

Edition: US

FRONT

POLITICSENTERTAINMENT

WHAT'S WORKING HEALTHY

WORLDPOSTHIGHLINE

HUFFPOST

ALL SECTIONS

THE BLOG

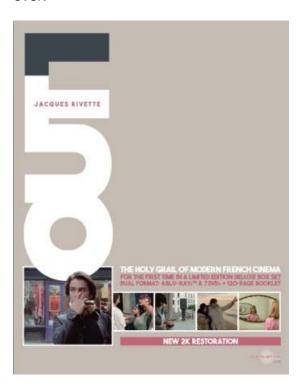
DVDs: A Lost Masterpiece, TV's Coolest New Show (This Week) And More

☐ 01/22/2016 03:53 am ET | **Updated** Jan 22, 2016



Freelance writer

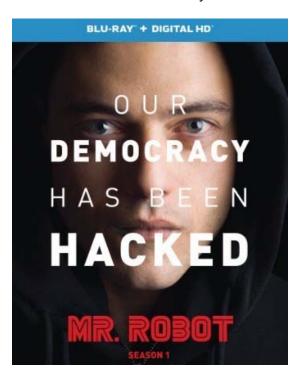
A new year and a new flood of DVD and BluRay releases. We start with a lost landmark of French cinema, dive into the coolest show on TV (at least until yet another one is dubbed even cooler next week) and then all bets are off. It's only January and thanks to the ever-rising spectre of streaming video on demand, studios are emptying their vaults faster than ever.

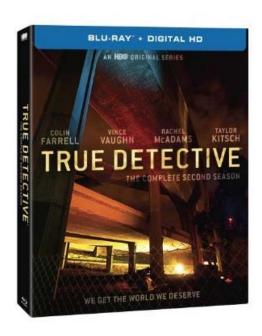


OUT 1 BOXED SET (\$99.95 BluRay and DVD combo; Carlotta)

Like Abel Gance's Napoleon, French director Jacques Rivette's 1971

masterpiece Out 1 is much-discussed but rarely seen, a rabbit-hole of a movie that's more than 12 hours long (in one version) and essentially invisible. Napoleon is difficult to screen for technical reasons; Out 1 simply wasn't available. Now finally the movie has been restored and screened in cinemas. But it will surely find its real audience via this beautifully made boxed set. Like the standard bearers from Criterion, this release from Carlotta is impeccable. You get the entire 12+ hour epic on both BluRay and DVD. You also get the shorter version dubbed Spectre on both BluRay and DVD. And to make sense of it all, you get a new 90 minute documentary that talks with many of the principals as well as using archival footage to try and nail this sucker down. Like much of Rivette's work, it's wildly experimental. Inspired by Balzac, it includes not one but two theater troupes, each rehearsing plays by Aeschylus. That is just the starting point for this sprawling, interlocking work. In cinemas, it was shown in marathon sessions. I think perhaps it will play best over eight nights, with each episode running about 90 or so minutes. You could of course watch it in four nights or binge watch it all in one day. Each experience would surely reveal different facets of this infuriating, fascinating work. Just seeing the damn thing makes the cineaste in me feel a little more noble. But more than that, it starts to give Rivette's career a shape I hadn't appreciated before. I can see the echoes in the work of Kieslowski and Lynch and of course in Rivette's entire career. In some ways, he's been playing off the experiments that began here. Check back in six months from now and maybe I could speak more sensibly about Out 1. But unquestionably it's great to have it presented with such care and authority.



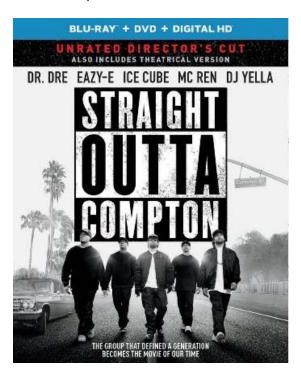


MR. ROBOT SEASON ONE (\$49.98 BluRay; Universal) TRUE DETECTIVE COMPLETE SECOND SEASON (\$79.98 BluRay; HBO)

It's fun being the coolest new show on the block. But how long will it last? For the moment, perhaps no TV show is snazzier than Mr. Robot. It tapped into the zeitgeist with an overwhelming sense of paranoia and the belief that privacy is a myth. (Belief? Make that fact.) Rami Malek was the unlikely lead. I'd found him an interesting if somewhat opaque actor in supporting roles but wondered who the heck thought he should be the lead of a TV show. So what do I know? Malek's opaqueness is part of his appeal (he has an air of mystery rare in the open-faced new Hollywood of easy access to a celeb's every thought). And that uncertainty is absolutely essential to the balancing act Mr. Robot pulled off in its first season. For most of the season, we don't know exactly how nuts his character might or might not be. Literally nuts. Certain episodes chimed in with the headlines, making Mr. Robot seem even more timely. (The season finale was even delayed due to unfortunate echoes of real life.) And now the hard part begins. Launching a series is hard. Launching a potentially great series is harder. Fulfilling that promise of course is even harder. So dive in now because season two can't come soon enough.

Of course, *True Detective* might tell the paranoid series Mr. Robot to watch its back. Get dubbed the hottest show on TV and people will come gunning for you. That's surely the feeling they have on this series. Season One was praised to high heaven. Unlike the continuing series *Mr. Robot, True Detective* has self-contained seasons, storylines with beginnings and middles and ends. Season Two starts from scratch with a new cast and has to win your trust all over again. Rather remarkably, *True Detective*

failed to do so in spectacular fashion. Not since Season Two of *Friday Night Lights* dove off a cliff with a ludicrous storyline has a series squandered so much goodwill so quickly. The folks at *TD* probably blame that target on their backs, ignoring the many shows that get acclaim and keep it (*The Sopranos, Hill Street Blues, The Wire, Mad Men, Breaking Bad* and so on.) The fact is that season two really pretty silly. Watch it and you're more likely to downgrade your feelings about season one than say, hey, it's not that bad! I'm still rooting for/waiting for Vince Vaughan to get back on top, but this wasn't it.

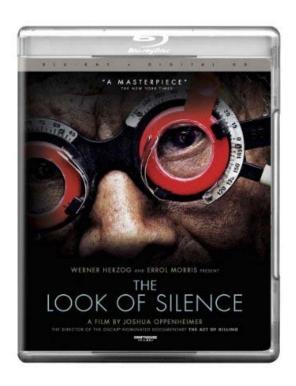




STRAIGHT OUTTA COMPTON (\$34.98 BluRay combo; Universal) **STONEWALL** (\$19.98 DVD; Lionsgate)

The Oscars may be stupid enough to ignore one of the most critically acclaimed and popular films of the year, but we're not! The truth is that the Academy Awards loves underdogs, but they usually prefer the sacrificial lamb sorts, like Meryl Streep in Silkwood or Tom Hanks in Philadelphia. Young black men who gain swagger and success by rapping bluntly and explicitly about their life? Not so much. And most Academy voters have never even heard of the legendary group N.W.A., much less heard their music. So given the film's success and raves, sure it "deserved" to be in the mix at this year's Oscars. (I put deserved in quotes because no movie "deserves" an Oscar nomination and an Oscar nomination or win has absolutely NOTHING to do with quality, much as they'd like to think so.) But one can easily understand why Selma and 12 Years A Slave were much more Oscar's cup of tea. Polite and noble? Great. Foul-mouthed and funny? Not so much. The controversy does have one positive side: maybe even more people will take the time to check out this film and learn about one of the most influential acts in music history, not to mention perhaps gaining some understanding of gangsta rap and why it took off and what it actually meant and still means to its fans.

Stonewall faced a worse controversy than not getting Oscar nominations: indifference. It also got tarred with the usual accusation of white-washing history. It uses the backdrop of the Stonewall riots to tell the usual tale of a (hot) gay kid from the sticks coming to Greenwich Village and finding himself, though not before a lot of creepy older men find him and offer money in exchange for his soul. It's terrible history, but movies aren't meant to be history. They are, however, meant to be entertaining and Stonewall feels more dated than dangerous or (god forbid) debauched. If it had been made in 1980 or 1970, this film would make perfect sense. Coming out in 2015, about the nicest thing one can say is that director Roland Emmerich had good intentions and clearly did everything in his power to deliver the best, most widely appealing film possible. But so often, you find a wider audience by being true to yourself: that's the real genius of Straight Outta Compton.



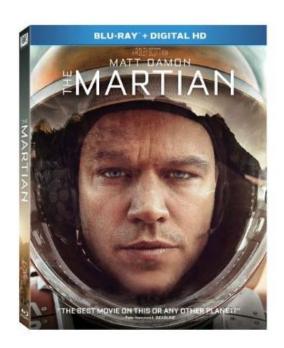


THE LOOK OF SILENCE (\$29.93 BluRay; Cinedigm) **LET THERE BE LIGHT** (\$29.95 BluRay; Olive)

The Look Of Silence is one of the best films of 2015. it's a companion piece to director Joshua Oppenheimer's brilliant The Act Of Killing. But it's almost difficult to believe they were made by the same person. Both movies illuminate the crimes against humanity that took place in Indonesia, crimes that remain unpunished to this day. The Act Of Killing pushed the envelope for documentaries, to say the least. Somehow Oppenheimer talked those who had taken part into reenacting their crimes...in the style of various movie genres, like crime flicks and

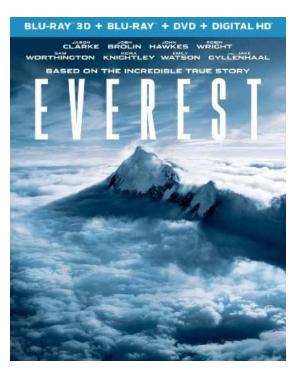
musicals. The result is even nuttier than it sounds. Now with *The Look Of Silence* we get the flip side: an absolutely traditional, straightforward, deeply compelling and unsettling look at the same subject. It's hero is an optometrist who lives in the same community with people who killed or orchestrated the death of countless people, including his brother. On camera, he calmly meets with these officials (they are in power, hence the lack of shame or fear of justice). He tests their eyes -- the nominal reason for the visit -- and then confronts them about the role they played. He is ignored, threatened, tearfully pleaded with, argued with and it's all just as compelling as any thriller. The credits are filled with people who worked on the film but in fear of reprisals asked their names to be left out. I literally fear the man's life and every time the film comes up, I gingerly check online to see if his death has been reported. So far, so good. Justice of course, is another matter entirely.

Director John Huston's work brings another crime to light: the brutality of even a just war. No one doubts the necessity of World War II (though the way civilians became acceptable targets for both sides certainly can and should be debated more). Huston dove in wholeheartedly, making a series of films for the Army. This BluRay collects four works and as it attests, shows Huston's transformation from war booster to something more complicated and humane. It begins with a flag-waving short narrated by Jimmy Stewart. Then we get Report From The Aleutians, which captures the boredom of preparing for battle. Even this was considered risky at the time. Huston really crossed the line with The Battle With San Pietro, which showed how a failure of intelligence could cost American lives. Finally, it ends with Let There Be Light, a disturbing and revealing look at soldiers suffering what we now recognize as PTSD. At the time, the suggestion of this was seen as a sign of weakness at best and unpatriotic at worst. Of course, Huston had as much gravitas and authority as any General. They didn't try and get him to change these movies. They just buried them deep. We can only be thankful they weren't destroyed. As a record of a major director actually coming to grips with war and its aftermath, this is a unique, fascinating chapter in Huston's career.









THE MARTIAN (\$39.99 BluRay; 20th Century Fox)

SICARIO (\$39.98 BluRay; Lionsgate)

EXPERIMENTER (\$29.98 BluRay; Magnolia)

EVEREST (\$44.98 BluRay; Universal)

Ok, now I'm going to get testy. I have many friends who absolutely loved *The Martian.* I suppose I understand why; it has an inherent appeal and stars the very appealing Matt Damon. But to me it's clearly an inferior spin on *Gravity* which was itself an inferior spin on the much better movie *Apollo 13*. Among its many failings is the film's inability to suggest the passage of time. Damon's astronaut is stranded and alone on Mars, literally out of touch with the rest of humanity for months at a time. But in

the movie it feels like maybe at most a few weeks have passed. Damon constantly finds a problem to be solved...and then immediately solves it. At least we get to spend a great deal of time with Damon. Unlike *Apollo 13*, the scenes on earth are by far the worst. Jeff Daniels is asked to behave absurdly as the head of NASA taking questions from reporters in a style that is movie-silly and shouldn't pass a test for believability from even the most innocent audience. Indeed, everything that happens on the ground is pretty godawful, dramatically speaking, from the many conferences about what to do about a stranded astronaut to the dreadfully boring ending. Are you upset Straight Outta Compton got ignored? I'm more upset by the acclaim and Oscar noms for this subpar film. Yet that's silly since Oscars have nothing to do with "the best films of the year" and given this movie's actual acclaim from critics not named Michael and its popular appeal, it makes perfect sense that it would be showered with attention.

Sicario on the other hand slipped through the cracks. It's a would-be drama hoping to wake us up to the corruption of the drug trade and the people who cynically, perhaps half-heartedly try to tamp it down. It's an expose in search of something new to expose, since we already know the drug trade has a corrupting influence on everyone forced in contact with it, from border guards to the CIA to honest good folk caught in the middle. Everything this movie reveals has been seen many times before and more effectively. It doesn't help that our way in is an FBI agent played by Emily Blunt. Her character behaves so foolishly so often you start to root against her. The manly man cynic Josh Brolin and the mysterious character portrayed by Benicio Del Toro are marginally more likable because they aren't patsies. Yet the machinations they engage in are so silly in their desire to "shock" that you giggle instead of gasp at every twist. The only positives here are the sweeping birds-eye cinematography of Roger Deakins and the moody score by Jóhann Jóhannsson.

On the plus side, *Experimenter* is the latest interesting addition to the body of work by director Michael Almereyda. Documentaries, shorts, an episode of *Deadwood*, Shakespeare (Ethan Hawke's intriguing Hamlet) -- Almereyda has done it all. Here he tackles the famed social experiment conducted at Yale in 1961 in which volunteers believed they were delivering painful shocks to patients simply because someone in a white coat (ie. a figure of authority) told them to do so. Peter Sarsgaard as the Experimenter is right in sync with the director's subtle, complex worldview and it's nice to see Winona Ryder delivering another good, you-know-l-can-act-don't-you? performance as his wife. It's not great, but it's intelligent, interesting and ripe for discovery.

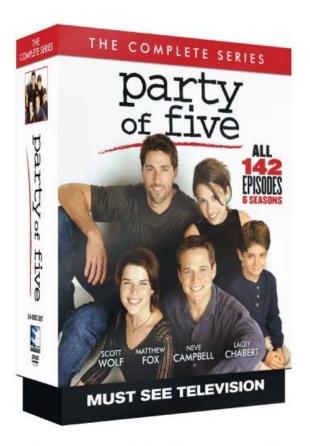
Everest, unfortunately, is perhaps not the best movie to see at home. Sure

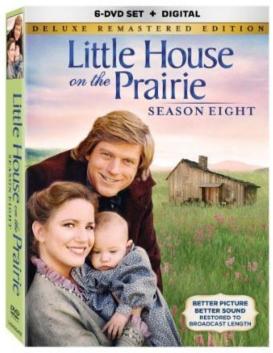
you've got a widescreen TV and some cool sound. (Or at least, lucky you if you do.) Even so, a spectacle like this benefits the most from being seen in a movie theater. Sure, it's not just a spectacle thanks to a solid cast led by Jake Gyllenhaal. But the main appeal is the sense of danger and realism surrounding this depiction of a doomed real-life expedition in 1996. I can't get into the many arguments about what really happened and who deserves blame, if anyone. Watching it on a small screen, you probably won't even care. Sometimes, waiting for BluRay (or VOD or Netflix) just isn't the right call.



THE COMPLETE LADY SNOWBLOOD (\$39.95 BluRay; Criterion)

If it wasn't for Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill,* I would have never heard of this early 1970s revenge classic. His movie paid obvious homage to *Snowblood* and as is Tarantino's wont, he urged everyone to check it out. Now finally we can in a print that does justice to it. This Criterion release contains the original and the sequel, looking better than ever. Watch out for that umbrella! Lady Snowblood is a young woman determined to get revenge against the dishonorable thugs who killed her father and brother and raped her mother. And by god she gets it, beautifully. The sequel is less interesting but is good to have here. The extras are modest but the care with which it's presented, from of course the print itself to the gorgeous artwork on the box itself is evident throughout. It's a career high for everyone involved, though the star Meiko Kaji is still around and still acting regularly, so who knows? Maybe 20 years from now Criterion will release some other work in which she shines.





PARTY OF FIVE COMPLETE SERIES (\$69.98 DVD; Mill Creek)
LITTLE HOUSE ON THE PRAIRIE SEASON EIGHT (\$21.98 DVD;
Lionsgate)

This problem is only going to get worse. What problem? The problem of getting access to your favorite TV shows in complete, satisfying sets. Boxed sets come out but don't include all the original music. Individual seasons are released one by one but before they're done someone goes

and releases a complete boxed set, making you feel like a fool for buying each one instead of waiting. Or you get one or two seasons...and then nothing. (I'm looking at you, *St. Elsewhere.*) Why will it get worse? Because there's so much damn television being created. Streaming is taking over, so studios are losing interest in physical product like boxed sets. Thank god some are still coming out.

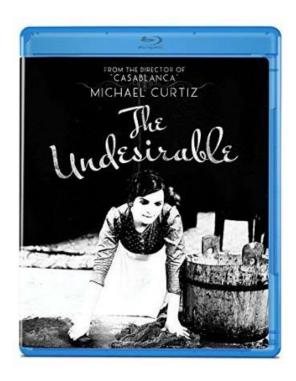
Here for example is Party Of Five. After some individual seasons came out, they stopped. At least now finally we get the entire series. These are the broadcast episodes, uncut. However, it seems music rights weren't cleared so we get a lot of cues that aren't what were originally played. This is maddening, though often I'd argue in the 1990s that the music cues popping up in these shows did to a degree become somewhat random. I'm just glad a show that obviously isn't one of the greats but boasted an excellent cast is available in some form. It's cheap, it's cheaply packaged, but by god it's the entire series.

Little House On The Prairie has had an even more convoluted path to release. We've had individual seasons in DVD and BLuRay, then seasons remastered on DVD, then a complete boxed set and then remastered on BluRay and so on and so forth. Some poor bastards have an almost complete set of BluRays but are waiting for the last two. (And those TV movies!) Here's the uncut season eight on DVD in nicely remastered picture and sound. No BluRay in sight yet, but hey, if you bought season 1-7 on DVD, you're gonna want this. It's too late to wish for common sense. Virtually no one who cares about LHOTP wants just a season or two. They want the whole series. I'm not even sure what the commercial reason is for turning out individual seasons at this point, though again, if you bought 1-7, well I know why YOU want it. The quiet charms of Season One are long gone, of course and by now LHOTP is just a soap with so many plot twists it puts to shame the simple plots and insights of the original books. BUt it sure looks good.



HOTEL TRANSYLVANIA 2 (\$38.99 BluRay; Sony)

The death of Adam Sandler has been greatly exaggerated. He's received Razzies for his work on The Cobbler. His Netflix western comedy *The Ridiculous* 6 got terrible reviews. (No one knows how popular it's been except for the folks at Netflix and they ain't talking.) And the would-be franchise *Pixels* got terrible reviews (though ok box office). But I'm happy to point out the obvious: Sandler has become MORE of a worldwide box office draw in the past ten years. (That's rare for comedy, which doesn't travel as well as action.) The good news continues for him with this animated sequel. It actually improves on the modest quality of the original, with a snappier story and better voice work all around. Needless to say, like most of his work it's harmless and sweet in intent, championing the offbeat and the oddball. And it was an even bigger hit than the first one. Watch it with your kids and you'll be pleasantly surprised. So yes, expect a *Hotel Transylvania* 3 and a lot more movies from Sandler. He's not done yet.



THE UNDESIRABLE (\$29.95 BluRay; Olive)

My favorite director of all time is Michael Curtiz. He embodies the classic Hollywood system and rivals Howard Hawks for the record of more great movies in more genres than anyone else in history. Great pirate flick? Captain Blood or The Sea Hawk. Great musical? Yankee Doodle Dandy. Great western? Dodge City, perhaps. Great woman's film? Mildred Pierce. Great costumer? The Private Lives Of Elizabeth & Essex. Great family film? Life With Father or Four Daughters. Great gangster flick with a heart of gold? Angels With Dirty Faces. Oh and here are two more. Great adventure? The Adventures of Robin Hood. And just plain greatest film of all time? Casablanca.

So if Curtiz directed it, I want to see it. And now finally, we get to see one of his unsung masterpeices. The silent Hungarian film *The Undesirable* was thought lost for good, but turned up in a basement in NYC. It's been fully restored and given a new score, fitting tribute to Hungary's greatest director. I'm almost a little wary of seeing it: I want it to be great, not just a good flick. Obviously, Curtiz delivered the goods or wouldn't have made the leap to Hollywood. On the other hand, if it's really good, I'll be all the sadder to realize how many of his early films are truly lost for good. I've checked out the image and score: they're all you could hope given the movie's relatively obscure nature. It's here, presented in as good a condition as possible. Given the swamp of titles that come out every week, it's hard to know what to watch first. Sometimes, however, I know I want to wait. It's a treat to know there's a "new" Michael Curtiz film for me to savor. Can I add it to the list above, tossing in "great silent film?" Soon, I'll know.

Thanks for reading. Michael Giltz is the founder of BookFilter, a book lover's best friend. Looking for the next great book to read? Head to BookFilter!

Need a smart and easy gift? Head to BookFilter! Wondering what new titles just hit the store in your favorite categories, like cookbooks and mystery and more? Head to BookFilter! It's a website that lets you browse for books online the way you do in a physical bookstore, provides comprehensive info on new releases every week in every category and offers passionate personal recommendations every step of the way. It's like a fall book preview or holiday gift guide -- but every week in every category. He's also the cohost of Showbiz Sandbox, a weekly pop culture podcast that reveals the industry take on entertainment news of the day and features top journalists and opinion makers as guests. It's available for free on iTunes. Visit Michael Giltz at his website and his daily blog.

Note: Michael Giltz is provided with free copies of DVDs and Blu-rays with the understanding that he would be considering them for review. Generally, he does not guarantee to review and he receives far more titles than he can cover.

Follow Michael Giltz on Twitter: www.twitter.com/michaelgiltz

FROM OUR PARTNERS

Presented by LendingTree

CONVERSATIONS