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 **Michael Giltz**
Freelance writer and raconteur

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DVDs: Tracy and Hepburn -- The Greatest Screen Team Of All Time

Posted: 04/15/11 05:24 PM ET

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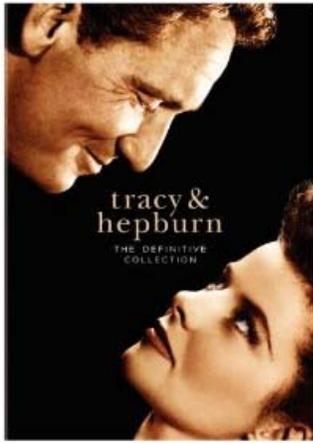
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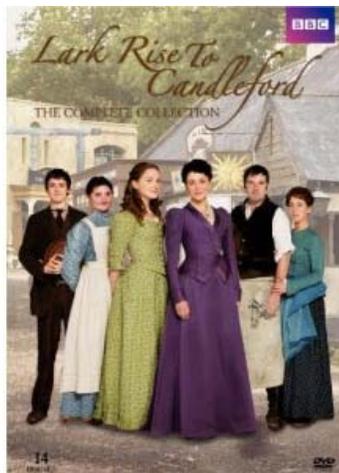
Jerry Seinfeld, Donald Trump Rip Each Other In Heated Political War Of Words

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PlayStation Network Could Be Down For Days



TRACY & HEPBURN: THE DEFINITIVE COLLECTION (\$59.98; Warner Bros.) -- So what's your pick for the greatest screen team of them all? William Powell and Myrna Loy? (I do love *The Thin Man*.) Bob Hope and Bing Crosby with their nutty *Road* movies? Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor? Laurel and Hardy? Focus on actors who made at least a few movies together. Think all you like about it -- my money is on Spencer Tracy and Katharine Hepburn. This boxed set makes the case. They made nine films together: two are pretty dull (*Sea of Grass* and *Keeper Of The Flame*) and one is well-intentioned and very dull (*Guess Who's Coming To Dinner*). That leaves six films that are good to great. Among the good are *Desk Set* and *Pat & Mike* and *Without Love*. The greats? *Woman Of The Year*. *State Of The Union*. *Adam's Rib*. That would be enough for any career but those are just the movies they made together. Tracy is simply the greatest screen actor of them all; his naturalness on camera is a wonder to behold. Listen to him deliver a speech in *Union* about the greatness of this country and see how he makes it sound so convincing and true, an idea that just popped into his head. (Please, someone get Obama to watch this film. It could have been written yesterday.) And no one ever listened better to their co-stars, fed them more energy and support. Hepburn ain't so bad herself. And together they have that chemistry that so many movies strive for but rarely reach. The way her eyes shine when looking at him in *Dinner*. The way they fight in *Adam's Rib*, in only the way people in love can truly fight. Their dynamic is still my image of what a relationship should be: two equals, holding on to their own identities and ideals just as strongly as they fight for and love the other. The capper is Hepburn's TV tribute to Tracy after he died. If you don't tear up when she reads the letter she wrote to her late love, then I don't want to know you. Now tell me your pick for the best team of them all. Or if you prefer, the runners-up to Tracy & Hepburn.



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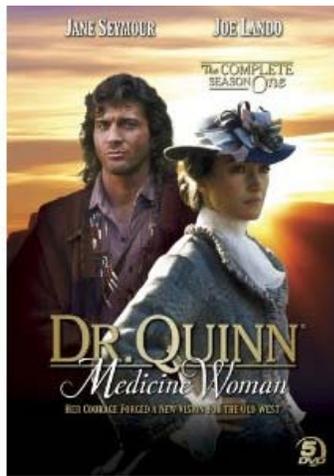
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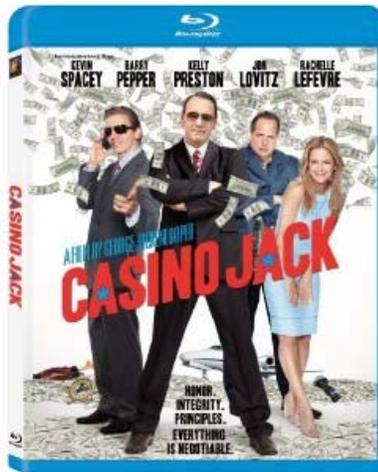


LARK RISE TO CANDLEFORD COMPLETE COLLECTION (\$179.98; BBC)

DR. QUINN MEDICINE WOMAN SEASON ONE (\$29.95; A&E)

HIGHWAY TO HEAVEN SEASON ONE (\$29.95; A&E)

Family programming is very hard to make well, avidly looked for by audiences who don't always want edgy material when they're sitting down together with their kids to see some drama and often treated with disdain by networks even when the shows are hits. Brenda Hampton created *7th Heaven*, one of the biggest drama hits of all time and yet all the networks spurned her ideas for new shows and Hampton found a new home on ABC Family. *Lark Rise* was -- I emphasize was -- one of the biggest hits of them all in the UK. And yet new programming heads decided they had too many period dramas and cancelled it outright in the midst of its fourth season. Fans can catch up with this solid, very well-acted show about a young woman who leaves her small village to work in the bustling town of Cranford, which itself is pretty small, so it all feels rather Little House-ish with a British accent. *Dr. Quinn* and *Highway To Heaven* are also out again in single season sets at \$30 each. How did I miss Joseph Gordon-Levitt popping up in season one of *Quinn*? Enjoy them; major TV networks are too busy trying to find the next bloody and violent *Sopranos* to waste their time with TV families always want to watch.



CASINO JACK (\$29.98 BluRay or \$22.98 regular DVD; FOX) -- Kevin Spacey stars in this broad, loopy look at Jack Abramoff, the disgraced lobbyist who was once the toast of K Street and had direct access to the White House. We start with Spacey in prison, so we know Abramoff is headed for a fall. But while Spacey has snap in the role, it's not that interesting to see him and his partner get ballsier and more crude in their influence peddling. I wish there were more sting, either in Abramoff's self-awareness of his crimes or our awareness of how much we might enjoy similar power. But they're basically jerks with no real talent for anything but bullying and coercion, so what's the fun in that? Jon Lovitz however steals away with another movie, thanks to his droll and very funny turn as a mattress king looking to get into casinos. A movie about him? Now that would be worth gambling on.



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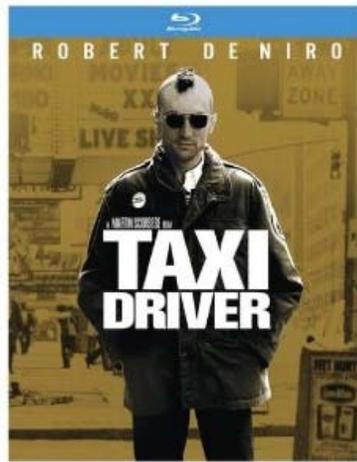
Viral Star Antoine Dodson ARRESTED



Gwyneth Paltrow Is Right. We're All Jealous. (Of Her and George W. Bush.)

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◀ 1 of 3 ▶



TAXI DRIVER ON BLURAY (\$24.95; Sony) -- James Cameron and Peter Jackson have made a lot of noise about shooting movies at a higher speed (48 or 60 frames per second instead of the usual 24 fps). That might eliminate the headaches some feel when watching 3-D and definitely provides a startling increase in image quality that Jackson compared to the difference between an LP and a compact disc. Did you know that BluRays can display movies at 60 fps? You need a high quality TV to get the benefits of course, but I must say that watching Taxi Driver on BluRay has blown me away. It feels like a completely different experience, radically changed from how I saw it on what always seemed like muddy prints in the past. It's different emotionally and visually in subtle and obvious ways. Is this what Martin Scorsese was looking at on his editing deck and what he wanted us to see, the way so many classic albums sound closer to the original masters on CD than an audio cassette ever could? This comes loaded with bonus features but the real bonus is to watch a movie that may be overly familiar to you and have it seem so fresh and new.



HARRY POTTER AND THE DEATHLY HALLOWS PART 1 (\$35.99 BluRay combo pack; Warner Bros.) -- Yes, this movie felt like one long prelude to the whiz bang action we're going to see in the finale. (I for one can't wait to see Maggie Smith leading a charge of desks.) The Potter DVDs have always been stuffed with extras and then restuffed on more elaborate sets down the road. Surely there will be one massive boxed set when all is said and done so you know whether to dive in or wait. I will say this set offers a BluRay, a DVD and a digital copy. It's on sale for about \$23, which is pretty darn good. You can get just a DVD or BluRay for \$14 or \$17 respectively, so they're all quite good deals and it's nice to see BluRay slowly lowering its prices to meet regular DVDs. They shouldn't be a premium, just a nice bonus for those who keep buying DVDs and want the best quality.



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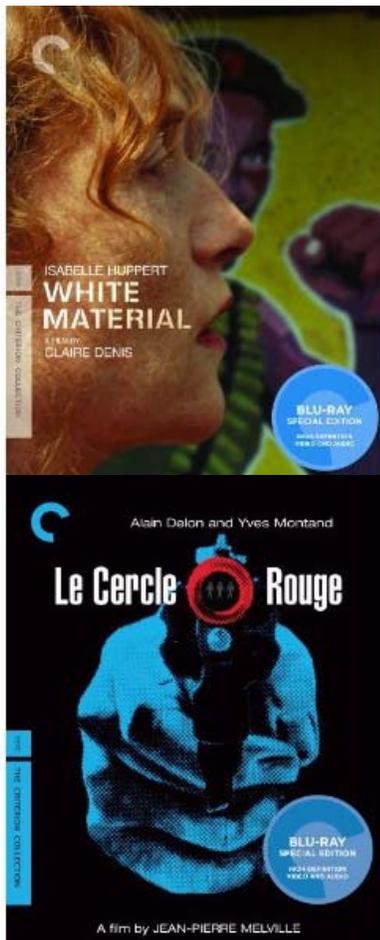


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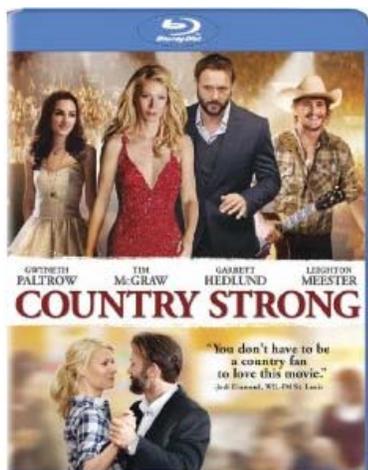
WHITE MATERIAL

LE CERCLE ROUGE (\$39.95 each on BluRay; Criterion) -- Criterion presents with care the latest film from director Claire Denis. It shows a white woman in an African country who refuses to abandon the family farm even as rebels overtake the government and threaten to wipe out competing tribes and of course colonial whites (even ones born and raised there). One reads about such people and thinks, "Why would they stay?" This film does a good job of getting under the skin of one such woman, played by Isabelle Huppert. It goes off the rails at the end, but it's intelligently made, boasts a great score by Tindersticks and comes with the solid extras pne expects. Jean-Pierre Melville made so many great crime films -- Riffifi, Le Samorai, Bob Le Flambeur, Le Doulos -- it's hard to know where to begin. Why not with Le Cercle Rouge, featuring Alain Delon as an ex-con who pulls off an easy heist only to discover that it's just as hard to avoid mistakes after the crime as it is during it. one great bonus includes 30 minutes of on-set footage that gives you a peek at them while they work.

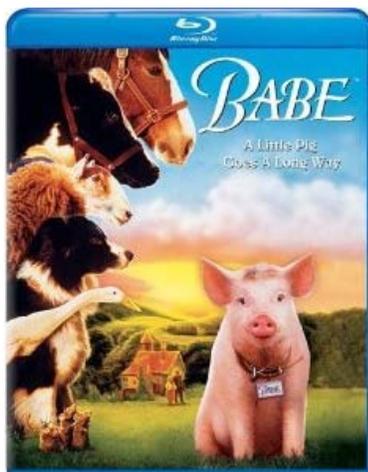


ANYTHING GOES (\$29.98; E One) -- If you can't make it to Broadway for the new blockbuster revival of Cole Porter's Anything Goes, check out this condensed version made for TV. It was performed live and features Ethel Merman in the role she indelibly stamped forever, along with a game Frank Sinatra and Bert Lahr. It's great fun to see them romping their way through the show and then taking bows in front

of a live audience. Catnip for theater buffs.



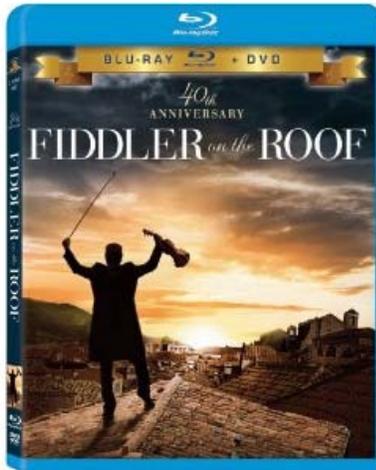
COUNTRY STRONG (\$34.95 BluRay or \$28.95 regular; Screen Gems; Sony) -- This is a curious little movie. It hits every cliché about a washed-up country singer (Gwyneth Paltrow) hoping for a comeback and watching younger and perkier women hot on her trail (Leighton Meester). And it ends terribly. But scene to scene it's actually kind of good, even though the script bungles by avoiding obvious steps like having Paltrow perform the song she writes with Garrett Hedlund at the very beginning when about to leave rehab. In fact, Paltrow's big moment in the spotlight is presented incompetently by writer-director Shana Feste, who never lets Paltrow deliver one big number for an emotional release but cuts and cuts from a piece of one song to another. Tim McGraw is fine as Paltrow's pushy husband. But the real delights were Hedlund and Meester, who have great chemistry together and sing well and even get the best musical moment: a duet called "Give In To Me," which bizarrely is only included on the second soundtrack and not the first.



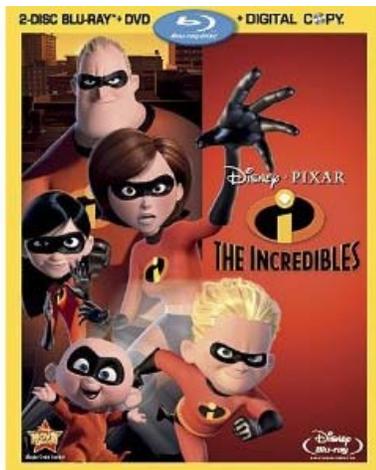
BABE (\$26.98; Universal) -- *Babe* is one of the greats, and just in the category of family films. It makes my short list for one of the best 100 movies of all time. It comes from writer-producer George Miller, who has unquestionably been creating one of the most unique bodies of work in film history. My only complaint is that the darker, weirder sequel *Babe: Pig In The City* isn't also on this disc as the perfect double bill. If you've never seen the original, you're in for a treat. But be forewarned: for a week or two afterwards, your kids may insist on being vegetarians.



H.R. PUFNSTUF: THE COMPLETE SERIES (\$34.97; Vivendi) -- I can't pretend this trippy little series by Sid & Marty Krofft is actually good; I can't claim it has a subversive crazy appeal and adults will discover an unexpected treat. No, it's just very strange and makes you wonder how it ever got on the air. But it does have a perverse pull for someone like me who saw the show when it originally aired. And God knows you can have a good laugh (not at it, with it -- everyone involved clearly knew this was campy nonsense) watching an episode or two. But the novelty soon fades. I am, however, inordinately pleased by the collectible bobblehead of Mr. Pufnstuf himself.



FIDDLER ON THE ROOF 40TH ANNIVERSARY (\$29.99 BluRay and DVD combo; MGM) -- Like *My Fair Lady*, this film has always seemed a rather turgid capturing of a landmark Broadway musical. Still, it's good to have Topol's Oscar-nominated performance captured forever and the movie certainly looks smashing. The extras are voluminous.



THE INCREDIBLES (\$45.99 BluRay combo pack; Disney) -- After the *Toy Story* trilogy, this might be the ideal introduction to what makes Pixar so great. It's a tremendous action film, a great superhero movie, a warm family drama and filled with humor. The attention to detail is marvelous with characters getting just as much focus as the set-pieces that will blow you away. The combo is a little pricey and they

don't offer a BluRay on its own, though for \$25 on sale, it's a good buy to have a BluRay for the home theater, a DVD for the car or boat and a digital copy for laptops and iPads. If it came to \$20 for the set, you'd be talking an unbeatable deal. And for a movie this good, I'd pay double. If you like *Spiderman* and *The Dark Knight* movies, you have to watch this (and probably already did).

DON'T FORGET: Let me know what your pick is for the greatest movie team of all time.

Thanks for reading. Michael Giltz is the co-host of Showbiz Sandbox, a weekly pop culture podcast that reveals the industry take on entertainment news of the day and features top journalists and opinion makers as guests. It's available free on iTunes. Visit Michael Giltz at his website and his daily blog. Download his podcast of celebrity interviews and his radio show, also called Popsurfing and also available for free on iTunes. Link to him on Netflix and gain access to thousands of ratings and reviews.

NOTE: Michael Giltz is provided with free copies of DVDs to consider for review. He typically does not guarantee coverage and invariably receives far more screeners and DVDs than he can cover each week. Also, Michael Giltz freelances as a writer of DVD copy (the text that appears on the back of DVDs) for some titles released by IFC and other subsidiaries of MPI. It helps pay the rent, but does not obligate him in any way to speak positively or negatively of their titles.

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NavyCaptret 13 minutes ago (3:37 PM)

13 Fans

Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland?
Paul Newman and Robert Redford?
Danny Glover and Mel Gibson (and Joe Pesci)?
Meg Ryan and Tom Hanks?
Joe Pesci and Robert DeNiro?
John Travolta and Samuel L. Jackson?

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HUFFPOST BLOGGER

Sal Nunziato 1 hour ago (2:23 PM)

45 Fans



Woody Allen & Diane Keaton. "Play It Again, Sam," "Sleeper," "Love & Death, " "Annie Hall," "Manhattan." Those 5 right there are both absolutely hilarious AND romantic. Then, just to show how wonderful the chemistry was almost 15 years later, "Manhattan Murder Mystery," one of Allen's most underrated.

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BillAnthony 16 hours ago (12:15 AM)

21 Fans

Being a big fan of director Jack Hill, the first pair to come to mind is Pam Grier and Sid Haig. Not necessarily portrayed as a romantic couple, sometimes deadly adversaries, always great on-screen chemistry together. They starred in at least three seminal 70's exploitation classics together. All have great trailers on YouTube, though not linked due to being more or less "NSFW" - The Big Doll House, Coffy, and The Big Birdcage.

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HUFFPOST BLOGGER

Michael Giltz 13 hours ago (3:10 AM)

78 Fans



Coffy is great fun. Clearly you're smarter about this genre than me.

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thoreau101 21 hours ago (7:02 PM)

104 Fans

The greatest movie team of all time? John Wayne and his Ego.

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triplettam 09:48 AM on 4/17/2011

729 Fans



Gotta go with William Powell and Myrna Loy. Even though they played the same characters in most of their pairings, they were perfect. John Wayne and Maureen O'Hara were great too. Non romantic

pairings; Abbot and Costello; Laurel and Hardy of course. But Walter Brennan and Gary Cooper made quite a few movies together. I can think of four right off the bat: "Meet John Doe," "Pride of the Yankees," "Sgt. York" and "The Westerner." All good. I'm sure there were others. Cary Grant and Irene Dunne made 3 good films together as well. "My Favorite Wife" is my favorite. The reaction scene in the elevator when Cary firsts sees Irene is iconic. And Irene pretending to be Cary's sister in "The Awful Truth" and singing that song? it doesn't get any better.

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nikkid39 01:30 AM on 4/17/2011

4 Fans

Grant and Dunne.

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HUFFPOST BLOGGER

Tallulah Morehead

03:38 AM on 4/17/2011

425 Fans



I didn't know Grant Tinker had ever worked with Dominick Dunne!

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nikkid39 11:29 AM on 4/17/2011

4 Fans

Actually I meant Grant Goodeve and Griffin Dunne. (Two can play) :-) Cary Grant and Irene Dunne, of course.

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dannyraindog 11:50 PM on 4/16/2011

387 Fans



One can make a case for hepburn and tracy but i would add that cooper and kate made the greatest rom. com. of alltime in bringing up baby!

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HUFFPOST BLOGGER

Tallulah Morehead

03:45 AM on 4/17/2011

425 Fans



"Cooper and Kate"? And in BRINGING UP BABY? Every time I've seen BRINGING UP BABY it starred Kate Hepburn and Cary Grant. There isn't anyone named Cooper in it, not even uncredited. If you mean Gary Cooper, he's not in BRINGING UP BABY. In fact, so far as I can find out, Gary Cooper and Kate Hepburn never worked together in anything, so I'm afraid they don't qualify as much of a screen team.

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Halsey 07:23 PM on 4/16/2011

312 Fans



Darn, I WISH I adored Tracy and Hepburn together on screen; it could provide hours of good viewing. I am the rare fish that never got it; not at a true core level. I preferred Hepburn on the one(I think only one) film with Bogart, African Queen. How many movies did Bacall and Bogart make? Was it the Big Sleep (I am obviously not well versed in this area. I just like what I like). I'd say Taylor/Burton moved me more (exception being Cleo). I remember laughing, at about at 14ish at a series of British comedies called "Carry On (then whatever the theme like Carry on Nurse. Does anyone else remember those? Are they are DVD? Thanks an forgive my ignorance.

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HUFFPOST BLOGGER

Tallulah Morehead 03:48 AM on 4/17/2011
425 Fans



The Carry On movies were great low-brow fun. There are, I think, about 26 of them. The first 12 are on DVD in a great boxed set I happen to have. The others have not been released on American DVD, unfortunately, though they are out on English PAL DVDs.

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PeterFormaini 07:17 AM on 4/16/2011

2 Fans

I absolutely adore their 2 best films - Adam's Rib and Desk Set. Their byplay in the latter is also classic - an indescribable chemistry that cannot be faked - or even acted - but comes from genuine love for each other.

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themightyabearld 03:51 AM on 4/16/2011

26 Fans

Good God! How can 'Catherine Hepburn'-in the one sub-head-get by your proofreaders...especially when her first name is spelled correctly less than one and a half inches away? Homonyms are one thing when the spelling is similar, but 'Katharine' is not remotely like 'Catherine'...at least not to anyone with reading skills beyond the third grade level.

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HUFFPOST BLOGGER

Michael Giltz 03:09 PM on 4/16/2011
78 Fans



Thanks for pointing that out. I didn't do the tags and might never have noticed if you hadn't mentioned. There are no proofreaders of the actual articles, however. They just go up the way I write them so any mistakes in the article itself are all mine.

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HUFFPOST BLOGGER

Tallulah Morehead 10:18 PM on 4/15/2011
425 Fans



Look, I love Tracy and Hepburn as much as the next movie fan, but The Greatest Screen Team was called The Marx Brothers. Laurel & Hardy a close second, and after that, I tend towards Karloff & Lugosi, and Peter Cushing & Christopher Lee. (who made 22 movies together, making Tracy & Hepburn mere pikers by comparison.) Give me a good monster movie over a rom-com any day.

Glad to see I'm not the only person to find the movie of FIDDLER ON THE ROOF "rather turgid."

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HUFFPOST BLOGGER

Michael Giltz 02:43 AM on 4/16/2011
78 Fans



I must admit I was thinking of movie duos. But The Marx Brothers are one of a kind indeed. I would feel more strongly about Laurel & Hardy if I had more chances to watch their shorts (which I understand contain by far their best work) but for some reason they're not readily available in the US. If you prefer monster movies, then I guess one of your dream teams would be Joan Crawford and Bette Davis in Whatever Happened To Baby Jane, right?

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HUFFPOST BLOGGER

Tallulah Morehead 08:25 PM on 4/16/2011
425 Fans



Well many of their shorts are available, if not always in very good condition. I grew up seeing the shorts on TV all the time, and know many of them very well indeed. Some are pretty weak, but the good ones vastly outnumber the weak ones, and a good-sized number of them are BRILLIANT. I felt like I was walking on Holy Ground when I walked up the Vendome Steps in Silverlake up and down which Laurel & Hardy carried that ill-fated piano in their Oscar-winning short THE MUSIC BOX. Just a month or two ago, TCM had a marathon of their shorts. Why weren't you watching them? Stan Laurel was a genius. (Stan was the major creative force in the team.) AVOID their 20th Century Fox films, as Stan asked us to, because they had no creative input at all, and they all suck!

Much as I enjoy BABY JANE, two women who so loathed each other that the hatred onscreen was but a pale reflection of the hatred on the set, is not my idea of a "team." A team works TOGETHER to do something. Bette and Joan were busy thinking up ways to sabotage each other. Joan wearing diving belt weights under her dress for the scene where Bette has to drag her out of bed, downstairs, and to the car, nearly doubling her weight, is funny as hell, but it's the opposite of teamwork.

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PeterFormaini 07:18 AM on 4/16/2011

2 Fans

'rather turgid'??

How about 'boring and sleep-inducing beyond belief'? :D

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HUFFPOST BLOGGER

Michael Giltz 03:09 PM on 4/16/2011

78 Fans



That's another way of putting it. I'd be harsher but I've never actually made it all the way through.

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bobzeschin 04:14 PM on 4/16/2011

3 Fans

I don't particularly like the film of "Fiddler" either, despite my friend Barry Dennen playing the rabbi's son, and one of the reasons is Topol, who gives me the same feeling that I have when I watch Simon Callow--that there's an invisible twin of him a few feet away giving himself a standing ovation. And when did a Russian peasant ever sound like he'd done a season or two with the Oxford University Dramatic Society? (P.S. He didn't win the Oscar in 1972--Gene Hackman won that year.)

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Tallulah Morehead 08:14 PM on 4/16/2011

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