

DVD Reviews – Issue #11
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Frank Miller's Sin City (Recut-Extended-Unrated)

Dimension Home Video

2005

Running time:147 min (not including features)

I'm a big fan of Frank Miller. I'm also a huge Robert Rodriguez fan. It goes without saying that the two of these men working together is something I'm going to be interested in. Sin City fulfilled my every expectation and then proceeded to surpass them. It is quite honestly one of my favorite films. Innovative, unique, groundbreaking hard boiled noir story telling at it's best. By now you've probably read quite a bit about the movie and probably even seen it. The movie rocks. So why the review? Because Rodriguez's Troublemaker studios has once again put out a truly wonderful ultimate edition.

What do you get for your extra dough? Lots. Commentary from Rodriguez, Miller, Tarantino, and Bruce Willis. They also separated the four story arcs so you can watch them separately. Tons of behind the scenes footage including lots of interview and production footage. I especially liked the segment on tracking down the cars for the movie. There's footage of Bruce Willis singing in a bar in Austin, you can watch the whole movie in Green Screen. And the signature of the Rodriguez special editions, the 15 minute flic school and a ten minute cooking lesson. This edition takes a great movie and turns it into a wonderful package that will entertain for hours. There's even a special edition graphic novel included with the set. Worth every penny.

Jon

Profit

Anchor Bay

2005 (1996)

Running time:9 hours

Fox in the nineties. It was a network trying to reach a new television audience. Amongst those that did not survive was *Profit*. 10 years later I still bemoan the fact. Avant guard even now *Profit* featured Adrian Pasdar as sociopath Jim Profit. He's out to destroy the powers that be at Greyson Enterprises.

Disguising himself as a golden boy, there are only two people he hasn't fooled. One is jailed in a grand bit of trickery and the other will not be stopped getting to the truth. Joanne Meltzer as the tough investigator is fab as the only soul left at Greyson who sees past Profit's veneer.

This series was extremely short lived, surviving only four episodes in 2005. The bible belt affiliates refused to run a show that showed incest, drugs, adultery, and murder. At it's core *Profit* is quite simply about corporate greed and the bottom line. Everyone is culpable and secret agendas abound. The idea to revolve the tele-play around a sociopath allowed writers to show a beyond hard-boiled story without worrying about expressing anything quite as mundane as

moral ambiguity. It made for a unique and spellbinding hour of television. Ten years later, on the tail of Enron, Tyco and Halburton it is perhaps even more relevant and certainly just as engrossing. Pasdar's performance still ranks amongst my favorite characterizations on the small screen.

For those who appreciate sick and twisted and wonderful this is the DVD of the year. Absolutely worth the nine hours of your time.

Ruth

DVD Features:

4 Never Aired Episodes

Featurette: *Greed Kills*

Audio Commentary with Creators David Greenwalt, John McNamara and Star Adrian Pasdar

Secrets of Angels Demons and Masons

Koch Vision

2005

Running time:96 minutes

Secrets of Angels Demons and Masons is a documentary on the history of Freemasons and the Illuminati. Inspired by the writing of Dan Brown this DVD puts facts up against the fiction of the two organizations from their beginnings to now. Filled with footage and pictures of actual places to better show what is discussed by the experts this is a fascinating look at a very intriguing part of history and how it was interweaved with religion. I found myself drawn into this film and came away knowing much more than I did going in.

Jon

Detective Story

Paramount

1951

Running time:103 min.

From what I can tell this is the first time this movie has been available on video. All I can say is it's about time. This is an amazing film with what could be Kirk Douglas's definitive performance in the role of the relentless and unbending cop, Detective James McLeod. Apparently Douglas spent time in New York at the 14th precinct in preparation for this role. It paid off in a big way. Eleanor Parker plays Mrs. McLeod, the loving wife who seems to be the perfect spouse for a hard working cop. Also featured is William Bendix, a character actor who is in countless movies. Lee Grant also got an Oscar nomination for her small role as a shoplifter.

Based on a play by Sidney Kingsley, Detective Story takes place in a New York squad room. The audience peeks into one shift and follows a number of different cases in what seems to be a typical day. However as the story develops you see that this is anything but typical and that McLeod is motivated by something other than justice.

The troubled McLeod is fascinating to watch. As the story unfolds and the shallow veneer is stripped away the man who would be righteous is revealed to be anything but. Reporter Joe Feinson cautions James, "not everything is black and white". With Detective Story director William Wyler catches on film shades of noir we haven't seen since.

No extra features on this black and white classic. That's ok, because the movie is a true classic and definitely priced right. Worth every penny.

Jon

Magnum P.I. season 3

MCA home video

2006 release

Season 3 saw the show become a ratings hit. Overall the season is as good as any the show has. The actors all seem to have become comfortable with their characters, and the writing was consistently good, doing an excellent job of blending drama and humor.

Season 3 opened with what would prove to be the show's most controversial episode: *Did you see the sun rise?* This episode saw the death of a minor recurring character as well as an ending that actually prompted letters to the network.

We find out that Magnum and T.C once spent time in a P.O.W. camp, being interrogated by a Russian advisor named Ivan. They, along with a man named Nunzio, escaped the prison camp.

Now in 1982, Nunzio turns up with startling news- Ivan is back after them--the only three to ever escape from him. Meanwhile, Naval Intelligence knows that the Soviets are up to something--and that it involves Magnum.

This two part episode features twists and turns and, as I said, a fairly shocking ending.

Some of the other better episodes of the season:

The Arrow That Is Not Aimed - Magnum works with Samurai warrior, who is trying to protect an ancient porcelain plate from some ninjas. Ninjas were big in the 80s.

Forty Years From Sand Island - Magnum investigates a 40 year old mystery that occurred at a World War II Japanese internment camp.

All in all, a very entertaining season and certainly worth picking up.

Jeremy Lynch

Max Allan Collins Black Box – Shades Of Neo Noir

Troma Video

2005

This is a 4 disc set from one of the true masters of noir. Max Allan Collins, best known for his writing, has directed a number of movies. Both *Mommy* and *Mommy's Day* are included in the set as is *Real Time: Siege at Lucas Street Market*. The third disc is *Shades Of Noir*.

The *Mommy* movies star Patty McCormack and are "unofficial" sequels to the movies *The Bad Seed*. These two movies are full of black humor and very entertaining.

Real Time: Siege at Lucas Street Market is filmed totally in multiple angles utilizing DVD technology to do something completely new. It's fascinating to watch and the way it was filmed really knocked me out.

The true Gem in this set for me is *Shades Of Noir*, containing loads of material for all noir fans. The original 1954 pilot of *Mike Hammer*, a wonderful feature on Mickey Spillane featuring loads of interviews with Mickey himself and a who's who of the mystery community. Also the Collins character Quarry in his first screen appearance.

This set is loaded with interviews and behind the scenes footage. Max Allan Collins has put together a set for true fans of the DVD format. This is something all mystery and noir fans should own.

Jon

Moonlighting: Season 3

Lion's Gate

2006 release

Running time: 660 minutes

Moonlighting never actually managed to film an entire 22 episode season. The third season saw production hampered by Bruce Willis breaking his collarbone and Cybill Sheppard becoming pregnant. They managed to put out 15 episodes in a season that would see them win 4 Emmys and a Golden Globe. *Moonlighting* was one of the more creative shows on TV and season 3 saw them continue the excellence of the first 2 seasons....well season and a half as the first season was only 7 shows long. The opening program of season 3 saw them poke fun at the fact that, despite being nominated for 16 Emmys for season 2, they only won one Emmy and that was for editing. Another episode featured Rona Barrett, a famous gossip columnist of the time, doing an investigative report of the lack of new episodes. That show also has Pierce Brosnan making a guest appearance as Remington Steele.

This collection is a must own if only for one episode: *Atomic Shakespeare*. This Emmy award-winning episode is a telling of *The Taming of the Shrew*. Interestingly enough, it was a rendition of this very play that gave creator Glenn Gordon Caron the inspiration for *Moonlighting*. Bruce Willis and Cybill Shepherd used their real life tensions to create an hour of the finest TV I have ever seen. It also won them 3 Emmys.

This 4 DVD set also includes commentaries on selected episodes by cast and crew including the long awaited reunion of Bruce and Cybill. It also has a half hour long documentary that, while interesting, could have easily been longer and contained more insight into the dynamics of the cast.

Do yourself a favor and pick this collection up, you will be rewarded with 15 hours of fun, excitement and wisecracking banter.

Jeremy Lynch

Hands Of A Murderer

Koch Vision

1991/2006

Running time:90 min

Edward Woodward as Sherlock Holmes and John Hillerman as Dr. Watson. Former stars of *The Equalizer* and *Magnum* were enough to get me interested in this and I'm always a sucker for Holmes movies.

Hands Of A Murderer opens with a hanging as Professor Moriarty is going to finally pay for his crimes. However the evil Professor escapes and its up to Holmes to capture him and protect England's secrets in the process.

Woodward makes a good Holmes though just a touch of snarky, But Hillerman steals the show as the most memorable Holmes I've seen in a long time. Great story and beautiful to watch this is a great Holmes movie.

Jon

Rebus: 4 mysteries on 3 DVDs.

Koch Vision

Released: 01/10/06

A couple things to make clear right off the bat: John Hannah is not the Rebus that long-time fans of the Ian Rankin novels will expect. Second; he does a hell of a good job making the role his own. When I first heard Hannah's name attached to Rebus, I immediately thought of his character in *Four Weddings & A funeral*. I could not imagine this show being anything other than awful. Hannah has proven myself and thousands of other wrong. I have never been so happy to be wrong.

This collection features four stories faithfully adapted from Ian Rankin's award-winning novels.

Black and Blue (2000): When a copy cat killer takes on the pattern of a legendary serial killer, Rebus finds himself delving into both the past and present to find justice.

The Hanging Garden (2000): Rebus follows the trail of war criminal that has gone into hiding in the area, while being drawn into a violent war between rival gangs. Things get very personal when Rebus's daughter is run down on the street.

Deal Souls (2001): After the apparent suicide of a friend and colleague, Rebus feels compelled to take a closer look at the circumstances of his passing. This story also tackles child abuse and pedophilia.

Mortal Causes (2004): When the son of a major criminal is found murdered, Rebus fears it is an underworld revenge killing. Soon the father escapes from prison and things get worse.

Also included is a making of documentary that features interviews with author Ian Rankin and actor John Hannah.

Ian Rankin is considered a mystery legend and with good reason. He created a character that draws heavily from the American hard-boiled detective tradition, and yet is very much Scottish. This series of films keep all of the wonderful aspects that make the Rebus novels modern classics.

Whether you are a fan of the novels, or just enjoy police dramas and detective shows, you owe it to yourself to pick up this excellent series. You won't regret it.

Jeremy Lynch