

Crimespree Magazine #25 July/August 2008 DVD reviews

DEXTER: season two

Paramount Home Entertainment

Michael C Hall returns as everyone's favorite serial killer...well, I suppose some of you sickos might prefer Hannibal, but Dexter is, in my opinion, the man.

In season two, Dexter's dumping grounds are discovered, which leads the local press and police dubbing him the "Bay Harbor Butcher." As a result of this, the FBI sends a profiler to work the case.

Dexter also has issues on the domestic front, his girlfriend thinks he is a drug addict and insists he seek treatment. While attending meetings, he meets a rather unusual woman who, while not knowing exactly what Dexter is, senses the darkness within him. She agrees to be his sponsor.

This season does an excellent job building suspense over the course of the season to the point where you may find yourself binging through entire season in one sitting!

Strong storylines, excellent characters, good dialogue...once again, Dexter delivers the goods.

Season two is a worthy follow to the outstanding first and will not let Dexter fans down.

Jeremy Lynch

DNa: series one and two

Acorn Media

I have come to expect pleasant offerings from Acorn Media, as often as not in a lighter vein. Such expectations did not prepare me for *DNa* starring Tom Conti, a sort of British CSI with less procedure and more character drive. This is one artfully crafted. Wonderfully acted piece of drama that hits like a sixties encounter bat, a canvas and foam implement for beating the snot out of your significant other without doing any actual damage. Think adult pillow fight. And *DNa* has plenty of impact. Every time you are sure you know where it's going it whacks you again. Delightfully. This short series is a treat with a capital T. And Conti is perfectly cast as Joseph Donovan, former forensic expert whose last case literally drove him nuts.

Now a successful writer, he is called in to consult on a case very like the one that sent him round the bay. Think you see where it's going don't you? Well you're wrong. This is no study in angst and soul searching via our hero. In fact our hero may be a suspect. Our hero looks damn good as the villain. There are twists, turns, serpentine and zags to keep this humming along without seeming rushed or descending into much darkness. It is a mystery with all that implies.

The set includes series one and two, where he is now head of forensics and is three shorter stories whereas one has one tale in two parts. The three shorter pieces are first rate in their own right and would have earned a good review by themselves, but for my money season one is the jewel in this crown. If you are looking for something very different in your mysteries, this is them. If you're not surprised I'll be surprised.

Lee Crawford

FIRST KNIGHT: Special edition

Sony Pictures Home Entertainment

To quote Vanessa Redgrave, "It's May, It's May.... The glorious month of May." And I celebrated by inserting a much loved movie into the DVD player, popping a little popcorn and getting to work for Crimespree Cinema.

First Knight has risen again. This 1995 retelling of the Arthurian Tale of a king, his bride and the knight who loves them both has been re-released by Columbia Pictures on DVD and Blu-Ray. Originally conceived to be a reunion between star Sean Connery and his *Goldfinger* director Guy Hamilton one can only imagine what might have been had Hamilton not died.

I still remember reading in the paper that Sean Connery had signed on to play Arthur and I would have paid for my tickets right then and there. Sean Connery/King Arthur; we have a winner folks. Add to that Richard Gere as Lancelot. Age, Smage. Lancelot is about sexy and swashbuckling and Gere has those. Julia Ormond as Guinevere made perfect sense as well. Fresh off of the movie, *Legends of the Fall* a better piece of casting could not have happened. Throw in Sir John Gielgud as Guinevere's advisor and Ben Cross as the evil Prince Malagant and roll picture.

Jerry Zucker stepped in for the deceased Hamilton and has brought a lushness to the film that befits what has to be the most universal legend of them all. This retelling of the tale of Camelot is about the end of the story. You will find no mention of Merlin, Morgana or Excalibur here although at a climactic moment within the final fight scene you will remember as surely as Zucker did, just what Excalibur is.

First Knight is a medieval parable for the thoroughly modern citizen. We're introduced to Lancelot, talented swordsman with no thought of a future. He is a drifter. Lady Guinevere is first seen on screen in a playful game of ball, a young Queen with responsibilities and naiveté, who knows there is no better man than Arthur, King of Camelot. Evil has come to her borders and she needs Arthur's help. The bridal journey to Camelot begins and the procession is attacked. Lancelot to the rescue. Guinevere to her groom. And then in a wonderful homage to all the screen tellings of Arthur before, a glorious take of torches, pomp and circumstance gives us our first glimpse of Arthur/Sean. And with the players we ascend to Camelot. Camelot is breathtaking. A collaboration between all behind the scene talent on what their imaginations have envisioned Camelot to be. Our attention is held firm for the remaining hour and three quarters of play.

There are moments aplenty in this flick to add to the "Camelot by Hollywood" arsenal and the movie is a very satisfying view. The Gauntlet scene, Malagant returning to the Round Table, The death scene, the scenery and costuming in every scene. There are two big battle scenes that rank right up there with all pre cgi battle scenes. For myself and many others the very best of the movie is when Lancelot takes off his helmet, jumps from his horse, and starts kicking ass.

There are problems too. Not within the movie itself, which will hold your attention admirably from beginning to end but in the aftermath. The "I wonder why they didn't..." syndrome. For the legend of Arthur is so large and has so many facets everyone is bound to miss a favorite part of the story upon reflection.

The triangle between our three protagonists is not as developed as I would have liked although the final scenes between the three are masterful. And now that I've seen the movie again (time three), I have a theory. Although the heartfelt speeches are there for the taking, the moments of shared joy are never present. The giddy happiness that is the idea of Camelot, makes way for lushness and sincerity every time. And that is why I will forever wonder what might have been if Hamilton who loved to add humor to drama would have been the director. For while Zucker embraces the ideology of Camelot whole heartedly he was also at this point in time trying to move away from his early career (Airplane). Unfortunately he checked the humor at the door. Which is why, one to five I give this movie a three despite its visual glory. But Arthur/Connery... come on.... it could be a one and still be must see. And if, like myself, you want more after viewing, I highly recommend *Lancelot and Guinevere* a 1963 movie starring Cornell Wilde as the Knight, which is my favorite of all the screens telling of this universal story.

Special Features are engaging but aside from the Arthurian Legend running commentary nothing we, the greedy viewer haven't come to expect. And although there is some commentary from Ormond and Connery, Gere and Cross are sadly missing.

Ruth Jordan

INTELLIGENCE: season one

Acorn Media

Last year, I stumbled across season one of a Canadian series called *Da Vinci's Inquest*. After watching only a couple of episodes, I fell in love with it. It featured realistic characters that did not always do the right thing.

Now, DVI creator Chris Haddock brings us a show that may very well be the smartest crime drama since *The Wire*.

Intelligence mixes the worlds of organized crime with that of government intelligence and espionage, and does so while offering up dynamic, believable characters and rich, complex storylines.

Jimmy Reardon (Ian Tracey of *Da Vinci's Inquest*) is loving father, hard-working owner of several businesses and an organized crime boss in Vancouver. It is in his blood, as he is a third generation crime boss. Reardon wants out, but needs to keep control until he can go legit. He is facing many challenges, including a biker gang that is looking to muscle in on his criminal enterprises.

Mary Spalding (Klea Scott), the head of Vancouver's Organized Crime Unit, finds herself battling those within her own government almost as much as the criminals she has been ordered to take down. Spalding is looking for big results so she can continue to climb the ladder of success.

Mary and Jimmy find themselves forming an alliance. He provides becomes her confidential informant and she goes after his rivals and turns a blind eye to his operations. They are allies, but hardly pals, as each benefits without really investing too much trust in the other.

Intelligence does a wonderful job of avoiding the simplistic tags of good and bad. Neither Mary nor Jimmy are angels, yet both feel they are clearly doing what they feel is the right thing. Jimmy is drug supplier and is involved in a number of illegal activities, but is a reasonable, levelheaded guy that clearly cherishes those around him. Mary believes in what she is doing,

but also has no problems making deals and cutting corners to continue to better her career.

Intelligence is loaded with strong performances by great actors. I hate to compare it to *The Wire*, but like that show, it assumes the viewer has at least some IQ points. Both shows also have no problems showing the bad with the good, and each offers criticisms of the institutions around them.

While not as universal strong as *The Wire*, *Intelligence* is a very good show that assumes it's viewers actually have so.

Jeremy

THE LAST DETECTIVE: set five

Acorn Media

While Peter Davison has had a long storied career (*All Creatures Great and Small*, *At Home with the Braithwaites*) I will always think of him as the Fifth Doctor on BBC's epic Sci-fi series *Dr. Who*.

Mr. Davison returns for a fourth season as Detective Constable Davies. Davis has the ironic nickname of Dangerous (He is anything but) Davies. Davies is a mild-mannered police officer. Neither tough nor brilliant, he is an empathic fellow that simply tries to do his best to bring justice for the victims.

Davies always gets the miserable cases that others don't want. And more often than not, he does a good job with them. This seems to annoy his superiors and fellow officers all the more.

In this season, Davies has just gotten back together with his wife. Unfortunately for her, with him comes Mod, a slacker that helped Davies out when he separated with her. Mod is crashing with them and, despite Davies' best efforts, seems inclined not to leave.

The Last Detective walks a fine line. Davies is a sad character that we are supposed to have sympathy for, but he needs to be strong enough for us to take him seriously and see him as being pathetic. They do a good job of not crossing that line.

For extras, there is an interview with Peter Davison. He talks about the series and his thoughts on the character and the stories. Solid bit.

This was my introduction to *The Last Detective*. While my own tastes run a little harder than this, I found it pleasant enough. Anyone that is a fan of cozies or British mysteries will almost certainly find this series worthwhile.

Jeremy

THE WIRE: season five

Warner Home Video

Each season of *The Wire* focuses on something, in the past it has been unions and ports, police and education. This time around, David Simon and co take a closer look at the print media. Like in the past, this examination reveals more than a few warts.

The overall feel of season five is very different from the others. Over the course of four seasons, we have some to know a wide variety of characters. In the final season, the show takes on the difficult task of wrapping up many storylines and giving and overall feeling of closure.

Some characters rise into the sunset, while others have rather violent departures. I can promise you that some of the endings will surprise you and one should bring tears to your eyes.

Perhaps the most fascinating storyline of the season is the journey of Bubs from a mealy junkie informant whose only desire was to score his next high, to a man that wanting to pull himself out of the gutters. Season four saw his actions result in the death of somebody close to him.

This season, Bubs is dealing with his demons and attempting to sober up. Watching this one character struggling to stay clean is extremely compelling and will almost certainly touch anyone with a heart.

Overall, I would say that season five is the weakest of the bunch, but it still stands well above the majority of the television out there.

Anyone reading this that has not already purchased *The Wire* really should do so. You are depriving yourself of one of the finest dramas in the history of television, and that is not simply hyperbole.

Jeremy