

BOOKER: The collector's Edition

Mill Creek Entertainment

During the run of 21 JUMP STREET, Richard Grieco was targeted to be the breakout star. He had that bad-boy look that Fox felt confident would bring them the 18-34 crowd and make Fox the young, hip network. He was given his own show, using the same character. Booker was a rebellious cop that often butted heads with those above him. His character left after being demoted for disobeying orders. He became a private eye and BOOKER was born.

BOOKER lasted one season and Johnny Depp went on to become a film star. Who knew?

While BOOKER did not last, and did not make Grieco a star, it is a fun, little show. Dennis Booker is hired by a large, Japanese company to help them with questionable insurance claims. Booker handles some jobs from them in exchange for his office space and the freedom to take other cases.

In addition to Grieco, Booker had appearances by Lori Petty (for a half season) as well as Thomas Haden Church, Marcia Cross as well as Peter Deluise and Holly Robinson revising their Jump Street roles. Crimespre regulars might also notice Ian Tracey (Da Vinci's Inquest, Intelligence) in a couple of episodes.

Grieco was by no means a master thespian, but he does a decent enough job here. If anything, Booker holds up a little better than some of the 21 Jump Street episodes. I don't know if they are quite as good as I remembered, but enjoyable nonetheless.

Jeremy Lynch

CASTLE: Season one

BVHE

Nathan Fillion has been a regular on numerous television shows. Some good, some less than stellar, but none were around for the long haul. But Castle appears to have the potential to make him a star.

In Castle, Fillion plays Rick Castle, a "bad boy" crime writer whose life is turned upside down when somebody uses the murders from his books in real life. He is brought on as a consultant for the police (much to the frustration of detective Kate Beckett) and actually plays a role in solving the crime. Beckett says goodbye, only to find Rick has convinced the powers that be to allow him to follow Beckett on the job for research. Having killed off his regular character, he is not looking to create a new protagonist and has decided Beckett will be his inspiration.

The stories are hardly original, but the dialogue is often snappy (When it looks like their time together is over, Castle attempts to pick her up. When it fails, he tells her it could have been great. She whispers "You have no idea" .) and the actors seem to have fun. Nathan's Castle is likable as well as annoying. A charming guy that knows he is charming and uses it to get his way. Fillion is able to walk that fine line without becoming a total pain in the ass.

One of the strongest aspects of season one is Rick's relationship with his daughter. While he often acts like a big child, his daughter is very straitlaced and serious. Their scenes are not only entertaining, but also sweet. Seeing Rick's love for his daughter softens the character and makes him more human..

The only thing keeping this show from becoming really great is the writing. The crimes are generally simple enough and often feel as though they are simply there to fill space. The season ending left some really nice possibilities as far as storylines go.

Overall, CASTLE is an entertaining show whose weaknesses are more than made up for by its strengths.

Jeremy Lynch

FRINGE: Season one

Warner Home Video

Anna Torv is FBI agent Olivia Dunham who is launched into a nightmare Alice in Wonderland world of fringe science (hence the title) when her partner/lover John Scott, Mark Valley of Boston Legal, is stricken with something that is dissolving him the same as it did a plane load of people which is the case they are investigating.

She pulls out all the stops to save him. Her best bet is Dr. Walter Bishop (John Noble), the only problem being he has been in the looney bin for the past seventeen years and can only be seen by a relative and his only relative is an also brilliant but ne'er-do-well son Peter (Joshua Jackson, Dawsons Creek) who if he never sees the old man again will be all the happier. She browbeats and blackmails him into seeing reason.

Lance Reddick (The Wire) plays the Homeland Security big wig who thinks the team should stay together. It's part X-Files, part Outer Limits and part Barney Miller for humor, supplied by Noble's Walter who is taken with the changes in the world he has been out of for so long. His fascination with a car seat heater is a hoot; "It warms you ass, have you tried one?"

Season one stumbles a couple of times, but picks up steam as it barrels to the season finale. A damn fun show worth watching.

Warner has done a nice job with this set, including 3 commentary tracks as well as a production diary, gag reel, deleted scenes and several featurttes (including one on Gene the cow).

Lee Crawford

IT'S GARRY SHANDLING'S SHOW.

Shout! Factory

In 1986, a very strange sitcom called It's Garry Shandling's Show was born. The show started on Showtime, but was picked up by the fledgling Fox Network. It starred Garry Shandling as Garry Shandling, a stand-up comedian, and focused on his life and his friends. Garry was pretty neurotic and could not keep a girlfriend. Does this sound familiar? It should, since that is pretty much what Seinfeld was.

This show did not follow any of the traditional rules of television. GS often broke the fourth wall, not only talking to the audience, but walking from one set to another. The humor was smart but still accessible by all. Some shows are a little too smart for their own good, but GS played to all time zones. The writing staff consisted of folks that went on to work on Seinfeld, The Simpsons, Men In Black, Futurama, Night Court, Full House (Ok, that is hardly something to brag about) among others. Looking back, you can see some of the comedic sensibilities that Garry Shandling and The Simpsons have in common.

I had completely just how many people made appearances, as themselves, on the show. Tom Petty, Rob and Carl Reiner, Vanna White, Dan Aykroyd, Martin Mull, Chevy Chase, Jeff Goldblum, Steve Allen, Dabney Coleman and even (then) Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley.

As always, Shout! does a damn good job of giving us some bang for our bucks. The extras are extensive and give insight in the making of this innovative show. Many companies might have looked at the idea of this set as something to make a quick buck from, but Shout! Has clearly spent time and money putting together a set that fans of the show will enjoy and treasure.

If you have a funny bone AND a brain, pick up this set. You have hours of entertainment waiting for you.

Jeremy

LIFE ON MARS US and UK

UK version – Acorn Media

US Version – ABC Studios

Well, as of tonight I've seen both versions of Life On Mars. The original UK version ran for two series (seasons) and it ended in a very interesting and talked about way. It is not definitive but lets the viewer draw their own conclusions. I loved it.

So, I hear they are planning a US version and I think "well that's just dumb"

The US television version of Coupling sucked. They didn't do too great with any number of other shows, and really, why screw with something so perfect?

Last week I saw the US version of Life on Mars at a DVD friendly store, and at a nice price. I like the cast so I figured what the Hell, how bad can it be? Turns out it isn't bad at all.

I have to say, after seeing the original cast line up I'm glad they made the changes they did.

Going in I expected a cheap rip off duplicating it or really butchering it. Sure enough, the first few episodes were carbon copies, right down to the dialogue. And then something magic happened. The show got notice that they were canceled. Normally bad news. But in this case they knew they had limited episodes to wrap it up and they did something truly amazing. They came up with clever and new ways to finish the story. I sat watching the last ten minutes of the show in awe.

They pulled it off, they made it work.

I honestly don't know if they would have done so well had the show continued. But working under the gun they excelled and in my opinion truly succeeded.

The UK version has some advantages. John Sim as Sam Tyler was inspired. His portrayal of Sam was a man haunted and confused trying to make sense of thing outside his control. It worked as a story on a basic level and on a deeper level. Sim is amazing and I will watch anything with him in it (including the kick ass episode of Dr. Who that he did).

Philip Glenister as Gene Hunt was the back bone of the show, strong and unforgiving. A simple man who is driven to do his job and grab life by the gonads.

Liz White as Annie, Dean Andrews as Ray and especially Marshall Lancaster as Chris, all terrific in there roles. Lancaster really gave Chris life all his own, growth of character from episode to episode underplaying the role to perfection.

The US version rocked a pretty impressive cast as well. At first I couldn't help but make comparisons between the different versions, but soon they became a separate thing. Kind of like reading about a character in a book and seeing them in a movie, separate but the same, but both viable and unique.

Harvey Keitel really grew on me with his somewhat quieter but equally forceful portrayal of Gene Hunt. Michael Imperioli as Ray Carling was really great, and he looked like he loved the role. I think Gretchen Mol as Annie did a superb job and I expect to see her getting a lot more work soon.

My biggest reaction was Jason O'Mara as Sam, while good in the role he just didn't seem to have the emotional impact the way Sim did. I truly bought into Sim being a tortured soul, while O'Mara simply seemed to be an irritated soul.

Both shows do a nice job of reflecting 1973 and its interesting to see the variations between the UK and the US.

In the end while I prefer the UK version I really liked both a lot and plan to rewatch them again soon.

All three are available in the US, Season 2 of the UK version coming in Late November (From Acorn Media). I would recommend getting all three, put on some flared jeans and a paisley shirt, put on some classic David Bowie (Hunky Dory) and sit back and get lost into this wonderful crazy world these amazing people created.

Jon

LONELY STREET

Echo Bridge Home Entertainment

New Mexico P.I. Bubba Mabry (Mohr) is hired to provide security for the charismatic "Mr. Aaron", who bears a striking resemblance to Elvis Presley had The King survived all these years. Concerned for his privacy, Mr. Aaron puts Bubba on the trail of tabloid reporter Hank Tankersley, but when Tankersley is shot to death, Bubba must uncover what Tankersley was planning and clear his own name in Tankersley's murder.

Though Jay Mohr doesn't exactly match my mental picture of Bubba from the book by Steve Brewer, he does a good-enough impression. With the aid of some prosthetics, Robert Patrick is absolutely convincing as 70-year-old Elvis on a health kick. Writer-director Peter Ettinger paces Bubba's investigation perfectly, showing his sorting through all the suspects in quick, well-placed flashbacks.

Finally, this independent film stands out for its sheer star power. Kudos to everyone who saw potential in Brewer and Ettinger's work. I recommend Lonely Street to Brewer fans, fans of mystery and comedy.

The DVD includes featurettes on the making of Lonely Street, Robert Patrick's transformation into "Mr. Aaron," two galleries of production stills set to original songs by Elvis impersonator James Brown, and a music video.

Gerald So

MASH (Blu-ray)

MGM/Fox Home Entertainment

M*A*S*H* will always hold a special place in my heart. Not only is it a damn good film, but it was my introduction to the late Robert Altman (I was 11 at the time). To me, MASH is Altman at his best. Dialogue flying every which way in a film that not only thumbs it's nose at authority, but also gives us close look at people in general.

For any heathens that are not familiar with MASH, it is about a Mobile Army Surgical Hospital during the Korean War. Donald Sutherland, Elliot Gould and Tom Skerritt play doctors that drink, have sex, joke and generally try to stay sane in the middle of chaos. Sally Kellerman is Hot Lips Hullahan and Robert Duvall is Major Frank Burns. The film spawned the massively successful television series.

The film does an incredible job of delivering legitimately funny humor, but also throwing the stark reality of the casualties of war in the face of the viewer. It is the epitome of anti-establishment, no shock since Altman spent the bulk of his career playing outside of the Hollywood system.

The transfer looks good. The film is presented in 1080p with a ratio of 2.35:1 and features English 5.1 DTS HD Master Audio, Spanish and French 5.1 Dolby Digital and English, French and Spanish subtitles. Most of the extras are coming from the previous DVD releases.

Pick this up and reacquaint yourself with a funny, well-made film.

Jeremy

THE MENTALIST: Season one

Warner Home Video

Simon Baker stars as Patrick Jane, a former television psychic whose world comes tumbling down when he earns the wrath of a serial killer named Red John. John takes his anger out on Jane's family, killing his wife and daughter. After this tragedy, he uses his extraordinary powers of observation and persuasion to help the CSAC solve crimes. His ultimate goal is to find and catch Red John.

The Mentalist is carried by Baker. The rest of the cast do a decent job with what they are given, but Baker has quite a bit of charm and delivers his lines with a smoothness that makes it easy to envision him as a psychic.

I would like to see the show spend some time fleshing out their other characters. Each is given a moment or two, but they are working with some pretty thin material. Shows like CSI, Numb3rs, Bones and NCIS have developed their characters (Numb3rs especially has done a great job of mixing characters and plot) and it keeps folks coming back even when the shows premise gets a little stale. I honestly could not tell you anything about the backgrounds of any of the supporting cast. Cho is the dour one, Wayne likes Grace...that is about it.

In addition to the 23 season one episodes, the set also contains two featurettes as well as a gag reel.

As I said, Baker does a great job and kept me watching despite my frustrations with the show. If you have seen any episodes and enjoyed them, you will likely find this worthwhile. But fans looking for a strong series, might want to look elsewhere.

Jeremy

THE MIDDLEMAN

Shout! Factory

Temping as a receptionist at A.N.D. Laboratories, 22-year-old art school grad Wendy Watson (Natalie Morales) is witness when a mutant experiment is reined in by the mysterious Middleman (Matt Keeslar). Impressed with Wendy's presence of mind under fire, the Middleman recruits her to his cause, telling her that comic-book dilemmas really exist and it's his job to keep them out of the public eye.

Constantly referencing TV and movies' rich tradition of science fiction, spy fiction, and slapstick comedy, *The Middleman* also offered fresh banter, not only pairing sarcastic Wendy and the classically forthright Middleman, but also pitting Wendy against the Middleman's unfeeling android assistant stuck in the form of a cranky schoolmarm, Ida (Mary Pat Gleason).

Wendy struggles to balance her paranormal crime-fighting career and everyday life rooming with her best friend, "confrontational spoken-word performance artist" Lacey Thornfield (Brit Morgan).

Creator Javier Grillo-Marxuach (*Charmed*, *Boomtown*, *Jake 2.0*, *Lost*, *Medium*) envisioned *The Middleman* as a broadcast network series, but when it wasn't picked up, he adapted it for comic books, which caught the eye of ABC Family. The show's mix of contemporary and traditional was, to me, what made it special, but the same mix didn't seem a good fit for ABC Family's brand. First aired on Monday, June 16, 2008 at 8PM, with its second episode it moved to the odd Monday 10PM timeslot. I willingly followed and caught the series' entire three-month run. I grew up admiring wholesome heroes but had to admit when they no longer seemed to fit the times. *The Middleman* and its underlying positive message have helped restore my sense of wonder. Thank you to everyone involved and to Shout! Factory for "getting it."

The DVD set includes all twelve filmed episodes in widescreen on three discs, four commentaries with the writers, cast, and crew, and a fourth disc of extensive bonus material including almost all the content originally posted to ABC Family's Middleman Web site, casting sessions, alternate scenes, and a gag reel.

Gerald So

MURPHY'S LAW: Series One

Acorn Media

James Nesbitt stars as Tommy Murphy, an undercover cop whose entire world is his work. After his wife and daughter were kidnapped, Murphy was given a choice: Set off a bomb in the local barracks or have his daughter killed. While he set out to deliver the bomb, he ultimately could not allow himself to be responsible for the death of hundreds of people.

Not only did the kidnapers follow through on their threat, but they forced his wife to watch. Because of this, Murphy puts everything he has into doing his job.

Based on the Colin Bateman novel of the same name, Murphy's Law is a pretty impressive series. This was my introduction to James Nesbitt, but he impressed the hell out of me. They do use some humor along with the drama, doing a good job of blending the two. It is my understanding that the series gets darker in the later seasons.

Season one certainly captured my attention. Anyone looking for a quality crime series should be pleased with Murphy's Law.

Jeremy

PARKER LEWIS CAN'T LOSE: Season one

Shout! Factory

I owe someone at the Shout! Factory a thank you. Parker Lewis is one of those show I forgot about but loved watching, and now these lovely people have put it on disc.

Originally airing in September of 1990 Parker Lewis was the perfect lead in to the New Fox network Sunday nights. Parker is a High School junior and he and his buds make the most of everything. It's kind of a variation on the cool high school kid as seen in Ferris Bueller and other movies, but very quickly it becomes apparent that this is something wholly its own. A typical episode has them on an adventure and it almost always include the use of cool tech and ingenuity. In episode 11 they duck into a locker to escape something and discover a secret door to an abandoned radio station. They clean it up

and go on the air as Radio Free Flamingo, playing classic rock and dispensing advice. Another episode has them trying to help freshman bud Jerry win the Science Fair, not knowing the principal has bet against them.

Part of what makes this work is the cast. Corin Nemec stars as Parker, you may remember him from later in his career when he was in Stephen King's *The Stand*, or maybe *Stargate SG1*. His pals Mikey and Jerry are played by Billy Jayne and Troy W Slaten. The school tough guy is Abraham Benrubi who plays Larry. Benrubi was Jerry on *E.R.* These four guys together on the screen is magic and always funny. They have great timing together and working together must have been great because they seem to be genuinely friends. The cast is rounded out by principal Musso, Melanie Chartoff, parents played by the hilarious Timothy Stack and Mary Ellen Trainor.

Another piece to the puzzle of why this worked so well was the look of the show that the directors created. Cool angles, creative use of dollies to move characters with the camera and wonderful sound effects added to give it a cartoony feel at times.

I was 26 when this first aired and high school was a bit behind me, but the show brought it all back as did rewatching it on DVD, and it brought back the fun stuff that made me almost miss high school, almost.

There is a feature on the set with up dated interviews with the cast and it's cool to see their take on the show 19 years later.

All in all I'd call *Parker Lewis Can't Lose* a lost gem and I'm glad it's back and can't wait for the next set.

Jon Jordan

PSYCH: Season two

Universal Studios

Season 2 of *Psych*, USA Network's broadly funny, fake psychic detective series, ended with Shawn Spencer (Roday) opening the door to find his mother, who had never previously on the show. In three episodes of Season 3, Shawn's mother, police psychologist Madeleine Spencer, is played by Cybill Shepherd. Overall, Season 3 continued to flesh out the characters' backstories and deepen their relationships without sacrificing individual episodes' fun factor.

In addition to Shawn's mother, Season 3 introduces Shawn's high school crush (Rachel Leigh Cook), Shawn's roguish uncle Jack (Steven Webber), Chief Vick's (Kirsten Nelson) Coast Guard commander sister (Jane Lynch), and Lassiter's (Omundson) estranged wife Victoria (Justine Bateman). That so many guest stars worked seamlessly into the show is a testament to the strength and flexibility of its premise.

The dynamics among the core cast progress as well. Shawn's playful pursuit of Det. Juliet O'Hara (Lawson) shows signs of becoming a full-fledged romance, mirroring Roday and Lawson's real-life relationship. Shawn and Lassiter's dynamic, once purely adversarial, moves toward a mutual, if still grudging, respect—especially when Lassiter directly saves Shawn's life in one episode. In short, *Psych* remains a broad comedy, but its well-layered plots keep it from becoming flimsy parody. If you've seen Seasons 1 and 2, you don't need convincing. If you haven't, the show is appealing enough to start anytime.

The four-disc Season 3 set includes sixteen widescreen episodes, deleted scenes, a gag reel, nine audio commentaries, seven video commentaries, "Psychout" outtakes, and six short montages.

Gerald So

SANCTUARY Season One

E1 Entertainment

A DVD arrived at Crimespree central and upon opening I was immediately intrigued. A show about science, crypto-zoology and the supernatural. And it's a Canadian TV show.

As of late we've been big fans of Canadian TV here at the Jordan house, *DaVinci's Inquest* and *Intelligence* in particular are favorites.

So with anticipation we popped in disc one of the four disc set and I have to say, the machine was on till all four discs were done. Wow. I'm totally hooked.

Sanctuary was originally done as webcasts, 8 of them 15 minutes each. These were re shot and became the first two shows. The set up is simple. Sanctuary is a foundation run by Helen Magnus (Amanda Tapping) that studies, rescues and protects "Abnormals". Their word for things that aren't quite human, or more than human. She recruits a young doctor to help her in her work, a forensic psychiatrist named Will Zimmerman. Rounding out the team is a handy tech guy named Harry, a Bigfoot and her daughter Ashley.

They track down Folding men, people with flexible skeletons, sisters who may actually be the Furies, mermaids, and all sorts of other wonderful creatures. There is a group trying to do something similar but for sinister reasons known as the Cabal. There is more interaction with these evil folk as we go.

We also start to get background. I don't want to give much away as it is so much fun to discover, but lets just say that in 157 years, Helen has met some very interesting people.

I am 100% invested in this show and the characters. I think they are doing some really clever things. I loved the episode that is an homage to The Trouble With Tribbles. They do a great hand held camera episode. There is a Fight Club episode,(but rule on of fight club is you don't talk about fight club). I love that this is entertaining as hell, smart, humorous and has great action. This is what television needs right now.

And lucky you, Season one is on DVD.

Jon Jordan

TERMINATOR: THE SARAH CONNER CHRONICLES : SEASON TWO

Warner Home Video

Terminator: The Sarah Conner Chronicles has been terminated-much to my chagrin. Not that you couldn't see it coming, they did struggle a bit, but season two was, I think, headed in the right direction. More the results of the action than the action. Derek Reese had stopped being such a whiny schmuck and more just a guy that has seen too much. And when Sarah goes one too many hours thinking her son was killed and breaks down, the company stands wide-eyed as one would at a statue of the Virgin weeping blood. The much vaunted Sarah Conner can't do that.

For those of you who don't know (and that would appear to be a bunch) Sarah is to, and does, give birth to the boy/man who will lead the resistance when the machines try to take over in the near future. The machines, not liking this send Robots back! in time to snuff her and failing that, him. A spin off series from the wildly popular Terminator films.

Character development, good in season one, got better in season two. John Conner started seeing a girl from school (a whole sub plot I won't get into here). Derek fronts a couple of very good episodes, and I felt very much involved in the extraordinary life of these ordinary people. Well, three people and one tame robot.

If you have any taste for sci-fi, action, or decent character studies, give the Sarah Conners Chronicles a look.

Lee Crawford