



Michael Giltz, Contributor BookFilter creator

DVDs: "Baby Driver" Deserves Ticket, Sterling "Lady Macbeth" Deserves Awards, Spoiler Alert: "Apes" Win

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This week we've got the sort-of overlooked *War For The Planet Of The Apes*, the over-praised *Baby Driver* and the overwhelming awards-bait drama *Lady Macbeth*. Plus TV gets deconstructed by *Green Acres* and Ernie Kovacs, a slew of holiday themed movies and TV shows, the Duke, Samurai Jack and more.

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W

WAR FOR THE PLANET OF THE APES

18 / 16



WAR FOR THE
PLANET
OF THE
APES

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**BRIE
LARSON**

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**WOODY
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WATTS**

THE
GLASS
CASTLE

BASED ON THE #1 BEST-SELLING MEMOIR

THE GLASS CASTLE

FROM THE PRODUCER OF
THE SHACK AND THE BLIND SIDE



"A POWERFUL, ENGAGING STORY AND A TRULY EXCEPTIONAL CAST"

- Slea Lemick, ComingSoon.net



WAR FOR THE PLANET OF THE APES (\$34.99 BluRay; 20th Century Fox)

THE GLASS CASTLE (\$39.99 BluRay; Lionsgate)

BABY DRIVER (\$34.99 BluRay; Sony Pictures Home Entertainment)

Perhaps *War For The Planet Of The Apes* will be best remembered for pushing forward the art of motion capture performance, with Andy Serkis delivering a nuanced, fascinating performance as Caesar. That would be fine, if a shame. The trilogy of films in this reboot are vastly superior to the original films, where only the first is of interest. But here we get three distinct stories that comment upon each other and are best appreciated all at once. The finale is a curious film. While *Dawn* was a rousing action film, *War* is more of a road picture, combining everything from *The Great Escape* to *The Ten Commandments* but with apes instead of

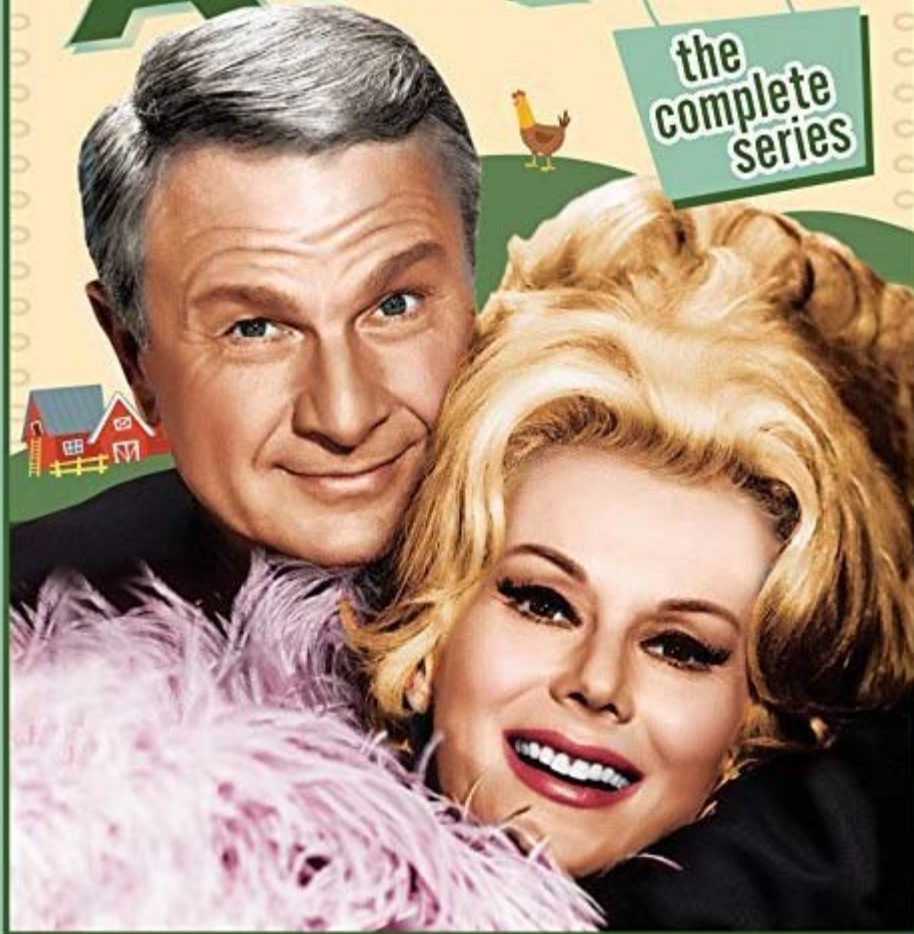
humans. People go from the heroes to the villains, climaxed by the chewy work of Woody Harrelson as a cruel man willing to do anything to keep humans on top. For a brief moment I imagined a truly mind-blowing climax, but the film went in a different, fine direction. As a technological achievement, the films are remarkable. And while each film has serious flaws, taken as a whole they are highly entertaining and speak to one another in fascinating ways.

Harrelson probably saw himself having a great year with *War* and *The Glass Castle* set to come out. The latter is a noble but unsatisfying drama that had everything going for it: a best-selling memoir, Oprah-worthy suffering redeemed in the end and a stellar cast. But somehow, it never comes close to working. If I knew why, I'd be making films instead of just reviewing them.

However, I do know that *Baby Driver* doesn't work and I blame the casting. And the script. And the conceit. Mainly, the movie feels like an excuse to stage some action scenes to some explosive if relatively offbeat pop songs from the past. Jump to those action scenes and you'll see the quirky idea that powers this film and it's quite successful. It's everything else that doesn't work, from Ansel Elgort as our magnetic hero (I'm not sold yet on him) to everyone else. To be honest, Elgort works better here than the rest of the cast. He's an orphan traumatized by the auto accident death of his parents, which has driven (!) him to become...not a driving instructor focused on safety but a car man for criminals with insanely gifted skills that he employs all to the rhythm of songs playing on his headphones. I can handle that. But the "dangerous" gang he joins makes me giggle. Literally everyone in the film has been better before but they are absurd here. Jon Bernthal is a nutty gangster who goes apeshit because Elgort is quiet and wears sunglasses indoors during their meetings. Does he want a new bestie or a driver who will keep his mouth shut? Jamie Foxx is a similarly unhinged lunatic though again he seemed just plain bonkers to me. To top it off, Jon Hamm is a REALLY crazy guy with a psycho girlfriend who will kill you as soon as look at you. But with his George Michael stubble and leather jacket he looked more like a guy cruising Greenwich Village than a desperado. This gang brought together by Kevin Spacey is literally the most volatile since the *Dirty Dozen* and at least they maintained a modicum of camaraderie.

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ERNE KOVACS



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GOOD
LOOK

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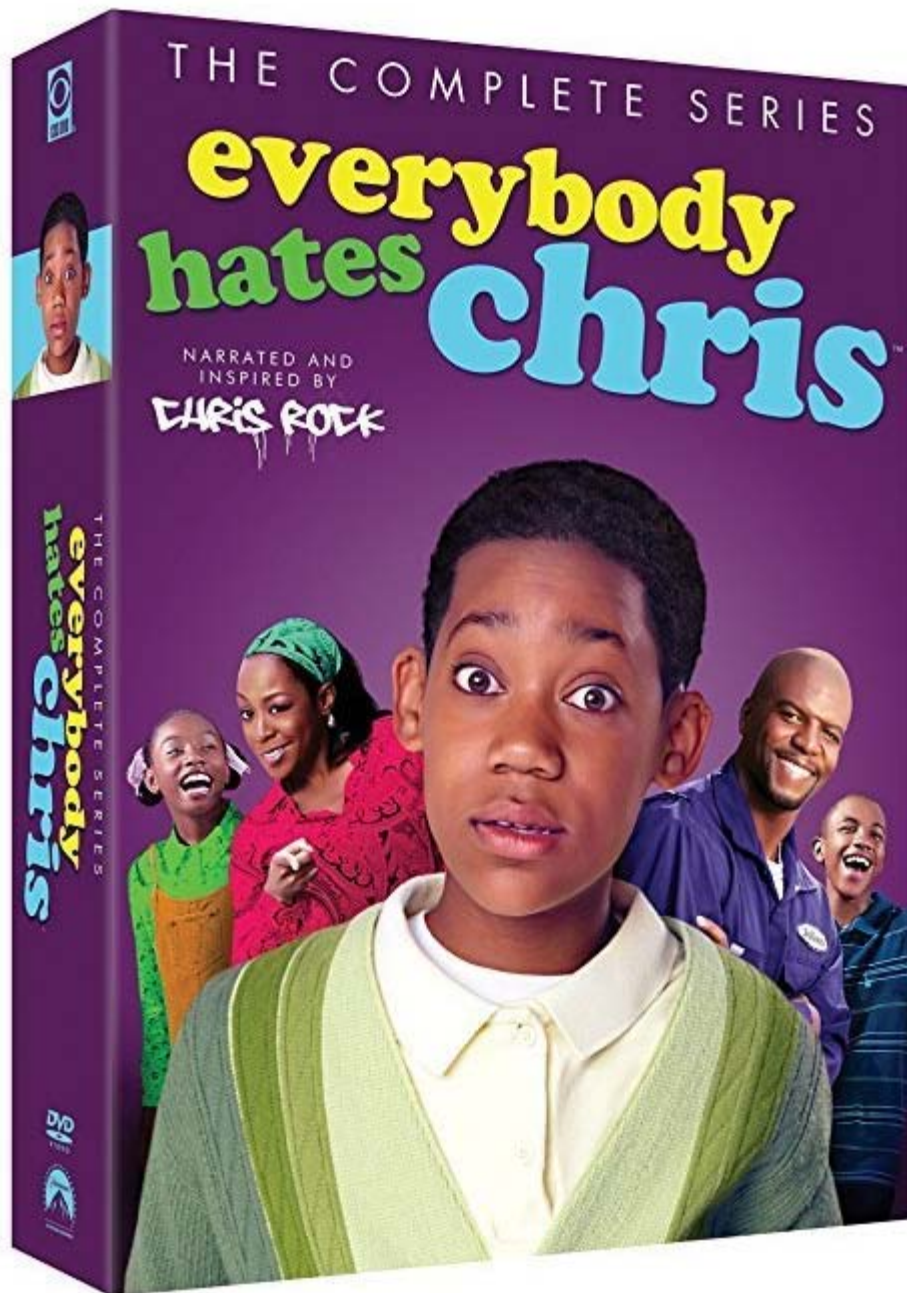


SAMURAI JACK

THE COMPLETE SERIES



[adult swim]



GREEN ACRES THE COMPLETE SERIES (\$139.99 DVD; Shout! Factory)

ERNIE KOVACS: TAKE A GOOD LOOK (\$69.97 DVD; Shout! Factory)

SAMURAI JACK THE COMPLETE SERIES (\$112.99 BluRay; Warner Bros.)

EVERYBODY HATES CHRIS THE COMPLETE SERIES (\$33.99 DVD; Paramount)

I shouldn't go overboard here but you can watch the silly sitcom *Green Acres* and see it as an absurdist deconstruction of the sitcom. It helps that Eva Gabor is such a surreal presence as the urbanite wife plunked down in rural America because her silly husband Eddie Albert wants to be a farmer. But when you start to pay

attention and realize how this show piled on absurdity like a talking pig, yokels who can blithely comment on world affairs, opening credits popping up in strange places (like window shades) and on and on, you have to admit this isn't quite as straightforward as the absurd but rooted in reality sitcom *The Beverly Hillbillies*. Mind you, you have to comb through a lot of simply bland episodes to discover these nuggets but they are definitely there. At the very least, the show was self-mocking and the people behind it had a lot of fun.

No one would question the truth that Ernie Kovacs both created and deconstructed a lot of the fundamentals we take for granted in TV. He influenced morning tv and late night talk show hosts — everyone from Steve Allen to David Letterman and beyond would attest to that. It's hard to know quite how he did this since the reign of Kovacs was brief and rarely seen again. Now we've seen wave after wave of Kovacs collected and preserved. Some of it is just plain nutty — just like watching say the entire first run of Letterman in the morning will uncover a lot of dross with just a few gems scattered among them. How else can you figure out what works and what doesn't? While I haven't watched every episode, I feel pretty safe in saying that perhaps nothing Kovacs did was quite as indifferent to the audience as the game show *Take A Good Look*. Even calling it a game show is misleading. Like *What's My Line*, it featured a secret guest a panel of celebrities would try to identify. Unfortunately for them, Kovacs presented clues in the form of skits so elaborate and beside the point that divining what the clue might be was all but impossible. Skip ahead in episodes and you can imagine the networks saying, "For the love of God, help us out here." Kovacs began to tell the audience who the guest was at the start, but that doesn't really help you figure out the clues or how they relate to the person in the least. His mockery of the celebs as they beat their heads against the wall in trying to outsmart him becomes increasingly amusing. It's a game show without a game, clues without a solution and a show without any purpose whatsoever except the perverse amusement of Kovacs himself. Letterman, I am sure, would love it.

Thank god for animated TV shows. While animation means *The Simpsons* can seemingly go on forever (not a good thing) it also means *Samurai Jack* can come back more than a decade after its fourth season and finally get the satisfying ending it deserves. This complete boxed set includes the debut film and all five seasons of the show, which follow a samurai entering a dystopian future where he goes on a journey to defeat evil and return to his own time. While there's humor here, what makes the show special is its seriousness of purpose and its visual flair. Thanks to a great ending, you can enjoy the episodic nature of most of the run more fully because you know eventually they'll get where they're going. It's the third major series from creator Genndy Tartakovsky, who also did *Dexter's Laboratory*, *Star Wars: Clone Wars*, the lesser animated film series *Hotel Transylvania* and for good measure was part of the team on *Powerpuff Girls*. That's a serious genius-level resume.

Everybody Hates Chris is a one-joke title riffing on *Everybody Loves Raymond*. Happily, the show is far better than that, telling the childhood travails of Chris Rock in hilarious detail. It's all anchored by an excellent cast. Tyler James Wilson is of course key as the young Chris, but Terry Crews and Tichina Arnold hit it out of the park as his parents. This is a very good sitcom that lasted four seasons and made the most of every single episode. Rock narrates and it is the best thing he's ever done. And on sale you get the entire series for less than \$30! I know it's convenient to have everything via streaming but you never know what's going to be available where or when. Some shows are worth owning and if you have kids, this is one of them.

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"IMAGINE ALFRED
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WUTHERING HEIGHTS"
— Eric Kohn, IndieWire

*lady
macbeth*



lady macbeth

11



AN INCONVENIENT SEQUEL (\$26.99 BluRay; Paramount)

LADY MACBETH (\$19.99 DVD; Lionsgate)

HEARTSTONE (\$24.99 DVD; Breaking Glass)

Clearly, Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth* was lightning in a bottle. That doesn't lessen the disappointment that this vital sequel couldn't come within a country mile of reaching the same audience as the original. The problem? The film fell between the cracks in messaging. The original had one clear point to make: Holy S***! The sequel had two conflicting messages: We Can Fix This and Holy S*** Trump won the Presidency and now our battle against climate change is endangered. In truth, the film pivots at the end to show how the rise of

green tech and states and cities pushing for change mean the end of fossil fuels and the rise of renewables is inevitable. Perhaps the big loss will be the opportunity the US had to be at the forefront of green technology (solar, electric cars, etc.) and lead the markets and thus make a lot of money in areas of growth here and around the world, especially India and China. Let's hope that's the worst case scenario.

An Inconvenient Sequel hasn't a hope of being an awards season player like the original because this year looks like an excellent one for documentary films. It also looks like another excellent year for roles for women. So I'm worried that the excellent drama *Lady Macbeth* might get lost in the shuffle. This excellent British film transposes the Russian novel to rural England in the mid-1800s. Frances Pugh is a young woman sold into marriage (as women were) who imagines oh so briefly it might be the beginning of a better life. Hardly. Her wedding night is a disaster, her husband brutish and indifferent, her father-in-law a beast and she is literally trapped in the clothes of a proper lady, sitting on a couch trying to catch her breath in a viciously tight corset and waiting waiting waiting for her husband to come home. Any attempt by her to merely walk outside is seen as highly improper and she's expected to sit and read scripture and adorn the home, nothing more. It's no surprise a servant full of life catches her eye. But what is a surprise is the increasingly ruthless way she maneuvers to seize any power and freedom she can. Pugh is the highlight here in a controlled performance that has stayed with me. But every element of this feature debut by William Oldroyd is top-notch, from the cinematography of newcomer Ari Wegner to the excellent cast including a hateful Christopher Fairbank as her father-in-law to poor Naomi Ackie as a servant caught in her web. This is a terrific debut and one of the best films of the year.

Heartstone is more admirable than brilliant. But it's still a worthy, interesting film of young love in Iceland. Two pals come of age as one flirts with a girl and the other realizes he wishes his pal would flirt with *him*. Nothing remarkable but the story feels fresh thanks to the unusual setting of a fishing village. Besides, the lead boy is called Thor and who can't love a small indie film about gay love when it involves Thor?



COLLECTOR'S EDITION

THREE O'CLOCK HIGH

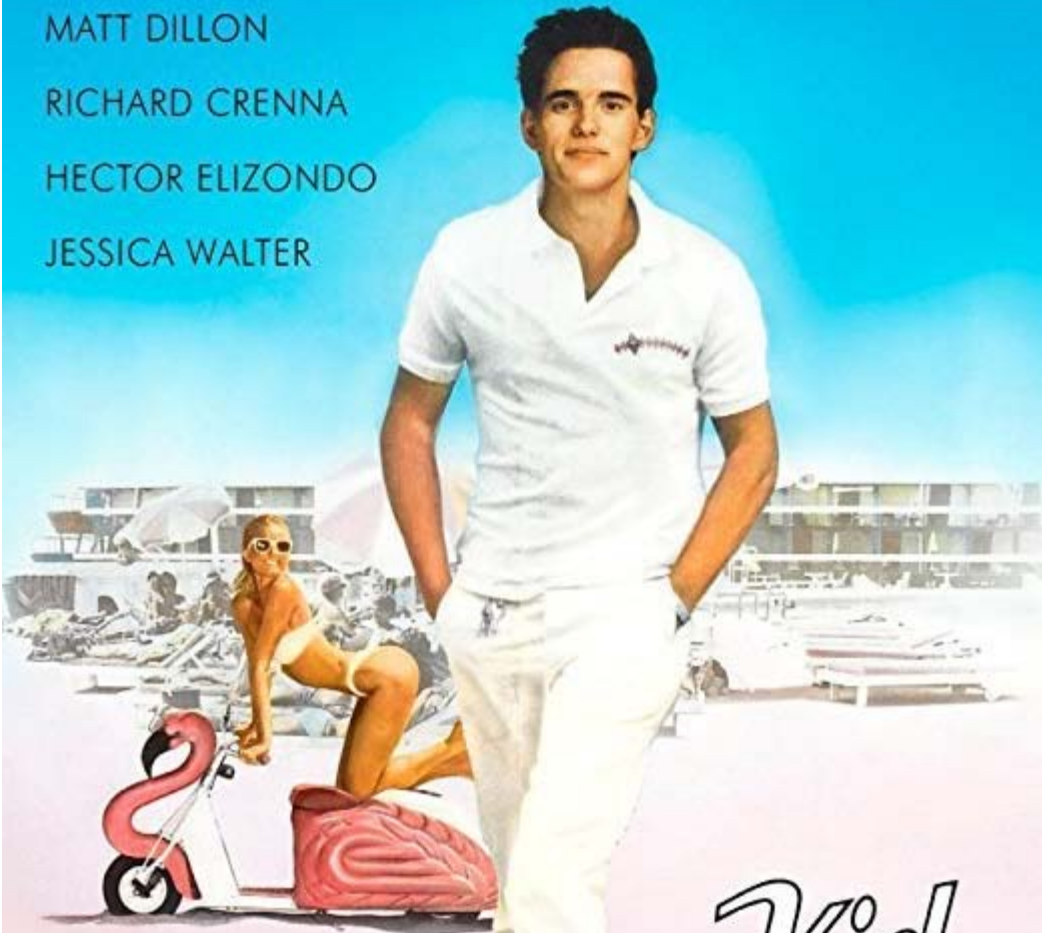
Jerry Mitchell just bumped
into Buddy Revell.
Now Jerry isn't thinking
about math or English,
because at three o'clock,
he's history.

SHOUT SELECT





MATT DILLON
RICHARD CRENNAN
HECTOR ELIZONDO
JESSICA WALTER



The Flamingo Kid

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THREE O'CLOCK HIGH (\$22.97 BluRay; Shout! Factory)

THE FLAMINGO KID (\$29.95 BluRay; Kino Classics)

L.A. CONFIDENTIAL 20TH ANNIVERSARY (\$14.99 BluRay; New Regency)

Director Phil Joanou was like Orson Welles on his first film — a kid with the biggest toy train in the world and desperate to show it off. The simple story of a kid in high school doomed to meet a bully for a fight at 3 pm is a riff on *High Noon*, every teen comedy ever made and on a technical level is a show-off of the highest order. In hindsight, it's a little too show-offy but I loved it at the time, feeling like I was seeing a director on the rise. Except for the U2 concert film *Rattle & Hum* (which I like a lot), Joanou's promise was never quite fulfilled. But

this belongs on a short shelf of weirdly quirky teen flicks, alongside *One Crazy Summer* and precious few others.

Like *Risky Business*, Matt Dillon's *The Flamingo Kid* was billed as a raunchy teen comedy. But director Garry Marshall's best film is quieter and smarter than that. (As was the blackly satirical *Risky Business*.) It's an observant, (bitter)sweet coming of age film anchored by star in the making Dillon and a host of colorful characters. Not great, but quite good.

On the other hand, director Curtis Hanson's noir-ish *L.A. Confidential* is indeed great, a classic that absolutely holds up with the classics it aspires to equal. Guy Pearce, Russell Crowe, Kevin Spacey (with one of the most convincing death scenes ever) and Kim Basinger as a femme fatale are all top notch in the sleazy story of a tabloid with dirty secrets and powerful people who want them to remain that way. But it's Hanson all the way, who did full justice to the James Ellroy novel in his screenplay co-written with Brian Helgeland. It's been 20 years since the film came out. It seemed an instant classic then and it is clearly a classic now. You might not be sure when it was made (it could be 1950 or 1990), but it's damn good.

BRENDA BLETHYN

VERA Set 7



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THE COMPLETE
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AMERICAN GODS

SEASON 1



AMERICAN GODS

STARZ

STARZ



VERA SET 7 (\$59.99 DVD; Acorn Media)

THE DURRELS IN CORFU COMPLETE SECOND SEASON (\$49.99 BluRay; PBS)

AMERICAN GODS SEASON 1 (\$39.99 BluRay; Lionsgate)

THE COLLECTION (\$59.99 BluRay; PBS)

You can keep your damned serialized TV with elaborate twists and turns. Sometimes I just want comfort food and that's what you get with *Vera*. Brenda Blethyn is a treat as the star of this procedural, which has everything an Anglophile could want: bodies, British accents and a truckload of good British actors in every role. It won't set the world on fire but Blethyn as the grumpy and Columbo-worthy disheveled crime fighter is

an irascible treat. This set contains four complete mysteries and since the show is seemingly more popular than ever, an eighth season is on its way. Clearly people are catching up on DVD and via AcornTV. You should too.

Gentler comfort can be found in *The Durrells in Corfu*, the amiable tv series spun off from the brilliant memoirs by Gerald Durrell (especially *My Family and Other Animals*). The series is gentler and broader in its comedy and clearly the Greek setting is a big draw. Kelley Hawes is a treat as the hard-drinking matriarch and Milo Parker a sweet presence as young Gerry. It's not a patch on the books but taken on its own terms, the show is a pleasant, family friendly diversion.

Those are shows I've dipped into. But there are a lot more I haven't yet. Some, like *American Gods*, I'm on the fence about. Like you, perhaps, I waited. Would reviews be good enough? Would it be back for a second season? It's unfair to wait to see if a show will return before watching it because of course unless you watch it in the first place, it might never return. And I am a fan of Neil Gaiman, though not that novel in particular. All of that made me wary, along with reviews that emphasized the wacky scenes they had to depict (ravenous sex a la a preying mantis, if a preying mantis were a goddess) rather than compelling characters. But *American Gods* is coming back so maybe now is the time to step in and see if you want to go along for the ride.

That was certainly my attitude towards *The Collection*. This BBC series was made in partnership with Amazon and as can happen on a streaming service, the immediate dumping of the show all at once meant it got about two minutes of publicity in 2016 and then disappeared. I hadn't much interest in a show set in the French fashion world post-WWII. But I kept hearing from friends it might be worth a look. Plus it has Mamie Gummer and Tom Riley, who finally gets to be gay when he should have been at least bi in the silly *Da Vinci's Demons*. Sadly, once you watch, you realize they feared a show about fashion in Paris wasn't quite enough and tossed in murders and other mysteries that by the end just feel silly. It's no surprise to hear a season two is not in the works.



THE MILESTONE CINEMATHEQUE

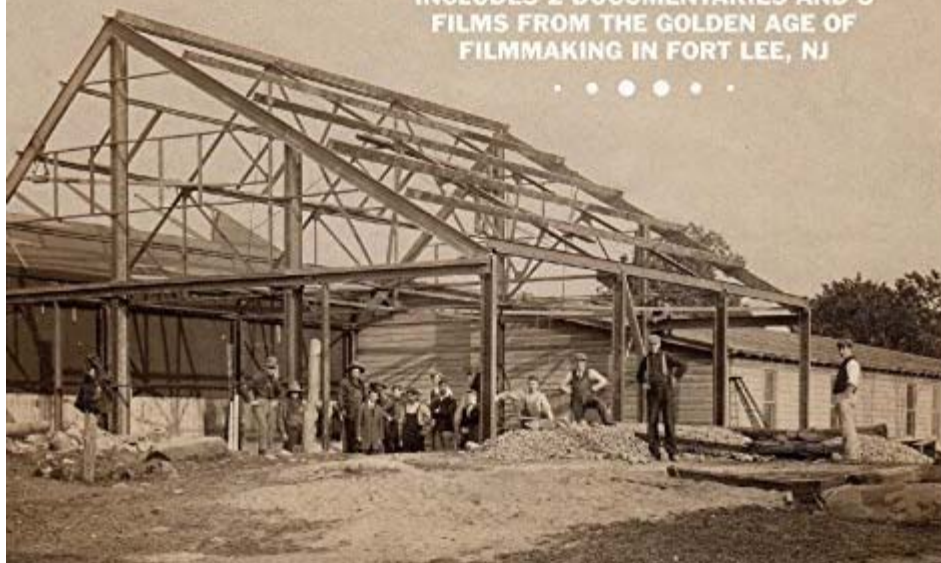
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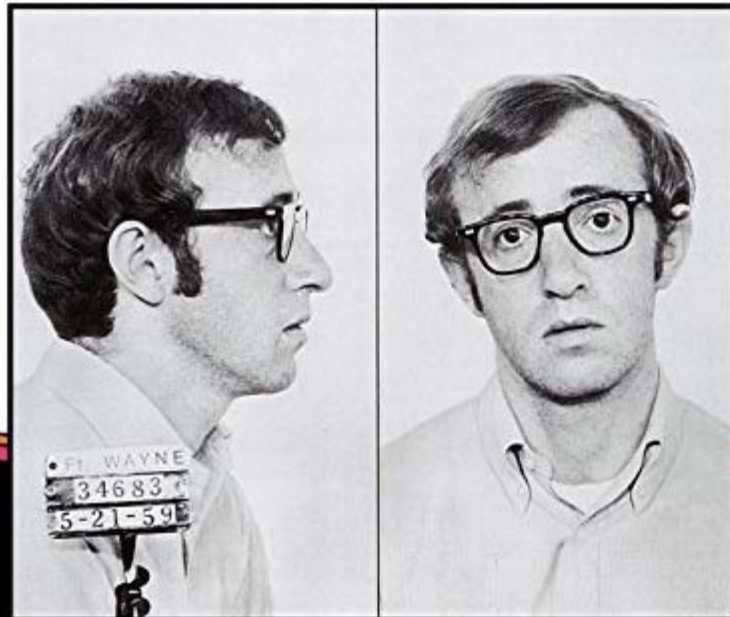
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Starring

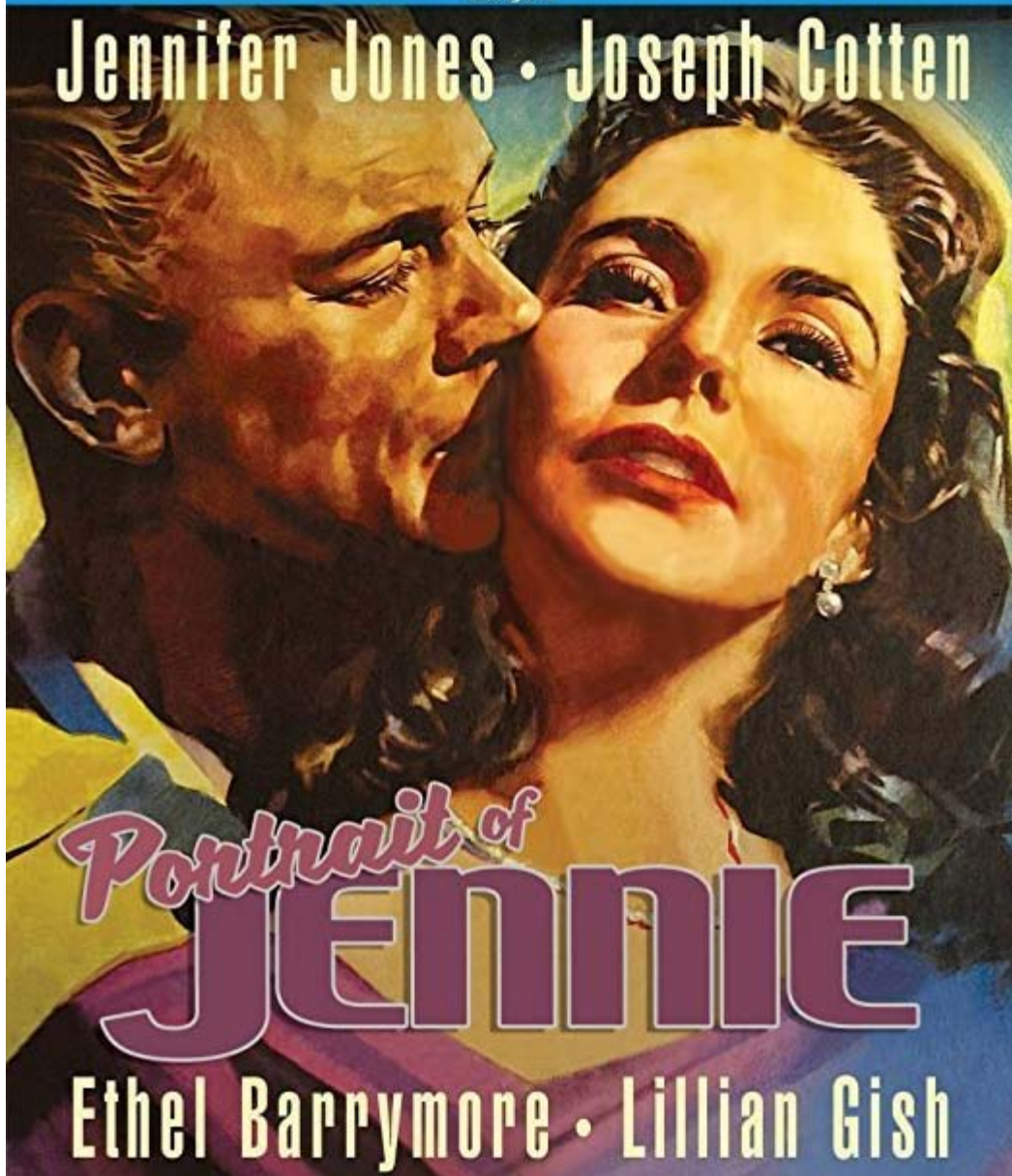
WOODY ALLEN

and

JANET MARGOLIN

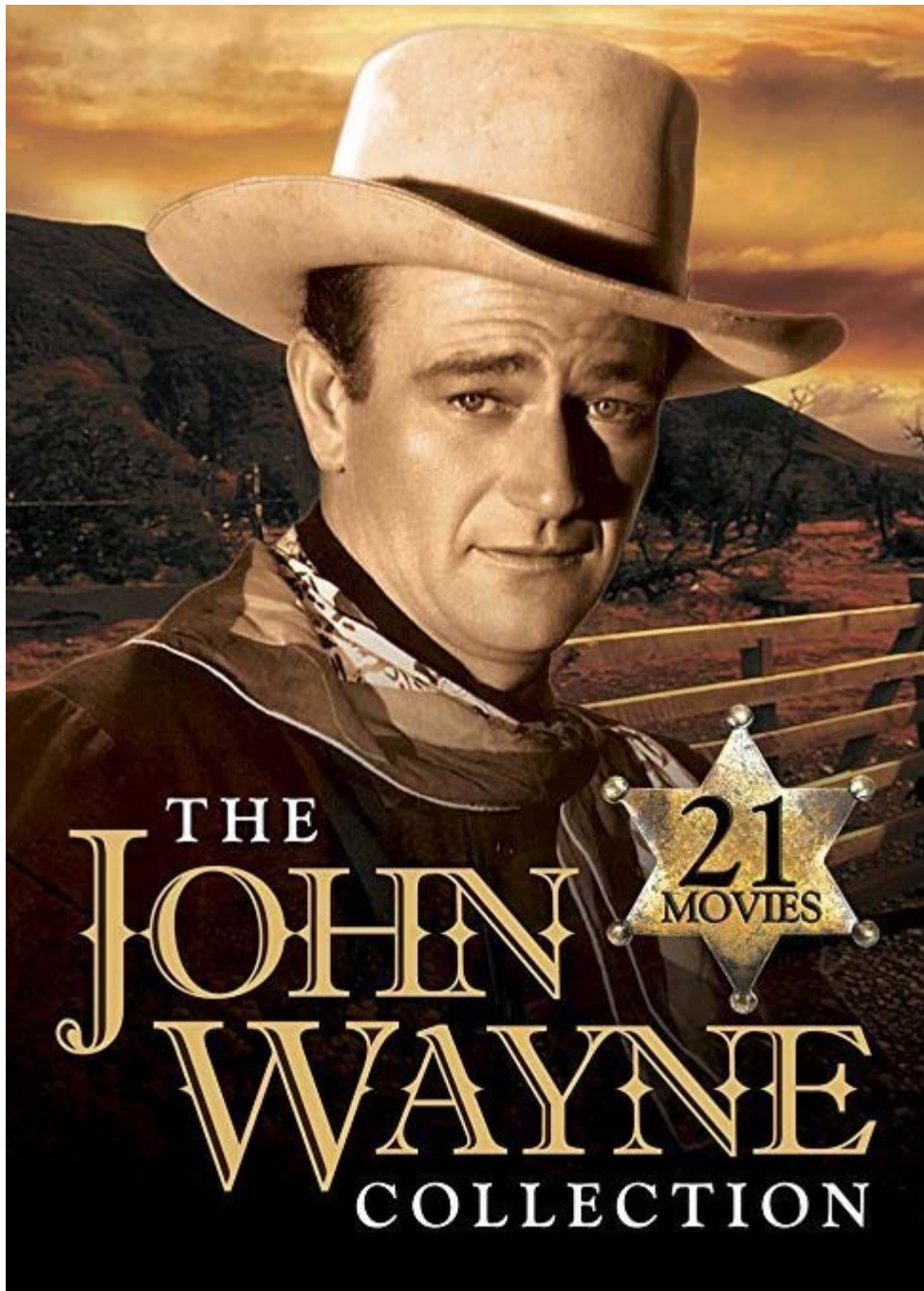


Jennifer Jones • Joseph Cotten



Portrait of
JENNIE

Ethel Barrymore • Lillian Gish



THE CHAMPION (\$34.99 DVD; Milestone)

LA CHINOISE (\$29.95 BluRay; Kino Classics)

LE GAI SAVOIR (\$29.95 BluRay; Kino Classics)

TAKE THE MONEY AND RUN (\$29.95 BluRay; Kino Classics)

PORTRAIT OF JENNIE (\$29.95 BluRay; Kino Classics)

THE JOHN WAYNE COLLECTION (21 MOVIES) (\$29.98 DVD; Image Madacy)

Who knew Fort Lee, New Jersey was the home of one of the first film studios way back in 1910? *The Champion* is a 35 minute documentary film that tells the story of its success in the silent era succinctly and with clear affection. Others might have been tempted to stretch out the story to feature length. Given the materials at hand, I think they wisely told the story they had and then stopped. But this two disc set doesn't stop with the film. It includes a fascinating 1935 short about Fort Lee after the studio shut down called *Ghost Town*. Plus you get a clutch of shorts and feature films, including a Mack Sennett comedy and the earliest Hollywood take on Robin Hood. A real treat for film buffs.

Film buffs will always be up for a fight, like Truffaut versus Godard. I fear my early pick was Truffaut (I always prefer story to showboating) but Godard might be lapping him. Here are two more Godard films to fight over. *La Chinoise* is a visually striking affair that both mocks and celebrates the desire of middle class students to rebel via a Maoist cell. The fact that it was made amidst the fervor of 1967 (with real revolution tantalizingly in sight for a moment in 1968) is amazing. But only true Godardians will enjoy the talk-fest that is *Le Gai Savoir*, an extended debate on philosophy and semantics and politics and sex between Juliet Berto and Jean-Pierre Léaud. It is interminable, with none of the visual flair and satirical piss-taking that makes *La Chinoise* compelling.

Sticking with film buffs (surely the only people still reading), they used to debate early Woody versus later, more serious Woody. That was until serious Woody of the 1980s led to the deadly dull Woody post-*Husbands and Wives*. (And yes, I include *Bullets Over Broadway*, which kinder folk will see as his last gasp.) Yes, certain films offer certain pleasures (Sean Penn in *Sweet and Lowdown*, Scarlett Johansson in *Match Point*). But by and large we've had 25 years of so-so movies. No surprise, because that was preceded by about 25 years of a lot of great movies. Very few acts stay on top for even that long. So don't fight over slapstick Woody versus the more sober Woody of the 1980s. It's all good, including what feels like his real debut with *Take The Money and Run*, a hilarious mockumentary filled with jokes. Seeing the home of his parents sort of pop back in on the new film *Wonder Wheel* is just one reminder of how long he's been at it. Sure, Allen hasn't been great in a long time. But when he was great, he truly was and it began for real right here.

No one talks about Woody Allen has a great actor. Despite doing slapstick, comedies and dramas, Allen is seen as playing himself, even if "himself" has encompassed everyone from the drolly sad Zelig a la Buster Keaton to the sex fiend a la Bob Hope of his slapstick to the endearingly hapless intellectual of *Annie Hall* and *Hannah And Her Sisters* a la...well, Woody Allen. And Joseph Cotten rarely springs to mind when discussing the great actors of Hollywood's Golden Age. Spencer Tracy, Cary Grant, Jimmy Stewart, Gary Cooper among men; Barbara Stanwyck and Katherine Hepburn and Myrna Loy for starters among women. But Joseph Cotten? Yet he starred in *Citizen Kane* and *The Magnificent Ambersons*, plus *The Third Man* and Hitchcock's personal favorite *Shadow Of A Doubt*. (Not to mention originating *The Philadelphia Story* and *Sabrina* — opposite Margaret Sullavan! — on stage.) He's one of the greats and that's obvious in *Portrait Of Jennie*. This mostly forgotten drama would make a great double bill with *Vertigo*, showing a painter obsessed with a young woman he keeps bumping into and sketching, even as she seems to exist mysteriously out of time. The girl is played by Jennifer Jones and this film is a huge improvement on their bore of a box office smash, *Duel In The*

Sun from two years earlier.

And by now everyone knows John Wayne is a major film actor. Again, he always seemed to be playing himself, but “himself” varied widely from comedies to drama to action, with men who were noble or racist, lovelorn or indifferent. This boxed set contains early Wayne films before he became a star for good with *Stagecoach*. It will separate the men from the boys when it comes to being a John Wayne fan. There are no genuinely great films, a lot that are ok at best and even more that are less than ok. But you can watch Wayne learn on the job, appreciating how he got better and better even amidst pretty weak material. It’s on the job training that is awfully hard to come by today — maybe only the remaining daytime soaps or some basic cable procedurals come close to Hollywood in its heyday for allowing stars to figure out who they are and what works. The quality varies in picture and sound, so only Duke fanatics need apply. But at barely more than \$1 a film, the price is certainly right.

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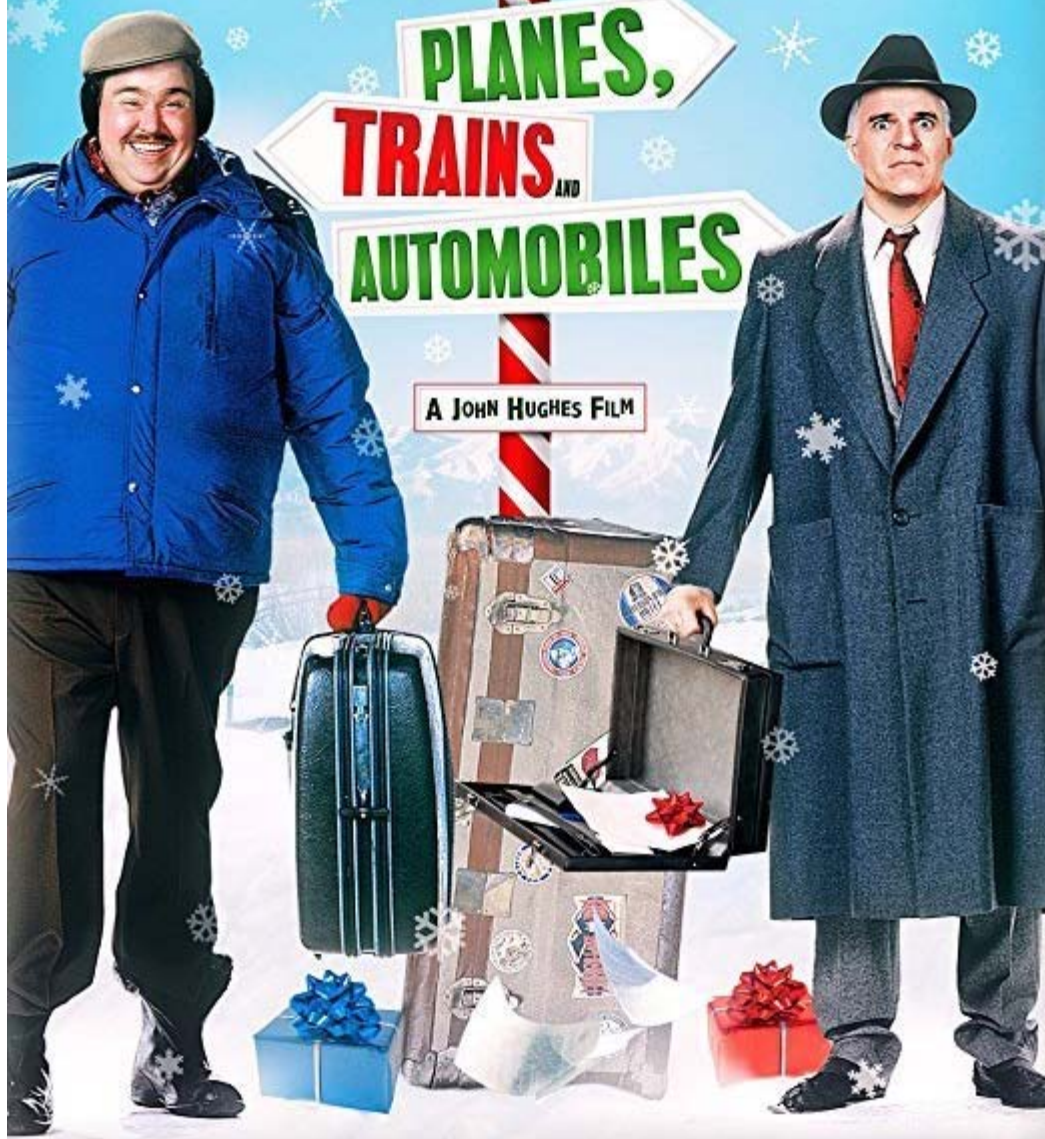
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JOHN CANDY

STEVE MARTIN

PLANES,
TRAINS AND
AUTOMOBILES

A JOHN HUGHES FILM

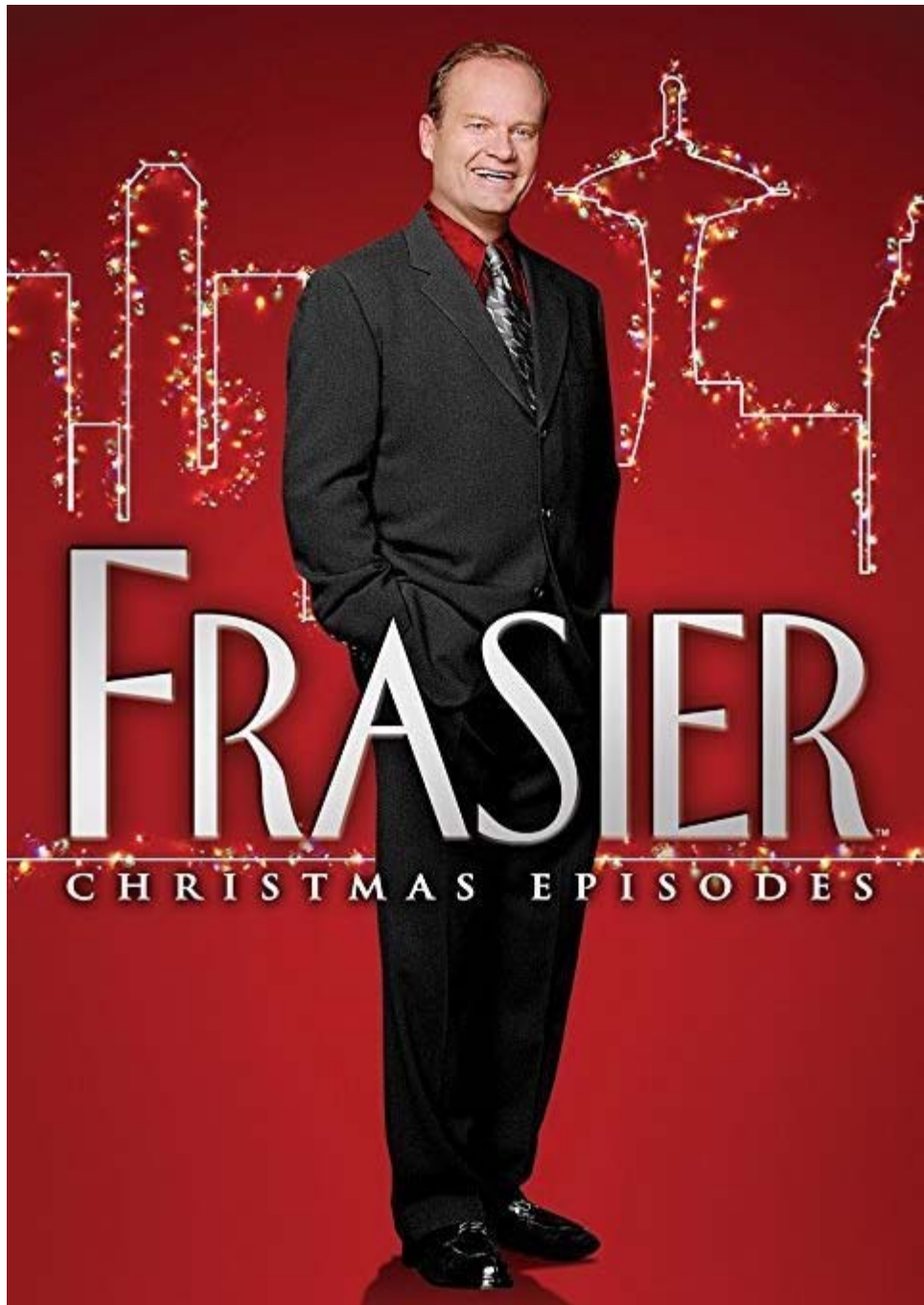


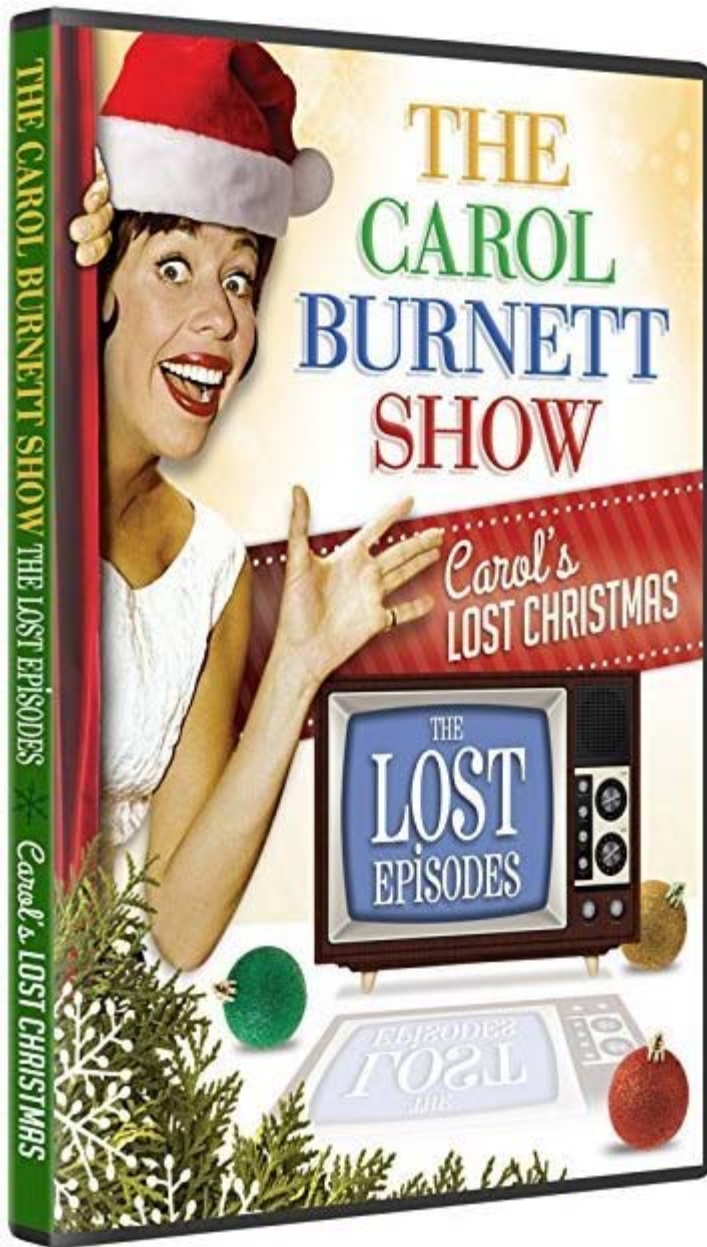
DVD + DIGITAL HD

70TH ANNIVERSARY

Miracle on 34th Street









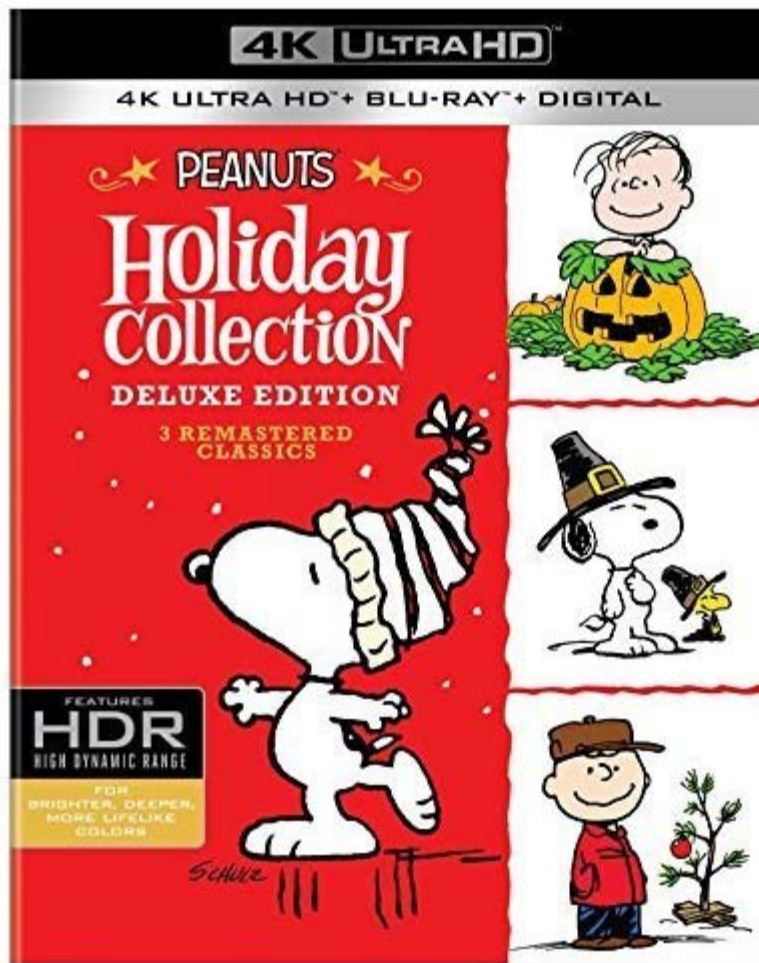
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—*The Globe and Mail* (Canada)



THE OLD DARK HOUSE (\$25.99 BluRay; Cohen Film Collection/Sony Pictures)

PLANES, TRAINS AND AUTOMOBILES (\$14.99 BluRay; Paramount)

MIRACLE ON 34TH STREET (\$14.98 DVD; 20th Century Fox)

FRASIER CHRISTMAS EPISODES (\$16.99 DVD; Paramount)

THE CAROL BURNETT SHOW: CAROL'S LOST CHRISTMAS (\$12.95 DVD; TimeLife/WEA)

MURDOCH MYSTERIES: ONCE UPON A MURDOCH CHRISTMAS (\$24.99 DVD; Acorn Media)

PEANUTS HOLIDAY COLLECTION DELUXE EDITION (\$44.98 4K Ultra High Def/BluRay/Digital Download)

Here come the holidays and whether you love Halloween, Thanksgiving or Christmas, you won't be surprised to know a batch of films and tv shows are being reissued to provide just the right entertainment to make the happy times with family actually BE happy — god knows when the talk turns to politics you will want to have something to pop on the TV. If you love Halloween, *The Old Dark House* is a signal film in the haunted house genre. Directed by James Whale, it has Boris Karloff and Gloria Stuart long long before her swan song in *Titanic*. I've revisited the film a few times but always found it a little creaky for my taste, albeit with some of the self-awareness that makes *Bride Of Frankenstein* such a treat. But it's presented with care and is undeniably a notable work that influenced many films that followed.

Moving on to Thanksgiving, we've got *Planes, Trains And Automobiles* with Steve Martin and John Candy. It pivots nicely from slapstick comedy and a polite guy driven nuts by an annoying travel mate to a mawkishly sentimental ending. Audiences love the film whereas critics saw it as a move by director John Hughes to grow up but which remained pretty much as flawed as his teen flicks. They're right but I think what keeps *PT&A* interesting is the relationship at its heart. Your relatives can drive you nuts when they come to visit. But you have to put up with them. Candy drives Martin to distraction of course but I don't think the message is that Martin realizes at the end that Candy is really a lovable nice guy. It's just, you know, don't be a jerk even if the guy DOES drive you nuts. Show a little empathy and try not to be mean if you don't have to be mean. Not a bad message.

Then there's Christmas and *Miracle on 34th Street*. This story of a department store Santa Claus who actually believes he really IS Santa Claus is irresistible, from Maureen O'Hara's marvelous work as a busy mom to Natalie Wood in one of the great child performances and Edmund Gwenn just perfect as St. Nick. It's not strictly a great film but it's a good film that deserves its enduring popularity. Thank god the colorized version (and the unnecessary 1994 remake) are long forgotten.

Frasier ran for eleven seasons so they had plenty of chances to put different spins on the holidays. For the first five seasons, it was one of the best sitcoms of all time. While like most shows it went on too long, irascibility was its strong suit and Christmas proved an ideal irritant. This is one of a batch of TV shows putting out holiday-themed sets, including *A Very Brady Christmas*, *The Honeymooners* (whose Christmas episode breaks the fourth wall) and *Sabrina The Teenage Witch*. Your pleasure with each will depend on your love for the shows. Certainly *Frasier* is a show you should admire and binge-watching the first few seasons will make you one. Or you could start right here.

It's been 50 years since *The Carol Burnett Show* debuted and it's been celebrated with a TV special, a tour by Burnett herself and more. I grew up on the show but I've never associated it with Christmas the way, say, a later generation linked *Friends* and Thanksgiving. But maybe that will change with this release, a collection of three complete early episodes that aired during the holidays. Almost no one has seen these episodes since they aired and here fans will find the show delivering treats like a sketch by Neil Simon, Santa Claus played by Jonathan Winters and Burnett herself clowning around with glee from soup to nuts.

Mystery buffs might enjoy Christmas but they'd prefer their stockings to be stuffed with a dead body. Nothing

says a gift to them like a juicy murder to solve. In comes *Once Upon A Murdoch Christmas*, a holiday film from the long-running Canadian series *Murdoch Mysteries*. The period procedural is set at the turn of the century, that is the 1900s, and the show has great fun with historical figures and early breakthroughs in crime solving. The second annual Christmas movie harkens to the UK tradition of jam-packing Christmas Day with special editions of all the top shows. Here the fabled Jumping Jack (a spin on Springheel Jack) is spotted robbing a train. Impossible! The show's charms are on full display, from the cast's chemistry to savvy touches like including an early kettle from the Salvation Army.

Or you could just get the *Peanuts*. Their holiday specials are as good as it gets, from *It's The Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown* to *A Charlie Brown Thanksgiving* to *A Charlie Brown Christmas*, one of the greatest TV specials of all time in any genre. In *Peanuts Holiday Collection Special Edition*, you'll also find six more episodes and several featurettes. But the real draw is the fact that these specials are on BluRay, digital download and in the fancy new format of 4K Super Hi-Def. If you've got a TV and player that can display 4K, you already know how amazing that leap in quality can appear. Yes, 8K is on the way, but chances are if you have a new TV you're 4K ready right now. I haven't been able to see them in 4K yet, but animation scales up quite nicely so don't be surprised if *Peanuts* wow you as much as the latest Hollywood blockbuster. And of course in any format, the enduring brilliance of *A Charlie Brown Christmas* will enchant you again.

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