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Portlandia: Season One Blu-ray Review

Posted December 15th, 2011 by Brendan Surplless

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- **Aspect Ratio: 1:78:1**
- **Video Codec: AVC/MPEG-4**
- **Resolution: 1080p/24 (23.976Hz)**
- **Audio Codec: English Dolby Digital 2.0**
- **Subtitles: None**
- **Region: A (Region-Locked)**
- **Rating: Unrated**
- **Run Time: 135 Mins**
- **Discs: 2 (1 x Blu-ray, 1 x DVD)**
- **Studio: MVD Visual**
- **Blu-ray Release Date: December 6th, 2011**
- **List Price: \$26.99**



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Overall



The Series



Video Quality



Audio Quality



Supplemental Materials



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(Screen captures are lightly compressed with lossy JPEG thus are meant as a general representation of the content and do not fully reveal the capabilities of the Blu-ray format)

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The Series





Portlandia, starring former SNL cast members Fred Armisen and Carrie Brownstein, is kind of a hard show to really explain. Origin-wise, we look back to 2005 when series creators Armisen and Brownstein started to collaborate on a bunch of Internet skits under the name *Thunderant*. The skits themselves were based around the city of Portland, Oregon (hence the name of the series) tackling subjects like the Hawthorne District to a random one-man performance in a theater. In 2009, the duo decided to see if the skits could be made into a full time series. Boom, the birth of *Portlandia* soon occurred. This first season features 6 20+ minute episodes that essentially follows a wide range of actors ranging from Steve Buscemi to Selma Blair (and Armisen and Brownstein too) as they travel throughout the city living each day via varying skits.

The skits are somewhat funny, but also fairly stupid at points. Take in point the 4th episode where the Mayor (played by the real-life Mayor of Portland) goes missing. Usually skits pertaining to missing folks can be funny, but this episode is easily one of the dumber ones. While I did find myself laughing a few times (more cracking a kind of “haha” laugh than a “laugh out loud” laugh), I found the overall humor to be dry, dull and a bit boring at times. I had figured the numerous guest spots from a variety of actors would help add something. Such wasn’t the case, as I found most of the actors seemed to be thrown in just to get “a famous name in the credit” bit.

Portlandia isn’t the kind of series everyone will enjoy or even want to see. The humor is a mix of sometimes quirky, sometimes borderline stupid, the style odd and the jokes weird. Call it a mix of my mood at the time or me just not getting the humor, but I didn’t find anything of real interest here.

Video Quality





The 1:78:1 framed, AVC/MPEG-4 encoded transfer is okay for a smaller budgeted show. The series color palette is quite soft at times featuring a mostly subdued palette. Softer colors like sky grays and blues tend to dominate this transfer. In comparing this to the included DVD version of the series, I did find that the Blu-ray does offer up a *slight* difference with a stronger image, but still not quite the quality we might expect. Grain is kept in check, while there's no instance of video scrubbing or any other annoyance.

Audio Quality



The show's Dolby Digital 2.0 is serviceable for the material at hand. Immediately from the initial opening episode continuing to the final sixth episode, we can see the limitations the sound designers ran into. While dialogue is well reproduced via the front channel, the rest of the track is fairly basic at best. Dynamics are

mostly absent, obviously no LFE is present and there's a lack of atmosphere. I guess one can lay the fault on the budget of the show. Still, I guess I didn't really expect much so that's why I was mostly pleased with what was presented. With a second season announced, I'm hoping a lossless offering is included.

Supplemental Materials



The included features are shown in HD and SD.:

- **Blooper Reel [HD]** – Just shy of 5 minutes of somewhat funny bloopers are shown.
- **Extended Scenes [HD]** – 2 brief scenes, totaling about 4 minutes of footage, are shown. The scenes themselves weren't really that funny in the first place, so these extended offerings did nothing for me.
- **Deleted Scenes [HD]** – More Deleted Scenes are offered here, a total of 7 scenes totaling about 15 minutes of footage. The scenes themselves are worth watching if you did enjoy the series.
- **Season Two Preview [HD]** – A brief, 1 minute, glance at the upcoming second season.
- **Fred Armisen Speaks to OES Graduates [HD]** – A commencement speech totaling 12 minutes adds up to the best feature found on the disc.
- **Thunderant Videos [SD]** – 2 videos, one for "Closer" and one for "One Man Show".
- **Fred, Carrie and Jonathan Krisel Commentary on all Six Episodes** – I'll be honest and admit that I watched the commentary for the initial two episodes, but just couldn't get into their monotone, low-key commentaries to continue.

The Definitive Word

Overall:





In the slightest sense, *Portlandia* is an odd show. MVD Visual has brought this first season to Blu-ray with decent video and audio and a few features including one great commencement speech. Despite the Blu-ray being serviceable at best, I just couldn't get into the show enough to warrant recommending this.

Additional Screen Captures










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