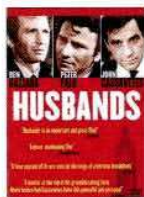


of an abused horse named Spartan—that takes the life of the mother of 15-year-old Amy (Amber Marshall). While Amy, whose father left years ago, struggles to rebound, her grandfather Jack (Shaun Johnston) and older sister Lou (Michelle Morgan) try to save the Heartland ranch with the assistance of pre-teen neighbor Mallory (Jessica Amlee) and new hired hand Ty (Graham Wardle), who's on probation for an unspecified crime. Disagreements run rampant until the core trio come up with a plan: Jack will run the ranch, Amy will train the horses, and Lou will handle business affairs. At first the better-funded Briar Ridge attracts the bulk of Hudson's equestrian business, but the locals ultimately return to Heartland, drawn by reports that Amy shares her mother's acclaimed way with horses. Nonetheless, further challenges lie ahead in the form of Ashley (Cindy Busby), a conceited competitor; the reappearance of Amy's father Tim (Chris Potter), who claims to be a changed man; and some rather ornery clients. DVD extras include five behind-the-scenes featurettes. Recommended. [Note: *Heartland: Season 1, Part 2* is also newly available.] (K. Fennesy)

Husbands ★★★1/2

Sony, 142 min., PG-13, DVD: \$14.95

Director John Cassavetes' 1970 Golden Globe nominated *Husbands*—subtitled “a comedy about life, death and freedom”—follows three married longtime friends (Ben Gazzara, Peter Falk, and Cassavetes), who react to the death of the fourth member of their fun-loving quartet by indulging in their most selfish instincts while trying to outrun both their fear of mortality and the frustrations of compromised lives. The buddies' collective mid-life crisis is the kind of situation often found in Cassavetes' work: personal, discomfiting, intimate films about troubled relationships in the modern world. The men carouse in all-night drinking binges, rush off for a weekend of gambling and cheating in London, and slip into boyish sniggering whenever the situation gets too personal (only while safely hidden in a barroom toilet do they give vent to their fears). As with most of Cassavetes' projects, the script was reworked through rehearsals and improvisations with actors investing themselves deeply in their characters' dramatic crises. The result is a mix of idiosyncratic insight and raw emotion pouring out in startling moments between long, rambling, often uncomfortable conversations that are as much about what is not said as what is, brought to life by raw, intense performances and volatile ensemble chemistry. This DVD restores all 142 minutes of Cassavetes' original version (cut by the studio for wide release), and features richly informative supplements,



including audio commentary by Cassavetes biographer Marshall Fine, and an excellent retrospective documentary featuring new interviews with Gazzara, producer Al Ruban, and cinematographer Victor Kemper. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Icons of Sci-Fi: Toho Collection ★★1/2

Sony, 3 discs, 259 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.98

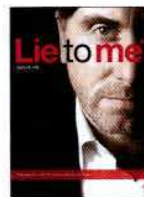
Though his name is conspicuously absent from the cover, the “icon” celebrated in Sony's three-disc *Icons of Sci-Fi: Toho Collection* set is Ishiro Honda, the prolific director of the original *Godzilla* and the best of the giant monster movies that followed it. This anthology highlights his science fiction output with the U.S. DVD debuts of three films: *The H-Man* (1957), a monster/horror picture within a cop drama, where detectives investigating a drug ring discover a gooey radioactive slime creature (predating *The Blob*); *Battle in Outer Space* (1959), a pre-*Star Wars* space opera, short on character and plot but full of nostalgic old-school special effects; and the original *Mothra* (1961), the gem of the set, a marvelous mix of science fiction, monster movie, and adventure fantasy filled with colorful characters and an unmistakable sociopolitical subtext (Toho's gentlest and most benevolent creature, Mothra, a giant multi-colored moth, is a beautiful and visually riveting figure). Superbly mastered, the set features both the original, uncut Japanese versions as well as the English-dubbed American ones, all in full Tohoscope widescreen, with informed audio commentary by sci-fi historians Steve Ryfle and Ed Godziszewski on *Battle in Outer Space* and *Mothra*. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)



Lie to Me: Season One ★★

Fox, 572 min., not rated, DVD: \$49.98 (4 discs), Blu-ray: \$59.99 (3 discs)

“Body language tells the truth” is the mantra of Dr. Cal Lightman (Tim Roth), the top deception expert in The Lightman Group, a firm offering human lie detectors for hire to corporate entities, private clients, and government agencies. Lightman and his fellow experts (partner Kelli Williams and junior agents Brendan Hines and Monica Raymund) spend each of the 13 episodes of this 2009 first season explaining every detail to one another in babblespeak of dubious legitimacy (“in a fake smile, there's no eye wrinkling”). Roth holds the screen as Lightman, an arrogant investigator grown cynical because he knows that everybody lies, and he isn't above using his talents on his own team members, which carries inevitable con-



sequences. But otherwise *Lie to Me* is just the latest incarnation of the formula popularized by *CSI* and its knockoffs—criminal procedurals that focus on specialized talents depicted as the *only* tool to solve every case. While the underlying science is real (inspired in large part by the work of Dr. Paul Ekman and his study of micro-expressions), the characters leap to false conclusions based on the slightest evidence. DVD/Blu-ray extras include a “making-of” featurette and deleted scenes. Optional. (S. Axmaker)

The Lola Falana Show ★★1/2

Video Service Corp, 2 discs, 180 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.98

The four ABC specials from 1976 collected here feature the song, dance, and comedy of Lola Falana, once the highest paid female entertainer in Las Vegas. A long-legged beauty with a dazzling smile, she combined show-stopping numbers in fantastical frocks with skits that ranged from humorous to poignant (some written by Alan Thicke). In the pilot, Falana tells the audience about herself, noting that she was best known for her work in nightclubs and on Broadway (she had also become a star of Italian cinema in the late 1960s). Guests include Hal Linden, Muhammad Ali, Billy Dee Williams, Gabe Kaplan, Redd Foxx, Dick Van Dyke, Art Carney, and Dennis Weaver. Clearly intended to give her ratings a boost, Dinah Shore and Bill Cosby made unannounced appearances in the second special. The shows' sketches take on racial prejudice, self-esteem, motherhood, and cultural touchstones like *The Godfather*, while musical selections include “You're All I Need,” “Stormy Weather,” “Ain't No Mountain High Enough,” and several other R&B and disco numbers. In one of the more delightful bits, Falana and Foxx sing “I Got You Babe” while dressed as Sonny and Cher, after which the real-life couple show up to set them straight. DVD extras on this double-disc set include a biography, photo gallery, and chatty new commentary on the third special from author/producer Nelson George, who compares Falana to her mentor Sammy Davis Jr. and to contemporary superstars like Beyoncé Knowles. A nostalgic blast from the disco-era past, this is highly recommended. Aud: P. (K. Fennesy)



Mister Ed: The Complete First Season ★★★

Shout! Factory, 4 discs, 780 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.99

A newlywed architect gains possession of a talking horse. Yes, they absolutely do not make 'em like this anymore, but what better escape from the onslaught of reality TV than this thorough-

