

Hello again for another look at the latest Blu-rays and DVD arriving on shelves. There's a good mix this week of awards bait and, well, some not-so-great features. So if you can't make it out to the movies this week, be sure to give one of these titles a try!

Big New Releases!

Chasing the Dragon - Based on a true story, this Hong Kong/China crime thriller set in 1963 involves a Mainland China immigrant who sneaks his way into the British colony of Hong Kong. Once there, he establishes himself as a ruthless drug kingpin and secures a notorious police detective to help him maintain control. However, when the cop eventually retires and new laws are established, the crook finds his power diminishing. The movie was released last fall in its homeland but is premiering on disc in this part of the world, so there aren't any reviews in these parts as of yet. The cast includes Donnie Yen, Andy Lau and Philip Keung.

Félicité - A woman earning a living as a singer in a bar finds her life turned upside down after her 14-year-old son has a terrible motorcycle accident. Living in Kinshasa (the largest city in the Democratic Republic of the Congo), she is forced to find her injured child and come up with a way to pay for their expensive medical treatment. This arthouse feature earned a lot of raves from members of the press. They were impressed with the performances and also complimented the work of the filmmakers in using hand-held cameras in a compelling and artistic manner. It features Véro Tshanda Beya Mputu, Gaetan Claudia and Papi Mpaka.

Geostorm - A satellite designer who saved the world by creating a climate-control system is called back into action when strange storms begin occurring around the globe. He and his politician brother learn that a conspiracy may be causing weather to change, resulting in a world-ending disaster. This big-budget epic was shot back in 2014, but it hit lots of production snags before finally arriving at cinemas a few months ago. Reaction to the movie was terrible. The movie wasn't previewed for critics and when they finally got around to seeing it, they called it preposterous, dull and corny. It stars Gerard Butler, Jim Sturgess, Abbie Cornish, Daniel Wu, Eugenio Derbez, Andy Garcia and Ed Harris.

Goodbye Christopher Robin - The life of author A.A. Milne, who created *Winnie the Pooh*, is chronicled in this biopic. It follows the writer as he struggles with PTSD from the war and becomes intrigued with his son's stuffed animals and other toys. However, the massive success

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of his books causes tension and resentment within the family. Critics gave the drama decent marks, but they didn't rave about it. They appeared to like the efforts to show the inspiration behind the books as well as the media circus that surrounded the family. However there were comments that the melodrama was overplayed and that some elements fell flat. The cast includes Domhnall Gleeson, Margot Robbie and Kelly Macdonald.

Jigsaw - Many may have thought that the *Saw* franchise had wrapped up long ago, but this eighth installment attempts to resurrect the series. Continuing events a decade after the previous chapter, a new group of individuals find themselves placed in death traps and must complete tasks in order to survive. At the end, the mastermind and reasoning behind the elaborate plot is revealed. The horror flick didn't garner much appreciation from critics upon its return. It was described as more of the same, and a film now lacking the shock factor that, if nothing else, managed to set its early predecessors apart. It features Matt Passmore, Callum Keith Rennie, Cle Bennett, Hannah Emily Anderson and Tobin Bell.

The Killing of a Sacred Deer - This follow-up from the director of *The Lobster* is another eccentric, arthouse effort. It follows a doctor who lavishes gifts upon a young man who often shows up at the county hospital. As the boy insinuates himself into the lives of the doctor and his family, the kid's strange and horrific motivations are revealed. Like the filmmaker's previous effort, this title earned strong reviews. It has been called eerie, cold as well as compelling and hypnotic in its oddness. However, those who didn't like it absolutely hated everything about it. Depends on if you have a taste for incredibly dark humor. It stars Colin Farrell, Nicole Kidman, Barry Keoghan and Alicia Silverstone.

My Entire High School Sinking Into the Sea - When a disaster at a high school causes the building to fall into the sea and slowly sink into the ocean, the student body form cliques and struggle to find a way to survive. A group of friends involved in the school paper team up with the school lunch lady to save whomever they can. This animated comedy earned solid reviews during its release. While some found it repetitive and didn't think it took full advantage of its fun concept, the majority enjoyed the eccentric visuals and humor on display. The voice cast includes Jason Schwartzman, Lena Dunham, Reggie Watts, Maya Rudolph and Susan Sarandon.

Thank You for Your Service - A group of US soldiers returns home from Iraq and has difficulty trying to restart their lives as a consequence of past events on the field of battle. The group attempts to communicate and deal with their PTSD issues alongside their family and friends. Members of the press were generally positive about this drama. Some commented that the plotline was a bit too familiar to really make a big impact, but most felt that its intentions were

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good and the performances helped elevate the film above many others of its ilk. It features Miles Teller, Haley Bennett, Joe Cole, Keisha Castle-Hughes and Amy Schumer.

Red Trees - This documentary traces a Prague-based filmmaker as she creates an "impressionistic visual essay" about her relatives during WWII. Specifically, their journey as one of a mere 12 Jewish families who survived the Nazi occupation of the Czech city. Using her father's own written words as narration, the film details the events, suicides and atrocities that he witnessed during this turbulent period. Reaction to this effort was surprisingly mixed. More than half called it beautiful and moving, but the artistic approach taken turned off many other viewers, who didn't feel as emotionally attached to the material as they wanted to be.

Blasts from the Past!

Shout! Factory also has some noteworthy Blu-rays. They include the Robert Englund thriller, *Dance Macabre* (1992). This one is about an American ballerina in a Russian dance school and is a nod to genre films like *Suspiria*. The disc comes with an interview with Englund, a trailer and a commentary track with writer/director Greydon Clark.

They also have a Blu-ray of *Rappin'* (1985). This flick was produced by the Cannon Group and features Mario Van Peebles as an ex-con who steps up to rap and save the neighborhood from a sinister developer. Ice-T also appears. And Shout! is also releasing a high definition version of the buddy action flick, *Shakedown* (1988). This one stars Peter Weller and Sam Elliott as a lawyer and unorthodox cop who team up to take down a New York drug lord. The release includes a new director commentary and introduction to the film, as well as interviews with the filmmaker and promotional materials.

Having mentioned *Suspiria* a couple of paragraphs back, horror fans will be happy to see a new Blu-ray restoration of a Dario Argento film arriving. This time Scorpion is bringing *Opera* (1987) aka *Dario Argento's Opera* to Blu-ray. It's about a maniac murdering the cast and crew doing a stage production of *Macbeth*. The film has been given a new 2K scan (that apparently looks quite stellar) and

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comes with a lengthy interview with Argento as well as one of the male leads.

And that's not all. VCI has a Blu-ray of the cheesy post-apocalyptic sci-fi/action flick, *The Aftermath*

(1982). Sid Haig appears. They also are putting out

The Twilight People

(1972). It's a riff on

The Island of Dr. Moreau

, in which involves a crazy doctor attempts to create super people. Unfortunately for him, he isn't a particularly good scientist and his experiments result in revenge-seeking monsters. Pam Grier makes an appearance as a "panther woman."

On a classier note, Clisifflix is distributing Blu-rays of a pair of Gary Cooper romantic comedies. *Along Came Jones* (1945) finds the actor playing a tramp who is mistaken for an outlaw. In *Casanova Brown* (1944), Cooper plays a concerned parent who accidentally kidnaps his own child.

Warner Archive appears to be getting in on the Gary Cooper business too. The actor stars in the western, *The Hanging Tree* (1959). He plays a doctor who saves the life of a man wanted by a gang. He then realizes he has the person's life in his hands and turns nasty, manipulating him into doing his bidding. This one arrives for the first time on Blu-ray. The same studio are also putting out DVDs of the out-of-print action/thriller, *Judgment Night* (1993), with Emilio Estevez, Cuba Gooding Jr., Jeremy Piven and Stephen Dorff.

Perhaps most notably, Warner Archive is also releasing *SubUrbia* (1996) on DVD. This drama from Richard Linklater (*Dazed & Confused*

, *Boyhood*

) has impossible to get since it was released on VHS not long after playing in cinemas. Reports suggested that music licensing issues were the cause for the extended delay. Now you can finally pick it up as a made-to-order disc through the Warner Archive site. Finally, they also have the Joe Pesci comedy, *The Super* (1991) as a DVD reissue.

DVD/Blu-ray Roundup for Jan. 26, 2018

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You Know, For Kids!

Just one title this week that may impress the youngsters.

Teen Titans: Season 1

On the Tube!

And here are this edition's TV-themed releases.

Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency: Season 2

Finding Your Roots: Season 4

The Paper Chase: The Final Season

Red vs. Blue: Season 15

Teen Titans: Season 1

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