

## Blu-Ray Review: ‘The Wizard of Oz’ Given Release Befitting a Classic

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on October 12, 2009 - 9:57pm

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CHICAGO – The Warner Brothers Blu-Ray release to mark the 70th anniversary of the beloved “The Wizard of Oz” is perhaps the most exhaustive and complete “Collector’s Edition” release to date. Warner Brothers, a studio that knows how to treat their classics, releasing gigantic sets for “Blade Runner” and “Casablanca” in recent years and with another for “Gone With the Wind” coming soon, has done it again, and arguably better than ever.

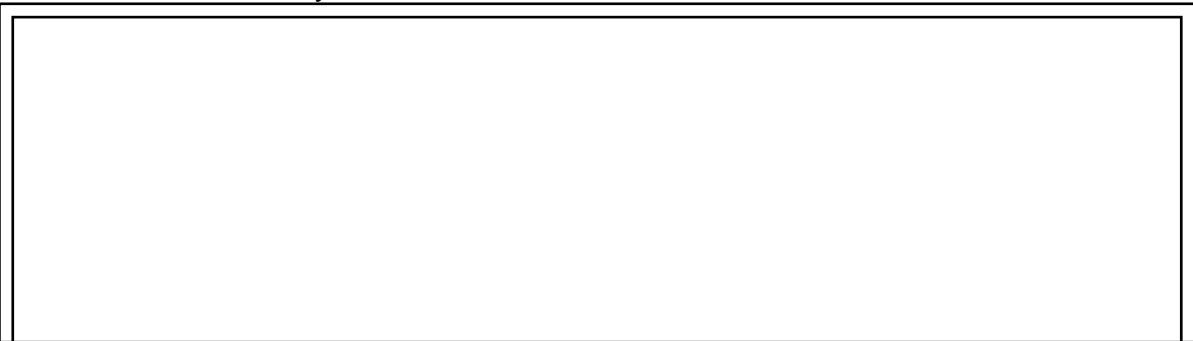


As for the film itself, what more could possibly be written about “The Wizard of Oz”? By some standards, it’s the most watched movie in world history, a film that has transcended its genre to simply become a part of the history of the planet. Have you ever heard someone criticize or complain about “The Wizard of Oz”? Me either.



The Wizard of Oz: 70th Anniversary Ultimate Collector’s Edition was released on DVD and Blu-Ray on September 29th, 2009.  
*Photo credit: Warner Brothers Home Video*

So, the unanimous love for the film is clear, but how does the Blu-Ray deliver such a timeless product? By providing nearly every piece of footage they could find from or about “The Wizard of Oz”. This is a “schedule clearer,” a release that will take more than one day of your life to go through and a box set you can return to repeatedly. It’s hard to believe anyone could have a question about any element of “The Wizard of Oz” not answered by this release.







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*Photo credit: Warner Brothers Home Video*

The producers of this ultimate collector's edition of "The Wizard of Oz" haven't just remastered the film or brought over the copious special features already available. They've taken the challenge of an actual collector's edition seriously, giving fans more than they could have imagined they would find in a single Blu-Ray set.

First, the film itself, which despite all the impressive bells and whistles will always be the centerpiece of any Blu-Ray release. I know that I've said this in a Blu-Ray review before but the transfer for "The Wizard of Oz" looks amazing. I was worried that the film would look too clean and overly plastic, as a lot of HD transfers for classic films have looked. It simply does not. There's a perfect mix of clean, vibrant color but also enough grain to convey the warmth of this classic film. "The Wizard of Oz" shouldn't look like it was made yesterday, and the team behind this transfer know that, producing an HD transfer that looks exactly right.

The audio on the film is presented in a new Dolby Digital 5.1 Audio track that's similarly impressive. A lot of classic film audio tracks come off sounding wrong, but "The Wizard of Oz" hasn't been over-mixed. It's not going to be an immersive audio experience but neither should they have attempted to make it one.

Before a buyer of the "UCE" even gets to the film, they'll marvel at the gorgeous packaging and the collection of physical collectibles in the set, including a Limited Edition 70th Anniversary watch with genuine crystals, an original 1939 campaign book reproduction, a replica of the original movie budget, and a 52-page commemorative book called "Behind the Curtain of Production 1060".



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*Photo credit: Warner Brothers Home Video*

The special features on "The Wizard of Oz" include over 16 hours of detailed documentaries, featurettes, archival footage, and even deleted scenes. Over 4 hours of the material has never been seen before. The final disc of the set features a 6-hour award-winning chronicle of the legendary studio that brought Oz to life called "MGM: When the Lion Roars". Yes, that's a SIX-hour bonus feature.

The "Oz" material lives on two Blu-Ray discs, divided as such. As for personal favorites, the Angela Lansbury-narrated "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz: The Making of a Movie Classic," while being previously available and originally aired on TV, is a great look at the production of the film, the deleted scenes are fascinating looks at what might have been (including an extended Scarecrow number and a bizarre group dance number to something approaching a jitterbug), and the archival, never-before-available, vintage films are a thing of beauty. Those features, combined with the gorgeous remastering, would make "The Wizard of Oz" a 5-star Blu-Ray release on their own. And, as you'll see by the list below, they're just the tip of the iceberg.

Special features (\*-new material to this edition):

Disc 1:

- Sing-along Track\*
- Commentary by Historian John Fricke with Barbara Freed-Saltzman (daughter of Arthur Freed), Margaret Hamilton, Ray Bolger, Jack Haley, John Lahr (son of Bert Lahr), Jane Lahr (daughter of Bert Lahr), Hamilton Meserve (son of Margaret Hamilton), Dona Massin (MGM choreographer), William Tuttle (make-up artist), Buddy Ebsen, Mervyn LeRoy, and Jerry Maren
- "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz: The Making of a Movie Classic" (1990 TV Special)
- "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz Storybook," Read by Angela Lansbury
- "Prettier Than Ever: The Restoration of Oz"
- "We Haven't Really Met Properly..." Supporting Cast Profile Gallery
- "Memories of Oz" (2001 TCM Documentary)
- "The Art of Imagination: A Tribute to Oz"
- "Because of the Wonderful Things It Does: The Legacy of Oz"
- Harold Arlen's Home Movies
- Outtakes and Deleted Scenes
- "It's a Twister! It's a Twister! The Tornado Tests"
- From the Vault: 3 Vault Shorts
- The Audio Vault: "Leo is on the Air," "Good News of 1939," "12/25/1950 Lux Radio Theater Broadcast"
- Stills Gallery
- Theatrical Trailer Gallery
- "Off to See the Wizard"

Disc 2:

- "Victor Fleming: Master Craftsman"\*
- "L. Frank Baum: The Man Behind the Curtain"
- "Hollywood Celebrates Its Biggest Little Stars!"\*
- "The Dreamer of Oz" (1990 TV Special)\*
- "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz" (1910)
- "The Wizard of Oz" (1933)
- "The Magic Cloak of Oz" (1914)\*
- "His Majesty, The Scarecrow of Oz" (1914)
- "The Patchwork Girl of Oz" (1914)\*
- "The Wizard of Oz" (1925 feature)

With releases like the Ultimate Collector's Edition version of "The Wizard of Oz," I often hear that they're over-priced and just ways to trick consumers into buying a film they already own for a second or third time. Looking at that list above, can one really argue that this edition of "Oz" doesn't give fans everything they could possibly ask for? This is no typical "double dip" and if you just want to own a Blu-Ray edition of the film, it's available in a less "Ultimate" edition as well. But real fans of the film should open the wallet a little wider and pick up one of the best Blu-Ray box sets to date.

*'The Wizard of Oz: 70th Anniversary Ultimate Collector's Edition' is released by Warner Brothers Home Video. The box set was released on September 29th, 2009. It is rated G.*



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