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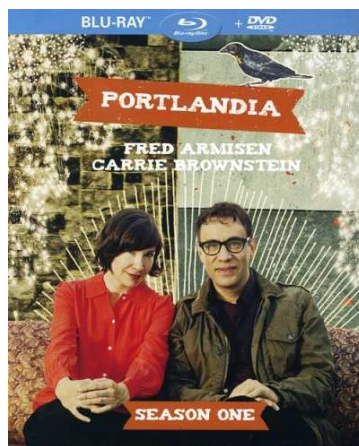


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Portlandia Review

by Rob Perez



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Whether you have disdain for hipsters or are too cool to admit you are one, the IFC original series *Portlandia* gives you insight into this world of Pabst Blue Ribbon consumers, in a humorous but non mean-spirited manner. Hipsters, to the outside world, are not likeable, easy targets to parody who bring it upon themselves with their self-loathing, elitist attitudes. *Portlandia* actually pokes fun at the lifestyle, not necessarily those who actually live the life, showing the absurdity of trying to be cool without being cool at the same mocking those trying hard to be cool. Add in the city of Portland, Oregon, ground zero for hipsters and all they believe in, as another character not just the backdrop of the show, and *Portlandia* will get you to laugh at this not so pathetic group but, strangely enough, be charmed by their existence.

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At its essence, *Portlandia* is a sketch comedy show written by and starring Fred Armisen (*Saturday Night Live*) and Carrie Brownstein (vocalist/guitarist for Sleater Kinney and Wild Flag). The show follows the life of two "typical" Portland, Oregon residents Fred and Carrie, and their central story arc in each episode is interspersed with some absurdest skits about people living the "alternative" Portland lifestyle. Armisen does a great job delivering his role with his usual childlike excitement and brings some of the more offbeat humor from *Saturday Night Live* over to this show. Brownstein dispels any doubts about her comedy chops, surpassing expectations and manages to be likable and really funny. The two tag-team and character swap for most of the show's segments, with extra bit players (Selma Blair, Heather Graham, Aubrey Plaza, Gus Van Sant, and Kyle MacLachlan) brought in during the season to populate the rest of the "*Portlandia*."

Most of the humor is found in exaggerated caricatures of more fringe personalities. Militant bike messengers, organic farm communes and adult play groups are all gently taken down a peg. But it's not a mean-spirited show, and often highlights how even the "normals" can be just as obsessive in their own way. Even the city of Portland isn't spared as it is portrayed as a microcosm of various indie movements and subcultures that seem to love posturing as holier-than-thou. Whether it's dumpster divers, organic obsessives, hipster culture watchers or granola feminists, Portland is just a magnet for these and other groups.

Some of the skits are more immediately humorous than others but those that do work, work very well, and are endearingly hilarious which makes the first season set of *Portlandia* an easy recommendation. If you're even slightly interested in this dry skewering of indie culture, *Portlandia* does it better than any other sketch comedy show.

DVD Bonus Features

The Blu-ray release is actually a combo-pack bundled with a DVD, both discs containing the same bonus features. Among the DVD features is Fred Armisen giving the commencement speech to the 2011 graduating class of Oregon Episcopal School; two video shorts from Armisen and Brownstein's pre-*Portlandia* web project *Thunderants*; and a teaser for Season 2 of *Portlandia*.

"Portlandia" is on sale December 6, 2011 and is not rated. Television. Directed by Jonathan Krisel. Written by Fred Armisen, Carrie Brownstein, Jonathan Krisel, Allison Silverman. Starring Fred Armisen.

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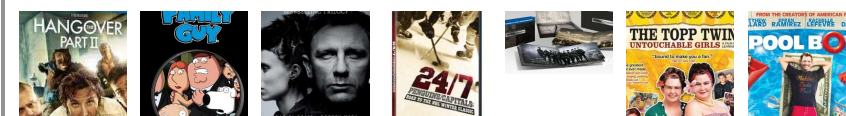
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