

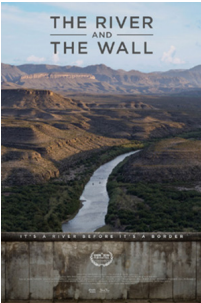
DVD/Blu-ray Roundup for July 5, 2019

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
Friday, 12 July 2019 07:31



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Hello once again, and welcome to another look at highlights arriving on Blu-ray and DVD. It may be a holiday week, but that doesn't mean that there aren't several interesting releases worth your while. 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!

An Acceptable Loss - A former top security advisor for the US government finds herself pushed into a regrettable decision after following the advice of a seasoned political official. Disturbed by the bill passed, the lead decides to go public about her concerns, knowing that these actions could bring down the government. Unfortunately, no one around wants the protagonist to speak the truth, accusing her of treason and threatening violence to stop her efforts. This independent effort didn't earn many votes from the press. A few commented that the villainess was an entertaining foil, but suggested that the story and events presented aren't as thrilling to watch as they should be. It stars Tika Sumpter, Jamie Lee Curtis, Ben Tavassoli and Deanna Dunagan.

The Best of Enemies - Based on the work of civil rights activist Ann Atwater, this biopic follows her experiences in North Carolina over the summer of 1971. When local Ku Klux Klan leader C.P. Ellis is forced into co-chairing a community summit on desegregation, the two go head-to-head with Atwater trying to change Ellis' perspective. Response toward this drama was mixed-positive. Those who had issues wrote that while the intent and performances were good, the production spoon-fed the story to viewers and was a little too sympathetic toward Ellis. Positive notices said that the story was predictable, but that the actors were excellent and essentially made up for the film's flaws. The cast include Taraji P. Henson, Sam Rockwell, Babou Ceesay, Anne Heche and Wes Bentley.

Combat Obscura - This documentary was shot and put together by a young man who enlisted in the US Marine Corps. The 18-year-old was designated as his unit's official videographer and was transferred to the front lines of Afghanistan. Once there, he was told to shoot and assemble footage for a recruitment video. Instead, the filmmaker followed the daily routines of soldiers. The press information states that "the edit ingeniously repurposes the footage to reveal the intensity and paradoxes of an ambiguous war from an unvarnished perspective." Reviews were exemplary, noting that the feature was a harrowing and messy look at what soldiers have to go through in the trenches (as well the nasty actions a few partake in).

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Dead Trigger - If you're stuck in a post-apocalyptic wasteland filled with ravenous zombies, I suppose there are worse people you could be stuck with than action hero Dolph Lundgren. The actor stars as leader of a specially trained unit fighting to wipe out the undead. Of course, with so many soldiers being eaten, the team also embarks on a search for new recruits. Be warned that this may not be among the actor's best films. Autumn Reeser, Romeo Miller and Isaiah Washington take on supporting roles.

Escape Plan: The Extractors - While 2013's *Escape Plan* was hardly a blockbuster success, the action picture has managed to spawn some direct-to-DVD sequels. The third entry features a Hong Kong tech mogul who hires the team of heroes to rescue his daughter from a group of criminals holed up in a Latvian prison. After the hero's own girlfriend is also taken hostage, the leads go all out in trying to eliminate the threat. As mentioned, this title is premiering on disc. However, a few early write-ups haven't been all that bad. Apparently, this follow-up is an improvement on the previous entry, providing a few B-movie thrills, as well as a surprise or two. The movie stars Sylvester Stallone, Dave Bautista, Curtis Jackson aka 50 Cent, Jin Zhang, Harry Shum Jr., Devon Sawa and Jaime King.

Mia and the White Lion - This interesting family film is about a 10-year-old girl from London whose parents buy a lion farm in South Africa. It's a rough transition, but the girl finds some happiness after befriending a lion cub. A few years later, she discovers that her father is going to sell her favorite animal to trophy hunters. Naturally, she and the adult lion go off the property and try to escape. Apparently, this English-language, French/German/South African production was shot over four years, meaning that viewers literally see the cat and the girl grow up as the story progresses.

Critics didn't mind the end product. A small group thought that the script and editing were clunky, but most described the movie as being sweet-natured and gorgeous to look at. It features Daniah De Villiers, Mélanie Laurent, Langley Kirkwood and Ryan Mac Lennan.

The Public - A cold snap in downtown Cincinnati forces the homeless to look for shelter. After arriving at a public library, they take refuge and stage a sit-in, attracting the attention of the police and media. Tensions rise as the stand-off continues between overwhelmed staff, suffering protestors and outside entities. Reaction towards this drama was generally upbeat.

A percentage did comment that the movie was overstuffed and tried to deal with so many issues, that it eventually lost its focus. Still, more admired the efforts of the cast and crew,

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thought the movie made good points and believed that it would start discussions between viewers on important issues. The cast includes Alec Baldwin, Taylor Schilling, Emilio Estevez (who also directed the film), Jena Malone, Christian Slater, Jacob Vargas, Gabrielle Union and Jeffrey Wright.

The River and the Wall - In this documentary, five friends decide to take a lengthy trip through the Texas wilderness along the US/Mexico border from El Paso to the Lower Rio Grande Valley. Over the course of their 1200 mile trip (using horseback riding, canoeing and mountain biking, as transportation) they look at the potential impact of a new border wall and discuss the current state of immigration in the country. All reviewers praised the movie. They wrote that this was a subtle, soft-spoken and hopeful effort with gorgeous photography of incredibly scenic locals. Additionally, they believed that it cleverly and sharply displayed the negative environmental and human impact of the wall proposal.

Styx - A successful emergency room doctor from Europe decides to fulfill her dream of sailing to Ascension Island in the Atlantic Ocean. After a terrible storm, the woman comes across a damaged fishing boat filled with drowning immigrant passengers. After radioing authorities, she realizes that no one is going to help, leaving her with the choice of whether or not to break maritime law and rescue them. Reviews were strong for this title from Germany/Austria.

While a few thought the filmmakers didn't quite nail the ending, the consensus was that this is an otherwise tense thriller with important points to make about the migrant crisis. Susanne Wolfe plays the lead. It appears that this particular release is DVD only for the time being.

Zulu Summer - Ever received an email from an African prince asking for your assistance in a financial matter and promising great riches if you participate? Most of us have, including a radio DJ from a small town in Montana. This documentary follows his exploits as he decides to investigate these strange emails and claims; his journey takes him all the way to Nongoma, South Africa. According to the press release, the man ultimately forges an international friendship that changes the lives of all participants.

It certainly sounds like an interesting concept for a non-fiction feature. The movie is debuting on disc, so there haven't been any official reviews posted just yet.

Blasts from the Past!

There are also some interesting older titles hitting Blu-ray this week. Arrow Video has a Special Edition Blu-ray of the cult film, *FM* (1978). It's about a group of radio DJs who become frustrated when new management decides to force lengthy commercial breaks into their programming, with a particular emphasis on military recruitment ads. The leads protest, locking the doors and playing rock tunes non-stop. Michael Brandon, Eileen Brennan, Alex Karras, Cleavon Little, Martin Mull and James Keach star, and the flick features appearances by musicians Linda Ronstadt, Tom Petty, Jimmy Buffet and REO Speedwagon. In some respects, it bears a bit of similarity to the TV series *WKRP in Cincinnati*.

Anyway, it definitely has a following and the disc comes with plenty of extra features. They include newly filmed interviews with star Brandon, as well as the screenwriter. It also includes a video appreciation of radio stations from the late '70s that includes discussions with a rock music critic and a study of the film's platinum-selling soundtrack. You'll also get a wealth of stills, promotional images and soundtrack images and some original trailers for the movie.

Kino is preparing a series of French, foreign-language titles for release on Blu-ray. The first is a Special Edition of *Bob le Flambeur* (1956), which depicts a casino heist. The movie has received a 4K transfer and comes with a film critic commentary, a documentary on the film's villain, and a trailer. They also have the crime film, *Le Doulos* (1963) aka *The Finger Man*. Like the previous title, it's a Special Edition with similar extras. You can also get *Léon Morin, Priest* (1961) which comes with very similar specs.

More recent French titles arriving from Kino include *The Outsider* (1983) aka *Le Marginal*. This flick is about a rogue detective in Marseilles trying to take down drug traffickers, and it co-stars Henry Silva. The Blu-ray release includes a film historian commentary track and a trailer. They are also delivering *The Professional* (1981). This isn't the Luc Besson film, but rather an earlier action film about a secret agent who is double crossed by the government and seeks revenge against those who set him up. The disc arrives with the same bonuses as the previous title.

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Finally, Vinegar Syndrome is releasing a series of small B-movies as Blu-ray/DVD combo packs. They include the modern day vampire story, *Night Owl* (1993), as well as the sci-fi flick, *The Passing* (1984). The latter is about a man who tries to take over the body of an unwilling victim and have his mind implanted in it. Both titles are getting 2K restorations from the original 16 mm camera negative, and come with director commentaries and several other extras.

The same distributor also has a combo-package of the cult advertising satire, *Putney Swope* (1969), which follows an agency that starts creating radical publicity campaigns, eventually drawing the ire of the President. The film has been newly scanned and restored in 4K from 35 mm pre-print elements. It comes with two audio commentaries (one from the director and another from a film critic), as well as so many other extras that they can't all be listed here.

Finally, you can also pick up *Taking Tiger Mountain* (1983). It's a thriller about a draft-dodger (Bill Paxton in his debut film role) who becomes part of a mind-control experiment. Sounds like some interesting stuff. The transfer and extras for the latter release are almost the same as for the previously mentioned title.

You Know, For Kids!

Here are some releases that kids might be interested in. If you're a fan of Batman animated films, you'll be happy with the selection.

4 Kids Favorites: Batman Beyond

Batman Beyond Triple Feature

Batman Dark Knight Returns Triple Feature

Batman Unlimited Triple Feature

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Batman Year One Triple Feature

The Day Henry Met...?: Season 2

On the Tube!

And these are the week's TV-themed titles.

The Day Henry Met...?: Season 2

FRONTLINE: The Abortion Divide (PBS)

Heroes: The Complete Series (2006 - 2010)

Hostile Planet (National Geographic)

Apollo 11: Landing the Eagle (Discovery)

Rhythm of the Dance (PBS)

A Summer to Remember (Hallmark TV-movie)

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