



APRIL 5, 2009

- HOME
- POLITICS
- MEDIA
- BUSINESS
- ENTERTAINMENT
- LIVING
- STYLE
- GREEN
- WORLD
- CHICAGO
- COMEDY 23/6
- VIDEO
- BLOGGER INDEX
- ARCHIVE
- Twitter: Follow Us
- Get Email Alerts
- Make HuffPost Your HomePage



Farrah Fawcett Is Hospitalized



Madonna Tot's Dad Found: 'At Last I Can Be Part Of Mercy's Life'



Reality Show Choreographer Accused Of Raping 4



Michael Giltz

Freelance writer and raconteur

Posted December 5, 2008 | 04:32 PM (EST)

- BIO
- Get Email Alerts Bloggers' Index
- Become a Fan

DVDs: Ron Howard Vs. Ron Howard



Read More: Animation, Arrested Development, Bill Murray, Documentaries, Dvds, Morgan Freeman, Movies, Paul Simon, Ron Howard, Saturday Night Live, Steve Martin, TV Shows, Wong Kar-Wai, Entertainment News

Buzz up! Be the First to Submit This Story to Digg

Get Breaking News Alerts

never spam

Share Print Comments

With *Frost/Nixon* opening today in select cities, Universal has found the right time to celebrate director Ron Howard by releasing *The Ron Howard Spotlight Collection* (\$39.98; Universal) a nice boxed set of four of what they call his "most unforgettable and highly acclaimed films" along with the usual extras. The movies? *A Beautiful Mind*, *Apollo 13*, *Cinderella Man* and *Backdraft*. The only problem? These aren't even close to his four best movies. Howard is a purveyor of middlebrow entertainment, which is a rude way of saying "movies." He doesn't work in

the personalized vein of an auteur or the seat-of-your-pants indie world and he's never quite enjoyed the prestige of the top-notch directors like Spielberg or Anthony Minghella, despite the many Oscar nominations and consistent box office success his movies enjoy. (I'm still bummed *Apollo 13* -- or *Babe* or *Sense and Sensibility* -- didn't beat out *Braveheart* in 1995 for the Best Picture Oscar.) Still, you can't dislike a guy who narrates *Arrested Development* or made an **Obama ad** that genially spoofed his TV acting career. Howard would have flourished in the studio system -- he's clearly shown a workmanlike ability to move from comedy to period piece to drama with ease. If I were gonna choose four movies to make the case for Howard, I'd pick *Apollo 13*, *The Missing* (his Western with Tommy Lee Jones and Cate Blanchett), *Parenthood*, and *Cocoon*. I even had to debate about *Splash* and *Night Shift*, too. His misfires are fewer but painful: *Willow*, *Far And Away*, *How The Grinch Stole Christmas* and *The Da Vinci Code*. But for all that, I think Universal would have served Howard better -- and celebrated their unique partnership (Howard has made virtually every one of his films with that studio) -- by releasing ALL his movies in one lavish boxed set and labelling it "Volume One." It looks like "Volume Two" would begin with another Oscar nominee in *Frost/Nixon*, so the story continues. What four movies of Ron Howard do you think are his best?

THE COOLEST DIRECTOR IN THE WORLD -- While Ron Howard turns out one commercial

NEIL YOUNG
FORK IN THE ROAD
 HIS LATEST ALBUM FEATURES 10 NEW SONGS



AVAILABLE
 APRIL 7

[CLICK HERE TO EXPERIENCE THE ALBUM](#)
 NEILYOUNG.COM

Popular Stories on HuffPost

- Fashion Face-Off! Michelle Obama And Carla Bruni-Sarkozy Finally Meet In France (VIDEO, PHOTOS, POLL)
*Video, poll and slideshow
- Levi Johnston Talks Safe Sex With Tyra Banks (VIDEO)
UPDATE 8:30pm: People.com is reporting that Sarah Palin has issued...
- Oscar de la Renta Slams Michelle Obama's Buckingham Outfit As Major Designers Feel Ignored
While Michelle Obama has made lesser...
- Verena von Pfetten 7 Lessons To Be Learned From Carla Bruni
So here's the thing. There's no shortage of articles dedicated to that certain je ne...
- Huff TV Arianna Discusses Michelle Obama's "Fantastic" Style On CBS'

hit after another but gets no respect, Wong Kar-Wai is -- by almost universal acclamation -- the coolest director in the world. (And here's hoping his recent stumbles of *2042* and *My Blueberry Nights* are not the sign of a permanent decline.) One big reason is his breakthrough hit *Chungking Express* (\$39.95 and coming out at the same price on BluRay December 16; Criterion). Everything is here: the slow motion, the emotionally acute visuals via the great Christopher Doyle, the obsessive repetition of a pop song (in this case the Mamma and the Pappas "California Dreamin'") and that indefinable cool. Extras include TV interviews w Wong and Doyle, commentary by a critic and new subtitles. Also out from Criterion: Richard Burton's wonderfully contained performance in the deeply cynical Le Carre adaptation *The Spy Who Came In From The Cold* (\$39.95; Criterion) and Sam Fuller's racism parable *White Dog* (\$29.95; Criterion) which I've never seen and look forward to checking out.

SNL VS. SNL -- Chevy Chase was long gone, but the fourth season of *SNL* (\$69.98; Universal) is so vital and funny and silly and smart that it could easily be ranked as the best season in the show's history. The Blues Brothers, The Loud Family (it doesn't get enjoyably dumber than that), Nick The Lounge Singer, my personal favorite the Nerds (Bill Murray and Gilda Radner), Steve Martin with Dan Ackroyd as the wild and crazy Festrunk brothers and on and on. Then there are the musical guests: Talking Heads, Grateful Dead, Rickie Lee Jones, Van Morrison, James Taylor, the Rolling Stones, Devo, the Doobie Brothers and more. What a great show and these complete season boxed sets do it justice.

STOP! DO NOT GO ON! -- Not until you've read about *The Gospel At Colonus* (\$26.95; New Video), one of the landmark musicals of the past three decades. The idea was simple: present *Oedipus at Colonus* as a tale of woe presented in a church, complete with gospel numbers. "I take my text today from the Book of Oedipus," intones a young Morgan Freeman, who is electrifying and commanding as the preacher/narrator. This 1985 Philadelphia performance was captured for TV with care and discretion by Kirk Browning, who knows you don't need to cut every five seconds to create excitement. All you really need are talented performers like Jevetta Steele, Robert Earl Jones and Clarence Fountain and the Five Blind Boys Of Alabama and great songs by Lee Breuer and Bob Telson. "How Shall I See You Through My Tears?," "Stop! Do Not Go On!," "Lift Him Up" and the moving "A Voice Foretold" are among the nonstop highlights. This is brilliant stuff and I've always been disappointed that I never got to see it live and had to settle for listening to the cast album. No more.

ANOTHER BANNER YEAR FOR DOCUMENTARIES -- Obviously, inexpensive portable cameras have revolutionized documentaries. Add in the flood of reality shows and the result is that people are more willing to go see documentary films in the theater and on TV now more than ever. Many of my favorite films this year are documentaries and still I can't keep up with the flood of releases. Among the many companies producing them are Arts Engine, which celebrates its 10th Anniversary of making documentaries happen with an elaborate boxed set (\$99.95; Arts Engine available [at their website](#)), which collects eight movies and 24 short films. Among my favorites are *Election Day*, which interwove the story of people voting on November 2, 2004; and *Arctic Son*, about a young man heading back to Old Crow (a town about 80 miles from the Arctic Circle) to reconnect with his father. Both were seen on PBS's invaluable *P.O.V.* series. And I'm intrigued by stories of Puerto Rican Americans trying to make it in New York City, tales of woe in the criminal justice system and *Brother Born Again*, about a bisexual Jewish woman trying to make sense of her brother who dropped out of college and was born again. Then there are the numerous shorts....

TODAY VS. YESTERDAY -- The original Robert Wise version of *The Day The Earth Stood Still* (\$19.98; Fox) is a quiet, thoughtful, philosophical film -- rather appropriate for a movie about aliens urging humans to unite and embrace peace. Or else. The new Keanu Reeves film out December 12 -- at least from [the trailer](#) -- seems chockful of apocalyptic explosions. Hmmm. Have we learned our lesson?

BLURAY -- Yeah, you're gonna have to buy a BluRay player. Among the new releases on BluRay are *Hancock* (\$39.95 or \$34.95 for the regular DVD special edition; Sony), which has a great premise and an okay follow-through but Will Smith is engaging as always and the action looks amazing. If you haven't seen the film, uh, try not to look too closely at the cover art or you'll realize it contains a spoiler. Extras include a digital copy, both theatrical and unrated versions, and a BluRay exclusive of on-set visual diaries. *The Chronicles Of Narnia: Prince Caspian* (\$40.99 or \$39.99 for the regular DVD special edition; Disney) has even more action and derring-do than the first in the series, which means it has strayed even farther away from the simple, gentle heart of

"Washington Unplugged"

Arianna was on CBS' "Washington..."

Alex Leo The "Real Housewives Of New York City" Flowchart Of Hate

I'm a little embarrassed to love this show as much as...

"BRUNO" TRAILER! Calamity, African Babies, Chase Scenes And More (NSFW VIDEO)

IT'S HERE! The trailer for this Jul's Sacha Baron Cohen...

NATO Leaders Focus On Afghanistan, But Most Reject Obama's Plea For Troops (SLIDESHOW)

STRASBOURG, France — On the eve of the NATO...

First Lady Fashion At Friday's NATO Concert (PHOTOS)

Another night, another fashion opportunity for NATO leaders and their spouses! See...

Diana Palin, Sarah Palin's Sister-In-Law, Arrested For Breaking Into Home

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — Police say Alaska Gov...

John Oliver Explains The Real Reason You Never Touch The Queen (VIDEO)

John Oliver was upset enough to drop his monocle when he...

Obama Teases Reporter From India During Press Conference (VIDEO)

Obama held a conference packed with press from around the world on Thursday. He called...

Jim Cramer Declares The Depression "Over" (VIDEO)

On Thursday's episode of "Mad Money" host Jim Cramer declared that the depression...

Scientists Find Rocket Fuel Chemical In Infant Formula

ATLANTA — Traces of a chemical used in rocket fuel were found in samples of...

Least Wasteful Cities In America (SLIDESHOW)

It's great to love the city you live in, and better to

the books by C.S. Lewis. No wonder it stumbled at the box office. When will they realize that "Narnia" is not an action franchise? Ben Barnes as Caspian poses like a runway model on the DVD cover but I'll take Peter or Edmund as heroes over Caspian any day. Loads of DVD extras and the computerized special effects do play better on BluRay. If Criterion's *The Spy Who Came In From The Cold* wasn't enough Richard Burton for you, dive into *Becket* (\$34.98; MPI), his costume epic about the Chancellor with a soul, which proves awfully inconvenient. Finally, what better way to remember George Carlin than by watching *It's Bad For Ya* (\$24.98 or \$19.98 on regular DVD; MPI), which shows Carlin as irascible and often as funny as ever?

MORE MOVIES -- I wanted to believe in *The X-Files: I Want To Believe* Special Edition (\$34.98; Fox) but it proved just a so-so episode of the series. Still, fans who skipped it in the theaters should find enough reason to check it out. An ok episode is better than no episode at all from one of the best sci-fi series in TV history. *Wanted Special Edition* (\$34.98; Universal) is an enjoyably ludicrous action flick with James McAvoy of all people proving he can carry a gun with aplomb. Chad Lowe's directorial debut is the low-key *Beautiful Ohio* (\$19.95; IFC) with an excellent cast including William Hurt, Julianna Margulies, Michelle Trachtenberg and newcomer Brett Davern. *Lower Learning* (\$26.97; Anchor Bay) is a comedy about teachers starring Jason Biggs, Eva Longoria Parker and Rob Corddry that has little to recommend it. The title is the funniest thing about it, I'm afraid. Israeli film *My Father My Lord* (\$29.95; Kino) is a critically acclaimed story about life in an ultra-Orthodox Hasidic community. Two new indie gay releases -- *Between Something & Nothing* and *Into It* (\$29.95 each; Waterbearer Films) -- both center around male prostitutes, which is like having 90% of movies about straight people center around drug dealers. No wait, that was the stereotype for blacks in the Seventies. It's like having them all be hookers. No, that's still the stereotype for women -- try to find a working actress who hasn't played a whore; it ain't easy. Ah well.

TV ON DVD -- *The Best Of Dr. Katz: Professional Therapist* (\$19.99; Paramount) is a good introduction to the squiggly series about the best therapist since Bob Newhart. If they'd been a little more generous with the running time, this would be all you need. *Daniel Boone Season 6* (\$49.95; Liberation) is the last season of the Western starring Fess Parker, who forever kept me confused as to the difference between Boone and Davy Crockett since he played both of them. The show was never a huge hit, but it peaked at #21 in its fifth season until the smash hit *Family Affair* sent it packing. You get all 26 episodes and some modest extras and the chance to have that theme song lodged in your brain all over again. *24: Redemption* (\$26.98; Fox) wasn't a smash in the ratings but it was lean and tough (I loved the ad that said "Hope has a fighting chance" and showed Bauer packing some serious heat) and is a good sign for the new season in January. *Law & Order Sixth Year* (\$59.98; Universal) is the latest release in the venerable crime season They better speed them up or they'll never catch up to the show itself. *Gomer Pyle U.S.M.C. The Final Season* (\$39.98; Paramount) was the fifth and last season for the worst Army recruit since Beetle Bailey. But he did have a lovely singing voice. *Mister Peepers Season 2* (\$39.95; S'more) is the fifties sitcom about a shy, unassuming science teacher (Wally Cox). I think he would have got along swimmingly with the blithe schoolteacher at the heart of Mike Leigh's *Happy Go Lucky*, one of the better films of the year. This is the season where Peepers marries his sweetheart, Nurse Remington. William Conrad was an unlikely TV star, so unlikely that one show called him simply Fatman. But *Cannon Season One Volume Two* and *Jake and the Fatman Season One Volume Two* (\$37.99 each; Paramount) both show him commanding the screen with authority. And viewers followed him everywhere: I can remember *Fatman* bouncing all over the TV schedule and viewers tracking it down and keeping it a hit wherever it was placed. Now *that's* a star.

FAMILY AFFAIR -- One of the best DVDs of the week just happens to be perfect for family viewing -- but don't let that stop you if your family's not around. *Sounder* (\$14.98; Koch) is a tear-jerker with Cicely Tyson in top form as a woman holding her family together during the Depression. *Misty* (\$14.98; Koch) isn't up to those high standards but it's fine, especially for animal lovers who can't get enough of children-and-their-horse movies. *The Longshots* (\$28.95; Dimension/Genius) is the modern equivalent of those flicks, with teddy bear Ice Cube discovering his niece sure knows how to throw a football. *The Nutty Professor* (\$19.98; Weinstein/Genius) is an animated spin on the Jerry Lewis classic. It's done on the cheap but Drake Bell is an appealing lead and Lewis was born to do voice work; quick, someone call Pixar. Two so-so movies prove animated cartoons shouldn't always make the leap to the big screen: *Hey There, It's Yogi Bear* and *The Man Called Flintstone* (\$19.98 each; Warner Bros.). Don't feel bad, guys. It didn't work for the



HUFFPOST'S BIG NEWS PAGES

Women's Rights	Michelle Obama	Europe
Newspapers	Cars	War Wire
Video	Financial Crisis	Barack Obama

[MORE BIG NEWS PAGES](#)

Books by this author

This Blogger's Books from amazon.com.

A cabin of one's own: New England's MacDowell Colony celebrates 100 years of artistic utopia. And the gay and lesbian artists who prospered there celebrate ... (The national gay & lesbian newsmagazine)
by Michael Giltz

Affairs to remember: Farley Granger bedded Ava Gardner, Shelley Winters, and Leonard Bernstein. In his autobiography, Include Me Out, Hitchcock's muse ... (The national gay & lesbian newsmagazine)
by Michael Giltz

If You Paid in Full or Made a Percentage Co-Payment for Brand Name Prescription Drugs You Could Get a Payment

Click Here - www.AWPClassActions.com

Peanuts gang, either.

ETC. -- *Paul Simon: Live From Philadelphia* (\$9.98; Eagle Rock) is a bare bones concert just 53 minutes long with Simon at a crossroads: his movie *One Trick Pony* would flop and he'd record a reunion album with Art only to erase Art's vocals and release *Hearts & Bones* to relative indifference before finally being reborn with *Graceland*. But you can't have any doubt he'd endure when Simon can reel off songs like "Me and Julio Down By The Schoolyard," "Something So Right" and "Late In The Evening." *Rush: Snakes & Arrows Live* (\$24.98; Zoe) with the prog rock institution finally getting some respect from *Rolling Stone* and proving why in this October 2007 concert in the Netherlands. *Nickelback: Live At Sturgis 2006* (\$19.98; Koch) captures a band that hopes they won't have to wait that long for their respect, but a 12 song set (even in high def) and only available at Wal-Mart (I hate exclusives) is no way to earn it. *Orthodox Stance* (\$24.95; C3) is an acclaimed documentary about a Russian immigrant who wants to both box and remain an observant Jew. Other new documentaries include *A Man Named Pearl* (\$26.95; Docurama) about a man who fights prejudice with a weed whacker; *The World Within* (\$29.95; Kino) about the ideas of Jung; and *In The Gutter* (\$19.97; Anchor Bay) an unremarkable look at gross-out comedies. Animal lovers will enjoy the boxed set *Growing Up* (\$39.95; Genius), which includes five DVDs covering baby animals as in *Growing Up Primates*, *Growing Up Wildcats*, *Growing Up Arctic* and so on. If you're not cold enough, *Arctic Exposure* (\$24.95; Genius) is a five part series following zoologist Nigel Marven as he travels all over the Canadian Arctic. And folks who hate choke chains will love *The Loved Dog by Tamar Geller* (\$19.95; New Video), a warm and fuzzy approach to working with your dog. Finally, two over-stuffed wrestling DVD sets: *The History of the Intercontinental Championship* and *Viva La Raza: The Legacy Of Eddie Guerrero* (\$34.95 each; WWE) and both filled with more than 25 matches and loads of extras.

So tell me, what do you think are Ron Howard's four best movies?

More in Entertainment...



- SNL: Madonna And Angelina In Weekend Update...
- Like A Boss: SNL Digital Short (VIDEO)
- Reality Star Jade Goody Buried In Lavish...

digg™ HuffPost Stories Surging Right Now

[Michelle Obama's Clothing Has Sean Hannity All Out Of Sorts](#)

[RICHARD POPLAWSKI, Pittsburgh Gunman, Kills 3 Police Officers](#)

[Dr. Rachel Ehrenfeld: Does Iran Harbor Osama bin Laden?](#)

[John Demjanjuk, Ohio Man Accused Of Being Nazi Guard, Avoids Deportation](#)

Sponsored Links

The Most \$100K+ Jobs
 Search 72,384 Jobs that pay over \$100,000 at TheLadders.com.
www.TheLadders.com

"My Teeth Are so White"
 Read the trick, discovered by a mom, to turn yellow teeth white.
CathysTeeth.com

Arthritis Information
 Sign Up to Receive a Free Info Kit About Rheumatoid Arthritis.
www.RAStraightTalk.com

[Buy a link here](#)

Comments 3 Pending Comments 0

[FAQ: Comments & Moderation](#) [FAQ: HuffPost Accounts](#)

Want to reply to a comment? Hint: Click "Reply" at the bottom of the comment; after being

approved your comment will appear directly underneath the comment you replied to

View Comments: [Newest](#) [Expand](#)
[First](#) [All](#)

[Yat1954](#) [See Profile](#) [I'm a Fan of Yat1954](#) [permalink](#)

In no particular order:

Night Shift "Is this a great country or what?"

Apollo 13 "Gentlemen, it's been a pleasure flying with you."

Parenthood "Ah, that was money well spent!"

Cocoon "If I fall and break my hip, I can't sue anybody."

[Favorite](#) [Flag as abusive](#) [Posted 11:47 AM on 12/08/2008](#)

[Michael Giltz](#) [See Profile](#) [I'm a Fan of Michael Giltz](#) [permalink](#)

You got me. Early on, he wasn't with them. And Da Vinci Code was a huge property he came on to later. Oh and Ransom was also Disney (ie Touchstone). But since 1989 a good 90% of his movies have indeed been for Universal. When you toss in the movies he and Brian grazer have produced for Universal, the projects they've brought to that studio are so many that people talked about the two of them running the studio at one point. I've associated them in my mind for so long with the studio that I failed to make the proper caveat. but given their intense relationship w Universal, I still think that just four movies when they had nine in all (and could have licensed the others easily enough) wasn't giving his work proper due.

[Favorite](#) [Flag as abusive](#) [Posted 03:48 AM on 12/06/2008](#)

[GoogieGomez](#) [See Profile](#) [I'm a Fan of GoogieGomez](#) [permalink](#)

Ron Howard has made virtually all of his films for Universal ?

'The Missing' is owned by Sony

'Cocoon' is owned by Fox

'Splash' was made for Disney / Touchstone

'Night Shift' is at Warner Bros.

'Willow' is MGM

'Da Vinci Code' (and the upcoming 'Angels & Demons') is Sony.

[Favorite](#) [Flag as abusive](#) [Posted 12:30 AM on 12/06/2008](#)

Comments are closed for this entry

You must be [logged in](#) to reply to this comment. [Log in](#) or

Ads by Google

Deep Discount DVDs
Low Price Films, Movies, Box Sets DVDs with
Free Shipping
DeepDiscount.com/DVDs



Google Custom Search

[HOME](#) [POLITICS](#) [MEDIA](#) [BUSINESS](#) [ENTERTAINMENT](#) [LIVING](#) [GREEN](#) [STYLE](#) [WORLD](#) [CHICAGO](#) [COMEDY](#) [FUNDRACE](#)

[Advertise](#) | [Login](#) | [Make HuffPost your Home Page](#) | [RSS](#) | [Jobs](#) | [FAQ: Comments & Moderation](#) | [FAQ: Huffpost Accounts](#) | [Contact Us](#)
Copyright © 2009 HuffingtonPost.com, Inc. | [Archive](#) | [User Agreement](#) | [Privacy](#) | [Comment Policy](#) | [About Us](#) | [Powered by Movable Type](#)

