

**THE BARON:  
THE COMPLETE SERIES**

Koch Vision

This British TV show from the late sixties was based on a series of novels by John Creasy. The Baron is a wealthy adventurer who specializes in antiques, and often works with the government in cases involving theft or forgery.

Steve Forrest, who would later go on to star in the TV series S.W.A.T. played the Baron and was really great in the role. He is believable as both an art and antiques expert and also as an adventurous man who can handle himself. Made by the same people who did The Saint, and Secret Agent Man the production is held to a higher standard, lots of outdoor shots and loads of locations. The writing was also very clever, holding true to the character that Creasy created but also making it something that stands on its own very well. This time period for television had a lot of these types of shows just starting out and as popularity soared more and more came on the scene. I think this one holds up well, which proves to me that good story telling is always going to be TV. Fans of classic TV should love this.

*Jon Jordan*

**BONES: THE COMPLETE 4th SEASON**

Fox Home Entertainment

In a creative decision at the end of its writers strike-shortened third season, series regular Eric Millegan's character, Dr. Zack Addy, was linked to a cannibalistic serial killer and committed to an asylum. Zack's spot on Brennan's team was filled in Season 4 by six rotating interns. Not knowing which intern would be featured in any given episode, I didn't warm to any of them until Season 5.

Season 4 was a mixed bag of ambitious and gimmicky episodes. The two-hour premiere was a trip to London during which Booth and Brennan solved two murders. In other episodes, location detracted from plot and character development: Brennan and Booth on a plane to China, Brennan and Booth in an office building, Brennan and Booth at a funeral home, Brennan and Booth join the circus.

The season's most significant and strangest character developments concerned Special Agent Seeley Booth (Boreanaz). The appearance of Booth's younger brother Jared (Brendan Fehr) revealed that their father abused them as children. In one episode, Booth hallucinates his dead Army Ranger spotter. In another, he hallucinates playing hockey with Luc Robitaille. In a third, he hallucinates The Family Guy's Stewie Griffin. These seemed like "jump-the-shark" moments for the traditionally very realistic show—until, late in the season, Booth was revealed to be suffering from a brain tumor.

These developments made me unsure of Bones' future, but looking at it another way, the show was taking risks, risks that have paid off in the fifth season.

The five-disc Season 4 Blu-ray set includes 25 episodes, three extended episode cuts, deleted scenes, a gag reel, a featurette on the rotating interns, and a featurette on transforming a guest actress into an androgynous character.

*Gerald So*

**BROTHERS & SISTERS:  
THE COMPLETE 3rd SEASON**

Buena Vista Home Entertainment

Brothers & Sisters features some of the best actors working on TV today. Nearly the entire cast has a resume that includes a leading role in a previous hit show: Calista Flockhart (Ally McBeal), Rob Lowe (The West Wing), Tom Skerritt (Picket Fences), Patricia Wettig (thirty something) and Rachel Griffiths (Six Feet Under). Of course there is also Sally Field at the center of the series, who may not have any Emmys for The Flying Nun, but she has 2 Oscars so she gets a pass.

The first two seasons of this series were a marvel in ensemble acting. Unfortunately season 3 went another route and the storylines feature far too much of Rob Lowe and Calista Flockhart, leaving the rest of the family to scramble for storylines of their own. It makes sense in the current TV climate that producers would focus on the sexier of its stars, but wasting the talents of Sally Field, Ron Rifkin and Ken Olin is a crying shame. I know ABC is selling advertising time to hipper products than Boniva or diabetic testing supplies, but favoring the

lesser talents of Dave Annable over Norma bloody Rae is not going to sell iPhones either.

That said, the show's new format is still very solid; it's just not what fans of the show have come to expect after the first couple of seasons. However, what fans can expect with this DVD release is the usual ABC royal treatment. There is an entire disc devoted to special features, of which there are many. Deleted scenes, bloopers, commentaries and a half dozen informative featurettes are all included. Overall, it's worth a buy for fans of the show who don't mind the shift from Brothers & Sisters to Sister & Husband.

*Bradley Hayward*

### **FOYLE'S WAR: FROM DUNKIRK TO VE DAY**

Acorn Media

I have always meant to watch FOYLE'S WAR, really I have. For a couple of previous releases, I had every intention of doing reviews, but always got distracted by something shiny. So when Acorn Media sent the complete series (thus far), I made a commitment to sit down and check out Mr. Foyle's adventures in WW II. Damn good thing I did because FW is a hell of a good show!

Michael Kitchen stars as Chief Superintendent Christopher Foyle. Foyle finds himself stuck at home during the war, but is kept plenty busy with murders, black-marketers and other illegal activities. He wanted to join the armed forces, but had his app turned down. To soften the blow, he is given a driver (Folye does not drive) in Samantha Stewart and a sidekick in Sgt. Paul Milner. Milner lost his leg in the war and finds his life restarted when Foyle brings him on board.

This set contains the first five series and cover the entire war. Make no mistake, FW is a crime series, but it also gives us a fascinating look at the U.K. during WW 2. This captivated me as much as the mysteries, which are pretty good.

Foyle's War , while not actually a war show, uses the backdrop of war torn England to excellent effect. It helps the show stand out from the numerous police shows that have popped up over the ages and gives it a fairly large amount of material to use.

Fans of British police dramas will certainly have fun and be sucked into Foyle's world in no time. Not only do I recommend this set, but I eagerly await the next season/series.

*Jeremy Lynch*

### **GHOST IMAGE**

Anchor Bay

Elisabeth Rohm (Angel, Law & Order) plays Jennifer, a video editor who blames herself for her family's death in a car accident when she was a child. On medication to prevent hallucinating her younger sister, she wakes up one morning to a visit from the police. They tell Jennifer her boyfriend Wade has been killed in a car accident, and she becomes so distraught her only comfort is repeatedly watching the last video message Wade left earlier that morning.

Soon Jennifer begins to hear and see Wade saying something new on the video, telling her she's in danger. Just after Wade's warning, Jennifer is attacked by a stalker, but when she reports the attack to police, they can find no evidence and still suspect her of killing Wade. Ghost Image kept me guessing for a while whether Wade's warning and the stalker were all in Jen's mind, but the execution and acting left something to be desired.

Likewise, it was interesting to try and find answers along with Jen by watching the videos Wade had shot, but the ultimate answers—who killed Wade and why—seemed ordinary compared to the movie's premise. Worth a rent if you're enough of a fan of ghost stories or Elisabeth Rohm.

*Gerald So*

### **HAWAII FIVE-O: The 7th Season**

Paramount Home Entertainment

In reviews of previous season of this show it's been made clear that the show still holds up, the islands of Hawaii add to the wonderful look of the show and that the camaraderie really seems to work. This is all still true in season seven. But having watched 7 of the 12 seasons now I have really noticed something else as well.

The story lines seem to be ahead of their time. Corruption, international incidents, thrill killers, elaborate robberies, the cases are not simple murder and search for the killer sludge permeating so many shows of the time. The cops are working the case, utilizing computers, forensics and all the tools available to them, most of which are standard now, but ignored by television in the early seventies.

So much like the previous reviews stated, I still love this show. I think my favorite of season seven was How To Steal A Masterpiece, an episode which involved an elaborate art heist. It's a good thing these writers were getting paid by the show, because I think they could have plotted crimes and pulled them off. There is buzz about a possible remake in the works. There was one a few years ago which never went anywhere with Gary Busey. All I can say is, who ever thinks they can take this on and revamp it has some really big boots to fill.

*Jon*

### **LIFE ON MARS: The 2nd Series**

Acorn Media

Season 2 of this amazing show picks up right where 1 leaves off. Sam Tyler still stuck in 1973 is coming to grips a bit with his present whereabouts, he's more comfortable and almost seems to be enjoying the work. But the joy is short lived as he starts to see signs from the future indicating that he may be able to go back.

It's hard to talk about this too much without giving anything away. I will say this. I think it's some of the best television that's been done in the last twenty years. The American version was entertaining, but lacked the heart that is so evident in every episode of the UK original. By the last episode I had no idea what would happen and how it would end. I could not have predicted the ending and it's a bit ambiguous. I think I know what I think happened, though others have different thoughts. But I will say I think the ending works and I liked it a lot. The sequel is called Ashes to Ashes and involves a female cop going back to 1982. There are references to Sam Tyler so we may still get a little more of the story.

This is fascinating television with a lot of heart and a lot of soul. I can't imagine anyone not loving this.

*Jon*

### **THE NO. 1 LADIES DETECTIVE AGENCY: Season one**

HBO/Warner

Based on the novel by Alexander McCall Smith , Agency stars Jill Scott as Precious Ramotswe, a young lady that decides, after leaving an abusive husband, to make some changes in her life. She opens a detective agency in the Botswana city of Gaborone. With her is Grace Makutsi (Anika Noni Rose) as her assistant. Together they plan to solve crimes and right wrongs in the male-dominated land of Africa.

The show kind of reminds me of something that would have been on CBS in the late eighties and early nineties (DIAGNOSIS MURDER, MURDER, SHE WROTE). So it is a little strange to see that it has found a home on HBO, home of THE SOPRANOS and THE WIRE. Instead of cold-blooded killings, we have tea and smiles.

If this sounds a little on the fluffy side, its because it is on the fluffy side. But to be fair, the source material is pretty light hearted. But rather than being inane, it is mellow and pleasant. The show moves at a relaxed, even leisurely pace and slowly heads to what are generally satisfying conclusions.

One upside to this show is that it will help dispel the notion that many of us have that all of Africa is war torn and devastated. It turns out Botswana is a fairly peaceful country with citizens that not only are not killing each other, but also get along (for the most part).

Agency makes excellent use of the setting, with local music, art and customs being put front and center. As much as the show is about the characters, it is also very much about Botswana.

Extras: There are actually pretty interesting. The series is being filmed in Botswana, something that has never happened before. The extras give us a look on the set and show us how important the country and people of Botswana are to the series. This is made clear in the making of featurette. We also get The Beat of Botswana which shows us the local musicians and talks about how important music, song and dance are to the culture of the country. Very interesting and well worth watching.

The No. 1 Ladies Detectives Agency is a little too light for my tastes, but fans of cozies will almost certainly have fun with it. I do think a little more work is needed to flesh out the supporting cast and give them the fun little characteristics that will make them memorable. But it is a pleasant enough show that will entertain the fans of television's Jessica Fletcher as well as those that love the source material.

*Jeremy*

### **NORTH BY NORTHWEST: 50TH Anniversary edition**

Warner Home Video

NBNW is easily one of my all-time favorite films. Cary Grant and Alfred Hitchcock always did excellent work together, but this film finds each of them at the top of their game. It takes the thriller genre and tosses in a touch of romance (by way of Eva St. Maire).

For anyone not familiar with the film, Grant plays Roger Thornhill, a charming ad man that is mistaken for a spy. A spy that, unfortunately for him, that some criminals want dead. After an attempt in his life fails, he goes about trying to find the real spy and soon finds himself framed for murder. He flees, via the train, and meets Eve Kendall (St. Marie) and the sparks fly. To say they have chemistry would be like saying Grant has charm...a gross understatement.

NBNW contains some rather suggestive dialogue that was quite daring for the time (I'm a grown woman. Yes, and in all the right places). It also contains a couple of the more famous chase scenes, one featuring a crop duster and the other the now legendary finale on top of Mount Rushmore.

This edition features two new documentaries: The Master's Touch: Hitchcock's Signature Style and North by Northwest: One for the Ages. Both are interesting and can be enjoyed for film buffs as well as casual fans. In addition to these, there are a number of other extras that have been carried over from previous editions. In addition, the blu-ray comes with a booklet that includes photos and info about the making of the film.

With a very nice transfer and a solid batch of extras, the 50th Anniversary edition is worth the money and certainly would be an excellent addition to any movie library.

*Jeremy*

### **THE PRETENDER Season 1- 4**

20th Century Fox DVD

On a recent trip to Target I found seasons 2 and 3 of The Pretender boxed together for a low price, I think \$14.99. I had vague memories of the show but recalled it being interesting and at least entertaining enough to warrant my spending 15 bucks. Being the anal retentive freak I am I also had to get the first two season, which I found used, also at a real nice price.

Mrs. Crimespree and I then spent about two weeks watching a few episodes a night till we had seen it all. Well, all it turns out except two made for TV movies.

The show holds up well because the lead character, Jarod, is so fun to watch. Jarod is a pretender, a person who is beyond genius and can become anyone or anything. This makes every episode a little different. Some weeks he's a race car driver, some weeks a doctor sometimes a cop. But at all times he's trying to help the little guy, people who have been wronged. Why? Because as a youngster he was taken away by a group called "The centre" where they used him to formulate strange scenarios which later were used to hurt people. And here's where our subplot and back story come in. Jarod wants to get back at the centre and also to find his parents. The Centre wants Jarod back and they are filled with evil bad guys and henchmen plus a few people that become friendly with Jarod and want to help. A bit forced, but fun.

It's a show loaded with 1990's character actors, some really fun plots and some truly great moments. I especially like how Jarod discovers something each week he missed out on as a kid, like ice cream or cookies. I don't know that I would rush out and pay a lot for this, but if you can find it at a decent price it's definitely relaxing and worth watching again.

*Jon Jordan*

### **SUPERMAN/BATMAN: PUBLIC ENEMIES**

Warner

Based on a DC Comics run by Jeph Loeb and Ed McGuinness, Warner's latest direct-to-DVD animated offering finds Lex Luthor elected President of the United States in a time of economic chaos and rising crime. When a huge kryptonite meteor is detected on a collision course with Earth, Luthor turns to Superman to back up his nuclear missile defense plan. Refusing to work for Luthor, Superman is ambushed by the kryptonite-powered cyborg Metallo and later framed by Luthor for Metallo's murder.

With only Batman on his side and a \$1 billion bounty on his head, Superman tries to clear his name and destroy the meteor in space. Early on, the movie seemed heavy on super-powered brawls, but by the end I was satisfied enough story had been told. The movie doesn't let us hear Superman and Batman's inner

thoughts like the comics, but the creative team may have tried to make up for that by bringing back Tim Daly, Kevin Conroy, and Clancy Brown—the most popular voices of Superman, Batman, and Luthor from recent cartoons. The artwork is broad and bright, resembling McGuinness's style, exaggerating features like Amanda Waller's girth and Power Girl's bosom.

With previous releases trying for a decidedly dark tone, *Superman Batman: Public Enemies* stands out for its fun factor. The actors' familiarity to the audience and with each other enhances Berkowitz's quippy script. The Blu-ray disc includes a featurette on Superman and Batman's relationship; an informative yet informal dinner with Kevin Conroy, DC Comics' Gregory Noveck, veteran Warner Bros. animator and producer Bruce Timm, and voice director Andrea Romano; a preview of DCU's next animated feature, *Justice League: Crisis on Two Earths*; a look behind the DC Comics event *Blackest Night*; six episodes picked by Bruce Timm from previous *Batman* and *Superman* cartoons; and, previews of four other DCU animated movies.

*Gerald*

### **TRAFFIK: The 20th Anniversary edition**

Acorn Media

Many Americans may be familiar with Steven Soderbergh's acclaimed 2000 film *Traffic*. *Traffic* gave us an unflinching look at the cocaine drug trade from all angles. It was a very good film and garnered considerable praise.

It is also a remake.

In 1989, *TRAFFIK* first aired in the U.K.. It looked at the world of heroin and is even better than Soderbergh's Oscar-winning film. Because it is a miniseries, it has more depth and can take a little more time with various aspects of the process. It uses three different sub-plots that are interwoven.

Jack Lithgow (Bill Paterson), is the British cabinet minister in charge of England's anti-drug campaign. He travels to Pakistan in an effort to put together an agreement with the Pakistanis to get them to bring the hammer down on the smugglers and farmers behind Heroin. His rather righteous stance crumbles a bit when he is forced to face his daughter's addiction. Helen Rosshalde (Lindsay Duncan) is focused on getting her German husband, a indicted drug runner, freed from jail. She pursues this with such focus that all other things fall by the wayside. Fatal (Jamal Shah) is a Pakistani farmer that leaves his village in search of work. He travels to the city of Karachi and ends up working for one of the country's biggest drug kingpin.

Through these three storylines, and their various subplots, we see the entire process of Heroin. From the fields to the rehab centers where most fail to kick the addiction. The show does a fairly good job of not being preachy, something that many shows fail at. The writing is uniformly strong, drawing you in and never letting go. While this is indeed a work of fiction, it almost feels like a documentary at times.

Despite the proclamation that this has been remastered, the picture is only so-so. My guess, and this is only a guess, is that the source recording has degraded over time. A real shame because a title of this caliber deserves better. That said, it is not bad enough to ruin the viewing experience. It does, however, detract a bit. Even after 20 years, the series feels current and is very relevant today. I was hooked after only one episode (there are six episodes totaling five hours) and kept me glued to my seat. The last time I was pulled in like this was *THE WIRE*. Fans of smart drama should get this, you won't be disappointed. The weak transfer is annoying, but ultimately does not hurt this enough to keep sane minded folk from buying it.

*Jeremy*