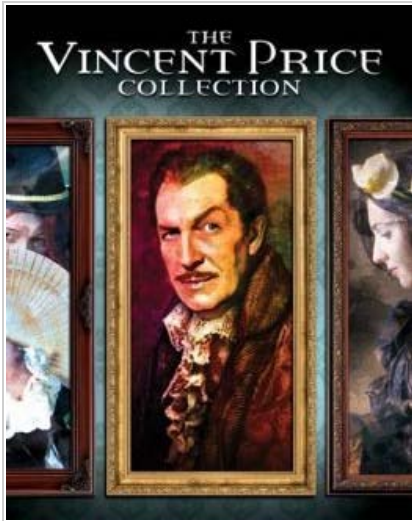


DVDs: Boo! A Halloween Roundup of Scary New DVDs and BluRays

Posted: 10/29/2013 3:52 pm

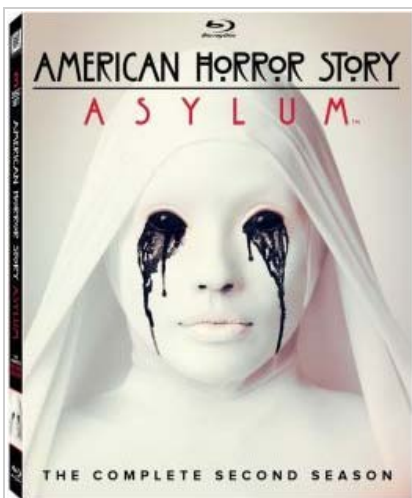
When Halloween rolls around, you probably have some of your favorite scary movies already in your library. Here's a roundup of new releases: spruced up editions of classics and new ones hoping to join them in your Halloween queue.



THE VINCENT PRICE COLLECTION

(\$79.99 BluRay; Scream Factory/MGM) -- Vincent Price became inextricably tied to horror films, much to this fine, versatile actor's dismay. Nonetheless, his loss in terms of parts and versatility was horror's gain. That was never clearer than in his collaboration with Roger Corman and others on tales by Edgar Allan Poe and other creepy gems. Here we have six films in all, appearing on BluRay for the first time and collecting some of the best horror work of his career. It contains four Poe films: *The Pit & The Pendulum*, *The Fall Of The House Of Usher*, *The Haunted Palace* (from a poem) and *The Masque Of The Red Death*. All are among the best work Corman ever did, so it's no surprise he can be heard on audio

commentary or interviews on all four. *The Abominable Dr. Phibes* has Price squaring off memorably with the great Joseph Cotten (who clearly wondered what had happened to his career in 1971 just as Price had resigned himself with grace to his fate). Finally, a real gem is *The Witchfinder General* aka *Conqueror Worm*. Whatever title it's marketed under, it's rather misleading since this is actually a sober historical film based on the true story of a witch finder in the era of Cromwell; Price does some of his best work in this 1968 gem, a great example of how he elevated work both serious and silly. Price can be seen offering introductions to five of the films and there's also a nice booklet on the movies.

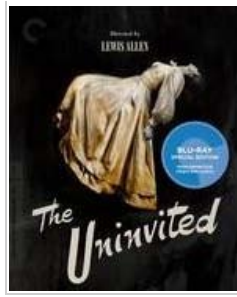


AMERICAN HORROR STORY: ASYLUM

(\$59.99 BluRay; FOX) -- So if you really want your creeps to be extended, how better than this TV series/miniseries? Each season provides its own self-contained horror story. Season Two centers on an asylum for the criminally insane. Steely nun in charge? Check. Demons? Check. Aliens? Why not? Nutjobs who like to wear human flesh? Of course. The exceptional cast is led by Emmy winner Jessica Lange as the nun, along with Zachary Quinto, Sarah Paulson and James Cromwell. TV was rarely conducive to horror in the past but *AHS* and *The Walking Dead* are changing that, perhaps for good.

THE UNINVITED

(\$29.99 BluRay; Criterion) -- I tend to



prefer my horror with more creepiness than gore. So this Hollywood gem from 1944 is right up my alley: Ray Milland and Ruth Hussey are

siblings who find a bargain of a home...complete with a ghost. It was notable for being a major studio release that tackled the haunted house genre without condescension or laughs. And there's a great, great Victor Young score to boot. The extras are modest but you can turn out the lights and listen to two radio adaptations of this story that also starred Milland, one from 1944 and another from 1949.

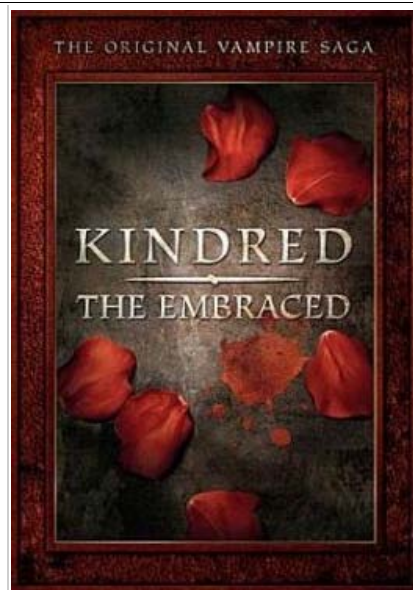


THE CONJURING (\$35.99 BuRay combo; Warner Bros.) -- I've no idea how actor Patrick Wilson became the king of horror. But here he is starring in a second likely franchise after *Insidious*. Strike that -- given its box office, *The Conjuring* is a definite franchise. Both horror tales were directed by James Wan of *Saw* fame (or infamy). Here the emphasis is on spookiness rather than imaginative gore as Wilson and wife Vera Farmiga. They play paranormal investigators who descent onto an isolated farmhouse to try and rescue a family that claims it is plagued by a menacing aura of evil. Guess what? They weren't lying. You'll jump a few times but this is strictly for people who want to clutch their movie watching companion's arm. If you want genuine mayhem,

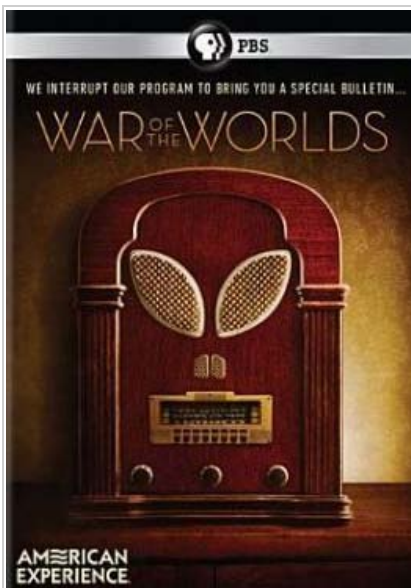
go elsewhere.



MANIAC (\$29.99 BluRay; IFC) -- This remake of the 1980 slasher film looks to redeem that film's brutal tone with added psychological insight and character depth. But all that stays with you is the sight of Elijah Wood going batshit crazy. When he brandishes a knife either you laugh or cry or do a little bit of both.



KINDRED THE EMBRACED -- COMPLETE SERIES (\$39.99 DVD; CBS/Paramount) -- Proving that literally every TV series has a fanbase of some sort (especially when it involves horror), this 1996 show lasted just eight episodes. But here it is enshrined in a rather nice boxed set including bonus features like a limited edition Book Of Nod, which will perhaps excite fans of the show though not necessarily fans of the role-playing game on which it was very loosely based. It's the 1990s and where better for various clans of vampires to live and battle each other than San Francisco? People in that town would barely notice. The pilot is godawful but essential for figuring out who is who -- the vampires can turn into wolves (huh?) and each clan has a particular bent, like nightclubs or business. A mortal cop and journalist are caught up in all the bloodletting almost immediately. Fans insist the show quickly found its ground but it was gone before anyone else could discover it. So despite countless classic TV shows remaining MIA, this gets a nice set to preserve it. Sometimes, it's not so bad being a vampire.



AMERICAN EXPERIENCE: WAR OF THE WORLDS (\$24.99 DVD; PBS) -- I love the cover art of this PBS documentary about what really happened the night Orson Welles broadcast his radio adaptation of the HG Wells novel *The War Of The Worlds* on October 30, 1938. It was indeed mass hysteria, enough to get ABC to dramatize the event in a TV movie back in 1975. Was it the Great Depression, the threat of war in Europe, the clever use of a radio news broadcast as a way to tell the story? Whatever the reason, it was remarkably effective and is surely the most famous Halloween-related stunt in radio history. This one hour documentary covers the story well. But it lacks the one essential extra that would make this DVD a must buy: the complete original radio broadcast that sparked the outrage.

NOSFERATU DELUXE REMASTERED EDITION (\$29.99 DVD; Kino) -- It doesn't get much creepier than F.W. Murnau's great 1922 vampire movie *Nosferatu*. I recently watched a screening of the Bela Lugosi *Dracula* with a new Philip Glass score. It was a great evening but I was reminded afresh of how campy and



dated the Lugosi original is (as opposed to say *Frankenstein*, which still retains its power). In contrast, the brilliant lighting and sets of this version combined with the one-off bizarre genius of actor Max Schreck as the title creature remains utterly hypnotic. It's been packaged and repackaged. If you don't own it, by all means get this latest remastering. If you do own it, i don't think it's such a tremendous leap forward that you must buy it again. The bountiful extras include both English or German intertitles, a 52 minute documentary

about Murnau and the making of this film and excerpts from eight other Murnau films. If you're really feeling ambitious, you can follow up a screening by reading Jim Shepard's novel *Nosferatu*, which tackles Murnau's biography and the making of the film to boot.



IN THE FLESH (\$19.99 DVD; BBC) -- Can't get enough of zombie-themed stories? You're in luck. Whereas *Warm Hearts* was a romantic comedy spin on zombies, the British miniseries *In The Flesh* is a very sober and serious drama about what it would actually be like to get raised from the dead. In this intriguing premise, a teenager commits suicide only to find himself one of the undead. Four years later, after rampaging about in zombie fashion, getting captured by the government and rehabilitated, he is being mainstreamed back into society. What would it really be like to come back from the dead? How haunted would you be by the acts of horrific violence you committed in your zombie state? How would friends and family treat you? That's the focus of this drama which is low on brain eating and high on contemplating such moral dilemmas. It

can be seen as an allegory about race or sexuality...or you can just enjoy it as a film about a zombie with a conscience. A second season is in the works.



EYES WITHOUT A FACE (\$39.99 BluRay; Criterion) -- Frankly, the poster art has always been creepy enough to keep me away from this classy horror flick from 1960. French director Georges Franju delivered this masterpiece about a plastic surgeon who is obsessed with restoring the beauty of his disfigured daughter...no matter the price. So this is the year I'll tackle *Eyes Without A Face*, which if nothing else supplied Billy Idol with a great title for a pop song. The extras include a 20 minute short Franju made in 1949 about the abattoirs of Paris and excerpts of interviews with the director and from a

documentary about the screenwriters.

ROOM 237 (\$29.99 BluRay; IFC Midnight) -- Here's the



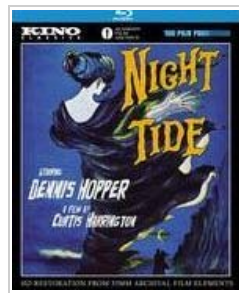
perfect Halloween movie for cineastes. You can watch Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* and then you can dive into this documentary film about scholars and fans obsessed with the film who have dived down the rabbit hole while explicating all the clues and meanings embedded in the movie. It's truly scarier than anything in *The Shining* to see how much analysis and symbolism some have attached to the most fleeting passages in the movie. While the level of detail and consistency in Kubrick's work is fascinating, ultimately this seems more about the passion

and mania others have brought to it than a definitive explanation of what Kubrick's *The Shining* really "means."



BYZANTIUM (\$29.99 BluRay; IFC) --

Director Neil Jordan's last great film was *The End Of The Affair* in 1999. Since then he's had better luck on TV overseeing *The Borgias* than with his movies. *Byzantium* proved no different. It's his first foray into the vampire genre since his Anne Rice blockbuster, which itself wasn't very good or would have inspired sequels about Lestat. (Perhaps a TV miniseries would do that work justice?) Here Jordan follows two female vampires, one with bloodlust and the other tired of always being on the run. If nothing else it has atmosphere to burn and fans insist Saoirse Ronan continues to show her exceptional acting chops.



NIGHT TIDE

(\$24.99 BluRay; Kino)

-- Not really a horror movie, *Night Tide* is a genuinely odd little B movie with a lot to recommend. Dennis Hopper plays a sailor who falls for a girl (Linda Lawson)

playing a mermaid in a seaside carnival. Of course, she's not really a mermaid but she may be a siren and just as she and Hopper are finding romance the ocean is luring her back. Admit it, you're intrigued. The extras include audio commentary by writer-director Curtis Harrington and Hopper, as well as a 55 minute interview with Harrington from 1985. **Lawson** by the way worked steadily in TV via bit parts and recurring roles for the next 44 years till retiring to Beverly Hills. No word on whether she spends an inordinate amount of time in her pool.....

Most titles listed here will be available in multiple formats and in multiple combinations, including DVD, Blu-ray, digital download, video on demand, streaming and the like. The format listed is the format provided for review, not all the formats available. It is often the most expensive version with the most extras. Do check individual titles for availability in all their various guises and price points.

*Thanks for reading. Michael Giltz is the founder and CEO of **BookFilter**, a book lover's best friend. It's a website that lets you browse for books online the way you do in a physical bookstore, provides comprehensive info on new releases every week in every category and offers passionate personal recommendations every step of the way. It's like a fall book preview or holiday gift guide -- but every week in every category. He's also*

the cohost 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* for free on iTunes. Visit Michael Giltz at his *website* and his *daily blog*.

Note: Michael Giltz is provided with free copies of DVDs and Blu-rays with the understanding that he would be considering them for review. Generally, he does not guarantee to review and he receives far more titles than he can cover.

Follow Michael Giltz on Twitter: www.twitter.com/michaelgiltz