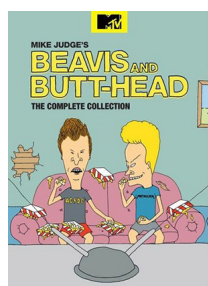


DVD/Blu-ray Roundup for Feb. 17, 2017

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
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Welcome back to another look at new releases arriving on Blu-ray and DVD. This time out, it's an impressive mix of Hollywood fare and independent features. So if you can't make it out to the movies this week, be sure to give one of these titles a try!

Big New Releases!

Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk - A soldier is hailed as a hero and made part of a halftime show at a Thanksgiving football game. Surrounded by the celebration, he remembers the harrowing details of what actually occurred on the battlefield. This drama from Ang Lee (*Brokeback Mountain*)

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Life of Pi

) didn't get a big push over the holiday season and only mustered middling notices. Part of the problem seemed to be the High Frame Rate technology employed. Many complained that the visuals were a distraction and left events feeling stilted. Maybe it'll play better on a home theater. It stars Joe Alwyn, Kristin Stewart, Chris Tucker, Garrett Hedlund, Mackenzie Leigh and Vin Diesel.

Bleed for This - Boxer Vinnie Pazienza is the subject of this biopic, which tells of his rise to the spotlight after winning two World Championship fights. Soon after, he breaks his neck in a car crash. Against advice from physicians, he decides to mount a comeback and continue boxing. Reviews were solid for this effort. They suggested that while this underdog story was a predictable one, the lead performance was so charismatic and the energy level so high that the movie still delivered. The cast includes Miles Teller, Aaron Eckhart, Katey Segal, Ciaran Hinds and Ted Levine.

Christine - Note: This title is being released on DVD only this week. A Blu-ray release will follow

Based on true events, this dark and disturbing feature tells the story of news reporter Christine Chubbuck, who worked as an on-air personality in Florida in the 1970s. She also suffered from severe depression and the movie chronicles her struggles with the disorder and awkward interactions with others. This received raves, complimenting the phenomenal lead performance of Rebecca Hall (how she didn't get an Oscar nomination is anyone's guess) and the film's attempts to grapple with a serious illness. It also features Michael C. Hall and Tracy Letts.

The Edge of Seventeen - This coming-of-age comedy/drama follows a moody teen who becomes furious after learning that her best friend has begun dating her brother. She attempts to confide in a teacher and begins to look elsewhere for friendships as she endures this troubled time. Overall, critics were very positive about this effort. A scant few found it uneven, but it has been described by the majority as an honest and authentic portrait of the teenage experience. The movie stars Hailee Stanfield, Woody Harrelson, Kyra Sedgwick and Haley Lu Richardson.

King Cobra - Based on a novel and true events, this independent drama involves a suburban man who becomes a gay adult film producer. Unfortunately, he finds both himself and his leading man in danger after the pair become targeted by rival pornographers. Reaction to this effort was split. Some believed that it was an unpretentious, yet chic thriller with a grim undercurrent. Others stated that the story itself was unremarkable and the movie felt a bit shallow. The cast includes Garrett Clayton, Christian Slater, James Franco, Keegan Allen, Alicia Silverstone and Molly Ringwald.

London Town - Set in London of the late 70s, this drama is about a teenager subbing for his injured cab driver dad. He gets the fare of a lifetime when Joe Strummer, lead singer of The Clash, hops in; the two embark on a daylong adventure. Notices were split, with a few more critiques than recommendations. Some argued that the ride was fun enough to earn its fare.

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Others complained that the material was handled in too soft and sentimental a manner, which they felt made light of the unfortunate circumstances of its characters. It features Jonathan Rhys Meyers, Daniel Huttleston, Dougray Scott and Natascha McElhone.

Maybe Tomorrow - This small, French-language Austrian feature played on film festival circuit back in 2013, but it took a few years to find distribution. It involves two students who meet up online and decide to get together for a hike to the top of a mountain, where they will end their lives. Along the way, they share their thoughts, experiences and disappointments. As mentioned, it hasn't been seen by many yet nor has it gotten a lot of reviews, so interested parties will just have to take a chance. Florent Arnoult and Alix Benezech play the kids.

Priceless - A troubled widower loses custody of his daughter and takes a job moving cargo in this faith-based thriller. When he discovers that he's actually helping human traffickers, he attempts to save them and rediscover his religious values in the process. This one didn't get a lot of press and the notices that did come weren't very complimentary. While they wrote that the themes were relevant, they called it a slow and unexciting suspense picture that generates no momentum. Joel Smallbone, Bianca A. Santos, Jim Parrack and David Koechner headline the film.

Stake Land II - This independent horror picture is a sequel to 2010's *Stake Land*. It reunites many of the original cast members. Set in a world where a vampire epidemic (much like a zombie infestation) has spread, the story involves a group of individuals attempting to survive. In this follow-up, a new vampire arises and attacks the young lead from the first film. He heads out to reunite with his old chums and enact revenge. This one is being released straight-to-DVD, so if you're interested, you'll just have to take a chance. It stars Nick Damici, Connor Paolo, Laura Abramsen, Bonnie Dennison and Steven Williams.

We Are the Flesh - Known as *Tenemos la Carnage* in its homeland of Mexico, this little horror flick scared enough viewers at film festivals to get a distribution deal from Arrow Video. The post-apocalyptic story involves a pair of siblings who are taken in by a strange hermit and forced to dig a strange underground structure for him while acting out his wishes. Critics generally liked it, although they warned possible viewers that this was a hard, ugly and shocking film. While there were several who found it too exploitative to give a pass, others were impressed with the visuals and disturbing subject matter. It features Noe Hernandez and Maria Evoli.

Blasts From the Past!

A few clusters of old-fashioned goofiness are making their debuts on Blu-ray. Universal are releasing the B-movie classic, *It Came From Outer Space* (1953) and they are presenting it in 2D as well as its original 3D. This one is about a writer and his schoolteacher girlfriend who witness a meteor crashing to Earth in the Arizona desert. He check the crater out and sees that's it really a spaceship containing a hideous monster, but the wreckage is covered by dirt by the time authorities arrive. Of course, his story is scoffed at and soon the townsfolk begin undergoing strange changes. The disc comes with a featurette on the movie, 3D trailer and a film historian commentary.

The comedic genius of Don Knotts can finally be witnessed in high definition with the Universal release of one of his most popular titles, *The Ghost and Mr. Chicken* (1966). In it, a timid reporter investigating a murder composes a piece claiming a local estate is haunted and ends up being threatened with a liable suit. To prove he isn't fibbing, he must return to the premises and figure out what is occurring at the creepy old estate. In the process, he may even end up solving the mysterious death. This isn't high art, but the rubbery faced actor may impress children and nostalgic viewers with his slapstick shenanigans.

Kino have a few Blu-ray titles as well. They have a double feature disc that includes two Buster Keaton silent films. *Steamboat Bill Jr.* (1928) and *College* (1927). The first is considered among the performers best and features some elaborate physical comedy on its riverboat setting.

23 Paces to Baker Street

(1956) is a thriller with Van Johnson and Vera Miles about, you guessed it, a writer who stumbles into a extortion conspiracy in London.

Perhaps the most famous of their releases is the prehistoric-set *One Million Years B.C.* (1966) which feature some iconic imagery of its lead actress, Raquel Welch. The plot involves a caveman who is thrown out of his village by a rival. He finds the female lead living with another tribe. She's forced out of her group as well and the two attempt to make a go of it together, fighting monsters and surviving volcanic eruptions.

Warner Archive have a curious addition as well. It's a Blu-ray of the Robert Mitchum thriller, *The Yakuza* (1975).

Finally, Criterion are delivering a belated Blu-ray of *The Tree of Wooden Clogs* (1978). This was supposed to be a few months back but was delayed. It's an Italian drama about family working a farm at the turn of the 20th century and one boy's attempts to attend school and benefit from an education. The movie has also been restored for Blu-ray release and comes with an hour long TV program detailing the production of the film as well as archival interviews and other bonuses.

You Know, For Kids!

Here are this edition's kid-friendly releases.

Blaze and the Monster Machines: Race Into Velocityville

Littlest Pet Shop: Pet Stars

Scooby-Doo! Shaggy's Showdown

Thomas & Friends: Wild Water Rescue

Thomas & Friends: The Adventure Begins

Wacky Races: The Complete Series (Warner Archive)

On the Tube!

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TV-fans have plenty of new titles to pick up as well.

Beavis & Butthead: The Complete Collection

The Bureau: Season 2

Deep Water

Gunsmoke: The Long Ride

Kojak: Season 1

Mercy Street: Season 2

Nash Bridges: Season 3

Nash Bridges: Season 4

Quarry: Season 1

Star Trek: Enterprise: The Complete Series

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