

Blu-ray/DVD Roundup for April 10, 2020

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Friday, 17 April 2020 04:49



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Hello and welcome to another look at highlights arriving on Blu-ray and DVD. Stuck inside? Some exciting documentaries are on the menu. Since you likely can't make it out to the movies this week, why not give one of these titles a try?

Big New Releases!

The Cold Blue - The 8th Air Force Division who fought in World War II is the subject of this remarkable documentary. This unit was sent on several suicide missions, flying over enemy lines. Nine of the survivors appear in the film to recount some of the events they experienced in

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1943. The movie also uses recently discovered, never-before-seen footage shot by filmmaker William Wyler (who would go on to make *Roman Holiday*, *The Big Country* and *Ben-Hur*) and his crew during several of their dangerous raids.

The press raved about this non-fiction feature. They all thought that this was an exceptional tribute and concluded that the stories and new footage put viewers right in the middle of the action, helping them to understand exactly what these brave aviators went through.

Escape from Pretoria - Set in South Africa during Apartheid, this drama is based on the events of a real-life prison break that occurred in 1979. Two men are arrested and become political prisoners after creating a series of pamphlets for a group who would become the African National Congress. Once in their cells, the activists suffer abuse, but befriend others incarcerated under similar charges. They eventually plot a daring escape.

This picture earned solid notices from critics. A few did comment that while the story was inspiring, it played out in too familiar a manner and the use of many tropes diminished its impact. Still, the majority admired the performances and thought that the film developed plenty of tension over its running time. Daniel Radcliffe, Daniel Webber, Ian Hart and Mark Leonard Winter headline the feature.

The Rest of Us - This story is about a woman whose life changes dramatically following the sudden death of her ex-husband. While attending the funeral, she meets her ex's widow and children. Discovering that the surviving family is in debt and about to lose their house, the protagonist invites them all to stay with her clan. The situation ends up revealing past secrets and forces the surviving members to process and address the man's untimely end.

Overall, critics appeared to like this independent drama. Some did state that the movie was too

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low-key for its own good and wouldn't make a lasting impression. Still, more suggested that the subtle approach worked and provided viewers with an authentic-feeling in taking on a complicated situation. The cast includes Heather Graham, Sophie Nélisse, Abigail Pniowsky, Jodi Balfour and Charles Gillespie.

The Woman Who Loves Giraffes - Anne Innis Dagg may be the very first person ever to study animal behavior. In fact, her research predated Jane Goodall and Dian Fossey, writing numerous papers in 1956 about her time spent with chimpanzees in Africa, before undertaking complex studies of giraffes. This documentary details the woman's life and work, as well as her struggles receiving recognition as a female scientist and her work as an activist. It also shows how long it took for those in academia to take her studies seriously.

This documentary has yet to receive a negative review. While some thought that the storytelling approach was a bit old-fashioned, yet they couldn't help but be amazed and drawn in by the woman's incredible work and the lack of recognition she has received for it. Dagg tells her own story, assisted with some voice-over work by Tatiana Maslany and Victor Garber.

Blasts from the Past!

There are loads of interesting new Blu-rays arriving this week.

Kino has a large selection of early classics arriving on Blu-ray. They include the Marlene Dietrich romantic comedy, *Angel* (1937), the Gary Cooper adventure flick, *Beau Geste* (1939), and another Oscar-nominated title featuring the star called

The General Died at Dawn

(1936). All three have been given new 4K masters and include trailers and detailed film historian commentaries to give viewers plenty of analysis and background information on the titles.

The distributor is also putting out a Blu-ray of *The Great Leap* (1926), a German romantic comedy set in the Dolomites mountain range starring Leni Riefenstahl before she became a notorious documentarian who made propaganda films for the Nazis. This release also includes a commentary with a film historian.

On a lighter note, you can also pick up another Gary Cooper picture with *The Lives of a Bengal Lancer* (1935). They are also releasing the Fred MacMurray crime-comedy, *Murder, He Says* (1945).

Criterion is bringing *Army of Shadows* (1969) to Blu-ray. This foreign-language drama details the French Resistance movement and its underground fighters during WWII. The well-regarded feature won several awards during its original run and the disc boasts a high definition digital restoration supervised by the director of photography, a film scholar audio commentary, interviews from 2007 with the cinematographer and editor, publicity materials, as well as on-set footage and archival talks with the cast and crew.

Finally, Film Movement has a Blu-ray box set called *Alastair Sim's School for Laughter: 4 Classic Comedies*. It includes the British comedies *The Belles of St. Trinian's* (1954), *School for Scoundrels* (1960), *Laughter in Paradise* (1951) and *Hue and Cry* (1947) and is said to include more than two hours of bonus features.

You Know, For Kids!

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Here are some titles that may keep younger kids occupied for an hour or two.

Octonauts: Ocean Adventures

Swift

Thunderbirds

On the Tube!

And here are some TV-themed releases that may distract parents or slightly older viewers.

Hallmark 2-Movie Collection: Paris, Wine and Romance / Rome in Love

Madam Secretary: The Complete Series

Madam Secretary: The Final Season

Moonlight in Vermont (Hallmark TV-movie)

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