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Battlefield Detectives (2003 – 4/Athena/Acorn DVD Set)/History Of The World In Two Hours (2011/A&E DVD Set)/Nazi Hunters (2010/MVD DVD Set)/Race To Space (Mill Creek DVD Set)

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

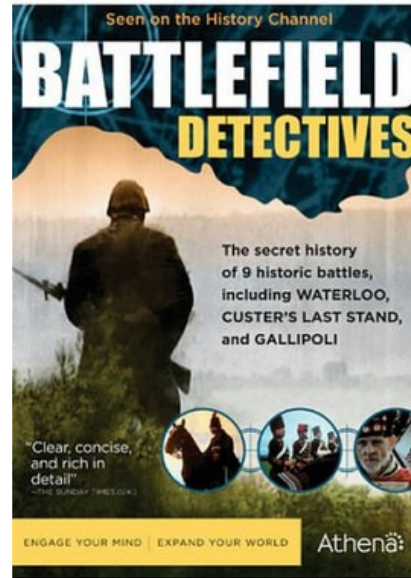
Special Interest programming can be cheesy, but there are many cases where it is still intelligent and here are four recent examples.

The Athena series of DVD documentary releases never really fails at this and their latest release is **Battlefield Detectives**, a 3-DVD, nine episode mini-series with some mixed reenactment footage that still does a fine job of covering the ground intended. To learn about past historical events that were not occurring when records were being kept of such things, the show investigates the following events: the 1066 Hastings battle, Battle of Agincourt, Sinking of the Spanish Armada in 1888, 1805 Battle of Trafalgar, 1815 Massacre at Waterloo, Charge of the Light Brigade, Custer's Last Stand, 1915 Gallipoli Disaster and the Vietnam debacle. That's a fine selection with the inclusion of Vietnam interesting as there is too much about it that is being forgotten and ignored. Especially if you do not know much about any of these key events, this is a set worth your time. Biographies of Major Military Leaders appear on all three discs and the case adds another illustrated, informative booklet on the show and its events

Though it runs about 90 minutes, The History Channel's **History Of The World In Two Hours** (guess they have a half-hour of commercials when they show it on TV!) is amusingly ambitious trying to give a crash course in how our world formed and that might get some people properly interested in history, but it is a bit much to squeeze this all in and does not always work out. Still, the curious should see it and at least it is an intelligent program. There are no extras.

Then we have the eight episode, two DVD set **Nazi Hunters** that is also a newer production and does a solid job of covering know and lesser-known killers in The Third Reich. Each episode takes son one of them as are as follows: 1) Herbert Cukurs, 2) Adolf Eichmann, 3) Klaus Barbie, 4) Erich Priebke, 5) Joseph Mengele, 6) Kurt Lischka, 7) Paul Touvier and 8) Gustav Wagner/Franz Strangl. Despite the millions of episodes of various TV shows on the subject on U.S. TV alone, this show stands out as one of the more exceptional, so those interested will not be disappointed. There are no extras.

Finally we have **Race To Space** which is a nice compilation of various



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films from the period of the actual Cold War Space Race era that is pretty impressive considering how many such sets we have come across. The ten programs include *The Race For Space*, *Project: Man In Space*, *Race To The Moon*, *Journey To The Moon*, *Apollo 11 – Time Of Apollo*, *Apollo 12 – Pinpoint For Science*, *Apollo 13 – Houston, We Have A Problem* (nice to see the real thing), *Apollo 17 – The Last Moon Landing*, *Fly Me To The Moon & Back* and *JFK: Speech At Rice University*. Extras include Slide Shows on Apollo 11 and The Universe.

We get anamorphically enhanced 1.78 X 1 image transfers on all these sets save **Space**, which is all 1.33 X 1 filmed shorts that usually run about a half-hour, but the first four are more like an hour. The newer programs are good, but have their softness and even motion blur, but **Space** is even softer overall. The Dolby Digital 2.0 sound is simple stereo on the newer productions and monophonic on the **Space** compilation and all the audio is more limited and shows its age.

- Nicholas Sheffo

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