

DVD Select: 30 years after, Elvis is still in the building, still on our minds

by Robert_J_Hawkins

I'm holding out hope - faint hope - that there is a tiny corner of the life of Elvis that has not yet been exploited to death. To his death, that is. Because it is happening again.

ELVIS ANNIVERSARY - Elvis Presley's movie catalog is being repackaged to mark the 30th anniversary of his death on Aug. 16. Paramount Home Entertainment and Warner Brothers have each released box sets. CNS Photo courtesy of Elvis Presley Enterprise. DVD RATINGS

4 stars: Don't miss: rent it/buy it

3 stars: Worth the risk: rent it

2 stars: On the tipping point: if nothing else is available

1 star: Don't bother: wait until it's in the \$1 bin To mark the 30th anniversary of the death of Elvis Presley (Aug. 16), a huge chunk of his movie catalog is being repackaged and re-issued. There are even a handful of films that apparently hadn't yet made it to DVD.

The packaging gets nicer with each re-issue and - more importantly - it gets compressed. Now, you can get four to eight movies on DVD for the previous space of two.

For space-saving reasons alone I'm inclined to go with the latest round of re-issues. (That leaves space on my

cramped shelves for the new Frank Sinatra and Brigitte Bardot film collections)

I would just love it, though, if one day somebody discovered the lost Elvis movie, the one in which he didn't let Col. Tom Parker and his handlers dumb-down everything to a song-action-song-action-kiss-song formula. The movie Elvis quietly made on the sly with a handful of young and really talented actors and actresses, let's call it the "Elvis Indie Project."

I think he was headed there with "Charro!" a Western with Elvis in facial hair and not a single song. That was almost his last film, released in 1969 just before "The Trouble with Girls" and "Change of Habit."

As it happens, "Charro!" is part of a box set from Warner Brothers, "Elvis: The Hollywood Collection" that touts six titles previously unavailable on DVD. Others in the set are "Girl Happy," "Kissin' Cousins," "Stay Away, Joe," "Tickle Me" and "Live A Little, Love A Little."

Ah, but Warner Brothers is just warming up. The studio is also debuting "deluxe editions" of two of Elvis' most popular movies, "Jailhouse Rock" and "Viva Las Vegas." Both contain commentary tracks by rock journalist Steve Pond and short feature films.

The studio also has a lock on two great Elvis performance documentaries: the Andrew Solt produced "This Is Elvis" and the 1970 film "Elvis: That's the Way It Is." Both come in two-disc "special editions."

Solt's "This Is Elvis" has the original 1981 theatrical version and the 1983 version with an additional 40 minutes. The set also includes a vintage feature, "Behind the Gates of Graceland."

"Elvis: That's the Way It Is" includes the original and the 2000 restoration, as well as 12 previously unseen

sequences/outtakes and a feature on restoring the film.

Paramount Home Entertainment reaches into its vaults and retrieves eight classic Elvis musicals, nicely packaged in a blue "suede" box no thicker than two traditional DVD containers.

The set contains one of the singer's earliest attempts "King Creole" (1958) and one of the few in which Presley is given a chance to really act. The immensely popular "Blue Hawaii" is here, as are the other two parts of his Hawaiian Trilogy: "Paradise, Hawaiian Style," and "Girls! Girls! Girls!" Rounding out the set are confections "G.I. Blues," "Easy Come, Easy Go," "Fun in Acapulco" and "Roustabout." (That last one includes a couple of newcomers in cameos, Teri Garr and Raquel Welch.)

MGM came out recently with its own box set under the "Movie Legends Collection" banner with four titles: the boxing remake "Kid Galahad," the prince-and-the-pauper riff "Clambake," the white trash "Follow That Dream" (with the worst Elvis movie name ever, Toby Kwimper), and the snoozer "Frankie and Johnny."

And finally, MGM re-issues the gonzo Elvis sci-fi horror film "Bubba Ho-Tep" in which a crotchety old resident of the Shady Rest retirement home (Bruce Campbell) claims to be the real Elvis Presley. Besides fighting old age and senility, Elvis must combat an old Egyptian evil spirit who is sucking the life out of the elderly residents. Like I said, gonzo. The disc is packaged in a little white leather jumpsuit - how cool is that?

Meanwhile, somebody please tell me there is a "lost Elvis" out there, that isn't part of the "31 great exploitations of Elvis" that we know as his entire theatrical oeuvre. Please! Before still-dead anniversary No. 40 comes along.

ALSO THIS WEEK

"Disturbia" (DreamWorks, 3 stars) Shia LaBeouf is a stir-crazy teen - kind of literally: He's under court-ordered house arrest for punching out a teacher. Not without good reason. Just the same - like Jimmy Stewart in the classic Hitchcock thriller "Rear Window," LaBeouf's character, Kale, amuses himself by spying on his neighbors. One of them is the little hottie who just moved in next door, Ashley (Sarah Roemer). Another is, oh, you know, possibly a serial killer. Good suspense, a taut thriller. And you've got Carrie-Anne Moss as the mom.

"The Salon" (20th Century Fox, 2 stars) From Mark Brown, the talented writer-director who brought you the "Barbershop" comedies turns his eye (and pen) on the ladies. "The Salon" has the misfortune of following Mo'Nique's "Hair Show" and Queen Latifah's "Beauty Shop" on to the screen. What the salon has going for it is not a singer-turned-actress with attitude but a real actress Vivica A. Fox as Jenny, the proprietor who is trying to hold her shop together.

"I Think I Love My Wife" (20th Century Fox, 2 stars) To love this movie, you've got to love Chris Rock. Me, I still get a headache after listening to him for more than 10 minutes. To his credit, this is a more mature role for the brash comic, as a married man in the perfect marriage who is bored out of his mind. But any resemblance to its inspiration "Chloe in the Afternoon" is purely superficial. And yes, that R rating, for a romantic comedy, is for real.

All the rest: The dismal sequel "Are We Done Yet?"; the horror fest "Beneath."

IT CAME FROM TV

George Sunday, health store owner and famous superhero is back for season two of "My Hero" from BBC. SciFi Channel's wizard detective debuts on DVD already, that's season one of "The Dresden Files."

The late John Ritter was never more engaging than in the sitcom "8 Simple Rules" (season one). Season two of "The Muppet Show" features the rarely seen "Valentine Special" and such guest stars as Steve Martin and Elton John. Speaking of puppets, the air-heads of "The Hills" are back in season two.

And how about a pair of seventh season boxes for two shows nobody thought would last past season two or three, or four - "Home Improvement" and "Full House."

Sure James Lipton can be a precious twit but he gets to the meat of his guests like no talk show host ever does. And what a guest here: "Inside the Actors Studio: Barbra Streisand" from Shout! Factory. (Did you know she has a Grammy, a Tony, an Oscar and an Emmy?)

Who knew competitive barbecuing could be turned into a reality TV series? Somebody did because cable TV's Versus channel now has out "Barbeque Championship Series - Volume 1: The Complete Season" - or is that complete seasoning?

FROM THE VAULTS

Two marvelous box sets for the subtitled crowd, both from LionsGate:

- "Brigitte Bardot 5-Film Collection"

Don't you just love the originality and depth of the title? Sigh. For an original sex symbol you could have done better. In the 1950s and '60s Bardot was one of the reasons America loved the French. The phrase "sex kitten" was, I believe, coined for her. The five films here are "Naughty Girl" (1956), "Love On A Pillow" (1952), "The Vixen" (1969), "Come Dance With Me!" (1959) and "Two Weeks in September" (1967).

- "The Director's Series: Luis Bunuel"

Two films here, both on DVD for the first time, the disturbing "The Young One" (1960) about a fugitive jazz musician in a struggle for love and control on a remote Carolina Island; and in "Gran Casino" (1947) the sister of murdered oil well owner goes under cover to find the truth behind his death.

"The Film Crew: Killers From Space" (Shout!) Those raucous film buffs from "MST3K" are back to victimize another B-movie, this one from 1954 stars Peter Graves as a nuclear scientist abducted by aliens. Yeah, it get what it deserves.

Â© Copley News Service

DVD Select: 30 years after, Elvis is still in the building, still on our minds by Robert_J_Hawkins