



Hope everyone out there who was celebrating Labor Day had a great day off. Despite the holiday, distributors are back in business today and releasing a huge number of Blu-rays and DVDs in a wide variety of genres. 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!

Absolution – Also known as *Harmony*, this teen fantasy/romance film from Australia follows a young woman with the ability to absorb the fears of those around her. This gift troubles the lady, who suffers against a growing build-up of negative energy. Apparently, she must find true love to counteract the effects of her unwanted power. The film has been advertised as the first chapter in The Five Frequencies saga, but I wouldn't hold out much hope for any follow-ups.

It didn't get much of a release in this part of the world and those who did see the flick didn't write highly of it, suggesting that the dialogue is clumsy and the story does little to involve curious viewers. The cast includes Jacqueline McKenzie, Eamon Farren, Salvatore Coco and Lewis Fitz-Gerald.

Behind the Bullet – This documentary deals with gun use and shootings in America. The press synopsis promises a movie that not only deals with the impact of losing a loved one, but also the impact it has on the person who has pulled the trigger. Four individuals are interviewed, each of whom either shot and killed a person accidentally, or in self-defense. It explains what firing a gun did to them psychologically, as well as the thoughts and struggles that have followed the act. This small picture has only played at a couple of film festivals (Slamdance and

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Sunscreen, specifically), so there hasn't been much written about the final results. Interested viewers will simply have to take a chance on it.

Booksmart – Struggling under the weight of their studious high school routine, a pair of honor students decides to go out and make up four years of lost partying just before graduation. They head out for a night on the town and get themselves into all sorts of odd situations, while also dealing with some unresolved issues in their personal lives. This coming-of-age comedy received great notices from the press. One or two reviewers didn't think that it was as sharp as it could have been, and followed genre conventions too closely, but almost everyone believed the characters were charming and thought the scenarios effectively dealt with modern teen issues while delivering laughs. It stars Kaitlyn Dever, Beanie Feldstein, Jessica Williams, Jason Sudeikis, Lisa Kudrow and Will Forte.

I Got the Hook-Up 2 – This sequel to the 1998 comedy about a pair of scam artists/stolen goods dealers picks up with the two having gone legit and starting their own successful restaurant. When a nasty health inspector threatens to shut their family business down, a couple of young hustlers step up with a scheme to try to help them survive the threat. This follow-up appears to have gotten a limited release a couple of months ago, but there aren't any reviews for it online as of this writing. So those interested in seeing what happened to these characters over the past two decades will have to take a chance and give it a look on disc. Master P, Anthony Johnson, Tommy "Tiny" Lister, D. C. Young Fly and FatBoy SSE headline the feature.

Loopers: The Caddie's Long Walk – Anybody who turns on the television most weekends is bound to see a professional golf tournament on the air. This documentary details one aspect of it that many don't think about... the role of the caddie. The movie explains how the position developed and how over time the people carrying the clubs and balls began to start offering great advice to the players. The film additionally includes interviews with numerous PGA pros and their stories about caddies.

Critics didn't mind this non-fiction effort. A small contingent thought it was a little bland and didn't really get deep into the rougher aspects of the job, but the majority found it an entertaining and amusing look at the game's unsung heroes. Bill Murray narrates the picture.

Ma – A group of teens hoping to party and score some booze asks a random woman to help them out. The friendly lady agrees and even lets them get together and socialize on her property...as long as they follow her eccentric rules. Initially, it seems like an amazing deal for

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the kids. However, they soon realize that breaking their host's specific requests may have dangerous and even deadly consequences.

Reaction was split toward this horror picture (although it did receive a few more approvals than pans). Those who disliked the picture found it corny and thought the talent in front of and behind the camera was capable of more than schlocky jolts. Still, slightly more were entertained by the lead performance and said it provided both creepy and campy fun. It features Octavia Spencer, Juliette Lewis, Diana Silvers, McKaley Miller and Luke Evans.

Men in Black: International – Call it a spin-off or a sequel, this new take on the sci-fi comedy series follows two agents hired to investigate crimes involving aliens and supernatural forces. When an assassination attempt is made on an alien aristocrat in London, a recruit and her partner discover that a sinister mole has worked its way into their agency. The heroes must stop the threat and save the day. Write-ups were less-than-stellar for the latest addition to the series. A couple of reviewers enjoyed the chemistry between the two leads enough to grant it a pass. Still, the consensus was that the screenplay left its heroes adrift and didn't provide anything memorable for them to do. It stars Chris Hemsworth, Tessa Thompson, Rebecca Ferguson, Kumail Nanjiani and Rafe Spall.

Nightmare Cinema – The latest horror anthology to hit screens revolves around a group of visitors to a movie theater. As the show unfolds, they begin to witness a group of short films detailing their deepest and darkest fears. Notices for this independent picture were generally upbeat. A segment of reviewers did complain that after delivering the goods with the first tale, the following stories were more hit-and-miss.

Overall, far more felt that this was an above-average horror anthology that delivered on the chills and gross-out fun, recommending it to genre enthusiasts. The cast includes Mickey Rourke, Richard Chamberlain and Adam Godley, and boasts directors Alejandro Bruges (*Juan of the Dead*

), Joe Dante (*The Howling*

,
Gremlins

,
The Hole

), Mick Garris (*Critters 2*

,

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Sleepwalkers

), Ryuhei Kitamura (

Versus

,

The Midnight Meat Train

) and David Slade (

Hard Candy

,

30 Days of Night

) behind the camera.

Squadron 303: The Battle of Britain – WWII is featured in this historical drama about a highly regarded air squadron featuring refugee Polish pilots who flew with the RAF and fought to free their country from Nazi forces. According to records, they shot down three times more enemy planes than any other allied squadron. Alas, this UK/Poland co-production did not hit the mark with the press. While all of them thought that the real story was fantastic material for a feature film, they noted that the small budget let the movie down.

They wrote that less-than-impressive visual effects hindered the picture greatly and noted that the characters and dialogue weren't well realized either, making this effort a misfire. The cast includes Piotr Adamczyk, Kirk Barker, Gabriela Calun and Maciej Cymorek.

Wind: Demons of the Prairie – Also known as *The Wind*, this western/horror is set in the late 1800s and deals with the harsh conditions experienced by a woman living on the plains. As circumstances get worse and she experiences symptoms of mental illness, unexplained supernatural events raise the stakes to even more dangerous levels. Critics were very positive about this chiller. A tiny percentage didn't care for the storytelling and couldn't get involved with the plight of the protagonist.

However, the overall reaction was that the independent feature was technically accomplished, focused on some interesting and unique aspects around its female lead and worked well as a haunting allegory. It stars Caitlin Gerard, Julia Goldani Telles and Ashley Zukerman.

Blasts from the Past!

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There are plenty of interesting catalog titles being released in high definition this week. Kino is putting out a Blu-ray of *Alps* (2011), a well-regarded early work from director Yorgos Lanthimos (*The Lobster*, *The Killing of a Sacred Deer*, *The Favourite*). It's about a business in which people are paid to impersonate a member of a family who has recently passed away, all so that the family can process their death. Those who have taken to the filmmaker's work will likely find something to enjoy. The disc comes with a movie historian audio commentary.

Dogtooth (2009) is an even earlier title from Lanthimos. In this picture, three teenagers are forced to live at the estate of their overprotective parents. They are given different meanings for words and told they can never leave until a specific tooth falls out. It's all done to keep them at home, but numerous complications soon arise. This release includes an audio commentary with the movie's stars, an interview with Lanthimos, deleted scenes and a trailer.

Perhaps the biggest highlight of the week might be two Blu-rays from Ealing Studios. The pictures star Alec Guinness. *Kind Hearts and Coronets* (1949) features the actor in several roles as members of a wealthy family who are slowly being murdered off by a commoner. He's out for revenge after they refuse to acknowledge his mother as one of their heirs. It's a very funny dark comedy and considered one of the best works from this studio. The Special Edition Blu-ray includes a film historian audio commentary, an introduction to the flick with director John Landis, featurettes and interviews with crew members on the cinematography and make-up effects. It also comes with an alternate American ending and trailer.

The Lavender Hill Mob (1951) is another excellent comedy that earned Guinness an Academy Award nomination. He plays a meek bank clerk who plots with some pals to rob his vaults of all its gold. Viewers get to see if they manage to pull it off. This Special Edition Blu-ray arrives with a film historian audio commentary, an introduction from Martin Scorsese, an interview with the screenwriter and director and a trailer.

My favorite of the bunch is actually *The Man in the White Suit* (1951). This movie involves an enthusiastic scientist who sneaks into labs at local textile factories in order to develop a fabric that can last forever. He succeeds and while the wealthy textile company owners and unions are initially impressed, they are soon terrified by the ramifications of his discovery... and soon willing to do anything to stop it from getting out.

I like to see the lead as a personification of progress and this is a great satire that pokes fun at

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the attempts of various social constructs to thwart his well-meaning efforts. The film earned a nomination for Best Screenplay at the Academy Awards. This Special Edition Blu-ray features a film historian commentary, a documentary on the picture, a critic interview and talk with director/fan Stephen Frears (*The Grifters*, *High Fidelity*, *Philomena*), as well as a trailer.

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