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DVDs: Nyuck! Nyuck! The Three Stooges Get Their Due

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THE THREE STOOGES ULTIMATE COLLECTION (\$95.99; Sony) -- The Three Stooges were always the blue collar comedians of live action comedy shorts. Laurel & Hardy were more elegant somehow. Abbott & Costello more verbal. ("Who's on first" alone raises them to the heights.) But the Stooges just nyucked-nyucked their way through 190 group shorts, some 28 solo shorts and a couple of feature films. That's a lot of poked eyes. Individual sets have been coming out for a while now and they're very nicely remastered and presented with care. This Ultimate Collection is merely a cardboard box that contains all those individual sets covering their 25 year career from 1934 to 1959. The bonus discs include several feature films and those rarer than rare solo shorts. Luckily for the fans who already bought these sets as they came out, Sony is wisely making the bonus discs available on their own (the price is rather steep but hopefully will come down). For anyone who hasn't started their Stooges

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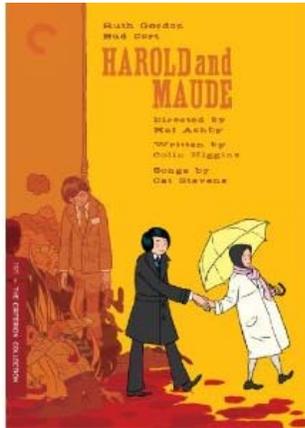
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collection, this set contains well over 60 hours of entertainment (frankly, I lost count). It's deeply discounted so if you want a lot of bang for your buck and would love to see kids watching black and white shorts from Hollywood's golden age rather than commercials for toys posing as TV shows, why, the Stooges are just for you. Me, I've always been left cold by their slapping and punching and funny noises. But they have endured and this set is a good legacy.



HAROLD AND MAUDE (\$29.96; Criterion) -- I have a complicated relationship with this film by Hal Ashby, the greatest director of the 1970s, bar none. (No one had a greater streak of brilliant, varied work in that era.) Initially, I loved the movie and felt completely betrayed by the ending, which seemed to be the opposite of the film's message. (If you're loving and embracing life, why kill yourself when you're healthy and happy and not even a hint of illness is on the horizon?) But I've come to accept the black humor and bittersweet ending thanks to the brilliant, enduring performances. Kudos in particular to Vivian Pickles, who strikes precisely the right tone to anchor the film as Harold's rather distracted mother. This transfer looks great and includes a lovely looking booklet, two audio interviews from the era with Ashby (who talks interestingly about his desire for a more provocative ad campaign) and screenwriter Colin Higgins and a video chat from today with Yusuf Islam/Cat Stevens. That short is brief but informative, detailing his love of musicals, his wish to have his music used more, how he was reluctantly and then enthusiastically drawn in and finally how rough demos of the original songs were rushed into the movie against his wishes, leading to decades where the only way to hear them was to see the film, making it that much more special. *Harold And Maude* is an inexpensive movie and this transfer makes it look as good as I've ever seen it. A counter-culture landmark? Sure, but more importantly a bracingly original film.



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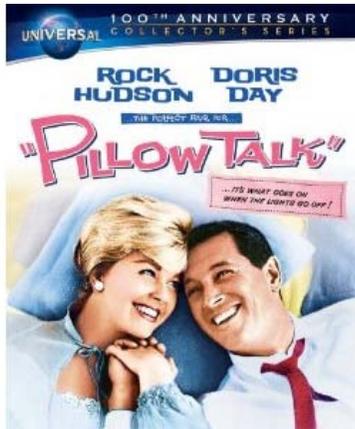
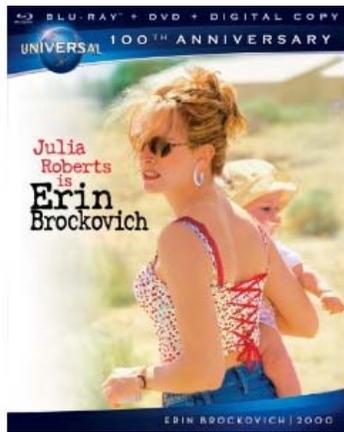
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THE STING 100TH ANNIVERSARY COLLECTION (\$39.98 BluRay; Universal)

ERIN BROKOVICH 100TH ANNIVERSARY COLLECTION (\$19.98 BluRay; Universal)

PILLOW TALK 100TH ANNIVERSARY COLLECTION (\$39.98 BluRay; Universal) -- Universal is celebrating its 100th anniversary and happily they're doing it right by spending money to restore some of their most important films. I know seemingly intelligent people who love movies that dismiss *The Sting*, presumably because it's too easy, too fun. They love obscure noirs or little known westerns but a popular entertainment like this is seemingly gone from the landscape today and they show no respect for what used to be. (Check out Julia Roberts in *Duplicity* for a great modern example ignored at the box office.) But it remains an absolute joy with movie stars doing what movie stars do best and bringing the sort of male camaraderie *Ocean's Eleven* can only dream about.

Julia Roberts also stars in *Erin Brockovich*. She won the Oscar but some believe what helped put her over the top was the DVD release and its deleted scenes; Roberts tears it up in some of them and word spread in Hollywood that you needed to check them out. When even your deleted scenes are making news, you know you've made a special movie.

Pillow Talk is, of course, a beloved romantic comedy, perhaps the key title in the Rock Hudson/Doris Day partnership. It looks smashingly good on BluRay and since the production design and cinematography is the film's strongest element, that's no small thing. But can't we finally admit that what seemed the height of sophistication in 1959 is now awfully lame and dated? Childish even? The dialogue is lame-brained (with Tony Randall getting most of the very few good lines), the storyline thin, the plotting and sexual politics tepid indeed. It feels like a child's version of what adult romance might be like. They have a certain chemistry, of course, but *Pillow Talk* is now finally revealed as a visual treat with nothing of substance inside the trappings.

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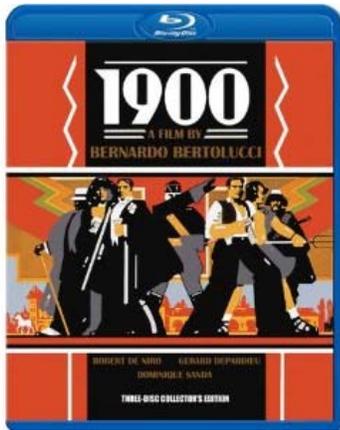


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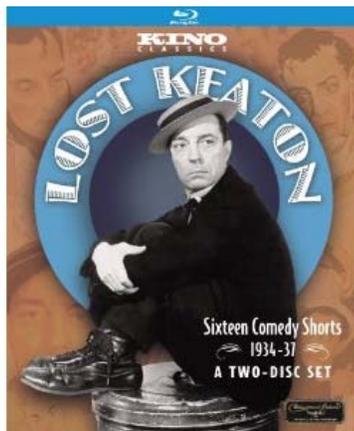
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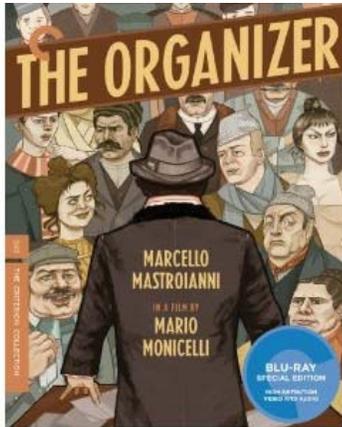
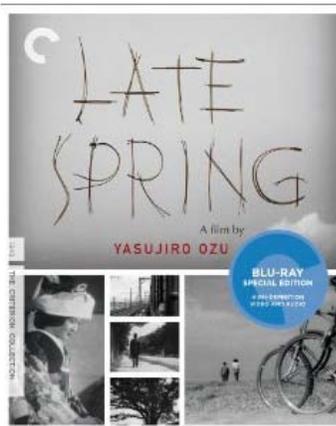


1900 (\$39.95 BluRay; Olive/Paramount)

CHINATOWN (\$26.98 BluRay; Paramount) -- Oh the fate of movies. How fickle the gods can be. Bernardo Bertolucci is a European director. Roman Polanski is a European director. Bertolucci's *1900* is a seminal film in his important body of work. Polanski's *Chinatown* is a seminal film in his body of work. And yet *Chinatown* has always been available in a lovingly preserved edition while *1900* has had a checkered history and rarely been seen in the U.S. in its full, epic length. *Chinatown's* blessed existence continues with this latest edition showing off Jack Nicholson's seminal noir at its best. *1900* has not been fully restored or expensively remastered in this BluRay, but for those who want to see one of his key films, it's probably the best we can expect for the foreseeable future and good enough to be worth watching.

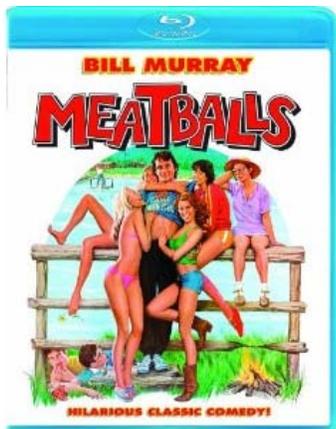


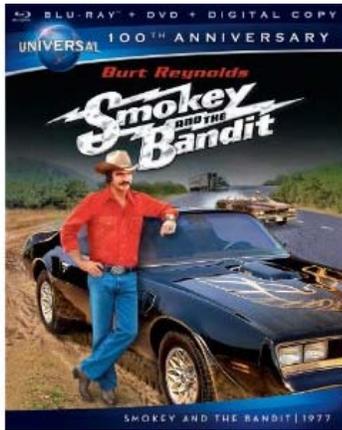
LOST KEATON SIXTEEN COMEDY SHORTS 1934-1937 (\$39.95 BluRay; Kino) -- Kino has been preserving and presenting the work of silent film legend Buster Keaton with a thoroughness and care that should warm the hearts of film buffs everywhere. This latest release contains 16 comedy shorts showing him in transition, crafting a new persona called "Elmer" and grappling and sometimes triumphing over the possibilities of sound. It's not Keaton at his best but you will discover some flashes of genius. For buffs, it's a chance to follow his career throughout every twist and turn.



LATE SPRING (\$39.95 BluRay; Criterion)

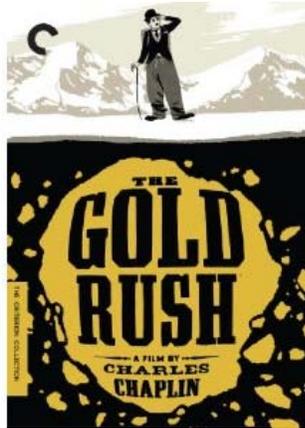
THE ORGANIZER (\$29.95 BluRay; Criterion) -- Every release from Criterion is a cause for celebration, whether it's a movie you love or one you've never heard about. Yasujiro Ozu is, of course, one of the landmark directors of the 20th century, an artist you simply have to be familiar with to call yourself a movie buff. But he wasn't perfect. Ozu was notably awful at naming his films -- *Early Summer*, *Late Spring*, *Middle Of Fall*, *Early-Mid Winter*. The titles do tend to blur. This 1949 masterpiece focuses on a middle class family and the impending marriage of a widow's treasured daughter. Many cineastes prefer it to Ozu's *Tokyo Story* but either is an essential viewing experience. Beautifully remastered, it contains Wim Wenders' 92 minute film about Ozu, a great introduction to his work. On the opposite end of the scale is a movie I've absolutely never heard of. *The Organizer* is an Italian film starring the great Marcello Mastroianni and an ode to unionism and employees coming together to demand workplace safety. Knowing it has the Criterion stamp of approval, you can't help but anticipate





MEATBALLS (\$14.99 BluRay; Lionsgate)

SMOKEY AND THE BANDIT (\$19.98 BluRay; Universal) -- Two stars coming into their own. Bill Murray turned a secondary part in a minor teen sex comedy called *Meatballs* into a big boost to his career. Clearly *Saturday Night Live* was just the beginning. The essential sweetness he brought to the broad comedy of a camp counselor was a big reason why. Reynolds, of course, was already a star by the time he made *Smokey* and sent sales of Coors beer skyrocketing. But it turned him into a superstar. He made better movies before and after and even enjoyed sitcom success, but it would never get bigger than this. Just ask Archer.



THE GOLD RUSH (\$29.95; Criterion) -- Here's a real treat for me, one of Charlie Chaplin's most popular movies in a version I've never seen before. This new Criterion edition contains the 1942 reissue Chaplin oversaw, trimming the movie down to 72 minutes and adding new music and narration. That's the only version I've ever seen. This edition also contains the original 1925 version back to its 88 minute length, nicely restored and with a newly recorded version of Chaplin's score. It's a rare chance to see a major work by one of the most popular directors of all time in a new light. Both versions have integrity since Chaplin oversaw them, but the original edition should ALWAYS be available. Did you hear that, George Lucas? You're in good company. Lots of directors fiddle with their work and sometimes even improve it. But happily history will always catch up with you.

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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09:51 PM on 06/20/2012

the three stooges are my dads favorite and i love watching them with him he always laughs so hard lol

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The Three Stooges... Ah yes, I watched them from the late 50's until you couldn't find them anymore!! In the So Cal area, they were on for 4 solid hourson Sunday during the 60's when they were trying to make another day for kids!

The Sting - A marvelous film!!! I saw that when it originally was released, about 1972 - 73... I was in my senior year! Redford and Newman are fantastic together!

Pillow Talk - I saw that movie when it came out, but you couldn't prove it by me... I had to be told about it! I got a copy of it about 12 years ago, and I put it on whenever I need to laugh... you couldn't make a film like that today

Chinatown - I saw that not long after I graduated... Probably 74 - 75. I have a DVD and I put it on whenever I want to be entertained... "She's my daughter! (Slap!) She's my Sister! (Slap!) She's my Daughter..."

"Meatballs" and "Smokey and the Bandit" - Saw them both about the same time in 1977 - 78. They were both good films! Whether you want a film about Camp or one about a comedic chase, you can't .go wrong with these films!

And I saw "The Gold Rush", but I don't remember it! Thanks for the memories!

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The stooges may not be for everyone but the early ones still make me laugh.The sound effects are classic.

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gordo001
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Harold and Maude is a great very much under rated movie.

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a man
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NOBODY could remake the Three Stooges, Abbott and Costello, Charlie Chaplin or Buster Keaton. They were the finest and the first true comedians. I still LOVE their movies and short clips. About ten years ago, a friend of mine and I tried to do the entire "Who's On First" routine on stage. We couldn't do it without scripts!!! And we grew up watching Abbott and Costello once a week and seeing that routine at least once a month. I wish that I could have met those seven men----they were geniuses.

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Three stooges were bigger stars when they got old and pass on then they ever were when making their films.

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BlackJAC
It's better to be a black king than a white knight
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Plus nobody's tried to remake Abbott & Costello with new actors.

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Actually, I tried.

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And hopefully no one will. Why ruin a good thing like what happen with The 3 Stooges movie. And Harold and Maude is a great under rated movie.

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