

DVD

Here's looking at 'Casablanca'

By Randy A. Salas
Star Tribune Staff Writer

The lure of 'Casablanca' lies in its romance, intrigue and mystery," actress Lauren Bacall says in an introduction on a two-disc special-edition DVD (Warner, \$26.99) available today.

But those are common ingredients in many movies," she adds. "I think what makes 'Casablanca' a landmark film and a touchstone for so many is largely because of its romance."

That's exactly why the 1942 film is so cherished today, critic Roger Ebert says in a feature-length commentary on the new DVD. Although "Casablanca" is No. 2 on the American Film Institute's list of the top 100 movies, he points out, it's arguably the greatest because it has the universal appeal that the more challenging No. 1 film, "Citizen Kane," lacks.

And it's all because of the romance: Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman as Rick and Ilsa, lovers unexpectedly reunited in seedy Casablanca, Morocco, with Nazis breathing down their necks.

And the classic lines: "Here's looking at you, kid." "We'll always have Paris." "Play it, Sam. Play 'As Time Goes By.'" "Of all the gin joints in all the towns in all the world, she walks into mine."

"Louis, I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship."

This is the second DVD incarnation of "Casablanca." There was nothing really wrong with the first, but the special edition sports a new, finely detailed transfer and a wealth of extras that pay tribute to the film's legacy.

Bacall, who was married to Bogart from 1945 until his death in 1957, figures prominently. Besides the introduction, she is the host of the half-hour "Casablanca" retrospective "You Must Remember This" and the Emmy-nominat-



Warner Home Video

"Casablanca" poster art shows the main players — from right, Humphrey Bogart, Ingrid Bergman and Paul Henreid — and the usual suspects.

ed 1988 documentary "Bacall on Bogart." In a seven-minute segment, Stephen Bogart and Bergman's daughter Pia Lindstrom also reminisce about their parents.

The DVD offers three other adaptations of the story. The 1943 Screen Guild Players radio version remarkably stars the top-billed actors from the film — Bogart, Bergman and Paul Henreid as underground leader Victor Lazlo — but it simply can't capture the film's magic. The others — a 1955 episode from the "Warner Bros. Presents" TV series and a corny Looney Tunes short featuring Bugs Bunny, "Carrotblanca" — are in-

teresting for completists but pale next to the original.

Film historian Rudy Behlmer's commentary serves as an ideal complement to Ebert's essential audio track. A few minutes' worth of deleted scenes and outtakes, minus audio, add little but are interesting asides. There also are scoring-session outtakes, an extensive production gallery, short essays and notes.

"To truly be called a cinema classic, a film has to enter the very fabric of our global conscience," Bacall concludes. "Casablanca" has done that and much, much more."

'THING' AND OTHER THINGS

To science-fiction fans, the 1951 Howard Hawks production "The Thing From Another World" (Warner, \$19.98) is every bit the classic that "Casablanca" is. Unfortunately, it gets short shrift in its DVD debut today.

The film is presented uncut and looks better than it has previously on home video, but it's not perfect; the source apparently is in rough shape. A scratchy trailer is the only extra. It would have been fun, say, to hear commentary from John Carpenter, who directed the 1982 version and is a Hawks devotee.

Five other sci-fi and horror favorites (Warner, \$19.98 each) are out today:

► "The Haunting," the first of many adaptations of Shirley Jackson's book "The Haunting of Hill House," includes commentary by aged director Robert Wise and others. He notes his use of odd, low angles to heighten the creepiness. They still work.

► "Wait Until Dark," the 1967 thriller starring Audrey Hepburn as a blind woman terrorized by a killer, includes short interviews with producer Mel Ferrer, who was married to Hepburn when the film was made, and co-star Alan Arkin, who says he relished his role as the bad guy.

► The early '70s films "The Omega Man" and "Soylent Green" star Charlton Heston in stories that take a skewed look at future Earth. Director Richard Fleischer contributes commentary to the latter. Both have spectacular widescreen presentations.

► The 1953 Vincent Price chiller "House of Wax" (not presented in its original 3-D format) has a remarkable DVD bonus: the 1933 Technicolor original "Mystery of the Wax Museum," directed by Michael Curtiz, who made "Casablanca" nine years later.

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WIDESCREEN 101

LESSON 4: WHAT DOES 'OAR' MEAN?

Watching movies properly on DVD isn't really about seeing them in widescreen. It's about seeing them in their original aspect ratio, or OAR — the way they were originally shown in theaters.

For most films made after the early '50s, that presentation happens to be widescreen. For most movies made before then, it's what's known as academy ratio, 1.37:1 (the image is 1.37 times wider than it is tall) — or roughly the dimensions of a regular TV screen (1.33:1).

A DVD fan once asked on an Internet forum when "The Wizard of Oz" would come out in widescreen on DVD. The answer, one hopes, is never.

"The Wizard of Oz" was shot in and always intended for exhibition in academy ratio. When you watch it on a regular TV set — as shown in this screen capture from the DVD, with Margaret Hamilton as the Wicked Witch of the West — you're getting the whole picture; the image properly fills the screen.



Another Internet DVD fan recently boasted that after he bought a widescreen TV set, he got rid of every DVD in his collection that wasn't widescreen. He seemed blissfully ignorant of dismissing a half-century's worth of filmmaking.

Both fans advocated widescreen presentations, yet their headline views were as misguided as modifying a widescreen movie to fit a regular TV screen.

"Widescreen!" isn't the cry of DVD enthusiasts. It's "OAR!"

Randy A. Salas

IN STORES NEXT WEEK

"Babylon 5" (third season), "Daisy Miller," "Die! Die! My Darling!" "Ffolkes," "Gotcha!" "Paper Moon," "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band," "Targets" and "Will & Grace" (first season).

YOUR HEALTH from E1
Warnings to teens won't get much attention

Yet many parents and children don't recognize that loss is occurring. Hearing degenerates without pain or other warning, so some high frequencies could be lost before the kids or their parents know they're gone.

Everyone starts life with thousands of hair cells in the inner ears, and loud sounds can destroy them permanently. When loud music is piled on top of the everyday noises that kids are exposed to, the accumulated exposure can lead to significant damage.

Unfortunately, if parents tell their children to turn the music down or off, it's unwanted advice that will "go in one ear and out the other," said Janet Hansen, an audiologist at the Hennepin County Medical Center in Minneapolis.

"Will they stop listening to loud music?" she asked. "Probably not, because when you're young, your body is healthy and strong, and why worry about it now? That's for old people to worry about."

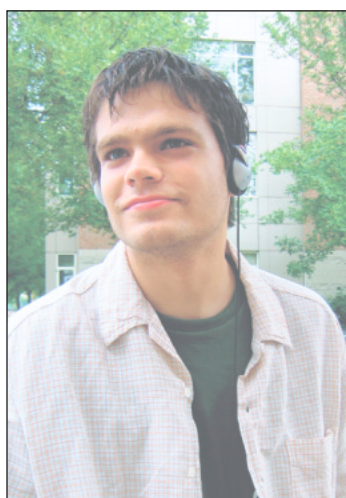
The federal government requires employers to protect their workers from noise at 85 decibels or higher if the sound will be at that level for 8 hours. Headphones and nightclubs can deliver music at 110 to 120 decibels — about the same level as an ambulance siren — or higher without restrictions or warnings. Digital technology has aggravated the problem by making it possible to increase volume without distortion.

"Noise isn't so much of an issue for teenagers," said Dr. Samuel Levine, an otolaryngologist and professor at the University of Minnesota Medical School. "They haven't had time to destroy their ears yet."

Documented risk

Research has documented the risk for young people.

German researcher Henning Wiegels found that teens'



Donna Halvorsen/Star Tribune
Andy Uzendoski believes in protecting his ears now so he'll be able to hear music in the future.

hearing was damaged when they listened to loud music over headphones two hours a day or went to clubs at least once a week for several years. A British study of 15- to 23-year-olds found that those who regularly used headphones and went to concerts had twice the hearing loss of those who didn't have such exposure.

In the United States, people are losing their hearing nearly 20 years earlier than would have been expected in the normal aging process, and noise likely is the cause, according to the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders.

About 10 million Americans have irreversible ear damage caused by noise, the institute said, and 30 million are exposed to dangerously loud noise every day.

Studies by the National Center for Health Statistics found that 15 percent of people ages 3 to 19 have signs of hearing loss. In addition, between 1971 and 1990, the number of people aged 45 to 64 with hearing losses increased 26 percent while losses among 18- to 44-year-olds increased 17 percent.

Not just rock

Rock music isn't alone in creating loud sounds.

Noise is everywhere. Vacuum cleaners average 81 decibels, a coffee grinder 80, a hair dryer 75, vehicle traffic 90 or more, airplane cabin noise 95 to 105, airplane takeoff 115 or more. Motorcycles, firecrackers and firearms can range

MORE INFORMATION

Ten ways to recognize hearing loss

- Do you have a problem hearing on the phone?
- Do you have trouble following conversations when two or more people are talking at once?
- Do people complain that you turn the TV volume up too high?
- Do you have to strain to understand conversation?
- Do you have trouble hearing in a noisy background?
- Do you find yourself asking people to repeat themselves?
- Do people you talk to seem to mumble (or not speak clearly)?
- Do you misunderstand what others are saying and respond inappropriately?
- Do you have trouble understanding women and children?
- Do people get annoyed because you misunderstand what they say?

If you answered "yes" to 3 or more of these questions, you may want to see an ear, nose and throat specialist or an audiologist for a hearing evaluation.

Source: National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders.

On the Web

- American Academy of Audiology
<http://www.audiology.org>
- American Auditory Society
<http://www.amauditorysoc.org>
- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
<http://www.asha.org>
- Self Help for Hard of Hearing People
<http://www.hearingloss.org>
- Sight & Hearing Association
<http://www.sightandhearing.org>

stick some ear plugs in your ears," Hansen said.

Reaching teens

Teenagers may not get the message. They seldom show up at clinics and doctor's offices to have their hearing tested.

"It's rare that we see a teenager to test their hearing unless

there's some kind of medical problem," Hansen said. "We don't want to scare them, but impress upon them that when hearing is gone, it's not coming back."

Dr. Stuart Cox, a St. Paul ear, nose and throat specialist, said he hasn't seen many young people with hearing loss from noise, but "I think it's only a matter of

time before we start seeing that."

One way to reach kids, Cox said, is to show them their hearing test results. "If they can see that there's a loss, and that it's permanent, some of them will change their habits," he said.

That can be as easy as changing the volume. If headphones have a 1 to 10 scale, 4 or 5 is where listeners should be, Sylvester said. "Anything above that is probably too loud."

She offers this guidance for parents:

► If you can hear music from your child's headphones while standing 3 feet away, they are too loud.

► If your child is wearing headphones and can't hear your voice, they are too loud.

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HEARING LOSS

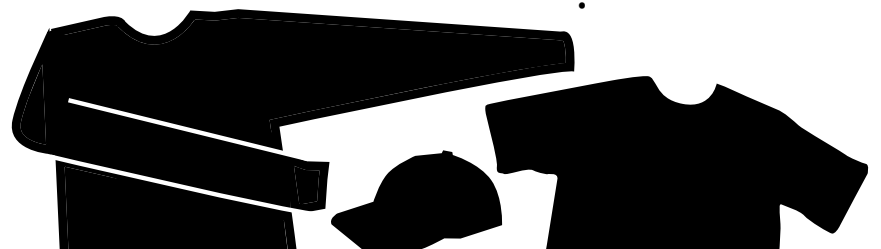
A two-part series.

Next week: Many boomers are beginning to need hearing aids.

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