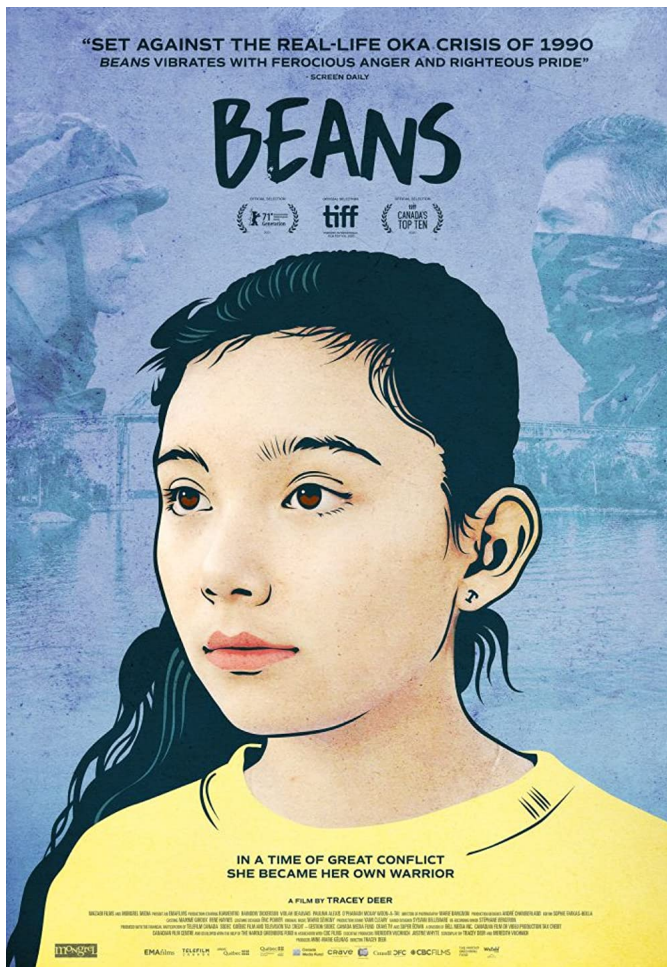


Written by gallupsun

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By Glenn Kay

For the Sun

Welcome back to another look at new releases on Blu-ray and DVD. Once again, It's a busy edition with plenty of entertainment in a wide variety of genres. 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!

THE ADDAMS FAMILY 2: This sequel to the 2019 animated family film begins with Morticia and Gomez becoming concerned that their children will soon grow up and leave them behind. In

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order to reaffirm family bonds, they decide to pack up a camper and head out with the kids on a lengthy holiday. These unusual tourists see the sights and get themselves into all kinds of trouble during their travels. Critics were less-than-enthused with this follow-up.

About one quarter of them were pleased that the story took the characters out of their natural element and described the movie as fun. However, the majority complained that it didn't do justice to the original source material and came off as a bland and forgettable animated feature. The voice talent includes Oscar Isaac, Charlize Theron, Grac Chloë Moretz, Bill Hader, Nick Kroll, Javon 'Wanna' Walton, Wallace Shawn, Snoop Dogg and Bette Midler.

ANNIE LIVE!: Based on the comic strip and 1977 Broadway musical, this production aired live on NBC in December of last year. The story follows a kind, but mistreated girl who is adopted by a billionaire. The nasty, envious orphanage owner is none-too-pleased about the relationship and comes up with a nasty plan to ruin the youngster's newfound happiness. While this adaptation technically aired on television, its release seemed a significant enough event to warrant a mention in this category.

The press also responded favorably toward this production. They wrote that while the live staging caused a few minor technical issues, the performances and songs were uniformly great and won them over. The cast includes Celina Smith, Taraji P. Henson, Harry Connick Jr., Nicole Scherzinger, Tituss Burgess and Megan Hilty.

THE AWAKENER: Loosely based on a comic book, this Brazilian picture from 2018 tells the story of a frustrated ex-special agent with military training who decides to take the law into his own hands. He dons a mask and becomes a vigilante. The figure focuses his attention on taking down corrupt politicians and businessmen that he knows are responsible for abusing the general public and stealing money from them. This picture was nominated for a few technical awards in its homeland, including sound and visual effects, but it still hasn't been seen by many in this part of the world.

A few online reviews have popped up and those haven't been raves. They claim the film is a hammy and over-the-top action opus that doesn't offer anything new or exciting. Kiko Pissolato, Tainá Medina and Samuel de Assis headline the feature.

BEANS: Based on the 1990 Oka Crisis that occurred in Quebec, Canada, this coming-of-age tale involves a 12-year-old child in a Mohawk community. When the Indigenous population starts protesting and uprising against cruel government officials, it leads to a 78-day stand-off. Over this period, the youngster is forced to grow up more quickly than anticipated and protect her territory. Critics were very positive about this feature.

A handful of them stated that while the event depicted was an important and relevant one, the storytelling was a bit clumsy and left something to be desired. However, the majority commented that the young lead was excellent, the movie dealt honestly with important issues, and the final results were compelling and powerful. It stars Kiawentiio Tarbell, Violaah Beauvais, Rainbow Dickerson and Joel Montgrand.

BEYOND FURY: This independent British action picture follows a familiar revenge-movie formula. During a night out, an ex-mercenary and his pregnant wife are attacked by a group of mobsters. The hoods murder the man's partner and unborn child, but fail to finish him off. After recovering, he decides to make those responsible endure even more pain and suffering than he went through, exacting revenge in the most violent manner possible.

There aren't many notices available for this title. Those that have popped up suggest that the low-budget movie is reasonably well-produced and the villains are suitably over-the-top. Yet they also say that it may be too graphic, and that the story was predictable and clichéd. The cast includes Nick Roberts, Giovanni Lombardi Radice, Dani Thompson and Jeff Stewart.

DON'T LET HER IN: Full Moon Entertainment (who produced the long-running "Puppet Master" and "Gingerdead Man" series) is presenting this low-budget horror flick. It's about a young couple who rents a room out in their spacious home. One assumes they don't end up doing a very detailed background check on their new tenant, because the seductive figure ends up causing trouble, invading their minds, beds, and lives. The film premiered on the Full Moon channel on Amazon Prime Video earlier in the year and is now debuting on disc.

Reviews online from genre critics say that if you're a fan of B-movie horror, it's a decent enough effort. They note that the script should have been developed a bit more, but that the cast is good and that the movie was fun to watch. The cast includes Kelly Curran, Lorin Doctor, Austin James Parker and Cole Pendery.

THE DRY: After twenty years in the big city, a federal agent returns to his tiny Australian hometown to attend the funeral of his childhood friend. He is told that his old pal allegedly killed his own wife and child before taking his life. After being asked by relatives to look into the deaths, the protagonist reluctantly stays in the area to investigate. Unfortunately, his presence raises questions about the disappearance of his 17-year-old female friend who vanished nearby when he was just a teenager.

Notices were excellent for this low-key thriller. There were a few who didn't find the movie or mystery tense enough to keep them hooked. Still, everyone else complimented the photography, mood, and performances, stating that the movie was well-acted, suspenseful, and gripping from beginning to end. It stars Eric Bana, Genevieve O'Reilly, Kier O'Donnell, John Polson, Sam Corlett and Bruce Spence.

ESCAPE FROM MOGADISHU: Inspired by a true story, this political thriller is set in 1991 during turbulent times. When the capital of Somalia is overrun by various rebel groups fighting the military junta, the lives of foreigners working at nearby embassies are put at risk. When the North Korean and South Korean consulates come under fire, workers from the two adversarial nations put aside their differences and try to help each other get out of the warzone. The movie earned a great deal of positive press.

One or two reviewers complained that it didn't accurately reflect the various conflicts or present authentic characters. Regardless, all others called the movie an exciting nail-biter with a couple of incredible escape sequences. They also suggested that the film efficiently handled complex issues like the tension between North and South Korea. Kim Yoon-seok, Jo In-Sung, Heo Joon-ho and Kim So-jin headline the feature.

LAST NIGHT IN SOHO: A shy, aspiring fashion designer heads to London to attend university. She has a hard time making friends and ends up moving off campus to a strange old apartment in Soho. Once there, the lead begins having visions of a woman who lived in the same room during the 1960s. The student witnesses disturbing things that influence her work and inspire her to find out what happened to this person.

More members of the press liked this psychological thriller than disliked it. About one quarter thought it was stylish, but didn't think the final reveal was satisfying and still had questions about

what they saw. However, the majority called it a slick, creepy, and compelling exercise, and enjoyed the fact that a few small aspects of the story were left open to interpretation. The cast includes Thomasin McKenzie, Anya Taylor-Joy, Matt Smith, Diana Rigg, Aimee Cassettari, Rita Tushingham, Michael Ajao and Terence Stamp.

THE LAST SON: A murderous outlaw wanders across the Old West in fear of an ominous warning given to him – that one of his children will ultimately kill him. With bounty hunters and a sheriff on his tail, the criminal decides to hunt his adult children down and wipe them out in order to end the curse. He starts picking them off one by one as he moves from town to town, but will his mission actually cause the prophecy to be realized? Critics didn't seem to care about the answer.

A small contingent wrote that this was an interesting, grim western with a good lead performance. But many of the write-ups found the main character difficult to relate to and the story lacking in drama, suspense, and excitement. It features Sam Worthington, Heather Graham, Thomas Jane, Machine Gun Kelly and James Landry Hébert.

LITTLE GIRL: This documentary details the life of a seven-year-old French child named Sasha, who was born as a boy, but has always known that she is a girl. The crew follows the reaction of the family to the youngster's proclamation. It also captures them as they try to help her confront outdated norms and find acceptance in her small town from both adults and fellow students. The non-fiction feature earned uniform raves from reviewers.

In fact, there currently are no negative write-ups about the picture. They all state that the film is a sensitive and moving portrait of Sasha, displaying her struggles and small victories in life. The group also suggested that the naturalistic filmic approach used, helps paint an accurate and relatable account that will touch anyone who watches it.

RED STONE: After a teenager sees his brother being slaughtered by a gangster outfit, a nasty Southern crime boss behind it hires a dangerous hit man to wipe out the witness. With the FBI also hoping to find the youngster, the main character rushes to locate and eliminate the kid. But as he gets closer to his target, the lead begins to question his orders and whether he can go through with the execution. There aren't a great many reviews for this independent period flick just yet, but those that have appeared, have been split on the final results.

One wrote that the performers were engaging, that the movie rose above its low-budget limitations. The other called it repetitive and predictable, stating that there were better viewing options out there. Neal McDonough, Michael Cudlitz, Mike Dopud and Dominic Scott Kay headline the film.

THIS GAME'S CALLED MURDER: A wealthy, but dangerous man who has made his fortune producing red high-heeled shoes for women struggles to deal with his rebellious daughter, who is less-than-impressed with his business practices. She begins posting her opposition online and gets caught up in a violent online game along with her dad, mother, and the family's goons. Few members of the press have seen this feature, but a couple of online write-ups have appeared. Some have called it crazy and said they were amused by the film's anarchistic streak, but others state that the humor felt forced and the characters too exaggerated and over-the-top to involve them in the story. Now, interested parties can pick the movie up and decide for themselves. It features Ron Perlman, Natasha Henstridge, Vanessa Marano and Judson Mills.

TIME: Fox Rich is the subject of this documentary. It details 20 years of the woman's life as she campaigns for the release of her husband, who is serving a 60-year sentence for a robbery that the two of them committed. We hear her story of what occurred and how she has raised their children while fighting for his sentence to be reduced. This picture premiered on Amazon Prime at the end of 2020.

It was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Documentary and earned nothing but praise from journalists. There were a small number who weren't overly sympathetic toward the subject due to their admission of guilt in the crime. Regardless, the consensus was that the film illuminated horrible issues about the way black men are treated by judges and the prison system, as well as the suffering that their families go through while their spouses serve interminable jail terms. The high-end Criterion line is premiering this feature on Blu-ray.

TITANE: After being struck by a car, a female suffers a terrible skull injury and has a titanium plate fitted into her head. When she is released from the hospital, she begins behaving oddly and becomes physically attracted to the vehicle that nearly killed her. Years later, she meets Vincent, a tortured figure who is addicted to using steroids in order to preserve his waning body. They find a connection and try to help each other deal with their unusual problems.

This bizarre French picture won the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival and the press gave

it very solid notices. A small percentage hated the characters and couldn't get onto the movie's odd wavelength, finding the experience baffling. Still, the vast majority were completely taken in by what they saw, describing it as a provocative and shocking body-horror drama that was impossible to forget. It stars Agathe Rousselle, Vincent Lindon and Garance Marillier.

WheelofFortuneandFantasy.jpg

WHEEL OF FORTUNE AND FANTASY: This Japanese drama involves three women whose stories are told in three individual chapters. One finds herself involved in an unexpected love triangle, another attempts in vain to trap and seduce a love interest, and a third has an unusual romantic experience because of a misunderstanding. The movie then traces the trajectories between their choices and regrets. The movie won and was nominated for several awards at various film festivals over the past year.

Critics were also very impressed. Only one person posted a negative review, suggesting that the tales featured didn't add up to much. Yet the overwhelming majority called it a wonderful and fascinating feature. They also appreciated that it showed how decisions are made in a little-seen and personal way.

The cast includes Kotone Furukawa, Kiyohiko Shibukawa, Katsuki Mori and Aoba Kawai.

BLASTS FROM THE PAST!

There are also plenty of older features being dusted off and given image upgrades. Arrow Video is releasing the hugely popular Italian cult film "Deep Red" (1975) in a Standard Special 4K edition (that also includes a regular Blu-ray). This is a fantastic horror flick about a musician who sees a woman being murdered in a distant apartment window and then attempts to solve the crime. He puts himself in a lot of danger as the killer eventually begins stalking him. It's an incredibly stylish and effective movie that stands as one of the best from director Dario Argento ("The Bird with the Crystal Plumage," "Suspiria," "Tenebre," "Phenomena," "Terror at the Opera").

This release presents both the exceptional 127-minute full-length original version and the 105-minute cut that was released internationally. In addition to the improved picture quality, you'll get all of the excellent previously released bonuses and extras about the title.

"Red Angel" (1966) is a chilling war picture from Japan featuring frontline medics dealing with the horrors of war and ultimately suffering from their own demons. The Blu-ray comes with an introduction from a Japanese movie expert, a film historian commentary, a visual essay on the movie, and plenty of publicity materials.

They also have a Blu-ray of the Italian creeper "Shock" (1977). It follows a family dealing with a vengeful ghost in their new home. The spirit is actually the wife's ex-husband. It eventually possesses the couple's young son, resulting in some very uncomfortable scenarios.

This Blu-ray includes a 2K restoration of the film, both the Italian and English language versions (with front and end titles also in each dialect). There's a film historian commentary, an interview with co-writer and co-director Lamberto Bava ("Demons"), a discussion with the feature's other co-writer, a video essay on the movie, a critical appreciation of the picture, a new interview with knowledgeable Italian film critic and authority Alberto Farina, a trailer, TV spots, and a photo gallery.

If you're looking for a comedy, Shout! Factory is presenting "Liar Liar" (1997) on Blu-ray as part of a Remastered 25th Anniversary Edition. The hit film starred Jim Carrey as a mischievous man who finds himself compelled beyond his control to tell the truth. His sudden honesty creates all sorts of chaos every time he opens his mouth. The movie has been given a 2K scan from the film's inter-positive and comes with featurettes on the writing of the movie, as well as a look back at the picture's impressive cast.

You'll also get a deleted scene, outtakes, an archived director commentary and more!

Kino is presenting the Jack Lemmon/George C. Scott courtroom drama "Inherit the Wind" (1999) on Blu-ray. This feature arrives on disc with an entertainment journalist commentary providing background information on the film, as well as some trailers. They also have a 4K restoration of "Three Women" (1924), a drama about a socialite and her daughter being taken advantage of by a paramour. It arrives with a film historian audio track.

The great Blue Underground line has a couple of horror flicks coming your way. “The Stendhal Syndrome” (1996) is a later work by Dario Argento (“Deep Red”). Asia Argento plays a young woman suffering from the title condition who is attacked by a vicious killer. She later takes revenge and then begins acting out in unsettling ways. This 2-disc Special Edition features a well-reviewed 2K restoration of the feature, an audio commentary with an expert on the movie, interviews with Asia Argento, as well as the film’s co-writer, and the make-up effects team.

It looks like this Blu-ray will also include additional bonus discussions, as well as publicity materials.

“The Toolbox Murders” (1978) is arriving in a 4K Ultra HD and Blu-ray set. This notorious horror flick is about a deranged handyman going on a murder spree with power drills and other dangerous items. In addition to the new, high-quality transfer, it comes with a cast and crew commentary, a film expert audio track, interviews with the director, some of the stars, and a video essay on the picture. You’ll also receive the trailer, a TV spot, radio commercials, a poster and still gallery, and plenty more!

ClassicFlix is putting out “The Little Rascals Volume 4” on Blu-ray. This is another collection of comedic shorts featuring the young comedians getting into all sorts of trouble. All of them were made between 1922 and 1928 and, as expected, the set will include some bonuses.

Additionally, Cohen Media Group is putting out “Expresso Bongo” (1959) on Blu-ray. This satirical musical follows a promoter who discovers a bongo player (played by popular musician Cliff Richard) in a coffeehouse and tries to make him into a media sensation. The disc contains the full and original 1959 theatrical version, which includes a number of songs that were cut out of the later and more commonly available 1962 cut, that was rereleased later to capitalize on Richard’s popularity.

Fans of The Beatles will be happy that Criterion is rereleasing “A Hard Day’s Night” (1964) in an upgraded 4K Ultra HD + Blu-ray set. This classic musical is presented on disc with all of the same extras, but everything included now has improved picture quality.

“The Capture” (1950) is also arriving on Blu-ray courtesy of The Film Detective. This well-regarded crime/drama is about a fugitive who ends up falling for the wife of the man whose death he is responsible for. The image has been newly remastered for this release and it comes with a movie expert commentary, a featurette on cast member Teresa Wright, and another special on the director, John Sturges (“Bad Day at Black Rock,” “The Magnificent Seven,” “The Great Escape”).

If Japanese animated features are more to your liking, one of the genre’s most famous is coming your way. “Akira” (1988) is arriving in a 4K and Blu-ray set from FUNimation. It’s about a young boy in futuristic Neo-Tokyo who acquires telekinetic powers. Curious parties will have to do some research to see if this edition includes any extras besides the high-quality picture.

Kit Parker Film is presenting a Blu-ray/DVD combo package of the WWII picture “A Walk in the Sun” (1945) with a “definitive” 4K image restoration. The UCLA Film & Television Archive worked on the transfer and it comes with a historian commentary, as well as a featurette on WWII films, some newsreels on the picture, and much more.

Low-budget horror distributor Troma has some interesting new Blu-rays coming your way. They include the comedic slasher picture “Blood Hook” (1986), which was the debut feature from Jim Mallon (who later became a producer on “Mystery Science Theater 3000”). They also have a Blu-ray of “Evil Bong” (2006). Both of these discs will likely include some bonus features.

Additionally, Troma is putting out “The Sexy Box” Blu-ray set, which includes the studio’s low-budget teen-sex comedies “The First Turn-On!” (1981), “Waitress!” (1982), and “Stuck on You!” (1983).

Sandpiper Pictures has a Blu-ray of the well-regarded Charles Dickens adaptation of “Nicholas Nickleby” (2002) starring Charlie Hunnam and Christopher Plummer. Additionally, they have the cheesy dance musical, “Salsa” (1988), which ever so-slightly predated the Lambada craze (which also included a couple of movies, as well).

Like Mexican wrestling movies? VCI is presenting a Blu-ray box set featuring eight titles starring Mexican wrestler Santo. It’s called “Santo: El Enmascarado de Plata” and includes the English-language versions of “Santo in The Wax Museum” (1963), “Santo in The Treasure of

Dracula" (1969), "Santo vs. The Riders of Terror" (1970), "Santo in The Vengeance of the Mummy" (1971), "Santo vs. Frankenstein's Daughter" (1972), "Santo & Blue Demon vs. Dracula and the Wolfman" (1973), "Santo and Blue Demon vs. Dr. Frankenstein" (1974), and "Santo and Mantequilla Napoles in The Revenge of La Llorona" (1974).

With the recent reimagining of Candyman doing well at the box office, Vestron has decided to release one of the sequels to the 1992 original on Blu-ray. "Candyman III: Day of the Dead" (1999) is another tale featuring the famous killer. It's considered the weakest in the series, but at least you can now pick it up in high definition and own the entire collection (the first two films are available through Shout! Factory).

Finally, Warner Archive is making made-to-order Blu-rays available of the war movie "Edge of Darkness" (1943) and the crime mystery/comedy sequel, "Song of the Thin Man" (1947). You can order these discs exclusively through the Amazon website.

YOU KNOW, FOR KIDS!

Here are some titles that may appeal to kids.

"The Addams Family 2"

"Annie Live!" (NBC/Universal)

"The Little Rascals Volume 4" (ClassicFlix)

ON THE TUBE!

And it looks like the TV adaptation of "Annie" is this week's sole TV-themed release.

Blu-ray/DVD Round-up for Jan. 21, 2022

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“Annie Live!” (NBC/Universal)

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