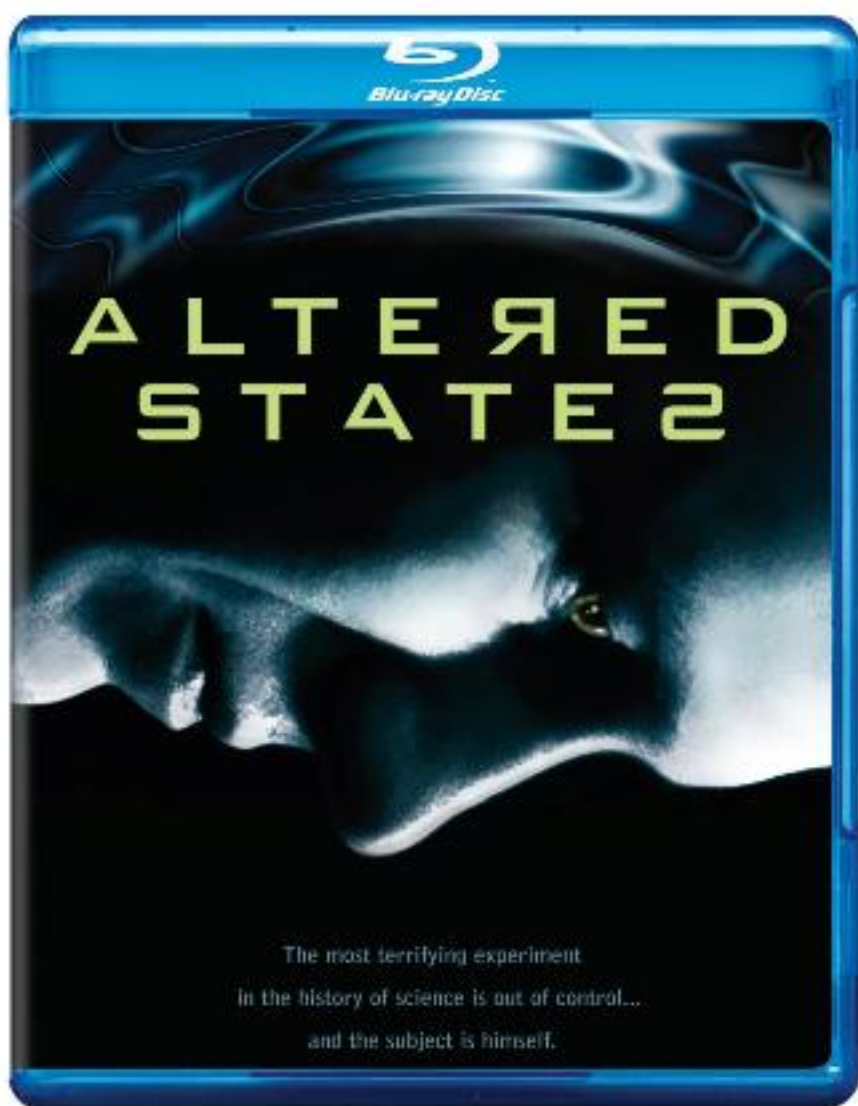


Blu-ray Review: Warner Bros. Releases Great Wave of Action, Sci-fi Flicks

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on July 11, 2012 - 5:34pm

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CHICAGO – Warner Brothers likes to pull handfuls of titles out of their immensely deep catalog and they’ve come back with a unique, interesting wave of releases at low prices to spice up your Summer this year. The films have little in common (although several could be classified as sci-fi) and vary wildly in quality but all are likely to have a fan or two out there wondering why they haven’t been released on Blu-ray. Now they have.



Altered States
Photo credit: Warner Bros.

“Altered States”



Rating: **4.0/5.0**

Director Ken Russell passed away last year leaving critics and movie lovers to continue to debate his unique style and best pictures. Personally, I’ve always been a fan of his 1980 adaptation of the legendary Paddy Chayefsky novel “Altered States,” featuring one of William Hurt’s most fearless and interesting performances. It’s both classic Russell in its unique style and a bit more accessible than some of his more, shall we say, bizarre films. “Fringe” fans should take particularly notice. It’s easy to see a lot of this unique work’s take on the scientist who experiments on himself in that beloved FOX show. Sadly, like most of this wave of catalog releases, the transfer is the only reason to upgrade as the studio hasn’t taken the opportunity to give this cult hit the special features that it deserves.

Synopsis:

Research scientist Eddie Jessup (William Hurt) believes other states of consciousness are as real as everyday reality. Using sensory deprivation, then adding powerful, hallucinogenic drugs, he explores these altered states..and endures experiences that make madness seem

a blessing. Academy award winner William Hurt as Jessup (his film debut) heads a solid cast featuring Blair Brown, Bob Balaban and Charles Haid. Working from Paddy Chayefskys novel, director Ken Russell guides us with a sorcerers skill through eddies magical and horrific journey as *Altered States* gyrates with dazzling visual bravado and bracing emotional impact.

Special Features:

o Theatrical Trailer



Brainstorm

Photo credit: Warner Bros.

“Brainstorm”



Rating: **3.0/5.0**

With the recent headlines about the re-opening of the case of the death of Natalie Wood, you're bound to read the title “Brainstorm” a few times. It was the film she was working on when she died with co-star Christopher Walken in what was long-considered an accident but has prompted further investigation three decades later. In fact, her death caused reshoots and re-edits on Douglas Trumbull's bizarre film, one that's inconsistent but also often quite fascinating thanks to the great work by Walken and Louise Fletcher.

Synopsis:

Imagine a machine that downloads one person's thoughts and sensations to another individual. Any person. Any experience. Now imagine how that breakthrough technology might be corrupted in the wrong hands.

Christopher Walken, Natalie Wood (in her final film) and Louise Fletcher play virtual reality researchers determined to keep their high-tech invention form lowdown tampering in *Brainstorm*. Bruce Joel Rubin (*Ghost*, *Jacob's Ladder*) provides the tantalizing what it? story, and Douglas Trumbull (inventor of the first simulation theater and a special-effects trailblazer on *2001: A Space Odyssey*) produces and directs this dazzling adventure. Wire up.

Special Features:

o Theatrical Trailer



Coma

Photo credit: Warner Bros.

“Coma”



Rating: **4.0/5.0**

Michael Crichton’s medical thriller is easily the most interesting film in this wave, a tight little gem that has gone largely unheralded by movie history but has held up shockingly well. In our current era of health care madness, it’s kind of amazing that this flick about a conspiracy to keep patients in comas hasn’t been remade. Someone call Brett Ratner! (Note: pay close attention for a cameo by a young Tom Selleck and the very first screen appearance by the great Ed Harris).

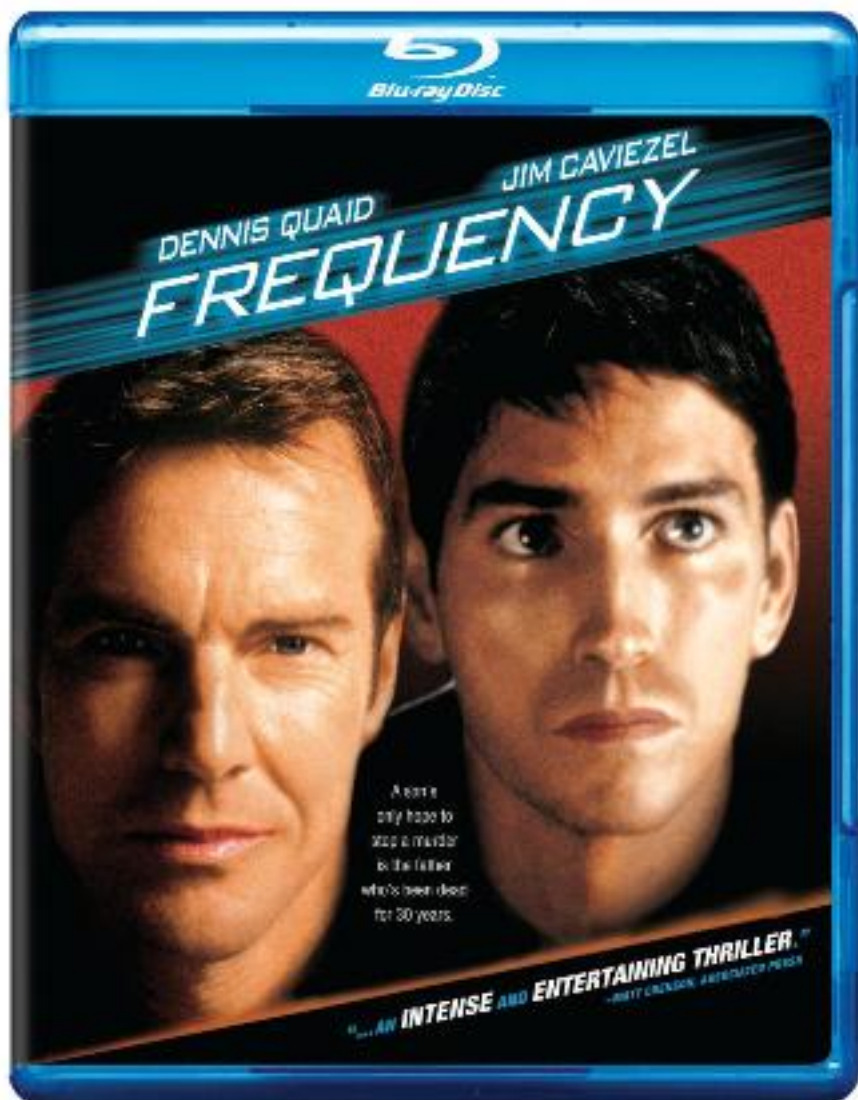
Synopsis:

Ten cases. Now 12. Why are young, healthy patient admitted for minor surgery at Boston Memorial Hospital ending up on life support? Dr. Susan Wheeler wants to know. Somebody else wants her dead.

Long before he created ER, Michael Crichton (Jurassic Park, Twister) adapted and directed this medical chiller based on Robin Cook’s best-seller, Genevieve Bujold plays Wheeler, trailing clues, clambering along duct ways, hiding among morgue cadavers, infiltrating the eerie Jefferson Institute (an unforgettable marvel of spooky technology) and persuading her skeptical boyfriend and fellow doctor Mark (Michael Douglas) that her suspicions are not mere paranoia. For thriller fans, Coma is heart-poundingly good medicine.

Special Features:

None...for shame...



Frequency

Photo credit: Warner Bros.

“Frequency”



Rating: **3.5/5.0**

Do you think when now-CBS stars Jim Caviezel (“Person of Interest”) and Dennis Quaid (“Vegas”) pass each other at network events, they shout out lines from “Frequency”? Quaid is actually very good here, better than he was given credit for in theaters, and the film has had a surprising staying power as a male tearjerker, the kind of flick that guys watch on Father’s Day and pretend that it’s just dust in their eye.

Synopsis:

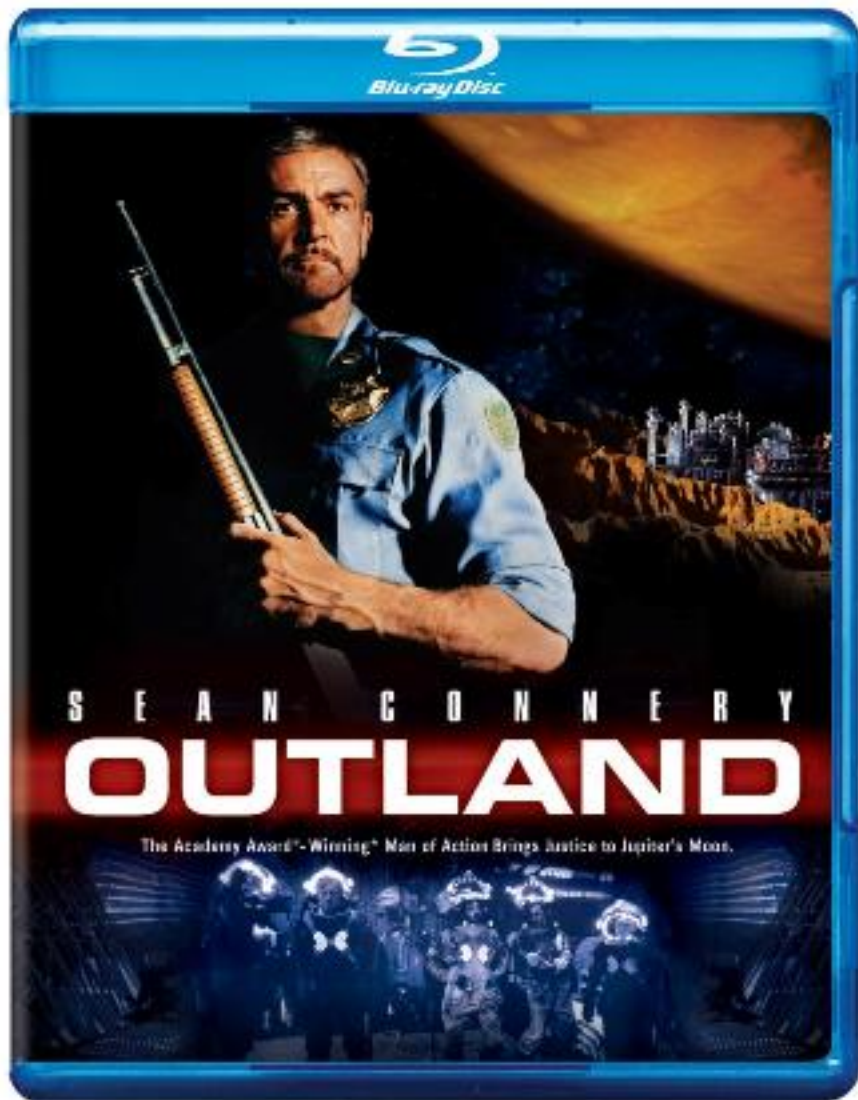
What if you could reach back into time and change the one event that forever altered your life? Would you do it? And what would it be?

All his life, police officer John Sullivan (Jim Caviezel, *Passion Of The Christ*) has been haunted by one tragic event. When a once-in-a-lifetime phenomenon of nature opens a mysterious channel to the past, John is stunned to discover that he is able to communicate with his dad Frank (Dennis Quaid) ...who’s been dead for 30 years. But by changing the past, they set in motion a string of brutal, unsolved murders, with John’s mother — and Frank’s wife — the next victim. Racing against time, the son and father must now find a way to stop the crime that could destroy the future for both of them.

Directed by Gregory Hoblit (*Primal Fear*), this mind-bending, edge-of-your-seat thriller will keep your adrenaline pumping long after its final, astonishing climax.

Special Features:

- o Commentary By Director Gregory Hoblit
- o Commentary By Writer/Producer Toby Emmerich and Actor Noah Emmerich
- o The Science & Technology Behind Frequency
- o 4 Animated Solar Galleries
- o Music Only Track With Commentary By Composer Michael Kamen
- o Deleted Scenes
- o Theatrical Trailer



Outland

Photo credit: Warner Bros.

“Outland”



Rating: **2.0/5.0**

Here's where the newest wave starts to slide downhill. Sean Connery looks bored through most of this bizarre sci-fi Western that essentially reimagines “High Noon” in outer space. The film had a notoriously awful DVD transfer in the past and so it's nice that fans of it can finally include it in their collection but it has not held up well.

Synopsis:

Io, Jupiter's innermost moon, hosts mining colony Con-Am 27, a high-tech hellhole. There a veteran marshal (Sean Connery) probes some mysterious deaths of miners. In pursuit of the truth, he's alone. In Outland, writer/director Peter Hyams (Timecop, 2010) depicts a chilling extension of today's corporation-driven world. Dehumanization is vividly evoked in Philip Harrison's striking production design and two-time Academy Award winner John Stears' special effects. The spellbinding result is ” a movie of unexpected pleasures” (Vincent Canby, The New York Times).

Special Features:

- o Commentary by Peter Hyams
- o Theatrical Trailer



Spawn
Photo credit: Warner Bros.

“Spawn”



There’s a reason that the director of “Spawn” only directed one feature film. It’s a shame too because I worry that kids will only know this character from the horrendous film instead of Todd McFarlane’s awesome comic series. Go read the books. And then see the film purely as curiosity because it doesn’t work as anything else.

Synopsis:

Imagine a creature on the verge of creation. From comic book legend Todd McFarlane comes the live-action special-effects movie Spawn. Michael Jai White, John Leguizamo and Martin Sheen star in a battle beyond good, beyond evil and beyond imagination.

Special Features:

- o Commentary Featuring Creator Todd McFarlane, Director Mark A.Z. Dippe, Producer Clint Goldman and Visual Effects Supervisor Steve “Spaz” Williams
- o Interview With Todd McFarlane
- o Behind The Scenes Making of Spawn Featurette
- o Spawn Sketch Gallery With Over 200 Original Concept Illustrations
- o Scene-To-Storyboard Comparisons
- o Original Todd McFarlane Sketches
- o Filter & The Crystal Method Music Video
- o Original Theatrical Trailer

“Altered States,” “Brainstorm,” “Coma,” “Frequency,” “Outland,” and “Spawn” were released on Blu-ray on July 10, 2012.



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