

Reviews of recent and upcoming DVD releases

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(MCT)

‘The Bourne Ultimatum’ (PG-13, 2007, Universal)

Where "The Bourne Supremacy" ended, "The Bourne Ultimatum" begins. So if your memory is fuzzy on how the first two legs of Jason Bourne's (Matt Damon) quest to reclaim his identity went, you might wish to revisit them before diving into "Ultimatum." That is, as it turns out, the only reason not to dive in. What once was one great action movie has sneakily evolved into a rather epic trilogy, and "Ultimatum" expertly applies the full-circle treatment while delivering more of what made the first two movies among the best of their respective years. The shaky-cam fight scenes are back _ grab a barf bag if they made you queasy in "Supremacy" _ but so are the legendary foot and car chases that make those stomachaches worth enduring. If you thought Jason Bourne could create a spectacle in a cab, wait until you see what he does with a New York City cop car. Julia Stiles and Joan Allen return to reprise their roles, while Paddy Considine, Scott Glenn, David Strathairn and Edgar Ramirez provide the new blood.

Extras: Director commentary, deleted scenes, five behind-the-scenes features.

‘Once’ (R, 2006, Fox)

"Once" is a musical about a street musician (Glen Hansard) who randomly meets a girl (Marketa Irglova) who ... wait, come back! If you've had it up to here with bombastic movie musicals and are determined to do what it takes to not finish reading this paragraph, you first should know that "Once" is not your typical movie musical ... if you even can call it one in the first place. Yes, the characters sing songs, most of them in their entirety. But these aren't invasive showtunes that completely break the characters away from their preexisting reality, but rather folksy and slightly poppy songs that completely jive with the people who are singing them. (The story is about two aspiring musicians, after all.) That little bit of balance goes a long way toward making "Once" a film first and a maybe-or-maybe-not musical second. That's the way it should be, too: The story of guy and girl (their credited names, no joke) is inspiringly serendipitous and perhaps the best music-centric love story since "Walk the Line," and semantics have no business getting in the way of that. Available December 18.

Extras: Cast/director commentary, musical commentary, two behind-the-scenes features, Webisodes.

‘Robin B Hood’ (NR, 2006, Dragon Dynasty)

Fong (Jackie Chan) is a petty burglar with a checkered past and a less-than-desirable family life, but those problems melt away once he's given the chance to kidnap a baby boy and collect \$7 million from the crime lord who wants him. Unfortunately for him and his partner (Louis Koo), no one bothered to mention that the kid would be so disarmingly adorable, and now the two criminals are forced to play nanny while fighting off multiple

forces and figuring out their next move. Creeping slightly past the two-hour mark, "Robin Hood" runs a bit long, sometimes dragging its feet on plot points that don't deserve the excess attention. But when "Hood" is on its game, it allows Chan to do what he absolutely does best _ namely, mix comedy and incredible combat artistry on some insanely clever set pieces, all the while holding a baby. For those who felt burned by the waste that was "Rush Hour 3," this likely is what you wanted instead. Watching Chan in his element is immensely more interesting than watching him perform sideshow duties for Chris Tucker, and his and Koo's fantastically overstated performances keep "Hood" entertaining even when the stunts take a breather. In Cantonese with English subtitles, but a passable English dub is available as an option.

Extras: Director commentary, interviews, three behind-the-scenes features.

'The Simpsons Movie' (PG-13, 2007, Fox)

Things get off to a troubling start in "The Simpsons Movie," which opens with a series of seemingly unrelated gags that scream, "We have a lot of screen time to fill and no idea how to do it." It doesn't help that an unfortunate hallmark of the show's recent years _ a gratuitous celebrity cameo _ rears its head almost immediately following this string of randomness. But then, a funny thing happens: Things get back on track. A timely and bitingly funny story about environmental panic emerges, and "TSM" manages to plot a perfectly palatable beginning, middle and end that's remarkably reminiscent of (if not quite as funny as) the show's glory days. Considering how much trouble the show has filling 22 minutes some weeks, it's positively astonishing to see it tackle nearly four times that many minutes without tripping over itself and falling apart. Against all odds, the wait was worth it. Available December 18.

Extras: Cast/crew commentary, Directors commentary, deleted scenes, vignettes, promo spots.

'Dirt: The Complete First Season' (NR, 2007, Buena Vista)

Given how intimate and persistent the relationship between actors and the tabloid press is, you'd think someone in Hollywood could imagine a good piece of entertainment about the business of covering celebrity. But as surely as "Paparazzi" made for one of 2004's worst movies, "Dirt" deserves similar dishonors among television shows in 2007. Had "Dirt" merely been sleazy and contemptuous, it might have had a chance. But rather than play the satire card, the show instead goes the soapy route, and the result is a dull tabloid editor (Courteney Cox), some stock celebs with equally little upside (Josh Stewart, Alexandra Breckenridge, Laura Allen) and a schizophrenic photographer (Ian Hart) whose episodes leave you begging for the return of the other characters. The talent's there, the eye candy is everywhere, and "Dirt" is slathered in cinematic polish. But excruciatingly bad writing kills the whole thing, and a great idea with ridiculous potential will have to keep waiting for its day.

Contents: 13 episodes, plus deleted scenes, outtakes and three behind-the-scenes features.

'Fall Into Me' (NR, 2007, Westlake Entertainment)

Recent dumpee Steven (Ron Menzel) meant well when he rushed to his ex-girlfriend's

(Meisha Johnson) place of employment to return a book, but that didn't stop a series of ill-timed circumstances from introducing him to Maria (Heidi Fellner) at a disease support group meeting he had no business attending. That, right there, isn't such a bad premise for a dark comedy that's fit to handle it. Unfortunately, "Fall Into Me" takes the complete opposite tact, painting Steven as this wholesome dating wunderkind who, outside of telling a despicable lie, can do no wrong. He talks with this really sweet voice and makes wistful faces, Maria responds by giggling like a schoolgirl, and we're subjected to a movie version of what a 12-year-old must imagine adult relationships to be like. Bad writing and less-than-stellar acting aside, "Me" also is fatally predictable, culminating with a telegraphed ending that likely also will insult the ideals of any woman with a shred of self-respect.

Extras: Alternate opening, director/crew bio, production gallery.

(Billy O'Keefe writes video game and DVD reviews for McClatchy-Tribune News Service.)

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