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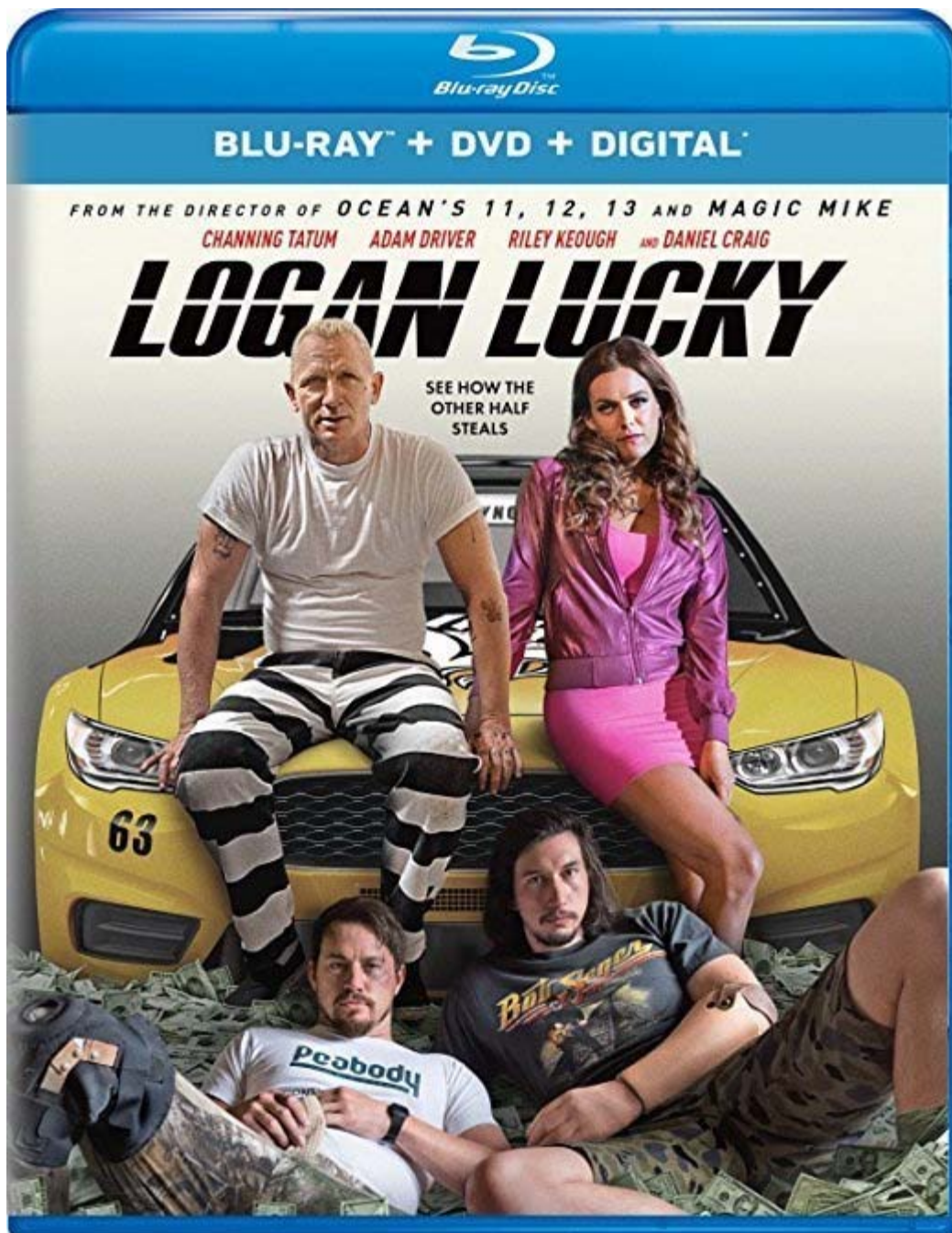


Michael Giltz, Contributor BookFilter creator

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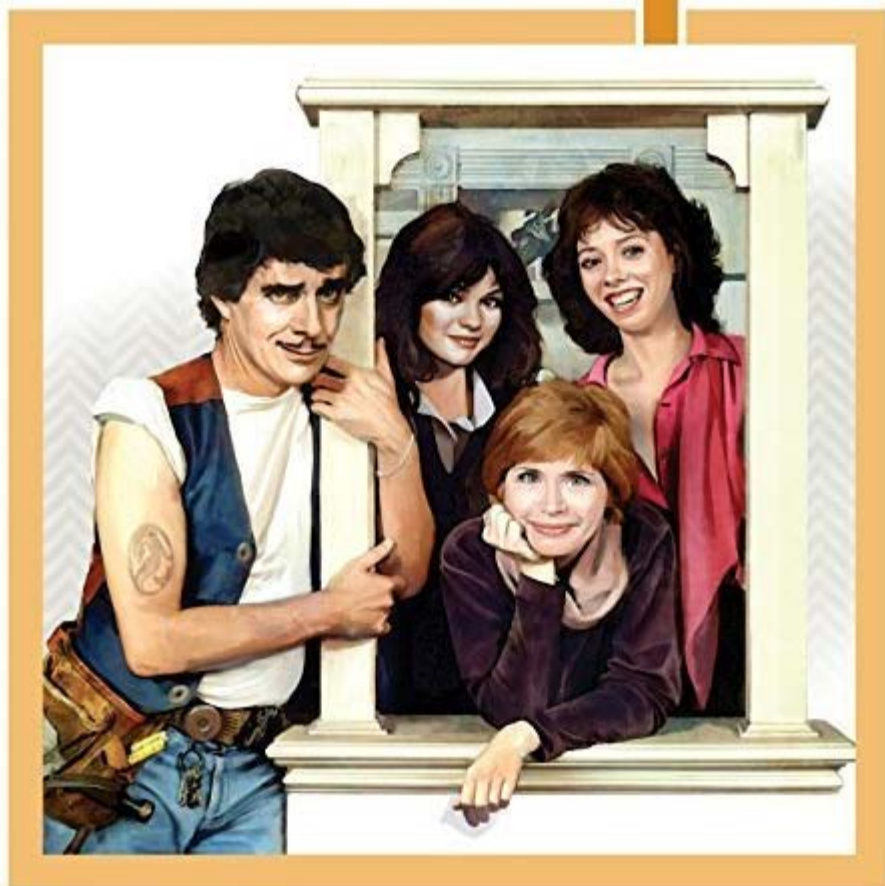
Here is my final batch of reviews before the holidays crash in on us. Next week, look for my best of the year/holiday gift guide where I champion some of my favorite releases from 2017 and highlight some of the best boxed sets and other elaborate titles that would look great under the tree/menorah/winter solstice sacrifice. But first, the final regular column of the year.



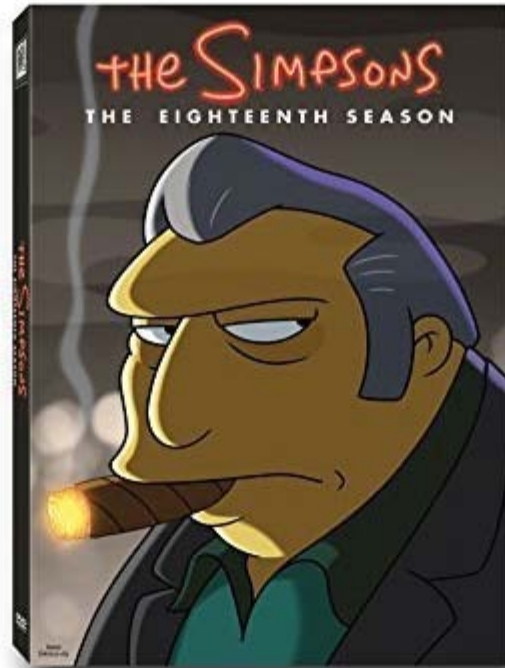
LOGAN LUCKY (\$34.98 BluRay; Universal Studios Home Entertainment)

Retirement? What retirement? Ok, director Steven Soderbergh revised that to “hiatus” from feature films and happily even that didn’t last long. One can imagine his frustration since studios are only interested in tentpole projects. Pivoting to TV and the fine series *The Knick* makes perfect sense. But here’s Soderbergh back in the movies, shooting a film on an iPhone (due out in 2018) and making a very conventional heist pic via unconventional means. I just wish *Logan Lucky* felt like it was celebrating the NASCAR, blue collar world it is immersed in, rather than kind of mocking it. Still, the cast is game and there are amusing moments in this tale of dudes looking to rip-off the money that floods into the Coca-Cola 600. It’s *Ocean’s 11* but with rednecks! Ok, it’s not that reductive but I was hoping for as much cleverness in front of the camera as they exhibited in the financing and marketing deals.

ONE DAY AT A TIME



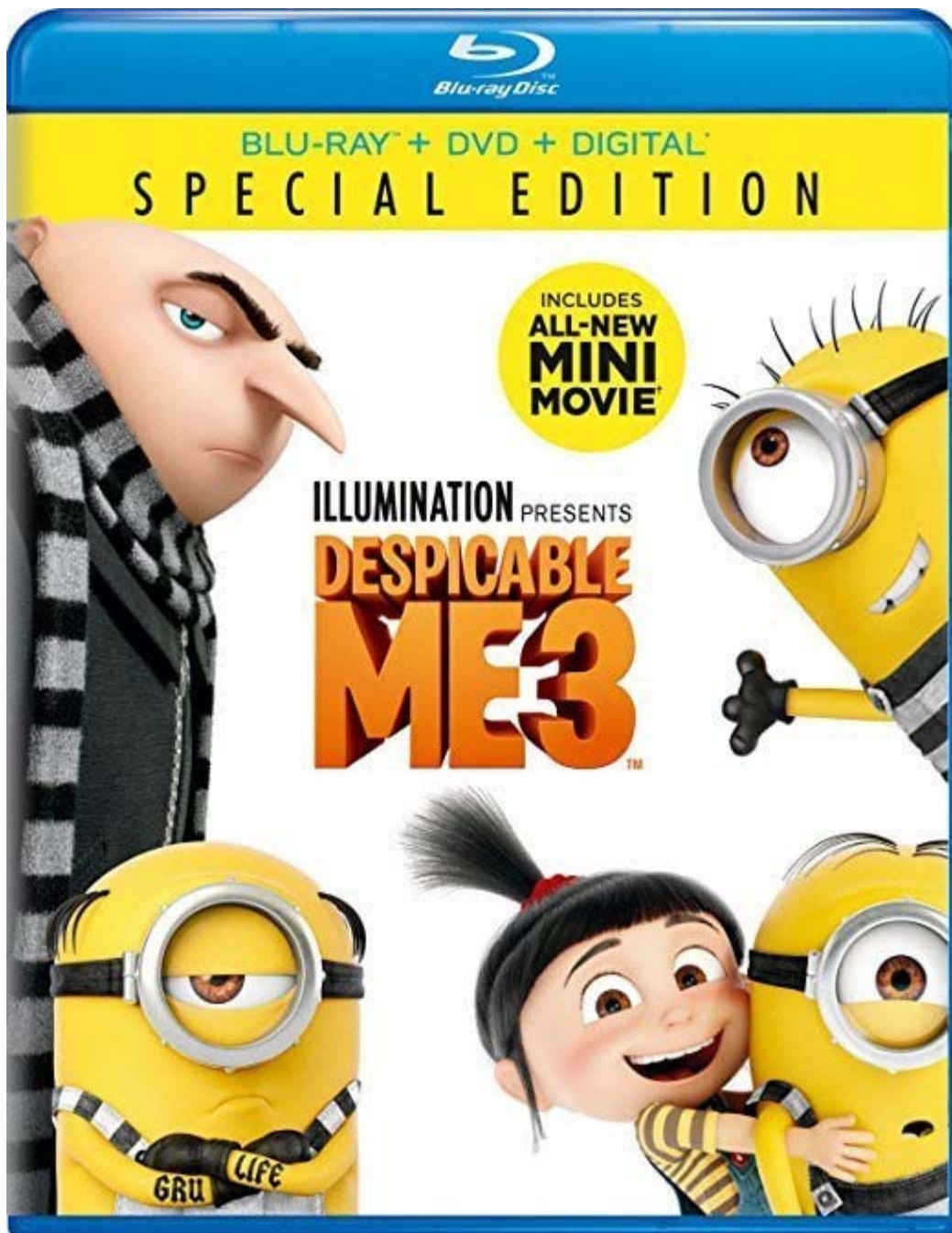
THE COMPLETE SERIES



self thought this sitcom was pretty tame, standard fare. Fun, but not button-pushing. All In The Family can take your breath away but watching *One Day At A Time* simply reminds you how the wacky neighbor/employee has been such a mainstay, from Schneider here to Kramer on *Seinfeld*. While the very conventionality of the show's presentation made the dicey issues (like a divorcee's life) easy to swallow, it also means that *One Day At A Time* hasn't aged well. The jaw-dropping envelope-pushing of *All In The Family* and *Maude* means those shows feel a lot more alive compared to the canned antics of *One Day At A Time* and *The Jeffersons*. But like that other sitcom's affable leads, the three women at the heart of this show also provide pleasure, from Mackenzie Phillips' live-wire nature to Valerie Bertinelli's effortless appeal to Franklin's grounded sensibility and refusal to be anything but true to herself.

The Simpsons keeps rolling along but seasons 18 and 19 have been missing for a while on DVD and BluRay, falling through the cracks as TV shows segued into placing a bigger emphasis on streaming. Ironically, while they've been busy putting out the earliest seasons of the show on BluRay, that format has fallen out of favor for many TV packages and we're just getting season 18 on DVD. That will surely frustrate some fans but at least it's here! These episodes aired in 2016/2017, included the show's 400th episode and if sales prove sturdy they'll surely put out season 19 as well. Good god this was a decade ago and we were already bemoaning the decline in quality from great to merely good or even ok. Scan the episodes and you'd be hard-pressed to single out any as all-time greats. Sitcoms at the most can stretch to seven seasons and maintain quality (*The Mary Tyler Moore Show* being the prime example) though animated shows like this and *South Park* can extend that truism another few years. But 18 seasons? Of *course* it's shaggy but either you want this or you don't and nothing I can say will change your mind.

Maybe the rules are different for an anthology series. Now we have TV shows with self-contained seasons that completely reinvent themselves each time out, sometimes with a new cast, sometimes with an entirely new setting and always with a new storyline that can be enjoyed start to finish as a stand-alone experience. Charting the quality of most shows usually starts at a peak and includes a slow or quick decline. Charting the quality of anthology shows like *Fargo* and *Black Mirror* and *American Horror Story* and *True Detective* is more like a stock market ticker in a world full of booms and busts or maybe a mountain range peopled with endless peaks and valleys. You just never know what the hell you're gonna get. The general consensus on *Fargo* has been, Why the hell would you turn that odd duck of a movie by the Coen Brothers into a TV series? Followed by, Oh my gosh, season one was brilliant! Followed by, Well season two was a mess. Followed by, Season Three is great again but for entirely different reasons! Who knows what will happen next but rest assured Ewan McGregor is having a blast and fans of season one have reason to return.



DESPICABLE ME 3 (\$34.98 BluRay; Universal Pictures Home Entertainment)

You have children. You want them to be entertained. You take them to *Despicable Me* or *Minions* or whatever and just thank your lucky stars it isn't *My Little Pony*. Who can blame you? Of course, the poor quality of this franchise dulls the senses and you find yourself saying things like *Despicable Me 3* is the best yet. Low bar, but nonetheless true.

"A MUST FOR BRITISH MYSTERY FANS"
—Los Angeles Times

MIDSOMER MURDERS

— JOHN BARNABY'S FIRST CASES —



ACORN

DIRECTED BY JEAN DELANNOY BASED UPON THE NOVEL BY GEORGES SIMENON

MAIGRET SETS A TRAP



JEAN GABIN JEAN DESAILLY LINO VENTURA
ANNIE GIRARDOT OLIVIER HUSSENOT

KINO



MIDSOMER MURDERS: JOHN BARNABY'S FIRST CASES (\$79.99 DVD; Acorn Media)

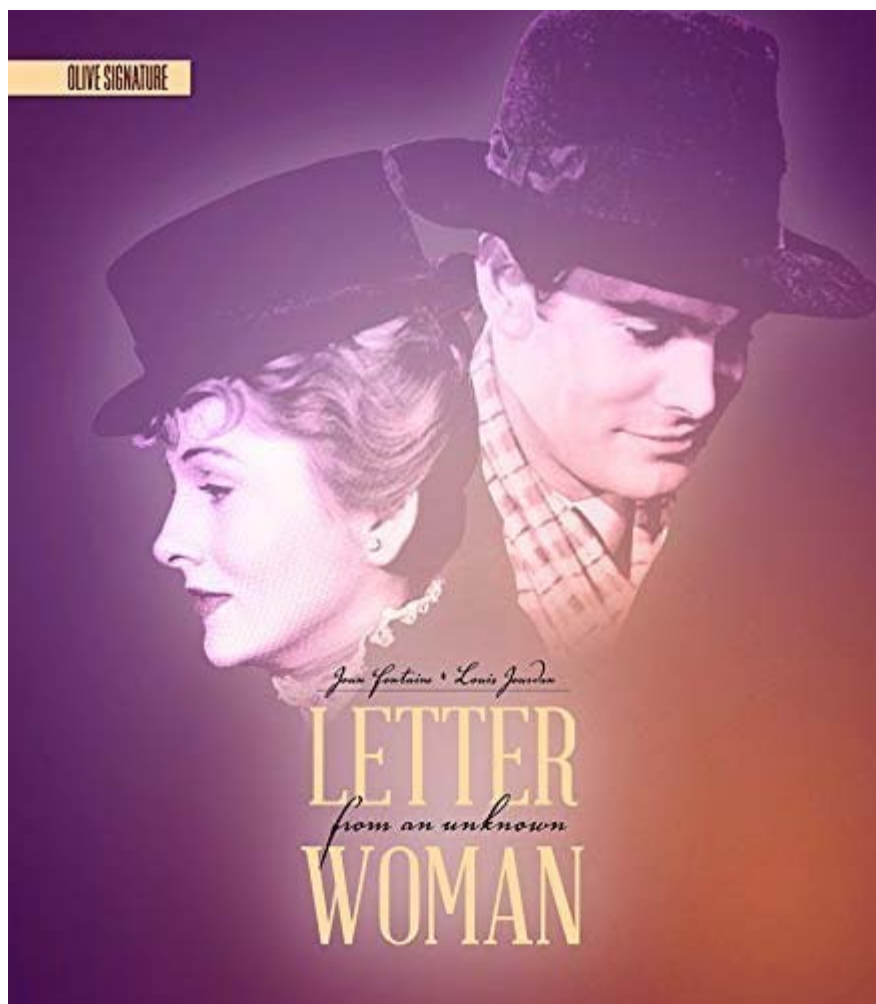
MAIGRET SETS A TRAP (\$29.95 BluRay; Kino Lorber)

MAIGRET AND THE ST. FIACRE CASE (\$29.95 BluRay; Kino Lorber)

A long-running series like *Midsomer Murders* is rightly taken for granted, not to mention the butt of jokes. Why would anyone live in Midsomer, which has a murder rate higher than the vacation spots of Jessica Fletcher? Like the long-running *Law & Order*, the show is shaken out of its complacency (or at least might be) when new leads appear. In these episodes from seasons 11-13, Neil Dudgeon becomes the new DCI, with Jason Hughes as his assistant, hanging around so longtime fans don't freak out too much over the changes. It's a

repackaging of previous releases as ardent fans will know, containing 14 feature length mysteries on eight discs. Comfort food, though being British the guest star roles are peopled with exceptional talent from stage and screen.

I'm not enough of an expert on the many lives of Inspector Maigret to weigh in on the definitive depiction of the crime fighter made famous by writer Georges Simenon. (Now Holmes I can offer an opinion on.) But these two French noirs from 1958 are quite satisfying. They star the great Jean Gabin and what a pity he only played the role three times (including *Maigret Sees Red* in 1963). In *Sets A Trap*, he must outwit a serial killer. In *The St. Fiacre Case*, the film actually climaxes at a dinner party where everyone is a suspect in the suspicious death of a countess. Gabin is coolly reserved, the films look great and anyone with a penchant for crime flicks will be satisfied.



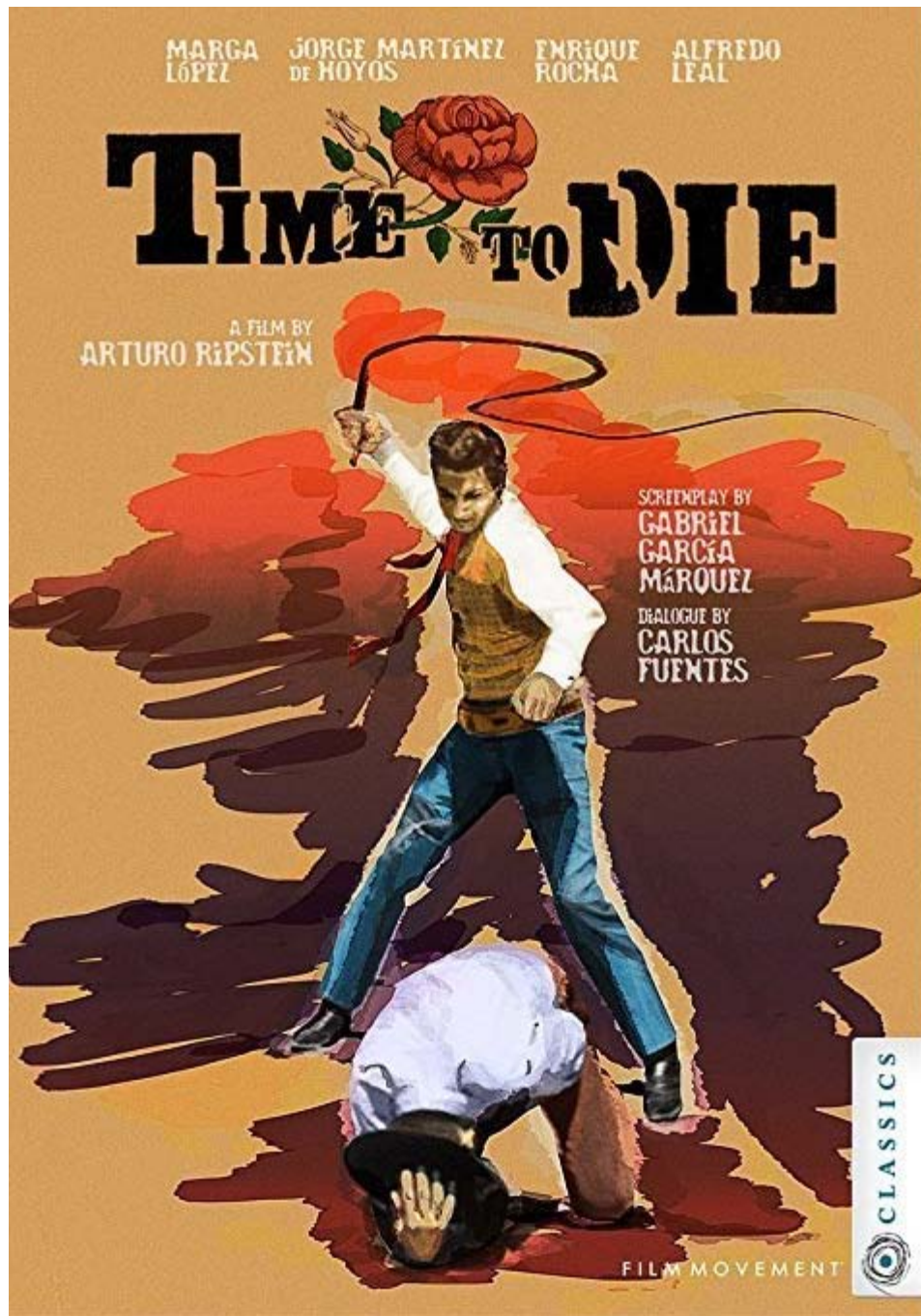
OLIVE SIGNATURE

Walter MATTHAU
Elaine MAY



**New
Leaf**





LETTER FROM AN UNKNOWN WOMAN (\$39.95 BluRay; Olive Films)

A NEW LEAF (\$39.95 BluRay; Olive Films)

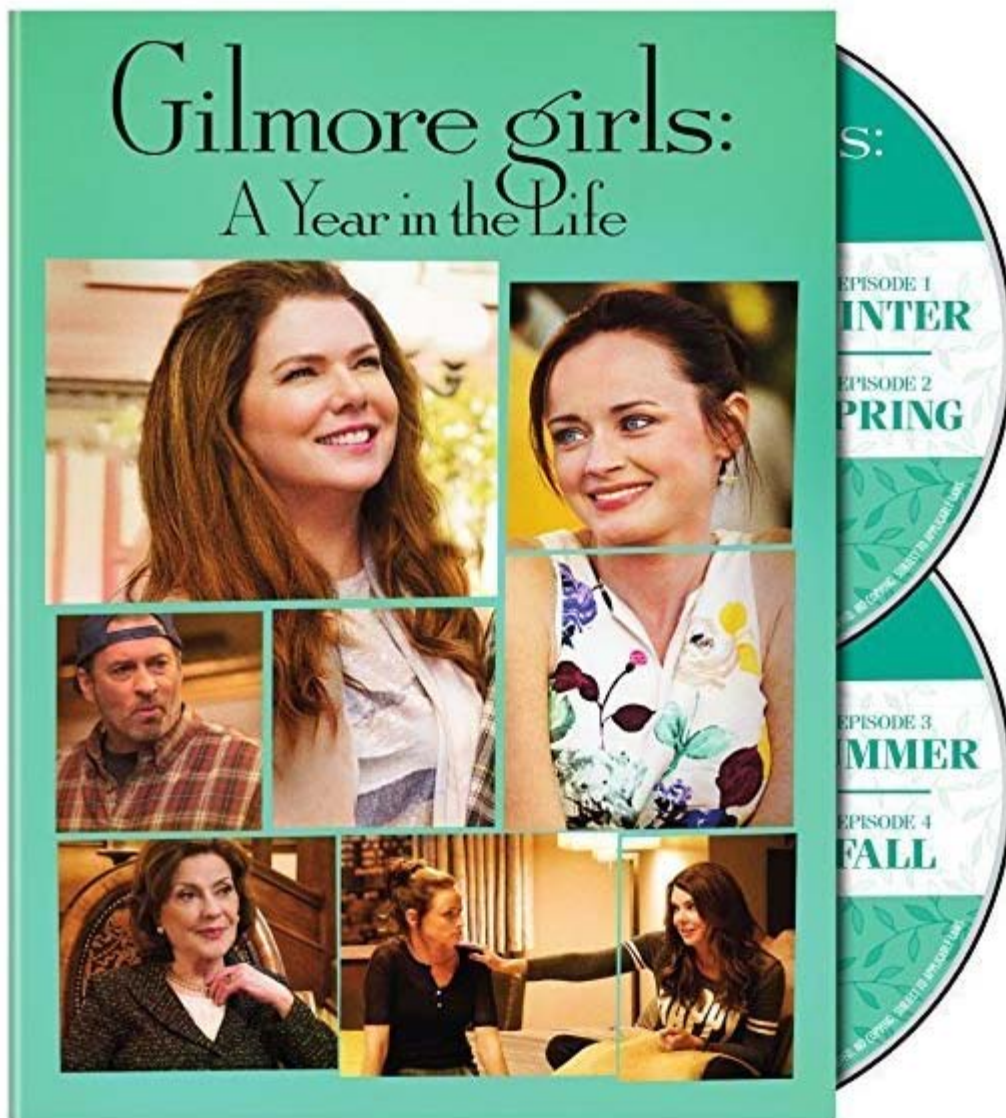
TIME TO DIE (\$27.75 BluRay; Film Movement Classics)

Director Max Ophuls enjoyed one of his greatest triumphs with the tragic romance of Letter From An Unknown Woman, one of those confections that the studio system of 1948 excelled at. Starring Joan Fontaine and Louis Jordan in his greatest role, it's a beguiling, near-perfect film. Though based on the novella by Stefan Zweig, it feels like one of those works of art that simply had to be a movie. That's more a reflection of how Ophuls completely transformed the story into visual splendor than any lack in the writing of Zweig. This

BluRay from Olive Films contains extras like audio commentary and interviews with scholars and cinematographers who discuss the film's treatment of women and its terrific camerawork.

Many others consider Elaine May's film *A New Leaf* a comic masterpiece but it has always left me a little cold. Still you have to tip your hat to anyone who can work in the studio system while writing, directing and starring in an original movie. May didn't get to see her reported three hour cut make the light of day, which is a pity. (Hasn't she held onto the original negatives?) If we can anticipate a new film from Orson Welles, I have to hold out hope for a re-cut *Magnificent Ambersons* or a director's cut of *A New Leaf*. But for the moment we have the 102 minute version in which Walter Matthau is a dissolute playboy who marries the wealthy but awkward botanist May and then falls in love with her before he can bring himself to knock her off. It's loopy, kooky, silly and presented nicely here. Just don't expect May to sign your copy.

Finally, there's the Mexican anti-Western *Time To Die*. Long before Clint Eastwood deconstructed oaters once and for all with *Unforgiven*, director Arturo Ripstein delivered this cult classic revived by Film Movement. Based on a screenplay by Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Carlos Fuentes (!), it shows a man released from prison after 18 years. He killed another man in self-defense and now finally he can rest...until the dead man's sons start to hunt him down to restore their family's "honor." Little known in the US since it came out in 1966, *Time To Die* finally enjoyed its first official theatrical release here in the fall in a newly restored print. Extras include an introduction by fan Alex Cox, commentary from the director and more.



GILMORE GIRLS: A YEAR IN THE LIFE (\$24.98 DVD; WarnerBros.)

Ok, so you've watched all eight episodes of *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel* and you're wondering what to do next. First, thank creator Amy Sherman-Palladino for following up one of the best series of the 2000s with a show that is a worthy successor. (*Bunheads* was fine but *Maisel* might be great.) Then revisit the series that made her name. How smart of Netflix to let Sherman-Palladino finally get to add a grace note of a finale to *Gilmore Girls* with the miniseries *A Year In The Life* last fall. We had no reason to expect a return to Stars Hollow would be anything but a bad idea. And yes, the four movies — one per season — were generally too long and there was a tendency to feel the need to give each minor character a moment in the spotlight. But it had a welcome seriousness of purpose and recaptured enough of the show's charm without just spinning its wheels to make us wish for more. Instead, Sherman-Palladino built on that quiet victory to venture out into new territory with the period setting and darker tone of *Mrs. Maisel*. This miniseries is the bridge between the two. It may be the end of *Gilmore Girls* but clearly it marked the beginning of a new chapter for Sherman-Palladino.

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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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 of the format reviewed and you'll find it discounted via retailers, not to mention available on demand, via streaming, physical rentals and more.