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Michael Giltz

Posted September 5, 2008 | 04:17 PM (EST)

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DVDs: Don't Miss Eli Stone and Pushing Daisies



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Every TV season, you're lucky if even one new show is worth watching. And when you do commit to a new show, chances are the flair and originality of the pilot is soon lost in the grind of delivering episodes week after week.

favor and check them out. Eli Stone First Season (\$39.99; ABC) is about a young lawyer who either has a brain tumor or is a prophet and is seeing visions that lead him to court cases that need his help.

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would become unbearable. But the show actually got better. There is absolutely nothing on TV like *Pushing Daisies* and precious few as distinctive as *Eli Stone*. Don't miss either of them.

So tell me, what returning shows are you eagerly anticipating and what new shows intrigue you? I'll be watching *Fringe*, like everyone else.

Also out this week:

Water Lilies (\$26.98; Koch Lorber) -- No one takes childhood or first love more seriously than the French. First time director Celine Sciamma peers intimately into the lives of three 15 year old girls exploring their sexuality against a backdrop of competitive synchronized swimming. Anne is heavy and determined to lose her virginity as soon as possible, preferably to the dashing Francois. Floriane is naturally sexy and flirtatious but hasn't actually slept with anyone, even her nominal boyfriend, the ever-present Francois. And then there's our heroine Marie (a gawky Pauline Acquart with lovely full lips who will clearly be a beauty when she grows up). Marie is friends with Anne but shadows the black sheep Floriane around, becoming so besotted with her that she steals Floriane's trash and even eats scraps of food that were thrown away by her. Beautiful and sharp-edged without being sad, it has some quiet passages that are grippingly frank.

Smart Movies -- *Bright Lights Big City* (\$14.98; MGM) doesn't transcend its era but Michael J. Fox is an underrated dramatic actor (bonus: the great cinematographer Gordon Willis provides audio commentary); *The Art of Travel* (\$24.98; First Look), a romantic drama about a man who dumps his cheating bride-to-be and goes on his honeymoon alone finds Christopher Masterson of *Malcolm in the Middle* hoping to make a similar transition -- he's got the goods, too; three oddball noirs, including *Roadhouse*, *Moontide* and *Boomerang* with Dana Andrews (\$14.98 each; Fox) and every time I hear the name "Dana Andrews" I can't help but think of Seth Green's line in Woody Allen's *Radio Days*; and *Gospel According to Harry* (\$29.95; Kino) from 1994 finds Viggo Mortensen in a genuinely surreal, typically oddball film about a disintegrating marriage from Polish director Lech Majewski.

Blu-Ray -- The flood of Blu-Ray titles is growing, especially the mannish-boy titles that guys who are early adopters eat up. Out now is *Transformers Special Edition* (\$39.99; Dreamworks), which is \$10 more than the regular DVD; *Black Mask* (\$29.99; Lionsgate) with Jet Li, which is \$20 (!) more than the regular DVD but boasts that it is "Beyond High Definition" since it's in 1080p; and *The Invincible Iron Man* (\$29.99; Lionsgate) which is a direct to DVD animated feature released by Marvel and costs \$15 more than the regular DVD. I've got to keep urging them to make Blu-Ray the same price as regular DVDs. They should see Blu-Ray as a chance to offer MORE value to the DVD faithful who are willing to upgrade their machine, not as a chance to raise the prices of DVDs.

Chris Marker -- The utterly unique French director/essayist is best known for the short *La Jetee*, the 1962 film which told its futuristic tale mostly through still images. His roving curiosity and eclectic approach to storytelling has created a much more substantial body of work than most know and Icarus Films is celebrating his career with four major DVDs. *The Case of the Grinning Cat* (\$29.98; Icarus) begins with his intrigue over some graffiti of a yellow cat that pops up in Paris after 9-11 and leads to a years-long journey. (The DVD also includes seven shorts.) *The Sixth Side Of The Pentagon/The Embassy* (\$24.98; Icarus) contains two shorts, one a collaboration covering the 1967 Vietnam protests that Norman Mailer covered in *Armies of the Night* and the other a fictional tale cunningly disguised as found footage from the early 70s. *The Last Bolshevik/Happiness* (\$34.98) is probably a great starting point for newcomers, including a silent film by Russian director Alexander Medvekin and Marker's probing look at Modvekin's life from the October Revolution to the collapse of communism. Finally, there's *Remembrance of Things To Come* (\$24.98; Icarus) a collaboration with the daughter of photographer Denise Bellon that uses her work to document Paris from 1935 to 1955. If this range of offbeat, daring and bold topics combined with daring approaches to storytelling doesn't intrigue you, then your cinematic heart has stopped beating.

Kids films -- Emma Watson is clearly the one to watch among the group of kids who came of age in the Harry Potter films but her talent isn't fully exploited in *Ballet Shoes* (\$24.98; Koch Lorber), a movie that is mainly for girls who have worn out their DVD of *The Red Shoes* and read the beloved book (namechecked in *You've Got Mail*) this is based on over and over again; *The Blue Elephant* (\$19.98; Genius) is a mild, cheaply animated film, though it's always nice to hear Carl Reiner barking; *Next Avengers: Heroes of Tomorrow* (\$19.98; Lionsgate) lets the kids of superheroes kick some ass -- these straight to DVD animated titles don't seem to harm the

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Arianna was on CBS' "Washington..."

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I'm a little embarrassed to love this show as much as...

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John Oliver was upset enough to drop his monocle when he...

Obama Teases Reporter From India During Press Conference (VIDEO)

Obama held a conference packed with press from around the world on Thursday. He called...

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Scientists Find Rocket Fuel Chemical In Infant Formula

ATLANTA — Traces of a chemical used in rocket fuel were found in samples of...

Least Wasteful Cities In America (SLIDESHOW)

It's great to love the city you live in, and better to

franchises the way I fear Disney's do, but they still appear questionable to me when the live action movies are doing so well; *It's The Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown* (\$19.98; Warner Bros.) is the only other Peanuts special I enjoy and it comes with two songs to download, a weaker special and a featurette; and *Bratz: Girlz Really Rock* (\$19.98; Lionsgate) has the rebellious gals getting kids at summer camp for actors and musicians to lighten up and not practice so much. Yeah, it's so boring to have to learn how to actually play an instrument.

Documentaries -- *Derek* (\$29.95; Kino) is a labor of love by actress Tilda Swinton and director Isaac Julien that explores the work of the late Derek Jarman via extensive clips, commentary from friends and an interview done in 1994 shortly before Jarman died (also out just now is Jarman's *War Requiem* at the same price from Kino); *Lagerfeld Confidential* (\$29.98; Koch Lorber) trades access for objectivity in this peek into the fashion world of Karl Lagerfeld; *Monster Camp* (\$24.98; Life Size) is a genial if low-rent look at larpers -- people who bring their love for Dungeons & Dragons et al to life by indulging in Live Action Role Playing; *Kordavision: The Man Who Shot Che Guevara* (\$19.98; Anchor Bay) examines the wide-ranging career of Alberto Korda, who has done fashion photography, underwater imaging, Cuba under Castro and that iconic image of Che which is one of the most famous and widely reproduced images of all time; *The Case For Faith* (\$19.98; Lionsgate) is too mild to convert the likes of Bill Maher but can provide info and comfort for Christians who grapple with major issues (like why is there evil) by having journalist Lee Strobel talk with leading thinkers; *Norah Jones: Live From Austin Tx* (\$19.98; New West) finds Jones increasingly confident as a performer - now if only she would amp up the melodies and hooks on her sometimes vague new compositions.

Grab Bag -- Jesse Bradford is still cute as a button and still looking for a movie role that fits him as well as the role of gardener on *Desperate Housewives* -- *My Sassy Girl* (\$27.98; Fox) isn't it; *Itty Bitty Titty Committee* (\$27.95; Wolfe) is a romantic drama from the director of *But I'm A Cheerleader* and deserves mention if only for having the cleverest title since *The Totally True Adventures of Two Girls in Love*; *Cannibal Terror* (\$19.95; Severin) is gorey exploitation from 1980 of the lowest (or is that highest?) order; Miley's dad Billy Ray Cyrus can't reel in any laughs (sorry) in the witless comedy *Baitshop* (\$19.98; Lionsgate) -- on the other hand he's better here than when hosting TV's *Nashville Star*; *UFC Classics 9 and 10* (\$19.98; Lionsgate) include the brutal fights held in Detroit and Birmingham, Alabama and while my mom lives in Birmingham, somehow I think she missed this so I'll have to send her the DVD; and it doesn't get more silly than the exploitation of *Tarzeena Queen of Kong Island* (\$14.98; Retromedia) with Christine Nguyen as our barely clad heroine fighting the bad guys alongside Tabonga, her loyal gorilla.

TV on DVD -- *The Big Bang Theory First Season* (\$29.98; Warner Bros.) is the only new sitcom from last season that looks like a hit and I have friends who enjoy the show but every time I tune in it just seems hopelessly traditional, right down to "zingers" and a noisy laugh track; *Desperate Housewives Season 4* (\$59.99; ABC) is something I need more than ever since I stopped watching the series after that natural disaster; *Life Season One* (\$29.98; NBC) is a crime drama my friend Aaron swears by and I sure like Damien Lewis but I just wish they'd drop the wildly complex "mystery" that overshadows everything; *Cheers Season 10* (\$39.98; Paramount) is about four seasons after they should have called it a day, but these episodes aren't as tired as I remembered thanks to a great cast; *Ghost Whisperer Third Season* (\$63.98; Paramount) wants us to believe spirits keep getting in touch with Jennifer Love Hewitt and that's really not hard to imagine though I still keep thinking Bailey will be pissed; and *The Office Season Four* (\$49.98; Universal) really astonishes me because it was such an awful idea to remake that perfect British sitcom and then it was such a lame imitation for a year and now it's so fully its own, marvelous show that I am pretty much gobsmacked.

So tell me, what returning or new shows are you anticipating?

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Thanks for commenting everyone. Josephbua - sorry the tension of wondering if they touched got to you :) But I wouldn't call Eli Stone derivative, actually, though the Ally mcBeal comparison is valid (and I'm NOT a fan of David Kelley). It seems a tad too oddball to be derivative. But i get your point about the weekly stirring cases and intentional eccentricity. That's exactly why I assumed I'd grow bored after a week or two and was surprised I kept watching the whole season. Wayoutleft, stay strong -- don't let them bully you into watching a show you've sampled and rejected. Maybe if it's still on the whole season and people keep liking it you might sample another episode? Your point about the TV trend towards ensembles is a good one. As for Terminator, I was into it at first and liked the idea of watching John Connor grow from a kid to a revolutionary but felt that focus got lost in th shuffle. I planned on sampling it again but frankly didn't even realize the season premiere was happening. I'll check it out again.

[Favorite](#) [Flag as abusive](#) *Posted 06:21 PM on 09/12/2008*

Yat1954 [See Profile](#) [I'm a Fan of Yat1954](#) [permalink](#)

Pushing Daisies!! Wooo-hoooo!!!

I can't wait.

[Favorite](#) [Flag as abusive](#) *Posted 05:38 PM on 09/12/2008*

BlueMrsKitty [See Profile](#) [I'm a Fan of BlueMrsKitty](#) [permalink](#)

I love love love Pushing Daisies and have eagerly anticipated its return. The chemistry between the two leads is fantastic.

[Favorite](#) [Flag as abusive](#) *Posted 06:43 PM on 09/11/2008*

josephbua [See Profile](#) [I'm a Fan of josephbua](#) [permalink](#)

Michael, the reason I stopped watching Pushing Daisies was that I spent so much time focusing on the leads to make sure they never touched that I kept having to rewind to find out what was going on.

And that was last year's second episode.

Eli Stone? Kinda derivative, dontcha think?

It reminds me of too many shows I've already stopped watching.

Favorite Flag as abusive Posted 06:14 PM on 09/11/2008

rightonBob [See Profile](#) [I'm a Fan of rightonBob](#) [permalink](#)

Definitely Pusing Daisies, Chuck, Eli Stone.

Favorite Flag as abusive Posted 02:11 PM on 09/11/2008

wwja [See Profile](#) [I'm a Fan of wwja](#) [permalink](#)

I loved Eli Stone! Didn't watch Pushing Diasies but I did hear it was good.

Favorite Flag as abusive Posted 09:56 PM on 09/10/2008

NicoleAnon [See Profile](#) [I'm a Fan of NicoleAnon](#) [permalink](#)

I just watched the first season of Mad Men - it's so good.

Favorite Flag as abusive Posted 02:54 PM on 09/10/2008

ByrdtheStampede [See Profile](#) [I'm a Fan of ByrdtheStampede](#) [permalink](#)

I was surprised by Terminator: TSCC - Summer Glau is rather brilliant. The season premiere was rather incredible, hinting at great new layers in an otherwise shallow, action-y premise.

Favorite Flag as abusive Posted 01:37 PM on 09/10/2008

wayoutleft [See Profile](#) [I'm a Fan of wayoutleft](#) [permalink](#)

they are pulling off the human interest between explosions, aren't they. i hate leather-vinyl super violent females... but TSCC is working for me.

Favorite Flag as abusive Posted 12:30 PM on 09/12/2008

BlackJAC [See Profile](#) [I'm a Fan of BlackJAC](#) [permalink](#)

I believe I shall save my money for CHUCK next week instead. So it is written, so it shall Flash.

Favorite Flag as abusive Posted 10:50 AM on 09/10/2008

wayoutleft [See Profile](#) [I'm a Fan of wayoutleft](#) [permalink](#)

i lost friends in the global Roswell community after with-holding total hysterical enthusiasm for daisies. i'm seeing a well-established trend toward the ensemble-based series, as opposed to single hero series. people are looking for a richer interaction pattern than single hero offers. special effects keep single hero the preferred cinematic approach; but tv audiences need lots of people- especially given the specificity of character required before viewers are willing to identify. and people love to see friendship. some of us true geniuses are smart enough to realize that after seinfeld and friends ruled the last decade. i know it's subtle, but we're finally there.

Favorite Flag as abusive Posted 10:23 AM on 09/10/2008

Heidfeld [See Profile](#) [I'm a Fan of Heidfeld](#) [permalink](#)

Ok... so the guy can't kiss or touch his girlfriend in any way... and they insinuate kissing but putting two dolls together.

How very Disney and how very pathetic.

Favorite Flag as abusive Posted 06:26 AM on 09/10/2008

cnobody [See Profile](#) [I'm a Fan of cnobody](#) [permalink](#)

Eli Stone had so much Ally McBeal in it that I was astonished to learn that it was not, indeed, a David E. Kelly production.

Pushing Daisies is one of my favorite new shows, or at least new last year. It was one that I feared would get lost in the strike, but I'm glad to be seeing promos on ABC for the new season. phew!

Favorite Flag as abusive Posted 10:58 PM on 09/09/2008

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