

The Aura IFC Films

The Aura, written and directed by Fabian Bielinsky is a crime film which makes obvious Bielinsky's love for noir and caper films.

Esteban Espinosa played by Ricardo Darin is a rather strange man. A taxidermist with a habit of being precise and careful he also suffer epilepsy. During the calm before these fits he sees that he could commit a perfect crime. An opportunity to prove he can do it presents itself, however the reality of the act is much different than the visualization of it.

Ricardo Darin is wonderful in this role and it's hard to take your eyes off of him. Bielinsky also nailed it with a tight plot and superb story. While a terrific crime movie, it's also an interesting look at a man finding out who he really is. In this genre it's hard to be refreshing and new, but *The Aura* does it. I really enjoyed this film

The movie is in Spanish with subtitles. Extra features include a making of featurette and a musical montage.

Jon Jordan

Criminal Minds : The First Season Paramount Home Video

In my on going quest for entertainment on DVD I purchased Criminal Minds. I hadn't seen it on network television because I just don't watch TV anymore. What drew me to this particular series was the FBI profiler aspect and two of the stars, Mandy Patinkin and Thomas Gibson probably best known for Dharma and Greg.

Patinkin plays James Gideon who is just coming back to the unit after a medical leave. He's obviously the agent people defer to and has the most experience of the group. Gibson plays the number two man, Aaron Hotchner who is very by the book. The rest of the team is made up of hard working people all specialists in something or other. I particularly like the genius 24 year old Spencer Reid played by Matthew Gray Gubler, he's subtly funny and humble and adds a touch of humanity to the team, though probably by accident. I find the characters much more believable than the agents or cops in a lot of other shows. You don't get the feel that they are always posing and waiting for a close up.

It is typical of television crime dramas in that as soon as the unit is called in, they manage to solve the case, no matter how long it may have been running, but that's a minor point. The show focuses on more than just serial killers, they hunt wackos of all types. The show is fast paced, written intelligently and is visually pleasing to boot. All in all it's damn good entertainment.

This set also has a couple nice bonus features included. 22 episodes coming in at 960 minutes, and all very enjoyable.

Jon Jordan

DEXTER: Complete First Season Paramount Home Entertainment

When I heard that Jeff Lindsay's character Dexter was going to become a series for Showtime, I was skeptical. Many of the things that make the novels so alluring have the potential to turn off many potential viewers. A main character that is an unfeeling serial killer (albeit of other killers) is not something that many folks will connect with. Lindsay is a talented enough writer that he has pulled it off in the books, could the series producers do the same? Forgive me for having any doubt. They have done a wonderful job. The series stays true to the overall feel of the books. Your feelings race from disgust to glee. After some episodes, I wanted to take a shower, yet could not wait for the next one.

The producers (responsible for the cable hits *The Sopranos*, *Six Feet Under* and *Oz*) take full advantage of the freedom that cable offers and have delivered a masterful show that stands out from everything else on the small screen.

Early in his life, Dexter survived a traumatic event, one he can not remember. His foster father, Harry, a former policeman, realizes his son lacks the emotions most of us have, and that he is filled an urge to kill that he can't ignore. Harry channels Dexter's homicidal urges into good, teaching him to kill only those who deserve it. He also helps Dexter to blend with other folk, teaching him how to emulate the human emotions he doesn't actually feel so

that he doesn't draw attention to his extracurricular activities.

Michael C. Hall (*Six Feet Under*) does a wonderful job as Dexter. By the second episode, his 6FU character was a distance memory. He really brings this character to life, with a certain spark that will help many viewers get past the more... disturbing aspects of Dexter.

Though certainly not for the soft, Dexter is an amazing show that is should be given a chance by all but the tenderest of views.

Won't you please give Dexter a place in your home?

Jeremy

DIE HARD Collection

MGM/Fox Home Entertainment

Ladies and Gentlemen, I present to you the scourge of terrorists everywhere, a blue-collar cop that simply is trying to do right by his family and country, a man whose very name strikes fear in the hearts of terrorists (or maybe not, since they keep crossing him), I give you John McClane.

If you don't watch popcorn films, you might not know the character or the series. Actually that really is not true. If you lived under a rock in the late 80s and the 90s, you might not know the character or the series.

John McClane (Bruce Willis) is a NYC cop that was introduced to the world in 1984 when he foiled a terrorist takeover (actually a robbery attempt) of his estranged wife's office building. Since then, he has saved America (Ok, at least parts of it) two additional times.

What we have here is pretty much everything a fan could possibly want (with the exception of the new flick *Live Free Or Die Hard*, which will almost certainly appear in the next box set) in regards to the *Die Hard* series. Each film gets a disc full of goodies (most of which are on the individual releases) that will inform and enlighten you on all things *Die Hard*. Extra scenes, trailers/TV ads, interviews and featurettes (mostly on how stunts and wacky action scenes are done) are provided for each film.

The fourth disc offers a TRAILER!!!! for new the *Die Hard* film (*Live Free or Die Hard*) and a new featurette looking back at the series. While it does make for interesting viewing, this new segment is hardly worth the cost of the set. If you already own these films, I can't see buying this. If you do not, this set is fun and should be owned by fans of the films.

Jeremy

Donnie Brasco (Extended Cut)

Sony Pictures Home Entertainment

Donnie Brasco is a love story.

(Are you nuts? It's about the Mob.)

Yes it is, but at it's core, it's a love story. The love that welded our puny species into the most successful hunters in history, and unfortunately made war an eternal curse. That love.

Al Pacino's Lefty is an aging, mostly overlooked gangster that hooks up with Johnny Depp's young lion of the title--who in reality is an F.B.I. undercover agent--and teaches him the ropes, the customs, the culture. Brasco's conflict becomes evident early--given the mores of his environ--as Lefty is a good and honorable man (who's killed 26 people...more by the film's end). Lefty's son is a useless drug addict, and Donnie becomes like the son he might have had. Their relationship is alternately abrasive and sweet, and these two will play you like a vintage harp. Excellent, for the performances are a little thin. As the story unfolds and we see both the Government and the Mob in action, I'm left with the feeling of not wanting to have anything to do with either side...but seeing the Mob as perhaps the lesser of two evils.

Anne Heche--as Donnie's real life wife and mother of his three daughters--is aces as well, and her stock keeps going up with me, somewhat to my chagrin. Her puzzled anguish at her husband being gone for three months at a time is believable.

With a supporting cast the likes of Michael Madsen and Bruno Kirby, this film is as good as you expect.

This is not a particularly violent movie, with one huge exception that is just entirely too realistic, but the

undercurrent is always there.

Special Features has an exclusive featurette, "Donnie Brasco (Joseph Pistone the real deal) Out of the Shadows" that is a good watch if only to confirm what you already suspected.

Maybe the best gangster film I've ever seen. Well directed by Mike Newell (*Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*).

Lee Crawford

Fletch (The Jane Doe Edition)

Universal Home Entertainment

What do Ted Nugent, Igor Stravinski, Harry S. Truman, Jane Doe, Mr. Babar, Mr. Poon, Dr. Rosenpenis, Dr. Rosenrosen, Dr. Rosen, John Kocktoastone, and Fletch F. Fletch have in common?

Answer: Irwin M. Fletcher.

Having watched *Fletch* 3,452 (squared times Pi to the Nth power) times, I was going just watch the extras and throw some words together and call it a night. But I watched the 2 documentaries and one "Best of Fletch" tidbit, and had to see the whole thing again.

As it turned out, I STILL love this movie! Clark W. Griswald was funny, sure; but in a doofus-y way. Irwin M. Fletcher, or "Fletch," is funny in the cool, "everything is under control" way. As one of the people interviewed for the two included documentaries says, "Fletch says smart-aleck remarks that if we were in the same situation we'd think of, 5 or 10 minutes later, and say, 'aw, I should have said this...'"

Fletch (the Movie) is based on Gregory McDonald's series of books about an investigative reporter; and *Fletch* (the Book) purists *hated* the film. *Fletch* the Book purists=GEEKS....much like the people who FREAK OUT if Spiderman of the comics has his hair parted on the right, but in the movie it is parted on the left. I quote The Shat: "Get out of your mother's basement and GET A LIFE!" I realize I might be ostracizing the one person who reads my reviews (Sorry Glen, but seriously, you should move out and let your mom have a social life) but it had to be said.

In the movie, Fletch goes undercover on the beach to expose a drug ring; while there, he is approached by Tim Matheson, who wants Fletch (using the alias Ted Nugent) to kill him...and well, that is it; Fletch investigates, and wackiness and hilarity ensue. Included in the supporting cast are Matheson, Gina "Pre-Oscar" Davis, M. Emmet Walsh, Joe Don Baker, George Wendt, and Dana Wheeler-Nicholson.

Is *Fletch* a great movie? No. Will it go down in history as the funniest movie of all time? No. (But I suppose if Borat can, anything is possible). But if you remember Chevy Chase best for the not-so-good movies he has made in the last...um...20 years, you NEED to see this movie. I watched it again, on my laptop, in a cigar bar, with earphones, and still almost peed my pants when Chevy--posing as a doctor--gets called in to assist in an autopsy. (I am giggling right now, just thinking about it.)

Randy Otteson

The Good German

Warner Home Video

No one will confuse *The Good German* (Warner Bros) with a feel good movie, but it is a nice piece of new Noir with a reasonably authentic old time look--although today's B&W film seems quite a bit sharper than the old stuff.

George Clooney stars as Jake Geismer, a reporter for the Potsdam conference in post war Berlin. He was there pre-war and fell for Lena (played by Cate Blanchett, who I swear was channeling Dietrich...and I mean that as a compliment), whose husband was recently killed in the bombing...so why is everybody looking for him? Good question, and one that Jake pursues when no one wants him to, and at personal expense. Jake gets the crud beat out of him so much you want to send him to the gym for some boxing lessons. You wonder why someone with his lack of defensive skills doesn't keep his nose out of other, tougher people's business.

Toby Maguire is Lena's new lover--and a greasy little snert he is, well played by an actor I'm not a huge fan of--who gets in over his head and ends up seriously dead, and nobody, but nobody, cares. Except Jake.

In the end I found *The Good German* to be a watchable but not very satisfying film, with the revelations making you go "hmm" instead of "whoa," though if you are a Noir fan take a squint.

Lee Crawford

HAWAII FIVE-O: Season One

Paramount Home Entertainment

Hawaii Five-O was quite possibly the longest running cop show on TV; it was on for twelve seasons, running from 1968 to 1980. One of the reasons for its success was Jack Lord, who had a commanding presence on the screen--enough that they replaced him as Felix in the *Bond* movies, for fear of his over shadowing their star. In *Five-O*, Lord played a no-nonsense cop who was uncorruptible and always got the job done. (Hell, I'll admit it, I still want to be Jack Lord!) The supporting cast was also strong, with James MacArthur as Danny Williams, and a host of local actors making up the Five-0 team.

I put in the first season a little nervously, as I have very fond memories of the show; I hoped I would see the series I remembered, and not a dated and over done production. I was wrong to be worried. While naturally a bit dated (it is almost 40 years old), the police work holds up, the acting is still strong, and it's just beautiful to watch. I did recognize a few actors and actresses including Sally Kellerman. It didn't really take much to get past the clothes and the portrayal of hippies with their cool talk, daddio...and I actually appreciate a plot that revolves around slipping an old man acid.

Special features are slim, but there is a very nice program taped for Hawaii Television--a look back at the show with interviews and great stories. The episodes were all remastered as well, and come through very sharp and with great sound quality. (That sound quality *really* came through when the theme song kicked in...I had it up really loud!) This is a great addition to any collection of crime or mystery related DVD.

Jon

THE LAST KING OF SCOTLAND

Fox Home Entertainment

Idi Amin Dada was, from 1971 to 1979, the President of Uganda; though President is a little misleading, as Amin came to power via a military coup. His reign is famous for its brutality: an estimated 300,000 to 500,000 people were put to death under his rule.

In *The Last King of Scotland*, Forest Whitaker plays the Ugandan dictator and steals the show. It is Whitaker's mesmerizing performance that takes the film from being a modest fictional account of an infamous dictator, to one that draws the viewer in; not letting go until the last frame of film has passed. This is truly a case of one performance elevating a movie to another level entirely. Whitaker delivers a complex portrayal of a very charismatic, very paranoid ruler; he makes it easy to see how Amin drew people in, but in the blink of an eye, his capacity for incredible violence is all too clear.

The film is told from the perspective of Nicholas Garrigan (James McAvoy), a young Scottish doctor acting as Amin's personal physician. For the record, there never was such a person--but this addition gives a human perspective to the atrocities that occurred, since we witness events along with him.

One thing I really must give praise for is the restraint Macdonald showed in terms of violence and brutality. It would have been very easy to go overboard with the gore. Instead, much of the violence is implied. An excellent job is done of creating a very tense setting with an inescapable sense of dread that builds as the film progresses. *The Last King of Scotland* is certainly worth seeing, but don't confuse the Oscar-worthy performance with this being an Oscar-worthy film.

The extras include some deleted scenes that were shed due to time constraints. These are mainly minor character scenes, but still worth watching. Director Kevin MacDonal provides optional commentary that is interesting. MacDonal also has a commentary track for the film that has its moments. Not to knock the director, but I would have enjoyed hearing the thoughts of Mr. Whitaker as well.

We also get a few featurettes: *Capturing Idi Amin* is around thirty minutes and gives us a behind scenes look, as well as providing some historical data. The most interesting part of this are some comments from various locals

that help to hammer home the impact this brutal dictator had. The other two are much shorter and look at the cast and their performances. One, "*Forest Whitaker: Idi Amin*," has Forest offering his thoughts on the role and his approach to it. The other, "*Fox Movie Channel Casting Session*", is a mix of interviews with supporting cast members.

I would suggest seeing *The Last King of Scotland*--if for no other reason than it is the film responsible for gaining Forest Whitaker the praise he so richly deserves.

Jeremy Lynch

LOVEJOY: Complete Season One

Warner Home Video

If you are not familiar with *Lovejoy*, prepare to meet the most endearing rouge ever. Based on the character from the novels of Jonathon Gash, Lovejoy (no first name known) is an antiques Divie. A Divie is one that has a special sense in regards to the legitimacy of antiques.

Lovejoy, along with his pal Tinker and their somewhat clueless apprentice Eric, manages to do just enough business to survive. It helps that he lives in a cottage on the estate of Lady Jane (whose chemistry with Lovejoy is quite electric), whom he often draws into his misadventures. While Lovejoy is indeed a scruffy disreputable fellow, he has a soft spot for damsels in distress and thus frequently gets himself in over his head while trying to help out.

For extras, we get interviews with Gash, as well as with McShane (Lovejoy) and "co-star" Gwen Humble (who appears in the two-part finale of the season one and just one other episode in the entire series).

Ian McShane is known to many as the foul-mouthed saloon owner Al Swearngen in *Deadwood*, but he will always be Lovejoy to me.

Do yourself a favor, pick up season one and give Lovejoy a chance. You will be rewarded with hours of fun.

Jeremy

Kidnapped: The Complete series Sony Pictures Home Entertainment

Kidnapped, like the famous Monty Python Parrot, is deceased and I fear no amount of tub-thumping can bring it back. But tub-thump I shall, because...well, I'm not very smart. I am however smart enough to get in out of the rain and to recognize good stuff when I step in it and Kidnapped is pure gold, friends, pure dramatic gold.

I know, I know, in every third TV show or movie someone gets snatched for ransom, and it generally holds about as much dramatic tension as washday. (Maybe less.) We've seen it too many times to care. Not so fast, discerning viewer; you've never seen it like this...no reason to trust me on this one, but do it anyway. Kidnapped will pop your ennui, and we both know how you love that.

There were a surprising number of promising series this season that shortly ran out of steam; Smith, for one. Kidnapped started strong and got jarringly better each week. Writing: superb. Acting: at least that good. Direction: masterful, atmosphere to burn; maybe the best drama I've ever seen on television.

This is not a review. It's a valentine.

When I outline the plot, you'd likely think 'Yawn, same old stuff', but it's like making love (Kama Sutra and contortionists aside); there's only so many ways to go and the magic is in the handling of the proceedings, not necessarily reinventing the exercise. Like the difference between a picture of food and a meal. The notes are the same but the song is very different and beautifully rendered. And to carry the music simile still further, it is how it comes to make you feel, for therein lies the magic. I'd seen it all before too and most of the time I felt like a sandwich. Kidnapped is so very real I sometimes felt like a peeping tom. (That's when I knew they owned me.)

Sure, there were a couple of bad signs in the beginning- the hero, the independent kidnapping specialist, is called Knapp. Someone ought to be slapped. And Jeremy Sisto the actor playing him, came on looking only slightly cleaner and better dressed than your average refugee. There, I thought, goes the ball game. Now if he is smarter than everyone else in the world except maybe Stephen Hawking, this is sick making and gets no more of my electricity. But no, the unfortunately named Mr. Knapp is an unusually rounded character with more facets than a rock stars nipple ring. And he ain't alone, not by a long shot. Delroy Lindos' F.B.I. agent Latimer King is a man of many parts and he shows you most of them, spinning and turning. Turner (Carmen Egojo), Knapps' associate-- besides being lovely--is a computer/electronics/information wizardess who plants a homing device in Knapp's wallet, somewhat to his surprise ("How'd you get into my wallet?"). She also knows where his rubber bullets are ("In the box marked Rubber Bullets."). The Techno-Magi has become required in current mysteries or thrillers and I haven't seen it done any better.

Which brings us to the Cains, Conrad (Timothy Hutton) and Ellie (Dana Delaney). Nice piece of casting. When their only son is grabbed on his way to school one morning, his bodyguard shot and left for dead (more on him later), these two do more acting with fewer words than I think I have ever seen. It's already been made clear, by this point, that all is not caviar and cold duck in their marriage; but the scene where he makes her a cup of tea in the kitchen, one sleepless night, is so genuinely tender it could bring a tear to your eye. No doubt this is a pair of pros with material they can get all their teeth into, and with no intention of leaving hungry.

Virgil, the boy's bodyguard and friend, is beautifully rendered by Mykelti Williamson (Bubba of Forrest Gump). Coincidentally--it at first appears-- Virgil is Latimer King's brother-in-law. The plot doesn't thicken; it sets up like Portland cement. Leaving his hospital bed to go after Leopold, "Because I told him I'd be ready," he saves more bacon than vegetarianism.

It becomes pretty clear pretty early that this is no garden variety kidnapping, but if not that, what? Too well funded and too well planned and just too much for a take-the-money-and-run affair. I half expected people to start baying like Bloodhounds as it wound down.

This is what television could be and so rarely is and the best series you never saw.

The Special Features are nicely done but too brief (bet you never thought you'd hear me say that), barely brushing the storyline with some very good stuff on word and name meanings.

Lee Crawford

MURDER IN SUBURBIA: Series 2

Acorn Media

Call me unsophisticated, but I don't really like police procedural shows. While I acknowledge that forensic science has revolutionized police work, I don't find watching detectives discover brain tissue in the sofa cushions all that entertaining; just fascinating in a kinda ooky way. (I also happen to be a charter member of the "David Caruso Can't Act" club but don't get me started on that.) It saddens me to think that American television audiences may have become too jaded by *CSI* to enjoy a cheeky little whodunit like *Murder in Suburbia*.

Caroline Catz and Lisa Faulkner play police detectives Kate "Ash" Ashurst and Emma "Scribbs" Scribbins in the British suburb of Middleford. The two are opposites in personality and in apparel. Ash's clothes and hair are sleek and businesslike. Her interview style is intense, confrontational. Scribbs is more free spirited in her dress and more instinctive in her dealings with people. Friends on and off the job, both are single and looking for the right guy. When they aren't interviewing suspects, they are engaging in commiserative confabs about the woeful lack of good men.

The show is full of subtle humor. In Episode 1, titled "Witches", Ash and Scribbs investigate the occult murder of a schoolgirl. In one scene, we listen to them chatting as they wait to interview a suspect while, in the background, the school chorus gravely sings a SATB arrangement of the Pet Shop Boys cynical "Suburbia". Not your standard glee club fare.

Much of the appeal of the show is found in the odd denizens of Middleford, like the finicky dog owner with a barking Big Ben doorbell, who is suspected of killing the owner of a kennel for accidentally allowing a stray mutt to "shag" her pedigreed poodle.

She describes the lasting damage the encounter caused: "She still has nightmares. Whenever she sees a whippet, she bolts."

The closest thing to police procedure we ever see is when they recreate a crime scene on Scribb's desk using Star Wars action figures. So, if you're into autopsies and doing your David Caruso impression in front of the bathroom mirror, go watch *CSI*. But if you like quirky characters and wily humor, give *Murder in Suburbia* a chance.

Naomi J Krueger

NCIS: Season Three

Paramount Home Entertainment

Near the end of filming on *NCIS*'s second season, Sasha Alexander, who played Special Agent Kate Todd, asked to be released from her contract, overwhelmed by the show's physical demands. Alexander's departure was written into the show as Kate Todd's shocking death at the sniper rifle of nemesis Ari Haswari (Rudolf Martin).

From the start of the third season, Kate's death realistically affects the rest of the team. The demanding Gibbs lightens up on his charges while office prankster DiNozzo does a bit of growing up. The show's creators also take the opportunity to add two strong female characters: Mossad Officer Ziva David (Cote de Pablo) and new *NCIS* Director Jenny Shepard (Lauren Holly).

The forward, sensual David is quite a change from straitlaced Kate Todd. Her gradual grasp of American slang is believable and provides opportunities for humor. David also lends the show more international flavor, widening its range of stories. Meanwhile, Shepard appears as Gibbs's former partner, now his boss. She can hold off his flinty attitude as well as his gruff charm.

The success of these changes coupled with crisp camera work and dependable writing helped *NCIS* reach a new ratings high.

The Season 3 DVD set is the most feature-packed to date. It includes 24 widescreen episodes, five featurettes, and four episode commentaries--on "Kill Ari (Part One)" with creator Don Bellisario, on "Boxed In" with producers Avery Drewe and David Bellisario, and on "Frame-Up" and "Bloodbath" with actors Pauley Perrette and Michael Weatherly.

Gerald So

Smokin' Aces

Universal Home Entertainment

The plan was to sit in front of the TV and veg out with a no-brainer, pure junk movie. If the aliens had flown over scanning for intelligent life, they wouldn't have stopped at my house. That's what I wanted. *Smokin' Aces* double crossed me. It is a way better film than I expected or was looking for. Can't trust nobody nowadays.

Quirky? Yep. Excessive? Now and again. But generally it's tight as a shore leave sailor, with good performances by a raft of stars like Ben Affleck, Andy Garcia, Ray Liota, Alicia Keys, Jeremy Piven and Ryan Reynolds.

Loosely based on the Sinatra legend (?)--an entertainer with mob ties gets in over his head--Buddy Isreal (Pivin) makes a mess, and to save his own worthless rump starts singing to the Feds. The mob figures the best way to clean it up is to have him killed, and will pay a cool million. The creams of contract killing get the word first and are on the move. Now doesn't that sound like a recipe for numbness with lots of gunfire? Yeah Skippy.

The artful use of jump cuts and transitions introduce the players nicely without slowing the action, and there aren't many you'd want to have lunch with. These people mean business and they enjoy their work. There are some truly first rate performances, too many to list; but I do want to mention two that come from outside the acting stable: Alica Keys and Common, music types, who at worst held their own is fast, fast company, and in the case of Common, owned the screen any time he was on it. Also, Taraji Henssen as half of the all girl hit team, and her co-star, a 50 caliber Barrett sniper rifle, are worth a couple of looks. Not "Oh look at the little girl with the big gun." And it is huge--think Howitzer without the wheels. But she comes on like she's been handling it since she was five and it's an extension of her arm. Chilling. She also doesn't give in to a pet peeve of mine which is the shooter closing his eyes before every discharge. Wouldn't last long in a gunfight like that.

The Special Features are well above average and the bit where Ben Affleck is trying to make a length of the table pool shot is laugh out loud funny. He should stick to poker. What I was looking for that night was undemanding entertainment. What I found was a jewel of a film. Give *Aces* a shot.

Lee Crawford

STREETS OF SAN FRANCISCO: Season one, Vol. one

Paramount Home Entertainment

I have very fond memories of this show. As a kid I remember my mother watching all sorts of crime and mystery television: *Mannix*, *The Rookies*, *Barnaby Jones*, *Canon* and many more. One of my favorites was always *Streets of San Francisco*. Of course I also have fond memories of the *Batman* TV show with Adam West, and now it just makes me laugh out loud it's so campy and silly.

Well, for my money, *Streets* holds up. I think the biggest reason is the fact that it stars Oscar winner Karl Malden and future Oscar winner Michael Douglas. I don't think I appreciated how good of an actor Malden is before, but after watching the first volume of *Streets* I won't be able to forget. He's perfect as the veteran cop. And seeing Michael Douglas in the beginning of his career is wonderful. I keep seeing glimpses of what will come down the line for him. As good as both actors are, watching them together is magic.

The stories are solid and well written; they feel like real police stories taking place. I also think they couldn't have picked a better city for the series. San Francisco is seen here in all its glory, and they also show its seamier side as well. There is a reason it gets top billing in the title.

This is something I've wanted on DVD for a while and it's nice to finally get it. It's even nicer to know that I enjoy it more now than I did when I was a kid. This set includes a publicity interview done right before the series aired that is quite fun. This is a must own as far as I'm concerned.

Jon Jordan

To Catch A Thief: Special Edition

Paramount Home Entertainment

To Catch a Thief is a strange bird. On the one hand, it features a master director--arguably the most brilliant one of his time--with two huge stars in a fairly predictable, lightweight romantic thriller. On the other hand, it is a hoot to watch. The film has, in the past, been criticized as being one of Mr. Hitchcock's weakest works, an accusation I disagree with. Let us think about that complaint for a minute: this movie is being attacked because it does not stand next to some of the greatest films of all time. Some filmmakers (Hello Mr. Schumacher) should be so lucky. *TCAT* features Cary Grant as John Robie, a notorious burglar that goes by the moniker The Cat. Mr. Robie has gone straight but somebody is emulating his style, thus putting in the crosshairs of the police. With the assistance of a beleaguered insurance agent, whose superiors are upset at having to pay out for all of the missing jewels, Robie sets out to catch the imposter.

His plan is to stake out millionairess Jessie Stevens, whom he views as the likely next target of the New Cat. While he has his eyes on Jesse, her daughter Francie (Grace Kelly) has her eyes on Robie. Francie knows Robie's identity and finds that all the more exciting. This leads to fun and games until Jessie's jewels disappear. This turn of events makes Robie's situation all the more precarious. He has one last chance to catch the thief and clear his name.

While lacking the tension and suspense of Hitchcock classics such as *Rear Window* and *Vertigo*, *To Catch A Thief* features a certain amount of playfulness that is not common in his films. *TCAT* does its job in that it entertains the viewers and lets you sit back, relax, and enjoy a leisurely romp through the French Riviera. For extras, we get a commentary track featuring director/film critic Peter Bogdanovich and film historian Laurent Bouzereau. The commentary reveals nothing profound, but is fun and interesting. Bogdanovich gives the unique insight of a director and talks about his various encounters with Hitchcock. The other extras are carryovers from the previous DVD release. Three of them are standard fare, giving us a look behind the scenes and talking about taking an idea and bringing it to the silver screen. There is a fourth that is about costumer Edith Head and her work at Paramount. (She is responsible for the styles of Grace Kelly, Audrey Hepburn and Gloria Swanson, among others.)

If you don't already own this film, you owe it to yourself to pick this up.
Jeremy Lynch

The Untouchables: Season one, Vol one.
Paramount Home Entertainment

Back in the late fifties Desi Arnez and Lucille Ball's Production Company produced a show called The Westinghouse Desilu Playhouse. They did a two parter called *The Scarface Mob*, which was later released in the movie theaters. This was also to become the pilot for *The Untouchables*. While the pilot used material right from the book by Elliot Ness also called *The Untouchables*, later episodes would become more fictionalized, such as the episode that sees Ness going after Ma Barker.

Helmed by producer Quinn Martin, the show was ahead of its time, showing crime to be a violent and dangerous way of life. Robert Stack lead the cast as Elliot Ness, and later won an Emmy for the role. While tame by today's television standards, this was groundbreaking television. Long on action and filled with tense moments, they didn't flinch while showing how badly a life of crime could end.

The Untouchables is as good as any of the crime movies being made at the time, and any fan of this era in America's crime history should consider this a must own. This first volume contains the first half of the first season, 13 hours and 25 minutes worth of classic television. This show is every bit as fun as I remeber it being when I first watched it as a kid.

Jon Jordan