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DVDs: No Excuses! Catch *Footnote*, *Deep Blue Sea*, *Margaret* & More

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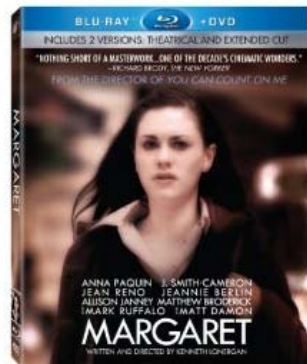
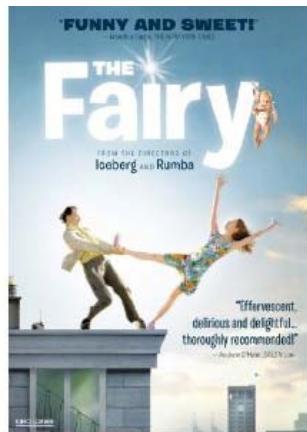


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FOOTNOTE (\$35.99 BluRay; Sony Pictures Classics)

THE DEEP BLUE SEA (\$38.94 BluRay; Music Box)

THE FAIRY (\$29.95 DVD; Kino Lorber)


MARGARET (\$39.99 BluRay; Fox) -- Seriously, has there ever been a better time to be a movie buff? Even if you're not wowed by Hollywood's current blockbusters, you have the entire history of cinema virtually at your fingertips. Art house and foreign films get wider distribution than ever via independent chains, streaming and on-demand. And even if you live in a city where tiny but acclaimed movies are shown and still don't get to the theater in time (hey, nobody's perfect) you still get to see virtually every well-reviewed film on DVD, BluRay or some other online source. A gal in Montana can legitimately put out a diverse, sophisticated best of the year list as knowing and smart and on-the-money as every major film critic. Even better, unlike most major film critics, she doesn't have to wade through a big chunk of clearly inferior studio releases. She can just wait for the critical consensus and favorite taste-makers to point her towards the movies worth checking out. So now the onus is on movie fans.

You have no excuse not to rent or buy or stream these four films if you haven't seen them already. Three of them are on my shortlist for the best films of 2012 and the fourth is one I'm eagerly anticipating.

Footnote is a very funny drama perfect for anyone who knows the world of academia or office politics. At its heart it is a movie about fathers and sons. Both are scholars. The father is a dutiful student, very good at the actual work of scholarship (we think) but terrible at playing the games that curry favor, get you on boards and win grants and the like. His son is the exact opposite, a glib glad-hander who appears on television as a talking head. When the father finally receives a coveted recognition of his body of work, it's a deeply moving moment -- until the son discovers, to his horror, that the award was meant for him,



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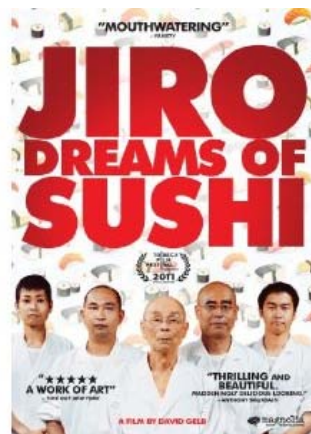
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In honor of Labor Day, here are some of TV's hardest workers
<http://t.co/XJTvtfGy> via @HuffPostTV

not his dad, and the officials who messed up want him to break the news to his father. This is a very intelligent film, wittily shot like an action film (it sounds silly but works quite well) with all sorts of nods to scholarship, with notes popping up on screen and so on. Not to be missed.

The Deep Blue Sea is a beautifully crafted film about doomed love during World War II. It's based on the play by Terence Ratigan and who better to savor that repressed era than director Terence Davies, who truly makes this work his own. Rachel Weisz is especially good as the heroine but then Davies always shows his leading ladies in the best light. This is filmmaking for adults.

The Fairy is a frothy bit of silliness from a team that revels in silent movie antics, setting up slapstick scenes of silliness that are distinctly their own but nod to the glory days of Keaton and Tati. The gentle romance revolves around a seaside hotel, a fairy, shoplifters and more. They still haven't matched the purity of their debut *L'Iceberg*, but this is a solid, charming confection. Finally, there's *Margaret*. I have no excuse for missing the movie in theaters. But knowing there was a director's cut out there did make me long to see that version of Kenneth Lonergan's troubled but acclaimed/damned drama. Given his great work in plays and movies, anything by Lonergan will be must-see viewing for years to come. With this BluRay, we get a chance to view either the theatrical version or Lonergan's preferred cut. Let the cult-status myth-making begin!



JULIA CHILD'S FRENCH CLASSICS (\$19.99; PBS Direct)

JIRO DREAMS OF SUSHI (\$26.98; Magnolia) -- In the last few years, I've fallen in love with Julia Child and her cooking shows. The color episodes get replayed again and again on TV, so I think I've seen just about all of them. She's such a fun, winning personality that even reruns are fun. But the black and white episodes are rarely shown, as if fans of Child couldn't handle black and white, which is just silly. Here, finally, is a DVD containing three hours of cooking segments. Some of the equipment used is dated and it would have been nice for a DVD extra to contain the actual recipes, but you can find them online. It's a good value such as it is. But why put out these episodes piecemeal? Surely any fans of Child who would want some of her black and white episodes would want all of them? All the ones available should be slapped on a no-frills boxed set and be made available. Otherwise they're just sitting in a vault somewhere and what's the point of that? in other words, a second helping of Child, please.

Jiro is like many other documentaries in this era where the tools to make a documentary film are so readily available. As a film, it's not terribly interesting. But if you're intrigued by the topic -- a profile of one of the top sushi chefs in the world, this one a man who operates out of a modest restaurant located in a subway station in Tokyo -- you'll find this worth your time.

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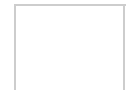
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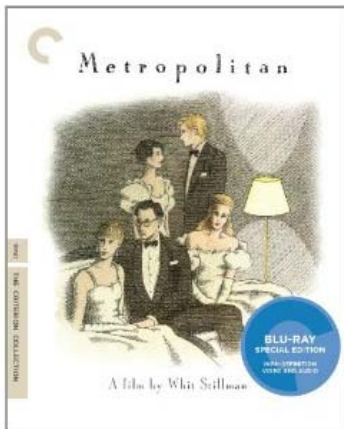
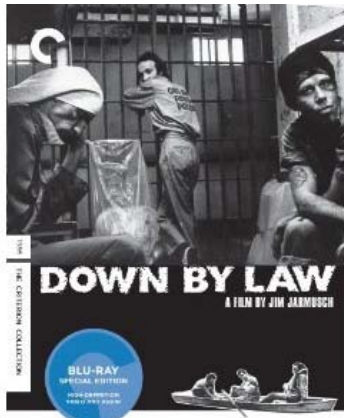
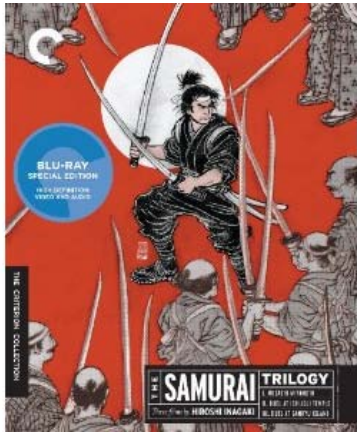
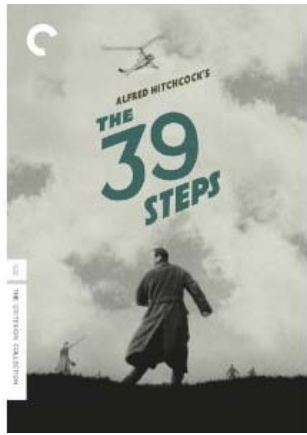


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THE 39 STEPS (\$29.95 DVD; Criterion)

THE SAMURAI TRILOGY (\$39.95 BluRay; Criterion)

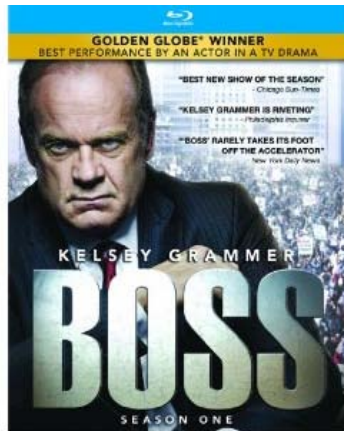
DOWN BY LAW (\$39.95 BluRay; Criterion)

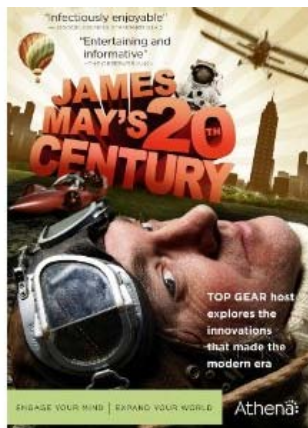
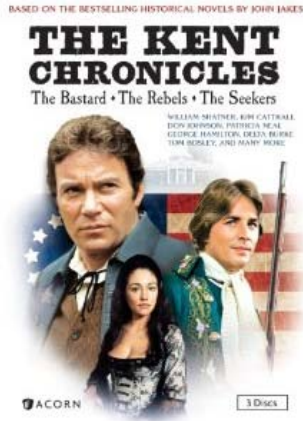
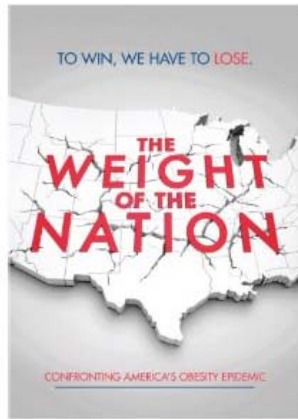
METROPOLITAN (\$39.95 BluRay; Criterion) -- Alfred Hitchcock is one of the most famous and successful directors in history and *The 39 Steps* is the movie that defined him forever. It's a grand adventure rather loosely based on the spy/adventure novel by John Buchan. What day of the week am I writing this? Well, it's Tuesday, so that means this is my favorite Hitchcock film of all time. On Wednesdays it's *Rear Window*. On Thursdays, it's his other British gem *The Lady Vanishes*. On Friday, it's *Shadow Of A Doubt* (Hitch's favorite so I'm just trying to curry favor). Oddly, it's a safe bet that most people haven't seen the box office hit *The 39 Steps*. Do watch it and you'll suddenly realize where the inspiration for countless movies you have seen sprang from. And there's no safer place to start than a DVD release from Criterion, which features an essay by Hitchcock expert David Cairns, TV interviews, excerpts from Truffaut's audio interviews with the director, a documentary about his British years and more, including my favorite -- a radio play version starring Robert Montgomery and Ida Lupino.

The Samurai Trilogy is a step below the true classic samurai films, but it's great fun and terrific to have in this good-looking, more compact BluRay edition. Toshiro Mifune stars as the samurai, delivering his usual full-bodied performance that's more nuanced than the potboiler novel it's based upon. Any fans of westerns and samurai films should dive in.

Down By Law is the movie that made clear Jim Jarmusch was in it for the long haul. *Stranger Than Paradise* was an oddball movie that might have been a one-off fluke. *Down By Law* showed Jarmusch was a rich and interesting filmmaker who would have a long career ahead of him. Among the usual extras are recordings of phone conversations between Jarmusch and his leads, including Tom Waits. Fans of extras know that technical people like the DP and composer often are the most informative and unguarded so they'll seek out the Robby Muller interview from 2002.

Finally, Whit Stillman is not enjoying a comeback with his latest release *Damsels In Distress*, but he has remained true to his unique sensibility. That's on full display in his utterly assured debut *Metropolitan*, the arch comedy of manners that made him an instant success. The modest extras include an audio commentary and outtakes of scenes and alternate casting. The movie has grown in my estimation over the years and this edition reinforces that.







BOSS SEASON ONE (\$39.97 BluRay; Lionsgate)

HATFIELDS & MCCOYS (\$55.99 BluRay; Sony)

THE WEIGHT OF THE NATION (\$19.97 DVD; HBO)

THE KENT CHRONICLES (\$59.99 DVD; Acorn)

ALPHAS SEASON ONE (\$44.98 DVD; Universal/SyFy)

JAMES MAY'S 20TH CENTURY (\$59.99 DVD; Athena)

THE IN-BETWEENERS COMPLETE SERIES (\$39.98 DVD; EOne) -- One of the more egregious oversights in the Emmy nominations was Kelsey Grammer not getting a best actor nod for *Boss* Season One as a corrupt mayor. The proof is right here. (Who would I take off the list to make room for him? Jonn Hamm or Michael C. Hall.)

Hatfields & McCoys got a little repetitive in the feuding, but I love a western and America loved this miniseries, one of cable's biggest hits of all time.

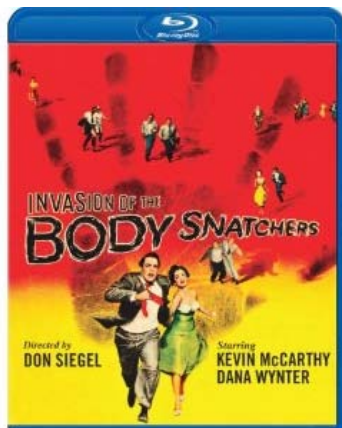
HBO has done a great job trying to bring the crisis of obesity into the spotlight via this miniseries *The Weight of the Nation* and all the other programming and outreaches that surrounded it. This set contains the four part series and more than four hours of extras, one time where piling on the content is OK.

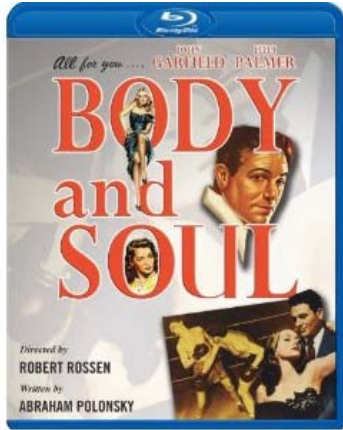
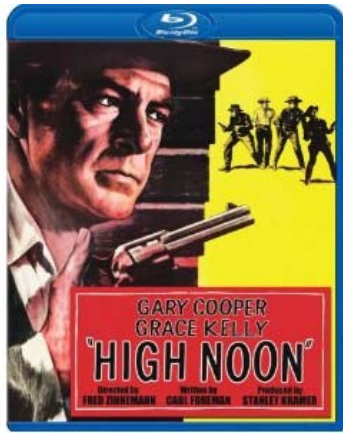
The Kent Chronicles combines three cheesy miniseries from the late 1970s based on the sprawling romantic epics by John Jakes. They haven't aged well in the least but it's nice to see all three in one set.

My friend Geoff Boucher at the [LA Times blog Hero Complex](#) is crazy about the SyFy show *Alphas*. That's good enough for me and it should be good enough for you. If this is your genre, this show is worth giving a look.

James May is famous in the UK for his cheeky car show *Top Gear*. Here on *James May's 20th Century*, he makes history fun for people who get queasy at the sight of dates and timelines and men in powdered wigs. It's good for parents and kids but will hopefully spur them on to more. There's also a three hour bonus program called *James May's Big Ideas*.

Finally, *The In-Betweeners* is a show about lads in the UK that probably seems smarter than it is because of their accents. It captures high school with a *Skins*-like maturity and the series has already made the leap to feature film with a huge hit movie in the UK.





INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS (\$29.95 BluRay; Olive Films/Paramount)

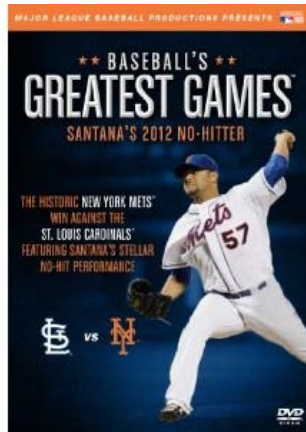
HIGH NOON (\$29.95 BluRay; Olive Films/Paramount)

BODY AND SOUL (\$29.95 BluRay; Olive Films/Paramount)

FORCE OF EVIL (\$29.95 BluRay; Olive Films/Paramount) -- Smaller companies rescuing classic films

can't get any credit. Of course, they don't have the finances to do a full restoration of movies, no matter how much the movie needs or deserves it. They also can't afford to create lots of extras. Then they need to charge a fair price because these movies aren't going to sell at the level of the latest Adam Sandler comedy. So here are four "bare bones" DVD releases of four genuine classics. I personally don't care that much for extras so I don't miss them, but others do. Two of the films look terrific. *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* literally blew me away when I saw it for the first time at Film Forum a few years ago. I was hoping for a good B movie, a great sci-fi flick. But I saw a great film, period. It's clearly a landmark work and one of the best of the 1950s and indeed of all time. *High Noon* has never done it for me, but this new BluRay edition looks very good and is the only one of the four to have an extra of note, namely a making-of documentary hosted by Leonard Maltin. The last two are just transfers of current prints onto BluRay. They won't blow you away but if you haven't seen these movies, you really should. Both star the pugnacious John Garfield. He plays a boxer in *Body* and a dirty lawyer in *Force of Evil*. Both were

written and the latter was also directed by the great Abraham Polonsky, whose career was curtailed by the blacklist. We'll never know what he might have created in his prime but these movies are a testament to his talent.



BASEBALL'S GREATEST GAMES: NEW YORK METS FIRST NO-HITTER (\$12.95 DVD; A&E/MLB) -- I'm lucky enough to get a lot of DVDs. And every once in a while I get sent one I know I can't keep. DVDs about the UK monarchy go to my mom, for example. And this DVD about the first no-hitter by a New York Mets pitcher is headed right to my friend Sam, a lifelong Mets fan. If it wasn't bad enough that the Mets had never had a no-hitter, Sam and other Mets fans had to endure the indignity of watching Mets pitchers head to other teams and THEN getting a no-hitter or a perfect game. Dwight Gooden did it for the New York Yankees, the bitter rival of the Mets. And David Cone threw a perfect game for the Yankees after his days with the Mets were over. Oh the horror. So here, finally, is the game where Johan Santana accomplished what seemed impossible: a no-hitter for the Mets. It's in the mail, Sam.

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.

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Well, as a season ticket holding Yankee fan, it actually wasn't that hard for me to give it up. But I can probably use all the brownie points I can get in heaven, so I'll take it.

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