

Blu-ray Review: Criterion Release of Steven Soderbergh's Incredible 'Traffic'

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on January 24, 2012 - 4:15pm

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CHICAGO – As his excellent “Haywire” plays in theaters and his even-better “Contagion” was recently released on Blu-ray and DVD, one is reminded of the incredible talent of Steven Soderbergh, one of the best living directors. But “Contagion” and “Haywire,” while enjoyable, don’t hold a candle to this incredible filmmaker’s best films, which include “Sex, Lies, and Videotape,” “Out of Sight,” “Che,” and, recently released on Criterion Blu-ray and DVD, the Oscar-winning “Traffic.” This is one of Criterion’s best releases for one of the ‘00’s best films.



Blu-ray Rating: **5.0/5.0**

Steven Soderbergh won his only Oscar for directing “Traffic” (and it should have beaten “Gladiator” for Best Picture a few minutes later on the same Oscar telecast and has held up significantly better than Ridley Scott’s film) and it was well-deserved. Watching the film again over a decade later, I’m blown away by how little of it feels dated (other than the fact that Dennis Quaid and Michael Douglas look so much younger that it makes me feel old). This is an even better film than you remember, a daring, ambitious, sprawling work that captures more about the war on drugs (and its overall failure) than any other film in history.

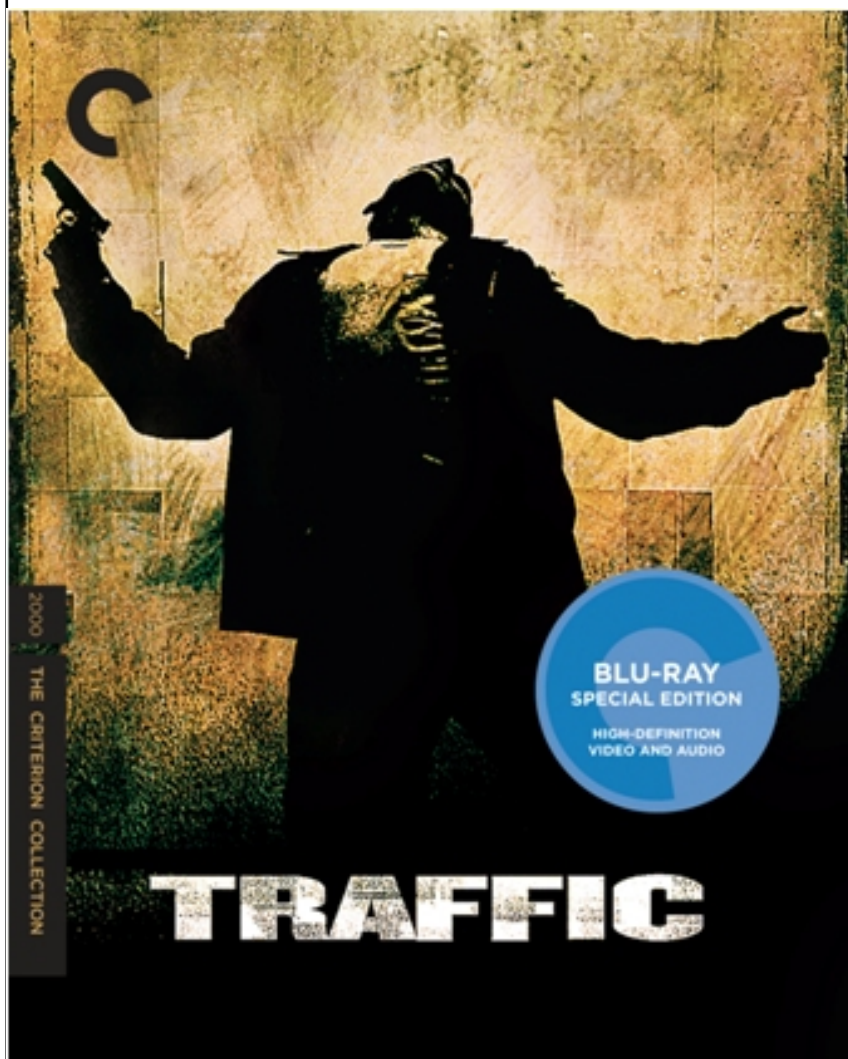


Traffic was released on Criterion Blu-ray and re-released on Criterion DVD on January 17th, 2012

Photo credit: Courtesy of the Criterion Collection

And the Criterion edition is absolutely stunning. It’s worth owning for one of its three (!!!) commentary tracks alone, the informative, insightful, fascinating one by Soderbergh and Oscar-winning writer Stephen Gaghan. Technical demonstrations, two more commentaries, TWENTY-

FIVE deleted scenes, a restored HD transfer, and a great essay by Manohla Dargis. Once again, this is supplemental material that is not designed, like most Blu-ray/DVD releases, as pure filler, but is intended to increase your appreciation for and understanding of the film they accompany. Filmmakers could learn a number of lessons from watching "Traffic" and Blu-ray producers could learn just as much from its incredible Criterion edition.



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Synopsis:

Traffic examines the effect of drugs as politics, business, and lifestyle. Acting as his own director of photography, Steven Soderbergh employs an innovative, color-coded cinematic treatment to distinguish the interwoven stories of a newly appointed drug czar and his family, a West Coast kingpin's wife, a key informant, and cops on both sides of the U.S./Mexican border. The film, delivering a complex and nuanced take on this issue of such great international importance without sacrificing any energy or suspense, is a contemporary classic, and the winner of four Oscars, for best director, best screenplay, best editing, and best supporting actor for Benicio del Toro.

Special Features:

- o Three audio commentaries, featuring Steven Soderbergh and writer Stephen Gaghan; producers Laura Bickford, Edward Zwick and Marshall Herskovitz and consultants Tim Golden and Craig Chretien; and composer Cliff Martinez
- o 25 deleted scenes, with optional commentary by Soderbergh and Gaghan
- o Three sets of demonstrations: one on film processing and the look of the Mexico sequences; one on film editing, with commentary by editor Stephen Mirrione; and one on dialogue editing
- o Additional unused footage of various scenes, from multiple angles
- o Theatrical trailers and television spots
- o Gallery of trading cards depicting the U.S. Customs canine squad used to detect narcotics and other illegal substances
- o Essay by film critic Manohla Dargis

"Traffic" stars Benicio Del Toro, Michael Douglas, Luis Guzman, Don Cheadle, Miguel Ferrer, Topher Grace, Erika Christensen, Catherine Zeta-Jones, Dennis Quaid, and Clifton Collins Jr. It was written by Stephen Gaghan and directed by Steven Soderbergh. It was released on Criterion Blu-ray and re-released on Criterion DVD on January 17th, 2012.



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Source URL (retrieved on Apr 19 2024 - 7:00pm):

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