

Blu-ray Review: David Fincher's 'The Game' Joins Criterion Collection

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on October 1, 2012 - 2:11pm

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CHICAGO – In many ways, it's easier to draw a direct line from 1997's "The Game" to the work that David Fincher is doing today than it would be from "bigger hits" like "Fight Club" and "Seven." Not only does "The Game" look strikingly similar to "Social Network" and "Girl with a Dragon Tattoo" in terms of the way Fincher and his amazing d.p. Harris Savides shoot board rooms and bad behavior but the film shares themes that still interest Fincher like obsession, ego, and deception. The Criterion edition of Fincher's film makes the argument crystal clear that is one of the most underrated thrillers of the '90s.



Rating: **4.5/5.0**

Not only does "The Game" perfectly display Fincher's obsessive level of detail in glorious HD but it features a confidence in storytelling that was not really appreciated when it came out as too many critics focused on perceived failures of the final act and ignored what came before. Like he did in "Seven," Fincher turns city living into a trap of its own as Nicholas Van Orton (Michael Douglas, in EASILY one of his best performances) partakes in a high-stakes "game" that could destroy him. Fincher and writers John Brancato & Michael Ferris play games themselves with the audience, always keeping one step ahead and playing with Hitchcockian expertise with their red herrings and clever plotting. "The Game" is just a smart, fun film and it's so expertly made and easier to appreciate with the subsequent fifteen years of brilliance from its creator.

The Criterion version of "The Game" is expectedly fantastic with a perfect HD transfer and a fantastic commentary track from Fincher, Douglas, Savides, and others. It's clear that the track is a compilation of different recordings (they weren't all in the same room) but it's still incredibly informative and insightful into the process, especially when Fincher speaks about his approach to filmmaking. The behind-the-scenes is very uncut — don't expect traditional talking-head stuff — and the alternate ending is kind of a waste of time even as bonus material, while David Sterritt's essay is definitely worth a read.

Overall, the Criterion edition of "The Game" makes one wish that all David Fincher's films would get the Criterion treatment. Who do I contact to get "Zodiac" on the list?



The Game was released on Criterion Blu-ray and DVD on September 25, 2012

Photo credit: Courtesy of The Criterion Collection

Synopsis:

The enormously wealthy and emotionally remote investment banker Nicholas Van Orton (Michael Douglas) receives a strange gift from his ne'er-do-well younger brother (Sean Penn) on his forty-eighth birthday: a voucher for a game that, if he agrees to play it, will change his life. Thus begins a trip down a rabbit hole that is puzzling, terrifying, and exhilarating for Nicholas and viewer alike. This multilayered, noirish descent into one man's personal hell is also a surreal, metacinematic journey that, two years after the phenomenon *Se7en*, further demonstrated that director David Fincher was one of Hollywood's true contemporary visionaries.



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["The Game" \[12\]](#)

Special Features:

- o New, restored digital transfer, supervised by director of photography Harris Savides, with original theatrical 5.1 surround soundtrack, presented in DTS-HD Master Audio
- o Alternate 5.1 surround mix optimized for home theater viewing, supervised by sound designed Ren Klyce and presented in DTS-HD Master Audio
- o Audio Commentary By Director David Fincher, Savides, Actor Michael Douglas, Screenwriters John Brancato and Michael Ferris, Digital Animation Supervisor Richard "Dr." Baily, Production Designer Jeffrey Beecroft, and Visual Effects Supervisor Kevin Haug
- o Exclusive Behind The Scenes Footage And Film-To-Storyboard Comparisons For Four Of The Film's Major Set Pieces, With Commentary
- o Alternate Ending
- o Trailer and Teaser, With Commentary
- o Booklet Featuring An Essay By Film Critic David Sterritt

"The Game" stars Michael Douglas, Sean Penn, Deborah Kara Unger, Armin Mueller Stahl, and James Rebhorn. It was directed by David Fincher and released in a Criterion Collection DVD and Blu-ray on September 25, 2012.



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Source URL (retrieved on Apr 16 2024 - 11:55pm):

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