

Blu-ray/DVD Roundup for March 26, 2021

By Glenn Kay

For the Sun

Welcome to another look at some of the highlights headed your way on Blu-ray and DVD. This is another strong edition with a couple of major releases in addition to some interesting independent fare. So, since you can't, or likely shouldn't be going out to the movies this week, be sure to give one of these titles a try!

BIG NEW RELEASES!

THE ARBORS: In a small town, a reclusive locksmith lives a quiet life avoiding people and staying in as much as possible. One day, he discovers an odd and mysterious creature on his property. He takes it in and tries to figure out exactly what it is, eventually forming a connection with the strange visitor. But the lead becomes suspicious of it after a series of bizarre and unexplained killings occur.

This independent production is said to be less of a monster movie than one might expect and is more focused on the lead character and his psychological state. There aren't many reviews available for it, but the ones that have popped up have been upbeat. The movie has been described as being tense and atmospheric throughout. It features Drew Matthews, Ryan Davenport and Sarah Cochrane.

BABY DONE: A woman with dreams of becoming an adventurer finds her life headed in a different direction after learning that she is pregnant. While the lead's boyfriend is thrilled by the news, she becomes concerned about the impact motherhood will have on her ambitions. Suddenly, she decides to squeeze as much action and excitement into her life as possible before the baby arrives. This little comedy out of New Zealand garnered a lot of positive

attention from the press.

Admittedly, a couple of write-ups complained that the somewhat impulsive main character was a little hard to like. However, all others stated that the feature was very funny, had good performances and felt authentic in its treatment of the lead's situation. The cast includes Rose Matafeo, Matthew Lewis and Emily Barclay.

THE BLOODHOUND: This chiller is loosely inspired by the writings of Edgar Allan Poe. It involves a young man who decides to head out to the fancy home of a childhood pal whose health has taken a turn for the worse. Wanting to reconnect, he arrives for a short stay, but is disturbed by both his ill friend's weird behavior, as well as that of the figure's twin sister. It turns out to be an awkward stay as the visitor talks to and learns more about this disturbed family.

Critics seemed to appreciate this eerie effort. A small percentage did suggest that the flick was a dreary, pretentious, and at times baffling affair that didn't provide much in the way of chills. Still, the majority complimented the production on being stylish and called the movie an intriguing and effective mood piece. Liam Aiken, Joe Adler and Annalise Basso headline the film.

BREAKING NEWS IN YUBA COUNTY: This comedy follows a suburban housewife who becomes something of a celebrity after her husband (whom she wasn't on the greatest of terms with) goes missing. She finds herself enjoying all the media attention as she sets up a city-wide search party to locate him. While traveling around, the woman gets into all sorts of misadventures as she encounters various local eccentrics and criminals. Reviews were terrible for this feature, despite boasting an impressive cast.

One or two thought it had some chuckles and was entertaining enough to recommend. Yet most thought that the stars had been left adrift, the attempts at humor fell flat, and the satire didn't work at all. It stars Allison Janney, Mila Kunis, Regina Hall, Awkwafina, Wanda Sykes, Ellen Barkin, Matthew Modine, and Juliette Lewis.

COSMOBALL: Remember the dystopian action movie *Rollerball*? It looks like this picture is the Russian equivalent of that flick. After a galactic war has ravaged the planet, the world is in ruins. A new sport has emerged, combining elements of soccer with gladiator fighting.

A nice guy in Moscow who just wants to provide for his family winds up being recruited by a local team and ends up battling for his life inside the arena. This foreign-language effort has been seen by very few in this part of the world. Some of the Russian reviews online have called the effort, well, a bit crazy and also say that it more closely resembles a superhero picture than a gritty action movie. It was nominated in its homeland for its visual effects, so it might provide some nifty visuals and a laugh or two for those who appreciate wacky entertainment.

The cast includes Evgeniy Mironov, Viktoriya Agalakova, Evgeniy Romantsov and Georgiy Bestaev.

HERO DOG: THE JOURNEY HOME: Well, the title already explains who the main character in this film is. The story details the experiences of an Alaskan malamute named Chinook. When a boat crashes on shore in the northern wilderness, the dog decides to lead a blind man who has crawled onshore to safety. The two must traverse great distances and face numerous obstacles along the way.

It looks like this family flick may have been shot as a sequel to a 2013 film called *Against the Wild*. Perhaps the distributor didn't think that the connection to the earlier title was noteworthy or worth advertising. At present, the movie is premiering exclusively on DVD and there aren't any reviews available for it, so curious parties will have to take a chance on the title. It features Steve Byers, Zackary Arthur and Natasha Henstridge.

MADAME: In this documentary from Switzerland, a gay filmmaker (whose previous non-fiction feature, *Garden of Stars*, was about an unusual cemetery in the city of Berlin) presents footage of himself conversing with his flamboyant and taboo-breaking 90-year-old grandmother. The two talk about issues like patriarchy, sexuality, and gender identity. Together, they discuss their own experiences, what they've learned in life and how the public's views on these subjects have gradually changed over the last century. This title hasn't been seen by many viewers outside of Europe and appears to be making its North American debut on streaming services and on disc.

It has played at various film festivals over the past year, where it won a few awards.

NEWS OF THE WORLD: One of the week's biggest new releases is this Oscar-nominated western. Set a few years after the end of the Civil War, an ex-captain travels from town-to-town reading newspapers to the paying public. When he discovers an uncommunicative 10-year-old girl on the road, he attempts to escort her across Texas and deliver the child to relatives. Naturally, the dangerous route puts both of their lives at risk.

Response was very positive toward this feature. A small contingent didn't find the story unique or exciting enough to hold their attention. Yet the consensus was that the performances were excellent and that the filmmakers delivered a solid and engaging western that would appeal to genre fans. The movie is currently nominated for its cinematography, production design, original score and sound.

It stars Tom Hanks, Helena Zengel, Mare Winningham and Michael Angelo Covino.

ONE AND THE SAME: This independent feature has appeared without much warning and looks to be premiering on disc (and perhaps on streaming platforms as well). Apparently, it's a science-fiction/mystery and the only other information available about it comes from the film's plot synopsis. It says that the story follows a young woman who discovers an experiment beyond space and time. She soon discovers that she once had a past life as a teenage boy.

The lead sets out for revenge after figuring out that her alter-ego was murdered by an ex-con. Almost nothing else is known about picture, so if you're interested in the story, you'll have to go in with no other information about it. The cast includes Acoryé White, Makena Taylor, Glenn Plummer and Ignacyo Matynia.

REUNION: If you're looking for something to send a chill down your spine, this genre picture may be for you. It involves a pregnant woman who learns of her grandmother's passing and decides to return home to spend time with her estranged mother. Their initial meeting is tense and only gets more unsettling as time passes. One hopes that she soon realizes that the lives of both she and her unborn daughter are at risk.

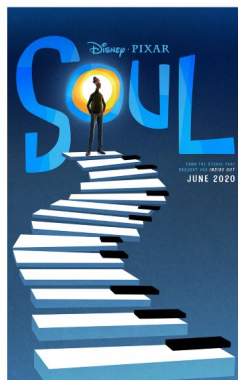
Response from critics toward this feature was reasonable overall. A small group critiqued the

movie for being too slow-moving and not delivering on some of the promising themes and ideas that it introduced. Yet far more thought that the film got stronger and stronger as it progressed, and wound up as a memorable and eerie exercise. Julia Ormond, Emma Draper, John Bach and Nancy Brunning headline the feature.

SOUL: The latest from Pixar and Disney is this animated family flick about a middle-school music teacher who aspires to play jazz professionally. He eventually gets an audition with a legend and makes an impression, but suffers a terrible accident on his way home. The teacher is transported to an otherworldly realm and meets a grouchy soul who doesn't want to inhabit an earthly body. So, the two strike a deal to help each other out.

The press adored this movie and it has been nominated at the Academy Awards for Best Animated Feature, Best Score and Best Sound. There was a minor contingent who stated that the movie played it too safe, talked down to the audience and wasn't memorable. Yet the majority thought it was fun and gorgeously animated, admiring most of the ideas that were being communicated. The voice cast includes Jamie Foxx, Tina Fey, Phylicia Rashad, Questlove, Angela Bassett, Alice Braga, Richard Ayoade and Wes Studi.

BLASTS FROM THE PAST!



Lots of notable older features are also getting high-definition upgrades this week. Shout! is releasing a Collector's Edition Blu-ray of the sci-fi/horror film, *Event Horizon* (1997). This tale follows the crew of a spaceship who discovers another lost vessel and investigates what happened to it. It isn't long before the crew realizes that the ship discovered something truly nightmarish.

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The movie starred Lawrence Fishburne, Sam Neill, Joely Richardson, Richard T. Jones, Jason Isaacs and Sean Pertwee. It was noted during its original release for being quite stylish, but otherwise a missed opportunity. In fact, rumors circulated that the finished product was quite different from the original script and that the studio had tinkered and cut many elements out during post-production. Despite the criticism, the feature amassed a following over the years and there are rumors about a director's cut floating around with roughly 40 extra minutes and a different ending.

This nifty Blu-ray doesn't include that original version (which is currently lost), but it does feature tons of new bonus materials.

You'll get a commentary with director Paul W.S. Anderson (*Mortal Kombat*, the *Resident Evil* series, *Monster Hunter*), an interview with the filmmaker, as well as discussions with the writer, the production designer, the set decorator, the production manager, the second unit director, the location manager and the sound designer. There are also conversations with co-stars Kathleen Quinlan, Jack Noseworthy and Peter Marinker. You'll also get a documentary on the picture that runs over an hour in length, more on-set footage, about 10 minutes of deleted scenes, another bit of concept art from two scenes that didn't get shot and some publicity materials. For fans of the flick, that's a lot of remarkable stuff to digest.

The distributor is also releasing a Blu-ray of the recent French horror title, *Raw* (2016). It's about a vet student who develops a disturbing taste for raw meat. Soon, she begins indulging herself and behaving in more and more disconcerting ways. This release includes a writer/director commentary, a discussion between the moviemaker and a critic, the Australian premiere of the title with a Q&A, a panel about female filmmakers, more interview footage, deleted scenes, trailers, TV spots and a promotional video.

Kino also has some interesting features arriving this week. *Crossed Swords* (1977) aka *The Prince and the Pauper* is a period effort from the UK. Based on the story by Mark Twain, it's about two men from very different backgrounds who look very similar. They switch clothes as a joke and end up having to live out each other's lives.

The Blu-ray includes a new 4K transfer of the movie, a film historian audio commentary, an

interview with star Mark Lester and a trailer. You'll also receive an extended international cut of the film in standard definition.

On the western front, you can also pick up the Stacy Keach effort, *Doc* (1971). This film is another take on the famous O.K. Corral story. This Blu-ray provides an improved 2K master of the movie, a commentary from western authority Alex Cox (who also directed the film,

Repo Man

), as well as a trailer.

The Kaiser of California

(1936) is a German western that has also been given a 2K upgrade.

It was made during the reign of the Third Reich, but apparently features some great cinematography. The disc also comes with a film historian commentary. They also have a Gregory Peck gunslinger picture called *Shoot Out* (1971), which comes with a film critic audio track and a trailer. The same extras are included for the Blu-ray of

Showdown

(1973), a western featuring Rock Hudson and Dean Martin as long-time friends who find themselves on opposite sides of the law and square off against each other.

Wong Kar Wai is a celebrated Hong Kong filmmaker and Criterion is releasing a seven-movie box set of his features called *The World of Wong Kar Wai*. It includes the titles *As Tears Go By* (1988),

Days of Being Wild

(1990),

Chungking Express

(1994),

Fallen Angels

(1995),

Happy Together

(1997),

In the Mood for Love

(2000) and

2046

(2004). All of the movies included have been given 4K restorations so they look as sharp and stylish as they did during their original runs in cinemas. There's a program in which Wai answers questions about his movies from other famous filmmakers, numerous short films by the director, tons of interviews and footage from various festivals, deleted scenes, alternate footage from various titles and much, much more (too much to list here, in fact).

If you're a fan of Wong Kar Wai, you certainly can't go wrong with this set.

If you're looking for some old exploitation flicks, Code Red has you covered. The studio has a Blu-ray of the horror film *Schoolgirls in Chains* (1973), about a maniac who kidnaps victims and uses them as playthings. The distributor describes the film as slimy and "morally corrupt", so that's what you should be ready for if you pick it up. Oddly enough, the movie's cinematographer would go on to shoot some famous TV shows and movies (like *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me*), proving the point that everyone has to start somewhere.

This release features a 2K scan from the original negative and comes with three audio commentaries (one with cast members, another with the director and a third with the director and cinematographer). There's also a making-of and a trailer included.

Those of you who are Marvel movie fans but just want the team-up flicks, can now pick up a new Disney set, *Avengers: 4-Movie Collection*, which contains all of the big superhero epics that were released under that title between 2012 and 2019. One assumes it's a repackaging of previously released discs and will contain all of the bonuses from the individual editions of the movies.

Sony is presenting one of the best science-fiction movies of the past few decades in a new 4K Blu-ray edition. The film in question is *Gattaca* (1997), which is set in a future where one's life path is predetermined based on their genetic make-up. A man must go to extremes and break the rules in order to fulfill his dream of being an astronaut. It's a powerful movie starring Ethan Hawke, Uma Thurman and Jude Law.

Apparently, the extras are all the same, but the image upgrade is quite significant, so if you're a fan of the film who has the set-up for a high-resolution display, you'll likely want to grab this disc.

Paramount is releasing a Blu-ray box set called *10 Best Pictures*. As you might have already guessed, it includes ten Best Picture Oscar winners produced by the studio. Alphabetically, you'll get
American Beauty
(1999),

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The English Patient
(1996),
Forrest Gump
(1994),
Gladiator
(2000),
The Godfather
(1972),
My Fair Lady
(1964),
No Country for Old Men
(2007),
Terms of Endearment
(1983),
Titanic
(1997) and
Wings
(1927).

Warner Brothers is putting out 4K versions of a couple of its titles. You can now pick up a 4K Blu-ray edition of the DC superhero flick, *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice* (2016). This release seems timed to coincide with a new streaming-only HBO Max release of the recent four-plus hour cut of

Zach Snyder's Justice League

(which is the follow-up to this film). While the latter title has been garnering a lot of press since its premiere on HBO Max, it will be coming out on Blu-ray in May.

Their other 4K Blu-ray is an upgrade of the recent *Godzilla* (2014) feature. This title may have come out to coincide with next week's new monster movie from the studio featuring the giant green lizard.

YOU KNOW, FOR KIDS!

Here are some titles that may provide some kid-friendly entertainment:

Anne of Green Gables: Three Movie Collection (PBS)

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Berenstain Bears: The Complete Collection

Hero Dog: The Journey Home

PAW Patrol: Dino Rescue - Roar to the Rescue

Pinkalicious and Peterrific: Playtime with Pinkalicious! (PBS Kids)

Soul (Pixar/Disney)

ON THE TUBE!

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

American Masters: Flannery (PBS)

American Masters: How It Feels to be Free (PBS)

Animal Kingdom: Season 4

Anne of Green Gables: Three Movie Collection (PBS)

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Berenstain Bears: The Complete Collection

Beverly Hills 90210: The Ultimate Collection

The Black Church: This is Our Story, This is Our Song (PBS)

Finding Your Roots: Season 6

The Jamie Kennedy Experiment: First Season

The Jamie Kennedy Experiment: Second Season

The Jamie Kennedy Experiment: Third Season

MacGyver: Season 2

Pinkalicious and Peterrific: Playtime with Pinkalicious! (PBS Kids)

Run's House: The Complete First and Second Seasons

Secrets in Our DNA (PBS)

Soulmates: Season 1

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The State: The Complete Series

The Undoing (Limited Series)

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