



By Glenn Kay

For the Sun

Welcome to another look at some of the highlights arriving on Blu-ray and DVD. It's a busy edition with several high-profile features arriving in a wide variety of genres. So, if you can't or shouldn't, head out to the movies this week, be sure to give one of these titles a try!

BIG NEW RELEASES!

BIGFOOT'S BRIDE: Wild Eye Releasing is a distributor who specializes in putting out campy, low-budget and even homemade genre pictures. This horror/comedy is set in the wilderness of North America. The story follows campers who discover the legendary Bigfoot monster. They learn that some of the reports about the hairy figure are false when he begins attacking them.

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The creature also decides to take one of the group members as his bride, leaving the survivors to try to find a way to rescue their friend. There aren't many notices for the title yet, although it did play at a few little film festivals back in 2019. One review that has appeared stated the movie will be amusingly cheesy to those who like B-pictures. It is being released exclusively on DVD.

The cast includes Jordan Phipps, Jessica Megan Rivera and Joel Rogers.

THE FINAL STAND: Also known as *The Last Frontier*, the Battle of Moscow is the inspiration for this biographical war film. As highly-trained Nazi forces advance, a team of young cadets is sent out to the front lines to help weakened army forces protect the city. The teens are thrown into the fray and end up serving as the last line of defense, with many giving their lives over a relentless assault that stretches out more than two weeks. This foreign-language feature appears to have been successful in its homeland, but there aren't many write-ups available for it in this part of the world.

The ones that have appeared so far are mixed. One stated that the fighting scenes were well-staged, but that the dramatic elements were overly sentimental. Another thought that the film was well-made and that the action was as well-executed as any Hollywood feature. It stars Artyom Gubin, Lubov Konstantinova and Sergey Bezrukov.

JUSTICE SOCIETY: WORLD WAR II: This is the latest in a long line of Warner Brothers' animated features based on DC superheroes and set during World War II. It follows the Flash, Wonder Woman, Hawkman, Aquaman and others as they are brought together by a mysterious figure from another time to change the future and help the allies win the struggle. One assumes that this tale also serves as something of an origin story for the Justice League. Response toward the picture was generally positive, but not exceptional.

Those who disliked it said that the story was a mess and that the filmmakers could have created more excitement as the protagonists faced off against the Nazis. However, more said that the characters were well-developed (in particular, the Flash and Wonder Woman) and complimented the end results as being fun to watch. The voice cast includes Stana Katic, Matt Bomer, Omid Abtahi, Darren Criss and Darin De Paul.

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LAND: After a personal tragedy, a woman decides to escape the modern world in order to find new meaning in her life. She decides to travel out to the unforgiving wildness of the Rockies and exist off of the land. Naturally, it's a tough existence and after a serious injury, she finds herself being helped by a local hunter. The protagonist is forced once again to address her personal issues and find a new way to move forward.

Critics were upbeat about the drama, which not only stars, but was also directed by Golden Globe winner Robin Wright. A small contingent did complain that the screenplay didn't manage to properly address the themes of the story and noted that the movie left them cold. However, the consensus was that the film was subtly powerful and that the performances and photography were very impressive. It also features Demián Bichir, Sarah Dawn Pledge and Kim Dickens.

THE LEGEND OF HEI: The lead in this animated feature from Japan is a cat's spirit. When his home is destroyed and deforested by developers, the supernatural entity is left homeless. The feline finds other spirit creatures planning on conquering the human race and taking back their land. However, the cat is separated from the group and meets with a man who decides to teach the animal to control and develop his powers.

The spirit must then decide which side to fight for. There haven't been many notices written for this title, but it has won awards at film festivals and reviews that have appeared have been positive. They have all called the movie gorgeously animated and complimented its remarkably complex story that offers a lot of information for the main character to process. The disc includes the film in its original Mandarin with English subtitles, as well as an English-language dub.

THE MARKSMAN: A patriotic Arizona rancher living near the Mexican border finds a young refugee fleeing from cartel assassins. After taking him in and getting to know the boy, the protagonist unexpectedly finds himself defending the child. He decides to fight back against the criminals pursuing the youngster, as well as prevent border patrol agents from sending the kid back home to certain death. Alas, the press was not overly-taken by this effort.

A small group suggested that the lead actor's performance carried them through the otherwise predictable story. However, most suggested that the talented star's work wasn't enough to make up for the film's slow-pacing and indistinctive, unexciting narrative. Liam Neeson, Jacob Perez, Teresa Ruiz, Alfredo Quiroz and Sean A. Rosales headline the feature.

THE MAURITANIAN: This picture is based on the true story of Mohamedou Ould Slahi, who was detained and imprisoned by the U.S. Government in Guantanamo Bay for years without actually having any criminal charges placed against him. A group of public defenders hears about his plight and heads down to Cuba to try to defend the man. Not only do they discover the horrible abuses that Slahi has been forced to endure, but also learn the shocking truth about the case. Response was solid toward this drama.

A small group did give it poor marks for presenting an important story in a generic and bland manner. However, the majority was so impressed with the performance of the man playing Slahi and found the rest of the cast so engrossing, that they forgave the movie delivering the material in a familiar style. It stars Tahar Rahim, Jodie Foster, Shailene Woodley and Benedict Cumberbatch.

MORGUE: A young man suffers a harrowing accident and finds himself out of money and work. Desperate to find something to make ends meet, he takes a position as an overnight security guard at a local morgue. As the evening wears on, the protagonist begins to witness strange and disturbing sights, including a corpse that won't stay still. Are the dead coming to life or is this the troubled hero having a mental breakdown?

This Spanish-language feature is from Paraguay and was a big hit in its homeland. In fact, there's word of a U.S. remake currently in development. Genre critics have generally been very supportive of the movie so far. One or two have called it slow-paced and ineffective, but more state that the movie has a lot of creepy atmosphere and that the lead is engaging.

The cast includes Pablo Martinez and Abel Martinez.

PIXIE: This crime-thriller dark comedy involves a frustrated woman who, after her mother's death, sets out to pull off an elaborate heist and get out of town. She teams with a pair of misfits to accomplish her goals, but things don't go according to plan and the motley crew finds itself being pursued by not only the police, but a criminal gang of priests and nuns. The movie earned some good reviews during its streaming release a couple months ago. A fraction didn't find the flick all that funny and suggested that it was a poor emulation of crime pictures from the 1990s.

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However, the consensus was that the strange characters were entertaining and that, if you could get on the film's wavelength, there were plenty of laughs to be had. It features Olivia Cooke, Alec Baldwin, Ben Hardy, Daryl McCormack and Colm Meaney. Those interested should note that for the time being it will only be available on DVD.

SCAVENGER: Known in its homeland as *Carroña* (which is a slang term there for low-life), this Argentinian grindhouse flick is set in a post-apocalyptic world. Meat and protein are hard to come by and many are killed as a result. An assassin and organ dealer struggles to survive in this world and seeks revenge for the wrongs done to her by enemies. Apparently, this is an incredibly violent and gritty little effort that is packed with all sorts of violent mayhem.

Critics have said that it works as a no-budget *Mad Max* rip-off and is more stylishly shot than one would expect. However, they also warn that there are a lot of hit-and-miss elements and some of them (including a series of physical assaults) aren't particularly enjoyable to watch. You can watch the disc in its original language with English subtitles or an English dubbed version. Nayla Churruarin, Sofia Lanaro, Jose Manuel Solis Vargas, and Gonzalo Tolosa headline the feature.

BLASTS FROM THE PAST!

It's another busy time for classic titles getting high-definition upgrades. Arrow Video has a Special Edition of the Japanese film, *Giants and Toys* (1958). It's a corporate satire about two warring caramel corporations who embark on elaborate publicity campaigns to outdo each other. One of the companies hires a ditsy teenage girl to act as their new mascot and spokesperson, while also encouraging her to befriend the competition and try to reveal their plans.

This movie is a cult item that is very well-regarded in Japan for the wild and clever advertising campaigns detailed. Remarkably, it has never been released on Blu-ray in North America. So, it's amazing to see the movie finally get a release in this part of the world. This reviewer looks forward to checking it out.

The MVD is delivering some interesting films this week. The first is a Collector's Edition Blu-ray of *Action USA* (1989), an independent feature noted for its incredibly dangerous-looking stunt

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work. The flick has been newly restored in 4K, so those car crashes, giants spills and explosions look all the more stunning. It comes with a commentary featuring a trio of participants that includes the director, lead actor and the cinematographer.

There's also an interview with the moviemaker, a behind-the-scenes featurette on the stunts, a trailer and plenty more. Looks like a flick well worth checking out.

Speaking of action, *Drive* (1997) is a remarkably entertaining flick that got lost in the shuffle back in the day, especially in North America due to a distributor that didn't believe in it. The feature ended up being heavily edited in this part of the world and arriving as a direct-to-video title ... it deserved much better. If memory serves, the original version was dynamically shot in widescreen and featured some memorable and thrilling martial arts choreography. It stars Mark Dacascos (who recently appeared as the main heavy in *John Wick: Chapter III – Parabellum*) as a genetically modified human doing his best to evade being captured by some nasty bad guys who wanted the technology for themselves.

Along the way, he makes a couple of friends (Kadeem Hardison and Brittany Murphy) who try to help him escape. The disc includes the proper director's cut which runs an additional 18 minutes, as well as the shorter video version that U.S. viewers will find more familiar. This release also features a commentary with the director, Dacascos and Hardison, as well as deleted scenes, an archival documentary on the production, cast interviews, and trailers.

Shout! Factory also has some very notable new Blu-rays. *All About the Benjamins* (2002) is an action/comedy with Ice Cube and Omar Epps about a bounty hunter who teams with a hustler to pull off an elaborate heist. This release includes a director and producer commentary, numerous featurettes about the shoot, deleted scenes, a gag reel, a music video, a theatrical press kit, interviews with the cast from the movie's premiere, and a trailer.

Another big title arriving from the distributor is the Collector's Edition of *King Kong* (1976). This remake of the classic monster movie starred Jeff Bridges and Jessica Lange who encounter the big ape and try to save him from being exploited. The flick is flawed and didn't get the best of reviews during its original release, but if you grew up with the picture (like this reviewer did) then you'll probably feel some affection for it. Believe it or not, the movie has never been released on Blu-ray and this edition includes the theatrical cut and the extended television version scanned in 2K.

Other extras include a film historian commentary track, an audio interview with make-up effects man Rick Baker, new interviews with various members of the crew, a ton of publicity materials, not to mention a lengthy panel discussion about the movie from 2016 that was recorded in the Aero Theater in Los Angeles. If you're a monster movie enthusiast, the release of this movie in high definition is a big deal.

Kino also has plenty of Blu-rays coming your way. The first is a set called *The Douglas Sirk Collection*, which contains *New Shores* (1937) and *Habanera* (1937). Both titles feature a movie critic commentary track that details background information about the movies and their importance in film history. The distributor is also putting out a Blu-ray of the western, *Horizons West* (1952), about two brothers in Texas who end up on opposite sides of the law.

This disc comes with an informative commentary and a trailer. Fred MacMurray and Dorothy Malone headline *Quantez* (1957), another western about robbers trying to escape authorities by crossing the border into Mexico. The bonuses on this release are the same as on the previous title.

They are also debuting the comedy *Tank* (1984) on Blu-ray. James Garner plays an army sergeant on his final tour of duty. When he discovers that some of the locals are part of a sinister operation, he decides to borrow a large piece of military equipment from the base and square off against the bad guys. The disc comes with an entertainment journalist commentary, numerous radio spots and a trailer.

Kino also has a Blu-ray of the action flick, *Wild Geese II* (1985), which follows a group of mercenaries who attempt a death-defying mission to break into a German prison. The cast includes Scott Glenn, Barbara Carrera, Laurence Olivier and Patrick Stewart. It arrives with a critic commentary, an interview with co-star Carrera, and a trailer.

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And there are even more Blu-rays to choose from! Criterion is giving the deluxe treatment to the beloved comedy, *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* (1982). The film painted a portrait of teenage life in the '80s and its many pitfalls with a biting sense of humor. It was a big success and helped launch the careers of Jennifer Jason Leigh, Phoebe Cates, Judge Reinhold, Forest Whitaker, Anthony Edwards, Eric Stoltz and Sean Penn.

This movie has received a 4K digital transfer with an improved picture that was supervised by the director. It also comes with the TV cut featuring deleted and alternate scenes. In addition, you'll get a discussion with director Amy Heckerling (*Clueless*) and writer Cameron Crowe (*Jerry Maguire*

,
Almost Famous

), a 1999 documentary on the movie, a 1982 interview with Heckerling and a few other bonuses.

The distributor also has a Blu-ray of the pre-code feature, *Merrily We Go to Hell* (1932). Movies made before the Hollywood production code was established were often more daring than the features that came decades later. This tale follows a married high-society couple who decide to try to solve their personal problems with an open marriage, leading to all sorts of unexpected difficulties. It has been called an early-feminist comment on marriage and arrives on Blu-ray with a 4K transfer, a 1983 documentary on the moviemaker and a film historian video essay.

Those who enjoy arthouse thrillers can pick up a Blu-ray of the Dutch feature, *The Cool Lakes of Death* (1982) from Cult Epics. The movie has been given a 4K restoration from the original camera negative and comes with a newsreel featurette from 1982, as well as plenty of publicity materials.

No Reason (2010) is a German indie horror movie about a woman's lost soul trying to find some kind of enlightenment in another realm. Unearthed Films is releasing this Blu-ray, which comes with a making-of, an interview with cast member Timothy Balme (*Dead/Alive*), a photo gallery and trailers.

Universal Pictures also has a few Blu-ray releases. They are putting out a 4K version of *The Fast and the Furious* (2001) and a 20th Anniversary 4K Edition of the animated favorite, *Shrek* (2001). If old action comedies with Burt Reynolds are more to your liking, you can also pick up

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the

Smokey and the Bandit 3-Movie Collection

, which contains the 1977 original, its 1980 sequel and the final 1983 follow-up (which doesn't have Reynolds in it).

There's a new *Saw* spin-off movie that is arriving at cinemas next week, so Lionsgate has decided to give the original *Saw* (2004) a 4K Blu-ray upgrade. One assumes all the extras will be the same, with the improved picture and sound being the main selling point.

Warner Archive is releasing made-to-order Blu-rays of the Bob Hope comedy, *Bachelor in Paradise* (1961),

the film-noir

They Won't Believe Me

(1947) and the Oscar-winning Gregory Peck western,

The Yearling

(1946). If you'd prefer not to order through their site, you should also be able to find these discs on Amazon.

Finally, LPs have been making a big comeback over the last ten years, resulting in many film soundtracks being repressed or newly-released on the format. Cinema Paradiso Recordings would like everyone to know that they are putting out a "Limited Edition" white vinyl LP of *The Parallax View* (1974) score. It's a very strong collection of orchestral music which was composed by Michael Small. Remarkably, the soundtrack has never been released in any form before, making this an impressive release by the relatively new distributor.

And just to make the deal sweeter, if you head to their official website, you can purchase the LP in a deluxe package that comes with the Criterion Blu-ray of the movie.

YOU KNOW, FOR KIDS!

If your kids haven't seen *Shrek*, you can now enjoy the film together in 4K.

Shrek (2001) 20th Anniversary Edition Universal

ON THE TUBE!

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

Dolly Parton & Friends: 50 Years at the Opry (PBS)

Man with a Camera: The Complete Series

Taking a Shot at Love (Hallmark Channel)

Timeless Love (Hallmark Channel)

When Calls the Heart Double-Feature: Open Season & From the Ashes

VISIT: WWW.CINEMASTANCE.COM

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