

THE DARK KNIGHT
Warner Home Video

Once again, Christian Bale returns as Bruce Wayne/The Batman and, thanks to a brilliant online marketing campaign, the anticipation was unprecedented.

Fortunately Mr. Bale and company deliver the goods. The Dark Knight finds The Batman struggling to maintain his principals while being pushed to the limit by The Joker (Heath Ledger in an Oscar-worthy performance).

But the Batman is not alone; he is assisted by Lt. Gordon (Gary Oldman) and the new D.A. Harvey Dent (Aaron Eckhart). Dent is being heralded as a shining knight for Gotham, and Batman is hoping that Eckhart will be effective enough that the Batman may no longer be necessary.

Director Christopher Nolan does a great job of mixing explosive action with drama and humanity. The result is a popcorn flick that has depth and resonates with emotion.

The deluxe edition offers up some great extras, we get a look at the shooting some of the more complex action scenes, as well as discussion about the story and characters.

You can buy The Dark Knight as a single disc, but I would highly recommend splurging on the two disc. Either way, you would be a fool not to add The Dark Knight to your film library. (*December 9th release*)

Jeremy Lynch

FRIDAY THE 13th: Season one
Paramount Home Entertainment

Before I go any further let me just make it clear: Friday the 13th: the series has NOTHING in common with the slasher movies of the same name. This is a completely different storyline.

Once upon a time, there was an antiques dealer named Lewis Vendredi. Mr. Vendredi made a deal with the devil: He would sell cursed objects in exchange for immortality.

These items would generally grant fortune to those that possessed them, but with a price, usually the life of an innocent person.

After years of working with the horned one, Mr. V decides to back out of the deal. Not surprisingly, he shuffles off the mortal coil shortly thereafter.

The shop was inherited by a couple of his relatives, Mikki and Ryan. The two have a huge sale, with can't miss prices, and pretty much damn the masses.

After a time, Jack Marshak, a stage magician and expert on the occult, visits them. It seems that Mr. Jack supplied some of the items to Louis, not knowing what was happening. Jack, Mikki and Ryan agree to work together to recover the items. This is harder that it sounds, since most of the owners are rather pleased with the benefits of the items and thus have little interest in giving them up. They use Uncle Louis' sales registry to track down the owners.

The show had almost an anthology feel to it, with each week providing a completely new supporting cast and new story.

The series generally aired after the nightly news, given the dark nature of the show and the overt violence it offered up. While many may not remember the show, those that do loved it and with good reason.

The show consistently offered up surprisingly strong stories, ones that still retain a level of creepiness after all these years. I remember finding it enjoyable at the time, but am surprised, upon watching these DVDs, at just how good it really is.

The video quality here is only so-so. Over the years, the tapes have degraded and no obvious efforts were made to clean them up. This is no shock, since the show never really had more than a cult following.

This is no to say that it is not watchable, I simply want to give folks a heads up on what they will be getting. Honestly, this is likely what is looked like on those 1980s television in the first place. The so-so video is easily made up for by the overall strength of the show.

So during the next dark and stormy night, lock the doors and put on Friday the 13th, you will have a blast!

Jeremy Lynch

THE GARMENT JUNGLE
SONY HOME ENTERTAINMENT

I get the impression that *The Garment Jungle* might have been aspiring to be the next *On The Waterfront*, but could not quite get there. While not bad, it simply lacks the power (both in story and in performances) of that classic.

The Garment Jungle, set in the New York garment industry, finds Alan (Kerwin Mathews) returning to the city to work for

his father Walker (Lee J. Cobb) whose company makes dresses.

Walter is trying to keep his workers from unionizing and hires Artie, a local thug, to prevent it from happening, while Alan is sympathetic with the workers plight and sides with the union organizer (Robert Loggia) and his wife (Gia Scala). Obviously this causes conflict between father and son. Before long, Walter realizes that Artie is going too far and must be stopped. When Walter attempts to fire him, Artie makes his move and tries to take over the company.

Sadly, TGJ seems to simplify things, giving us an obvious villain when it could have played up the logical desires of each side in this conflict. Instead of shades of grey, we get black and white.

The conflict between factory workers and the owners was often brutal and complex, but this film takes the easy way out, with the result being a wishy-washy film.

Visually, *The Garment Jungle* is quite nice, certainly better than one might expect from a minor film of the era.

We get a couple of promos for other movies in the Martini movies series, as well as the original trailer for *The Garment Jungle*.

Jeremy

GENERATION KILL

HBO/Warner

Based on the book by ED SAS, Generation Kill shows us the Iraq invasion through the eyes of a reporter embedded with the Marine Recon Unit.

Ed Burns and David Simon (The Wire) are responsible for GK and once again deliver a wonderfully diverse group of characters. Like the Wire, each stands out as unique, with few fitting into a neat stereotype.

Since it is based on reality, things are not neatly wrapped up. At the end of the series, there was only a limited feeling of closure, that some things would likely only get worse.

Since watching the series, I have read the book. I have to say that Simon and Burns did a hell of a job bringing the printed words to life, delivering an excellent translation while keeping the heart and soul of the source material.

With Generation Kill, Simon/Burns continue to maintain a high standard that the rest of television will have to work hard to reach.

(December 16th release)

Jeremy

THE GODFATHER: The Coppola Restoration

Paramount Home Entertainment

The Godfather films are not simply classics, but actual American cinematic icons. With this in mind, I am not going to review the actual films, you either like them or you don't (Freak!). I suppose there may be two or three of you that have just awoke from a four decade coma and thus have not seen them.

If this is the case, then they are somewhere on your hundred page list of things to see (hopefully near the top).

What I am going to talk about is the contents and quality.

Part one and two are over three decades old. Until recently film preservation was a bit of a joke...no, forget the bit part, it was a joke. As a result, the original negatives had deteriorated severely over the years.

As a result, most of us that did not them in the theaters have had no idea what the films looked like when in their prime.

But the technological advances of the last decade have allowed the classics of old to be restored to their original glory.

A few years ago, Francis Ford Coppola reached out to his good friend Steven Spielberg (who had a business relationship with Paramount) and asked for his help in getting these films restored.

Under the supervision of Robert Harris Each frame was digitally copied and then reconstructed. I doubt I could explain just how big, and time-consuming, an undertaking this was.

Coppola and cinematographer Gordon Willis were both consulted every step of the way, with each approving the final product.

While obviously degradation would be bad for any film, it had an especially negative impact here because the overall look and feel of these films was something that was painstakingly crafted. The colors and textures were considered as important as the performances and story, helping to invoke a certain mood and provoke specific emotions.

So, having said all that, how do they look?

In a word: Amazing.

Before I go any further, let me point something out: These films (the first two) are still thirty plus years old. As I said, no attempts were made to turn them into 21st century pics, these are not "perfect" but simply as they were intended.

The Blu-ray collection is breathtaking. All three have MPEG-4 AVC 1080p Aspect ratio: 1.78:1 transfer and look damn good. One suggestion: I would watch this in a dark room, the way that Willis shot the film really lends itself, in my opinion, to a theater-like setting.

The sound has also been completely restored and brought up to the 21st century: The films are presented both in Dolby TrueHD 5.1 (Which my sad little set-up prevents me from truly embracing) and Dolby Digital Mono. It is also, in French

and Spanish, here in Dolby Digital 5.1.

What we have here is a treasure trove of goodies, both old and new. Not only is every extra from the previous box set here, but new tidbits as well!

Included is Coppola commentary tracks, the deleted scenes, bios, storyboards, trailers, the photo galleries and the Family Tree...all of these classic featurettes have been brought on board.

With comes delightful new stuff like *The Masterpiece that almost Wasn't*. This runs about 30 minutes and tells the story of the battle not only to get the original made, but also to convince Paramount to use Brando.

When the Shooting Stopped: A look at the post-production, including editing and music.

Godfather World has filmmakers and actors (including HOMER SIMPSON) talking about the films and their impact.

Emulsional Rescue (Horrid title) has Robert Harris (coordinator of the restoration process) talking about the process. Film geeks MUST watch this, as it is fascinating to hear about all of the steps involved.

Godfather on the Red Carpet has some celebs talking about the films. Personally, I thought this was pretty useless, no offence to those whose opinions are given.

There are four little segments (*The Godfather vs. The Godfather, Part II, Cannoli, Riffing on the Riffing and Clemenza*) that have additional interview footage and offer up some fun anecdotes.

There is also a Crime organization Chart giving us the rap sheets of various members of the Corlone family. Last, and maybe least, is wedding album with some photos from Connie and Carlo's wedding.

This is a must own for anyone that is a film buff. I cannot endorse this strongly enough. This package gives us everything we could possibly want and the restoration job should be viewed as a standard to be aspired to for future projects.

THIS IS A MUST OWN COLLECTION.

Jeremy

The Man from U.N.C.L.E. - The Complete Series Warner Home Video

I'm going to start this review with some numbers.

41. There are 41 discs in this set.

105 episodes.

5620 minutes of viewing. (4 years worth)

This is a big DVD set. As it should be, Man From U.N.C.L.E. was a big show. The first episode aired in 1954 and the show can boast creative input from none other than Ian Fleming. Robert Towne and Harlan Ellison also wrote for the show.

UNCLE stands for **United Network Command for Law Enforcement** which is a covert world wide espionage group. Their main foe was THRUSH, a group out to rule the world.

The main character was originally going to be Robert Vaughn as Napoleon Solo, but as soon as David Macallum made his first appearance as Illya Kuryakin it became a duo starring in the show. The fought for the good of mankind using gadgets, charm and martial arts. They go the girls and cracked wise. It was pure fun, and still is.

Each episode was titled with the word affair. The Vulcan Affair, The Neptune Affair, and one of my favorites, The Sort of Do It Yourself Affair.

Season one was in black and white but after that they were all in color. It was also after season one that the show began to embrace the idea of parody of the espionage craze and doing things to the extreme. This was in part due to the popularity of Get Smart and Batman. While not always hitting the mark the show was a huge success and spawned spin off shows and a large number of products including novelizations (23 published by ACE books) and many toys.

This is in some ways typical of older shows on DVD, a big part of the fun is the nostalgia factor, and Man From U.N.C.L.E. has this in spades. But rewatching these shows as an adult I find that a lot of them really hold up, especially the first and fourth season when the camp factor was a bit lower.

The extra features include almost ten hours of extras, including new interviews, behind the scenes footage, home movies and the never aired pilot episode. This is a wonder set and one I am going to treasure.

Jon

NASH BRIDGES Season One Paramount Home Video

Ok, so not everyone has been waiting for this show to come out on DVD, but I for one am thrilled. I love this show. Don Johnson is beyond a doubt the one the show is all about, and after his runaway success with Miami Vice he was looking

for something new. I find his character of Nash Bridges to be upbeat and refreshing. He is more than just ass kicking cop, he's a family man and a friend and he doesn't take himself quite as serious.

Set in San Francisco the show takes full advantage of the city in almost every scene. Nash spends a fair amount of time driving around in a yellow Barracuda and so we see a lot of Frisco.

The first season they were a replacement so it is only 8 episodes. We also have a few things that would be changes later. Cheech Marin (Joe Dominguez) starts out as an ex-cop PI who works with Nash on occasion, he eventually rejoins the force to become Nash's partner again.

Nash has an interesting family life as well. A teenage daughter from his first marriage, his second wife still wants him, his Father won't stay in the nursing home and would rather stay with Nash. The family stuff blends well in the show and keeps it from being too hard boiled. The show ran for six seasons and by season two the show had really found it's sea legs.

When I was first married we would watch it with my in laws on Friday nights and it was something we loved doing together. Groaning at the bad puns and calling people Bubba right along with Nash.

It may not be as influential as some shows, but it sure is a damn fun show to watch. I'm ready for the rest now please.

Jon

PUSHING DAISIES: Season one

Warner Home Video

Pushing Daisies should be right up my street. It's different, quirky, snappy dialogue with appealing characters. In a nutshell, or a pie crust, their big on those type references, Ned, the Pieman (he's a baker) discovers he can bring back the dead with a touch when his dog is hit by a truck. Like all such things there is a catch. If he leaves them alive for more than a minute someone in proximity dies or if he ever touches them again they die, forever. This proves inconvenient when his childhood sweetheart is murdered and he can't bring himself to send her back.

Private eye Emerson Cod (Jim Dale) knows his secret and thinks how much easier it would be to solve murders if you could ask the victim who killed them. They partner and split the rewards. Everybody's happy until the aforementioned childhood sweetheart come on the scene.

There is a strong supporting cast including Swoosie Kurtz as a crazy Aunt and Kristin Chenoweth as the waitress in love with the Pieman.

On paper I should love this show but in fact I am indifferent and I can't say why. It's the first time I've felt that the problem may be with the reviewer rather than the creation. I am usually more self righteous than that.

The Specials are discussions of the episodes with cast and crew.

Lee Crawford

THE SHIELD

Sony Pictures Home Entertainment

Following on directly from the earth shattering events of the previous season, season six gives us a world in turmoil. The department has refused a full funeral for Lem and Claudette has been ordered to hold all officers in overtime so they cannot attend, Vic is determined to find Lem's killer and bring him to justice, Shane is attempting to hide the truth about his actions, Kavanaugh is driven to bring Vic down, a mass murder in Farmington has Dutch and his new partner Billings distracted from investigating Lem's death and new blood is recruited into the strike team.

The season is as intense as it's ever been; Vic is battling against grief, anger, Kavanaugh, forced retirement and Shane. He's determined to find and kill whoever caused Lem's death, but he's not yet aware that Shane is the guilty party.

Kavanaugh's fall from grace becomes complete this season when he plants evidence in an attempt to bring Vic down for good.

Meanwhile Julien is promoted to the Strike team along with Detective Kevin Hiatt who is drafted in to become the new Strike Team Captain. This brings additional pressure to the Strike Team as it becomes harder for Vic, Shane and Ronnie to communicate. Shane in particular spirals out of control with grief; his actions become more and more wild as the season progresses and you're left wondering when he's going to crack. Needless to say, by the end of the season he's placed everyone in such a dangerous situation.

It's rather interesting the way Shane and Vic progress in this season, Vic starts out completely unhinged - willing to throw his life away if it means he'll bring justice to Lem's killer - but as the season progresses he regains control of his emotions and by the end he's relatively composed (considering the situation) able to maneuver a long time enemy Aceveda into an

alliance. While Shane loses control more and more as the season progresses until he's painted himself into a corner with the worst possible bedfellows - the Armenians.

This season is shorter than most of the previous seasons because it was initially intended to be shown as the second part of season five. This does mean that the season feels a little lighter than expected and it runs by with incredible pace, at the end of the final episode you're left feeling a little 'is that it?' Which is a shame, but when you realize that this is really the second half of a season it's understandable.

There are not a lot of extras in this season-boxed set. There are a total of four featurettes and that's it. Which is a bit of a 180 compared to previous seasons and most annoyingly there's no commentary here; which is a real shame because I do enjoy watching stuff with commentary on at least once. There's not much else to talk about, the featurettes are good - but it's not enough.

While not as stunning as the previous two seasons, season six still delivers its punches well and stands like a giant above most other television. It's proven time and time again that it can twist the plot in directions you wouldn't expect and it's been consistently able to raise the stakes every season. Which is no mean feat when you consider the set up of the first few seasons.

It's not the best season, but it does include some of the best moments and it's every bit as essential to watch as the rest are.

SJ Batten