



DVDs: Fritz Lang, Bob Hope, The Good DC Movies And More



Michael Giltz, ContributorBookFilter creator

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Ready for some Black Friday shopping? Looking to cross some gifts off that holiday list or just give yourself a treat before deciding what to get everyone else? Here are a clutch of boxed sets and new releases that should satisfy any film or TV buff!



KINO
CLASSICS



**FRITZ
LANG**

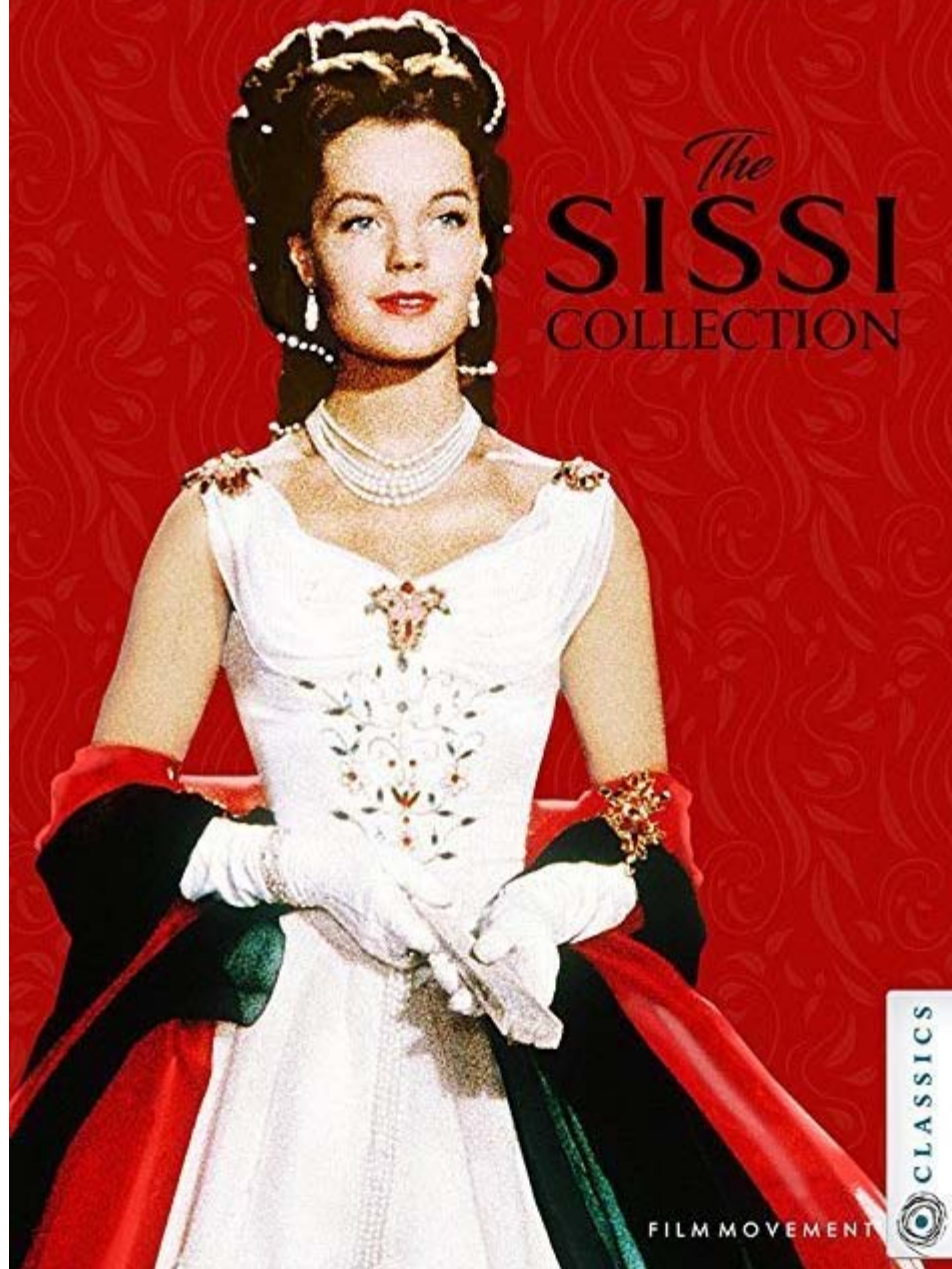
THE SILENT FILMS

F.W. Murnau
MURNAU STIFTUNG



ROMY SCHNEIDER

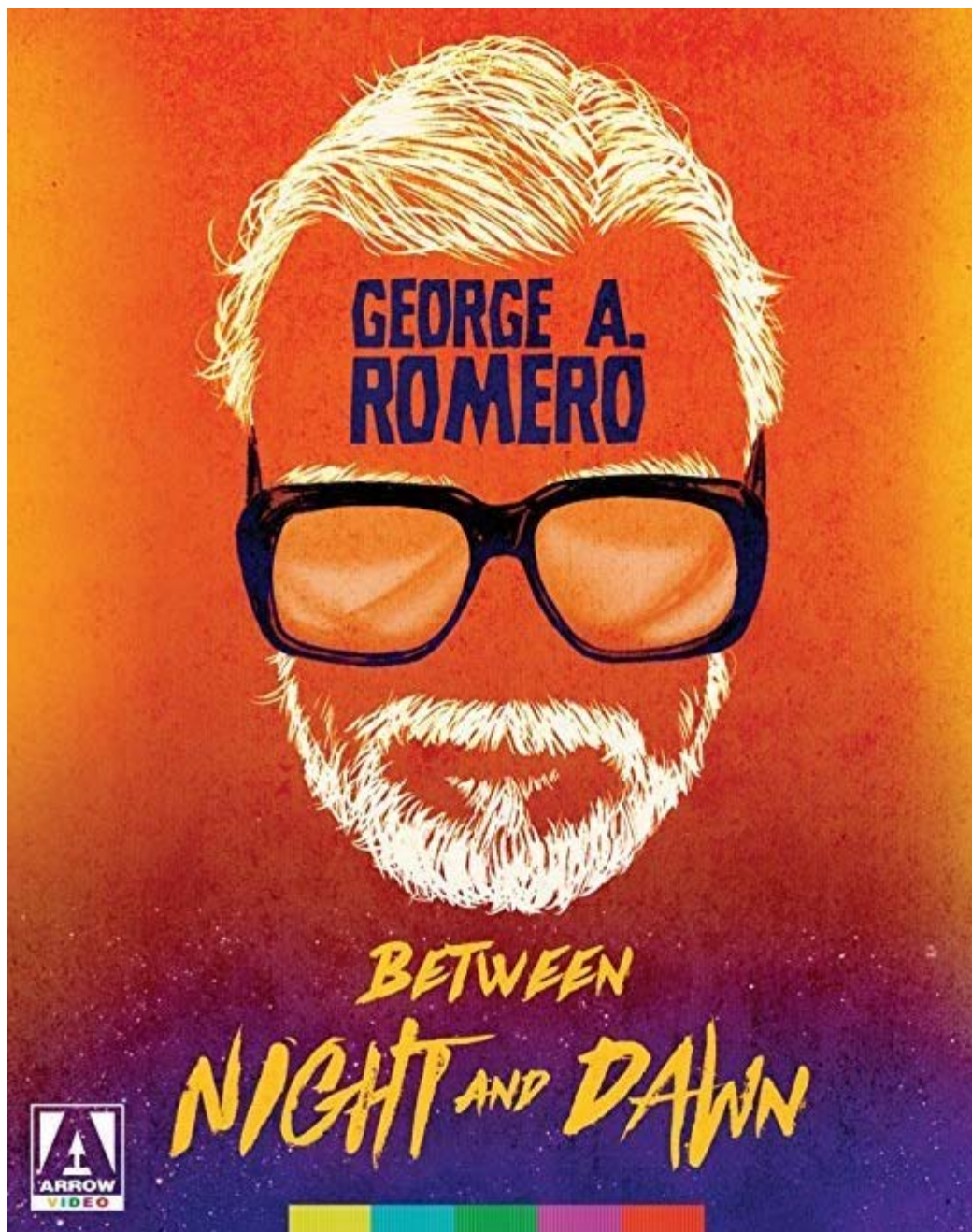
The
SISSI
COLLECTION



CLASSICS

FILM MOVEMENT





FRITZ LANG: THE SILENT FILMS (\$149.95 BluRay; Kino Classics)

THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES: THE BOB HOPE COLLECTION DELUXE SET (\$249.95 DVD; TimeLife)

DC UNIVERSE TENTH ANNIVERSARY COLLECTION (\$299.99 BluRay; Warner Bros.)

THE SISSI COLLECTION (\$74.95 BluRay; Film Movement Collection)

GEORGE A. ROMERO: BETWEEN NIGHT AND DAWN (\$99.95 BluRay; Arrow Video)

Fritz Lang: The Silent Films is just a gorgeous, beautiful boxed set. Any serious cinephile will feel a rush of pleasure just holding it in their hands. It contains eleven films — many of them landmarks of cinema — by

one of the screen's great directors. Just listing them is fun, but rest assured the prints are gorgeous, the extras plentiful and this is an exemplary set by any standard. Among the films? *Metropolis*, *Spies*, *Dr. Mabuse*, *The Gambler*, *The Spiders*, *Die Nibelungen* and more. Sci-fi, serial cliffhangers, mysteries and more — Lang covered a range of genres with flair and fun. Worth every penny.

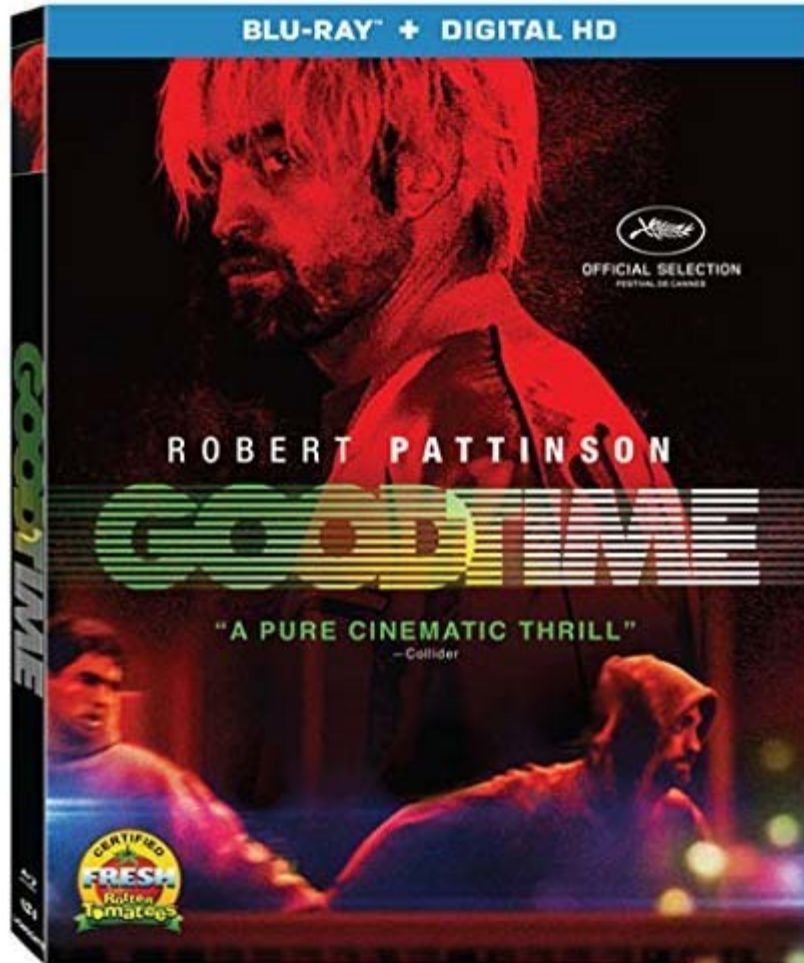
For literally generations, Bob Hope came into our homes for free with annual specials, celebrating Christmas or the troops or Christmas and the troops and more. His appearances were so frequent that Hope's annual shows felt more like a long-running series than a string of specials. Here's Hope again with a new comely co-star, making his wisecracks, swinging his golf clubs and saluting the military or Hollywood or the folks at home. While some skits have become legend, most slipped by in a nostalgic haze, feeling like a throwback to an earlier vaudevillian era even when they were new in the 1970s and the 1980s and beyond. Hope of course first made a name in vaudeville and Broadway and his shows are a final link to that turn of the century form of entertainment. While vaudeville is gone forever, Hope's TV specials live on. This massive set — *Thanks For The Memories* — contains 39 specials, and 20 of them haven't been rebroadcast or repackaged since their original airing. In other words, for most anyone you're looking at a treasure trove of material. You also get a celebrity roast, a commemorative booklet and more, all of it in tribute to one of the most influential entertainers of them all, the guy who made popular the stand-up routine riffing on the day's headlines that every late night talk show host mimics to this day.

What is the deal with DC? They've been turning out clever, fun, bold animated movies for years now. You can catch up with the elaborate boxed set *DC Universe*, which contains thirty full films and five shorts covering all areas of the DC world. Some are better than others; some are great in fact. But the quality is far higher than their live action fare, with the exception of *Wonder Woman*. One, why don't they let some of these writing and directing teams tackle the live action films? Two, why don't they roll the dice and turn their most promising project into a big budget, animated film? That's happening with the Spiderman franchise and frankly when you plunge into this very impressive set, you'll wonder what the heck they're waiting for. Go see *Justice League* and then come home and watch some of the dozens of movies contained here. You'll find yourself saying, why couldn't the live action movies be this fun? Warner Bros. is sitting on a gold mine of talent. If they want to start digging, the mother lode is right here.

Long before *The Princess Diaries*, actor Romy Schneider became a worldwide superstar playing the young Empress Elisabeth of Austria in a series of films. All but forgotten now, they're collected in the new boxed set The Sissi Collection. *Sissi*, *Sissi: The Young Empress* and *Sissi: The Fateful Years* are delightful bon bons. But they only hint at the success Schneider would have working with some of the most famed directors in the world for the next three decades: Orson Welles, Luchino Visconti, Woody Allen, Claude Sautet, Bertrand Tavernier and many more. But it all began here, though one would hardly guess Schneider would become the icon she remains from these trifles. Still, they amuse and are presented with care.

The late George Romero's legacy begins and ends with his zombie movies. But this boxed set — in the works before his death — offers more to consider from Romero's career. Following the success of *Night*

Of *The Living Dead*, Romero turned out a string of horror/suspense films that ventured far from zombies but hewed closely to the ideas he would explore in *Dawn Of The Dead* and for the rest of his career. *There's Always Vanilla* is the dreadfully titled tale of a doomed romance between a drifter and a model. *Season Of The Witch* watches a bored housewife who decides to dabble in the occult. (Maybe John Updike saw this?) And *The Crazies* is more straight-up horror with a small town gripped by a plague that turns those infected into homicidal maniacs. All teh films are nicely restored (taking into account the drive-in vibe they embraced) and all feature extras and commentary and more. Yes, Romero's most famous works rightly feature the walking dead, but they didn't come out of nowhere.





BLU-RAY™ + DVD + DIGITAL

CHARLIZE
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JAMES
McAVOY

ATOMIC BLONDE

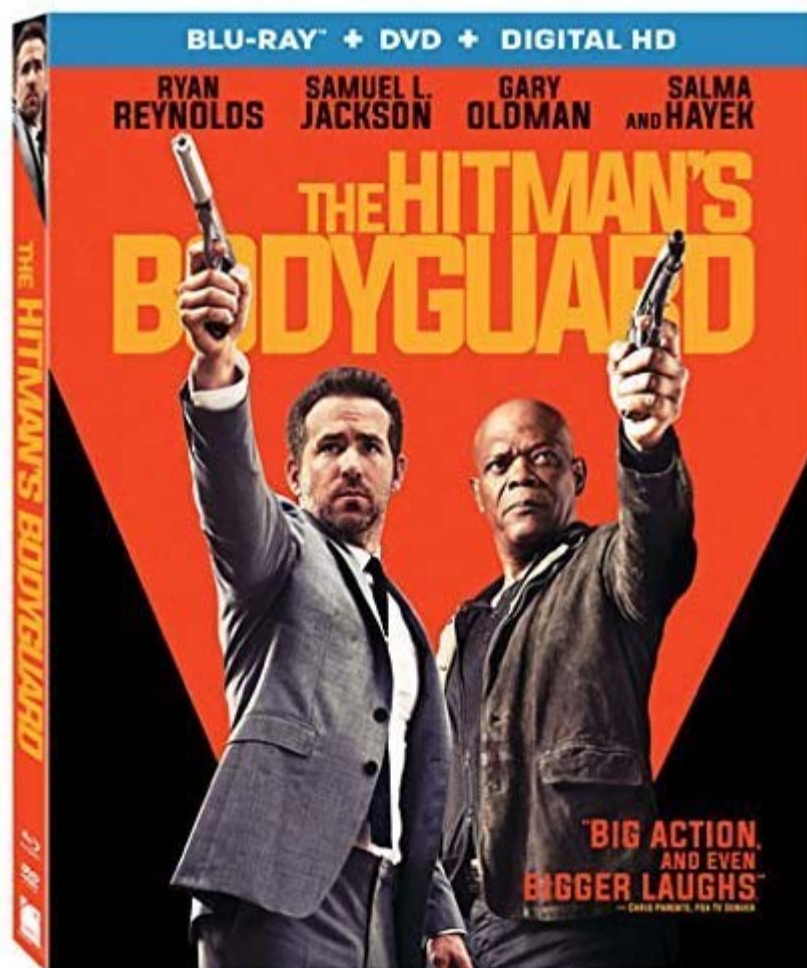
"WITNESS THE BIRTH OF A NEW AND ORIGINAL HERO."

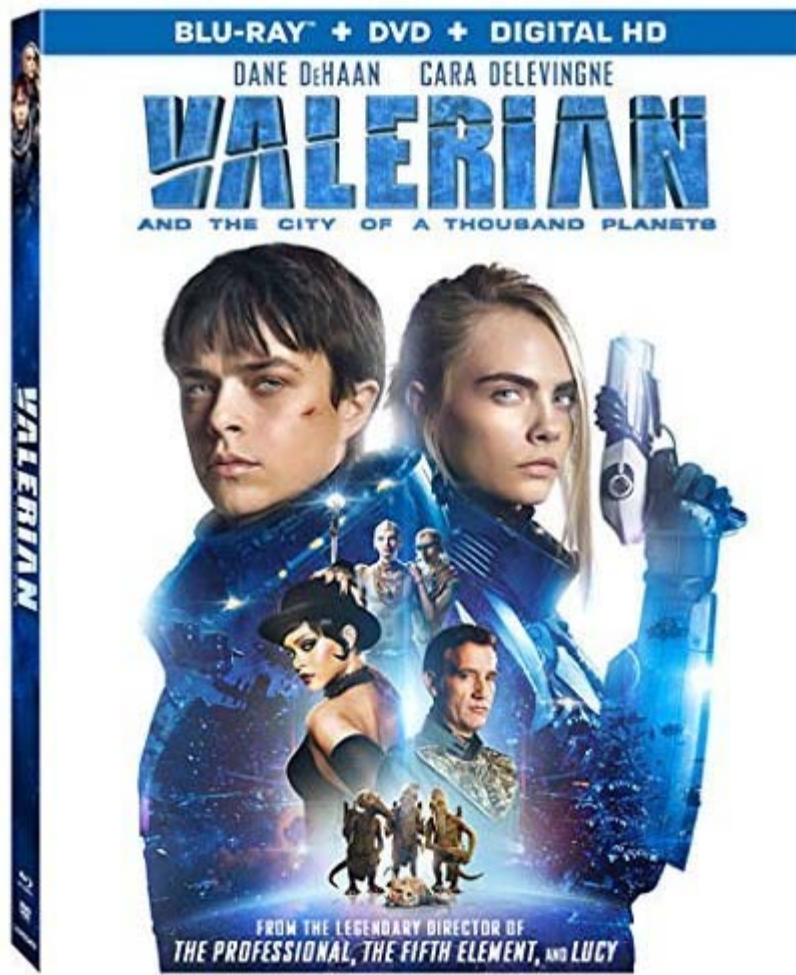
—Joanna Robinson, *Vanity Fair*

CLEARLY

FOCUS
FEATURES

ORIGINAL





GOOD TIME (\$24.99 BluRay; Lionsgate)

ATOMIC BLONDE (\$34.98 BluRay; Universal Studios Home Entertainment)

THE HITMAN'S BODYGUARD (\$39.99 BluRay; Lionsgate)

VALERIAN AND THE CITY OF A THOUSAND PLANETS (\$39.99 BluRay; Lionsgate)

The Safdie brothers and actor Robert Pattinson are all winners thanks to *Good Time*. Pattinson added yet another cool title to his post-twilight resume and the Safdies earned the right to be dubbed the next Tarantino(s) or the next Coen brothers or more likely forge their own path. And happily the cool indie films of the moment are not noble and serious but fun action flicks with a beating 1970s heart. Crime, a jail break, one night to make it happen — *Good Time* has it all.

That same sense of fun is the strongest suit of *Atomic Blonde*, a nutty spy caper set in East Berlin during the fall of the Wall. James Mcavoy has a blast as a none-too-trustworthy double (or triple?) agent who is either playing both sides or just really good at his job. The Maguffin? A list of spies. Who wants it? Everyone, starting with Sapphic assassin Charlize Theron , who can out-kiss and out-kill James Bond any

day. Director David Leitch has a blast with the action scenes: like *Baby Driver*, they are synchronized to pop songs to great effect. It's all utter nonsense, best enjoyed in a drive-in but in a pinch you can make do at home with popcorn and some shots of vodka.

A goofy sense of fun was all anyone could hope for from another mismatched buddy comedy. In the case of *The Hitman's Bodyguard*, the chalk and cheese pairing is hitman Samuel L. Jackson and Ryan Reynolds as the bodyguard determined to deliver Jackson safely to the Hague for testimony. They've hated each other for years of course and would gladly kill each other for a dime. Hilarious! The two pros make what they can of it but this is pretty by the numbers stuff with none of the action flair of *Atomic Blonde* or overall hipness of *Good Time*.

So those are three B movies in a row. Now here comes a film that just seems like a B movie. In fact, *Valerian and the City of A Thousand Planets* is the most expensive French film ever made. From Euro-trashy director Luc Besson, it's an acid trip extension of the nuttiness he displayed in *The Fifth Element*, all of it in service of a comic strip series that was an influential precursor to *Star Wars*. Dane DeHaan and Cara Delavigne are promising actors who barely register as human here — they're more like anonymous avatars working their way through a video game. I hoped for something so absurdly over the top it had a nutty or kitschy charm. But this isn't surreal or so bad it's good. It's just...boring.

DAVID SUCHET JESSICA CHASTAIN HUGH BONNEVILLE TOBY JONES BARBARA HERSHEY

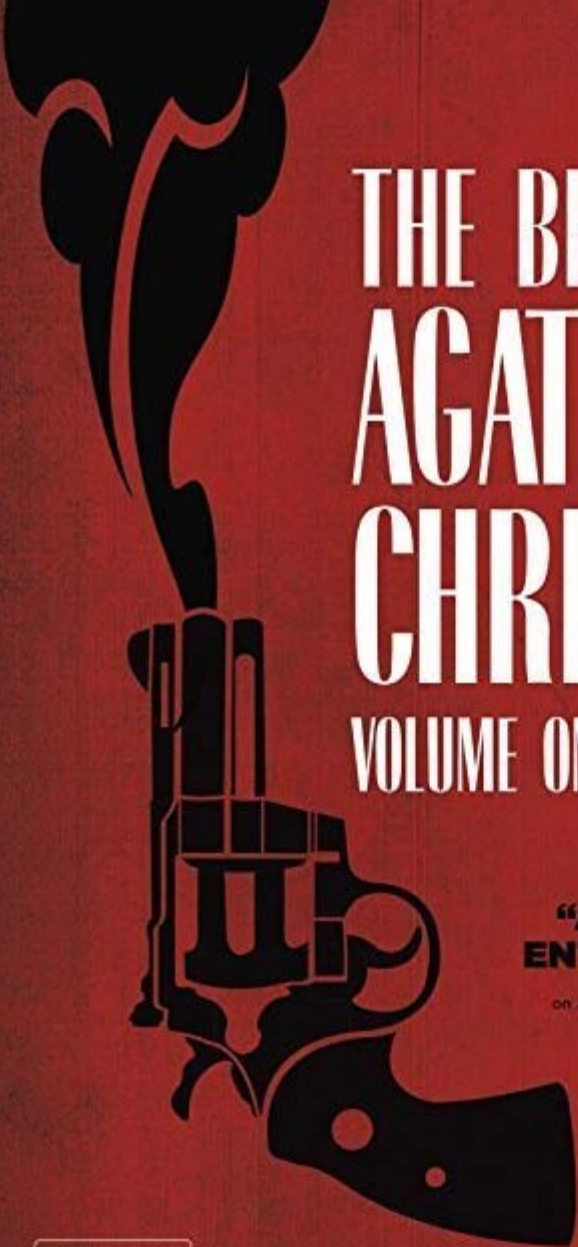
Agatha Christie

MURDER ON THE ORIENT EXPRESS



ACORN

itv
STUDIOS
GLOBAL ENTERTAINMENT



THE BEST OF AGATHA CHRISTIE

VOLUME ONE

**"ABSURDLY
ENTERTAINING"**

— VARIETY
on *And Then There Were None*

As seen on the
BBC

ACORN

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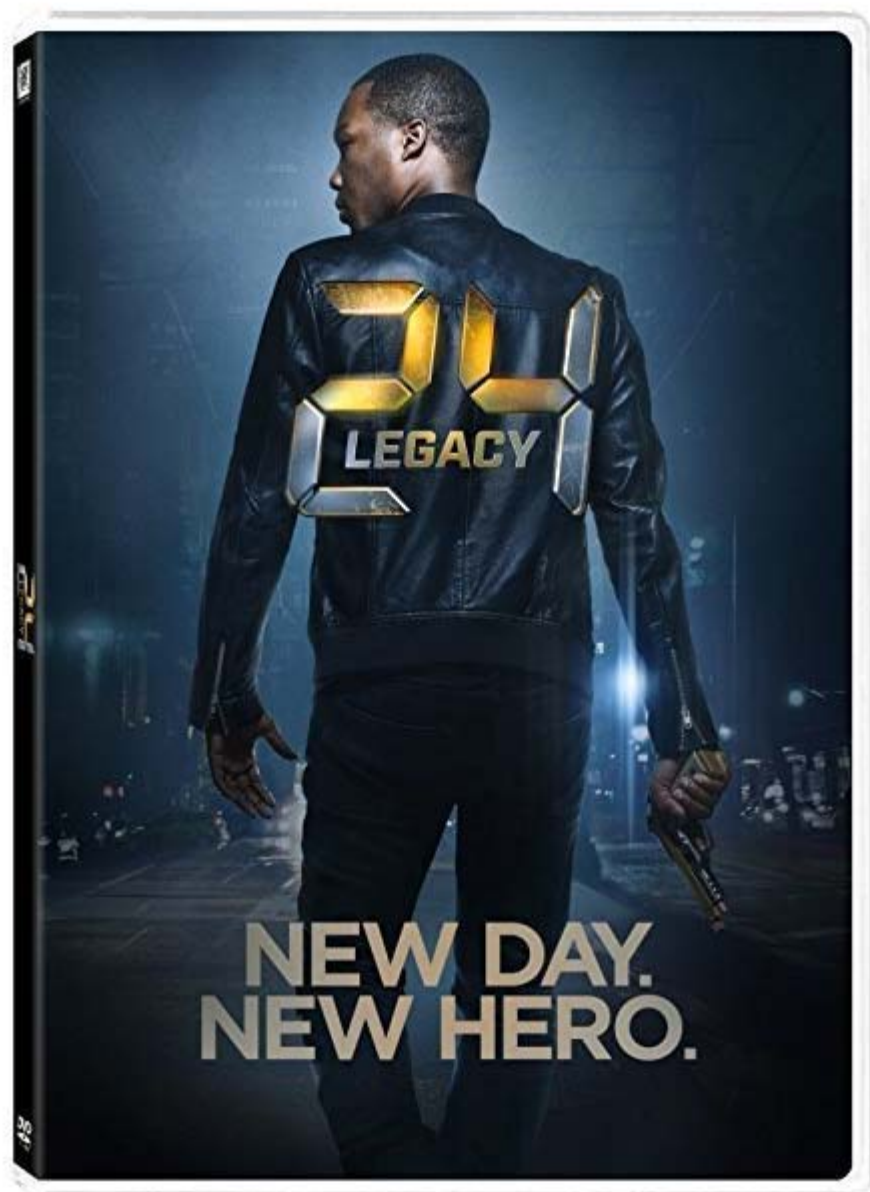
GILLIAN ANDERSON JAMIE DORNAN

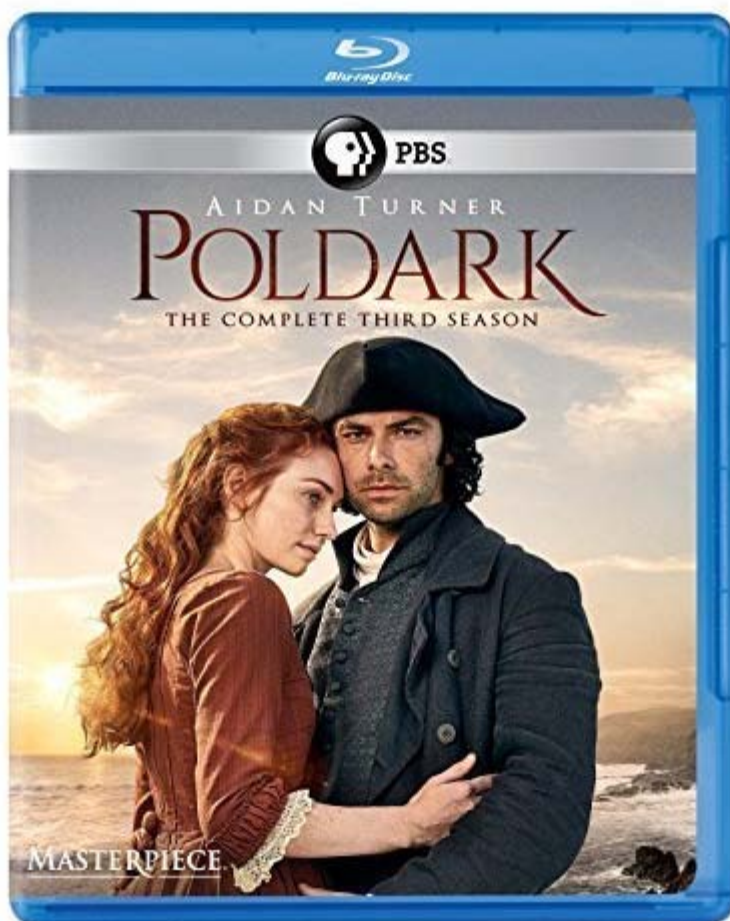
THE FALL

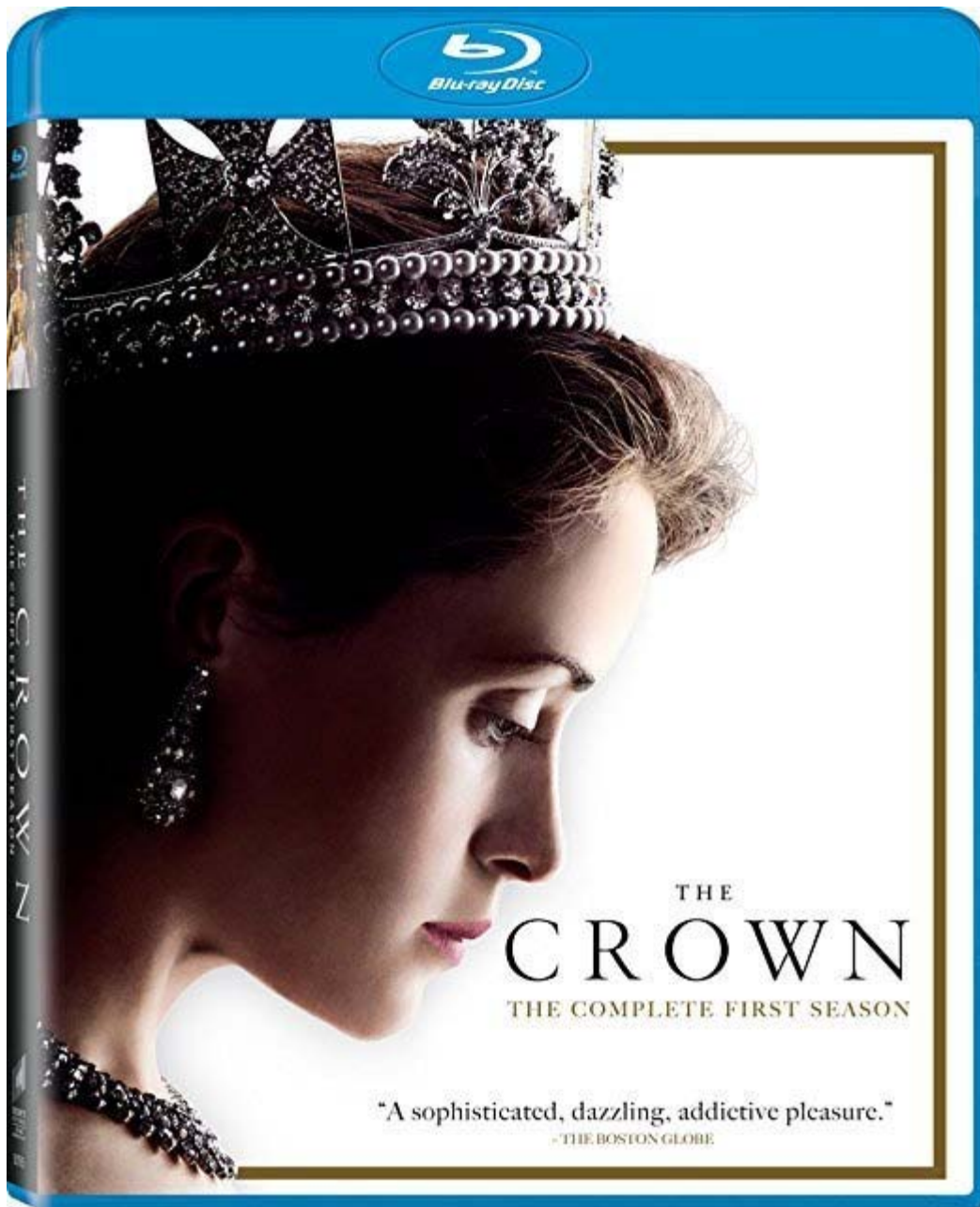
COMPLETE COLLECTION

"ELECTRIC WITH SUSPENSE"
- ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY

ACORN







AGATHA CHRISTIE'S POIROT: MURDER ON THE ORIENT EXPRESS (\$19.99 DVD; Acorn Media)

THE BEST OF AGATHA CHRISTIE VOL. ONE AND TWO (\$39.99 each DVD set; Acorn Media)

THE FALL COMPLETE COLLECTION (\$69.99 DVD; Acorn Collection)

24: LEGACY (\$29.98 DVD; 20th Century Fox)

THE RED SKELTON HOUR IN COLOR DELUXE EDITION (\$199.95 DVD; TimeLife/WEA)

POLDARK COMPLETE THIRD SEASON (\$54.99 BluRay; PBS)

THE CROWN COMPLETE FIRST SEASON (\$55.99 BluRay; Sony Pictures Home Entertainment)

Why go see the new Kenneth Branagh adaptation of Agatha Christie's *Murder On The Orient Express*? It's not as good as the original film version from the 1970s. But that's no sacrosanct why-would-you-remake-it flick? In fact, they did remake it — and much better — for TV's *Poirot* series starring David Suchet. Suchet is the greatest Poirot even if the nature of the stories from Christie mean the series isn't as much fun show to show or cumulatively as say the Jeremy Brett Sherlock Holmes or a number of other sleuths one could name. But he IS Poirot and one distinguishing element of the series is how they've subtly reinforced the importance of faith to Poirot and made that a low-key through-line on the show and his growth. That pays off in spades in *Orient Express*, one of Christie's most famous tales. The case is notable for its simplicity in presentation and left field solution. (Christie did not always play fair.) But that's a stunt and doesn't bear reading (or watching) twice. What makes the Suchet version superior is how they emphasize the case he just solved prior to this one and Poirot's own feelings of guilt and complicity and conscience to turn what Poirot is going to do AFTER he solves the crime into the real mystery here. It's very effective and what can be a "I've brought you all here" cliché finale becomes one with genuine suspense. It's a triumph and peak moment for the series.

But of course the British do Poirot right. *The Best of Agatha Christie Vol One* and *Two* are two separate sets, each containing three feature length mysteries. *Volume Two* contains two Poirot mystery films and *Witness For The Prosecution*, which is currently being staged in London at an actual site for court hearings. (The audience is *literally* the jury.) *Volume One* contains an all-star *And Then There Were None* plus two Poirot films, including *Death On The Nile*. Kenneth Branagh is going to direct and star in a remake of *Death On The Nile* to follow up the success of *Murder On The Orient Express*. I prefer the campy *Evil Under The Sun*, but why wait? Suchet got there first and probably has already done it better.

Certainly one of the most acclaimed British suspenseers in recent years has been *The Fall* starring Gillian Anderson and the disconcertingly tall Jamie Dornan. Anderson has proven herself in so many different ventures and yet it's still fun to see her in investigative mode, aliens or no aliens. This is a very dark show and not for the faint of heart. One can never say never as far as future episodes, but the three seasons they delivered feel complete.

However, the TV franchise *24* will be back, just not with a recurring male lead as they had with Kiefer Sutherland and tried again on *24: Legacy*, starring Corey Hawkins as a veteran caught up in the usual ticking clock serial adventures of a guy just trying to save the world in one day. It was smart to ditch the 24 episodes format, which daunted even the most inventive writers with the need to add so many twists and turns that things inevitably became ludicrous. However, the show was not firing on all cylinders and having Hawkins prove such a goody goody removed the moral darkness that made Jack Bauer such a compelling anti-hero. Next time the lead will be a woman and if they're smart they'll make it just twelve episodes (or 14 or 10 or whatever they need) and let her sacrifice herself at the end as the only way to save the day. That will raise the stakes for every future person caught up in *24*. Because, let's be honest — like James Bond, *24* will be back.

The clown Red Skelton is gone and likely the art of clowning will remain on the fringes of entertainment, the province of artists like Bill Irwin working in fancy theater venues or hapless guys and gals trying to join the circus long after the circus has disappeared. For a time, clowning was everywhere from silent movies to vaudeville to prime time TV as championed by Red Skelton and the many enduring characters he created. *The Red Skelton In Color Deluxe Edition* contains literally dozens of TV episodes and primetime specials with Skelton clowning and goofing around — 22 DVDs and 65 hours in all. It likely will appeal to those who saw it the first time around or little kids who don't know they shouldn't enjoy something so simple and innocent as this.

The soapy British drama *Poldark* has officially passed the original TV series. Well, not officially, not yet. The original 1975 series was one of the earliest successes of Masterpiece Theatre in the US. Despite massive popularity, it only lasted two seasons and 29 episodes and I've never found a convincing reason why. I think the Brits were just bashful of such commercial success. Well, the new version has lasted for three seasons and 27 episodes. Since it's coming back for a fourth season, clearly it will have passed the original in every way. They've reached book six in the 12 Poldark novels by Winston Groom so eight seasons is not out of the question. That's going to mean a lot more dangers to overcome for Aidan Turner as our hero. He came back from the (unsuccessful) attempt to quash the American rebellion to find his homestead in disarray and his true love set for another. But dear me that was hours and hours and seasons and books ago! It's time to catch up.

The Crown is yet another British import and this one is tackling the life of Queen Elizabeth in fascinating fashion. Season One saw Claire Foy as Elizabeth face the daunting task of wearing the crown. We'll follow her again in season two. And here's the clever bit — they'll jump forward in time and cast a new actress to take over the role at a later point in the Queen's reign. Hey, if you're going to chart the career of the longest running monarch, you're going to have to think outside the box. This competed with a series about Queen Victoria for the hearts of Anglophiles everywhere last year. True subjects watched both, but *The Crown* seems to have nabbed the brass ring of proving the most addictive and enjoyable for my family and friends.

BLU-RAY™ + DIGITAL HD

JEREMY
RENNER

ELIZABETH
OLSEN

WIND RIVER

WIND RIVER

9/1



DANGER COMES WITH THE TERRITORY



BLU-RAY™ + DVD + DIGITAL

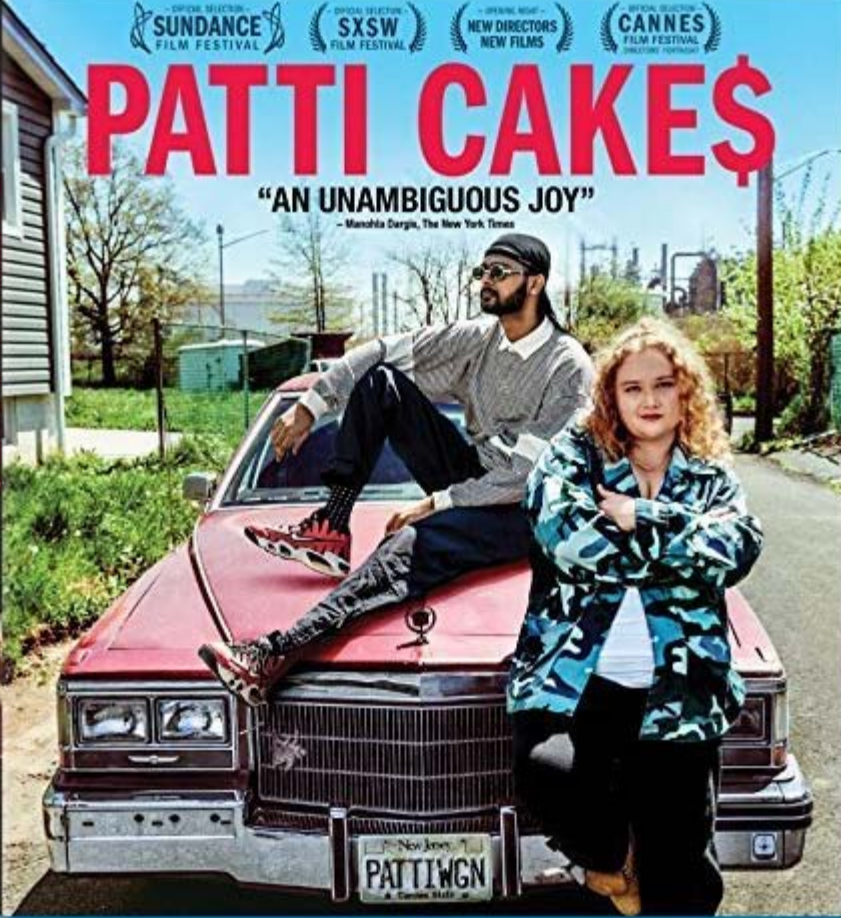


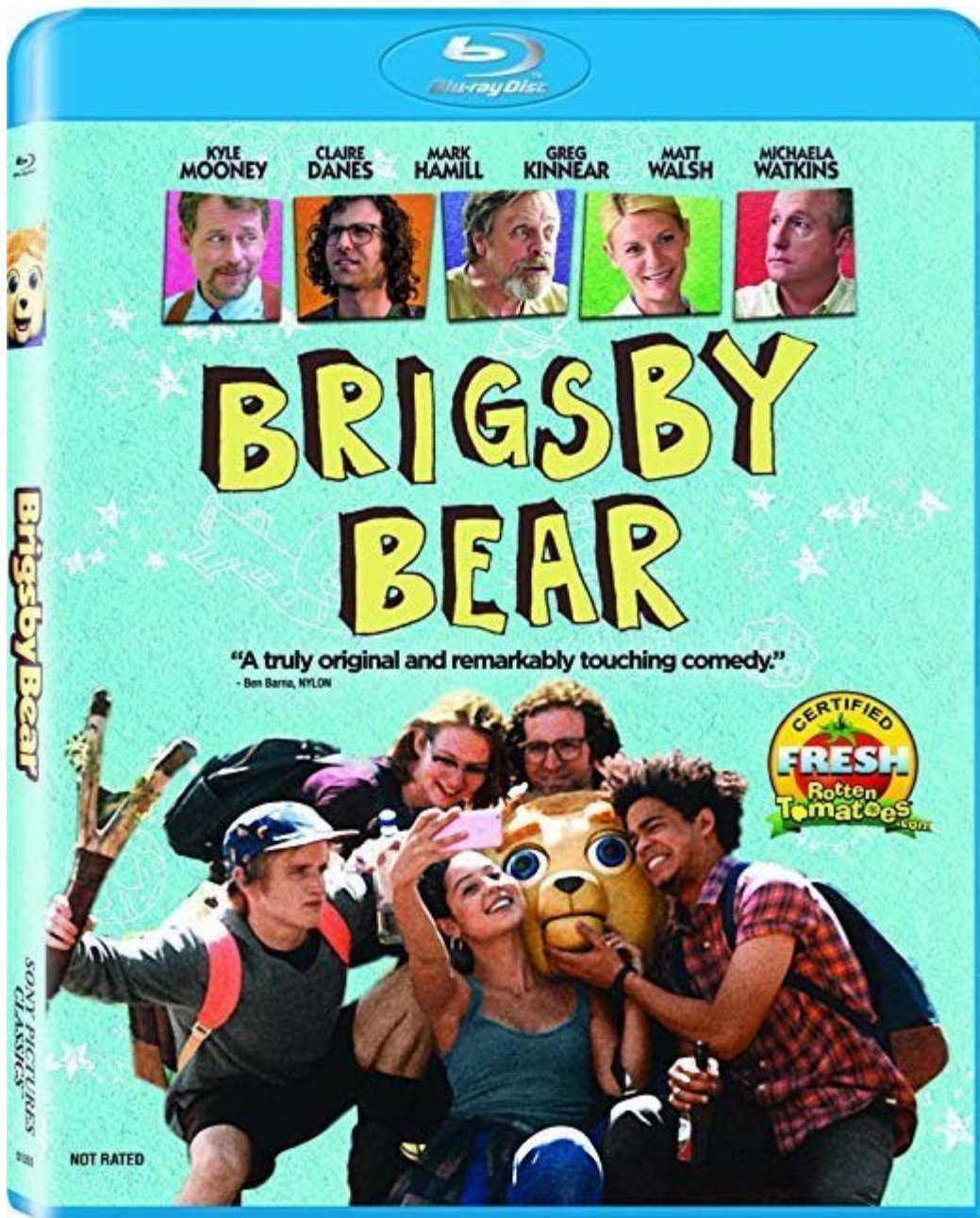
PATTI CAKE\$

"AN UNAMBIGUOUS JOY"

—Manohla Dargis, The New York Times

PATTI CAKE\$





WIND RIVER (\$34.99 BluRay; Lionsgate)

PATTI CAKE\$ (\$34.99 BluRay; Fox Home Entertainment)

BRIGSBY BEAR (\$30.99 BluRay; Sony Pictures Home Entertainment)

Indie films don't have it easy. They can come and go in a flash — the days when word of mouth meant a film lingered in theaters is long gone. But all three of these films have a good case to make for your attention. *Wind River* is the directorial debut of Taylor Sheridan. He's gone from acting in *Sons Of Anarchy* to writing screenplays like *Sicario* to the Oscar-nominated *Hell Or High Water* and now writing and directing. Here³ he's delivered a suspense film about an FBI rookie (Elizabeth Olsen) teaming up with a tracker (Jeremy Renner) to solve the murder of a young woman on Shoshone and Arapaho land. It's one of

the genuine indie success stories of the year, should feature in end of year lists and maybe Oscar consideration and proves Sheridan has fully arrived.

In contrast, *Patti Cake\$* came out of Sundance with “winner” stamped all over it. But this tale of a white female rapper wannabe simply vanished from sight. It might have been a comedic win but instead looks like one of those Sundance hype that never pans out. In this case that’s unfair since the film is genuinely odd and Danielle Macdonald would be a Best Actress contender if the film had clicked or it weren’t such a strong year for female roles. Think a distaff *Eight Mile*, but funnier and quirkier.

Finally, there’s *Brigsby Bear* which is a cult film from start to finish. It’s strange in a way *Patti Cake\$* and most films can never be because it had to be made and channels some very weird compulsions. It’s a batshit crazy story about a guy obsessed with his favorite kid’s show. When it’s cancelled he makes like Drake and insists the show must go on. Literally. I don’t know who thought they’d make their money back by investing in this nuttiness but God bless them for it and God bless Claire Danes and Mark Hamill for signing on.



BLU-RAY
SPECIAL EDITION

HIGH-DEFINITION
VIDEO AND AUDIO

1975

THE CRITERION COLLECTION



BARRY LYNDON

a film by
STANLEY KUBRICK

The Philadelphia Story

Directed by
GEORGE CUKOR

1940

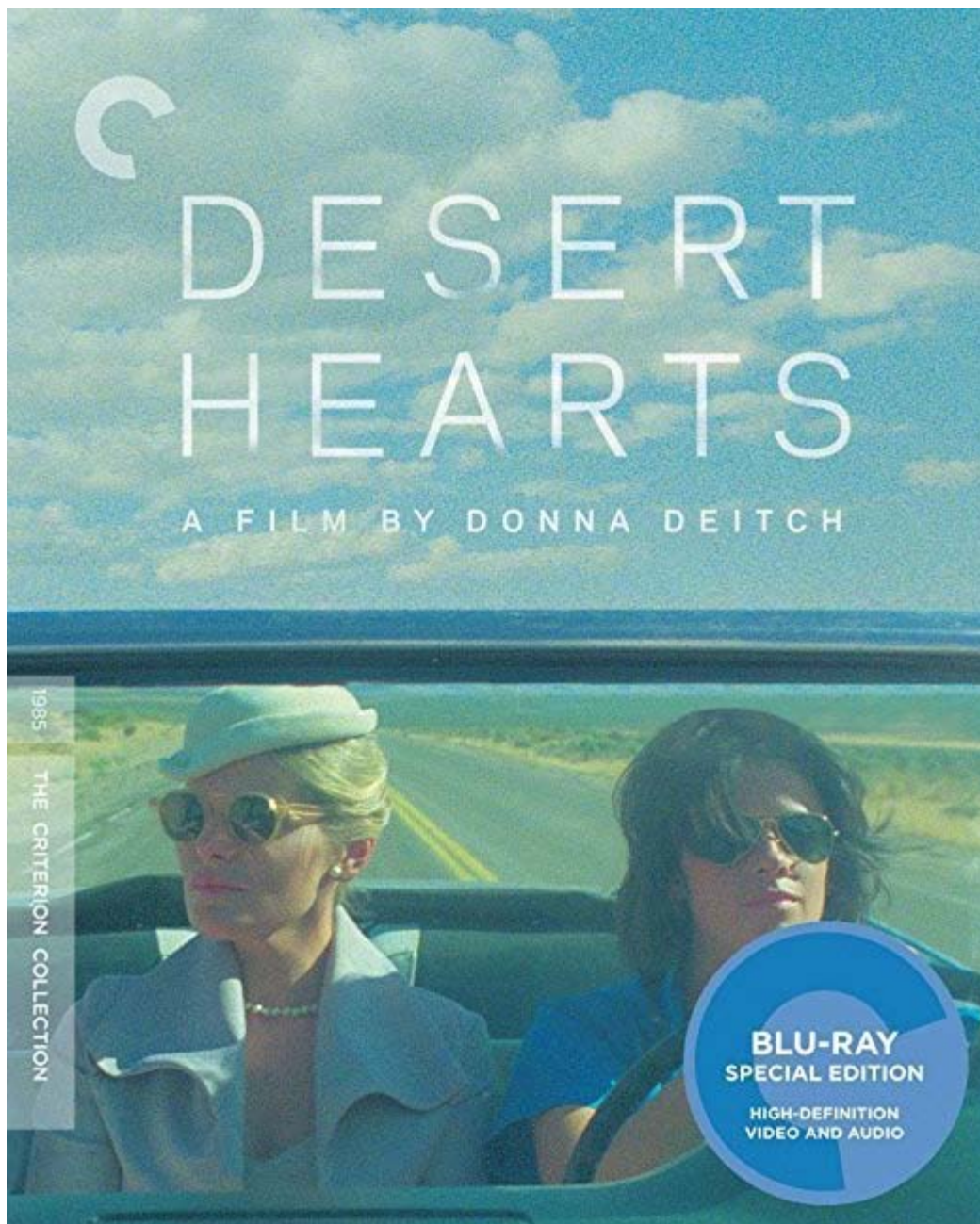
THE CRITERION COLLECTION

STARRING

Cary GRANT
Katharine HEPBURN
James STEWART

BLU-RAY
SPECIAL EDITION

HIGH-DEFINITION
VIDEO AND AUDIO



BARRY LYNDON (\$39.95 BluRay; Criterion Collection)

THE PHILADELPHIA STORY (\$39.95 BluRay; Criterion Collection)

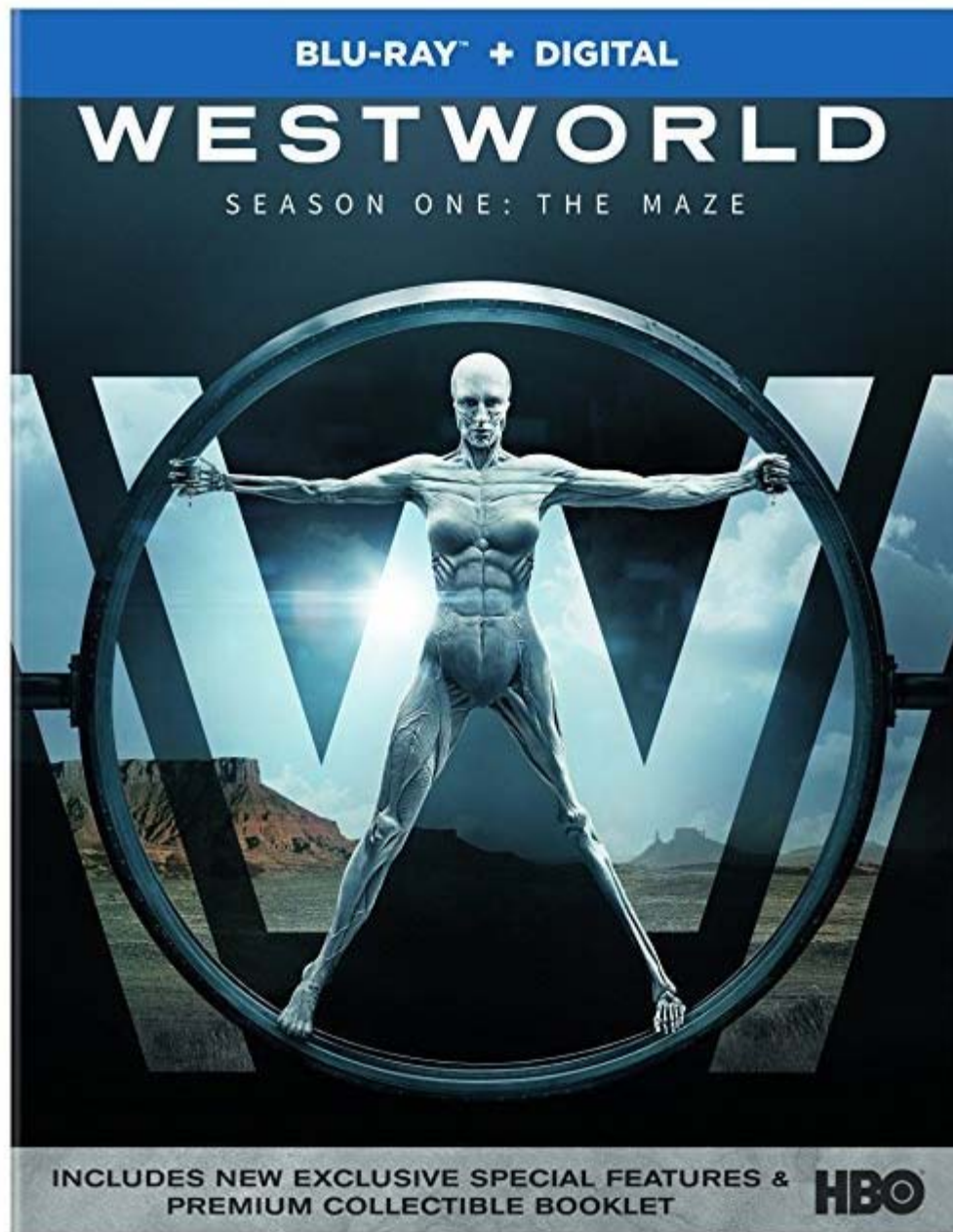
DESERT HEARTS (\$39.95 BluRay; Criterion Collection)

Stanley Kubrick is one of the boldest directors in film history. For me, he's unique in that I seem to enjoy his films more and more every time I return to them. It begins with intellectual admiration for what he achieved, such as adapting *Lolita* or telling the story of man's leap to a next level of consciousness in *2001: A Space Odyssey* or taking a new angle on Vietnam in *Full Metal Jacket*. But then I watch each of these films again and again and admiration turns to jaw-dropped admiration and finally love. I always knew such and such a film was great but how did I not realize exactly how great they were from the start? That

hasn't happened yet for *Barry Lyndon*, his period film famously shot in natural lighting. (Think lots and lots of candles.) For the moment I blame Ryan O'Neal, who I have liked in other films. But every time I return to it I keep waiting for the other shoe to drop. Certainly, this gorgeous new Criterion edition is a good excuse: it looks simply stunning and a second disc contains all sorts of extras. If you're looking for a demo disk to show off your home entertainment system and are tired of the obvious sci-fi fare, try this one out.

I need no prompting to love *The Philadelphia Story*, one of the all time greats and the comeback vehicle for Katherine Hepburn that made her a star forever. It's peak work for everyone involved, including Hepburn and Cary Grant and Jimmy Stewart, not to mention director George Cukor and playwright Philip Barry, whose work was adapted by Donald Ogden Stewart and an uncredited Waldo Salt. An heiress is about to get married to a drip and her ex-husband (still carrying a torch) is determined to stop it. Since the entire family loves the ex (Grant) they're willing accomplices, even when he drags two reporters along (including an abashed Jimmy Stewart). Romantic, funny, silly and serious, *The Philadelphia Story* is Hollywood at its best, a movie kids can enjoy well enough but which adults will savor. The film looks great and the extras are exemplary, from a 1943 radio adaptation to two episodes of *The Dick Cavett Show* featuring Katherine Hepburn. There's even an excerpt from another Cavett interview with Cukor, though that only makes me wish they'd included the whole thing.)

Director Donna Deitch has had a perhaps frustrating career. She broke through with her very independently financed feature *Desert Hearts*, a 1985 drama about two women falling in love that was a landmark in so many ways I've lost count. That film is beautifully presented by Criterion with the care it deserves, including previous extras, a new gorgeous transfer and new conversations with all involved, including one with Deitch and her technical team, another with Deitch and actor Jane Lynch and finally interviews with the two leads Helen Shaver and Patricia Charbonneau. So what's frustrating? With this critical and commercial success, Deitch was tapped by Oprah to direct the Emmy nominated hit miniseries *The Women Of Brewster Place*. And after that? She directed more than a dozen episodes of *NYPD Blue* and usually just one or two episodes of a bunch of other fine TV dramas. Deitch did a documentary film that garnered attention but she remains a talent deserving of many more opportunities than the work for hire she has undoubtedly performed admirably.



WESTWORLD SEASON ONE: THE MAZE (\$54.97 BluRay; HBO/Warner Bros.)

You say you love *Westworld*? Well, I guess I believe you. It's just hard to take you seriously. The show is both banally obvious (ooh, robots might have feelings!) and laughably complicated at the same time. It's the latest example of a TV series that makes you feel like you have to start taking notes from episode one on. Lots of people are good in it, from Evan Rachel Wood to a never better James Marsden. Others are asked to do such nonsense I take their performances as high camp (Jeffrey Wright, Anthony Hopkins). And again, it's just so annoyingly complex with conspiracies inside enigmas inside puzzles (inside a MAZE, apparently) that I just don't care. And I find it very hard to believe you really care too. But if you do, the season looks great and of course you'll find all sorts of extras and backstory and hints about what's to come that will absolutely blow your mind! I feel like it's already as lost as *Lost* got in season two but you

kept watching that to the end didn't you?





SELZNICK INTERNATIONAL
Presents



**GINGER ROGERS
JOSEPH COTTEN
SHIRLEY TEMPLE**

I'LL BE SEEING YOU



SINCE YOU WENT AWAY (\$29.95 BluRay; Kino Classics)

I'LL BE SEEING YOU (\$29.95 BluRay; Kino Classics)

DRIFTWOOD (\$29.95 BluRay; Kino Classics)

Joseph Cotten is such a good actor no one even thinks of him as a good actor. Even other actors don't mention Joseph Cotten as a good actor. Oh, was that acting? That's just good ole Joe. Here are two more examples. *Since You Went Away* is the poor man's *The Best Years Of Our Lives*, both more sentimental and less fondly remembered. It came out in 1944 and focuses mostly on the home front in the midst of World War II. There's romance and patriotism and somber fears about the future. *Like Best Years*, it's remarkable how nuanced and realistic this film can be about the price of war at a time when you'd expect nothing but cheerful flag-waving. Cotten plays a man who has fallen hard for a woman (Claudette Colbert,

great) who eventually becomes unattainable (It's complicated). But everyone behaves admirably and hey there's a war to be fought. It's almost three hours long from producer David O. Selznick of *Gone With The Wind* fame. It was a hit, but not *that* big a hit.

I'll Be Seeing You is an interesting film too, with Cotten back from the war suffering from post traumatic stress disorder meeting Ginger Rogers, who is out of prison on a holiday furlough after being wrongfully convicted fo manslaughter. (Hey, it's complicated.) Rogers isn't sure how her family and friends will treat her. Cotten is afraid of hurting those around him and of course they fall in love. It's a strange tale to buck up the spirits. But both films take place or climax at Christmas so anyone who wants to avoid the usual default picks of *It's A Wonderful Life* and *A Christmas Story*, here are two fun options.

The oddest of these three odd but well made releases is *Driftwood*, the story of an adorable little orphan who charms everyone she meets. That's actually the job description for orphans — charm everyone you meet if you want to find a new home! In this case the orphan is played by a young Natalie Wood, who gives another winning child performance as little Jenny, a kid who isn't used to civilization as she puts it. Too cute for words, she adopts a puppy who is the sole survivor of a plane wreck...and might just be infected with a deadly disease. Before you know it little Jenny is on her deathbed and the town faces a plague. The sterling cast includes Walter Brennan, Ruth Warrick, Dean Jagger and Margaret Hamilton among many others, the director is Allan Dwan and the better than expected cinematography is by John Alton and it's cornpone nonsense delivered with Hollywood efficiency.

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