

April 28, 2014

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POST

ENTERTAINMENT

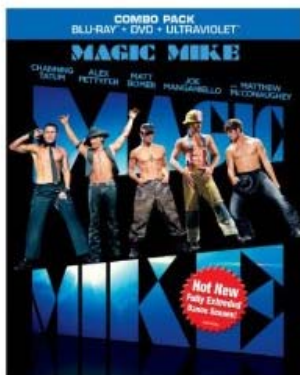
DVDs: Strippers, Miners and the Twee Wes Anderson Strikes Again

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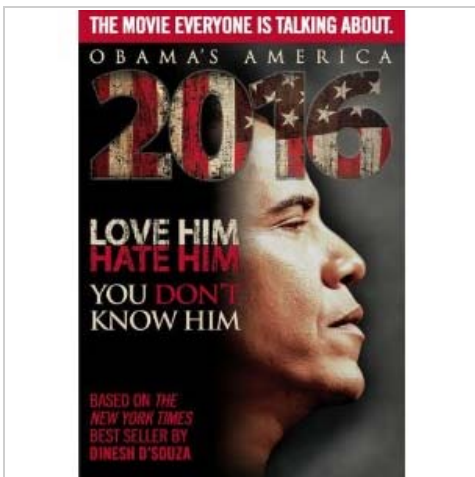
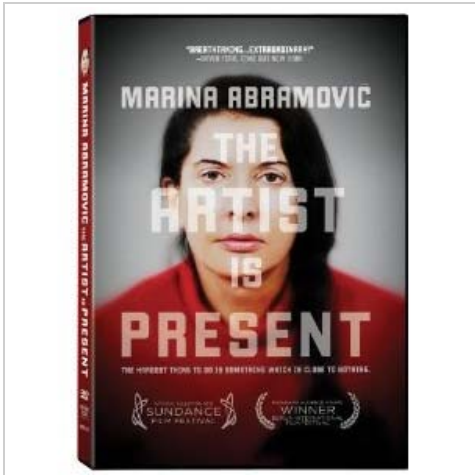
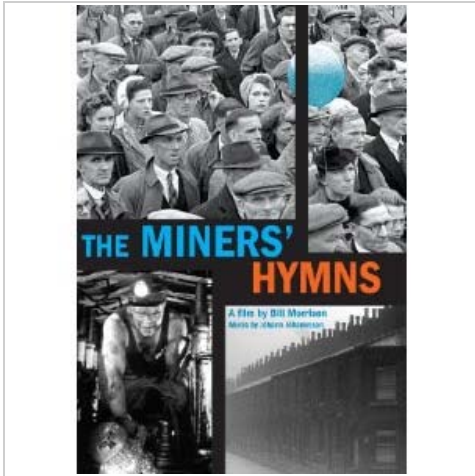
MOONRISE KINGDOM (\$34.98 BluRay combo; Universal) -- At this point, either you find director Wes Anderson's sensibility tiresome and twee or you used to like it but can't bear the cult of personality around his body of work or you're in all the way. I'm in all the way and I know I'll be seeing his movies for years to come, just like I saw every Woody Allen movie for a decade. It's the same film he's made before? Hardly, but it is made with the same care and distinctive style; someone called them bespoke films and that captures it perfectly. Wes Anderson's movies are handmade and keyed to his particular

concerns and from the wonderfully shot first scene to the last you know you are experiencing exactly what he wants you to. This tale of a young boy and girl who are rebellions (he's an orphan and she's unmoored because her parents are slipping away from each other). They fall in love and run away. And then they're found. But mixed in is classical music, a superior Khaki Scout troop leader (an amusing Edward Norton) and Anderson's usual cast of characters including Bill Murray. It's intelligent, funny and has more genuine emotion than any live action movie he's made since *The Royal Tennenbaums*. Which is another way of saying, yes, this is a new Wes Anderson film just like the last Wes Anderson film but just as with Woody in his heyday every two or three films there'd be a corker. This one is a corker.



MAGIC MIKE (\$35.99 BluRay combo; Warner Bros.) -- I saw this movie with my sister, 200 other women and maybe -- maybe! -- two other men. But guys needn't avoid this flick in fear if their girlfriends or wives want to watch it. It's much closer to *Boogie Nights* than say *Coyote Ugly* or a genuine chick flick. Director Steven Soderbergh is definitely trying for a serious story here amongst all the skin and fun, the age old story of a new kid mentored by an older pro trying to make it in a rough and tough industry. Soderbergh doesn't succeed but the result is more interesting than you might

expect, Matthew McConaughey has fun as the wily head of the male stripper club and Channing Tatum edges closer to the earnest appeal of a Mark Wahlberg than one would have imagined he was capable of. Besides, guys, you might learn a few good dance moves.



THE MINERS' HYMNS (\$29.98 DVD; Icarus)

MARINA ABRAMOVIC: THE ARTIST IS PRESENT (\$29.95 DVD; Music Box)

2016: OBAMA'S AMERICA (\$19.98 DVD; Lionsgate)

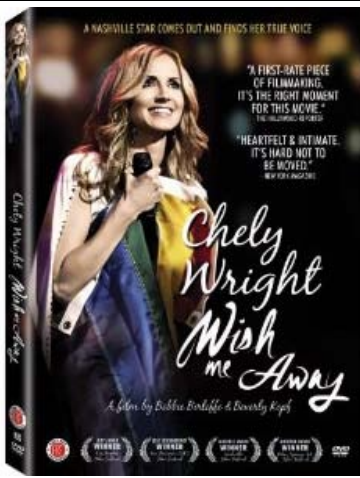
CHELY WRIGHT WISH ME AWAY (\$27.95 DVD; First Run)

STEPHEN HAWKINGS' BRAVE NEW WORLD (\$49.99 DVD; Athena) --

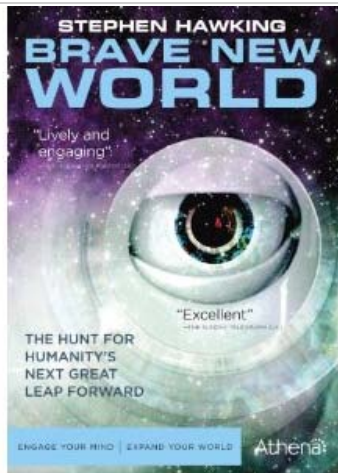
The Miners' Hymns is quite simply one of the best and most beautiful films of the year. Director Bill Morrison (the landmark *Decasia*) sculpts found footage of life in an England mining town into an elegy for a vanishing way of life and the union movement that forged it and kept it alive for decades. The fights between unions and management provide arresting moments, as do annual gatherings of unionists from around the country. But this wordless spectacle transcends the specific and you certainly don't need to own a copy of *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropist* in order to enjoy it. The capper is a stunning score by Johann Johannsson that makes this montage positively mesmerizing and gives it the feel of a grand state funeral. Three bonus shorts include more innovative work by Morrison but it's *The Miners' Hymns* that will linger in your memory. A thoroughly original work. Other documentaries out now include a look at the acclaimed performance artist Marina Abramovic, the silly conspiracy-theory minded documentary *2016: Obama's America* which somehow became one of the most successful documentary films of all time, the inspiring look at country singer Chely Wright's decision to come out professionally and a UK TV series in which Steven Hawking guides you to the wonders of science like driver-less cars and exo-skeletons that can help the physically challenged walk.

NEIL YOUNG JOURNEYS (\$35.99 BluRay; Sony Pictures Classics) --

Director Jonathan Demme has made three concert film documentaries with Neil Young and each one is distinctive, just like Young's increasingly impressive body of work. *Heart of Gold* captured



Young's gentle acoustic side, *Trunk Show* stepped closer to his rocking side and this quirky combination of road movie has Young reminiscing about his life (Young has just published a rambling memoir) interspersed with more music, mainly from his fiercely loud solo album *Le Noise*, which I loved. An original.



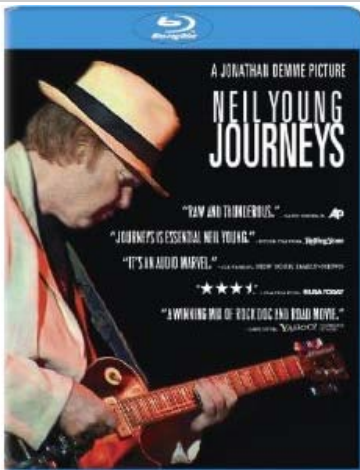
MADAGASCAR 3: EUROPE'S MOST WANTED (\$39.99 BluRay combo with rainbow wig; Paramount/DreamWorks)

SECRET OF THE WINGS (\$49.99 BluRay combo; Disney)

LOONEY TUNES PLATINUM COLLECTION VOLUME TWO

(\$44.98 BluRay; Warner Bros.) --

Madagascar 3 is out! Sadly, the most amusing part of this release is the rainbow wig that comes with the deluxe edition. This remains one of the more anonymous and puzzlingly successful animation franchises to date. There's no secret as to why a string of straight-to-DVD movies starring Tinkerbell are smash hits. Disney spares no expense in making this releases far superior to TV or other straight-to-DVD releases. In this story, Tink makes a new fairy friend that's just like her (literally) and of course lessons are learned but it's painless and quite pretty at times. Don't be surprised if the directors Roberts Gannaway and Peggy Holmes (who also worked on the script) make the leap to feature films soon. Finally, you probably already know that Looney Tunes is responsible for some of the greatest animated shorts in history. You get a grab bag of stuff on this BluRay release including some genuine rarities that are unfortunately slapped onto a third disc in so-so quality because they didn't have the money or time to remaster them, The main shorts look great and are worth getting of course. But this entire series is a mishmash of overlapping collections (Volume Two of this BluRay series doesn't even use the same packaging as Volume One, which is annoying) that repeat all sorts of classic





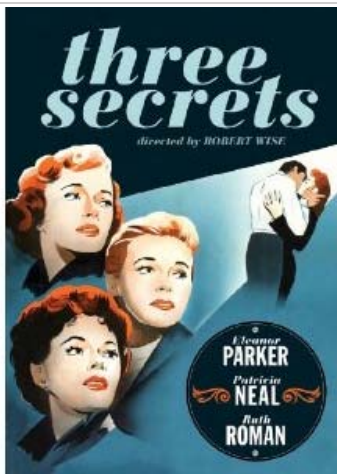
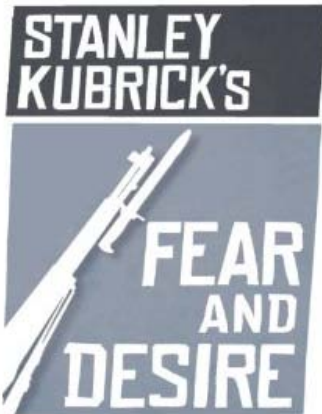
titles and leave others out of the mix. Genuine fans who eagerly buy this stuff are frustrated and it's easy to see why. Develop one or two disc greatest hits packages for the casual fans and genuine boxed sets that cover the runs of Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies and other facets of their library in exhaustive, loving form and everyone will win. it's their legacy and it's more valuable than ever to preserve and present in top form, thanks to streaming services that make this stuff invaluable. Now do it right.

FEAR AND DESIRE (\$29.95 DVD; Kino)

LETTER FROM AN UNKNOWN WOMAN (\$24.95 BluRay; Olive/Paramount)

THREE SECRETS (\$24.95 BluRay; Olive/Paramount)

UPTIGHT (\$29.95 BluRay; Olive/Paramount) -- Stanley Kubrick always tried to disown his debut film *Fear And Desire*. He never mentioned it and tried to keep it from ever being shown. That's silly. It's by no means good, but given his career it will always be of interest to fans (especially given its overlap with *Full Metal Jacket* and *Paths Of Glory*, not to mention director Paul Mazursky in a role). Kino also includes a documentary short Kubrick released the same year that makes this essential for completists of the director. I'm going to rip apart Universal soon for their shoddy release of an Alfred Hitchcock boxed set. But somehow I have different standards for tiny companies trying to make available lesser known films that would otherwise not be seen at all. Still, it's heartbreaking to see a classic like Max Ophuls' *Letter From An Unknown Woman* out on BluRay in anything other than a superior, remastered version it richly deserves. Still, I suppose it's better than nothing and shocking that such a



major film hasn't been around for ages. *Three Secrets* is a far lesser melodrama directed by Robert Wise but it's also of interest. *Uptight* is the real surprise: it's a Jules Dassin remake of John Ford's *The Informers* set in a Cleveland ghetto and with a score by Booker T and the MGs. I've never even heard of it, much less seen it. All three look okay on BluRay, nothing special and no extras to speak of.

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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