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ENTERTAINMENT

## DVD: *Doctor Who* Stumbles

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**DOCTOR WHO SEASON SEVEN PART ONE** (\$24.98 DVD; BBC) -- Ever since Russell T. Davies brilliantly rebooted *Doctor Who* with a deadly serious Christopher Eccleston, we've been spoiled. Eccleston bolted unceremoniously (and unfortunately) after just one season. But he was replaced by David Tennant, who was widely and immediately (and correctly) hailed as "the best Doctor ever!" A decent budget didn't in fact spoil the show and the series was cool and smart and fun. God help the person who has to follow Tennant, I thought, only to have Matt Smith step in and be widely and immediately (and

pretty much correctly) hailed as "the best Doctor ever!" All praise due to Tennant but Smith has built on what Tennant created and the show went from strength to strength. It reached a new peak in season six with a long arc that was rich in drama and portent. Some episodes were stand-alone (and weaker for it) but almost all of them pushed the major story forward with relentless energy to a thrilling finale. So here we are halfway through season seven and everyone seems exhausted. The writers clearly weren't up for another major storyline and settled into one-off episodes. But after the ambition and complexity of season six, that simply won't do anymore. It doesn't help that the one-off episodes have been rather weak overall and that the climax of Part One was very badly handled -- both too obvious, too dragged out and unsatisfying in about eight different ways. (Sure, I teared up, but what of it?) The show needs to take a long break after this season, recharge its batteries and pick up the gauntlet it tossed down. When the show can be that great, good isn't good enough and so-so (which is exactly what most of these five episodes and the tepid Christmas special -- not included here -- amount to) is unacceptable. The Doctor deserves much better.

**THE EXPENDABLES 2** (\$39.99

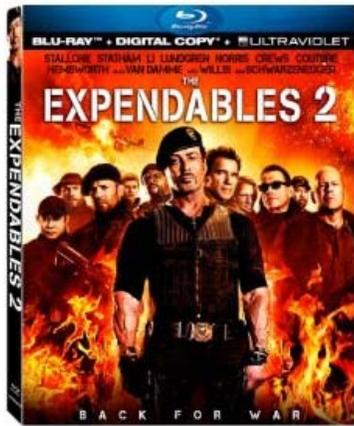
BluRay combo; Lionsgate)

**LAWLESS** (\$39.99 BluRay combo;

Anchor Bay)

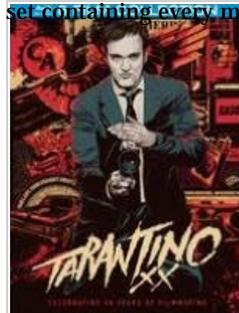
**MEN IN BLACK 3** (\$55.99 BluRay 3D  
combo; Columbia Pictures)

**PARANORMAN** (\$ BluRay 3D combo;  
Focus Features) -- These are exactly the  
sort of movies people skip when they're  
playing at the local cineplex. But because  
they know the stars and have just seen



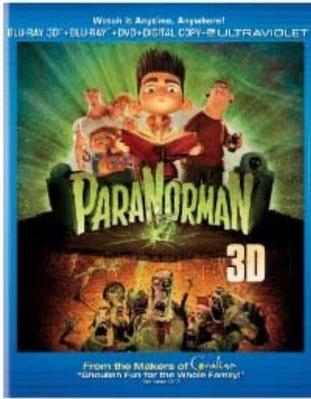
the trailers and advertising, they rent them rather than checking out one of the genuine classics from 20 or 30 or 60 years ago that line the shelves and offer genuine greatness. Of course, sometimes you do find a gem among recent releases, but one out of four is not a great average. *The Expendables 2* was more of the same with even more retro action stars thrown in. It made more than the first one around the world so you can bet there will be an *Expendables 3*. *Lawless* is a by the numbers period drama about bootleggers (the good guys) and the ruthless lawmen (the bad guys) trying to shut them down. A very good cast is the lure here. The lure of *MIB3* (which comes out November 3) has always escaped me from the first film of the franchise. This time around they spice up the formula by going back in time. There's no formula in *ParaNorman*, a stop-motion animated film that deserves a wider audience and will hopefully find it now on BluRay and DVD. John Goodman is in a lot of films this year, but this contains his best work. Perfect for the kids in the family who feel left out because they're too young to watch *The Walking Dead*.

**TARANTINO XX** (\$119.99 BluRay; Lionsgate) -- Director Quentin Tarantino is celebrating the 20th anniversary of his feature film debut with a new movie in theaters (*Django Unchained*) and a boxed set containing every movie he's directed



so far as well as *True Romance*, a key script from Tarantino that was a peak for the late director Tony Scott. You get five hours of new features

and complete BluRay editions of *Reservoir Dogs*, *Pulp Fiction*, *Jackie*



*Brown, Kill Bill Vol 1 and 2, Death Proof and Inglorious Basterds, as well as Scott's True Romance.* (Nitpickers will

wish his segment from *Four Rooms* as well as the films *Natural Born Killers* and *From Dusk Til Dawn* were here to make this complete. But if they were here, still others would say, what about the episodes he directed for *CSI* and *ER* and what about his early shorts? Gee, you can't please some people.) Taken as a whole, it's actually more impressive and more solid than I would have expected. Tarantino seemed out of gas until *Inglorious Basterds* revived his flair. In context, *Death Proof* feels very much of a piece with his other work (no one would accuse Tarantino of thematic inconsistency in the genres he explores) though I would still like to see a shorter cut (like 55 minutes) rather than a longer one and we should still be able to see the original theatrical presentation of *Grindhouse*. *Jackie Brown* plays stronger, *Reservoir Dogs* holds up and with so much more to make his case as a talent, the many flaws of the dazzlingly structured *Pulp Fiction* seem less important. Chances are you own them already if you're a fan. But if you're new to BluRay, this is a very strong set.



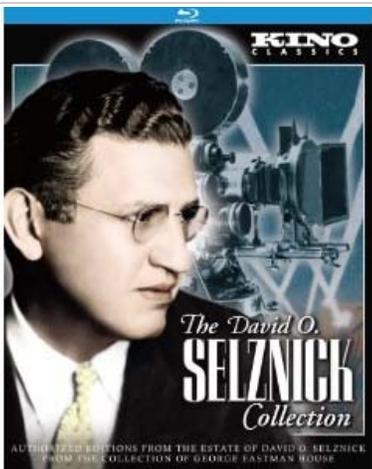
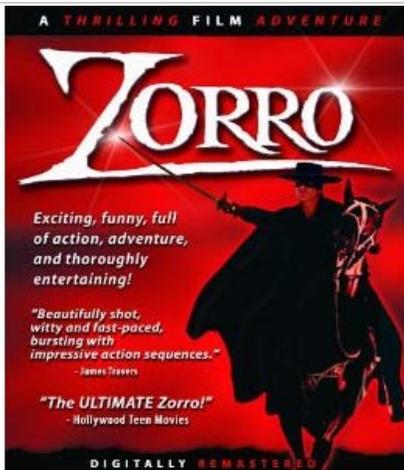
**PIER PAOLO PASOLINI'S TRILOGY OF LIFE** (\$79.95 BluRay; Criterion)

**ABRAHAM LINCOLN** (\$34.95 BluRay; Kino)

**ZORRO** (\$24.98 BluRay; Sommerville House)

**THE DAVID O. SELZNICK COLLECTION** (\$99.95 BluRay; Kino) --

Like any movie lover, there are certain major directors I just don't get. Their sensibility, their aesthetic, the stories that interest them and how they tell them -- whatever the reason, our tastes are out of sync. So it is with Pier Paolo Pasolini, the famed director who has never made a movie I've really liked much other than his very early work *Mama Roma*. But Criterion keeps pushing me. Like a good friend or a great film teacher, they keep bringing his work back before me. Take another look, they say. This is important. Here we have three of his late films, an earthy trilogy that tackles the famed tales of *The Decameron*, *The Canterbury Tales* and *The Thousand and One Nights*. These new editions look very good given their source material and the copious extras put Pasolini and his work in perspective. I need no prodding to check out one of



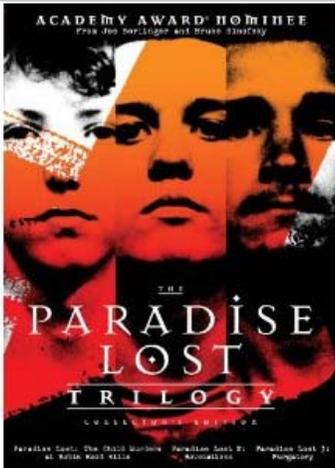
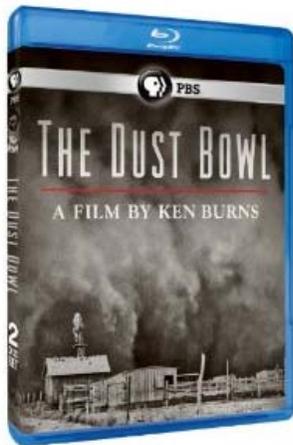
DW Griffith's few talkies. His biopic of *Lincoln* can boast a very good Walter Huston (Daniel Day Lewis ain't the only one who can play Abe) and little else. Griffith never quite made the transition to sound but it's a worthy curio. Zorro has been captured on film many, many times and personally, there's no version I'm over the moon about. Still, this version from the 1970s is a fun twist, resetting the tale in South America and letting Alain Delon have revenge and not just love of the peasants as his driving force. And that's one heck of a sword fight at the end -- it actually might be the longest in movie history. Many producers in the heyday of Hollywood deserve a boxed set of their works. So this collection of some of David O. Selznick's best movies from the 1930s before he hit the jackpot in 1939 makes perfect sense. You get BluRay editions of a wide range of movies linked only by their intelligence and audience appeal: *A Farewell To Arms*, *Bird Of Paradise*, *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, *Nothing Sacred* and *A Star Is Born*. You could easily create another two boxed sets with each containing another five equally distinctive movies from Selznick's career and not even raise a sweat. If there's a classic movie buff on your gift list, problem solved.

### **GAME OF THRONES FIRST SEASON COLLECTOR'S EDITION**

(\$99.97 BluRay; HBO) -- Here's a completely lavish and unnecessary boxed set, making it perfect for the fantasy crazed member of your family this holiday. You get the entire first season of *Game Of Thrones* on BluRay, DVD and digitally, all encased in a cushiony box fit for a king -- not something you'd actually want to be in a world where being king means sitting around with a target on your back, but you get the idea. My



enough fire, a wonderful pet as well.



favorite give-away is the bonus of an actual dragon's egg. It makes a wonderful paperweight and if you throw it into a hot

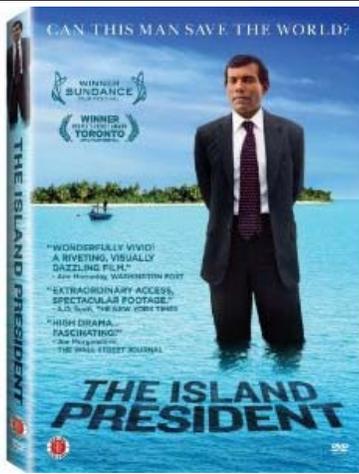
**THE DUST BOWL** (\$29.99 BluRay; PBS)

**PARADISE LOST TRILOGY** (\$49.95 DVD; Docurama)

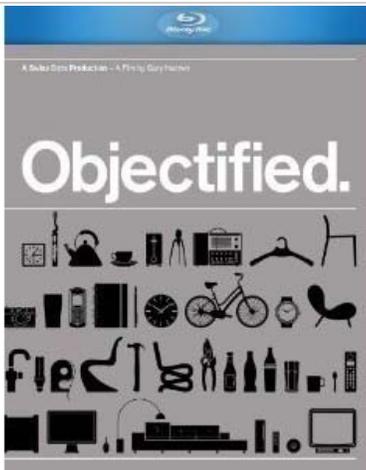
**THE ISLAND PRESIDENT** (\$27.95 DVD; First Run Features)

**OBJECTIFIED** (\$34.95 BluRay; New Video)

**BOOKER'S PLACE** (\$26.95 DVD; New Video) -- Do we take Ken Burns for granted? Do we mock his style which has become so familiar it breeds contempt? Do we forget the sea change he wrought in documentary films and how popular they can be? Yes, yes, and yes. And yes to the final question as to whether *The Dust Bowl* is worth your time. Of course it is. It's by Ken Burns. The *Paradise Lost* trilogy is truly a journey down the rabbit hole with the frightening tale of the West Memphis Three a crazy, unnerving ride from start to finish. Messy and passionate and life-changing work for the innocents involved. Mohamed Nasheed may be a controversial former President of the Maldives but he's also a canny promoter who knows how to get attention for his country, which may soon disappear if nothing is done about global warming. Actually, even if we do make an historic push worldwide to tackle the problem, the Maldives are probably lost anyway. But *The Island President* is still a good wake-up call. Director Gary Hustwit follows his clever documentary about the font helvetica with this equally intriguing and offbeat look at manufactured goods that are so ever-present we ignore them. Finally, in the year I was born a black man in Mississippi dared to take part in a TV documentary about racism. It ended



with his brutal murder. *Booker's Place* by the son of that original documentary's director returns with Booker Wright's granddaughter to visit again that time and the impact Mr. Wright had by simply telling his story.



**FRANK SINATRA PRIMETIME**

(\$17.98 DVD; Shout)

**LES MISERABLES IN CONCERT**

**THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY** (\$34.98 DVD; BBC)

**COLOR ME OBSESSED: A FILM ABOUT THE REPLACEMENTS**

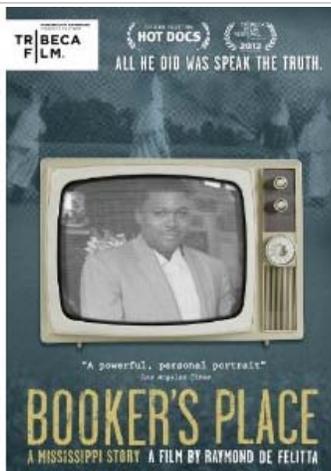
(\$19.95 DVD; MVD)

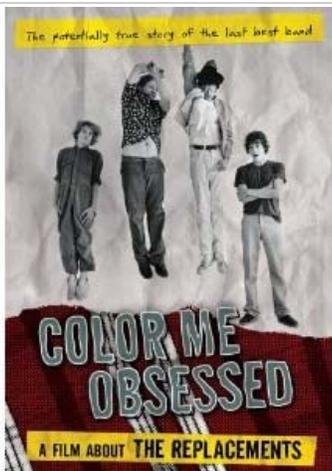
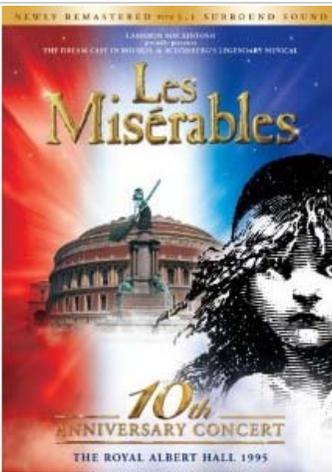
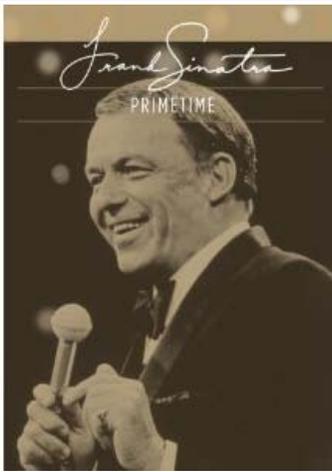
**STEP UP REVOLUTION 3D** (\$39.99 BluRay combo; Summit)

**IKE AND TINA ON THE ROAD 1971-72** (\$19.95 DVD; MVD)

**SPARKLE** (\$35.99 BluRay combo; Sony)

-- Frank Sinatra did a lot of hammy stuff on variety shows and with the Rat Pack. But he also filmed a lot of TV specials and whenever he just sat there and sang, the results could be magical. *Primetime* gives you three Sinatra specials, including two from the late 1960s and one from 1977. If you've got a couple hours, we can discuss his vocals on every performance and compare them to bootlegs, live renditions, Reprise, Capitol and Columbia recordings and so on. But even a casual fan will enjoy a look back at Ole Blue Eyes in the September of his years. If you're panting for the film version of *Les Miserables* (which didn't wow me and I love the show), then you're the audience for this re-release of a tenth anniversary concert that's been remastered and gussied up with new audio so the revolution can take place all around you. *Color Me Obsessed* may be unique: it's a documentary film about the late, great Minneapolis rock band that focuses on their fans. You won't find a single photo or video or live footage or even a scrap of music from the band itself. That sounds like a recipe for disaster but it's weirdly compelling and makes it almost impossible to watch



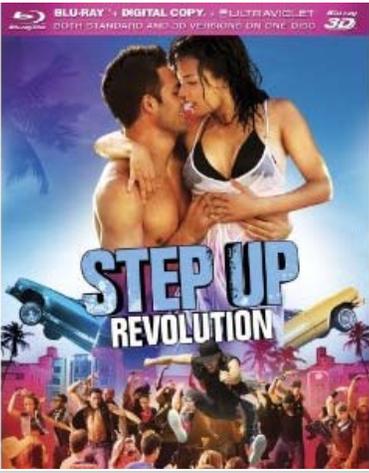


without diving for your old albums the moment it's over. Is the dance move *Step Up Revolution* stupid? Do you care? Did I mention it's in 3-D? Oy. *Ike and Tina On The Road* is strictly for hardcore fans happy with any scrap of footage featuring these two in their heyday. It's a pity their fiery act was never captured in full (to the best of my knowledge). Finally, I believe in Jordin Sparks. The movie *Sparkle* was overshadowed by the death of Whitney Houston but Sparks is a real talent from *American Idol* and continues to deliver some great singles while gingerly stepping into the role of actress. This isn't a slam dunk for her (even though obviously she was destined to star in a remake of *Sparkle* with a name like that) but on-the-job training has a long history in Hollywood. Look at Whitney's own acting, which certainly improved after her stiff debut in *The Bodyguard*. This may remain a footnote but even if only as a singer, I think Sparks will be around for years to come.

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opinion makers as guests. It's *available* for free on iTunes. Visit Michael Giltz at his *website* and his *daily blog*. Download his podcast of celebrity interviews and his radio show, also called *Popsurfing* and also *available* for free on iTunes. Link to him on Netflix and *gain* access to thousands of ratings and reviews.

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