

Boxset Review: The Humphrey Bogart Signature Collection Vol. 1

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first of two Humphrey Bogart Signature Collections, this set is a must-have for film aficionados. Not only does it include (2) two-disc special editions, but it also provides conclusive evidence of just how good Bogie was as an actor. From Europe to the mountains and the open road, this collection takes us away to the deepest recesses of Hollywood brilliance – a brilliance that Humphrey Bogart mastered.

Casablanca (1943) Two-Disc Special Edition

The

Movie: Bogart in a white jacket. Bogart in a trench coat.

What better way to spend 102 minutes than to fall into one of the most beloved movies of all time? Casablanca, Morocco is like refugee purgatory. While attempting to escape Nazi rule, these men can do nothing but wait for a visa to leave the country. The visas are in extremely high demand, and two German letter carriers are soon murdered for their load. Major Strasser (Conrad Veidt, a veteran of German Expressionism, most notably "The Cabinet of Dr.

determined Caligari") and policeman Louis Renault (Claude Rains) are on a mission to find the seized letters. Strasser is

that the letters not fall in the possession of Victor Laszlo (Paul Henreid), who is believed to be en-route to Casablanca. Strasser and Renault conduct a search of Rick's Café Americain, run by Rick Blaine (Humphrey Bogart), in an attempt to find the killer. Blaine is involved with the letters, but only in holding them for Ugarte (Peter Lorre), a shifty visa dealer who claims to have a buyer. Ugarte plans on leaving Casablanca with his profits from the sale. Renault wants to arrest Ugarte and believes that Blaine will get in the way. After Renault warns him about interfering, Blaine delivers a sharp "I stick my neck out for nobody".

Ugarte is arrested, and Victor Laszlo arrives at Rick's café soon after with companion Ilsa Lund (Ingrid Bergman). Laszlo is a leader of the Czech underground who contacts his counterparts while Ilsa asks Sam the piano player (Dooley Wilson) to play "As Time Goes By". Blaine is angry upon hearing the song (which he'd asked Sam never to play) and tries to stop him. Ilsa catches Blaine's eye and he remembers their love affair of long ago. The Nazis had invaded Paris and Ilsa warned Rick to flee. He agreed to leave only in her company, so she'd promised to meet him at a train station – a promise that went unfulfilled. As Blaine shakes off the painful memories, Ilsa tries to explain away her past actions. He lashes out at her in a drunken stupor, causing her to walk out. The following day, Laszlo and Ilsa learn that Ugarte was killed in police custody.

This prompts Laszlo to confront Blaine about buying the letters. In a bit of spite, Blaine refuses to sell the letters and suggests that Laszlo ask Ilsa for an explanation. Major Strasser soon orders Rick's café to be closed for petty reasons. Blaine meets with Ilsa later in the evening and listens to her justification for standing him up years ago. She'd married Laszlo in secret, but feared him dead and agreed to leave with Blaine for the simple fact of being a widow. However, at the last minute, she'd learn that Laszlo was never killed. Realizing that she and Blaine still love each other, she asks him to make decisions for the both of them. Laszlo is arrested while hiding out and pleads with Blaine to use the letters for Ilsa's departure from Casablanca. The timeless ending to this film rains on the viewer with magic. The scene has been immortalized a million times over on merchandise and in various tributes. This is the prototypical Bogart – a tragic hero, not only to those who encounter him on screen, but to every person fortunate enough to observe the workings of a true icon. The DVD: This fantastic two-disc special

edition is jam-packed with bonus features. It's a testament to the film's significance in history. Casablanca defined a generation ravaged by the effects of World War II. It also spoke volumes on the public's need for a hero. Bogart's bravado validated the will of America, in times of crisis and otherwise. The bonus features on this collector's edition include: A commentary by: critic Roger Ebert and author-historian Rudy Behlmer, a new digital transfer with an Introduction by Lauren Bacall, nearly 10 minutes of newly found deleted scenes and outtakes, two documentaries hosted by Lauren Bacall - "You Must Remember This" and "Bacall on Bogart", "The Children Remember": parental memories from Stephen Bogart and Ingrid Bergman's daughters Pia Lindstrom and Isabella Rosselini, The Looney Tunes homage "Carrotblanca", Premier episode from the 1955 Casablanca TV series, Audio-only treasures: "Screen Guild Players Radio Production" with the three stars, plus rare scoring session outtakes, Production history gallery: Photos, press materials, studio correspondence, memorabilia, musical outtakes, and production history, DVD-ROM script to screen and weblinks. This is without a doubt, the definitive version of Casablanca to own.

The Treasure of the Sierra Madre (1948) Two-Disc Special Edition

The

Movie: Humphrey Bogart is Fred Dobbs in this tale of gold prospecting, directed by John Huston (who'd directed Bogart in 1941's *The Maltese Falcon*, 1942's *Across the Pacific*, and would go on to direct him in 1948's *Key Largo*, 1951's *The African Queen* and 1953's *Beat the Devil*). Dobbs is a bit down on his luck when he begins work in a Mexican oil field. There, he meets Bob Curtin (Tim Holt), a fellow American with whom he forms camaraderie. The two men shack up in a run-down boarding house after the day's work is complete. During the night, Howard (Walter Huston), a career prospector, begins rambling about past men who'd lost everything trying to strike it rich while digging for gold. Dobbs, somewhat of an egotist, brags that he would never fail in such fashion. Pat McCormick (Barton MacLane, a career Bogart co-star), the man who hired Dobbs and Curtin, has a reputation for stiffing his workers. They decide not to be played for a fool and confront McCormick for immediate payment. McCormick reacts with physical violence but is clearly overpowered. Dobbs and Curtin pick his pockets, taking only their due instead of cleaning him out. Not wanting a life of random odd jobs, the two men ask Howard to help them prospect for gold. Howard agrees and the three hopefuls set out for the Sierra Madre mountains. Bandits lead by Gold Hat (Alfonso Bedoya) attack their train, but Dobbs and Curtin are able to fend off the assailants. They forget about the small hindrance and continue towards unexplored land. They manage to locate a windfall of gold and respond in jubilation. However, the discovery plays on Dobbs' paranoia and he suggests that the gold be divided up (so as not to be cheated by his partners). Unbeknownst to each other, all three men have become paranoid. Curtin even considers leaving Dobbs to die when Dobbs is trapped in a cave-in, but reconsiders. Curtin soon encounters James Cody (Bruce Bennett) on a routine run for supplies. Cody is prospecting as well, and asks Curtin about the holdings of the surrounding mountains. Curtin brushes off the interrogation, but is followed by Cody back to the camp, where Cody decides to partner with the three. Gold Hat's band of criminals attack again, and although they are eventually scared away, the gunfire of the assault leaves Cody dead. As time wears on the men, Dobbs becomes increasingly obsessed with the gold. He begins to have delusions about threats on his life and being robbed for his share of the findings. In a bizarre series of events, Dobbs shoots Curtin and

leaves him to die. However, Curtin manages to survive and pairs up with Howard to go after Dobbs. Gold Hat's bandits find Dobbs first and kill him for his supplies. The bandits are completely ignorant to the gold on Dobbs and unload it in the desert. The bandits themselves are eventually shot and killed, leaving only Howard and Curtin to sort out the path for the rest of their lives. The DVD: In yet another two-disc special edition, this film was done great justice. Bogart is once again opposite his usual self. The scenery in this film is nothing short of amazing. It took 5 ½ months to shoot, and although it was nearly a month over-schedule, the ends certainly justify the means. The video and audio transfers are equally stunning, and with so many scenes filmed on dusty terrain, it provides that much more to appreciate. The special features in this edition include: A commentary by author/historian Eric Lax, All-new transfer from restored picture and audio elements, Warner Night at the Movies, 1948 introduced by Leonard Maltin including trailers, newsreel, short subject and cartoon "Hot Cross Bunny", Humphrey Bogart trailer gallery, New documentary, Discovering Treasure: The Story of "The Treasure of the Sierra Madre" (2003), Documentary John Huston: The Man, the Movies, the Maverick (1989), Galleries: Dressed-set photos, storyboards, cast/crew photos, & publicity, Audio vault: Lux Theatre broadcast of "The Treasure of the Sierra Madre" and Cartoon "8 Ball Bunny". Gold aside, the film is a treasure in itself. It's also a salute to Bogart's versatility. Any actor that can effectively play so many roles is destined to become a legend. As we all know, Bogie is just that.

They Drive by Night (1940)

The

Movie: It's well known in the classic Hollywood community that many of Bogart's crowning achievements were films initially turned down by George Raft. In this tale of life on the road, the two are side by side, with the beautiful Ann Sheridan thrown in to cool the raging egos. Humphrey Bogart is Paul Fabrini. He and his brother Joe (George Raft), earn a paltry living as independent truck drivers. Their jobs are sporadic, and the future is all but bright with no steady source of income. The two have their own truck, which is a great advantage but hasn't been paid for in full. Joe wants to run his own trucking business, but Paul is exhausted with the pressure and wants to settle down with his wife Pearl (Gale Page). Ed Carlsen (Alan Hale) owns a large trucking company and offers Joe a job. When Joe refuses (due to his frustration over working for someone else), Paul agrees to continue their independent romp until the truck is paid off. On a routine run (the last one needed to pay the truck off), Paul falls asleep while driving and takes the vehicle over a cliff. The accident causes Paul to lose an arm. Ed Carlsen's wife Lana (Ida Lupino) is in love with Joe. She convinces Ed to offer Joe a managerial job in the office. Joe accepts the job, knowing he is Paul's only source of financial support. Despite her constant persuasions, Joe has no interest in Lana, but rather is in love with Cassie Hartley (Ann Sheridan). Cassie is the wise-cracking waitress at a popular trucker hangout. Her ability to handle herself makes her "one-of-the-guys", albeit the most beautiful one. This is what drives Joe wild. Lana doesn't give up easily and throws herself at Joe during a party. Again, he refuses her in the interest of being a good friend to Ed. This final rejection sends Lana into a rage, and she orchestrates the "accidental" death of her husband. She returns to offer Joe a partnership in the trucking company, but soon blames her husband's death on him when she learns of his plans to marry Cassie. The police believe the distressed widow; and, Joe is charged as an accomplice. Lana, under the weight of her own lies, finally buckles and spills her guts on the witness stand. The DVD: From the title alone, we understand just where this film is going.

This is the kind of story best suited for an isolated night, though the quality is nothing to hide from. The video transfer is obviously the result of careful restoration, and the audio is just sharp enough to catch the wind of Bogie's verbal uppercuts. In a film such as this, where quick-witted vernacular is traded back and forth, it's important that pieces of dialogue not be lost. The result is a satisfying glimpse at this 1940 classic, the way it was intended to be seen and heard. Special features include: "Divided Highway: The Story of They Drive by Night" featurette and "Swingtime in the Movies".

High Sierra (1941)

The

Movie: A second Bogart-Lupino collaboration of this set is High Sierra. Directed by Raoul Walsh (who would go on to work with Bogart on 1943's Action in the North Atlantic and 1951's The Enforcer), High Sierra stars Humphrey Bogart as Roy "Mad Dog" Earle, a bank robber who is released from prison when one of his mob associates buys his freedom from the Governor. That associate is "Big Mac" (Donald MacBride). However, Earle's freedom is not exactly "free".

In exchange, Mac wants him to oversee another crime out west. Earle stops to visit his childhood farm on his way to the Sierra Nevada Mountains. The visit is short-lived when his criminal face is recognized by a passing local. Earle meets up with Red (Arthur Kennedy) and Babe (Alan Curtis) when he arrives, two juvenile wannabe

thugs who hardly have the discipline to control themselves. In addition, he doesn't like that Babe's girlfriend Marie Garson (Ida Lupino) is hanging around. Earle is not amused, and a bit irritated that he has to consort with such amateurs. Earle's reputation is legendary in the world of crime, so this "gang" of his is more star struck than anything. Leaving them behind, he heads to meet a waiting Big Mac in Los Angeles. While driving, he gets into an accident with Ma and Pa Goodhue (Elisabeth Risdon and Henry Travers), two seniors with their granddaughter Velma (Joan Leslie) in tow. Rather than fly off the

handle, Earle

is actually sympathetic towards the Goodhues. He notices that Velma has a clubfoot, which Pa laments could be repaired with surgery if the money was available. Earle is clearly infatuated with Velma and gives the Goodhues some cash before he continues on to Los Angeles.

He arrives in LA to find an ailing Big Mac, who confesses that he desperately needs the money from the impending robbery. Meanwhile, a doctor visits Velma (at Earle's request) to examine her foot. Earle volunteers to fund the operation, despite his knowledge of Velma's involvement with another man. Earle subconsciously believes his act of heroism will drive Velma into his arms, with the approval of the Goodhues. He returns to the mountains and finds the gang in disarray. Red and Babe have broken into a fight over Marie, who pleads with Earle to let her stay with him. Against his better judgment, he relents. The night of the robbery arrives and nothing goes according to plan. Earle has no choice but to shoot a guard and make a quick getaway. Red and Babe are killed in the escape, leaving only Marie as his accomplice. The two make it back to LA with the stolen property, but quickly retreat after learning that Big Mac is dead and Earle is forced to kill an ex-policeman.

They are again on the run, but Earle's feelings for Velma will not let him proceed without seeing her once more. He visits Velma and finds her with her boyfriend, which angers him. Earle and Velma exchange harsh words before he walks out the door...and out of her life. Still running, Earle puts Marie on a bus to get her out of harm's way, but she re-routes after hearing that the police are chasing him. The excitement culminates in a standoff between Earle (hiding in the mountains) and the police who are determined to take him one way or another. The DVD: As with the other films in the set, this restoration was top notch. Perhaps the most enjoyable thing about the disc, aside from the film itself,

was the bonus feature: "Curtains for Roy Earle" - an all-new featurette on the making of the film. It was certainly interesting to see Bogie on the wrong side of the law. We're accustomed to his smooth detective exterior and rigid sense of logic. But here, he is almost the polar opposite. He's a man who cares about himself, but whose logic is tampered with in the face of a beautiful young cripple. It's perhaps that internal struggle that lead him down the jagged road to a surefire pitfall. Whatever the case may be, this is more classic Bogie for the enthusiast, and a great addition to any film library – no matter what side of the mountain you're on.

THE CONCLUSION

They sure don't make 'em

like they used to, but thankfully we can still enjoy them. Humphrey Bogart was more than an actor, he was an original. In the passing years, he has become the embodiment of true artistic genius. It's that level of ability that makes this collection a fitting representation of the man who gave us classic after classic, and whose influence continues to grip the very industry he once dominated.

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