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DVDs: My So-Called *Twin Peaks* Boxed Set

Posted October 30, 2007 | 02:53 PM (EST)

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A batch of new releases right some old wrongs in the world of DVDs. First up is *Twin Peaks Definitive Gold Box Edition* (\$99.99; Paramount), the complete series from director David Lynch. Surely the whole world agrees by now that this brilliant show should have been a miniseries. If it had run, say, 14 hours and climaxed with revealing who killed Laura Palmer, it would easily rank as among the greatest TV events of all time. Instead, a show that was wonderfully idiosyncratic and funny and spooky and compelling devolved into a mess. That doesn't take away anything from the hypnotic spell it casts for the entire first season and about half of the second (before the gateways to other worlds and the super-strong cheerleaders showed up). And now you can enjoy David Lynch and co-creator Mark Frost's achievement in one set with loads of extras. Previously, the show was available in two sets containing Seasons One and Two but without the two hour pilot, a bizarre situation worthy of Lynch himself. And hey, enough time has passed that a *Return To Twin Peaks* miniseries might be just the thing, guys.

The next wrong to be righted is *My So-Called Life* (\$69.99; Shout). If ever a show deserved to be collected in a boxed set with loads of obsessive extras, it's this one. Unfortunately, the show previously was released in a bare-bones boxed set that was sporadically available at best. Teenage angst was never more painfully, dramatically captured than in this hearts-on-sleeves drama about Angela (a luminescent Claire Danes), her boy toy Jordan (Jared Leto) and her best friends. Everything mattered so tremendously to Angela, as only things can matter to a 15-year-old high school student. It was painful to have the show canceled, but in retrospect it was the best thing that could happen. The show's heightened tension would have been draining over five seasons and the perhaps unintentional arc of the series suggests Angela's future so neatly and beautifully that you might imagine they'd planned it all along.

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Finally, there's *Stanley Kubrick - Directors Series* (\$79.98; Warner Bros.), which collects five Kubrick films (I'd call them classics, but that would be redundant) and a very good documentary in one set. This supplants *The Stanley Kubrick Collection* from 2000, which also had *Lolita* and *Barry Lyndon* as

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well as the non-Warner Bros. title *Dr. Strangelove* -- none of which are here, but featured cropped presentations of *Full Metal Jacket* and *The Shining*. They insisted up and down that this was the way Kubrick wanted it, but sometimes directors are wrong. Making available again the meticulous images he composed for the big screen is definitely the right call. *Eyes Wide Shut* is included (Nicole Kidman's performance looks better and better) and the packaging says you can choose both the unrated and the silly, censored North American version. But as far as I can tell, only the unrated version is included, which is the only one Kubrick fans would want anyway. Confused? Here's a recap: you get a documentary and five great Kubrick films -- *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *A Clockwork Orange*, *The Shining*, *Full Metal Jacket* and *Eyes Wide Shut* -- all beautifully remastered, with substantial extras and none of them cropped for video. It's far preferable to his last boxed set and brings his vision to DVD unaltered in any way.

Also out this week: Tobey Maguire exhausts the possibilities of Peter Parker in *Spider-Man 3* Special Edition (\$36.95; Sony), which can't match the peaks of *Spidey 2* but is still fun; *Angel Complete Series* (\$139.98; Fox), which collects all five seasons in a nifty box that can sit snugly on top of the *Buffy* box (with *Buffy The Vampire Slayer* and *Bones* as well, David Boreanaz might challenge Michael Landon for starring in the most hit series); *No End In Sight* (\$26.98; Magnolia), a solid primer on exactly how the mess in Iraq developed; Don Cheadle shakes off that Sidney Poitier aura of nobility he's getting and delivers a loosey-goosey performance as radio dj Petey Greene Jr. in *Talk To Me* (\$29.98; Universal); if you can't wait to watch the finale of the clever political miniseries currently airing on PBS's *Masterpiece Theater*, you can cheat by buying *The Amazing Mrs. Pritchard* (\$39.99; Acorn) - now if only she'd run for president; the charming Adam Brody of *The OC* searches for the right vehicle to turn him into a leading man but doesn't quite seal the deal with *In The Land Of Women* (\$27.98; Warner Bros.); prepare to say goodbye to the quirky, sentimental sitcom *Scrubs* -- which ends its run soon -- by collecting the *Complete Sixth Season* (\$39.99; Touchstone); Marc Antony portrays salsa legend Hector Lavoe in the biopic *El Cantante* (\$27.98; New Line) and even Antony would agree that fans who don't know Lavoe should start with his CDs *La Voz* or *Live at the Cheetah* with the Fania All-Stars; the classic anthology series *Suspense Collection 2* (\$39.98; Infinity) unearths 30 episodes unseen since they aired in the late 40s and early 50s; Luke Wilson wrote, co-directed and stars in *The Wendell Baker Story* (\$27.98; ThinkFilm), a shaggy dog story of a con artist who goes to work in a retirement home; dog trainer Paul Owens offers more tips for "a compassionate, non-violent approach" in *The Dog Whisperer Vol 2: Solving Common Behavior Problems* (\$29.95; Sand Castle), so it's a perfect gift for Michael Vick; *Aquaman The Complete Collection* (\$26.98; Warner Bros.), is a cartoon that satisfies only the youngest fans thanks to characters like Aqualad and sea creatures named Tusky and Imp; Walter Brennan chews up the scenery as the old coot to end all coots in TV's *The Real McCoys Season Two* (\$39.98; Infinity), the first "rural comedy" that spawned imitators like *Green Acres* and *The Beverly Hillbillies*; *Sesame Street Old School 1974-1979 Volume Two* (\$39.95; Genius) is a bursting-at-the-seams 3 DVD set with complete episodes and tons of bonus segments that feature the best of the best including celebs like Lily Tomlin and Ray Charles; and finally *The Jazz Singer Deluxe Edition* (\$39.92; Warner Bros.) takes a creaky if iconic movie starring Al Jolson and surrounds it with so many compelling extras that it becomes a must-have for serious film buffs.

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Despite Twin Peaks' mid-second season spin into oblivion, the show still ranks as the best event in American television history. Being my opinion, of course, it would be my ranking as well.

It's true, shortly after the murder was solved, it began to weaken, particularly in following the 'James Splitts' plotline. However, I find those last few episodes worthwhile, if not worthy of comparison to the first three-quarters of the show.

I say mention here of disappointment in the season one ending cliffhanger. I also remember seeing news coverage at the time, showing a roomful of viewers screaming and whining in unison at season's end. Again, maybe just my opinion, but I can't imagine that anyone who was desperate to know who killed Laura Palmer seriously enjoyed the show for all of its worth.

You see, the show was about the mystery, not the mystery being solved. Lynch never planned on revealing the killer's identity in the first place, and this caused a major rift between him and the network, which eventually led to a cast feeling abandoned right about the point when the quality took a nose dive.

Nevertheless, Lynch took over directorial duties once again for the finale, showing, once again, the show's true potential.

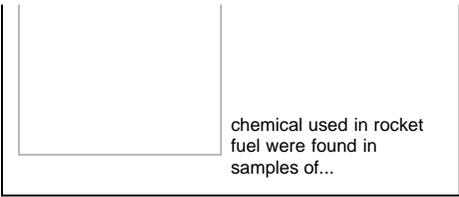
So it wasn't as good as it could've have been, but a hallmark regardless.

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I'm thrilled that the 'Twin Peaks' pilot is now available. It seemed madness to me that it was never released before.

I recall having huge belly laughs when it first aired, and for the first time in a long time, I found myself actually staying in on 'Twin Peaks' nights just to watch television. Unfortunately, I also recall how angry I became on the final episode of the first series when absolutely nothing was resolved. After that it was downhill, but if the pilot and the first episode proved anything, it was that long and medium shots plus slow and lengthy pauses can work on television.



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Don't let the promises from the network (and the ensuing feeling of betrayal) color your opinion of how the second season played out at the beginning.

I think that the episode where the murderer is "revealed" is the best two hours of television ever. After THAT, I'll give you, it began downhill.

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