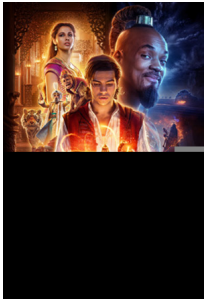


DVD/Blu-ray Roundup for September 13, 2019

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
Friday, 20 September 2019 03:14



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The fall is here, which means it's a great time to enjoy Blu-rays and DVDs. Numerous summer releases are now making their debuts and there are plenty of independent choices and documentaries to keep audiences informed. 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!

5th of July -This independently produced comedy follows a young professor who sets out to fulfill a last wish...to drive to the mountains and spread his dad's ashes over a favorite lake. But by the time the lead arrives at his destination, he's tired and curses out his late father. The universe soon turns against him. Thieves steal his wallet and valuables, he's drugged by hippies on their way to Burning Man, and other encounters jeopardize his life.

No one has seen this picture yet, so there are no reviews. As such, one shouldn't necessarily expect a masterpiece. It features Jaleel White (yes, "Urkel" himself in the protagonist role), Sean Kanan, Gary Anthony Williams, Dyana Ortelli and Sy Richardson.

Aladdin - The famous Disney animated musical gets a live action update in this big budget family flick. Once again, a kind street urchin finds a strange and magical lamp that holds a wish-granting genie. He decides to be turned into a prince in order to win the affections of the sultan's daughter, Jasmine. Meanwhile, the Sultan's advisor wants to use the lamp for his own nefarious purposes.

This effort was a box office hit, but earned middling notices (although they were slightly more positive than negative). Most described it as mediocre, saying it looked impressive but paled in comparison with Disney's classic animated film. Still, the majority did concede that it would, if nothing else, impress children. The movie stars Will Smith, Mena Massoud, Naomi Scott, Marwan Kenzari, Billy Magnussen and Alan Tudyk.

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Armstrong - As one might have guessed when reading the title, this documentary chronicles the life of astronaut Neil Armstrong. The film shows viewers never-before-seen home movie footage, along with incredible images of his work and missions for NASA. Viewers will also be treated to stories of his years as a fighter pilot in Korea. This non-fiction feature earned good, if not exceptional marks from the press.

About one quarter of reviewers complained that the information wasn't dynamically presented and felt the movie didn't offer as much depth or insight as needed. Still, the majority thought it demonstrated the man's calm and measured nature, and offered some thrills when examining the legendary moon landing. Harrison Ford narrates the picture.

Crystal City - Here's another doc for those interested in non-fiction titles. This effort is focused around a new problem arising over the last 20 years in the gay community (and elsewhere, too). Specifically, use of the highly addictive and illegal drug called crystal meth. The filmmakers chart its rise in popularity at dance clubs and its affect on the population by focusing on the struggles made by three men to break their dependence on the substance.

After playing a few festivals, the picture is making its debut on disc. There aren't many write-ups of it right now, but the one or two online reviews state that it is an effective and sensitively handled look at the troubling phenomenon.

The Dead Don't Die - Zombies rise again in this comedy from acclaimed independent writer/direct Jim Jarmusch (*Paterson, Only Lovers Left Alive, Mystery Train*) . A small town full of eccentrics is invaded by the dead. The community tries to figure out how to survive attacks from their neighbors-turned-flesh-eating monsters. Critics were mixed about this feature, although there were a few recommendations overall.

Those who disliked the picture said it wasn't as passionately made as some of the filmmaker's other projects. They noted that it was too laid back for its own good and that the story failed to gain much momentum. Slightly more admitted that it had flaws, but found some of the characters, situations, and events amusing to witness. The cast includes Bill Murray, Adam Driver, Tilda Swinton, Chloe Sevigny, Steve Buscemi, Danny Glover, Caleb Landry Jones, Rosie Perez, Iggy Pop, RZA, Selena Gomez, Carol Kane and Tom Waits.

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Echo in the Canyon - Laurel Canyon, Calif. has been fertile ground for incredible musical talent. This documentary details the period from 1965 to 1967 in which several performers developed their skills there or travelled to the locale to record music. It includes groups like The Byrds, The Beach Boys and The Mamas and the Papas. The documentary also features an incredible assortment of interviews with music-makers who share their memories and stories about the period.

Reviewers all liked the movie, stating that while there weren't any stunning revelations, the tales shared were very entertaining. Participants include Brian Wilson, Ringo Starr, Michelle Phillips, Eric Clapton, Stephen Stills, David Crosby, Graham Nash, Roger McGuinn, Jackson Browne, Tom Petty (in his very last film interview), Beck, Fiona Apple, Cat Power, Regina Spektor and Norah Jones.

John Wick: Chapter 3 - Parabellum - The third chapter in this high-energy action series finds its title character, a no-nonsense retired assassin, being excommunicated from his profession. With a target on his head and every hit man out to finish him off and claim a hefty reward, the protagonist must use extreme measures to survive the onslaught. This newest follow-up was a box office hit and earned solid notices. A few write-ups expressed a feeling of being a bit worn down and didn't think the sequel impressed outside of its well-staged action scenes.

However, the consensus was that the fights presented were unforgettable and that the picture delivered on its promise of thrilling, bone-crunching confrontations. It stars Keanu Reeves, Halle Berry, Laurence Fishburne, Mark Dacascos, Lance Reddick, Anjelica Huston and Ian McShane.

Wish Man – A cop manages to survive a near fatal accident and later finds himself being falsely accused of police brutality. Feeling lost, he comes into contact with a terminally ill young child. The child sets out to reunite the officer with his long-lost father. Inspired by the boy's actions, the man ultimately forms the Make-a-Wish foundation.

This independent biopic drama of the man behind the actual organization received a limited theatrical release in June and hasn't garnered many reviews yet. Those that have popped up haven't been raves. They all admire the work of the institution, but gripe that there are some issues with the film. Some thought that it wasted energy focusing on subplots involving crooked cops instead of the institution's origins. The cast includes Andrew Steel, Kirby Bliss Blanton, Tom Sizemore, Danny Trejo and Frank Whaley.

Blasts from the Past!

This week boasts numerous older titles that are getting Blu-ray upgrades. Shout! Factory has the Hammer Films monster movie, *Blood from the Mummy's Tomb* (1971). It's about an evil queen whose Egyptian tomb is raided. Naturally, she leaves a horrible curse on the interlopers.

The movie is presented in two aspect ratios and includes a film historian audio commentary, an interview with the sound recordist and camera operator, a documentary featuring talks with the star, as well as the movie's screenwriter. This is in addition to US and UK trailers and all sorts of publicity materials.

They also have a Blu-ray of the chilling *Circus of Horrors* (1960). The plot involves a deranged plastic surgeon hunted by the authorities. He manages to evade the law and then takes over a circus troupe in Europe. The doctor performs several procedures on his scarred female show members to win them over and turn them into his beautiful performers.

However, when the employees begin to find out about his past, they start dying in horrific accidents. This disc for this creepy little British production comes with a *Trailers from Hell* segment featuring director John Landis (

The Blues Brothers, An American Werewolf in London
) as well as a theatrical trailer, TV spots and still gallery.

Scars of Dracula (1970) from Hammer Films features Christopher Lee in the fifth title presenting the actor as the blood-sucker. In this effort, he's resurrected once again and goes on the rampage around his old Eastern European haunting grounds. The Shout! Blu-ray is presented in two different aspect ratios and arrives with a new film historian audio commentary, an older commentary featuring Lee and the director, a featurette going into the production and publicity spots like trailers used to promote the movie during its original release.

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Kino also has plenty of interesting Blu-rays. They include the Rock Hudson/Claudia Cardinale spy comedy/thriller *Blindfold* (1965). The release includes an animated image gallery and trailer.

Speaking of thrillers, the distributor is delivering a Special Edition Blu-ray of *Mirage* (1965). This picture stars Gregory Peck about an accountant with amnesia who hires a private investigator (played by Walter Matthau) to find out who he is. What is discovered ultimately makes the hero the target of a murder plot. The disc comes with an interview with co-star Diane Baker, a film historian audio commentary, an image gallery and the trailer.

They also have the John Wayne drama *Pittsburgh* (1942), which follows two friends working in the coal mining industry who pine after the same woman. Many years later, the three reunite and sparks fly once again. They've also got

Reap the Wild Wing

(1942) an adventure picture starring the same actor that involves shipwrecked salvagers.

The Spoilers

(1942) is a western featuring Wayne in more conventional surroundings, fighting off bad guys in Alaska during the Gold Rush. All three Blu-rays come with trailers and image galleries, and the latter also includes a film historian commentary.

Additionally, Kino is releasing a Blu-ray of the Bette Midler tear-jerker, *Stella* (1990), about a single mother and her lifelong struggles as she attempts to raise a daughter all on her own. Eventually, her concerns about providing a good life and opportunities for the youngster lead her to make some hard decisions. It comes with a trailer.

As always, Criterion has a new Blu-ray as well. This week, it's *The Cloud-Capped Star* (1960). It's a much-admired Bengali drama about a young woman who quietly endures having a hard life, in which she must forgo everything she desires, and instead serve the interests and care for her siblings and parents. The noted French film journal

Cahiers du Cinema

ranked it as one of the best pictures ever made in India. It has been given a new 2K digital restoration, a new conversation between moviemakers Saeed Akhtar Mirza and Kumar Shahani, a stills gallery featuring rare pictures and other bonuses.

The Juniper Tree (1991) is another interesting Blu-ray, this time coming from Arbelos Films. This Icelandic tale involves two sisters who get involved in witchcraft. Famous musician Björk

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plays one of the main characters. The feature has received a new 4K restoration from the original 35mm camera negative. And for those who purchase the Blu-ray, they'll get incredible bonuses including three newly remastered short films by director Nietzchka Keene, a new interview with the cinematographer, an archival discussion with Keene, never-before-seen outtakes and a US theatrical trailer.

Golden Globe nominee for Best Foreign-Language Film, *The Mad Adventures of Rabbi Jacob* (1973) is hitting disc for the first time ever courtesy of Film Movement. For those curious, it's a Gallic title about a bigoted Frenchman forced to impersonate a rabbi while on the run from a group of hired killers - and the police. Those who purchase the Blu-ray will see a new 4K restoration of the film and get an interview with the co-screenwriter of the picture.

Warner Archive is giving 3D enthusiasts something to cheer about as they release two of their classic titles on Blu-ray along with an option to watch them as they were originally released. The first is the very strong Alfred Hitchcock classic, *Dial M for Murder* (1954). There aren't many extras listed, but there are plenty of great three-dimensional tricks played in the flick and it will be thrilling to finally be able to see the film restored and ready to watch in both 2D and 3D.

They are doing the same with the musical comedy, *Kiss Me Kate* (1953), which will more than likely involve plenty of big numbers and dancers kicking and throwing themselves around across the screen and right out of your television. In regular 2D, you can now order the George Segal/Glenda Jackson rom-com

A Touch of Class

(1973) in high definition. These three releases are currently available as made-to-order discs on the Warner Archive website...and will eventually find their way onto Amazon and other sellers shortly thereafter.

And finally, some readers will want to know that Disney is re-releasing a stack of older Blu-rays this week. They include all of the Tim Allen *Santa Clause* movies, as well as a massive selection of Disney animated pictures and Pixar flicks. (You can read most of the titles in the kid's listing below).

You Know, For Kids!

It may seem a bit early, but studios are already putting out some family-themed holiday releases. You'll find highlights listed below.

Blu-ray re-releases of many Disney pictures like *The Santa Clause*, *The Santa Clause 2* and *The Santa Clause 3: The Escape Clause* as well as Disney and Pixar animated classics including the animated *Aladdin*, *Brave*, *A Bug's Life*, the *Cars* films, *Finding Nemo*, *Finding Dory*, *The Incredibles*, *Inside Out*, *Monsters Inc.*, *Monsters University*, *Ratatouille* and *Wall-E*

A Charlie Brown Christmas (1965) Blu-ray/DVD combo

A Charlie Brown Thanksgiving (1973) Blu-ray/DVD combo

Curious George: Royal Monkey

Dinosaur Train: Dinosaurs Big and Small! (PBS Kids)

Thomas & Friends: Big World! Big Adventures – The Movie

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On the Tube!

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

The Alienist: Season 1

A Charlie Brown Christmas (1965) Blu-ray/DVD combo

A Charlie Brown Thanksgiving (1973) Blu-ray/DVD combo

Chicago P.D.: Season 6

Dinosaur Train: Dinosaurs Big and Small! (PBS Kids)

Harvest Love (Hallmark TV-movie)

Hawaii Five-O: Season 9

SEAL Team: Season 2

Serengeti (BBC Mini-series)

Supernatural: Season 14

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This is Us: Season 3

When Whales Walked: Journeys in Deep Time (PBS)

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