

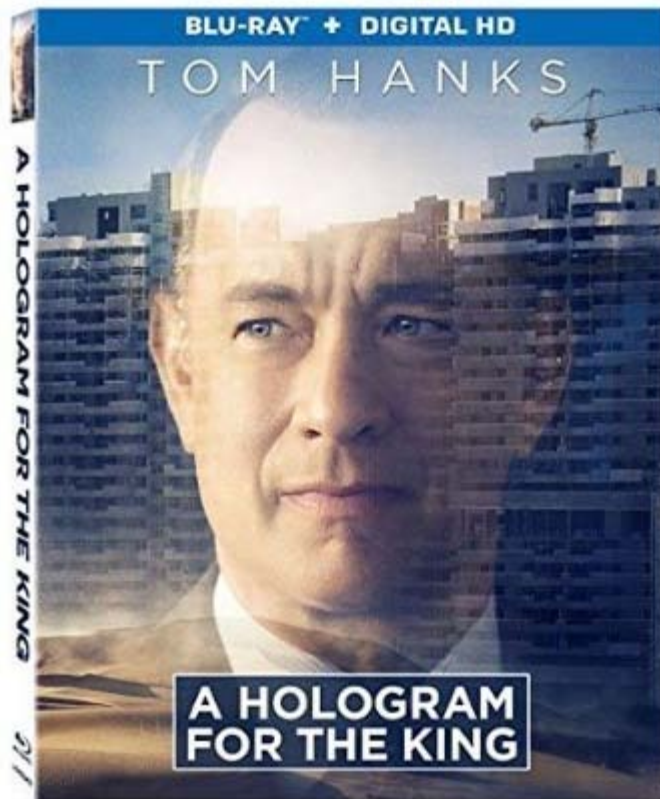


Michael Giltz, ContributorBookFilter creator

DVDs: A "Lobster" To Savor, Beautiful Bergman & More

08/17/2016 10:43 pm ET | Updated Aug 18, 2016





THE LOBSTER (\$24.99 BluRay; Lionsgate)

HIGH-RISE (\$29.97 BluRay; Magnolia Home Entertainment)

A HOLOGRAM FOR THE KING (\$24.99 BluRay; Lionsgate)

I think I don't like actor Colin Farrell — and yet, he's starred excellent movies, such as *The New World* and *In Bruges*. And here he is again in the absolutely bonkers art house hit *The Lobster*. In this surreal flick, people live in a society where relationships are absolutely essential. If you break up with someone, you are sent to a hotel resort where you have only a few days to find a new mate (while evading capture during regular hunts in the woods). If you don't find a mate, you are turned into another creature of your choice to start life anew. Farrell announces he'd like to come back as a lobster for rather convincing reasons right at the start of the movie. And that's where you realize how droll and daft this is going to be. The cast is impeccable and the tone maintained precisely. Just when you think they've mined every bit of comedy out of the premise, the movie goes off in a new direction and you realize how smart it is about relationships and life in general. *The Lobster* really stuck with me and will definitely be on my best of the year list.

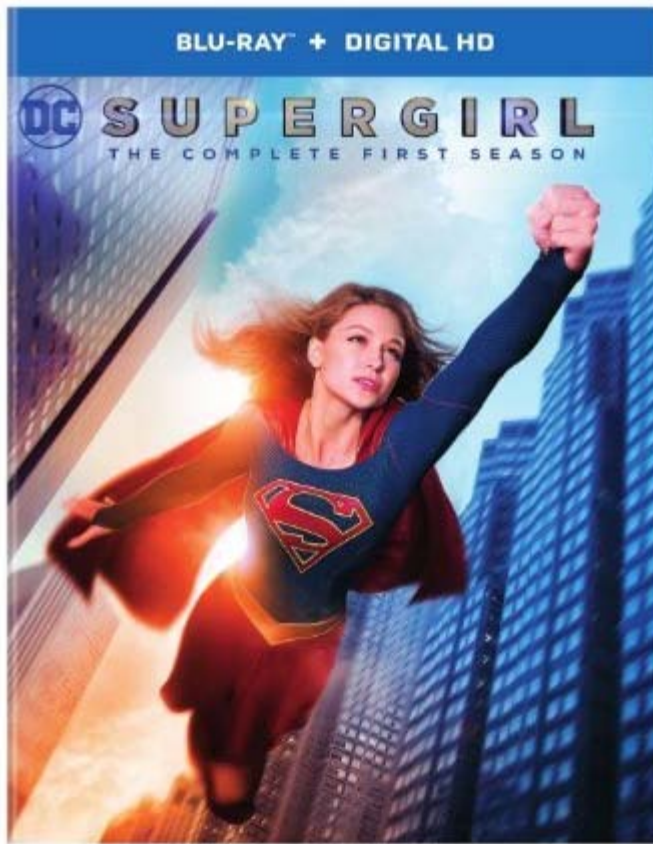
In contrast to Farrell, I think I like Tom Hiddleston and yet he's suddenly risen to Big Star status on a string of admirably bold movies that simply don't work: his Hank Williams biopic *I Saw The Light* was stillborn, *Crimson Peak* was all atmosphere and now *High-Rise*, an adaptation of a JG Ballard novel simply never coheres. Luckily, Hiddleston has that *Avengers* franchise and the terrific TV miniseries *The Night Manager* to remind us why we became fans in the first place.



INGRID BERGMAN: IN HER OWN WORDS (\$39.95 BluRay; Criterion)

Frankly, this new documentary combining footage shot by Bergman herself and new interviews with family and collaborators could be a vanity project and it would still be worth watching. Ingrid Bergman is simply one of the most beautiful, luminous people to ever live — just watch *Casablanca* for proof. But she was also an artist, which is why her work isn't reduced to a lot of still images. And Bergman's life was notably tumultuous. Combine an actor's natural desire to be in control for a change (rather than a tool of the director) and Bergman's natural desire to place some control over her jagged adventure through fame, infamy and ultimately the permanent status of a legend and a real talent and her life-long project to document things is understandable. Director Stig Björkman has worked with editor Dominika Daubenbüchel to craft all of it into a loving testament to her remarkable life, albeit one that focuses on the private rather than the professional, but then that's apparently what Bergman did in her film, photo and diary entries. Criterion offers the usual thoughtful extras for this unexpected coda from a real talent.







THE KNICK SEASON TWO (\$34.98 BluRay; HBO)

BLINDSPOT SEASON ONE (\$54.97 BluRay; Warner Home Video)

SUPERGIRL SEASON ONE (\$54.97 BluRay; Warner Home Video)

CODE BLACK SEASON ONE (\$55.98 DVD; Paramount)

THE BLACKLIST SEASON THREE (\$75.99 BluRay; Sony Pictures Home Entertainment)

GOTHAM SEASON TWO (\$54.97 BluRay; Warner Home Video)

Chart the artistic trajectory of these current TV shows on a chart and you'd have one crazy heartbeat. Director Steven Soderbergh's *The Knick* pulled a fast one to great effect. In two seasons and 20 episodes, it told of the downward spiral of surgeon Clive Owen at a NYC hospital during the early 20th century. Gruesome attempts to perfect the caesarean section birth, addiction to anesthesia, Typhoid Mary and the like make it almost a horror show. But the vivid characters keep this from Grand Guignol. And they never told us Owen's story would come to a natural conclusion at the end of season two so fans could enjoy a complete tale with a bit of a jolt. What? That's it? Not quite, since it seems likely they'll keep the setting (and perhaps change the time period?) so the story of medicine's history can be told with new characters and through a new lens. It's a great example of how this era of no-rules is allowing storytelling to fit the story, rather than the commercial demands of running five years and producing 100 episodes for syndication as in days gone by.

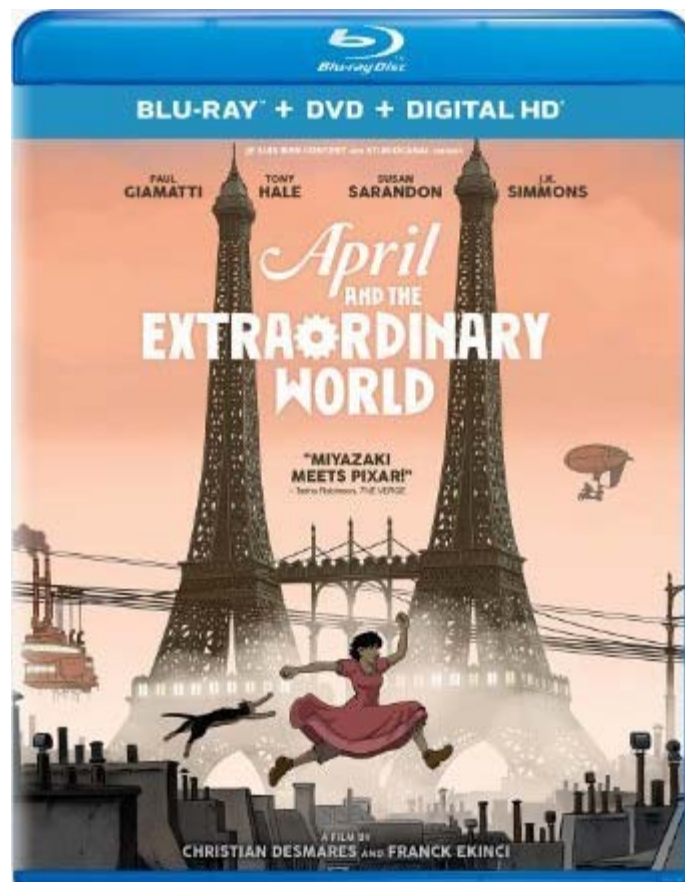
The Blindspot isn't nearly as successful and I predict they'll be in for a rude awakening come season two. The story of a woman who wakes up with tattoos all over her body, it has a great hook that immediately makes you think, ok, but is this a series? The ratings fell for much of the season until settling in much lower than the premiere. Unless they can avoid a *Lost*-like feeling that the story could go pretty much anywhere (and thus nowhere), *The Blindspot* might have wished it were a six episode BBC miniseries instead.

Supergirl simply doesn't know what it wants to be. It never really found a rhythm despite a game cast (including a thoroughly wasted Jeremy Jordan, who is probably longing to be back on Broadway in a new musical as much as we want him there too). The move from CBS to the CW could be the perfect shock to the system. Being at the CW could make them say, "Right, so we're young and fun? Got it!" The upcoming musical crossover episode with *The Flash* sounds bonkers. But better bonkers than boring.

Code Black has the opposite problem. It knows exactly what it wants to be: seemingly like every other ensemble medical drama of the last ten years, only less so. One can piece together bits and pieces of *ER* and *Grey's Anatomy* and on and on, but what makes a story or character definitely *Code Black* remains a mystery, as does the reason for this show's being. Mind you, a serious substantial role for Luis Guzman should be reason enough. But he deserves better.

The Blacklist unquestionably lost its way a bit after a goofily riveting first season. Now more often than not it's just goofy. But it's rescued time and time again by the wonderfully florid lead performance of James Spader and some of the best guest stars on TV, including Tony Shalhoub's hilarious turn this season as a key player in organized crime. Here's hoping they pull it together again in season four and the writers give the cast the storylines they deserve. (And Diego Klattenhoff's romantic potential is explored much, much more thoroughly.)

Unlike most of these shows, *Gotham* is actually improving. In season two, they settled into a bigger-is-better mantra, letting the criminals go batshit crazy on Gotham. It was capped by Cameron Monaghan's positively electric turn as the Joker (if that's the right way to describe a character that apparently will inspire the ultimate villain The Joker). But a lot of actors had a lot of fun and this has to be one of the most lavish, eye-catching shows on TV. Has anybody noticed that — like an old school movie star — Ben McKenzie has become better and better with every role? And he's been in THREE hit series. So far. (That would be *The OC*, *Southland* and now *Gotham*.) That's Michael Landon territory and pretty damn rare and the guy's only 38 years old next month.





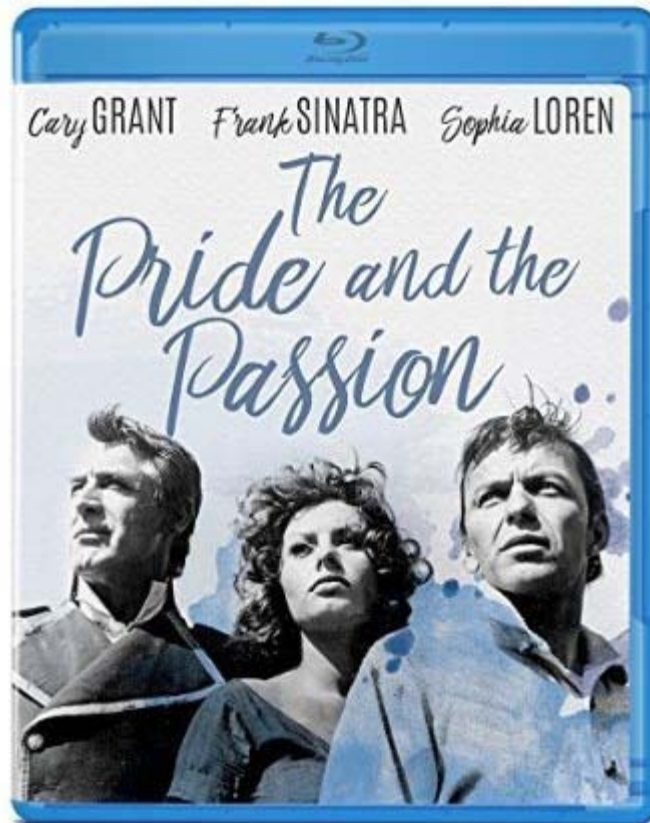
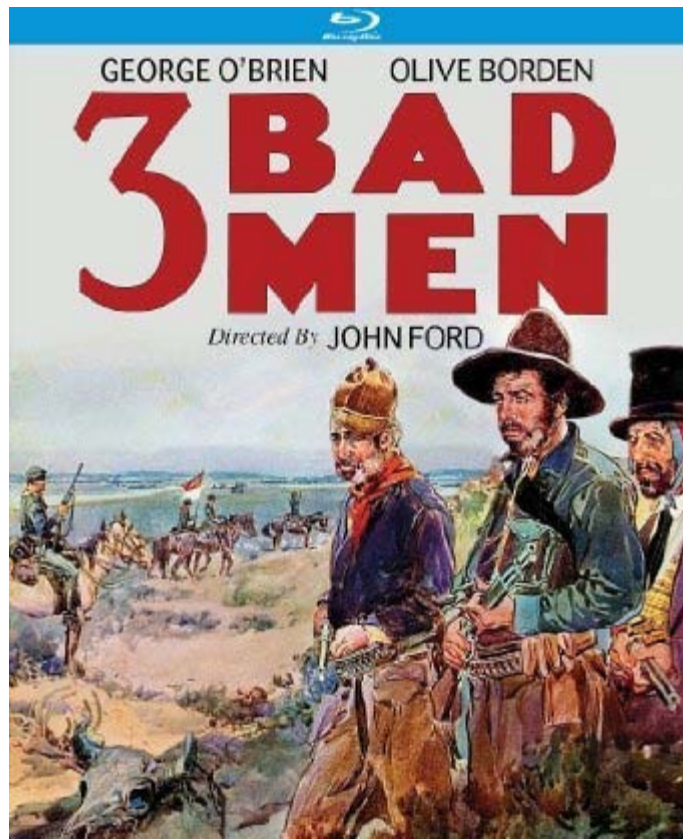
APRIL AND THE EXTRAORDINARY WORLD (\$34.98 BluRay; Universal)

THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE (\$38.99 BluRay; Sony Pictures Home Entertainment)

Slowly but surely the stranglehold of classic fairy tales on animated movies is ending. There have always been exceptions, but too often the Disney model of familiar stories held sway. No more. Miyazaki and steam punk are two major inspirations for *April And The Extraordinary World*, a French-Belgium-Canadian co-production that spans the globe in telling its fanciful sci-fi bit of whimsy. It begins with Napoleon's scientists trying to breed super-soldiers and ends on the moon where vegetation has run riot. In between you get a plucky heroine, gorgeous imagery and — if all you're used to is Disney — a far from typical story. It's more ambitious than successful but the voice cast led by Marion Cotillard is winning.

In contrast, *The Angry Birds Movie* seems hatefully cynical — a movie based on an app? On a banal but hugely successful mobile game? (Sure it has some elemental appeal and at least the physics are pretty good, but still...) Surprisingly, what should have been a cold-hearted cash-in turns out to be...bearable. Not genuinely good but certainly better than anyone had reason to expect. It could have been worse but since it made enough money to warrant a sequel we can save our ire for that even less necessary effort.





THE MARK OF ZORRO (\$29.95 BluRay; Kino Lorber)

TELL ME THAT YOU LOVE ME, JUNIE MOON (\$29.95 BluRay; Olive Films)

3 BAD MEN (\$29.95 BluRay; Kino Lorber)

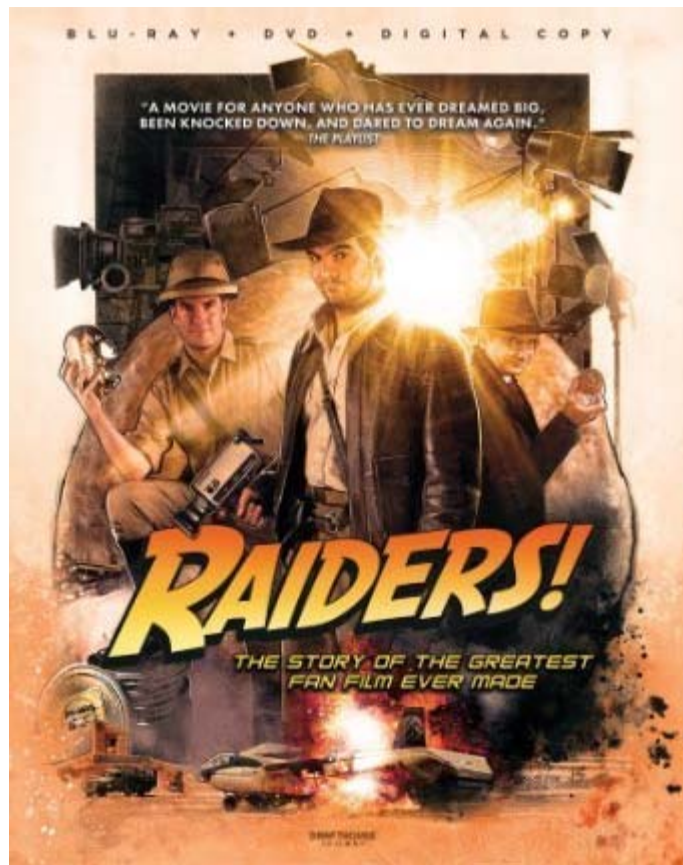
THE PRIDE AND THE PASSION (\$29.95 BluRay; Olive Films)

Douglas Fairbanks Sr. wowed in the silent classic. Antonio Banderas had one of his sexiest most satisfying vehicles in *The Mask Of Zorro* in 1998. But Tyrone Powers owns the part with the 1940 version, which is one of those studio system peaks where every element is delivered by people at the top of their craft. Toss in one of the best sword fights of all time and you really can't go wrong with this grand adventure.

It's bizarre that director Otto Preminger's 1970 movie *Tell Me That You Love Me, Junie Moon* is only now making its DVD and BluRay debut. Mind you, the movie itself is even more bizarre, with Liza Minelli attacked by her boyfriend with battery acid and later institutionalized, only to make friends with an epileptic and a gay paraplegic (as one would). This obviously was made during Preminger's late period, I've lost my mind Skidoo phase. But with all the talent involved, it's worth a look-see for the curious. Just.

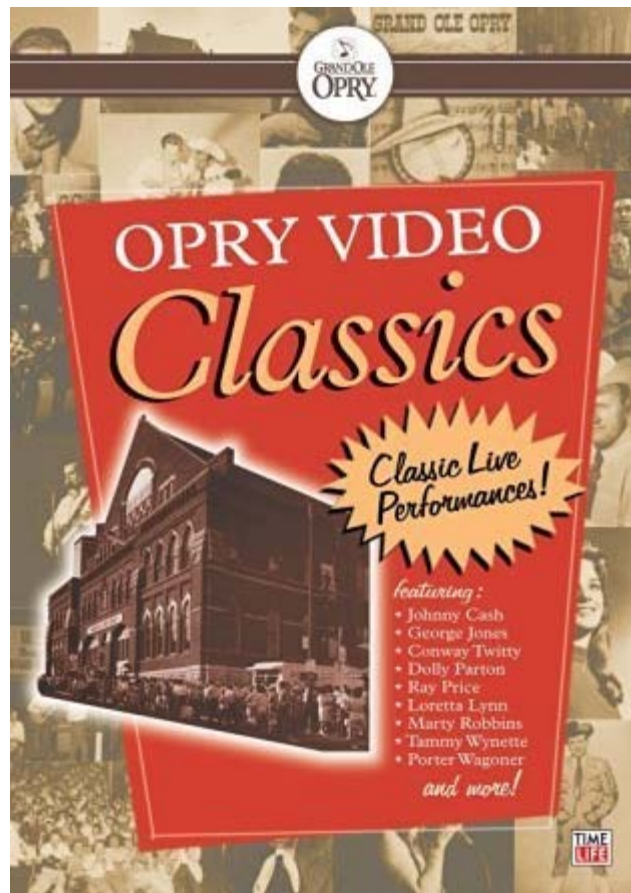
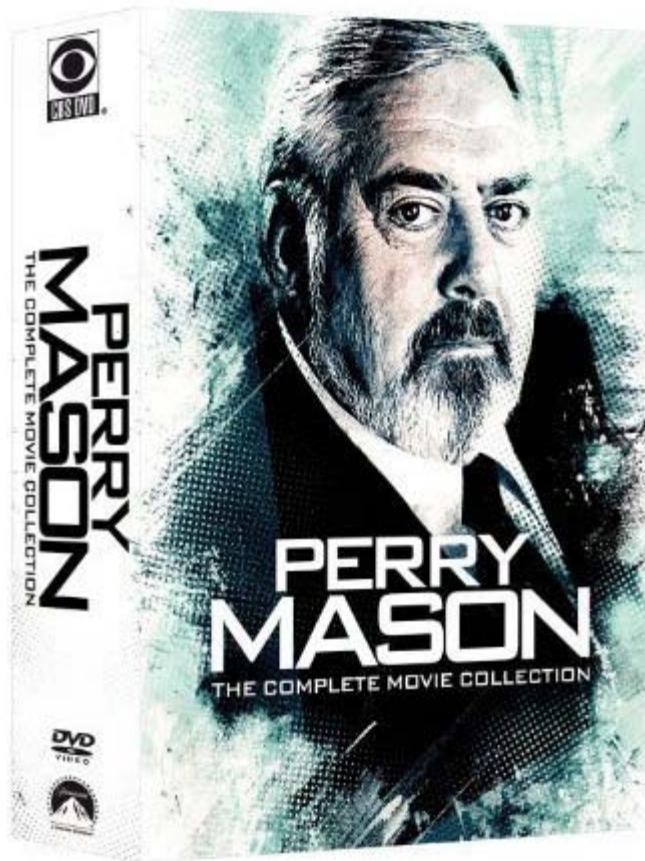
Director John Ford didn't have many down periods — he made great silent films, great sound films during Hollywood's golden age and didn't embarrass himself in the home stretch with movies like the classic *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* coming right towards the end, some 45 years after he began. *3 Bad Men* is from 1926, a silent film that celebrates honor among thieves as rival baddies work together to avenge a wronged woman. It's not a curio — Ford has mastered the silent epic by this stage and the movie even inspired Kurosawa in the naming of his film known in the West as *The Hidden Fortress*. Which itself inspired George Lucas when making *Star Wars*. Which is proof that you should never stop exploring the byways of cinema where the unlikeliest connections will occur. This thoroughly enjoyable Western is a fine place to start.

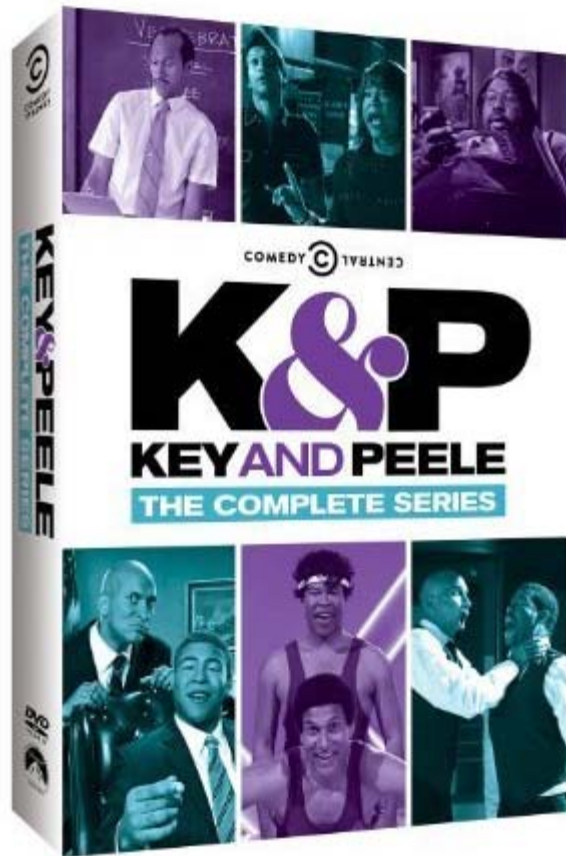
It's important to remember that director Stanley Kramer had pretty mixed reviews by smart folk even at the peak of his award-grabbing career. Few directors were as self-importantly Important as Kramer and you're no scholar in pointing that out. I'd love to rescue *The Pride and the Passion* from ill repute and point out some notable aspects. That has to wait for some of his so-so later films. Here on his second effort as director, Kramer is deadly dull in this anti-war period piece set during the Napoleonic era and a giant cannon that is shipped here and there and most everywhere. Cary Grant — who is effortlessly appealing — is unappealing. Frank Sinatra looks miserable and isn't acting. Sophia Loren barely registers as sexy. It's one of those all-star films that was a nightmare for everyone involved; the story of its making is far more entertaining than anything that got onscreen, more's the pity.



RAIDERS! THE STORY OF THE GREATEST FAN FILM EVER MADE (\$34.95 BluRay; Drafthouse Films)

Like me, the men in this documentary saw *Raiders Of The Lost Ark* when they were kids in Mississippi and were blown away. Unlike me, they decided to do a shot-by-shot remake of the film and spent the next seven years doing just that. You won't be surprised to hear the film encompasses a lot more than this nutty endeavor, as eleven year old boys grow up and grow apart. It's about passion and childhood and the inevitability of — yuck — becoming responsible. Let's not oversell it: unlike *Raiders Of The Lost Ark* — this is a curio, albeit an affecting and interesting one especially for film buffs. Worth your time if you ever cracked a whip or, you know, had friends in middle school and then wondered a few years later exactly why you were friends in the first place.





PERRY MASON COMPLETE TV MOVIES (\$45.98 DVD; Paramount/CBS DVD)

OPRY VIDEO CLASSICS (\$119.99 DVD; Time Life)

THE COMPLETE KEY & PEELE (\$40.26 DVD; Paramount)

KEANU (\$29.98 BluRay; Warner Home Video)

If they asked me, I could write a book about how to properly release TV shows on new formats. Some shows release part 1 of a season and then part 2 of a season (especially when there's a break between them) and then a complete season which invariably has some new material not available on the two earlier releases, which were bought by hardcore fans. Some classic shows release a few seasons and then stop. Some shows have one season available on BluRay and another that isn't. It's infuriating and annoying and unfair. But it's not a plot to frustrate viewers. It's just incompetence or the vagaries of a show's airing or access to rights or god knows what.

So putting all that aside and the fact that these TV movies have been available in various permutations before, here is *Perry Mason The Complete TV Movies*. Yes, I know: in October, they'll be releasing *Perry Mason The Complete Series* and obviously anyone who wants this wants that and ideally they'd both be packaged together. But they're not. And this is here and if you love Perry Mason, it's inexpensive and compact and I hope you didn't buy those earlier sets. It'd be a great gift for Robert Downey Jr. but I assume he already has them.

Similarly, *Opry Video Classics* is a compilation of practically every country star you can name giving a performance of one their hits on the Grand Ole Opry. Best as I can tell, this eight DVD set is a more compact repackaging of the earlier set. It's not better in video or audio quality, but it's not worse either. This is historic stuff and you'll see Johnny Cash and Patsy Cline and hundreds of others and they're all striving to do their best because hey, it's the Grand Ole Opry and that's where you want to make your mark. Their vaults must be brimming and ideally one would want an even more comprehensive compilation and remastered everything and complete shows and more from recent years. But for what it is and the caveat that this is not state of the art, it's a feast for country fans.

Full credit to Key & Peele: they stepped away from a hit TV show before it could become stale and very, very few artists have ever done that. I'm not sure why there's no BluRay option or lavish extras of the sort a show of this calibre and popularity deserves. Yet personally, I don't get over-excited by those bonus features most watch once if at all. This compact set has the entire series at a very low price and that's great.

Seeing *Keanu* crash and burn at the box office, you can't help thinking maybe they made the wrong choice. They didn't. The movie certainly wasn't helped by an ad campaign slightly at odds with its modestly more violent nature. (It's not all cute kitties, you know.) But it does capitalize on their chemistry and show they've got a life beyond the show. They're not done yet and before you know it, people will watch this and say, "Hey, it's not bad!" Ain't that always the way?

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