

By Glenn Kay

For the Sun

Welcome to another look at some of the highlights arriving on Blu-ray and DVD. This is a very busy week featuring award-winning pictures, well-reviewed independent features, as well as some great family fare. So, if you can't make it out or shouldn't be heading to the movies this week, be sure to give one of these titles a try!

BIG NEW RELEASES!

ABOVE SUSPICION: Based on a true story, this drama follows a young FBI agent who recruits a female informant in small Kentucky town. She begins providing information on illegal activities in the area and the two begin an illicit affair. Unfortunately for both of them, their activities lead them down a murderous path that results in a major scandal. The movie wrapped production back in 2017, but is only being released on disc now.

Critics called this production a missed opportunity. A small group did compliment the performances and felt that the cast's work was reason enough to give it a try. However, most thought that the film couldn't generate thrills or tension, suggesting that a true story doesn't always make for dynamic entertainment. The movie stars Emilia Clarke, Thora Birch, Jack Huston, Johnny Knoxville and Kevin Dunn.

COSMIC SIN: After an intergalactic skirmish with a new alien species from another planet, a group of seven rogue soldiers travel through the galaxy to try to find the creatures' home planet. Fearing that human colonization of space will cause an interstellar war with the aliens, the team plots a massive strike against the civilization in order to prevent future conflict. Reaction was extremely poor toward this independent science-fiction production. One or two reviewers stated that the flick was well-paced and delivered a few B-movie thrills.

Sadly, all others stated that the ideas and themes on display were poorly handled, the dialogue was clunky and the end results were a bit of a mess. It features Bruce Willis, Frank Grillo, Brandon Thomas Lee, Corey Large, C.J. Perry and Costas Mandylor.

THE FATHER: An elderly man living at home finds his grip on reality weakening and his relationship with his family strained when his daughter announces her intentions to move away and hire a nurse to help care for him. The protagonist struggles to process what is occurring around him and his emotions begin to boil over as more information about his plight is slowly revealed. This film received raves from the press and won Academy Awards for Best Actor and Best Adapted Screenplay. Only a couple of write-ups had issues with the feature, finding the storytelling gimmicky and the events disorienting.

The rest said that this technique was the very point of the film and noted that the exceptionally performed movie truly helped viewers understand the fear a person experiences while losing control of their mental faculties. The cast includes Anthony Hopkins, Olivia Colman, Mark Gatiss, Imogen Poots, Rufus Sewell and Olivia Williams.

HUNTED: This thriller involves a woman who meets a charming man in a bar. Unfortunately, after leaving with him, the protagonist discovers that her new man is a psychopath. She escapes his clutches and tries to find safety in a nearby forest. The man pursues her and she is forced to fight back using whatever she can within the rugged natural environment.

Response toward this English-language Belgian/French/Irish movie was slightly more positive than negative. Those who didn't care for the production thought its attempts to merge horror with fantastical elements were ineffective and tonally unbalanced. Slightly more stated that while uneven, this was still an interesting update on the legend of *Little Red Riding Hood*. Lucie Debay, Arie Walthalter and Ciaran O'Brien headline the feature.

MINARI: Inspired by the filmmaker's childhood and personal experiences, this drama tells the story of a Korean man who uproots his family from California, moving them to rural Arkansas in order to start their own farm specializing in unique fruits and vegetables. However, it's a tough road with many setbacks. The financial strain eventually causes great tension within the family. Reaction toward the film was almost uniformly excellent.

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A small contingent said that the movie was sweet but slowly paced and tied things up too neatly at the close. However, everyone else asserted that it was a beautifully acted, slice-of-life feature that paints an accurate picture of the difficulties of moving to a new place. The movie won ultimately an Oscar for Best Supporting Actress. It stars Steven Yeun, Han Ye-ri, Noel Cho, Alan S. Kim, Youn Yuh-jung and Will Patton.

THE NEST: Set in the 1980s, this tale features an ambitious entrepreneur who moves his family from the U.S. to a large manor in England while he explores new financial opportunities. As we learn more about the businessman, it becomes clear that he is financially strapped and is keeping up appearances while the family lives a financially unsustainable lifestyle. As the bills pile up, the spouses begin to turn on each other. The press consensus for this drama was very upbeat.

A tiny contingent found the characters difficult to like and their downward spiral frustrating to watch. Still, the vast majority said it was a low-key, but compelling watch that delivers a sense of unease as it details an upper-class family coming undone. The cast includes Jude Law, Carrie Coon, Oona Roche and Charlie Shotwell.

THE PRINCE'S VOYAGE: This animated film from France involves an old, bipedal simian prince who washes up on the shore of a distant and unknown land. He's found by an ape-boy who takes him into a modern city of monkeys and delivers the traveler to his parents, who are scientists at a local museum. The prince tries to learn the language and ways of these people, but becomes concerned by some of their conservative attitudes. This movie is based on a novel by Pierre Boulle called *Monkey Planet* and was nominated for an award a couple of years ago at a European film festival.

Unfortunately, it seems as if it got lost in the shuffle due to the pandemic and is only now being released in North America. There aren't many write-ups for it, but most online suggest it's a decent film with great visuals that effectively uses the leads to address topics like prejudice. The movie is presented in French with an English subtitle track.

RAYA AND THE LAST DRAGON: Disney's latest animated adventure takes place in a

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fantastic world in which people and dragons once coexisted, until the serpents sacrificed themselves to protect the land from an evil force. In the following years, human communities began fighting to gain control of the creature's ancient powers. One girl discovers a surviving dragon and asks the monster to help her return the land to its former glory. Overall, critics were very impressed with this family flick.

There were a few who thought it was gorgeous to look at, but formulaic with underdeveloped characters and themes. Regardless, the majority opined that this was solid entertainment that looked incredible and featured some standout vocal work. The voice cast includes Kelly Marie Tran, Awkwafina, Gemma Chan, Daniel Dae Kim, Benedict Wong, Sandra Oh and Alan Tudyk.

S--THOUSE: A lonely college freshman thinking about giving up on his education and heading back home decides to attend a frat party. While there, he meets a sophomore who has just experienced a tragic loss and needs company. These two very different people discuss their problems and concerns, sparking up an unexpected friendship over the course of a single evening. This independent feature earned plenty of upbeat write-ups.

A limited number said that the dialogue between the students felt real and honest, but thought this authenticity didn't necessary lend itself to interesting storytelling. However, the overwhelming majority said that the title of the feature was something of a misnomer and stated that the film was a touching and well-acted coming-of-age gem. It stars Cooper Raiff and Dylan Gelula.

SON: Eight years after a pregnant woman escapes from a cult, she and her son are visited by members of the sinister sect who are determined to take her child away. The protagonist and the boy go on the run and try to get assistance from a police detective. But when the youngster unexpectedly takes ill and starts behaving strangely, his mother is forced to take a stand against the cult and protect her child. This independent horror flick received more positive reviews than negative ones.

Articles that panned the movie complained that the story wasn't very original and the attacks felt repetitive. Still, the consensus was that movie was well acted and provided the required gross-outs, while also addressing issues like paranoia. The cast includes Andi Matichak, Emile Hirsch, Luke David Blumm and Cranston Johnson.

SUPERNOVA: After a man is diagnosed with dementia, he and his partner decide to travel across England in an RV and visit people and places from their past. It is all planned out in an attempt to make the most of what little time they have left together. However, when one of the men tries to add unexpected elements to the journey, it adds drama and tension to the trip. This little UK production received plenty of raves during its limited release early in the year.

A handful of reviewers thought that the story was obvious in its attempts to manipulate the emotions of viewers and ultimately didn't make a lasting impression. Yet most thought that while the movie was subtle, the acting was incredible and the tale created a lot of intimate and relatable drama. It features Colin Firth, Stanley Tucci and Pippa Haywood.

TOM & JERRY: This adaptation of the famous cartoon cat and mouse places the famous animated characters in a live-action setting. The story involves a celebrity wedding in a fancy New York hotel. When the mouse Jerry breaks into the hotel to enjoy the food and luxuries being offered to guests, Tom the cat is hired to eliminate the pesky rodent.

The two create chaos as the wedding unfolds, threatening to take down the entire building. The press disliked the end results. There was a contingent who claimed that some of the sight gags worked and that the film would effectively distract and entertain young tykes. Yet the majority complained that this was a poor update and also thought that it spent too much time focusing on the humans instead of the lead animals.

The cast includes Chloë Grace Moretz, Michael Peña, Rob Delaney, Jordan Bolger, Patsy Ferran, Pallavi Sharda, Colin Jost and Ken Jeong.

BLASTS FROM THE PAST!

It's another jam-packed edition if you happen to be looking for high-definition upgrades of classic titles. Universal is presenting a 4K Blu-ray (which also comes with a regular Blu-ray) of the madcap comedy, *Animal House* (1978). This feature from director John Landis (*The Blues Brothers* , *A n American Werewolf in London* , *Trading Places*)

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Spies Like Us

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Three Amigos!

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Coming to America

) deals with a college fraternity of losers getting into politically incorrect hi-jinx and taking down the school's snobs and arrogant dean. It boasts an incredible cast that includes Tom Hulce, Stephen Furst, Jim Belushi, Kevin Bacon, Karen Allen, Tim Matheson, Peter Riegert, Donald Sutherland, John Vernon and musician Otis Day.

Besides the picture upgrade, you'll also receive a reunion featurette, an alumni update, a couple of Scene It? games on the disc that are based on clips from the movie. In addition, it comes with trailers.

The studio is also releasing the Blu-ray set *Dragonheart: 5-Movie Collection*. It contains all of the flicks in the series from the original in 1996 to the most recent straight-to-disc sequel from 2019. Personally, I haven't seen any of the follow-ups, but the original is now old enough that it likely has a following from adults who might have originally seen the film as kids. Now, fans can own the entire franchise in one package.

MVD has a Blu-ray of *Mackintosh and T.J.* (1975). This feature marked the final film appearance of Roy Rogers. He plays a cowboy looking for work who befriends and comes to the assistance of a runaway teen. The disc includes a 4K restoration of the feature, an audio commentary with the movie's co-stars Clay O'Brien and Andrew Robinson, and a reunion with these cast members.

You'll also get an interview with co-star Billy Green Bush and some original footage that was taken on set during production.

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