



Michael Giltz, ContributorBookFilter creator

# DVDs: "Alien: Covenant" Delivers; Amy Schumer's "Snatched" Doesn't; And The Studio System's Greatest Director

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BLU-RAY™ + DVD + DIGITAL

FROM GUY RITCHIE, DIRECTOR OF SHERLOCK HOLMES

CHARLIE  
HUNNAM

JUDE  
LAW



king  
arthur  
LEGEND OF THE SWORD





**ALIEN: COVENANT** (\$34.99 BluRay; 20th Century Fox)

**KING ARTHUR: LEGEND OF THE SWORD** (\$35.99 BluRay; WarnerBros.)

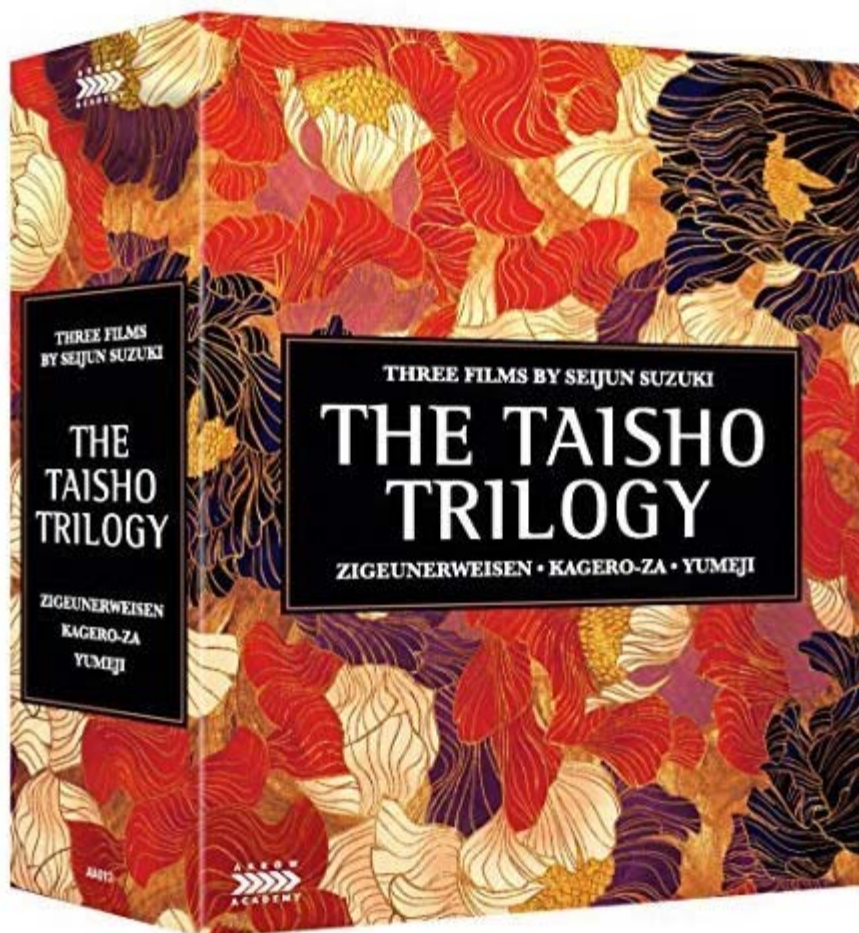
**THE WALL** (\$24.99 BluRay; Lionsgate)

After seeing *Gladiator* win the Best Picture Oscar, director Ridley Scott made precisely one decent film (*Black Hawk Down*) and a lot of not-so-decent ones. In desperation, he returned to his vaunted *Alien* franchise and directed the impenetrable, silly *Prometheus*. (Others would unnecessarily reboot *Blade Runner*, a film that really doesn't need a sequel in the least, though admittedly the trailer looks intriguing.) But then Scott got his mojo back. He delivered the crowd pleaser Matt Damon film *The Martian*, he's got a prestige pic this December titled *All The Money In The World* that actually looks promising and in the middle he delivered yet another *Alien* sequel, which nobody wanted or was waiting for and did only so-so at the box office because who wanted to see another *Alien* film after *Prometheus*? But guess what? *Alien: Covenant* actually delivers. If it had come out instead of *Prometheus*, this would be a much bigger hit.

Warner Bros. knew that their attempt at a King Arthur franchise didn't deliver. That's why that sat on the film *King Arthur: Legend Of The Sword* (even the title bores) before finally pushing it into theaters and just as quickly

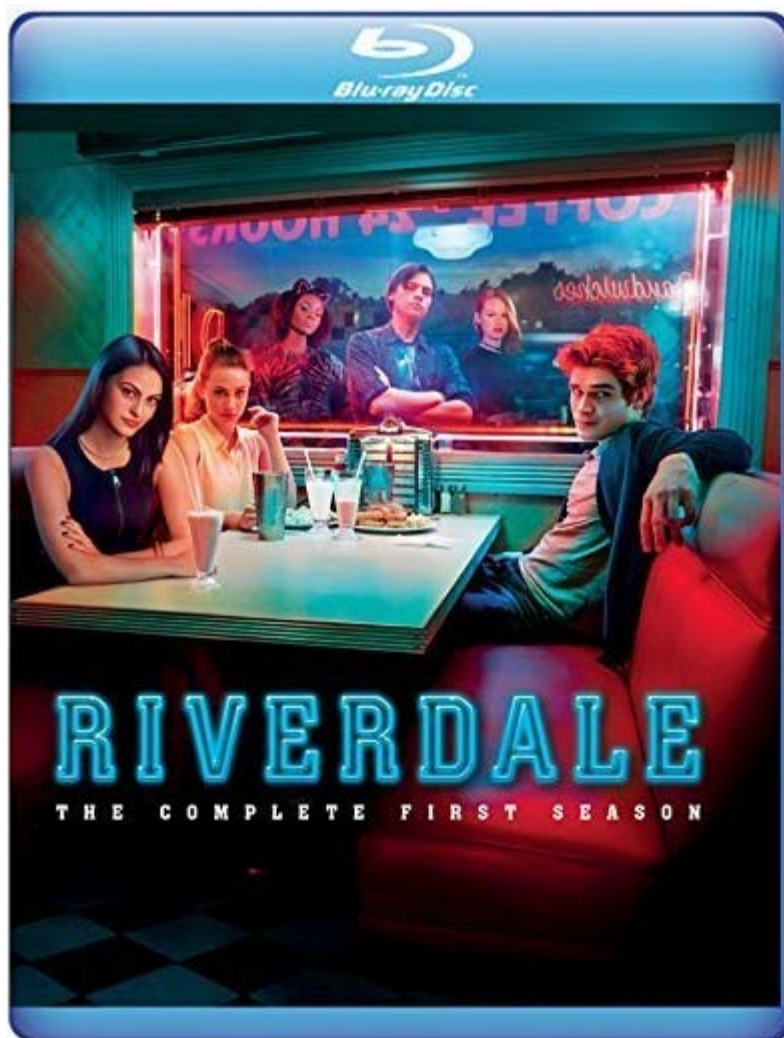
pushing it onto VOD and DVD. Turns out Charlie Hunnam might have been better off doing *50 Shades* after all. I have such fondness for the tales of King Arthur — *Le Morte d'Arthur* by Sir Thomas Mallory was one of the first “adult” books I ever read — that watching a pointless retelling of those stories really irks me. At least *Excalibur* had the benefit of being genuinely odd. Here they could be telling any old story, paying so little attention you wonder why they bothered at all.

Amidst all the franchises and reboots, some actual original movies are made. Director Doug Liman is proving interesting enough to make him a must-see. Sure he has some dull fare to his credit — *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* and *Fair Game*, to be exact — but he’s got a lot more in the plus column, from his early hits *Swingers* and *Go* and *The Bourne Identity* to nice-try *Jumper* to waaaaay under-appreciated *Edge of Tomorrow* (a sequel? cool!) to this tight little film. *The Wall* is simple and effective: two soldiers in Iraq (Aaron Taylor-Johnson and John Cena) are pinned down behind wall by a sniper. That’s it. Made for a dime, it’s almost an exercise in filmmaking, not to mention an interesting two-hander for the actors. Admirable genre filmmaking.



**THE TAISHO TRILOGY** (\$99.95 BluRay; Arrow Academy)

I first stumbled across director Seijun Suzuki via a Criterion boxed set on their Eclipsed label dubbed *Nakatsu Noir*. It's proven seminal for me in terms of my ongoing film education and is bursting with super-cool Japanese crime dramas, all of which I'm sure the likes of Quentin Tarantino and Martin Scorsese have been touting for ages. It helped me discover whacked out masterpieces like *Tokyo Drifter* (1966) and *Branded To Kill* (1967). Turns out Suzuki's career is just as crazy: so rebellious he delivered a film that the studio considered unreleasable though now it's considered a gem. Suzuki was fired, successfully sued in court but was blackballed by the entire industry. He came roaring back with *Zigeunerweisen* in 1980, the first in a very loose trilogy that is elliptical and mature drama, rather than elliptical and nutty pop like his gangster flicks. AGAIN, studios thought it was absurd but a bold producer screened it in an inflatable tent (!), the film became a cause célèbre and it won four top Japanese Academy Awards, including Best Picture and Best Director. Arrow Video has released all three films in the trilogy in this lavish boxed set with all the extras and context one could hope for. The tales are mysterious and strange ghost stories, but don't worry — they're just as mysterious and strange to Japanese audiences, so you're supposed to be a little confused. A major release.



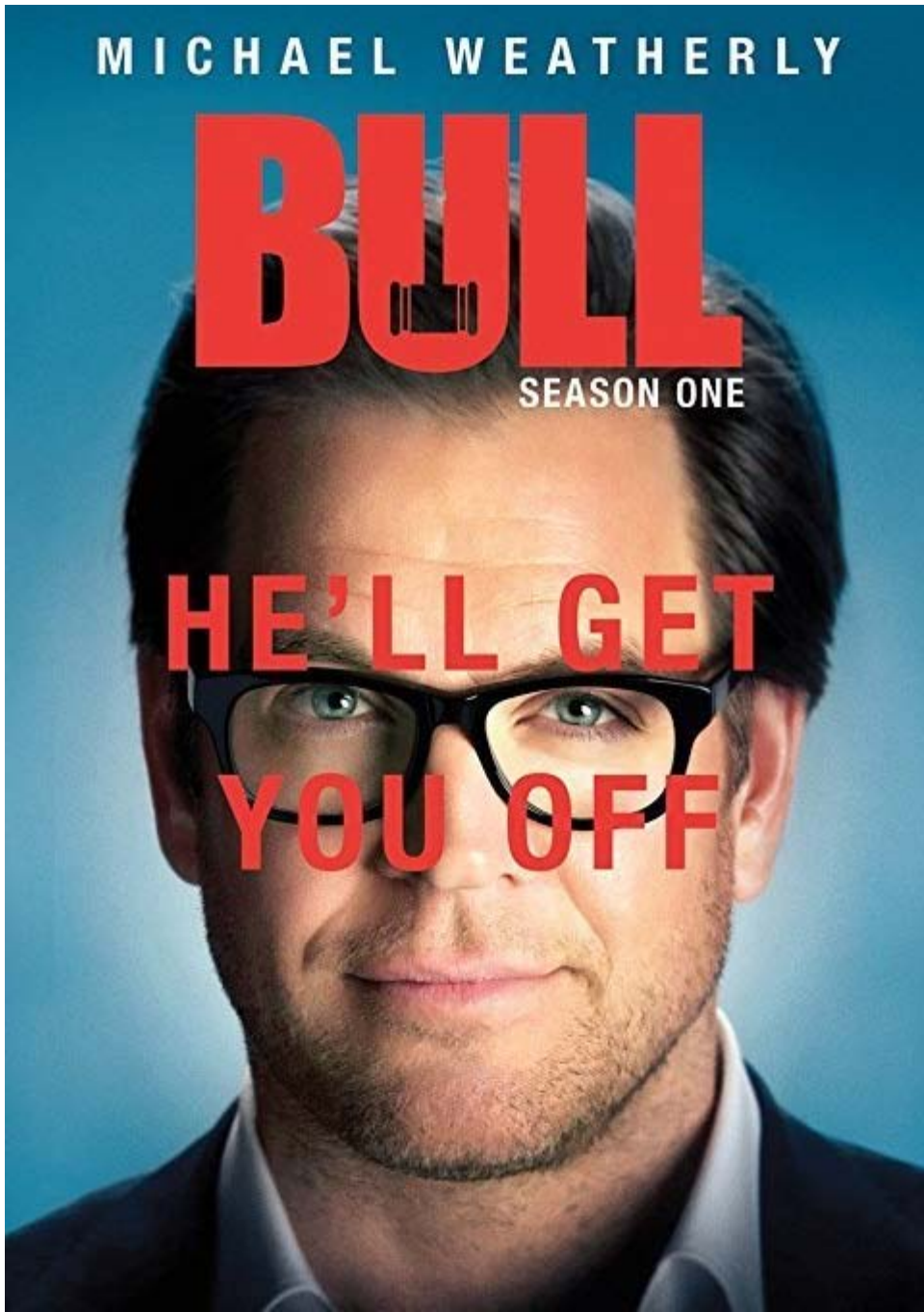


MICHAEL WEATHERLY

# BULL

SEASON ONE

HE'LL GET  
YOU OFF

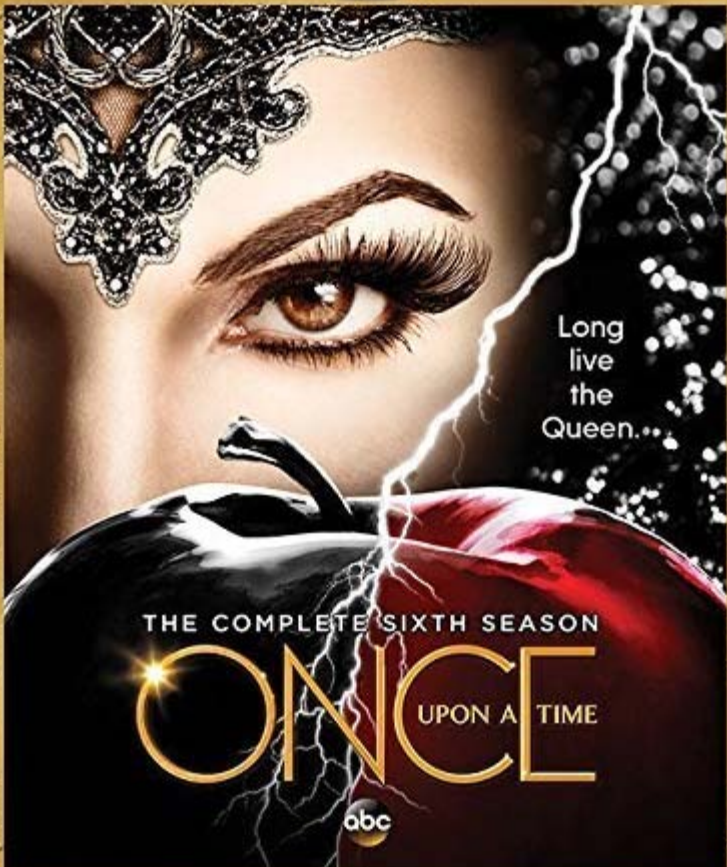


  
Blu-ray Disc

THE COMPLETE SECOND SEASON

# BLINDSPOT





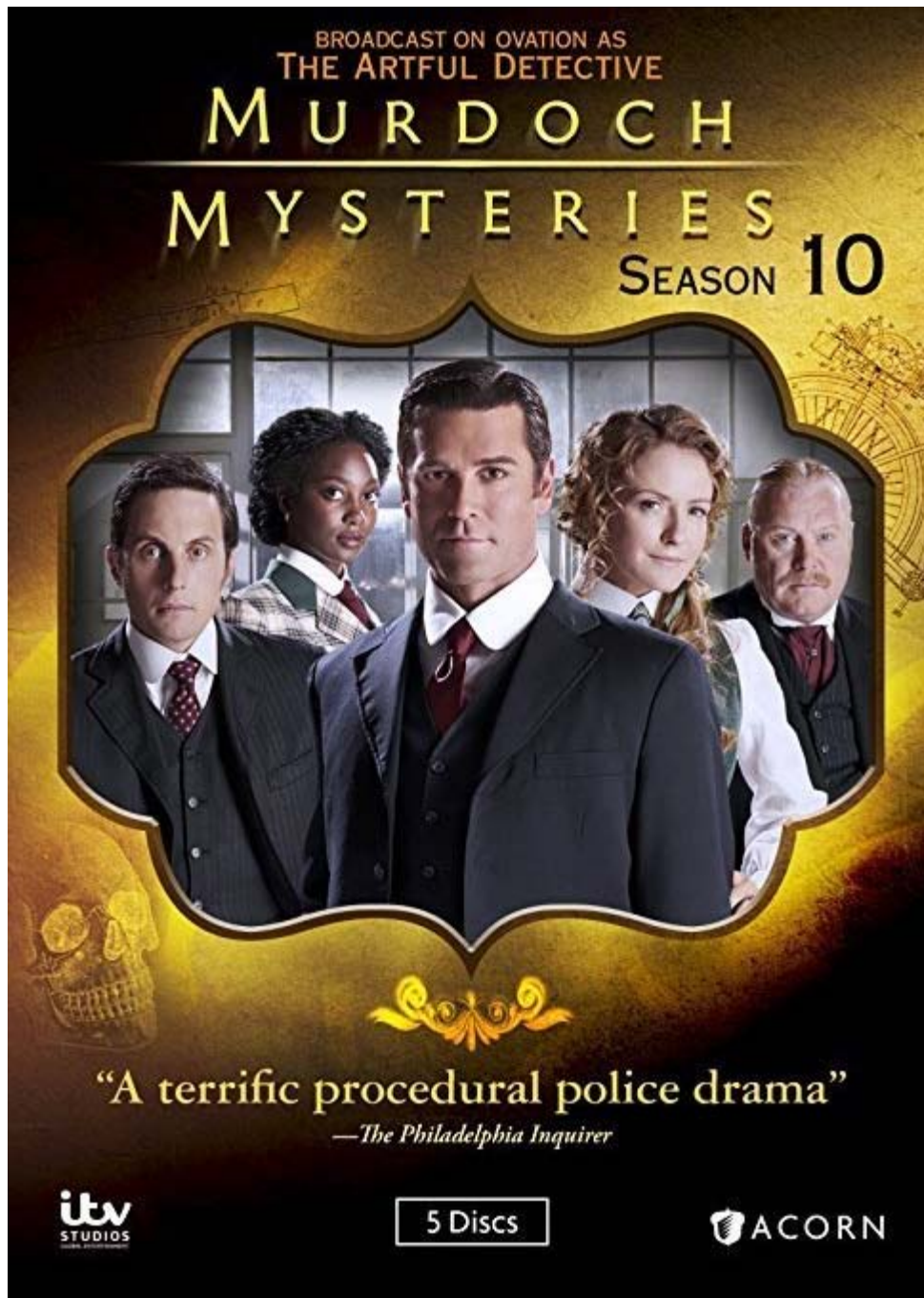
Long  
live  
the  
Queen...

THE COMPLETE SIXTH SEASON

# ONCE UPON A TIME







**RIVERDALE COMPLETE FIRST SEASON** (\$39.99 BluRay; Warner Bros.)

**BULL SEASON ONE** (\$49.99 DVD; Paramount)

**BLINDSPOT COMPLETE SECOND SEASON** (\$44.98 BluRay; Warner Bros.)

**ONCE UPON A TIME COMPLETE SIXTH SEASON** (\$79.99 BluRay; ABC Studios)

**MURDOCH MYSTERIES SEASON 10** (\$59.99 DVD; Acorn Media)

I'm writing this review in a Panera Bread, my office away from home where I do a lot of my writing. (I like a

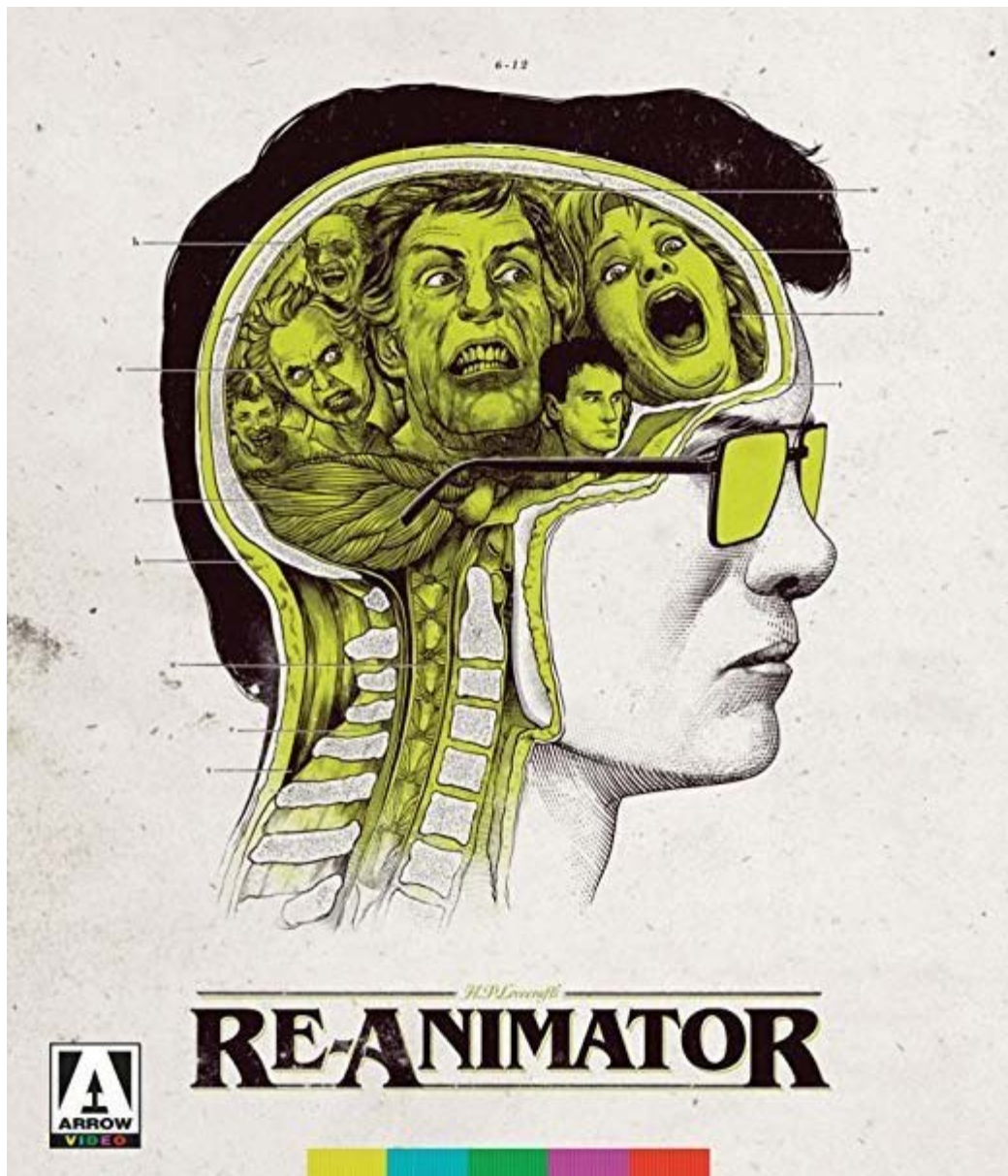
little distraction while thinking and besides...free refills!) Just last week, I listened amused as a little girl maybe ten years old detailed the entire first season plot of *Riverdale* to her mother and increasingly distraught grandmother. "Ok, so now THEY'RE brother and sister, but...!" said the little girl, detailing affairs and murders and extortions and maybe incest with gleeful abandon while the adults peppered her with questions. Granted, I had more fun watching the little girl explain the plot than I did when actually watching the episodes themselves. In this sped-up world, I felt *Riverdale's* need to shock and titillate spoiled the fun that could be had from watching those iconic characters Archie and Betty become corrupted or at least darker as the season went on. In fact, it took about two minutes for good girl Betty to seduce a jock in a hot tub and get so vengeful that she even freaked out big city gal Veronica. Oh well. At least Kevin has a boyfriend.

It's not easy launching a series and the courtroom drama *Bull* had a better ad campaign than actual show. But Michael Weatherly is having a blast as the smarter than everyone else in the room Bull. Let's face it, Dr. Phil's TV persona was always larger than life and this nonsense inspired by his work as a trial consultant is luckily having fun with the Phil-isms and feeling no need to be faithful to the facts of what this work is really like. It's comfort food and fans of *NCIS* should feel right at home.

*Bull* should be around a good long time. I'm not so confident about *Blindspot*, which began with a bang and fell in the ratings ever since. NBC renewed it for a third season (starting this October) but it must be doing better overseas because it fell 30% from season one's average and I see no reason why it won't fall again opposite strong and familiar Friday night competition like *MacGyver*, *Once Upon A Time*, *Hell's Kitchen* and critical fave *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* (go, Rachel Bloom!). In essence, this overly complicated series was an idea for a movie or miniseries stretched out to a five season stretch. I mean, how many tattoos does she have?

Speaking of *Once Upon A Time*, they should be running out of fairy tales to subvert by this time except you never run out of fairy tales. Rebooting with a load of new cast-members this season, you can enjoy a sense of completion when watching Season Six while resting assured that the story goes on and if ABC has their druthers you'll never hear anyone say, "And they lived happily ever after." On TV, a Final Battle is never a final battle, not if the ratings hold up.

And on chugs *Murdoch Mysteries*, the Canadian crime drama that is a gentler, period answer to the question what would *C.S.I.* be like if it took place up north, in the past and everyone had better manners? It's set in Toronto around the turn of the century (20th, that is) with handsome Yannick Misson starring as William Murdoch, a detective who uses new-fangled ideas of science to solve crimes. (He's also a Catholic, which is about as welcome then as Jews and Muslims have been during other parts of North American history.) Essentially, this is a gentle procedural, with history providing the backdrop for a lot of stories and each episode tying up a puzzle nicely while the main characters get arcs that give long-time viewers a sense of progress. And, yes, an eleventh season begins this October so *Murdoch Mysteries* might just become the UK answer to the UK's never-ending series beginning with an M, *Midsomer Murders*.



**RE-ANIMATOR LIMITED EDITION** (\$39.95 BluRay; Arrow Video)

I'm not a horror buff so when I say I howled with glee and the over-the-top humor and gore of Sam Raimi's masterpiece *Re-Animator* (on the short list of Greatest Sequels of All Time) you can at least rest assured it comes from someone who is not down with *Saw* and splatter gore and will cover his eyes if things are getting too outrageous. And they do get outrageous here, but with such wit and verve that you can't help enjoying yourself. This anniversary edition is positively bursting with extras and the transfer looks great.



BLU-RAY™ • DVD • DIGITAL HD

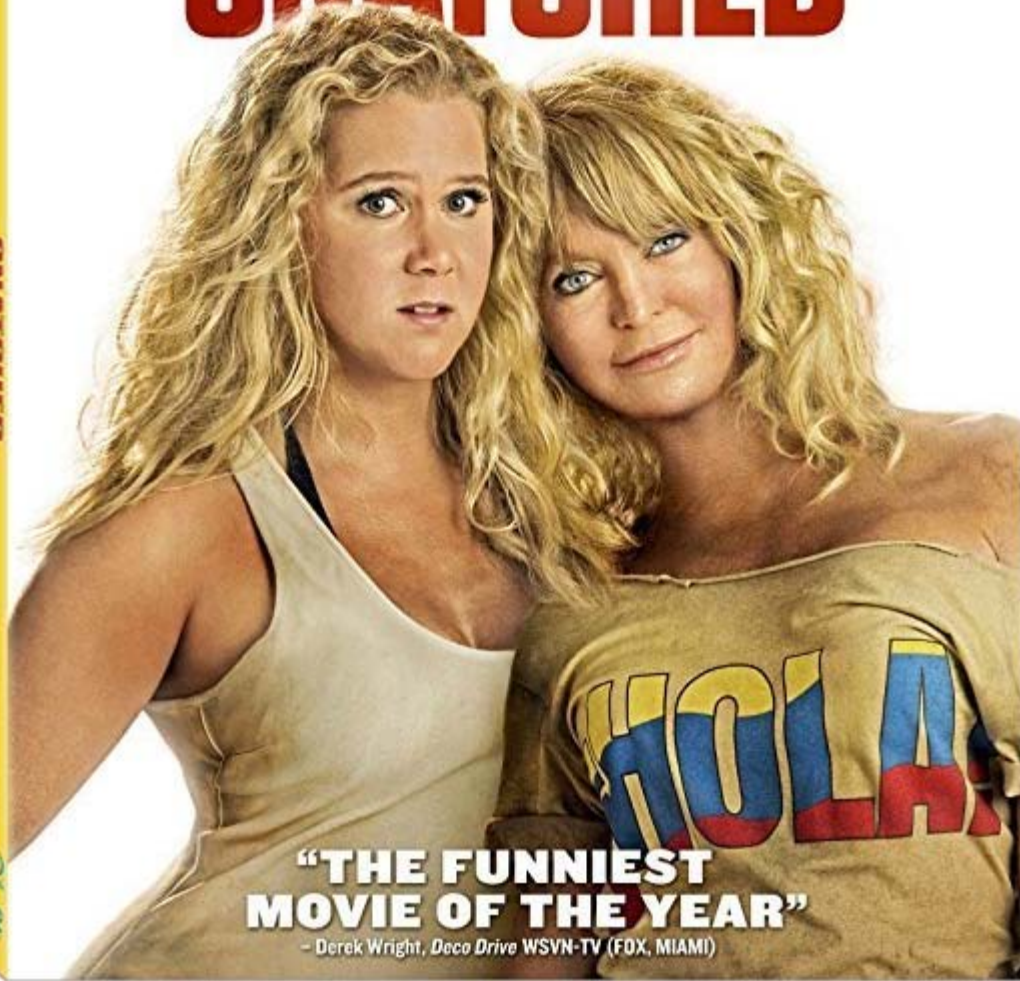
Amy Schumer

Goldie Hawn

# SNATCHED

SNATCHED

SNATCHED



**"THE FUNNIEST  
MOVIE OF THE YEAR"**

- Derek Wright, *Deco Drive* WSVN-TV (FOX, MIAMI)

BLU-RAY™ + DVD + DIGITAL HD

EUGENIO SALMA ROB KRISTEN  
DERBEZ HAYEK LOWE BELL

# HOW TO BE A LATIN LOVER

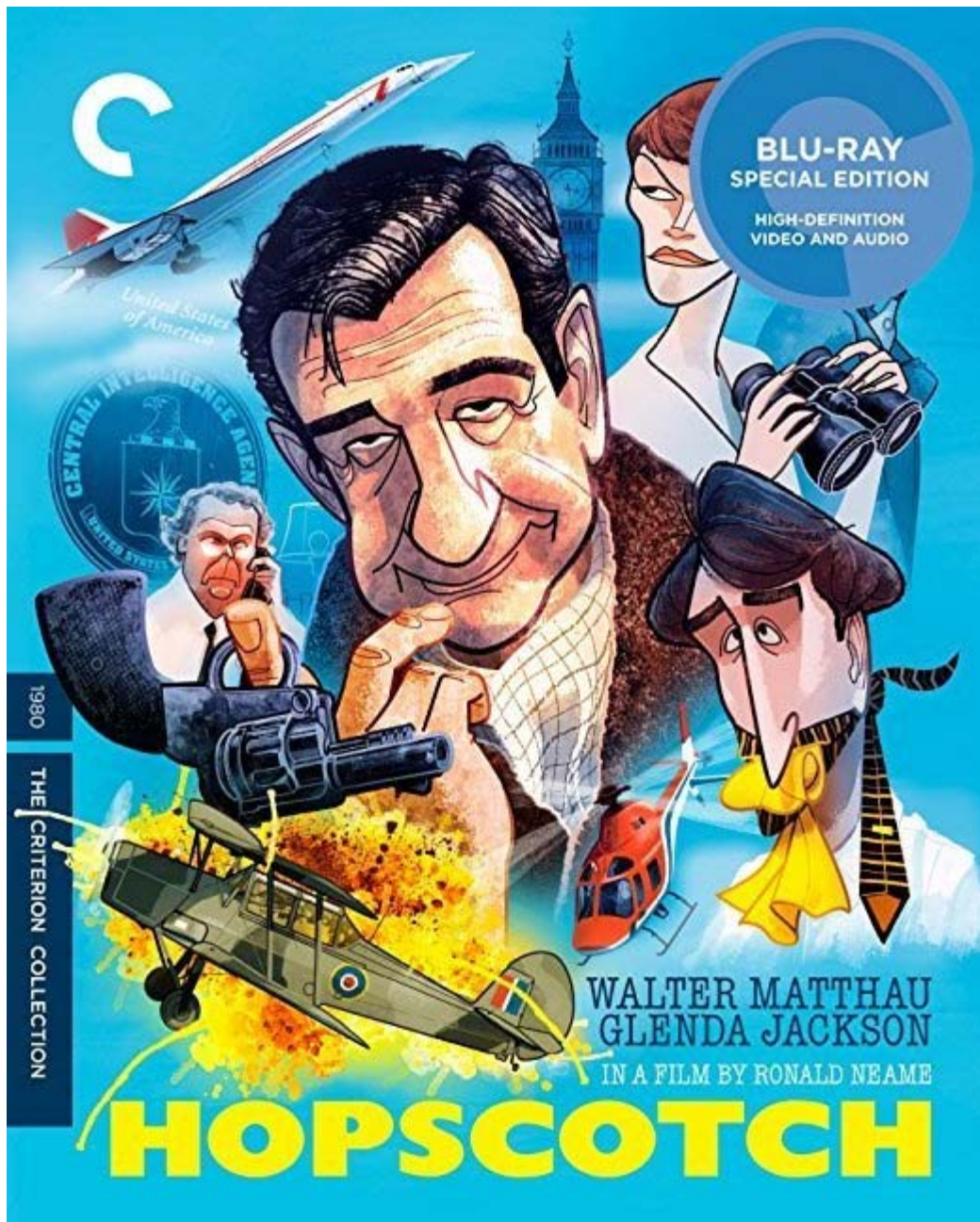


AGE IS A NUMBER,  
SEXY IS FOREVER

HOW TO BE A LATIN LOVER

2011





**SNATCHED** (\$34.99 BluRay; 20th Century Fox)

**HOW TO BE A LATIN LOVER** (\$39.99 BluRay; Lionsgate)

**HOPSCOTCH** (\$39.95 BluRay; Criterion)

I know, I know. You're scrolling the on-demand list of movies or glancing at the titles in RedBox or flipping through the titles in an actual store (does that even happen any more?) and you just want to rent or buy a comedy and forget about the news for a while. It's so easy to just say, "Oh I like Amy Schumer!" I mean, I like Amy Schumer but since your friends told you the movie wasn't good and the critics told you the movie wasn't that good, then why give in to the well-it-can't-completely-suck attitude of picking a movie that — at best — you hope won't be as bad as you know it will be. And really, *Snatched* is not so dreadfully bad — it's not



actually *evil*, after all — but it's not good. Hollywood has depended on your laziness for years but word of mouth and the info on the Internet means it doesn't work so well any more. So yeah, you could check out *Snatched* because hey it co-stars Goldie Hawn and everybody loves Goldie Hawn. Or you could rent *How To Be A Latin Lover* and hope for a laugh or two and if you don't pay too much attention and actually care, you'll probably chuckle once or twice.

But why not seek out a classic comedy? It has nothing in common with those movies tonally — it's not a broad dumb comedy — but *Hopscotch* is coming out again in a new edition from Criterion. It stars Walter Matthau as a retired CIA agent who partners with a European widow (the very sexy Glenda Jackson) to publish his memoirs. Sure, his own government is freaked out but so is every other spy agency in the world and they're all out to stop him. Being an old school pro, Matthau outwits all the young Turks looking to catch him and there's the fun of this lighthearted romp. It's a real treat. Kudos also to Criterion for their new trend of including episodes of Dick Cavett's talk show that include the talents from the films they put out. Here you've got Matthau's appearance from 1980 and it's a pleasure too.



**BLU-RAY  
SPECIAL EDITION**

HIGH-DEFINITION  
VIDEO AND AUDIO

1950

THE CRITERION COLLECTION

THE  
**BREAKING  
POINT**

DIRECTED BY MICHAEL CURTIZ



*For Three Men  
The Civil War Wasn't Hell.  
It Was Practice!*



**CLINT  
EASTWOOD**



**THE GOOD, THE BAD & THE UGLY**

co-starring

**LEE VAN CLEEF**

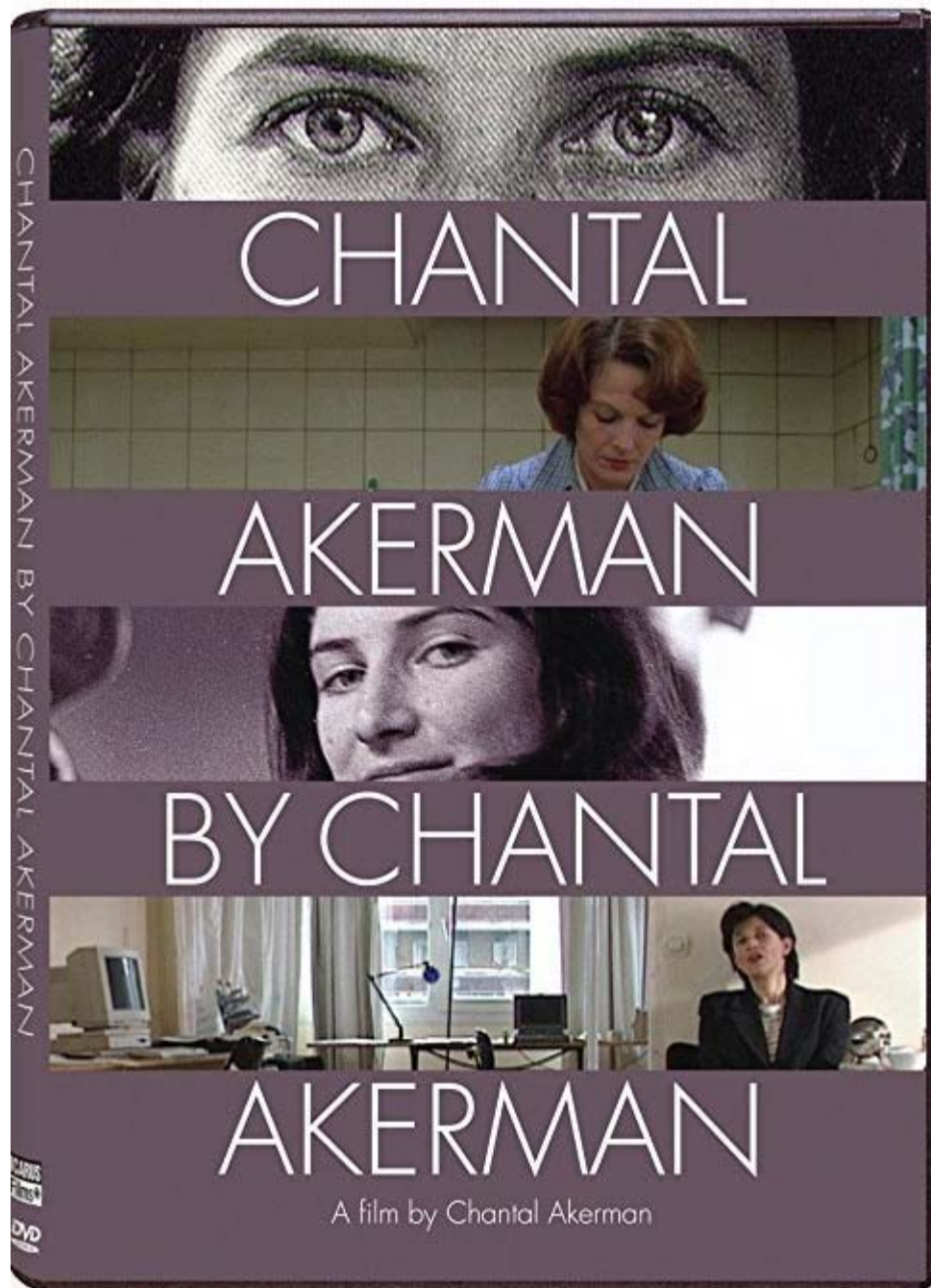
also starring

**ELI WALLACH**

in the role of Tuco

directed by  
**SERGIO LEONE**





**THE BREAKING POINT** (\$39.95 BluRay; Criterion)

**THE GOOD, THE BAD & THE UGLY** (\$29.95 BluRay; Kino Lorber)

**CHANTAL AKERMAN BY CHANTAL AKERMAN** (\$24.98 DVD; Icarus Films)

I'm no auteurist, one of those people who believe the director is the controlling, artistic vision of a film, the artist who puts their stamp on it above all others. I mean, it's a good argument but since you can follow a career of an actor or writer or editor or cinematographer (to name a few of the many artists who work on film) and see THEIR signature in every frame of every film they make, I just don't want to give the director undue acclaim. And yet, I have my favorites. To me, the greatest director of the studio era was Michael Curtiz. He

made more great films in more genres than any other director (barring perhaps Howard Hawks) and I know if he directed it, it's worth seeing. Of course others immediately say Oh Curtiz is just a hired hand who went where he was told, professional but anonymous. Which makes him both the height of the auteurist argument and it's undermining at the same time. None of that matters of course. What matters is that you should see any movie he's made. After all, he made — among many others — *Captain Blood* (a classic pirate film), *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (a classic adventure tale), *Angels With Dirty Faces* (a good gangster flick in which James Cagney breaks down and weeps), *Dodge City* and *Santa Fe Trail* (good westerns), *Yankee Doodle Dandy* (a classic musical), *Life With Father* (a charming family film), *Mildred Pierce* (then ultimate women's film) and *20,000 Years In Sing Sing* (a great prison film). Believe me, I could go on. Oh and *Casablanca*. And yet, I've never seen *The Breaking Point*. It's a remake of Ernest Hemingway's *To Have And Have Not*. Of course, that novel was adapted earlier in a classic version starring Bogie and Bacall. So that's one good reason I never got around to this one. But it stars John Garfield (who Curtiz helped turn into a star by showcasing his volcanic talent in the solid hit *Four Daughters*) in his second to last film, alongside the undervalued Patricia Neal. This set includes a handsome new transfer, commentary from an historian and Curtiz biographer, video from his acting coach daughter, analysis of the director's technique and a piece from the *Today* show looking at Hemingway's home and some items related to the novel. I can't imagine it will outdo that Howard Hawks classic but I won't be surprised in the least if it becomes an addition to the long list of good-to-great films from the studio system's greatest director.

Unlike me, Sergio Leone's western *The Good, The Bad & The Ugly* keeps getting better looking as it gets older. It was a hit upon release in 1967 and certainly turned Clint Eastwood into a star once and for all. But critics were thrown off by how the sly humor and serious epic style of the film (underlined by that iconic score) played off one another to absurd and gratifying effect. Audiences ate it up but critics perhaps were worried about how much fun it seemed. Be serious. Or be silly. But serious *and* silly? That threw them for a loop. Of course the stock of Leone and his spaghetti westerns has only risen since then. This 50th anniversary edition offers the original US theatrical version and an extended cut, along with extras. As of yet, I haven't been able to compare them to previous editions but any chance to rewatch this hoot of a film is welcome.

Certainly Chantal Akerman is on the short list of all-time great directors. And who better than Akerman to take a look at her work? Typically puckish and innovative, when Akerman was asked to contribute to the series Cinema Of Our Times she offered to compile excerpts from her own work exclusively. When they insisted Akerman appear on screen as well, she filmed herself in her apartment reading the text of how difficult it was to make this movie. And then she followed it with excerpts from all her movies. There was no one like her and this odd duck of a memoir/tribute is delightful proof.

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