What to Watch: Oct. 1-7, 2013

Submitted by BrianTT [1] on October 6, 2013 - 9:15pm

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CHICAGO – Another week of Blu-ray, DVD, and streaming options for you to peruse courtesy of HollywoodChicago.com's "What to Watch." Every week, we gather a select few of the most recent Blu-ray & DVD releases, toss in at least one On Demand option we've seen, and present them in a checklist order for you to knock out through Amazon, iTunes, Netflix, or good, old-fashioned Blu-ray (yes, that sounds funny to me too). This week's is the strongest yet by far. Everything in here is worth a look, all the way down to #9. This is just the order you should watch 'em in more than anything else.



The Bling Ring
Photo credit: Lionsgate

"The Bling Ring"

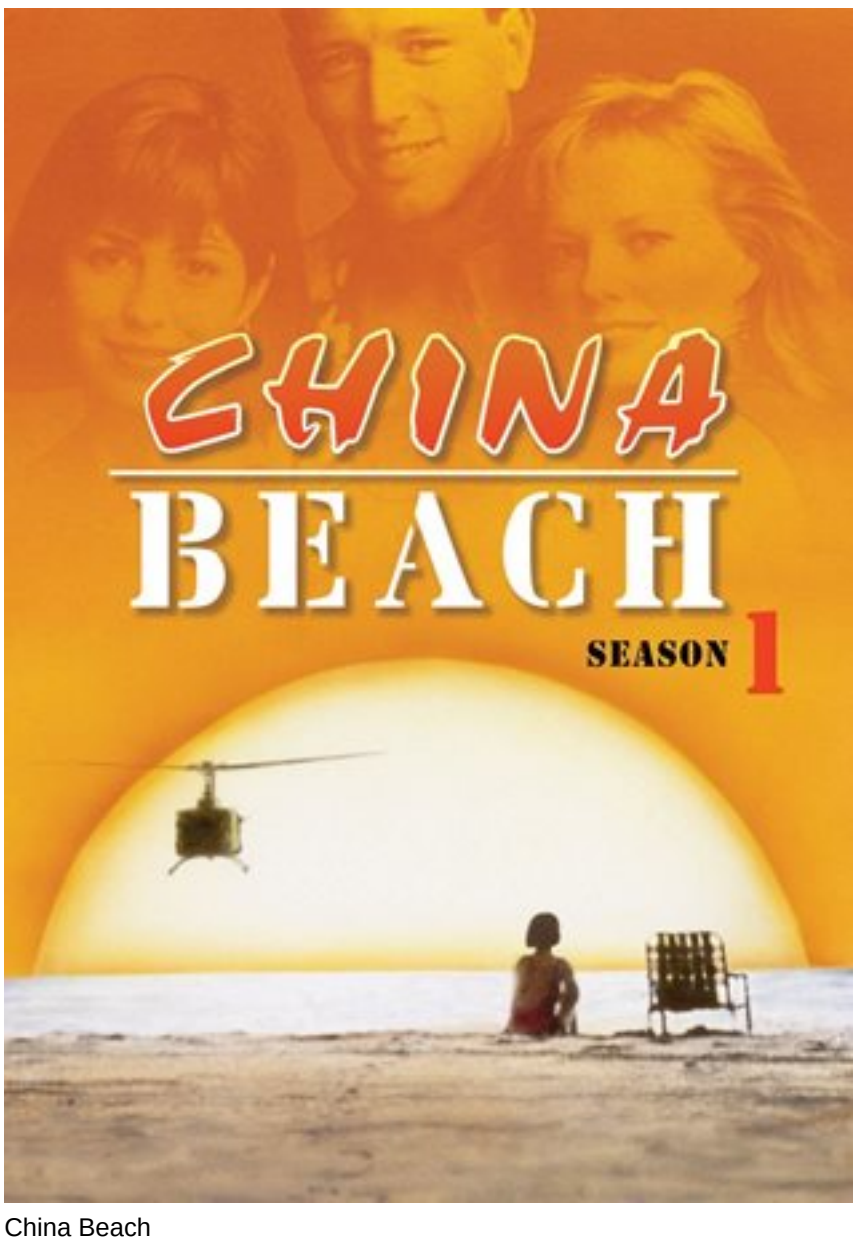
I argued with a few people who saw Sofia Coppola's wildly entertaining dissection of celebutante youth culture as too shallow and my counter is that most of those people don't know what they're really asking for. Did you want a scathing rebuke of the criminals who robbed Paris Hilton? A.) Why? B.) There's a Lifetime TV movie for you. What I find so fascinating about Coppola's film, complete with its perfect editing and great supporting performance from Emma Watson, is the refusal of its creator to give you easy moral judgments. You can make them if you'd

like. But there are so many message movies with stories like “The Bling Ring,” it’s fascinating to see one that doesn’t admonish its characters as much as it holds up a mirror to the world that created them.

From my theatrical review: [21] “*Are they vapid and is the film equally so by refusing to stand above them? Arguably, but isn’t that the point? Do we really want to see a film about “The Bling Ring” that presents its characters as just another example of youth gone wild for us to be superior over? We’ve seen that before. “The Bling Ring” does something much more daring just by presenting these fame-centric kids as what they are – a product of the world around them.*”

Special Features:
o Making The Bling Ring: On Set With Sofia, The Cast And Crew Featurette
o Behind The Real Bling Ring Featurette
o Scene Of The Crime With Paris Hilton Featurette
o Theatrical Trailer

Where to Watch: Blu-ray, DVD, Amazon Instant Streaming, Vudu, iTunes



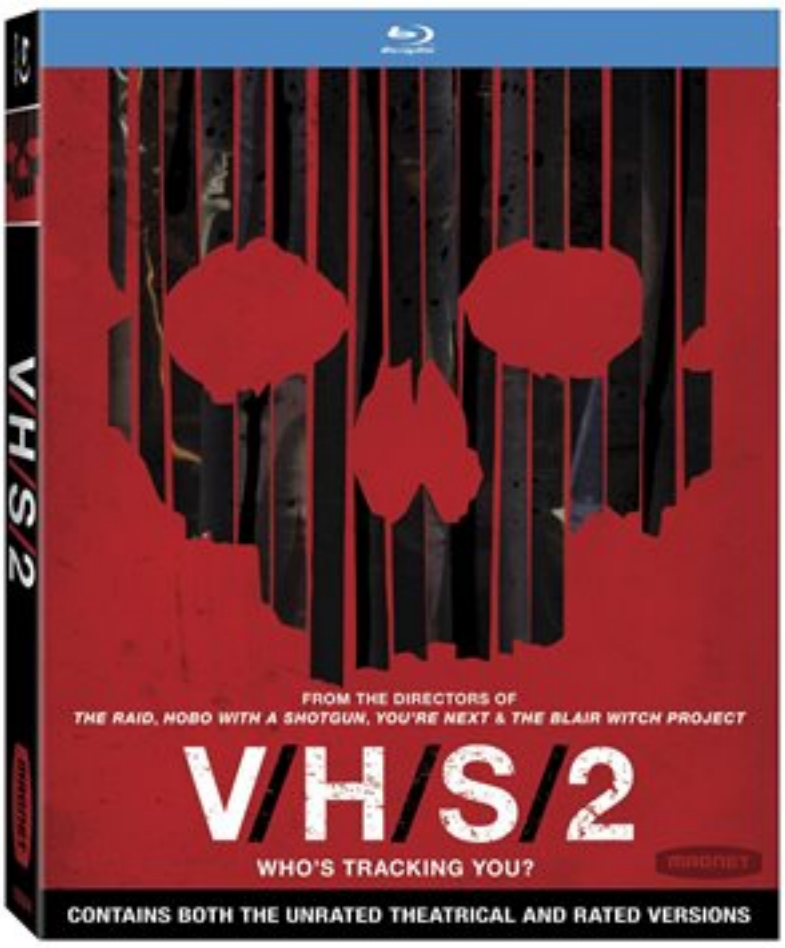
China Beach
Photo credit: Time Life Entertainment

“China Beach”

What to Watch takes a COMPLETE left turn into this incredibly important and influential drama from 25 years ago. In 1988, “China Beach” was revolutionary, approaching complex characters and adult drama in a way that may look quaint to modern cable audiences but was unlike anything the networks were doing in the ’80s. Time Life long ago released a complete series set but those are incredibly hard to find now (going for over $300 in some online markets) and so they’re releasing the first season standalone to get people back into this daring show. Those of you that love “Breaking Bad,” “Mad Men,” and “Boardwalk Empire” should see one of the ’80s dramas that showed us what was possible in the form.

Special Features:
o China Beach - How It All Began
o Highlights From the 25th Anniversary Cast Reunion, December 12, 2012
o Interviews: Dana Delany and Chloe Webb
o Episode Commentary

Where to Watch: DVD



VHS2
Photo credit: Magnolia

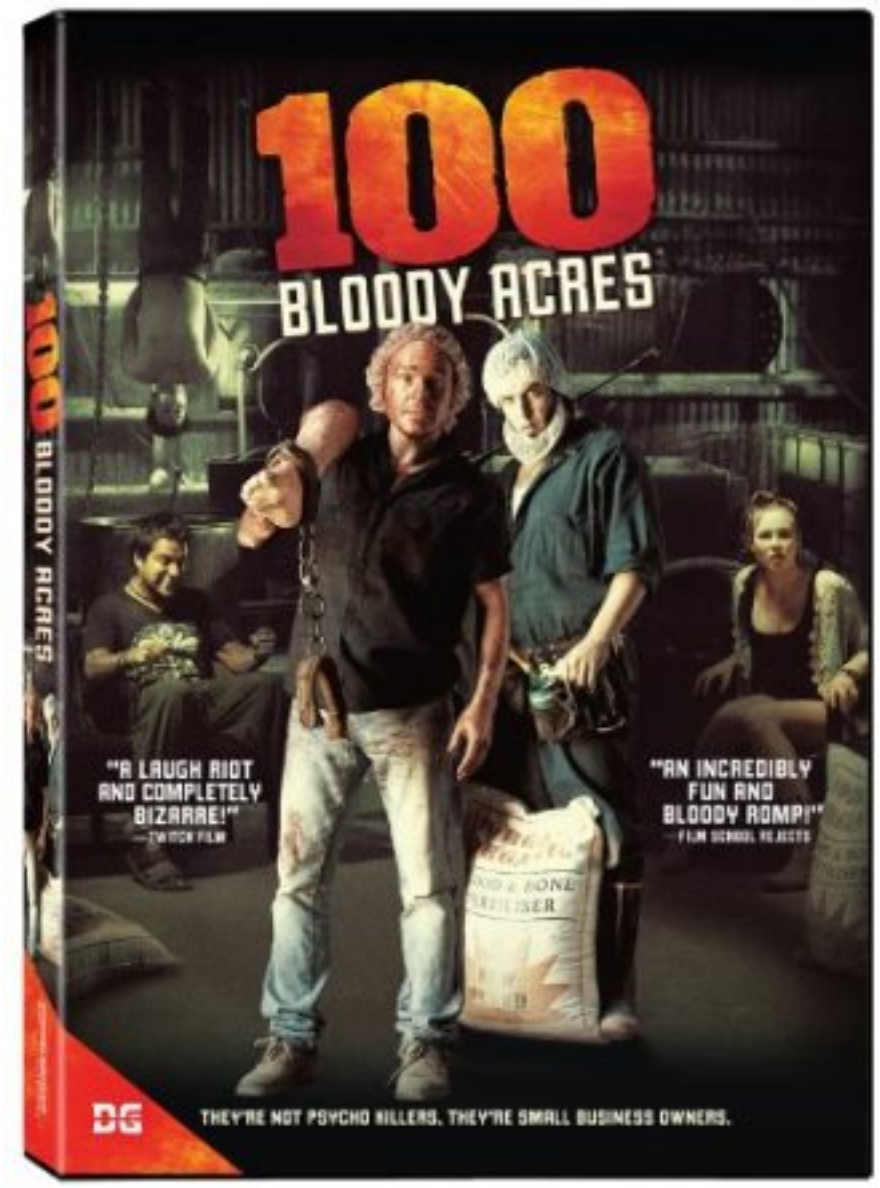
“V/H/S/2”

It’s October, so every What to Watch is going to include a horror movie or two (this one has two good ones). This sequel, originally called “S-VHS” at Sundance (a title I vastly prefer) features two of the best short films you’ll see all year, from the directors of “The Blair Witch Project” and “The Raid: Redemption.” They’re a pair of horror gems, one with such a brilliant approach to the undead fad that you can’t believe it wasn’t envisioned before and the other with the kind of over-the-top aesthetic that only the director of “The Raid” could bring to it. You must see them both.

From my Sundance review [22]: “*It’s pretty damn good. It’s definitely a superior work to last year’s Sundance hit “V/H/S” as its two central segments are so cleverly conceived and well-directed that they make any flaws of segments one and four easier to overlook. Utilizing a much higher budget, this is the more hi-fi answer to the original (a fact that will easily divide viewers into camps as to which one is their fave).*”

Special Features:
o Tape 49 Rewind
o Dissecting Phase I Clinical Trials
o Inside Safe Haven
o Slumber Party Alien Abduction: Behind The Lights
o A Ride In The Park: I Dare You
o AXS TV: A Look At V/H/S/2
o Behind The Scenes Photo Galleries
o Filmmaker Commentary
o Theatrical Trailers

Where to Watch: Blu-ray, DVD, Vudu, iTunes



100 Bloody Acres
Photo credit: Music Box Films

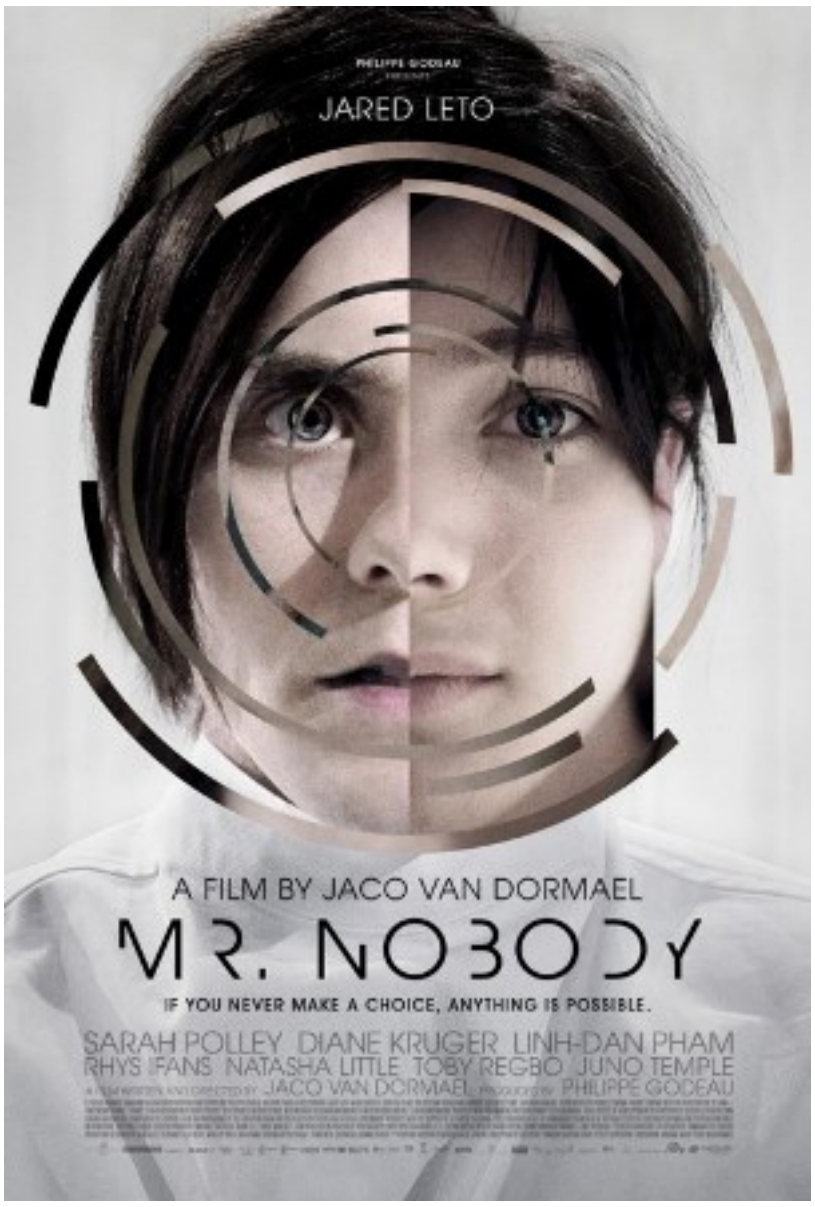
“100 Bloody Acres”

Speaking of fun horror movies, this Aussie, indie hit is undeniably clever, even as it amplifies the gore. In the vein of “Shaun of the Dead,” which RogerEbert.com compares this work to on the DVD case, “100 Bloody Acres” has that infectious energy, that whip-smart pacing that elevates it above its lackluster peers. Horror and comedy are both so much about timing — spacing the scares or the laughs — that it’s refreshing to see a flick that gets both of them so right.

From my theatrical review [23]: “*“100 Bloody Acres” features enough lines, set pieces, and story beats that come from unexpected places that it entertains throughout. It’s not a classic of the genre like the films that seem to have inspired it but it’s so refreshing to see a horror-comedy that’s actually funny that you’d be forgiven for thinking it’s a bloody masterpiece.*”

Special Features:
o Behind the Scenes
o Cast & Crew Interviews
o SFX Featurette
o Gag Reel
o Storyboard Gallery
o Morgan Brothers TV Commercial
o Celestial Avenue, A Short Film, & More…

Where to Watch: DVD, Amazon Instant Streaming, Vudu

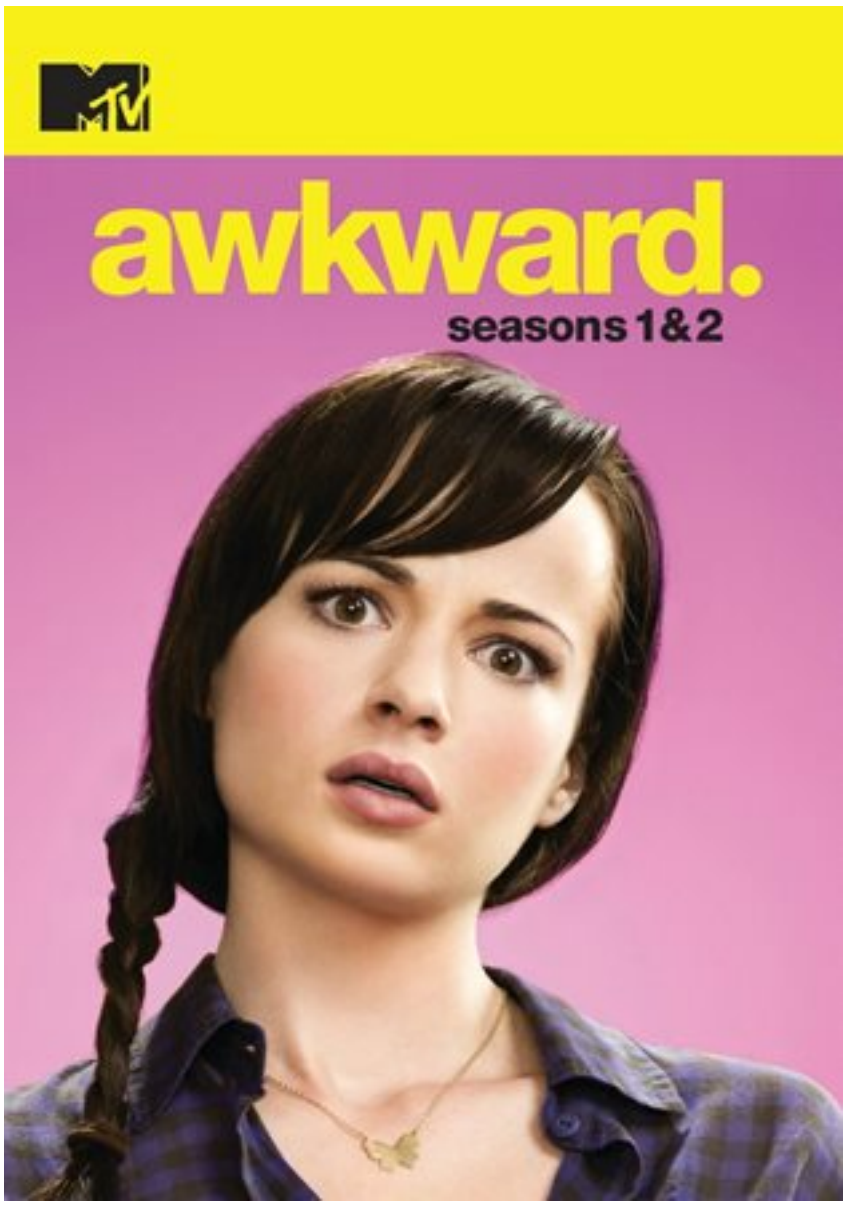


Mr. Nobody
Photo credit: Magnolia

“Mr. Nobody”

What can I say about “Mr. Nobody,” the most ambitious film to sit on the shelf for four years in recent memory? Why did this linger and gather dust for so long? It’s too remarkably unique to have been forgotten entirely and features incredibly strong performances from Jared Leto and Sarah Polley, the former doing the best work of his career. I’ll admit that it’s far too long (the writer/director hits many of the same romantic beats repeatedly) and that it feels too reminiscent of superior works like “Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind” or David Mitchell’s “Cloud Atlas” (with a bit of “The Butterfly Effect” thrown in for good measure), but we need more movies willing to take these kind of risks. At least we need to see them when they do.

Where to Watch: On Demand, Amazon Instant Streaming, Vudu, iTunes



Awkward
Photo credit: MTV

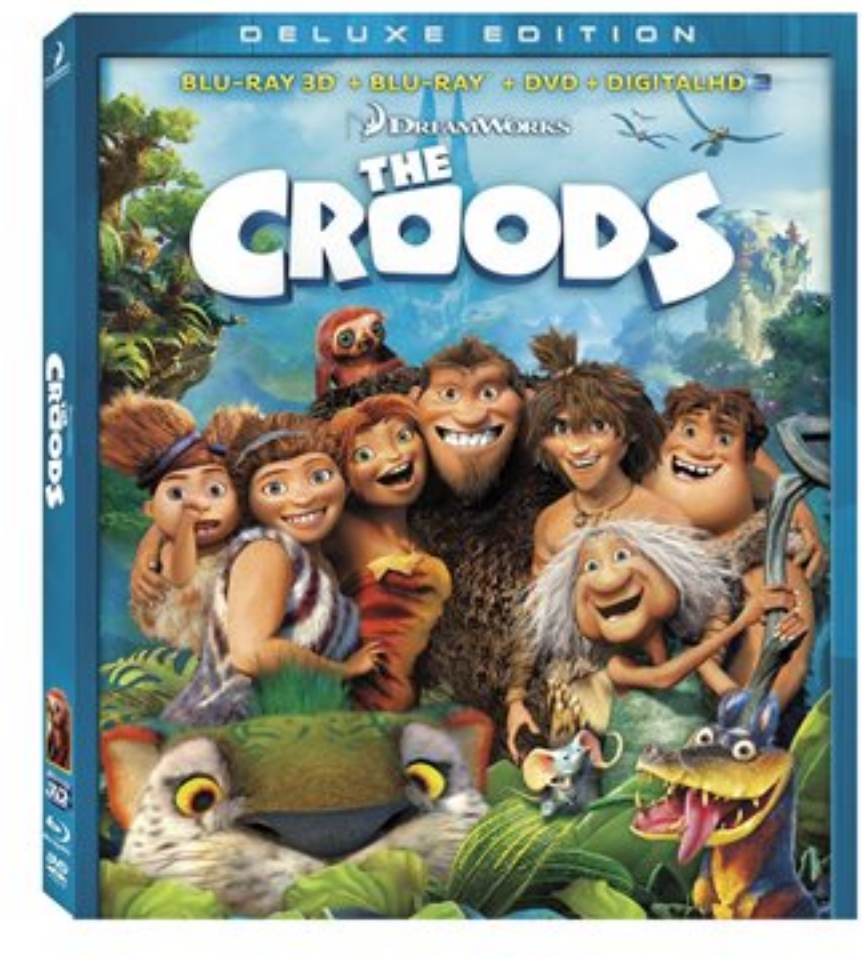
“Awkward: Seasons 1 & 2”

MTV’s teen comedy may not be among the best (“Freaks & Geeks,” “My So-Called Life”) but it’s much closer than those of you who gave up on the network when they gave up on music videos may believe. This is timely, funny stuff that works for multiple generations. It’s imperfect but often funny enough that you won’t notice the flaws. It could even bring you back to MTV. It helps that the “Seasons 1 & 2” set is LOADED with special features. Like all modern shows, I believe it should be on Blu-ray just on principle but the special features here make up for that oversight.

Special Features:
Season 1: Webisodes, Dressing Awkward, What’s to Come, Character Advice, Team Matty vs. Team Jake, Cast vs. Fans, Fan Correspondents, On The Red Carpet, Interview With Molly

Season 2: Webisodes, Set Tour, Cast Chemistry, Cast Awkward Moments, Valerie’s Desk, Mothers and Daughters, Wardrobe Trailer, Jake and Lissa’s Relationship, Peer-enting, Pranks, Character Intros, About the Show

Where to Watch: DVD, Amazon Instant Streaming, Vudu



The Croods
Photo credit: DreamWorks

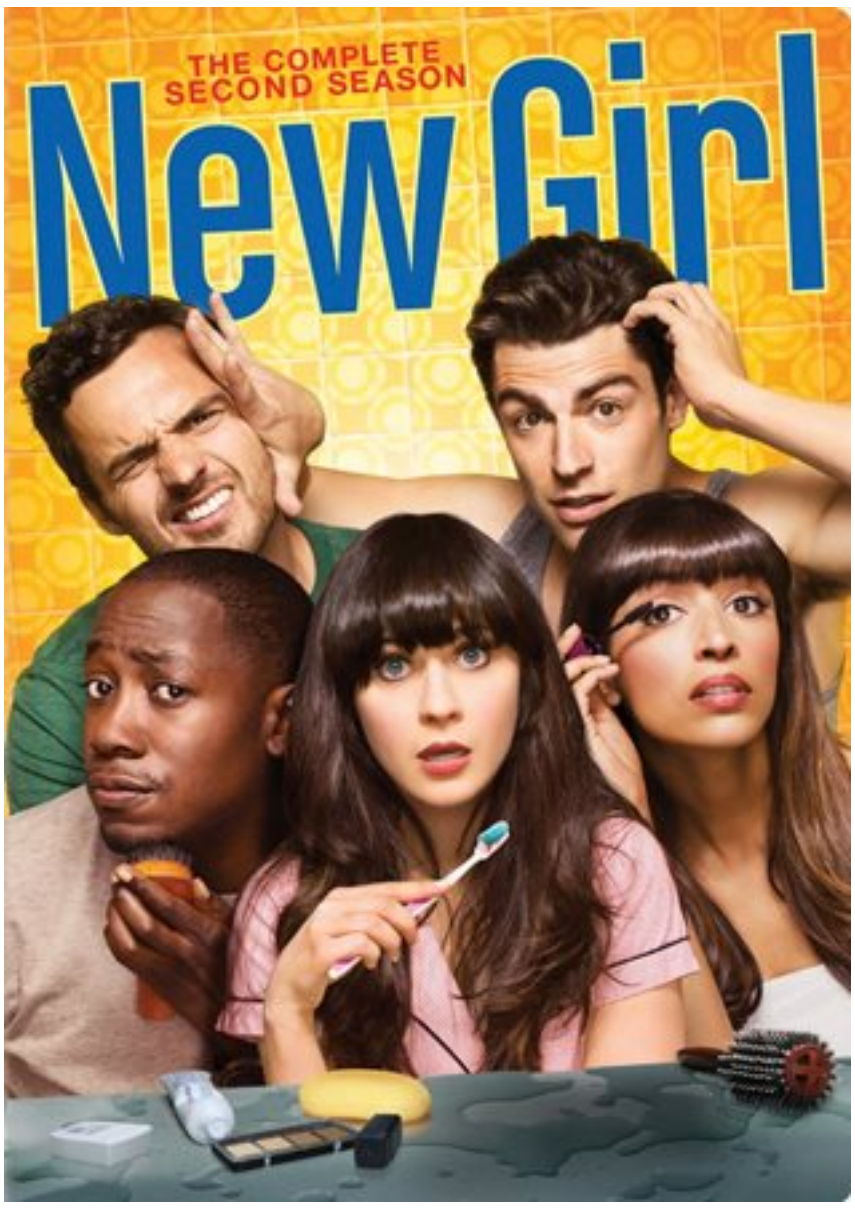
“The Croods”

“The Croods” will always have a special place in my heart as it’s the first film my son saw in the theater. If it means anything, he loves it. And he’s picky like his dad. It’s easy to see why. It’s a visual ride, a film that keeps the little ones engaged with its breakneck pace and stunning CGI animation. I wish the storytelling was a little deeper but the quality of the filmmaking, including the voice work, is well above average. The Blu-ray is also a little slight on special features (and even the transfer seems so-so) or this might have ranked a little higher on this week’s list, the strongest edition of What to Watch to date in terms of quality. In some recent weeks, this would have been near the top.

From Patrick McDonald’s theatrical review [24]: “*Good cartoons know that we’re in on the joke, that all the surreal actions will satisfy our basic funny bone. Great cartoons give us a little bit more, an empathy or a story that really goes beyond expectations. “The Croods” is a great cartoon, and a wonderful achievement in animation evolution.*”

Special Features:
o The Croodaceious Creatures Of Croods
o Belt’s Cave Journal
o Croods’ Cuts: Lost Scenes
o Be An Artist: Draw Creatures From The Croods!
o Digital Copy Included

Where to Watch: Blu-ray, DVD, Amazon Instant Streaming, Vudu



New Girl: Season Two
Photo credit: Fox

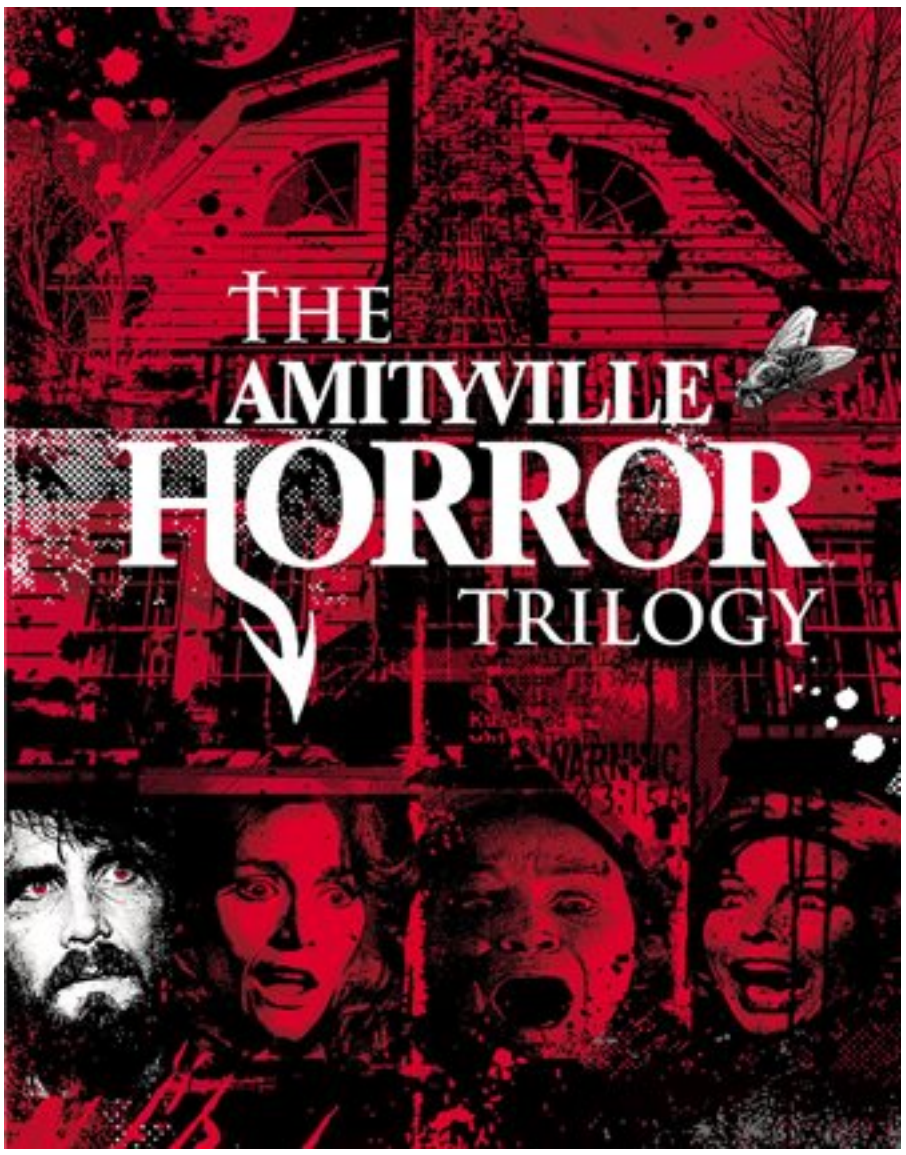
“New Girl: Season Two”

I’ll admit it. I’m a man and I really enjoy “New Girl.” It’s not just for women. It’s a smart, fun, well-performed relationship comedy, which has only gotten better as the show has become less of a star vehicle and more of an ensemble comedy. The second season seemed to lose some buzz, dropping in ratings and failing to notch the Emmy nods of the first season. I don’t get it. I think it has more to do with the unstoppable erosion of network ratings than an actual dip in quality. You check out the DVD and decide for yourself.

From my TV review [25]: “*A year ago, “New Girl” was clearly a star vehicle for Zooey Deschanel and her overly quirky Jess. As Jake Johnson and Max Greenfield started to get more laughs, the program developed into an ensemble comedy that really works and the writers opened up the show to play to the entire cast.*”

Special Features:
o Extended Version Of Virgins
o Full Of Schmidt
o Gag Reel
o Audio Commentary On Cooler
o Deleted Scenes

Where to Watch: DVD, Amazon Instant Streaming, Hulu, Vudu, Netflix



The Amityville Trilogy
Photo credit: Shout Factory

“The Amityville Trilogy”

We’ve broken most Scream Factory releases out to their own standalone Blu-ray reviews because there’s usually so much to talk about in relation to them. Such is not really the case here. The special features were all previously available, the transfers aren’t as mind-blowing as some of the recent SF ones (“Day of the Dead” is breathtaking), and, well, arguably 67% of the set is horrendous. Even the first movie hasn’t held up very well. This is for diehard horror fans this holiday season only, those excited to watch “Amityville 3D” again. You know who you are.

Special Features:
The Amityville Horror
o Audio Commentary By Dr. Hans Holzer, Ph.D In Parapsychology
o For God’s Sake, Get Out! - Documentary With Stars James Brolin and Margot Kidder
o Theatrical Trailer
o Radio Spots

Amityville II: The Possession
o Interview With Director Damiano Damiani
o New Interviews With Actors Andrew Prine, Diane Franklin And Rutanya Alda
o Audio Commentary With Author Alexandra Holzer (Growing Up Haunted - A Ghostly Memoir)
o Theatrical Trailer

Amityville 3D
o Theatrical Trailer

Where to Watch: Blu-ray, Amazon Instant Streaming, Vudu

 [26]

By BRIAN TALLERICO [27]
Content Director
HollywoodChicago.com
brian@hollywoodchicago.com [26]

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