

Written by gallupsun
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By Glenn Kay

For the Sun

Welcome back to another look at highlights arriving on Blu-ray and DVD. The new release column isn't quite as busy as normal this time out, but it is filled with some interesting and unusual features worth checking out. So, since you can't, or likely shouldn't be heading out to the movies just yet, why not give one of these flicks a try?

BIG NEW RELEASES!

FUKUSHIMA 50: Based on the 2011 disaster in Japan, this drama tells the story of how a magnitude 9.0 earthquake rocked Fukushima. A nuclear plant manager and his team of engineers risk their lives to try to contain a reactor leak and must also contend with a massive tsunami rushing into the region. Frustrated by a lack of assistance and left alone to deal with the issue, they must prevent an even greater calamity from occurring. Response was generally positive toward this foreign-language feature.

A few reviewers complained that the feature wasn't as impressive as the *Chernobyl* miniseries and that the storytelling techniques felt old-fashioned. Still, the majority said the film made some

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important points about the dangers of nuclear power and thought it was an appropriate and engaging tribute to real-life heroes. It stars Ken Watanabe, Takumi Saitoh, Riho Yoshioka and Hidetaka Yoshioka.

LEAP OF FAITH: WILLIAM FRIEDKIN ON THE EXORCIST: *The Exorcist* is one of the most successful and well-regarded horror films ever made. This documentary was originally made for the Shudder streaming service and is now also being released on disc. It details the entire production through the eyes of director William Friedkin (

The Boys in the Band

,
The French Connection

,
Sorcerer

,
To Live and Die in L.A.

). He describes how he became involved in the project, his approach to the story, and also tells wild tales of the shoot itself.

The movie goes into more history about the director's other films. This feature earned excellent notices. There were one or two critics who weren't overly impressed and stated that they already knew most of the information being relayed. However, the consensus was that the movie was fascinating and Friedkin had plenty of interesting revelations about the movie's creation.

LILY'S LIGHT: THE MOVIE: In this musical for families, a foster mom becomes the keeper of an enchanted lighthouse. The eccentric woman, her talking pets, and her adopted kids do their best to keep the place in order using joy, love, laughter, and songs to deal with any problems that arise. Some of the tunes used in the film have been contributed by Kenny Loggins and Songwriting Hall of Fame inductee Steve Dorff. This feature premiered on streaming platforms recently and is now arriving on disc.

Currently, there aren't a lot of reviews available for the movie. Those that have popped up online suggest that while the feature is unrelentingly sugary and upbeat, the performers do a solid job and suggest that the film should appeal to preschoolers. The cast includes Sherry Hursey, Maxwell Gross, Jordyn Curet, Mindy Sterling and Fred Willard.

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OLIVER SACKS: HIS OWN LIFE: Dr. Oliver Sacks was a British neurologist, naturalist and writer who penned many successful books on a wide variety of subjects related to his fields of study. He often used the experiences of his patients as inspiration, as well as his own personal experiences. The filmmakers bring together Sacks' friends, family members, colleagues and patients as they discuss the man's remarkable life and career. Critics uniformly praised the feature and it has yet to receive a single negative review.

They all suggested that the interviewees were excellent and really helped viewers understand the incredible importance of Sacks' work and provided a clearer picture of the man who created it. In the end, they called the movie a moving and inspirational analysis of a figure who deserves more attention for his good deeds.

W WILLY'S WONDERLAND: This genre picture begins with a loner driving into a small town and having his car unexpectedly break down. When he discovers that the repairs are more than he can pay, the lead asks the local mechanics how he might be able to cover the debt. He agrees to work overnight as a janitor at Willy's Wonderland, a local theme park. Unfortunately, the lead quickly learns that the animatronic mascots are sentient and have a habit of murdering workers.

The concept certainly is an entertaining one and more members of the press recommended the feature than told people to stay away. Those who had issues with the final product, thought that the filmmakers didn't make the most of the engaging scenario and wrote that events felt too repetitive. However, most found it to be an enjoyably crazy, tongue-in-cheek effort that might even become a cult item. It stars Nicolas Cage, Emily Tosta, Beth Grant and Ric Reitz.

BLASTS FROM THE PAST!

Plenty of interesting older movies are receiving Blu-ray upgrades this week. VCI is releasing *The Basher Box Set*

which contains 4K, high-definition versions of Hong Kong action pictures

The Prodigal Boxer

(1972), and

The Awakened Punch

(1973) aka

Village on Fire

. Both flicks are about young martial artists out for revenge on those who have murdered their

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family members. In addition to the improved image quality, the Blu-ray also includes an expert commentary on the first title, an interview on these types of features with an action choreographer, theatrical trailers and some essays on this revenge subgenre and its place in Kung Fu cinema history.

Looks like it could be a lot of fun.

Kino has plenty of new titles to promote. *Dynasty* (1977) is a period effort from Hong Kong, an Emperor who must battle for his survival after being accused of treason. The movie was shot in 3D and this Blu-ray comes with many viewing options, including two different 3D versions. One is in “Real 3D” for specially equipped televisions and the second is an edition that comes with one pair of red and cyan glasses for viewing in an alternate three-dimension format that will play on any TV. Of course, you’ll also get a 2D edition.

This release comes with extras like a short explaining 3D technology, a 3D animated short, a featurette on the format in the 1950s, a promotional short about a department store from the era, as well as a 3D comic book.

Those who enjoy surfing can pick up the drama *North Shore* (1987) on Blu-ray. It stars Matt Adler, Nia Peeples and Gregory Harrison and tells the tale of a young man who travels to Hawaii for the summer. Once there, he learns plenty of life lessons from the local surfers. You’ll also get a director and executive producer commentary, an interview with the filmmaker, deleted scenes, an alternate ending and a trailer.

The Producers (1968) was put out many years ago by Shout! Factory, but now it’s being reissued on Blu-ray from Kino with a 4K image restoration featuring corrected color grading. This classic from Mel Brooks (*Young Frankenstein*, *Blazing Saddles*) is about two Broadway producers who attempt to make money by creating a notably disastrous stage flop – which turns into an unexpected smash success. This version includes a new film historian commentary, as well as an hour-long making of, outtakes and other publicity materials.

Speaking of Mel Brooks, the distributor is also debuting another of his titles on Blu-ray. *Spaceballs* (1987) is a parody of

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Star Wars

that made a huge impression with young viewers during its original run at theaters. It's all very silly stuff, but it does feature an impressive cast (Bill Pullman, John Candy, Daphne Zuniga, Rick Moranis and Brooks himself) and there is a huge demographic who fondly remember the movie. You will be able to pick up a 4K edition of the movie or a regular Blu-ray and both come loaded with bonuses. There's a Mel Brooks commentary, a lengthy interview with Brooks and co-star Rudy De Luca, a documentary about the feature, a discussion with the writer/director and a co-screenwriter, a tribute to co-star Candy, flubs, publicity materials and other extras.

You can also pick up the *Two Films by Lois Weber* Blu-ray set which contains the dramas *A Chapter in Her Life*

(1923) and

Sensation Seekers

(1927). These were early pre-code silent films from a female moviemaker that were released by Universal and depicted the struggles of modern women as they attempt to gain independence. Both titles have received 2K restorations and the later film also includes a film historian commentary.

Kino has a Blu-ray of the teen comedy, *The Wild Life* (1984). This movie is about a high school grad who moves into an apartment with his best pal, hoping to embark on some wild adventures. Unfortunately, their attempt at fun doesn't go as planned, resulting in comic misadventures. The flick had a plenty of familiar faces, including Chris Penn, Ilan Mitchell-Smith, Eric Stoltz, Jenny Wright, Lea Thompson, Rick Moranis and Randy Quaid.

Remarkably, it has only been available on VHS until now and is finally getting a new life on Blu-ray. The disc comes with a commentary from a teen film expert, an interview with co-star Ilan Mitchell-Smith, nine radio spots, and a trailer.

Troma is presenting the cult zombie flick *The Children* (1980) on Blu-ray. This effort follows a town that comes under attack from a horde of undead, irradiated kids. The movie was previously released by Vinegar Syndrome, but has been out-of-print and hard to locate for some time now. There aren't any details available about this version, but one assumes that the image quality and extras should be the same as in the other version.

Ironmaster (1983) is arriving on Blu-ray courtesy of Code Red. This is an Italian fantasy flick about a group of humans living in the Stone Age who must create tools and use their brains to

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fight off a vicious enemy force. The movie arrives with an HD master that was scanned in 2016, as well as interviews with the cast and crew.

Scorpion is releasing *September 30, 1955* (1977) on Blu-ray. It's set in the 1950s and follows a group of teens who go on a crime spree after watching the news and learning about the death of their hero, James Dean. This feature stars Richard Thompson and marks the onscreen debut of Dennis Quaid. You'll get a film historian audio commentary and a trailer on the disc.

Distributor The Film Detective has a Special Edition of *Hercules and the Captive Women* (1963). The sword and sandal effort from Italy involves the legendary hero traveling to Atlantis, dealing with a lovely sorceress and saving the city from an aquatic monster. This Blu-ray comes with a documentary feature about these flicks, a film historian commentary, and a full *Mystery Science Theater 3000* episode in which the hosts poke fun at the movie.

Low-budget outfit Full Moon is making *House of Cruel Dolls* (1974) available on Blu-ray as part of their Eurocine Collection line. According to various sources, it's a trashy little exploitation flick that has been remastered for genre film audiences in its uncut form from the original camera negative for the first time in North America.

You can also pick up Full Moon's quirky B-movie comedy *Shrunk'n Heads* (1994) in high definition. This picture tells the tale of some nice teens who are murdered by a street gang. A voodoo spell resurrects them from the dead as flying shrunk'n heads and the buddies set out to stop the murderers before they do harm to the entire community. The disc includes a new restoration of the fully uncut version of the film, a behind-the-scenes featurette and trailers.

Rising Sun Media is presenting a Blu-ray of the ultra-low-budget tongue-in-cheek horror/comedy [*Killer Piñata*](#) (2015). This one is about a piñata that comes to life to avenge all of its pals who have been beaten open by families during birthday celebrations.

Cult Epics is releasing *The Debut* (1977) on Blu-ray, a foreign-language art film from the Netherlands about a May-December romance.

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Finally, Criterion is presenting a Blu-ray of the romantic drama, *History is Made at Night* (1937). This well-regarded feature is about a divorcee who falls for a Parisian woman, but must contend with the angry ex of his new love who will do anything to win her back. The pair races across Europe trying to evade the jilted and dangerous pursuer. This release includes a 4K restoration of the feature, a conversation about the title with a critic, an interview with another film authority about the movie's director, audio excerpts with the filmmaker from 1958, a 1940 radio adaptation of the picture, and a new program about the impressive restoration of the picture.

YOU KNOW, FOR KIDS!

Here are some titles coming your way that may appeal to youngsters.

BoBoiBoy: Elemental Heroes

Josie and the Pussycats in Outer Space: Season 1 (1972) Warner Archive

Ultraman Leo: The Complete Series (Mill Creek)

ON THE TUBE!

And here are all the TV-themed releases arriving on store shelves.

Ancient Aliens: Season 13 (History Channel)

Baseball: A Film by Ken Burns – Fully Restored in High Definition (PBS)

Blu-ray/DVD Roundup for April 16, 2021

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BoBoiBoy: Elemental Heroes

Hemingway: A Film by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick (PBS)

Josie and the Pussycats in Outer Space: Season 1 (1972) Warner Archive

Le Mans 2020

Pumas: Legends of the Ice Mountains (PBS)

Ultraman Leo: The Complete Series (Mill Creek)

Wedding Every Weekend (Hallmark TV-Movie)

VISIT: WWW.CINEMASTANCE.COM