

Blu-ray Feature: The 10 Best Blu-rays of 2012

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on December 11, 2012 - 5:53pm

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CHICAGO – It's that wonderful time of year when we look back on the 11 months that just sped by and try to capture what was best, worst, overlooked, and more. While most of these pieces will just make people disagree, our annual cavalcade of year-end features starts with a piece that you can use to do your holiday shopping! These were the best Blu-ray releases of 2012, a year that saw a bit of a plateau in the technology but still produced enough quality to make a top 20 easy to produce.

First, a few notes.

Considering how easy it would be simply to make a top ten list that was comprised entirely of Criterion Collection Blu-rays, the tough decision was made to eliminate them entirely from contention. While it would be unfair to include them as they'd probably take up at least half the list, it seems just as unfair to ignore them entirely. And so here are the ten best Criterion Blu-rays of 2012, all must-owns for true movie fans

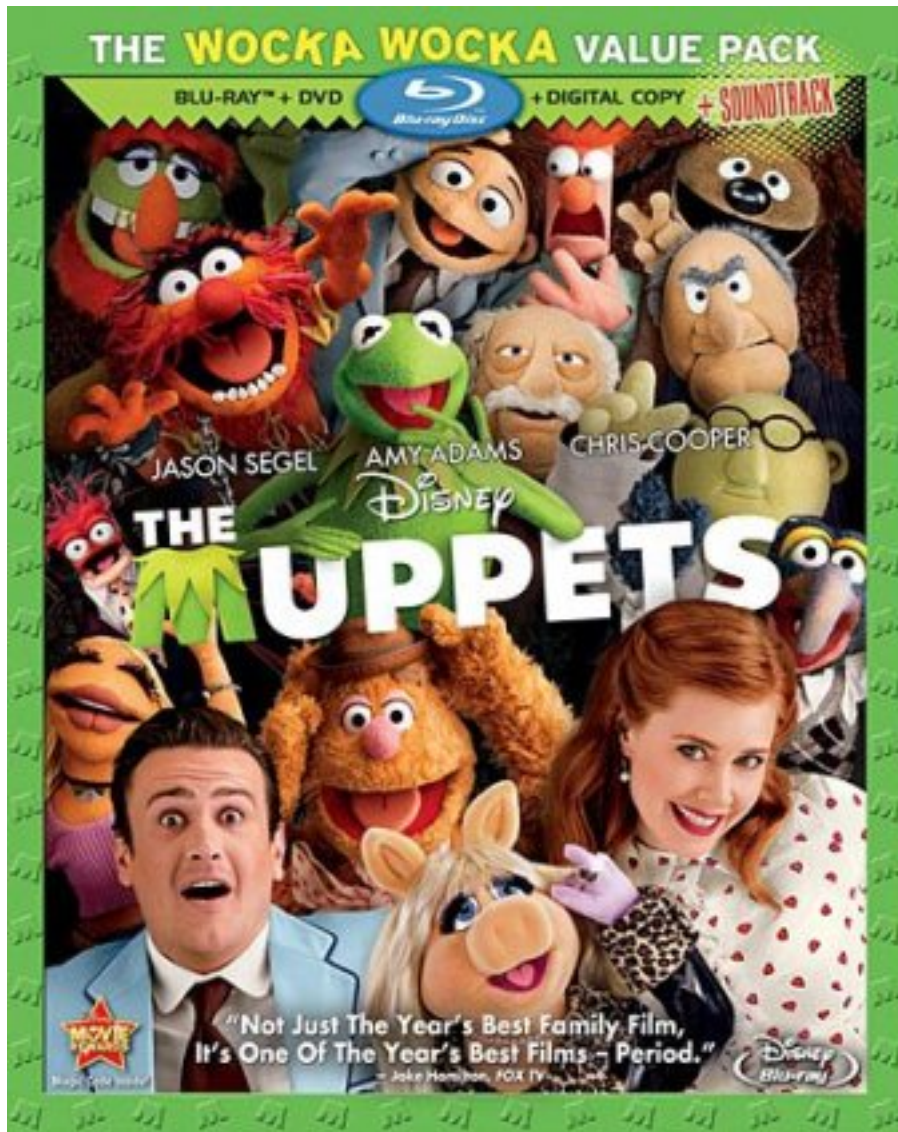
"Anatomy of a Murder"
"Brazil"
"Children of Paradise"
"David Lean Directs Noel Coward"
"The Game"
"The Gold Rush"
"Heaven's Gate"
"In the Mood For Love"
"Rosemary's Baby"
"Trilogy of Life"

And while we're limiting ourselves to Blu-ray releases for this feature, it would be a tragedy not to mention the best DVD-only releases of the year: Shout Factory's great ode to one of the best writer/directors of all time in "The Incredible Mel Brooks" and Music Box Films' exhaustive chronicle in "The Story of Film."

The Best Blu-rays of 2012

Runner-Ups: "The Cabin in the Woods," "The Deer Hunter," "Deliverance," "E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial," "Lethal Weapon Collection," "Monty Python and the Holy Grail," "ParaNorman," "Prometheus," "The Town: Ultimate Collector's Edition," and "The Walking Dead: Season Two".

10. "The Muppets"



The Muppets

Photo credit: Disney

The most joyful film of the last several years was treated justly with this excellent multi-disc release that offered fans a chance to take Kermit, Miss Piggy, Fozzie, and Walter on the road with not only DVD, Blu-ray, and digital copies of this hysterical film but a code to download the fantastic soundtrack. With deleted scenes, a clever audio commentary, a blooper reel, and a history on the work it took to get Jim Henson's legendary creation back to the screen, this is the best family Blu-ray release of a new movie for 2012.

[Buy "The Muppets" Here](#) [15]

9. "Battle Royale: The Complete Collection"



Battle Royale: The Complete Collection

Photo credit: Anchor Bay

It took decades to get here and the film adaptation of a work often considered inspired by it (“The Hunger Games”) to get “Battle Royale” a stateside home release of any kind but the wait was worth it. The four-disc special edition of the spectacular “Battle Royale” was the best foreign language film Blu-ray release of the year, offering multiple versions of the modern classic and hours of special footage. To be fair, the remastering here could have been a little better (and only the inferior Director’s Cut includes a Dolby TrueHD 7.1 audio track) but just being able to own “Battle Royale” on Blu-ray at all is a victory.

[Buy “Battle Royale: The Complete Collection” Here](#) [16]

8. “Chinatown”



Chinatown

Photo credit: Paramount

One of the best films of the most important period in movie history was perfectly restored for the Blu-ray arrival of Roman Polanski’s “Chinatown,” a film that looks so good in HD that it could have come out last week (and it would have been the best movie of 2012). The transfer alone would have earned mention in a feature like this one but when you add to this release a new commentary track that features Robert Towne and David Fincher along with a spectacular new appreciation of the film featuring some notable creative voices commenting on the film’s influence on their career. “Chinatown: An Appreciation” includes Kimberly Peirce, Steven Soderbergh, Roger Deakins, and more. Both features ALONE would make “Chinatown” a must-own. Add them to the previously available features that include interviews with Roman Polanski, Jack Nicholson, and more, and the perfect HD transfer, and you have one of the best classic movie Blu-rays of 2012.

[Buy “Chinatown” Here](#) [17]

7. “Star Trek: The Next Generation — Season One”



Star Trek: The Next Generation — Season One

Photo credit: Paramount

When Paramount decided to upgrade their beloved “Star Trek: The Next Generation” for the HD fan base, they knew they would have to go above and beyond for customers who not only owned every episode of Captain Picard’s universal adventures but had seen them multiple times. They’d never seen them like THIS. The upgraded special effects earned this release a ton of warranted publicity but it was the little things that really elevated it. Just watching Picard on the bridge looks amazing. And the remastered sound is incredible. Finally, the show has held up dramatically in ways for which it rarely gets the credit it deserves. Right from the very beginning, “The Next Generation” was delivering the kind of intellectual, engaging sci-fi screenwriting that is just too rare in today’s TV market. It would be popular and spectacular if it debuted today, a quarter-century after it actually started. And it would look just about this good.

[Buy “Star Trek: The Next Generation — Season One” Here](#) [18]

6. “Cinderella”



Cinderella

Photo credit: Disney

Another year, another Disney classic release on my Blu-ray top ten. Can you blame me? Disney does such amazing work with their most beloved films, not only offering fans new special features but HD remasterings that make the upgrade from DVD to Blu-ray easier to justify. Years from now, the Disney classic Blu-ray releases will be looked at as game-changers when it comes to animation in HD. The movie is more visually accomplished than most Blu-rays of films that were theatrically released last year. Admittedly, most of the best special features are material that has been imported from previous releases (although the new short “Tangled Ever After” is pretty cute) but it’s that gorgeously-mixed transfer that pushes it up this list as the best animated Blu-ray of 2012.

[Buy “Cinderella” Here](#) [19]

5. “Game of Thrones: The Complete First Season”



Game of Thrones: The Complete First Season

Photo credit: HBO

The best TV-HD release of 2012 is HBO’s exhaustive offering for fans of one of their most beloved and award-winning shows. Not only is “Game of Thrones” one of the best shows on TV and not only has it been presented in perfect HD video and audio but the bonus material is absolutely overwhelming. Each episode features an interactive guide that is constantly being updated to make sure you know how the characters relate and even where they are physically in the world of Westeros. There are clan and character histories, not just plot recaps, and it’s all presented in an incredibly user-friendly manner. If someone is understandably apprehensive about getting into a show with as many speaking roles as “Game of Thrones,” HBO has done everything they can to allay their fears, including not just the on-screen guide but a pamphlet that includes a map and a family tree. Seven commentaries, hours of featurettes, an interactive compendium of the houses...it’s damn near exhausting. And for good measure, HBO included DVD and digital copy versions of the episodes as well.

[Buy “Game of Thrones: The Complete First Season” Here](#) [20]

4. “Universal Classic Monsters”



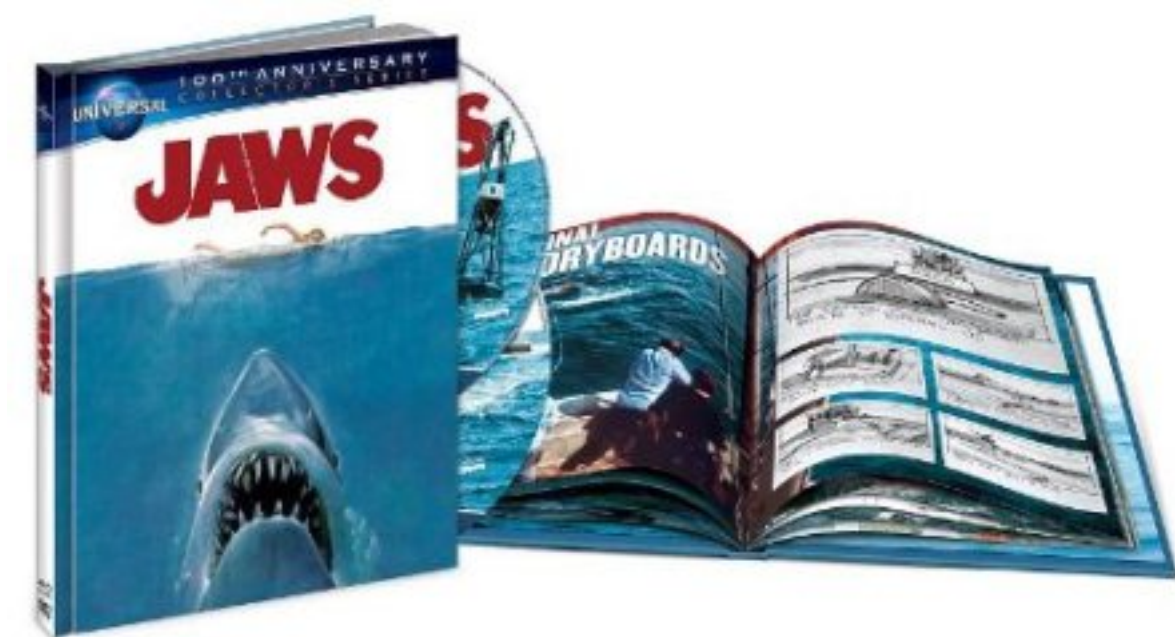
Universal Classic Monsters

Photo credit: Paramount

Now we get to the real meat of the list. Seriously, as much as I like #5-10, these top four are the ones that must be owned if your Blu-ray collection is to truly be complete. There was little competition for these top four spots and the first goes to an amazing collection featuring the timeless monsters that not only made Universal a powerhouse studio but redefined what we expect from horror films to this very day. So much of what we think about when we imagine vampires, monsters, and anything that goes bump in the night was defined by classics like “Dracula” and “Frankenstein.” And each film has not only been perfectly remastered but accompanied by incredible special features like the Spanish-language version of “Dracula” shot at the same time but with a completely different tone.

[Buy “Universal Classic Monsters” Here](#) [21]

3. “Jaws”



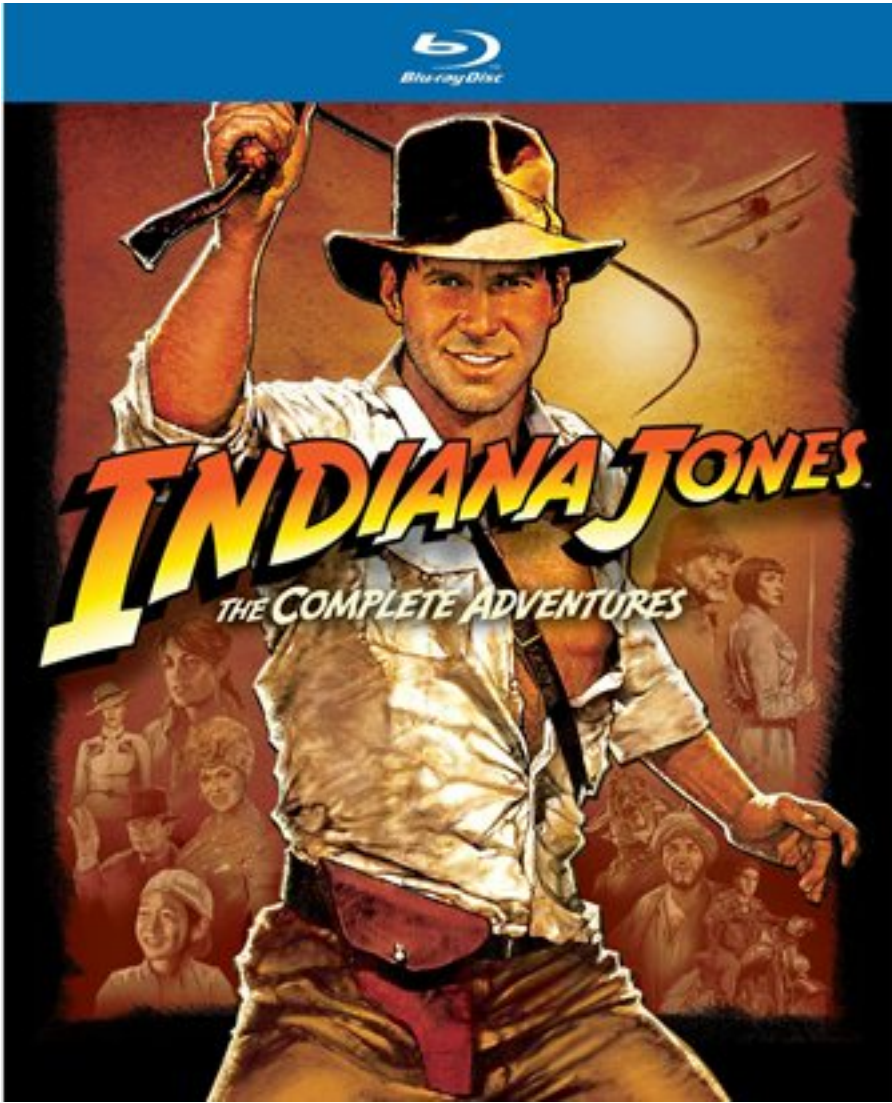
Jaws

Photo credit: Universal

Blu-ray releases should be tested in front of a film's most loyal fans. I've seen “Jaws” numerous times. It is my “oh no, _____ is on cable and now I have to watch all of it” movie. Every time I stumble upon it, I get sucked back into its singular joys. And yet when I started up this Blu-ray, I literally felt like I was watching it for the first time. The way moonlight shimmers off the water in that opening scene took my breath away. Judged purely on HD transfer, this is the best Blu-ray of the year. Add in the excellent special features and it's a clear choice for the phrase “must-own.”

[Buy “Jaws” Here](#) [22]

2. “Indiana Jones: The Complete Adventures”



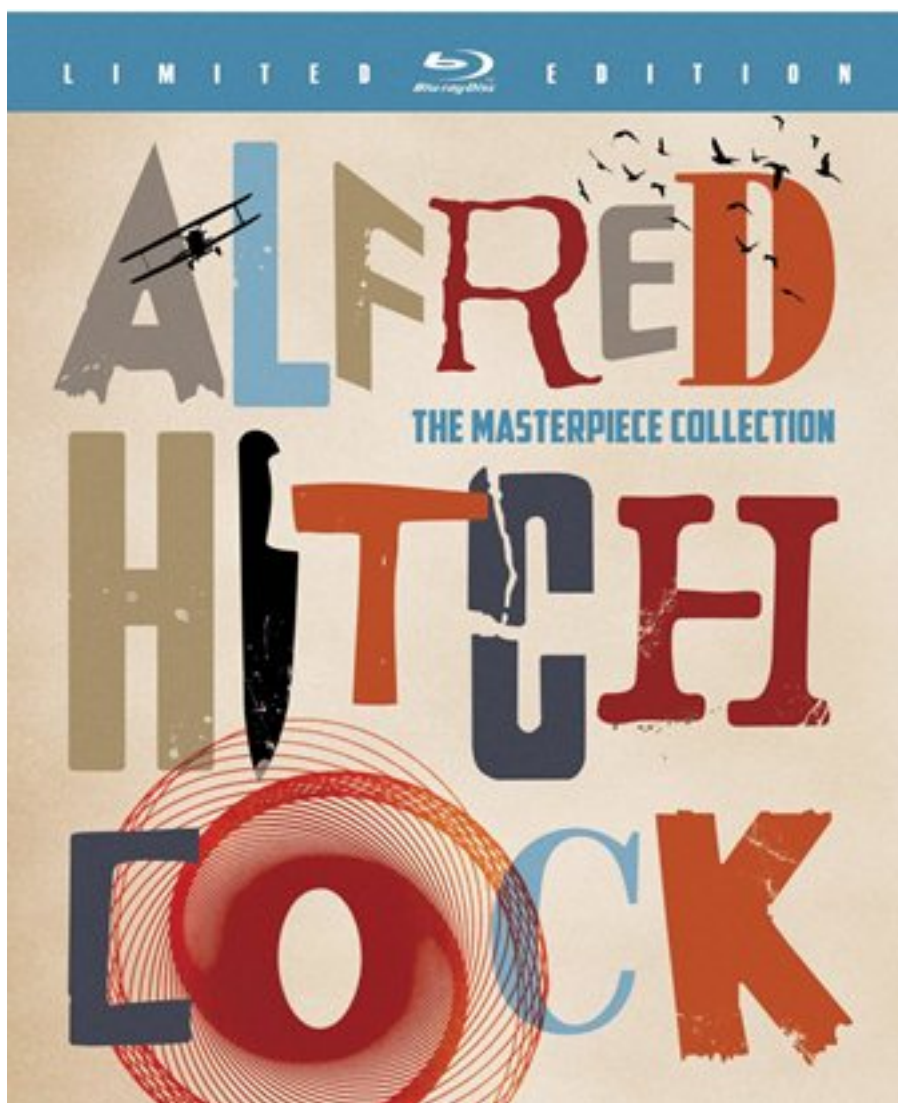
Indiana Jones: The Complete Adventures

Photo credit: Paramount

A remastered HD version of “Raiders of the Lost Ark”? Where do I pre-order? Yes, we can argue all day as to the quality of the other three movies in this collection but “Ark” is a must-own in HD by itself. And the transfer on “Doom” is a beauty, remastered in a way that makes it look like it could come out today. The fifth disc in this set includes nearly an hour of interviews, clips, and behind-the-scenes footage for each film. Rare footage is included like the screen test between Tom Selleck and Sean Young for “Raiders” along with amazing trivia like the fact that his name was once Indiana Smith or that it was almost called “The Temple of Death.” These making-of featurettes are spectacular. On top of the four individual features, there’s a whole new documentary of archival footage from “Raiders.” The disc adds up to seven hours of bonus material, which may sound like overkill for some franchises but “Indiana Jones” is not your average franchise. It’s a reason to buy a Blu-ray player.

[Buy “Indiana Jones: The Complete Adventures” Here](#) [23]

1. “Alfred Hitchcock: The Masterpiece Collection”



Alfred Hitchcock: The Masterpiece Collection

Photo credit: Universal

I know, I know. It's a little unfair to pick such an expensive release as the best Blu-ray of 2012 but I'd be lying to myself if I didn't include a box with some of the films that shaped the reason I love movies in the first place — "North by Northwest," "Psycho," "Rear Window," "Vertigo." And that's just four of the fifteen works of one of the best directors of all time included in this gorgeous box. You haven't seen "Vertigo" until you've seen it in HD. And the special features are impressive in terms of both quantity and quality. You'll spend days exploring the featurettes, archival footage, and commentary tracks and learn more about the movies that shaped the next half-century of cinema.

[Buy "Alfred Hitchcock: The Masterpiece Collection" Here](#) [24]



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By [BRIAN TALLERICO](#) [26]

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