

sight+sound

TUESDAY IN SOURCE

More DVD and CD coverage on our Media page.

Nothing compares like DVD Beaver

● Website helps sort out confusion of re-releases by offering detailed head-to-head reviews.

ON DVD RANDY A. SALAS

Reissues on DVD seem as common these days as new releases:

"Brokeback Mountain" is back as a two-disc set less than nine months after its first appearance on DVD. A new special edition of "The Silence of the Lambs" represents the third incarnation of that Oscar winner on DVD. Even foreign films, such as Akira Kurosawa's samurai films "Yojimbo" and "Sanjuro," have been re-released recently.

Casual viewers might go to the store or their Netflix queue and grab whatever version of a DVD is available without further consideration. But aficionados closely follow news of re-releases with one constant thought: Should I upgrade?

Enter DVD Beaver (www.dvdbeaver.com), a Canadian website that seeks to answer that question "for the discerning cinema fan."

DVD Beaver focuses on what it calls eclectic fare. While that might be difficult to define, you won't see it covering the latest Adam Sandler film or action blockbuster. You will find recent award winners, classic movies and many foreign films.

"When I was quite young, my father would rent 35-millimeter reels and a projector from the local library for us to see films at home," site founder Gary Tooze explained. "It was a pretty cool experience — certainly the precursor of DVD and home theater. I've always been passionate about film."

Besides the typical reviews



FILE
"The Silence of the Lambs," starring Jodie Foster and Anthony Hopkins, was recently released for the third time on DVD.

OUT TUESDAY

"Flags of Our Fathers," "Charmed" (Season 7), "Eddie Murphy: Delirious," "Hollywoodland," "Cinderella III," "Flicka," "Mad About You" (Season 3), "Running With Scissors," "A Summer Place," "The Science of Sleep," "Crossing Delancey," "The Grudge 2," "The Last Unicorn" (special edition).

and retailer links that many other sites have, DVD Beaver offers thorough comparisons of many DVDs that are available in two or more versions.

"It extends beyond such things as the best image and sound — whether optional subtitles are offered, if one print is censored or incomplete, offering the film in its intended aspect ratio, valued supplements; details such as that," said Tooze, a 44-year-old

Toronto-area resident who chips away full time at DVD Beaver.

Comparisons include large-screen captures to help compare image quality; menu screens and even bitrate graphs that show how much compression was used to author a disc. (A higher bitrate generally translates to a better picture.)

Foreign releases of a film on DVD are often included in comparisons, in keeping with DVD Beaver's advocating that cinephiles buy a multiregion player to be able to watch DVDs from around the world. Along with all of the technical specs come short reviews that make a final determination of which release is best.

DVD Beaver doesn't have comparisons of every DVD re-release. But for the ones it does cover, the site is a valuable resource for serious film fans.

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UPGRADE OR NOT?

Here are five recently released DVDs available in previous editions, and DVD Beaver's evaluation of which version is best:

"Casablanca" Warner's new high-def version (\$29) sports "the best black and white DVD image ... seen to date," easily besting the standard two-disc special edition.

"The Silence of the Lambs" MGM's new two-disc set (\$27) is "a complete and professional package" compared with the old MGM and Criterion discs, even if it doesn't have the outstanding commentary of the latter.



Toshiro Mifune stars in Akira Kurosawa's "Yojimbo."

"Yojimbo"/"Sanjuro" Criterion has taken two of its worst DVDs and given them thorough makeovers in their new reissues (\$70 set; \$40 each).

"Brokeback Mountain" Universal's new two-disc collector's edition (\$27) offers minimal additions for more money. "The original DVD gives a more-than-worthy presentation — stick with that and save some dough."

"The Double Life of Veronique" The new two-disc Criterion Collection set (\$40) is "the definitive version" compared with two European discs.

RANDY A. SALAS

CD REVIEWS

POP/ROCK

Katharine McPhee, "Katharine McPhee" (RCA)

She is over the rainbow. In fact, she even has a song on her debut CD titled "Over It." Fans of 2006's "American Idol" runner-up may be surprised at the sexed-up, urbanized siren programmed to do battle with Ciara and Beyoncé. Her handlers meticulously calculated everything here to appeal to the widest possible range of listeners and formats, from hip-hop to pop to R&B to adult contemporary. Sometimes it works, such as on "Love Story," featuring McPhee's trademark "ooh-oohs." And sometimes it doesn't, such as on "Open Toes," a hip-hop ode to shoe shopping. "Do What You Do" has somewhat more street credibility, fitting in easily on R&B stations or BET. "Not Ur Girl" is the closest to a mainstream pop song for the teeny-bopper audience, with a catchy melody over a standard rock beat. But it's on the power ballads "Home" and "Ordinary World" that McPhee shows she really can sing, with a voice that is at once sultry and breathy in the lower registers, and strong when it needs to be in the higher ranges. 5311

WAYNE PARRY, Associated Press

Clap Your Hands Say Yeah, "Some Loud Thunder"

This band is so insistently indie rock that it releases its own discs on a label with no name. Even more indie is the way its music shuns ingratiation. Where mainstream rock offers its pleasures upfront, indie puts up obstacles — eccentricities, obscurities, clutter, noise — to deter all but diehards. Perhaps that's why the first and title song of "Some Loud Thunder" is distorted to become nearly unlistenable. This is the band's second album, following a self-titled 2005 debut lauded by newly influential, indie-er-than-thou music blogs. The questions for the sequel were whether this five-member band could move beyond its obvious sources — folk-rock, New Order and mostly Talking Heads — and whether Alec Ounsworth's scrawny yammer of a voice would stay tolerable. It eventually does. "Satan Said Dance" pulsates and blips like 1970s German rock; "Goodbye to Mother and the Cove" builds like a scene from a Philip Glass opera. Ounsworth ponders everything from his insecurities to America's image in the world. Clap Your Hands Say Yeah demands a new, irksome level of indulgence here but finds a new richness in the songs it doesn't sabotage. 5312

JON PARELES, New York Times

To hear samples, phone 612-673-9050 and press the four-digit number listed.

TUESDAY'S RELEASES

Apples in Stereo, "New Magnetic Wonder"; Bloc Party, "Weekend in the City"; Belinda Carlisle, "Voila"; Cat Empire, "Two Shoes"; Fall Out Boy, "Infinity on High"; Ruthie Foster, "The Phenomenal Ruthie Foster"; Patty Griffin, "Children Running Through"; Jordan Pruitt, "No Ordinary Girl"; Tierney Sutton, "On the Other Side"; Ashley Tisdale, "Headstrong."

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