

A Mark of Excellence

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Blast From the Past: Alfred Hitchcock Presents:

Man on the Edge

Susan Lin



The first blast from the past might be the re-appearance of this column; you could call it a “blast-within-a-blast.” Anyone remember this newsletter feature, where we take a peek into the distant shadows of Mark’s extensive resume, and showcase a gem that you may have missed?

Because these works are on the little-known and not-easily-available side, it’s a more detailed recap than you might find in an typical write-up. Which means there may be minor spoilers along the way, but fear not - I won’t reveal any major surprises! Grab your popcorn; join me on the couch. Get comfy. Put your feet up on the coffee table - it’s allowed.

We’ve been going year by year, and our clock seems to have stopped on the year 1987. Return with us now...Peer back, back, deep into the misty shadows. Dim

shapes are emerging through the clouds....Ronald Reagan is president.... The Iran-Contra scandal is growing...The stock market is crashing....and, horror of horrors, the pop group Wham! is breaking up -

Uh-oh, what’s this we see? Can that be our Mark standing on the ledge of a very tall building?

Fear not, time travelers, Mark has not been driven to despair by the current events - it is merely a scene from “Man on the Edge” - an episode of the TV program *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, and Mark’s character has his own reasons for being just a step away from death.

This TV series could also be called a “blast-within-a-blast.” *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* had its first incarnation during the Master of Suspense’s heyday in the late 1950s and early 60s. Each episode, book-ended by Hitchcock’s droll, deadpan commentary, was a self-contained story, often revolving around a suspicious death and ending with an ironic twist.

The second generation of the show began in 1985, and while it sometimes used the original show’s scripts, all the episodes were newly-filmed. The only scenes that were kept were the Hitchcock spots, but in keeping with the decade’s colorization craze, they were given a little shot of Roy G. Biv to more closely match the look of the new shows.

Since “Man on the Edge” was a brand-new story, there wasn’t an appropriate clip from the late, famed director to introduce it; it simply begins by panning over some skyscrapers. Watching from our comfortable couch, which sits firmly in 2006, we can’t help but chuckle at the first sight of Mark walking along a downtown street clad all in light-blue denim, the jean jacket complete with enormous sheepskin collar and lapels. Nice threads, Mark! Is this an ‘80s thing? I’m trying to remember - When was the Urban Cowboy craze? Because, look, he’s wearing cowboy boots, too....

Then it dawns that this character is simply out of place in the big city, as he enters a high-rise hotel, and speaks in a southern twang - how is it that so many of Mark’s roles call for that? It *is* rather irresistible, that accent....Even though our handsome country boy hasn’t enough money to properly tip the bellhop, his friendly demeanor instantly has the folks on both sides of the screen on his side. Thus we’re all quite distressed when the bellhop returns to the room a moment later and sees that the likeable young southerner is now standing on the ledge

outside, clearly planning to jump.

What could be driving him to end it all? Well, since flashbacks are decidedly in keeping with our “blast from the past” theme, it’s only fitting to report that “Man on the Edge” is chock full of them. Our story constantly teeters between present and past. We know the first flashback is near as the camera pulls in tight, tighter....Mark’s face is in close-up, but his gaze is distant. The wind ruffles his hair....his faraway look isn’t trained on the cityscape, oh, no...those beautiful blue eyes are looking inward -

Hmmmm? Where was I? Oh, yes, the flashback. Like memory itself, the scene is a little dimmer than the present. We’re in an apartment, and Danny (Mark) and his wife Sally are having a talk which quickly reveals the troubles of this Arkansas couple. Money is tight. Earlier in the day his wife had fainted from hunger into the arms of a kind stranger. Danny’s concern nearly keeps him from revealing his own day’s news: he’s been fired.

Back at the hotel, things are aswirl above and below. In the room the cops are cynically businesslike, while on the street the crowd chants, “Jump! Jump!” The only one who seems to doubt the inevitability of a grim spectacle is Lieutenant Muldoon, a police psychologist, but it doesn’t look good for the lone optimist. He doesn’t have the best track record, as the cop is quick to remind him. And Danny doesn’t seem all that interested in talking. It isn’t long before an attempt to coax Danny within arm’s reach is botched; “I think he’s gonna jump,” Muldoon mutters in disgust to the cops.

But no, the only jumping taking place right now is a jump backwards in time - cue the next flashback! Sally is telling Danny

she’s leaving. She wants a divorce, because she’s in love with a man named Rick, who just happens to be the kind stranger she mentioned in Flashback #1.

Flashback #3 reveals Danny drinking alone one night in the dim apartment, listening to his answering machine. A desperate message begins to play.... “Danny? It’s Sally....Rick left me, just like you said he would....I’ve taken some pills...”

Danny leaps from his chair, calls for an ambulance, and rushes to Sally’s new address - but it’s all too late. Back into the glare of daylight we go, back out onto the ledge, where Danny’s inward look is now washed over with a haunting heartache.

In between the flashbacks, Muldoon continues trying to talk Danny back inside. From time to time he seems to be making progress; at one point he even elicits a laugh, yet, just as quickly, it seems Danny is about to step off.



Narrow as that ledge is, Mark has all the room he needs to display his impressive acting chops. He teeters on the edge of several emotions - desperation, suspicion, amusement, bitterness - moving from one to another with the ease of an acrobat. It’s his facile unpredictability that keeps the suspense going where it might otherwise flag; “Man on the Edge” has some admittedly artificial dialogue. It’s hard, after all, to present a full life story in the space of less than half an hour; the screenwriters didn’t have the luxury of rambling on, as I am doing now.

Mark’s gift is to make the most of every moment, and he does in

every scene, turning the lines from hokey into heartfelt, expository into emotional. It’s his performance that ultimately brings us to the edge of our couch, our feet off the coffee table and firmly planted on the floor: *What will happen?* Because in spite of all the heartbreak, it begins to look like Muldoon will succeed in talking Danny back inside. “They came for a show,” Muldoon tells him, indicating the chanting crowd below. “Don’t give it to them.”

Too late, Muldoon, we say to the screen, out here, we’re watching the show we came for, and it’s a good one....

Meanwhile, on the screen, Danny is clearly thinking it over; his face shows it all. Yes....yes...He’s looking back at the open window, and slowly nodding....

Phhhhtttt! Oops, I seem to have changed the channel by accident. So sorry - how did that happen? The tape is still running - You’ll miss the ending! Does it have the classic Hitchcock twist? Oh, where’s that remote? Did it fall between the cushions? So sorry, so sorry! Ah, here it is....

Click. The full-color Hitch is tied to a railroad track, his shoes looming comically large in the foreground. He lifts his head to speak to the camera: “A train should be coming along any minute,” he casually remarks. “Oh, here’s one now....” *Roarrrrr.* Blackout.

This concludes our Blast-from-the-Past version of “Man on the Edge.” Terribly bad luck that I couldn’t show you the ending; it was a good one indeed, one I never saw coming. So sorry to leave you all hanging like that. Perhaps I should have called this write-up “*Fan on the Edge....*”



Notes from the Editor



We're kicking off a year-long tenth anniversary celebration a bit early!!

The **IMHFC** annually makes a donation to **CHPHP** in honour of Mark's birthday. In recognition of the beginning of the 10th year as Mark's sanctioned fan club and a fun way to have members participate in raising additional funds to donate to Mark's charity of choice, we have an incentive!

From now through 31 August 2006, for each dollar the fan club member donates for this, two slips with their name will be placed in an envelope. On 25 September 2006, two lucky members' slips will be pulled. The first member will have a choice between an issue of

'*The Black Pearl*' or a '*Galactic Heroes Luke Skywalker + Speeder Bike*' set personalized and autographed by Mark! The second member will receive the other gift, also personalized and autographed by Mark! The winners will be notified on 25th September, and the announcement will be in the 25 December 2006 newsletter.

As the fan club's gift, each current member as of 25 September 2006, will have 1 slip in the envelope.

Time-line:
now through 31 August:

for every dollar you donate for **CHPHP**, 2 slips with your name will be placed in an envelope

Early September:

all money donated will be sent to **CHPHP** in time for Mark's birthday



25 September:

1 slip per current member placed in envelope
2 lucky members' slips pulled and they are notified

25 December:

winners are announced in the 25 December 2006 newsletter

Send your donation along with the slip below to:

IMHFC

PO Box 287

Grand Blanc MI 48480

US

If sending a money order, it needs to be in USD.

10th Anniversary Celebration CHPHP Donation

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____

Country: _____ ZIP/Post Code: _____

Did You Catch?

The full Comcast advert, 'Probe'? Sadly, the video of this was up on YouTube and IFilm for about a day before Comcast took it down. If you have caught their ad on television, with the group discussion concerning the future, this video is a longer 'talk show' version, so to speak. Remember, 'there's "The Future" and there's "THE FUTURE"!'!

Mark is an alumnus of LACC, Los Angeles City College. As one of the theatre programme's out-

standing graduates, he was invited to 'Glittering Diamonds', the celebration of LACC Theatre's 75 years of history. It was held, in December 2005, at the Camino Theatre. Mark and Cindy Williams were among those delighting the audience with stories of when they attended LACC.

Mark as Paul Dini's special guest on the first episode of *Monkey Talk*? Check out



<http://filmforce.ign.com/articles/695/695253p1.html>

This space is blank for the slip on the other side :)

Mark on dvd: The Full DISClosure

Susan Lin

It seems like every time I turn around, I **discover** that yet another item in Mark's extensive credits list can be found on DVD. Did you know "Son of the Beach" was on DVD?

How about Mark's guest spot on "The Partridge Family"? It's hard to keep up with them all. You'd think with that lovely thing called the Internet it would all be just a click away, but it's tricky. An Amazon search will find movies, but misses the TV shows. EBay items can be a bit...questionable with regards to their authenticity. The IMDB credits list is fairly thorough, but you have to click each title to find out whether it's been released in any format at all. A nuisance, all of it.

In past issues we've already been **discussing** brand-new and upcoming DVD releases, but even that can get confusing - can you remember, for instance, if *Conan: Red Nails* is out yet? (Answer: No, still in production). How about *Robot Chicken*? Yes, or no, depending on when you read this: The current release date is March 28.

So confusing. Wouldn't it be nice, I thought to myself, if there was a list, a handy list, a list all in one place, of all Mark's work that is currently available on DVD? One gloriously comprehensive list. *What a great idea*, I thought, and started compiling the list....and compiling....

Wow. That's....that's...a mighty big pile I'm compiling here. A mighty long list. And that's just Region One....

So in the interest of full **disclosure**, I must confess: the list got so long, I just plain ran out of time to finish it.

Still, we haven't given up on the idea, and so over the next few issues, we'll be giving you not one, but a series of handy checklists of DVD titles, maybe even with clever themes, to help you keep track of them all. By Christmastime you should have more than enough information to make a "**disc**" gustingly long wish list!

This issue's theme is **New Releases**, and we'll admit that for now we're being a bit **discriminatory** - this information is for US releases only. What qualifies as "new?" We thought it fitting to set the date at January 2004, to coincide with *Comic Book: The Movie*'s release - it makes a distinguished benchmark, what with that Best Picture DVD award and all. Here, in alphabetical order, are the latest DVD titles for Mark Hamill fans. Use your own **discretion**; some of these have far more Mark minutes than others!



Batman - The Animated Series - Vol 1, 2, 3, 4

Batman - 2-disc special edition (Mark narrates the bonus feature "Legends of the Dark Knight: The History of Batman")

The Big Red One: The Reconstruction

Comic Book: The Movie



Corvette Summer

The Flash: The Complete Series



Justice League - Season One (March 21st)



The Partridge Family: The Complete 1st Season

Nausicaä of the Valley of the Winds



Reeseville

Saturday Night Live: The Best of Chris Kattan (Mark's 1997 skit)



The Simpsons: Bart Wars (the "Mayored to the Mob" episode)

Striperella Season 1

3rd Rock from the Sun: Season 2



Ultimate Avengers



Wizards

and, oh, a multi-disc something or other called Star Wars Trilogy

Ironic-twist ending: Note that "The List" (from *Just Shoot Me*) is NOT on the list! Season 3 isn't on DVD.



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The Last Word...

A Mark of Excellence is the quarterly newsletter of the **International Mark Hamill Fan Club**. Yearly dues are \$15 US, and include 4 consecutive issues of the newsletter, a membership card, access to the fan club area on the website, and special mailings as appropriate.

Submissions, including photos or original artwork, are welcomed; final editing is the discretion of the editor. If you wish your photo or artwork returned please enclose a sase, and attach your name/address on the back of your submission.

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