

## **ALIAS SMITH AND JONES: Season One**

Universal

*Alias Smith and Jones* is one of those T.V. shows that brings me back to my childhood as surely as a glass of Kool-Aid with Ring-Dings on the side. A humorous western created by Glen Larson (Magnum P.I.) and introduced to the television audience in 1971 with a movie pilot, *Alias Smith & Jones* quickly became a ratings success.

Kid Curry and Hannibal Hayes are two gentlemanly outlaws in the Old West. After a train heist goes bad (the gang is unable to open the safe they've come to rob), Kid and Hannibal decide it's time to move on. The Governor is offering amnesty to outlaws who promise to change their ways and our duo sends an emissary to request they be put on the list. In a back room deal the Governor promises them that amnesty if they can keep the slate clean for a year. The catch is ... until the year is up no one will know that amnesty has been approved.

With a price on their heads, disgruntled outlaws following their trail and no money, series leads Ben Murphy and Pete Duel travel from episode to episode paying their way through a series of private security jobs, high adventure, and more than one close call. There is a who's who of guest stars including Earl Holiman, Purnell Roberts, Susan St. James and Dennis Fimple (one of my favorite character actors).

The series enjoys notoriety because of the suicide of lead Pete Duel and the recasting of the role Hannibal Hayes. Here in season one we have Smith and Jones in all their glory and for a moment, some of the best of early seventies T.V.

Ruth Jordan

## **Blood Diamond (Two-disc special edition)**

Warner Home Entertainment

Sierra Leone has known more than it's fair share of tragedy. It is the region's seemingly unending pain that is at the center of *Blood Diamond*. Directed by Edward Zwick, starring Leonardo DiCaprio, Jennifer Connelly and Djimon Hounsou, BD is an action film set in the brutal world of diamond mining. The mining is often done by forced labor, with the money going to fund war. Hence the term "Blood Diamond".

The story centers on three people: Archer (DiCaprio), a Diamond Smuggler looking to get out of Africa, Maddy Bowen (Jennifer Connelly), an idealistic reporter looking to tell the world about the blood diamond trade, and Solomon Vandy (Djimon Hounsou), a local fisherman whose family has been taken away from him.

The paths of these cross and become intertwined. Solomon has hidden a rare pink diamond, but the only thing he really wants is to be reunited with his family. Archer wants this rare treasure and is willing to help Solomon find his family in exchange for said bauble. Maddy wants to report the truth and sees the stories of Archer and Solomon has a chance to do so.

*Blood Diamond* is a fast paced, thought provoking film that will keep you on the edge of your seats. Some of the action is graphic, so this might not be for the faint of heart. Thought over the top and , at times, uneven, this is good movie that will leave many of it's viewers thinking a little more about a time and place that might not otherwise enter their consciousness.

The film is available both in separate one and two-disc editions. I strongly recommend the two-disc set as it offers a look into the war and diamond trade, as well as giving us a look into the making of the film.

Jeremy

## **DA VINCI'S INQUEST: Season One**

Acorn Media

A month ago, I had never heard of *Da Vinci's Inquest*. Then a copy of season one found its way to my desk, and I am richer for it.

*Da Vinci's Inquest* is a well-written Canadian drama that has a gritty feel, yet rarely goes overboard; managing to deliver a strong sense of realism without going to excess on language, violence or graphic imagery. Dominick Da Vinci (Nicholas Campbell) is a coroner for Vancouver. His drive to uncover the truth behind the deaths brought to him--to "speak for the dead"--often puts him at odds with his colleagues. A recovering alcoholic who occasionally falls off the wagon, Da Vinci is divorced, with joint custody of a teenage daughter. While we certainly have seen this sort of character before, great pains are taken to avoid making him a cliché. As a result, Dominick feels like a real person and not an archetype of the crime genre.

Fans of the late 70s/early 80s sitcom *Soap* will be delighted to see Donnelly Rhodes (who played Dutch on said show) here as Detective Leo Shannon. Also appearing, as Da Vinci's daughter, is Jewel Strait, who later played Kaylee on *Firefly*.

Sadly, this set has no extra features. As one unfamiliar with the show, I would have enjoyed learning a little more about the cast and creative forces behind it.

After one season, I can say this is one of the best police shows I have seen in the last ten years. Simply fantastic! I can hardly wait for seasons two through seven. *Da Vinci's Inquest* is a must own.

Jeremy Lynch

## **THE DEPARTED**

Warner Home Entertainment

After delving into history (*The Aviator*, *Gangs of New York*), *The Departed* finds Martin Scorsese back in the crime genre that made him famous. Guess What? He clearly has not lost a step.

*The Departed* follows themes familiar to Scorsese's work, the rise and fall of those with power. This time around, the setting is "Southie" in Boston. Jack Nicholson stars as Frank Costello, an Irish-American crime lord loosely based on real-life crime boss Whitey Bulger. Costello plants young Colin Sullivan (Matt Damon) into the police academy. Once Sullivan has risen through the ranks, he acts as a mole, for Costello, in the organized crime unit of the police force. At the same time, Billy Costigan (Leonardo DiCaprio), fresh out of the academy, is recruited to infiltrate Costello's crew. They arrange for him to be kicked off the force and sent to prison, at which time he hooks up with Costello.

The rest of the movie finds these two struggling to keep their identities secret under pressure from both sides. It is fascinating to watch how each of them handles the tremendous stress that is placed upon them. Like many of Scorsese's films before this, *The Departed* is a game of duplicity and betrayal. Much of the time is spent keeping us guessing who is playing who. The twists and turns are done well, never really feeling forced. In the hands of a lesser director, some of this would undoubtedly come across as being clichéd.

All in all, *The Departed* is an outstanding film that is attribute to the skills and passion of Martin Scorsese. The extras are pretty good, considering how quickly they got this out. There is no commentary, which is a real shame when you look at all of the talent involved with this. There is a documentary on Scorsese that is from Turner Classics. It features the iconic director giving us his thoughts on his career gives us a rather insightful look in to the filmography of the iconic director. This is a couple of years old and thus has nothing about *The Departed*.

There are two other featurettes (*Stranger than Fiction* and *Crossing Criminal Cultures*) that give us a look into the film and the real life events and characters that inspired it. Also included are 9 deleted scenes that have introductions by the director. These intros make these scenes all the more interesting, though one can see why they were cut.

Jeremy

### **DOCTOR WHO: The Complete Second Series**

BBC Warner

In this second series of *The New Dr. Who* David Tennant takes over for Christopher Eccleston as The Doctor. For those of you unfamiliar with this show, Dr. Who has been around since the early sixties, and has just recently been brought back to the airwave. The Doctor is a timelord who, with the help of the TARDIS, can travel through time and space. While not immortal, he can regenerate his body when killed.

In the first of the new episodes we got to see the Daleks make their return as bad guys, in this season we get to see the Cybermen. We also get a visit from previous doctor companion Sarah Jane and K-9 in a wonderful episode that takes place in a school.

Tennant has all the makings of a great Dr Who, he's a bit eccentric, whimsical and totally adventurous. I have loved this show for a long time, and this new version of it is terrific. Long time fans should be happy, and new comers should also enjoy it.

There is also a nice selection of extra features including commentary by cast and crew on all episodes, picture-in-picture commentary on "The Girl in the Fireplace", "The Age of Steel", "The Impossible Planet", and "Doomsday", David Tennant's video diaries and a great little booklet.

Jon Jordan

### **EMERGENCY: Season Three**

Universal Home Entertainment

If you can make it through the 1970s melodrama and the quasi-Dragnet speechifying of the first two seasons, you'll find that, in the third season, this series finally comes into its own. The scripts are better paced, provide a better balance of talk and action, and the actors are more comfortable in their roles.

One of the keys to the success of the show is the chemistry between the two main characters. Johnny Gage and Roy DeSoto are partners in the Los Angeles Fire Department's fledgling paramedic program. Roy (Kevin Tighe), is the quiet, grounded one; married with kids. Johnny (Randolph Mantooth) is, of course, the complete opposite: single, impulsive, given to flights of cockeyed reasoning. There is some fine acting here. Tighe plays the more reserved DeSoto as alternately amused and exasperated with his partner. Mantooth plays Johnny with puppy-dog charm.

When the alarm sounds, however, both men are focused and competent. This show is a fine action series and, even after more than 30 years, it still holds up as a procedural show. Its influence on today's emergency medical field can't be underrated. If you read the internet fan sites, you'll get an idea of how many people were inspired to take up emergency medicine after watching Gage and DeSoto defibrillate victims and set up IVs with ringers lactate and D5W. (As a matter of fact, teen idol Bobby Sherman retired from show business to become an EMT after a guest turn in the season 3 episode "Fools".)

This show brings back fond memories of being a young teen in the 70s. While all of my friends were sighing over Randolph Mantooth, I was a Kevin Tighe girl. I still recall the cover of a February issue of *Tiger Beat* showing the two actors reaching out from a heart-shaped picture and a caption reading: "Randy and Kev have a valentine for you!"

Not that I subscribed to *Tiger Beat*, you understand. I just saw it on the news stand when I was picking up my copy of *The*

Smithsonian.  
Naomi J Krueger

### **THE GOOD SHEPHERD**

Universal Home Entertainment

"Robert DeNiro is a God among men!", some would say. I wouldn't. I would say he is in a class of actor with very few members. (Of course Tom Green is in a class of actor with very few members. But he would be on the polar opposite of the scale from Mr. DeNiro.) It seems that Robert DeNiro would have to work very hard to deliver a bad or even ho-hum performance. I also would have to say there is not a movie of his that I have seen that I haven't liked, though I haven't seen *Rocky and Bullwinkle*. Why do I bring up Robert DeNiro? Because he directed and co-stars in *The Good Shepherd*.

Matt Damon plays a man who is recruited out of college into the OSS (the secret organization that spied for the allies in World War II), then is chosen to lead the development of the CIA (to "do what the OSS did during the war, but here at home."). The movie co-stars Angelina Jolie as his wife, John Turturro as his partner/lacky, Alec Baldwin as his FBI "friend," William Hurt as his mentor, Michael (Dumbledore the second) Gambon as his "morally questionable" college professor (of course I mean "morally questionable" for World War II era America, now he would be no big deal). Timothy Hutton, Robert DeNiro and Joe Pesci play smaller roles.

The movie itself is very good. Well made, and well acted. Matt Damon was outstanding as a stoic man of that era, showing little emotion. Having said that, this is not a movie for someone with a short attention span; you have to pay attention or you will be lost.

For extras there are only deleted scenes, which are actually pretty cool. They delve deeper into Matt Damon's character's marriage problems and also show an entire sub-plot that was cut out--in the movie they were able to dispose of that sub-plot with one sentence. (Which I thought was interesting, but then I am a geek.)

So, in the words that my 11th grade composition teacher told me never to use: "in conclusion," I would say definitely get/rent/buy/steal/borrow/On-Demand this movie.

P.S. Robert DeNiro is a God among men!  
Randy Otteson

### **Guns of Navarone: Collector's Edition**

Sony Pictures Home Entertainment

Anyone that even remotely likes WW II films has to own this. *Guns of Navarone* is quite simply one of the best WW II films ever made. It raised the bar for those that came after it.

Gregory Peck, David Niven and Anthony Quinn head up a group of soldiers that must sneak through enemy territory to take out a set of massive guns that protects a waterway. The allies cannot launch their attack until the guns are taken out. This set features a variety of goodies, some old and some new. We get a pair of commentaries, a new one from film historian Stephen Rubin that gives some nice insight into the film and its place in cinematic history. Also featured is a commentary by Director J. Lee Thompson. This contains some fun anecdotes from the set, as well as the usual comments regarding production. All in all, this Collector's Edition is a fine look at a real cinematic treasure.  
Jeremy

### **MAGNUM P.I. Season 6**

Universal Home Entertainment

Running from 1980 to 1988, *Magnum P.I.* was one of the more successful detective shows in television history. Thomas Magnum (Tom Selleck) seemed to borrow a bit from Jim Rockford in that he was as tough as he needed to be, but not much more. Both characters often found themselves on the wrong side of a beating, and more than once getting the short end of the stick.

Season Six is not one of the stronger one of the show's run, but the cast wear their roles like comfortable clothes and the chemistry that has developed over the years still makes the show fun and entertaining, even if it is no longer fresh and surprising.

Look for appearances by Anthony M. LaPaglia, Alan Hale (The Skipper), Tate Donovan, Dennis Haysbert and Peter Davison (the Fifth Doctor on *Doctor Who*).

Jeremy

### **MIAMI VICE Season 3 and 4**

Universal Home Entertainment

Most people reading *Crimespree* have heard of *Miami Vice*, and most likely watched it. I find the show completely entertaining. And while parts of it are rooted deep in the eighties, I think a good deal of the show still holds up well. Because what really made the show work was the Attitude. By season three and four all the actors were comfortable in their roles, and I have to say, Lt. Castillo is still one of the coolest cops ever. The show was also getting great ratings, which meant that they continued

to get great music and amazing guest stars. James Brown, Chris Rock, Julia Roberts, Liam Neeson, Willie Nelson and Benicio Del Toro were all on Miami Vice. Plus many actors who went on to become stars later.

Season three was a particular favorite of mine because I love the episode Michael Mann used as a practice run for *Manhunter* having Sonny get in the head of a serial killer. It also has the episode "El Viejo" with Willie Nelson as a retired Texas Ranger out to avenge the son of his partner. Season Three also saw one of the cast killed off, pretty innovative at the time.

While this may not be as powerful as *West Wing*, or as intense as *The Shield* or *The Wire*, it is damn good entertainment, and entertaining 20 years later.

Jon

### **MICHAEL SHAYNE MYSTERIES Vol.1**

Fox Home Entertainment

The series of movies in this set, 4 of the 7 made, star Lloyd Nolan as Michael Shayne. Nolan had a long career in Hollywood appearing in over 150 movies and television shows and he was working right up till his death in Sept. of 1985 at the age of 83. There was a second series of 5 films starring Hugh Beaumont.

The movies are based on the character Michael Shayne written by Brett Halliday whose real name was Davis Dresser. 32 books were actually written by Dresser, and the books that followed were written by a series of different ghost writers, including Denis Lynds and Robert Terrall. However, only the first movie is based on one of the Halliday books.

This set includes the movies *Michael Shayne Private Detective*, *The Man Who Wouldn't Die*, *Sleepers West & Blue White and Perfect*.

Throughout the special features and in the booklet the term Noir is bandied about, and while I make no claims to be an expert I would not call these noir films, maybe noir lite. The movies are done with a lighter tone than noir films, and I think that this actually makes them more watchable. Nolan was perfect for the role and it is very clear he had a lot of fun with it. I especially love his interacting with other characters. Subtle little things he does really add to the role. He embraced the wise cracking, quick thinking character they wanted for the movies. Tight plotting and nice directing make these truly classic detective films, and they should be in the collections of anyone who likes the PI genre.

The producer, Sol Wurtzel is the same genius who brought us Mr. Moto. Fox studios liked their detective movies, which is evident in the run of the series.

The set also has some really nice extra features including a great booklet, a featurette called *The Detective Who Never Dies* in which they talk to Otto Penzler, Barry Zeman and Dresser's widow. Also included are a feature on cover artist Robert McGinnis, *Follow That Lead* and *Nabbing Crooks The Michael Shane Way*.

All in all, this is a must own for mystery fans with hours of entertainment. I'm really looking forward to volume 2, and I want to reread some of the books now as well.

Jon Jordan

### **MISSION IMPOSSIBLE: Season 1**

Paramount Home Entertainment

Originally aired in 1966-1967 these 28 episodes are highly entertaining. I have a fondness for the series from watching the reruns as a kid ( I was only 3 years old when it first aired). I still enjoy it. Watching as an adult the experience is different and I was able to appreciate different aspects of the show. Martin Landau really was a hell of an actor even back then. I understand why Barbara Bain was on the show. She has a sly way about her that is a pleasure to watch. Of course, for my money, the key to every caper working was and is always Greg Morris as the tech guy. He's cool, slick and the real heart of it. I also love the theme song.

The first season was a bit different with Steven Hill playing the leader, to be replaced later by Peter Graves.

While you might not be able to tell by today's television, *Mission Impossible* was the most expensive show being made at the time. Compared to other shows of the time, it shows, not only in the elaborate sets they used but in the really great writing. Of course having the cold war to use as material was wonderful for the script writers. Capturing terrorists, freeing people imprisoned and getting the bad guys taken out is what they do, and they do it well. I think a lot of today's television owes all the people involved with *Mission Impossible* a dept of gratitude.

This review will self destruct in five seconds.....

Jon

### **ROCKFORD FILES Season 3**

Universal Classic Television

Season Three is the season that brought home an Emmy Award for James Garner. Originally aired in 1976-1977, the things that make this show work and make it a classic hold up. Jim Rockford doesn't want to get in fights. He doesn't want to make waves. But he will do whatever he needs to do to solve his case. Another real asset to the show was David Chase who wrote and produced *Rockford Files*.

Season three sees the cast really mesh, not unlike a good pit crew on a racing team. Everyone involved with the show has hit their stride and as a result the entire season is great. The cases Rockford takes are a bit more meaty, dealing with corruption

and really helping people who need help. Stand-Out episodes are "Feeding Frenzy" which sees Jim helping his fiancée's father make an error from his past right and "Just Another Polish Wedding" which features Isaac Hayes as an old prison pal. There are a lot of great guest stars throughout the season; Cleavon Little, Strother Martin, Ned Beatty, and Robert Loggia. No special features this time out, but there is a bonus episode from season 4 called "Quick Nirvana". No doubt about it, shows like this, and especially seasons like this are the reason Television on DVD is such a good idea. This is extreme T.V..

Jon

### **ROCKY BALBOA**

Sony Pictures Home Entertainment

When it was announced that Sylvester Stallone was going to make a sixth Rocky film, many rolled their eyes. The fifth and "final chapter" in the Rocky series left a pretty bad taste in the mouths of even the biggest fans of the Italian Stallion.

Well Mr. Stallone has proved everybody wrong and, in the process, wrapped up the story of one of the more iconic characters in American Cinema.

At the start of this film, we find Rocky living in the past. His wife has passed away and his relationship with his son is strained. He spends his time telling boxing tales at his restaurant.

When a computer simulation suggests that Rocky (In his prime) would beat the current champ, the wheels are set in motion for the aging hero's return to that which made him a legend.

Stallone's situation is not that different from that of his character. The majority of his box office success, and virtually all of his critical success, came from the Rocky series. Not only has he returned to the character, but to the very core of what made the original movie great. Virtually all of the sequels gave us great action and drama. *Rocky Balboa* gives us more. It gives us the heart and soul of a character that became a national icon.

Is *Rocky Balboa* a great film? Not really, but it is a film clearly made with love and passion. Those characteristics come across on the screen and make this solid film something special.

For extras, we have a very interesting and enlightening commentary by Stallone. This commentary will be really enjoyed by long-time fans of the series, as Stallone talks about his journey through the series. I must mention that Stallone says some things that suggest that a director's cut might eventually be made available.

Also included are a number of deleted scenes including an alternate ending. These scenes generally give us a little more insight into the characters. The scene where Paulie breaks down is outstanding. I wish it had made the final cut.

Jeremy

### **ROSEMARY & THYME - Series Three**

Acorn Media

Charming is not a word one usually associates with Murder Mysteries, at least I don't...usually. But for *Rosemary and Thyme* starring Felicity Kendal (sigh) and Pam Ferris, it fits. In this age of Forensic Overkill these stories, third and evidently last in the series, are a breath of fresh air, sans fertilizer. Oh, people die (hence the name murder mystery) but we are NOT treated to a close up and personal view of anyone's entrails. For that, sometimes you want to shout "praise be!" We are treated to views of flowers and plants, and while I don't claim to be a big lover of either, it was...nice. In fact if I had to sum it all up, I would do it with; Nice. Not the murderers (boo, hiss) but pretty much everyone else.

For the most part they are pottering about the garden, someone else's (they are some kind of garden doctors) and come across or are directed to a body. Open-mouthed shock ensues, scene closes. New scene begins with them back pottering. Occasionally one will pop up her head and say something like; "You don't suppose the murderer was a left handed Eskimo?" to which the other will reply, "I shouldn't think so," or "Yes, that explains the ice and whale blubber." I'm poking fun, but these are fun. I enjoyed them and I think you will as well.

Specials are Location notes, photo gallery, and filmographies.

Lee Crawford

### **THE SHIELD: Season 5**

Fox Home Entertainment

I came late to the party and watched The Shield seasons 1-4 on DVD, back to back. I waited a couple weeks and did it again. I've made no secret that I think The Shield is one of the best shows ever made. I wait for shows to come out on DVD. I have been very anxiously waiting for Season Five of The Shield.

Season 5 is 11 episodes and has a total run time of 546 minutes, and not a one of those minutes is wasted. I'll be the first to admit that after watching four seasons I was really wondering if they would be able to shock me; to grab me and keep me watching nonstop to see what happens. It's not that I doubt Shawn Ryan and company for a minute, but my God, after everything I have seen on this show I was wondering what could be left! Well they came through.

This latest season sees Forest Whitaker as an IAD Lieutenant named Kavanaugh with his sights set on Vic Mackey and his strike team. He's relentless, obsessed and impossible to take your eyes off of. Mackey and his crew continue to do what they do best; take down the bad guys. Now they need to be careful because everything they do is being watched. Part of me knows

that Vic needs to pay for what he's done, but most of me is rooting for him to make it. The struggle between Mackey and Kavanaugh draws in other players as the two scramble to outwit each other. Amidst all this, the temp replacement captain is a joke and Julian is training a rookie who keeps making mistakes. Dutch and Claudette are having trust issues which may harm their partnership. And no one knows who the father of Danny's baby is. It all spirals to a climax in the last episode that is unlike anything I've ever seen on television.

The cast, writers, producers and directors of this show continue to amaze me. This is a must own DVD set. The fourth disc is extra features, including interviews, "making of features" and a prequel to season 6 which is also a coda to season 5.

Jon

### **SLEEPER CELL: AMERICAN TERROR**

(Sleeper Cell Season 2)

Paramount Home Entertainment

I watched the original *Sleeper Cell* when I bought my iPod Video. I thought, "It is a Showtime production; it will be more real than anything on regular TV.!" I was not disappointed.

Back again from the first season are: Michael Ealy as FBI agent Darwyn al-Sayeed, Oded Fehr as Farik (the cell leader from last season), Henri Lubati as Ilija (the only other terrorist to escape alive from last season's finale), and the lovely Melissa Sagemiller as Darwyn's girlfriend, Gail (who this season knows he is an FBI agent, and not an ex-con with mysterious dealings strange foreigners in the middle of the night).

This season has Darwyn infiltrating another cell that is planning a nuclear attack on American soil. Farik and Ilija are followed on their respective courses in the aftermath of last season's failed attack.

I really enjoyed last season and was pumped to see what happened next. I realized watching the second season that what I liked most about the first season was the interaction between Michael Ealy's low-key Muslim character and Oded Fehr's extremist character. (Of which there is none in the second season, except in the final episode.) The second season, while good, was a lot like the first, with a couple of exceptions: Darwin has a new handler (the FBI agent that he reports info to and gets info from) whom he does not get along with and one of the terrorists is a woman (who takes an uncomfortable interest in Gail).

You've got to like Oded Fehr...even though he is playing a character that would kill you for looking at him wrong, he seems extraordinarily "cool." I am talking "The Fonz" cool...you know, if Fonzie were a Muslim extremist, and Richie was an undercover FBI agent and Ralph Malph was his Handler.

Randy Otteson

### **WKRP in Cincinnati: Season One**

MGM/Fox Home Entertainment

*"Baby, if you've ever wondered, wondered whatever became of me. I'm living on the air in Cincinnati, Cincinnati WKRP."*

In the interests of full disclosure, I must confess that I am a HYOOOGE fan of *WKRP in Cincinnati*.

Set in the late 70s, *WKRP* follows the lives of a rock n' roll radio station. We have an odd little news director (Les Nessman), a fast-talking sales manager (Herb Tarlek) and a DJ (Dr. Johnny Fever) that occasionally needs to look at his coffee mug to remember who he is.

The first episode shows the station from easy listening to RnR. The scene where Johnny officially changes the format alone is worth the cost of this set. But that is not all! We are also treated to one of the true classic episodes: The legendary turkey drop. If you can sit through that and not laugh, you simply don't have a funny bone.

The bonus features are a tad on the skimpy side, especially when you think about how long they have had to work on this, but that hardly matters because the show is so good.

The 80s may have given us *The Cosby Show*, and the 90s *Seinfeld* and *Friends*, but my heart belongs to the big *WKRP in Cincinnati*.

Jeremy