

September 1, 2012

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## DVDs: "Doctor Who" Just Keeps Getting Better And Better

Posted: 12/08/11 04:43 PM ET

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**DOCTOR WHO: THE COMPLETE SIXTH SERIES** (\$89.98 BluRay or \$79.98 DVD; BBC/2Entertain) -- I'm almost scandalized at how quickly I've come to accept Matt Smith as the Doctor, when I was sure David Tennant would overshadow others for years to come. This is another very strong season for the show, with Neil Gaiman penning one of the best episodes, "The Doctor's Wife" and the Christmas episode spin on Dickens especially good. The 14 episodes contain an overarching storyline featuring Alex Kingston as a fellow time traveller. The only pity about seeing Kingston here is that it precludes her from being the first female Doctor, which is long overdue and for which she proves herself eminently capable. (Perhaps Emma Thompson, though of course the Doctor is rarely cast with a big name.) I hope they commit to some really universe-shaking storyline and do an entire season as one long

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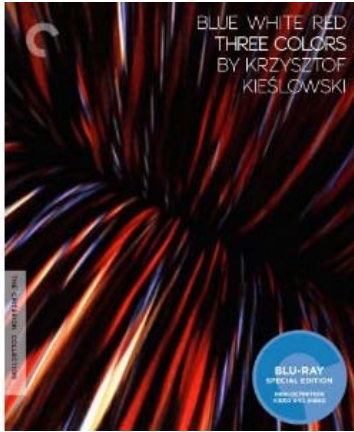
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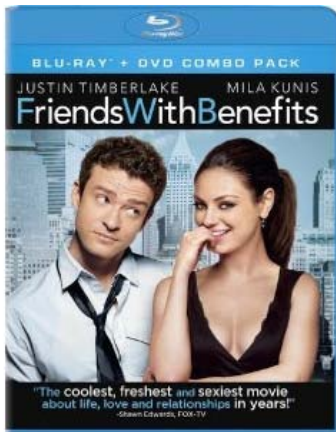
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adventure, ala the "Children Of Earth" miniseries for Torchwood, a high-water mark in quality for the entire Who universe. Still, this is great fun. I'm sure they'll much up the proposed feature film; I mean how long can they go without stumbling?



**THREE COLORS: BLUE, WHITE, RED** (\$79.95 BluRay; Criterion) -- I meet with a dozen or so people every year to vote on our favorite movies. ([The IRAs.](#)) Once a decade we vote on the best movies of all time so we've been going back and forth for months on what movies we're watching and re-watching. Any serious movie lover won't be surprised to know that director Krzysztof Kieslowski keeps coming up. Some are watching *The Dekalogue* for the first time (while others argue it's a TV miniseries, even if it did play in theaters here in the US). Others appreciate *The Double Life Of Veronique*. But everyone is determined to watch or rewatch *Three Colors*, a trilogy of films and one of the landmark works of cinema. Each film stands alone but they're richer when watched together (one a night, or even take a night off between them). White is the awkward middle child, but *Blue* and *Red* are simply sensational. Deeply moving, philosophical and on a very basic level just simply gorgeous to look at, these movies have never looked better than in this Criterion edition. Those with earlier DVD versions may want to hold on to them for some of the extras. This set contains many of them and new ones, along with a substantial booklet. But the movies -- dealing with pain and death and love and the cross currents of coincidence and fate that bind us all together -- are overwhelming. I actually don't like the cover art (usually Criterion finds just the right visual approach for its titles) but that's a very minor point in what is immediately one of the most important and satisfying releases of the year.



**FRIENDS WITH BENEFITS** (\$40.99 BluRay or \$30.99 DVD; Sony) -- It's wonderful to see a young up-and-comer like Justin Timberlake getting some on the job training from Hollywood. Seriously, though, Timberlake is improving with each movie and show genuine chemistry with Mila Kunis in this familiar but not bad story about two friends who decide to fool around -- but they won't fall in love. Promise! This is how Hollywood used to work, with young starlets like Timberlake put in a dozen or so movies a year while they figured out what he (or she) was good at. Or dumped them, of course, but I think Timberlake is a keeper. Maybe a musical? Someone call MGM.

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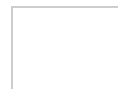
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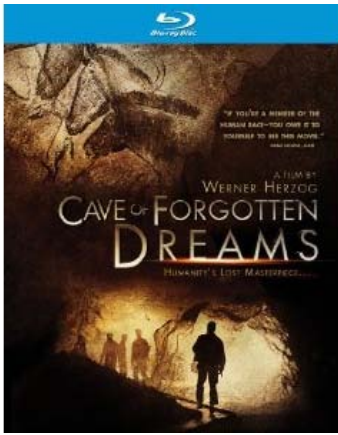
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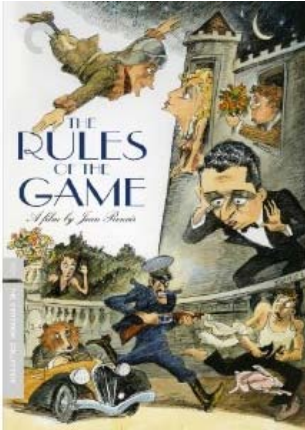
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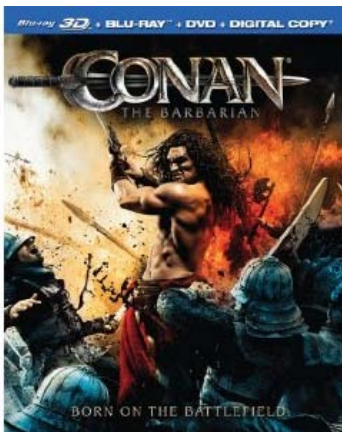
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**CAVE OF FORGOTTEN DREAMS** (\$34.98 BluRay 3-D combo or \$27.98 DVD; MPI/Sundance) -- On repeated viewings, Werner Herzog's rambling documentary about the cave paintings in France reveals the diversions at the end when he starts ruminating about albino alligators or some such thing are a shame for an otherwise magical film. I can't watch it in 3-D though if you have a 3-D compatible TV and a 3-D compatible BluRay player of some sort and the right glasses, you can and should and let the rest of us know what it's like. Seeing the film for the first time in 2-D, it remains a wonder, almost like going to church the feeling is so hallowed (and the choral music only reinforces that). Herzog gazes quietly at cave drawings created tens and tens of thousands of years ago, drawings the general public can't get access to in order to preserve them, and it's a rare treat. One of the best films of the year and quite gorgeous looking.



**THE RULES OF THE GAME** (\$29.95 DVD; Criterion) -- 1939 is widely considered the greatest year in Hollywood history and, for me, *The Rules Of The Game* is the greatest film of the year. Of course, when you hear a movie is one of the Great Films, you might brace yourself for some serious, heavy, slow-moving contemplation of the universe. But what you get in director Jean Renoir's masterpiece is a delightful comedy of manners about the upper crust on a weekend in the country with everyone hopping into each other's beds when they're not making fun of one another. It's no less deeply moving and insightful for being so light on its feet. This is one classic you can savor easily. Criterion's new edition is beautifully remastered, with loads of useful extras like a TV documentary and TV interviews with Renoir over the years among a bounty of other features. Quite the treat.



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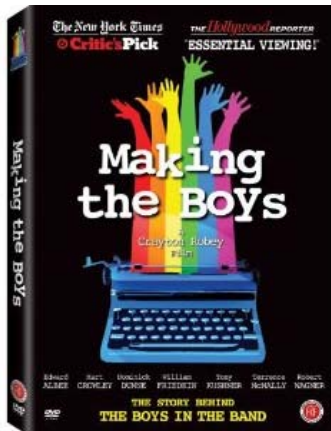
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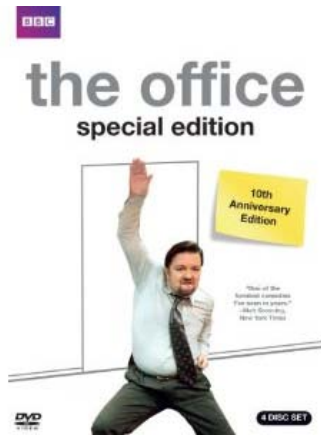
**CONAN THE BARBARIAN** (\$39.99 3-D BluRay combo or \$29.95 DVD; Lionsgate) -- Fans of the Robert E. Howard stories decried the Arnold Schwarzenegger movies for their comic tone and liberties with the source material. Now with this new version starring Jason Momoa so stunningly witless and video game-ish in its telling that they must be weeping over the lost glory days of Arnold. I will say that Leo Howard shows some sparks in the brief section devoted to young Conan but it's about the only point of interest in this mindless, noisy, boring rendition that sucks the pulp out of Conan and leaves only a dry husk. I did not like it, in case you were wondering.



**THE FUTURE** (\$27.98; Lionsgate) -- Actor Hamish Linklater is having a very fun year. He's starring on Broadway in the comedy Seminar with Alan Rickman, he was positively delightful in the Off Broadway show The School For Lies and he co-stars in the second film from the distinctively oddball director, writer and star Miranda July. However much you cotton to July's offbeat perspective in this story of a couple overwhelmed by the prospect of adopting a cat, you simply have to see her film if you want to talk intelligently about the year in cinema. Her audio commentary is a must for getting to know July better; pity Hamish wasn't on there with her.



**MAKING THE BOYS** (\$27.95; First Run Features) -- It's ironic but true that watching this documentary about the making of the landmark gay play and film The Boys In The Band may be a more lasting creative accomplishment than the play itself. The Boys In The Band has gone from shocker to camp to some unusual spot in between, but this film about that show features playwright Mart Crowley, the surviving cast members and many people who can attest to the impact the show had, people like Edward Albee, Tony Kushner, Dominick Dunne and the like. A model of its sort with some nice extras to boot featuring Dan Savage and Dunne.

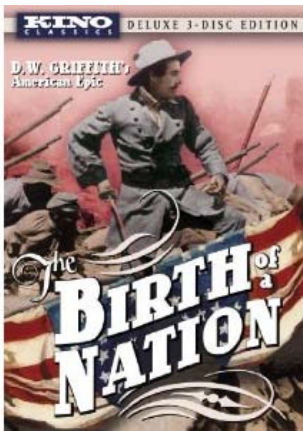


**THE OFFICE SPECIAL EDITION 10TH ANNIVERSARY** (\$39.98; BBC/2Entertain) --

Unquestionably the most influential and funniest sitcom of the 2000s, *The Office* just looks better and better with repeated viewings. If you're never seen it, don't bother renting or streaming or buying season one -- just get the whole darn thing right here. You're gonna want to own it and watch it again and again. The only advantage to not owning it is that you won't be tempted to pop it in every few weeks. Twelve pitch-perfect episodes that equal *Fawlty Towers* in their unfaltering quality, this set also contains the finale Christmas special that weakens a bit on the central premise. I strongly suggest you wait quite a while before watching that one after the end of the show proper. Ricky Gervais has gone on to do other very fun work, but this will be on his tombstone and who would complain about that. Martin Freeman, Mackenzie Crook, Lucy Davis -- what great casting! New extras include testimonials from Ben Stiller, Hugh Jackman and the like along with a new documentary. Essential.



**ONE DAY** (\$29.98 DVD; Focus) -- Speaking of the Brits, they've had quite enough thank you very much of American actresses coming along and snagging some of the most sought after roles in UK movies. First Renee Zellweger created outrage when she was cast in the iconic role of Bridget Jones; luckily her accent and performance quieted them down. Anne Hathaway has had less luck, convincing few that she was Jane Austen and now as working girl Emma in this middling romance based on the best-selling novel by David Nicholls. The movie wouldn't have been better with a local girl, but the Brits are not amused. Well fine, but does that mean Hugh Laurie will stop playing *House*?

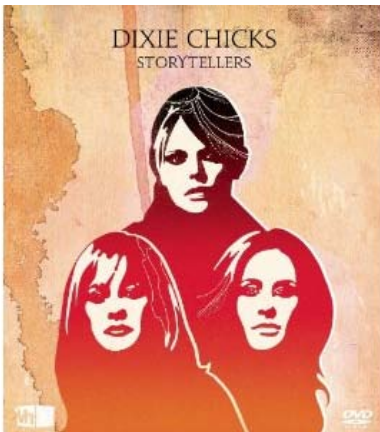


**THE BIRTH OF A NATION DELUXE 3-DISC EDITION** (\$29.95; Kino) -- D.W. Griffith's epic is a

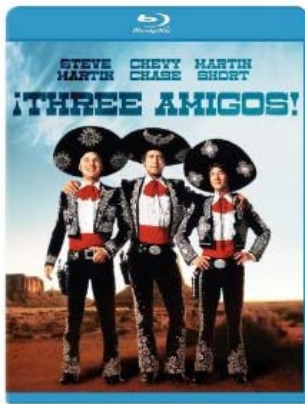
technical marvel that pioneered numerous techniques and remains a landmark work. But it's important to watch this film and remember it because of its virulent racism and reworking of history, not despite it. Watch the movie's vicious portrayals of blacks and you'll never watch *Gone With The Wind* in the same way again. See its absurd story of Yankee and Southerner coming together and damning the Negro for ever coming between them, marvel as the KKK plays a key heroic role, note that it was praised (praised!) by President Woodrow Wilson as it became a box office sensation and you'll gain an entirely new perspective on race relations and our nation's history since the Civil War ended. This set includes two versions of the film two different scores, a clutch of Griffith shorts centered around the War Between The States, a look at the battle over the film when it was reissued in 1922 and much more.



**LE CIRQUE: A TABLE IN HEAVEN** (\$24.95; First Run Features) -- As with director Andrew Rossi's *Page One*, an interesting subject overcomes the more rudimentary aspects of the film. Here Rossi takes a look at the famed restaurant Le Cirque as it makes a wrenching transition. Sirio Maccioni and his three sons close down one location and then work towards a new opening and that crucial first review as they try and deal with the many changes in the industry. The movie showcases the family but of course celebrities like Woody Allen also pop in. Zagat's might say affordable and reasonable fare.



**DIXIE CHICKS STORYTELLERS** (\$14.98; Columbia) -- This 80 minute set from 2006 captures the Dixie Chicks reveling in their commercial and critical comeback *Taking The Long Way*, the Grammy winner for Album Of The Year. Here we get just eleven songs leavened with the stories from the women in the band about how and why the songs were written and recorded. It's fun for fans but the strongest reaction you have after watching it is how missed the Dixie Chicks are in the music world. Six years is too long to wait. Till then, this release will have to do for fans looking for something, anything they can buy from the group. It's good. A new album would be better.



**THREE AMIGOS!** (\$14.98; HBO) -- I am deaf to the pleasures of this super-silly comedy about a silent film comedy act unintentionally hired by a Mexican village plagued by bandits a la *The Magnificent Seven*. Still, I have friends who swear by it and certainly Steve Martin, Chevy Chase and Martin Short seem to be having fun, even on the audio commentary.



**THE TAKING OF PELHAM ONE TWO THREE** (\$19.99 MGM) -- Forget the recent remake. This trim thriller starring Walter Matthau and Robert Shaw in the story of a gang that hijacks a subway car is great fun, especially for its look at New York City in 1974. Director Joseph Sargent never parlayed its success into a feature film career, but he's delivered one strong TV movie after another for decades, right up to *Warm Springs* and *Something The Lord Made* in his eighties.



**THE BIG COUNTRY** (\$19.99; MGM) -- I prefer my Westerns sleek and simple but this William Wyler film is 166 minutes of the big lumbering sort with Gregory Peck a man who prefers the sea but finds himself in a range war. The smaller touches are what endure, especially Burl Ives as a vicious rancher (he won the Oscar) and the marvelous score by Jerome Moross.



**SABU!** (\$44.95; Eclipse/Criterion) -- Sabu was surely one of the unlikeliest of movie stars. He was discovered by documentary filmmaker Robert Flaherty and immediately had the movie *Elephant Boy* created as a vehicle for him. It became a massive worldwide success and other movies followed, especially *The Drum* and *Jungle Book*. Those are his three best movies, along with *The Thief Of Baghdad* (not included here). Sabu had genuine presence and humor and sex appeal (Sabu rarely bothered with wearing a shirt) but Hollywood had no idea what to do with him. Sabu emigrated to the US, became a citizen, served honorably during WW II and then watched his career slide into miserable B movies and embarrassments until he died unexpectedly at the age of 39. But here is a fine recap of why he was so popular: three of his best films in one compact package. *Elephant Boy* and *Jungle Book* look good with *The Drum* clearly in need of restoration but good to have in any form.

Thanks for reading. Michael Giltz is 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](#). 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 and BluRays 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.

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**Maureen Ryan: How to Be a TV Critic**

You learn two things as soon as you become a television critic: First, everyone thinks you have an awesome job. Second, almost everyone thinks they can do your job.



**John Fleming: Doctor Who and The Nightmares of The Man Who Created The Daleks**

As mentioned in a previous Huffington Post blog, last century I interviewed Terry Nation, who created the Daleks for the BBC TV series Doctor Who. We...



**Kris LoPresto: To Recap or Not to Recap, That Is the Question**

Lost was a show that required a weekly recap to go over all the hints and clues. Flashforward six years later to the present day and the Internet has a recap for nearly every single show on TV. How did this happen?

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*Mind Bender*  
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09:25 PM on 12/08/2011

Lot of good stuff there Michael. "Red, White and Blue" are great. And "Doctor Who?" what can you say? Matt Smith was good. Perfectly quirky. I forget the name of his sidekick, but she was wonderful too. Along with "Torchwood," great year.

I used to play in a band who did gigs with Sabu's son (the name of his band was Sabu). Sabu must died right after he had him. Didn't know it was so young.

And that "Big Country" score is one of the best. I watch it often, mainly for Ives and Jean Simmons. thanks for letting us now about these releases.

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Karen Gillan as Amy Pond. She's hot.

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