

**Black Rain**  
(Special Collector's edition)  
Paramount Home Entertainment

Michael Douglas is a cop who has seen better days; Andy Garcia plays his young and idealistic partner. They catch a Japanese criminal in New York and have to escort him to Japan, where they lose him. As you would guess cultures clash when they team up with the Japanese police to try and recapture him. Ken Takakura plays the Japanese officer assigned to baby-sit them and the future Mrs. Spielberg (sorry--I meant Kate Capshaw) plays an American working as a hostess in a Japanese bar. Also look for Stephen Root (News Radio), Luis Guzman (who has been in every movie or TV show where they needed a tough looking latino in the past 20 years) and the late John Spenser (The West Wing) in small parts.

There are four very interesting "Behind-the-scenesies" on this addition--I learned that Shigeru Matsuda, who played the freaky, twisted bad guy, up until that point in his career was primarily a comedy actor (a sort of Japanese Jerry Lewis), and that he died of stomach cancer shortly after filming Black Rain.

*Randy Otteson*

**Boston Legal season 2**  
Fox Home Entertainment

For the uninformed, Boston Legal is about a law firm. This is not L.A. Law or The Practice--though it did rise from the ashes of The Practice--this is something very different. Something that is, at times, damn weird.

Season two of Boston Legal sees some cast changes, with the departure of Tara (Rhona Mitra) and Laurie (Monica Potter) and the arrival of Denise Bauer (Julie Bowen). Michael J Fox and Parker Posey have come on board in reoccurring roles and both do a bang up job. Fox's scenes with Denny (William The Shat Shatner) are almost worth the price of the set by themselves.

I will say that some of the wackiness feels forced, but not so much that it ruins the season. Shat and James Spader continue to shine brighter than ever and are the reason this show is as good as it is. While this duo certainly adds more than their share to the weirdness, it is their relationship that gives this show some of its most poignant moments.

All in all, the second season is good and certainly worth buying.

*Jeremy Lynch*

**The Chairman**  
Fox Home Entertainment

1969's The Chairman, directed by J. Lee Thompson, is expectedly, a little dated. What passes for high tech gizmos is downright laughable in this age of Bondish excess. Still it never set out to be the Belle of the Ball, just a decent thriller. Which it is.

The premise is that China, Mao's China, has developed an enzyme that enables any crop to grow in any climate. Our Government is interested enough to have climbed into bed with Russia, a shocking notion at the time, as whoever feeds the third world pretty much owns it. They want Prof. Hathaway (Gregory Peck) to go to China, also mostly unheard of at the time, and beg, borrow or steal it from an old friend and mentor played by Keye Luke. The high-tech whiz-bang is a one way satellite mic implanted in his head. We later find out it is also a bomb in case things go very wrong. The General (Arthur Hill) does not burden him with the last part of this information.

With two titans like Peck and Hill doing the heavy lifting, I think this appears to be a better film than it is, though I must admit I enjoyed it. The ending is as tense as you could ask for. If sixties spy thrillers ring your chimes, you could do worse--and at last there are Special Features I can enthusiastically endorse. The voice over narration by a film historian and a critic, whose names escape me because...I don't care, do a credible job and occasionally drop in an interesting nugget to the point that I listened to seventy or eighty percent of it. The jewel in the crown though, is the inclusion of the European versions of the self conscious sexy bits (this was the sixties).

*Lee Crawford*

**The Da Vinci Code**  
Sony Home Entertainment

My name is Jeremy and up to recently, I had neither read nor seen The Da Vinci Code. I know, I know, it is what EVERYBODY is reading and watching. That is why I had not. Call it snobbery, but if that many folk are praising it, it must be run of the mill stuff. How can something appeal to that many non-readers, and still be good?

I sat down, feeling rather indifferent, and watched The Da Vinci Code. Know what? I enjoyed it immensely. I thought it was a fun yarn with enough history thrown in to make it sound plausible. Of course there are about one hundred non-fiction books disputing the story's accuracy--though Dan Brown himself says it is a

fictional story. (Move on guys! Certainly there is something else for you to overreact to.)

Director Ron Howard keeps this blockbuster on course. My opinion of Howard is that he is a journeyman director. While he is not a visionary or a master, he is one that can be counted on not to drop the ball. When hundreds of millions are being invested, you need a director that can handle the pressure and give the audience what they want. Ron Howard is that man.

This review is also tempered by the fact that I saw National Treasure a couple of months ago. Having seen that lousy rip-off, TDVC came across even better by comparison. (If there is anyone that was not impressed by Tom Hanks' understated performance, go watch Nicolas Cage and you will appreciate Mr. Hanks like never before.) TDVC producers did everything right: They put together an excellent cast, got an outstanding screenwriter and used a director that would not crack under the pressure of adapting the most popular novel in the history of popular novels (Ok, there may have been bigger ones, but I am too lazy to look it up. Even if I did, I might lose the ability to use that hyperbole.)

Tom Hanks stars as Robert Langdon, a professor that studies symbols. Rather than a know-it-all, he comes across as a very bright man, but still the kind of person that might really exist. He is drawn into a murder investigation when a museum curator that he was supposed to meet with is found murdered. The body is arranged like Da Vinci's famous Vitruvian man, and a cryptic message has been written in the dead man's blood.

Realizing he is a suspect in the murder, Langdon finds himself on the run, trying to solve the puzzle left by a dying man. He teams up with the dead man's granddaughter, and they race against sinister forces (including a self-flaggelating albino monk), as well as the police, to unlock a mystery that may rock the very foundation of modern Christianity.

The two DVD collection takes a look at the history that influenced the writing, as well as the making of the film. It is the non-film related featurettes that make this particularly compelling. Loaded up with several featurettes, you get a look at everyone from the director, author, and actors all the way down to the Dolly Grip. These all seem to be a part of one larger telling of the creation of the film. Since a lot of it is about the book and actors, these featurettes will appeal to more casual fans than many of the more technical featurettes that often fill DVDs,

If you are looking for a fun yarn that does not insult your intelligence, this is for you. I should also point out that if having tenets of Christianity questioned bothers you and would interfere with your ability to enjoy what is a delightful yarn, this is not for you. If you were one of those that were up in arms about it the first time around, you might want to pick National Treasure--though the historical suppositions are the least of that film's crimes.

*Jeremy*

### **A Fish Called Wanda**

MGM/Fox Home Entertainment

In the interests of full disclosure, I have to state that I consider AFCW to be one of the greatest comedies of the last thirty years. Frankly, I can't see an intelligent argument made against that. If you try, I shall be forced to call the nice men in the white jackets. At long last, Wanda has a proper edition. Up to now, it has only been available in a very meager edition with no extras. That is crime. I waited a long time before breaking down and buying that pathetic version. We now get a chance to see some of the behind the scenes wackiness that occurred during filming.

If you have never heard of this film, you are in for a treat. The story centers around group robbery and the surrounding chaos. Caught in middle of it is a barrister (that's British for lawyer) played by John Cleese. Jamie Lee Curtis is a treacherous dame looking to secure the riches for herself. She is working with Otto (Kevin Kline in one of the greatest performances in the history of man, maybe of all creatures...the original Lassie was pretty good, but I think Kline pulls out a little something extra here).

While Curtis is romancing anything that might get her the money, Kline is doing some work of his own, including goading the gentle Ken (Michael Palin) into offing a witness. If it sounds gruesome, fear not, wackiness ensues....albeit somewhat dark wackiness.

If you bought the no-frills version, put it on Ebay and get this one. If you don't own a copy, BUY THIS IMMEDIATELY!

*Jeremy*

### **Fuzz**

MGM

I discovered this move through a weird coincidence, I collect Ed McBain paperbacks and I found a version for FUZZ I had not seen before. On the cover were Rachel Welch, Burt Reynolds, Yul Brynner and Tom Skerrit with a number of other actors. Curious I went to Amazon and sure enough, there was a movie and it was available on DVD. Of course I ordered it.

While it was filmed in 1972 and it shows, it's a really fun movie. The screenplay was written by Evan Hunter,

so McBain fans should feel safe with the translation to film. I thought it really captured the 87th precinct perfectly, right down to the painter putting on a new coat of awful green on the squad room walls. Reynolds as Steve Carrella was great, as was Skerritt as Kling. I thought Brynner as he Deaf Man was inspired casting. And since the Deaf Man is such a great character in the books it was a good choice for the film. The Deaf Man is killing city officials and the 87th precinct is doing their best to catch him, including going under cover as nuns.

This is a wonderful piece of nostalgia and thoroughly enjoyable.

*Jon*

**The Green Mile**  
**"2 Disc Special Edition"**  
Warner Home Entertainment

Yikes it is scary how good this movie is. But it should be with a cast that includes, but is not limited to: Tom Hanks, David Morse (who I think should get more mainstream work), Bonnie Hunt, an Academy Award worthy performance by Michael Clarke Duncan, James Cromwell, Graham Greene, Doug Hutchison (Who X-Files fans will remember was the "Man" who could bend himself in weird ways to get at his victims, and secreted bile), the very entertaining Sam Rockwell, Patricia Clarkson, Harry Dean Stanton, William Sadler (Die Hard2 and Played Death in Bill & Ted's Bogus Journey), and the always good Gary Sinise. Personally I think Gary Sinise and Don Cheadle are in the same category, follow me on this one. They are both so good all the time, they will need to do a string of so-so performances, then come back to their regular spectacular selves, before they will get an Oscar. Did you follow that? I didn't and I KNOW what I am trying to say. Not sure why I went off on that love fest. Gary Sinise is in the movie for less than 5 minutes and Don Cheadle isn't in it at all!

The Green Mile is the story of Louisiana State Prison Death row set in the 30's. Um, that is about all I can say without ruining it for the one person in America who hasn't seen it.

There are some extras in this DVD. Two, count them TWO deleted scenes. One was interesting and a little creepy; the other would have added nothing to the movie at all. There are two behind the scenes documentaries. A Stephen King is God love-in. Michael Clark Duncan's screen test, and the makeup tests for Tom Hanks, when they were kicking around the idea of having him made up as an old man, instead of casting an old man to play Paul Edgecomb as an old man. (They must have got complaints from the Hire Old People Association (HOPA)) Also included is the "Never before seen" Teaser trailer. It shows a mouse walking around the electric chair. Which I thought was quite cool. But the director said made it look like the movie was about Tom Hanks and a rat infested prison. There is also some documentaries on Mr. Jingles the mouse (If your name is Bone Narr what job do you think you would have? That's right you would be the Mouse Stunt Coordinator for The Green Mile) and one on creating the sets.

One problem I had with The Green Mile "2 Disc Special Edition" is that half way through the movie you have to change to the second disc! I HATE THAT! Even the special features span the two discs. Maybe it's the laziness in me, or maybe it's the fact that this is an emotional movie and you lose some of the emotional ride when you have to get up and change the disc. "Oh, as long as I am up, I will go to the bathroom or maybe make some food, or maybe I will CROCHET!" You just lost my Short attention-spanned ass! Some time later I will say, "I never finished watching The Green Mile "2 Disc Special Edition" Better start from the beginning." And the cycle continues and I NEVER see the second disk, but will have a nice collection of crochet tea cozies! But what do you (The Studio) care you've got my money! Sure, you're saying, "Randy, just get a damned DVD changer!" I have one. But it still interrupts the flow, gives me the opportunity for me to be distracted by something shiny. OOOOH! Gotta go, A DIME! Mmmmm....shiny....

*Randy*

**Homicide: Life on the Streets**  
**The Complete Series**  
A&E Entertainment

If you enjoy cop shows, you absolutely must pick up this incredible set. Homicide, by the creator of the HBO hit The Wire, was one of the best police shows to come along in the last 20 years. If you watch this, you may never be able to watch NYPD Blue again.

Here now are all seven seasons for your viewing pleasure.

This fantastic collection features tons of extras including the Law & Order crossover episodes and Homicide: The Movie. It comes in a filing cabinet that is the coolest DVD packaging I have ever seen.

*Jeremy*

**James Bond Ultimate Edition  
Collections 1-4**

Fox Home Entertainment

I think it is safe to say that each and every person reading this has seen one or more of the films covering the exploits of James Bond. Whether you can remember seeing Dr. No in the theatres, or perhaps started with a later one (For me, it was Moonraker)

Over the last 2 ½ years, James Lowry, the man behind the restoration of such classics as Casablanca and Citizen Kane, has headed a team that has completely remastering the first 20 Bond films. This process has not simply consisted of repair the extensive damage of the earlier films, but bringing them all BEYOND their original quality, including reworking the audio so as to include a track of 5.1 DTS surround sound. . We have come to expect perfect quality from modern films, but the older ones are truly going to "shock and awe" the viewers.

In addition to repairing the films from ravages of time, these sets include some amazing outtakes and featurettes. While there are some that look back at the films, others are from the original releases of the films and are a treasure to watch. Interviews from the original publicity events. It is fun watching a much younger Sean Connery on the set of Goldfinger.

Any fan of James Bond will be in absolute heaven with these sets.

**Collection 1** contains Goldfinger, The Man With The Golden Gun, Diamonds Are Forever, The Living Daylights and The World Is Not Enough.

**Collection 2** contains Thunderball, A View To A Kill, The Spy Who Loved Me, License To Kill and Die Another Day.

**Collection 3** contains GoldenEye, Live & Let Die, From Russia With Love, For Your Eyes Only and On Her Majesty's Secret Service

**Collection 4** contains Tomorrow Never Dies, You Only Live Twice, Dr. No, Octopussy and Moonraker

*Jeremy*

**Life On Mars**

BBC

Life on Mars must have been an interesting show to pitch. Sam Tyler, a cop in present day Machester has an accident and goes into a coma. He wakes up in 1973. Not sure if it's a dream or if he's really traveled through time or if he's just going crazy he pushes on with the job of being a detective in the same station he was stationed to in 2006, but 33 years earlier. The obvious differences are there, no computers, forensics minimal. It's a completely different way of policing. The writing is top notch and a lot of care is taken to get the 70's look right. They also did a great job with the casting. Everyone here is great at what they do.

Tyler finds himself frustrated with the older ways of policing, but he also starts to get the swing of the era, adapting and trying to do his job as best he can. Quirky and fun, gritty and realistic, and just damn good Television.

As yet this only available from the UK, but I've heard that David Kelly has plans to adapt it here in the US. I doubt it will be as good as this original version which truly shines.

*Jon Jordan*

**Miami Vice.**

Universal Home Entertainment

Michael Mann has taken a television series from my childhood and brought it to the big screen. The result is a something that feels like a two hour episode of the television series.

Ok, I will say that it certainly looks better than the old show, but the actual content is about the same. The dialogue is pretty clichéd and you can/will predict most events long before they actually happen.

Here we have an extended cut of the film. Guess what folks: the extra minutes do not raise this film to a level of greatness. That would require a far better script than what was used. If there is one thing that Mr. Mann seems to struggle with, it is recognizing issues with scripts and boy does this one have issues.

Having said that, I did enjoy Miami Vice. If you are looking for something on the level of Mann's other films (Collateral, The Insider, Heat) you will be disappointed, but If you are looking for beautiful women, ruthless villains and cool cars, you will be entertained..... just don't expect depth.

*Jeremy*

**Numb3rs season 2**

Paramount Home Entertainment

Revisiting Numb3rs in season 2(CBS Paramount) is a lot like revisiting old friends. Well drawn characters with just enough peccadilloes to be real and not cartoons; and chemistry to spare between Alan (Judd Hirsch), Don (Rob Morrow), and Charlie (David Krumholtz) as father and radically different sons. Their interplay is low key magic.

I came late to the party as the premise--Genius uses math to solve crimes--sounded like a yawn to me. It's not, in fact the deftly handled segments have become another character and I look forward to the two or three interspersed in the action. Which brings me to two of my favorite players: Navi Rawats' Amita should put to bed the old saw that guys don't like smart women. She's big time smart and girl-next-door sexy. Yum. And Peter MacNicols' Professor Larry Flienhardt is masterful, eccentric in just the right degree and at times heartbreakingly wise. One of the great characters of recent memory.

The players seem more at home in their respective skins than ever which is all to the good. We also see Charlie's deepening involvement with Amita as well as new depths of respect and affection between he and Don.

The six disc set has the full twenty four season 2 episodes of an above average cop show with the above first rate elements, along with cast and crew commentary and blooper reel and an interesting section on the math that's worth a look, plus some behind the scenes looks for the curious.

Diane Farr replaces Sabrina Lloyd as the woman of the office. I'm sure her mother's pleased. With a voice that could etch glass one wonders how she got into acting school, much less out.

On a happier note, Lou Diamond Phillips reprises his role as the aptly named Edgerton, a thoroughly dangerous man, in Toxin, with a very nice twist at the end. And Amita takes on her largest role to date in the disquieting Harvest, a shaming look at organ buying from the poor of the third world.

The series gives you a lot to like and not much to dislike, which puts it head and shoulders above most TV fare.

*Lee*

### **Peeper**

Fox Home Entertainment

This 1975 film starring Michael Caine as a 1940's LA private investigator is a real treat. Done as a homage and or spoof it's based on a novel by Keith Laumer called DEADFALL (not to be confused with the Michael Caine movie called Deadfall). Natalie Wood is the femme fatale and she is terrific in her scenes with Caine. The dialogue is snappy and clever, and the delivery is perfect. It's not an out and out comedy, though it is amusing.

Here's the lowdown on the plot. A disreputable looking man pops into PI Leslie Turner's office and wants to hire him to find his missing daughter. Turner takes the case and it leads him to a wealthy family. He finds himself being chased by people also looking for the daughter and something her Father stole. A big finish on a cruise ship and a nice noirish ending.

There are also some special features including a discussion of film noir which was very interesting. This is a great addition to a mystery lovers DVD collection.

*Jon*

### **Pinky and the Brain Volume 2**

Warner Home Video

Everyone's favorite rodent mastermind is back, hatching more plots for World conquest....if only he had opposable thumbs.

While the first season took many by surprise, the expectations were there by the time these episodes ran. The crew continued to deliver consistently entertaining shows that make this second volume worth watching. They continue to ride that fine line of making the shows fun for kids, yet still smart enough to amuse adults.

As an added bonus, we get to see Mark Hamill (Luke Skywalker) and Wayne Knight (Newman from Seinfeld) in a casting audition.

Pick this up; your kids will love you and your funny bone will thank you.

*Jeremy*

### **A Prairie Home Companion**

New Line Cinema

A Prairie Home Companion is a look at the final broadcast of a fictionalized of the Garrison Keillor's radio variety show of the same name. While the show is closed down in the movie, the real show continues as strong as ever.

While the film has many of the aspects that have made the real show famous, it can appeal to non-fans as

well. Director Robert Altman gives us a look at the people behind the show. As it often the case with Altman's films, APHC is not so much about a central story as it is about the interactions behind the scenes. I found the film fascinating as it brings together an amazing cast and allows them to make their characters their own. The heavy lifting is left to Meryl Streep, and Kevin Kline has some wonderful comedic moments. If you are looking for a film in which the story is king, this is not for you. If you enjoy rich, multi-faceted characters and like the journey as much as the destination, APHC will draw you in and enthrall you. The special features are nothing beyond the usual, but some of the backstage interaction is interesting, particularly those between Altman and Keillor.

APHC is a fitting finale to the incredible career of Mr. Altman.

*Jeremy*

### **Reservoir Dogs**

Lion's Gate

Hired by a Mob Boss, six strangers come together to pull off the perfect heist. With just that simply sentence, you know they are screwed. When the job goes bad, the survivors meet at their rendezvous point and realize that one of them is an informant.

This was Quentin Tarantino's first, and some say greatest, film. It sparked a slew of imitators, but this film still as fresh and fantastic as the day it came out.

Yes, that's right; we get another edition of Reservoir Dogs. Only four years ago, the 10 anniversary edition came out with several different covers, separating unsuspecting fans from their money.

Now we are treated to this extra deluxe super package of mayhem and severed ears. Fans of Tarantino will certainly enjoy this orgy of all things Quentin, but the casual fan need not purchase it if you already own the special edition. The extras are really for the hard core fans.

If you do not already own this film, it really does belong in the library of all fans of hard edged crime.

*Jeremy*

### **The Unit Season 1**

Fox Home Entertainment

The Unit it is based on the Inside Delta Force books by Eric L. Hanely, and was created for television by David Mamet (yes, that David Mamet, who wrote *Glengarry Glenn Ross* and *The Untouchables*).

For those of you who use to watch *Felicity* and think "Damn, I would LOVE to see Scott Foley shoot down a helicopter with a stinger missile!", this is the show for you...but let's face it, if you watched *Felicity*, you are probably NOT going to watch a show about an elite military squadron that espionages (made up word?) all over the globe and assassinates bad guys.

When I started watching *The Unit*, all I knew about it was that the cool guy from 24 and the Allstate commercials was in it. The cool guy is, of course, Dennis Haysbert, who is so commanding on *The Unit* when they do flashbacks to when he wasn't the leader of the squad, you still expect him to give out all the orders...but they give him a mustache that makes him look like Carl Weathers from *Predator* or Richard Roundtree, so you are sort of OK with him taking orders. (Do you remember when Mr. Haysbert played Pedro in the "Major League" series of movies? I didn't.) Since they needed someone rough and tough--who you could see giving Dennis Haysbert orders--to play his commanding officer, they went out and got the Terminator himself...(no not that one, the OTHER one). That's right, the ONE Terminator that legally could run for president: Robert Patrick (who would have kicked Arnie's ass in T2, to put it in Scooby-Doobian terms, "if it hadn't been for that meddling kid").

After the first two episodes I thought "this show is OK, but I have seen better." (Maybe it was because I was watching Showtime's *Sleeper Cell* at the same time...which is a damn good show; not just because it has a nude Melissa Sagemiller, guns, and the sexy, "damn I wish I were gay," Michael Ealy and Oded Fehr, but because it is interesting and scary at the same time. Scary in the "Oh, crap! This is probably really going on," kind of way...not in the "BOO!" kind of way.) But as I kept watching and got to know the characters, and as the cast began to gel and become more comfortable with each other, I began to really enjoy it.

Two people who acted their asses off were Regina Taylor and Abby Brammell. Ms. Taylor plays Dennis Haysbert's wife, who comforts and shows the ropes to the new Unit member's wives. Ms. Brammell plays one of the Unit wives that would be unlikable if played by a lesser actress.

The extras for season one include one episode with commentary, and an Inside Delta Force documentary in which you get to hear David Mamet say that trying to get *The Unit* made was like hitting your penis with a hammer for six months. Now that's dedication.

All in all I would say the *The Unit* is a VERY good show, with something for everyone...guns and espionage for guys and drama on the home front for the ladies.

*Randy*