

BC-CPT-DVDREVIEWS:KRT _ entertainment (1720 words)

Reviews of recent and upcoming DVD releases

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(KRT)**

"Billy Jack: 35th Anniversary Ultimate Collection" (PG, Ventura)

Need the kind of entertainment only a B-movie can provide? Thanks to this four-film collection, your lucky day may be today. The famously successful "Billy Jack" _ an \$800,000 indie film that made \$65 million at the box office _ is here, but you also get the lesser-known prequel, "Born Losers," that introduced the title character (played in all four films by Tom Laughlin). "The Trial of Billy Jack" and "Billy Jack Goes to Washington" round out the series, which packs together John Wayne-style violence, humor, a love story or two and social messages that are as nuanced and subtle as a John Wayne film. As long as you don't take Billy too seriously, he and his friends and enemies will not let you down. Blood-hungry types need not let the PG rating deter them; had these come out in this paranoid age, they'd almost certainly be slapped with an R rating.

Extras: New transfers, making-of documentary, commentary from the Laughlin family, "Cut Your Own Version" editable fight scene footage, promo spots, galleries, book excerpt.

"Alfred Hitchcock: The Masterpiece Collection" (NR, Universal, Oct. 4)

The roster sells itself: "The Birds," "Vertigo," "Psycho," "The Man Who Knew Too Much," "Rear Window," "Rope" and "Family Plot." And that's only half the list. Unlike some (most) director sets, "The Masterpiece Collection" is truly a collection: 14 films, 15 discs, a staggering array of extras and, for the aficionados, some of the prettiest packaging ever to house a DVD. As good as Warner's Hitchcock set was last year, it's merely a companion piece for this monster. If you know anyone who even remotely enjoys the man's work, your Christmas shopping might have just ended two months early.

Extras: Fourteen (yes, 14) documentaries, nine behind-the-scenes features, commentaries, newsreel footage, storyboard/photo/production/note galleries, AFI salute, bonus "Psycho" making-of feature, "Masters of Cinema" episode, conversations, trailers, promo spots, 36-page booklet, more.

"Alfred Hitchcock Presents: Season One" (NR, Universal, Oct. 4)

Just in case the 14 movies somehow leave you wanting, there's always the first season of "Alfred Hitchcock Presents," which at its core is essentially "The Twilight Zone" with a murder/mystery spin. The half-hour mysteries are fun to solve and often pretty clever. And if you have trouble spelling out the ending, Hitchcock comes to the rescue at the beginning and end of each episode to condescendingly save the day. If the movie set is too much Hitchcock for your wallet, this set makes a great plan B. Includes 39 episodes, plus a brand-new retrospective.

"The Warriors: Ultimate Director's Cut" (R, 1979, Paramount, Oct. 4; also available on UMD)

You have to wonder when someone's going to get the bright idea to turn "The Warriors" into a Broadway musical. The premise _ a gang is singled out for the assassination of the one man who could

have brought every gang together to take down the police _ may not scream song and dance. But the way the gangs present themselves _ with costumes, formations, and dare we say choreography _ elevates this beyond the realm of your standard brawl film. That it manages to do it with a straight face _ and without eliciting the kind of unintentional laughter a film like this could solicit in droves _ is all the more impressive.

Extras: Director introduction, four behind-the-scenes features. (Extras not available on the UMD.)

"The Interpreter" (PG-13, Universal, Oct. 4)

United Nations interpreter Silvia Broome (Nicole Kidman) overhears whispers about a plot to assassinate a tyrannical African leader on her home turf, and a multitude of conventional thriller plot devices take it from there. The attention to detail in "The Interpreter," parts of which were actually shot at the UN, lifts it beyond the reaches of mediocrity. The film also succeeds in presenting Broome as more than a one-dimensional damsel who was in the wrong place at the wrong time. But that doesn't stop the logic car from constantly trying to derail the whole production _ without giving anything away, let's just say the film's resolution couldn't possibly hang by a thinner thread. Sean Penn also stars.

Extras: Alternate ending, deleted scenes, four behind-the-scenes features.

"The Fly: Collector's Edition" (R, 1986, Fox, Oct. 4)

"The Fly II: Collector's Edition" (R, 1989, Fox, Oct. 4)

Most people know the concept behind the original "The Fly," which is actually a remake of a 1958 film and will be apparently be remade again next year. But while "guy (Jeff Goldblum) mixes DNA with a fly and turns into crazy beast" seems like the foundation for an extremely elementary horror film, the end product is actually quite brilliant. "The Fly" isn't scary so much as it is really gross. But the slow transformation from nerd to freak _ complete with denial, anger, acceptance and other steps _ is remarkably well done and surprisingly subtle for the kind of film it is. The sequel? Not so hot, but acceptable for the cheap cash-in it is, if only to see what happens next.

"Fly" extras: Director commentary, brand-new documentary, deleted scenes (with storyboards and script), alternate ending, test footage, original short story, original screenplay and rewrite, article and photo galleries, behind-the-scenes features, promo spots, more.

"Fly II" extras: Director commentary, alternate ending, deleted scene, series documentary, new documentary, storyboards (with commentary), production journal, behind-the-scenes features, galleries, more.

"The Girl in the Cafe" (NR, HBO)

A chance meeting in a cafe between a young "student" named Gina (Kelly Macdonald) and a hanger-still-in-his-shirt civil servant named Lawrence (Bill Nighy) turns into something more _ well, maybe, if Lawrence can handle it. But wait, that's not all! Lawrence isn't just any civil servant: He works for some pretty important people, and everybody's packing up for a trip to the G8 conference, where world leaders will wring their hands over serving their own countries' interests instead of finding ways to squash world poverty. Guess what Gina thinks they should do? Yes, "The Girl in the Cafe" is that predictable, and the stark right turn the film takes from quaint love story to soapbox bonanza is enough to stiffen your neck if not break it entirely. It's a testament to Nighy and Macdonald, who are terrific

together in a weird way, that "Cafe" remains an interesting film despite the preaching.

Extras: Writer/Director commentary, deleted scenes, behind-the-scenes feature.

"House of D" (PG-13, Lions Gate, Oct. 4)

An American living in France (Writer/Director David Duchovny as an adult, Anton Yelchin as a teenager), tells his estranged wife and son the story of a rocky adolescence that included an unstable mother (Tea Leoni), a retarded best friend (Robin Williams) and a chance encounter with a prisoner (Erykah Badu) who offers life lessons when no one else can. The premise is shaky, and so is the film, which sandwiches bits of genuinely good storytelling between layers of heavy schmaltz and moments whose intentions were far better than their execution. If you can't tolerate coming-of-age films, this one will burn you. And if can't stand Williams' "Patch Adams" period, some of his lines here could actually be harmful to your health.

Extras: Duchovny commentary, alternate ending, deleted scenes, behind-the-scenes feature, retrospective, Duchovny Q&A.

"Drawn Together: Season One Uncensored" (NR, Comedy Central, Oct. 4)

The concept _ eight cartoon stereotypes living under one house in toe world's first animated reality show _ is enormously inspired. But "Drawn Together" spends its ammo almost entirely by the end of the first episode. Some funny bits do pop up, but most of the gags are thin and predictable. The barrage of parodies is tired and barely elementary, and the show as a whole just tries way too hard to be offensive and funny despite giving off the stench of half-assed writing and production. By the middle of the second episode, you'll have had enough; by the end of the seventh, you might be ready to kill every single character on the show. Includes seven episodes (all extended and uncensored, four with commentary), plus deleted scenes/unaired segments, a tabletop game and karaoke sing-along.

SITCOM ROUNDUP

"Taxi: The Complete Third Season" (NR, Paramount): If this show debuted on the fall schedule today and didn't change a single thing, it would still be ahead of the pack. Skeptical? Check out the episode in which Latka (Andy Kaufman) introduces a gourmet cookie with a special ingredient that drives his public wild. One of the best ensemble sitcoms TV has ever had the pleasure of airing.

"Cheers: Season 6" (NR, Paramount): Goodbye, Shelly Long, hello Kirstie Alley. Has any show replaced its outgoing cast members as perfectly as this one did? "Cheers" never had a bad season in 11 tries, and this transitional season, which finds Sam (Ted Danson) bar-less and bored for the first time, is a gem. Includes 25 episodes.

"Frasier: The Complete Sixth Season" (NR, Paramount): Frasier (Kelsey Grammar) and Roz (Peri Gilpin) lose their jobs to a format change and Daphne (Jane Leeves) ushers in the short-lived Donny era in what would be one of the last truly consistent seasons the show would have before its resurgence a few years later. Includes 23 episodes.

"Everybody Loves Raymond: The Complete Fourth Season" (NR, HBO): "Raymond" truly hit its stride one year before, and season four doesn't mess with the momentum. Highlights include Debra's (Patricia Heaton) fake boob job, Ally's (Madylin Sweeten) turn as a bully and Robert (Brad Garrett) getting a souvenir from a bull. Includes 24 episodes (four with commentary), plus deleted scenes and

bloopers.

"I Love Lucy: The Complete Fifth Season" (NR, Paramount): Lucy (Lucille Ball) and the gang are still in Hollywood as the season kicks off, but good luck keeping them there. England, France and the Swiss Alps are but three of the places that will never be the same by season's end. The famous grape-stomping episode also shows up here. Includes 26 episodes, plus lost scenes, bloopers, outtakes, behind-the-scenes features, production notes, five episodes of Lucy's radio show and more.

"The Brady Bunch" (NR, Paramount): The "Marcia, Marcia, Marcia" episode comes alive in glorious DVD, and Peter's (Christopher Knight) voice cracks in what could be the show's best moment. Includes 23 episodes.

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