

Hollywoodland

Universal Studios

A truly tragic tale told through the eyes of a private eye, this is the story of the death of George Reeves (played by Ben Affleck), the man who played Superman in the fifties.

The story would be a sad one even without his death, Reeves had a career that would forever be haunted by playing the man of steel. His personal life was a mess, and his career screaming to a halt. Ruled a suicide his death didn't really seem to surprise any one. Except his mother who hired a PI, portrayed by Adrian Brody, to look into the death. Even after he is taken off the case he is haunted by it.

Brody is wonderful in this movie, and once again proves how good he is. Affleck, while sometimes not making the brightest career moves, shines in this role. This is a very interesting look behind the magic and tragedy that is Hollywood.

Jon

Archangel

Mti Home Video

We rented this movie last night and we really enjoyed it. Robert Harris is a wonderful author who has a knack for writing about cold war and espionage and things related to it. His book *Fatherland* and the book *Enigma* were both turned into entertaining films.

In *Archangel* Craig stars as a Historian who is an expert on Stalin. While in Russia lecturing he stumbles across information that may lead him to what might be Stalin's lost diaries.

Stalin being responsible for possibly more deaths than anyone, this could be big news.

As these films often do, this one involves a plot that sees our historian friend hunting for the diary, and being thwarted. He hooks up with a Russian woman with ties to the story and a reporter who insists on coming along.

The climax of the film is wonderful and the acting was great. I also really liked the locations and the way it was filmed. It even stayed pretty true to the book.

I would suggest this film to people who enjoy spy movies, or just a good political mystery.

Jon Jordan

Bones - Season One

Fox Home Entertainment

I began watching *Bones* as a fan of David Boreanaz. The life and work of Kathy Reichs inspired the show, but viewers may be better off not knowing the Temperance Brennan from Reichs's books. TV's Brennan (Emily Deschanel) works at the Jeffersonian Institute in Washington DC, occasionally lending her expertise to the FBI. Brennan is ultra-professional, adept at identifying human remains, less than perfect dealing with the living. Her FBI contact, Special Agent Seeley Booth (Boreanaz) would rather trust his intuition and experience than wait for absolute scientific proof.

Almost right away I enjoyed watching Boreanaz as a layman among scientists, departing from his supernatural role as Joss Whedon's Angel. I did not find Brennan immediately likable, and I think that was by design. Brennan's team at the Jeffersonian, along with Booth, let her charms show gradually over the course of the first season.

Brennan's team includes Angela Montenegro (Michaela Conlin)--a graphic artist who helps put names, faces, and bodies to sets of decomposed bones--Dr. Jack Hodgins (T.J. Thyne), "a dirt, bugs, and slime guy" and part-time conspiracy theorist--and Zach Addy (Eric Millegan), Brennan's super-intelligent, super-naive grad student. Over time, the characters developed their own quirky dynamic, and I came to know how each would react to events, a familiarity that makes watching the show more fun.

The DVD set includes 22 widescreen episodes on 4 double-sided discs, two audio commentaries--on the Pilot by exec producers Hart Hanson and Barry Josephson, and on "Two Bodies in the Lab" by David Boreanaz and Emily Deschanel--character profiles, and three featurettes.--

Gerald So

Charlie Chan Collection, Vol. 2

Fox Home Entertainment

"Talking to cow on wall is like train with no wheels. Soon get no-where."

That is my favorite line from *Murder By Death*, uttered by Peter Sellers doing a spoof of Charlie Chan, the famous Chinese detective from the Earl Derr Biggers novels.

That was my introduction to Charlie Chan, a spoof. I thought it was funny and a little on the edge...I mean a white man playing a Chinese detective...THAT'S OUTRAGEOUS! Now that I have watched four REAL Charlie Chan movies and the extras that

come with them, I realize it was not as outrageous as I thought. In the four I watched: *Charlie Chan at the Opera* (1936), *Charlie Chan at the Race Track* (1936), *Charlie Chan at the Circus* (1936), *Charlie Chan at the Olympics* (1937), Charlie Chan was played by Warner Oland, a Swede. And he was pretty damn good. There were clips from other Chan movies where the Chinese detective was played by a white man wearing VERY obvious make up to make him look Asian. It looked horrible. But Warner Oland, who wore no make up (he just turned up his eye brows and mustache), looked natural. He once said it was because he had Mongolian blood on his mothers side...but I digress. The movies were very good. Due to the age of the films, there are few odd moments--such as a black stable hand saying in a high voice "Yeahssir, right away misser Chan!"--where you sit back, your mouth agape, going "I...um...well...uh...hmmm...I am alone watching this and I am uncomfortable!" But for the most part they are a lot of fun. Warner Oland's interaction with his "Number One Son," played by Keye Luke (who went on to play David Carradine's Kung Fu teacher in...that's right...*Kung Fu*) is worth the price of admission. Charlie Chan is a low key, slow talking personality with an old time-y Chinese accent; his son is a hyperactive, fast talking, and totally Americanized, but lovable personality.

In the extras we learn that Mr. Oland, in real life, was a very fast talker; and that the director H. Bruce Humberstone would sometimes have to get him drunk to slow down his delivery of the lines...not that this presented much of a challenge, as Warner Oland LOVED to drink. In one scene in *Charlie Chan at the Race Track*, they had to prop him up against a fence and have a crowd around him to hold him up. In that same scene, they used a starter gun to startle him into moving his head to mimic watching a race, because he was leaning on the fence staring straight ahead.

One line I enjoyed in particular is from *Charlie Chan at the Opera*. Boris Karlof plays a madman that escapes from an asylum and hides in a theater. The stage manager trying to get the opera on track says: "This show is going on, even if Frankenstein walks in!" (Oddly enough Warner Oland played a character named Dr. Boris Karlov in *The Drums of Jeopardy* in 1931. I LOVE YOU IMDB! You make me sound smart!) Also watch for Charlie riding on the Hindenberg in *Charlie Chan at the Olympics*--which was filmed not to long before...you know. (Hint: OH! The humanity!) Makers of the movie spliced in real olympic footage from the Berlin games; watch for all the swastikas that were blurred out by the producers. (We do see, however, a couple of Nazi salutes during the torch lighting footage.)

It was kind of interesting to watch Charlie interact with the German police while trying to solve a murder. The main German keeps saying, "THIS KIND OF THING DOES NOT HAPPEN IN BERLIN!" What I did not realize (but learned in *Charlie Chan at the Olympics*) was that, apparently, EVERYONE who worked in Berlin hotels in the 30's spoke English with a perfect American accent! To quote Fran Tarkenton, "that's incredible!"

Randy Otteson

The Illusionist

Fox Home Entertainment

Is any I know to be true, real, or is any I know to be real, true? These are the questions that fuel the psychological engine of *The Illusionist*. Written and directed by Neil Burger, *The Illusionist* stars Edward Norton and Jessica Biel, with a truly stand-out performance by Paul Giamatti as the Chief Inspector. In fact, all the players deliver in spades. We are each so entombed in our beliefs that the concept of reality becomes abstract if not downright inconvenient, and this film puts on the pillow gloves and slaps us around with this from the opening minutes.

Someone sold their soul to the Devil, or did they? Someone was murdered. Or were they? Someone should pay, or should he? Magic is real, or is it? Giving equal weight to both sides of a question is no mean feat, and with our (purportedly) rational thought processes in the way, becomes artful.

Eisenheim (Norton) and Sophie (Biel) were childhood sweethearts, but she was high-born and he a cabinet makers son. The Aristocracy was less than thrilled with this state of affairs in eighteenth century Austria and nipped it in the bud. He goes off to seek his fortune, which we find out fifteen years later, is as a great Illusionist. She is to wed the Crown Prince and soon to be Emperor, Leopold (Rufus Sewell). They attend a performance where she ends up on stage. Eisenheim recognizes her almost immediately, but she is slower, as if she can not trust herself to hope, and the triangle is set.

The twists and turns from there could give you whiplash if you're not careful, with the Chief Inspector as dutiful but unwilling bullyboy. This is a well made and sumptuous yarn and Jessica Biel steps out of her usual roles into this beautifully. Edward Norton has the difficult task of making us care about a man who can't reveal much. He does.

The tone of a film is important and this one has it to spare. Outstandingly shot and costumed with the feel of old Vienna dripping from every frame. Check the Directors commentary for little gems like the object manipulations being performed by the actors after much hard work and their wish to stay accurate with the period and especially the tricks, only augmenting them for effect or when there was no other real option. It's a fairly dark movie in its feeling but it hooked me and I enjoyed it. Or was that an illusion too?

Buy *The Illusionist* here.

Lee Crawford

In Her Line of Fire

Genius Products

Lynn, a Secret Service agent (Mariel Hemingway), is responsible with protecting a U.S. vice president. This job gets a bit more difficult when their plane goes down in a storm near a remote island used for training local rebels; she must fight hard to save the lives of the VP as well as her love interest, rookie reporter Sharon Serrano (Jill Bennett). In *Her Line of Fire* was produced for Here!, a cable network that caters to the gay/lesbian community. Thus the protagonist Lynn (Hemingway) was made a lesbian. Despite this twist, *IHLOF* feels like one of the many mid 80s films that road the coat-tails of Rambo. Hemingway is passable in place of Stallone, but nothing about this film is particularly memorable

Jeremy Lynch

NCIS: The Complete Second Season

Paramount Home Entertainment

Introduced in a two-part, eighth-season episode of the military legal drama *JAG*, *NCIS*--following the fictionalized cases of the U.S. Naval Criminal Investigative Service--promised to be grittier and faster-paced than its stately sister show.

Not held to military courtesy, *NCIS*'s characters let their personalities shine, each offering a distinct perspective on the action while adding to the overall chemistry; from senior investigator Leroy Jethro Gibbs (*Mark Harmon*) to slicker, more impulsive Tony DiNozzo (*Michael Weatherly*); from grandfatherly M.E. "Ducky" Mallard (*David McCallum*) to goth forensic scientist Abby Sciuto (*Pauley Perrette*).

In its second season *NCIS* further distanced itself from *JAG*, deemphasizing its military angle and highlighting human interest. Always employing inventive camera work, the second season included grainy flashbacks and black-and-white freeze-frames to introduce and end each act, which have become the series' signature.

The DVD set includes 23 episodes on six discs, four behind-the-scenes featurettes, and two audio commentaries--on "*Black Water*" with co-execproducer Chas. Floyd Johnson and on "*Twilight*" with writer John C. Kelley and actors Michael Weatherly and Pauley Perrette.--

Gerald

Paul Newman Box Set

Warner Home Video

This is an outstanding set and a great bargain as well. 7 movies by Paul Newman including; *Somebody Up There Likes Me*, *The Left Handed Gun* (a Billy the Kid movie), *The Young Philadelphians*, *Pocket Money*, *The Mackintosh Man* and two films based on the books by Ross MacDonald, *Harper* and *The Drowning Pool*.

The Young Philadelphians is about a young lawyer (Newman) working his way up the social ladder while working a murder trial. Great costars include Brian Keith and Robert Vaughn.

Somebody Up There Likes Me is a boxing movie in which Newman plays Rocky Graziano. It also features commentary from Martin Scorsese.

Pocket Money is a humorous film with the always great Lee Marvin, two down on their luck cowboys trying to get ahead. Marvin and Newman work great together.

The Mackintosh Man is an espionage film that is set in England, so starring James Mason. A real twisty turny plot keeps this lively.

The Left Handed Gun, is the weakest link in this collection, I think *Young Guns* was a much better telling of the Billy The Kid saga, though Newman is good in the role. It also feels pretty dated.

Harper and *The Drowning Pool* are amazing, made in 1966 and 1975 respectively these should be a must have for any mystery reader who loves film. Joanne Woodward was spectacular in *The Drowning Pool* and it was also a very early performance from Melanie Griffith, back when her voice actually suited her age. *Harper* features Robert Wagner and Janet Leigh along with Lauren Bacall and Shelly Winters. These two movies are the reason I bought this set.

Add this set to *The Sting*, *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* and *Cool Hand Luke* and you've got a definitive Newman collection.

Jon

A Scanner Darkly

Warner Home Entertainment.

Richard Linklater's intriguing adaptation of Philip K. Dick's novel, "A Scanner Darkly" is set in suburban Orange County in a future where America has lost the war on drugs. When one reluctant undercover cop is ordered to start spying on his friends, he is launched on a paranoid journey into the absurd, where identities and loyalties are impossible to decode. It is a cautionary tale of drug use based some of the author's own experiences.

The film itself is fine, but it is the visuals that make this special. Linklater uses live action photography overlapped with a type of animation. The result is very intriguing imagery. Looking at the cast; we have a who's who of troubled young talent

including Keanu Reeves, Robert Downey Jr. and Winona Ryder. Well, I don't think Reeves has ever been in trouble with the law, but some would argue that everyone involved in the making of Sweet November should have been locked up. (We at the Central Crime Zone would like to say that while Mr. Reeves was indeed in that wretched turkey, he was also in Bill & Ted's excellent Adventure which certainly should get him at least one get out of cinematic jail free card). While not exactly loaded with bonus features, it does contain a commentary with Linklater and Reeves as well as Dick's daughter. Her addition makes for some interesting insight. While not a classic, Darkly is interesting enough to warrant picking up.

Jeremy

Silence of the Lambs (Collector's Edition)

Fox Home Entertainment

Clarice and Hannu-baby get a new edition that features discussions with director Jonathan Demme and Jodie Foster. Regardless of the years that have passed, this remains a true classic that should be owned by everyone.

By now, pretty much everyone has seen Silence of the Lambs. Those that have not, have abstained because their hearts might not stand it. Creepiness aside, this film is a true classic. The performances by Foster and Hopkins rank among the all time greats.

To the best of my knowledge, this is the fourth DVD release of this film. Each has had different features which mean that junkies such as me keep buying them. For the record, I have the Criterion Edition, the special edition and now the collector's edition.

This edition features recent interviews with Foster and director Jonathon Demme. These provide some interesting insight into the film and also give them a chance to reflect upon the film fifteen years later.

If you are a big fan and a cinemaphile, it would be worth picking this up for the interviews. But if you are a casual fan and already own it, I can't see needing this one.

Jeremy

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