

Blu-Ray Feature: The 10 Best Blu-Rays of 2010

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on December 9, 2010 - 6:33pm

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CHICAGO – As more and more homes become HD-enabled, the Blu-ray market has finally started to expand to the point that it's getting difficult to narrow a list of the best releases down to only ten. But that's what we're here for — to do the difficult jobs. These are the ten best Blu-rays of 2010.

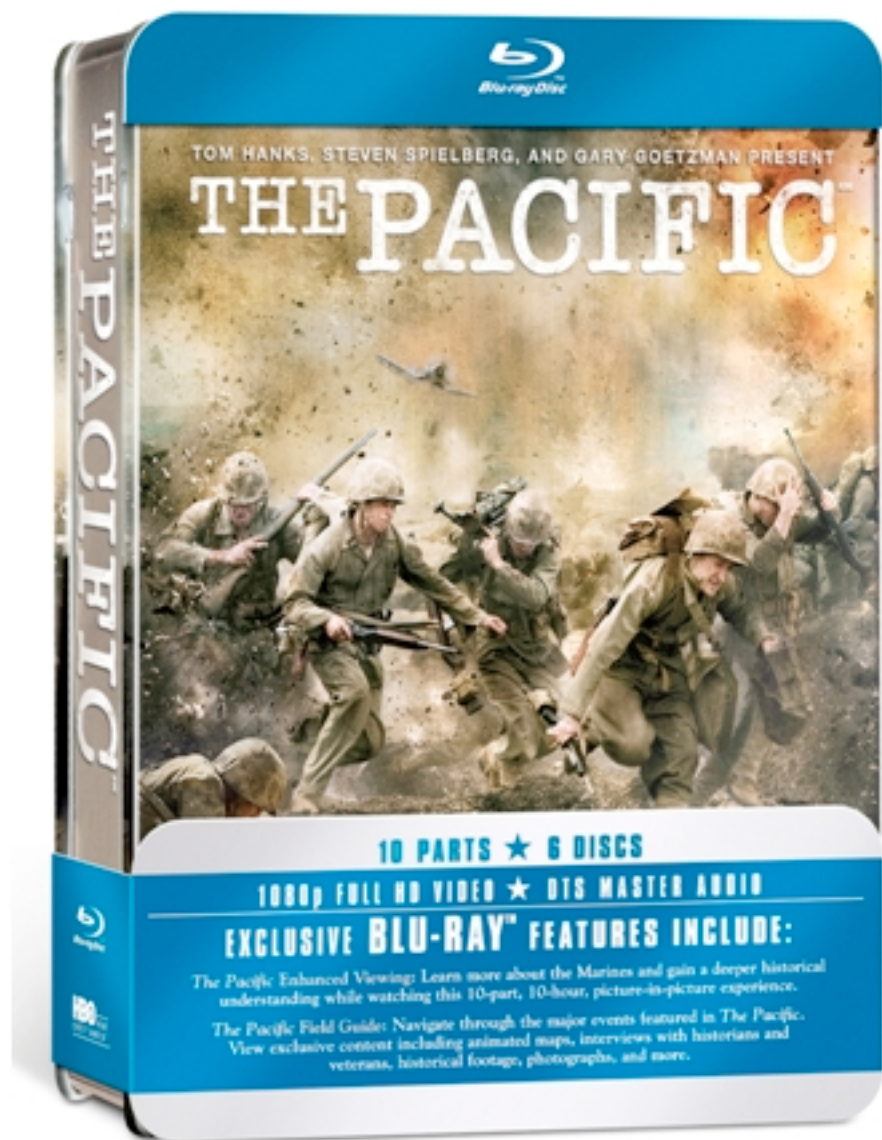
The most notable trend in Blu-ray in 2010 was the treatment of classic films and television. Several major studios found new ways to pull classic gems from the vault, put them in new HD settings, and remind people why they fell in love with them in the first place. The Criterion Collection continued to lead the way when it came to classics, but Warner Bros. and Universal deserve some praise (and earned a few spots on the list below).

Was it a banner year for classics or a disappointing one for modern releases? Does 70% of our top ten consist of films or TV shows that came out before 2000 because of a glut of great old product making it to the new format or a lessening in quality in terms of new releases? Both. I think we're a little exhausted by the repetitive pattern of most of the 2009 or 2010 films released on Blu-ray this year in that they often featured similar transfers and dull special features. Only the geek-centric properties like "Kick-Ass" and "Scott Pilgrim vs. the World" seemed to go out of their way to present something different. And, of course, Pixar continues to rock the HD format.

Without further ado, you should own all twenty of these releases by now or revise your wish list to Santa:

Runner-Ups: "Fantasia/Fantasia 2000," "Glee: Season One," "GoodFellas: 20th Anniversary Edition," "Hamlet (BBC)," "Kick-Ass," "The Maltese Falcon," "Modern Family: Season One," "Scott Pilgrim vs. the World," "Toy Story 3," and "Where the Wild Things Are".

10. "[The Pacific](#) [16]"



The Pacific
Photo credit: HBO Home Video

HBO Home Video changed the expected quality level on their award-winning standard DVD releases over the last ten years and they have set a similar bar in the world of HD. It's odd how long they're taking to release their older programming on the format (where the F— are the rest of the seasons of "The Sopranos"?) but it's comforting to know that all of their new material is now being treated with the same respect they used in the days of DVD. "The Pacific" features perfect HD picture and sound with fascinating special features, all built around one of the best mini-series in television history. Every episode of the award-winning show features "Enhanced Viewing," a feature that presents picture-in-picture interviews, photos, and technical details about the people on-screen. It's the kind of unique, informative special feature that takes advantage of the BD technology in a way more studios should mimic.

9. "[Beauty & The Beast](#) [17]"

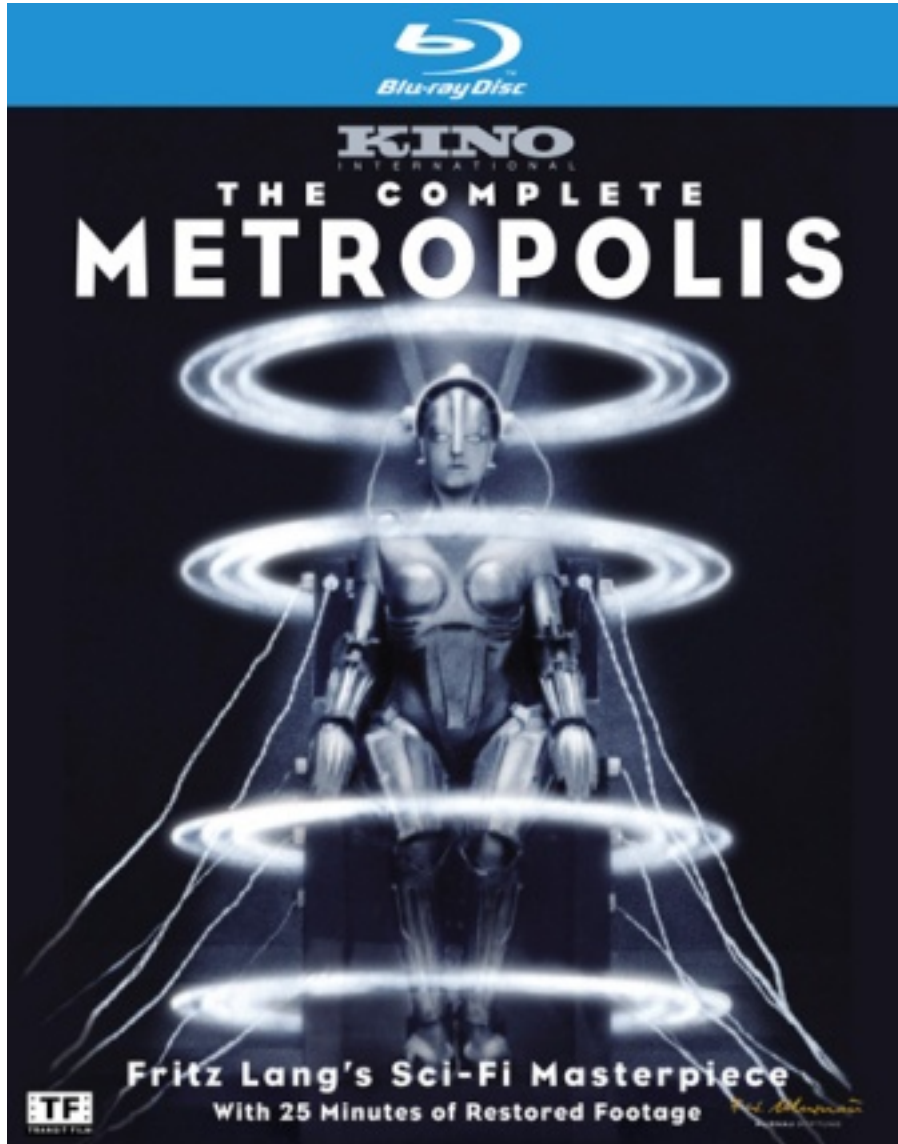


Beauty and The Beast

Photo credit: Disney

Disney continues to set the bar for animated Blu-ray releases in a way not so other studios can match it but so high that no one will get anywhere close. Every single “vault” Disney Blu-ray is worth a purchase and the Diamond Edition of “Beauty and the Beast” is one of the best. As for this year, even releases of “Princess and the Frog” and “Ponyo” nearly made the runner-ups section of this list. The fact is that Disney HD video highlights how to present feature animation better than anyone. And this is one of the best animated HD transfers yet produced for one of the rare animated films that actually plays even better two decades after its release than it did when it began its cultural domination. The quality of the image in Disney’s Blu-ray version of “Beauty and the Beast” is hard to capture in words. The colors don’t just pop off the screen. They’re not just “bright.” They’re perfect. Every line detail, every background, every movement — the quality of this transfer makes a well-known film feel new again. It’s that remarkable. Oh, and three versions of the film along with hours of special features don’t hurt.

8. “[The Complete Metropolis](#) [18]”



The Complete Metropolis

Photo credit: Kino

The story behind “The Complete Metropolis” is one of the best movie-lover tales of 2010. Almost a century after it was released, we can now see “Metropolis,” recently released on Blu-ray, in a more complete manner than ever before. When the curator of the Museo Del Cine in Buenos Aires acted on a hunch and found a rare print of “Metropolis” in her archives, movie history changed. Years of restoration did the best they could to reincorporate footage incredibly damaged by the passage of time and “The Complete Metropolis” was finally released in theaters over 83 years after its Berlin premiere. “The Complete Metropolis” is a must-see for anyone who dares to call himself a film buff. It is easily one of the most important films of all time. In fact, a solid case could be made that it’s the MOST influential film ever made as it influenced all cinematic science fiction to come. And it looks amazing in HD. Imagine finding a few lost tracks to “Abbey Road.” Imagine a lost Beethoven symphony. That’s the parallel here. One of the most incredible movies ever made is even better than the history books had recorded. Buy it. Or stop calling yourself a movie buff.

7. “[Back to the Future: 25th Anniversary Trilogy](#) [19]”

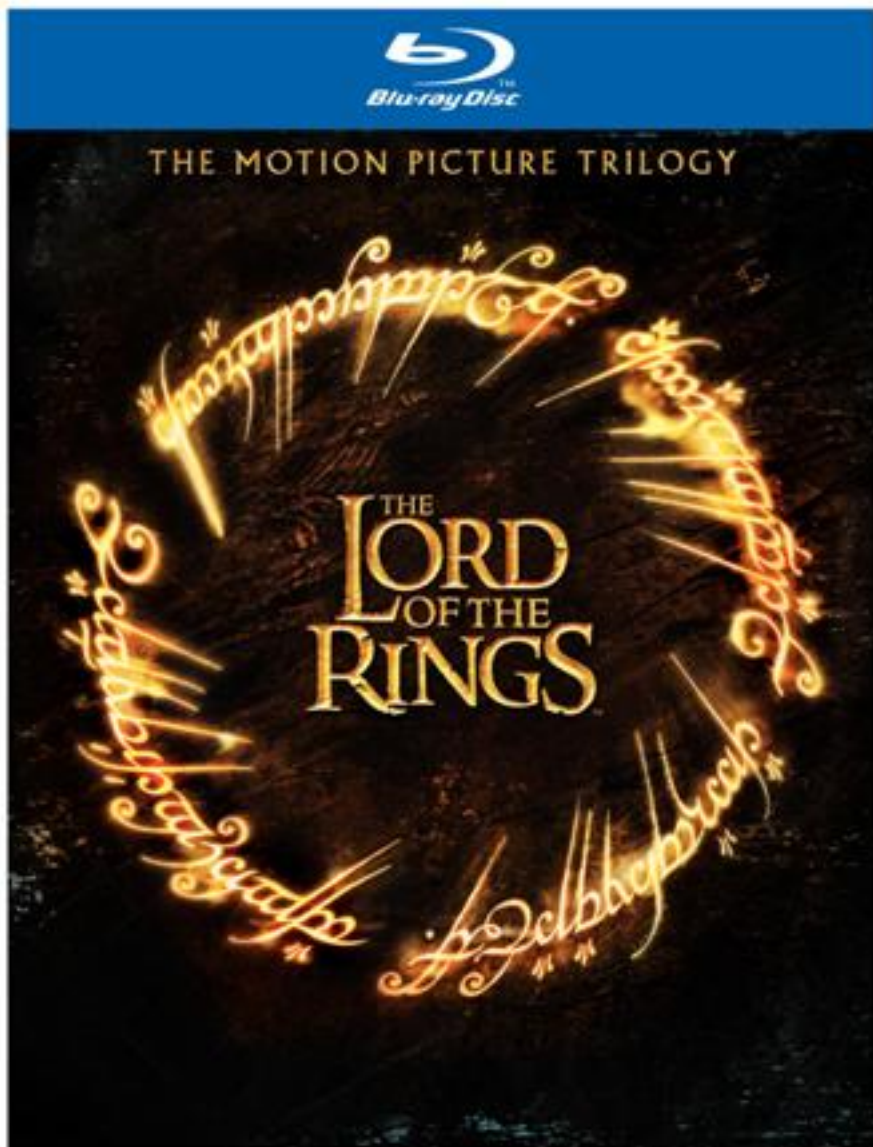


Back to the Future: 25th Anniversary Trilogy

Photo credit: Universal

It warms the cockles of a Blu-ray critic's heart to see a loyal fan base treated as well as Universal treats the legions of adoring fans of "Back to the Future" with the "25th Anniversary Trilogy." The set not only includes pristinely-restored versions of the three films but includes hours of spectacular special features, much of which plays during the actual films. Each movie comes with two commentary tracks: One a Q&A with director Robert Zemeckis and producer Bob Gale and one a feature commentary with producers Gale and Neil Canton. They can also all play with three U-Control features: Setups & Payoffs (which links moments throughout the trilogy), Storyboard Comparison, and Trivia Track. The most exciting non-picture-in-picture feature is an incredibly-detailed and lengthy documentary about the making of the film that features new interviews with ALL of the players, including Michael J. Fox and executive producer Steven Spielberg. With alternate endings, archival tests, storyboards, and much more, there's no way that there's anything left on the cutting room floor. Fans of "BTTF" have taken hours of their life watching these movies over and over again. Giving them something new related to their favorite trilogy is a true Blu-ray gift.

6. "[The Lord of the Rings Trilogy](#) [20]"



The Lord of the Rings Trilogy

Photo credit: Warner Bros.

Don't just buy one trilogy ("BTTF") this year. Buy two. The biggest complaint about the long-delayed and highly-anticipated "Lord of the Rings" box set is that the films aren't included in their extended format, meaning that buyers will likely have to buy another collection somewhere down the road. So what? Those of you complaining about that are those that would turn down \$99 because it's not a cool hundred. It ignores the greatness of this set as released with some of the best HD video and audio transfers to date. Naturally, "Lord of the Rings" looks amazing in 1080p and New Line/WB are not about to drop the ball in transferring their most-beloved property to the new format. Will I buy the Extended Edition releases? Of course, but it won't diminish the enjoyment of this excellent release.

5. "[Psycho](#) [21]"

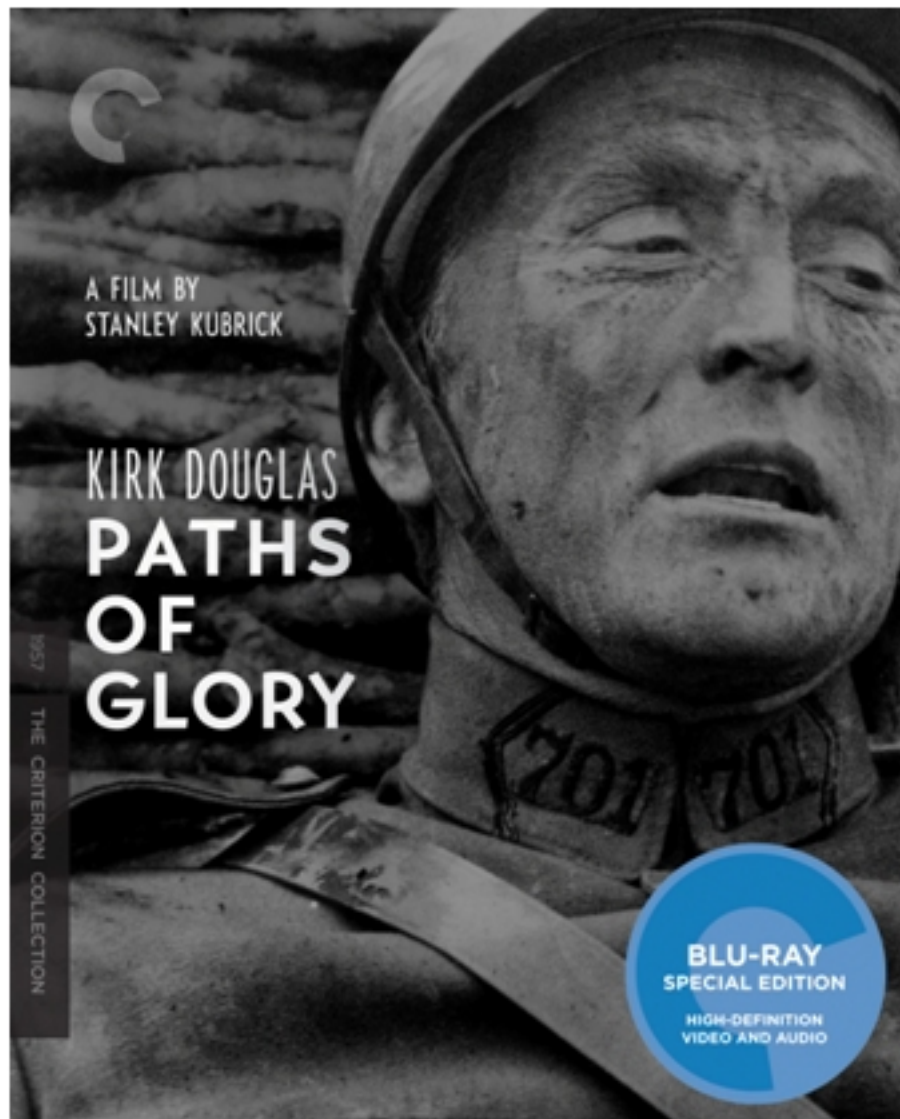


Psycho

Photo credit: Universal

“Psycho,” a movie I’ve possibly seen more than any other, has never looked quite like it does on this release. The remastered 1080p picture is absolutely stunning with the perfect color balance, line detail, and amount of grain to create a better video transfer than we’ve yet seen for the film. This is one of the best HD black & white video transfers, period. It’s stunningly good and should be used as the model for all films of this era being released in HD. The quality of the film and its transfer alone would earn it a spot on this list but it lands in the top five because of Universal’s incredible collection of special features including a feature-length documentary, a retrospective doc about Hitchcock, an audio commentary, and some of the most fascinating archival material of the year. There are only two Hitch films on Blu-ray to date and it will be 2040 before we get them all at this rate. If they’re all this good, I’m willing to wait.

4. [2010 Criterion Blu-Ray](#) [22]

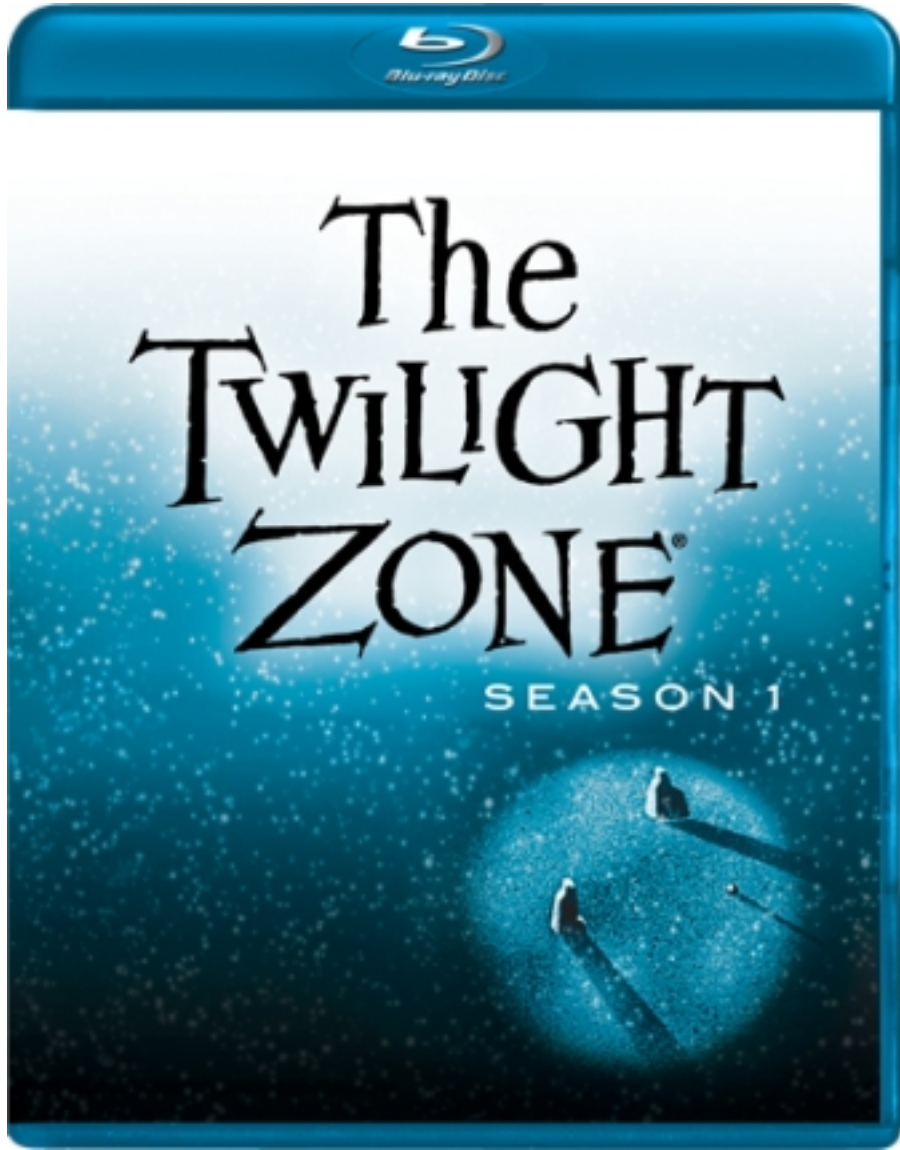


Paths of Glory

Photo credit: Courtesy of the Criterion Collection

We could have populated this list with Criterion Blu-ray alone and so have taken the easy way out and lumped the best of the year into one spot. We’re lucky enough to regularly review HD releases from The Criterion Collection and yet the quality of these releases still have the power to amaze. With remarkable transfers and amazing, informative special features, Criterion continued to set the bar for classics in 2010. Universal had some great ones (“Psycho”) as did Warner Bros. (“The Maltese Falcon”) and Fox (“The Sound of Music”), but they’re all following Criterion. The best of the Collection this year included “Paths of Glory,” “M,” “The Night of the Hunter,” “Bigger Than Life,” “Red Desert,” and “Stagecoach.” They may be expensive, but save up and buy them all.

3. [“The Twilight Zone: Season One](#) [23]”



The Twilight Zone: Season One

Photo credit: Image

Enter the middle ground between light and shadow with the amazing Blu-ray release of the first season of one of the best television programs of all time — “The Twilight Zone”. This release is packed with remarkable special features that are all perfectly shaped around a show that has lost absolutely none of its power despite the decades since its original airing and the myriad of programs that it inspired. Old films and shows sometimes look “wrong” in HD but “The Twilight Zone” just looks perfect. And the special features are mind-blowing. There’s a never-before-released unofficial pilot episode from 1958 called “The Time Element,” nineteen new audio commentaries, interviews with several of the “Twilight Zone” actors, a “Tales of Tomorrow” episode called “What You Need,” a vintage audio interview with director of photography George T. Clemens, 1977 syndication promos for “A Stop at Willoughby” and “The After Hours,” 18 radio dramas, and 34 isolated music scores. Image also included the special features previously available on the award-winning standard DVD sets including several more commentaries, vintage audio recollections, Rod Serling audio lectures, Rod Serling promos, the original unaired pilot version of “Where Is Everybody?,” and footage of the Emmy Award wins for the show. It’s overwhelming and breathtaking — the kind of complete release that all beloved programs should mimic.

2. “[Avatar: Extended Collector's Edition](#) [24]”

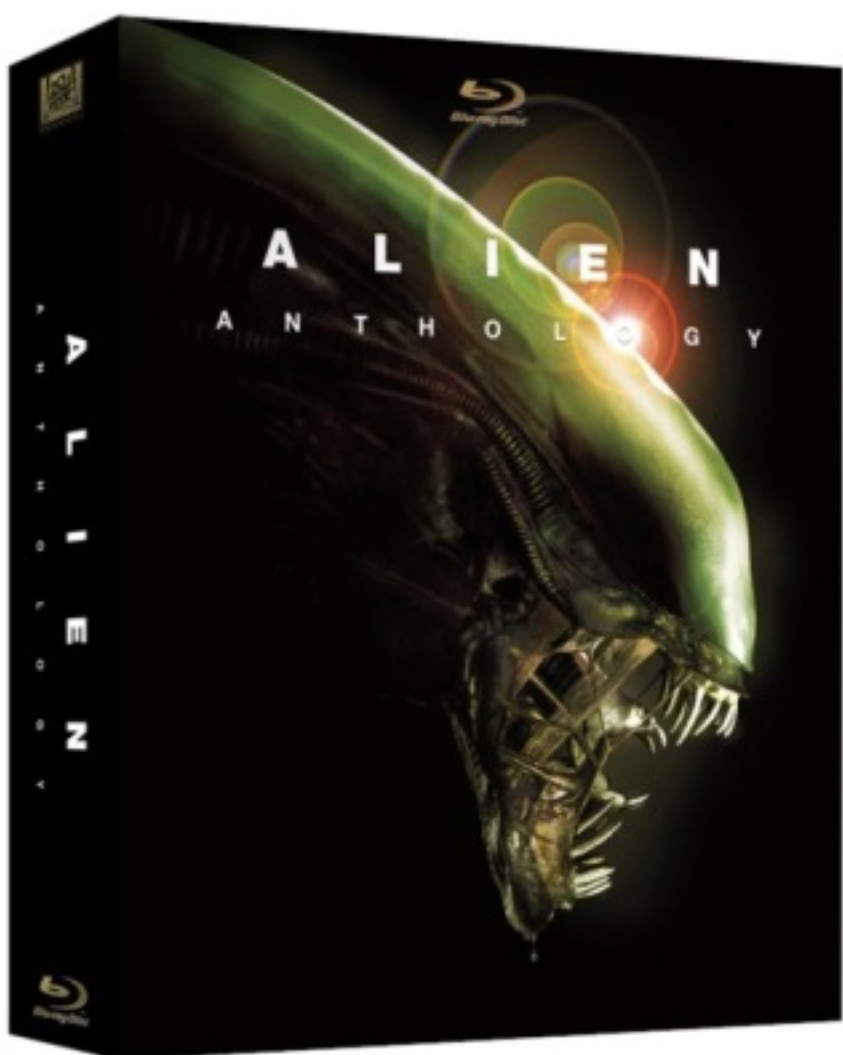


Avatar: Extended Collector's Edition

Photo credit: Fox

With a version of the film that's better than the theatrical mega-hit, perfect HD video and audio, and hours of special features, the newest release of "Avatar" is a must-own even if you don't like the film. It's simply too impressive to ignore. The extended cut (with 16 extra minutes) of "Avatar" is better than the original to the point that I'll never watch the theatrical version again and the set comes with two discs of bonus material, the kind that fans will spend days dissecting and sharing with their friends. Every element of "Avatar" has been dissected in documentaries, featurettes, and production material. Deleted scenes, trailers, scripts, screen tests, rehearsals, even an animated short — James Cameron and others who adored "Avatar" claimed that the film would change the cinematic paradigm. It doesn't seem to have done that. But the Blu-ray release could still change its market forever. If only all blockbuster HD releases were this impressive.

1. ["Alien Anthology \[25\]"](#)



Alien Anthology

Photo credit: Fox

With FIVE DAYS worth of special features, multiple versions of one of the most influential franchises in history, and gorgeous HD picture and sound, this is why Blu-ray was invented in the first place. Each of the four films have been presented in pristine video and audio quality, but it's the first two movies, the ones most of you really care about, that are the most remarkable. They look spectacular. The contrast levels, the color choices, the line detail — they're jaw-dropping. Even the grain level has been perfectly rendered so the films don't look unnatural. The audio is similarly mind-blowing. As for special features, everything from the "Quadrilogy" set has been transferred over and enhanced by Blu-ray functionality. All four films feature "MU-TH-UR Mode," which allows documentaries, interviews, and more to play along with the films. There's also a trivia track and an amazing function that allows you track things you're interested in while you watch the four films for the player to then remember when you put in the special features discs 5 and 6. Even the housing of the six-discs in what feels like a hardcover book with beautiful artwork enclosed in a beautifully-designed slipcase is above-average. If you own a Blu-ray player, it's not really doing its job without the "Alien Anthology."



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