

## Blu-ray Review: Classic Alfred Hitchcock, Billy Wilder, Woody Allen Finally in HD

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on January 30, 2012 - 11:04pm

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CHICAGO – I've long said that one of the main reasons that Blu-ray didn't take off as quickly as people thought it would is because too many of movie lover's favorite movies weren't available on the format. It took years to get "Alien," "Star Wars," and even "Back to the Future." "Jaws" and "Raiders of the Lost Ark" still aren't in HD. Well, a wave of catalog releases last week that included some of my personal favorite films ever made should help the format overall. With several Oscar winners and some of the most influential filmmaking of all time, this is an amazing catalog wave. Buy all six.

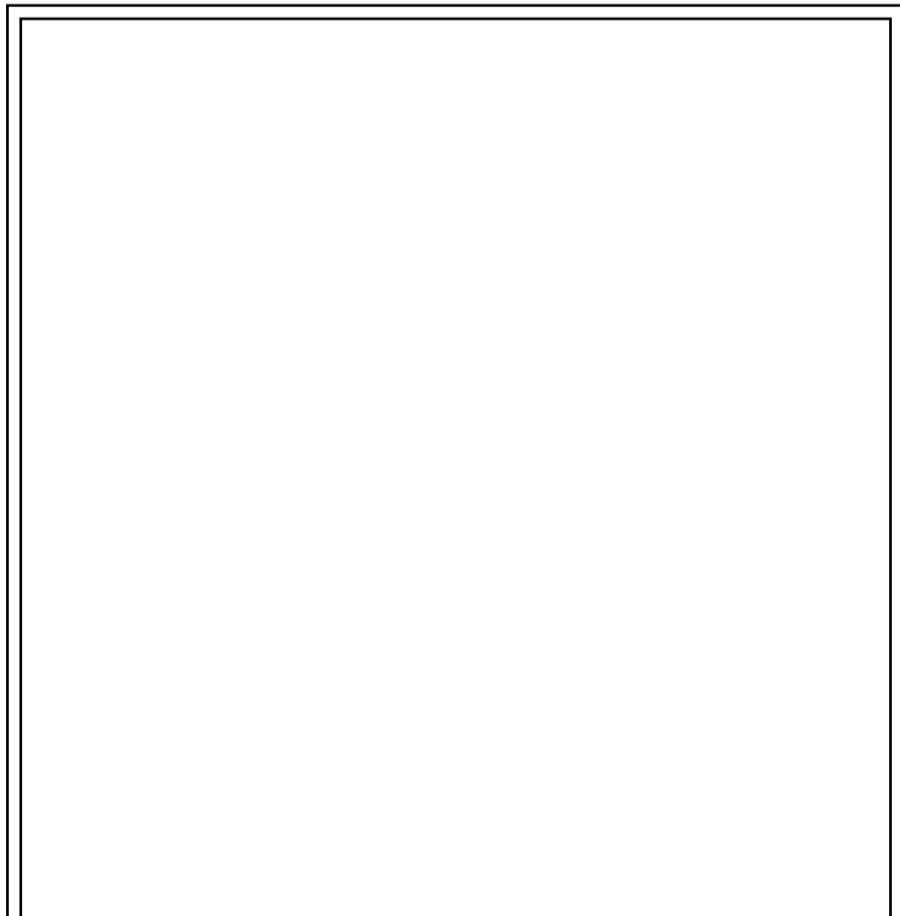


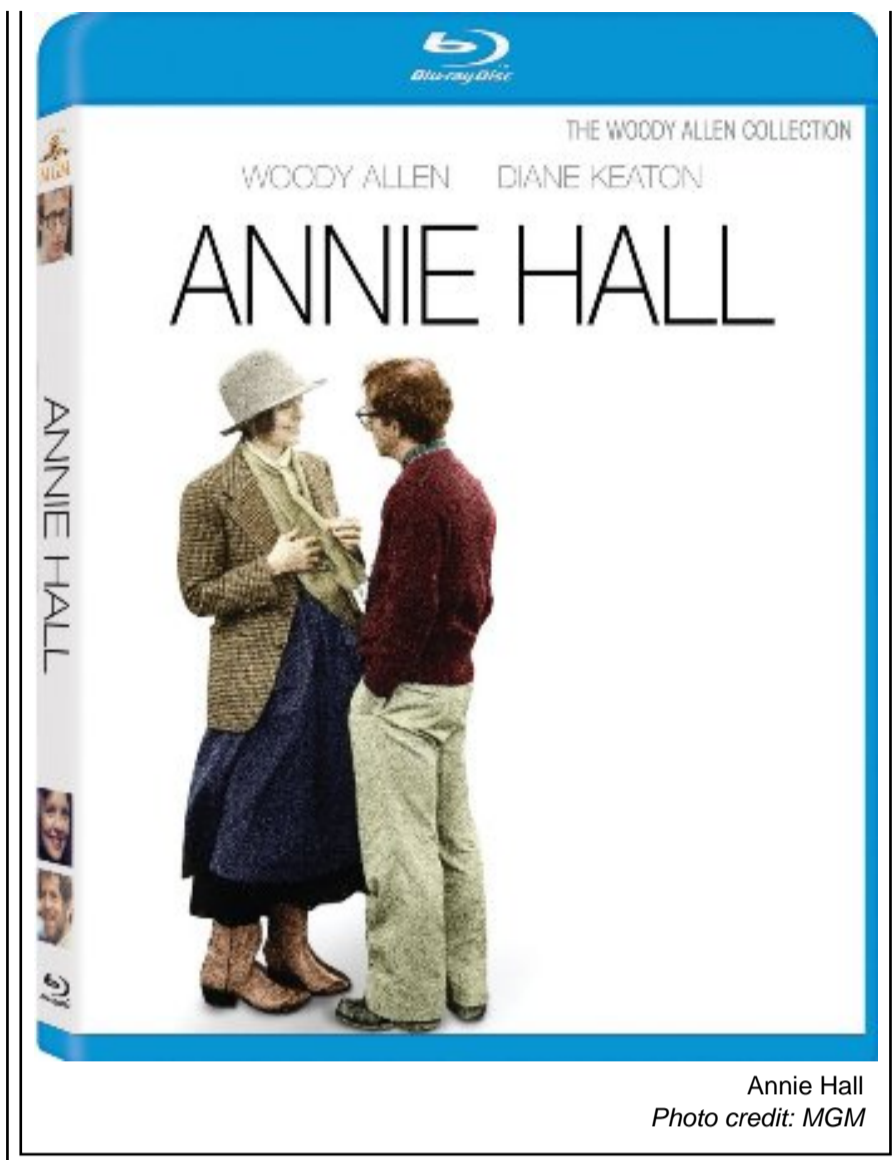
Blu-ray Rating: **4.5/5.0**

Where to start? How about a competition as to which of these films is the most influential — "Rebecca," "Annie Hall," or "The Apartment"? All three amazing works of art just hit Blu-ray for the first time, accompanied by "Notorious," "Spellbound," and "Manhattan." The three Alfred Hitchcock films were all previously owned by Criterion (and, disappointingly, not all of the incredible special features from those releases have not been imported) but it took Fox/MGM to get them into HD. I'm a little biased when it comes to Hitchcock, but these are three of my favorites and I'm ecstatic to be able to add them to the very small number of Hitch films available on Blu-ray (it's these three, "North by Northwest," "The Lady Vanishes" and "Psycho" and that's it). The number of Hitchcock films in HD just doubled.

As for the other half of this wave, you can't go wrong with either of the classic Allen films or one of picks for a short list of the best films ever made, the simply amazing "The Apartment." The special features in the non-Hitchcock films in this wave are a bit disappointing (hence the lowered rating above...all six films are 5-star, for sure) and I'd love to see the Hitch movies treated with more special, remastered love and new featurettes instead of the imported, previously available ones here, but I'll take 'em as is rather than not at all.

If you're like me and you have a special section for Blu-rays of your absolute favorite movies ever made, you're going to have to make some room.





### “Annie Hall”

#### Synopsis:

Considered to be “Woody Allen’s breakthrough movie” (Time), Annie Hall won four Oscars including Best Picture and established Allen as the premier auteur filmmaker. Thought by many critics to be Allen’s magnum opus, Annie Hall confirmed that Allen had “completed the journey from comic to humorist, from comedy writer to wit [and] from inventive moviemaker to creative artist” (Saturday Review).

Alvy Singer (Allen) is one of Manhattan’s most brilliant comedians, but when it comes to romance, his delivery needs a little work. Introduced by his best friend, Rob (Tony Roberts), Alvy falls in love with the ditzy but delightful nightclub singer Annie Hall (Diane Keaton). When Alvy’s own insecurities sabotage the affair, Annie is forced to leave Alvy for a new life - and lover (Paul Simon) - in Los Angeles. Knowing he may have lost Annie forever, Alvy’s willing to go to any lengths - even driving L.A.’s freeways - to recapture the only thing that ever mattered ... true love.

### “The Apartment”

#### Synopsis:

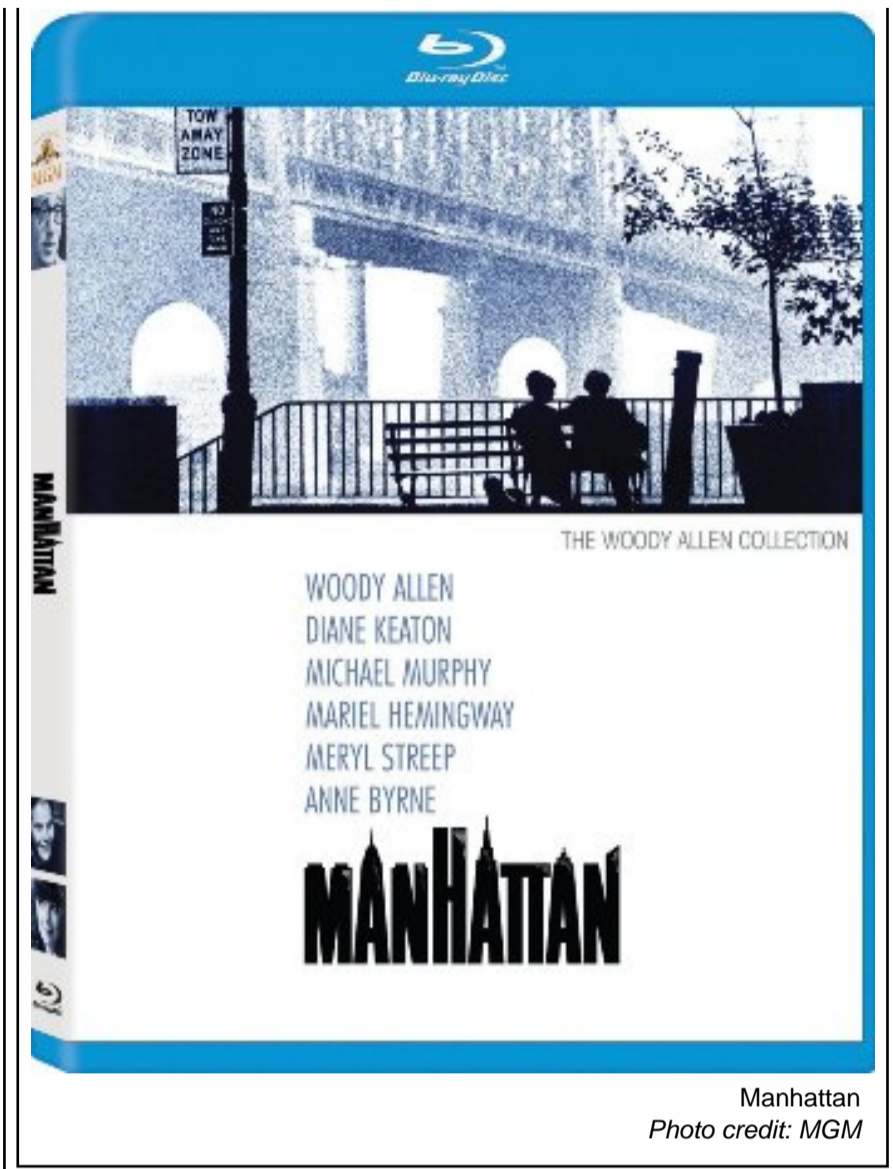
Winner of five 1960 Academy Awards® including Best Picture, The Apartment is legendary writer/director Billy Wilder at his scathing, satirical best, and one of the “finest comedies Hollywood has turned out” (Newsweek).

C.C. “Bud” Baxter (Jack Lemmon) knows the way to success in business... it’s through the door of his apartment! By providing a perfect hideaway for philandering bosses, the ambitious young employee reaps a series of undeserved promotions. But when Bud lends the key to big boss J.D. Shelldrake (Fred MacMurray), he not only advances his career, but his own love life as well. For Shelldrake’s mistress is the lovely Fran Kubelik (Shirley MacLaine), elevator girl and angel of Bud’s dreams. Convinced that he is the only man for Fran, Bud must make the most important executive decision of his career: lose the girl... or his job.

#### Special Features:

- o Audio Commentary from Film Producer and Historian Bruce Block
- o Inside The Apartment
- o Magic Time: The Art Of Jack Lemmon
- o Theatrical Trailer





Manhattan  
Photo credit: MGM

### “Manhattan”

#### Synopsis:

Nominated for two Academy Awards in 1979, and considered “one of Allen’s most enduring accomplishments” (Boxoffice), Manhattan is a wry, touching and finely rendered portrait of modern relationships against the backdrop of urban alienation. Sumptuously photographed in black and white (Allen’s first film in that format), and accompanied by a magnificent Gershwin score, Woody Allen’s aesthetic triumph is a “prismatic portrait of a time and a place that may be studied decades hence” (Time).

42-year-old Manhattan native Isaac Davis (Allen) has a job he hates, a seventeen-year-old girlfriend, Tracy (Mariel Hemingway), he doesn’t love, and a lesbian ex-wife, Jill (Meryl Streep), who’s writing a tell-all book about their marriage...and whom he’d like to strangle. But when he meets his best friend’s sexy intellectual mistress, Mary (Diane Keaton), Isaac falls head over heels in lust! Leaving Tracy, bedding Mary, and quitting his job are just the beginning of Isaac’s quest for romance and fulfillment in a city where sex is as intimate as a handshake — and the gateway to true love...is a revolving door.

### “Notorious”

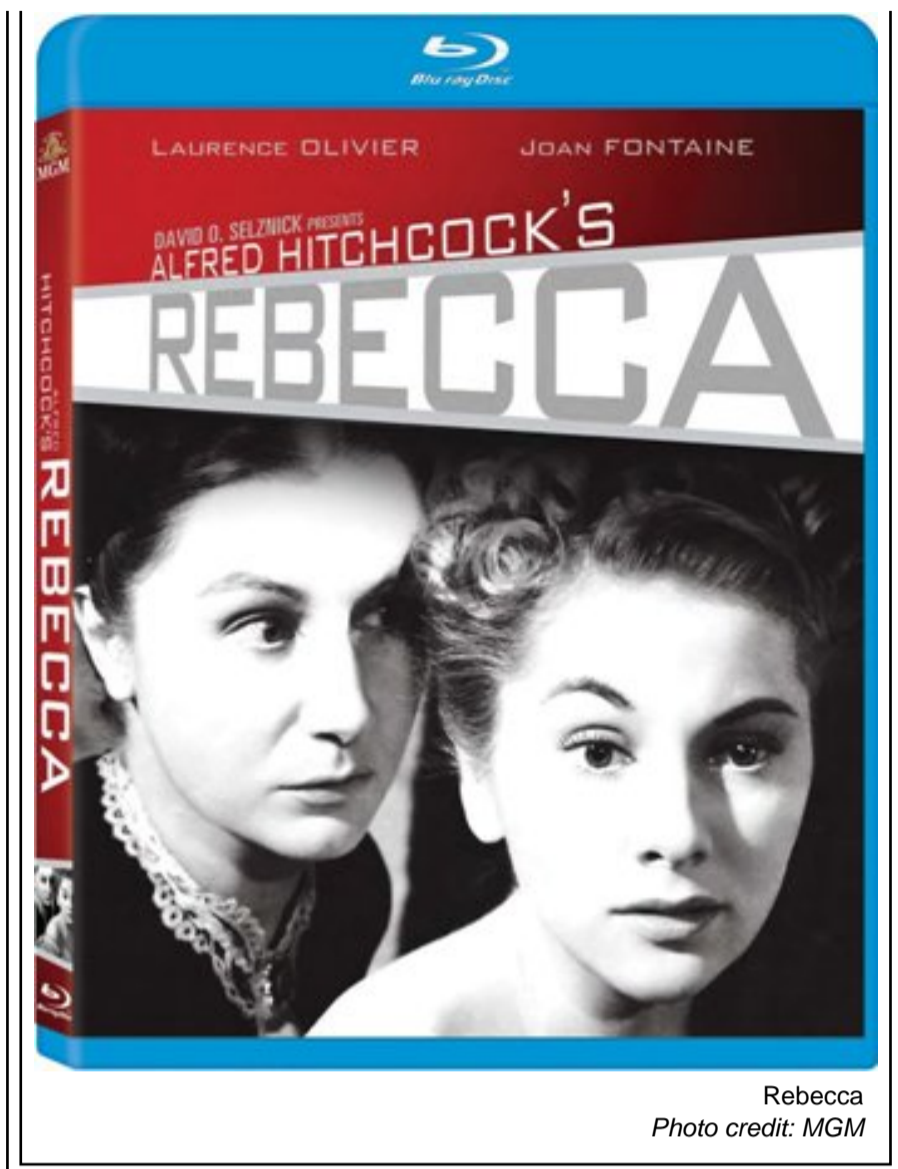
#### Synopsis:

From legendary director Alfred Hitchcock comes this “torrid, tense, tinglingly suspenseful” (Cosmopolitan) film that ranks as one of his best. Oscar Winner Ingrid Bergman “is literally ravishing” (Pauline Kael), and Cary Grant and Claude Rains give “excellent performances” (Variety) in this “taut spy movie that delivers a romantic punch” (The New Yorker)!

When troubled beauty Alicia Huberman (Bergman) is recruited by American agent T.R. Devlin (Grant) to infiltrate a German spy ring in postwar Rio, she accepts... but soon finds herself falling in love with Devlin. And when she receives orders to seduce a Nazi kingpin (Rains), Alicia must sacrifice the only happiness she’s ever known for a perilous mission that could ultimately cost her and Devlin their lives.

#### Special Features:

- o Commentary with Film Professor Rick Jewell
- o Commentary with Film Professor Drew Casper
- o Isolated Music and Effects Track
- o The Ultimate Romance: The Making Of Notorious
- o Alfred Hitchcock: The Ultimate Spymaster
- o The American Film Institute Award: The Key To Hitchcock
- o 1948 Radio Play Starring Joseph Cotten and Ingrid Bergman
- o Hitchcock Audio Interviews
- o Restoration Comparison
- o Original Theatrical Trailer



Rebecca  
Photo credit: MGM

### “Rebecca”

#### Synopsis:

For his first American film, Alfred Hitchcock teamed up with producer David O. Selznick (*Gone With the Wind*) to create a “spine-tingling” (*LA Weekly*) romantic thriller that won the Academy Award for Best Picture. Based on Daphne Du Maurier’s timeless novel, this dark, atmospheric tale of fatal obsession features Laurence Olivier, Joan Fontaine and Judith Anderson, as well as a “haunting score by Franz Waxman” (Leonard Maltin).

After a whirlwind romance, mysterious widower Maxim de Winter (Olivier) brings his shy, young bride (Fontaine) home to his imposing estate, Manderley. But the new Mrs. de Winter finds her married life dominated by the sinister, almost spectral influence of Maxim’s late wife: the brilliant, ravishingly beautiful Rebecca, who, she suspects, still rules both Manderley and Maxim from beyond the grave!

#### Special Features:

- o Commentary with Film Critic Richard Schickel
- o Isolated Music and Effects Track
- o The Making of Rebecca
- o The Gothic World Of Daphne Du Maurier
- o Screen Tests
- o Radio Plays
- o Hitchcock Audio Interviews
- o Original Theatrical Trailer

### “Spellbound”

#### Synopsis:

“The secret recesses of the mind are explored with brilliant and terrifying effect” (*New York Herald Tribune*) in this fascinating psychological thriller from Alfred Hitchcock. Featuring powerful performances from Ingrid Bergman and Gregory Peck, this masterpiece of mystery, romance and suspense boasts an Oscar-Winning score by Miklos Rozsa and a haunting dream sequence by Salvador Dali.

Dr. Constance Peterson (Bergman) is a dedicated psychiatrist who puts all her passion into her work - until she falls in love with Dr. Edwards (Peck). Unfortunately, it soon becomes clear that Edwards is an impostor - an amnesiac - who may or may not be a cold-blooded murderer. Pursued by the police, Constance must decide whether to turn in her mysterious lover... or risk her life by trying to unlock the dark secrets in his mind.

#### Special Features:

- o Commentary with Author and Film Professor Thomas Schatz & Film Professor Charles Ramirez Berg
- o Dreaming With Scissors: Hitchcock, Surrealism And Salvador Dali
- o Guilt By Association: Psychoanalyzing Spellbound
- o A Cinderella Story: Rhonda Fleming
- o 1948 Radio Play

- o Hitchcock Audio Interview
- o Original Theatrical Trailer

*"Annie Hall," "The Apartment," "Manhattan," "Notorious," "Rebecca," and "Spellbound" were released on Blu-ray on January 24th, 2012.*



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