

May-June 2013

Video Librarian

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IN THIS ISSUE

Lore | The Central Park Five | Doctors of the Dark Side | Africa | Knuckleball! | The Abolitionists | Love Free or Die | Jedi Junkies



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Lore ★★★1/2

Music Box, in German w/English subtitles, 108 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95, May 28



Set in 1945 in the Bavarian countryside just after Germany's surrender near the end of WWII, this coming-of-age/survival story centers on 14-year-old Hannalore Dressler (Saskia Rosendahl)—nicknamed Lore—who is left in charge when her parents are taken into custody for Third Reich war crimes. Just before departing, Lore's mother instructs her stolid, responsible daughter to take the four younger siblings—ranging in age from an infant to a pre-teen—to their grandmother's house, some 500 miles to the north, near Hamburg. As they all trek across the Black Forest countryside—where anti-Semitism is rampant, and many villagers believe that the Holocaust images posted on bulletin boards were staged by actors—Lore barter their meager possessions for food and medicine. Along the way, the kids are stopped by American soldiers who demand to see their identification papers. Observing their dilemma is Thomas (Kai Malina), a mysterious young Jewish man with a number tattooed on his arm, who comes to their rescue, claiming that they are his siblings.

While grateful, the sullen Lore is also stubbornly conflicted; her Hitler's Youth Corps Nazi indoctrination taught her to distrust and loathe Jews. Eventually, Thomas will become their leader/guardian, not only arousing sexual feelings in Lore but also forcing her to question her beliefs. Australian director Cate Shortland's admirably restrained drama, based in part on Rachel Seiffert's 2001 novel *The Dark Room*, is a powerful, thought-provoking film. Extras include a "making-of" featurette, alternate ending, deleted scenes, and a "Memories of a German Girl" featurette. Highly recommended. (S. Granger)

VL at ALA

Video Librarian will be exhibiting at the American Library Association's Annual Conference in Chicago, IL, from June 28-July 1. We hope you will drop by our booth (#1940) to say hello!



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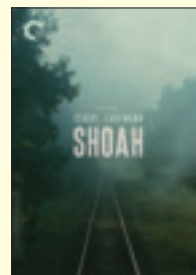
"No Pryor Restraint" Richard Pryor Tribute Boxed Set Bows June 11 from Shout! Factory

Although he can be described as a comedian, actor, writer, and social activist, Richard Pryor was, first and foremost, an artist whose groundbreaking brand of uncompromising humor enriched the lives of millions. On June 11, Shout! Factory will release *No Pryor Restraint: Life in Concert*, a celebration of the life and work of this seminal American comedian. Compiling seven audio CDs and two DVDs for 12 hours of prime Pryor hilarity spanning the years 1966-1992, the set includes nearly two hours of previously unreleased material. Known for his utterly honest explorations of the contemporary American experience as well as his tumultuous personal life, Pryor was a Grammy and Emmy Award-winning comedian for whom no subject was off-limits. Representing the best of the oral tradition, Pryor used the comedy stage as both a bully pulpit and a chopping block, scrutinizing his own personal shortcomings as much as he dissected the racial hypocrisy that had defined America for so long. The set includes the DVDs *Richard Pryor—Live in Concert* (1979), *Richard Pryor: Live on the Sunset Strip* (1982), and *Richard Pryor: Here and Now* (1983), along with audio material from Pryor's classic albums for the Laff, Stax, and Warner Bros. labels and a couple of compilations. An accompanying book contains rare photos, multiple essays, exclusive celebrity tributes, a discography, and a filmography.

Criterion's June Slate Includes Blu-ray Debuts of "Shoah" and "Wild Strawberries"

Kicking off Criterion's June slate on June 11 is the Blu-ray debut of Ingmar Bergman's 1957 world cinema masterpiece *Wild Strawberries* (Blu-ray: \$39.95), following the story of a traveling professor (Victor Sjöström) forced to come to terms with his murky past through flashbacks, fantasies, and nightmares. Bonus features include an intro by Bergman. Coming June 18 is František Vlácil's 1967 drama *Marketa Lazarová* (DVD: 2 discs, \$29.95; Blu-ray: \$39.95)—hailed as the greatest Czech film ever made—based on a novel by Vladislav Vancura that depicts a fierce feud between two rival medieval clans. Also arriving on June 18 is the 1923 silent slapstick classic *Safety Last!* (DVD: 2 discs, \$29.95; Blu-ray: \$39.95), star-

ring comedy icon Harold Lloyd as a small-town bumpkin department-store clerk who comes up with a wild publicity stunt to draw attention to the business. Bonus features include audio commentary and three newly restored Lloyd shorts. Also releasing on June 18 is William Cameron Menzies' 1936 sci-fi epic *Things to Come* (DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95), based on the book by H.G. Wells, which offers a prescient political look at war, dictatorship, disease, and utopia. Available June 25 is Claude Lanzmann's nine-hour-plus 1985 opus *Shoah* (DVD: 6 discs, \$99.95; Blu-ray: 4 discs, \$99.95), a monumental investigation (over a decade in the making) of the Holocaust, featuring first-person testimonies from survivors and former Nazis, as well as other witnesses. Extras include three additional films by Lanzmann.

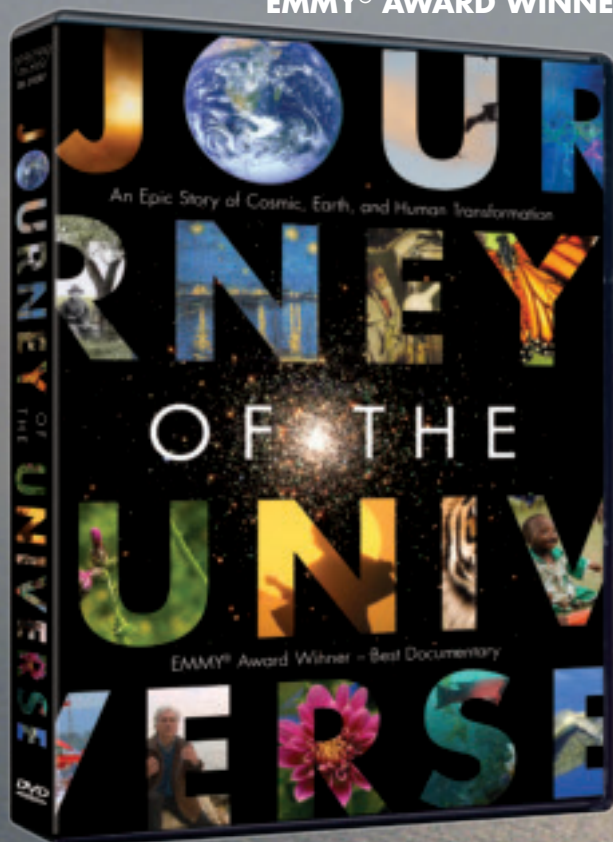


"Dangerous Edge" Doc on Graham Greene Now Available from PBS

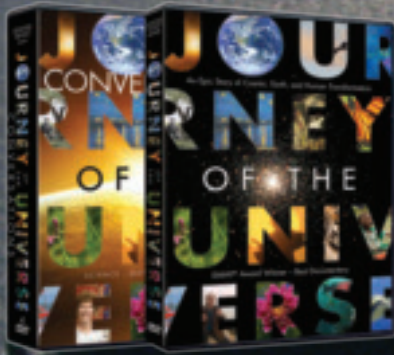
PBS Distribution has released *Dangerous Edge: A Life of Graham Greene* (DVD: \$24.99), a portrait of the critically acclaimed and bestselling British author, narrated by Sir Derek Jacobi, with Bill Nighy as the voice of Greene. *Dangerous Edge* weaves information about Greene's novels—including *The Quiet American*, *Brighton Rock*, *The End of the Affair* and *The Third Man*—into the story of his life, revealing an extraordinary man who traveled the globe to escape the boredom of ordinary existence. Interviewees include writers John Mortimer, John le Carré, David Lodge, and Paul Theroux, former CIA operative and author Frederick Hitz, historian Brigitte Timmermann, psychologist Dr. Kay Jamison, and Greene's daughter, Caroline Bourget. Greene's *oeuvre* (some 50 books) spanned seven decades and sold tens of millions of copies in many languages. As a journalist for 60 years, Graham Greene covered the most dangerous events of the past century: Kenya's Mau Mau rebellion, the Vietnam War, Haiti's "nightmare republic," the rise of Castro, and the fall of the Soviet Union. The documentary draws on Greene's words from his books and recordings, as well as photographs and film clips, to chronicle the enigmatic life of this great writer.

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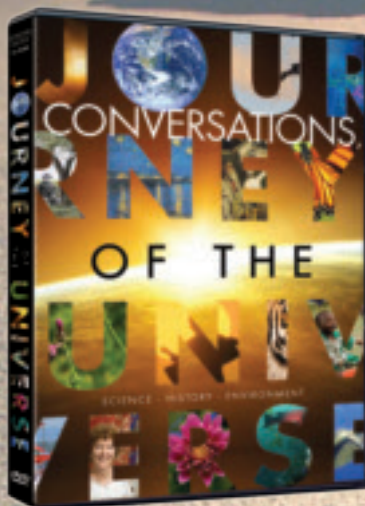


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JOURNEY OF THE UNIVERSE is an epic film about the human connection to Earth and the cosmos, from producer/directors Patsy Northcutt and David Kennard (director of Carl Sagan's *Cosmos*).

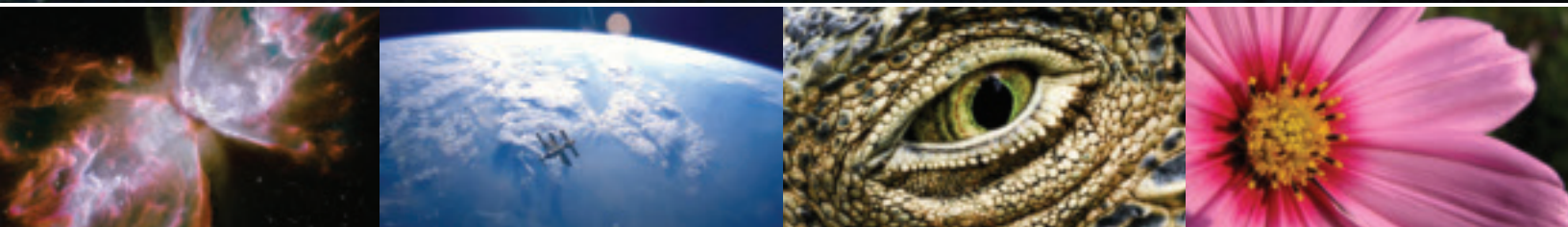
Big Bang, big science, big history—this one-of-a-kind film was created by renowned scientists, scholars, and award-winning filmmakers led by co-writers Brian Thomas Swimme, the acclaimed author and evolutionary philosopher, and Yale University historian of religions Mary Evelyn Tucker. Together they weave a tapestry of scientific discoveries in astronomy, geology, biology, ecology, and biodiversity with humanistic insights concerning the nature of the universe.

JOURNEY OF THE UNIVERSE: CONVERSATIONS

Hosted by Mary Evelyn Tucker, this 20-part/4-disc series integrates the perspectives of the sciences and the humanities into a retelling of our 14 billion year story. "Conversations" with scientists, historians, and environmentalists explores the unfolding story of Earth, the universe and the role of humans in responding to our present challenges.

"There is blockbuster potential in Journey of the Universe... I recommend it with great enthusiasm." – THOMAS LOVEJOY, Conservation Biologist & Co-founder, PBS NATURE

"... transforms how we understand our origins and envision our future"
– Yale University Press



NATIONAL RELEASE: JUNE 4, 2013

Public Performance Inquiries to DVD@disinfo.com

journeyoftheuniverse.org

JOURNEY OF THE UNIVERSE

SRP: 24.98
Item #: SHL-DV-087
UPC #: 826262008796
ISBN #: 9781939517012
NTSC / REGION 0
File Under: Documentary (Other)

Aspect Ratio: 1:1.78
Sound: Dolby Digital 5.1
Rating: NR
Original Language: English w/
English and Spanish Subtitles
COLOR
Run Time: approx. 57 minutes

JOURNEY OF THE UNIVERSE: CONVERSATIONS

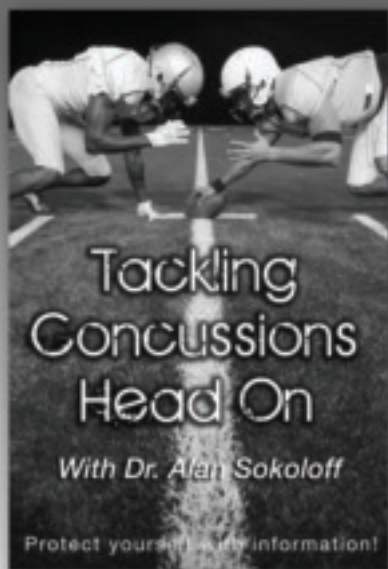
SRP: 79.98 / 4-disc set
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ISBN #: 9781939517029
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Rating: NR
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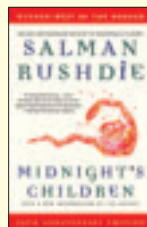
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Books Into Movies

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

Coming in May

Midnight's Children (May 3) is director Deepa Mehta's adaptation of Salman Rushdie's 1980 Booker Prize-winning novel about India's transition from British colonialism, starring Satya Bhabha, Shahana Goswami, Rajat Kapoor, and Shabana Azmi.



What Maisie Knew (May 3, in limited release) is based on Henry James' 1897 novel about a young girl caught in the middle of her parents' bitter divorce. Directed by Scott McGehee, the film stars Alexander Skarsgård, Julianne Moore, Steve Coogan, Emma Holzer, and Onata Aprile as Maisie.



The Great Gatsby (May 10) is adapted from F. Scott Fitzgerald's 1925 classic novel about the American Dream. Directed by Baz Luhrmann, the star-studded cast includes Leonardo DiCaprio, Jason Clarke, Carey Mulligan, Isla Fisher, Joel Edgerton, and Tobey Maguire.



Nikki and the Perfect Stranger (May 15) is based on the 2012 book *Night with a Perfect Stranger* by Christian author David Gregory. Directed by Jefferson Moore, the film stars Moore, Juliana Allen, Matt Wallace, and Georgette Kleier.



Coming in June

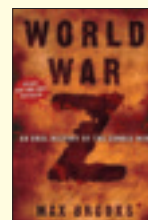
Tiger Eyes (June 7) is based on Judy Blume's 1981 young adult novel. Directed by the author's son, Lawrence Blume, this adaptation stars Willa Holland, Amy Jo Johnson, Tatanka Means, Elise Eberle, and Cynthia Stevenson.



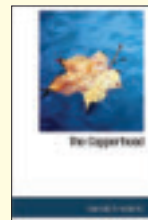
Much Ado About Nothing (June 21) is based on William Shakespeare's 16th-century romantic comedy play. Directed by Joss Whedon, the film stars Amy Acker, Alexis Denisof, and Fran Kranz.



World War Z (June 21) is based on Max Brooks' 2006 horror novel, subtitled "An Oral History of the Zombie War." Directed by Marc Forster, the post-apocalyptic action drama stars Brad Pitt, Matthew Fox, Eric West, and David Morse.



Copperhead (June 28) is based on Harold Frederic's 1893 novella *The Copperhead*. Directed by Ronald F. Maxwell, the drama stars Billy Campbell, Angus Macfadyen, and Peter Fonda.



Looking Ahead

Slated for July is **Alongside Night**, an adaptation of sci-fi novelist J. Neil Schulman's 1979 dystopian novel. Directed by Schulman, the film stars Kevin Sorbo, Christian Kramme, and Jake Busey.



Slated for August is **The Mortal Instruments: City of Bones**, based on the 2007 first volume in author Cassandra Clare's six-part YA fantasy series. Directed by Harald Zwart, the film stars Lily Collins, Lena Headey, Jonathan Rhys Meyers, and Jamie Campbell Bower.



Also slated for August is **Percy Jackson: Sea of Monsters**, based on the 2006 second novel in Rick Riordan's popular YA adventure series *Percy Jackson & the Olympians*. Directed by Thor Freudenthal, the film stars Alexandra Daddario, Brandon T. Jackson, and Logan Lerman as the titular protagonist.



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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

Defiance (Trion, PS3/X360: \$59.99, Rated: M). In this MMOG (Massively Multiplayer Online Game), players join together in a futuristic open-world third-person shooter as thousands of other players scour a transformed Earth, competing for alien technology and battling monsters.



Minecraft: Xbox 360 Edition (Microsoft, X360: \$19.99, Rated: E10+). One of the most popular PC games ever released comes to the Xbox 360, as players engage in fun block building to explore, build, and conquer.

Pandora's Tower (XSEED, Wii: \$39.99, Rated: T). In this third-person role-playing game players must brave the Thirteen Towers—suspended in the middle of a valley by chains connected to surrounding cliffs—in order to stop a cursed young woman's slow transformation into a hideous beast.

April 28—May 4

Deadly Premonition: The Director's Cut (Aksys, PS3: \$39.99, Rated: M). The award-winning *Twin Peaks*-esque third-person survival-horror game has been revamped for this "Director's Cut," which features enhanced graphics and updated controls to better help special agent Frances York Morgan solve the mystery of the Red Seed Murders.



May 12—May 18

Metro: Last Light (Deep Silver, PS3/X360: \$59.99, Rated: M). In this first-person

shooter set in 2034 beneath the ruins of post-apocalyptic Moscow, players control Artyom, who holds the key to survival as mutants stalk the catacombs and a civil war stirs that could wipe humanity off the face of the Earth forever.

May 19—May 25

Fast & Furious Showdown (Activision, PS3/WiiU/X360: \$39.99, Rated: T). Players drive a variety of vehicles in this racing game that follows storylines from the popular film franchise, as the crew travels around the globe trying to take down a dangerous international gang.

Resident Evil Revelations (Capcom, PS3/WiiU/X360: \$49.99, Rated: M). This critically-acclaimed third-person survival horror title originally released on the Nintendo 3DS has been reformatted for consoles with high quality HD visuals, enhanced lighting effects, and more, as players fight terror aboard an abandoned cruise ship before moving inland to the devastated city of Terragrigia.



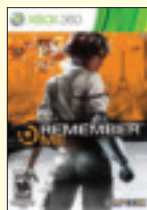
May 26—June 1

Fuse (Electronic Arts, PS3/X360: \$59.99, Rated: M). When a volatile energy source called "Fuse" falls into the wrong hands, the CIA calls in elite contact team Overstrike 9 in this third-person co-op action-shooter that has players trying to take down the rogue paramilitary corporation behind the theft.

GRID 2 (Warner, PS3/X360: \$59.99, Rated: E). In this sequel to the critically-acclaimed racing game, players will be pitted against advanced AI with an improved handling system as they drive iconic cars across three continents.

June 2—June 8

Remember Me (Capcom, PS3/X360: \$59.99, Rated: M). Set in Neo-Paris 2084—where privacy is a thing of the past, and personal memories can be bought and sold—this third-person action-adventure game finds players taking on the role of Nilin, a former elite memory hunter with the ability to break into people's minds and steal or even alter their memories.



June 9—June 15

Dark (Kalypso, X360: \$49.99, Rated: M). In this stealth-based action-adventure game with role-playing elements, players will step into the shoes of Eric Bane, a newly "born" vampire, who must uncover the secrets of the mysterious GeoForge Corporation.



The Last of Us (Sony, PS3: \$59.99, Rated: M). Set 20 years after a pandemic has ravaged civilization, this third-person action-adventure game casts players in the role of a survivor named Joel, who is hired to smuggle 14-year-old Ellie out of an oppressive military quarantine zone—a small job that soon transforms into a brutal journey across the U.S.

TV on DVD/Blu-ray

Available Now

H2O: Just Add Water—The Complete Season 1, H2O: Just Add Water—The Complete Season 2 and H2O: Just Add Water—The Complete Season 3 (New Video Group, DVD: 4 discs each, \$24.95 each). Three Gold Coast teens become mermaids with special powers in these compilations from the 2006-10 live-action Australian family fantasy series.



Kingdom: Complete Series (BFS, DVD: 8 discs, \$69.98). Stephen Fry stars as kindly country solicitor Peter Kingdom in this compilation from the three season 2007-09 ITV dramedy series.

The Lost Archives of Candid Camera (eOne, DVD: 2 discs, \$19.98). This compilation includes sketches from the classic Emmy-nominated 1960s series, featuring celebrities such as Carol Burnett, Ella Fitzgerald, Count Basie, Mel Torme, Jimmy Durante, and Jack Benny.

Oliver Twist (eOne, DVD: \$19.98). This 1982 TV-movie adaptation of the Charles Dickens classic stars George C. Scott, Tim Curry, Eileen Atkins, Timothy West, and Richard Charles as quintessential orphan Oliver Twist.

Star Trek Enterprise: Season One (Paramount, Blu-ray: 6 discs, \$119.99). Set in the 22nd century, this 2001-02 debut season



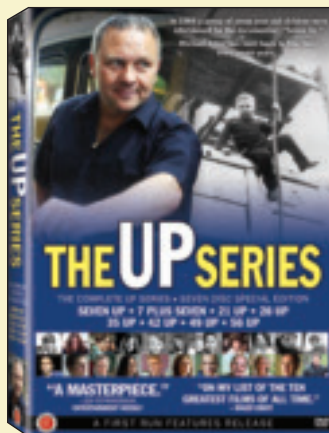
56 UP

138 minutes, color, SRP: \$29.95, FRF 915380D
STREET DATE: JULY 2

Starting in 1964 with *Seven Up*, a team of filmmakers interviewed 14 children from all over England, asking them about their lives and their dreams for the future. Every seven years, Michael Apted has been back to talk to them, examining the progression of their lives.

"To see 56 Up is to be reunited with an old friend. Make that 13 old friends, together again for a documentary project the likes of which the world has never seen - a matchless portrait of our time."

-Kenneth Turan, Los Angeles Times



THE UP SERIES BOX SET (SEVEN UP - 56 UP)

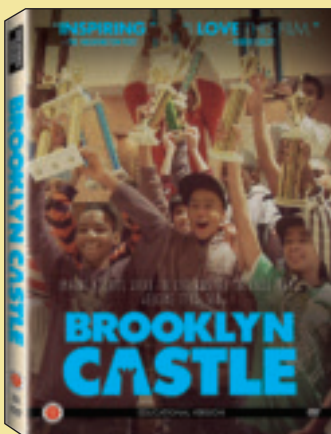
848 minutes (7 discs), color, SRP: \$79.95, FRF 915588D
STREET DATE: JULY 2

"An awe-inducing series of films as profound as they are straightforward: here is a chronicle of real human souls evolving in real time, a longitudinal study unique to the medium of moving images - and a documentary masterpiece. The experience of watching has only become more soul-stirring."

-Lisa Schwarzbaum, Entertainment Weekly

"THE UP SERIES is on my list of the ten greatest films of all time." -Roger Ebert

"One of the towering achievements in the history of documentary film." -Philadelphia Inquirer



BROOKLYN CASTLE EDUCATIONAL VERSION

102 minutes, color, \$40-\$60, FRF 915571D
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This irresistible documentary tells the stories of five members of the chess team at an inner city junior high school that has won more national championships than any other in the country. The film follows the challenges these kids face in their personal lives as well as on the chessboard, and is as much about the sting of their losses as it is about their victories.

"Wonderful...a can't-miss film!" -LA Times

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FERLINGHETTI A REBIRTH OF WONDER

79 minutes, color, SRP: \$24.95, FRF 915489D
STREET DATE: JUNE 11

This incisive portrait of poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti explores his vital role as catalyst for numerous literary careers and for the Beat movement itself. Interviews with Ferlinghetti and others reveal a rich mélange of characters and events that unfolded in postwar America, including the publication of Allen Ginsberg's *Howl*, William S. Burroughs' *Naked Lunch*, and Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*.

"Rousing! A wide-ranging knockabout jamboree." -Christian Science Monitor



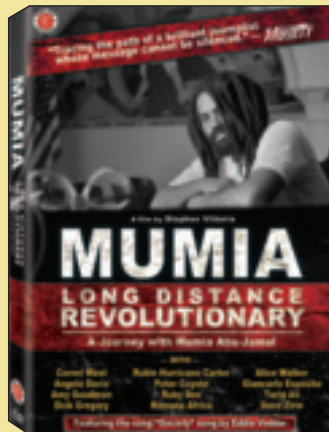
11 FLOWERS

115 minutes, color, SRP: \$27.95, FRF 915496D
STREET DATE: JUNE 11

One of China's foremost Sixth Generation directors, Wang Xiaoshuai (whose earlier film *Beijing Bicycle* was an international success) has created a moving coming-of-age tale set in the final days of China's Cultural Revolution.

"Critic's Pick! Luminous, intimate & lovely."
-The New York Times

"Wang Xiaoshuai's latest masterpiece... might be his best film. A smooth blend of Ju Dou, To Live...and Stand By Me."
-San Francisco Chronicle



MUMIA LONG DISTANCE REVOLUTIONARY

120 minutes, color, SRP: \$24.95, FRF 915472D
STREET DATE: JUNE 11

An inspiring portrait of a man whom many consider America's most famous political prisoner - a man whose existence tests our beliefs about freedom of expression. Through interviews, archival footage, and dramatic readings, and aided by a potent chorus of voices including Cornel West, Alice Walker, Angela Davis and others, this riveting film explores Mumia's life before, during and after Death Row.

"Traces the path of a brilliant journalist whose message cannot be silenced." -Variety



WINE, WOMEN & FRIENDS

57 minutes, color, SRP: \$19.95, FRF 915557D
STREET DATE: MAY 21

An adventure began six years ago in France by two women who were determined to start a vineyard and produce their own wine, the old-fashioned way. With not a lot of money and hardly any experience, all they had to offer was their dedication and passion - and a little help from their friends.

"This charming film gives a very personal view of growing grapes and making wine. It celebrates the sense of community that they have created." -Julia Harding, Master of Wine at Jancis Robinson



COME UNDONE

97 minutes, color, SRP: \$19.95, FRF 915564D
STREET DATE: MAY 21

This sensual gay classic explores a young man's sexual awakening and the turbulence of first love in a small French seaside town. Mathieu, a quiet 18-year-old, meets the handsome and aggressive Cedric, who takes an interest in the younger man. Mathieu becomes enraptured by his mature lover and an intense affair begins.

"The most mature depiction of a young gay male's romantic awakening I have ever seen." -The Advocate

of the Emmy-winning sci-fi spin-off series starring Scott Bakula, Anthony Montgomery, and Jolene Blalock is newly available on high-definition Blu-ray.

May 7

30 Rock: Season 7—The Final Season (Universal, DVD: 2 discs, \$44.99). This seventh and final 2012-13 season of the critically-acclaimed sitcom stars Tina Fey, Alec Baldwin, Tracy Morgan, and Jane Krakowski.



Flashpoint: The Fifth Season (Paramount, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.99). Compiling the 2012 fifth season, this Gemini Award-winning series following the action-packed escapades of a tactical team stars Amy Jo Johnson, Enrico Colantoni, and Hugh Dillon.

Fringe: The Complete Fifth and Final Season (Warner, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$49.99). Starring Anna Torv, Joshua Jackson, and Jasika Nicole, the 2012-13 fifth and final season of this futuristic sci-fi thriller series culminates in one last battle.

The Great Gatsby—Midnight in Manhattan (BBC, DVD: \$14.99). Celebrating the 75th anniversary of F. Scott Fitzgerald's classic novel, this compilation of BBC programs includes "Omnibus—The Great Gatsby: Midnight in Manhattan," "The Jazz Age: Majesty," "Bookmark—The Other Side of Paradise: The Story of Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald," and "Private Affairs: A Dream of Living."

Gunsmoke: The Eighth Season, Volume 1 and **Gunsmoke: The Eighth Season, Volume 2** (Paramount, DVD: 5 discs each, \$49.99 each). Marshal Matt Dillon (James Arness) watches over the citizens of Dodge City in these compilations from the 1962-63 eighth season of the long-running Western series.

Have Gun Will Travel: The Final Season, Volume One and **Have Gun Will Travel: The Final Season, Volume Two** (Paramount, DVD: 2 discs each, \$29.98 each). Richard Boone stars as professional traveling gunfighter Paladin in these volumes from the 1962-63 sixth and final season of the Western drama.



James A. Michener's Texas (Paramount, DVD: \$19.99). Based on the novel by James A. Michener, this 1994 historical Western miniseries stars Maria Conchita Alonso, Benjamin Bratt, Patrick Duffy, Stacy Keach, and Anthony Michael Hall, with narration by Charlton Heston.



K-9: The Complete Series (Shout! Factory, DVD: 4 discs, \$29.98). A cybernetic dog from the future meets with a 21st-century London professor in this 2009-10 time travel adventure series spin-off from *Doctor Who*.

Private Practice: The Complete Sixth and Final Season (Buena Vista, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.99). The personal and professional lives of the workers at Seaside Health and Wellness are showcased in this 2012-13 sixth season starring Kate Walsh, Benjamin Bratt, and Caterina Scorsone.

Rookie Blue: The Complete Third Season (eOne, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.98). Five Toronto rookie cops (including stars Travis Milne and Missy Peregrin) continue to learn the ropes in this 2012 third season of the ABC crime drama series.



Royal Pains: Season Four (Universal, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.98). Hampton doctor Hank (Mark Feuerstein) and his CFO brother Evan (Paulo Costanzo) struggle with sibling rivalry that threatens their business partnership in this 2012 fourth season of the USA-aired dramedy series.

Witness: A World in Conflict Through a Lens (HBO, DVD: \$19.98). Produced by Michael Mann and David Frankham, this four-part HBO-aired documentary series follows three combat photographers into dangerous conflict zones in Mexico, Libya, South Sudan, and Brazil.

May 14

Bearcats! The Complete Television Series (Timeless, DVD: 3 discs, \$19.95). Two men-for-hire travel the Southwest in a classic Stutz Bearcat sports car in this 1971 adventure series starring Rod Taylor and Dennis Cole.

The Bletchley Circle (PBS, DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99). Four female former war codebreakers use their talents to crack

the pattern of a serial killer in this 2012 series starring Anna Maxwell Martin, Rachael Stirling, Julie Graham, and Sophie Rundle.

Dance Academy: Season 1, Volume 1 (New Video Group, DVD: 2 discs, \$19.95). Aired stateside on Nickelodeon, this compilation from the 2010 first season of the Australian young adult series follows the students of the National Academy of Dance in Sydney. Also newly available at the same price are **Season 1, Volume 2**, and **Season 2, Vols. 1 and 2**.

Dexter: The Seventh Season (Showtime, DVD: 4 discs, \$54.99; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$65.99). Serial killer of killers Dexter Morgan (Michael C. Hall) becomes conflicted when his sister (Jennifer Carpenter) stumbles across his secret in this 2012 seventh season of the Showtime-aired crime series.



Doctor Who: The Visitation—Special Edition (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$34.99). Traveling back to 17th-century London, the Doctor (Peter Davison) and his crew attempt to stop an alien menace in this special edition of the four-part 1982 story arc.

Top Gear: The Complete Season 19 (BBC, DVD: 3 discs, \$24.99). Presenters Jeremy Clarkson, Richard Hammond, and James May are back in this 2013 19th season of the BBC-produced auto aficionado series, which also includes the two-part "Africa Special."

May 21

The Gene Autry Show: The Fifth and Final Season (Shout! Factory, DVD: 2 discs, \$14.99). Iconic singing cowboy Gene Autry stars in this 1955 fifth season of the Western series that also features Pat Buttram and Autry's popular trick pony Little Champ.

Laverne & Shirley: The Sixth Season (Paramount, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.99). Penny Marshall and Cindy Williams star as the titular Milwaukee brewery workers in this 1980-81 sixth season of the Golden Globe-nominated sitcom.



Perception: The Complete First Season (Buena Vista, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.99).

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An offbeat neuroscience professor joins up with a former student and FBI agent to solve cases in this 2012 first season starring Eric McCormack, Rachael Leigh Cook, and LeVar Burton.

Saving Hope: The Complete First Season (eOne, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.99). The spirit of a surgeon in a coma watches over his fiancée and hospital coworkers in this 2012 first season of the Gemini Award-winning medical drama series starring Erica Durance, Michael Shanks, and Daniel Gillies.

Teen Wolf: The Complete Season 2 (Fox, DVD: 3 discs, \$34.98). A teen with a wild supernatural secret navigates high school and romance while trying to cope with his animal instincts in this 2012 second season, starring Tyler Posey, Tyler Hoechlin, and Crystal Reed.

True Blood: The Complete Fifth Season (HBO, DVD: 5 discs, \$59.99; Blu-ray: 7 discs, \$79.98). A power struggle between the Vampire Authority and “vampire fundamentalists” is at the center of this 2012 fifth season of the acclaimed fantasy thriller series based on the books by Charlaine Harris, and starring Anna Paquin, Stephen Moyer, and Sam Trammell.



Weird Creatures with Nick Baker, Series 1 (PBS, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.99). Naturalist Nick Baker presents this 2007 first series, which follows his excursions around the globe to find strange and unique creatures.

May 28

Covert Affairs: Season Three (Universal, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.98). Thirty-something CIA operative Annie Walker (Piper Perabo) is back in this 2012 third season of the USA-aided action series that also stars Christopher Gorham, Peter Gallagher, and Oded Fehr.

Doctor Who: Series Seven, Part Two (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$24.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$29.98). Matt Smith returns as the Doctor in this second set of episodes from the 2012-13 seventh season of the popular, long-running, sci-fi adventure series.



Longmire: The Complete First Season (Warner, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99). Based on the bestselling mystery novels by Craig Johnson, this 2012 first season following the titular sheriff stars Robert Taylor, Katee Sackhoff, and Lou Diamond Phillips.



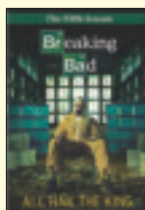
Red Widow: The Complete First Season (Buena Vista, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.99). A NoCal suburban housewife (Radha Mitchell) is embroiled in her late husband's organized crime dealings in this 2013 first season of the drama series.

Suits: Season Two (Universal, DVD: 4 discs, \$44.98). A college dropout (Patrick J. Adams) finds new inspiration after working with a corporate attorney (Gabriel Macht) in this 2012-13 sophomore season of the USA Network law dramedy series.

June 4

Adventure Time: The Complete Second Season (Warner, DVD: 2 discs, \$26.95). Nominated for an Emmy, this collection compiles the 2010-11 second season of the top-rated Cartoon Network animated series.

Breaking Bad: The Fifth Season (Sony, DVD: 3 discs, \$55.99; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$65.99). Bryan Cranston takes his bow in his Screen Actors Guild and Emmy award-winning role as biology teacher turned meth kingpin Walter White in this first half of the split-in-two 2012-13 final season of the acclaimed AMC drama series.



Falling Skies: The Complete Second Season (Warner, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$49.99). The alien attack survivors band together in this 2012 sophomore season of the TNT sci-fi thriller series starring Noah Wyle, Moon Bloodgood, Connor Jessup, and Maxim Knight.

Ice Road Truckers: Season Six (A&E, DVD: 4 discs, \$24.98). This 2012 sixth season of the History Channel reality series profiles truck driver professionals who navigate icy tundra roads.

Major Crimes: The Complete First Season (Warner, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.99). A spin-off from *The Closer*, this 2012 debut

season of the TNT-aided L.A.-set legal drama stars Mary McDonnell, G.W. Bailey, and Tony Denison.

Mountain Men: Season 1 (A&E, DVD: 2 discs, \$19.99). Narrated by D.B. Sweeney, this 2012 first season of the History-aided series follows three men who live in the wilderness.

Pretty Little Liars: The Complete Third Season (Warner, DVD: 5 discs, \$59.99). While the girls think a murderer is behind bars, they are shocked by a surprising event in this 2012-13 third season of the ABC Family series starring Lucy Hale, Ashley Benson, and Shay Mitchell.

Rawhide: The Sixth Season, Volume 1 and Rawhide: The Sixth Season, Volume 2 (Paramount, DVD: 4 discs each, \$45.98 each). These sets from the 1963-64 sixth season of the Golden Globe-nominated Western series starring Clint Eastwood feature guest appearances by Elizabeth Montgomery, Beau Bridges, and Mickey Rooney.



Vexed, Series 2 (Acorn, DVD: 2 discs, \$49.99). Stars Toby Stephens and Miranda Raison join forces as a disparate detective duo in this 2012 second season from the BBC-aided series.

June 11

Burn Notice: Season Six (Fox, DVD: 4 discs, \$49.98). Jeffrey Donovan, Gabrielle Anwar, Bruce Campbell, and Sharon Gless star in this 2012 sixth season of the USA Network-aided espionage series.



Ghost Hunters: Season Eight, Part 2 (Image, DVD: 4 discs, \$24.98). This compilation includes 14 episodes from the 2012 eighth season of the Syfy-aided paranormal investigation series.

H2O—Just Add Water: Metamorphosis, H2O—Just Add Water: Sea Change and H2O—Just Add Water: Mermaid Magic (New Video Group, DVD: \$9.95 each). A trio of Gold Coast teenage mermaids are at the center of these TV movie specials from the 2006-10 live-action Australian family fantasy series.

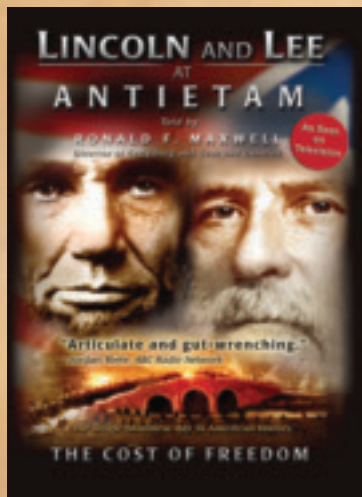
150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG

The Battle of Gettysburg was fought July 1st - 3rd, 1863, in and around the town of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. It was the battle with the largest number of casualties in the American Civil War and is often described as the war's turning point.

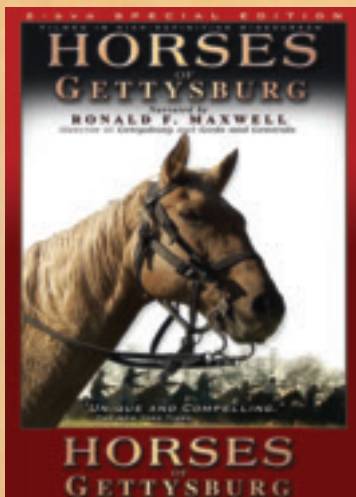
"This excellent documentary draws on vintage photographs, archival letters and journals, and interviews with historians and other Civil War experts to bring this remarkable story to life. Highly recommended."
- Video Librarian

Horses of Gettysburg celebrates the honor and courage of these four legged warriors and their critical role in shaping the United States of America that we live in today. Narrated by **Ronald F. Maxwell**. Filmed in high definition

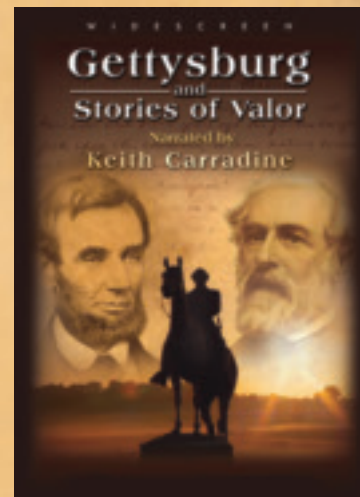
Narrated by **Keith Carradine**, *Gettysburg and Stories of Valor* captures the Battle of Gettysburg with an artful blending of live footage from the battlefield, still pictures, drawings, engravings, and never before seen photographs.



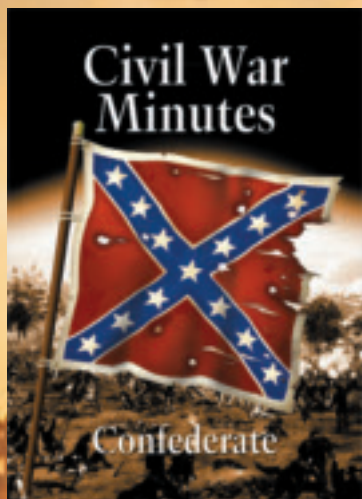
LENGTH: 120 Minutes • MSRP: \$24.95
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Horses of Gettysburg [Public Television Edition]
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Gettysburg and Stories of Valor [Public Television Edition]
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Civil War Minutes – Confederate reveals little known facts and stories about major Confederate players in the Civil War. Discover why few photographs exist of General Robert E. Lee and get an eyewitness account of J.E.B. Stuart's death.

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The Best Of Civil Minutes: Confederate
LENGTH: 75 Minutes • MSRP: \$14.95
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Two faces of courage under fire...The inspiring stories of two courageous Union soldiers who command troops in many of the deadliest battles of the Civil War are reenacted in the *Civil War Life, 2-Disc Set*.

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Civil War Life: Left for Dead
LENGTH: 80 Minutes • MSRP: \$19.95
CATALOG# 20421 • UPC#6-4603204219-1
Civil War Life: Shot to Pieces
LENGTH: 80 Minutes • MSRP: \$19.95
CATALOG# 20422 • UPC#6-4603204229-0



Civil War Minutes – Union exploring the life of the *Union Soldier*. Personal belongings open a window into the lives of those who battled in America's Civil War. This encyclopedic DVD features real stories of ordinary people who left their homes and families behind to answer duty's call for their young and inexperienced nation.

LENGTH: 180 Minutes • MSRP: \$39.95
CATALOG# 20418 • UPC#6-4603204189-7

The Best Of Civil Minutes: Union
LENGTH: 80 Minutes • MSRP: \$14.95
CATALOG# 20419 • UPC#6-4603204199-6

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The Newsroom: The Complete First Season (HBO, DVD: 4 discs, \$59.99; Blu-ray: 6 discs, \$79.98). Featuring episodes from the 2012 first season, this behind-the-scenes peek at a major news network stars Jeff Daniels, Emily Mortimer, Dev Patel, and Alison Pill.



Perry Mason: Final Season—Season 9, Volume 1 (Paramount, DVD: 4 discs, \$45.98). Raymond Burr stars as outstanding defense attorney Perry Mason in this first volume of episodes from the 1965-66 ninth and final season of the Emmy-winning crime-drama series.

Rizzoli & Isles: The Complete Third Season (Warner, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98). The work lives and friendship of the titular Boston crime-solving duo (Angie Harmon, Sasha Alexander) hit a few snags in this 2012 third season of the drama series that also stars Lorraine Bracco.

Wagon Train: The Final Season (Shout! Factory, DVD: 8 discs, \$59.98). Guest stars for this 1964-65 eighth and final season of the Emmy-nominated Western drama starring Frank McGrath and Terry Wilson include Bobby Darin, Leslie Nielsen, Linda Evans, and Bruce Dern.

June 18

Body of Proof: The Complete Third Season (Buena Vista, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.99). A medical examiner (Dana Delany) deals with personal and professional issues in this 2013 third season that also features Jeri Ryan and Mark Valley.

Call the Midwife: Season Two (BBC, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$44.98). Based on the bestselling memoirs of British nurse Jennifer Worth, this 2012-13 sophomore season following the jobs of midwives in 1950s East London stars Jessica Raine, Vanessa Redgrave, and Jenny Agutter.



Drop Dead Diva: The Complete Fourth Season (Sony, DVD: 3 discs, \$30.99). Starring Brooke Elliott as a model reincarnated as a plus-sized lawyer, this 2012 fourth season of the Lifetime-aired dramedy series features guest appearances by Valerie Harper, John Ratzenberger, Nancy Grace, and Kelly Osbourne.

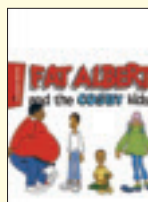
Wilfred: The Complete Season 2 (Fox, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$39.99). Aired on FX, this 2012 second season follows the escapades of a manic-depressive (Elijah Wood) and his titular dog friend (Jason Gann).

Workaholics: Season 3 (Paramount, DVD: 3 discs, \$19.99; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$22.99). Slacker co-worker roommates (Adam DeVine, Anders Holm, and Blake Anderson) are back in this 2012-13 third season of the Comedy Central series.

June 25

CSI: NY—The Ninth Season (Paramount, DVD: 5 discs, \$64.99). Gary Sinise and Sela Ward star in this 2012-13 ninth season of the crime drama series, which features guest appearances by Rob Morrow, Meredith Monroe, and Ted Danson.

Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids: The Complete Series (Shout! Factory, DVD: 16 discs, \$119.99). This compilation features the entire run of Bill Cosby's animated 1972-85 family comedy series.



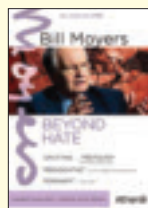
MADtv: The Complete Third Season (Shout! Factory, DVD: 4 discs, \$29.95). Featuring episodes from the 1997-98 third season of the sketch comedy series, this set includes guest stars such as Salt-n-Pepa, Jennifer Love Hewitt, Halle Berry, Phyllis Diller, Jerry Springer, and Pam Grier.

Looking Ahead

Slated for July is the first season of **How the West Was Won**, the first and second seasons of **The Regular Show** on Blu-ray, the third season of **George Lopez**, and the eighth season of **The Virginian**, as well as lost episodes of **The Jack Benny Program**, plus **Last of the Summer Wine: Vintage 1999**, and **Robot Chicken: DC Comics Special**. Slated for August is the fourth season of **Community**.

Re-priced or New to DVD/Blu-ray

Bill Moyers: Beyond Hate (Athena, DVD: 2 discs, \$34.99). Aired on PBS, this provocative 1991 documentary (VL-10/91 ★★★★★) hosted by Peabody Award-winning broadcast journalist Bill Moyers explores the concept of hate and features interviews



with Elie Wiesel, Nelson Mandela, Jimmy Carter, and others. DVD extras include the bonus documentary "Facing Hate with Elie Wiesel and Bill Moyers."

The Blue Planet: Seas of Life (BBC, Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$39.98). Presented by Sir David Attenborough, this Emmy-winning eight-episode series (VL Online-5/02 ★★★★★) offering a natural history of Earth's waters is newly available on high-definition Blu-ray. Bonus features include five additional programs, interviews with the crew, and behind-the-scenes footage.



Heist (Passion River, DVD: \$24.95). Subtitled "Who Stole the American Dream?", filmmakers Frances Causey and Donald Goldmacher's documentary (VL Online-10/12 ★★★★★)—offering an in-depth examination of the financial meltdown of 2008 and the wealthy corporate players responsible—is newly available on home video.

Money and Medicine (Docurama, DVD: \$29.99). Re-priced for home video, Oscar-nominated filmmaker Roger Weisberg's 2012 documentary (VL-9/12 ★★★★★) looks at how today's U.S. healthcare system is designed to offer financial incentives based on the quantity of patients rather than the quality of treatment. Bonus features include deleted and extended scenes.



Jean Rouch: Six Films (Icarus, DVD: 6 discs, \$1,475, web: icarusfilms.com). The work of ethnographic French filmmaker and anthropologist Jean Rouch is showcased in this collection that includes *The Lion Hunters* (1965), *Moi, Un Noir* (1958), *The Mad Masters* (1955), *Mammy Water* (1956), *Little By Little* (1969), and *Jaguar* (1967), all of which are also available separately for \$248-\$398 each.

Sholem Aleichem: Laughing in the Darkness (Docurama, DVD: \$29.95). Combining stills, archival film footage, and artwork alternating with excerpts from interviews with scholars and others, Joseph Dorman's biographical documentary (VL-3/13 ★★★★★) spotlights the life and career of famed Jewish writer Solomon Rabinowitz (1859-1916). Newly available on home video, bonus features include a "making-of" featurette.

COMPELLING NEW DVDS FROM VISION VIDEO



NEW!

Weaving Life: Peacemaker Dan Terry

American Dan Terry and his family spent 40 years devoted to the people, the culture, and the landscapes of Afghanistan. Tragically, in August 2010, Dan was among ten humanitarian aid workers assassinated there. *Weaving Life* tells how Dan wove relationships, joy, partnership, and understanding into his work in Afghanistan. Through interviews with family members and friends, Dan's photography, and film students' artwork and video journals, his story is told. Documentary, 58 minutes.

DVD - #501507D, \$19.99, UPC 7 27985 01507 1

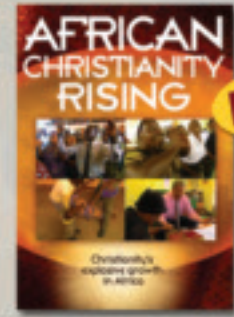


NEW!

Our Fascinating Universe

Take off into outer space, a journey into unknown worlds of vast dimensions and fascinating beauty, a journey in search of answers. How did the universe come into being? What role do human beings play in it? What keeps the stars and planets on their orbits? Was it pure chance that brought them into being or is there a higher Being behind it all? Featuring stunning space telescope images and captivating insights from leading scientists, *Our Fascinating Universe* will take you on a journey into greater understanding. Documentary, 55 minutes.

DVD - #501495D, \$19.99, UPC 7 27985 01495 1



NEW!

African Christianity Rising

What does Christianity's explosive growth in Africa mean for the church and for the world? For over a decade, award-winning documentary filmmaker, author, and scholar James Ault has explored these questions, with guidance from leading thinkers on the subject, filming personal stories in Ghana and Zimbabwe in the range of Christian communities found today in sub-Saharan Africa. He follows churches through struggles and triumphs and returns some years later to find out what has happened to the people and churches portrayed. Documentary, 150 minutes.

DVD - #501509D, \$29.99, UPC 7 27985 01509 5



NEW!

Bringing Joshua Home

In late December, 2012, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a bill banning all American adoptions of Russian children. Protests against this new law have erupted in both the United States and Russia. How this controversy will be resolved remains to be seen. What can be seen is the power of life-giving love exhibited by those who have successfully adopted in the past. *Bringing Joshua Home* tells the personal story of one family who successfully adopted a Russian child. Arthur and Hanna Rasco share the challenges, joys, and drama of adopting their baby boy from Moscow and introducing him into their family. Documentary, 25 minutes.

DVD - #501513D, \$14.99, UPC 7 27985 01513 2



NEW!

India's Untouchables

The situation of India's Dalit community, formerly known as the Untouchables, is a disgrace in the modern world. These three documentary films expose the systematic oppression of the Dalit people while offering practical solutions for healing and change. This three DVD set also includes over two hours of bonus material, making it perhaps the most comprehensive exploration of the plight of the Dalits currently available on DVD. The three segments are: *India's Hidden Slavery* (57 min.), *India's Forgotten Women* (45 min.), and *India's New Beginnings* (35 min.). Documentary, 137 minutes.

DVD - #501516D, \$24.99, UPC 7 27985 01516 3



NEW!

Single Creek

According to U.S. Census data, approximately 100 million single adults now live in the United States, representing 45% of all U.S. households. *Single Creek* is a documentary about real singles with real issues at all stages of life. How does society treat those who are unmarried, divorced, widowed, or those who choose lives of celibacy? The film urges people to consider new ways to connect with this growing demographic while challenging singles themselves to live full lives. Also included are insights from well-known authors and speakers, such as Dennis Franck, Wendy Widder, Terry Hershey, and Randy Thomas, on the subject of singleness. Documentary, 53 minutes.

DVD - #501512D, \$19.99, UPC 7 27985 01512 5



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This section features reviews of 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

2 + 2 ★★★★★

Strand, 105 min., in Spanish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99, June 4



This Argentinian sex comedy is a lighthearted romp for most of its running time, although it takes a turn toward the serious in its final stretch. Diego (Adrián Suar), an award-winning egotistical doctor, and his humbler low-key research partner, Richard (Juan Minujín), are longtime best friends. So are their wives: Diego's Emilia (Julieta Díaz) is a TV meteorologist and mom, and Richard's Betina (Carla Peterson) works in fashion. All are attractive people in their late 30s who they think they know each other well until Betina confesses that she and Richard have been keeping their marriage alive for years as secret swingers, attending orgies with like-minded couples. An intrigued Emilia begins pressing an inhibited Diego to take her to one of this community's parties, but once they actually go, he puts on a hilarious display of jittery, moral resistance. Days later, under even more pressure from Richard and Betina, as well as Emilia, Diego stops putting up a fight and the couples change partners. Despite some comically awkward moments (Diego and Emilia's teenage son shows up unexpectedly the morning after a night of four-way romping), everything seems fine. But eventually emotions are aroused that trump desire, leading to a crossfire of love, betrayal, and anger that upsets the illusion of free-spiritedness. While the story loses some of its spark towards the end, the appealing cast and strong characters compensate in director Diego Kaplan's stylish film. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

4Some ★★1/2

Strand, 79 min., in Czech w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99

Two middle-aged Czech couples (husbands Jiří Langmajer and Hynek Cermák, and wives Marika Procházková and Viktorie Cermáková), who are also longtime friends and neighbors, switch partners during a

combination business trip/vacation to the Caribbean and then try to continue the sexual experimentation after returning home. But their adolescent children—two boys in one family and two girls in the other—are interested in one another too, which puts a crimp on the adults' style. That's the premise of Jan Hřebejk's slight but genial comedy, which spends a good deal of time on montages showing the four parents frolicking together clothed on the sunny Caribbean beaches or undressed in bed while engaged in wife-swapping. Unfortunately, when the couples return home, the obligatory slapstick of their awkward attempts to keep the excitement going never moves much beyond mild embarrassment, while the subplot about the children feeling the first pangs of lust doesn't have much of a payoff, resulting in a film that is amiable enough, but also curiously bland (given the subject). Optional. (F. Swietek)



28 Hotel Rooms ★★1/2

Oscilloscope, 82 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.98



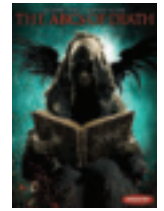
Much like 1978's *Same Time, Next Year*, in which Alan Alda and Ellen Burstyn played lovers who would meet once every 12 months, actor-turned-director Matt Ross's more sexually-explicit film depicts a multi-year affair through the prism of 28 hotel rooms. The central relationship pairs two unnamed characters: an author (Chris Messina) who has a girlfriend, and a data analyst (Marin Ireland) who has a husband—although those external bonds change with time, along with their career prospects. The couple reconnects whenever the Seattle-based analyst makes a business trip to New York, where the duo drink, talk, and make love. Ross never rushes the action, and the actors work well together, but revelations about their personal lives are rarely as interesting as the professional ones (the author thinks of himself as an artist, the analyst thinks of herself as a problem-solver). While the characters aren't completely unlikeable, they're also not quite distinct enough to inspire rooting interest, and repeatedly watching the couple engage in sex veers towards the voyeuristic. Of course, the sex eventually leads to love, jealousy, and resentment, at which point the protagonists are faced with a choice of ending the affair or fully committing to each other. Optional. (K. Fennessy)

The ABCs of Death ★★

Magnolia, 130 min., not rated, DVD: \$26.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98, May 7

This horror anthology, consisting of 26 alphabetically arranged short films by various directors in a number of languages (mostly

Spanish, English, and Japanese), only sporadically rises above mediocrity and often descends into sheer awfulness. The sole directives imposed on the contributors were to begin and end their films in the color red and to include at least one death in their scripts. Overall, the funnier pieces come off best, including a couple of amusingly scatological animated entries, and Adam Wingard and Simon Barretta's live-action "Q is for Quack," about two low-rent filmmakers who decide to make their short stand out by including a real death in it. A few of the more explicitly gruesome contributions carry real punch—like Marcel Sarmiento's "D is for Dogfight," in which canine bites man (and vice versa), while others, even Noboru Iguchi's crudely obvious "F is for Fart," sport eye-catching visuals. But, generally speaking, the grosser, more surrealistic pieces fall flat—such as Timo Tjahjanto's "L is for Libido" (about a masturbation contest)—and there are far fewer hits here than misses. Likelier to cause squeamishness (and impatience) than fright, this is not a necessary purchase. (F. Swietek)



All Together ★★★

Kino Lorber, 96 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95



This touching, funny, and insightful film tells a winning story about seniors that manages to stay generally lighthearted without portraying the elders as merely cute old people. The wonderful cast meshes perfectly, playing five elderly friends in France who decide to throw in their lot together via cohabitation. While the initial idea is that they can look after one another while also celebrating a shared history, living under one roof naturally complicates relationships. Jane Fonda plays a former professor unable to keep her advancing cancer a secret from her husband (Pierre Richard), who is suffering from growing senility. Geraldine Chaplin is the discreet and practical wife of a lifelong social activist (Guy Bedos), and Claude Rich portrays an unrepentant womanizer who frequents prostitutes and has a veiled history with both Fonda and Chaplin's characters. Into this mix comes a German student (Daniel Brühl), who acts as a live-in assistant while also researching his employers for his thesis. Writer-director Stéphane Robelin deftly explores what life is like for this quintet who must learn to accept, support, and forgive each other in order to stay together. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

Alois Nebel ★★★

Zeitgeist, 84 min., in Czech w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99

Based on an acclaimed Czech graphic nov-



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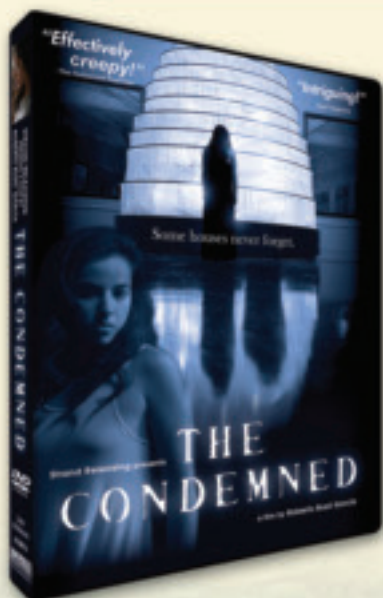
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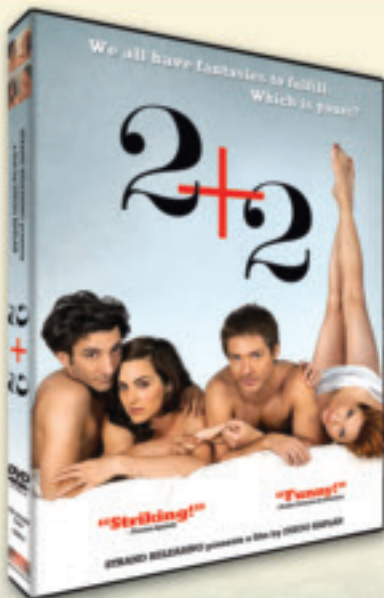
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"FLAWLESS AND VERY ENJOYABLE"
- Page 17

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(Phantom of the Paradise)

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(The Office TV series)

Kevin McCarthy
(Invasion of the Body Snatchers)

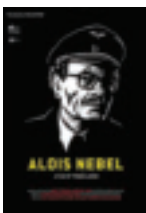
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106 minutes - B&W - In English - Not Rated

el, filmmaker Tomáš Luňák's animated drama uses black-and-white digital overlays to create striking, noir-like visuals. The title character (voiced by Miroslav Krobot) is an aging, taciturn, railway-station dispatcher in Czechoslovakia in 1989, a time when the Cold War is entering its terminal phase and the Warsaw Pact nations are beginning to collapse. After seeing a vagrant man roughed up and arrested at the station, Nebel begins experiencing flashbacks to grim memories of Nazi German and Soviet collaboration, and eventually checks himself into a psychiatric clinic—an act that costs him his job. A trip to plead with railway administrators in Prague leads Nebel to strike up a relationship with a trainman's widow running a boarding-house. Returning to the countryside, Nebel talks his way back into service with the father-and-son team running the station, who plan to turn the place into a black-market hub. Ultimately, the accumulation of what seem like random incidents will add up to a revenge-murder conspiracy in this moody, stylish, and offbeat foreign film. Recommended. (C. Cassidy)



Beautiful Creatures

★★★1/2

Warner, 124 min., PG-13, DVD: \$28.98, Blu-ray: \$35.99, May 21

Aimed squarely at Twihards, director Richard LaGravenese's *Beautiful Creatures* is a sudsy, supernatural Southern Gothic love story based on the first book in a bestselling YA series by Kami Garcia and Margaret Stohl. After alienated 15-year-old Lena Duchannes (Alice Englert) moves to the stifling, superstitious town of Gatlin, SC, she anxiously tries to keep a low profile while counting down the days until her not-so-sweet 16th—when a family curse predicts that she will undergo a “claiming” ritual to determine whether she's a Light (good) or Dark (evil) Caster of spells. As a mysterious outsider, Lena immediately captures the heart of the film's narrator, Ethan Wate (Alden Ehrenreich)—a lad steeped in literary influences, including Jack Kerouac, Kurt Vonnegut, and Henry Miller—who dreams about an ethereal, dark-haired stranger on a Civil War battlefield. Despite their obvious differences, Lena and Ethan eventually come to discover that they may be following the same fateful footpath as two 19th-century lovers. “Love is a spell created by mortals to give women something they can have besides power,” explains the devilish Sarafine (Emma Thompson, in a dual role), jousting with Lena's reclusive uncle, Macon Ravenwood (Jeremy Irons), who fears for Lena's future if she, as a witch, were to love a mortal. LaGravenese tones down



the maudlin, adolescent angst clichés here, changing the source material in a creepy and complicated manner that will either delight or infuriate avid fans of the novels. A strong optional purchase. (S. Granger)

Bestiaire ★★★

Zeitgeist, 72 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.99

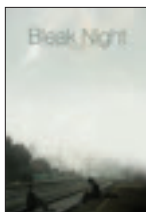
The animals of the Parc Safari in Quebec and their relationships with humans—the zookeepers, park visitors, taxidermists who stuff them after they die, and artists who sketch the taxidermists' work—are the subjects of Denis Côté's nearly wordless documentary. Titled after a type of medieval book that mingles illustrations of beasts with religious texts, the film juxtaposes extended shots of the animals—some grazing quietly in pens while staring into the camera, others frantically rushing about cages or pawing at their gates—with footage of the men, women, and children who interact with the animals, both park workers and carloads of spectator customers. The obvious purpose here is to contemplate both the loneliness and pain of the animals' existence in captivity, and the mindset of those who would put them on display for profit or enjoy seeing them in such a synthetic environment. *Bestiaire* is artfully photographed—the opening sequence, in which men and women draw sketches that only gradually reveal the subject (a stuffed deer), makes for an elegant introduction—and cannily edited. And while it's filmed with an ostensibly objective approach, *Bestiaire* clearly suggests that human beings mistreat animals by confining them for the viewing pleasure of weekend vacationers. Recommended. (F. Swietek)



Bleak Night ★★★1/2

BayView, 117 min., in Korean w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99

In recent years, South Korea's film industry has blossomed, producing a number of provocative and disturbing films. Yoon Sung-hyun's drama, a sterling example from this Korean New Wave, explores the complex bonds between friends and family. Teenage Ki-tae (Lee Je-hoon) is part of a circle of schoolboys whose penchant for practical jokes is often pushed to nasty extremes. Despite his outward bravado, however, Ki-tae fights inner demons that he is unable to control, eventually driving him to suicide. Ki-tae's grieving father (Cho Seong-ha) tries to make sense of his son's death, seeking out Ki-tae's friends for answers and ultimately uncovering complicated aspects of Ki-tae's emotional state. What is truly remarkable here is the fact that *Bleak Night* was created



as a student project for the Korean Academy of Fine Arts. An excellent foreign film, this is highly recommended. (P. Hall)

Broken City ★★★

Fox, 109 min., R, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$39.99

This mundane political thriller pivots around a dense web of criminal conspiracies enveloping longtime incumbent New York City Mayor Nicholas Hostetler (Russell Crowe), who is vying for re-election with younger, richer Councilman Jack Valliant (Barry Pepper). After being forced to take a fall seven years ago for gunning down an exonerated rapist/gang member, former NYPD detective Billy Taggart (Mark Wahlberg) opened his own private investigation agency in Brooklyn. But he's often strapped for money, which is why he accepts \$50,000 in cash from Hostetler to spy on his wife, Cathleen (Catherine Zeta-Jones), whom the blustering mayor suspects of adultery. The plot thickens when Taggart concludes that Cathleen is involved with Paul Andrews (Kyle Chandler), campaign manager for Valliant. But the case turns out to be far more convoluted since there is also a clandestine subplot revolving around a multi-billion-dollar deal to level Bolton Village, a public housing project—and Taggart is being used as a pawn. Adding to the complications are the police commissioner (Jeffrey Wright) and Taggart's aspiring-actress girlfriend (Natalie Martinez), whose family lives in Bolton Village. Unfortunately, these are all caricatures, not characters. The first feature that Allen Hughes has directed without his twin brother Albert, *Broken City* is a disappointing neo-noir. Optional, at best. (S. Granger)



Bullet Collector ★★★

Artsploitation, 121 min., in Russian w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99

This aggressive and disturbing Russian drama follows a 14-year-old boy's (Ruslan Nazarenko) slow descent into violent madness. Trapped in a horrible domestic environment—his mother cannot control her anger and his stepfather loathes him—and subject to bullying at school, the boy loses himself in violent fantasies involving deadly criminal action. His life becomes even more chaotic when he is sent to a reform school—a seething environment in which his fantasies blur with his grim surroundings. But is all of this really happening, or is the young man permanently lost in a private world of outlandish lies and movie-style mayhem? *Bullet Collector* is the debut feature of director Alexander Vartanov, who invests his work with significant artistic flourishes, including richly textured





Mosquita Y Mari

When straight A student Yolanda (nicknamed Mosquita) decides to help struggling tough girl Mari with her homework, the two girls develop an unlikely and intense friendship, with many ups, downs and challenges.

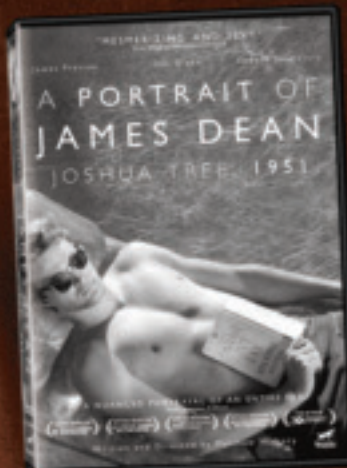


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- Huffington Post

"Katherine Brooks has an
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quietly powerful and
boldly energetic."

- LA Weekly

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Strange Frame

This gorgeous animated sci-fi story is centered around the theme of the transformative power of love between Naia, feisty, young singer-songwriter, and the beautiful saxophonist Parker.

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91 min / Color / WOL50390 /
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black-and-white cinematography, a twisting screenplay (that somehow shoehorns a tender romantic subplot into the tumult), and stylish graphic violence. The result is often bewildering and hard to watch—imagine Francois Truffaut's *The 400 Blows* seen through a Quentin Tarantino viewfinder—but *Bullet Collector* does maintain a distinctive vibe. Recommended. (P. Hall)

Cirque du Soleil: Worlds Away ★★1/2

Paramount, 91 min., PG, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99



Fans of Cirque du Soleil will appreciate this visually stunning if also overlong feature film graced with gorgeous cinematography. Writer-director Andrew Adamson imposes a feeble plot on material drawn from seven Cirque productions, as Mia (Erica Linz) searches for a handsome aerialist who slips from the trapeze and is literally swallowed up by the sand of the Big Top, following him to a netherworld where he's been taken captive by a bunch of acrobatic savages. Many episodes ensue—one takes its inspiration from samurai movies, while others go underwater—featuring impressively athletic groups of dancer-gymnasts. All of this is delivered with swooping camera moves and beautiful lighting effects (not to mention abundant bungee cords), set to a musical background that often consists of Beatles songs. The result is basically a pop ballet spruced up with acrobatic effects that is better when it serves up familiar tunes than its bland symphonic score, which sounds like inferior Tchaikovsky. Eventually, of course, the lovers come together for a *pas de deux* that sends them airborne for lots of twirls and ersatz pirouettes. As sheer spectacle, *Worlds Away* is an eye-catching film, but it's also a pale reflection of an actual Cirque live performance. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

The Collection ★

Lionsgate, 82 min., R, DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$24.99



Anyone who hoped that torture-porn movies had run their course will get a nasty surprise from this sequel to *The Collector* (VL Online-5/10), which was a mean-spirited, claustrophobic horror film about a man trapped in a darkened house with a killer who specialized in intricate death-traps. Filmmaker Marcus Dunstan's *The Collection* plays out on a larger scale than its predecessor, beginning with a gruesome scene in which the Collector, clad in his familiar black mask, rigs a rotating blade from a farm machine to descend from the ceiling of a nightclub and literally rip the gyrating patrons to bits. As is the Collector's custom, he carts off one of

the survivors—Elena (Emma Fitzpatrick)—to his lair in a dilapidated hotel, pursued by a gang of vigilantes that includes Arkin (Josh Stewart), who escaped the Collector's clutches in the first film. What follows is the usual cat-and-mouse game as the would-be heroes try to evade their quarry's elaborate contraptions in order to rescue Elena—with most, of course, falling to make the cut (so to speak). The film closes with a turn-the-tables epilogue that—unfortunately—suggests another sequel may be coming. *The Collection* sports the gloomy cinematic look common to this sort of grisly fare, as well as hyperkinetic editing designed to give viewers jolts; but, ultimately, this is just another helping of the same brutal, pointless mayhem endemic to the genre, peopled by wafer-thin characters played by a nondescript cast. Not recommended. (F. Swietek)

The Condemned ★★

Strand, 90 min., in Spanish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99

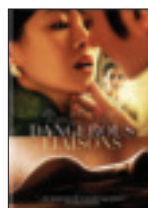


Ana (Cristina Rodlo) is a Mexican heiress bent on honoring the legacy of her father, an internationally renowned doctor whose research in cancer therapies began in the small town of Rosales in Puerto Rico. Ana's rather aggressive plan is to transform the old family home and medical clinic into a museum recalling her father's pioneering work and the children he treated there. But the effort is undercut by gloomy locals, none of whom is happy with Ana or her plans. It turns out that the old-timers have no interest in preserving memories of what seem to be unspeakable matters. Meanwhile, the refurbished mansion appears to be occupied by menacing forces that only grow more violent over time. Co-written and directed by Roberto Bós-García, *The Condemned* features some strong performances—including René Monclova as an aging assistant who recalls what actually happened in the clinic years before—but as a would-be spooky thriller, never seems to gain any real momentum. Not a necessary purchase. (T. Keogh)

Dangerous Liaisons

★★★★1/2

Well Go USA, 110 min., in Cantonese w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98



The oft-filmed 18th-century French novel of seduction by Pierre Choderlos de Laclos adapts astoundingly well to the Far East in this atmospheric Chinese-Korean co-production, set in a gilded-era 1931 Shanghai, where a westernized upper class dwells in splendor while storms of war and revolution gather in the distance. Wealthy playboy Xie Yifan

(Jang Dong-Gun) is a notorious ladykiller, but he never stops thinking of glamorous businesswoman Jieyu Mo (Cecilia Cheung), seemingly his amoral match in every way. Mo agrees to sexually surrender to Xie if he succeeds in heartlessly wooing and bedding a chaste widow (Zhang Ziyi). And, giving herself a comparable challenge, Mo takes on an assignment to destroy the star-crossed love blossoming between an artist from the lower classes and a teenage heiress who is promised in an arranged marriage. Of course, tragedy ensues. Known for his romantic films, South Korean director Jin-ho Hur skillfully steers his Chinese ensemble cast in this lush and entertaining big-budget production. Highly recommended. (C. Cassidy)

Dead in France ★★

Breaking Glass, 88 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99



An initially promising British noir-comedy, *Dead in France* follows Charles (Brian A. Levine, who also wrote the screenplay), a polished hitman ready to retire and enjoy life on a yacht in the company of a good woman. Unfortunately, Charles doesn't know anything about yachts and has never kissed a woman, let alone lived with one. But he has one eye on a boat and the other on his comely house-cleaner, Lisa (Celia Muir)—not realizing that both are tied up in separate but simultaneous scams. The result: Charles is robbed of two million pounds by a pair of upstart criminals as Lisa's idiotic boyfriend holds several people hostage on Charles' property. Meanwhile, a female assassin is leaving a trail of carnage in her quest to take Charles out. Director Kris McManus's handsome, black-and-white footage and exotic, Côte d'Azur setting make *Dead in France* worth watching for awhile, but the clever premise quickly runs out of fresh ideas and descends into a redundant bloodbath. Not a necessary purchase. (T. Keogh)

Electric Button (Moon & Cherry) ★★

MVD, 82 min., in Japanese w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$17.95



Aspiring to become a writer, university student Tadokoro (Tasuku Nagaoka) joins a creative writing club whose mostly-male members prefer to sit around and drink beer while talking about sex. The club's sole female member, Mayama (Noriko Eguchi), takes a shine to Tadokoro, and after discovering that he is still a virgin, realizes that she has both a new sexual conquest to look forward to and material for her planned erotic novel. Writer-director Yuki Tanada emerged as one of Japan's most prominent female filmmakers with this 2004 feature (originally titled *Moon & Cherry*). As with many Japa-



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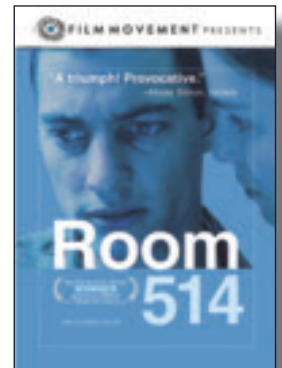
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nese comedies, much of the humor depends on a subtle understanding of the nation's cultural protocols (some American viewers may wonder about the extraordinarily naive behavior by Tadokoro and the unsympathetic manner in which he is treated by Mayama). Nagaoka and Eguchi offer fine performances in this amusing comedy of sexual manners, a gender reversal tale of seduction and betrayal. Recommended. (P. Hall)

Elena ★★★1/2

Zeitgeist, 109 min., in Russian w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99



Visually spare and acutely observed, Andrey Zvyagintsev's *Elena* tells a simple story of familial discord in today's Russia that is both starkly powerful and deeply troubling. In a quietly somber, soulful performance, Nadezhda Markina stars as Elena—the second wife of wealthy Vladimir (Andrey Smirnov)—an ex-nurse who cared for Vladimir some years earlier following surgery. Both have children from previous marriages: Vladimir is estranged from his hedonistic daughter, giving her a regular allowance but otherwise ignoring her; Elena is burdened with a layabout, heavy-drinking son, who lives with his wife and children in a rundown Soviet-era complex and depends on her for money. A crisis arises when Vladimir suffers a heart attack and drafts a will that makes his daughter the chief beneficiary, leaving Elena with a modest annual pension. After considering the effect that this would have on her ability to help her son and grandchildren, Elena decides to take preventative action. Zvyagintsev presents all of this in a matter-of-fact fashion, conveying the aridity and aimlessness of a morally comatose society in which violence and corruption lurk just below the surface. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

For Ellen ★★★1/2

New Video, 95 min., not rated, DVD: \$26.95



For Ellen has all the superficial markings of the archetypal "critical favorite" indie flick. Paul Dano stars as Joby, a brooding, semi-articulate goth-metal singer-songwriter who is clearly at a crossroads in his life. Although we never meet Joby's band or hear their music, it's obvious from hints that while the band might have enjoyed marginal success in the past, they are now on the outs. What's worse, Joby is in the painful process of a divorce that will eventually mean losing custody of his 6-year-old daughter, Ellen (Shaylena Mandigo), despite the best efforts of his sadly ineffectual geek lawyer. After lots of drinking and brooding and general inward suffering, Joby finally tries to strike up a friendly relationship with

his daughter, who eventually opens up to him and learns to tolerate his awkward approach to fathering. Even though Dano does a fair job of expressing Joby's inarticulate rage and frustration, all too often his character is more pathetic than sympathetic. Written and directed by So Yong Kim, *For Ellen* has its moments, but Joby remains a maddening cipher, a man whom we still know next to nothing about when the credits roll. Optional. (M. Sandlin)

The Ghastly Love of Johnny X ★★★

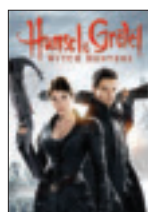
Strand, 106 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99, June 18



A wild-eyed tribute to the B-movie era of juvenile delinquents in leather jackets—not to mention the schlocky sci-fi epics of Ed Wood (*Plan 9 from Outer Space*), with a touch of *West Side Story*—director Paul Bunnell's *The Ghastly Love of Johnny X* serves up an inspired pastiche of pop culture stereotypes. Reportedly shot on some of Kodak's last 35mm black-and-white Plus-X film stock, this intentionally overripe retro tale centers on the banishment of young misfits from their home planet to the American southwest, where ringleader Johnny X (Will Keenan) leads a band of tough chicks and tattooed hoods on a mission to survive on a strange planet: Earth. Johnny can redeem himself by performing a selfless action and thereby earn his way back home, so when the opportunity arises to salvage the career of a faded and dying rock star (Creed Bratton), he leaps at the chance. The loose storyline is really secondary to Bunnell's affection for 1950s movie rebels without a clue, outlaws and lovers living by their own codes, and musical numbers that threaten to break into bloody rumbles. And the cast includes a genuine sci-fi icon: the late Kevin McCarthy (*Invasion of the Body Snatchers*) in his last performance—a self-lamproving one at that. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

Hansel & Gretel: Witch Hunters ★★★

Paramount, 88 min., R, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99, June 11



No doubt this campy Grimm fairy tale as horror-action-comedy sounded good on paper. As you may recall, young Hansel and Gretel were captured by a witch after they nibbled on her candy cottage. But that's just the prologue, as now-adult Hansel (Jeremy Renner) explains: 15 years later, he and Gretel (Gemma Arterton) roam the Bavarian woods as wisecracking, revenge-seeking vigilantes, skillfully saving medieval towns from the wrath of prowling witches with their automatic crossbows. Unfortunately, a blood moon eclipse has

arrived, making witches impervious to fire. Led by evil sorceress Muriel (Famke Janssen), the frenzied, ferociously empowered witches are snatching and imprisoning children from Augsburg for a black Sabbath sacrificial feast. The villagers are frantic, of course (bottles of milk have woodcut pictures of missing kids on the labels). Just as Sheriff Berringer (Peter Stormare) manages to organize a witch hunt, Hansel and Gretel appear, saving Mina (Pihla Viitala), who develops a yen for Hansel, while Gretel's stalked by Ben (Thomas Mann), who's read about her in the newspapers. Written and directed by Tommy Wirkola, the film is full of ghouls, goblins, and gutter-mouthed dialogue that adds up to little more than preposterous drivél. Not a necessary purchase. (S. Granger)

Happy People: A Year in the Taiga ★★★1/2

Music Box, 94 min., in English, Russian & German w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95



Legendary filmmaker Werner Herzog (sharing co-directing credit with Dmitry Vasyukov) also serves as narrator for this documentary focusing on Russian fur trappers from the village of Bakhtia, located in the "Taiga" area of central Siberia. Living a hardscrabble existence—far from Russian urban centers and factory towns—these are "happy people," in the Rousseau-like sense of having all that they need provided by the land, and ancient folk-wisdom techniques that have taught them to manufacture everything required. They truly dwell in harmony with their untamed environment—or, at least the hunter-trappers do; some villagers, listlessly performing wage jobs, succumb to vodka and hardly remember the ways of their ancestors. Over four seasons, the camera follows latter-day mountain men Anatoly Blume, Gennady Soloviev, and Mikhail Tarkovsky (a relative of Russian director Andrei Tarkovsky), who take viewers through an age-old, carefully maintained schedule: stocking provisions, raising their dogs, repairing cabin-shelters, arming traps, and preparing for months of deep-winter isolation while they harvest mink and sable. Backed by a stirring soundtrack from Klaus Badelt, this is a powerful, multi-disciplinary documentary that deftly mixes the subjects of nature, ethnology, hunting, and travel-adventure. Highly recommended. (C. Cassidy)

Hemel ★★★

Artsploitation, 83 min., in Dutch w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99



Dutch director Sacha Polak's feature debut sports plenty of nudity—as well as explicit sexual situations

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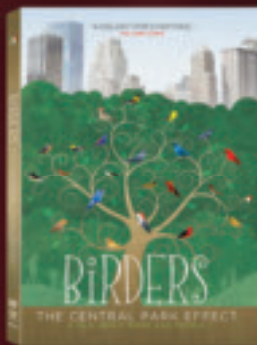
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and rough language—but it also boasts a sense of artistry. The narrative is essentially a portrait of Hemel (Hannah Hoekstra), a beautiful young woman whose name means “Heaven,” although she is living in a psychological hell, engaging in a stream of one-night stands with men she picks up in nightclubs and bars. Her hedonistic lifestyle appears to stem from her repressed grief over the death of her mother when Hemel was a mere infant, and also her ostensibly pleasant but actually fraught relationship with her widowed father, whose string of brief encounters with younger women ends when he takes up with a co-worker his own age—a woman Hemel finds threatening. The situation grows even darker when Hemel unexpectedly calls on her sanctimonious ex-stepbrother after one of her lovers becomes physically abusive. Thanks to an incisive script, sensitive direction, and a courageous performance by Hoekstra, *Hemel* emerges as a penetrating study of a young woman on the edge. Recommended for more adventurous foreign film collections. (F. Swietek)

Hitler's Children ★★★

Film Movement, 83 min., in German, English & Hebrew w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95

Ironically sharing a title with a WWII Hollywood-propaganda drama, Chanoch Ze'evi's *Hitler's Children* interviews several adult offspring and descendants of infamous high-ranking Nazi officials, who are saddled with burdensome surnames and driven to make attempted atonements. Niklas Frank has written two bitter memoirs of being the privileged son of Hans Frank, German governor-general of occupied Poland. Niklas regularly reads to student audiences, cautioning against blindly following one's elders. Niklas tells the kids that he knows they are bored watching him “execute my parents anew,” yet he persists, as though in self-therapy. Seemingly less haunted—although still the author of a book that has estranged her from her family—is Katrin Himmler, a granddaughter of Heinrich's younger brother. Katrin actually married a Jewish son of Holocaust survivors and admits that, yes, during their domestic spats the, uh, baggage sometimes comes up. Monika Goeth heard sugar-coated accounts all her life of her (executed) father Amon, a work-camp chief; she was devastated when she witnessed his portrayal as a sadistic murderer in *Schindler's List*. Bettina Goering, grandniece of Hermann, underwent sterilization surgery to discontinue the Goering bloodline. When a remorseful descendant meets Israeli pilgrims to Auschwitz, a note of bitterness appears as an adult child of survivors says that all this regret and catharsis still can't put back what was lost, or mend horrific wounds. An



often powerful and sad documentary about the terrible legacy of the sins of the fathers of the Third Reich, this is recommended. (C. Cassidy)

In Their Skin ★★★

MPI, 96 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.98

As home-invasion thrillers go, *In Their Skin* is a thoughtful if also terrifying drama about one family trying to supplant another. Following the death of a child, the grieving upper-middle-class Hughes family retreats from the city to take emotional refuge at their upscale vacation home deep in the woods. The day after attorney Mark (Josh Close), his wife Mary (Selma Blair), and their young son Brendon (Quinn Lord) arrive, a family of drifters outwardly similar to the Hughes—Bobby Sakowski (James D'Arcy), his spouse Jane (Rachel Miner), and their son Jared (Alex Ferris)—show up, claiming to be neighbors. Invited to lunch, the Sakowskis soon prove to be hostile as well as bizarre, leading to a night of terror for the Hughes family. While the scenes of psychological and physical torment are hard to watch, the old horror movie trope of a broken family fighting for its survival proves particularly effective here (as does the suggestion that the Sakowskis are a dark reflection of the miserable Hugheses). Director Jeremy Regimbal deftly controls the chaos within this creepily atmospheric film. Recommended. (T. Keogh)



Jack Reacher ★★★

Paramount, 130 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99, May 7

Tom Cruise stars in this fast-paced, action-packed thriller based on *One Shot*, the ninth novel in Lee Child's bestselling series revolving around enigmatic Jack Reacher. And before going any further, let me make a full disclosure: my son, Don Granger, produced this film. Child specifically wanted Cruise to play Reacher, a former military policeman who drifts around the country, usually by bus or hitchhiking, carrying only a toothbrush, expired passport, and ATM card. Homeless by choice, living off-the-grid Reacher wears his clothing for a few days before discarding it and buying replacements at thrift stores. A tough, self-sufficient loner, Reacher is a man of few words and occasional dry wit. When a sniper positions himself in a parking garage across from Pittsburgh's baseball stadium and shoots what appears to be five random people on the riverfront promenade, Reacher—who specializes in homicide investigations—suspects there's something more going on with the mysterious murders, especially when the accused gunman (Joseph Sikora) asks for his



help. This development arouses the suspicion of the arresting detective (David Oyelowo), determined district attorney (Richard Jenkins), and the suspect's criminal defense lawyer (Rosamund Pike)—who also happens to be the DA's daughter—along with other deceptive characters played by Robert Duvall and director Werner Herzog. Writer-director Christopher McQuarrie and cinematographer Caleb Deschanel stage compelling car chases and a treacherous shootout in a gravel quarry here, but what's most surprising is how adroitly Cruise masks his trademark charisma, becoming completely convincing as the terse, quirky vigilante. *Jack Reacher* is exciting, escapist entertainment (and Child fans can glimpse the novelist as the officer returning a toothbrush to Reacher in the police precinct). Recommended. (S. Granger)

The Last Stand ★★1/2

Lionsgate, 107 min., R, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.99, May 21

In his first major screen role since he left California politics, Arnold Schwarzenegger gives hardcore fans what they want: a few amusing quips and oodles of heroic action, including hand-to-hand combat, prolonged car chases, and blasting, bullet-riddled showdowns. After an illustrious stint as an LAPD narcotics detective, Ray Owens (Schwarzenegger) is now the taciturn, mild-mannered sheriff of sleepy Sommerton Junction, a small Arizona border town that turns out to be the escape route chosen by fugitive Gabriel Cortez (Eduardo Noriega), an arrogantly diabolical, third-generation Mexican drug kingpin. While U.S. authorities, led by Federal Agent John Bannister (Forest Whitaker), are in hot pursuit from Las Vegas, Cortez is zipping along through the sun-drenched desert badlands, bursting through blockades at more than 200 mph in a souped-up Corvette ZR1 with a female FBI agent (Genesis Rodriguez) as hostage. Meanwhile, Cortez's ruthless henchman (Peter Stormare) has gunned down an old farmer (unbilled Harry Dean Stanton) who protested the secret construction of a canyon bridge on his property. So it's up to Owens and his makeshift assortment of deputies (including *Jackass* star Johnny Knoxville) to apprehend the culprit. Directed by Kim Jee-woon, *The Last Stand* is standard Hollywood mindless mayhem that is likely to appeal to fans of the still-muscular, 65-year-old former Governor. A strong optional purchase. (S. Granger)



Little White Lies ★★1/2

MPI, 154 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98

Writer-director Guillaume Canet's follow-up to his engrossing thriller *Tell No One* is a disappointing French homage to *The Big Chill*, revolving around a group of Parisian

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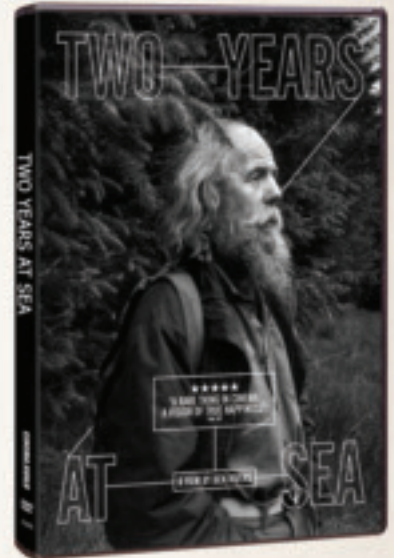
Manohla Dargis, The New York Times

“This richly gradated black-and-white wide-screen feature pulls you in instantly with its beautiful opening image of a man trudging through the snow... Interpreting *Two Years at Sea* is far less important (or necessary) than watching it, experiencing the film as it happens instead of trying to wrest meaning from it. What counts is the fog that wreathes the trees, the bloody folk song that the man plays on a record player, the slight pulsing quality of the images and the way that another person's seclusion can feel like an oasis.”

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friends (in their 30s and 40s) who go off on their annual seaside vacation together despite the fact that one member has been injured in a motorcycle accident and lies near death in a hospital. That decision suggests the extent of their self-absorption, which is demonstrated repeatedly over the course of the two-and-a-half hour running-time here as secrets are revealed, tempers flare, and reconciliation follows tragedy. The ensemble cast includes some of France's most illustrious talent—François Cluzet, as well as Oscar winners Jean Dujardin and Marion Cotillard—but all are hampered by having to portray sketchily-written characters, none more so than top-billed Cluzet, badly overplaying a married man who goes berserk over a male friend's admission that he is attracted to him. A soundtrack consisting of American pop songs from the '60s and '70s, moreover, is pleasant to listen to, but also feels curiously anachronistic. A starry but emotionally thin comedy-drama, *Little White Lies* is an optional purchase. (F. Swietek)



Madrid, 1987 ★★1/2

Breaking Glass, 104 min., in Spanish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$21.99



An extremely talky film based on a slender premise, David Trueba's claustrophobic *Madrid, 1987* nonetheless has its strong points, notably in the performance of José Sacristan as Miguel, a cynical married journalist who takes pretty university student Angela (Maria Valverde)—approaching Miguel for advice on her writing—to a friend's apartment for less than honorable purposes. Before he can lure her into bed, however, Miguel and Angela wind up locked naked in a cramped bathroom, where for hours Miguel pontificates on anything and everything, with Angela serving as a mostly mute listener. Much of the writing here is sharp and amusing, and Sacristan delivers the lines with winning irascibility, but the film simply drags on too long. The dating of the characters' none-too-brief encounter to a period when Spain was still struggling to confront the realities of the post-Franco era suggests that *Madrid, 1987* is intended as a sort of microcosm of the relationship between the country's old and new generations. But it may be difficult for non-natives or those unfamiliar with contemporary Spanish history to appreciate that subtext. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Not Fade Away ★★1/2

Paramount, 112 min., R, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99

David Chase, creator of HBO's *The Sopranos*, makes his directorial debut with this bitter-sweet coming-of-age drama. Taking its name

from a song popularized by Buddy Holly, *Not Fade Away* captures the shift in rock 'n' roll that took place during the roughly five turbulent years between the assassinations of President John F. Kennedy in 1963 and his brother Robert in 1968. Intelligent yet insecure Douglas Damiano (John Magaro) is a drummer in a garage band with his friends Eugene (Jack Huston) and Wells (Will Brill). Calling themselves The Twilight Zones, the band plays covers of songs by the Rolling Stones, Bo Diddley, and the Kinks. Doug is infatuated with Grace (Bella Heathcote), who doesn't pay much attention to him until one fateful evening when egomaniacal Gene has to skip a gig after swallowing a lit joint, elevating Doug into the vocalist spotlight. Grace comes from a well-to-do, conservative household already worried about her unstable, artsy sister (Dominique McElligott), while Doug's family is blue-collar Italian-American, typified by his judgmental, domineering father (James Gandolfini) and depressive mother (Molly Price). Chase draws on his poignant, rock-infused memories of growing up in suburban New Jersey to delineate these nostalgic, if also somewhat clichéd, characters, coupling them with a pleasant period soundtrack. A strong optional purchase. (S. Granger)



Obselidia ★★★

Passion River, 97 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95



In Diane Bell's eccentric indie comedy, Michael Piccirilli stars as George, a bookish figure who believes that he is the world's last door-to-door encyclopedia salesman. George isn't exactly cutting edge: he writes on a manual typewriter and is obsessed with the concept of obsolescence, ultimately deciding to compile a book about all of the things that have become obsolete. George is joined in his quest by Sophie (Gaynor Howe), a projectionist in a theater that shows silent films. Together, they venture to Death Valley to track down a reclusive scientist who has grandly predicted the end of the planet for the year 2100. *Obselidia* plays with a number of ideas related to values and perceptions—George is focused aggressively on preserving a record of the extinct and the defunct, while Sophie's philosophy is that nothing ever becomes obsolete as long as someone loves it. A Sundance Film Festival award-winner, the film gets a lot of mileage from its loose-limbed charm and the chemistry between Piccirilli and Howe. Recommended. (P. Hall)

Off White Lies ★★★

Film Movement, 86 min., in Hebrew w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95

This gentle drama-comedy boasts a couple

of nice performances in its story of homeless Israeli father and ne'er-do-well Shaul (Gur Bentvich) and his estranged, 12-year-old American daughter, Libby (Elya Inbar), who has come to live with him. With literally nowhere to turn for shelter, Shaul cons his way into the home of a Jerusalem family by pretending that he and Libby are refugees from the Second Lebanon War. The ruse initially works, but tensions quietly mount as Libby tires of Shaul's deceptions and she wants to return to the U.S. Meanwhile, Shaul ingratiates himself with his hosts, but risks his cover because of sexual interest in the lady of the house (Salit Achimiri). Co-writer and director Maya Kenig takes a laidback approach, eschewing emotional fireworks while allowing Shaul's house of cards to collapse under its own weight as Libby resists and rebels until finally finding a way to make her father act like a grownup. Bentvich and Inbar shine as the leads in this genial film. Recommended. (T. Keogh)



The Pool ★★★1/2

Kino Lorber, 94 min., in Hindi w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95



Filmmaker Chris Smith's Sundance prize-winning drama stars Venkatesh Chavan as 18-year-old Venkatesh, an illiterate janitor at a hotel in the Indian state of Goa. Venkatesh supplements his meager income by being a street vendor, selling plastic bags with the aid of a 10-year-old orphan named Jhangir (Jhangir Badshah). Venkatesh's obsession is to swim in a pool that is part of a long-vacant estate, which he is able to view by climbing a mango tree overlooking the property. One day, residents arrive at the estate: a gruff man and his beautiful young daughter. Venkatesh insinuates his way into their lives by seeking out a job as a gardener on the property, setting the story into motion. Smith's direction is remarkably assured, considering that a) *The Pool* is a Hindi-language production (the filmmaker does not speak the language), and b) the stars were nonprofessionals who were unable to read. Nonetheless, Smith and his youthful actors overcame these barriers to create this original and moving drama that clearly underscores the social and economic obstacles that continue to hobble modern-day India. Highly recommended. (P. Hall)

Promised Land ★★1/2

Universal, 107 min., R, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$34.98

Gus Van Sant's *Promised Land* serves up a polemic about the dangers of the hydraulic drilling practice known as fracking. Farm boy-turned-corporate salesman Steve Butler



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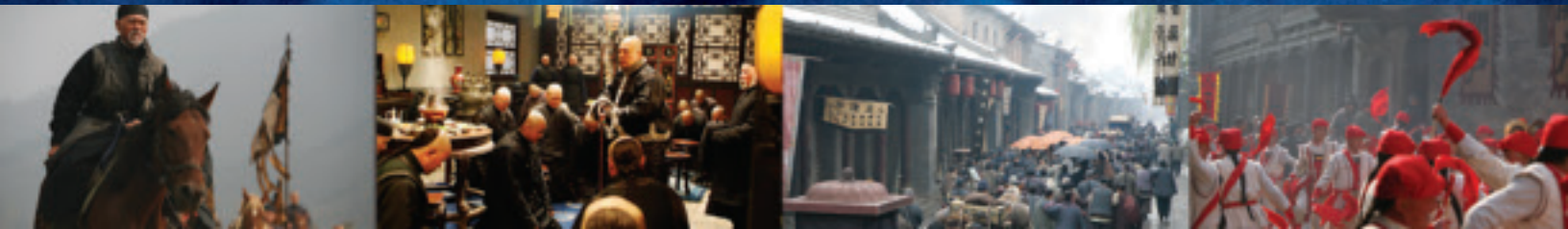
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(co-screenwriter Matt Damon) has been dispatched by the Global company to the rural Pennsylvania town of McKinley with his partner, Sue Thomason (Frances McDormand), to acquire natural gas drilling rights from local citizens who are suffering hard times due to the recent economic decline. Steve's job shouldn't be too difficult, especially since Global is offering considerable profit to each farmer for the right to blast pressurized chemicals into the soil in order to release natural gas. Some accept with alarming alacrity, but others prove more recalcitrant. The primary opposition comes from Frank Yates (Hal Holbrook), a high-school science teacher who publicly challenges Steve's corporate agenda and calls for the townspeople to vote, rather than just accept Global as their economic salvation. Adding to Steve's consternation is the arrival of Dustin Noble (co-writer John Krasinski), a slick environmental agitator who launches an anti-Global campaign, pointing out that fracking not only contributes to air/water pollution but also proves deadly to livestock. The professional acting ensemble is first-rate (augmented by real-life residents of Avonmore, PA), but the corruption narrative feels simplistic and one can't help but raise an eyebrow over the fact that part of the film's funding came from the United Arab Emirates, the world's third largest oil exporter, which may be said to have a vested interest in suppressing U.S. natural gas production. Optional. (S. Granger)



Safe Haven ★★

Fox, 116 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$39.99, May 7

Based on the novel by Nicholas Sparks, *Safe Haven* begins with a distraught young woman (Julianne Hough) fleeing from a violent suburban crime scene, cutting her long brunette hair, and bleaching it blonde before she surreptitiously boards a bus. Impulsively, she gets off in Southport, a small, sleepy community on the picturesque North Carolina coastline. Determined to bury her past, she introduces herself as Katie, rents an isolated cabin in the woods, and lands a job working as a waitress. Katie is befriended by a neighbor (Cobie Smulders) and she catches the eye of the proprietor of the general store (Josh Duhamel), the latter a recent widower raising his sullen, sensitive, pre-teen son (Noah Lomax) and disarmingly spunky, 8-year-old daughter (Mimi Kirkland). Meanwhile, back in Boston, a crazed, vodka-swilling detective (David Lyons) is determined to track Katie down. Director Lasse Hallström's sappy, tear-stained, blandly cast film tries to mix elements of suspense with a touch of the supernatural,



but this is really just sentimental schmaltz. Optional, at best. (S. Granger)

Silent Souls ★★★1/2

Zeitgeist, 75 min., in Russian w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99

This meditative third feature from Russian filmmaker Aleksey Fedorchenko is not a documentary, but the journey that is taken by the characters—two men carrying the body of one man's young wife, who died suddenly, to her final resting place—also serves as an anthropological tour through the distinctive (and disappearing) culture of the Meryan people in West-Central Russia. Igor Sergeev stars as Aist, a writer and poet and something of a cultural historian, who accompanies grieving widower Miron (Yuriy Tsurilo) while also narrating—expounding upon the Meryan people, who pride themselves on the unique heritage bestowed upon them by their Finnish ancestors. The symbolic odyssey here recalls the patient, poetic work of Andrei Tarkovsky, both with its long takes and in the way the film slips from the smoky present of a winter road trip to bright remembrances of the past. While there is definitely a sense of loss and sadness in *Silent Souls*, the narrative is also very positive in its presentation of death as part of the cycle of life, and in its depiction of the desire of Meryans to return to the sea (not the earth). A gentle, affirming film that captures a mostly unknown culture while presenting a meditative and beautiful journey, this is highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)



Starlet ★★★

Music Box, 103 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95, May 7

Sean Baker's *Starlet* depicts the surprising friendship that develops between two women. Jane (lanky model Dree Hemingway, daughter of Mariel Hemingway) works in San Fernando Valley's adult entertainment industry. Jane's chihuahua, Starlet, provides more stable companionship than either her high-strung roommate, Melissa (Stella Maeve), or hopped-up boyfriend, Mikey (James Ransone). While looking for items to decorate her room, Jane stops at 85-year-old widow Sadie's (Besedka Johnson) yard sale, where she buys a thermos that surprisingly contains rolls of hundred dollar bills, sending Jane on a shopping spree. Sadie intended the sale to mollify a civic group that has been pressuring her to renovate. After guilt sets in, Jane finds ways to keep running into Sadie—a loner who doesn't appreciate the unsolicited attention (and even calls the police at one point). Jane doesn't tell Sadie about her job or the money, but she wears Sadie's resistance down by driv-



ing her to the grocery store, the cemetery, and bingo nights. Jane and Sadie wouldn't seem to have anything in common, but Jane becomes genuinely intrigued by Sadie's background, which includes a gambler husband. Later, while Jane is at work shooting a porn scene (which includes full frontal nudity and sex), Starlet leads Melissa to a discovery that threatens the tenuous relationship between Jane and Sadie. An emotionally powerful character study, *Starlet* is recommended for more adventurous collections. (K. Fennessy)

Tatsumi ★★★1/2

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

Filmmaker Eric Khoo's biographical profile is an animated tribute to Tatsumi, a significant writer-illustrator of Japanese manga who, beginning in the late 1950s, turned away from fantasy and child-oriented material to create a raw, realistic graphic-novel genre he called "gekiga," which might be compared (at least for its taboo-breaking impact) to underground "comix" in the West. In 2009, Tatsumi wrote and illustrated his own memoir, *A Drifting Life*. Tatsumi's personal history as a struggling artist (although proclaimed a manga prodigy and approved by the legendary Osamu Tezuka, his family still suffered financially) is interlaced with cartoons based on five of his gekiga created in the 1970s as a caustic reaction to a Japanese economic boom that never seemed to benefit the lower classes. The stories-within-the-story depict (almost always in monochrome palette) desperate and doubting postwar Japanese individuals embroiled in dire dilemmas ranging from murder to pornography to prostitution. A bold, provocative film featuring graphic animated sex, nudity, and violence, this is recommended for both foreign film and art-oriented collections. (C. Cassidy)



The Thieves ★★1/2

Well Go USA, 136 min., in Korean w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98

South Korea's answer to Steven Soderbergh's *Ocean's* trilogy, *The Thieves* is a sleek, snappy heist movie with convoluted plotlines and plenty of eccentric personalities. The basic premise brings together two criminal crews—one from South Korea, the other from Hong Kong—for a trip to Macau to steal a priceless (and ostensibly nonexistent) diamond necklace from a brutal crime boss. Half the crew is out to rip off the other half, an undercover cop is working in their midst, and the mysterious mastermind of this heist (Kim Yun-seok) has his own agenda. Elder statesman of Chinese pop movie stardom



THE CHICAGO 8



The true story of the explosive trial that resulted when seven leaders of the Vietnam anti-war movement, along with the Chairman of the Black Panthers, were charged with conspiracy to incite the devastating riots at the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago. It is one of the highest profile criminal court cases in US history.

All-star cast includes:

Gary Cole (*Office Space, The Brady Bunch Movie*), Mayim Bialik (*Big Bang Theory, CBS*), Danny Masterson (*That 70's Show*), Thomas Ian Nicholas (*American Pie series*), Meta Golding (*The Hunger Games: Catching Fire*), Philip Baker Hall (*Modern Family, 50/50*), Orlando Jones (*Runaway Jury, Magnolia*)

- Winner of Best Feature Film at the Beverly Hills Film Festival
- Features bonus material including "The Making of the Chicago 8" and an exclusive interview with Danny Masterson

DRAMA | 89 MINS | COLOR

DVD: PRDVD2063 **\$19.99** | BLU-RAY: PRDVD2065 **\$24.95**

AGE OF CHAMPIONS

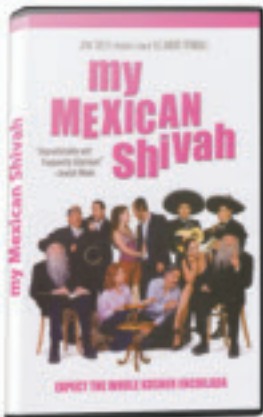


Age of Champions is the award-winning documentary following five competitors who sprint, leap, and swim for gold at the National Senior Olympics. You'll meet a 100 year-old tennis champion, 86 year-old pole vaulter, and rough-and-tumble basketball grandmothers as they discover the power of the human spirit and triumph over the limitations of age.

"As a profile of perseverance and discipline, *Age of Champions* is infectiously inspiring!"
-*Washington Post*

Documentary | 70 mins.
Color | PRDVD2105 **\$59.95**

MY MEXICAN SHIVAH



From acclaimed Mexican filmmaker Alejandro Springall!

The passing of a Mexican Jew whose appetite for life was stronger than his spiritual discipline makes for a difficult set of funeral arrangements in this comedy from filmmaker Alejandro Springall. While Moishe was a man with plenty of friends, most of the folks he left behind to arrange his funeral don't have much good to say about him. *My Mexican Shiva* follows Moishe's dysfunctional family through the complicated seven-day mourning period after his death. Can they learn to put Moishe's past behind them?

"Repurposing clichés as springboards to deeper issues...[Alejandro Springall] reminds us that ritual can ease reconciliation, and that sometimes even meat and dairy can get along. -*The New York Times*

Comedy | 98 mins.
Color | Hebrew and Spanish
w/English subtitles |
PRDVD1976 **\$24.95**



NO WAY OUT BUT ONE

Holly Collins came to the family court of Minnesota with the intention of bringing charges of domestic violence against her ex-husband. The court's response was not to come to her aid, but instead to grant full custody of her children to her and her children's abuser. In 1994, Holly Collins became an international fugitive when she ignored the court's ruling, grabbed her three children, and went on the run from her abusive ex-husband.

"The film is advocacy journalism at its very best, exposing what can happen when men accused of abuse get custody in family courts."
-*Huffington Post*

Documentary | 88 mins.
Color | PRDVD2005 **\$24.95**

THE DREAM SHARE PROJECT



The *Dream Share Project* is an inspirational documentary film that follows two recent college graduates on a road trip across America, as they explore how successful people have chased their dreams. Along the way, the pair learns about topics like: discovering one's passion, committing to a dream, dealing with setbacks, and redefining success for the Millennial generation. *The Dream Share Project* features eye-opening advice and anecdotal wisdom from an Olympic skier, one of the original Latin Kings of Comedy, a slam poet, a Project Runway fashion designer, the CEO of a sustainable flip flop company, and many more.

Documentary | 63 mins.
Color | PRDVD2109 **\$24.95**

Simon Yam, playing Chen, is given a genuinely romantic/tragic heroism, just one of the many boxes the film checks off in its everything-plus-the-kitchen-sink conglomeration of heist movie conventions. *The Thieves* also serves up romance, pulp crime tragedy, reversals of sympathy, and some thrillingly staged and executed action scenes. Unfortunately, all of this plays out with a confusing flashback structure and more twists than viewers can easily track. Still, this slickly-produced film—the top-grossing movie of all time in South Korea—will likely appeal to fans of old Hong Kong and new South Korean action cinema. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

This Is Not a Film ★★★

Palisades Tartan, 75 min., in Persian w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$19.98



A more fitting title there never was: this non-film offers 75 minutes of camera footage crudely recorded—partly on a cell phone—in a luxury Tehran high rise. At the center of this documentary of sorts is prominent dissident Iranian filmmaker Jafar Panahi, who we immediately learn is facing six years of jail time and a 20-year ban on making films in Iran. We see Panahi on the phone as his lawyer delivers the bad news, after which—in what seems to be some sort of clandestine act of defiance—Panahi calls his associate over to help film this documentary. In what would no doubt seem like a potentially interesting concept on paper, Panahi decides to describe and enact scenes from his latest screenplay, which had been met with disapproval by Iran's totalitarian government. But this attempt is hardly adequate, and Panahi begins to realize the futility of this one-man attempt to dramatize his script. Later, Panahi becomes fixated on the man who has come to take his trash, and at this point the film ceases to be a serious statement of defiance from an oppressed artist. Although one does get a certain obvious sense of the sort of soul-deadening authoritarian society a free-thinking artist like Panahi unfortunately has to deal with, the most interesting thing about this “film” is that it was smuggled out of Iran in a cake. A critical darling—arguably for reasons other than cinematic quality—that received a lot of publicity, *This Is Not a Film* is ultimately recommended as a somewhat awkward poster child for freedom of speech. (M. Sandlin)

Warm Bodies ★★★

Summit, 97 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95, June 4

Over the decades, Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* has been adapted for numerous genres. Based on Isaac Marion's popular novel, screenwriter-director Jonathan Levine's *Warm Bodies* transposes the tortured

love story into the realm of the undead. Set in a post-apocalyptic world where humans dwell in heavily-guarded urban enclaves, the tale is narrated by R (Nicholas Hoult), a twentysomething zombie who shuffles aimlessly around an abandoned airport, adroitly avoiding voracious, decaying, skeletal zombies known as Boneyes. One day, R and grunt-buddy M (Rob Corddry)—along with fellow corpses—encounter a group of humans, including Julie (Teresa Palmer) and her boyfriend, Perry (Dave Franco), who are scavenging pharmaceutical supplies. As R munches on Perry's brain, gaining flashback access to his memories, he finds himself irresistibly attracted to Julie, saving her from his flesh-eating cohorts and hiding her in the abandoned plane he calls home. Despite Julie's initial mistrust, R continues to gently court her, giving her canned food and beer while playing selections from his collection of vintage vinyl. After Julie manages to escape and return to the fortified, walled-off city where her ruthless father, General Grigio (John Malkovich), heads the zombie-hunting militia, she finds that she misses R. Meanwhile, smitten R follows Julie, sneaking inside the wall and appearing below her balcony. Combining humor and heart, this strangely sentimental paranormal rom-com about forbidden love is recommended. (S. Granger)



Wuthering Heights

★★★1/2

Oscilloscope, 129 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99



The good news about the third feature from *Fish Tank* director Andrea Arnold is that she puts her own unique stamp on Emily Brontë's brooding classic, while the not-so-good news is that it marks her least satisfying film to date. Arnold starts by turning Heathcliff (Solomon Glave) into an escaped slave, presumably of Caribbean descent, who materializes on Yorkshire's moors without the benefit of a back story. Devout farmer Earnshaw (Paul Hilton) takes him in “because it's the Christian thing to do.” Life at *Wuthering Heights* isn't easy, but the teenager finds a saving grace in Earnshaw's daughter, Catherine (Shannon Beer). After their father's death, however, her brother, Hindley (Lee Shaw), takes over the household, and sends Heathcliff to sleep with the livestock. Although Heathcliff and Cathy share a bond, she eventually accepts a proposal from the respectable young man who nursed her back to health after an injury, and Heathcliff leaves town. Returning six years later with money in his pocket, Heathcliff (now played by James Howson) tries to win back Cathy (Kaya Scodelario),

but faces several roadblocks, even as their mutual attraction remains strong. Instead of a swoon-worthy story, however, Arnold emphasizes brutality over any other concern. Heathcliff and Cathy have a sadomasochistic relationship (and Heathcliff has a propensity for strangling small creatures to death), and both are immune to the feelings of anyone but themselves, making it hard to care about what happens to either one. Still, given the source material and Arnold's critical cachet as a director, this should be considered a strong optional purchase. (K. Femmessy)

Yossi ★★★

Strand, 85 min., in Hebrew w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$27.99, May 21

After nearly a decade, filmmaker Eytan Fox returns to the story he began with *Yossi & Jagger* (VL Online-6/04), which was about two Israeli soldiers who have a brief but passionate affair during their tour of duty on the border with Lebanon. The earlier film ended with the death of the younger man; *Yossi* finds the titular character (Ohad Knoller) still haunted by his lover's memory as he works long hours as a hospital doctor. Jarred by a visit from Jagger's mother for an examination, Yossi finally reveals the truth about her dead son's sexuality—an unnerving experience that results in him making a blunder in the operating room that necessitates a little vacation. While driving to the Sinai—a dangerous region—Yossi picks up four soldiers who have missed their bus. One of them, Tom (Oz Zehavi)—who is openly gay—persuades Yossi to stay at their hotel rather than continue his trip. Over the next several days, Yossi's emotional resistance is gradually broken down by Tom, and he finds himself reconnecting with another human being for the first time since Jagger's death. Fox's film effectively conveys both the pain of loss and the difficulty of recovering from grief, while also showing the enormous changes that have occurred in society's attitude toward homosexuality over the short space of a decade. A sharp and affecting character study with a decidedly hopeful outlook, this is recommended. (F. Swietek)



Video Librarian Online

Visit Video Librarian Online (www.videolibrarian.com) during May and June for DVD/Blu-ray-specific comments added to the video movies reviewed here, as well as new reviews, including: *Cloud Atlas*, *A Good Day to Die Hard*, *Identity Thief*, *Knife Fight*, *Mama*, *Parker*, *Side Effects*, *Stand Up Guys*, *Texas Chainsaw*, and much more!

Breaking Glass Pictures

A World of Independent Films



Silver Case

When two thugs get their hands on a mysterious silver briefcase, they find themselves on the run from a powerful Hollywood producer known as "The Senator" and his henchmen. But what's inside the silver case?

Starring: Eric Roberts, Claire Falconer, Brian Gamble, Shalim Ortiz & Seymour Cassel

87 MINUTES | COLOR | SRP \$24.99 | BGP358
ACTION | STREET DATE: 5/7



K-11

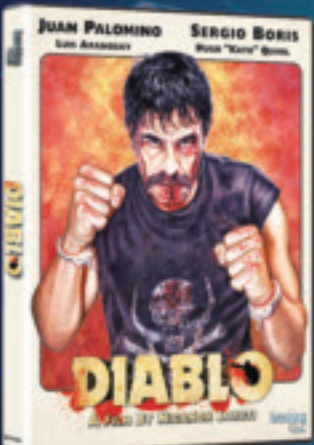
Music executive Ray Saxx, Jr. is trapped in K-11, a unique section of the Los Angeles County Prison System for gay and transgender inmates. He was out cold when he arrived and he has no idea how he got there - just that he needs to get the hell out...alive and intact.

"Jules Stewart makes a confident directorial debut" - *Echo Magazine*

Also Available on Blu-Ray™
\$29.99
SRP
BGP349

Starring: Goran Visnjic, Kate del Castillo, D.B. Sweeney, Portia Doubleday, Jason Mewes

88 MINUTES | COLOR | SRP \$24.99 | BGP348
DRAMA | STREET DATE: 4/23



Diablo

Marcos is a washed up champion boxer who was forced into retirement after killing a man in the ring with a single punch. Just as his luck seems to be taking a turn for the better, his cousin Huguito arrives at his door, and as Marcos is about to learn, wherever Huguito goes, trouble soon follows.

SPANISH W/ ENGLISH SUBTITLES

85 MINUTES | COLOR | SRP \$24.99 | BGP360
ACTION/COMEDY | STREET DATE: 6/4



Stuck To Your Pillow

After a fatal diving accident, Miguel refuses to move on to the afterlife and instead stays on earth as a ghost - all for the love of his life, Patricia, a married woman. So, Miguel and Patricia begin an affair in the only place they can meet: dreams.

SPANISH W/ ENGLISH SUBTITLES

102 MINUTES | COLOR | SRP \$24.99 | BGP357
COMEDY/DRAMA | STREET DATE: 4/30



Just 45 Minutes From Broadway

A family of Broadway thespians gathers in a country cottage outside New York, where romance blossoms, secrets come out and high drama ensues! Based on the hit play by Henry Jaglom.

"Fans of Jaglom's improvisational style will be reminded of some of his best work" - *San Francisco Chronicle*

Starring: Tanna Frederick, Judd Nelson & David Proval

106 MINUTES | COLOR | SRP \$24.99 | RBR008
COMEDY/ DRAMA | STREET DATE: 7/9



Henry Jaglom Collection vol. 2: Three Comedies

This special edition box set includes three classic comedies by acclaimed independent director Henry Jaglom: The crime caper *Sitting Ducks*, and two New York City romances, *Can She Bake a Cherry Pie?* and *New Year's Day*.

90 MINUTES EACH | COLOR | SRP \$24.99
RBR006 | COMEDY | STREET DATE: 5/7

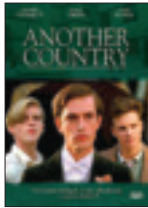
For more information please contact Richard Ross at: ross@bgpics.com

Visit us at: www.breakingglasspictures.com

Another Country

★★★1/2

Hen's Tooth, 90 min., PG, DVD: \$19.95



Marek Kaniiewska's 1984 film version of Julian Mitchell's award-winning play is loosely inspired by the early life of Guy Burgess, the British double agent who defected to the Soviet Union. At the center is Guy Bennett (Rupert Everett), an upper-classman at an exclusive British boys' school in 1932 England. Bennett and his friend Tommy Judd (Colin Firth) share a common bond as outsiders in this posh environment: Bennett is gay, while Judd is a committed Marxist. Bennett runs afoul of rigid social codes when a classmate intercepts a love letter written to a younger student, James Harcourt (Cary Elwes). Meanwhile, Judd finds his political obsessions at odds with the ossified class system that governs both the school and the wider British society. The alienation felt by the two young men will ultimately lead to a significant betrayal of their country after they enter the adult world. Although the glossy production values mirror the style of Merchant-Ivory films, *Another Country's* gritty emotional power comes from its denunciation of hypocrisy and the abuse of privilege. When first released, the film created a sensation for its frank and unapologetic consideration of homosexuality—no American motion picture of the era tackled the subject with a comparable depth of passion or maturity. And while it's mostly remembered for Everett's star-making turn, the real surprises today are the wonderfully low-key performances by two then-unknowns: Firth and Elwes. DVD extras include an audio commentary by Kaniiewska and cinematographer Peter Biziou. Highly recommended. (P. Hall)

The Ballad of Narayama

★★★★

Criterion, 98 min., in Japanese w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95



Frequently cited as one of the greatest Japanese films ever made, the 1958 original version of *The Ballad of Narayama* has been aptly described by the late Roger Ebert as "a film of great beauty and elegant artifice, telling a story of startling cruelty." The "cruelty" here is not between people so much as it is of blindly adhering to senseless, outmoded traditions, while the "elegant artifice" refers to the film's remarkably stylized sets—all created in-studio with realistic landscapes, cleverly controlled lighting effects, and artificial, mood-setting backdrops used to express passing seasons in a small, remote village in the foothills of Mount Narayama. Food is scarce in this harsh environment, where tradition dictates that when a villager

reaches the age of 70, that person must be carried to Narayama's mountaintop and left there to die. Orin (Kinuyo Tanaka) is a dutiful woman who is about to turn 70 and is quite ready for death—in fact she's eager to summit the mountain on the back of her reluctant son, a recent widower. But first she arranges for him to meet the woman he will eventually marry. Directed by Keisuke Kinoshita, the film is based on a Japanese folk legend, and is heavily influenced by Kabuki theater, most notably in its use of traditional music and dance to enhance and punctuate the narrative. Presented with a 2k digital transfer on DVD and debuting on Blu-ray, extras include a booklet featuring an essay by critic Philip Kemp. A richly formalized film of arresting beauty and gut-wrenching emotion, this is highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** (J. Shannon)

Battlestar Galactica: Blood & Chrome ★★★

Universal, 94 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$34.98



This prequel to the acclaimed Syfy series was originally produced as a TV-movie-sized pilot, but was subsequently cannibalized and chopped up into tiny chapters for a web series before finally being aired on Syfy as a standalone feature. *Blood & Chrome* is a little thin compared to the *Battlestar* reboot productions, but is certainly more ambitious than typical Syfy original films (most of which have "mega" in the title, and involve catastrophic geological events or mutant creatures). This story, set early on in the first Cylon war, is built around young William Adama (Luke Pasqualino), a cocky rookie fighter pilot fresh from flight school and now in military service. With no idea of the reality of war, he's immediately put on transport duty with burned-out co-pilot Coker Fasjovik (Ben Cotton) and a passenger: a civilian software engineer named Dr. Beka Kelly (Lili Bordán), who sends them on a mission into the heart of Cylon-occupied territory. Unfortunately, this plays mostly like an extended episode—with stock personalities dropped into the mission of the week—making it strictly for diehard *Battlestar* fans. Presented on DVD and Blu-ray, extras include a visual effects featurette and deleted scenes. Optional. (S. Axmaker)

Bonanza: The Official Fifth Season, Volume 1

★★★1/2

Paramount, 5 discs, 1,010 min., not rated, DVD: \$46.99



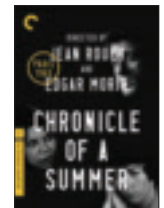
By the time NBC's famous Western series hit its 1963–64 fifth season, the show was approaching the top spot in the ratings (only *The Beverly Hillbillies* scored higher),

while the crew and cast—Lorne Greene as Ponderosa ranch patriarch Ben Cartwright, and Pernell Roberts, Dan Blocker, and Michael Landon as sons Adam, Hoss, and Little Joe—were confidently turning out episodes that ranged from tense mysteries and rugged action pieces to tender dramas and raucous comedies. This compilation even includes one segment ("Twilight Town") that qualifies as a sort of period *Twilight Zone*, as well as stories that feature historical characters such as Charles Dickens, Calamity Jane, and Doc Holliday, and a guest star list that included Gena Rowlands, Stefanie Powers, and Keenan Wynn. Thanks to carefully restored transfers that easily surpass all previous releases, this will be a mandatory acquisition for those who have been collecting the series; but it will also appeal to anyone interested in taking a nostalgic trip to the golden age of the television Western. Compiling the first 18 episodes of season five, DVD extras include audio commentary on the beloved episode "Hoss and the Leprechauns," an appearance by Greene and Blocker on *The Andy Williams Show*, and photo galleries. Highly recommended. [Note: *Bonanza: The Official Fifth Season, Volume 2* is also available.] (F. Swietek)

Chronicle of a Summer

★★★★

Criterion, 90 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95



This groundbreaking 1961 documentary by filmmaker-anthropologist Jean Rouch and sociologist Edgar Morin helped establish the concept of *cinéma-vérité* (a term introduced by Morin in the opening sequence). Rouch and Morin conduct on-the-street interviews in Paris, where the question "Are you happy?" is used as a springboard into the personal opinions of a diverse group of people. The filmmakers query African students, blue-collar workers, a concentration camp survivor, and even a secretary for the influential movie magazine *Cahiers du Cinéma*, all of whom give answers that reflect concerns both timeless and unique to the era (the film was shot in 1960, while France was still embroiled in the Algerian War). Rouch and Morin then gather the interviewees together to watch the footage, capturing the participants' reactions, which are passionate and (in many cases) strangely vitriolic. Rouch and Morin conclude their efforts with a debate among themselves, which they filmed at the Musée de l'Homme in Paris. *Chronicle of a Summer* was highly influential in its time as both a key piece of the French New Wave and a bold experiment in nonfiction filmmaking. Bowing on DVD and Blu-ray with a pristine 2K digital restoration, extras include the 2011 retrospective documentary *Un été + 50*, interviews, and a booklet featuring an

essay by film scholar Sam Di Iorio. Highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** (P. Hall)

The Client List: The Complete First Season

★★

Sony, 3 discs, 417 min., not rated, DVD: \$45.99

Jennifer Love Hewitt stars in this Lifetime original series as Riley Parks, a licensed massage therapist and mother of two who's left broke and desperate when unemployed husband Kyle (Brian Hallisay) runs off without a word. Her legitimate income from working at a classy day spa isn't enough to make the mortgage payments, so she signs up to take on a few select clients who will pay for a little extra service on the side. Yes, Riley is a suburban single mother with a secret life as a prostitute. The show avoids the more lurid elements of the TV movie that inspired it, but is still essentially a racy soap opera with a Texas drawl, a lot of girl bonding and family crises, and a few hunky cowboys. What grounds it are the real-life anxieties: a bad economy, unemployment, fears of losing a home, and, of course, holding a family together after being abandoned by a spouse. And in a curious twist, Riley is a relationship counselor as well as a sex worker, repairing the broken lives of her customers. The rest is romantic melodrama, moral hand-wringing, and political hardball in a series that at least challenges the sexist double standard of men and women and sex. Costarring Cybill Shepherd, Loretta Devine, and Colin Egglesfield, this set compiles all 10 episodes from the 2012 debut season, with extras including outtakes and deleted scenes. An optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)



Continuum: Season One

★★★1/2

Universal, 2 discs, 440 min., not rated, DVD: \$44.98, Blu-ray: \$49.98

Created for Canadian TV and picked up by the Syfy channel stateside, this mix of time-travel sci-fi and urban cop show stars Rachel Nichols as law-enforcement officer Kiera Cameron, who is transported back from 2077 to 2012 along with a band of revolutionaries sprung from prison in a wonderfully inventive jail break. Stuck more than 60 years in the past, she teams up with Vancouver police detective Carlos Fonnegra (Victor Webster) and budding technology phenom Alec Sadler (Erik Knudsen) to stop the terrorists from using their knowledge to sabotage the future. Along with the cool technology and flash-forwards, what drives this clever genre show are its topsy-turvy contradictions. In the future, a corporate oligarchy rules the country with more interest in stability and profit than social welfare



and human rights, with Kiera acting as both a loyal government soldier and a police officer dedicated to protecting every human life. The "bad guys," meanwhile, fight for freedom and democracy with the bloodthirsty vengeance of gangsters, indifferent to who is being sacrificed along the way. Presenting all 10 episodes from the 2012 debut season, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

Femme Fatales: The Complete First Season

★★★1/2

eOne, 3 discs, 392 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.98

This Cinemax After Dark anthology series mingles soft-core erotica with noir-ish storytelling, aiming to titillate while spinning a real yarn. The range of the episodes is surprisingly broad: mini-noirs predominate, but there are two straight-up revenge fantasies, a takeoff on women-in-prison exploitation fare, a pure haunted-house shocker, a hostage suspense tale, and even one screwy comedy (pun intended). And the hour-long finale, about a supposed mentalist, manages to refer back to a number of previous segments. Whatever the genre, room is always made, however gratuitously, for a few steamy sex sequences (another regular feature has a sultry hostess spouting arch introductions). The writing is hardly first-rate, the acting is mediocre, and the visuals shoot for but rarely achieve a stylish glossiness. Still, *Femme Fatales* has the virtue of not taking itself too seriously, and anyone looking for a bit of titillation (both straight and lesbian) could do worse. Compiling all 14 episodes from the 2011 debut season, DVD extras include an episode commentary, deleted and alternate scenes, behind-the-scenes featurettes, a blooper reel, and a photo gallery. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)



Game of Thrones: The Complete Second Season

★★★1/2

HBO, 545 min., TV-MA, DVD: 5 discs, \$59.99; Blu-ray/DVD Combo: 7 discs, \$79.98

The second run of HBO's sprawling fantasy epic based on George R.R. Martin's *A Song of Fire and Ice* novel series builds an increasingly complex narrative that spans many lands, and encompasses an ever-growing cast of characters. The confederation of kingdoms plunges into a free-for-all civil war after sniveling young Prince Joffrey (Jack Gleason) is elevated to the throne by his cold-blooded mother, Cersei Lannister (Lena Headey). At the same time, the scheming Lannister family's black sheep, Cersei's brother Tyrion (Peter Dinklage), steps up to prove himself a master politician



and tactician. Meanwhile, barbarian queen Danerys (Emilia Clarke) gathers her own army in the sun-baked desert across the water, and in the icy north, something is rumbling on the other side of The Wall. The fantasy elements here are still merely grace notes in a human-based saga that plays like a fanciful take on Europe in the Dark Ages. The scale of the production (in particular the climactic battle of King's Landing) is impressive, with location filming in Ireland, Morocco, Malta, Croatia, and Iceland—capturing striking, dynamic landscapes that define each fictional land. But none of this would mean much without the strong writing, vivid characters, and superb cast, a combination that has earned the show a legion of obsessive fans. Compiling all 10 episodes from 2012 on DVD and Blu-ray, extras include audio commentaries, behind-the-scenes featurettes, and character profiles. Exclusive to the Blu-ray version are an interactive "War of the Five Kings" guide, animated "Histories and Lore" videos, and "Hidden Dragon Eggs" (as well as a pair of DVD flipper discs with all episodes). Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Gossip Girl: The Complete Sixth and Final Season

★★★

Warner, 3 discs, 422 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.98

Gossip Girl's final year isn't its best, but this sixth season of the blatantly escapist series about scions of the Upper East Side who plot, scheme, and dress to the nines offers enough highlights and suggestions of satire to make the show's end something to mourn. The central cast remains engaging, but new additions make little impact, starting with Barry Watson's drippy entrepreneur Steven, who fails to register as a viable romantic option for Serena (Blake Lively), and she wisely moves on to someone more dynamic. Steven's daughter, Sage (Sofia Black D'Elia), who attempts to sabotage Serena at every turn, is even more problematic—especially when she sets her sights on *Spectator* publisher Nate (Chace Crawford); the resulting tryst with a teenager comes across as both sleazy and inconsistent with Nate's character. Novelist Dan (Penn Badgley) is more unsympathetic than necessary, but certain late-breaking revelations help to explain why, while also allowing him to redeem himself. Finally, there's the long-anticipated reuniting of Blair (Leighton Meester), who has found her calling as a fashion designer, and Chuck (Ed Westwick), who has eased up on the Machiavellian machinations, although he continues to wear those ridiculous bow ties. Most significantly, the satisfying finale gives each character an end story and finally reveals the identity of anonymous blogger Gossip Girl. Compiling all 10 episodes of the 2012 final run, DVD extras include behind-



the-scenes featurettes, deleted scenes, a gag reel, and a downloadable audiobook prequel. Recommended for those collecting the series. (K. Fennessy)

Hidden ★★★

BFS, 2 discs, 240 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.99



Originally broadcast in 2011 on the BBC, this four-part series serves up vigorous action and mystery in a twisted tale of corruption, murder, and conspiracies. Hard-bitten solicitor Harry Venn (Philip Glenister) has effectively hidden his miscreant past as a getaway driver in a robbery that went awry, but it bubbles up to the surface when a shady lawyer, Gina Hawkes (Thekla Reuten), hires him to track down an alibi witness who mysteriously disappeared. Taking the case, Harry winds up on an unexpected detour: an investigation into his brother's death 20 years earlier in the botched attempted theft. Harry's personal drama plays against percolating crises in present-day London, where rioters protesting government cuts have shut down most of the city, and the seemingly unrelated stories slowly overlap and then intertwine into a violent, fast-paced tale. At times, *Hidden* feels somewhat overcooked with its surplus of intrigue and mayhem, and the political machinations occasionally seem like a mean-spirited parody of old *Yes, Minister* scripts. But Glenister shines in a performance that recalls the glory days of film-noir tough guys, his seemingly doughy appearance merely camouflaging a memorable anti-hero who is ready and eager for any challenge thrown at him. Recommended. (P. Hall)

Highlander 2: Renegade Version ★★

Olive, 109 min., R, DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$24.95



Theatrically released in 1991 as *Highlander II: The Quickening*, this sequel was later re-edited (adding 18 minutes) and re-christened as director Russell Mulcahy's "Renegade" version, which developed a small but loyal following (even prompting a spin-off TV series). Only fans of truly bad cinema will find any guilty pleasure in this chaotic follow-up to 1986's *Highlander*, in which Christopher Lambert reprises his role as Connor MacLeod—a member of the alien race known as "Immortals"—who was banished to Earth some 500 years ago. Set in the year 2024, the plot finds MacLeod—whose corporation created a shield to protect the Earth following the depletion of the ozone layer—fighting an evil cartel that has seized control of the shield. Virginia Madsen plays a scientist who assists MacLeod in his mission to destroy the baddies, while Sean

Connery is back in his role from *Highlander* as the Scottish Immortal named Ramirez (!), although by the time Connery starts engaging in dashing swordplay, you may wonder if he's wandered in from another movie altogether. Making its second standalone appearance on Blu-ray, with a decent transfer and no extras, this bona fide cinematic turkey is optional, at best. (J. Shammon)

The Late Mathias Pascal ★★★

Flicker Alley, 171 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$34.95



Based on a 1904 novel by Luigi Pirandello, *The Late Mathias Pascal* is a fabulist 1926 epic from France starring Russian-born Ivan Mosjoukine, one of the great French silent actors, in the title role of a provincial dreamer whose life takes a fantastic turn. Legendary director Marcel L'Herbier (a master of technique and a proponent of complex storytelling who wound fantasy and poetry around social realism) opens the narrative with a succession of setbacks—namely, a fairy-tale romance gone sour and a double-shot of tragic death—before taking a hard turn into wish fulfillment. Mathias loses everything before becoming an innocent in the high society of Rome, where he wins it all back; although his new life comes with a wicked price. Thanks to L'Herbier's graceful direction, the story bounces from dreamy love story to heavy tragedy to playful fantasy and back without feeling schizophrenic. The magnificent sets and locations, evocative imagery and effects, and offbeat performance of Mosjoukine nicely combine to take viewers on a delightful journey. Although considered a classic of French cinema, *The Late Mathias Pascal* is not well known to American audiences, but will certainly appeal to silent movie fans. Currently available on Blu-ray only (a DVD version is slated to appear in an upcoming boxed set of French silent cinema), this is mastered from a 2009 restoration and features a lovely new score by Timothy Brock. Extras include a booklet. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Little Fugitive ★★★1/2

Kino, 80 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$34.95



French director François Truffaut once said, "our New Wave would never have come into being if it hadn't been for the young Morris Engel, with his fine *Little Fugitive*." This early milestone of American independent filmmaking had a powerful influence on such later French classics as *The Red Balloon* and Truffaut's own *The 400 Blows*. Co-directed by Engel, Ray Ashley, and Ruth Orkin, *Little*

Fugitive—shot by Engel in New York during the summer of 1952—tells the simple story of a 7-year-old Brooklyn boy named Joey (charmingly played by non-actor Richie Andrusco), who flees to Coney Island after a mischievous prank that leads him to believe he has accidentally killed his older brother, Lennie. With six dollars in his pocket, Joey indulges himself with amusement rides and junk food, and as the weekend progresses, Lennie embarks on an equally adventurous search for his missing kid brother. Winner of the Silver Lion Award at the 1953 Venice Film Festival, and an Oscar nominee for Best Story, *Little Fugitive* was inducted into the National Film Registry in 1997. Making innovative use of a hand-held camera (which impressed Engel's friend Stanley Kubrick, who used the same equipment for his debut feature, *Fear and Desire*), the film favors image over dialogue to tell a timeless story that holds universal appeal. Bowing on Blu-ray, bonus features include audio commentary by Engel, two documentary shorts, and a photo gallery. A little masterpiece, this is highly recommended. (J. Shammon)

The Loretta Young Show: 100th Birthday Edition

★★★1/2

Timeless, 17 discs, 3,780 min., not rated, DVD: \$99.99



Silver screen star Loretta Young hosted this anthology series, which ran from 1953 to 1961, and she herself starred in over half of the 250-plus episodes, introducing most with her trademark entrance—sweeping into a room in a glamorous gown to the applause of an unseen audience. The episodes themselves were a mix of comedy, romance, family drama, and crime stories, all with original scripts and—for the most part—new characters. The exception was Young's portrayal of Inga Helborg, a *Farmer's Daughter*-like role, in four multi-part narratives (all included here). The demands of a weekly production proved overwhelming for Young (this was an era when seasons ran as many as 36 episodes), and guest hosts regularly stepped in to ease her workload, starting in season three. The segments in this set, authorized by the Loretta Young Estate and released to celebrate her 100th birthday, were mastered from 16mm TV syndication prints or pre-HD video masters, and there are moments of missing audio and other damage. While not stellar, the quality is still acceptable, especially given the scope of the project. Presenting 146 episodes on a whopping 17 discs, DVD extras include archival interviews with Young, her children, and co-star Beverly Washburn; home movies; and an actress bio. Offering good value, this will mostly be of interest to nostalgia buffs. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)



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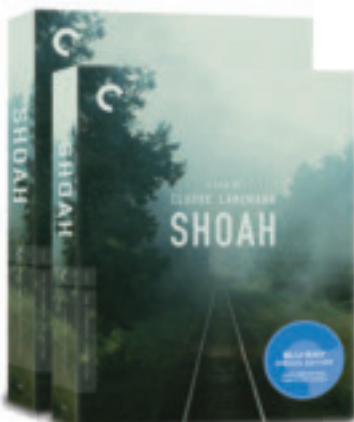
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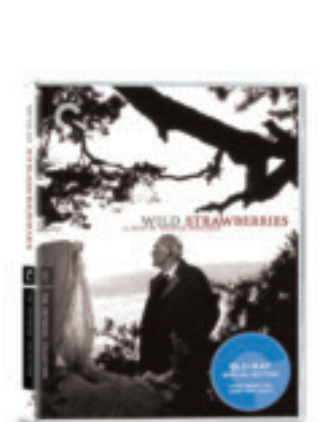
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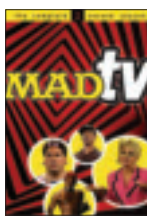
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MADtv: The Complete Second Season ★★★

Shout! Factory, 4 discs, 960 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.95

This set collects all 22 episodes of the 1996-1997 sophomore (in more ways than one) season of the Quincy Jones-executive-produced, Fox-aired comedy hour, which was loosely based on the iconic humor magazine. Much of the sketch-based satire is stuck in the '90s, with gags about Gen-X teens, *Party of Five*, Bob Dole, and the assumed marital bliss between Bruce Willis and Demi Moore. A mash-up of the sitcom *Suddenly Susan* and the serial-killer thriller *Millennium* is hilarious (at least to anyone who actually remembers those shows). Aging better: what purports to be Woody Allen's first South-Central-L.A. gang drama *Annie Ho*; Corky Quackenbush's stop-motion travesties of *Curious George*, *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*, and Will Vinton's California Raisins; and the bits that most directly evoke *Mad* magazine, such as animated versions of "Spy vs. Spy." Nineties-tastic guest hosts include Pauly Shore, French Stewart, Neve Campbell (announcing that she's just made a movie entitled *Scream*), Queen Latifah, LL Cool J, Harry Connick Jr., Bobcat Goldthwait, and the late, great Rodney Dangerfield. Recommended, overall. (C. Cassidy)



Men at Work: The Complete First Season ★★★

Sony, 2 discs, 212 min., not rated, DVD: \$35.99

This formulaic TNT original sitcom follows four sex-obsessed best friends and co-workers at a Manhattan-based men's magazine who devote more hours to goofing off than to doing any real work. In fact, the quartet—Neal (Adam Busch), Tyler (Michael Cassidy), Gibbs (James Lesure), and Milo (Danny Masterson)—spend most of their time competing for, talking about, and dishing dubious advice about women. Think *How I Met Your Mother* (with Neal as the sole guy in a long-term relationship, Milo as the looking-for-true-love single, and Tyler and Gibbs competing as the ladies men) with a male-centric focus, a little less invention, and a bit more horndog humor. The rhythm, pop-culture references, and punch lines all seem familiar, making this simply a fair copy of better, smarter shows. Compiling all 10 episodes from the 2012 first season, extras include deleted scenes and outtakes. Not a necessary purchase. (S. Axmaker)



Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries, Series 1 ★★★

Acorn, 4 discs, 706 min., not rated, DVD: \$59.99

The colonials prove themselves a match

for their former rulers in this series based on the books by Kerry Greenwood about Phryne Fisher, a stylish 1920s society woman who is a formidable amateur sleuth. Although it feels very much like the period mysteries that the British have turned into a cottage industry, *Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries* is set in Melbourne, was made by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, and features actors who are among the best from Down Under. Fisher is played by Essie Davis, who certainly captures the character's proto-feminist personality and air of self-confidence, although at times she comes uncomfortably close to smugness. Davis is backed by an ensemble of colorful supporting players, including Miriam Margolyes in a recurring role as Aunt Prudence. The scripts are traditional (mostly murder cases), but a running plotline concerns the disappearance of Fisher's sister and the criminal she believes is responsible—a man whose escape from prison makes for an exciting finale. Compiling all 13 episodes from the 2012 first season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes, cast interviews, a set tour, and a photo gallery. Recommended. (F. Swietek)



The Mob Doctor: The Complete Series ★★★

Sony, 3 discs, 566 min., not rated, DVD: \$35.99

Two of the most popular TV drama genres are medical stories and crime capers, so wouldn't it be a great idea to combine the two? Aired on Fox, *The Mob Doctor* centers on Grace Devlin (Jordana Spiro), a medical professional who leads a double life as the provider of healthcare services for Chicago mobsters (Devlin has been tapped to repay her brother's debt to the cement shoes crowd). The show displays a penchant for clichés and a sometimes baffling lack of logic, but thanks to its over-the-top bizarre plots and a number of overactive scenery chewers (including Michael Rapaport, Michael Madsen, and especially William Forsythe as the Gotti-esque mob king), each of the 13 episodes compiled here possesses a full-throttle manic power that is able to turn the utterly ridiculous into an entertaining distraction. *The Mob Doctor* may not have been great television, but it was great fun, and its cancellation after its single 2012-13 season was grim news for devotees of high-camp action shows. Recommended. (P. Hall)



A Nightmare on Elm Street Collection ★★★

New Line, 5 discs, 655 min., R, Blu-ray: \$59.99

This boxed set presents all seven original *A Nightmare on Elm Street* films on Blu-ray (pre-

viously only the first three were available in high-def). In the 1984 contemporary classic opener *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, written and directed by Wes Craven, Robert Englund (under layers of latex sculpted to resemble burned flesh) dominates the film as Freddy Krueger, the deceased child-killer who returns from the dead as a demon and delivers one-liners while he murders teens in their dreams. Englund was the only member of the first *Nightmare* to appear in the others, all of which took the same idea in different and often interesting directions, thanks to an array of talented directors (including Renny Harlin, Chuck Russell, and Stephen Hopkins) and screenwriters (including Brian Helgeland and Bruce Wagner), pushing the concept into a realm between the surreal and cyberpunk in the second through sixth films, subtitled *Freddy's Revenge* (1985), *Dream Warriors* (1987), *The Dream Master* (1988), *The Dream Child* (1989), and *Freddy's Dead: The Final Nightmare* (1991). Creator Craven then returned to write and direct *Wes Craven's New Nightmare* (1994), which re-imagines the entire series as a meta-movie years before *Scream*. Taken as a whole, this is the most creative and adventurous horror franchise of the slasher-movie era, one that also turned Freddy Krueger into the most perverse screen icon of his day. Along with the audio commentaries and behind-the-scenes featurettes from previous releases, this set presents a new retrospective documentary and two episodes from the *Freddy's Nightmares* 1988-90 TV spin-off series. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



Nurse Jackie: Season Four ★★★1/2

Lionsgate, 280 min., DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$39.98

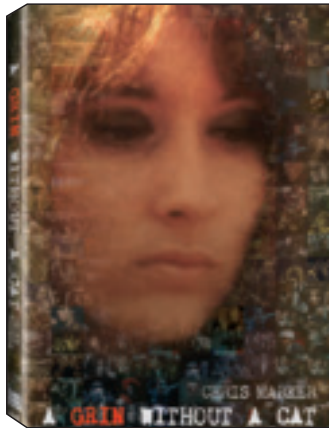
Broadcast TV sitcoms put a high premium on likeability. Give a series enough seasons and those characters with the roughest and sharpest edges will be polished to become more sympathetic (*Taxi* watchers will recognize this as "the De Palma effect."). Cable series are a different story: with more creative freedom and less network intervention, they can stay true to their misanthropic muse. In its fourth season, *Nurse Jackie* remains a very dark ride, with Edie Falco's pill-addicted Jackie an unremitting and uncompromising piece of work. Effed up? Jackie can do effed up, as she herself remarks early on in this pivotal season during which she finally enters rehab. Of course, Jackie's rehab is no quick fix—a series of personal and professional crises and setbacks will make any victory against her addiction hard-earned. Jackie's long-suffering cuckold husband serves her with divorce papers and her daughter Grace



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“His sprawling and constantly evolving body of work...was at once fragmentary and cohesive, united by an abiding interest in the nature of time and memory and by a strong physical and intellectual wanderlust.” – Dennis Lim, *THE NEW YORK TIMES*

Chris Marker (1921-2012) is recognized worldwide as one of the most innovative and influential filmmakers in the history of cinema, and, as biographer Catherine Lupton wrote, “a touchstone for artists, commentators and audiences in many fields of contemporary audio-visual culture.”



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180' / B&W + color / 1977-1993

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REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS TO COME

Co-directed by Yannick Bellon
42' / B&W / 2001

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BONUS FILM: COLETTE

A film by Yannick Bellon
26' / B&W / 1950



THE SIXTH SIDE OF THE PENTAGON

Co-directed by Francois Reichenbach
26' / B&W + color / 1967

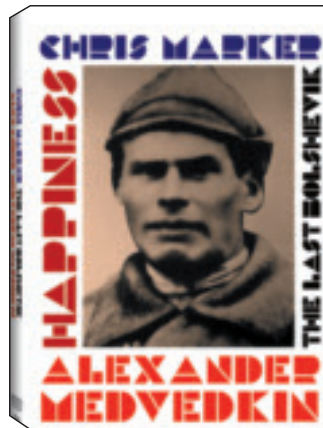
THE EMBASSY

21' / color / 1973

A remarkable time-capsule, *THE SIXTH SIDE OF THE PENTAGON* is Marker's first-person account of the 1967 March on Washington. *THE EMBASSY* is one of his few fiction films.

“A searing, artful piece of agitprop.”

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116' / B&W + color / 1993

Marker's tribute to Russian film pioneer Alexander Medvedkin, and an archeological expedition into the history of cinema and the Soviet Union.

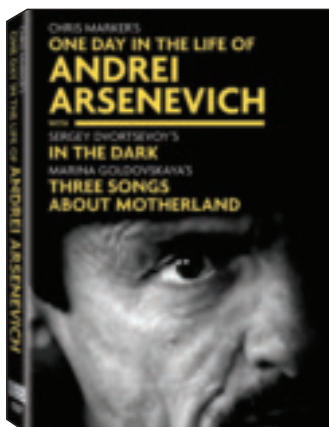
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– Jonathan Rosenbaum, *Chicago Reader*

BONUS FILM: HAPPINESS

A film by Alexander Medvedkin
64' / B&W / 1934



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55' / color / 1999

Marker's personal and loving portrait of his friend and colleague, Russian director Andrei Tarkovsky, widely regarded as one of the 20th century's greatest filmmakers.

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– *The Los Angeles Times*



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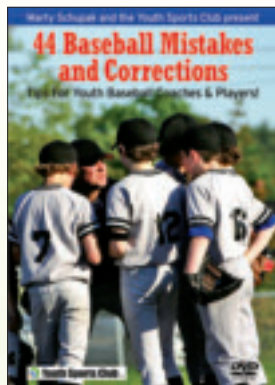
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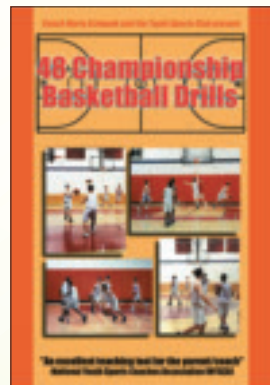
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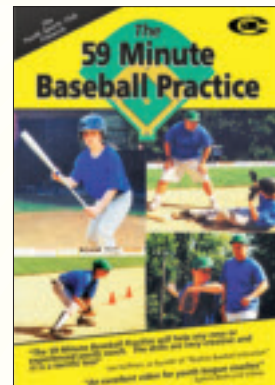
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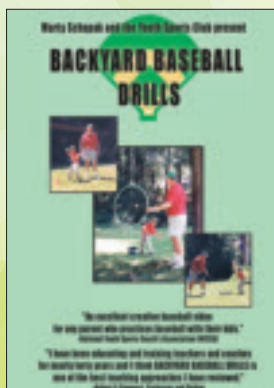
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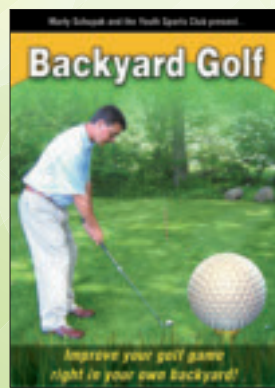
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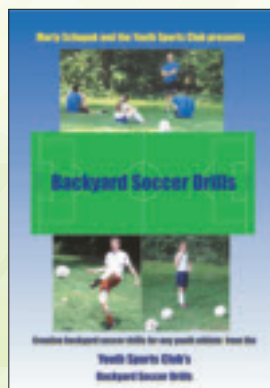
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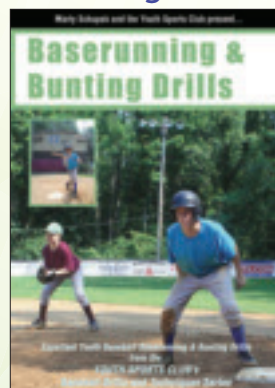
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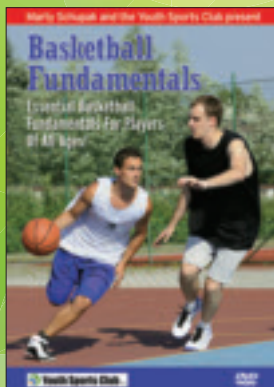
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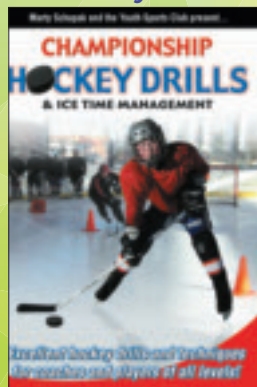
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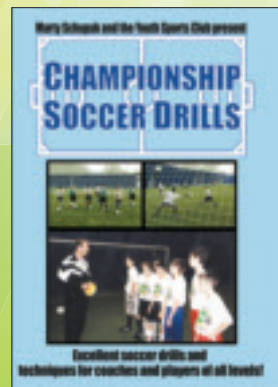
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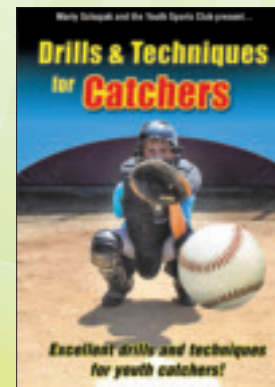
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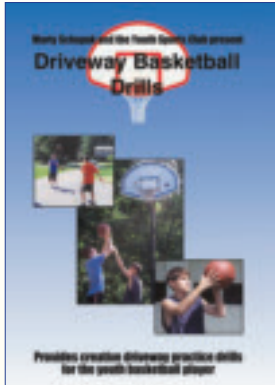


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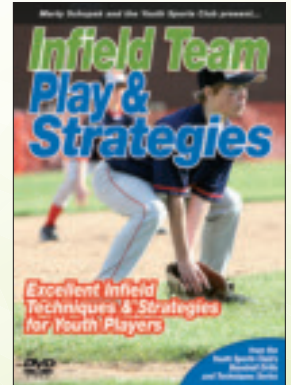
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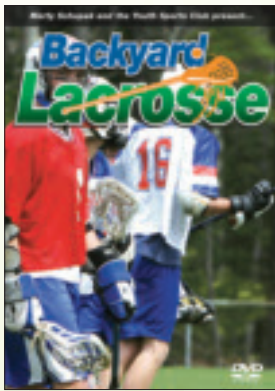
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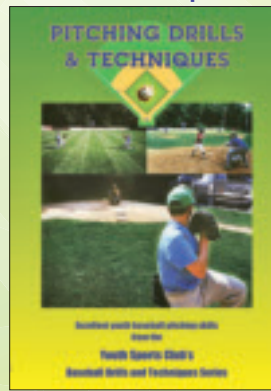
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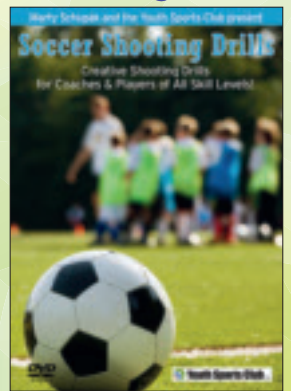
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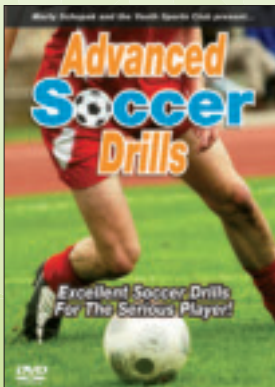
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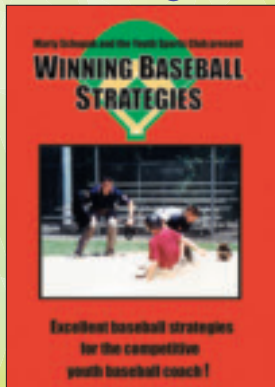
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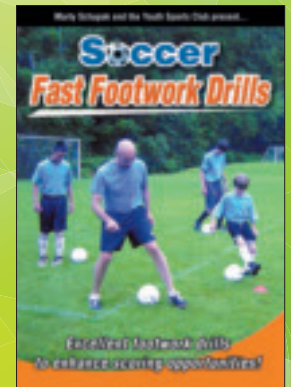
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is miserable in her private school. At All Saints Hospital, there is a new cost-cutting corporate boss (guest star Bobby Cannavale) with whom Jackie immediately clashes, but Jackie strikes up a budding friendship with a fellow addict, who turns out to be the boss's son (Jake Cannavale). Other characters have their own problems: administrator Gloria (Anna Deavere Smith) is demoted and back in scrubs, and Jackie's no-nonsense best friend, O'Hara (Eve Best), is pregnant. Emmy-winner Falco remains a marvel as Jackie, who explores new depths (such as scoring a freebasing hookup at her church). Presenting all 10 episodes from the 2012 fourth season, extras include audio commentaries, behind-the-scenes featurettes, and a gag reel. Recommended. (D. Liebenson)

Spy: Series One ★★★

BFS, 2 discs, 138 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.98



Although it looks like a 007 parody, this British TV farce is more a mash-up of dysfunctional-family comedy and cloak-and-dagger stuff—rather like a live-action equivalent of Seth MacFarlane cartoons on Fox. Tim (Darren Boyd) is a hapless London dad, now divorced for a year from his venomous ex-spouse, Judith (Dolly Wells). Tim still has custody of his creepily precocious 9-year-old son, Marcus (Jude Wright), who openly loathes his father. To score more points with the boy and with social-service workers, Tim applies for a civil service job, but bureaucratic mishap instead lands him into training for MI5, the elite British Secret Service, where he becomes a protégé of the steely, nameless “Examiner” (Robert Lindsay)—who chronically mischaracterizes Tim’s bumbling and bewilderment as spymaster savoir-faire and killer instinct. Storylines in this six-episode set include Tim trying to keep his MI5 double life top-secret despite his sudden celebrity after “rescuing” a homeless man; Marcus running a clandestine mini-casino out of the home; a family therapist developing a romantic obsession for Tim (who, for his part, begins to have feelings for a fellow trainee agent); and Marcus getting a classroom-security post from his school headmaster (who also happens to be Judith’s fawning new boyfriend). The whole 2011 first series can be enjoyed in one sitting, and most of the humor should travel well for North American viewers. Recommended. (C. Cassidy)

The Thief of Bagdad

★★★1/2

Cohen, 149 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$24.98

Douglas Fairbanks, the first action hero, stars in *The Thief of Bagdad* (1924), a lavish adaptation of the



Arabian adventure fantasy *A Thousand and One Nights* that was directed by Raoul Walsh from a script by Fairbanks. In one of the grandest and most glorious spectacles of the silent era, Fairbanks swaggers through massive marketplace sets and cavernous throne rooms, playing an incorrigible thief and pickpocket who scales towering castle walls (with the help of a magical rope) and leads palace guards on a merry chase through crowded bazaars until he falls in love with a beautiful princess (Julanne Johnston) and vows to win her heart. And that’s just the first act! Racing against three kings to retrieve the rarest treasures known to man, the lovesick robber dashes through fiery caverns, battles a smoke-belching dragon, dives for underwater treasure guarded by a spider, rides a flying horse, and creates an army out of nothingness with a special powder. Toss in a magic-carpet ride, a crystal ball, and storybook sets (gorgeously designed by William Cameron Menzies to epic scale), and the result is a classic that may show its age but will never lose its sense of wonder. Throughout, Fairbanks commands the screen with a hearty laugh, graceful athleticism, and jaunty *joie de vivre*. Looking superb on DVD and Blu-ray, this 2K-mastered edition features color tints and an orchestral score composed and conducted by Carl Davis. Extras include audio commentary by film historian Jeffrey Vance, and a behind-the-scenes featurette. An iconic film of the silent era, this is highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Twenty Twelve: The Complete Series ★★★

BBC, 2 discs, 377 min., not rated, DVD: \$34.98



Like the original U.K. series *The Office* starring Ricky Gervais, writer-director John Morton’s BBC workplace comedy *Twenty Twelve* employs a similar faux-documentary style to present a whip-smart ride-along with a fictitious committee of type-A London officials, PR flacks, and brand-ambassadors handling preliminary arrangements for the 2012 Summer Olympics under a thousand-day deadline. The team, crowned with empty titles (Head of Legacy, Head of Sustainability, Head of Infrastructure), confront bewildering pressure-group protests, political correctness, environmentalists, and angry Muslims demanding an Olympics worship center facing Mecca; watch as a bus tour of Brazil’s delegates disintegrate into disaster; try out an awkward ex-jock as a figurehead-spokesman; and stage non-events like “Inclusivity Day.” The group’s leader is “Head of Deliverance” Ian (Hugh Bonneville), a trudging bloke with a knack for evasive oratory, who tries to please everybody while his off-screen marriage to a nasty lawyer crumbles, his dutiful secretary falls for him, and he suffers an embarrassing injury

on the eve of the games. Familiarity with British (and London) culture is necessary for maximum enjoyment, but Olympics-trivia knowledge—surprisingly—is not, although among the real-life celebs making cameo appearances as themselves here is Olympics-champion-turned-House-of-Lords-member Sebastian Coe (usually in exasperation mode). Presenting all 13 episodes that originally aired in 2011-12, DVD extras include cast and crew interviews. Recommended. (C. Cassidy)

Veep: The Complete First Season ★★★1/2

HBO, 221 min., TV-MA, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99; Blu-ray/DVD Combo: 3 discs, \$49.99



Emmy-winner Julia Louis-Dreyfus plays fumbling American Vice President Selina Meyer in this HBO-aired comedy from British satirist Armando Iannucci. Dishing up plenty of bureaucratic dysfunction and petty infighting (Washington insider and former *New York Times* columnist Frank Rich served as an advisor), the series begins with one-time senator and rising star Meyer reduced to insignificance when she signs on for the second spot on what turns out to be the winning presidential ticket. Her staff—Amy (Anna Chlumsky), Mike (Matt Walsh), Dan (Reid Scott), and Gary (Tony Hale)—are clearly B-team players, and the episodes largely revolve around everyone’s bickering and passing the buck while dealing with minor issues and ceremonial events that are pawned off by the president and his team (POTUS himself is never seen—another indication of how out of the loop Meyer is). For all the bills and task forces tossed around, the show doesn’t address issues; rather, it’s purely a comedy about petty personalities, political waste, and ineffectual leadership—which, given the climate in the nation’s capital today, may not be too far off the mark (although the show is a little toothless, and manages to avoid political partisanship). Compiling all eight episodes from the 2012 debut season, extras include audio commentaries, deleted scenes and outtakes, and behind-the-scenes featurettes (the Blu-ray version also includes a bonus DVD with the entire season on a single flipper disc). A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

Video Librarian Online

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★★★★★ = Excellent

★★★★ = Good

★★★ = Fair

★★ = Poor

PPR = Public Performance Rights

DD = Digital Download

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 in the Pink Shoes ★★1/2

(2013) 75 min. DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$26.98. Universal Studios Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).

Mattel's signature fashion doll plays a ballerina in this Hans Christian Andersen-inspired animated fable. Kristyn dances in the shadow of the technically perfect Tara, who lands all the best parts; Kristyn prefers to add her own moves to the mix, which doesn't sit well with Madame Natasha (although the teen insists that she can't help it when she gets "lost in the music"). Natasha's sister, Katerina, serves as the company's wardrobe mistress—and fairy godmother for underappreciated dancers. When Kristyn comes to her for new shoes, Katerina gives her a special pink pair she's been saving. After Kristyn puts them on, she and her friend, Hailey, enter the world of *Giselle*, which looks like a Thomas Kinkade painting with rolling hills and quaint cottages. To Kristyn's surprise, the townspeople think she's the title character, leading to proposals from a prince and a huntsman before she and Hailey split the scene only to enter *Swan Lake* and *The Nutcracker*, which brings an evil sorcerer, another romantic suitor, and a few more costume changes. As with *The Wizard of Oz*, the individuals the girls meet have real-world counterparts, like the Ice Queen, who recalls Madame Natasha (and they even turn into swans after one of their more unfortunate encounters, although sundown returns them to human form). The

story ends where it began, except this time Kristyn steals the spotlight from Tara, who doesn't seem to mind (an unlikely scenario). Extras include outtakes, a music video, and a Barbie *Life in the Dreamhouse* episode. A midling children's video that is still likely to be popular, this is a strong optional purchase. Aud: P. (K. Fennessy)

Curious George Swings Into Spring

★★★

(2013) 57 min. DVD: \$19.98. Universal Studios Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).

A Curious George story in which the troublemaking chimp blunders his way into mischief is hardly a surprise; indeed, George—the lovable if accident-prone character created by authors Hans Augusto Rey and Margret Rey in 1939—has several such silly moments in this original animated feature film, including inadvertently opening a valve that releases steam through an apartment building. But for the most part, George is constructively occupied here, trying to get his pal, a rather solemn dachshund named Hundley, to loosen up and enjoy the coming of spring. Hundley, a "lobby dog" who stands ceremoniously beside his friendly doorman master during the latter's duties, doesn't approve of George's idea of fun. But when a plumbing disaster ties up the doorman for a few days, Hundley ends up accompanying George and the chimp's guardian, the Man with the Yellow Hat, on a trip to the country, where spring means an explosion of flowers, sunshine, and bunnies, as well as an annual hot air balloon festival. Most of the action takes place in pastoral settings, as George manages to get Hundley to relax, explore, and play, although—not surprisingly—George does become terribly curious about those balloons, leading to more adventure and comic mayhem. Recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

Duck Dodgers: Dark Side of the Duck, Season One ★★1/2

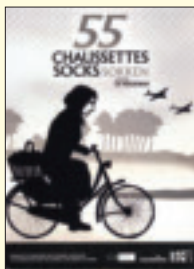
(2003) 2 discs. 298 min. DVD: \$19.98. Warner Home Video (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 0-7806-9726-X.

As a bonus feature, this set contains Chuck Jones' classic 1953 animated short "Duck Dodgers in the 24½ Century," which might have been a mistake, since this one seven-minute short outshines any of the 13 episodes comprising the 2003 first season of this Cartoon Network series. The Jones touch (not to mention the virtuoso voice artistry of Mel Blanc) is sorely missing, and while each episode boasts some loony moments, the series itself never really blasts off. Daffy Duck is the incompetent and egotistical space captain Duck Dodgers, unfrozen after three centuries, and unleashed upon the 24½ century. Porky Pig reprises his role as an eager young cadet (more cowardly here than in the original cartoon), while Marvin Martian is on hand as Dodgers' archenemy. Notable episodes include "Detained Duck" (in which Dodgers discovers he is the twin of a super-villain), "The Green Loontern," and the satirical "Hooray for Hollywood Planet." In classic Warner Bros. cartoon tradition, the series is meant to appeal to both children and adults, trotting out the usual pop culture references and star impersonations that also—unfortunately—tend to date the material. An optional purchase. Aud: P. (D. Liebenson)

Elmo's World: All Day with Elmo ★★★

(2013) 122 min. DVD: \$14.98. Warner Home Video (avail. from most distributors).

This two-hour compilation features eight segments that make up a regular daily routine for *Sesame Street* monster Elmo. Running approximately 15 minutes each, the sections follow the customary format of *Elmo's World*: namely, the beloved furry creature asks viewers to guess what he's thinking about today



55 Socks ★★★★★

(2012) 9 min. DVD: \$129. National Film Board of Canada. PPR.

Co Hoedeman—a Dutch-born Canadian animator best known for his Academy Award-winning short *The Sand Castle*—brings uncommon sensitivity to this adaptation of Marie Jacobs' poem about survival during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands. During the winter of 1944–45, wartime conditions for the Dutch people were harrowing because of Nazi control of the nation's food supplies. In *55 Socks*, as edibles grow scarce, four women who share a home decide to use the wool from a treasured bedspread to barter for something to eat. They carefully unravel the fabric and knit woolen socks, producing 27 pairs plus one extra without a woolly mate. One woman carefully packs the footwear in a basket and bicycles into the rural village, hoping to locate a farm where she can trade her wares for fresh provisions. Hoedeman's direction resonates with a calm yet steely beauty, brilliantly evoking the emotional drama of the resourceful knitters who placidly survey their difficult circumstances and resolve to overcome adversity with dignity and grace. An extraordinary paean to the human spirit, this 2013 ALA-ALSC Notable Children's Video selection is highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** Aud: E, I, J, H, C, P. (P. Hall)

(surprise: that day's topic!), while pet Dorothy the goldfish and Mr. Noodle (and sometimes his siblings) make appearances, real-life kids and adults demonstrate aspects of the subject at hand, and puppet, CGI, and animated segments follow with songs and pertinent information. Covering getting dressed, types of families, school activities, staying healthy through exercise, helping others (and helpful professions), bath time, teeth hygiene (a young Tyler James Williams from *Everybody Hates Chris* here helps his brother brush), and bedtime, this solid addition to the series is recommended. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

The High Fructose Adventures of Annoying Orange, Vol. 1: Escape from the Kitchen ★★

(2013) 113 min. DVD: \$14.95. Vivendi Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

True to its name, the Cartoon Network series built around the YouTube sensation Annoying Orange is indeed annoying. A hit with kids who enjoy wacky, irreverent humor, the animated *The High Fructose Adventures of Annoying Orange* features a chattering, citrus anti-hero compelled to tell bad puns and laugh in a manner that drives even his friends (Apple, Grapefruit, Banana, Marshmallow, and others) to distraction. The 10

episodes compiled here include "Captain Blood Orange," in which Orange (in pirate mode) makes Apple walk a gangplank and leads a battle against some British yachts, absurdly ending with the characters caught up in a weird Corn cult that seeks sacrifices to the mysterious He Who Comes During Night Shift. In "Veggie Zombies," vegetables discarded by human kids turn into zombies, although before that apocalypse happens, Orange is the subject of an intervention that leads him to a psychiatrist. In "Fruit-Vengers," Orange and the others swim in chemical goo and develop such superpowers as flying, super-speed, and x-ray vision, while Grapefruit turns into a mad super-villain. And in "Dr. Strangeplum," Orange and pals become the reluctant guests of spooky Professor Plum in his mad mansion, where Apple disappears just before a tray arrives—of sliced apple. Toby Turner appears as the only human in the series, the jittery Nerville. While the random craziness of the stories carries some appeal, Orange is too well-named. Optional, at best. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

Kali the Little Vampire ★★★

(2012) 9 min. DVD: \$89. National Film Board of Canada. PPR.

This final entry in Portuguese animator Regina Pessoa's three-part series about child-

hood (including 1999's *A Noite* and 2005's *Tragic Story with Happy Ending*) is an eerie, melancholy tale presented with a limited color palette of white, gray, and sepia (with startling crimson added for effect). Oscar-winning actor Christopher Plummer narrates, voicing an older version of the titular creature of darkness, who recounts his past ("I longed to be like other children and play in the light."). Kali is always lurking in the gloom, watching youngsters play and later collecting leftover bits of their toys and games in an effort to share in some of the fun. While "every night, I hoped that next morning would be different," the other kids obviously fear Kali...until the day he comes to the rescue. Artsy and ethereal, this 2013 ALA-ALSC Notable Children's Video selection includes a bonus "making-of" interview with writer-director Pessoa (who says she named Kali for the Hindu goddess). Recommended. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Lots & Lots of Monster Trucks, Vol. 2

★★★★1/2

(2012) 60 min. DVD: \$12.95 (\$19.95 w/PPR). Marshall Publishing. ISBN: 978-1-936134-24-3.

Watching this monster truck program is like seeing Hot Wheels cars come to life: a parade of huge vehicles sporting outrageous paint jobs, suspension setups that look like



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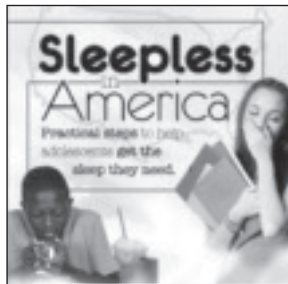
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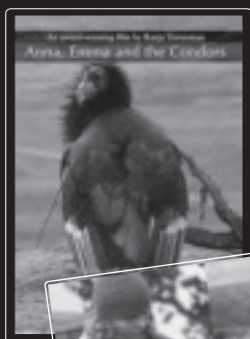
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Anna, Emma and the Condors ★★ ★ 1/2

(2012) 20 min. DVD: \$24.95: individuals; \$49: public libraries & high schools; \$89: colleges & universities. Green Planet Films. PPR.

Winner of the Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Children's Video, this documentary from filmmaker Katja Torneman showcases the Parish family, who are committed to ensuring the future of the endangered California condor. Chris Parish is a condor field project supervisor at Peregrine Fund, his wife Ellen is a field biologist and local leader of Jane Goodall's Roots and Shoots community organization, and they've brought their 'tween-aged daughters Anna and Emma into the fold. The

homeschooled sisters are definitely interested in the family business of condor preservation (Chris says that they can probably give his presentation better than he can), and they participate with their parents in various chores and leisure activities that make up their "down-to-earth" lifestyle. Combining majestic location footage of the Vermillion Cliffs National Monument (a release site for the animals), up-close contact with condors, and several bird facts (many have suffered from lead poisoning through hunters), *Anna, Emma and the Condors* offers an interesting look at a family dedicated to a worthy cause. Highly recommended. Aud: J, H, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

high-tech Tinker Toys, and 66-inch tires that are taller than most pickups. Of course, crashes are part of the package at monster truck shows, as these extremely bouncy behemoths hurl off obstacles such as ramps, dirt piles, and other trucks (naturally, the drivers wear helmets and armor, emerging safe and sound, ready to drive another day). Viewers will also witness the "wrecker" process—i.e., getting the trucks turned back upright and sometimes towed away. Providing a bit of variety, the production also gives some air time to stunt motorcyclists catching air over huge jumps, often doing tricks and twists (including handstands on the handlebars, 360-degree spins, and other jaw-dropping maneuvers), and captures some four-wheeler racing, with Baja-style trucks bustin' through the desert. Set to a hard-driving soundtrack, this bit of action eye-candy is sure to please young motor enthusiasts—and some parents as well. Highly recommended. Aud: P. (C. Block)

Madly Madagascar ★★

(2013) 22 min. DVD: \$14.98. DreamWorks Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Was this trip really necessary? Set between the second and third *Madagascar* feature films, this direct-to-DVD holiday special takes place on Valentine's Day, as King Julien and the penguins pull a con on the local animals with a discarded bottle of "love potion." Meanwhile, Melman the giraffe goes overboard with preparations for his first Valentine's Day with Gloria the hippo, Marty the zebra falls for an okapi, and Alex the lion tries to recapture the magic of the Valentine's Days he used to spend at the zoo. The film's indelible voice cast (Ben Stiller, David Schwimmer, Chris Rock, Jada Pinkett Smith) reprise their popular characters, the animation is solid, and the lessons are admirable (it's not how

many valentines you get, it's who you get them from), but it's hard to feel the love for this uninspired product pipeline filler. DVD extras include two bonus 2006 shorts: the superior "First Flight," a charmer about a businessman who gets a change in attitude and altitude when he befriends a baby bird, and "Hammy's Boomerang Adventure," a slapstick nonsense piece featuring characters from *Over the Hedge*. Optional, at best. Aud: P. (D. Liebenson)

Monster High Double Feature: Friday Night Frights/Why Do Ghouls Fall in Love? ★★ ★ 1/2

(2013) 92 min. DVD: \$19.98. Universal Studios Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).

Based on the popular line of Mattel fashion dolls, this animated double feature follows a group of high-school characters based on teenage versions of Universal Studios spook staples, with names like Draculaura and Frankie Stein. Full of puns—with regular exclamations of "you're fangtastic!" or "oh my ghou!"—the horror angle is played here for laughs, although some moments of mild violence and menace could frighten younger children. These stick-thin monster teens with long, glossy locks and short skirts love girl power slogans, but their constant preening and obsessing over boys delivers a mixed message. *Friday Night Frights* finds the girls forming the first all-female Skultimate Roller Maze roller derby team, although they don't make much progress until a wolfman-style boyfriend steps in as coach and whips the group into shape. *Why Do Ghouls Fall in Love?* follows the same wolf boy as he competes with Draculaura's evil ex for her heart. The coffin-shaped smart phones and winks to famous ghoulish characters can be fun, but this is ultimately fluff, serving up empty statements like "Real beats fake any day of the week." On the other hand, the

Monster High dolls are massively popular, so consider this a strong optional purchase. Aud: P. (K. Cruver)

Out on the Prairie & Deep in the Swamp

★★★

(2012) 15 min. DVD: \$69.95 (study guide included). Nutmeg Media. PPR. ISBN: 1-933938-92-7.

Author Donna M. Bateman is showcased in this iconographic-animated double-feature that presents rhythmic counting stories involving animals indigenous to certain biomes. Illustrated by Susan Swan, 2012's *Out on the Prairie* features a shaggy mother bison and her baby, a pronghorn and her two kids, a prairie dog mom and her four pups, and a sharp-tailed grouse and her six chicks (who "scurried after beetles where the grass and flowers mix")—all the way up to 10 Great Plains toads. Illustrated by Brian Lies, 2007's *Deep in the Swamp* sports a different backdrop, but still showcases multiples of various animals, including the river otter, snapping turtle, alligators, blue heron, and nine rat snakelets who "climbed up a pine where the bamboo vines twine." Narrated by Tony Fragale and Melissa Kate Miller, both stories feature detailed artwork, numbers reviews, and bonus facts about flora and fauna in the inspirational Badlands and Okefenokee national parks. Recommended. Aud: K, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Phineas and Ferb: Animal Agents

★★★

(2013) 168 min. DVD: \$19.99. Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

In addition to their genius-level science skills, the titular stars of the Disney Channel's animated series *Phineas and Ferb* also have a secret agent, Perry the Platypus, for a pet. Granted, the two normal suburban stepbrothers are unaware of Perry's fedora-sporting alter ego—they're just trying to find creative ways to spend the summer. This 12-episode set opens with a riff on the kitsch classic *Fantastic Voyage*, as Phineas (voiced by Vincent Martella), the pointy-headed one, and Ferb (Thomas Brodie-Sangster), the green-haired one, shrink themselves down in order to rescue Isabella's Fireside Girl sash from Pinky the Chihuahua's digestive tract—but end up in their sister Candace's (Ashley Tisdale) stomach instead. Like Perry, Pinky also works for the O.W.C.A. (Organization Without a Cool Acronym), which brings both agents into contact with mad scientist Heinz Doofenshmirtz (creator Dan Povenmire). Although Candace knows about Phineas and Ferb's weird schemes and inventions, their parents are clueless, always arriving after everything has returned to normal. So, naturally, Candace is thrilled to find a traffic cam disc with proof of her brothers' escapades, but when

Perry discovers that he also appears in it, he leads her on a wild goose chase. Other stories revolve around abandoned amusement parks, potato gremlins, and red-eyed Flynn-Fletcher robots. DVD extras include a featurette in which Phineas and Ferb interview celebrities, including Jason Segel and David Beckham. A solid set of fast-moving, fourth wall-breaking episodes that will appeal to kids and adults alike, this is recommended. Aud: P. (K. Fennessy)

Show Way ★★★

(2012) 15 min. DVD: \$59.95 (study guide included). Weston Woods Studios. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 0-545-47811-1.

Author Jacqueline Woodson narrates this colorful adaptation of her 2005 Newbery Honor and ALA Notable picture book, which features illustrations by Hudson Talbott. Chronicling the history of a family through quilt-making and anecdotes, *Show Way* focuses on young Soonie's older female relatives, who were sold into slavery and would later stitch messages into map-like ("show way") quilts. The narrative follows eight generations down the line (starting with Soonie's great-grandma, who taught Big Mama), telling stories of women who "jump the broom," raise children ("she loved that baby up"), work, and learn. Threading illustrative depictions of life for the women (including some dramatic patchwork scenes of escape and being chased by dogs), with quotes from luminaries such as Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, and Langston Hughes, *Show Way* serves up snippets of family historical background up through the Civil Rights era and the present (ending with Woodson's own daughter). Featuring a read-along option, DVD extras include a bonus interview with Woodson. A 2013 ALA-ALSC Notable Children's Video selection, this is recommended. Aud: E, I, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Rise of the Turtles ★★1/2

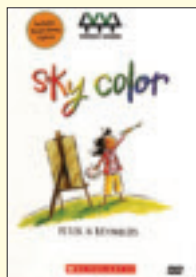
(2012) 145 min. DVD: \$14.99. Paramount Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Nickelodeon's all-CGI 2012 series—the umpteenth reboot of the comics-derived, three-decades-old *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* franchise—boasts some recognizable names in the vocal cast (Sean Astin, Jason Biggs, a guest bit by Lewis Black) and some savvy gags (a dead-on mockery of the stiff 1970s Saturday-morning *Star Trek* cartoon scores a hit). But, otherwise this is typical turtle soup, starting with a rushed origin two-part pilot in which—some 15 years after their accidental mutating-goop creation—the four wisecracking humanoid terrapin-ninjas are permitted to emerge from the sewers of NYC, under the guidance of their mutant-rodent martial-arts master Splinter (here looking more like a badger than a rat). Almost immediately they encounter the Kraang, who are *Men in Black*-style alien brains in exoskeletons, setting into motion a series of fights against assorted super-foes. For those who care about the TMNT mythology, Japanese arch-villain Shredder only makes a token appearance, and late series addition Venus de Milo (a girl ninja turtle) never shows up. For that matter, human heroine April O'Neil isn't terribly prominent either in this new series that is essentially rambunctious male-adolescent stuff. Compiling the first six episodes, extras include "making-of" animatics and a theme song karaoke music video. Sure to be popular, this is a strong optional purchase. Aud: P. (C. Cassidy)

Wind Flyers ★★★1/2

(2012) 7 min. DVD: \$49.95 (study guide included). Nutmeg Media. PPR. ISBN: 1-933938-90-0.

Narrated by Tony Fragale, this iconographic-animated adaptation of the 2007



Sky Color ★★★1/2

(2012) 7 min. DVD: \$59.95 (study guide included). Weston Woods Studios. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 0-545-52331-1.

Narrated by Sisi Aisha Johnson, this animated adaptation of writer-illustrator Peter H. Reynolds's 2012 picture book is dappled in tones of black, white, and sepia, with droplets of color to illustrate various facets within scenes. The story follows young artist Marisol, who displays "art gallery" works on the family refrigerator, where her paintings serve to share ideas and notes with others. During a classroom brainstorming session, Marisol and her peers work on a library mural project, with Marisol searching for the perfect blue to fill in her part: the sky. Disappointed when she can't find the right shade, Marisol looks for inspiration (in a gorgeously depicted scene), enjoying from her porch a sunset of pink, orange, purple, and indigo, as her hair slightly blows in the wind. Later, Marisol has a Technicolor dream that gives her the idea to create a swirly spread of the sky that captures various real-life elements. Featuring a read-along option and a bonus interview with Reynolds, *Sky Color*—a 2013 ALA-ALSC Notable Children's Video selection—offers a charming look at out-of-the-box thinking. Highly recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

picture book written by Angela Johnson and illustrated by Loren Long depicts a young boy's admiration of his great-great-uncle's love of being airborne, and later heroic position as a Tuskegee Airman during WWII. *Wind Flyers* starts off with cute stories about the uncle jumping off a chicken coop and a barn (into soft hay, thankfully) when he was a child. At the age of 11, the uncle took a trip in a barnstormer aircraft, after which he was hooked, thinking "...it's what Heaven must be." The pair go through a photo album as the uncle describes his pride in being part of the 332d Fighter Group, his postwar job at crop dusting, and his lifelong appreciation for the wind in his sails. Featuring realistic drawings and an informative author's note on the real-life pilots, *Wind Flyers*—a 2013 ALA-ALSC Notable Children's Video selection—is highly recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

PSYCHOLOGY & SELF-HELP

The Big Picture: Rethinking Dyslexia

★★★

(2012) 52 min. DVD: \$45; high schools & public libraries; \$295 w/PPR; colleges & universities. Ro*co Films Educational.

James Redford's (son of Robert Redford) HBO-aired documentary examines dyslexia from the perspective of those with the condition and those who study it. The subjects here include average citizens and noted figures, such as Richard Branson, Gavin Newsom, David Boies, and Charles Schwab, who together underscore the fact that dyslexia is a learning disability. Dr. Sally Shaywitz, a developmental pediatrician at Yale University, says that 80-90% of her patients with learning problems have dyslexia, which she sees as a good news-bad news situation, since while dyslexics do have difficulties with reading, writing, dates, and numbers, they can also be creative thinkers and imaginative writers. Boies, who eschews notes in court because they're too hard to read, believes that "dyslexia is positively correlated with creativity." The director's college-age son, Dylan, recalls that he avoided his locker all through high school, because he found the combination lock too hard to navigate, while Tyler, an orthopedic surgeon, learned to speak slowly in order to avoid malapropisms (Tyler's daughter, Skye, also has dyslexia). Of all the speakers, Boies seems to see this genetically-linked disorder as more of a gift than impediment, since he also credits dyslexia for teaching him to think outside the box and see the "big picture." Hand-drawn animated segments depicting the ways that dyslexics experience high-pressure scenarios add a welcome visual dimension to the talking-head interviews. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

In Search of Memory ★★★1/2

(2008) 95 min. DVD: \$24.98. Icarus Films Home Video (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Filmmaker Petra Seeger's documentary profiles Columbia University neuroscientist Eric Kandel, a winner of the Nobel Prize for unveiling the cellular processes involved in the brain's memory storage. The upbeat, spry Kandel declares that the very act of watching this film will alter a viewer's biology, as new memory cells form to accommodate the cinematic experience. Kandel has promised his wife, Denise, a 50th-anniversary gift of a trip back to Europe, and Seeger accompanies the scientist and his family to Austria, where the Jewish Kandel household suffered persecution and ultimate expulsion at the hands of the Nazis (Denise was concealed as a child by righteous gentiles in a French convent). Intercut with dramatic re-enactments that evoke a world of Austrian Jewish culture lost to Nazi madness, the present-day Kandel is seen with his international team of research assistants, talking about experiments with enormous snails (possessing the biggest, most easily-managed cells) to grow memory-storage neurons under lab conditions. Kandel also waxes philosophically about reconciliation with his refugee past and about Judaism, a religion he says respects knowledge and does not deny scientific realities. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

Samuel Morris: The African Missionary to North America ★★★1/2

(2012) 58 min. DVD: \$19.99. Christian History Institute (dist. by Vision Video).

The remarkable story of Samuel Morris—a young Liberian who came to America in the

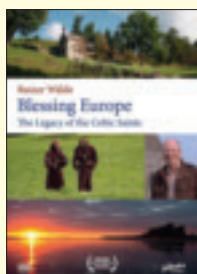
late-19th century to deepen his Christian faith—is told in this interesting biographical documentary. Born Prince Kaboo, Morris (who would eventually take his English name from the American benefactor of a missionary) escaped a brutal kidnapping at the hands of a rival tribe, finding his way to a welcoming coffee plantation in Monrovia. Once there, Morris discovered that his own miraculous release from captivity—involving a heavenly bright light and the voice of God—sounded a lot like the conversion of St. Paul on the road to Damascus. Still a teen, Morris became a fervent Christian who wanted to know more about the Holy Spirit. Resolving to go to the United States to find a new mentor, Morris talked his way onto a passenger ship and famously converted the hard-nosed captain and rough crew. His talent for sparking a spiritual awakening in others carried over to his time in New York City with missionary Stephen Merritt, and later to Taylor University in Indiana, where his reputation spread beyond the campus to local churches, both black and white. Morris's extraordinary tale is told here using a combination of archival materials, drawings, and interviews with historians. Highly recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

SOCIAL & POLITICAL ISSUES

As Goes Janesville ★★★

(2012) 88 min. DVD: \$99.95; public libraries; \$295; colleges & universities. The Cinema Guild. PPR. ISBN: 0-7815-1429-0.

Brad Lichtenstein's absorbing PBS-aired *Independent Lens* documentary focuses on Janesville, WI, which serves as a microcosm for exploring the effects of the economic recession and its ramifications for America as a whole. The film begins with the 2008



Blessing Europe: The Legacy of the Celtic Saints ★★★1/2

(2012) 60 min. DVD: \$19.99. Rainer Wälde Media (dist. by Vision Video).

The fascinating history of Celtic Christianity's spread through Ireland and the British Isles—and into Western Europe from the 6th through 8th centuries—is told in this documentary by author and filmmaker Rainer Wälde. With the story of Irish monk and missionary St. Columbanus as a narrative anchor, Wälde follows the paths and legacies of several Irish saints, showing how they brought their own brand of faith into European areas where there was often disunity among Christians (and resistance by non-Christian religions). Those spotlighted include Aidan, who established a monastery on the island of Lindisfarne; Pirmin, born in Spain but heavily influenced by the Irish in his work in the upper Rhine and Danube regions; Magnus, who set off for Bavaria; and Gallus, one of 12 missionaries who left with Columbanus for Europe but eventually broke with him. Columbanus' story begins with his leaving Bangor, Northern Ireland, in 583, determined to spend the rest of his life creating monasteries and Celtic Christian communities far and wide—which is precisely what he did in France, Germany, Switzerland, and Italy, leaving behind a lasting legacy. Wälde effectively combines dramatic re-creations with comments from interviewees who explore Columbanus' impact on European history. Highly recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

closing of the General Motors assembly plant, the town's major employer. Lichstenstein follows two workers—Gayle Listenbee and Angie Hodges—who eventually accept GM's offer of continuing employment at operations elsewhere (although that means leaving their families behind), and Cindy Deegan, who opts to train for a different occupation. But it's hard for Deegan to secure any job during the downturn, and the impact of a sudden medical scare in already troubled circumstances adds to the drama. Meanwhile, a volunteer group tries to attract new businesses to the county, although the effort entails tax incentives that threaten to upset the municipal budget. And the city is torn by the state's wider political crisis involving the election of a Republican governor, Scott Walker, whose attempt to end the collective bargaining rights of public service unions initiates widespread demonstrations and recall efforts at the ballot box. Caught in the middle is Democratic State Senator Tim Cullen, who's rebuffed when he tries to find common ground with his Republican colleagues and scorned by some Democrats as a turncoat to the progressive cause. Janesville—the home of Republican former vice-presidential candidate Paul Ryan—may not be the typical American town, but its story throws the nation's economic problems (and their real human cost) into sharp relief. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (*F. Swietek*)

The Elder Project ★★★

(2010) 130 min. DVD: \$248. Icarus Films. PPR. Closed captioned.

Seven octogenarians—five who are more or less on their own, and two best friends living together—are the subjects of Eva Colmers' six-part documentary filmed over a two-year span. All of the elders display a determination to remain as independent as possible, although they are cognizant of physical infirmities that require assistance from others, whether relatives, friends, or the state. Arn, who lives in a rustic farmhouse, remains active and means to stay so; but Clara, who finds it increasingly difficult to walk, has moved into a government-run residential facility, while John and Jack are ebullient pals at a veterans' home, scooting around in their wheelchairs and cheerily interacting with the staff, although health problems intrude. Nirmala and Ruth continue to live by themselves but are increasingly dependent on their loving, supportive families and wider social communities; and while Joanna remains in her house, the debilitating effect of Alzheimer's places ever-greater demands on her daughter. As might be expected, *The Elder Project* has a poignant side, as we witness the deterioration of the seniors (one of whom passes away); but, overall, spending time with these seven and their loved ones is more uplifting than sad, as they exhibit an inspiring love of life and refusal to give



Connected ★★★

(2011) 80 min. DVD: \$29.95. Docurama (avail. from most distributors).

This hard-to-pigeonhole 2011 documentary is not exactly the straightforward cyber-manifesto it initially seems. Filmmaker and leading 'net citizen Tiffany Shlain (founder of the Webby Awards, among other online distinctions) opens her film with John Muir's aphorism that everything is connected to everything else. Cosmic-zooming from the personal out to a Big Picture, Shlain describes her loving relationship with her brilliant father, surgeon/author Leonard Shlain, and talks about his controversial theories on the evolution of creativity, literacy, and social development. Tiffany planned to collaborate on a film with her father, but he receives a terminal diagnosis with brain cancer, while she is suddenly having a difficult, high-risk pregnancy (after several miscarriages). From this family drama starting point, she explores (assisted by stock clips, home movies, and found footage) the appeal of social media and search engines to neurological pleasure-centers; cancer as a metaphor for the dangerous illusion of limitless consumerist growth; unforeseen eco-disasters and hive-collapse disorder among bees (Al Gore receives "special advisor" credit, as do Dave Eggers and Vendela Vida); Marie Curie and Leonardo Da Vinci; and the grief of losing a parent. For Tiffany, the World Wide Web offers teeming humanity a hope for positive, WiFi-speed interaction and empathy for each other and the environment—if we make the right choices. DVD extras include two spinoff short films by Shlain and her wired-up collaborators. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (*C. Cassidy*)

up in the face of adversity. And the documentary fulfills its purpose of illustrating various caregiving options open to the elderly as their needs increase. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (*F. Swietek*)

Facebook Follies ★★★

(2012) 55 min. DVD: \$39.95; public libraries; \$89 w/PPR: high schools; \$195 w/PPR: colleges & universities. *The Video Project*. Closed captioned.

Although the title specifically mentions Facebook, this CBC-aired documentary examines the wider consequences of sharing too much personal information online, ultimately serving as a solid cautionary guide for social media users, both veterans and neophytes. As an Internet security expert cautions, free services tend to come with a price since the personal details that users provide can end up in marketing or hacking schemes. Furthermore, data often doesn't disappear—not for those with the technological know-how to retrieve it—so it's best to be cautious at all times. One scenario concerns a famous figure who embarrassed himself publicly, but most are about private citizens whose actions brought misfortune their way, such as a 16-year-old in Hamburg who posted a birthday party invitation to Facebook that accidentally targeted over 2,000 people due to a privacy-setting mishap; more than 1,500 individuals showed up, and police had to disburse the rowdy throng. In another example, a disgruntled airline passenger tweeted a terrorist-like threat about a delayed flight, an error in judgment that resulted in a trip to court, a steep fine, and a lifelong ban from the Sheffield airport. In other instances, users lost homes, marriages, and political campaigns through misinterpreted pictures

and posts—the most infamous example being Congressman Anthony Weiner, who texted an explicit image that went viral and contributed to his resignation. Not all bad news, *Facebook Follies* also touches on some of the more positive aspects of social sharing, such as singles finding soul mates, orphans connecting with relatives, and thieves and other miscreants managing to direct authorities to their doors because they bragged about their exploits online. Also featuring an abridged 42-minute version for classroom use, this is recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (*K. Fennessy*)

The Flat ★★★

(2011) 98 min. In Hebrew, German & English w/ English subtitles. DVD: \$24.98. MPI Home Video (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 0-7886-1643-9.

The title of this award-winning Israeli documentary refers to the Tel Aviv apartment of filmmaker Arnon Goldfinger's German-born grandmother Gerda, who died at the age of 98. As Goldfinger goes through Gerda's belongings, he discovers a surplus of merchandise—shoes, books, mink stoles—that suggest Gerda lived a comfortable if perhaps unremarkable life. But a few items seem peculiar: a coin with the Nazi swastika on one side and a Star of David on the other, and a newspaper clipping about the presence of a high-ranking Nazi officer in 1933 Palestine. Goldfinger's mother Hannah does not appear too eager to help the filmmaker, but he eventually begins to uncover a family secret about a bizarre friendship between Gerda and her husband and Leopold von Mildenstein, a high-ranking SS official. Even more surprising is the fact that this friendship continued for years after the end of WWII and the creation of the state of Israel. Needless to say,

Goldfinger's discoveries lead to an amazing real-life story as he dissects family secrets and digs up painful and often embarrassing truths. Telling a tale that is more astonishing than many Hollywood mysteries, this is recommended. [Note: this is also available with public performance rights for \$115 for public libraries and \$300 for colleges & universities from Ruth Diskin Films, www.ruthfilms.com.] Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Harvest of Empire: The Untold Story of Latinos in America ★★★

(2012) 93 min. DVD: \$80: public libraries & high schools; \$300: colleges & universities. Third World Newsreel. PPR.

The recent reemergence of immigration as a pressing matter in U.S. politics—particularly regarding Hispanics—makes *Harvest of Empire* an especially timely documentary. Based on the same-titled book by Juan González, this film by Peter Getzels and Eduardo López opens with cable news footage illustrating the volatility of the issue, before offering thumbnail historical sketches of seven places—Puerto Rico, Guatemala, Mexico, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, and El Salvador. The overarching theme—enunciated by González in observations periodically inserted into the flow of archival footage, interview excerpts, and graphics—is that interventionist U.S. policies since the 1950s, often in support of private business interests but frequently stemming from ideological motives, were instrumental in emigration from those territories to the United States, which then used the outflow as a “safety valve” to alleviate local resistance to oppressive pro-U.S. regimes. A further point, especially relevant to Mexico, is that America has historically turned to its southern neighbor as a source of needed manpower, only to take a much less welcoming stance during times of economic hardship. *Harvest of Empire* ends by returning to the U.S.-Mexican border, where an activist group commemorates those who lost their lives crossing illegally. Although it will be difficult in the present political climate to persuade some hardliners to consider a more balanced view, Getzels and López’s intelligent film should broaden the discussion. DVD extras include expanded interviews and a poetry reading by Puerto Rican lawyer Martin Espada. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

The Law in These Parts ★★★1/2

(2012) 101 min. DVD: \$24.99. The Cinema Guild (avail. from most distributors, June 4). ISBN: 0-7815-1422-3.

Filmmaker Ra’anán Alexandrowicz’s documentary challenges Zionist doctrine that Israel’s development in the Middle East (at least in the Occupied Territories) has brought justice to barren hinterlands. A number of Israeli Defense Force judges and prosecutors (many now retired) who administered con-

quered Palestinian land in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are queried here about their actions (and decisions) on the bench after 1967. While it’s true that they faced Solomon-like dilemmas (such as whether to consider Palestinian insurgents “enemy combatants” in Geneva Convention terms, or for that matter, ever recognize Arab rights as being co-equal to those of citizens of the Jewish state), a troubling picture begins to emerge as case histories are recalled (such as the Palestinian widow jailed over a year for giving a fugitive a piece of pita bread). Palestinian lands were annexed using ancient Ottoman Empire code (or a perversion of it) as precedent; a blind eye was turned to thuggery by Orthodox settlers; and torture as a sanctioned IDF interrogation technique got a pass. And some Palestinians early on did file with Israeli courts to try to lawfully retain their property—to no avail. One judge here tellingly refuses to answer the 64,000-shekel question: would Israeli citizens agree to live under the same legal system as the Occupied Territories? A Grand Jury Prize winner at the Sundance Film Festival, this thought-provoking documentary is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

More Than a Month ★★★

(2011) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$52.95 w/PPR). PBS Video. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-801-1.

Shukree Hassan Tilghman is a young filmmaker on a quixotic quest to end Black History Month, which in recent decades has been recognized and celebrated each February in schools, libraries, and government offices. As Tilghman sees it, this tribute has become a routine recognition of a few figures—notably Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks, Harriet Tubman, and Frederick Douglass—who are highlighted in Febru-

ary, and then marginalized the rest of the year. Tilghman’s PBS-aired *Independent Lens* documentary poses the pointed question: can black history be confined to just one month of coverage? Armed with a petition and a sandwich-board sign, Tilghman goes to Manhattan’s Times Square, where he obtains some signatures...and a lot of quizzical stares. Many express the fear that without Black History Month, the contributions of African Americans would be ignored. Tilghman traces the observance back to 1926, where it started as a week-long celebration started by Carter G. Woodson. The filmmaker interviews members of the Sons of Confederate Veterans, visits the largest black-owned ad agency in America, commissions a Harvard University survey on the lasting effects of these celebrations on black pride, and seeks insights from both scholars and storytellers. Tilghman concludes that “history is about power... power to control the story.” Not surprisingly, he argues that we need to step beyond Black History Month, “not end, but transcend...” in a quest to discover the “lost, hidden, ignored” legacy of African-American history. An instructive, entertaining documentary about ethnic pride that should provoke lively debate, this is recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

People of a Feather ★★★1/2

(2012) 90 min. In English & Inuktitut w/English subtitles. DVD: \$89: high schools & public libraries; \$295: colleges & universities. Sanikiluaq Running Pictures (avail. from www.peopleofafeather.com). PPR.

People of a Feather showcases the extraordinary beauty of Hudson Bay and its wildlife, focusing on people who have in many ways adapted to modern life, but whose livelihood—in terms of food and other basic needs—depends (as it has for a hundred years)



Doctors of the Dark Side ★★★1/2

(2011) 73 min. DVD: \$24.98. Shelter Island (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-934708-98-9.

Producer-director-psychologist Martha Davis is on a mission in this somber, angry, yet absolutely non-hysterical documentary, to expose “torture doctors” within the American medical and psychiatric establishment who formalized techniques of “enhanced interrogation,” such as sleep deprivation and waterboarding, on behalf of the Pentagon and CIA. Doctors who, moreover, were actually present for paperwork and monitoring during the infamous prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib and similar ordeals at Guantanamo Bay—often involving detainees who proved to be innocent. Narrated by actress Mercedes Ruehl, *Doctors of the Dark Side* argues that this ugly collaboration represents one of modern American medicine’s most shameful episodes, as noir-ish tableaux with actors depict/suggest the methodologies for mental and physical torments (with disclaimers that the reality is commonly worse). Some military officers, whistleblowers, and doctors earn praise for not going along with torture, but we are told that harsh policies continue as much under Obama as the Bush-Cheney administration. Although military lawyers and activists appear as interviewees, the shadowy architects of enhanced interrogation—not surprisingly—do not. Davis outs them anyway, using courtroom drawings when photos are unavailable. DVD extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes. A deeply troubling documentary, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

on seals and ducks. Unfortunately, all of these elements are threatened by global warming and the environmental impact of hydroelectric power dams. Filmmaker Joel Heath trains his lens on Sanikiluaq, a community of fewer than 1,000 souls in Nunavut, Canada, but much of the film simply features wild animals in their natural habitat, or native people performing daily tasks: gathering down from eider nests, or enjoying a meal of seal meat (cleaved into chunks) with a Pepsi. Offering contrast, the contemporary footage is interspersed with re-creations of life in Nunavut a century ago. DVD extras include featurettes on the community's location and history, as well as efforts to study duck populations; and behind-the-scenes shorts on building igloos, making parkas, and constructing sealskin kayaks. Featuring both the full-length version and a 52-minute abridgement, this festival award-winner is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (M. Puffer-Rothenberg)

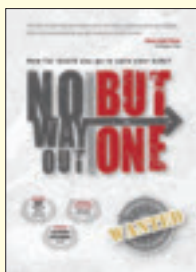
Poverty in America: Nouveau Poor—Immigrant Poverty ★★★

(2011) 41 min. DVD: \$169.95. Films Media Group. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62102-665-5.

T.N. Mohan's documentary, part of the *Poverty in America* series, takes a look at a grim side of the immigrant experience. While many people still come to the U.S.

with dreams of achieving economic success, the odds are against them if they arrive without a white-collar skill-set. Many work excessively long hours for poor pay, and find

themselves crowded into substandard housing in areas where generational poverty has taken root. Because many send the bulk of their earnings to families back in their native



No Way Out But One ★★★

(2011) 88 min. DVD: \$24.95. Passion River (avail. from most distributors).

This alternately dispiriting and enlightening documentary uses one particularly noteworthy case to illustrate some of the ways that family court can make an abusive domestic situation worse. Attempting to minimize her children's exposure to their abusive father, Holly Collins brought her case before a Minnesota court in 1992, but wound up actually losing young Jennifer and Zachary on the grounds of "parental alienation," a tactic often used by the defense (although discredited by many psychologists).

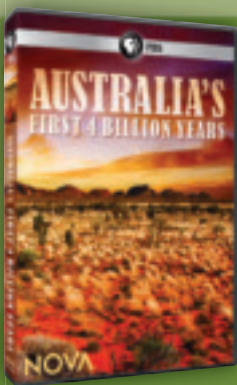
It might seem odd that the court would find in favor of Holly's ex-husband, especially with pages of medical and psychological evidence—including a report on Zachary's skull fracture. But lawyers interviewed in co-directors Garland Waller and Barry Nolan's *No Way Out But One* say that this kind of outcome is not unusual in a family court, where judges and evaluators adhere to less rigorous standards. For two years, the kids lived with their father and stepmother, but the abuse continued, so Holly worked out a plan of escape that took them through Canada and Mexico en route to Europe, which landed her on the FBI's "Most Wanted" list for child abduction. The filmmakers catch up with her in the Netherlands, where the Dutch government granted her asylum for domestic violence—a process that took years, while Holly and the children lived in a remote refugee center. Nolan and Waller also recount the means by which Holly ultimately obtained justice in the U.S., ending her story on a happy note—although it would take 17 years to get there. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)



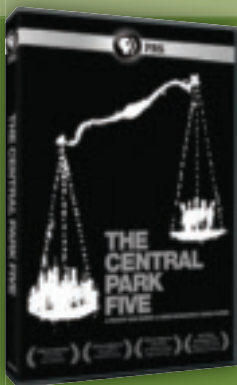
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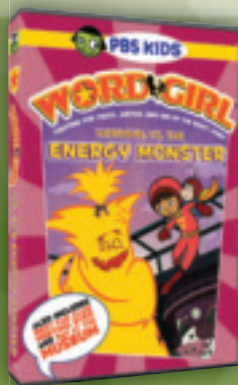
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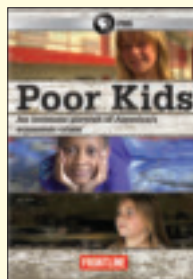
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Poor Kids ★★☆☆1/2

(2012) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.95 w/PPR). PBS Video. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-832-5.

Over 16 million children live in poverty in today's America, often hiding in plain sight. In filmmaker Jezza Neumann's PBS-aired *Frontline* documentary, the kids tell their own stories of what it's like to be poor in an affluent nation. Often this means losing their houses, not having three meals a day (or hot showers), separating from friends or missing school as they move from one shelter or motel to another, collecting cans to make a little money, and coping at a young age with family stress and struggles. The children note how fast things can change: the loss of a parent's job or health coverage can result in a quick fall through the cracks from middle class into poverty. In school, some of the kids belong to a "nutrition club," a euphemism for a program to distribute food to feed children over the weekend (even so, fewer vegetables and fruits—coupled with an abundance of cheap junk food—increases the dangers of childhood obesity). Although parents try to manage with a strategy of "struggle, survive, and smile," the economic woes produce stress and depression, which leads to yelling at the kids. And not attending school regularly is a recipe for career failure (in the words of one 14-year-old, "my life is almost over."). Offering a reminder of how hard it is to find a path out of poverty, *Poor Kids* powerfully shines a spotlight on an urgent problem that should be a national priority. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)



countries, they wind up contributing very little to the American economy. A number of immigrants speak at length here; most are from Latin America, detailing their problems without rancor or ruefulness over their situation. Several academic experts, along with the late David Broder of the *Washington Post*, also offer observations, although practical solutions for alleviating the financial misery remain elusive. Unfortunately, the film tends to blur the very clear differences between legal and illegal immigrants; Mohan also repeats the argument that these individuals absorb the jobs that Americans will not do, ignoring the fact that many Americans would do the work if employers paid job-appropriate salaries with benefits. Still, the issues raised here are important, and *Nouveau Poor* deserves praise for spurring discussion of a complex problem. Other titles in the series include *Born with a Wooden Spoon: Welcome to Poverty U.S.A.* (VL-1/08), *The 51st State: America's Working Poor*, and *Obvious Poverty: America's Homeless*. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

The Revisionaries ★★☆☆

(2011) 83 min. DVD: \$29.95 (avail. from most distributors), \$349 w/PPR (avail. from www.kinolorberedu.com). Kino Lorber.

Looking at one aspect of the continual evolution-vs.-creationism argument, *The Revisionaries* offers a snapshot of theocratic strategies for insinuating a right-wing Christian agenda into U.S. schools. Due to the sheer number of costly textbooks that Texas buys, publishers wind up kowtowing to the Texas State Board of Education, which wields enormous editorial power. The cameras follow board chairman Don McLeroy, a born

again Christian dentist who considers himself well versed in science—Earth is less than 6,000 years old, and the Ark had room for dinosaurs, he says. Over protests by aghast Austin educators and scientists, McLeroy advocates for seemingly minor qualifiers against Darwinism in the state's textbook language—a precedent that also permits tweaks in the social studies texts, with much of the input coming from Cynthia Dubar, who teaches law at Jerry Falwell's Liberty University. So, Thomas Jefferson is distanced from the humanist French Revolution, Ronald Reagan and the NRA are elevated, and there is a call for references to "country and western music" replacing "hip-hop" (never mind that Liberty University panders to prospective disciples with a rap recruiting video). Filmmaker Scott Thurman takes a fairly subtle approach, even giving the evangelicals more camera time than their opponents to talk about how they are spreading the Word against what they consider pernicious liberalism. A solid entry in the chronicles of the culture wars, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Sousa on the Rez: Marching to the Beat of a Different Drum ★★☆☆

(2012) 27 min. DVD: \$24.95 (\$150 w/PPR). Native American Public Telecommunications (dist. by VisionMaker Video).

Music has always been an important part of Native American culture, although this informative documentary focuses on ensembles that have eschewed traditional sounds and images. Instead of folk-oriented material produced with flutes and tom-toms, they play brass band standards. Clips from old movies and animated shorts (such as *Betty Boop*) show Native American characters play-

ing Western music for humorous effect, but tuba player Steve Lopez of the Fort Mojave Tribal Band—who has been involved with marching bands for 45 years—doesn't see anything unusual about doing what feels natural. Says trombone player Jeremy Printup of the Iroquois Indian Band, "I can't sit still when I listen to John Phillip Sousa." Narrator Richard Ray Whitman notes that Native American involvement in brass bands dates back to the federally-run boarding schools of the late-19th century, which aimed to eradicate indigenous culture. Young women studied piano, a drawing-room instrument, while young men donned military-style garb and learned to play brass instruments, a practice intended to instill discipline. These groups would then go on to perform at presidential inaugurations, the opening of the Brooklyn Bridge, the Chicago Exposition, and other major historical events. The now widely denigrated boarding school scheme failed in many ways; in this particular situation, the participants held on to their traditions and simply added brass-band expertise to their skill set. In fact, they would often perform in headdresses and buckskins, although contemporary groups have toned down their look. Printup's band mate, clarinet player Eva Espinosa, also sees it as a way to connect with non-Natives. When they watch her group play, she says, they can see that "we're not so different after all." Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

The Suicide Plan ★★☆☆1/2

(2012) 90 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.95 w/PPR). PBS Video. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-831-8.

Miri Navasky and Karen O'Connor's PBS-aired *Frontline* documentary takes a mature and frequently heartbreaking look at terminally ill patients who seek assistance in ending their lives. Outside of Oregon and Washington state, physician-assisted suicide is illegal in the U.S.; however, that hasn't stopped many suffering people with incurable and devastating illnesses from soliciting aid in bringing their pain-plagued lives to a close. Many have sought the assistance of the Final Exit Network, which maintains strict criteria regarding whom they will help. The Network's activities have also caught the attention of law enforcement, and this film follows a pair of federal agents who try to apprehend the organization's leaders and shut down their operations. However, the court system offers more than a few surprises in regard to where terminally ill people of sound mind can choose to die. Both sides of the issue are presented here, largely via interviews with affected individuals, "assistants," and representatives of various groups, providing a cogent consideration of the legal, medical, moral, and psychological aspects of the debate. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

The Ultimate Wish: Ending the Nuclear Age ★★★

(2013) 40 min. In English, Japanese & French w/ English subtitles. DVD: \$49; public libraries; \$59; high schools; \$240; colleges & universities. New Day Films. PPR.

Taking on an immense topic in a compact, emotional documentary, filmmaker Robert Richter draws parallels between the earthquake-related 2011 nuclear power plant meltdown at Fukushima, Japan, and the targeted A-bombings at Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. The camera follows 77-year-old Nagasaki survivor Sakue Shimohira, one of the dwindling number of eyewitnesses/victims, who visits schools in the West, informing students of the horrors of the attack, subsequent health ailments, and Japanese social ostracism of the atomic wounded—pathologies that drove her elder sister to suicide. Nuclear weapons now belong to such potentially unstable nations as Pakistan and North Korea, although a few countries (South Africa, Ukraine) are hailed for dismantling their arsenals. Ongoing reliance on nuclear power, meanwhile, presents terrorists and warlords with potential opportunities for obtaining plutonium and radioactive waste poisons. Lumping warheads in with the nuclear-power industry makes for an all-or-nothing tone here, but it's all in keeping with the film's uncompromising anti-nuke stance. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Vigilante Vigilante: The Battle for Expression ★★★

(2011) 86 min. DVD: \$24.95 (avail. from most distributors), \$249 w/PPR (avail. from edu. passionriver.com). Passion River.

Max Good's documentary focuses on an

unusual subculture of crime fighters: self-appointed anti-graffiti activists who seek to erase the vandalism scribbled on walls, fences, and lampposts across America. *Vigilante Vigilante* follows three of these individuals in their lonely (and sometimes angry) crusades to clean up their communities, making clear that there is little glamour and excitement found in this form of crime fighting—mostly it involves spraying over the tags with silver or gray paint. Unfortunately, this compounds the problem if the original surface is a different color, not to mention if the vigilantes are undertaking their actions without permission from the owners of the tagged properties. These activities contradict Good's personal biases on the matter: "Graffiti represents a voice, a free voice," he says in the opening narration, but—to his credit—he makes no attempt to depict his subjects as kooks (although one of them believes that homemade signs taped to lampposts seeking information on lost dogs are just as bad as gang-inspired spray-paint imagery). An interesting look at an offbeat subject, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Walled In: The Politics of Building Barriers ★★★

(2011) 53 min. DVD: \$169.95. Films Media Group. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62102-525-2.

Robert Frost's dictum that good fences make good neighbors is challenged here—albeit in a wry and engaging way—by French filmmaker Paul Moreira in this personal essay-style documentary. One might expect from the title that the subject would be about barriers that countries have

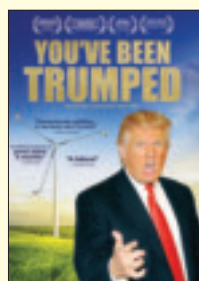
constructed to ward off "invasions" (such as the wall the U.S. is building along the Mexican border, or that Israel has built in the West Bank) or to keep people in (like the Berlin Wall), but Moreira's target is smaller. He's interested in the walling-off of neighborhoods in urban areas to create enclaves of supposed safety, sheltering those who can afford to live in them from the danger posed by their fellow citizens. Moreira focuses on three cities—Toulouse, the most walled city in France; Rio de Janeiro, where the well-to-do inhabit blocks of condominiums that are luxurious, virtually self-sufficient communities; and Baghdad, where U.S. troops constructed elaborate obstacles to divide the city along sectarian lines, which the Iraqi government has largely kept in place. By interviewing locals on either side of the structures and scrutinizing official policies, Moreira offers acute observations about how the practice of using walls as a means of urban control has exacerbated social divisions and undermined order rather than enhancing it. And he does so in a gently probing manner that effectively illuminates issues raised by this new form of segregation. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

TEEN ISSUES

My Digital Life ★★★

(2013) 28 min. DVD: \$79.95 (downloadable teacher's guide available). Learning Zone Express. PPR. Closed captioned.

Producer and host Larkin McPhee's timely guidance program looks at the digital revolution's effects on daily life. Noting that many teens start their mornings by checking texts or other forms of media, the program states that the reported figure of K-12 students devoting more than 53 hours weekly to screen time may be even higher when considering schoolwork (a group of teens here talk about how they use Skype primarily for homework problems...well of course you do, girls). While there are definite benefits, the experts here look at further considerations, including setting personal boundaries (would you put it on a billboard?), thinking ahead about being represented positively in the future, and using focused attention instead of multi-tasking. Also touching on subjects including a family "tech curfew" wind-down time, the benefits of face-to-face interaction, and letting go of constantly responding to others, *My Digital Life* reminds viewers who are "...spending a lot of time wired into the world [to] think about what you might be missing." DVD extras include downloadable teaching materials. Recommended. Aud: J, H, P. (J. Williams-Wood)



You've Been Trumped ★★★

(2011) 100 min. DVD: \$29.95. Docurama (avail. from most distributors).

In 2007, business magnate Donald Trump purchased a huge stretch of the northeast coast of Scotland, announcing a grand plan to construct two golf courses, a 450-room luxury hotel, and 1,500 townhouses. The Donald was not welcomed by many locals; in fact, several refused to sell their property to accommodate his dream. While this may seem like a real-life version of the classic 1983 Bill Forsyth film *Local Hero*, little in the way of gentle humor was found in Trump's Scottish adventure, as we learn in Anthony Baxter's award-winning documentary detailing how

Trump and his backers in Scotland's political leadership bulldozed their way—literally and figuratively—into making the scheme work. Trump crudely insulted his opponents, referring to one farmer as living in a pigsty. When a local council rejected a building application on environmental grounds, the Scottish parliament took the unprecedented step of reversing the decision. And while local police were indifferent when residents living next to the construction site had their water supply shut off, the authorities were extremely eager to arrest Baxter for shooting his film. Trump and his Scottish allies refused to be interviewed, so the story told here is necessarily shaped by Trump's detractors; regardless, American-style capitalism has never looked so ugly. DVD extras include bonus footage, and an appearance by the filmmaker on *Moyers & Company*. An ALA-VRT Notable Videos for Adults selection, this is recommended. [Note: this is also available with public performance rights for \$295 from Bullfrog Films, www.bullfrogfilms.com.] Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Teens in Action, Video 1: To Survive and Thrive ★★1/2

(2012) 22 min. DVD: \$69.95 (discussion guide included). Active Parenting Publishers. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-59723-277-7.

This initial program in the *Teens in Action* series features two hosts who employ a corny metaphor about the Swedish warship *Vasa* to suggest that young people can avoid capsizing their lives through adding various balancing features, such as courage, responsibility, cooperation, and respect. *To Survive and Thrive* explores challenges faced by families with teens, serving up vignettes on adolescent issues such as peer pressure, sexual desire, and power struggles with parents, while also outlining family enrichment activities

for togetherness and “taking time for fun.” Some of the illustrative segments seem a bit peculiar (outside of a sketch comedy series), including one girl who clutches a stuffed animal and talks about drugs, and a boy who dresses as a silly Einstein-like character and later drunkenly harasses another girl. Overall, however, the program does present some solid ideas about working with parents, while also assuring teen viewers that they are not alone in their sometimes confusing pressures and concerns. A strong optional purchase. [Note: also newly available in the series are: *Cooperation and Communication, Responsibility and Discipline, Building Courage and Self-Esteem*, and the two-part *Drugs, Sexuality, and Violence: Reducing the Risks.*] Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

documentary (which sometimes even sports the suspense and occasional humor of a *Law & Order* episode) is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (M. Puffer-Rothenberg)

Offender Profiling ★★1/2

(2012) 25 min. DVD: \$169. VEA (dist. by Insight Media). PPR. Closed captioned.

Presented by Dr. Steve Taylor, *Offender Profiling* looks at the realities behind the psychology of offender profiling, noting that the real work is different from media portrayals of singlehanded forensics superheroes such as Robbie Coltrane in *Cracker*. Explaining that group efforts are involved when there is no obvious suspect, the program looks at deductive and inductive approaches—i.e., top-down (to suggest a likely perpetrator) or bottom-up (using variables and scientific theories)—to building a sketch of a criminal’s personality, behavior, and possible history through an examination of variables that might indicate a pattern. While the program suggests that a career in the field might not necessarily be as exciting as seen in fictional counterparts (“in real life, it’s more of a desk job”), it also looks at some higher-profile cases, including the 1980s “Railway Murders,” the 17th-century Bosworth field witches, and the Rachel Nickell murder investigation. Some of the participant experts here seem more than a bit jaded (“...say we had a hundred rapes...” one nonchalantly notes, to illustrate some point I don’t remember nearly as well). A strong optional purchase. Aud: H, C, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

EDUCATION

Dropout Nation ★★1/2

(2012) 120 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.95 w/PPR). PBS Video. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-797-7.

Aired on PBS’s *Frontline* series, this documentary explores what it calls a “hidden crisis” in American education—namely, that hundreds of thousands of students drop out of school every year—while also following efforts by Brandi Brevard, who holds the title of Campus Improvement Coordinator at Houston’s Sharpstown High School, to stanch the flow. Brevard’s job is to ensure that the kids at Sharpstown, which once had a reputation for an abnormally high dropout rate, stay in school through graduation.

Dropout Nation focuses on four students: an athlete who briefly lives with Brevard and her family, a young lady who was evacuated from New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina, a youth with significant anger issues, and another whose seemingly low-key personality interferes with the seriousness of his academic responsibilities. Teachers, counselors, and the principal also contribute to the stories. These kids are not stupid, by any stretch of the imagination, but all are burdened with personal problems (mostly relating to domestic issues) that interfere with their self-esteem and studies. Writer-producer Frank Koughan’s documentary reminds viewers that for many kids, the American school system is failing. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (P. Hall)



LAW & CRIME

Invoking Justice ★★1/2

(2011) 85 min. In Tamil w/English subtitles. DVD: \$89; public libraries; \$295: colleges & universities. *Women Make Movies*. PPR.

Filmmaker Deepa Dhanraj’s fascinating documentary follows members of the South Indian Muslim Women’s Jamaat as they advocate for two young women who were murdered by members of their husbands’ families, and another who wants a divorce after years of physical abuse. The organization was founded in 2004 in Tamil Nadu to help female victims of violence, working alongside traditional village jamaats—all-male councils that settle family disputes according to Islamic sharia law. Before 2004 no woman was allowed to testify on her

own behalf; now the Women’s Jamaat hears all sides (enlisting the help of local police to question reluctant men) and helps plaintiffs document their complaints. Representatives of the Women’s Jamaat discuss cases with male jamaats, and they are calm but persistent in challenging those who have let violent incidents pass. The individuals featured are articulate, passionately supportive, and fair as they consider where the blame lies. The women are also—somewhat surprisingly, considering that most have suffered some form of domestic violence—amused at efforts to be thwarted or silenced. In fact, they seem almost giddily empowered, assuring victims that it is safe to speak to them and joking about what should be done to an offender before settling down to formalize a complaint. Combining interviews with footage shot in police stations, communities, and private homes, this engaging and thought-provoking

Filmmakers Grover Babcock and Blue Hadaegh’s *Scenes of a Crime* offers a stark reminder of how “third degree” police interrogation tactics have become more humane only in a physical sense. Psychologically, these methods remain brutal, with the filmmakers claiming that 63 percent of all confessions are “coerced” by the police. In this particular case, Adrian Thomas, an unemployed African-American truck driver in Troy, NY, is taken in for questioning by local authorities after his four-month-old son is found dead with what is initially deemed a skull fracture. Much of the footage here is taken from a hidden camera in the police interrogation room, where Thomas was relentlessly hounded by bullying officers for nearly 10 hours. In on-camera interviews, these small-town cops defend their openly deceptive and often downright dishonest means of coercing Thomas into admitting the “truth” of doing violent harm to his son. But as viewers learn from the post-mortem evidence explained by experts, while the police may have elicited a confession, it was far from the actual truth. Once the hapless

Scenes of a Crime ★★1/2

(2012) 88 min. DVD: \$99; public libraries; \$295 w/PPR: colleges & universities. New Box Productions. ISBN: 978-0-625-69935-6.

Thomas goes to trial, the white jurors finish the job that the corrupt cops started: one woman even bases her guilty verdict on the fact that Thomas was unemployed and seemed "lazy." This powerful documentary presents an all-too-depressing example of a 21st-century American justice system still sadly stuck somewhere in the mid-20th century. Featuring both the full-length documentary and a shortened 48-minute version, this ALA-VRT Notable Videos for Adults selection is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (M. Sandlin)

NATURE, MATH & SCIENCE

Math Tools in Action: Journals ★★★
(2013) 45 min. DVD: \$75. Stenhouse Publishers. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-57110-969-9.

This program visits Arizona elementary school teacher Chris Confer's 1st- and 5th-grade math classes to show how children benefit from guided journaling in math. Confer's students learn about mathematical concepts and arguments (and develop vocabulary) by working with written materials that she includes in prepared notebooks and also recording their own responses to her questions in class. Having kids write about a math principle before and after a lesson allows her to see where they are in their thinking at the beginning, and then to gauge their progress as they do a "quick-write" at the end. Confer is an engaging presence, involving the youngsters through stories, feedback, and physical gestures (wide-flung arms for "the greatest" in 1st grade, thumbs-up or thumbs-down for 5th-graders testing a theory). She shows students how to record journal entries to track their ideas and document their progress in consistent and useful ways, and in occasional brief voiceovers she explains what she's doing and why. Elementary teachers will easily see how they can incorporate her strategies into their own settings and adapt them for different grade levels. DVD extras include a downloadable viewing guide with more information and other materials for in-service training workshops. Recommended. [Note: also newly available in the *Math Tools in Action* series are: *Anchor Charts* and *Manipulatives*.] Aud: C, P. (M. Puffer-Rothenberg)

Natural Beekeeping with Ross Conrad ★★★1/2
(2012) 193 min. DVD: \$24.95. Chelsea Green Publishing. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-60358-327-5.

Natural Beekeeping focuses on Vermont beekeeper Ross Conrad, who is an expert on keeping bees and their hives healthy through careful breeding and natural management. Scenes of Conrad in a workshop setting are interspersed with demonstrations in the field, as he covers everything from how the insects breed and communicate, to hive construc-

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Africa ★★★★★

(2013) 300 min. DVD: 3 discs, \$24.95; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$34.98. BBC Worldwide Ltd. (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-6240-4558-5 (dvd), 978-1-6240-4559-2 (blu-ray).

Hosted by the legendary Sir David Attenborough, the BBC/Discovery Channel series *Africa*—presented in six parts (“Kalahari,” “Savannah,” “Congo,” “Cape,” “Sahara” and “The Future”) that divide the continent geographically and thematically—raises the nature documentary bar (repeatedly) with breathtaking footage shot across the length and breadth of wild Africa. A tiny lizard bravely crawls over sleepy lions in order to subsist on the swarming flies. A hungry bird abuses its status as a watch-sentry for a meerkat den in order to steal their food for itself. Advanced night-vision cinematography captures the normally sullen and solitary black rhino socializing with its kin. Two bull giraffes duel with surprising and spectacular savagery (a sequence analyzed like a heavyweight title bout). And ambitious time-lapse photography compresses over 20 months worth of footage of the Sahara sand dunes into just a few minutes of liquid-like undulations. The closing moments of each episode go behind the scenes as producers and cinematographers recall standout experiences (these wrap-up sequences are also included as part of the extras, along with a few deleted scenes). Serving up sequences that are incredible, inspiring, and sometimes shocking and heartrending (such as the drought death of a baby elephant), *Africa* is highly recommended. **Editor’s Choice.** Aud: H, C, P. (C. Cassidy)



tion, fighting pests, harvesting honey, and winter nutrition and ventilation. Conrad, who wrote the 2007 book *Natural Beekeeping*, is an articulate and informative teacher who comes across as a bit of a bee whisperer: here, he stresses the importance of being calm around bees—displaying no sense of anxiety or fear—while also noting that it is too easy to be disrespectful of bees when covered in beekeeper gear, so he wears only ordinary clothing, making sure it is smooth and light-colored so as not to appear threatening. A fine instructional program that explores this niche topic in great depth, this would be a boon for both hobbyists and those considering taking up beekeeping as a small commercial venture. DVD extras include downloadable and printable instructions for making “bee tea,” a list of resources for beginners, and an outline of seasonal tasks. Highly recommended. [Note: also newly available is *Top-Bar Beekeeping with Les Crowder and Heather Harrell*.] Aud: P. (F. Gardner)

To the Arctic ★★★★★1/2

(2012) 40 min. DVD: \$28.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$44.95. Warner Home Video (avail. from most distributors).

Beauty masks tragedy in *To the Arctic*, an IMAX documentary narrated by Meryl Streep that is set at the top of the world, where the natural cycles of animals are increasingly being threatened by climate change. Viewers will see starving polar bears desperately swimming in search of sea ice from which they can hunt sea lions (we’re told that the sea ice will be gone by 2050), arctic birds struggling with changing seasons, and walrus stuck on land, while Inuit locals note that the ice is thinning so badly that they fall through. There is also fantastic footage of a caribou migration to a traditional birthing

ground, a journey that is becoming harder because of rising temperatures—so many calves are born and die before their mothers reach their destination. Meanwhile, underwater footage reveals the effects of acidic water from distant greenhouse gases. In the documentary’s dramatic, nail-biting highlight, a female polar bear and her two cubs are pursued by a male bear, resulting in a tense confrontation. Backed by the music of Paul McCartney, this is an entertaining, enlightening, yet also alarming film. Extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes. Highly recommended. Aud: J, H, C, P. (T. Keogh)

HEALTH & FITNESS

Advanced Vinyasa Flow Yoga: Strength and Balance ★★★★★1/2

(2010) 123 min. DVD: \$19.99. BayView Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).

Aimed at highly-experienced yoga practitioners, the poses in this increasingly challenging series of routines are presented in five sections of varying difficulty. Instructor Jenni Rawlings leads the presentation against a bright, white background, making it easy to see the different positions (useful, since the pace can occasionally be brisk). Rawlings provides voiceover instructions, naming poses and offering suggestions for refinements as the moves are repeated over the course of the routine. The program begins with a relatively easygoing short flow sequence, with basic poses simple enough for low to mid-level yoga practitioners. The remaining four sections increase the difficulty, with some extremely advanced poses—including lifts and hand and arm stands. An excellent workout for

yoga vets, this is highly recommended. Aud: P. (K. Cruver)

First Response: The Complete Guide to Breathing Emergencies, Medical Emergencies and Poisons ★★★★★1/2

(2012) 25 min. DVD: \$44.99 (\$129.99 w/PPR). Visual Education Centre Limited.

First Response presents basic knowledge and skills for those suddenly called upon to administer emergency first aid. A first responder—or a “first aider”—is defined here as someone who identifies an emergency situation and provides help until medical professionals take over. Via real-life scenarios, animated graphics, and demonstrations from host/director Nick Rondinelli, viewers learn how to keep themselves safe from transmission of disease (although, realistically, few are likely to have safety goggles or rubber gloves handy) and how to proceed through the essential response process: survey the scene; check for responsiveness; call 911; perform a “primary survey” using an “ABC” approach (airway, breathing, and circulation); conduct a “secondary survey” asking follow-up questions; and be a calming presence. Rondinelli also explains how to recognize symptoms of shock, how to place the patient in “shock position” with feet slightly elevated to help blood flow to the brain, and how—in many cases—to control the loss of blood. Also covered are anaphylaxis (severe allergic reactions), asthma, diabetic shock, fever, convulsions, poisons (consumed, inhaled, absorbed, and injected), and other dangerous situations. A fine first aid primer, this is highly recommended. [Note: also newly available in the *First Response* series are: *The Complete Guide to Bleeding, Wounds and Burns* and *The Complete Guide to Head, Spine, Bone, Muscle, Joint Injuries and Environmental Emergencies*.] Aud: P. (C. Block)

Shaman, Healer, Sage ★★★★★

(2013) 64 min. DVD: \$19.98. True Mind (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-934708-94-1.

A complement to the titular bestselling memoir by psychologist and medical anthropologist Alberto Villoldo, *Shaman, Healer, Sage* takes viewers to the South American sources of Villoldo’s formative experiences in shamanic healing. Villoldo describes leaving his regular life and successful practice in the U.S. over 25 years ago to journey to the Amazon and Andes, where he was taught the healing practices of Inca and Q’ero shamans. Under the guidance of masters, Villoldo learned that healing is achieved by integrating physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual components—banishing residual traumatic “imprints” within individuals (which might be built up over several lifetimes). While *Shaman, Healer, Sage* provides some background on the spread of shamanism from Africa to the rest of the world over the centuries, the

main focus is on Villoldo's personal memories of feeling "inauthentic" during his earlier years as a professional, his recollections of frightening times as a child in Cuba, and how he had to be stripped of his persona (violently so, in a vision) before finding his true soul. The most interesting material here involves Villoldo's experiences with mentors, particularly a Peruvian named Antonio, a man with extraordinary energy (at almost 70 years old) who works miracles with individuals at death's door. DVD extras include the featurette "Energetic Interventions," in which Villoldo demonstrates some of the techniques described in the documentary. Likely to be appreciated by New Age aficionados (and dismissed by skeptics), this is recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

Yogawoman ★★★

(2011) 83 min. DVD: \$49.99 (\$125 w/PPR): public libraries; \$295 w/PPR: colleges & universities. *Collective Eye.*

Annette Bening narrates this global exploration of women who practice yoga. Although initially developed as a pathway toward peace and enlightenment for Indian men, yoga has become a worldwide phenomenon, largely driven by female teachers and practitioners. Of the 20 million individuals who practice yoga in the U.S., 85 percent are women. Filmmakers Saraswati Clere and Kate McIntyre's *Yogawoman* incorporates dozens of mostly brief interviews, attempting to cover the experiences of many practitioners around the world. The result is a fascinating patchwork of stories, although the pace can be frantic (which seems rather counterintuitive to the nature of the subject). The documentary is most powerful when it explores someone's story in more detail, such as how yoga teacher Seane Corne's practice has led her to develop a philanthropic organization which assists African women with HIV, or how instructor

Tari Prinster used her own experience with breast cancer to develop yoga classes to help other cancer patients. This sometimes overstuffed mélange of historical background, interviews, classroom footage, and archival clips winds up being ultimately inspiring, successfully conveying the overall message that yoga is for everyone (from juveniles in a detention center to pregnant women), offering wide-ranging benefits that run the gamut from stress relief and recovery from illness to an improved mental state and menstrual cycle regulation. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Cruver)

RELATIONSHIPS & SEXUALITY

Out in the Open ★★★

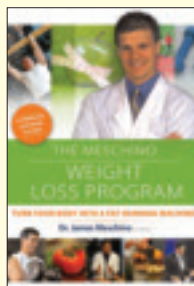
(2013) 88 min. DVD: \$24.99. *Breaking Glass Pictures (avail. from most distributors).*

Matthew Smith's documentary opens with an hysteria-level parody of a vintage classroom-paranoia film warning against homosexuals. They come from hell! They convert normal people using magic! They are on a mission to cover the world in AIDS! Countering the you-can't-insult-me-because-I'll-say-it-first tone of the intro, *Out in the Open* ultimately argues for the inclusion of open gays and lesbians in society. "Who can imagine a world in which gay people and straight people get along?" asks the satirical narrator, cueing at-home visits and talks with un-closeted members of the LGBT community, along with their friends and families. Most subjects affirm that they only want to be accepted into the mainstream and, in fact, tend to shun militant politics and extreme antics. Interviewees, skewing towards the arts and West Coast showbiz, include *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*'s Carson Kressley, Olympic medalist Greg Louganis, pro poker players

The Meschino Weight Loss Program ★★★1/2

(2011) 147 min. DVD: \$19.98. *BFS Entertainment & Multimedia (avail. from most distributors).*

The charismatic Dr. James Meschino presents a lecture on his titular weight loss program, which focuses on three principles: shrinking fat cells, feeding lean mass, and starving body fat. The disc includes both the full, uninterrupted lecture and a condensed broadcast version of the presentation, which Meschino supplements with testimonials from doctors and people who have successfully lost weight on the program (it also includes an interview section in which he explains various aspects of the program in deeper detail). The full version of the lecture contains the doctor's entire regimen, supported by a PowerPoint presentation which is shown in split screen. Meschino's style boasts an energy level and tone that can seem similar to an infomercial, but the advice here is practical, and he does not promise any magic solutions. Addressing the psychology of many weight loss programs, Meschino offers explanations of why these fad diets usually don't work, and instead advocates a synergistic plan in which users develop a lasting new relationship with food, find exercise they enjoy and will commit to, and get in the habit of keeping a healthy routine. Highly recommended. Aud: P. (K. Cruver)



DVD PICKS

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SARA IVANHOE'S "TASTE" BAY398, \$19.99

Sara Ivanhoe's *Taste* is a new DVD for beginners and all levels of yoga practitioners that consists of 10 short yoga sequences as well as three extended programs. The 10 short yoga sequences are perfect for when time is short, or to target a specific body region: wake, cleanse, work, burn, shed, firm, tail, core, sleep, and chill; the three extended programs are slim, strength, and rest.



BOB ROSS THE HAPPY PAINTER BV0401, \$29.99

He's the soft-spoken guy with the fuzzy hair painting mountains and trees with big brushes in a matter of seconds: Bob Ross is public television's most beloved personality and here is the behind-the-story look at his journey to becoming an American pop-culture icon. This documentary explores his life through accounts of friends & family, photographs, and rare archive footage plus interviews from some famous Bob Ross enthusiasts including talk show pioneer Phil Donahue, film stars Jane Seymour & Terrence Howard, and country music favorites Brad Paisley & Jerrod Niemann.

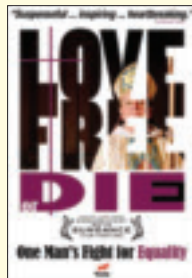


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Love Free or Die ★★☆☆1/2

(2012) 83 min. DVD: \$24.95. Wolfe Video (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-935423-68-3.

This touching and remarkable documentary focuses on a couple of years in the life of Gene Robinson, a recently-retired New Hampshire bishop in the Episcopal church. Before stepping down at age 65 in January 2013, the openly gay Robinson fought an uphill battle in the larger Anglican Communion—a worldwide body of 80 million members, led by the Archbishop of Canterbury—for inclusion in the global church's leadership organization. Robinson also worked hard, alongside many others, for the church's recognition of same-sex marriages and civil unions. Award-winning filmmaker Macky Alston's *Love Free or Die* begins with Robinson's uninvited presence near a major Anglican conference for bishops in Britain, where he is hoping to speak to any group willing to listen, accepting one parish's invitation to do so, which results in a tense confrontation that is quickly dissolved by Robinson's compassion and charm. Back in the U.S., the film captures Robinson's popularity among his New Hampshire flock, including many formerly skeptical individuals won over simply by getting to know Robinson and his low-key partner. While there is a lot of drama and suspense revolving around a national conference for the Episcopalian church—in which measures related to LGBT rights are on the table—mostly this is an enlightening profile of a wonderful man, a lightning rod who has helped bring progress to the cause of equality. DVD extras include deleted scenes. A Special Jury Prize winner at the Sundance Film Festival, this is highly recommended. [Note: this is also available with public performance rights for \$249 from Kino Lorber Edu (www.kinolorberedu.com).] Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)



jobs kept falling through, while Claudia Quijano, who suffered physical abuse in Mexico, discovered a more welcoming climate in the U.S. Astrid Olsen found the freedom to be herself in the Bay Area, but then her parents tracked her down, shipped her back home, and forced her to live as a boy (she would eventually return). Except for Kelly J. Kelly, who had an awakening at 31, all of the interviewees here knew something was different from an early age, but didn't know what to do about it, or had anyone with whom they could speak openly. Inter-titles offer statistics on the challenges faced by the transgender populace, including lack of access to proper medical care (doctor Barry Zevin recalls that many patients would wait too long to get help due to fear of discrimination). The Tom Wadell Health Center clinic, which stepped in with HIV screening and hormone therapy, proved to be so popular that several other clinics have sprung up in its wake in the Bay Area and beyond. A solid addition to both LGBT studies and general collections, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennesy)

What Do You Know? Six to Twelve Year Olds Talk about Gays and Lesbians

★★★

(2011) 13 min. DVD: \$30: public libraries; \$50: colleges & universities. Frameline Distribution. PPR.

Featuring candid comments from children ages 6-12 from schools in Alabama and Massachusetts, *What Do You Know?* poses onscreen questions that ask kids what they think about homosexuality. Interviewees describe the first time they heard the word "gay" (one says the school bus, another mentions "I Feel Pretty"), discuss the meanings of the word (most participants talk about love, or have heard it used as a slur), and share their feelings about the subject (one student said people told her that they "feel sorry for you" about her gay sister, another kid wears a "Got Moms?" T-shirt). *What Do You Know?* features some giggling and a surprising amount of understanding about being different, while also interviewing some students—very honest ones—who are remorseful, admitting that they've used the word "gay" as an insult themselves, or haven't stopped others. Also including a segment in which teachers talk about how they handle related issues in the classroom, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

FOOD & SPIRITS

Can I Eat That? ★★☆☆1/2

(2012) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$52.95 w/PPR). PBS Video. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-805-9.

Exploring some of the science behind food and cooking, this glossy four-part offering

Jason Somerville and Vanessa Selbst, and actor Eric Roberts and his wife Eliza (who praise Eliza's daughter's "coming out" and marriage plans). Also on hand is a Methodist minister who favors LGBT inclusion under Christian principles. Although this is essentially a standard talking-head documentary with production values that are slightly YouTube-ish, the verbal recounting here of heartache, workplace discrimination, domestic violence, childhood molestation, and the yearning to belong is often powerful. DVD extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes, extended interviews, bloopers, and a photo gallery. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Satan's Angel: Queen of the Fire Tassels

★★★

(2013) 72 min. DVD: \$24.99. Breaking Glass Pictures (avail. from most distributors).

Like its, um, titular heroine, *Satan's Angel: Queen of the Fire Tassels* serves up an agreeably ragged walk on the wild side. Blowzy Angel Walker, 67, may look matronly but she is a living legend of "burlesque revival," emerging from retirement with an act she honed under the name "Satan's Angel" in which she sets the tassels of her nipple pasties ablaze. Walker recounts her Catholic-schoolgirl San Francisco upbringing, talks about how nude modeling led her to 1960s exotic dancing (more money than office work), and revisits the bone-breaking motorcycle crash that made her adopt slow, sinuous moves apt for classic striptease (Walker headlined in Vegas for an incredible 12 years). Despite being a lifelong lesbian, she had an indeterminate sum of marriages/affairs, sometimes with

celebrities (the only two she rates as good lovers were Frank Gorshin and Bobby Darin). She also entertained Vietnam troops, claims to have been targeted by biker gangs, and succumbed to addiction in the 1980s during a hiatus from a flesh circuit that had grown too hardcore for her "Catholic" tastes. Filmmaker Josh Dragotta draws on comments from Walker, her tolerant mom, and fellow "classic" strippers and retro-modern imitators. DVD extras include extended interviews and a photo gallery. An inspiring tale featuring women who proudly flaunt their realistically aged, Rubenesque bodies (no plastic surgery or anorexic emaciation here), this is recommended for both LGBT and general collections. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Transgender Tuesdays: A Clinic in the Tenderloin ★★☆☆

(2012) 61 min. DVD: \$90: public libraries; \$290: colleges & universities. Healing Tales Productions. PPR.

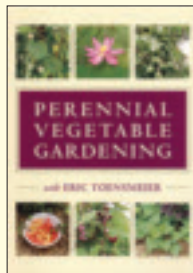
In their illuminating documentary, filmmakers Nathaniel Walters-Koh and Mark Freeman (a retired nurse practitioner) profile a clinic in San Francisco's Tenderloin district that has served the transgender population since 1993—the first public health facility to fill that role. Cabaret performer Veronica Klaus provides eloquent narration while patients and providers reflect on the divergent paths that led them to the Tom Wadell Health Center. Hailing from far-flung locales—including the Ozarks and Cambodia—most of the transgender subjects here did not enjoy happy childhoods. Marilyn Robinson, a ward of the state, worked as a prostitute when other

Perennial Vegetable Gardening with Eric Toensmeier

★★★1/2

(2012) 143 min. DVD: \$29.95. Chelsea Green Publishing. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-60358-369-5.

From the cloud-forest highlands of Mexico to the lowlands of Florida to his own Massachusetts backyard, Eric Toensmeier introduces viewers to dozens of edible perennials (many of which will likely be unfamiliar to viewers) in this program based on his 2007 book *Perennial Vegetables*. Toensmeier extols perennials as a labor-saving way of providing a steady supply of vegetables for the table or for sale, while also exploring new plants and tastes. He ranges far beyond the familiar asparagus and rhubarb, describing species such as air potatoes and Chinese yams, both of which grow above ground; good King Henry, a spinach substitute; sea kale (tastes like broccoli); water mimosa (your taste buds might think it's cabbage); fuki (parts of which have a celery-like flavor); and edible mulberries with high-protein leaves. Toensmeier also offers advice on soil preparation, site design, polyculture (combining different plants), weed and pest control, and pruning, while also presenting nutrition information and cooking tips. Especially impressive are his examples of inter-planting, which will make even a small plot super-productive. DVD extras include the downloadable PDF file "A Global Inventory of Perennial Vegetables." Serving up a thorough exploration of the topic, this is highly recommended. Aud: P. (F. Gardner)



from PBS's *NOVA scienceNOW* series finds affable host David Pogue acting like a kid in a laboratory, fiddling with equipment and registering shock, disbelief, and astonishment as he watches, via x-ray, as a python digests a rat (Pogue also samples fried cricket, and has his nose taped shut in a demonstration of how all five senses are involved in tasting). A segment on the physics of a Thanksgiving feast features tips on how to keep a bird juicy (hint: brining helps) and the stuffing crisp, while animation and explanation are combined to enliven a discussion of the Maillard reaction—i.e., why fried foods turn brown. Pogue also toasts marshmallows over a campfire with biologist Stephen Secor, who theorizes that cooking is inextricably linked to human evolution. Filmmaker Doug Hamilton concludes with a profile of Nathan Myhrvold, a former Microsoft executive who is so widely read that he once was Amazon's biggest individual book customer. Myhrvold has co-authored a six-volume cookbook on "modernist cuisine," with foods like butter made from centrifuged peas (definitely *not* your grandma's cooking). Fast-moving, fun, and informative, this will appeal to both foodies and science buffs. Highly recommended. [Note: also newly available in the series are *What Will the Future Be Like?* and *What Are Animals Thinking?*] Aud: J, H, C, P. (F. Gardner)

screensaver backgrounds, the presenters here point out that the three "credit bureaus"—Experian, TransUnion, and Equifax—are not all-knowing quasi-governmental agencies but rather for-profit outfits selling their own and not necessarily accurate statistic called a "credit score." Lenders and banks use FICO scores (named for its 1960s originator, the Fair Isaac Company), a numerical determination of how well one uses credit. Director Nabil Captan's primer is aimed at alerting viewers about spurious competing "FACO" (pronounced "fake-oh") scores, questionable "pre-approved" credit-card offers, and financial-service hustlers who take fees (sometimes illegally) for what consumers could accomplish for free. Viewers learn that multiple credit cards with debts can actually give a healthy "utilization ratio" boost to the score, more so than credit accounts that are consolidated or left unused. The program also points out that while old delinquent payments or bankruptcies do not go away forever, they also don't have to be deal breakers if one follows the advice given here (legitimate credit and FICO websites and toll-free numbers are included). DVD extras include an interview with Captan and Craig Watts of FICO that puts special emphasis on how home-loan modifications and mortgage defaults can damage credit. Highly recommended. Aud: P. (C. Cassidy)

BUSINESS & ECONOMICS

The Credit DVD, 3rd Edition ★★★1/2

(2013) 55 min. DVD: \$29. Nabil Captan & Company. PPR.

Consumer credit myths are busted in this eye-opening treatment guide to "building a perfect credit score." Seen against CGI-

SPORTS, GAMES & RECREATION

T-Ball Skills & Drills ★★★1/2

(2013) 36 min. DVD: \$24.95. Youth Sports Club. PPR. ISBN: 978-0-9839242-5-8.

For many kids, T-ball (a form of baseball in which players hit baseballs off of tees instead of swinging at a pitched ball) is their entry

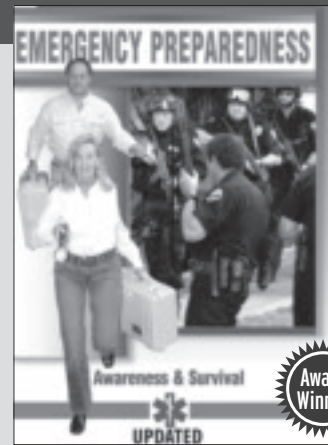


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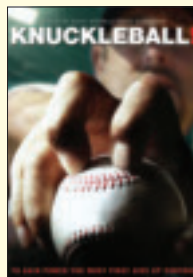
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Knuckleball! ★★☆☆

(2012) 85 min. DVD: \$24.98. MPI Home Video (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 0-7886-1631-5.

Filmmakers Ricki Stern and Annie Sundberg's *Knuckleball!* is an entertaining and informative documentary that focuses on a controversial and often marginalized group of baseball pitchers who specialize in throwing knuckleballs. Although not an entirely respected or even consistently reliable pitch (some consider it a downright gimmick used by mediocre pitchers), the knuckleball—which is thrown off one's rigorously filed fingernails—moves slowly (around 60 mph) and doesn't spin. But its advantage—when it works—is that the ball moves unpredictably and drops suddenly, making it hard to hit. *Knuckleball* concentrates on two pitchers during the 2011 season: 18-year veteran Tim Wakefield of the Boston Red Sox and 37-year-old R.A. Dickey of the New York Mets. Wakefield, now a Boston icon, describes how his entire career has been shrouded in doubt because of the knuckleball, and how his perseverance has kept him in the game despite being written off many times. Dickey talks about being similarly cast aside from time to time, and living with the hard economics of his sometimes mocked specialty. Dickey also notes that knuckleballers typically flourish in their mid-30s, after enough data has gathered to prove that they can win games. Viewers also hear from batters who have to face the pair, catchers who must anticipate them, and managers who have learned to be patient and have faith. The film also includes heartwarming scenes of Wakefield and Dickey together with older, retired members of the relatively small knuckleball fraternity, including Phil Niekro and Charlie Hough. DVD extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes and additional interviews. Highly recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)



into the great American pastime. This helpful instructional title from coach Marty Schupak presents more than 30 drills suitable for young beginners. The first drill, in which the batter simply uses a plastic bat to swing at the tee itself, is a great way to build confidence; other exercises cover the fundamentals of hitting, throwing, base running, and fielding (colored bases, bowling pins, and milk jugs are among the clever props employed). The program also provides tips for parents and coaches (including how to organize the drills in a logical order), addresses safety issues, and suggests various practice games. All the while, narration plays over scenes of real kids and adults working hard and having a great time on the ball field. Highly recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (C. Block)

Waiting for Lightning ★★☆☆

(2012) 2 discs. 96 min. DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

China, 2005: construction begins on a massive “mega-ramp” in order to enable veteran American skateboard daredevil Danny Way to jump the Great Wall itself. Filmmaker Jacob Rosenberg's *Waiting for Lightning* chronicles the countdown to the leap, dropping ominous (although rather misleading) hints that the stunt will not end well. Concurrently we learn about Way, the product of a tragic SoCal childhood, who found his healthiest role models and outlets in the emerging “thrash” culture of the 1970s. Way was a prodigy on the extreme-ski/snowboard circuit (mastering snowboard, surfboard, and

motocross bike on the side). But he also accumulated injuries, some physical (a broken back), others spiritual (the early deaths of his mellow surfer-dude stepfather and his extreme-sports mentor Mike Ternasky). Although Way matures and starts a family, he still pushes himself with outsized feats. Will the Chinese escapade be the culmination of a death wish, or a personal/professional triumph? Fans of skateparks and the X Games will overlook the emotional manipulation, and enjoy the guest appearances by extreme-sports superstars such as Laird Hamilton, Rob Dyrdek, and Tony Hawk. Exclusive to the DVD/Blu-ray Combo edition are bonus extreme-sports videos, deleted scenes, and interviews with Rosenberg and others. Recommended. Aud: P. (C. Cassidy)

THE ARTS

Arts & the Mind ★★☆☆

(2012) 120 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.95 w/PPR). PBS Video. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-800-4.

Beginning with the first cave paintings created thousands of years ago, art has long held a central role in defining what it means to be human. Lisa Kudrow hosts this two-part PBS documentary by filmmaker Leo Eaton on how the arts can spark creativity, enrich lives, and impact the human brain, particularly among children and senior citizens. Visiting schools, the program illustrates how the arts allow students to col-

laborate, tear down walls and barriers, share emotions, budget time, and self motivate. Unfortunately, however, in these times of tight budgets and standardized tests, programs related to the arts are often the first to be cut. In the case of seniors—drawing on the “use it or lose it” principle—the arts can help promote movement or stimulate memories, which might help to combat Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. Other topics covered here include the roles of music, storytelling, poetry, and communal arts (like mural making) that more closely bind communities. The arts are also increasingly valued as a means of helping to heal chronically ill children or veterans afflicted with post-traumatic stress disorder. Scientists, physicians, teachers, and individuals (including actor Tim Robbins and musician Herb Alpert) testify about how the arts can reduce conflict and encourage improvisation and risk taking. Insightful and inspirational, this documentary will be a useful starting point for related discussion. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)

Free Radicals: A History of Experimental Film ★★☆☆

(2012) 82 min. In English & French w/English subtitles. DVD: \$29.95 (avail. from most distributors), \$249 w/PPR (avail. from www.kinolorberedu.com). Kino Lorber.

Pip Chodorov delivers a charming, if selective, history of underground cinema in this very personal documentary, which to some extent represents a collaboration with his father Stephan, who also appears as a commentator. Chronologically, the coverage begins with Hans Richter, a pioneer in abstract animation after World War I, with other segments devoted to Len Lye, who made a groundbreaking 1958 short by directly scratching the film stock, and Stan VanDerBeek, who led the way in computer-generated film in the mid-20th century. Attention is also rightly paid to Stan Brakhage, interviewed as he lay ill with cancer but still hopeful about creating another of what he called his celluloid poems. The primary emphasis, however, is on the New York scene during the 1960s. Pride of place is given to Jonas Mekas, who was instrumental in establishing the Anthology Film Archive, which collected, preserved, and distributed experimental work. Mekas is joined in his recollections by such figures as Robert Breer, Ken Jacobs, and Peter Kubelka, shown in archival footage explaining his mathematically based editing process. Chodorov's work is admittedly incomplete, but its combination of rare interviews, excerpts from various examples (as well as several full shorts), and chatty, enthusiastic tone make it an entertaining and informative introduction to a film genre that remains unknown to most moviegoers. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Switek)

Gottfried Helnwein and the Dreaming Child ★★1/2

(2011) 72 min. DVD: \$27.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors).

In a cross-disciplinary pollination, Viennese-born artist Gottfried Helnwein—whose oversized canvasses present photographs of waiflike children in macabre, threatening, and grotesque poses (holding guns, bloodied, and sometimes appearing to be dead)—was selected as the guest production designer for an opera based on *The Dreaming Child*, a stage piece by Israeli writer and dramatist Hanoach Levin (who died in 1999) that similarly explores the innermost fears of a little girl, which chiefly focus on parental loss and nightmarish quasi-military authority figures. Helnwein says that his haunting imagery grew from the guilty silence—regarding the Holocaust—in which he grew up, leading to a fixation with the thousands of suffering and exploited children. The mounting of *The Dreaming Child* (in Tel Aviv and Los Angeles) witnesses some temper tantrums and kerfluffle (Israeli labor laws thwart the use of an age-correct child actress/vocalist). Although described as a kindred spirit to Helnwein, the celebrated Levin remains a shadowy figure here, and *The Dreaming Child* itself only comes across in fragments as a Cirque du Soleil-style oddity in Lisa Kirk Colburn's documentary, which mainly serves as a portrait of Helnwein. A seemingly levelheaded (despite his odd fashion sense) family man, Helnwein's work might easily strike many as transgressive voyeurism—some of it derives directly from forensic photos. The avant-garde opera becomes quite literally an art installation for him, leaving little doubt whose story this is. DVD extras include outtakes and an art gallery. A strong optional

purchase. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Hava Nagila ★★★

(2012) 75 min., DVD: \$150; public libraries, \$350; colleges & universities. Katahdin Productions (avail. from www.havanagilamovie.com). PPR.

Humor and agreeable docu-schtick flavor this you-don't-have-to-be-Jewish-but-it-helps dissertation on the title tune. "Hava Nagila" is so thoroughly associated with Jewish culture and identity that some believe it dates to Old Testament times. But the song is actually a Ukrainian Hasidic melody from the 1800s, with 20th-century lyrics added by Zionist composer A.Z. Idelsohn (or, possibly, his adolescent protégé Moshe Nathanson—a lawsuit and royalties controversy followed, oy vey!). The upbeat, evocative song was popularized by Harry Belafonte, covered by Glen Campbell, parodied by Alan Sherman, and deliberately travestied by Bob Dylan. Serious Jewish musicologists still harbor a love-hate relationship with "Hava Nagila" and its kitschy associations (shown in Hollywood film clips ranging from *Thoroughly Modern Millie* to *Wedding Crashers*). Filmmaker Roberta Grossman uses "Hava Nagila" and its various iterations to portray the Jewish-assimilation experience and cultural resilience, right up to the YouTube era, in this entertaining film with a quirky interviewee list ranging from Leonard Nimoy to Connie Francis, along with illustrious rabbis, rebbes, and authors. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Lost and Sound ★★★

(2012) 76 min. DVD: \$295. Filmmakers Library. PPR.

Like the filmmaker herself, the hearing-impaired Britons in Lindsey Dryden's artful

Jedi Junkies ★★★

(2010) 73 min. DVD: \$19.95. Docurama (avail. from most distributors).

In the documentary subgenre of films about rabid fantasy fans, a handful have already been devoted to *Star Wars* followers, including *A Galaxy Far, Far Away* and *Starwoids*. Filmmaker Mark Edlitz's somewhat scattershot *Jedi Junkies* adds little that is new, but it entertains in a can-you-top-this? way. A few actors (Jeremy Bulloch, Ray Park, Peter Mayhew) make appearances at nostalgia conventions, and there is a fondly recalled encounter with Carrie Fisher, but this is mainly centered on the fans, who defend their obsession—noting that nobody considers team-sports backers or classic-car hobbyists to be so abnormal in their all-consuming preoccupations. Interviewees (besides a pair of psychologists) include members of a NYC school for light-saber fighting; hoarders of tie-in toys (right down to minute variations in molds and packaging); a metalworker who creates commissioned *Star Wars* weapons and props; a Sith villain rock band; and a man who attained renown for building a full-sized Millennium Falcon in his backyard—albeit as a short-lived prop for his "fan film" (and speaking of fan films, the documentary does feature some amusing excerpts). The sexy box art with a cosplayer attired as Princess Leia in her metal "slave" bikini outfit is not indicative of the main focus of this film, which should attract viewers for whom the force is strong. DVD extras include audio commentary by the director, deleted and extended scenes, and featurettes. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)



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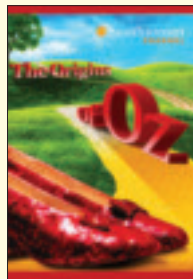
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The Origins of Oz ★★★

(2010) 46 min. DVD: \$14.98. Inception Media Group (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Hollywood's 1939 classic film depicting Dorothy's visit to the magical kingdom of Oz has been seen by more viewers more times than any other film in history. Filmmaker Anne MacGregor's Smithsonian Channel-aired documentary delves into the background of the movie, the book, and author L. Frank Baum. Narrated by singer Natalie Merchant, *The Origins of Oz* celebrates Baum, pointing out that he is remembered not for his failed careers as a shopkeeper and newspaper owner, or his days as an early Hollywood filmmaker, but rather for the story that became the first in a series of books about Oz. Married to the daughter of a suffragette, Baum created "the first feminist character in American literature" in "the first genuine American fairy tale," which was "the *Harry Potter* of its day." When Baum collaborated with illustrator W.W. Denslow on a book called *Father Goose*, the success of the venture encouraged Baum to come up with an original tale for Denslow to illustrate, and the rest—as they say—is history. Topics covered include the differences between Baum's novel and the motion picture, and a helpful description of the three-strip Technicolor process pioneered in the film *The Wizard of Oz*. The appeal here lies largely in the comfort of revisiting a familiar subject with a little more background and some commentary on pop culture (in one scene, gawking tourists venerate the ruby slippers on display at the Smithsonian as if they were the crown jewels). Released to coincide with the arrival of the big budget Hollywood prequel *Oz the Great and Powerful*, this is recommended. Aud: P. (F. Gardner)



the rapier-sharp bickering of Beatrice and Benedick—destined, of course, to end in their marriage. But the play also features a distinctly dark side in the romance of a second couple, Hero and Claudio, whose trip to the altar is temporarily derailed by the cruel machinations of the wickedly wily Don John—which can only be overcome by Hero's feigned death. In this production, surprisingly, the more dramatic elements come off best; the second-act sequence in which Claudio (Philip Cumbus) brutally humiliates Hero (Ony Uhiara) for her supposed infidelity boasts real power, as Cumbus performs it with genuine ferocity. But the humorous aspects are a bit marred by the exaggeration and mugging so characteristic of Globe productions. Here, all of the material involving the constable Dogberry (Paul Hunter) comes off like an overly broad TV sketch, and even Beatrice and Benedick (Eve Best, Charles Edwards) engage too often in overdrawn pauses and bits of business more suitable to sitcoms. Those collecting the entire run of Globe releases will definitely want to add this one, which for others is a strong optional purchase. Aud: H, C, P. (F. Swietek)

documentary have found ways to integrate music into their lives. Along with experts from the worlds of music and neuroscience—who testify to the benefits of sound on the human psyche—the subjects here share their experiences. Nick, an arts reviewer, lost hearing in one ear due to an undiagnosed illness; he can still hear music, but not in the same way (he describes it as "flat"), partly due to tinnitus. To the musically-inclined parents of 12-year-old Holly, "music is a fundamental part of our lives." At the age of 14 months, she lost her hearing to meningitis, after which she shut down and stopped communicating. With the aid of cochlear implants, Holly now studies piano, violin, and ballet (an audiologist explains that while Holly can hear rhythm normally, pitch and timbre present more of a challenge). Emily, who was born deaf, attends a prestigious collegiate dance program; she has used hearing aids for 19 years and cochlear implants for three. Both Holly and Emily have benefited from expensive surgeries and extensive training. Interstitial segments employ fuzzy sound and abstract imagery to duplicate the way these individuals perceive music, i.e. as if it were being heard underwater. According to University of Edinburgh professor Nigel Osborne, flawless hearing is a myth. He notes that, "We all have our own slightly distorted picture of sound. And therefore we all reconstruct it to be perfect in our own way." Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

The Miners' Hymns ★★★

(2011) 52 min. DVD: \$29.98. Icarus Films Home Video (avail. from most distributors).

Media artist Bill Morrison's documentary

short is a non-narrative symphony of images from U.K. film/news archives related to the English coal industry. Yorkshire pits and collieries such as Hylton and Monkwearmouth endured from the Victorian era, nurturing surrounding towns while sustaining the British Empire—at least until the tapped-out mines closed in the 1970s and 1980s, with the Thatcher years awash in bitter strikes by the National Union of Mine Workers in a futile attempt to hold back inevitable demise. With a slightly Philip Glass-like score/sound design by Johann Johannsson, *The Miners' Hymns* is not so much an A-to-B chronology as a back-and-forth dip into a lost world—highlighting the monumental coal-burrowing machines; carts on their rails like a subterranean roller-coaster; and the working-class pride of the miners, as well as their brass bands and families on parade in the streets. Billowing trade-union banners—glorious even in black-and-white—end the film on a triumphant but also elegiac note (since we have already beheld the labor riots and armies of British policemen who accompanied the end of this industry and its culture). DVD extras include three bonus short films by Morrison. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Much Ado About Nothing ★★1/2

(2011) 2 discs. 166 min. DVD: \$29.99. Kultur International Films (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-0-7697-9248-4.

The latest release in the continuing series of Shakespeare's works from the restored Globe Theatre in London is Jeremy Herrin's 2011 staging of the comedy famous for

The Portrait ★★★

(2012) 42 min. DVD: \$150. National Film Board of Canada. PPR.

One of many contributions to the celebration of Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee in 2012 was Canada's commissioning of artist Phil Richards to paint a portrait of Her Majesty for display in Buckingham Palace. Produced by the National Film Board of Canada, director Hubert Davis's short documentary follows the creation of the painting: from the original commission up through Richards' meticulous preparations—including working with small models of the monarch—to the unveiling of the finished work for Elizabeth in a typically elaborate ceremony. *The Portrait* is essentially an illustrated lecture during which Richards talks exuberantly about the art of portraiture (and of painting in general), while sketching his own biography and describing in considerable detail the step-by-step process that he followed in this particular case—which, he observes, differed from most in that he was able to spend only minimal time with the subject. Davis skillfully interweaves shots of Richards' recollections with montages of still photographs, artwork, home movies, and newly shot footage of Richards' travels to England. One can debate the quality of the portrait that Richards eventually produced—as he himself admits, his traditional, almost photographic style has never won him many critical plaudits—but Davis's film is revealing and visually exuberant. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

HISTORY & CURRENT EVENTS

Briars in the Cottonpatch: The Story of Koinonia Farm ★★★★★

(2003) 57 min. DVD: \$19.99. Cotton Patch Productions (dist. by Vision Video).

This eye-opening PBS-aided 2003 documentary—presented here in a 10th anniversary edition—sheds light on an extraordinary American story: the history of Koinonia Farm in Americus, GA. Once a symbol of a much-derided ideal of racial equality—both before and during the Civil Rights movement—the community survived years of violence and hatred from segregationists, ultimately giving rise to the nonprofit organization Habitat for Humanity. Filmmaker Faith Fuller begins the story with Clarence Jordan—a student of agriculture, and a minister—who decided in 1942 to create a collective farm on which black and white families would live and work together, sharing the profits. For years, the white establishment of Americus, one of the most dangerous cities for African-Americans in the South and a Ku Klux Klan stronghold, tolerated what they considered an eccentric experiment. But with gains being made in American courts by blacks during the 1950s and '60s, racism in both its institutionalized



The Abolitionists ★★★★★

(2013) 180 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.95 w/PPR). PBS Video. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-833-2.

As the 19th century got underway, American citizens saw the rapidly expanding nation as a beacon of hope, equality, opportunity, and equality. For a small group of anti-slavery activists in the 1820s, however, America was an “empire of sin,” fatally flawed by the unholy compromise made by the Founding Fathers (many of whom were slave owners themselves). The abolitionists (as they came to be known) prodded and pushed a reluctant nation towards what would become a bloody civil war. Oliver Platt narrates this three-part PBS-aided *American Experience* documentary from filmmaker Ron Rapley that explores the personalities, tactics, and internal conflicts of these passionate men and women. At first, abolitionists like William Lloyd Garrison thought that “moral suasion” could convince slaveholders to give up their property. But slaves had become one of the largest economic assets. Fugitive slave Frederick Douglass and Angelina Grimke, the aristocratic daughter of a South Carolina slaveholding family, would testify to the cynical, brutal nature of the slave business, but their lectures and pamphlets were met by defiance and violence in the South and skepticism in the North. After the war with Mexico added new territory to the union, it became obvious that slave owners—often with the cooperation of the courts and federal government—aimed to make the country a vast slave empire. John Brown, scorning “milk and water” abolitionism, hoped to “purge this guilty land with blood”—first with raids in the border state of “bleeding Kansas,” and then with an attack on the federal armory at Harpers Ferry, WV. Meanwhile, Harriet Beecher Stowe, mourning the death of her young son, pricked the nation’s conscience with her empathetic novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Combining dramatic re-creations with insight from historians, this excellent documentary captures the passions, struggles, arguments, despair, and ultimate steely resolve of the abolitionist movement. Highly recommended. **Editor’s Choice.** Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

Two Documentaries From Swedish Filmmaker Terje Carlsson



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and freewheeling forms sought new targets, among them Koinonia, which suffered harassment, violence, boycotts, and more. Narrated by former Atlanta mayor and civil rights leader Andrew Young, *Briars in the Cottonpatch* combines archival footage/stills with interviews of participants, historians, and other notables (including former U.S. president and Georgia governor Jimmy Carter) to trace those years of survival against all odds. DVD extras include an update on Koinonia and related featurettes. Highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** Aud: H, C, P. (T. Keogh)

How to Survive a Plague ★★★

(2012) 109 min. DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98. MPI Home Video (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 0-7886-1608-0.

Filmmaker David France's Oscar-nominated chronicle of the AIDS crisis during the dark years of the late 1980s and 1990s focuses on the activist group ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power)—founded by outspoken playwright Larry Kramer—whose members angrily occupied hospitals and New York's St. Patrick's Cathedral in reaction to perceived apathy toward the pandemic and its victims. The emphasis here is on the East Coast, Greenwich Village, and the NYC area, as archival footage recalls a hotbed of activism, with reporter Ann Northrop dropping journalistic objectivity to coach ACT UP on how to stage their actions. Viewers are reminded of an era when even the late Mayor Ed Koch was vilified for not doing enough, although particular venom here is reserved for then-President George H.W. Bush and Republican Senator Jesse Helms. Arch-conservative Pat Buchanan actually comes off better, shown here as being sympathetic to AIDS patients who were denied by red tape

and the National Institute of Health from trying new and experimental treatments. Fractious politics eventually splintered ACT UP, creating a breakaway group called TAG (Treatment Action Group). Doctors credit the efforts of both groups to exert ongoing pressure and spread awareness, which led to "combination therapy" and widespread, affordable AIDS drugs—developments that came sadly and fatally late for so many. DVD extras include audio commentary by the director and various members of ACT UP, and deleted scenes. Recommended. [Note: this is also available with public performance rights for \$295 from Ro*co Films Educational, www.rocoeducational.com.] Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

The Hunt for Bin Laden ★★★

(2012) 93 min. DVD: \$24.98. Inception Media Group (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Originally aired on the Smithsonian Channel, Leslie Woodhead's documentary details the extensive and expensive efforts by the U.S. government to locate and assassinate Osama Bin Laden. For many years, Bin Laden's operations were unknown to American intelligence; the founding of al-Qaeda in the mid-1980s initially warranted little notice from the CIA. But by 1993, al-Qaeda's involvement in a pair of audacious attacks—the bombing of the World Trade Center and the Black Hawk Down incident in Somalia—clearly demonstrated Bin Laden's power as the most dangerous foe to American interests in the post-Cold War world. Yet the U.S. government constantly bungled its handling of Bin Laden: an inadequate American spy network failed to apprehend him, while the CIA's refusal to share information with

the FBI helped enable al-Qaeda operatives to begin American-based operations that culminated in the 9/11 attacks. When the Bush Administration began its war in Iraq, the White House eventually tried to downplay the importance of capturing Bin Laden. *The Hunt for Bin Laden* paints a somewhat sketchy portrait of how the elusive terrorist managed to evade pursuers from the time he escaped across the Afghan border in December 2001 until his assassination in May 2011. Overall, the hunt for Bin Laden is estimated to have ultimately cost \$1 trillion—a figure that was tragically bloated by remarkably bad planning and incompetent intelligence gathering. A solid nonfiction counterpart to the Oscar-nominated film *Zero Dark Thirty*, this is recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (P. Hall)

Missions That Changed the War: The Doolittle Raid ★★★1/2

(2011) 2 discs. 176 min. DVD: \$49.99. Athena (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-59828-758-5.

Originally broadcast on the Military Channel, this four-part documentary provides a comprehensive overview of one of the most astonishing missions of World War II: Lt. Col. Jimmy Doolittle's air raid on Japan on April 18, 1942, a mere four months after the brutal Pearl Harbor attack that caught Americans off-guard. Conceptually, the assault appeared nearly impossible to execute, given the limits of American aviation technology at the time and the belief that Japan was too protected for a direct hit. Narrated by Gary Sinise, *The Doolittle Raid* mixes historical footage, expert commentary, maps, and interviews with four of the participating crewmen to examine the mission's logistical concerns, not the least of which was the problem of having bulky B-25 bombers take off from aircraft carriers that were not designed to accommodate them. Under Doolittle's supervision, the bombing mission only created minimal damage to the Japanese targets, but it generated an extraordinary psychological victory through its breaching of the supposedly impenetrable Japanese mainland. Although the story has been told in a number of war-related documentaries, as well as the classic 1944 MGM drama *Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo*, this in-depth treatment offers wider scope. DVD extras include a fascinating interview with Edward Saylor (an engineer gunner on the Doolittle crew), and a 16-page viewer's guide that includes a Q&A with Carroll V. Glines, Doolittle's official biographer. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

The Central Park Five ★★★1/2

(2012) 120 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.95 w/PPR), Blu-ray: \$29.99. PBS Video. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-6088-3854-7 (dvd), 978-1-6088-3855-4 (blu-ray). Closed captioned.

Marking a decided shift from Ken Burns's usual style (characterized by stately narration, nostalgic music, and slow camera pans across sepia photos), the famed filmmaker's latest is a gripping, true-crime (and injustice) contemporary documentary adapted from the book of the same title by Sarah Burns (his daughter). On April 19, 1989, a white woman jogger was brutally beaten and raped in New York's Central Park. Mayor Ed Koch vowed vengeance: a park dragnet put in custody five black and Latino young men who were conveniently accused of the monstrous crime. Strong-arm NYPD interrogations produced videotaped "confessions" from the teens (who only wanted to go home), while tabloid news trumpeted the instant myth of feral black "wolf packs" (which never happened). DNA evidence and an event-timeline failed to link the suspects to the rape, but all five of the accused, while proclaiming their innocence, were convicted. In 2002, a notorious serial rapist confessed to being the jogger's lone assailant, which his DNA and testimony proved. Yet NYC police, prosecutors, and media still defend actions that created a race-hate climate and the urban legend of "wilding" attacks. The five wronged men are interviewed here, although the jogger (who has since made her own book deal) is not, a minor omission in this excellent documentary that further explores America's terrible race pathologies. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)



Orchestra of Exiles ★★★

(2013) 85 min. DVD: \$27.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors).

Bronislaw Huberman (1882-1947) was a revered Polish-born violin prodigy, music scholar, and orchestra leader, who—politically radicalized by World War I and the rise

of Hitler—refused to perform in German territories, even as other Jewish artists were attempting to hold on to their careers and positions while riding out a crisis that they (often fatally) assumed would only be temporary. Huberman, an advocate of Zionism, relocated to the Middle East, and defiantly formed the Palestine Orchestra against the backdrop of Hitler's emerging Final Solution. Playing on the Third Reich's obsession over international respect for Teutonic high culture, Huberman was able to wrangle immigration papers from German authorities, allowing a number of endangered musicians and their families to flee to the haven of British colonial Palestine during the 1930s. Serving up commentary from Itzhak Perlman, Zubin Mehta, Joshua Bell, and the descendants of Palestine Orchestra players, filmmaker Josh Aronson successfully visualizes Huberman's era via elaborate non-dialogue re-enactments (with actor Thomas Kornmann as Huberman). Arturo Toscanini, Leonard Bernstein, Johannes Brahms, and Richard Wagner also feature in this untold story from the Holocaust (and early Israel) that hits the right notes for both Judaica and classical music collections. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassady)

The Time Compass: The Inca Empire

★★★★

(2011) 20 min. DVD: \$49 (single site), \$159 (multi-site). Teacher's guide included. New Dimension Media. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-60721-100-6.

Based on a series of books, this excellent, fast-paced program combines knowledgeable narration, computer animation, landmarks, maps, and corny features (such as wisecracking animals) to provide an info-packed primer on the Inca empire. Exploring the Incas' origins and history in the Andes region, innovative techniques (including crop terraces and irrigation systems), military strength, impressive architecture, and methods of accounts and records (including quipu knots), *The Inca Empire* also looks at the royal government and prevailing laws, as well as what happened to the Incas following the 16th-century invasion by Spanish conquistadores. For context, the documentary also explores simultaneous cultures and events around the world (touching on the Ottoman Turks and Shogun Ieyasu's samurai warriors). Providing a ton of data with kid-friendly nuances ("If you like French fries, you should thank the Incas," due to their advances in potato cultivation), this is highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** Aud: I, J, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

The Tiniest Place ★★☆☆1/2

(2011) 104 min. In Spanish w/English subtitles. DVD: \$398. Icarus Films. PPR.

The 1979-92 civil war in El Salvador has receded from media attention, but here it receives a poetic cinematic monument from

filmmaker Tatiana Huezo, who focuses on the forest village of Cinquera—a town that was virtually annihilated during the conflict but has since been rebuilt, replete with memorials to vanished/murdered sons and daughters. Inhabitants talk about the village earning a reputation as a home for "subversives" (possibly due to revolutionary sermons by a local Catholic priest), which led to brutal government raids searching for the community's young people (that, of course, only pushed those same young people to take up arms as leftist guerillas). A survivor visits the damp "Devil's Cave" where he and others hid for years after Cinquera was devastated by air raids, and a witness speaks of what we would call post-traumatic stress disorder: "There's just no fixing me." Imagery of cleansing rain and livestock giving birth serve here as an obvious metaphor for renewal, although a bitter roll-call of the dead holds out the promise that there will be no forgetting, even if the guerillas' long-maintained guns are no longer in use. None of the Salvadoran Army regulars or security forces speak. An award winner on the festival circuit, this powerful documentary is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassady)

We Are Egypt: The Story Behind the Revolution ★★☆☆1/2

(2013) 82 min. In English & Arabic w/English subtitles. DVD: \$24.98. The Disinformation Company (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-934708-99-6.

Better than most news agencies did, an embedded filmmaker here explains the players and issues involved in the climactic "Arab Spring" Egyptian uprising in early 2011, which overthrew the long-entrenched National Democratic Party (NDP) and government of Hosni Mubarak. In voiceover,

director Lillie Paquette describes herself as a D.C. functionary and U.S. representative in the Mideast who realized how unpopular America was among Egyptians for propping up the Cairo government. Her story adopts a semi-video-diary format, counting down to crucial late-2010 elections as she speaks personally with the various opposition political groups, dissidents, and candidates (one, the nephew of the assassinated Anwar Sadat). These factions rise to challenge the 30-year stranglehold of the NDP, yet make no headway in rigged ballots, and occasionally members are jailed on trumped-up charges. Viewers are told that the popular and well-organized Muslim Brotherhood party was deliberately allowed by the NDP to gain a foothold in Parliament—in order to deliver a warning to Washington that the nation could slide into Islamic militancy if true democracy were allowed. Paquette even has an audience with a slick NDP spokesman, plus gets a few words from surprise guest celebrity, Omar Sharif. The extensive extras include behind-the-scenes updates, and extended comments from Sharif, who was a witness to Egypt's 1952 revolution against the original monarchy. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassady)

TRAVEL & GEOGRAPHY

Discoveries... America National Parks: Alaska's Katmai, Lake Clark & Alagnak

★★★1/2

(2012) 50 min. DVD or Blu-ray: \$24.95. Bennett-Watt HD Productions. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-60490-168-9 (dvd), 978-1-60490-191-7 (blu-ray).

This beautifully shot high-def production from filmmakers Jim and Kelly Watt—part



Timothy Spall: Somewhere at Sea—The Complete Series

★★★1/2

(2011) 3 discs. 330 min. DVD: \$39.98. BFS Entertainment & Multimedia (avail. from most distributors).

Burly British character actor Timothy Spall may be best known for playing Peter Pettigrew in the *Harry Potter* films, but as this charming BBC series confirms, Spall is equally entertaining at being himself. Over the course of this series' three-season run from 2010-12, Spall and his wife, Shane, sail their 52-foot Dutch barge, *Princess Matilda*, along the British coast, while also taking a side journey over to the neighboring Channel Islands. Spall is a self-described "idiot mariner" and he spends much of his time proving his case, as the Spalls make extremely slow progress, puttering down rivers with no great rush and spending oodles of time waiting for the weather to be perfect. Needless to say, the British weather doesn't cooperate very often, but Spall would rather not venture too far into choppy waves. "If in doubt, don't set off," he insists, perhaps with tongue firmly in cheek. Indeed, much of the series is played for laughs, as Spall melodramatically transforms mildly inclement weather conditions into a *Poseidon Adventure*-worthy storm. Mrs. Spall is delightful in her own right, offering good-natured support to her husband's clowning while exhibiting more than a little patience over his maritime dithering. The Spalls also cede screen time to the British Isles' beautiful coastal scenery, which will certainly appeal to Anglophile travelogue fans. Highly recommended. Aud: P. (P. Hall)

of the *Discoveries...America National Parks* series—showcases some of western Alaska's most striking natural wonders. The spectacular footage opens with the many attractions of Katmai National Park and Preserve, a four-million-acre domain that includes the Novarupta volcano, whose massive eruption in 1912 created the Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes; and Brooks Camp, one of the best places in the world to safely view and photograph brown bears as they fish for salmon, eat, and play. Rangers offer ursine guidance for shutterbugs, including how to read the bears' comfort level (they're dangerous!) and pointing out exactly how far 50 yards is (the minimum safe distance). Next, it's on to Lake Clark National Park and Preserve, a remote wilderness covering two million square acres that relies on boats and small aircraft (mostly float planes) to bring in visitors, who marvel at craggy volcanic mountains reflected in gorgeous lakes and enjoy fishing for a variety of species in rushing streams. Angling receives lots of attention in sequences shot at the Alagnak Wild River, whose headwaters lie within Katmai (and here the camera crew step into the frame to do a little fly-fishing with friends). For those planning a trip or just up for some enjoyable armchair traveling, this is highly recommended. [Note: also newly available from Bennett-Watt is the companion title *Fly Fishing Adventure: Fish & Bears on Alaska's Alagnak River*.] Aud: P. (C. Block)

Travel with Kids: Mexico—Cabo San Lucas & Baja ★★★

(2012) 57 min. DVD: \$14.95. Equator Creative Media (dist. by Janson Media). ISBN: 978-1-56839-432-2.

In this edition of *Travel with Kids*, the Roberts family—Mom, Dad, and brothers Nathan and Seamus—hop on a tour bus in California, cross the border, and explore Mexico's Baja Peninsula, including the resort town of Cabo San Lucas and the nearby deserts and bays. A history lesson about the region visited is standard for the series, and this time viewers learn about the indigenous peoples, as well as the waves of conquerors, missionaries, and other cultural influences that made the area what it is today. Food is always a major aspect of each trip; one local culinary eccentricity here is toasted grasshoppers (with chili and lime added for flavor), which Nathan munches with great relish. A guided tour—via four-wheel drive vehicles and zip lines—introduces the foursome to the rugged beauty of the surrounding landscape, including trees that grow nowhere else in the world (and inspired some of Dr. Seuss's otherworldly *Lorax* illustrations). A highlight is a whale-watching jaunt on the water in small boats, for very close encounters with gray whales. DVD extras include helpful tips, as well as a "Mexico at Home" section featuring crafts, recipes, and some basic Spanish-language vocabulary and phrases. Recommended. Aud: P. (C. Block)

BIOGRAPHY

Erroll Garner: No One Can Hear You Read ★★★1/2

(2012) 53 min. DVD: \$24.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors).

Jazz pianist Erroll Garner (1923-1977) was a legendary musician with a four-decade career that found him playing in his own dazzling style all over the world. Filmmaker Atticus Brady's *Erroll Garner: No One Can Hear You Read* offers an excellent overview of Garner's life and accomplishments, drawing on comments from numerous interviewees who offer fascinating insights. Born in Pittsburgh, Garner was known to climb out of his crib to play piano early in the morning at the age of three. Growing up in an urban hotbed of jazz, Garner joined the Candy Kids—children who played at theaters and on local radios—and became a sensation. Soaking up influences while also under the tutelage of the same school bandleader who coached Billy Strayhorn, Garner learned to mimic his heroes at the piano, moving to New York to perform with Charlie Parker. But while he could play be-bop, Garner was his own man musically (former sidemen in Garner's band talk about how Garner would never play a tune the same way twice). Full of great anecdotes (including how Garner wrote "Misty" in his mind while enduring a frightening flight on an airplane), the documentary features comments from Woody Allen, Ahmad Jamal, Maurice Hines, Steve Allen, Kim Garner (Erroll's daughter), and others. DVD extras include a director's commentary and extended interviews. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

Follow Me: The Yoni Netanyahu Story

★★★1/2

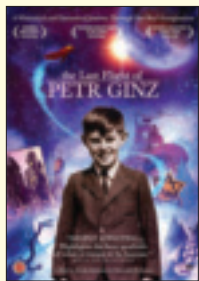
(2012) 87 min. DVD: \$19.99. Crystal City Entertainment (avail. from www.followmethemovie.com).

Lt. Col. Yonatan "Yoni" Netanyahu was the only member of the Israeli commando force killed in the 1976 raid that rescued the hostages being held at Uganda's Entebbe Airport. Jonathan Gruber and Ari Daniel Pinchot's documentary offers a glowing tribute to the man whose death at age 30 robbed the world of a complex and passionate figure. Drawing on Netanyahu's remarkably eloquent letters and notebook entries, the film details the intellectual evolution of a committed Zionist who saw the defense of Israel as his life's mission. His nationalism ultimately overruled other professional and personal goals—Netanyahu walked away from a Harvard scholarship and dissolved a happy marriage to concentrate on his work with Israel's military, ultimately serving with great valor in the Six Day War and the Yom Kippur War, becoming a national hero. His leadership at Entebbe produced an astonishing victory against Palestinian terrorists. The filmmakers conduct a series of interviews with those closest to him, including his ex-wife and his younger brother, current Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. But even though these recollections sometimes veer into hagiography, this is a fine testimonial to one of Israel's most beloved military figures. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

How Does It Feel ★★★

(2012) 34 min. DVD: \$150. National Film Board of Canada. PPR.

Directed by Lawrence Jackman, this National Film Board of Canada documentary



The Last Flight of Petr Ginz ★★★1/2

(2012) 66 min. DVD: \$24.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors).

Equally heartbreaking and transcendent, filmmakers Sandy Dickson and Churchill Roberts' *The Last Flight of Petr Ginz* draws on the beautiful notebooks of writings and drawings created by the titular Prague teenager who was murdered at the Auschwitz death camp in 1944, taking viewers into Petr's reflections and dreams with a judicious use of animation (that essentially brings some of his artwork to life). Born in 1928 to a Jewish father and Christian mother who converted, Petr and his sister Eva grew up in a home with a strict emphasis on learning. Attending a school for gifted students, Petr enjoyed science but also loved to write and draw. Inspired by Jules Verne, he created illustrated books of science fiction—stories that increasingly became metaphors for the German occupation of Europe. As he moved inexorably toward his final days at the concentration camp in Terezin and death at Auschwitz, Petr's writing reflected his anxiety and tragic parting from his parents. Yet, at Terezin, where the Nazis had gathered artists of all kinds to put on a false front for the Red Cross, Petr prolifically produced gorgeous images of Prague, beautiful flowers, and mystical night scenes. Even more impressive was his role in the boys' barracks editing the secret underground newspaper *Vedem*, which was full of news, poems, stories, and art by imprisoned young men who longed for a chance at living that they knew would never come. DVD extras include three bonus short films. A powerful profile, this is highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (T. Keogh)

kicks off with a Smokey Robinson lyric sung by the film's subject, Kazumi Tsuruoka: "People say I'm the life of the party..." And the 58-year-old Kazumi, whose speech is affected by having cerebral palsy—certainly is the star of the show in this slice-of-life portrait that combines interviews (subtitled), personal family photos, and Kazumi's rendition of several tunes, such as "Tracks of My Tears," "You Really Got a Hold on Me," "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry," and "Do You Wanna Dance?" The camera follows Kazumi from his apartment, to an outdoor public performance (accompanied by an accordionist), to a grand finale backed by a band at a venue, incorporating along the way conversations with performer and teacher Fides Krucker, who works with Kazumi on a "CP Salon" show. Kazumi's comments on loneliness, rejection, and becoming stronger in the face of disability offer insights into this inspiring figure. An ALA-VRT Notable Videos for Adults selection, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Planet of Snail ★★★

(2011) 87 min. In Korean w/English subtitles. DVD: \$29.95. The Cinema Guild (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 0-7815-1416-9.

Filmmaker Yi Seungjun's *Planet of Snail* focuses on the lives of a South Korean couple living as independently as they can. Blind and deaf, Cho Young-chan adapted as his senses gradually failed in childhood, and is now an accomplished writer, poet, and playwright (he also sculpts and draws). Young-chan is aided by his diminutive wife Soon-ho, who has a spinal condition. She translates and interprets the world for her husband through their shared code-language of taps on each others' hands. Meanwhile, Young-chan's towering height is a plus, especially when he can be directed while performing household chores. Their relationship seems idyllic but not absolutely co-dependent: Young-chan embarks on a trip without Soon-ho to investigate the feasibility of live theater for the blind-deaf, thereby sharpening his sense of self-reliance. But mostly the documentary provides a lyrical immersion into this remarkable couple's lives and routines. DVD extras include deleted scenes. A Grand Jury Prize winner at Amsterdam's International Documentary Film Festival, this affecting portrait is recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Video Librarian Online

Visit Video Librarian Online (www.videolibrarian.com) for more reviews during May and June, including: *Beware of Mr. Baker*, *Climate of Doubt*, *Growing Change*, *Inventing David Geffen*, *Loving a Stranger*, *An Original DUCKumentary*, *Sext Up Kids*, and much more!

Series Update

Set in the whimsical world of Care-a-Lot, **Care Bears: Totally Sweet Adventures** (88 min., DVD: \$14.98) is the latest addition in Lionsgate's computer-animated series, featuring four stories about the titular friendly bears, as well as a sing-along. See review of *Care Bears: Journey to Joke-a-Lot* in VL-1/05.



Newly available from Lionsgate and HIT Entertainment is **Thomas & Friends: Go Go Thomas** (58 min., DVD: \$14.98), featuring the Rev. W. Awdry's talking train engines on the Island of Sodor. See review of *Thomas the Tank Engine & Friends: Cranky Bugs & Other Thomas Stories* in VL Online-2/99.

Also newly available from HIT Entertainment and Lionsgate is the computer-animated **Angelina Ballerina: The Mousling Mysteries** (61 min., DVD: \$14.98), featuring the titular rodent dancer and friends, who uncover clues to solve a variety of mysteries in Chipping Cheddar. See review of *Angelina Ballerina: Rose Fairy Princess* in VL-7/02.

The latest compilation in the PBS Kids and Jim Henson Company preschool series is **Dinosaur Train: Submarine Adventures** (50 min., DVD: \$9.99), featuring the episodes "Otto Ophthalmosaurus," "Shoshana Shonisaurus," "Maisie Mosasaurus," and "A Sea Turtle Tale," along with an interactive game. See review of *Dinosaur Train: Dinosaurs Under the Sea* in VL-1/11.



The newest addition to the popular *Strawberry Shortcake* franchise from Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment is **Strawberry Shortcake: Berry Friends Forever** (88 min., DVD: \$14.98), a reboot of the series set in Berry Bitty City, featuring lessons about teamwork and good manners. See review of *Strawberry Shortcake: Spring for Strawberry Shortcake* in VL-5/03.

Siblings of Autism: The Challenge and the Hope (30 min., DVD: \$44.95) is the most recent program in Listen 2 Kids Productions' series about issues related to children, providing candid

interviews of kids with autistic siblings who cope with various challenges. See review of *Grief & Loss: A Child's Perspective* in VL-1/13. Available from: Listen 2 Kids Productions, P.O. Box 3954, Grand Junction, CO 81502; tel: 970-270-4005; web: listen2kids.net.

The latest title in Getting to Know's acclaimed art appreciation series adapted from the books by creator Mike Venezia is **Getting to Know the World's Greatest Artists: Faith Ringgold** (22 min., DVD: \$29.95), which explores the life and career of the Harlem-born contemporary artist. See review of *Getting to Know the World's Greatest Artists: Claude Monet* in VL-9/01. Available from: Getting to Know, 21 West Chestnut St., Ste. 506, Chicago, IL 60610; tel: 877-270-2787; web: gettingtoknow.com.



Speechless (16 min., DVD: \$80) and **The Tale of Timmy Two Chins** (18 min., DVD: \$80) are the two newest productions from the national nonprofit organization Scenarios USA, which funds the making of short films by young people for young people. See review of *All Falls Down* in VL Online-6/05. Available from: Scenarios USA, 80 Hanson Pl., Ste. 305, Brooklyn, NY 11217; tel: 718-230-5125; web: scenariosusa.org.

Guns, Gangs & Violence: The Willie Jones Story (19 min., DVD: \$64.95) is the most recent addition to TMW Media Group's *Teens at Risk* series, designed for grades 8-12. See review of the companion series *Real Life Teens: Weapons & Violence* in VL-3/02. Available from: TMW Media Group, 2321 Abbot Kinney Blvd., Venice, CA 90291; tel: 310-577-8581; web: tmwmedia.com.

The latest addition to Cerebellum Corporation's *Kelso the Frog* series encouraging students to learn positive skills and concepts is **Learning Character with Kelso** (20 min., \$89.95), which is geared towards grades K-5 and includes a leader's guide with lesson plans and handouts. See review of *Kelso in Action, 4th Edition* in VL-3/12. Available from Cerebellum Corporation, 1661 Tennessee St., Ste. 3D, San Francisco, CA 94107; tel: 866-386-0253; web: cerebellum.com.



Berserk—The Golden Age, Arc I: The Egg of the King ★★★

(2012) 76 min. DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$24.98. Viz Media (avail. from most distributors).



That mouthful of a title announces the first of three films in a visually lush, savagely violent anime adaptation of a popular manga saga by Kentaro Miura, set in a medieval Europe-style realm. The aptly named Guts is a sullen young slave-turned-mercenary whose swordsmanship and fighting spirit lead to his being unwillingly recruited into the Band of the Hawk, notorious soldiers-for-hire who can turn the tide in most any battle. Their leader is the cultured and lethal (and androgynous) Griffith, who has ambitions to ascend to royal rank. Griffith carries a strange supernatural trinket known as the Egg of the King. The mere sight of this red gem leads a warrior-demon (a particularly outstanding bit of monster animation) to warn Guts that remaining on Griffith's side will mean death. *Berserk's* very grown-up, take-no-prisoners moodiness (the lone child character doesn't last long) informs a mature tale (with full-frontal nudity, gore, and profanity) that is also compelling—although it's still a bit early to say whether this narrative of blood and Guts will continue to captivate. This 2012 feature-length film is presented on a dual-language disc, suitable for 17-up, with extras including an art gallery. Recommended. (C. Cassidy)

A Certain Magical Index, Part One ★★★1/2

(2008) 2 discs. 300 min. DVD: \$64.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4210-2599-X.



This action-fantasy anime steeped in religious cults and magic is set in Academy City, a metropolis filled with science schools, where 1.8 million psychic young people called "espers" are learning to develop their supernatural capabilities. Schoolboy Kamijo finds himself defending and protecting a mysterious, amnesiac young nun named Index, who claims to be from a Puritan English church but studies sorcery for the purpose of righteous combat. The 103,000 evil-spell books in Index's photographic memory make her a highly desirable target for a villainous society of sorcerers, and Kamijo, despite being one of the weaker students, takes it upon himself to come to her aid. Fortunately, Kamijo has one amazing and mysterious power that proves to be a formidable weapon in the effort—the ability to negate others' magical strengths. Over the course of the wide-ranging storylines, Kamijo endures much punishment (including recovering from serious brain damage) as he uncovers a plot involving

vampires, discovers a cruel experiment that is killing esper clones, and comes across clues suggesting that the sect that trained Index cannot be trusted. Compiling 12 episodes that originally aired in 2008 on a dual-language set, rated TV-14, DVD extras include audio commentaries. Visually splendid, but also somewhat confusing and only fitfully engaging, this is a strong optional purchase. [Note: *A Certain Magical Index, Part Two* is also newly available.] (C. Cassidy)

Is This a Zombie? ★★★1/2

(2011) 2 discs. 325 min. DVD: \$49.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4210-2519-1.



The short answer to the titular question is "maybe," and the creature referenced is high schooler Ayuma, who while home alone (as his parents travel) tries to befriend a strange, silent girl in armor and then is suddenly slain by a mystery killer. It turns out that the armored female is actually the Queen of Hades, Eucliwood Hellscythe, and she's emotionally moved to resurrect Ayuma. Although not a George Romero-type flesh-eating ghoul (he regenerates from any injury and has enhanced-strength superpowers), Ayuma still considers himself a walking corpse and is shamed by his debased after-lifestyle, which soon attracts other supernatural young women to dwell with Eucliwood under Ayuma's roof. This harem includes a big-breasted ninja vampire and a student witch—armed with a chainsaw—who accidentally transfers her powers to Ayuma, making him, to his embarrassment, a transvestite zombie. All of this leads to Ayuma invoking spells to fight various marauding monsters. Ranging from mammary-gland-happy slapstick to breathtaking surrealism (at one point a string orchestra fights a flying fleet of whales), this manga-derived action-comedy anime is hardly a classic; but at least it encompasses a full story arc involving a main villain (Ayuma's murderer). Compiling all 13 episodes from 2011 on a dual-language set, rated TV-MA, extras include episode commentaries and textless songs. A strong optional purchase. (C. Cassidy)

Level E: The Complete Series ★★★

(2011) 4 discs. 325 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$64.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4210-2616-X.



Offering the usual mix of intrusive aliens and teenaged defenders—albeit with some snarky original twists—this anime series centers on high school baseball player Yukitaka Tsutsui, who has a sports scholarship and his own apartment. One day, a blond guy calling himself Prince Baka barges into Yukitaka's life and moves in.

Insisting he's from outer space, Prince Baka displays a sense of humor that could charitably be described as borderline sadistic. Much of the series involves the outlandish pranks Baka hatches on unsuspecting Earthlings, including an elaborate scenario (stretching over several episodes) that includes kidnapping five high school kids, turning them into blatant knockoffs of the Power Rangers, and locking them in a wild role-playing game. To *Level E's* credit, Prince Baka is hardly a run-of-the-mill anime creature, and his funny/nasty comedic sense gives the series a satisfying *Punk'd* vibe. However, the Power Rangers spoof goes on too long without reaching a satisfactory conclusion, and Yukitaka (a genuinely appealing character with his own subplot involving a charming neighbor) is absent for long periods. Still, *Level E* deserves kudos for trying to do something offbeat that succeeds in many ways. Compiling all 13 episodes from 2011 on a dual-language set, rated TV-14, extras include episode commentaries, and an interview with the English voice actor for Baka. Recommended. (P. Hall)

Toriko: Part 01 ★★★1/2

(2011) 2 discs. 325 min. DVD: \$39.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4210-2631-7.



Viewers will require an extremely generous (and crude) sense of humor to appreciate this wonderfully weird anime. *Toriko* is one of the Four Heavenly Kings and the world's most famous Gourmet Hunter—i.e., someone willing to travel to the most inhospitable corners of the planet to capture rare animals for inclusion in outlandish meals. *Toriko*, who sports a flowing mane of blue hair and a muscular body that makes Channing Tatum look like Don Knotts, exudes a self-confidence that inevitably carries him into ridiculous peril. Joining him on his ventures is chef Komatsu, who possesses none of *Toriko's* bravado and strength, and who, naturally, winds up as comic relief to the buff superhero. Also in the mix are the other Heavenly Kings (including one with uncommonly strong hair follicles), a female reporter who follows *Toriko* on his impossible journeys, and *Toriko's* loyal Battle Wolf. And there's a group trying to obtain the same rare fauna to fuel a growing army of robots that are being prepped for (what else?) world domination. *Toriko: Part 01* is certainly among the most peculiar of anime comedies, but the characters are so hilariously broad and the stories so cheerfully inane that it is easy to get hooked on its inspired lunacy. Compiling 13 episodes originally airing in 2011 on a dual-language set, rated TV-14, extras include episode commentaries. Highly recommended. [Note: *Toriko: Part 02*, *Toriko: Part 03*, and *Toriko: Part 04* are also newly available.] (P. Hall)

Adelaide di Borgogna

★★★

(2011) 137 min. In Italian w/English subtitles. DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99; Blu-ray: \$39.99. Arthaus Musik (dist. by Naxos of America).



Rossini's rarely mounted 1817 *opera seria* is generally thought to be one of his weakest scores, but this 2011 revival from the Rossini Festival in Pesaro shows that while uneven, it does feature some splendid music. Drawn from 10th-century German history, the libretto finds Emperor Otto the Great (Ottone) marching into Italy to rescue the titular heiress from both Berengario (the Lombard warlord who killed her father) and his son, Adelberto. In the process, Ottone falls in love with Adelaide and marries her, saving her from Adelberto's unwanted advances (the opera closes with the happy couple singing ecstatically while their enemies writhe in chains). Typical for the genre, this is a largely static work, featuring a succession of arias sung by mostly stationary soloists, with occasional choral interruptions. But the numbers boast considerable variety and are performed in stellar fashion, with Daniela Barcellona (in the trousers role of Ottone), Jessica Pratt (Adelaide), and Bogdan Mihai (Adelberto) the standouts, tossing off the coloratura with aplomb and investing the rather stock characters with a semblance of humanity under Pier' Alli's astute direction. The sets here are simple but effective, the costumes are elegant, and Dmitri Jurowski leads the Orchestra and Chorus of the Teatro Comunale di Bologna with finesse. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 and PCM stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and PCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include a "making-of" featurette. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

Ariane et Barbe-bleue

★★★

(2012) 120 min. In French w/English subtitles. DVD or Blu-ray: \$29.99. Opus Arte (dist. by Naxos of America).



The story of serial wife-killer Bluebeard and his new bride—whose curiosity about a locked door in his castle leads Bluebeard to plan her death as well—was the subject of numerous operas from the 18th through the 20th century, including Bartók's 1918 *Duke Bluebeard's Castle*. *Ariane et Barbe-bleue* by Paul Dukas dates from 1907 and was composed to a libretto by symbolist writer Maurice Maeterlinck, offering an exploration of the female psyche that is more interested in imagery and suggestion than realistic narrative. The reasonably evocative score is performed in this 2011 production from Madrid's Gran Teatre de Liceu under the baton of conductor Stéphane Denève, with Jeanne-Michèle Charbonnet starring as a vivid, strong-voiced Ariane. As Barbe-bleue,

veteran José van Dam no longer possesses his once-commanding vocal power, but he remains an authoritative stage presence. Claus Guth's production opts for modern dress and a rather sterile set, with a simple projection of a large house, rather than a castle, accompanying the opening chorus (still, in a work such as this—where psychology trumps realism—it's an acceptable choice). Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray release) and LPCM stereo, extras include a cast gallery. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

I Masnadieri ★★★1/2

(2012) 124 min. In Italian w/English subtitles. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. C Major (dist. by Naxos of America).



One of two 1847 operas by Giuseppe Verdi, *I Masnadieri* has always been thought markedly inferior to the second, *Macbeth* (see review on pg. 68), and this 11th release in the *Tutto Verdi* series confirms that judgment. Written for legendary soprano Jenny Lind, the libretto is, charitably speaking, a mess: Carlo—who is estranged from his father, Massimiliano, due to the machinations of his evil brother, Francesco—becomes the leader of the titular brigands. Francesco plots to kill Massimiliano with a false report of Carlo's death while also hoping to seduce Carlo's lover, Amalia. The schemes fail, but Carlo eventually stabs Amalia to save her from the shame of marrying a bandit. Much of the score sounds as if Verdi were on autopilot; not displeasing, but certainly not memorable. This rare revival, performed at the Teatro di San Carlo in Naples in 2012, finds Nicola Luisotti conducting the orchestra and chorus with vigor if not much polish. The singing is mostly of solid provincial quality, with Aquiles Machado and Lucrecia Garcia in the roles of Carlo and Amalia, and Artur Ruciński a standout as Francesco. But Gabriele Lavia's staging is disappointing, featuring a single ugly set containing lights, equipment, a few posters and sticks of furniture, and a grab-bag of costumes from various eras. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray release) and PCM stereo, extras include an introduction to the opera. Except for completists, this is an optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Il Flaminio ★★★1/2

(2010) 183 min. In Italian w/English subtitles. DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99; Blu-ray: \$39.99. Arthaus Musik (dist. by Naxos of America).



Earlier releases in the series of long-forgotten operas by Giovanni Battista Pergolesi (1710–1736)—staged in his birthplace of Jesi—were *opera seria*; namely, *Adriano in Siria* (VL-7/12) and *Il Prigionier Superbo* (VL-1/13), both of which include comic intermezzos as a bonus. This

2010 production presents the short-lived composer's final stage work, a three-act *opera buffa* with a familiar plot about couples overcoming obstacles. The seven characters include two servants who fuss and fret at one another but wind up headed to the altar, four figures from the upper classes who suffer many machinations before finding their way into the arms of obvious soul-mates, and one odd man out, who is content in the end with indulging in pleasures other than marriage. The totally formulaic libretto is burdened with masses of spoken recitative, much of it devoted to jokes based on differences in Italian dialects that non-natives will find irrelevant. Fortunately, however, Pergolesi's music is delightful, easily the equal of Handel's, and is stylishly performed by the Accademia Bizantina under Ottavio Dantone. Laura Polverelli shines in the title role, her agility deftly meeting the composer's many demands, while working on a small but attractive single set. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 and PCM stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and PCM stereo on Blu-ray, this is highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

I'm Now: The Story of Mudhoney ★★★1/2

(2012) 102 min. DVD: \$14.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).



The thesis of this Mudhoney documentary lies in the title: the Seattle quartet believe they owe their longevity to living in the present instead of the past, but that actually describes their career more than their music, which takes inspiration from proto-punk groups like the Sonics and the Stooges. Co-directors Ryan Short and Adam Pease begin with band members' involvement in other 1980s outfits, such as Green River, before singer Mark Arm and guitarist Steve Turner formed Mudhoney with drummer Dan Peters and bassist Matt Lukin. Former Green River member Stone Gossard, who co-founded Pearl Jam, jokes that he and Pearl Jam's Jeff Ament were the "sellouts," but their high-profile band has lasted almost as long, albeit on a larger scale. The documentary chronicles Mudhoney's move to a major label, the loss of Lukin, and the return to their indie roots. Turner acknowledges that some will always associate Mudhoney with grunge, but he's made his peace with that, and Arm, who manages the same Sub Pop warehouse from which their records originate, is simply grateful that they still have a following. Soundgarden guitarist Kim Thayil and *Rolling Stone* writer David Fricke see Mudhoney as a band that makes music for people like themselves, or as Arm bluntly puts it, "Any time you're playing music for the crowd instead of yourself, you're fucked." Short and Pease have combined a wealth of archival material with present-day interviews shot in black-and-white. Like Cameron Crowe's *Pearl Jam*

Twenty, this is also a fine overview of a band, a place, and an era. DVD extras include bonus tour footage, and a music video for "I'm Now." Highly recommended. (K. Fennessy)

La Salustia ★★

(2011) 185 min. In Italian w/English subtitles. DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99; Blu-ray: \$39.99. Arthaus Musik (dist. by Naxos of America).



The latest release in the series of operas by Giovanni Battista Pergolesi (1710–1736) staged in his hometown of Jesi is of his debut 1731 *opera seria*. The libretto is an absurd bit of historical blarney set at the 3rd-century court of the Roman emperor Alexander Severus, whose wife, Salustia, saves her mother-in-law, Giulia, from assassination—even though the older woman has been abusive towards her, and the leader of the plot is Salustia's own father. The conventional score consists of a series of arias that are noble or passionate—depending on the mood of the moment—and only occasionally interrupted by duets and ensembles. But the plot does include one unusual episode—in Act III, a character is thrown to the lions but manages to emerge victorious!—and Pergolesi's music is unfailingly well-wrought and pleasurable. This 2011 production features the original revision the composer had to prepare because of the death of one of the singers, and transposes some of the voices (with a baritone singing a tenor role, for instance). But the young cast, headed by Serena Malfi in the title role, handles the considerable vocal demands dexterously, and the Accademia Barocca de I Virtuosi Italiani performs with vigor under Corrado Rovaris. The staging is admittedly less winsome, with the set a bland array of quasi-classical columns, and the costumes are decidedly odd (mostly 18th century, with strange touches, like bags over the extras' heads). Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 and PCM stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and PCM stereo on Blu-ray, this is recommended, overall. (F. Swietek)

Love for Levon: A Benefit to Save the Barn ★★

(2012) 2 discs. 271 min. DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99. StarVista Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



This two-disc set captures a New Jersey concert held in tribute to the late Levon Helm, drummer and singer for The Band. If no one sounds like the distinctive-voiced Helm, this 2012 engagement from the Izod Center in the Meadowlands Sports Complex does feature a wide variety of R&B, country, and roots artists who perform a 27-song set list drawn from tunes either written or inspired by Helm, such as Marc Cohn's "Listening to Levon" (Jakob Dylan's version

of Clarence "Frogman" Henry's "Ain't Got No Home," which the Band covered, makes less sense, but is still a good tune). Although more formal in nature, the show recalls the Midnight Rambles that Helm used to host in Woodstock, and the performers here receive backing from his band, including his singing daughter, Amy (the concert profits went towards renovating Helm's Barn to keep the rambles going). The Band's keyboard player Garth Hudson even shows up to accompany Diereks Bentley on "Chest Fever" and John Prine on "When I Paint My Masterpiece." Gregg Allman proves to be a fine choice for "Long Black Veil," accompanied by guitarist Warren Haynes. Other highlights include My Morning Jacket's heartfelt renditions of "Ophelia" and "The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down," along with Roger Waters and singer-pianist Allen Toussaint's swampy version of "Life Is a Carnival." For the most part, the lower-key performances work best, even if the crowd goes wild for the slick, Nashville stylings of Eric Church, who performs "Get Up Jake." The second disc features interviews with the key performers, like Toussaint, who says of Helm, "He never got glossy. Of course, gloss isn't bad—it's good for donuts." Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 on DVD, and Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on Blu-ray, this is recommended. (K. Fennessy)

Luisa Miller ★★1/2

(2007) 147 min. In Italian w/English subtitles. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. C Major (dist. by Naxos of America).

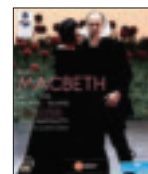


The 14th release in the Tutto Verdi series from Parma is the better known of the composer's 1849 operas (the other being *La Battaglia di Legnano*). *Luisa Miller* is a formulaic piece based on a tragedy by Friedrich Schiller about the daughter of an elderly soldier who finds herself in love with Rodolfo, a nobleman posing as a peasant. Unfortunately, both are being forced to marry others, and when Rodolfo comes to believe that Luisa is unfaithful to him, he kills her before committing suicide. Much grieving ensues. Despite the hackneyed plot, Verdi furnished it with fine music, nicely presented in this excellent 2007 production from the Teatro Regio that is preferable to the 2006 mounting from Venice (VL-7/08). Donato Renzetti draws vivid playing from the company orchestra, and the vocalism is outstanding. As Luisa, Fiorenza Cedolins looks the part and sings it beautifully, while Marcelo Alvarez's ringing tenor is perfect for Rodolfo. The rest of the cast deliver fine performances as well, although veteran Leo Nucci must be singled out as Luisa's father (well deserving of the ovations from the Parma audience). And Denis Krief's staging is exemplary, featuring sets and costumes that draw clear distinctions between the worlds of the aristocrats and the common-

ers. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray release) and PCM stereo, extras include a brief introduction to the opera. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

Macbeth ★★

(2006) 157 min. In Italian w/English subtitles. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. C Major (dist. by Naxos of America).



Shakespeare always brought out the best in Giuseppe Verdi. This 10th release in the complete series of the composer's operas being issued in celebration of his 200th birthday is of his early masterpiece based on the Bard's "Scottish Play." The staging in this 2006 production from the Teatro Regio di Parma situates the plot in what looks like the 17th century in terms of costuming, but adds some odd, distracting touches, such as an onstage audience that observes the action from an upper level, and witches who are portrayed as happily washing clothes until they transform in order to do their more nefarious business. Musically, however, the performance has very few weaknesses. Veteran Bruno Bartoletti conducts with passion and precision, drawing every nuance from the score and making even the innocuous ballet music palatable. And both Leo Nucci and Sylvie Valayre are in superb form as Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, capturing the iconic characters both vocally and dramatically. With a strong supporting cast, this is one of the better versions of *Macbeth* available, although the competition is formidable (see reviews in VL-3/03, VL-1/06, and VL-11/11). Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray release) and PCM stereo, extras include an intro to the opera. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

The Magic Flute ★★1/2

(2006) 134 min. DVD: \$19.98. Revolver Entertainment (avail. from most distributors, June 11).



Kenneth Branagh and Stephen Fry clearly love Mozart's penultimate opera, a charming fairy tale with Masonic overtones about a prince who seeks to rescue a princess—at her mother's urging—from a supposed villain who turns out to be a wise, benevolent purveyor of enlightenment. But their attempt to transform it into an anti-war parable sung in English is a misfire. Although Fry is a proven wordsmith and Branagh an accomplished director, their 2006 translation of the German text too often comes off as doggerel during arias and ensembles, and the alteration of spoken passages to fit the change of setting—namely, the trenches of World War I—is frankly simpleminded. Still, Branagh does capture some extraordinary visual moments—such as the opening helicopter shots of the battlefields—and the musical side of

the performance is solid. American James Conlon conducts the Chamber Orchestra of Europe in a brisk, spit-and-polish reading of the score, while the cast of relative unknowns offer fine singing, including Joseph Kaiser as Tamino, Amy Carson as Pamina, and Lyubov Petrova as the Queen of the Night. Those who prefer a film version of *Die Zauberflöte* over an opera house rendition are directed to Ingmar Bergman's wonderful 1974 version (VL-3/01): Bergman's Swedish translation may be no better than this English one, but the performance is truly magical. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1, extras include a "making-of" featurette and cast and crew interviews. An optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Médée ★★★1/2
(2011) 138 min. In French w/ English subtitles. DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99; Blu-ray: \$39.99. Bel Air Classiques (dist. by Naxos of America).



Luigi Cherubini's (1760-1842) 1797 masterpiece is technically an *opéra-comique* (because the original libretto included spoken couplets between the musical numbers), but in reality this is a dark, passionate tragedy based on the Greek myth about the sorceress who married Jason after helping him win the Golden Fleece but took terrible vengeance against their children when he set her aside for a new wife. In this 2011 production from La Monnaie in Brussels, *Médée* is even more dramatic: the couplets have been replaced with stark, direct dialogue while the score is brilliantly played by the original-instrument group Les Talens Lyriques under Christophe Rousset. In the title role that Maria Callas famously revived for modern audiences, Nadja Michael displays enormous vocal power while spitting out frenzied rants with venomous fury. The rest of the cast—Kurt Streit as Jason; Hendrickje Van Kerckhove as his new love, Dircé; Vincent Le Texier as Dircé's father, King Créon; and Christianne Stotijn as Médée's confidante, Nérís—are solid. As often happens, the one drawback here is the staging, with Krzysztof Warlikowski situating much of the action in what appears to be a large steam bath, which permits characters to appear frequently in various states of undress but is nevertheless peculiar. Still, this is a striking production, overall, presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 and PCM stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and PCM stereo on Blu-ray. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

Mosè in Egitto ★★★
(2011) 150 min. In Italian w/English subtitles. DVD or Blu-ray: \$29.99. Opus Arte (dist. by Naxos of America).

The series of Rossini's works from the long-standing Pesaro Rossini Festival—including *La Cambiale di Matrimonio* (VL-7/08), *Il Turco in Italia* (VL-5/09), and *La Gazza Ladra* (VL-

7/12)—ably demonstrates the breadth and invention of his *oeuvre*. This 2011 mounting of his powerful 1818 opera about Moses' freeing of the Jews from their bondage in Egypt finds Rossini at his most dramatic. Like Cecil B. DeMille's *The Ten Commandments*, the story portrays the biblical plagues that Moses inflicted on the Egyptians and the vacillation of Pharaoh in allowing the Jews to leave—likewise closing with the dramatic parting of the Red Sea. Also like the Hollywood epic, *Mosè in Egitto* includes a fictional romantic subplot, an affair with a Jewish woman that leads Pharaoh's son to try to prevent the Jews' departure. Rossini's score is remarkably modern for its time, sometimes suggesting Verdi in its hushed power (particularly in the third-act choral prayer added to the 1819 revival and included here), and it is performed with fervor by the Orchestra of the Teatro Comunale di Bologna under Roberto Abbado. The vocalism is also strong, with Riccardo Zanellato (Moses), Alex Esposito (Faraone), Olga Senderskaya (Faraone's wife, Amaltea), Dmitry Korchak (his son, Osiride), Sonia Ganassi (Osiride's lover, Elcia), and Yijie Shi (Aronne) all contributing good work. Graham Vick's staging uses images of modern strife (soldiers with assault rifles, rebels wearing suicide bombs)—an increasingly tired visual cliché—but the musical side shines. Presented in DTS 5.1 and Dolby Digital stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and LCPM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include a "making-of" featurette and a cast gallery. Recommended. (F. Swietek)



Spirit of the Church, Volume 1 ★★★
(2013) 139 min. DVD: \$14.98. Green Apple Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



The first installment in this 12-volume set presents four episodes of the Chicago program *TV Gospel Time*, which aired Sunday mornings on NBC from 1962-1965. Each episode includes a text introduction with biographical information about the featured acts (interestingly, the third episode was actually filmed in Baltimore). A few solo artists appear—including Brother Joe May and Marie Knight, the latter an associate of Sister Rosetta Tharpe—but most of the music here is performed by ensembles, some of whom perform a cappella, while others add guitar or piano. Songs include familiar gospel favorites, such as "Wade in the Water" (the Soul Stirrers) and "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" (Knight), but there are also plenty of lesser known hymns. Among the highlights: Inez Andrews and the Andrewettes ("What Love") and the Caravans ("That's Why I Call Him Mine"), who anticipate crossover groups

like the Staple Singers in the way that they combine pop, rock, and proto-funk (the only accompaniment to their powerful voices are hand claps and tambourine). If the music has value, the audio-visual quality of these monaural kinescopes is poor at best (blurred outlines, ghosting, and speckling)—to the point where it's hard to make out individual faces whenever larger groups appear onscreen (fortunately, there are plenty of close-ups). Promos for Feen-A-Mint, Artra Beauty Bar, and other vintage products add to the historical appeal, while the bonus feature offers two fine Mahalia Jackson performances from 1961. Recommended. (K. Fennessy)

Turandot ★★★
(2012) 124 min. In Italian w/English subtitles. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Opera Australia (dist. by Naxos of America).



Serviceable but not outstanding, this 2012 Opera Australia production of Puccini's ever-popular classic—about an ice-cold Chinese princess who dooms all her suitors by demanding that they answer her riddles or suffer execution, until a stranger calling himself Calaf beats her at her own game—was filmed at Melbourne's Arts Centre, which proves to be a fine venue with good acoustics. Andrea Licata conducts the Orchestra Victoria with an appropriate sense of sweep, richness, and power, while both Susan Foster as the princess Turandot and Rosario La Spina as Calaf exhibit strong voices. The supporting singing is similarly dependable, with Hyeseoung Kwon cutting an especially sympathetic figure as Liù, the slave girl tragically in love with Calaf. In visual terms the staging by Graeme Murphy is extremely traditional, featuring set and costume designs that date back to 1990 but still look pristine. Other versions with starker casts and more opulent productions are available, but anyone looking for a current mounting that might not reach the heights but is without serious flaws won't go wrong with this one. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray release) and LPCM stereo, extras include a cast gallery. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

New to Blu-ray

La Forza del Destino (Arthaus Musik, Blu-ray: \$39.99). Bowing on Blu-ray, this 2007 production (VL-5/09 ★★★) of Verdi's melodramatic opera about star-crossed lovers was filmed live at the Teatro Comunale in Florence, Italy. Performed by the Orchestra e Coro del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino—nimble conducted by Zubin Mehta—the strong cast includes Violeta Urmana, Marcello Giordani, and Carlo Guelfi.



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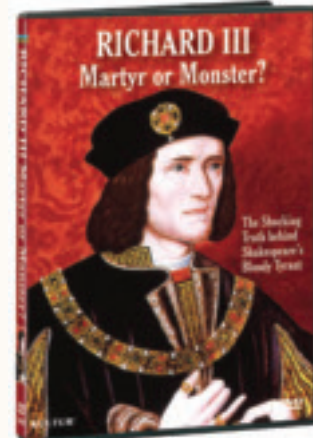
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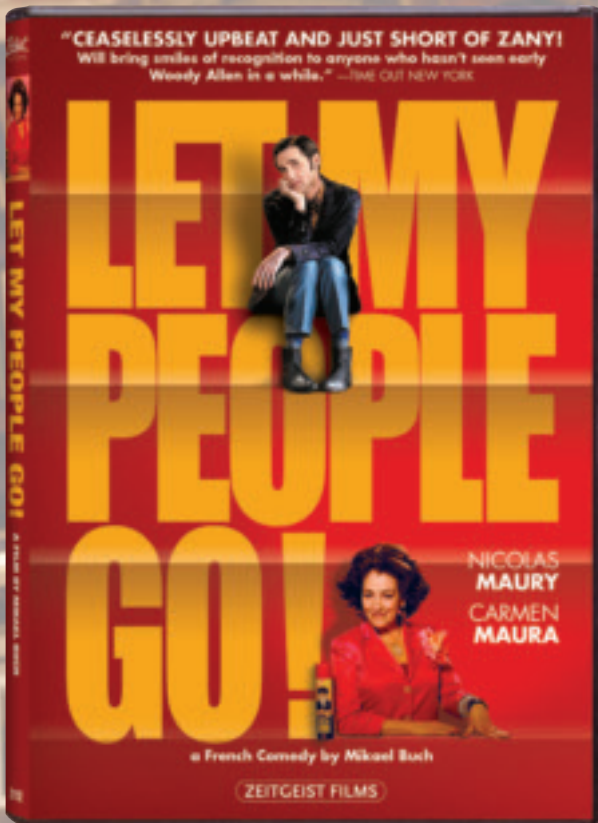
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All the hoopla

"All titles available at all times to all users."

That's the potential promise of Midwest Tape's new digital platform service "hoopla" (with a lower case "h").

This also happens to be what most would consider the absolute Holy Grail for the Perfect Library.

Which, of course, begs the obvious question: who's been smoking what?

But hoopla actually does meet two out of three of those "alls" right out of the gate.

Here are the basics: hoopla is a digital content delivery system specifically designed to enable libraries to circulate video, music, and audiobooks on a charged per-circ basis to patrons through cloud-based streaming to mobile devices and PCs.

Items are literally available "at all times to all users," although the qualifier lies in that phrase "all titles," which means all titles that hoopla offers (no more, no less). The audio holdings are impressive: 200,000 albums (expanding to 300,000 in the near future) and over 9,000 audiobooks. I am personally jazzed about the music side of hoopla—my library doesn't buy much in

the way of CDs due to theft and damage, so hoopla will make it possible for me to sample whole CDs before deciding what I want to buy. Video—which Midwest readily admits "present[s] a challenge because of the significant file sizes, storage, and encoding costs associated"—will start out with more than 2,500 titles, although that number could grow fairly quickly.

Libraries pay no set-up, maintenance, or annual license fees—only per-circ costs (ranging from \$0.99 to \$2.99 per title). For patrons, the hoopla experience of watching a film is similar to the Netflix streaming model—browse, select, play—offering a crisp, richly-detailed, continuous image (as long as it is coming across a high-speed Internet connection).

Today, it seems that 95% of all discussion in the library world revolves around e-content—with all of its myriad promises and headaches—even though e-content only accounts for about 5% of total library circulation.

The death of physical formats (books, CDs, DVD/Blu-ray) has been—and continues to be—greatly exaggerated. Midwest Tape has no intention of supplanting physical media, which company Vice President Jeff Jankowski believes will be with us for a long time (and I absolutely agree). Rather, hoopla

will simply allow libraries to offer patrons another option—to electronically view content within the context of a familiar (and free to them) library experience.

Many aspects of e-content are (and will continue to be) hotly debated within the library community—including the worries that e-content is vaporware, makes moot the First Sale Doctrine, raises serious patron privacy concerns, and can place collection development and selection in the hands of vendors.

Some may balk at hoopla's pay-per-view model, but realistically this is the only approach that major studios will seriously consider for use in libraries (for comparison, check out OverDrive's video offerings, which are both notably major-studio-poor and annual license based—so, in effect, libraries wind up paying for a lot of garbage that was selected by neither librarians nor patrons).

As I write, hoopla is being beta-tested in several library systems across the country before a roll-out this summer.

Despite the reservations that I (and many others) have regarding e-content, hoopla strikes me as a major step forward—arguably the first truly library-oriented digital platform for media.

Randy Pitman

Feel-good features from FilmWorks Entertainment this summer!

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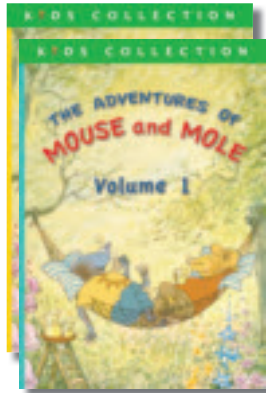
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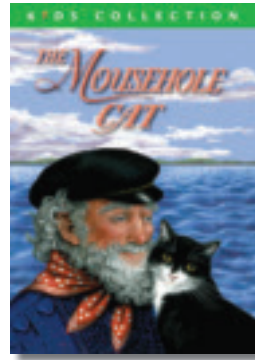
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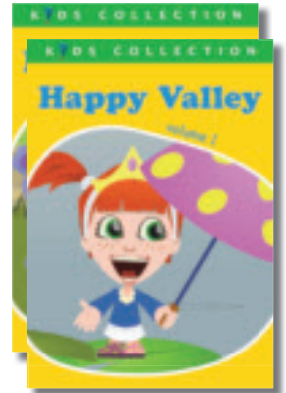
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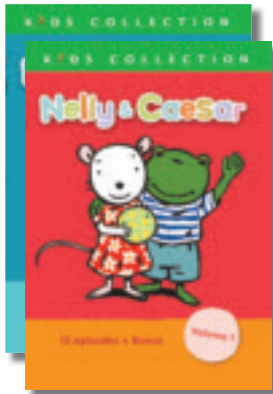
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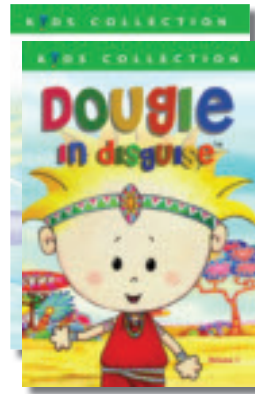
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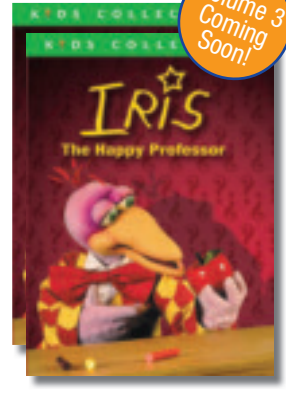
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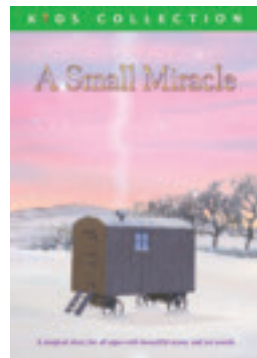
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