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Michael Giltz

Freelance writer and raconteur

Posted: March 17, 2011 05:29 PM



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DVDs: A Brawling Mark Wahlberg, a Psychic Matt Damon and a Buddha-like Little Boy



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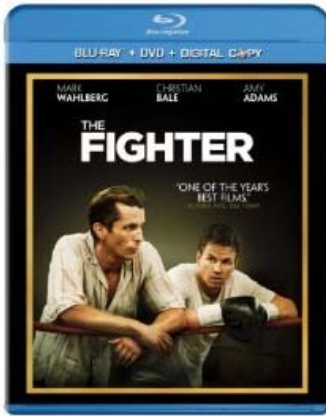
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THE FIGHTER (\$39.99 BluRay or \$29.99 regular; Paramount) -- I wish I liked *The Fighter* more than I do. It's a passion project for Mark Wahlberg, a very good actor with good taste in scripts. It's bursting with talent, including Oscar winners Melissa Leo as Wahlberg's pushy mom and Christian Bale as his drug-using brother. And it gives the talented director David O. Russell another hit to his credit. Great. Unfortunately, the story is so familiar and rote that you wait in anticipation for some curve ball, some new insight that never comes. Further, the fights are shot to mimic the style of TV coverage back in the day. That's an interesting choice aesthetically but it means the fights themselves are fairly dull to watch. It's a decent film with Amy Ryan and especially Wahlberg very good again. It's just hard to think of anything new here worth your time.



HEREAFTER (\$35.99 BluRay combo; \$28.98; Warner Bros.) -- After a disturbingly realistic tsunami in the opening scenes, Hereafter settles into a rather dull story of a reluctant psychic (Matt Damon) constantly hounded by people who want him to use his gifts to give them solace and closure. He just wants a normal life but it's not to be. The similarly-themed *Beutiful* has an excellent performance by Javier Bardem and a darker tone to recommend it. Here Clint Eastwood never seems to dig into the material with any passion. That's not true on the extras where Eastwood holds forth on his entire career in a very lengthy interview that is engaging and fun to hear.



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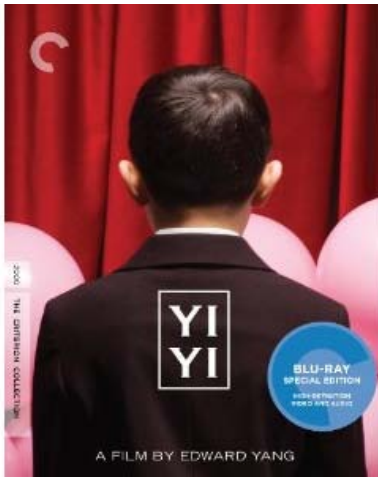
Lindsay Lohan Is 'Angry' About Jail Sentence

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Antoine Dodson Arrested

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YI YI (\$39.95 Criterion BluRay)

AU REVOIR LES ENFANTS (\$39.95; Criterion BluRay) -- People throw around words like "masterpiece" with casual abandon. Not me, I promise you. But here are two masterpieces. You'll find them both among [my lists of the best films of all time](#) -- *Au Revoir* is my favorite film from 1987, one of the best years for movies in history, in my opinion. And *Yi Yi* was an instant classic for me in 2000. It would have been my #1 pick except for *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, one of the best action adventure films of all time and another masterpiece. You owe it to yourselves to watch both of them and Criterion makes it a pleasure more than ever. *Yi Yi* was previously out on a disastrously poor DVD release that was the only available copy for years. It was still watchable, but it deserved much better. *Au Revoir* has had fine releases but Criterion always raises the bar. I love that they include the Charlie Chaplin short seen only briefly in the film. *Yi Yi* is a group portrait of a middle class family in Taiwan. You'll get to know them all but at the heart of it is a little boy so wise and clever and with such a wonderful outlook on life you'd swear he's the reincarnation of the Buddha. (That is not a plot point, by the way.) *Au Revoir* is based on a childhood memory of director Louis Malle about the Jewish boys hidden in their Catholic boarding school during WW II until the Nazis come and ferret them out. It's heartbreaking and lovely. I interviewed Malle shortly before his death and did something I rarely do which was to praise this film in person and say how much it meant to me and how I believed he had done his memory justice. He's used to praise and probably forgot it an hour later but I was glad I did it.



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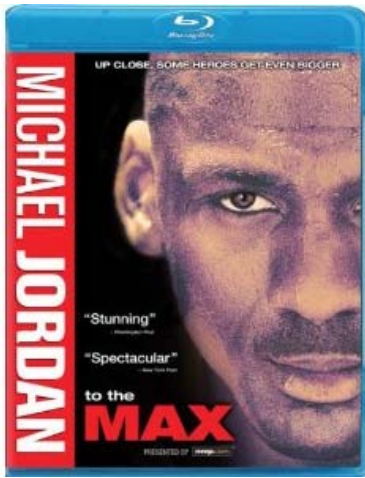


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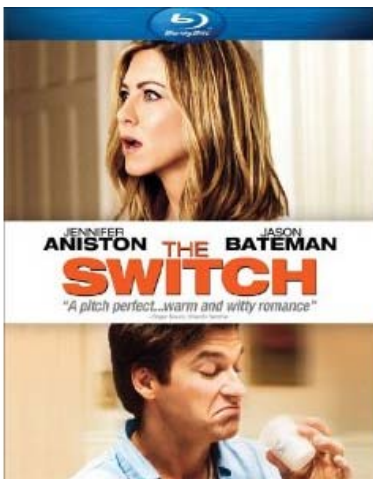
Mel Gibson Opens Up: 'I Could Easily Not Act Again'





MICHAEL JORDAN TO THE MAX (\$19.99 BluRay; Lionsgate)
ULTIMATE JORDAN DELUXE LIMITED EDITION (\$69.98 BluRay; Image)
THE ULTIMATE WAVE TAHITI 3-D (\$24.98 Image)

WALKING ON WATER (\$14.94; Sony) -- Okay, lots of sports documentaries. *Michael Jordan To The Max* is a terrific looking 46 minute movie created for IMAX in theaters. It looks just great if you want a demo DVD and love Jordan. The same is true for the 45 minute *Ultimate wave Tahiti* BluRay. (It contains both the BluRay and BluRay 3-D version; my TV is not 3-D compatible.) If you're really into either of these sports, this brief but amazing looking flicks could work for you. *Ultimate Jordan* is a much more substantial collection of four highlight films from Jordan's career as well as five key games from his career in their entirety along with other extras. Unfortunately, it's a huge letdown if you watch the IMAX movie first because these pre-HD titles have not been remastered sufficiently or the source material is so degraded that it kind of seems subpar. If you're a fanatic, you've been warned; the content is great. Finally, *Walk On Water* follows surfers Tyler Hallen and Luke Davis as they travel the world looking for some gnarly waves but end up finding Jesus.



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Viral Star Antoine Dodson ARRESTED

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Gwyneth Paltrow Is Right. We're All Jealous. (Of Her and George W. Bush.)

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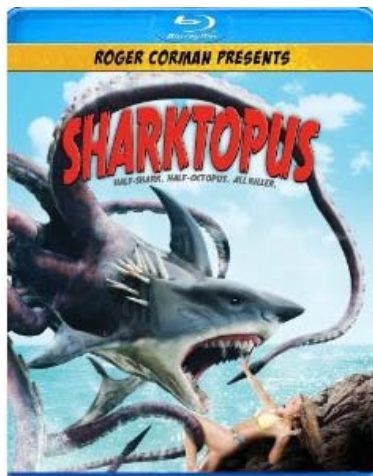


Mexico

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THE SWITCH (\$39.99 BluRay combo and \$29.95 regular DVD; Lionsgate)

BURLESQUE (\$34.95 BluRay combo and \$28.95 regular DVD; Screen Gems) -- Why aren't Jennifer Aniston and Jason Bateman bigger movie stars? Because they -- or their agents/managers -- can't pick good scripts. Even when Aniston is in a hit film, it's usually bad and she doesn't get the "credit" as far as Hollywood is concerned. Bateman can't seem to get any traction despite being in great movies like *Up In The Air* and *Juno*, cult favorites like *Extract* and hits like *Hancock* and *Couples Retreat*. *The Switch* will change nothing for either of them, despite being a romantic comedy about best friends who, surprise, finally realize they're perfect for each other. And I wish *Burlesque* were much better or much worse than it is, but you can't have everything. It just... is.



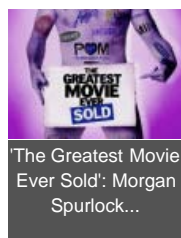
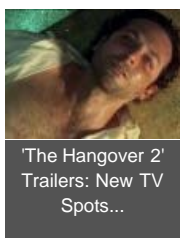
SHARKTOPUS (\$24.99 BluRay; Anchor Bay) -- This movie is a different kind of bad. It's the Saturday night SyFy scare-fest starring a ridiculous creature that's "half shark, half octopus, all killer!" Of course it's awful. But with a name as silly as that and an awesome poster you kind of want to see it anyway, don't you? And thus was the drive-in movie born. Even Roger Corman thought it was a bit much but that hasn't stopped him from presenting it, has it?

Thanks for reading. Michael Giltz is the co-host of Showbiz Sandbox, a weekly pop culture podcast that reveals the industry take on entertainment news of the day and features top journalists and opinion makers as guests. It's available 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.

NOTE: Michael Giltz is provided with free copies of DVDs to consider for review. He typically does not guarantee coverage and invariably receives far more screeners and DVDs than he can cover each week. Also, Michael Giltz freelances as a writer of DVD copy (the text that appears on the back of DVDs) for some titles released by IFC and other subsidiaries of MPI. It helps pay the rent, but does not obligate him in any way to speak positively or negatively of their titles.

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