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L.A. CONFIDENTIAL: TWO-DISC SPECIAL EDITION (DVD)

by Brad Cook (2008-09-23) 2008, Rated R, 138 minutes, Warner Home Video



Watching "L.A. Confidential" for the first time since its original DVD release, I was struck by its vivid use of archetypes. We have characters as archetypes: the young idealist, the vengeful tough guy, the hard-ass police captain, the loose cannon who's close to earning his pension, the sleazy tabloid reporter, and so forth. We have locations as archetypes, in particular L.A. of the 1950s in all its Technicolor glory. And we even have a story trope as archetype: the buddy cop movie in which the two leads are woefully mismatched.

The film, however, turns those archetypes upside-down, revealing new truths about its characters, exposing L.A.'s seedy underbelly, and using three radically different main characters who are paired off as buddies at various times, depending on the story's needs. The plot, which was adapted from James Ellroy's novel, takes us on a rollercoaster ride, although the secret concealed at its heart is by-the-numbers, and the ending has a deus ex machina element that thankfully doesn't undercut the climax. I should also point out that "L.A. Confidential" catapulted its three male stars' careers to greater heights.

Disc one includes a group commentary with film critic Andrew Sarris, co-writer Brian Koppelman, Ellroy, Russell Crowe, Kevin Spacey, Guy Pearce, and other members of the cast and crew. They didn't record the track at the same time, which was a good idea, since many group commentaries tend to devolve into the participants goofing around with each other. A text tag lets us know who's talking, a helpful technique that also doesn't show up in a lot of group commentaries. You can listen to Jerry Goldsmith's isolated score and view various trailers and TV spots.

Over on disc two, everything from the original DVD release is included: the making-of featurette "Off the Record;" director Curtis Hanson's photo pitch, which used various vintage photos and other materials to show executives the look and feel he was going for; and an interactive map on which you can click to learn more about the movie's locations. On top of that, we have another 90 minutes of new material that digs even deeper: "Whatever You Desire: Making 'L.A. Confidential,'"

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LAKEVIEW TERRACE

"Sunlight and Shadow: The Visual Style," "A True Ensemble: The Cast," and "Book to Screen." They're all pretty self-explanatory. Warner Bros. brought in Hanson, all of the major cast members, Ellroy, costume designer Ruth Myers, cinematographer Dante Spinotti, and others to look back on their experiences. As a result, we get a very comprehensive look at the [making of the film](#).

Disc two also features the 2000 pilot for an "L.A. Confidential" TV series, which stars Keifer Sutherland as Jack Vincennes. It only takes five or ten minutes to see why the series wasn't picked up; this is something worth watching only as a curiosity. Finally, Warner Bros. threw in a CD sampler of six songs from the film.

Unlike some double-dips, this is a Special Edition worthy of its name.

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Which Paul Newman role is your favorite?

- 1) Brick Pollitt, "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof"
- 2) Eddie Felson, "The Hustler" and "The Color of Money"
- 3) Hud Bannon, "Hud"
- 4) Luke, "[Cool Hand Luke](#)"
- 5) Butch Cassidy, "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid"
- 6) Henry Gondorff, "The Sting"
- 7) Reggie Dunlop, "Slap Shot"
- 8) Sidney J. Mussburger, "The Hudsucker Proxy"
- 9) Sully Sullivan, "Nobody's Fool"
- 10) John Rooney, "[Road to Perdition](#)"
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