

DVD/Blu-ray Roundup for June 1, 2018

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
Friday, 01 June 2018 08:04



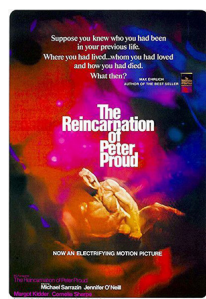
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Time for another look at highlights arriving on Blu-ray and DVD. There are some interesting features arriving that are both new and old. So, if you can't make it out to the movies this week, be sure to give one of these titles a try!

BIG NEW RELEASES!

Annihilation - Based on the first book in the Southern Reach Trilogy, this science-fiction tale involves the sudden appearance of a hidden portal that sends travelers into a land where the laws of nature don't apply. When her husband disappears into the zone and returns home changed, a biologist decides to venture in with a team and investigate the phenomena for themselves. Reaction towards this eccentric tale was generally positive. A few called it too vague and cryptic to appreciate, but more liked the cast and found that the movie created a real sense of unease and tension. It stars Natalie Portman, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Gina Rodriguez, Tessa Thompson, Tuva Novotny and Oscar Isaac.

The Lodgers - This Irish period film appears to be a Gothic melodrama that involves supernatural elements. It's about twins who live a reclusive life in an old mansion... along with a strange, evil presence that claims to hurt them if they do not follow its rules. These demands include being in bed by midnight and never allowing anyone else cross the threshold of the home. These requests are soon broken, resulting in mortal danger. Critics had mixed feelings about this independent production. Half thought it didn't explore its themes deeply enough and wasn't very scary. The others thought it was beautifully filmed and enjoyed the atmosphere generated. The cast includes David Bradley, Charlotte Vega and Moe Dunford.

Miss Stevens - A teacher who has just lost a family member is required to chaperone three students over a weekend at a drama competition. Traveling across great distances in close proximity causes the characters to open up about their complicated lives and personal experiences. In the end, it is suggested that the kids and their guardian end up learning life lessons and helping each other out. Reviews for this independent comedy/drama were very strong. One or two called the material too slight, but almost everyone else was impressed with the performances and found the film to be warm, affectionate and likable. It features Lily Rabe, Timothee Chalamet, Lili Reinhart and Anthony Quintal.

What We Started - EDM (electronic dance music) is the subject of this documentary. The movie chronicles two major players in the genre, including one of the pioneers who created it as well as another at the forefront of today's DJ scene. Using these subjects, the movie attempts to provide a history of EDM and uses trippy visuals to go along with the beats. The press were split on the end result. Some believed that the movie went on too many tangents and needed more focus, eventually losing viewer attention. However, just as many thought that the film presented a very thorough history of the music scene and the lives of its major players.

BLASTS FROM THE PAST!

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Wow, it's a busy week for classic titles hitting Blu-ray. Arrow Academy are delivering a Special Edition of the much-lauded New Zealand drama, *Smash Palace* (1981). This movie is about a rare car driver who retires to his late father's junkyard in a remote part of the country (much to the chagrin of his wife). The two begin to bicker and the relationship begins to fall apart, leading to extreme measures. This title was successful during its original release, but has since been hard-to-come-by in this part of the world. The new Blu-ray includes a sharp high definition transfer, an audio commentary from director Roger Donaldson and stunt driver Steve Millen, a nearly hour-long documentary on the making of the film and publicity materials.

Olive Films have some interesting releases as well. They have a DVD of the Roger Corman horror/comedy, *A Bucket of Blood* (1959). In this one, Dick Miller stars as a sculptor who begins murdering people and covering his victims in clay, becoming a well-regarded artist in the process.

They also have a Blu-ray of the comedy, *Cold Turkey* (1971). This effort was written and directed by Norman Lear (producer of

in the Family

and

Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman

). It stars Dick Van Dyke and is a satire of the tobacco industry as a company attempts to stage a huge smoking-related publicity event. It received decent reviews in its day but has been kind of forgotten over the 47 years, so it's nice to see it being made available to curious viewers once again.

Additionally, Olive are putting out the Harry Belafonte crime picture, *Odds Against Tomorrow* (1959). The movie is about two crooks from different backgrounds who are forced to work together on a big score. Unfortunately, suspicion and prejudice strains the relationship.

Vinegar Syndrome have a couple of cult movies arriving on Blu-ray. They include the Texas-made horror/comedy, *Blood Suckers from Outer Space* (1989) and the hugely successful, icon Melvin Van Peebles film,

Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song

(1971). This one arrives newly scanned and restored in 4K, with an archival making-of featurette, a new interview with cast member Niva Ruschell and publicity materials.

And there's more. Criterion have a trio of art house Blu-rays coming your way. *Au Hasard*

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Balthazar (1966)

is a French effort from Robert Bresson (*Diary of a Country Priest*

, *The Passion of Joan of Arc*

) about a donkey and the various owners he gets passed along to. It's been given a 4K restoration and comes with a few extras as well.

The Best Picture Oscar-winner *Midnight Cowboy* (1969) featuring Jon Voight and Dustin Hoffman is also getting an upgrade. This edition includes a 4K restoration, 1991 director audio commentary, new cinematographer commentary, a short film made on location, a documentary on the movie, archived interviews and more.

Finally, the distributor are putting out the John Wayne western, *Red River* (1948). The Blu-ray includes two cuts of the movie, and they've both been given 2K digital restorations. It also includes numerous interview with crew and film critics, as well as a radio theater adaptation of the film.

In the mood for something a little cheesier? Severin has ridiculous Italian B-movie horror arriving on Blu-ray. Their titles include *Shocking Dark* (1989), Lucio Fulci's *Zombi 3* (1988) and *Zombie 4: After Death*

(1989). That latter boasts Claudio Fragasso (*Troll 2*

, *Monster Dog*

) as writer and director. They're all over-the-top gore-fests with cheesy acting and cornball scripts, but they might provide a few laughs for those in the right frame of mind.

Kino have a Special Edition Blu-ray of *The Reincarnation of Peter Proud* (1975). This one involves a professor plagued by visions of his death. When he goes to investigate, he discovers that he may be reincarnated. It stars Michael Sarrazin, Jennifer O'Neal and Margot Kidder. This well-regarded chiller has been given a 4K transfer from the original camera negative, a film historian audio commentary, Spanish Super 8 footage of the film featuring alternate content, and a barrage of publicity materials.

Finally, Classicfilx has a Blu-ray of the thriller, *The Man Who Watched Trains* (1952) and Cohen

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Media is delivering the French, bittersweet coming-of-age tale, *The Two of Us* (1967) in high definition.

YOU KNOW, FOR KIDS!

Not much for the kids this time out, but there is one straight-to-DVD title arriving.

ON THE TUBE!

And here are the week's TV-themed releases. If you like low-key British comedies and haven't seen *Detectorists*, that show comes highly recommended (the first two seasons are available for viewing on Netflix).

Detectorists: Series 3

Diff'rent Strokes: The Final Season

East West 101: Series 1

Frontline: Weinstein (PBS)

Haunted: The Complete Series

I'm Dying Up Here: Season 1

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Jackass: TV and Movie Collection

Suits: Season 7

Tales from the Crypt: Seasons 1 - 3

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