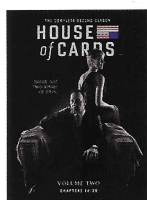


and overarching narrative of the quartet make *Hinterland* a deeply immersive viewing experience with long dramatic tendrils revolving around Tom's unresolved personal issues, as well as multiple conflicts with his boss, underlings, and a tight community that holds secrets of their own. Presenting the entire 2014 first season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes and a photo gallery. Boasting solid writing, direction, and performances, this is recommended. (T. Fry)

## House of Cards: The Complete Second Season

★★★★1/2

Sony, 4 discs, 663 min., not rated, DVD: \$55.99, Blu-ray: \$65.99

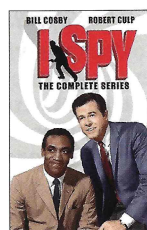


This original Netflix series continues the treacherous, often funny, and always spellbinding saga of antihero Francis Underwood (Kevin Spacey). Francis and his wife, Claire (Robin Wright), have moved into the West Wing as Vice President and Second Lady, and their hunger for power remains insatiable. Francis's unctuous smile and Southern charm hide his murderously Machiavellian brilliance, and such are his powers of manipulation that he makes us complicit by often turning to the camera to directly address the viewer. The situations are gripping, whether focused on a trade war with China, Claire's battle against sexual assault in the military, shady donations to a super PAC, or simply grinding personal enemies into dust. And even though it dives headlong into the bottomless pit of Washington politics, *House of Cards* is just as much about the bleakest conflicts at the center of the human soul. Compiling all 13 episodes from the 2014 second season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes. Serving up many surprises, this dark and delightful series is highly recommended. (T. Fry)

## I Spy: The Complete Series

★★★★

Timeless, 18 discs, 4,100 min., not rated, DVD: \$129.99



Robert Culp and Bill Cosby were TV's hippest Cold Warriors in the 1960s, a pair of jet-setting spies who goofed around like old chums in between tight situations while on cloak-and-dagger cases. Culp was Kelly Robinson, a veteran agent traveling under the guise of a playboy tennis amateur and minor sports celebrity, and Cosby was Alexander Scott, a Rhodes scholar turned American operative who posed as Kelly's trainer. In an era of shows like *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.* and *Mission: Impossible*, which cashed in on the popularity of James Bond, *I Spy* offered something different. Shot in foreign locations in Asia and Europe as well as the U.S., the show downplayed gadgets and gimmicks while

presenting a more streetwise version of international spycraft, often weaving social issues into the stories. The major draw, however, was the chemistry between the actors, whose rapport was established in both teamwork and their often improvised banter. And along with making the world safe for democracy, the duo effectively broke the color barrier by giving viewers black and white partners who were both friends and equals (which led to the series being banned by some TV stations in the American South). *I Spy* ran for three seasons (1965–68) and Cosby won three consecutive Emmy Awards for Outstanding Lead Actor in a Drama Series. Compiling all 82 episodes, this still entertaining classic TV series is recommended. (S. Axmaker)

## The Indian Doctor: Series 3

★★★★1/2

BFS, 2 discs, 227 min., not rated, DVD: \$34.98



The third season of the 1960s-set BBC–aired series centering on an Indian doctor who finds himself practicing medicine in a small Welsh village finds the residents of Trefelin shaken by the unexpected return of Basil and Robert Thomas, long-absent sons of the local mine owner. Indeed, the brothers make a dramatic entrance in a loud American sports car followed by a too-generous offer to buy everyone drinks at the pub. And the eponymous physician, Dr. Prem Sharma (Sanjeev Bhaskar), is taken by surprise when Basil (William Houston) and Robert (Rhydian Jones) offer him a job at a new medical center they are planning to build. But the Thomases actually have bigger real estate undertakings in mind involving the development of a new housing community—a scheme that risks creating more harm than happiness for the people of Trefelin. In the meantime, a cave-in at the mines stirs up anxiety among the locals, especially following the discovery that the disaster resulted from an act of sabotage. While the ensemble cast members turn in fine performances, the stories in this set of five episodes from 2012 are not as compelling as in earlier seasons. Still, fans will likely want to see how everything unfolds, making this a strong optional purchase. (P. Hall)

## Jack Taylor: Set 2

★★★★

Acorn, 3 discs, 280 min., not rated, DVD: \$49.99



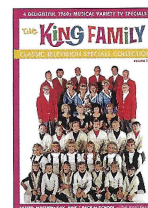
Iain Glen (Jorah Mormont in *Game of Thrones*) is Irish detective Jack Taylor, a hard-drinking ex-cop turned private detective in Galway who has a way of making every case personal. Jack is a likeably gruff private citizen in an Irish culture of shady characters, career criminals, corrupt officials, and a working class that has little faith in the cops. “The

Dramatist,” the first entry in this 2013 second set of made-for TV movies, opens with Jack six months “off the sauce” and working to maintain his sobriety while he helps former colleague Kate (Nora-Jane Noone) look into the apparent suicide of a college girl that she thinks is connected to other deaths. The case takes a toll on both Kate and Jack, who returns to the bottle. Things only get worse in the second mystery, “Priest,” after the murder of a cleric leads to the revelation of buried church secrets, and Jack’s young protégé, Cody (Killian Scott), ends up suffering the consequences. By the third episode, “Shot Down,” Jack has fled Galway, and he helps out a group of travelers (Irish gypsies) when a killing puts a young witness’s life in danger. Throughout, Glen embodies the soiled hero in a corrupt world—as flawed as they come, but ultimately just the man to walk these mean streets. The culture and setting lend the series a distinctive identity, while Glen carves a great character out of the role. Extras include an interview with director Stuart Orme, and photo galleries. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

## The King Family: Classic Television Specials Collection, Volume 1

★★

MVD, 2 discs, 200 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.95



Hopelessly wholesome and obliviously dated, this quartet of King Family holiday specials would make Huey Lewis rethink that whole “hip to be square” thing. This set contains the Easter, Mother’s Day, June, and September (Back-to-School) specials, produced between 1967–69—three of the decade’s most tumultuous years, but you’d never know that here. The King Family roots date back to the 1930s with the harmonizing King Sisters, but with the passing of decades, everyone—it seemed—got into the act (perhaps the most recognizable would be Tina Cole, a costar on *My Three Sons*). Their musical talent is undeniable, but they come across as so perky that one imagines even “Up with People” members would urge them to take it down a notch. For the uninitiated, think of those Maharelle Sisters sketches on *Saturday Night Live*, but even those cannot prepare viewers for the L7-ness of it all, from the winsome renditions of contemporary hits such as “Happy Together” to the bland Southern California outdoor settings (including a shopping center and a botanic garden). The accompanying extras feature some archival goodies, including excerpts from a lost 1968 Valentine’s Day special, home movies, and clips from *The King Family Show* circa 1965. Possibly of interest to Baby Boomer TV buffs, this is an optional purchase. (D. Liebenson)