



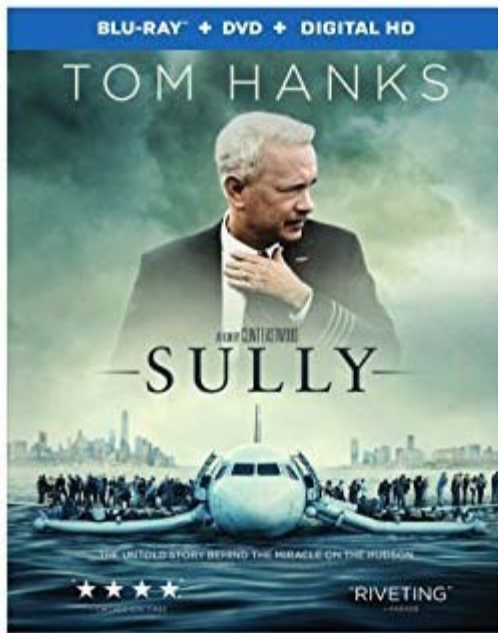
Michael Giltz, Contributor [BookFilter](#) creator

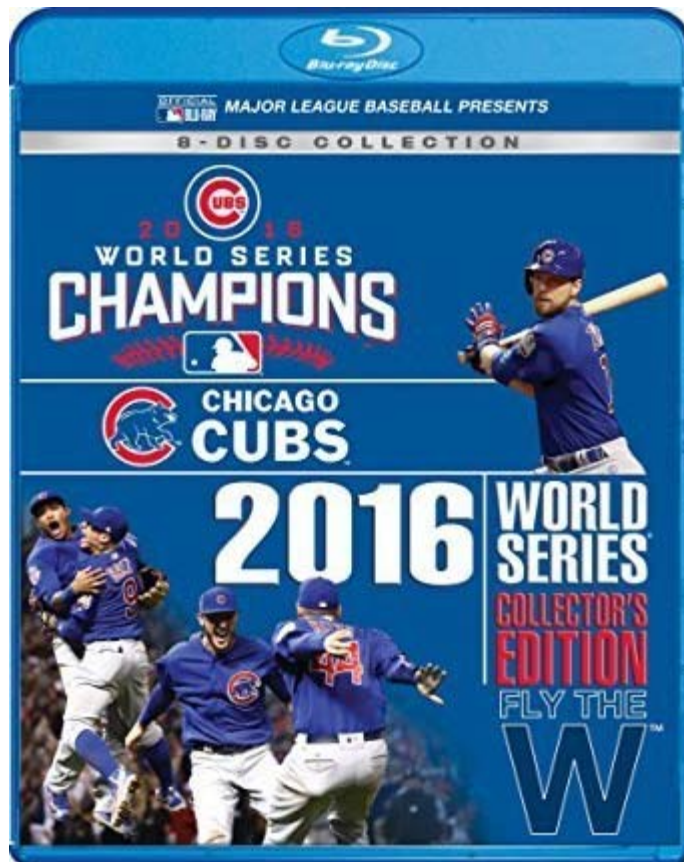
DVDs: Holiday Gift Guide/Best Of 2016

12/16/2016 02:31 am ET | Updated Dec 17, 2016

Don't panic! You've still got time to pick up a great gift or order online for delivery before the holidays are over. As long as you order in the next twenty minutes, of course.... Below are some lavish boxed sets that always make impressive gifts, along with some of my favorite releases of the year and some new releases. What do you care, as long as you say, "That's perfect for Uncle Tommy! Get it!" We've got a LOT packed into this column, but keep scrolling — you'll find something ideal for everyone on your list. Okay, let's start with some releases perfect for the 'rents or grandparents.







FLORENCE FOSTER JENKINS (\$39.99 BluRay; Paramount)

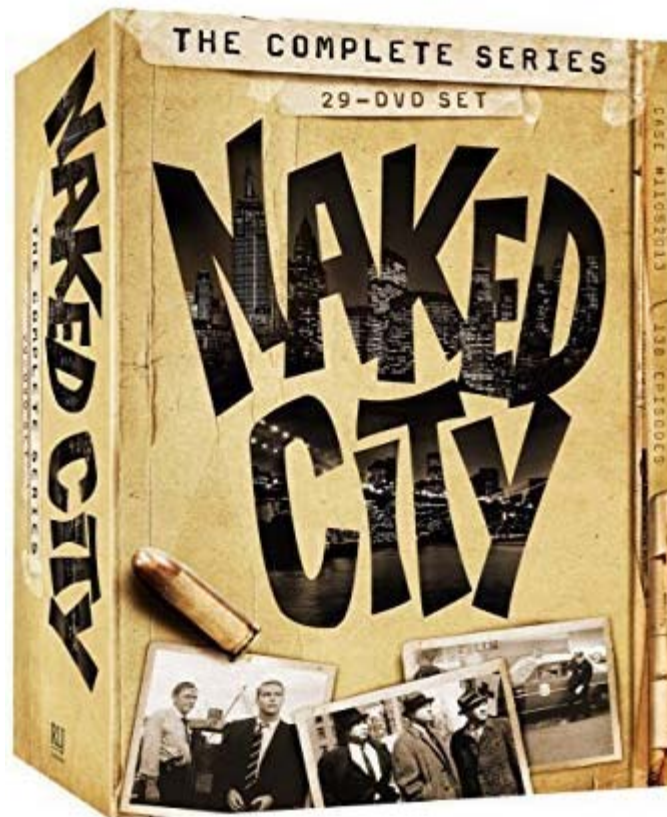
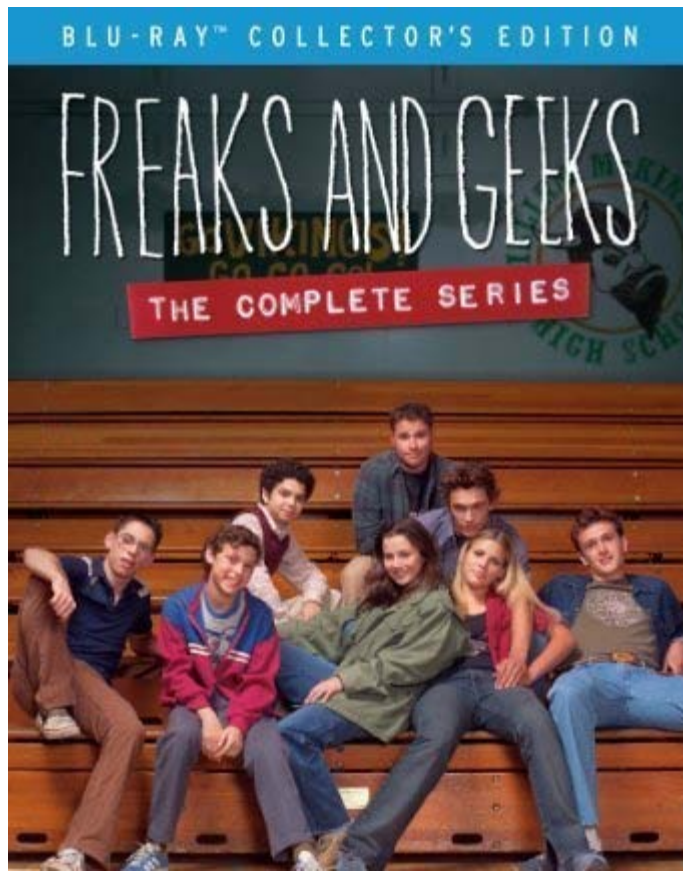
SULLY (\$35.99 BluRay; Warner Bros.)

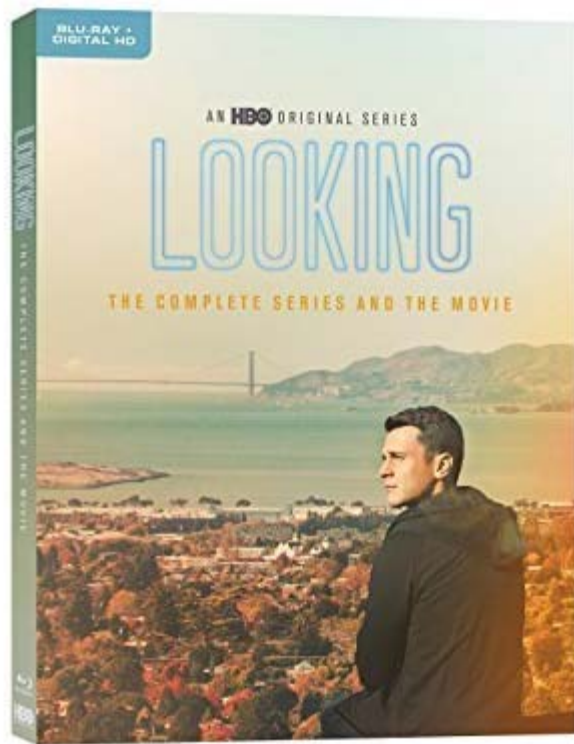
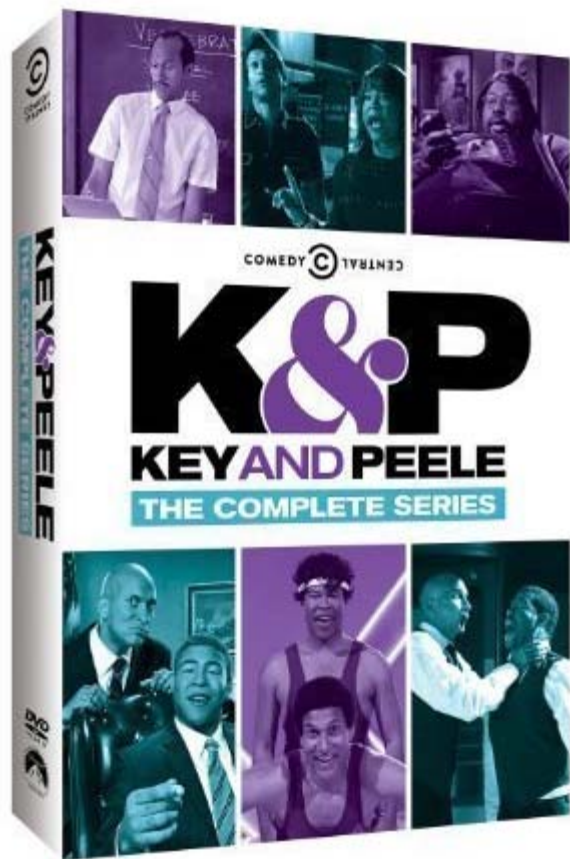
THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN (\$34.99 BluRay; Sony Pictures Home Entertainment)

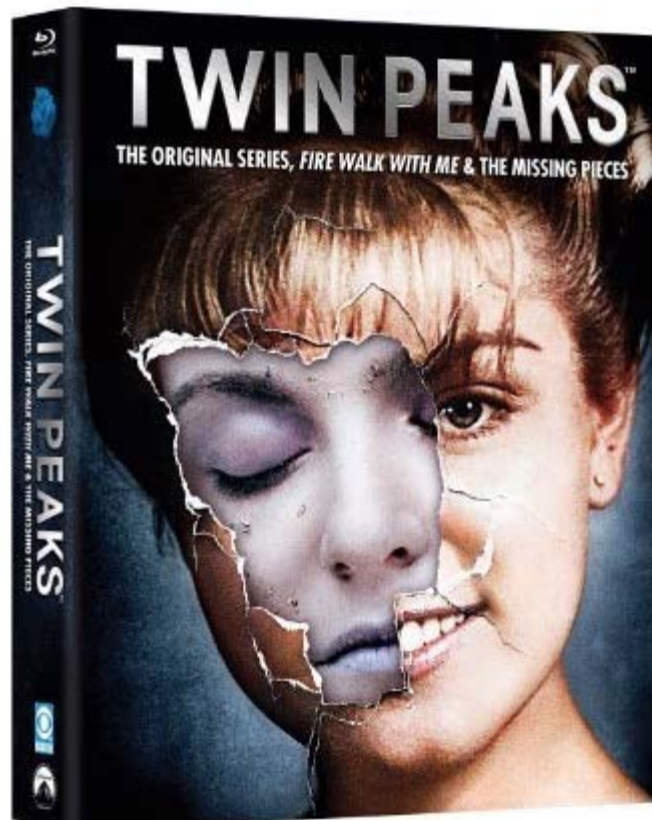
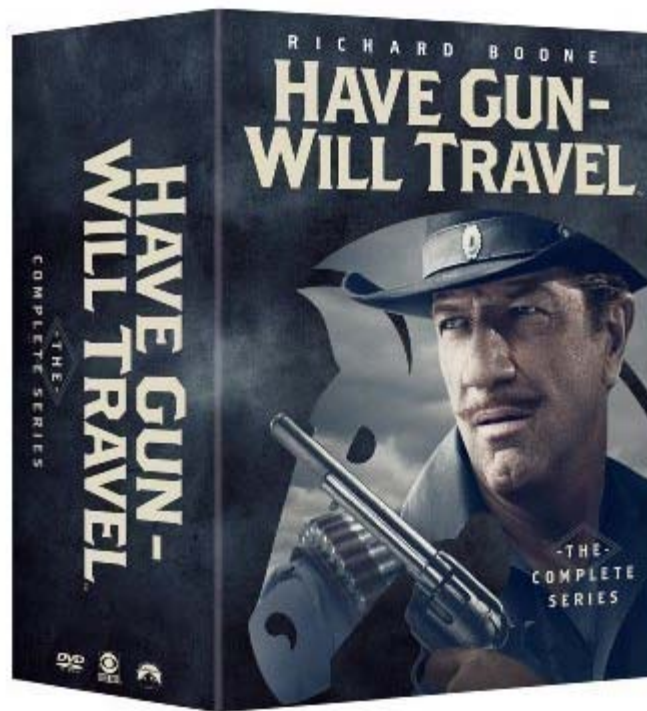
2016 WORLD SERIES COLLECTOR'S EDITION (\$79.97 BluRay; Shout! Factory)

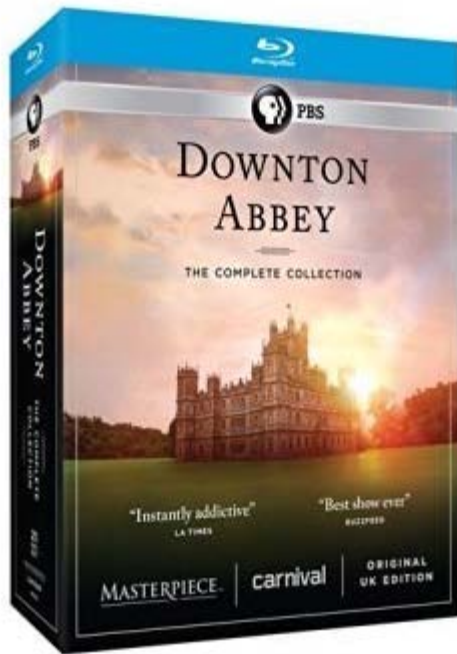
JASON BOURNE (\$34.99 BluRay; Universal)

The folks aren't that hard! They're all gonna love Meryl Streep in the period comedy *Florence Foster Jenkins*, which also stars Hugh Grant and is sure to be a player come Oscar time. It's about a wealthy woman who is foolishly indulged in her love of opera singing by a doting husband...until she insists on making her Carnegie Hall debut instead of just singing for friends. It's another case of Streep being far superior to the material. Similarly, Tom Hanks is strong as always in *Sully*, a movie about that pilot who safely landed a plane shortly after takeoff under remarkable pressure. You probably thought, how will they turn that into a movie? And really, they didn't, but here it is. Those who yearn for action might enjoy the semi-familiarity of *The Magnificent Seven*, a remake of a classic western (itself a remake of *Seven Samurai*), this one starring Denzel Washington and an all-star cast. (Or you could "accidentally" get them the original Hollywood version and everyone will be that much happier.) And of course anyone from Illinois will be ready to eat up the *2016 World Series Collection*. They waited more than 100 hundred years so I can't imagine anyone wanting the standard set of highlights — buy the deluxe set with every single complete game in the instant fall classic. It truly was a great series so even non Cub-fans will enjoy it...a little. And you may think Matt Damon is for a younger generation. But your parents and grandparents have been reading about the exploits of the forgetful assassin Jason Bourne for nearly 40 years now. The latest film in the series — *Jason Bourne* — is serviceable and Damon's got that old Hollywood glamour so it'll do.









FREAKS AND GEEKS THE COMPLETE SERIES (\$119 BluRay; Shout! Factory)

NAKED CITY THE COMPLETE SERIES (\$179.99 DVD; Image Entertainment)

KEY AND PEELE THE COMPLETE SERIES (\$40.26 DVD; Paramount)

LOOKING THE COMPLETE SERIES AND MOVIE FINALE (\$39.16 BluRay; HBO)

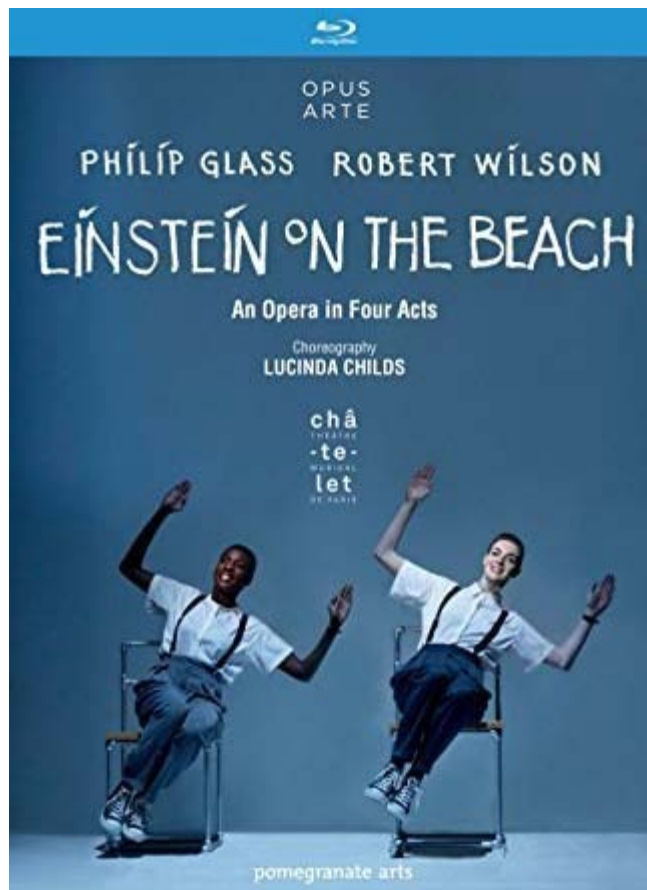
HAVE GUN WILL TRAVEL THE COMPLETE SERIES (\$84.98 DVD; CBS Home Video/Paramount)

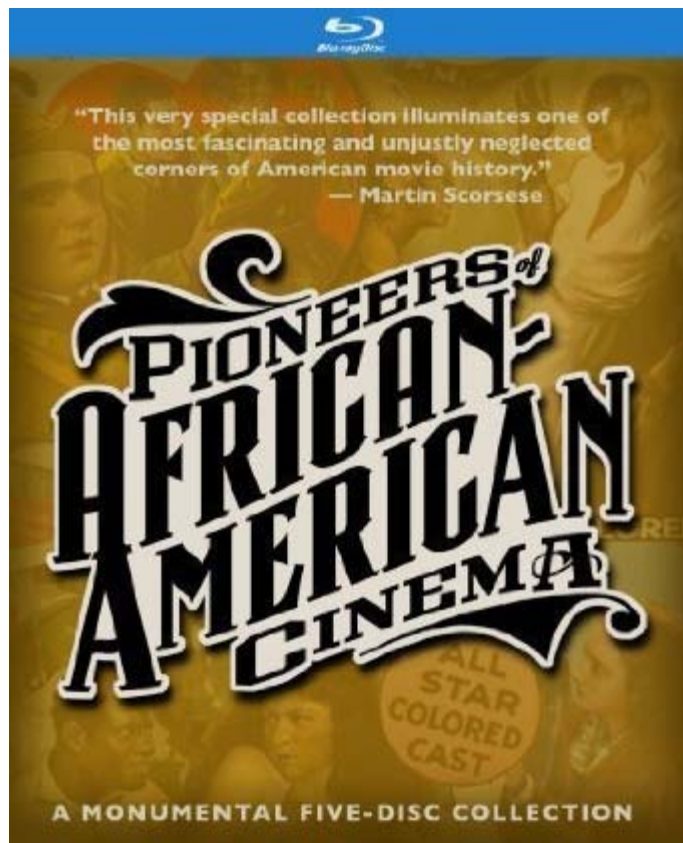
TWIN PEAKS COMPLETE SERIES, FIRE WALK WITH ME AND MISSING PIECES (\$72.99 BluRay; Paramount)

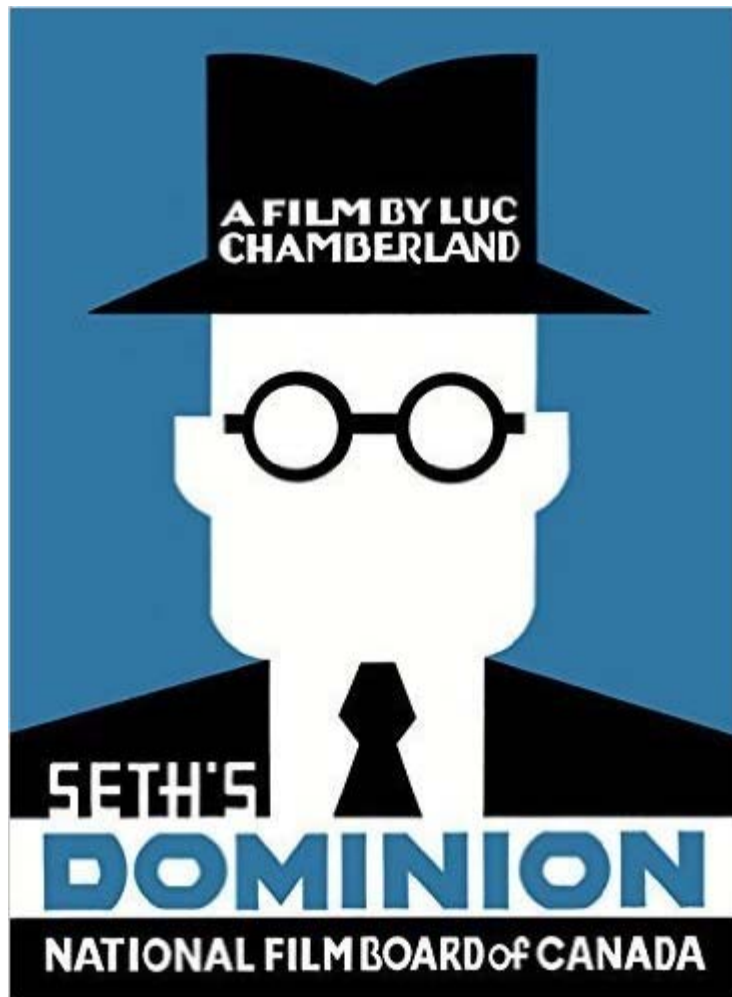
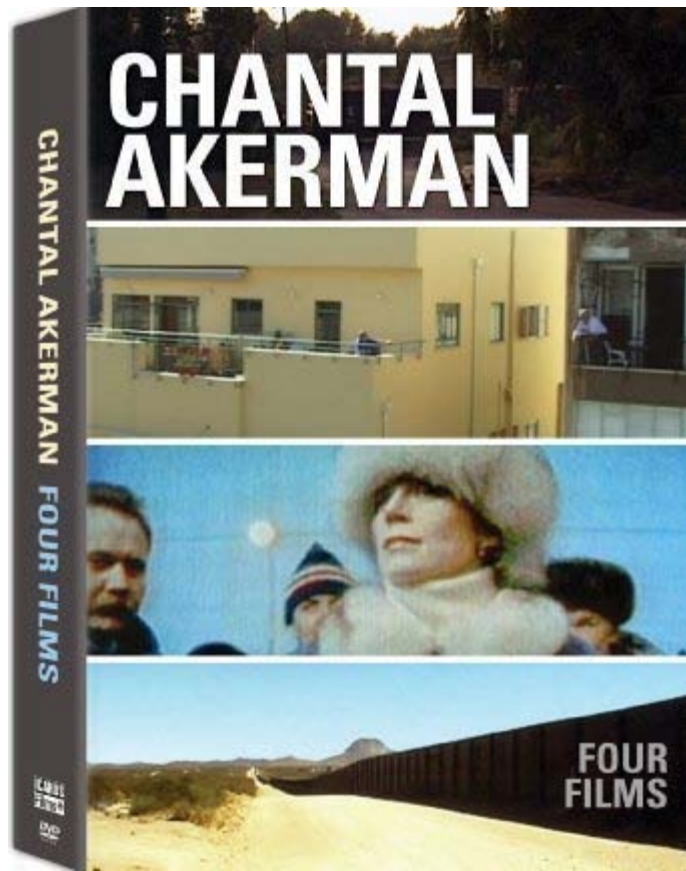
DOWNTON ABBEY THE COMPLETE COLLECTION (\$149.99 BluRay; PBS)

Now we're getting serious. Complete boxed sets of TV shows are a statement of love from a serious fan, a collectible they can display, a chance to watch a show from start to finish without worrying about your internet connection and they always make a great gift. Less often, it's a chance to see a show you've never seen before. (It's pretty rare people buy an entire series unless they're already a fan.) But *Freaks And Geeks* is an exception and great to get fans or someone who has never seen it. Easily one of the best shows of all time, it's hugely appealing to a wide audience (you can watch it with your mom!) and very repeatable. And now it's on BluRay and looks better than ever. *Naked City* is an old school anthology crime show, bursting with movie and TV stars on the rise, just like *Law & Order* is on the resume of every New York actor working today. It's tougher than tough and the template for many shows that followed. *Key And Peele* — a bargain of a collection that contains the entire run of the show that did NOT end too soon. Nope, it went out on top and that's a rare

and beautiful thing. Sure you'll have your favorites but the overall quality of the sketches impresses when you see it all at once. Now here comes *Looking*, a show that people didn't quite know what to do with when it was airing. Quiet (like *Rectify*), it stars Jonathan Groff and is notably uninterested in betraying its characters and the world they lived in. *Looking* just went about its business. Now that it has ended its run with a movie finale, you can watch the entire series at its own gentle pace and appreciate what they did rather than worrying about what they didn't do or might have done or should have done. Its stock is going to rise and rise in years to come. Binge watch, but don't rush — savor. *Have Gun Will Travel* is another series that benefits from being seen all at once. It's a long ago Western but it deserves a higher profile and this boxed set is just the way to earn it. You know they're doing a new season of *Twin Peaks*, I'm sure. Like *Gilmore Girls*, this will probably be a mixed blessing but have something for fans to cherish. Even better, it's an excuse to dive back into the wackiness that was the original series, the spin-off prequel movie and the copious extras collected in one boxed set. Even the credits will blow your mind — they're so leisurely you feel like you've entered a time warp even before the episode starts. Finally, your family and friends addicted to all things British have watched *The Crown*...twice. And they didn't even think it was that good! So give in and get them the complete *Downton Abbey*. Yes, PBS seems to be doing marathons of the series every other weekend. But with the entire series collected in one compact set, they can indulge whenever they want AND you have every right to change the channel or drag them out of the TV room the next time a marathon begins and they threaten not to let go of the remote for the next 72 hours.







EINSTEIN ON THE BEACH (\$39.99 BluRay; Opus Arte/Naxos)

THE MAGIC BOX: THE FILMS OF SHIRLEY CLARKE 1929-1987 (\$99.95 BluRay; Milestone)

PIONEERS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN CINEMA (\$99.95 BluRay; Kino Lorber)

CHANTAL ACKERMAN: FOUR FILMS (\$49.98 DVD; Icarus Films)

SETH'S DOMINION (\$29.95 DVD/Hardcover; Drawn & Quarterly)

Any opera or classical music fans in your life? They will go crazy for *Einstein On The Beach*, which is finally (!) available for viewing in the home. A landmark of opera, music and art, *Einstein On The Beach* is an incomparable work and here you're seeing a faithful, imaginative record of a performance during its most recent revival. This isn't a film reimagining of the work — it's more like an exceptionally good example of one of those Live At The Met broadcasts or the PBS shows of a particular theatrical piece. They do use editing and close-ups to provide intimate moments you'd never experience during an actual performance. But mostly they stay out of the way. The picture and sound quality is excellent and the packaging is gorgeous. And to Linda and Jesse — two friends I've seen the show with or listened endlessly to the albums with, wondering what it would be like to actually see the show — my answer is "Absolutely not." I'm keeping it. I won't even lend it.

The Magic Box is truly a monumental labor of love, the fourth and final volume in Milestone's project to present the full, dizzying career of director Shirley Clarke in all its glory. This final set is the most sprawling and provocative of all, running the gamut from experimental shorts to home movies dating from when Clarke was just ten. The major works include the Oscar winning documentary *Robert Frost: A Lover's Quarrel With The World* and *In Paris Parks*, among others. The folks at Milestone aver — now with the ample proof of their four Clarke collections — that if Clarke were a man her career would already have placed her in the pantheon, rather than practically disappearing from view. No more.

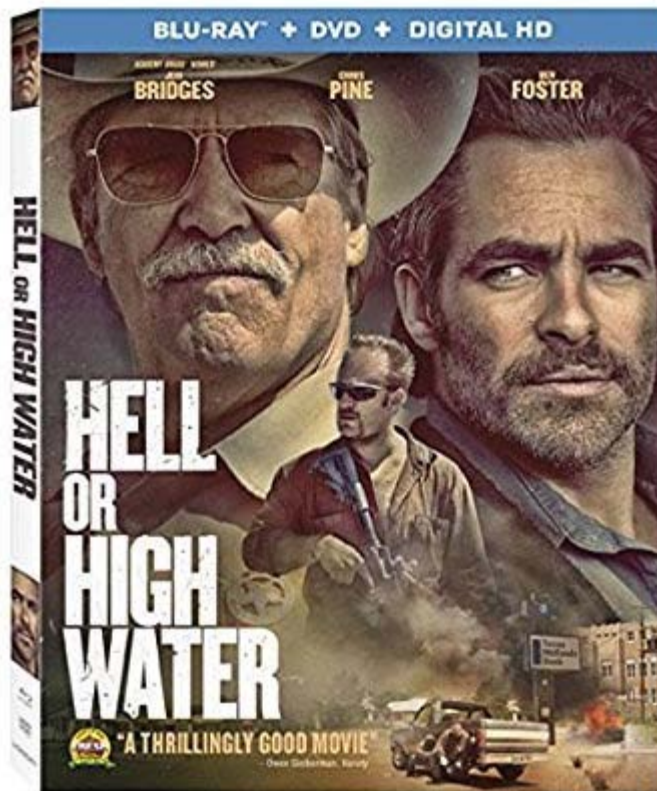
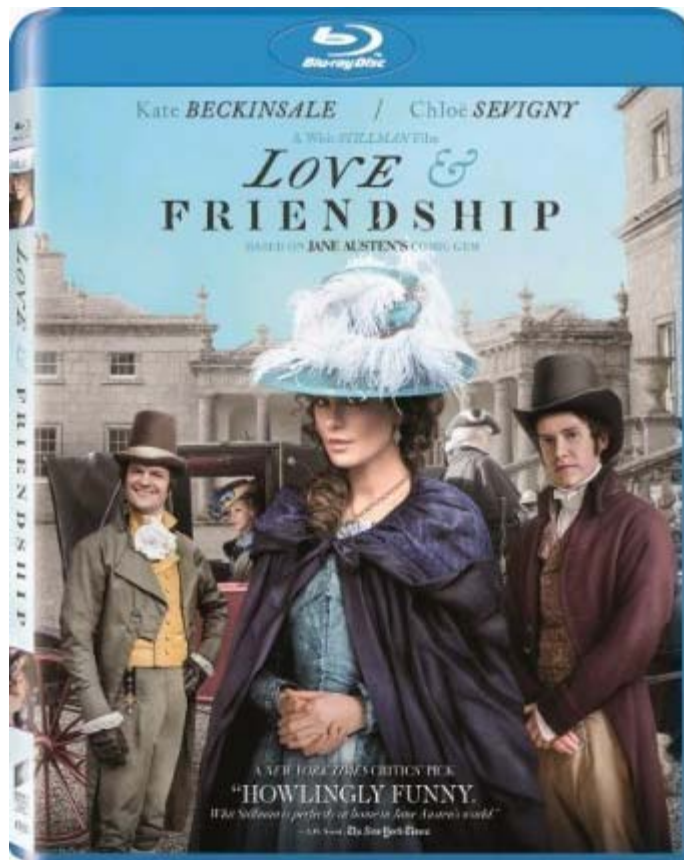
Pioneers Of African-American Cinema is also hugely impressive. No wonder Martin Scorsese is proudly touting this set with a quote on the front of it: this is an historic release. Yes, it's important and scholarly and worthy of praise. But with a dozen feature length films and more than 20 shorts and fragments, just a small sampling makes clear that it's damn entertaining. Paul Robeson is just one of the many notable names appearing in or contributing to the wide range of movies, including melodramas, westerns, comedies, musicals and more.

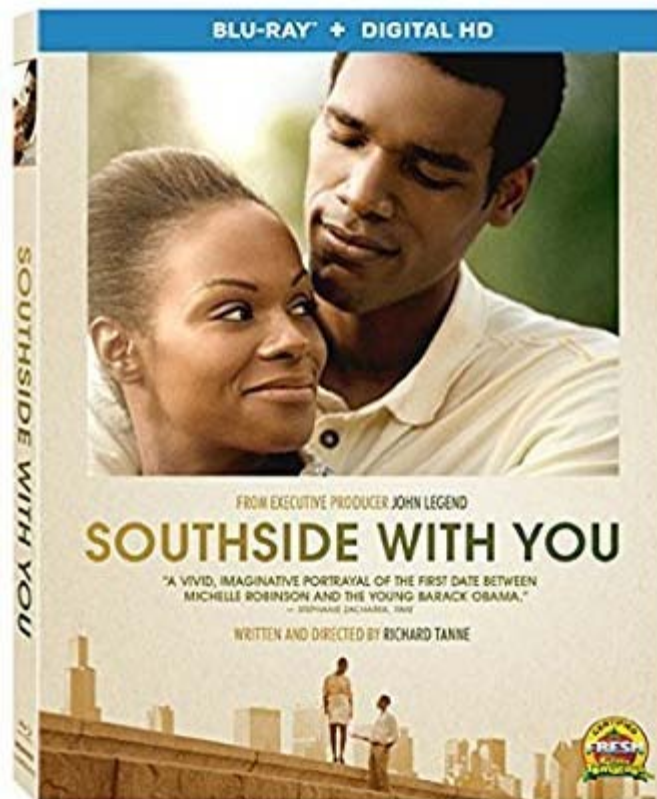
The death of artist Chantal Akerman at 65 (due to depression leading to suicide) is a terrible blow to cinema. Her masterpiece *Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* is simply one of the greatest films of all time. Calling it a great "feminist film" is an insult to a work so important and influential, just as Akerman herself rejected labels and refused to have any of her movies shown at gay film festivals. You simply must start with *Jeanne Dielman*. But she has much more to her credit, including a string of provocative

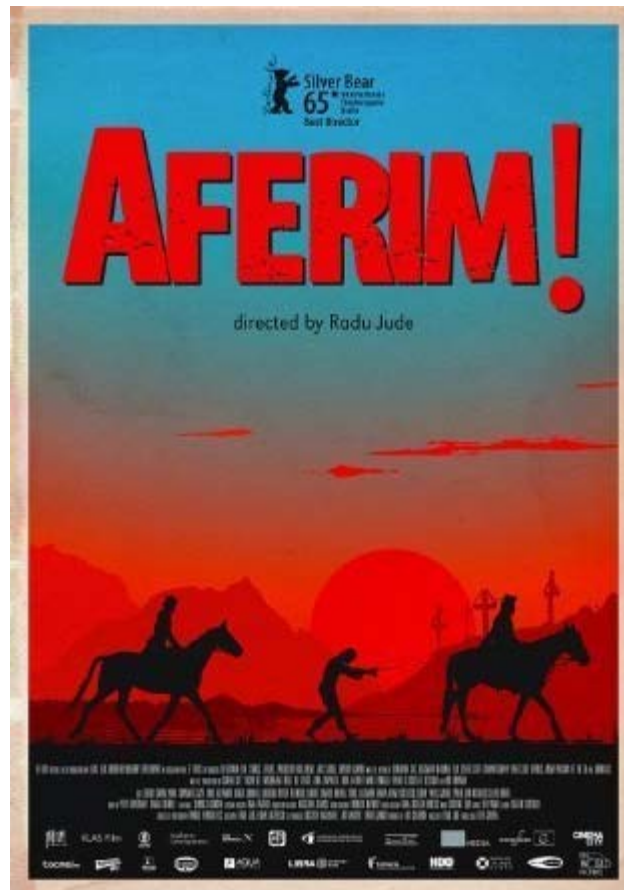
documentaries. In the four films included in *Chantal Ackerman: Four Films*, Akerman compellingly examines Eastern Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the brutal murder of James Byrd Jr. in Texas, illegal immigration and — most satisfyingly — herself, by making a film from the perspective of her apartment in Tel Aviv while she muses on this and that. A bonus disc features an hour long interview with Akerman about her body of work.

Finally, for fans of comic books, *Seth's Dominion* is a very fun tribute/documentary to Seth, the artist who has probably designed the art adorning some of your favorite movies and books as well as his acclaimed solo works. This hardcover book is a lovingly curated collection of his distinctive artwork and career and it contains a documentary film about Seth that is just about 45 minutes long and sort of like Crumb if Crumb's family weren't so batshit crazy. You get a real sense of Seth's life and philosophy of work, along with fascinating glimpses of the many projects he keeps going (like an ever-growing model small town with each building crafted by Seth himself). You also get a live talk and some shorts animated works of Seth. It probably isn't the best place for newcomers unless they're predisposed to such stuff. (Try his classic work *It's A Good Life, If You Don't Weaken.*) But it's catnip for fans.











EVERYBODY WANTS SOME!! (\$39.99 BluRay; Paramount)

LOVE & FRIENDSHIP (\$30.99 BluRay; Sony Pictures Entertainment)

HELL OR HIGH WATER (\$19.96 BluRay; Lionsgate)

ZOOTOPIA (\$39.99 BluRay; Disney)

THE LOBSTER (\$24.99 BluRay; Lionsgate)

SING STREET (\$34.99 BluRay; Anchor Bay)

SOUTHSIDE WITH YOU (\$24.99 BluRay; Lionsgate)

GREEN ROOM (\$24.99 BluRay; Lionsgate)

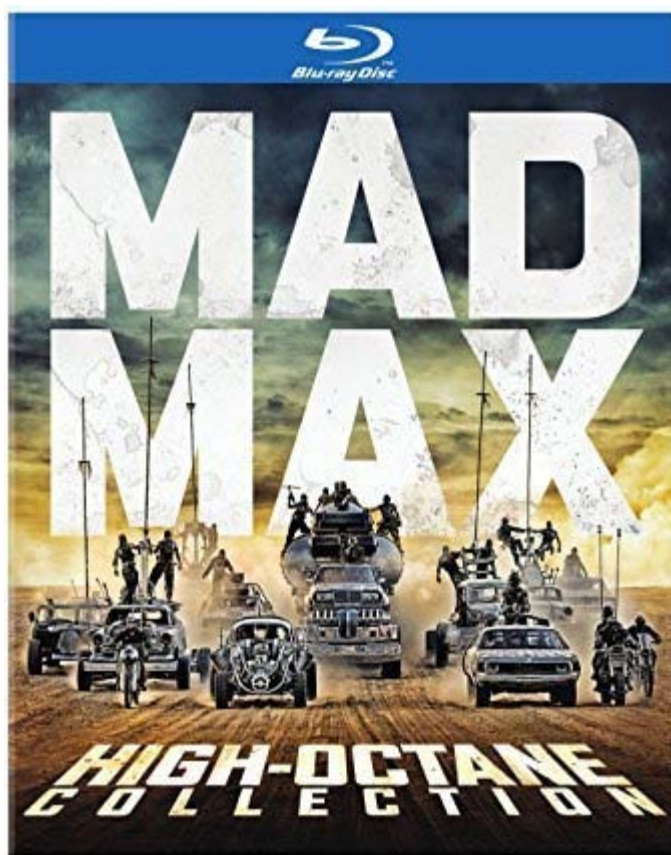
AFERIM! (\$34.95 BluRay; Big World Pictures)

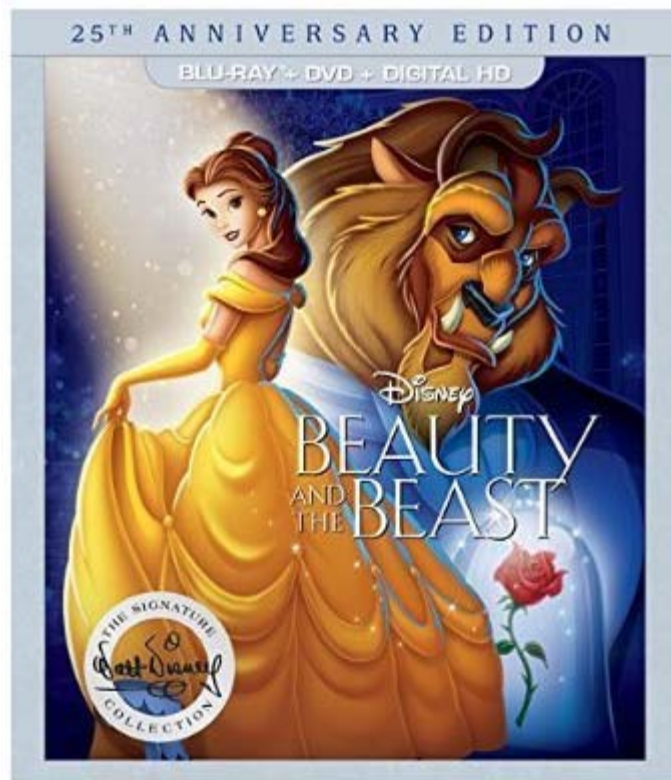
LITTLE MEN (\$26.97 DVD; Magnolia Home Entertainment)

You'll find all these movies on all sorts of best of the year lists. What more do you need to know? Match up

the film with the tastes of someone you need a gift for and you've got one less present to shop for. And if you haven't seen these movies popping up on best of the year lists, you're reading the wrong best of the year lists.







THE MARX BROTHERS SILVER SCREEN COLLECTION (\$59.98 BluRay; Universal Studios Home Entertainment)

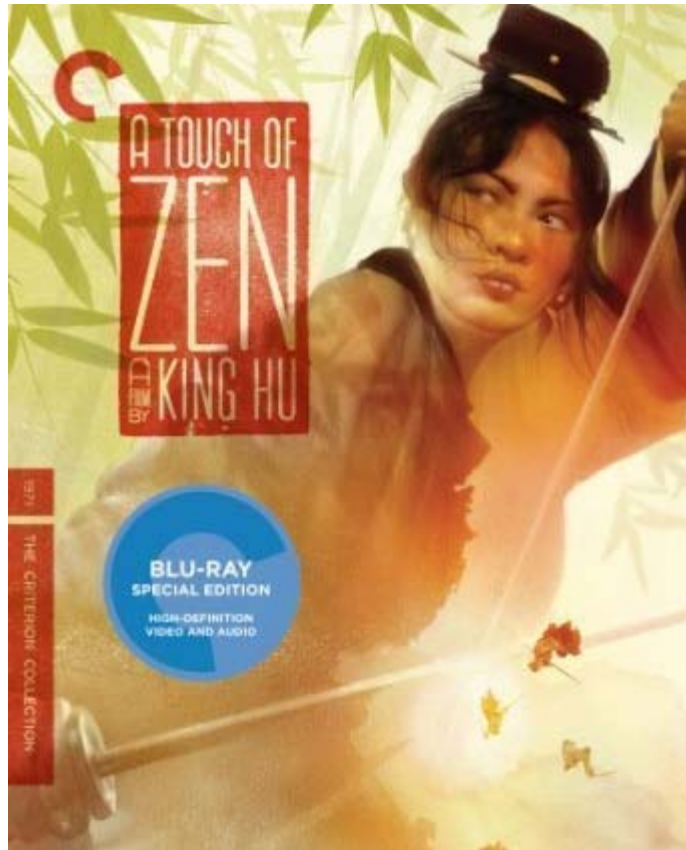
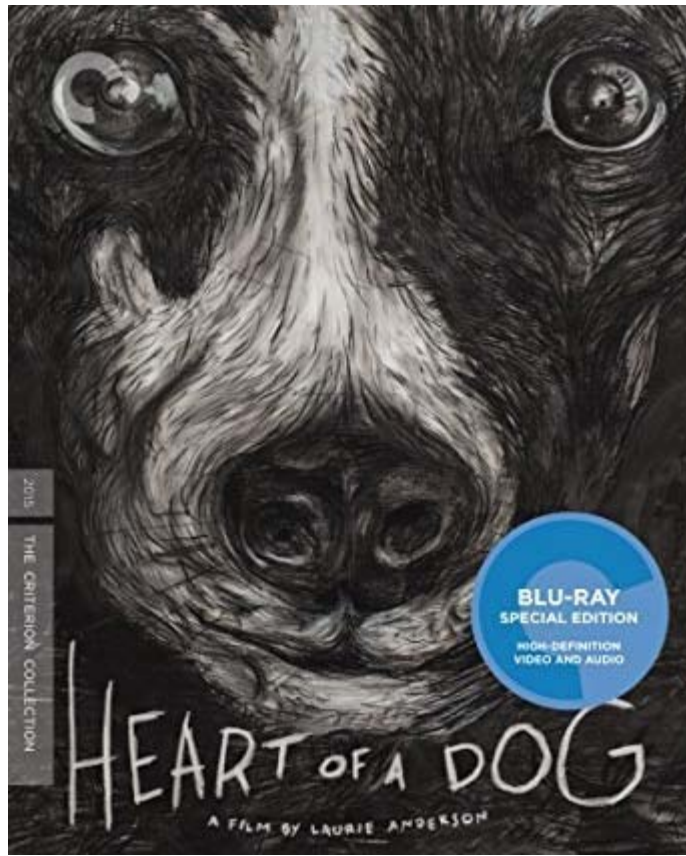
HOWARD'S END (\$34.99 BluRay; Cohen Film Collection on Sony Pictures Home Entertainment)

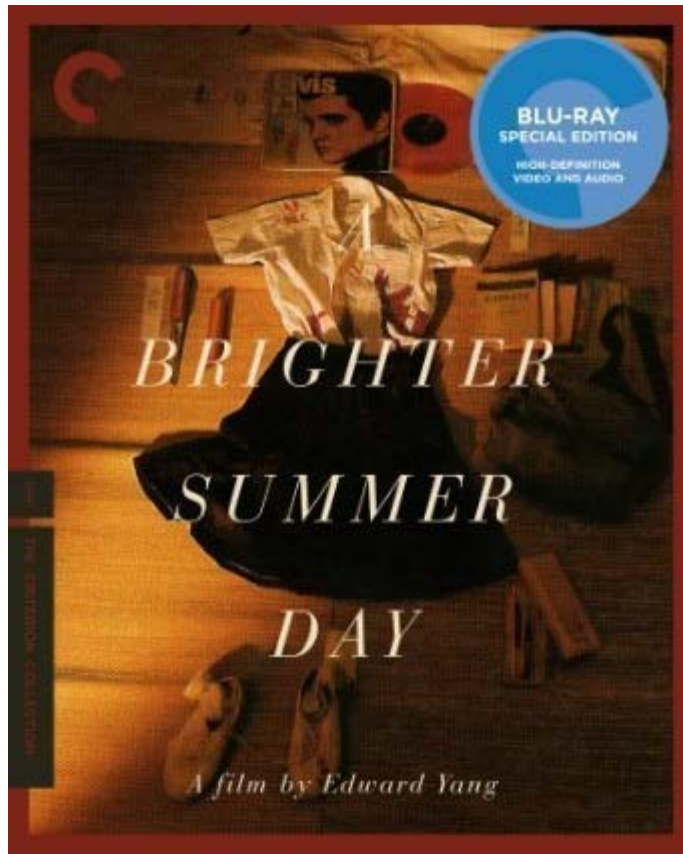
MAD MAX HIGH OCTANE COLLECTION (\$79.99 BluRay; Warner Bros.)

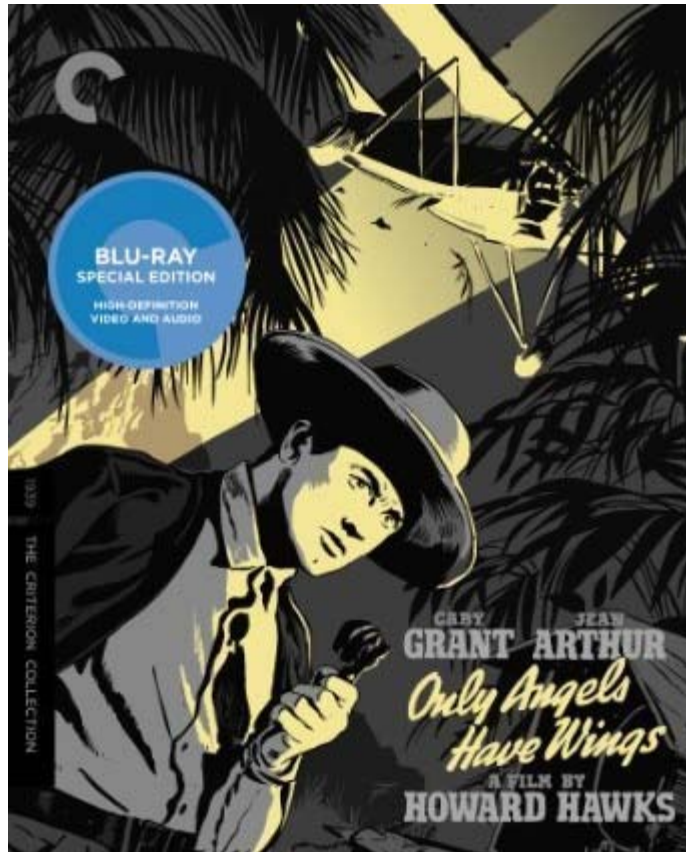
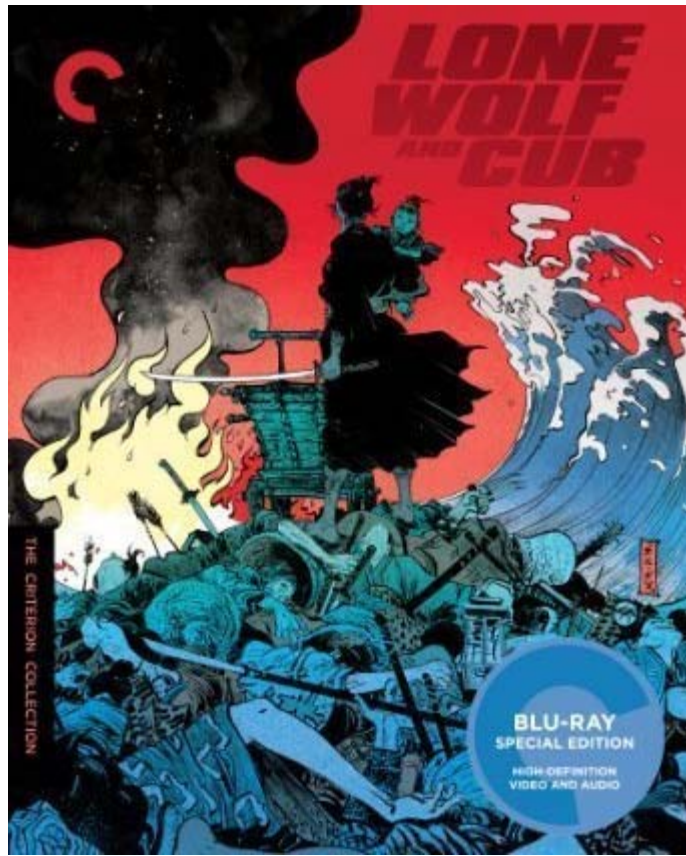
BEAUTY AND THE BEAST 25TH ANNIVERSARY COLLECTION (\$39.99 BluRay; Walt Disney Studios)

DEAD RINGERS (\$34.99 BluRay; Shout! Factory)

Some more great boxed sets and reissues of classic films. The Marx Brothers remain an anarchic landmark and this new reissue of their best films (the “animal” series including *Duck Soup*) includes some long-lost snippets. The filmmaking duo of Ismail Merchant and James Ivory had a long and distinguished career. But two films loom ever larger as their claim to fame: the delightful *A Room With A View* and the sober, quieter masterpiece *Howard's End*. Director George Miller is never quiet and he's blazing a career that is wildly, even willfully eccentric. But cutting through it all are the four *Mad Max* films, all presented here in superior prints. Typically, he includes a black and white version of his new romp *Mad Max: Fury Road*, which is just plain nutty but that's Miller for you. The live action *Beauty And The Beast* is coming and you know you'll see it. (Even if they seem a little ashamed of the fact it's a musical.) Remind yourself of what a brilliant bit of compact filmmaking the Disney classic was — no wonder it was the first animated movie nominated for Best Picture. Finally, director David Cronenberg is a master of unease and that was never better demonstrated than in *Dead Ringers*. It's a uniquely creepy tale of identical twins who share expertise as doctors, women...and some very unnerving instruments. Yes, Jeremy Irons pulls off a technical marvel playing both twins but they're also two remarkably nuanced and complete performances.







HEART OF A DOG (\$39.95 BluRay; Criterion)

A TOUCH OF ZEN (\$39.95 BluRay; Criterion)

A BRIGHTER SUMMER DAY (\$39.95 BluRay; Criterion)

HERE COMES MR. JORDAN (\$39.95 BluRay; Criterion)

LONE WOLF AND CUB (\$99.95 BluRay; Criterion)

ONLY ANGELS HAVE WINGS (\$39.95 BluRay; Criterion)

I'm a bit of a broken record when it comes to Criterion. What can I say? They set the standard for movies on DVD and BluRay (and before that laser disc and CD-ROM.) They set the standard for excellent prints. They set the standard for terrific extras, from commentary tracks to finding really illuminating and penetrating shorts to include, be they interviews of making-ofs or whatever. They never pad their releases with "stuff." That's what other people do when they want you to think you're getting great extras, just like Criterion puts out. Here are six releases from 2016 by Criterion but I could just as easily showcase another six or another 20. If it says Criterion, it's a safe bet to be a superior work of art presented with care and affection. Laurie Anderson's documentary *Heart Of A Dog* is a meditation on grief and proves she can do just about anything. *A Touch Of Zen* and the marvelous *Lone Wolf And Cub* boxed set of six movies are glorious works of samurai action and fantasy. *A Brighter Summer Day* is a towering masterpiece no film buff can afford to miss. And Criterion continues to put out classic Hollywood movies and remind you how good studios once were, including charmers like *Here Comes Mr. Jordan* and the full-bodied entertainments like *Only Angels Have Wings*. You simply can't go wrong buying a gift for a movie buff if it says Criterion and it always feels like Christmas whenever one of their titles is delivered to my door. Make the cineaste in your life feel the same way.

REGISTER TO VOTE!!

It's easy, it's fun, it's empowering.

Here's a nonpartisan site that will allow you to easily access your state's voter registration site.

Are you in New York? You can register online right here.

If you don't register and vote, you don't get to complain.

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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; the exception are elaborate boxed sets, which are usually sent with the understanding that they will be reviewed. All titles are available in various formats at varied price points. Typically, the price listed is merely the suggested retail price and you'll find it discounted, not to mention available on demand, via streaming, physical rentals and more.