

September 1, 2012

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## DVDs: Is "Jaws" The Most Influential Film of All Time?

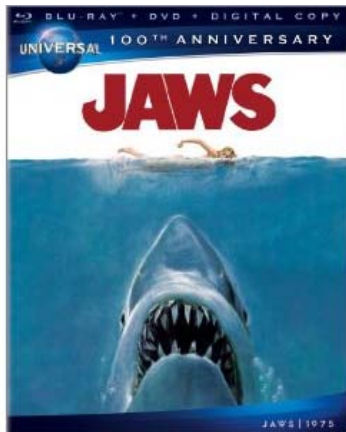
Posted: 08/17/2012 3:58 am

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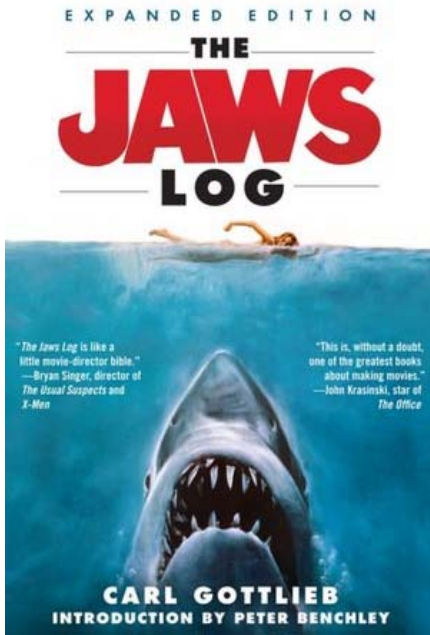


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**JAWS UNIVERSAL 100TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION** (\$29.98 BluRay combo; Universal)  
**THE JAWS LOG** (\$16.99; Newmarket Press) -- Few films if any have proven so influential in so many areas of the movie industry as *Jaws*. It established Steven Spielberg as the wunderkind filmmaker; he would go on to become the most well-known and popular filmmaker since Alfred Hitchcock. *Jaws* pioneered the wide release approach to distribution which -- combined with TV ads, another major innovation, given their frequency and effectiveness -- is the template for most studio films today.

It turned summer into the prime time for major movies, which seems obvious now (kids are out of school! people want to avoid the heat!) but back then summer was for dumping schlock. It shot on location on the water, something that studios avoided like the plague for 70 years until Spielberg came along and decided that was the only way to make it right. *Jaws* pushed the boundaries on technology and far more importantly demonstrated how creativity and cleverness were far more important than special effects.

It turned composer John Williams into a pop star, the most recognizable composer of his era and probably in history, just as Spielberg is the most famous filmmaker of our times. The music entered pop culture forever.

The making-of book by Carl Gottlieb which was tossed off almost as an afterthought, is a model of its kind. *The Jaws Log* -- which I read for the first time this month -- must have been revelatory in the 1970s for its peek behind the scenes. Audiences today are much savvier and I do wish more time were spent on creative decisions. But as a record of how movies are made and life on the set, it is great fun and as accurate today as it was then. (Just add some zeros to the various costs involved.)

*Jaws* was the first film released on laserdisc in North America. The making-of documentary by Laurent Bouzereau in a later laser disc edition also set a high standard. The film has been celebrated and discussed online by fervent fans since the internet began and in fact a new documentary called *The Shark Is Still Working* is a crowd-sourced labor of love kickstarted by that online community and in the works for seven years. Testimonials from numerous younger filmmakers prove what a seismic effect it had on Hollywood's future generations. Both documentaries are available on this new BluRay edition.

In short, *jaws* changed the way movies are made, when they're released, how they're released, how they are marketed and sold, how they're packaged for home entertainment and how they're remembered online. As a bonus, it's also a great film -- adult, smart, terrifically fun and filled with marvelous performances from Richard Dreyfuss and Roy Scheider on down.

None of this would matter half as much to most people if the movie itself weren't indeed Hitchcockian in its innately cinematic approach to telling the primal story of a monster on the loose. Other films will always rank higher on the list of all-time best films. (Heck, it's not even my favorite Spielberg movie.) But *Jaws* in many ways can lay claim to the most influential movie in Hollywood's history.



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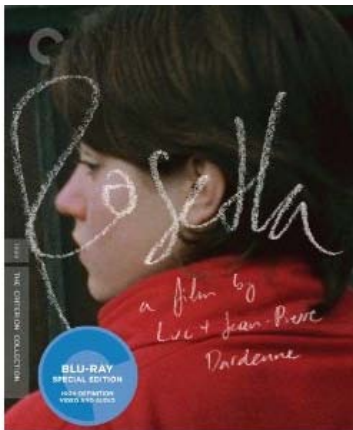
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**LA PROMESSE** (\$39.95 BluRay; Criterion)

**ROSETTA** (\$39.95 BluRay; Criterion) -- Since 1996, the Dardenne brothers have delivered six feature films. (Their careers began with documentaries in the 1970s and they've made one or two in that time as well, not to mention a short or two.) I suppose different critics would debate which of those films is the best. I, for one, think *Lorna's Silence* is the weak link. The other five all made my list of the best films of the year when they were released. As a body of work, those six films are simply astonishing. It's clear the Dardenne brothers are easily among the most talented filmmakers in the world working in the last decade and a half.

Their debut feature *La Promesse* is an excellent starting point. Like all their films, it focuses on people in the margins, in this case a teenage boy who slowly comes to realize his father isn't merely partnering with undocumented workers but taking horrible advantage of them. It's a moral awakening with the force of Huck Finn's in Mark Twain's classic and painful and wonderful to watch.

Moving on with *Rosetta*, again and again the Dardennes use handheld cameras to stay right on top of their characters, inexorably drawing us down into their world like a whirlpool of emotion. We meet Rosetta as she desperately strives to support herself and her drunken mother. We see each painful decision leading to the next and the next. How easily the poor and vulnerable can slide into despair.

The movies are gripping and rich, from *La Promesse* to their current marvel *The Kid With A Bike*. You owe it to yourself to see their films and Criterion's editions, presented with care and thoughtful extras like interviews with the filmmakers and actors, are the ideal place to begin.



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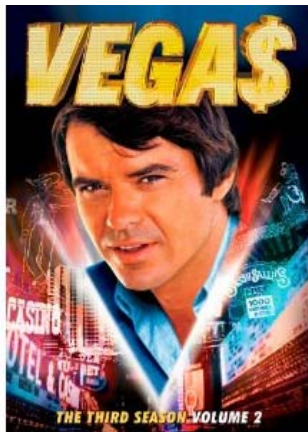
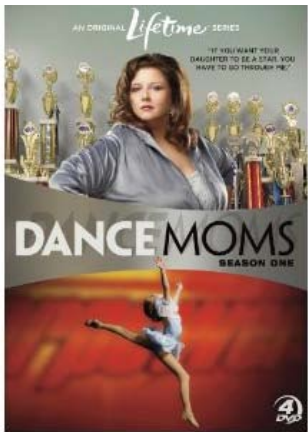
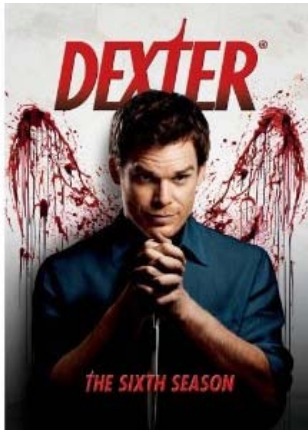
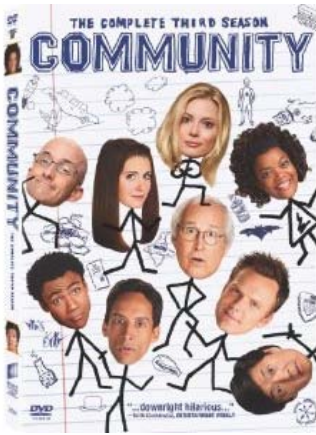


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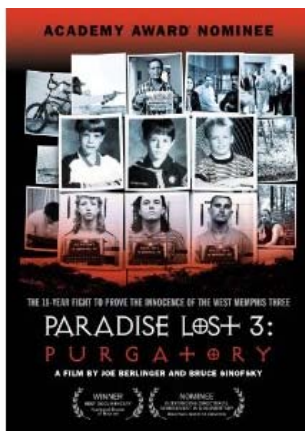
**COMMUNITY THE COMPLETE THIRD SEASON** (\$45.99 DVD; Sony)

**DEXTER THE SIXTH SEASON** (\$54.99 DVD; Showtime/CBS)

**DANCE MOMS SEASON ONE** (\$ DVD; Lifetime)

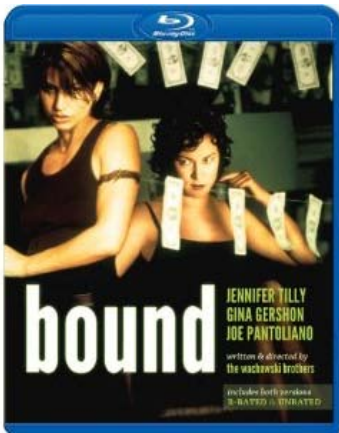
**VEGAS THE THIRD SEASON VOLUME TWO** (\$ DVD; CBS/Paramount) -- The third season will always be the "final" season for many fans of *Community*, now that NBC has dumped the show's creator

Dan Harmon. At least he went out with its nutty, self-referential, TV-spoofing flag waving high. *Dexter* is still going though it should have called it a day a season ago, when Dexter had seemingly found the perfect damaged girlfriend. I couldn't bear to watch this season yet when the series that had pushed its premise far beyond what I imagined had clearly found the ideal ending. But it's very very hard to walk away from a hit and they're going to keep on going and I'll eventually give in and see how they've handled the pressure. Yet another terrific season-defining poster image, by the way. The women involved in *Dance Moms* really should take a look in the mirror -- when you're more hateful than a serial killer (albeit a lovable serial killer played by Michael C. Hall), something is dreadfully wrong with how you behave yourself on camera. A guilty pleasure for some, but just tiresome and annoying to me. *Vegas* was a modest hit series back in the day and like most shows of its ilk from the late 1970s/early 1980s, it has not aged well. But Robert Ulrich leaves no doubt as to why he has been a major TV star for so long: the camera simply likes some people more than others and he is one of them.



**PARADISE LOST 3: PURGATORY** (\$29.95 DVD; Docurama) -- This series is messy and long and frustrating and absorbing and angry and triumphant. It has taken up almost 20 years of the filmmakers' time to find justice for the West Memphis Three and the simple fact that you might know the name "the West Memphis Three" is a testament to their work. And it actually changed lives. What more powerful words could a documentary filmmaker hope for? Any caveats about structure and the rambling nature of some episodes pale beside that fact. And overall, the films are a hypnotic look at the criminal justice system and the fact that no laws or good intentions can keep a community from looking the other way or demanding blind justice because a terrible crime has been committed. Ultimately, only vigilance can ensure justice is done. And that's exactly what these films have provided.

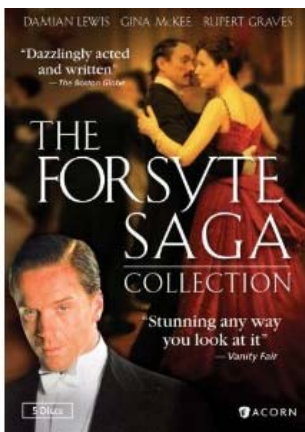


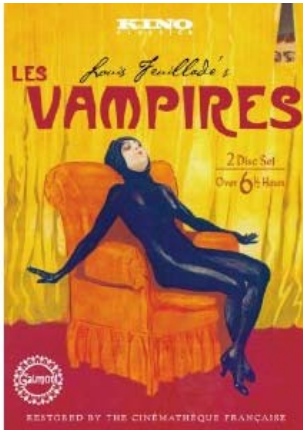
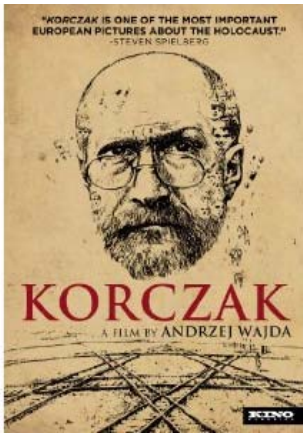


**GROSSE POINTE BLANK** (\$20 BluRay; Hollywood/Disney)

**BOUND** (\$29.95 BluRay; Olive/Paramount)

**ADVENTURES IN BABYSITTING** (\$20 BluRay; Touchstone/Disney) -- A deliciously offbeat crowd-pleaser from John Cusack. *Grosse Pointe Blank* is the nutty story of an assassin who ends up attending his high school reunion while on the job and falling in love all over again with the one that got away, Minnie Driver. Here's hoping the seven or so films he's completed or working on or about to work on will pull Cusack out of his rut and back on top as one of the most interesting and smart actors of his generation. *Bound* is a nifty B movie caper with sapphic overtones. It's tremendous fun and gave Jennifer Tilly one of her best showcases ever. You knew the Wachowskis were ones to watch but it took Joel Silver to say, Hey, here's a ton of money. Go make a sci-fi spectacle. Finally, I probably overpraised *Adventures in Babysitting* a tad when it came out and I'm almost afraid to rewatch this trifle and see how it's dated. But boy Elizabeth Shue was adorable in it. I was certainly right about her.





**THE FORSYTE SAGA COLLECTION** (\$79.99 DVD; Acorn)

**KORCZAK** (\$29.95 DVD; Kino)

**LES VAMPIRES** (\$34.95 DVD; Kino) -- Anyone who has become enamored of Damian Lewis because of Showtime's acclaimed *Homeland* should of course check out *Band Of Brothers* and this high-toned soap opera. The original *Forstye Saga* was a groundbreaker, albeit a creaky one by today's standards. This remake is essentially unnecessary but polished fun, with a top notch cast including Lewis and the always indispensable Rupert Graves. I'm just catching up with the great director Andrzej Wajda and his extraordinary body of work. Here's another gem -- *Korczak*, from 1990 when it shouldn't have missed my attention. It's the true story of a man who ran an orphanage for Jewish orphans who stood by his children after the Nazis came. Sad and beautiful. Finally, for pure cinematic fun *Les Vampires* is one of the landmark serials that prove the format was not just for silly escapism but could in fact contain significant works of art. The battle-scarred landscape alone (courtesy of WW I) makes this a valuable work but the 10 part gangster tale will grip you all on its own.

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*Most titles listed here will be available in multiple formats and in multiple combinations, including DVD, Blu-ray, digital download, video on demand, streaming and the like. The format listed is the format provided for review, not all the formats available. It is often the most expensive version with the most extras. Do check individual titles for availability in all their various guises and price points.*

*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 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.

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**HUFFPOST SUPER USER**

**GaryNOVA**

*Fear My Micro-bio!!!!!!!*

**553 Fans**

10:14 PM on 08/21/2012

I love films that practically invent a brand new genre. Jaws is one of them. Alien

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**whatsthatssound**

*ferret in a beret*

**726 Fans**

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10:08 AM on 08/18/2012

Yep, you are right. Jaws is responsible for everything that came after it. It is pretty much of a B.C./A.D. marking point. And much of what came after it was horrible, while much of what came before it was great. So, Jaws, Steven, Mr. Williams, etc., not to mention author Mr. Benchley; you accomplished something absolutely amazing and you did it to the hilt. Now please go back and UNDO it.

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**HUFFPOST SUPER USER**

**SuzyScorp**

*If opportunity isn't knocking, build a door!*

**135 Fans**

10:02 AM on 08/17/2012

imho, Jaws set the bar for summer blockbusters. According to 1975 ticket sales, it was the highest grossing movie, during the summer, for a long time.. Hence, how summer blockbuster got it's title from... Jaws was also the first to film in the real ocean.. So many studios wanted to play it safe and use a large pool, but Steven Spielberg was adamant that they go in the salt water, to make it more authentic.. It was pretty much the introduction (at least for me, as I was only 11 back then) to Richard Dreyfuss, such a gifted actor, that would go on to make a couple dozen more movies! lol

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HUFFPOST BLOGGER

**Michael Giltz**

*freelance writer*

**127 Fans**

02:18 PM on 08/17/2012

I ran out of room but you're definitely right about the movie launching Dreyfuss into the stratosphere where he would remain for years, with Close Encounters of the Third Kind, The Goodbye Girl, Whose Life Is It Anyway, Down & Out In Beverly Hills, Tin Men and beyond.

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**simmersck**

**304 Fans**

04:54 AM on 08/17/2012

Maybe Lawrence of Arabia? It sure made me understand the cut throat, murdering, mentality of the middle east.

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HUFFPOST BLOGGER

**Michael Giltz**

*freelance writer*

**127 Fans**

02:15 PM on 08/17/2012

Thanks for commenting. Of course, please note that I am not discussing the most artistically satisfying movies of all time, but the most influential in terms of the movie business. Lawrence of Arabia is a great film but it's one in a long line of epics of that sort, though most not made with such artistry and success. I can't think of any particular impact of Lawrence beyond making a star forever of Peter O'Toole and being the latest success for David Lean. It wasn't an independent production, for example, nor did it mark an actor or director breaking away from a studio system or demanding a cut of the grosses, like Jimmy Stewart in his westerns. "Jaws" was so influential in so many areas ("Star Wars" came in its wake) that I'm hard-pressed to find its equal. But as a film, Lawrence of Arabia is indeed a masterpiece.

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**simmersck**

**304 Fans**

04:06 PM on 08/17/2012

Well said Michael!

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