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Captain Power: The Complete Series (1987 – 1988/Music Video Distributors DVD Set) + **GI Joe Renegades: Season 1 – Volume 1 + GI Joe: Series 2 – Season 2 + Jem and the Holograms: Season 3 + The Smurfs and the Magic Flute** (Shout! Factory DVDs)

Captain Power: The Complete Series

Picture: C+ Sound: B- Extras: B Episodes: B

Created by Gary Goddard, **Captain Power** was an incredibly innovative and creative series; though it only lasted one season. Even at one season (22 episodes) **Captain Power** had a huge impact on kids of the time, many fondly remembering the series to this day. The nostalgia held for this series is only heightened by the successful toy line produced by Mattel.

The toy line was as innovative as the series itself, allowing children to interact with each and every episode by projecting a special light on the television screen that corresponded to the action at hand. Also many action figures came with a VHS tape so children could view **Captain Power** any time!

Bio-Mechs are robotic soldiers that fight the wars of the future in 2147; making man obsolete in war, but still lingering in the background. Bruce Gray plays Dr. Stuart Gordon Power who along with his partner Dr. Lyman Taggart (played by David Hemblem) are working on a super computer called the Overmind. The Overmind was meant to be the answer to all man's problems, but after Dr. Taggart made the hasty choice of hooking himself into Overmind to "speed up the project," things went terribly wrong. Dr. Taggart was no longer himself and now obsessed over making man and machine into one ultimate being; in the process of doing this however he set in motion a new and catastrophic war. Man was now in conflict with the Bio-Mechs and it is up to Dr. Power to restore peace and order...or at least give man a fighting chance.

Dr. Power creates a set of Power Suits that when worn gives that person superhuman qualities/power. Dr Taggart attempts to stop Dr Power from making these devices and in the process kills Dr Power and severely injures himself, forcing him to become more machine than man. Jonathan Power (son of Dr. Gordon Power) assembles a team using his father's power suits to save the world. Dr Taggart is now Lord Dread and will stop and nothing to destroy Captain (Jonathan) Power and gain control of the world. Power calls his team 'The Soldiers of Fortune' who use the suits in conjunction with a super computer named Mentor (made by Dr Power) to restore order. Along the way many troubles arise with Lord Dread being at the center of every evil plot, starting the wheels in motion for his 'Project: New Order,' which will destroy all that is left of humanity.

The series was off to a great start before being canceled, but sadly audiences will never get to experience what was to come as **Captain**



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Power was canceled after only one season.

The technical features here are adequate but far from great. The picture is old/worn appearing to be a direct VHS tape transfer in its 1.33 X 1 full screen presentation. The series was originally shot on film and mastered on tape; sadly the taped transfers being used here which have grit/grim, a softness and lack of clarity that is sad to see. The colors are generally ok and there are few light/dark issues; but the series could be much better. The sound is a Dolby Digital 2.0 Stereo Track that leaves much to be desired as it projects mostly from the front with little action from anywhere else; ending up quite lackluster for this fast paced series.

As for extras, several commentary tracks exist on various episodes, which is very nice as audiences get insight from a variety of sources; including but not limited to creators, writers, producers, and even actors. We are treated to 'Out of the Ashes' a featurette that takes an in depth look at the special effects as well as story structure throughout the series, giving over 90 minutes of bonus footage that you can't find anywhere else. There is a lot of talk about the technical difficulties and the casts' time on the set; hardships, fun, and everything in between. There is a wonderful extra that details why a second season never happened and what direction the series would have taken if it had continued; something fans have been dying to know. Finally there is the made for TV (Canadian) movie **Captain Power: The Legend Begins** that US audiences have never experienced before; but overall it is weaker than the series itself as it is only a string of the first season episodes edited together to make a 90 minute movie. In the end, it feels more like a rushed summation than a solid venture in cinema. There is also a still gallery that I could take or leave.

A greatly underrated series that though a bit dated, stands the test time and had great potential that was never fully recognized.

G.I. Joe: Renegades – Season 1: Volume 1 (Shout! Factory DVD)

Picture: B Sound: B Extras: D Episodes: C+

GI Joe: Renegades is a new **GI Joe** series that follows the basic premise of the original series. The series originally aired in November of 2010 on *The Hub* channel. As previously mentioned the series holds true to many of the original **GI Joe** ideals, but puts a new spin on the now classic 1980's series.

The premise of **GI Joe: Renegades** is that while the GI Joe team was scouting Cobra Pharmaceuticals (a front for the evil Cobra) on a covert mission there was an 'accidental' explosion that was pinned on the GI Joe team. The GI Joe Team is now flagged by the government, media, and cobra as outlaws that must be stopped at all cost; in turn forcing The Joes to go on the run. While setting out to prove their innocence, GI Joe Team is pursued by not only Cobra, but also an elite military unit called The Falcons. The double trouble doesn't make things easy for Team Joe, especially when they are trying to uncover the truth behind the mysterious explosion. In **Season One – Volume One** of the series now on DVD we get a taste of the action with Duke, Roadblock, Tunnel Rat, Ripcord, and Snake Eyes all tagging along for the ride. There is exciting action and a twisted storylines to peak the interest of many viewers.

The series is a departure from the classic **GI Joe** fans have come to know and love; but that is not a bad thing. The series is enough like the classic GI Joe, but far enough away that it doesn't real like a rehashed venture down memory lane. This is the perfect time to get back in GI Joe, especially with the new film on the horizon.

The technical features of this **GI Joe: Renegades** series are nicer than many of the recent iterations we have seen since the series was just produced in 2010. The picture is a 1.78 X 1 Anamorphic Widescreen that has solid colors and bold framing blacks. The image isn't stunning by any means and will look better on Blu-ray, but is a far better quality than the classic Joe series on DVD. The sound is a Dolby Digital 5.1 Surround that gets the job done with some use of surrounds but mostly comes from the front, though does pick up the rears to a small extent when the action takes off.

No extras are available here.

G.I. Joe: A Real American Hero - Series 2: Season 2 (Shout! Factory DVD)

Picture: B Sound: B Extras: B Episodes: B

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Picture: B+ Sound: B+ Extras: B+ Episodes: B+

This is the final 20 episodes of the classic series made by DIC Entertainment and put on DVD by Shout! Factory (saviors of the 1980/90's classics). This series (again) is not to be confused with the original 1980's series. It is a new series in the same universe that continues the storyline of our classic (original) heroes while introducing a host of new heroes and villains alike.

In these 20 final episodes, General Hawk returns with his new team of JOEs to battle Cobra Commander and his band of tyrants. This season premiered in 1991 and is a fan favorite as it brought back many original GI Joe members (Duke, Storm Shadow, and more) and truly capped of a solid series. Whereas many animated series feel unfinished these last 20 episodes deliver just enough action/continuity to get the job done. So gear up and tune in on DVD for 20 outrageously entertaining GI Joe tales.

The technical features are what you would expect from an early '90s series that was transitioning from a basic animation 80's series. The picture is a 1.33 X 1 Full Screen image that is adequate but does have grain and debris. The colors and blacks are nice enough, even with the animation feeling pretty basic without too much depth. The sound is a simple Dolby Digital 2.0 Mono track (as the series was originally aired) that blasts from the front. Dialogue is clear enough but don't expect anything thrilling here.

The best thing from the technical features (and perhaps the series) is the featurette found in the extras entitled Retrospective Featurette with the Hasbro Toy Team. It isn't very long nor does it have too much info (a lot of geeking out), but it does feature some toys circa 1991 and that is good enough for me.

Jem and the Holograms – Season Three (Shout! Factory DVD)

Picture: B Sound: B Extras: C Episodes: C+

Jem in Season Three continues to be same old same old as we are treated to the same old same old. **Season Three** changes it up A TAD as a new rival is introduced in the form of *The Stingers* who attempt to knock Jem and the Holograms out of the spotlight. *The Stingers* are oddly (totally awesome) an '80s glam/hair band that is headed by Riot who swears to make Jem his. The series (directed at young females) tugs on girls' heart strings as Jem is conflicted over and caught in a love triangle when she is falling for Riot, but still has feeling for long time love Rio.

This is the last season for **Jem and the Holograms**, but not much new is found here to wrap the series up. Jem bounces back and forth again between secret studio identity and rock star legend; though now we have the aforementioned love triangle.

Jem is a fun series, but is almost the epitome of directed marketing. While boys had GI Joe, He-Man, and Thundercats toy companies were searching hard to sell girls something outside of easy bake ovens and Barbies...enter Jem (and don't forget She-Ra). **Jem** came and went leaving its mark on 1980's cartoon history. I found it enjoyable and nostalgic though not all too deep, fun never the less.

The technical features are exactly the same as found in the previous set with a less than stellar picture, but a very nicely upgraded sound. The image is a 1.33 X 1 Full Screen that boasts solid colors that pop, leaning more heavily on the pastel pallet but bright. The black level is a tad weak and there is grain with debris throughout. The sound again is a Dolby Digital 5.1 Surround upgrade that makes the music pop; whereas not fantastic it is a big step up over other series from the same time.

The only extra is the 'Music Jukebox' that highlights the songs from the series; nice to have it in one place, but nothing to write home about.

The Smurfs and the Magic Flute [Original Full Length Feature Film]

(Shout Factory DVD)

Picture: B Sound: B Extras: B- Film: B-

Originally produced in 1976 in Belgium and premiering other places around the globe (EXCEPT The USA) **Smurfs and the Magic Flute** was a film directed by Peyo that finally found its way to the USA in 1983. The film was the spark that would ignite the 1980's Hanna-Barbera **Smurfs** series that would forever be cherished by American viewers.

Set in the Middle Ages, the film focuses for the first 20 or so minutes on Sir Johan and Court Jester Peewit as they set out to recover a Magic Flute that was stolen by Mathew McCreep. McCreep discovered the flutes hidden powers and is using it to bewitch the people of the kingdom to steal their money. Johan and Peewit try in vain to stop McCreep and seek the help of a wizard to stop him before it is too late. The wizard knows the origins of the flute and sends the two men with an incantation to Smurfland. In Smurfland our heroes meet Papa Smurf and his fellow Smurfs who agree to help the men by building another flute. From here we embark on a Smurf-Tastic adventure with many surprises, twists and turns along the way.

The film is great. It truly showcases why the Smurfs were an instant hit. The film is insanely creative and introduced the world to a host of oddball, but lovable beings. If you are a Smurf fan or have never smurfed in your life, this is where you start.

The technical features are solid with bright colors and detailed animation from the picture end. The image could be clearer and could definitely use some restoration (perhaps on Blu-ray). The sound is a simple 2.0 Dolby Digital Stereo track that could ALSO use an upgrade, but gets the smurfing job done.

Extras are nice, but don't hold much rewatchable quality. Extras include:

- Original Uncut Theatrical Release of Film (not really an extra)
- Image Gallery
- Glossary of Smurf Terms (I will remember this if I am ever transported to Smurfland)
- The Smurf Story
- Character Guide
- About the Smurfs and the Magic Flute
- Animated Menus

- Michael P Dougherty II

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