

FOLLOW US: [f](#) [t](#) [v](#) [y](#)

RESTAURANTS

LOCAL DATING

JOBS, HOUSING

✉ EMAIL NEWSLETTERS: NOW, DAILY 7, BITE CLUB...

To sign up, enter your email here

GO

MUSIC | MOVIES | CALENDAR | ART | BLOGS | VIDEOS | CONTESTS+EVENTS | LOCAL GUIDES | TICKETS+DEALS | ARTICLES | SEARCH

MORE BLOGS: [Stuck in VT](#) | [Solid State](#)

SEARCH BLURT

www.hulu.com/plus Ads by Google

BLURT CENTRAL

Subscribe to this blog... [RSS](#)
 What's Blurt?
 Who's Who? (staff directory)
 Email Blurt...
 Blog commenting policy...

RECENT POSTS

[Burlington Rep. Rachel Weston to Step Down](#)
[Lowell Wind Opponents Decry USDA Forest Service Approval of Deerfield Wind Project](#)
[Alice Eats: Brunch at Bluebird Tavern El Cortijo and Sukhothai Open; New Eatery From August First Owners](#)
[New Commenting System on Blurt: Introducing Disqus](#)
[Brock to Shumlin: Tell Us How You're Paying for Health Care — Before Election Day](#)
[Alice Levitt's Best New Restaurant Dishes of 2011](#)
[Grazing: Mulled Wine Recipe From Nina Koch](#)
[Movies You Missed 19: Saint Nick Burlington Photographer Chosen As Finalist in National Geographic Photo Contest](#)

RECENT COMMENTS

on [FairPoint Followup](#)
 on [Grazing: Mulled Wine Recipe From...](#)
 on [Grazing: Mulled Wine Recipe From...](#)
 on [The Fate of Sadie Katz:...](#)
 on [Grazing: Mulled Wine Recipe From...](#)
 on [Grazing: Mulled Wine Recipe From...](#)
 on [Grazing: Mulled Wine Recipe From...](#)
 on [Wealthy Vermonters Continue to Say,...](#)
 on [Alice Eats: El Gato Cantina](#)
 on [Video: Middlebury Chili Festival](#)

« [Sanders Introduces Constitutional Amendment to Overturn "Citizens United" Ruling](#) | [Main](#) | [Have You Seen This Guitar?](#) »

DECEMBER 09, 2011

Movies You Missed 17: Portlandia

POSTED BY MARGOT HARRISON ON DECEMBER 09, 2011 AT 10:00 AM IN MOVIES, TELEVISION | [PERMALINK](#)

15

Like

4

Tweet

0

This week in movies (or TV) you missed: Finally, someone made a sketch comedy show about all the different subcultures in Burlington. OK, not really. But close enough.

What You Missed

Until now, I was under the mistaken impression that "Portlandia" was a web series.

It actually airs on IFC in 20-minute blocks, but a lot of the sketches have found their way to YouTube.



As you may have deduced, the setting is Portland, Ore. Most of the parts in these loosely connected sketches are played by Fred Armisen of "Saturday Night Live" and Carrie Brownstein, late of Sleater-Kinney. In the **first sketch of the first episode**, Armisen plays an Angeleno who returns from a trip to Portland to tell his friend about the magical place he's discovered — a city where political earnestness, slacking and "the dream of the '90s" never died.

I didn't have to watch much of the ensuing musical number to realize that Burlington and Portland are spiritual twins. Lines like "It's where young people go to retire!" sounded like outtakes from my inner monologue. Even Portland's fictional mayor (played by Kyle MacLachlan) kind of has a Bob Kiss vibe to him.

In the six episodes of season 1 (season 2 starts this coming January), we meet various Portlandia denizens, retired and not: yuppie control freaks; feminist bookstore owners; hip crafters ("Put a bird on it!"); surly musicians and would-be musicians; nerds; locavores who have to visit the farm before they can touch their chicken; aggressive cyclists; flower-child cyclists; and oh, so many more. Guest stars such as Aimee Mann, Steve Buscemi, Heather Graham and Aubrey Plaza of "Parks and Recreation" show up, too.

Why You Missed It

Maybe you didn't. Maybe you've been quoting it for months.

Should You Keep Missing It?

No. "Portlandia" is like "SNL" if "SNL" were mocking a place like Burlington instead of the real world, and if "SNL" were funny.

In tone and style, it reminded me even more of my old favorite, "The Kids in the Hall."

That's not coincidental, since Lorne Michaels and his Broadway Video company produced both. They have similar credit sequences and bumpers, and both feature all members of the cast in drag. In this case, all two of them. Armisen reminds me of Bruce McCulloch as a middle-aged woman, and Brownstein is hilarious as a man.

I wouldn't mind seeing a few more regular cast members, and stronger development of the recurring characters. But, given that it's practically just them and the extras and guests, the two writer-stars carry it pretty effectively.

Also like "Kids in the Hall," the show generally goes for the absurd, conceptual joke instead of the obvious one, and it doesn't always get there. But when it's on, it's on.

I especially loved the **sketch** where Armisen and Brownstein are sitting in a coffee shop and one-upping each other on their recent reading: "Did you read the story in *Mother Jones* on eco chairs and eco ways to sit?" "I did!" ... "Did you read that steampunk article on Boing Boing?" "I did not like the end of it!"

It escalates from there, as each tries to demonstrate they're more in control of the influx of information, communication and memes, while never actually stopping to *discuss* any of the readings in question.

So I'm glad that from now on, if someone asks me, "Did you see the episode of 'Portlandia' where Aimee Mann became a cleaning lady for a couple of her fans who treated her like crap?" I can now say, "Yes! How about that ending? That was some cameo! Did you see the one about Sparkle Pony with the girl from the Decemberists?"

Verdict: Sure, they're in-jokes. But they're in-jokes that needed to be made.

Other New DVD Releases You May Have Missed

"Big Love," final season (Dude with three wives wins political office. Now what? Don't tell me.)

The Debt (Helen Mirren kicks Nazi ass)

Histoire(s) du Cinema (a long, personal essay in/on film from Jean-Luc Godard)

Life, Above All (a young African girl struggles to protect her loved ones)

Rapt (French thriller about a power broker abducted for ransom)

*Each week I review a brand-new DVD release picked for me by Seth Jarvis, buyer for Burlington's **Waterfront Video**, where you can obtain these fine films. (In central Vermont, try **Downstairs Video**.)*

0 Comments and 0 Reactions



blog comments powered by DISQUS

I love this show so much. I think of the BICYCLE RIGHTS! sketch almost daily while walking around Burlington.

POSTED BY: TYLER MACHADO | DECEMBER 09, 2011 AT 02:02 PM

I love that show, I just wish it wasn't so damn hard to watch it if you don't have IFC.

POSTED BY: JACK TREMBLAY | DECEMBER 09, 2011 AT 03:14 PM

The comments to this entry are closed.

NETFLIX

Instantly watch
TV shows &
movies







Click here >

CATEGORIES

- 2009 Inauguration
- 2012 Burlington Mayor's Race
- Alice Eats - Restaurant Reviews
- Animals
- Art
- Books
- Burlington
- Burlington Telecom
- Business
- Champlain 400
- Civil Rights
- Current Affairs
- Dance
- Democratic National Convention
- Economy
- Education
- Election 2010
- Energy
- Environment
- Farms and Agriculture
- Fashion
- Film
- Food and Drink
- Games
- Gay Marriage
- Hatin' With the Phelpses
- Health Care
- Higher Ed
- Housing
- Immigration
- In Memoriam
- Media
- Movies

- Music
- News
- Occupy Vermont
- Opinion
- Outdoors
- Phish
- Politics
- Religion
- Review
- Science
- Social Action
- Sports
- Television
- Theater
- tmdvt09
- Town Meeting Day 2009
- Town Meeting Day 2011
- Transportation
- Travel
- Tropical Storm Irene
- University of Vermont
- Vermont
- Vermont Yankee
- Video
- Weather
- Web/Tech
- Weblogs
- Weird Stuff

ARCHIVES

- January 2012
- December 2011
- November 2011
- October 2011
- September 2011
- August 2011
- July 2011
- June 2011
- May 2011
- April 2011

[More...](#)

BLURT'S BLOG BUDDIES

- Burlington Pol
- Candleblog
- CrankyCakes
- Gannett Blog
- Ghost of Midnight (Front Porch Forum)
- Green Mountain Daily
- iBrattleboro
- Romenesko
- librarian.net
- MiddBlog

STUCK IN VT (VIDEOS)

- Four Months After Irene [250]
- Jay Peak's Pump House [249]
- Pete's Greens Barn Warming [248]

SOLID STATE (MUSIC)

- "Tablespoon" by Confetti Dreams
- CMJ Recap: Badges? We Don't Need No Stinkin' Badges!

CMJ Day 1: Sleep Disorders

MISTRESS MAEVE (SEX)

- Blog Retired
- Date Night, Hate Night
- Sexless in the City



Contact us:

- Advertising
- Staff Directory
- Submissions
- Sponsorships

About us:

- Website FAQ
- Our Story
- Privacy Policy

Our Websites:

- Seven Days
- Classifieds
- Dining Guide
- Personals

Can't get enough?

Subscribe to NOW, our email newsletter, for weekend events & discounts!

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED © SEVEN DAYS 1995-2010 | PO BOX 1164, BURLINGTON, VT 05402-1164 | 802.864.5684