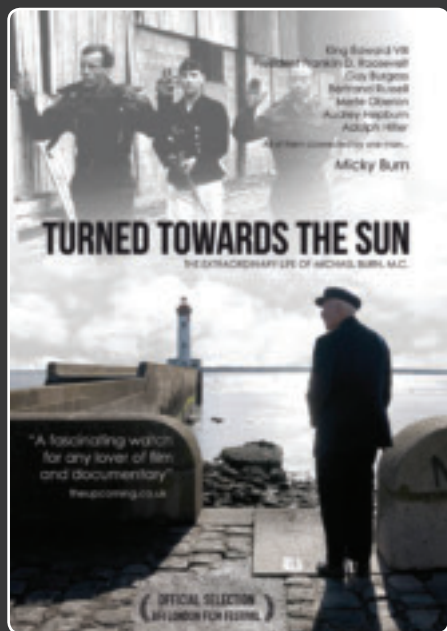
filmmaker Laura Poitras’s Oscar-winning *Citizenfour*, with its suspenseful real-time unfolding of the story of whistleblower Edward Snowden’s revelations of massive illegal spying by the U.S. government; and Kirby Dick’s *The Hunting Ground* on the widespread prevalence of sexual assault on U.S. college campuses.

And on the fun (yet also often meaningful) side, filmmaker Doug Block’s *112 Weddings* offers an engaging look at married life some years after the ceremony; director Brenda Goodman’s *Sex (Ed): The Movie* delivers an amusingly nostalgic look back at the old sex education films we endured in school; and Chris Moukarbel’s *Banksy Does New York* captures the mind-boggling social circus that erupted when controversial British graffiti artist Banksy mounted a month-long public art show in NYC in October 2013.

As we begin our fourth decade, members of the *Video Librarian* staff are already starting to screen promising films for next year’s list, looking for the best and brightest documentaries for libraries to share with patrons and students.

Happy viewing to all in 2016!

Randy Pitman



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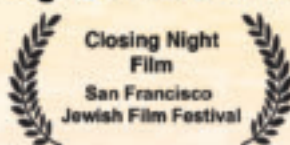
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Filmmaker Lacey Schwartz grew up in a typical upper middle class Jewish household in Woodstock, NY, with loving parents and a strong sense of her identity, despite occasional remarks from those around her who wondered how a white girl could have such dark skin. As a child she believed her family's explanation — that her appearance was inherited from her dark-skinned Sicilian grandfather — but when she reaches her adolescence, and her parents abruptly separate, her gut begins to tell her something else.

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