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Portlandia Season One comes to Blu-ray and DVD



Jerome Wetzel, Lexington TV Examiner

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Portlandia Season One
Credits: IFC

Rating for Portlandia Season One:

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..... IFC launched a new sketch comedy series last year, produced by [Saturday Night Live's Lorne Michaels](#), called [Portlandia](#). Now season one is available on Blu-ray and DVD. It will likely not surprise you to learn that it stars a *SNL* cast member, [Fred Armisen](#), known for playing Barack Obama and Joy Behar, among others. Fred is joined by musician [Carrie Brownstein](#). The show is made up of a series of shorts featuring odd characters, some stand alone, some recurring in multiple episodes. The jokes are much more understated than *SNL*. The unique catch here is that all the bits take place in Portland, Oregon, and the show tries to capture the spirit of the city. Having never been there, I can't say if it does so accurately. I can say, I have enjoyed watching it.

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..... In the first two weeks alone, Fred and Carrie visit a free range chicken farm populated by polygamists, an uber-feminist bookshop, engage in an adult game of hide and seek, write a theme song for Portland at the request of the mayor, and do a huge opening number for the premiere! And that's just the tip of the iceberg! The humor is unexpected, and fun. For instance, the sketch about writing the song is back and forth random ideas between the pair. What makes it rise above average is that Carrie falls in love, accidentally kills the guy, and attends his funeral while giving her thoughts. It is never mentioned, but really elevated the whole sketch. It's fresh, unique fun.

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.... Celebrities, too, seem to like the show. Steve Buscemi (*Boardwalk Empire*), Kyle MacLachlan (*Desperate Housewives*), Aimee Mann, Jason Sudeikis (*SNL*), and Aubrey Plaza (*Parks and Recreation*) are among those who stop by to join the pair in their odd stories. This sort of proves the respect the duo has within the performing community, and makes it all the more fun to see who will pop up next!

.... The tone of *Portlandia* speaks to the outsider. Whether you are an outsider yourself, or just enjoy a light hearted poking of such people, there is something for you in this series. Portland may or may not be made up of young people who "go there to retire," but the grunge and indie spirits of the 1990's thrive in the city, or at least this fictional version of such. Thus, *Portlandia* routinely goes into territories other comedies merely touch on, if that.

.... One may question whether or not to buy the Blu-ray version of *Portlandia Season One*. The price difference isn't big, so why not? True, owing to the low budget of the series, not everything is as crystal clear as other Blu releases. The blacks are not particularly rich. But the creators do pay much attention to detail, and you wouldn't want to miss that. Also, it isn't a cheap conversion, so why the picture does go soft at times, there is a quality different over the DVD. As far as audio goes, it does lack the surround sound many Blu releases have, but the mixing is done nicely, and with little action, many will not even notice.

.... Bonus features are sadly lacking on this set. The audio commentaries aren't particularly insightful, and do drag on a bit. Deleted and extended scenes, almost twenty minutes in length, are mainly a snooze fest. There are a couple of gems within, but it's not worth sitting through the others to get to them. A commencement speech given by Armisen is included, but he looks uncomfortable, and his humor is uneven. A couple of sketches of the former Armisen / Brownstein project, *Thunderant*, are pretty cool, though. And the packaging, with an tone-appropriate environmental package and great graphics, is neat.

.... Even without a ton of extras, [Portlandia Season One](#) is worth the purchase for the episodes alone. Pick up your copy now and prepare for season two, which premieres on IFC in early January.

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By Jerome Wetzel
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Jerome Wetzel hosted two entertainment based podcasts, "Geek Out With Jimmy" and "The Good, The Bad, & The Geeky". He is also the author of the An...

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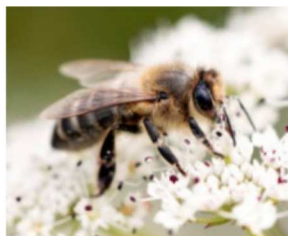
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