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AE&TV

CYBILL, BRUCE GREAT PAIR IN MOONLIGHTING

As a suspense show, **Moonlighting** has not aged particularly well. In fact, 20 years after its premiere on ABC, the quirky saga of the Blue Moon Detective Agency feels downright dated. If you're even a casual viewer of any of the CSI or Law & Order shows, your entertainment palette has probably become accustomed to brisker pacing and smarter, more daring developments. If you're watching **Moonlighting** for the sleuth stories that nominally drive each episode, it feels thoroughly soporific.

But the glacial plotting of the mysteries on the show is eclipsed by its central charm: the deeply conflicted relationship between its protagonists, Madelyn "Maddie" Hayes (Cybill Shepherd) and David Addison (Bruce Willis). The two-hour pilot that launches this 20-hour, two-season, six-disc **DVD** set ably proves that the detecting is a mere backdrop for the famously zingy tension between the actors.

Creator Glenn Gordon Caron (currently of the hit *Medium*) was then in his 20s, with only minimal work on shows such as *Remington Steele* under his belt. He wrote the role of Maddie, a former model who loses her money and ends up running the Blue Moon agency, with former model Shepherd in mind. (Shepherd, whose career took off with her role in 1971's *The Last Picture Show* and fizzled amid her long affair with director Peter Bogdanovich, was a Breck girl; Maddie was the face of Blue Moon Shampoo.)

The casting of irresistibly irresponsible David was considerably more difficult (in part, Caron reveals in a behind-the-scenes featurette, because Shepherd was unwilling to screen-test with any of the candidates). It ended up being the role that would make Willis, who at 30 had had only bit parts in *Miami Vice* and *The Twilight Zone*, famous, paving the way for his star-making turn in 1988's *Die Hard*.

The much-reported real-life tensions between Shepherd and Willis are just alluded to in the **DVD** features, and while both actors offer commentaries, they do not do so together. Willis is mild, affable and a bit dull discussing "My Fair David," a second-season episode in which Maddie dares David to act like a responsible adult for one week. Meanwhile, Shepherd, who is generally acknowledged to be a bit on

the nutty side, treats her commentary on "Every Daughter's Father is a Virgin" sort of like a therapy session, making jokes about anger management issues, weeping over her dead father and offering asides such as "Yul Brenner was my first sexual fantasy." If nothing else, it's entertaining.

You can say the same thing about the first two seasons of **Moonlighting**. The show would manage to hang on for nearly an entire third season before David and Maddie's marvelously unresolved sexual tension would burst (and another two uneven seasons after that), so this set represents the show at its most pure.

The second season also offers some fine examples of the winking, self-referential humor that garnered notice, as well as the truly ambitious efforts it made to transcend the genre -- such as the all black-and-white "The Dream Sequence Always Rings Twice," which scored an introduction from legendary filmmaker Orson Welles taped a week before his death. The perfectly modulated chemistry between Willis and Shepherd couldn't last forever, but this **DVD** set at least proves it still holds up after two decades.

Moonlighting -- Seasons One and Two. Not rated, 1,200 minutes. \$49.98.

GRAPHIC: PHOTO; LIVELY SEXUAL TENSION:Bruce Willis and Cybill Shepherd team up to run a detective agency in **Moonlighting**. ABC photo