

Blu-ray/DVD Roundup for June 23, 2023

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
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Welcome to another look at some of the highlights arriving this week on Blu-ray and DVD. This edition is filled with several big releases that fared well with critics. So, if you can't make it out to the movies this week or need to stay indoors, be sure to give one of these titles a try!

BIG NEW RELEASES!

AVATAR: THE WAY OF WATER: Some 13 years after the original *Avatar*, writer/director James Cameron returns with the first of several planned follow-ups to his science-fiction epic. Sixteen years after the events of the first movie, the lead has started a family on his new alien home world of Pandora. His peace comes to a quick end when a new team of human soldiers arrive to colonize the planet. The protagonist tries to keep them safe by moving everyone to a distant water-based community. However, the villains continue their pursuit and the family must square off against them.

The movie earned generally solid reviews and broke box office records, becoming the all-time third-highest grossing film worldwide (the first *Avatar* still stands at number one). Those who disliked the film complained about the story and called the movie overlong and draining. However, more than three-quarters were wowed by the spectacle and visual effects (which won

an Academy Award), stating that it would impress anyone who enjoyed the original.

There are all sorts of different editions, including 4K Ultra HD, 3D and Blu-ray, so be sure to check the specs on each version to make sure you get the one that is right for you. The film stars Sam Worthington, Zoe Saldana, Sigourney Weaver, Stephen Lang, Cliff Curtis, Joel David Moore, CCH Pounder, Edie Falco, Jemaine Clement and Kate Winslet.

GUY RITCHIE'S THE COVENANT: Also known as *The Covenant*, this drama involves a U.S. Army Sergeant serving in Afghanistan. While on assignment, his squad is attacked by Taliban forces. The military man is saved by his Afghan interpreter, who goes to extreme lengths to get them both to safety. When the lead discovers that the government is not honoring their word to give Afghan helpers safe passage to the U.S., he sets out to find and extract the man himself.

Critics gave this picture high marks. A small contingent found it melodramatic and called its critical view of the government heavy-handed. Everyone else was impressed by the performances, called the film extremely tense and appreciated its attempts to bring important issues to light. The cast includes Jake Gyllenhaal, Dar Salim, Antony Starr, Alexander Ludwig, Emily Beecham and Jonny Lee Miller.

I AM T-REX: This animated feature from China is set in the age of dinosaurs. A young T-Rex lives with his father who is the leader of their valley community. When a nasty foe decides to fight for control of the region, the violent battle results in a tragic end for the dad. The young T-Rex son runs away for good, traumatized by what he has witnessed. Later, he meets other dinosaurs and asks them to train him so that he can vanquish his enemy and bring peace back to the valley.

No one has seen the movie in this part of the world, so there are currently no reviews available for it. Parents should probably be warned that it appears that several characters may meet a violent end over the course of the running time. The disc appears to contain an English-language dub of the original Cantonese. As of this writing, no English voice cast has been listed.

POLITE SOCIETY: A London teenager of Pakistani descent spends her days dreaming about being a stunt woman and practicing martial arts with her supportive older sister. When her elder sibling quits her studies and quickly announces that she is getting married, the teen becomes upset and suspicious. Despite the initial friendliness of her potential in-laws, the youth is determined to sabotage the relationship and stop the pair from getting married.

This comedy earned lots of praise from the press. A tiny number couldn't get on the film's wavelength, calling it strange and commenting that it misses its opportunities to delve into serious drama about its subject matter. However, the vast majority thought the movie was hilarious. They stated that this high-energy, witty effort surprised them with some over-the-top moments and a warm-hearted sense of sisterly love.

It features Priya Kansara, Ritu Arya, Nimra Bucha and Akshay Khanna.

RODEO: In this French drama, a teenage misfit finds solace in the world of motorcycles. When she sets out to join a community of dirt bikers who perform stunts, she is surprised to find that the gang is completely male-dominated. The protagonist attempts to fit in and win them over, but a painful injury puts her on the sidelines and causes her further struggles.

Reaction toward this foreign-language feature was very positive. A small contingent found the icy characters hard to relate to and couldn't get emotionally involved in the proceedings. Still, the general consensus was that despite some minor issues with the story, the movie was interesting, gritty and tense enough to ultimately draw them in.

Julie Ledru, Yannis Lafki, Louis Sotton and Junior Correia headline the feature.

SKINAMARINK: Two children wake up in the middle of the night to find that their parents have disappeared and their home is completely empty. Even worse, all of the doors and windows leading out have disappeared. The kids decide to move to the living room and watch TV in order to pass the time until someone arrives to help them. Unfortunately, they soon hear a frightening, disembodied voice urging them to come upstairs.

This independent horror picture earned more upbeat reviews than negative ones. Close to one-third thought that after an unsettling opening, the story ground to a halt and events became tedious and dull instead of scary. But most complimented the film as stylish and creepy. They believed it effectively tapped into childhood fears and made a lasting impression.

It stars Lucas Paul, Dali Rose Tetreault and Ross Paul.

A SNOWY DAY IN OAKLAND: In this independently-produced comedy, a San Francisco psychologist decides to end a romantic relationship with her business partner and move across the bay to Oakland. Once there, the lead opens her own practice. The move raises eyebrows among neighbors, who don't believe that she'll be able to find anyone willing to pay to talk about their personal problems. But when a developer arrives planning to turn the street into a parking lot, locals want therapy and even ask for help in saving their businesses.

This title is a streaming and direct-to-disc DVD-only release. Thus far, there have only been a handful of reviews. Half thought the tone was off and that the message wasn't sharply delivered, while the same number called it corny but fun and stated that it benefitted from a talented cast.

The movie features Keith David, Nicole Ari Parker, Sean Maguire, Michael Jai White, Loretta Devine, Marla Gibbs and Tony Plana.

SURVIVE: A woman with suicidal tendencies completes treatment at a facility and heads home,

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only for the plane she is traveling on to crash in the snowy mountain wilderness. There is one other survivor, who informs the lead that they will have to trek a great distance to find help and safety. Despite some reluctance, she realizes that the two of them must look out for each other to survive and tries her best to assist him.

This independent disaster film/drama was released at theaters in some international territories, but is debuting on disc and through streaming sites in North America. Notices from Europe were not ideal. Write-ups noted that the movie was nicely shot, but that story elements focused too much on one character, were too exaggerated and that the film lacked believability.

Sophie Turner and Corey Hawkins headline the feature.

YOU KNOW, FOR KIDS!

These titles may be of interest to children.

I Am T-Rex (animated movie from China) (Well Go USA) Blu-ray

Reboot The Complete Series – The Definitive Mainframe Edition (Shout! Factory) DVD

Stan Lee's Superhero Kindergarten: Super K Time Trippers (Ncircle) DVD

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