

September 1, 2012

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## DVDs: Why Dr. Seuss Movies Suck

Posted: 08/08/2012 12:45 am

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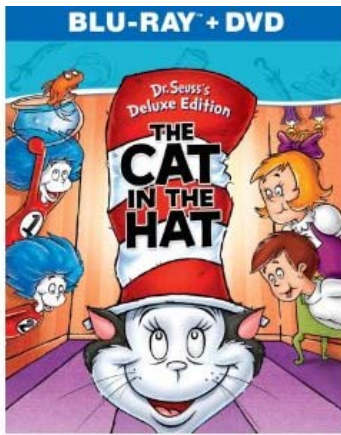
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### DON'T MISS HUFFPOST BLOGGERS

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**THE LORAX** (\$34.98 BluRay combo; Universal)

**THE CAT IN THE HAT DELUXE EDITION** (\$24.98 BluRay combo; Warner Bros.)

**MY LITTLE PONY: ROYAL PONY WEDDING** (\$14.97 DVD; Shout)

**MIA AND THE MIGOO** (\$19.98 DVD; EOne) -- Hollywood keeps making movies based on books by Dr. Seuss and they keep sucking. It's not hard to understand why when you see something like the 85 minute, padded out Hollywood flick *The Lorax* (complete with celeb voices like Zac Efron, Taylor Swift and Betty White) side by side with *The Cat In The Hat*, the 1971 TV special that's a trim and tight 25 minutes and features voice actors like Allan Sherman, Daws Butler, Thurl Ravenscroft and other people you've never heard of before. The Dr. Seuss books are typically 32 pages long (like most picture books) and contain very few words. Padding out those minimalist stories to feature length means adding in unnecessary chase scenes and subplots and other gilding that obscures the haiku-like masterpieces Seuss created. Mind you, even keeping it short doesn't guarantee success; the TV special version of *The Lorax* back in 1972 is better mostly because it's shorter than the film. The preachiness of one of Seuss's more didactic books comes through even more clearly. But there's no question you'll get much more value out of watching and rewatching *The Cat In The Hat* than the latest stab at puffing up a Seuss tale into a movie. That won't stop kids from wanting to see them; if you've got a little girl, it's quite likely you've had to endure *My Little Pony*. It's kind of cute that *Royal Pony Wedding* is tied into the Royal Wedding but comes out so long after Will and Kate tied the knot it seems sweetly out of step. But that's where the cuteness in this banal series ends. (Carterlot? Really?) Take a stab at a lesser known property and check out *Mia and the Migoo*. It too has a nature-friendly tale, just like *The Lorax*, not to mention a star-heavy cast including Whoopi Goldberg and Wallace Shawn. But the personal nature of this story and the care



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[Welcome to the American Republic, Mr. Eastwood](#)

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**Colin Ferguson Shows Up At LA Premiere**

**Spencer Matthews Talks About The Bachelor Winner Khloe**

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 **Celebs React To Eastwood's Wild Speech**

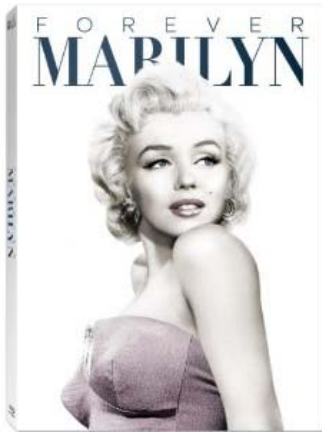
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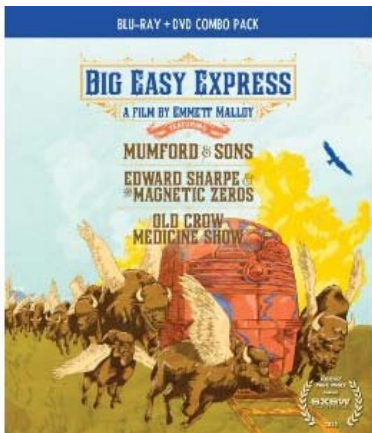
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with which the hand-drawn animation was created make this far more distinctive and engaging. And if your kid becomes crazy about it, you won't mind seeing it repeated a bazillion times so very much.



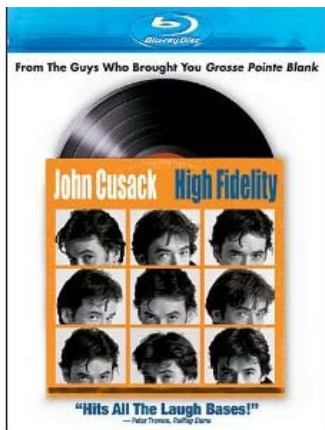
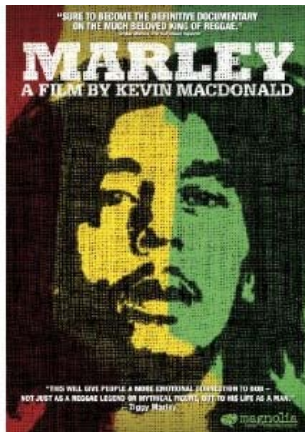
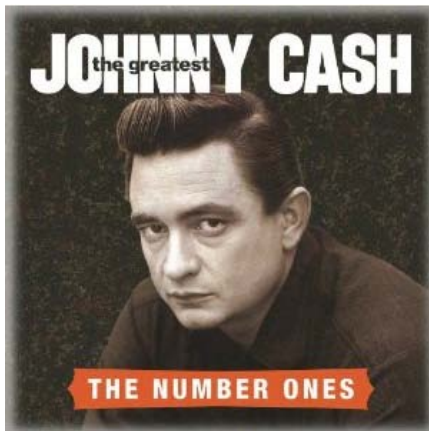
**FOREVER MARILYN** (\$99.98 BluRay; Fox) -- By now, the starlets who are famous for their breasts and their pin-ups have been reduced to a few iconic images. The actresses with genuine talent and star quality are remembered for their films. Hence this seven film collection of Marilyn Monroe which contains five movies new to Blu-ray and yet still has fans asking why was this movie left out and why was *that* movie left out and so on? At less than \$15 per film, this is a modestly packaged set with a cardboard case and those annoying sleeves in which you slide discs in and out and try not to scratch them. But where it really matters -- the quality of the images on the discs themselves. Her greatest film -- *Some Like It Hot* -- looks as good as recent reissues. The bauble *How To Marry A Millionaire* may be dated in its would-be modern sensibility but that makes its essentially romantic heart even more endearing. *There's No Business Like Show Business*, *River Of No Return* (with Robert Mitchum) and the truly dated *The Seven Year Itch* (a tiresome conceit that has not stood the test of time) are all fine looking and Monroe looks even better and is the best thing in them. But her last completed film *The Misfits* -- with Monroe holding her own next to Clark Gable and Montgomery Clift -- shows Monroe maturing beautifully. And *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* is just stunning. For those like me who prefer their movies in compact cases rather than say a pink powder puff that you'd end up storing in your closet anyway, this is a solid introduction to a major talent.



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**BIG EASY EXPRESS** (\$16.99 BluRay; Alliance)

**JOHNNY CASH: WE WALK THE LINE** (\$24.98 DVD; Legacy)

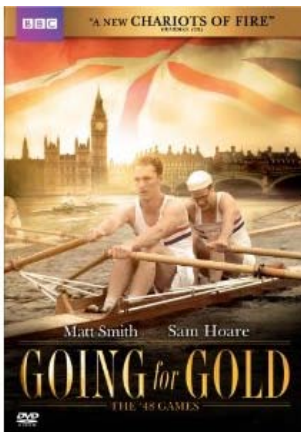
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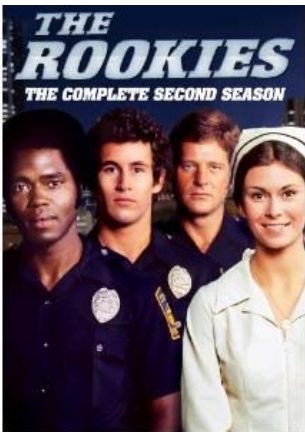
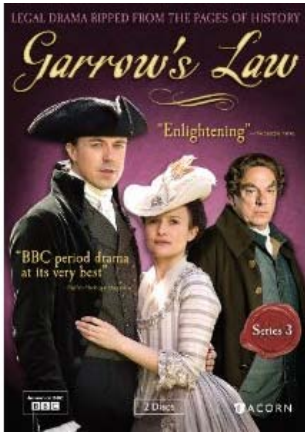
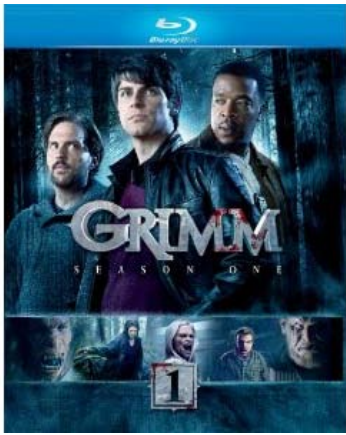
**MARLEY** (\$26.98 DVD; magnolia)

**FELA KUTI DOUBLE FEATURE** (\$24.96 DVD; Lorber)



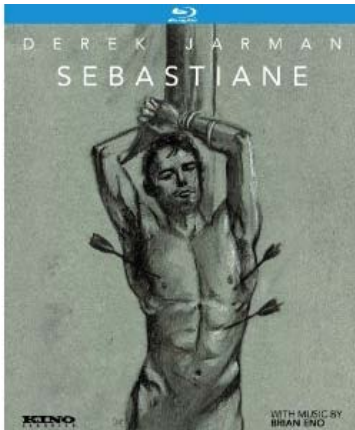
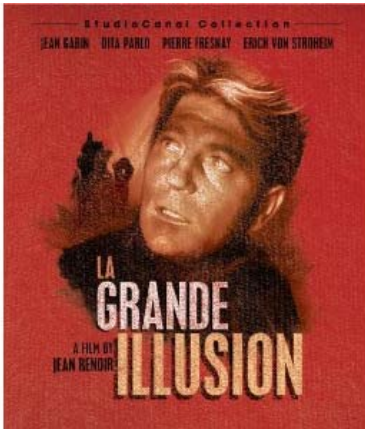
**HIGH FIDELITY** (S20 Blu-ray: Touchstone) -- *Big Easy Express* is an all-too brief concert film/documentary about a concert tour featuring Mumford & Sons, Edward Sharpe and Old Crow Medicine Show, three simpatico bands drawing upon Americana. The gimmick was that they rode the rails, traveling on a special train the entire way. It sounds like a blast. Unfortunately, for a fair amount of the 66 minute film everyone keeps telling us what a great time they're having and/or expounds on the meaning of it all. When the filmmaker stays in the corner and just observes everyone jamming, it's a delight akin to *Festival Express*. Modest highlights on this strictly for fans release include watching Mumford & Sons rehearse with a high school marching band and then cutting to the live performance where the kids are having the time of their lives, as well as a raucous finale on "Bound For Glory." Next time, more music please. *Johnny Cash: We Walk The Line* is a tribute to the Man in Black. These shows are a dime a dozen but the artists are especially focused and on their game, with Carolina Chocolate Drops a delight on "Jackson" and Kris Kristofferson the magnetic elder statesman on a few numbers. Also out are a string of nicely priced Cash compilations, led by *The Number Ones* (which contains 19 hits), *Duets*, *Gospel* and *Country Classics*. Each is just \$8 on their own and a good buy. Buy them all and mix them up and you'll have a pretty good introduction but the uninitiated are still better off with a Sun classics compilation and the live album *At Folsom Prison*. *Marley* is about two and a half hours long but Bob Marley's life and music and impact is so rich you almost wish it were a six hour TV miniseries instead. Fela Kuti was the Bob Marley of Africa and this useful two-fer is a good introduction to those who saw the Broadway show or have heard some of his magnetic music and want to know more. *Teacher Don't Teach Me No Nonsense* is an hour long documentary at its best when Kuti is talking or singing, the nearly 90 minute concert film from 1978 shows Kuti in fine teacher form, taking ten minutes for a glorifying introduction, a lecture on who he is and what he's going to do before actually getting down to sing. The sound quality isn't great but Kuti surely is. Finally, if you've read this far you're a true music fan so you're sure to enjoy John Cusack's *High Fidelity*, a fine translation of the novel to America and a love letter to music with some classic scenes in the record store that make it essential. Sadly, Cusack has hit a wall in the last decade and hasn't really done anything of more than modest interest. Maybe he *should* run for President...

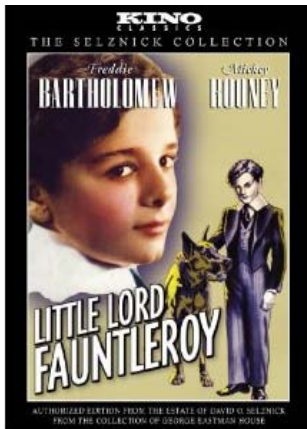




- MISFITS SEASON ONE** (\$24.98 DVD; BBC)
- GOING FOR GOLD: THE '48 GAMES** (\$19.97 DVD; BBC)
- GRIMM SEASON ONE** (\$69.98 BluRay; Universal)
- GARROW'S LAW SERIES 3** (\$39.99 DVD; Acorn)
- STRIKE BACK SEASON ONE** (\$59.96 BluRay combo; HBO/Cinemax)

**THE ROOKIES SECOND SEASON** (\$44.99 DVD; Shout) -- *Misfits* is a UK show about teens who suddenly develop supernatural powers and use them to protect their home town. *Buffy For Brits?* *Chronicle The TV Series?* Take your pick. It was initially seen here only on Hulu, which let this witty if modest show feel just right -- finding it on Hulu made it unique and surely Hulu is where a lot of its core audience lives. (Watching TV shows live is *so* 2008.) Some of those kids love *Dr. Who* so Matt Smith might lure them to this sports films about an unlikely duo competing in the 1948 Games. *Going For Gold* fine for those with an Olympics hangover, love *Chariots of Fire* or simply crush on Smith. *Grimm* is a show I watched for a few episodes and then moved on. TV has so much to offer it's hard to commit to a new show that doesn't wow you. but friends who love this sort of programming insist it found its footing about halfway through the season so if the mythology isn't too complicated, I'll catch up. *Garrow's Law* isn't nearly as interesting as the historical figure William Garrow that it's based on. But this legal period thriller is fine fare for those crazy about the genre. *Strike Back* is really season two, but it's the first one seen in the US (on Cinemax). A more action-oriented, more humorous spin on *24* and the frenetic UK show *Spooks*, it's good mindless fun the British accent makes you pretend it's more sophisticated than it actually is. Plus, I love their new tagline: Diplomacy Is Overrated. (And Season One was a stand-alone storyline so you won't be lost at all.) Finally, *The Rookies* was a typical Aaron Spelling offering with a patina of social concern by humanizing the LA police force. It's mostly fun just to see Kate Jackson of *Charlie's Angels* and Michael Ontkean of *Twin Peaks* in this early commercial success.





**LA GRANDE ILLUSION** (\$29.99 BluRay; Lionsgate)

**SEBASTIANE** (\$29.95 BluRay; Kino)

**THE TEMPEST** (\$29.95 BluRay; Kino)

**JOHNNY GUITAR** (\$29.95 BluRay; Olive)

**RIO GRANDE** (\$29.95 BluRay; Olive)

**LITTLE LORD FAUNTLEROY** (\$24.95 DVD; Kino) -- Some acclaimed movies to wind up the column.

La Grande Illusion often makes short lists of the greatest films of all time. But it drops out of the Top 50 in the latest Sight & Sound poll. Did they make a mistake? You judge via this fine looking print. Derek Jarman sees two early films get a BluRay release -- Sebastiane is a spin on Billy Budd that mythologizes a Christian saint and gay icon. The Tempest is Shakespeare on a dime with a musical finale Busby Berkeley would be proud of featuring "Stormy Weather," natch. Many aficionados consider Johnny Guitar one of director Nicholas Ray's greatest. I think they're out of their mind and the only real pleasure to derive from it is its campy goofiness. Joan Crawford agrees with me and who'd disagree with her (at least to her face)? Rio Grande is the soft landing for John Ford's Cavalry trilogy, whose first two films are classics. Still it has John Wayne and Maureen O'Hara in a dry run for The Quiet Man. Finally, Little Lord Fauntleroy is a predictable programmer despite its high-toned pedigree but it's clear even 76 years later why Freddie Bartholomew and Mickey Rooney were such huge child stars.

\*\*\*\*\*

*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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**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.

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**Joseph Schmoe**  
338 Fans

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11:17 AM on 08/09/2012

Every Seuss movie sucks. He and Bill Watterson (of Calvin & Hobbes fame) were struck from the same mold: no product line, no crappy merch based on wonderful characters who lived on the page, and that was enough.

Ted G. wasn't cold in his grave yet when his wife and family inked deals to market the heck out of every Seuss property, plus terrible cutting-room floor stuff such as "Daisy-head Maisy." It's all garbage.

Go back to the books; that's all any child needs for wonder, imagination and creativity.

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**BlackJAC**

*It's better to be a black king than a white knight*

## 1331 Fans

07:19 PM on 08/08/2012

You're aware that the target audience for Dr. Seuss movies is children whose ages are still in the single digits, right?

Also, it's technically Season 2 of *Strike Back*, for there was a six-part first season released only in the UK: <http://www.amazon.co.uk/Chris-Ryans-Strike-Back-DVD/dp/B0039WHKE0>

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### HUFFPOST BLOGGER

**Michael Giltz**

*freelance writer*

127 Fans

11:48 AM on 08/11/2012

Hi Blackjac, I can't change the packaging on the DVDs or what the studio calls it but I did indeed make that very point in my review of *Strike Back*. Thanks for the info and link anyway. However, as for the audience of Dr Seuss being little children, there are excellent movies and TV shows and books geared towards little kids and there are pieces of junk for little kids. Some might satisfy kids but bore adults, some might satisfy adults but be too sophisticated for kids and the best ones of all either have an enduring simplicity and artfulness (like say the TV special *Cat in the Hat* or *Winnie the Pooh*) while others resonate differently at different stages of your life (like the novel *Peter Pan*). But just because a kid is 7 years old doesn't mean you have to settle for them watching junk.

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### BlackJAC

*It's better to be a black king than a white knight*

1331 Fans

07:22 AM on 08/12/2012

Like a 7-year-old's going to know the difference anyway. They just want to laugh and have fun.

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### leskataus

259 Fans

02:28 PM on 08/08/2012

The reason these movie adaptations are so awful is because they are trying to extend books that can be read in as little as 10 minutes into two hour movies. As a result, unnecessary subplots and characters have to be added to fill out the movies. I thought "The Cat In The Hat" was especially unfunny.

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### Ilisa

1699 Fans

02:23 PM on 08/08/2012

The best movie made from a Seuss book is the cartoon version of "How The Grinch Stole Christmas". No Seuss movie should have ANY words added to those from the book, and NO Seuss movie should star real people dressed up.

The movie adaptation of Maurice Sendak's "Where The Wild Things Are" also did a great disservice to a beloved writer's vision.

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### GraceNotes

*We live for books.*

250 Fans

04:22 PM on 08/08/2012

The original made-for-TV version of *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* is still shown every year, for good reason. The music is fantastic, and holds up better than some of the old Disney stuff.

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**Ilisa**  
**1699 Fans**

06:19 PM on 08/08/2012

Totally agree!

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**BlackJAC**

*It's better to be a black king than a white knight*

**1331 Fans**

07:24 PM on 08/08/2012

But the live-action Jim Carrey one restored Seuss' original intent to denounce the commercialism of Christmas: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C\\_4LmbuSmpl](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C_4LmbuSmpl) It gave the Grinch actual motive beyond simply being a jerk.

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**Ilisa**  
**1699 Fans**

03:07 AM on 08/09/2012

That was the whole point of the book and the cartoon that reproduced the book exactly--with great music. The live action was awful, and Cindi Lou Who was WAY more than two.

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**HUFFPOST SUPER USER**

**Sally Barry**

**20 Fans**

09:33 AM on 08/08/2012

That Grinch movie with Jim Carrey? That is the Stuff of Nightmares. Just ghastly, major FAIL.

Marilyn Monroe's movies have been shown this month, and it seems they (and she) are criticism from some wet-behind-the-ears people who just don't see it. They focus on her voluptuous figure and pointy bras! The movies are all we have, of course they are kind of dated, and she didn't have any attractive compatible male stars to be romantic with (Tom Ewell?? Joseph Cotton?? Ew.). But there was only one Marilyn Monroe, and she will forever be THE icon. Who else could be on her level? Angelina Jolie, that weird bag of rattling bones?

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**brenstwits**  
**0 Fans**

07:49 AM on 08/08/2012

WE loved the Lorax. And all Dr. Seus movies. must be a man writing this.

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**HUFFPOST BLOGGER**

**Michael Giltz**

*freelance writer*

**127 Fans**

11:53 AM on 08/11/2012

Huh? What does being a man have to do with anything? If you liked ALL feature film adaptations of Dr Seuss you must be an uber fan -- even the estate didn't love all the movies, despite the money they've pulled in. But I appreciate good children's programming and even better children's programming that transcends the needs of kids and prove an enduring work of art. Certain shows on the Disney Channel and Nickelodeon might not be shows I'll watch regularly but I can appreciate them as appropriate for kids and much better than low bar fare that peddles cereal and is just stuffed with dumb action and humor. Naturally, the best stuff can appeal to kids and adults...even if one of the adults is a male. Do you really think only women can appreciate and understand movies and TV shows and books made for kids and which ones work?

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**HUFFPOST SUPER USER**

**johnpezzu**  
19 Fans

07:44 AM on 08/08/2012

"your not a kid anymore"

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**HUFFPOST SUPER USER**  
**Kelly Groves Scott**  
14 Fans

07:29 AM on 08/08/2012

I liked The Lorax and Horton Hears a Who was awesome. The only ones that sucked were the Jim Carrey Grinch and Mike Myers Cat in the Hat.

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**Maki Maus**  
35 Fans

04:46 AM on 08/08/2012

As someone who grew up on Dr. Seuss, I have to agree with the assessment that, apart from the original Chuck Jones rendition of "The Grinch that Stole Christmas" and the sometimes unfocused but basically intact "Cat in the Hat" (short cartoon version), adaptations of Seuss have been inferior to the point of insulting. But then again, the movies were evidently done by individuals who wanted to cash in on the popularity of the good 'Doctor' without trying to understand, let alone capture, his elfin sense of humor.

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