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## Scarecrow & Mrs. King – The Complete First Season (1983 – 1984/Warner DVD) + Death At Love House (1976/Cheezy Flicks DVD)

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

When **Hart To Hart** was such a smash hit, everyone wanted to have a show like it and none really worked until

**Moonlighting** came along and was still something else. One of the few commercially successful imitators was **Scarecrow & Mrs. King**, the fourth hit TV series for the ever underrated Kate Jackson (**Dark Shadows**, **The Rookies**, **Charlie's Angels**) and up and coming actor Bruce Boxleitner, whose previous work in feature films (**Tron**) and TV genre shows (**Bring 'Em Back Alive**, **How The West Was Won**) had not led to commercial success. This **Complete First Season** changed that.

Boxleitner plays Lee Stetson, whose codename is Scarecrow, is on a job when he is being pursued while holding a very important package. Enter Amanda King, a single mother who is at a train station when he sees her and hands her the package. This leads to them becoming associated and she unwittingly gets involved with the case. Thus, the show was on its way.

Like **Remington Steele**, I was never a big fan, but there was something slightly less phony and plastic about this series thanks to its leads. However, it has too much comedy for its own good and like **Steele**, has not dated as well as **Hart To Hart** because these are Spy shows stuck in The Cold War. KGB agents here in particular seem cartoonish and supporting characters have limited weight, including regulars Mel Stuart (**All In The Family**) and screen legend Beverly Garland.

This set has all 21 hour-long shows over five DVDs and Jackson was still a top name at the time despite not making the transition to the big screen she almost pulled off. She was always in dramatic shows, but this proved she could do outright comedy and that is likely why she signed on. Fans will be happy, but others will note how dated it is and not very edgy.

Jackson had also worked with Robert Wagner of **Hart To Hart** back in a 1976 TV movie called **Death At Love House** for her great friend Aaron Spelling. They play a married couple who are researching a book on Lorna Love, a legendary Hollywood sex goddess, but when they go to her house, it is haunted by her and she wants to claim the husband's soul!



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They work as a couple and have support from a cast that includes Bill Macy (**Maude**) as a real estate agent, Dorothy Lamour, John Carradine, Joan Blondell, Sylvia Sydney and Marianna Hill. It is too short and only so suspenseful, plus we have seen this before. Director E.W. Swackhamer had helmed several Rookies shows with Jackson, but cannot make the James Barnett teleplay work.

The 1.33 X 1 image in both cases were filmed in 35mm, but **King** looks better, more colorful and clean throughout, even from show to show. **Death** has a transfer that looks too soft, has aliasing errors and color is not so good despite what looks like solid cinematography from Director of Photography Dennis Dalzell (**The Rookies, The New Original Wonder Woman**). King should not sound better with Dolby Digital 1.0 Mono versus the PCM 16/48 2.0 Mono on Death, but the episodes sound cleaner while the telefilm has pops, clicks and distortion even TV movies of the time should not have. Laurence Rosenthal (**Coronet Blue, Fantasy Island** and yes, **The Rookies**) scores the telefilm effectively enough.

There are sadly no extras on **King**, but trailers for other films from Cheezy Flicks and some theater/drive-in concession shorts are included on **Death** which are a nice plus.

- Nicholas Sheffo

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