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May 14, 2014

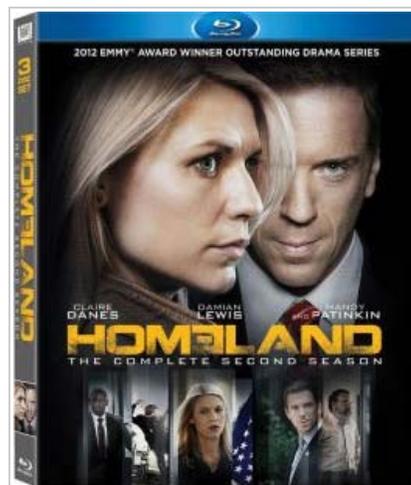
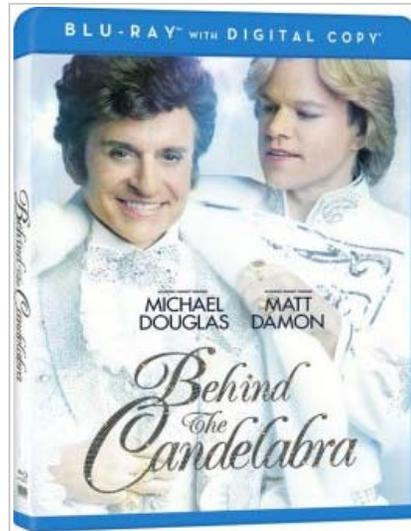
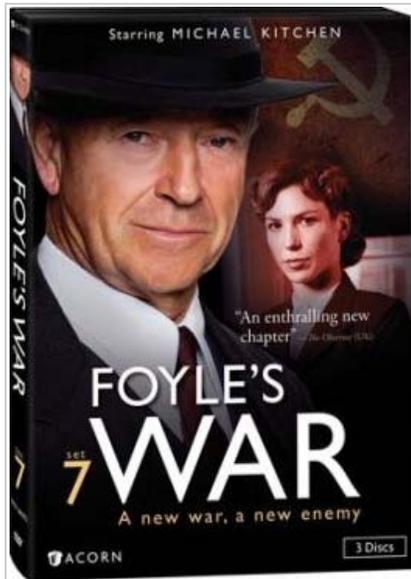
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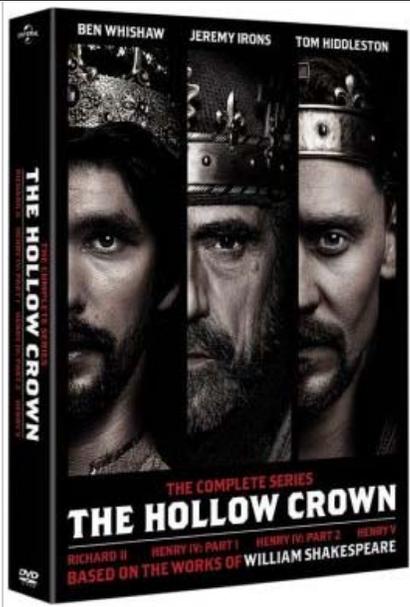
ENTERTAINMENT

DVDs: *Foyle's (Cold) War*; Bergman/Bergman; Chucky In Love

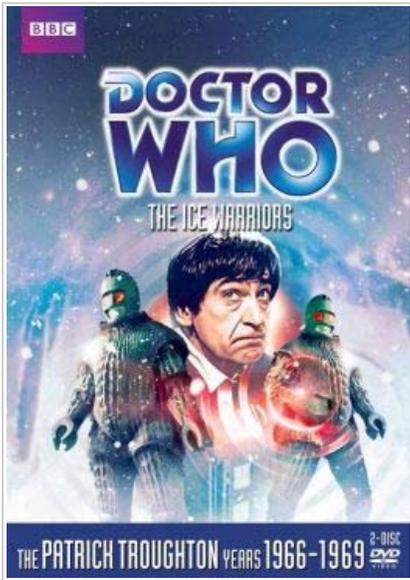
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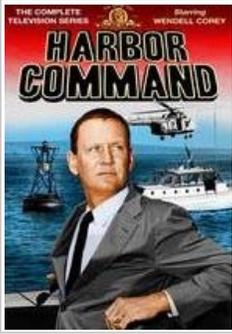
A clutch of Emmy-winning TV shows are outshone by the return of *Foyle's War*, a British mystery series that's regained its footing. Also out now are two more great Criterion releases, the godawful *Hangover III* and a clutch of movies perfect for Halloween.





FOYLE'S WAR SET
7 (\$ DVD; Acorn)
BEHIND THE CANDELABRA
(\$24.99 BluRay; HBO)
HOMELAND SECOND SEASON
(\$59.99 BluRay; FOX)
THE HOLLOW CROWN (\$44.98 DVD; Universal)
DOCTOR WHO COMPLETE SEVENTH SERIES (\$89.99 BluRay; BBC)
DOCTOR WHO: THE DOCTORS REVISITED (\$39.99 DVD; BBC)
DOCTOR WHO: THE ICE





WARRIORS (\$34.99 DVD; BBC)

DOCTOR WHO: SCREAM OF THE SHALKA (\$24.99 DVD; BBC)

LUTHER 3 (\$34.99 DVD; BBC)

HARBOR COMMAND (\$29.99 DVD; Timeless)

Foyle's War is an acclaimed drama about a detective (Michael Kitchen in the role of a lifetime) who must continue his job on the home front during World War II when he'd rather be doing his bit. Of course, you need police even during war so his job is vital and invariably includes lots of telling crimes (black market, Nazis and so on) that relate to the war. It was always conceived

to end with the war and to be frank, the show dragged it out a bit and the last season or two weren't always up to par. And then, as so often happens, they said goodbye. And then, as so often happens, they said hello again. It's simply the best thing most everyone involved with this series has ever done. So they've relaunched the series with Foyle involved in the Cold War, being drawn into MI5 against his better judgment. Foyle fits smoothly into this deceptive, who-can-you-trust post-war atmosphere and the series feels reborn in many ways. It's as good as it's been in many a year. The three TV movies in this new season are very strong and set the show up for many seasons to come. They'll need to stop Foyle from being lied to by his superiors and Foyle unmasking them again and again. That's run its course even in just three shows. Creator Anthony Horowitz is clearly torn between calling it a day and ending on a high note (something they failed to do last time) and exploring the fresh new territory. I say, commit to the Cold War, write some smashing episodes and don't worry about the finish line. Just tell great tells when you can find them. They have some great new characters and watching Foyle work with them could be fun. And for heaven's sake, bring back Foyle's son. That wouldn't hurt a bit.

Garnered with Emmys, this TV movie about Liberace is mostly a draw for the performances of Michael Douglas as the pianist and Matt Damon as his lover. What might have been disastrously campy somehow managed to be both serious and fun at the same time. *Candelabra* won't send people scurrying to unearth their old CDs of the performer, of course. He sure could play but his main gift was showmanship. Some people master the classical canon. Others prefer to glitter and be gay.

Not since *Friday Night Lights* has a great TV show collapsed so completely in its second season. But like *Friday Night Lights*, *Homeland* has a strong enough cast that they have the ability to find their mojo again. Mind you, the real problem may be that *Homeland* is a TV series that really should have been a miniseries. Hopefully, they'll prove me wrong in Season Three.

Both those shows won tons of Emmys (and *Foyle's War* has been garlanded overseas). Don't be surprised if a lot of trophies get showered on *The Hollow Crown* next year. It's a wildly ambitious miniseries that tackles Shakespeare's history plays with an all-star cast. Sam Mendes, Richard Eyre and other theatrical heavyweights oversaw the project. Jeremy Irons, Tom Hiddleston and Ben Wishaw (as Richard II) star, alongside a bevy of greats like Patrick Stewart, Simon Russell Beale, Julie Walters, John Hurt -- you get the idea. You can't swing a stick without hitting a great actor. This monumental work tackles four plays: *Richard II*, *Henry IV Parts I and II* and *Henry V*, which may cast the longest shadow since it's been filmed so successfully before. It's airing on PBS right now and will surely be shown in classrooms for years to come. Hey, if kids are trying to cheat and not read the plays, they could do worse.

Now we know the seventh series is the last for Matt Smith as Doctor Who (he has a few upcoming specials and then passes the torch at Christmas). It's been a vaguely unsatisfying final season. His previous one had a major arc running throughout season six that was so ambitious and successful that it was inevitable that the next one would pale in comparison unless they raised the stakes again. They didn't. The goodbye to companions Amy and Rory were a bit abrupt, though in fairness I'm not good with goodbyes. The holiday special ("The Doctor, The Widow And The Wardrobe" was very weak) and the

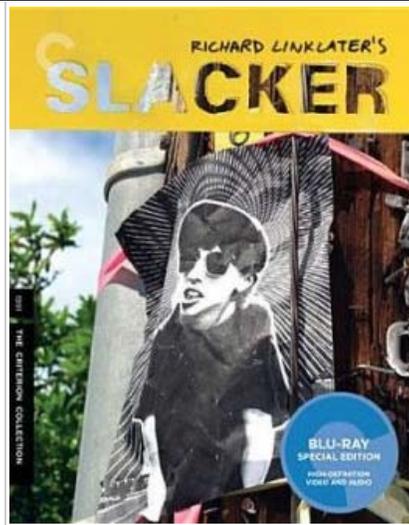
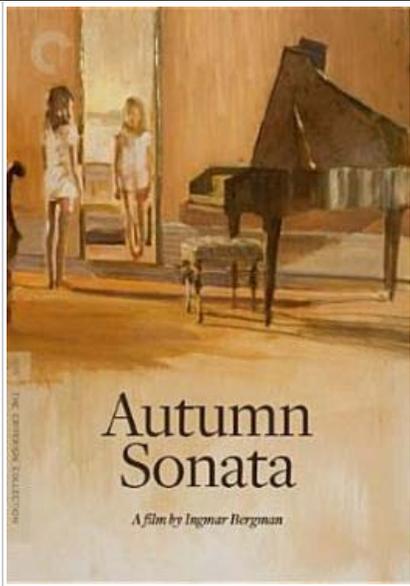
mystery of his Impossible Girl was both too built up and not bold enough. They even had a few genuine clunkers. I don't mean to go overboard. The second half of the season was solid and Smith held his own throughout. But looking back, I think the decision to bring in a new Doctor will let Smith walk away with his head held high. They clearly ran out of steam and nothing jolts the place like a new lead actor. God help Peter Capaldi. So-so final season or not, Smith is a very hard act to follow.

If you want to catch up on previous Doctors, the special set *The Doctors Revisited Fifth To Eighth* is one of your most reasonably priced ways into the good Doctor's adventures. Here you get a solid look at four Doctors (including Peter Davison, who I still think of immediately as a vet from *All Creatures Great And Small*) and four complete adventures, one for each Doc.

Two rare-ish releases round out the Doctor Who titles this week. *The Ice Warriors* is from the little mentioned years of Patrick Troughton. The villains in this piece were included nicely in the season that just ended. This is the first time they appeared. It's rare because two of the six episodes were apparently lost for good. They've been recreated via so-so animation and using the original voice soundtracks, a rather clever way to fill in the gaps that they've used before. In contrast, *Scream of the Shalka* was a web only animated series offering a new adventure of Doctor Who for his 40th anniversary when no live action series was happening. Richard E. Grant did the voice of the Doctor. He was the ninth to do so, but reboot creator Russell T. Davies really did not like Grant's performance and insisted Christopher Eccleston was the Ninth Doctor and Grant's animated turn would remain outside the official canon, making Grant grist for trivia questions for generations to come.

The *Luther* crime series is notable almost entirely for the electric performance of Idris Elba. The mysteries and cast surrounding him are fine if familiar, but he raises the quality by his acting alone. In a crazy bit of over-acting, David O'Hara is a fellow officer who begins to suspect Luther is responsible for crimes himself. Isn't it suspicious that Luther seems to show up at so many crime scenes? (Um, well, he's a cop, so...no.) O'Hara delivers his sometimes ludicrous lines at a glacial pace that begins to have its own weird fascination. Never a great show, but even Elba can't do much with the material here.

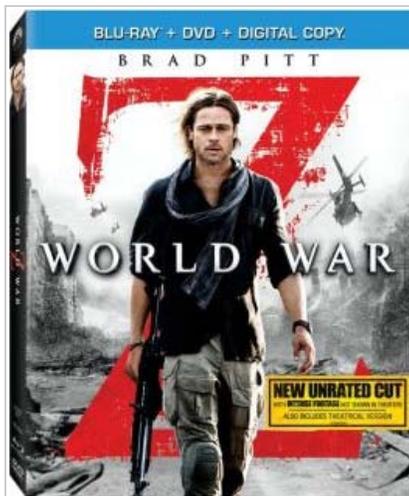
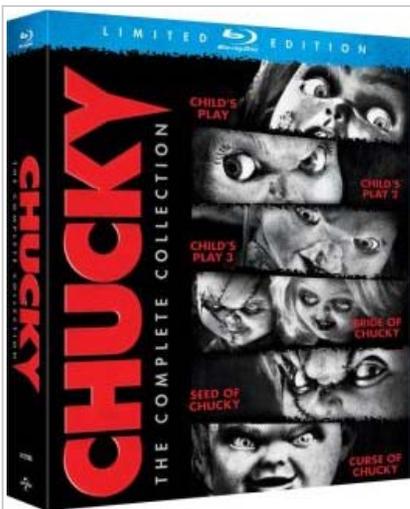
Harbor Command was a syndicated half hour cop show that aired on TV stations back in 1957. It's standard police stuff -- with a no-nonsense Dragnet vibe -- with one twist: all the crimes take place at the major seaport of San Francisco. Instead of pulling up in cars, cops are just as likely to pull up in boats. It stars character actor Wendell Corey (Rear Window, The Rainmaker and many others) in the biggest role of his career and he makes the most of it. Corey is one of those actors made for television; he doesn't try too hard and his naturalistic style lets the clunky dialogue feel unforced and convincing. I can't imagine many people were clamoring for the 39 episodes of this show that ended after just one season but anyone who was will be very happy. The episodes I looked at were in surprisingly great shape: they look pretty darn terrific. It's just a small hint at the wealth of TV material that's still waiting to be unearthed.

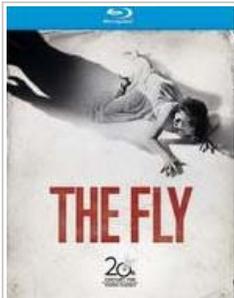
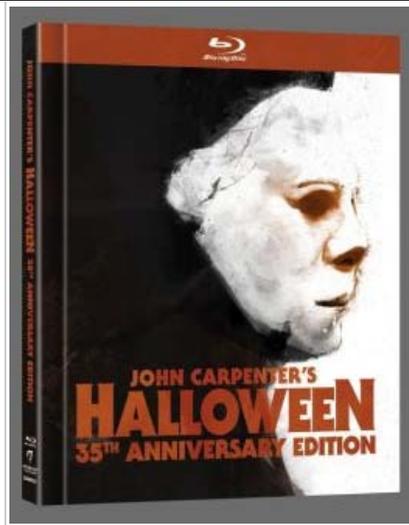


AUTUMN SONATA (\$29.99 DVD; Criterion)
SLACKER (\$39.99 BluRay; Criterion) --

Autumn Sonata is like one of those rock super groups -- a pairing of two giant talents that often seems better on paper than in reality. In this case, the reality worked out beautifully, with director Ingmar Bergman making his one and only film with actress Ingrid Bergman. The mother-daughter tale co-starring Bergman's muse Liv Ullmann is tense, dramatic and subtle. Strong extras include a new interview with Ullmann and a 1981 interview with Bergman at the National Theater in London just three years after the film came out.

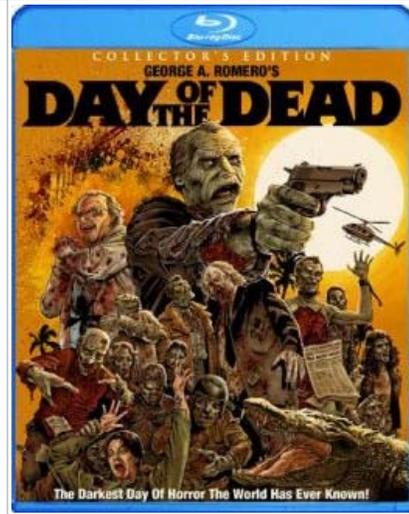
I can never remember if *Slacker* brought the term "slacker" to national attention or just solidified its meaning once and for all. In any case, this shaggy dog tale by director Richard Linklater is a master class in how a neophyte director can make the most of his surroundings. Here Linklater shows a day in the life of Austin, Texas. He eschewed a strong narrative and just created a mosaic of quirky individuals, of which Austin boasts many. It's a key work of independent cinema though I favor *Dazed And Confused* as his real breakthrough. Made for \$23,000, it's surely never looked better than on this Criterion BluRay. The marvelous extras include his first film from 1988, a short, three audio commentaries, casting footage and much more.





CHUCKY: THE COMPLETE COLLECTION (\$84.98 BluRay; Universal)
WORLD WAR Z (\$39.99 BluRay combo; Paramount)
HALLOWEEN 35TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION (\$34.99 BluRay; Anchor Bay)
PRINCE OF DARKNESS (\$29.99 BluRay; Scream Factory/Universal)
THE PURGE (\$34.99 BluRay combo; Universal)
THE FLY (\$24.99 BluRay; Fox)
THE DEVIL BAT (\$24.99 DVD; Kino)
THE AMITYVILLE HORROR TRILOGY (\$69.99 BluRay; Scream Factory/MGM)
DAY OF THE DEAD (\$29.99 BluRay; Scream Factory)

Chucky has proven a surprisingly durable little



menace, thanks to half a dozen movies that keep making money. Like *Frankenstein*, the series started in creepily strong fashion and peaked with the satirical, vicious *Bride Of Chucky*. *The Complete Collection* comes out October 8 with all the movies on BluRay, just in time for Halloween. The comeback film *Curse of Chucky* is also available on its own since many fans probably own the last boxed set they put out.

World War Z ultimately proved Brad Pitt's highest grossing film to date. Thank goodness for him, since this trouble-plagued production had shot up in costs and needed reshoots. Unfortunately, financial success won't lessen the sting for fans who insist that the clever, multi-layered novel its based on was turned into a standard issue shoot-em-up.

Halloween has been released and re-released so many times it's almost silly. If you don't own it and want to, this Bluray edition will serve you well and includes a new commentary by John Carpenter and Jamie Lee Curtis. If you do own a good copy already there's no need to upgrade here. They might consider selling the audio commentary online for a few bucks so fans who want to hear it don't have to shell out for the movie all over again. Just a thought.

Director John Carpenter made many other films beloved by horror and sci-fi fans and I'm sure *Prince of Darkness* has its adherents. But to most of us, this is nonsense, closer to camp than horror and that ain't good.

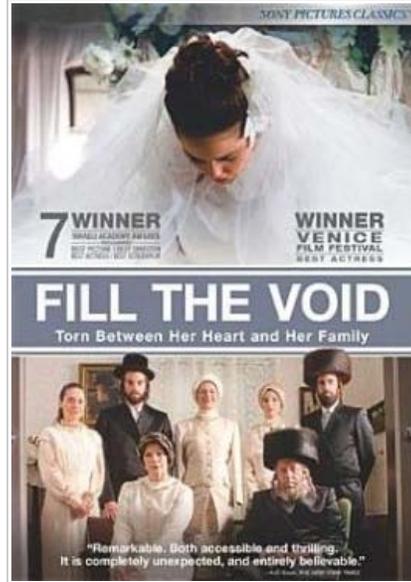
Ethan Hawke is one of my favorite actors and it's been unexpected fun to see him getting a payday by making a string of smart, low-budget horror flicks like *The Purge*. In the near future, the 99% are allowed one night a year to blow off steam. It's the "purge," a 12 hour period when anything goes -- rape, murder, you name it. The rich bunker down in their mansions; the poor go nuts. Hey, I thought that was what the lottery was for -- to keep us all distracted. Anyway, to me the plot is very similar to an old *Star Trek* episode where Kirk and Spock end up on a very pleasant planet, only to discover the natives go wilding when the sun goes down. Fan reaction was all over the place; critics don't really matter on this one.

Vincent Price has a great boxed set of his Hammer movies coming out in a few weeks. For now, you'll have to settle for one of his campier horror flicks. *The Fly* is a nutty film best remembered for the creepy finale where a half-human, half-fly is trapped in a spider's web and squeaking out "Help me! Help me!" It was remade brilliantly by David Cronenberg and that has simply made the original superfluous in my book. In a similar and far sillier vein is Bela Lugosi's *The Devil Bat*. You know you're in shaky territory when even the DVD says the premise of the movie is ludicrous (Lugosi trains vampire bats to attack his enemies and uses after-shave lotion to lure the beasts to his target). Still, Lugosi gives his all.

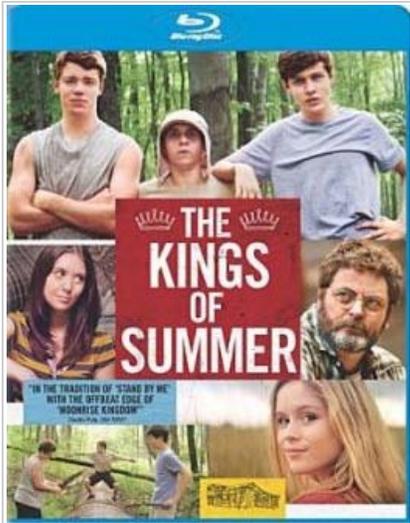
I doubt anyone was more shocked than the filmmakers when the original low-budget nothing *The Amityville Horror* became a box office smash. It spun off two sequels and a

remake (so far). All three of the original series are in this BluRay boxed set, with the third available on BluRay 3-D, though I don't have a TV that lets me judge how well it's done. I really didn't need a stand-up comic to tell me that anyone who spends more than a minute in a home whose walls are dripping blood and has a voice that moans "Get out!" is pretty stupid.

Director George Romero's original zombie trilogy stumbled to the finish line with the so-so *Day Of The Dead*. it's simply not up to the standards of the classic *Night Of The Living Dead* or its clever sequel *Dawn Of The Dead*. Here military men and a hot female scientist are holed up in a missile silo while the zombies are rampaging all over the earth. This edition looks great and includes new commentary from Romero along with other extras.



THE



HANGOVER PART III (\$35.99 BluRay combo; Warner Bros.)

FILL THE VOID (\$30.99 DVD; Sony Pictures Classics)

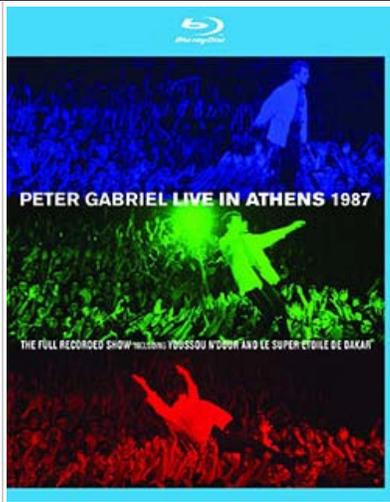
THE KINGS OF SUMMER (\$35.99 BluRay; Sony)

IN THE HOUSE (\$34.99 BluRay; Cohen Media Group)

PETER GABRIEL LIVE IN ATHENS

1987/PLAY THE VIDEOS (\$24.97

BluRayDVD; Real World/Eagle Vision) -- I do



like the mock serious posters for *The Hangover Part III*. They're kind of funny. And that's about it for the final entry in this dim-witted series. I didn't think much of the original, so you might probably tune me out right away. Fans of that were pretty defensive about the stupider sequel --

"it wasn't that bad" was the most they could muster. And virtually no one spoke up for this humor-free Part III. At least it means there won't be a *Hangover IV*. Hey, I'm liking it better already!

Fill The Void is one of the most popular Israeli films in recent years. It swept the top awards in that country, won Best Actress at the Venice Film Festival and was seen around the world. In it, a young woman is about to be married when her sister dies in childbirth. Suddenly, tradition is demanding that she marry the widowed husband instead of the man she loves, forcing the girl (Hadas Yaron) to quash her dreams. Despite strong reviews, it slipped through the cracks in the US.

The Kings Of Summer is a Sundance favorite about four teenage boys who spend a summer trying to build a cabin in the woods and living off the land. It's *Stand By Me*, sans the dead body. It's one of the lucky few films from Sundance to get a theatrical release. But bizarrely the movie was rated R, making it inaccessible to a good chunk of its audience. Why was it rated R? For "language and some teen drinking." If the MPAA thinks teens haven't heard every word in this movie countless times before, I'd like them to meet my nephews.

Francois Ozon is one of the most exciting directors working today. You wouldn't really know it because he's so darn prolific. Like Fassbinder, every time you turn around Ozon has made another movie in another unexpected genre. In this case, it's *In the House*, the sexy and strange story of a high school student who weasels his way into the home of his favorite professor with the usual unexpected consequences. It's about the 17th film for the 45 year old French director (notn counting one in the can and one being filmed) and I can't wait to see what he does next.

Finally, here's a terrific concert film from musician Peter Gabriel. *Peter Gabriel Live In Athens 1987* was directed and edited with care, unusual for most concert films from the Eighties (and today), where quick edits are the norm. Gabriel is creating more of a theatrical piece than a straight concert here. While it never ascends to the heights of *Stop Making Sense*, every song is well thought out and choreographed and Gabriel performs with intensity. The BluRay includes the entire three hour concert, which begins with a 40 minute set from Youssou N'Dour and Gabriel's headlining show, featuring 16 songs when Gabriel was at the peak of his commercial and artistic powers. Oddly, it's not even mentioned on the cover, but this release includes a bonus DVD of *Play The Videos*, the excellent compilation featuring 23 of his groundbreaking music videos. Apparently it's a sop to fans who shelled out for an elaborate boxed set that included this concert but only on DVD. This BluRay only release means they have to pay for it all over again in a sense, so the Play DVD is perhaps a "sorry about that" gesture, though of course any fan who bought that massive boxed set surely already owns it. Putting that aside, this is an excellent concert with great visuals and sound that even casual fans of Gabriel will enjoy. If you don't own *Play*, that makes this a must-have.

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