

Apocalypse Now – The Complete Dossier

Paramount

The plan for Apocalypse Now Special Collectors Edition was pretty straight forward. Check out the add ons and review them. The best laid mice of plans and men.

I decided to watch some of it to refresh Imagine my surprise when I was three or four minutes in and it dawned on me I had seen clips, reviews, reports, critiques', reports of reports, parodies, endless hype and hoopla, but I had never seen the movie. I would have sworn in a court of law I had. If asked I said I had. My subconscious had stitched together a film of its own and labeled it so-so. I was in for a treat. I may gush. Leave now if that makes you pukey.

I watched the 1979 version and spotted the 2001. This is the Sistine Chapel of war films. Coppola skated so close to the edge, so close to losing it (and me) and pulled it off every damn time. Absolutely stunning. The word Masterpiece keeps cropping up when I think back, in the literal sense of the piece that makes you a master. It's that good. If there's a false note in it I missed it. The cast, Martin Sheen, Marlon Brando and Robert Duval are backed by a 14 year old Lawrence Fishburne and a first rate team of players all very much in the zone.

This movie could have so easily been awful--it's not. It could have been laughable--it's not.

It is disturbing and hugely so. The acid test (no pun intended) of a film for me is 'would I watch it again.'

Hell, I can't wait to watch it again!

In case I haven't been clear, watch this film if you haven't seen it in a while (or ever) you will be richly rewarded.

The bonus features on this set are really for film buffs. If you watch all of them, you will have completed your first year of film school. They take a look at the music, sound editing, video editing and much more. Again, it is more for film buffs than casual viewers. This package certainly gives you major bang for your buck.

Lee Crawford

Brick

Universal Studios

Brendan, our hero, is a loner that sits on the edge of society. He coolly watches the world around, often with disdain. This changes when he gets a call from Emily, his ex-girlfriend. She is in trouble and does not know what to do. By the time he tracks her down, she tells him to forget her and walks away. The next day, she is found dead.

Brendan, driven by his still-deep feelings, climbs out of his self imposed exile to find out what happened. He digs into the criminal underworld to seek justice. He begins looking for the shadowy criminal ringleader known as The Pin. Brendan is determined to make sure the parties behind her death are brought to justice.

Oh yeah, it is set in high school. Now before you smirk or say "how cute," this is unlike any high school film you have ever seen. This is a hard-boiled film through and through. First time director Rian Johnson credits the Coen Brothers for the creation of Brick: once he found out that their film Miller's Crossing was inspired by the work of Dashell Hammett, he poured through the author's works and that prompted him to write Brick.

Some nice acting from Joseph Gordon-Levitt (Brendan) and Lukas Haas (The Pin) but Nora Zehetner is awesome as Laura the dame that may or may not be helping our hero. She has the charisma to lead men to their doom, and have them not even mind it.

As I said, the budget for Brick was only \$500K, but the sparse feel really works for the film. It helps create the stark world that Brendan and Co. inhabit. In this day and age when the studios seem to place more importance on star power and big budget effects, it is nice to see a film that is powered by a good script and fine acting. Brick is a must see if only to send a message to Hollywood that well crafted films still have a place in society. It is a fantastic film that easily ranks as my number one film for 2006.

The bonus features here are few, but considering how lean this film is, that is not surprising. There are some outtakes (with intros by writer/director Rian Johnson) that are not so much deleted scenes as they are extended shots. Rian does a good job explaining why each scene was changed.

There is also an interesting, entertaining commentary by Johnson as well as members of the cast and crew. Well worth listening to.

Open your wallet and buy this, you won't regret it.

Jeremy Lynch

Hard Candy

Lions Gate

A captivating and very disturbing psychological horror/thriller that will leave some viewers in a fetal position and requiring extensive therapy. It is a movie that gets in your face, manipulates your emotions and then hits you when you aren't looking.

A teenage girl decides to meet an older man whose acquaintance she made online. Soon after that, they decide to go to his place for drinks. This film is a true game of cat and mouse, but who is the mouse?

Ellen Page is amazing in her role as Hayley. I have not been this captivated with a young actress since Natalie Portman came on the scene with *Leon: The Professional*. This film could/would have been just another independent exploitation flick if not for the quality acting of Page and her co stars.

While *Hard Candy* is a good film, it is not for everyone as it is very intense and will prove to be too much for some. Having said that, I think this is far better than the gorreffic flicks that are dominating the horror market these days.

Jeremy Lynch

Lucky Number Slevin

TWC/Genius

When you put together a cast that includes a couple of Oscar winners (Morgan Freeman, Sir Ben Kingsley), pair of guys that have won both the Golden Globe and Emmy (Stanley Tucci, Bruce Willis) and a couple of the hottest young stars (Lucy Liu, and Josh Hartnett), you expect quality, but as good as the acting in *Lucky Number Slevin* is; it is the clever script that really makes it shine. It is complex, with twists and turns, without crossing the line and becoming convoluted.

Josh Hartnett is mistaken for Nick Fisher. Mr. Fisher owes a couple of warring gang bosses some money, quite a bit actually. When each comes collecting, things get unpleasant. I could break the entire plot down, but I will simply say this is the delightful film of revenge that is worth buying. It should be in the collection of any self-respecting crime buff.

Jeremy Lynch

The Matt Helm Lounge set

Sony

Donald Hamilton's *Matt Helm* series was one of those series that kind of falls into the Men's Adventure category. Irving Allen saw something in it he liked and went to produce four movies based on *Matt Helm* starring Dean Martin. Filmed in 1966, 67 and 68 these movies obviously were made to spoof the Bond movies which were becoming a part of our culture. Filled with gadgets, one liners and gorgeous women these films were loads of fun. The set includes *The Silencers* ('66), *Murder's Row* ('66), *The Ambushers* ('67) and *The Wrecking Crew* ('68), all based on Donald Hamilton novels. The plots are fairly simple, a supervillain is planning a world shattering crime and only *Matt Helm* can save the day. And this swinging spy, this fore-runner to *Austin Powers* is just the man to do it!

Great fun.

Jon Jordan

The Mr. Moto Collection Vol. 1

Fox Home Entertainment

Classic Peter Lorre playing a wonderful detective based on the books of JP Marquand. This was a real joy to watch. I have vague recollections of these movies from the days before cable television when the local independant station would run them on Saturday afternoons. I enjoyed them then, I love them now. Lorre is a joy to watch. It was the popularity of these films that got him his role in *The Maltese Falcon*.

The Movies in this set, *Think Fast Mr. Moto*, *Thank You Mr. Moto*, *Mr. Moto Takes A Chance* and *Mysterious Mr. Moto* are all wonderful. While the character of *Moto* is a bit different than in the novels, namely he is a bit less villainous, they are true to the feel of the books. Part espionage, part sluth, these films should be a must have for any mystery fan. Filmed in the late 1930's they have the wonderful feel of the time.

The special features are also quite nice, in particular I liked *The Mysterious Mr. Lorre*, and there are three other featurettes as well. Set two will feature the other four films in which Lorre played *Moto*.

Jon Jordan

Oz: complete 6th season.

HBO

In 1997, Tony Fontana pitched, to HBO, the idea of an hour long drama set in a minimum-security prison. The name for this series was to be "Club Med." HBO decided to green light the project, but something changed during the process, it was decided that it would be in a maximum-security prison instead. The main characters would not be in for white-collar crimes, but for murder, armed robbery and kidnapping. The name of the show was changed to "Oz."

This unlikely show was the first one-hour drama on HBO and ran for 6 critically acclaimed years. In 2003, they finally closed wrapped for the final time. *Oz* features an amazing cast filled with faces that would be familiar to many TV viewers. More than one of these inmates has been on the other side of the law on shows such as the *Law & Order* franchise as well as *Third Watch*.

The challenge of writing a show about prison is great. For starters, you have to draw the viewers in when you have very few sympathetic characters. You can only so many characters that A) were wrongly imprisoned or B) Have seen the light and have become beacons of humanity.

Season six is the final one and goes out with power and force. Not everyone gets what they deserve (good or bad) but the end of *Oz* is consistent with the realism that made it one of the finest shows on television. The one issue I do have is that at times, it feels as though they were rushed to wrap things up. Some of the characters are written off rather abruptly, I wonder if they had been wanting a seventh season and were forced to move faster than originally planned to the series conclusion? Dispute

this problem, the show is still worth watching. One has to applaud their decision to keep the end faithful to the grittiness that was the show's trademark. It would have been so easy to wrap things up with a happy, feel-good ending. This collection contains a few audio tracks featuring Series creator Tony Fontana, as well as several actors. These commentaries are fairly low key and certainly add some fascinating insight into the production of the show, as well as how some of the cast and crew felt about saying goodbye to the characters and show that they had put so much time into. There is also an extended version of the series finale, but the extra footage is rough, noticeably so. This is too bad because the extra scenes are quite interesting.
Jeremy

Romancing The Stone Fox Home Entertainment

Kathleen Turner is Joan Wilder, a romance novelist with no love life of her own. Her mundane life is disrupted when she is called upon to deliver a package to Columbia. Her sister is being held hostage and her life depends on the package. But, it turns out that others are also after the package. After he foils an attempt on her life, Joan looks to Jack (Michael Douglas) to assist her. He agrees, for a sum of money, to deliver her safely to...the nearest telephone. While this is no easy feat, as they are in the jungle, clearly Jack is not the hero of her dreams, or her novels for that matter. This movie holds up well after 20 years. Kathleen Turner and Michael Douglas had chemistry, which is a good thing because it prevents Danny De Vito from completely stealing the movie. If there is one problem with this picture, it is the soundtrack. Filled with keyboards, it places the film firmly in the 80s, the bad part of the 80s. The closing music might very well be Kenny G. I think it was as the pain in my head was just like when I have heard him in the past. The special features are enjoyable. The deleted scenes are all variations of ones in the movie. Looking at them gives you an idea of how the movie might have been. We are also treated to the recollections of the cast. Some have aged well, some not so much.
Jeremy Lynch

The Sentinel Fox Home Entertainment

Michael Douglas and Kiefer Sutherland in a shoot-em-up political thriller! Pass the popcorn and get out of my La-Z-Boy. The Sentinel explores the unthinkable, a traitor in the Secret Service, and one out to kill the President. When Pete Garrison (Michael Douglas) flunks the polygraph test, I can't tell you why, it points all the fingers at him. Keifer Sutherland's David Breckinridge character heads the investigation with Eva Longoria along to hold down the testosterone. He and Pete were best friends until Pete slept with his wife, which can put a strain on a relationship. They come to get Pete, who doesn't go quietly and is on the run to nail the real bad guy of course. This is my favorite part and for the most part is smartly written with elements I haven't seen before. High marks. For killing a Sunday evening; you could do worse. In the Special Features, Director Clark Johnson, allows that character actor Raynor Schiene (pronounced rain or shine) aside from being a really good performer, has one of the great names of all time. Damn straight. We only see the snitch Walter three times in the film (and one of those he's dead) but he's such a greasy little snotball and played absolutely to the hilt, puts me in mind of Harry Dean Stanton in his prime. Good stuff. Also, it gets pretty funny as the director points out all his relatives in the movie. There's a herd of them from his mother (the convenience store clerk) on down to second cousins. I love a running gag.
Lee Crawford..

Thank You For Smoking Fox

A couple of things struck me about Thank You For Smoking:
Nobody actually smokes a cigarette in the movie. You see cigarettes, but not a single one is smoked.
The entire movie is shades of gray. Seriously, nobody is good or bad. Sure, there are a couple of morons, but the film lacks actual villains. There are simply points of view. It is kind of scary to see so many different perspectives without easily being able to paint some as bad or good. That is a testament to Jason Reitman's abilities as a director.
We see a P.R. man for Tobacco just trying to do his job while attempting to gain the respect of his son. If you are thinking he comes out against Tobacco, you could not be more wrong. This is not Capra, it is actually sort of the anti-capra. It is also a great film that is well worth seeing,
Jeremy Lynch

Threshold: The complete Series.

CBS/Paramount

Threshold is the entire 2005 series up 'til the plug was pulled. It's nine hours and fifteen minutes long and left me wanting more. There are four discs and twelve stories including the two hour pilot, plus deleted scenes and specials. A first rate cast and decent writing make this worth the time.

Carla Gugino takes the lead as Dr. Anne Caffrey, a Contingency Analyst and author of the plan being implemented by J.T. Baylock (Charles S. Dutton) Deputy National Security Advisor, against an alien invasion with a couple of novel twists. A large crystal probe appears to a ship at sea and plays sounds that transform the crews double helix DNA into their triple helix DNA, this with the uncontrollable urge to 'improve' all the rest of us. Some of us have a rather nasty reaction to this change. We implode.

The "Red Team" is charged to prevent this propagation at all costs, and therein lies the tale as the hand picked specialists try to stay even half a step behind. Brent Spiner (Data, Star Trek Next Generation) is very good as the bristly medical chief cook and bottle washer Dr. Nigel Fenway, with Lucas Pegg (Rob Benedict) as the young and naive physicist, Aurthur Ramsey (Peter Dinklage, The Station Agent) linguist and mathematician and Cavennaugh, hired gun.

Again it is the acting and the writing that lift this above the ordinary. Peter Dinklage must have paid them for this choice role as a brilliant but self destructive gambler, womanizer and cowardly substance abuser. He's terrific.

An enjoyable program that any Sci-fi fan should enjoy.

Lee Crawford

V For Vendetta

Warner Home Entertainment

So many comics and graphic novels are currently being rushed to the big screens that one could, and should, be cautious about dropping cold cash to see them.

V is one that you can feel comfortable about buying as the cast and crew certainly give you bang for your buck.

Based on the graphic novel by Alan Moore, Vendetta is set in a not too distant future in which England has become a fascist state. A shadowy figure, known only as V, wages war on the government with the intent to spark a revolution, or so it would appear. Before long, it becomes clear that he has vengeance on his mind.

I thought V was fantastic. It is visually impressive, but the cast, headed by Natalie Portman and Hugo Weaving, really deliver the good and help make this something special.

The two DVD set contains a veritable treasure chest of features including both a look behind the making of the film as well as the events that helped inspire it.

Jeremy Lynch

Veronica Mars- Season 2

Warner Bros.

I'm hooked. This Warner Brothers series almost passed me by. Enough people recommended it. Said it was witty, well written and fun. But I've had my Buffy . Thank goodness for DVD. Veronica Mars is the last Teenage hero. Season one revolved around her best friend's murder. Season Two finds Veronica trying to hang up her amateur detective hat. But don't worry, that last's about half of an episode. There's another year long case, a bus crash that kills eight of Veronica's class mates. A bus she was supposed to be on. But the best of season two is the week to week. The continuing development of V's relationship with her father is a thing of beauty. Francis Capra's Weevil and Jason Dohring's Logan Echols are two of the best non-stereotypical characters ever written for T.V. The biker and the spoiled rich kid take on a whole new meaning. Repercussions from both the bus crash and the murder of Lily Kane will have you staying up late. In the town of Neptune which is strongly divided by those who have and have not there is wit, great writing and fun, allegory and truths. A feeling of right is might if you will. Escapism of the highest order. And there is a teenage girl who kicks ass week after week. Kristin Bell's Veronica Mars is a thing of beauty. Created by Robert Thomas this is the most unique detective show since The Rockford Files.

Ruth Jordan

Waking the Dead (series 1)

BBC Video

This British series, Waking the Dead, is what CSI should be. The series follows a cold case squad as they try to use new forensics techniques to solve old case. It's not as fast paced and glamorous as CSI, but the police work is much more realistic. The squad consists of DS Boyd , the man in charge, two investigators, a forensics expert and an psychologist. Between them they manage to work the cases from every angle and find the truth that has kept the cases from being truly solved. This first series consists of the pilot, simply called Waking The Dead, and four more episodes, totaling about 10 hour worth of programming. The show stars Trevor Eve, Sue Johnston, Claire Goose, Wil Johnson and Holly Aird. Fans of British crime dramas will really enjoy this.

Jon Jordan