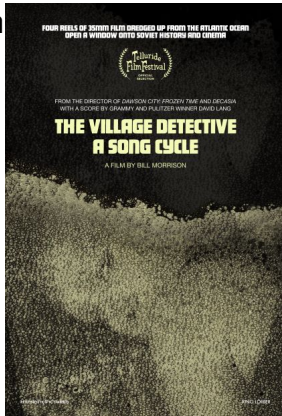


Blu-ray/DVD Roundup for November 26, 2021

By Glenn Kay

For the Sun



Happy Thanksgiving and welcome to another look at highlights arriving on Blu-ray and DVD. This week doesn't offer a lot of major Hollywood releases, but there is plenty of great stuff worth checking out. So, if you can't or shouldn't be heading out to the movies this week, be sure to give one of these titles a try!

BIG NEW RELEASES!

AMERICAN NIGHT: Described as a neo-noir thriller, this tale involves a rare Andy Warhol painting that unexpectedly appears on the underground market. Over the course of the running time, a wide variety of eccentric characters attempt to obtain the valuable piece of art. Some of those involved include a museum curator, an art dealer, a stuntman, and a wannabe ninja. The press disliked this picture intensely.

In fact, there are currently no positive reviews for the feature. All reviewers wrote that while the film was a polished piece of work with a great cast, the writing wasn't up to snuff, it was

overlong and didn't feel like much more than a poor emulation of an old Quentin Tarantino film. It stars Paz Vega, Jonathan Rhys Meyers, Emile Hirsch, Jeremy Piven, Michael Madsen and Maria Grazia Cucinotta.

APACHE JUNCTION: A reporter from the city decides to travel to the old west and finds herself stopping at the title location. She quickly discovers that the frontier town is a haven for criminals and cold-blooded killers. After being targeted by one of these nasty characters, a notorious gunslinger steps in and helps her. The lead is forced to spend time with her violent protector and trust his judgment in order to survive the ordeal.

There aren't a great many reviews for this feature yet, but those that have appeared have been more negative than positive. A few liked the performances enough to recommend the movie, but the majority called the film dull and predictable, stating that it also took itself far too seriously. The cast includes Stuart Townsend, Scout Taylor-Compton, Thomas Jane, Trace Adkins, Ed Morrone and Victoria Pratt.

THE DRUMMER: This drama interweaves several stories of war veterans from different generations. The first character introduced fought in Viet Nam and now serves as a lawyer and advocate for soldiers dealing with mental health issues. Another decides to open a coffee shop with an "anti-war" theme. Several veterans arrive as customers and also share experiences and traumas they experienced during their tours of duty.

This independent drama hasn't been seen by many yet,, but early notices have been decent. One write-up stated that the movie didn't feel authentic and was filled with caricatures. However, a few more have written that the movie was well-intentioned and did a complimentary job of addressing the various problems veterans deal with. Danny Glover, Sam Underwood, Prema Cruz and Frankie J. Alvarez headline the film.

THE EIGHT HUNDRED: Released in its homeland as "Ba Bai," this foreign-language war epic from China is set during the brink of World War II. Eight hundred Chinese soldiers find themselves completely surrounded by invading Japanese forces. After taking refuge in a warehouse in the middle of a Shanghai battlefield, the group must fight its way to safety. This feature won many awards at various film festivals in the Pacific Rim and impressed critics.

One or two complained that the characters weren't well-written and that the story was filled with overused war film clichés. However, most stated that the production design was impressive, the battle scenes were incredible to behold and that the movie successfully displayed the horrors of war and the sacrifices made by soldiers. It features Zhi-zhong Huang, Hao Ou, Yi Zhang and Chen Yao.

LAIR: A family suffering from inner turmoil becomes embroiled in even more trouble after deciding to help a local man's in his efforts to overturn his friend's murder conviction. As it turns out, the odd acquaintance believes that he will free his pal by proving that supernatural forces were involved in the crime. As members of the family become involved in the investigation, they begin facing demons metaphorically and literally that force them to deal with their own personal issues. There have only been a few reviews for this title so far and the response has been mixed.

One called the film effective and claustrophobic. Others suggested that the story didn't really go anywhere and the final results of this chiller were underwhelming. It features Oded Fehr, Corey Johnson, Emily Haigh and Alexandra Gilbreath.

LITTLE FISH: This science-fiction drama picture is set during a global pandemic involving a virus that causes people's memories to disappear. The story follows a romance between two people dealing with the outbreak and its effects. As this occurs, viewers witness earlier events in their lives and how they fell in love. As the film cuts back and forth between time periods, it becomes more and more difficult to determine if they have been infected by the virus.

Reaction was very positive toward this feature. A small number found the editing choppy and as a result didn't find the story captivating. However, the vast majority suggested that the performances were excellent and the plight of the characters was very involving. It stars Olivia Cooke, Jack O'Connell, Soko, Raúl Castillo and David Lennon.

MA BELLE, MY BEAUTY: This US/France co-production involves three people from New Orleans who were once involved in a polyamorous relationship. After the arrangement falls apart, one person disappears while the other two get married and move to France. Two years later, the couple is living an idyllic life. They get a shock when their ex-lover appears at the door hoping to rekindle their unique romance.

Response was decent towards this drama. About a quarter of reviewers complained that the movie was too low-key, didn't go into enough depth with its characters, and noted that there wasn't enough tension or conflict to sustain interest. Still, the majority found the movie interesting and appreciated that it took risks with the story and didn't offer concrete answers about its chosen subject. They believed the film would inspire conversation between viewers. The cast includes Idella Johnson, Hannah Pepper and Lucien Guignard.

OVERRUN: When his sister is discovered to be an informant reporting on an underworld mobster, a concerned brother sets out to protect his sibling. Good thing he's a former extraction specialist who knows how to handle dangerous situations. First, he makes a deal with the criminal to take on an impossible job in the hopes that it will make up for his sister's actions. Of course, instead the lead ends up taking on enemies from all sides.

This feature is only going to be available on DVD. However, notices for the movie were pretty decent. A handful said that the action was impressive, but that it was full of clichés. However, most thought that the film was fun and had incredible stunts that were better than many big-budget action pictures. It features Omid Zader, Johnny Messner, Bruce Dern and William Katt.

RAGING FIRE: In this Hong Kong action picture, a cop who lives on the edge and specializes in dangerous assignments runs into trouble during a string operation. Things start going wrong and the lead discovers that the man he's tracking is a former protégé. The villain is furious over a past disagreement with the protagonist that ruined his career and is determined to exact revenge. The two go head-to-head in a battle to the death.

Critics enjoyed this foreign-language feature. A few did complain that the story was formulaic and predictable. However, everyone else was impressed with the cast, the well-staged fights and called it an excellent throwback to action flicks of old. Donnie Yen, Nicholas Tse, Qin Lan, Angus Yeung and Patrick Tam headline the movie.

RISEN: A meteor crashes in a New York farming town, making the surrounding area uninhabitable and killing various life forms in its path. An astro-biologist is sent to investigate what might be wiping out people and other organisms. She discovers an odd, enormous tree growing from the site of the impact. The lead becomes convinced that the plant is actually a seed from another world and that these and other nearby trees are colonizing the planet.

So far, very few have seen this independent feature. Unfortunately, those who have seen it haven't been impressed. One or two thought the movie had enough interesting ideas to earn it a pass, but all others said the pacing was bad and the end result was unexciting. This title will only be available on DVD. The cast includes Natalie Rose, Terri Purchase, Nicole Sharrock and Wassim Hawat.

THE SHOW: In this British feature written by legendary "Watchmen" comic book writer Alan Moore, an investigator searching for a rare artifact finds himself in a town populated by the supernatural. In order to complete his mission, he's forced to deal with vampires, sleeping beauties, voodoo-practicing gangsters, noir private eyes and masked avengers. After dealing with several surreal figures, the lead begins to question his own sanity. The press generally liked this little fantasy flick.

A small contingent found the dialogue awkward and didn't think the movie offered much beyond surface-level thrills. But most were far more complimentary, calling it entertainingly quirky, engaging, and populated with memorable characters. It stars Ellie Bamber, Tom Burke, Richard Dillane, Christopher Fairbank and Alan Moore.

UNCUT GEMS: This feature follows a New York City jeweler with a serious gambling addiction. After angry debt collectors and others begin questioning his behavior, contacting him and making threats, the protagonist puts all of his efforts into brokering a deal that could save both his business and his life. Reviewers loved this feature when it was originally released at the end of 2019, but it has taken a while for the Blu-ray and DVD to arrive on shelves. Perhaps this is because famed boutique line Criterion is putting it out (in both a 4K edition/Blu-ray and just a regular Blu-ray).

One or two called it so dark that they felt like they were watching a train-wreck. However, all others praised it as an unsettling, but gripping feature with a superb lead performance and a memorable ending. Adam Sandler, Julia Fox, Idina Menzel and LaKeith Stanfield headline the film.

Thevillagedetectiveasongcycle.jpg

THE VILLAGE DETECTIVE: A SONG CYCLE: It's amazing what gems can be found in the strangest of places. This documentary tells the story of a fisherman off the coast of Iceland who caught something unexpected in his net at the bottom of the sea. He discovered four reels of a hard-to-come-by 1969 Russian film called "Derevensky Detektiv," starring Soviet-era character actor Mikhail Zharov. The filmmakers restore the found footage and interweave filmography and interview clips of the movie's lead actor to show how life can endure through celluloid.

Write-ups were excellent for the feature. There were a couple who thought it was edited together in a clumsy way, but most called it interesting and a great introduction to a performer unknown in this part of the world.

BLASTS FROM THE PAST!

There's also plenty to choose from when it comes to older titles. Arrow Video is presenting "The Bird with the Crystal Plumage" (1970) in a new 4K Ultra HD and Blu-ray package. This landmark Italian "giallo" film from Dario Argento ("Deep Red," "Suspiria") about a man who witnesses a murder gets an impressive picture upgrade and comes with all of the extras from previous editions.

They also have a 4K Ultra HD and Blu-ray combo of the filmmaker's follow-up, "The Cat o' Nine Tails" (1971). It's another effective thriller from the director that includes plenty of murder and mayhem.

"Phantom of the Mall: Eric's Revenge" (1989) was a low-budget slasher that became something of a staple on the VHS rental market. Arrow has now secured the rights for a 2-disc Limited Edition Blu-ray release of the feature. For those unfamiliar with the movie, it's about a man whose house is burned down by a greedy developer who wants to build a shopping plaza there. Some time later, the mall opens, but the staff and customers find themselves hunted by a disfigured avenger.

You'll get three versions of the movie, including the theatrical cut, the TV cut and a bonus fan (which is a new recut of the movie using footage from the two previous editions). The disc also comes with a director's commentary, a second track with the producer, a making-of documentary, alternate and deleted scenes, a mass of publicity materials, the screenplay, a

60-page booklet on the film and plenty more!

MVD Visual is putting out “Roy Rogers: His First & Last Double Feature” Blu-ray. It contains the titles “Under Western Stars” (1938) and “Mackintosh & T.J.” (1975). The second film in the collection contains plenty of extras, like interviews with cast members and a reunion of many of the stars. It also has on-set footage, and even a commentary track featuring a couple of actors who appear in the other bonuses.

Shout! Factory has decided to debut “Dracula: Dead and Loving It” (1995) on Blu-ray. This parody of Dracula from writer/director Mel Brooks (“Young Frankenstein,” “Blazing Saddles,” “Spaceballs”) stars the late, great Leslie Nielsen as the title bloodsucker. Brooks participates in an audio commentary for the movie alongside cast members Steven Weber, Amy Yasbeck, Rudy DeLuca and Steve Haberman. The disc also comes with featurettes, trailers and TV spots.

Kino is presenting a new 4K Ultra HD/Blu-ray edition of “Invasion of the Body Snatchers” (1978). This classic horror flick is just as strong as the original movie from 1956 and comes highly recommended. The picture upgrade was approved by the director and this release contains all of the extras from previous versions (including two commentaries, about 10 featurettes on the movie, promotional materials and more).

While we don’t usually deal with TV shows in this section of the column, it should be noted that Kino is also putting out a Blu-ray of “Night Gallery” Season 1 (1969 - 1970). This was another supernatural anthology chiller from Rod Serling (creator of “The Twilight Zone”) and it’s great to see it getting the high-definition treatment. There are historian commentaries on all of the episodes, as well as a special on the show and how it got chopped up and heavily edited when it was rerun on television.

Code Red has a Blu-ray of the French comedy sequel, “La Cage aux Folles II” (1980). The disc has both the original French version with subtitles and an English-language dub, as well as a trailer for the title.

“Stingray” (1978) is an action picture about two drug dealers on the run from the law. Dark Force Entertainment is releasing a Blu-ray of a “Director’s Cut” of the movie. It has been newly

re-mastered and includes a filmmaker commentary, interviews with the director and cast members, as well as a Q&A session, music videos, audio recordings, a trailer, and more.

Criterion is presenting one of the greatest films of all time this week. "Citizen Kane" (1941) is appearing on disc in a 4K Ultra HD/Blu-ray edition, or it can also be picked up as just a Blu-ray. This tale details the life of a publishing tycoon and was based on William Randolph Hearst. There are too many extras to write about here, but just a few of the bonuses include multiple audio commentaries, a rarely-seen feature-length documentary on the movie, archival interviews, a selection of radio plays featuring many of the cast members and much, much more.

The same distributor is also releasing "Menace II Society" (1993) in a similar manner, both as a 4K HD disc and Blu-ray of the film, as well as a standalone regular Blu-ray. This story follows a teenager in Watts attempting to break free from his bleak surroundings and make a better life for himself. The package includes a new restoration of the "Director's cut", two audio commentaries from 1993 featuring directors Albert and Allan Hughes, a 2009 featurette on the making of the film, new conversations with both directors and some of the cast, a 1993 discussion with the moviemakers, deleted scenes, a film-to-storyboard comparison and a trailer.

Gemini Entertainment has a couple of Blu-rays that may appeal to nature enthusiasts. "Acadia Sights & Sounds" (2009) and "Becoming Acadia" (2016) are documentaries focused on the sights and sounds of Acadia National Park in Maine. The first title features various images from the area, while the second focuses on the history of the park.

Best Buy and Lionsgate have teamed up to present an exclusive 4K Ultra HD and Blu-ray "Steelbook Edition" of "Terminator 2: Judgment Day" (1991). The set contains all three cuts of the movie presented in the highest possible quality and packaged in a sturdy case. It comes with previously released bonuses and a new 55-minute documentary on the film that features Arnold Schwarzenegger, Edward Furlong and writer/director James Cameron.

Speaking of steelbooks, Paramount is presenting the hilarious Steve Martin/John Candy comedy "Planes, Trains & Automobiles" (1987) on Blu-ray just in time for Thanksgiving in the very same kind of heavy, metallic case. And they have a 4K Steelbook and Blu-ray that contains both versions of "The Ten Commandments" (1923 and 1956).

If you're a fan of Woody Allen, you may be excited to see a group of his movies being released on Blu-ray for the first time in the U.S. by Quiver Films. The set is called "The Woody Allen Collection" and it contains "Bullets Over Broadway" (1994), "Mighty Aphrodite" (1995), "Everyone Says I Love You" (1996), "Celebrity" (1998), "Small Time Crooks" (2000), "The Curse of the Jade Scorpion" (2001), "Hollywood Ending" (2002) and "Anything Else" (2003). There are a few lesser works in there, but some fantastic stuff as well – the first two movies are excellent and "Small Time Crooks" is a great deal of fun.

Severin has a Blu-ray of the British drama "All or Nothing" (2002) from writer/director Mike Leigh ("Secrets & Lies," "Topsy Turvy"). It's an award-winning, all-star effort about three lower-class families struggling to get by in London. It stars Timothy Spall, Lesley Manville, Ruth Sheen, Sally Hawkins and James Corden. The disc features a new scan of the movie as well as interviews with most of the cast and crew.

Finally, Warner Archive is presenting a couple of made-to-order Blu-rays that can be purchased through Amazon. They include "Lullaby of Broadway" (1951) and "The Thin Man Goes Home" (1945).

YOU KNOW, FOR KIDS!

If you're looking for kid-friendly entertainment, then here is your only option for the time being.

"Sesame Street: Wonderful World of Friends!" DVD

ON THE TUBE!

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

"American Experience: Citizen Hearst" (PBS) DVD

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Written by gallupsun

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“Night Gallery” Season 1 (1969 - 1970) Blu-ray

“Sesame Street: Wonderful World of Friends!” DVD

“To the Manor Born” The Complete Series (BBC)

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