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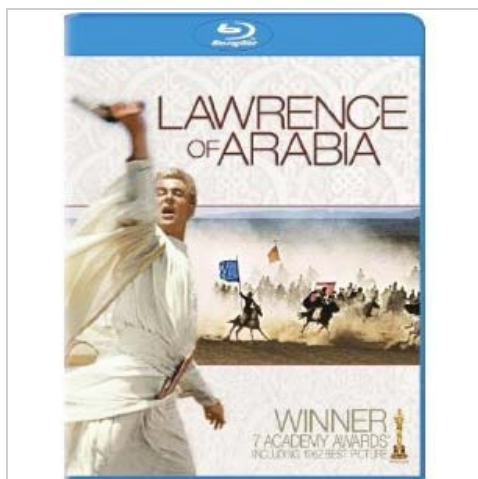
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ENTERTAINMENT

## DVDs: *Lawrence of Arabia* Still Dazzles With Intelligence

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**LAWRENCE OF ARABIA 50TH ANNIVERSARY COLLECTOR'S EDITION** (\$99.95 BluRay boxed set or \$26.99 BluRay; Sony) -- It was two in the morning and I just wanted to check out the picture and sound quality of this new restoration. Almost against my will, I was mesmerized once again by one of the most intelligent, complex and fascinating depictions of an historical figure on film. It helps when that historical figure is such a rich and contradictory fellow as Lawrence of Arabia and helps even more when he is captured in lightning flashes of wit and anger and equal parts of self-

delusion and self-awareness by Peter O'Toole in one of the great film debuts. The film itself remains one of the champs and this restoration is a stunner, an immediate addition to the short list of "demo" BluRays, those titles you pull out when you want to show off your system. The standard Bluray release has two discs while the deluxe set has even more extras and a soundtrack CD. It's the film itself that demands the most attention but the extras are strong. But this elaborate boxed set -- it's handsome and grand, of course, with a hardback book filled with striking photography and a "still" from the film as well as all four discs of content and score. But again I ask, does anyone who designs these things ever actually take them home? If the film *Lawrence of Arabia* is the center of your life, I guess you'll be happy to have a boxed set so bulky it won't fit onto most bookcases without jutting out. You might dominate a coffee table or build a new table specifically to show it off. Even taking the hardback book out doesn't help -- that, too, on its own sticks out over the lip of my rather deep library shelves. It's so big and heavy it's almost designed not to fit anywhere practical. What's the point? If you're like me, you'll take out the Bluray set, put it on your shelf and store the rest in a closet or basement with all the other ungainly boxes that studios think make a Bluray release special.

**BRAVE** (\$39.99 BluRay combo; Disney)  
**THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN**  
(\$40.99 BluRay combo; Sony)  
**SAVAGES** (\$34.98 Bluray combo;  
Universal) -- It's Pixar's fault. Only their



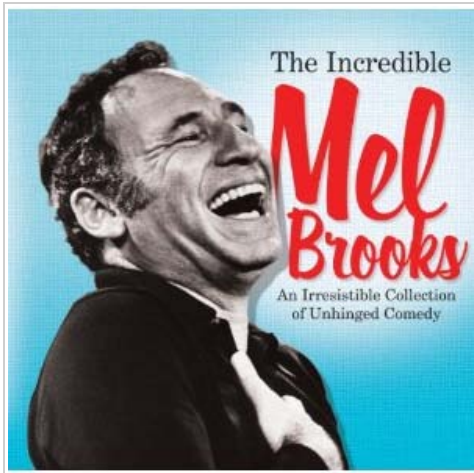
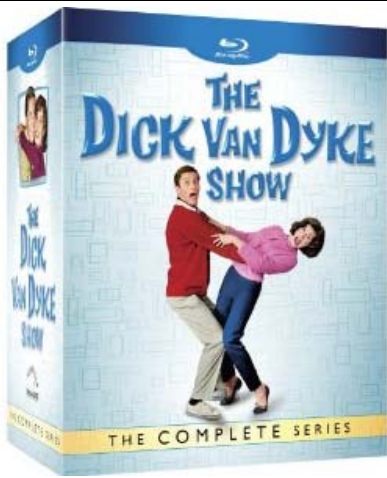
high standards could make anyone see *Brave* as a disappointment, even for a moment. In fact, it's a solid, entertaining feature with sharp animation and a distinctive heroine who, for a nice change, isn't pining for a guy or trying to win the love of her father but paired off with her mother for much of the action. It doesn't quite deepen on repeated viewings like the best Pixar films, but it does hold up. Andrew Garfield's stint as Spider-Man gives me the feeling you get when someone is repeating a joke you've heard. It might be a good joke, but you can't help holding up your hand and saying, "Wait, I know this one." Seriously, the Peter Parker origin story? We do not need to hear that retold every ten years. (Ditto Batman, folks!) I'm a big fan of Garfield and dig the movie's '70s vibe, but it's just too soon. They needed to either cast much younger and make Peter a truly believable teen as opposed to a movie teen or not redo the origin story or just, you know, wait a while and make us actually want to see Spidey again. He barely left. At least Oliver Stone is having fun, *Natural Born Killers*-type fun with his new movie *Savages*. That's been a while and Salma Hayek in particular is with him every step of the way.

**THE DICK VAN DYKE SHOW  
COMPLETE SERIES** (\$349.98 BluRay;  
Image)

**THE INCREDIBLE MEL BROOKS**  
(\$89.93 DVD; Shout)

**ENTOURAGE THE COMPLETE  
SERIES** (\$249.99 DVD; HBO)

**THE LIFE AND TIMES OF GRIZZLY  
ADAMS SEASON ONE** (\$29.93 DVD;  
Timeless)



### **SUPER BOWL COLLECTION 1-XLVI**

(\$249.95 DVD; Gaiam/NFL)

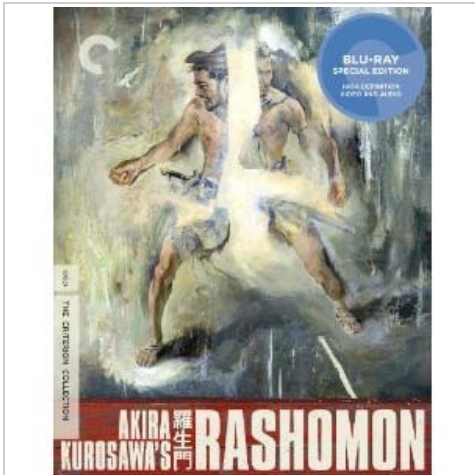
### **HOUSE THE COMPLETE SERIES**

(\$199.98 DVD; Universal) -- A number of actors have been on two hit shows, but few have been in two genuine classics. But that's what Mary Tyler Moore did with her own show in the 1970s and *The Dick Van Dyke Show* in the 1960s. It's a smart, funny, warm and above all intelligent sitcom that raised the bar for every show that followed. It "only" ran for five seasons, but that includes 158 episodes, so they quit just in time. This set looks great on BluRay and is jam-packed with extras. An ideal set of a landmark series. Even more astonishing is the Mel Brooks collection Shout pulled together. It's like a dream list of every odd and end in Mel's incredible career: TV spots, commercial, HBO specials, talk show appearances, songs, episodes of *Get Smart*, new original intros and documentaries about his film work, specials from the UK and elsewhere focusing on everything from his days on *Your Show Of Shows* to the birth of The 2000 Year Old Man routine. If there's anything they missed in this scrapbook of hilarity, I can't think of it. *Entourage* was never quite an HBO signature series (it's a little second tier behind *Sex and the City* and *The Sopranos*) -- but it's the sort that keeps that channel humming: the people who like this series love it and there's nothing else quite like it on TV. The gang gets a very classy boxed set indeed with all eight seasons intact. *The Life and Times of Grizzly Adams*, on the other hand, is a minor 1970s series in the *Little House/Waltons* vein that had a rather checkered history. It gets a very rote release on DVD with untouched visuals, a very muddy soundtrack making it hard to hear dialogue at times and discs that don't even bother to number



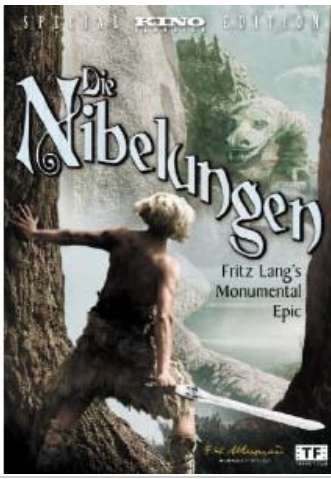
themselves so you have to guess which ones come first. Strictly for hardcore fans who wore out their VHS tapes; no one new will get caught up in the show under these minimal conditions of presentation. The Super Bowl boxed set looks impressive and is at least relatively compact, so it can fit on a book or DVD case longways. But it duplicates the content of earlier Super Bowl collections without including most of the bonus material. Normally, fans who collect individual sets and then see a boxed set fear they may have to buy it all over again to catch some new bonus feature. Here the reverse is true: fans who waited for this megaset will look longingly at the earlier releases. *House* is in the record

books and while the doctor here would have advised fewer seasons and a strong arc for *House* throughout, the show still has a distinctive anti-hero and a great performance by Hugh Laurie. Lots of fun in its heyday and nicely if straightforwardly collected here with all eight seasons in one neat box.



**RASHOMON** (\$39.95 BluRay; Criterion)  
**THE NIBELUNGEN** (\$34.95 DVD; Kino)  
**SUNSET BOULEVARD** (\$26.98 BluRay; Paramount)  
**FILM NOIR COLLECTION VOLUME ONE** (\$89.99 BluRay; Olive)  
**THE OTTO PREMINGER COLLECTION** (\$69.95 BluRay; Olive)  
**WE CAN'T GO HOME AGAIN** (\$34.99 DVD; Oscilloscope) -- *Rashomon* is a landmark of cinema, the endlessly intriguing fable about reality and

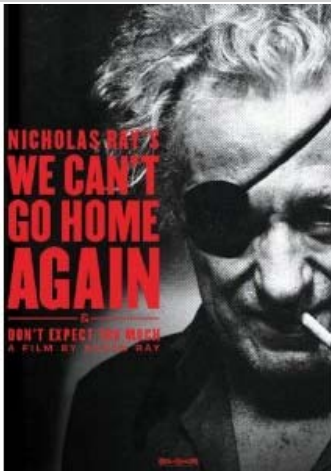




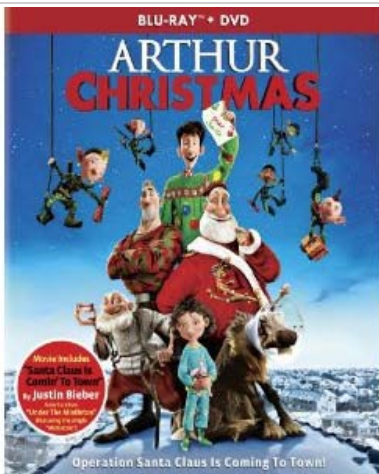
storytelling and perception -- though on a more basic level, it's just a fascinating mystery. Director Akira Kurosawa would go on to make many more, many better movies, but this is where he laid his marker. Criterion, as always, does full justice to the movie's image and sound. It's loaded with extras, including a new one that's a 68 minute documentary about the movie including interviews with cast and crew. Fritz Lang's eye-popping silent epic telling the story Wagner turned into *The Ring* is tremendous fun. I feel kind of cheated I didn't get to see *The Nibelung* in a movie theater first, but Kino has done a solid job on this restoration including a 68 minute (!) documentary about the making of the film. *Sunset Boulevard* is a perennial champ. Just as New Yorkers love to moan about their city but would never dream of leaving, Hollywood loves to embrace poison pen love letters to its industry and few are as acidic as this Billy Wilder classic about a silent film star entombed in her mansion and her legend. Collections of noir (like collections of westerns) always make the films in them seem better by their surroundings. These four movies are pretty good to solid -- *Union Station*, *Appointment with Danger*, *Dark City*, *Rope Of Sand* -- but somehow they seem sharper, savvier in one set. But with friends like the Otto Preminger Collection, who needs enemies? You could create a great boxed set of Preminger's best work. This ain't it. *Hurry Sundown* is meh, *Such Good Friends* is just a little better and *Skidoo* is just a surreal, horrific disaster of a movie, literally unwatchable, especially if you actually like Preminger. Yikes. Just as bad is Nicholas Ray's glorified home movie *We Can't Go Home Again*. He messed around with this lackadaisical student project for years (Preminger cast kids in his film class, mucked about for a while with the footage and probably knew it was a goof). Sure it played at Cannes but there's a reason we haven't seen it for years. It would make a dull extra for a proper Ray film on DVD. On its own, it's



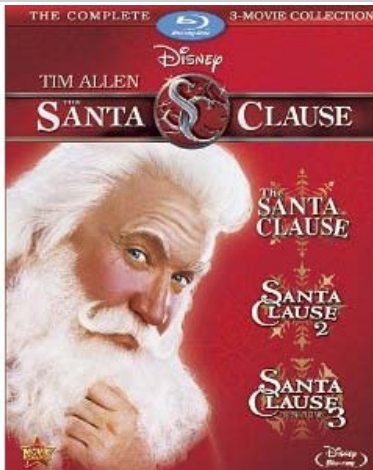
just nonsense, a tired bit of miscellany to an important career. I feel bad for the students.



**ARTHUR CHRISTMAS** (\$40.99 BluRay combo; Sony)  
**THE MUPPET CHRISTMAS CAROL** (\$26.50 BluRay; Disney)  
**IT'S A SPONGEBOB CHRISTMAS** (\$14.98 DVD; Nickelodeon)  
**THE SANTA CLAUS MOVIE COLLECTION** (\$49.99 BluRay; Disney)  
**SILENT NIGHT DEADLY NIGHT DOUBLE FEATURE** (\$14.98 DVD; Anchor Bay)



**SILENT NIGHT** (\$29.99 BluRay; Anchor Bay) -- If you're looking for a new movie that could be a holiday perennial, trust me and check out *Arthur Christmas*, the animated film in which Arthur tries to make sure the one child missed this year by Santa doesn't go without a gift. It's a very clever and charming tale (the premise is that Santas retire and the job is taken over by their sons so keep this in mind with little ones). I named it one of the best movies of the year and think people will catch up soon and dub this a holiday classic. *The Muppet Christmas Carol* is celebrating its 20th anniversary as the best of the original Muppet movies after the first, thanks to that durable Dickens plot and a marvelous performance by Michael Caine (he deserved an Oscar nod). *It's A SpongeBob Christmas* is just one episode

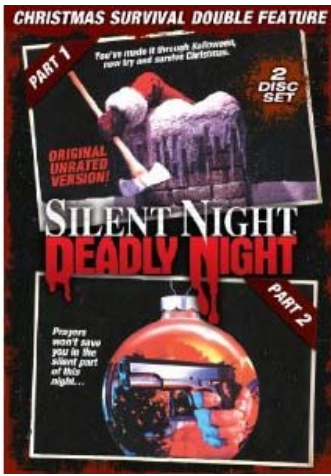


of that goofy series, but it's done in stop-motion animation and the result is a treat for nostalgic adults missing Rankin-Bass. One of their best in years. Sure, three *Santa Claus* movies is two too many, but can you blame Tim Allen for relishing his film success and the chance to don the red suit? I can still remember the controversy over the low rent *Silent Night Deadly Night* with its rampaging Santa horrifying town elders everywhere. The even lower rent sequel is embraced by cultists for its wacky sense of humor (they knew they were making a pile of dreck) and the commentary track by everyone involved that beats *MST3K* to the punch. There's a remake of the original in theaters this weekend starring Malcolm McDowell; they all come out on DVD or BluRay on December 4.

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*Most titles listed here will be available in multiple formats and in multiple combinations, including DVD, BluRay, 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.*

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