

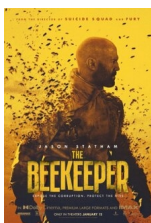
Welcome to another look at some of the highlights arriving on 4K Ultra HD, Blu-ray and DVD. This is a busy edition that features a mix of studio pictures, independents and micro-budgeted eccentricities. So, if you can't make it out to the movies this week or need to stay indoors for a few days, be sure to give one of these titles a try!

BIG NEW RELEASES!

AMERICAN STAR: A hitman nearing retirement decides to travel to Spain's Canary Islands for his final assignment. After arriving, he is told that his mysterious target has left the area and will return in a couple of days. The lead decides to wait it out and take in his tranquil surroundings in the meantime. He quickly finds himself drawn in by the locals, the beautiful surroundings and an impressive shipwreck. When the individual returns, the lead learns that the person may have a connection to his new friends.

This film was generally well-received by critics. About one-quarter did state that the plot was predictable and that the style was too slow to make a lasting impression. However, the majority thought the cast were excellent and suggested that the film was an engaging, low-key existential drama.

For the time being, this is a DVD-only release. It stars Ian McShane, Nora Arnezeder, Oscar Coleman and Thomas Kretschmann.



THE BEEKEEPER: This tale follows a beekeeper with a secret past living quietly in a Massachusetts barn where he tends to his colony. When the retired teacher who owns the property is taken for all she has by cybercrime scammers and commits suicide, the tenant decides that he has to act. As it turns out, the protagonist was once a special operative who knows exactly how to eliminate the criminal organization responsible.

Overall, the response was upbeat towards this action picture. About one-quarter of reviewers thought the film was generic and didn't take full advantage of its unusual concept, leaving them unimpressed with the proceedings. However, the majority described the film as an entertaining, old-fashioned throwback to action pictures of yesteryear, providing plenty of fun mayhem and thrills.

This picture is available in a 4K Ultra HD and Blu-ray combo or as a standalone Blu-ray. The cast includes Jason Statham, Emmy Raver-Lampman, Bobby Naderi, Josh Hutcherson, Jeremy Irons, Phylicia Rashad and Minnie Driver.

BEFORE THEY VANISH: An elderly rancher who has devoted his life to caring for and preserving the rare Nokota breed of horses gets terrible news from his doctor. After struggling with cancer for many years, he is told that the illness is now terminal and that he has little time left. Knowing that buyers will likely purchase the animals for slaughter and wipe out the horse breed, the protagonist must quickly try to find a way to save them.

This independent picture is based on a true story and was given a limited release a few months ago, but hasn't been seen by many at present. So, curious parties will have to go into the movie without knowing the general feeling about its quality.

Christine Carapico McGowan, Elizabeth Carrapico, Yvette Running Horse Collin and Michael Filisky are listed as cast members in this feature.

BETWEEN WAVES: A woman on various medications after the disappearance of her lover starts having visions of him in this science-fiction/drama. She soon begins to suspect that he may have traveled to a parallel universe. Friends suggest that she needs to take more meds as she begins to think about other worlds and whether or not she may even be in the correct timeline.

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This film from Canada has been making the festival rounds since 2020 and was released at cinemas in its homeland, but has only recently found a U.S. distributor. Members of the press who have seen it have been slightly more positive than negative. Those who didn't care for it suggested that the movie was confusing and left too many unanswered questions. Others thought while it wasn't perfect, this was a well-shot and fascinating story about obsession and grief.

Fiona Graham, Luke Robinson and Sebastian Deery headline the feature.



DRIVE-AWAY DOLLS: After breaking up with her girlfriend, a free-spirited young woman yearns to leave town and have fun in another city. She convinces an uptight female acquaintance to let her tag along on a road trip delivering a car to Tallahassee. Little do the pair know that they have been given the wrong vehicle to take to their faraway locale. Criminals pursue them as the women drive and form a close friendship.

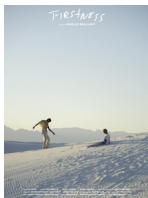
This comedy was co-written and directed by Ethan Coen (of the Coen Brothers team who made *Raising Arizona*, *Fargo*, *No Country for Old Men* and many other critically lauded titles). The press wasn't overwhelmed by the movie, but did give it more recommendations than pans. About one-third of write-ups complained that the gags were hit-and-miss, the characters weren't engaging and that the film seemed slapdash in execution. However, the majority thought the eccentric characters were fun to watch. They called elements of the story hilarious and admired the film's boldness.

It stars Margaret Qualley, Geraldine Viswanathan, Beanie Feldstein, Joey Slotnick, C.J. Wilson, Colman Domingo, Pedro Pascal and Matt Damon.

FATHER OF NATIONS: This independent science-fiction/drama from north of the border is set years after a catastrophic event has put humanity on the verge of extinction. An accident hampers a loner, who is discovered and taken in by a small community of survivors. He and the group do their best to find some kind of purpose, despite being short on supplies and ideas on how to continue long-term into the future.

Apparently, the little picture was made over a period of several years. It did get a theatrical release in Canada at the end of 2022 and has recently been picked up for distribution on disc in the U.S.. There currently aren't many professional reviews for the picture, but online viewers have given their thoughts. While some suggested the film was a bit too long and some of the performances stiff, they commented that it was beautifully shot and dealt interestingly with deep themes.

It features Nathan Horch, Ed Ogun, Kyra Macpherson and Lindsay Christopher.



FIRSTNESS: Here's an independent production that appears to have been shot during the COVID-19 pandemic, before arriving on streaming platforms and now, a few years, on disc. The story follows three characters in the desert. A father struggles with mental illness while traveling with his non-binary son. The pair unexpectedly encounter an ex-con looking for work. Strangely enough, they all start to communicate and come to a deeper understanding of each other.

Not many critics have seen the picture, but the ones who did responded positively towards it. They suggested that the movie was strange, dreamy and didn't seem to follow a traditional

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storyline. Still, they noted it was sweet, gentle and made points about tolerance and understanding without preaching to the audience.

Tim Kinsella, Spencer Jording and Caleb Cabrera headline the picture.



IT'S QUIETER IN THE TWILIGHT: NASA's Voyager program is noted for the launch of two space probes in 1977. Their creators hoped these instruments would collect new and exciting data from Jupiter, Saturn, Neptune and Uranus and transmit it back to Earth. This documentary deals with the engineers and scientists who made the probes, but garnered little public attention for their work. Now elderly, the group speak about their contributions to the project, also noting that their lives will likely end before those of their creations.

Everyone who saw this picture was impressed. They wrote that while a lot of details are unloaded on viewers, they should be able to keep up with the technical talk and understand it all. Compliments were also paid to the film for shining light on the incredible work of the individuals who have put together these metallic travelers and now sent them past their targets into interstellar space.



JUSTICE LEAGUE: CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS PART TWO: This DC superhero animated adventure is a follow-up to the previous chapter that was released on disc a few months ago. It picks up the story about multiple versions of familiar heroes like Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman fighting a powerful and sinister force who threatens to destroy not only the Earth, but all of its parallel universes. This final showdown reveals who comes out on top and survives the ordeal.

So far, no members of the press have seen the final product, so there are no opinions about its overall quality. The first film was well-received, so hopefully this sequel can equal or better the previous chapter. The movie is being released in a 4K Ultra HD and Blu-ray Steelbook and is also being made available as a standalone Blu-ray.

The voice-cast includes Jensen Ackles, Stana Katic, Jimmi Simpson, Troy Baker, Jennifer Hale and Lou Diamond Phillips.

MONOLITH: A podcaster is the lone character in this low-budget independent science-fiction drama. Desperate to build an audience, she uses less-than-professional methods to try and get ahead in her field. The central character eventually finds a story lead and talks to a maid who believes that a specific black brick (that her employer has stolen) contains supernatural powers. As the podcaster investigates, she begins to wonder if she has uncovered an incredible conspiracy.

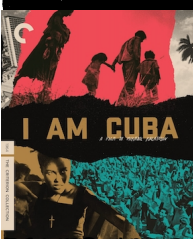
Reception for this effort was reasonably good. A small number did suggest that the emphasis on audio over visuals and the confusing nature of the story left them unsatisfied. However, the majority complimented the claustrophobic feel and thought the film was clever, creepy and left them with plenty to think about.

Lily Sullivan headlines the feature.

Blu-ray/DVD Roundup for April 26, 2024

Written by gallupsun

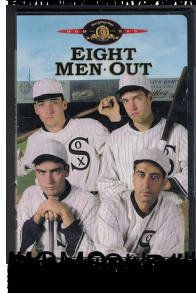
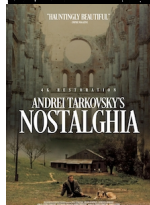
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Universal is releasing a Blu-ray of *The Cat and the Canary* (1927) with Laura LaVerne, Grubbs, Hale, Forrest Stanley, Tully Marshall, George Astor, Eben Finck, Martha Mattox, Arthur Edmund Carewe, etc. (Blu-ray only)