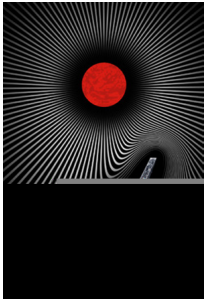


DVD/Blu-ray Roundup for August 23, 2019

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
Friday, 30 August 2019 01:08



It's time for another look at highlights of new Blu-ray and DVD releases arriving this week. There is plenty of interesting fare including films from Hollywood and around the world. 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!

Aniara - This Swedish-Danish science-fiction picture is set on a spaceship headed to Mars. With the Earth dying, the craft carries a massive population planning to colonize the red planet. When the ship is knocked off course, the travelers are forced into contemplating their consumerist habits and whether their species is really worth saving. The production received slightly more positive reaction than negative from critics. A percentage appreciated what the movie was attempting, but stated that it had too much on its plate and lacked focus or relatable characters. Slightly more thought it was grim but engaging, with excellent production value and plenty of ideas. It features Emelie Jonsson, Peter Kananian and Peter Carlberg.

The Biggest Little Farm - A filmmaker and his wife decide to try their hand at starting a farm in this documentary. They begin to develop an incredibly diverse and sustainable ranch on 200 acres outside of Los Angeles and record every step of the process. Along the way, they are faced with both expected and unexpected complications as they realize that their soil lacks proper nutrients and then a drought begins. Response toward the film was excellent. One or two found the storytelling techniques used in this non-fiction feature stiff and artificial. However, the consensus was that this doc was inspirational and a fascinating examination of what it takes to coexist with the natural surroundings.

Brightburn - Using traditional superhero movies as inspiration, this dark comedy involves a young boy in an alien vessel who crash lands on a farm. He's adopted by a family and 12 years later, the newcomer discovers he has immense power and is invulnerable to most weapons. Unfortunately, he also gets a belated message from his ship that tells him that his role in life is to take over the world. The press did seem a bit split on the end results, although slightly more enjoyed it than disliked it.

A group didn't think it did much with the unique material and described the jokes as being dumb and dopey. A slightly larger contingent believed that several elements worked and that the movie was funny enough to entertain. It stars Elizabeth Banks, David Denman and Jackson A. Dunn.

The Brink - This documentary follows extreme right-wing leader Steve Bannon, who spent many years being part of President Donald Trump's inner circle. After the figure was fired as White House strategist following the Charlottesville Unite the Right rally in 2017, the film details his move to Europe and attempts to unify and solidify various extremist factions and influence over there. Critics gave the non-fiction feature high marks. One or two suggested that it didn't reveal anything about the man we didn't already know. Still, the majority stated that it did an

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exceptional job of capturing Bannon's racist tendencies, habitual lying and nasty temper in great detail.

Camp Wedding - An engaged woman decides to have her nuptials at a summer camp and enlists her wedding party to help set up the festivities. As the event draws near, concerns arise when the venue doesn't look as wonderful as expected. Things take an even darker turn when bridesmaids and groomsmen are slowly murdered by a psychotic killer. This independent horror/comedy has played a few festivals, but is primarily debuting on disc. Sadly, the few reviews that have popped up haven't been complimentary. One reviewer complained that the gags don't land and little fear or tension is developed. It features Kelley Gates, Sean Hankinson, Cadden Jones and Morgan McGuire.

A Dog's Journey - In this tearjerker, a dog's family decides to remove the animal from their home after having a newborn. Separated from the baby yet still determined to protect her, the pooch vows to find the infant once again. Along the way, the canine encounters tragedy, dying and being reincarnated as different breeds, continuing to remember and seek out its original relative. Reviewers were divided on the end result.

About half admitted it was manipulative in its attempts to elicit emotion, but thought the dogs were still pretty darn cute. The rest contended that the animal voice-over didn't work and the movie was too obvious and blunt in its efforts to engage viewers. The movie stars Josh Gad, Dennis Quaid, Kathryn Prescott, Marg Helgenberger and Betty Gilpin.

The Hustle - Two female con artists from different backgrounds butt heads in this comedy after finding themselves both working the French Riviera. At first, the more established of the pair tries to train the other to be her accomplice, but bickering ensues and the leads soon make a bet to determine who can remain at the scenic locale. This is a remake of 1988's *Dirt* *y Rotten Scoundrels*, which itself was a redo of the 1964 feature *Bedtime Story*. One thing is certain about this particular version...very few enjoyed it.

A couple liked the tireless efforts of the cast, but almost everyone else stated that this film wasn't nearly as enjoyable as the previous version, didn't add anything new, and was a misfire. Anne Hathaway, Rebel Wilson and Alex Sharp headline the film.

Iron Sky: The Coming Race - This sequel to the 2012 Finnish-German horror/comedy *Iron Sky* picks up where the original ended. For those who don't remember the first chapter, a group of Nazis escaped Earth and built a secret base on the Moon, before starting a war on the planet below. In this follow-up, our home planet has been rendered uninhabitable and various groups of survivors battle for control of the base and orbiting rock mass.

Critics weren't overwhelmed by this follow-up. About one third of them wrote that as absurd as the story was, they were impressed by the imagination on display. Still, the most common comment was that this title lacked wit and came across as loud and annoying. It features Lara Rossi and Vladimir Burlakov.

I Trapped the Devil - Those looking for a late summer Christmas-themed horror picture may want to give this a try. The story involves an eccentric who invites his brother and sister-in-law over for a festive holiday reunion and celebration. His guests become disturbed and confused when they realize that their host has locked a man up in the basement...a figure whom the captor claims is actually the devil himself. This little feature has earned good notices.

While a percentage did critique the movie for dragging in sections, most other write-ups complimented the mood and thought that as the characters switched loyalties and turned on one another, it all became quite tense. The cast includes Scott Poythress, A. J. Bowen and Susan Burke.

Low Low - Here's a coming-of-age film that depicts a group of teenage girls from lower-class backgrounds graduating from high school. Over the course of the running time, viewers witness their last day together before their lives take them on different tracks. Along the way, they take part in several rites of passage and try to find a sense of empowerment and learn the true value of friendship.

This independent drama received plenty of decent reviews. While comments declared that the film was far from perfect, they still agreed that the young stars were great together and that it was interesting to see them navigate and express concerns over the future. Sean Carrigan and Elaine Hendrix are featured.

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Seaside - A young woman decides to head to the Oregon coast after her boyfriend inherits his childhood home. Once there, they decide to start a family. However, the new arrival soon runs into her significant other's ex-girlfriend and learns that he hasn't been completely honest about his past. The female lead is forced into unraveling a mystery and deciding if her relationship is worth fighting for.

This small indie flick is a thriller and has only played at a film festival or two. It hasn't received many reviews yet, but the few that have appeared suggest that the movie is a bit slow moving and drab. It stars Ariana DeBose, Matt Shingledecker and Steffanie Leigh.

The Wild Pear Tree - This Turkish foreign-language feature involves a young writer who returns home after graduating. He searches for sponsors to help him publish his first big novel, but soon becomes distracted by his troubled father, who is weighed down by a serious gambling addiction. In reconnecting with his past, the young man begins to see how the people around him have informed his work of art.

Notices were very strong for this drama. Although many admitted that the movie was long and the storytelling less than subtle, just about all who reviewed it also remarked that it was beautifully made and very passionate about the ideas being expressed. It features Dogu Demirkol and Murat Cemcir.

Blasts from the Past!

There are some really fantastic older titles arriving on Blu-ray this week. Arrow Video has a Special Edition of the Al Pacino thriller, *Cruising* (1980). It features the Oscar-winning actor as an undercover cop investigating a serial killer who is targeting New York City's gay community. This film was from a different era and isn't considered by some to be politically correct, but it has developed a sizable following over the years.

For its high definition debut, the movie has been given a new restoration from a 4K scan of the original camera negative supervised by writer/director William Friedkin (*The French Connection*,

To Live and Die in L.A.

), along with an updated sound mix. It also includes an archived director commentary, an

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archival featurette looking at the feature's origins and production, a segment on the controversy surrounding the movie and its legacy, along with a trailer.

Several weeks back Arrow announced the release of *Akio Jissoji: The Buddhist Trilogy*, a 3-Disc Limited Edition that included the Japanese films

This Transient Life

(1970),

Mandala

(1971) and

Poem

(1972). Apparently, the set was delayed at the last minute but is arriving this week.

Shout! has a Collector's Edition of the cult classic *The Harder They Come* (1972) on Blu-ray. It stars Reggae legend Jimmy Cliff as a musician trying to make his mark in Kingston, Jamaica. He encounters some nasty types and turns into an outlaw. This feature became one of the first midnight movies (along with

Night of the Living Dead

) and is an underground favorite.

The release boasts a new 4K scan of the original 16mm negative, an audio commentary with a Jimmy Cliff authority, a making-of featurette and a clip about the movie's enduring legacy, archived interviews with Cliff, as well as the director and the producer, the cinematographer and line producer. You'll also get a trailer and a music video of the title track. Additionally, this release includes a second film from the director called *No Place Like Home*. It was also shot in Kingston, but had far more difficulty securing a release.

The second title comes with many of the same features included with the title flick. And if that isn't enough, there's a third disc with a detailed and thorough examination of the Jamaican cinema and music scene.

The same distributor also has a Blu-ray of the Hammer horror flick, *Horror of Frankenstein* (1970). Not only is the film presented in two aspect ratios, but it also comes with a new movie historian audio commentary and a second archived filmmaker track. Extras also include an interview with the lead actress, another with the producer/director, and one featuring the assistant director. And you'll get more featurettes and a selection of publicity materials relating the film.

Kino has a massive selection of Blu-rays this week encompassing B-movie titles and cinematic classics. They include the likes of *4D Man* (1959), *Babylon* (1980) and the so-bad-it's-still-really-bad flick, *the Kid Versus Dracula* (1966). They've also got the old-fashioned sci-fi adventure feature, *Dinosaurs!* (1960) in high definition.

Billy

On a completely different note, you can now pick up a new edition of the French arthouse favorite, *Last Year at Marienbad* (1961). It's considered a completely unique puzzle-box of a movie with long tracking shots and odd elements in the frame (like strange shadows) that don't always make sense. The film itself has been given a 4K restoration and comes with some bonuses that may help you decipher its many hidden meanings and layers. The film has greatly influenced many and even inspired a music video or two.

They also have Blu-rays of the rom-com *The Marrying Man* (1991), and extras laden 2-disc Special Edition of the Shirley MacLaine musical, *Sweet Charity* (1969), and a Blu-ray of the silent flick, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1927) that features two different cuts of the movie.

Criterion is delivering the melodrama *Magnificent Obsession* (1954) from director Douglas Sirk (*All That Heaven Allows*) on Blu-ray. As in the filmmaker's other pictures, you can expect the bright colors to bounce off the screen, which has received a high-definition digital restoration. You'll also get an audio commentary from 2008 featuring film scholar Thomas Doherty, *Magnificent Obsession* , John M. Stahl's 1935 adaptation of the same novel newly restored, and a documentary on Sirk from 1991. The disc also includes a 2009 interview with screenwriter Robert Blees, discussions from 2008 with filmmakers Allison Anders and Kathryn Bigelow, in which they pay tribute to director Douglas Sirk and a trailer.

The next release is a personal favorite. *The Witches* (1990) is a superb kids' film based on the Roald Dahl novel that also happens to be just a little bit creepy and intense in spots. It's about a young boy whose grandmother takes him on a trip to the coast of England after the unfortunate

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death of his parents. The pair suddenly find themselves in the middle of a convention for witches (their leader is played by Anjelica Huston). When the youngster is transformed into a mouse, he must use unique methods in order to stop the sinister threat.

Warner Archive is finally making this title available to order on Blu-ray through their site. Now viewers can enjoy the trippy vibe from director Nicolas Roeg (*Don't Look Now*, *The Man Who Fell to Earth*), and make-up and puppet work in high definition. This is one of my favorite Dahl adaptations and is recommended for kids who can also stand to get a little bit scared.

Finally, classic film fans can pick up *The Buster Keaton Collection: Volume 3* from Cohen Media. This new Blu-ray includes the comedies *Battling Butler* (1925) and *Seven Chances* (1926).

You Know, For Kids!

Here are some titles that youngsters may enjoy.

A Dog's Journey

LEGO DC: Batman

Pokemon: The Series: Diamond and Pearl: The Complete Season

Ronja: The Robber's Daughter: The Complete Series (Studio Ghibli)

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Shimmer and Shine: Legend of the Dragon Treasure (Nickelodeon)

The Witches (Warner Archive)

On the Tube!

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

American Gods: Season 2

Arrow: Season 7

Blue Bloods: Season 9

Brooklyn Nine-Nine: Season 6

The Bureau: Season 4

Gourmet Detective: Complete Movie Collection (Hallmark TV-movies)

Mayans M.C.: Season 1

NCIS: New Orleans: Season 5

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Pokemon: The Series: Diamond and Pearl: The Complete Season

Ronja: The Robber's Daughter: The Complete Series (Studio Ghibli)

The Streets of San Francisco: The Complete Series

S.W.A.T.: Season 2

The Walking Dead: Season 9

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