



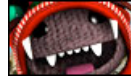
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Psycho (Special Edition) DVD Review

This classic thriller gets a classic DVD.

by **Christopher Monfette**

September 25, 2008 - Alfred Hitchcock has the strange distinction of being one of few directors not immediately associated with a single movie. Toss the name out into a roomful of people and the room will reply with cries of *Psycho*, *Rear Window*, *Vertigo*, *The Birds* -- maybe even some scattered shouts of *Strangers on a Train* or *Rope*. So it's no surprise that Universal is re-releasing a handful of Hitchcock's greatest films as part of their legacy series, starting with what is perhaps his most defining achievement -- *Psycho*.

It's almost impossible for most of us internet-generation critics to appreciate first-hand the impact that *Psycho* had on its original audience. This critic's grandmother has a story from having seen the film for the first time in London, shortly after its premiere there. The woman next to her, sucking on newly-purchased popsicle, unexpectedly -- or so goes the tale -- inhaled the entire thing when the shower curtain pulled so famously back, choking while the audience screamed in terror. Thankfully, the story ended better for her than it did for poor Marrion Crane.

It's a movie that hardly bears reviewing. Chances are good that you've seen it on either DVD or late-night television, and if you haven't, then you've got better things to do than read this review. But where much praise is given to films like *Citizen Kane* for pioneering now-everyday film techniques -- occasionally elevating the film beyond it's modern-day effectiveness -- *Psycho* continues to be not only the film from which all other suspense films would eventually borrow, but a damn good thriller so many decades later.

The twisted story of a boy and his mother works for a number of reasons: Joseph Stefano's chilling script and Anthony Perkins' equally chilling portrayal of the troubled Norman Bates; the sudden and shocking murder of the film's seeming lead actress; the shrill-sounding strings; the simple, yet brilliantly stylized direction by the master himself -- Alfred Hitchcock. It's a movie that takes its time, building tension slowly only to release it in quick, terrifying bursts -- the famous shower scene, or Arbogast's murder.

In fact, one could hardly imagine the landscape of modern cinema had *Psycho* not established its historic, bloody precedent. Nor would one want to.

Score: 10 out of 10

Video and Presentation

God knows there have been previous *Psycho* DVD releases, but the digitally re-mastered transfer of the film makes it look about as good as you're likely to see it. Virtually no

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MPAA Rating: NR
MSRP:
 US: \$26.98
Publisher: Universal Studios Home Entertainment
Genre: Thriller
Release Date:
 US: October 7, 2008
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9.0

Outstanding

10

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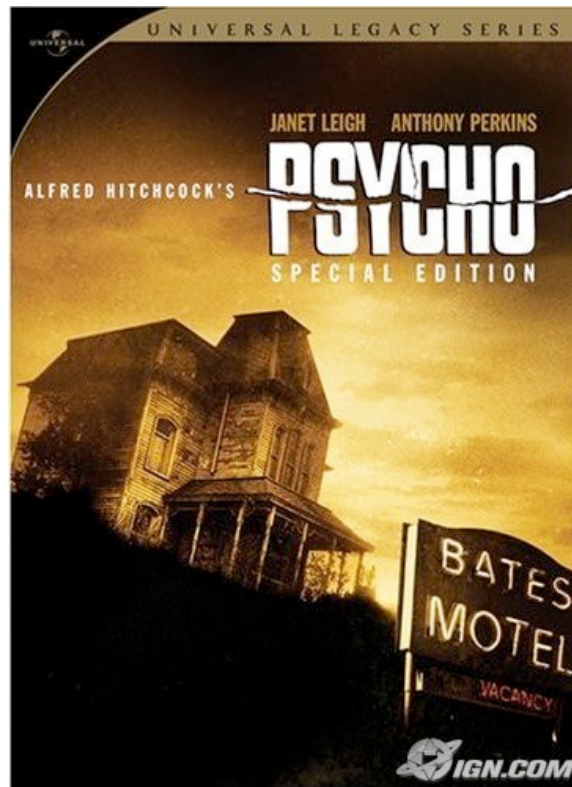
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artificating or additional noise. The film grain is preserved without distraction. The black levels offer a brilliant contrast within the film's painterly black-and-white composition. The image quality is strong and the detail top-quality. This is a great, great transfer of a great, great film.

Score: 9 out of 10

**Languages and Audio**

Given its age, the two-channel stereo mix works rather well. The dialogue is clear and the music – what little of it there is – is striking when it finally plays. The rain pounds and the silences are *deadly silent*. It's not a complicated audio track, just a classic one, and it's been transferred here as well as one might expect without unnecessarily updating it to 5.1 surround.

Score: 7 out of 10

Extras and Packaging

This two-disc release offers a comprehensive compilation of classic *Psycho* images and features, including:

- Feature Commentary with Stephen Rebello, Author of "Alfred Hitchcock and the Making of *Psycho*"
- The Making of *Psycho* Documentary
- In the Master's Shadow: Hitchcock's Legacy
- Hitchcock / Truffaut Excerpts
- Alfred Hitchcock Presents: Lamb to the Slaughter
- Newsreel Footage: The Release
- The Shower Scene
- The Shower Scene Storyboards
- The Archives
- Posters, Ads and Lobby Cards
- Production Photographs

In many ways, the commentary on disc one seems unnecessary in light of the other material found on the adjacent disc. Rebello clearly has much to say on the subject of *Psycho*'s creation, much of which is insightful, entertaining and certainly well-informed. But running at roughly 90 minutes, the feature-length documentary on the second disc – "The Making of *Psycho*" – offers just as much insight through the use of interviews, film clips and other assorted footage. Having filmed and aired some time ago, it's a bit

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Psycho

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visually dated, but all the information is first rate. Interviews with Hitchcock's wife, assistant and co-workers – alongside commentators such as a noticeably younger Clive Barker – paint a fully-fleshed portrait of the film's production.


"In the Master's Shadow" assembles some of Hollywood's latest A-list filmmakers – directors, editors, sound designers – for a twenty-minute discussion of the influence of Hitchcock on modern-day filmmaking techniques. Guests include Martin Scorsese, William Friedkin, John Carpenter and Guillermo del Toro. Hearing these masters discuss their first experiences with Hitchcock is worth the price of admission alone. And in the tradition of film *masters*, the disc offers about 15 minutes worth of audio from the famous Alfred Hitchcock / Francois Truffaut. While the exchange is slowed somewhat by the translator, the exchange – which is played over film clips – is fascinating to hear.

With the exception of some period newsreel footage from *Psycho*'s original New York premiere --- which is rather uninteresting – the first disc provides a lot of photos and storyboards which, together, tell the visual story of *Psycho*. Film history buffs will no doubt appreciate this glimpse behind-the-scenes. Overall, this is a terrific set of extras that demands to be seen by any Hitchcock fan or *Psycho* enthusiast.

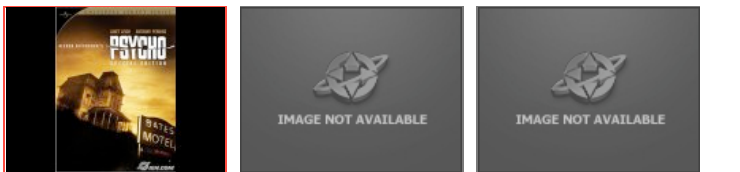
Score: 9 out of 10

IGN's Ratings for Psycho (Special Edition)

Rating	Description
out of 10	click here for ratings guide ⓘ
10	The Movie Perhaps the most classic of thrillers.
9	The Video Nicely remastered.
7	The Audio Basic, yet effective, two-channel stereo.
9	The Extras A brilliant homage to the historic director.
9	OVERALL (out of 10 / not an average)



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This movie still scares me more than any other movie I've ever seen. One of the greatest ever.

Posted by: [NavTheConqueror](#) on September 26, 2008 15:29 PDT [Report Abuse](#)



The cinematography is so good, every time I watch Psycho I'm just in awe with how Hitch set up his shots and how perfect every single frame of the film is. I won't buy this new edition since I already own it twice over...

Posted by: **Peer-IGN** on September 25, 2008 19:42 PDT

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this is what movies should be.

1st!

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