

DVD Review: 'Humphrey Bogart: The Essential Collection' is Fantastic

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CHICAGO – Having written about DVDs for years, I've been lucky enough to receive and buy dozens of star-centered box sets: collections of films based around an actor or director ranging from Bette Davis to Mel Brooks. More often than not, the set is missing an essential film or two, features lackluster video/audio transfers, or includes bare-bones DVDs without bonus material. None of that is true about "Humphrey Bogart: The Essential Collection," one of the best DVD box sets ever released.



DVD Rating: **5.0/5.0**

The first thing one will notice about "Humphrey Bogart: The Essential Collection" is that it lives up to its name. The set includes 24 films from the period in which Bogart went from a stage star to one of the biggest stars in the world. And, from that period, everything that matters is here including Bogart's most-beloved classics: "High Sierra," "The Maltese Falcon," "Casablanca," "To Have and Have Not," "The Big Sleep," "The Treasure of the Sierra Madre," and "Key Largo."

Those seven films alone could comprise an "essential" set for most Bogart fans but when you add in films like "The Petrified Forest," "Kid Galahad," "Dark Victory," and "Dark Passage," it becomes that much more remarkable. Yes, it would have been nice to have some later films like "The African Queen," "The Caine Mutiny," or "Sabrina" but those were made after Bogart left WB. True Bogart fans should own "Casablanca," "The Maltese Falcon," and "The Treasure of the Sierra Madre" on Blu-ray, especially given the 5-star quality of those releases, but the set is honestly worth the purchase price for just the other 21 films. And now you can have three of Bogie's most-beloved on DVD as well as Blu-ray.



Humphrey Bogart: The Essential Collection was released on DVD on October 5th, 2010

Photo credit: Warner Bros.

The films alone are almost all better than you even remember, but the set is not merely a bare-bones compilation. Naturally, the quality of the video transfers vary but most of the films look better than average DVD. It can be a bit difficult to go from the beautiful blacks and grays of the

HD release of "The Maltese Falcon" to the weathered picture on "To Have and Have Not," but these films certainly don't look "bad" and probably look significantly better than the last time you saw them on cable or even VHS.

Just watching all 24 movies in "Humphrey Bogart: The Essential Collection" would take days, but it's the special features that are truly overwhelming. The 24 films are split up among 12 double-sided DVDs in cases that hold two-a-piece for a total of six DVD cases within the set. A seventh case includes the excellent documentary "The Brothers Warner," a feature-length piece that has been available before about the golden age of Warner Brothers. Physical collectibles include a 48-page book with an introduction by Robert Osborne and a nifty set of one-sheet poster photo cards and rare archival studio correspondence.

The special features are overwhelming, including 16 commentaries, 13 historical featurettes and short documentaries, studio blooper reels, vintage radio shows, classic cartoons, newsreels from the period, and radio show adaptations. Listing them by film would be overkill there are so many pieces included in the collection from a Looney Tunes cartoon to a newsreel to commentaries by film historians. You could literally spend every waking hour with this set for over a week and maybe have taken it all in. It's a transportative set that doesn't just compile films from an era but takes you back to it. There will likely not be a better holiday season gift for movie fans this year. Put it on the top of your wish list.

"Humphrey Bogart: The Essential Collection" stars Humphrey Bogart and dozens of other stars. It was released on DVD on October 5th, 2010.



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