



A Decade in Review: The Top 10 Spy Television Shows of 2000-2009

by
Wesley Britton with Craig Arthur and David E. Foster

Introduction

This feature on the best TV spy projects of the 21st Century is rather different from the other “Decade in Review” articles posted here at Spywise.net. Parts I and II of the overviews on spy movies (available in “Spies on Film”) and books (in the “Spies in History and Literature” files) are compilations of perspectives from a variety of writers. I was but one of the international cast of contributors to those surveys. But, not surprisingly I suppose, I became the primary voice of this retrospective of the best spy television broadcast this past decade.

I say not surprisingly because, after all, I’m the author of *Spy Television* (Praeger, 2003) and *The Encyclopaedia of TV Spies* (Bear Manor Media, 2009). In those books and many articles at various websites, I’ve reviewed and critiqued pretty much every espionage-oriented series, mini-series, and TV movie ever produced. So I worried any “Top 10” overview like this one drawing so much from my point of view would essentially be repeating what I’ve said elsewhere. I must say that while I’m a historian of spy television, that doesn’t make my opinion on any “best of” list any more credible than any other attentive TV viewer. Thankfully, Craig Arthur and David Foster contributed insights that make what follows, I hope, a bit more varied than it could have been.

So, regarding my part of this essay, how do I offer something fresh here without repeating old ground you can explore in considerable depth in *Spy Television* or the encyclopaedia? Well, this time around, I’ll take off my researcher’s hat and get personal with no pretence of reference-volume objectivity. I’ll leave out most of the background material of production histories, studio and network conflicts etc. and simply share why I think we had a very good 10 years of spy TV. We did, we really did, second only to the heyday of the 1960s. We just enjoyed a decade of considerable variety, from “Spy-Fi” to chilling realism. There were so many programs, not all the quality efforts could be included here. No doubt fans of series like *Chuck* or *E-Ring* will wonder why their favourites didn’t make the cut. Well, no doubt others would champion realistic offerings including shows like *Threat Matrix* and mini-series like *The Grid*, *The Company*, and NatGeo’s excellent *Spies, Lies, and The Super*

Bomb. While three “Spy-Fi” programs are in this “Top Ten,” I didn’t include personal favourites like *Seven Days* which ended its under-appreciated run in May 2001 and *Fringe*, admittedly a spy show in only the broadest terms. I doubt many would consider the strangely executed *My Own Worst Enemy* as among the best of anything, but I suspect there’s a minority voice that would have good things to say about the 2009 remake of *The Prisoner*. Sorry, I think there are better choices.

If some descriptions below are longer than others, that’s because there’s already plenty out there on programs like the Big Three: *Alias*—J. J. Abrams’ triumph—*24*—the most controversial and innovative series of the past 10 years—and *Burn Notice*—clearly the most beloved spy show in many a moon. However, as some choices are likely to be unfamiliar to some readers, a number of discussions required greater depth. Now, I won’t get quite as informal as Ian Dickerson’s companion article—“A Decade in Review: What the Brits Saw and What We Didn’t” (also here in the “Spies on Television and Radio” files)—and Craig and Dave have their own ways of saying things. Perhaps these capsule reviews might inspire you to explore my books—along with the shows themselves— and, of course, there’s nothing wrong with that!

Lastly, unlike the other pieces in these overviews, this “Top 10” won’t appear in chronological order but instead from the most top-notch down to the intriguing and interesting series that either lost their way or were broadcast for only a season or two. Be sure to take notes—and let me know what you think! Expect some surprises . . .



1: **24** (Fox) Nov. 6, 2001--present

It might be hard to remember, but in the weeks after 9/11, three new spy series debuted for the fall 2001 season, the first time that had happened in many a year. Two of them—*Alias* and *24*—went on to high-flying success. The other, *The Agency*, went on to have two more-or-less decent seasons, hampered by a production crew never quite finding the footing that would merge entertainment with realism.

Of the three, *24* remains the champion, and is about to launch its eighth and likely final season. Like no other series this decade, *24* is the show that has most resonated with contemporary concerns in both historical contexts and cultural themes. Its first year, *24* was known for its innovative style and harsh look into counter-terrorism with a focus on the family of Jack Bauer. As the years progressed, some seasons better realized than others, the show

became a sounding board for a national debate on just how far should intelligence operatives go to fight the “War on Terror.” All along, the lynchpin in the less than subtle sub-texts blending perceived fact with uncertain fiction was the rock-solid performance of Keifer Sutherland as the most conflicted hero in television. In fact, Jack Bauer became one of the “Three JB’s” of the decade—Matt Damon’s Jason Bourne, Daniel Craig’s James Bond, and Sutherland’s Jack Bauer. For my money, any of these could have been the central figure in *Quantum of Solace* (2008) as each share far more than flinty toughness, intelligence, and resourcefulness. Together, they define the decade in terms of what audiences expect in our heroes—loyalty, self-reliance, self-sacrifice, and, most important, a willingness to do what few of us could. *24* is more than a successful series—it’s a chronicle of who we’ve become since 9/11.



2. *Burn Notice* (USA) June 28, 2007—present

Anecdotally speaking, I know of no other spy series with as wide a demographic appeal as *Burn Notice*. While Matt Nix clearly had the 18-49 spread in mind, *Burn Notice*'s mix of humor, action, and character development reminded many a Baby Boomer of what they loved about the classic series of the 1960s. But, in a strange way, it's not really a spy show per se. True, the premise of the show is that Michael Westen is on a quest to regain his old job and every episode is crammed with “When you're a spy” observations and use of Westen's training and skills. But the stories are mainly *The Equalizer* meets *The Rockford Files* with Westen and team constantly distracted from his quest and rather getting drawn into aiding the innocent in achieving extra-legal justice. *Nothing wrong with that—this just limits Westen's scope to Miami, not exactly a typical hotbed of spy vs. spy intrigue.*

The core of the show, of course, is the intertwined lives of the full cast, notably the most colorful second-banana in the biz, Bruce Campbell's engaging Sam Axe. I've never felt Fiona Glenanne (Gabrielle Anwar) has been developed to her potential, but we've only had three seasons. And then there's Mom and brother Ned in refreshing, adult relationships far different from the typical old spy engaged in recriminations about being a poor spouse or parent.

Burn Notice also benefits from being one of the modern-breed of limited seasons when a full rack of twenty-plus stories aren't required each year. We get enough episodes to get things cranked up, and then we're left in anticipation for what will happen next for Mikie and Co. If this goes on, *Burn Notice* will be a feature in another “Decade in Review” ten years from now.



3. **Alias** (ABC) Sept. 30, 2001--May 22, 2006

Here's what New Zealander Craig Arthur has to say about *Alias*:

“Although hampered by its science fiction story arc concerning a fictional Nostradamus-like Renaissance figure “Milo Rabaldi” and his Leonardo da Vinci-like inventions which place this show in Lara Croft territory (especially given protagonist Sidney Bristow’s globe trotting missions), there is still an interesting element of deception as Bristow (Jennifer Garner) attempts to bring down the nefarious private intelligence agency SD-6 from the inside and to conceal her secret life from her friends. In later seasons, however, the plot twists become increasingly nonsensical and self-defeating. Some great cameo performances by actors as diverse as Sir Roger Moore, Ricky Gervais, Quentin Tarantino, David Carradine and Faye Dunaway.”

For me, what kept me interested in *Alias* wasn't its mix of fast-paced action (rather repetitive as the seasons progressed), the soap operish character interactions (could the CIA be so limited as to need only a handful of operatives sharing beds and bloodlines?), or the story-arcs that expanded plot lines beyond the 45 minute adventures typical of most other series. It was the style, not the substance.

While the two series were on the air, *24* was the show we had to sit on the edge of our seats to view intently, *Alias* was the one we could kick back and let the visuals and sound wash over us. It was fun stuff, ear and eye-candy that diverted us from the evening news.



4. **La Femme Nikita (USA)** Jan. 13, 1997--March 4, 2001

While only two seasons rightly belong to the decade being discussed here, *La Femme Nikita* was an important contribution to the spy genre. In many ways *Nikita* was a richer and more artistically stylized show than *Alias* because, broadcast on a cable channel and produced in Canada, it fortunately didn't have to be as "consumer-friendly" as programs on a major network like ABC. Its best years were its early seasons before the "suits" tried to play just those games, most notoriously when USA president Stephen Chao thought it would be a marvelous idea to guest-star wrestlers from the WWE to reach that demographic. The final episodes, as a result, lost some of the punch but *Nikita* remained the series that best demonstrated what was to come in the new millennium.

Far more than a cult favorite, in fact, *Nikita* prefigured many elements that would dominate post-9/11 programming. Alongside *The X-Files*, the show relied on ongoing story arcs, darker tones, and personal conflicts to emphasize the repercussions of individual choices, both moral and professional. It established, although didn't create, the mold of players in an ensemble cast who each have mixed motives, important back-stories, and all working for an organization more than questionable in its means and ends. While again not the first character to be in this situation, Peta Wilson's *Nikita* helped shape the template of characters having a personal quest that linked the episodes—*Nikita* wanting out of dirty work, Michael Westen wanting his old job back, Sidney Bristow wanting to take down SD-6, etc. Without question, *Alias* was an obvious re-working of *Nikita*'s premises and themes, and Joel Surnow and *Nikita* executive consultant Robert Cochran went on to create the equally hard-edged *24*. In fact, a number of *Nikita* participants went on to *24* including producers Robert Lenkov and Howard Gordon and composer Sean Callery. Nominated for 18 Canadian Gemini Awards, all five seasons have been released on DVD and are a must-have in any serious collection of spy television.



5. **Spooks** (A.K.A. MI-5) (In U.K., BBC-1) May 13, 2002—present, (In U.S., A&E, renamed MI-5) July 22, 2003-- Oct. 21, 2006

Craig Arthur says this series was “Chic, tense and suspenseful. One of the best spy series of all time though the first two seasons remain the best, before Matthew Macfadyen’s departure and the gradual shift in the show’s premise. The focus used to be on the character’s reconciling their private lives with the need to maintain the secrecy of their work. Gradually the premise changed to storylines more like the American series 24, dealing with double agents and terrorist plots. While the characters still maintained their depth and humanity, sensationalism replaced reality.”

It’s true that *Spooks* began as one of the best realistic (often brutal) dramas in the tradition of *The Sandbaggers* and lost much of its character development after the first few seasons. But the real problem for the show in the states was A&E, once an engaging alternative to other cable channels, when it pretty much dropped its “Arts” component and went to light “Entertainment” in its offerings. As a result, the latter years found *Spooks* aired sporadically, in shifting time slots, and thus lost its base in America. The first two years are essential DVD viewing. Thereafter is a matter of how much patience you have in finding the episodes.



6. **Intelligence** (Canada only, CBC) Oct. 10, 2006— December 10, 2007

On April 29, 2008, Acorn Media released the first season of Canada’s *Intelligence* on DVD in the Region 1 format. Finally, those of us south of the border got our first chance to experience one of the finest espionage-oriented television series ever produced. After seeing

the second season (issued last year), I had to wonder—why can't American networks do something on this level of, well, intelligence?

The multi-layered program aired as a series from October 10, 2006 to December 10, 2007 on the CBC, roughly Canada's equivalent of the BBC. Producer and writer Chris Haddock created *Intelligence*, describing the show as "half gangster, half espionage," and that's a fair summation. That is, if you can accept mobsters without Italian accents and no desire for bloodletting. The gangster half of the show revolved around Ian Tracy as Jimmy Reardon, a third-generation Vancouver crime boss overseeing his family's legacy in shipping, money laundering, and pot smuggling. The espionage half centered on Klea Scott as Mary Spalding, daughter of an Army intelligence officer and head of Vancouver's Organized Crime Unit. A black woman operating in a male-dominated realm, she wanted to move upstairs to become chief of the Asia Pacific Region of the Canadian Security and Intelligence Service (CSIS).

Throughout the two season run, Spalding and Reardon had parallel storylines, with both their criminal and law enforcement activities complicated by rivalries with their respective competitors, most notably American agencies or gangs seeking control over Canadian interests. In the pilot, Spalding—as savvy, crafty, and strong-willed a spymaster as has ever been seen on either the small or large screen—began building her own independent network of informants by crafting an uneasy alliance with Reardon. She offered him immunity from prosecution in exchange for his becoming an informant on major criminal activity, notably gun smuggling like ships in Panama carrying arms destined for the Congo. At the same time, Spalding planted a dancer in Reardon's club to spy on him while she established a relationship with the head of an escort service. And, after discovering one of her Chinese translators is a mole, Spalding turned him into her own double-agent.

Throughout season one, Spalding also learns her agency—indeed all of Canadian intelligence—is riddled with moles as well as subordinates who'd like to see her go, especially the vicious veteran intelligence agent Ted Altman (Matt Frewer), her scheming second-in-command. Along the way, Spalding learns just how far the tentacles of the U.S. reach into Canadian intelligence. This is called "deep integration" of U.S. and Canadian political and economic systems which included American intelligence agents infiltrating Canadian institutions.

If all this seems like much too much for any one series to carry, *Intelligence* was driven by well-crafted scripts by Chris Haddock who carefully blended in new characters and developments from episode to episode. Using a snowballing menu of perspectives, his storylines unfolded in well-balanced shifts from the criminal machinations to the turf wars inside Canadian law enforcement. Better, every character was fully realized, totally believable, and, especially in the case of Spalding, almost jaw-dropping in their abilities to maintain their own balancing acts. All this overlapping of criminal conspiracies and espionage in the plots drew, in part, from Haddock's notion that drugs are the crucial modern industry. In his view, information--the buying and selling of "intel" on everything from heroin trafficking to international terrorism--is the most addictive and profitable drug of all.

While it was on the air, *Intelligence* developed a strong fan base, received critical favor, was sold to 143 foreign markets, and earned 11 Gemini nominations. However, at the end of the second year, citing poor ratings, the CBC pulled the plug, apparently nervous about a drama that pushed the boundaries wide open in both substance and style. That's the one drawback to *Intelligence*—the final scene is a shocking cliffhanger, never to be resolved.

If I haven't made it clear—don't miss *Intelligence*! It is something special for anyone who ever appreciated *The Sandbaggers*, *Danger Man*, or, well, few shows are like it. With any luck, more in its mold will be coming—and would be most welcome from any country of origin. (Available on Netflix, if that helps.)



7. **Sleeper Cell: American Terror** (Showtime) Dec. 4-18, 2005; Dec. 10--17, 2006

I'll let David Foster get in the first words on this one:

Showtime's *Sleeper Cell*—the first series anyway—was an amazing piece of television, presenting, as it did, maybe not a balanced, but a unique and different view of terrorism. In the show, each terrorist is presented as a fleshed out human. Why they have chosen the path they have is explored, and how they fit in to U.S. culture is depicted rather chillingly. One moment a character maybe teaching math at a local high school, the next he is planning a deadly anthrax attack on the local shopping centre.

The series is bound together by two central core performances. The first is Michael Ealy as Darwyn Al-Sayeed, a deep cover FBI agent whose mission is to stop the terrorist attack the sleeper cell is planning to perpetrate. Ealy's character is dragged through the wringer over the course of the series, and each emotional bump in the journey packs a wallop. It doesn't hurt that Ealy is a good-looking guy with piercing green eyes. Then there is Oded Fehr as the utterly charming, charismatic and deadly Faisal Al-Farik, the leader of the terrorist cell. Farik maybe the most evil character in the series, but there too is much duality to his character. Whilst not planning terrorist attacks he is seen as the coach to a junior baseball team. That, in essence, is *Sleeper Cell*'s major coup; it makes evil men at times seem rather likeable and normal. If you met some of these characters in the street, you may even like them and consider them friends, without knowing what atrocities they may be planning.

In some ways, *Sleeper Cell* presents an explanation as to why and how the events on 9/11 happened. It's a question many of us asked – 'How!' and 'Why?' *Sleeper Cell* is one of the few shows to address these questions, and as such makes it possibly one of the most important shows of the last decade.

That's David's take—here's mine:

Perhaps the best televised attempt to look inside the mindset of terrorists out to harm us, the two series of *Sleeper Cell* were both compelling and tragic, in the sense they demonstrated that evil hides among us in plain sight.

In the first ten hour, eight episode run, 30 year old FBI undercover agent Darwyn Al-Sayeed (Michael Ealy), An African-American practicing Muslim, infiltrated a sleeper cell of Islamic extremists based in Los Angeles. To establish his bona fides to the group's leader, the brutal and calculating Faris al-Farik (Oded Fehr), Al-Fayseed had to participate in the murder of a hapless cell member who carelessly leaked information about the group to a family member in Egypt. Posing as a devout Jew, the well-trained Al-Farik built his unit with members from a variety of ethnic groups including the blond-haired white American, Tommy Emerson (Blake Shields), a privileged son of liberal activists. Christian Aumont (Alex Netic) was from French descent and a former Skinhead and National Front member. Ilija Korjenic (Henry Lubatti) had seen his family killed in Bosnia and was out for revenge. While the group posed as normal citizens enjoying family picnics and baseball, Al-Fayseed reported to FBI senior agent Ray Fuller (James LeGros) who had to battle with superiors to keep Al-Fayseed in place after the murder of the screw-up cell member. This turned out to be wise as the cell was after big fish in the killing game, and only a mole in the unit saved fans of a baseball game at Dodgers Stadium. And that was only the first season.

admittedly too realistic for commercial networks, the show gained credibility with input from Islamic and Arabic specialists, experts in counterterrorism and biological and chemical weapons, and FBI agents. Once again, the questions are raised about the morality of defeating terrorists with a more docu-drama approach. Powerful stuff.



8. **Jericho** (CBS) September 20, 2006—March 25, 2008

Some readers of my *Encyclopedia of TV Spies* questioned some of my choices as many series have espionage-flavored elements but are more strictly classified as science-

fiction or some other genre. Well, I see many overlaps and connections that I describe in detail in the book's introduction.

In this case, *Jericho*, of course, was more a program best described as “speculative fiction” with an ensemble cast of ordinary people thrust into an extraordinary situation—that of being survivors of a massive nuclear attack on the U.S. One figure who knows some secrets about this is former CIA agent Robert Hawkins (Lennie James). As part of the online publicity for the first season, Hawkins was the featured character in a series of “prequel” webisodes named “Countdown” that took place before the pilot. Available for viewing on the main *Jericho* website, “Countdown” had Hawkins watching films on nuclear disasters before he escaped as government agents broke into his room. Clues into the conspiracy he had glimpses into were also signaled to viewers of broadcast episodes by way of Morse code messages sent to Hawkins at the beginning of each hour. Along the way, other agents and conspirators come looking for Hawkins, and thus spy v. spy battles become part of the testy duels suffered in a once sleepy mid-west town.

A truncated second season of 7 episodes was aired to finish off the well-received if under-watched series. Despite its broadcast failure, *Jericho* was one of CBS' Innertube's most-watched shows. The second-season premiere sold more than 700,000 copies, making it one of iTunes' most downloaded shows. It was an intelligent, carefully woven program now worthy of your DVD diet even if the grand finale was rather rushed and open-ended.



9. **Secret Adventures of Jules Verne, The** (Sci Fi Channel) June 18—Dec. 16, 2000

Ten years later, I'm still astonished this short-lived nugget isn't more discussed or getting the praise it deserved. Even more astonishing is the fact it's not out on DVD. So I'm going to include my full *Encyclopedia of TV Spies* article here as so little is on the web about this classic:

Created by producer Gavin Scott in 1999, *Secret Adventures* was the first all-digitally produced television series ever made. Scott's premise was that science fiction writer Jules Verne's classic tales were not created out of whole cloth from the writer's imagination, but were instead inspired by his own wild adventures as a youth, later fictionalized as stories.

Set in the 1860s, the young Bohemian writer Jules Verne (Chris Demetral) was drawn into the war against the League of Darkness, an aristocratic organization wishing to retain

power for the rich and nobly born by stirring up wars because peace promotes democracy. Verne's compatriots included the cynical gambler Phileas Fogg (Michael Praed), the son of Sir Boniface Fogg, the deceased creator of the British Secret Service. His cousin was Rebecca Fogg (Francesca Hunt), the very Emma Peel-like leather-clad first woman secret agent for the service. Rebecca idolized her late uncle, while Phileas remained angry his father sent his brother, Erasmus, to his death on a secret mission. Phileas' multi-talented manservant, Passepartout (Michel Courtemanche), brought Verne's scientific ideas to life in his lab on the fantastic airship, "Aurora." Fogg won this dirigible in a Montreal card game rigged by the British government to have him involved in saving the Empire from various threats. This group's adventures included destroying a giant mole machine designed to assassinate Queen Victoria, defeating a madman's attempt to take over the world with rocket-powered vampires, going back in time to reunite the Three Musketeers, helping the Union army during the Civil War, assisting a young Thomas Edison who's invented a new tank, fighting Jesse James and his gang who've taken over the "Aurora," and stopping the evil Count Gregory from stealing the Holy Grail in another dimension.

When production began, there were worries no American outlet would pick up the Montreal-based project until the 22 episodes were filmed and the Sci-Fi channel took note. While the concept seemed unworkable on paper, the final product was fresh, unique in format and execution. Scott and his team created one of the world's largest production facilities to house the project called Angus Yards, a former train depot. It was equipped with complete costume, prop and set design shops, computer graphics facilities, and the world's largest green screen. Costs were maintained by housing production and post-production in the same building, allowing for quick integration of special effects with live action.

While all involved with the series emphasized its science-fiction aspects, connections to the secret agent genre were evident on many levels. According to one producer, the show was "like The X-Files style of fantasy, where you believe it and it did really happen to those guys, only with the higher production values." One connection to *The Wild Wild West* was the recurring adversary, Count Gregory (Rick Overton), the armor-clad, half-metal leader of an ageless cult. He evoked similar villains of *WWW*'s television and movie incarnations while representing the dark side of the 19th century Industrial Age.

Francesca Hunt's Rebecca Fogg evoked *The Avengers* spirit as she alternated between coy demurness and aggressive fighting, being the central action figure in the series. Also like *The Avengers*, according to Hunt, a key element of the series was the ironic British sense of humor. She noted the difficulty of modern action adventure acting with new special-effects, claiming it takes a special ability to gawk at and speak to rockets or people that aren't there until the digital experts work with the film. Like honor Blackman, whose judo skills from her *Avengers* days made her the leading candidate to play Pussy Galore, Hunt performed her own stunts and employed her four years of training in dancing and swordplay, the latter a skill she never expected to use in her career. Notable guest stars included Patrick Duffy, John Rhys-Davies, Michael Moriarty, Margot Kidder, Polly Draper, and David Warner. While plans were underway to film a second season, the project was dropped. To date, no DVD release has been issued.

So, if there are any Powers That Be who can bring this especially well-done series back—at least in terms of making the one season commercially available—the time is overdue. Very.



10. **Invisible Man, The** (Sci-Fi Channel) June 10, 2000-Feb. 1, 2002

Here's yet another example of where quality is quashed by costs.

When this fourth incarnation of an invisible spy debuted, it earned the largest audience viewing an original program on the SciFi Channel to that date. There was a lot to like. The central character was French-Canadian Darien Fawkes (Vincent Ventresca) who was a convicted thief forced to be a guinea pig in a secret government experiment. A synthetic gland secreting light bending quicksilver was inserted into his brain allowing him to become invisible. But it also began destroying his higher mental capabilities. Fawke's quest in the series was to find a means to have this gland safely removed.

The personality of the mysterious organization Fawkes worked for was seen through the various supporting characters including his bantering, unsophisticated partner Bobby Hobbs (Paul Ben-Victor). Alex Monroe (Brandi Lanford) was the lead female agent who'd transferred to the unnamed Agency after her newborn son was kidnapped and her ongoing quest was to recover him from the evil organization, Chrysalis. Albert Eberts (Michael Mccafferty) was the verbose computer nerd wishing for opportunities to perform field work. Administrating this small and under budgeted group was "The Official," Charles Borden (Eddie Jones).

From the beginning, the series' producers avoided overworked science-fiction subjects like aliens or alternate universes, so the show kept close to its secret agent foundations without veering off into overused subjects on other series. Geared for a broad audience, especially 18-49 year olds, the dark themes were tempered with well-written humor. One running gag was the names of continually changing cover agencies "absorbing" the department—whose budgets the Official drew from—completely unrelated to espionage. Thus Fawkes and Hobbs were rarely taken seriously when they announced they worked for the Department of Fish and Game, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, or the United States Post Office.

After the show ended due to high costs and differences between the Sci-Fi Channel and its parent company, USA, the show was cancelled which inspired an on-line letter campaign including postcards and fliers ready-made for use by disappointed viewers. This led

to an unusual request from USA after the 2001 anthrax scare. the network posted a note to "Invisible Maniacs" asking they not send "packages of Kool-Aid and glitter (or any other powdery substance). Due to the state of heightened security throughout the country and the U.S. Postal system, any and all questionable mail is being met with extreme scrutiny." (Powdery substances were symbolic of the gold flakes that fell off Fawkes' body after he returned to visibility.) Thankfully, the show is now available on DVD and well worth viewing. Highly recommended.

Mini-Series Honourable Mention

Master Spy: The Robert Hanssen Story (CBS) Nov. 10-17, 2002

In the "Decade in Review" articles on spy films, the Director of Adult Education for the International Spy Museum, Amanda Olke, chose *Breach* as one of her picks for best of the decade. Craig Arthur had this to say regarding the TV version of the same events:

"This two part mini-series explores the same real life events as the 2007 movie, *Breach*. But *Breach* focused on Eric O'Neill, the young FBI recruit who helped entrap Hanssen and did not really explore the mentality of Hanssen the double agent. In *Master Spy*, however, Norman Mailer's splendid writing takes us inside the mind of a traitor. A study of the 'palace of mirth, deception and exquisite solitude' involved in this matter of deception and corruption."

I second Craig's feelings on this collaboration of Lawrence Schiller and Norman Mailer who spent considerable time investigating the Hanssen story and dramatizing one of the most bizarre double-agents in history. William Hurt is chilling as the lead character and the story unfolds with greater depth than the shorter *Breach*. Well worth an evening or two of DVD watching.

For biographies of Craig Arthur, Wes Britton, and David Foster, see the "Contributors" page of Part II of "A Decade in Review: The Best Spy Films (2004-2009)."

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