

DVD/Blu-ray Roundup for Nov. 17, 2017

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It's a really busy week once again with some intriguing Blu-ray and DVD releases coming your way. So if you can't get out to the theater this week, be sure to give one of these titles a try!

Big New Releases!

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6 Below: Miracle on the Mountain - Based on a true account, this movie follows an ex-hockey player struggling with personal demons who decides to go snowboarding alone in the High Sierra mountains. Bad idea! When a snowstorm hits unexpectedly, he becomes lost and struggles to survive incredibly brutal conditions for several days. Reaction to this drama wasn't particularly overwhelming. While admitting it was an interesting tale, the movie received criticism for being pedestrian and bland in its presentation of the story, and ultimately failed to convey the true horrors experienced. Starring Josh Harnett, Mira Sorvino and Sarah Dumont.

Amityville: The Awakening - The 1977 book "The Amityville Horror," about an evil house tormenting its owners, has resulted in a massive franchise of films. So far, 18 movies (although many of them made for the direct-to-video market) have been produced. The most recent chapter follows a new family as they move in to their haunted home, start to feel a supernatural influence, and eventually to turn on one another. Critics panned the movie. They wrote that while it had a good cast, the movie did nothing to distinguish itself from others in the series, and repeated the plot elements in an uninspired manner. Interestingly, it was shot in 2014, but shelved by the distributor. The cast includes Jennifer Jason Leigh, Bella Thorne, Makenna Grace, Cameron Monaghan and Kurtwood Smith.

Aquarius - A 65-year-old widow and retiree living in Brazil faces great difficulty when she becomes the last resident at her apartment complex. Eager developers want to buy her out so that they can develop a new condominium. She resists, however, and the wishful buyers decide to make her life unbearable until she agrees to sell. It becomes a battle of wills between the two parties. This foreign-language drama earned plenty of praise during its arthouse run late last year. The consensus being that although the movie was a bit lengthy, the lead performance is fantastic, the events compelling, and the themes resonant. Sonja Braga plays the lead.

Atomic Blonde - Based on a graphic novel of the same name, this action picture is set in Berlin during the Cold War. An MI6 agent is sent in to investigate the murder of a compatriot, only to find herself double-crossed and under attack. The press was generally positive about the feature. Some believed that the story itself didn't hold up to much scrutiny and therefore couldn't recommend it. But other critics praised the spectacular stunt work and action and gave the plot a pass. The movie features Charlize Theron, James McAvoy, John Goodman, Eddie Marsan, Sofia Boutella, Toby Jones and Bill Skarsgard.

Brigsby Bear - An adult outcast who lives in the desert spends much of his time watching a children's show about a large bear. When the program is abruptly cancelled, the surprised and disappointed lead sets out to make his own series finale and provide the character some closure. Weirdness ensues. Critics really liked this oddball comedy. There were a few who

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didn't appreciate the seriousness that eventually worked its way into the story, but most found it to be a low-key and sweet feature that effortlessly charmed. It stars Kyle Mooney, Mark Hamill, Jane Adams, Greg Kinnear, Claire Danes, Matt Walsh and Andy Samberg.

In This Corner of the World - This animated picture from Japan tells is a coming-of-age story about a teenage girl who gets married and lives a simple life with her family in Hiroshima during WWII. Obviously, the woman is forced to forage a new life after the war reaches her home and staggering devastation occurs. The movie received excellent notices from reviewers. It has been described as a beautifully animated, emotional and relatable effort that details how ordinary lives are forever altered by events well beyond their control and understanding.

Kedi - Here's an interesting conceit for a documentary. The city of Istanbul is examined and documented through the eyes of its massive population of stray cats, who have resided in the area for centuries. Reportedly, there are thousands upon thousands living in the streets and the citizens have taken it upon themselves to keep them fed and happy. A few thought that it was a nice but otherwise unremarkable doc. However, most members of the press were taken with the numerous cats on display and the movie's assertion that their presence had a strangely positive effect on the population.

The Secret Scripture - Based on the popular novel, the plot of this drama involves a psychiatrist visiting a mental institution that is about to be torn down. While there, he interviews an elderly resident. She discusses her life in the facility, fascinating the doctor. The resident's tales didn't end up fascinating critics. A spattering of them enjoyed the performances, but most described it as a melodramatic misfire that didn't make much narrative sense and worsened as it progressed. Now viewers can make up their own minds. It stars Rooney Mara, Vanessa Redgrave, Jack Reynor, Eric Bana and Theo James.

Unlocked - A CIA agent fails to apprehend a terrorist who then causes death and disaster during an attack in Paris. Shuffled off behind a desk at a London branch, she finds herself uncovering an even larger plot while interviewing a criminal suspect. The lead tries to redeem herself, and to stop sinister parties attempting to unleash a biological attack. Reviews weren't overwhelming for this action/thriller. A few thought it was a passable potboiler and liked the female-centered focus, but most called it a predictable and by-the-numbers thriller. It features Noomi Rapace, Orlando Bloom, Toni Collette, John Malkovich and Michael Douglas.

Whose Streets? - This documentary chronicles the Ferguson, Missouri vigils, uprising, and

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protest measures taken after unarmed local Darren Wilson was shot dead by police in Aug. of 2014. It introduces viewers to residents and allies who felt compelled to make their voices heard, and also captures the more extreme actions taken by other factions. The movie earned a nearly unanimous approval rating from critics, who commented that it doesn't shy away from putting viewers right in the middle of the fracas, helping them to get a palpable sense of what occurred and empathize with the participants.

Wind River - A new FBI recruit is sent to investigate the murder of a local Native American woman near a reservation. She teams with an emotionally scarred game tracker to determine what happened to the woman and why it occurred. Of course, the pair's own lives come into danger during the inquiry. Reaction to this thriller from Taylor Sheridan (*Hell of High Water*

) was positive overall. Most admitted that it wasn't quite on par with the director's previous feature and took a few missteps (particularly during the final act). However, they generally felt that it was a well-acted and compelling mystery. It stars Jeremy Renner, Elizabeth Olsen, Julia Jones, Jon Bernthal, Gil Birmingham and Graham Greene.

The Women's Balcony - This comedy from Israel involves a village family's trials over two significant events. It starts with a bar mitzvah that suffers from a big mishap and climaxes with a wedding. Based on press notes, it appears that much of the movie involves the women of the community squaring off against a rigid and strict rabbi. The movie was a hit in its home country and also earned good reviews in North America. It has been called a very enjoyable, sweet and breezy ensemble film that entertains from beginning to end. The cast includes Evelin Hagoel, Igal Naor and Orna Banai.

Zoology - In this Russian drama, an inwardly drawn middle-aged woman who works in a zoo and lives with her religious mom must endure the daily grind. Day after day, co-workers and the lady's mother treat her poorly. Things change when the woman suddenly grows a tail. Strangely enough, it emboldens her as she begins to take more control of her life. However, when more physical changes start occurring, it puts the lead at a crossroads. Reaction towards this foreign-language movie has been positive, with reviews concluding that while it may be bizarre, the tale works well as a sharp satire. It features Natalya Pavlenkova and Dmitry Groshev.

Blasts from the Past!

Arrow Video have a Blu-ray/DVD combo box set arriving that will be of great interest to horror

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fans. *George A. Romero: Between Night and Dawn* includes three of the director's more difficult to locate films, which were released between *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) and *Dawn of the Dead* (1978). This includes the counterculture romantic comedy, *There's Always Vanilla* (1971), as well as the effectively eerie drama, *Season of the Witch* (1972). And finally, buyers will receive the extremely tense and expertly made thriller, *The Crazies* (1973).

All have been given spiffy new restorations from original elements with vastly improved image and sound quality. The set also comes with a wealth of extras. They include film journalist commentaries, interviews with Romero, bits of never before seen behind the scenes footage... there's literally too much to go through right here. It's a superb release. One thing is for certain, if you're a fan of the director, this is a great way to catch up with his lesser-known titles and add them to your collection. Let's hope they can also license the out of print *Martin* (1978) at some point in the future.

There are plenty of other interesting releases as well. Criterion has a Blu-ray of the well-regarded drama *Desert Hearts* (1985). This independent film involves a love affair between two women in the 50s. The disc includes a new 4K restoration of the feature, director audio commentary, as well as a conversation between the filmmaker and actress Jane Lynch, interviews with stars Helen Shaver and Patricia Charbonneau, and documentaries on the production.

They also have *Le Samouri* (1967), French film about a contract killer who models himself after samurai warriors of Japan. I haven't seen it, but the movie is beloved by crime cinema aficionados and sounds very interesting. The Blu-ray comes with a short documentary on the director, archival interviews with cast and crew, as well as a 2005 retrospective discussion.

Shout! Factory has some notable Blu-ray titles as well. *Attack of the Puppet People* (1958) involves an insane doll-maker who manages to invent a way to shrink people to a height of roughly six inches. This twisted individual starts miniaturizing people (including his secretary) to keep them as pets or playthings. The small but determined group decides to fight back, escape, and hopefully figure out a way to instigate a growth spurt. This movie arrives with a new 2K

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transfer, film historian commentary and a theatrical trailer.

On a similar tack, they also have a “Collector’s Edition” of *The Incredible Shrinking Woman* (1981). It’s a comedy about a put-upon suburban housewife who ingests a household chemical and begins to get smaller and smaller, perplexing her family. If memory serves, at one point she ends up in a lab befriending a gorilla. Lily Tomlin plays the lead role. The disc includes a brand new transfer as well as interviews with Tomlin, director Joel Schumacher, and the writer/producer, cinematographer and composer. There’s also a deleted scene, trailer and still gallery. This one has been hard to find for a long time, so many will be happy to finally be able to pick it up in high-definition.

Shout! also has *The Paul Naschy Collection II* Blu-ray set, which includes the cheesy B-movies *Hunchback of the Morgue* (1973), *Devil’s Possessed* (1974), *The Werewolf and the Yeti* (1975), *Night of the Howling Beast* (1974), *Exorcism* (1974) aka *Lorna the Exorcist* and *A Dragonfly for Each Corpse* (1975). And yes, it comes with a bevy of extras as well. None of the features are particularly good, but even I must admit that *The Werewolf and the Yeti*, if nothing else, is a great-sounding title for a movie.

Finally, Kino has several Blu-ray featuring films from various eras, including the film noir, *The Man Who Died Twice* (1958), the silent feature *The Last Laugh* (1924) and the modern crime flick, *This World, Then the Fireworks* (1997).

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You Know, For Kids!

Here are some options for the kids.

Mariah Carey's All I Want for Christmas is You

The Nut Job 2: Nutty By Nature

On the Tube!

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

7th Heaven: The Complete Series

24: Legacy

CSI Miami: The Complete Series

D.C. Follies: The Complete Series

Doctor Who: Series 10

The Dukes of Hazard: The Complete Series

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Last Tango in Halifax: Season 4

Preacher: Season 2

Rake: Series 4

Simon & Simon: Season 7

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