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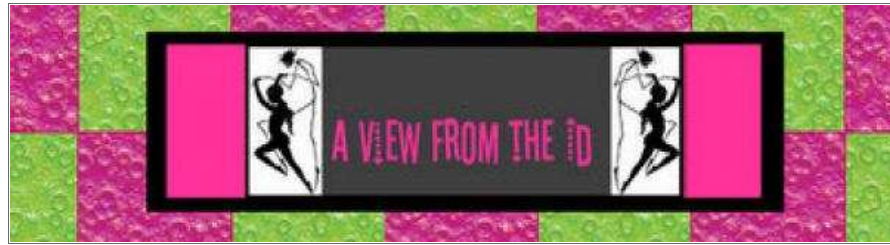
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# I Dunno About *Portlandia*: Season One

Author: [Bob Etier \(/people/missbobetier/\)](#)

Published: [October 28, 2011 at 10:36 am \(/archive/2011/10/28/2Ftechnorati.com%2Fentertainment%2Farticle%2Fi-dunno-about-portlandia-season-one%2F&t=1%20Dunno%20About%20Portlandia%3A%20Season%20One%20-%20Technorati%20Entertainment&src=sp\)](#)

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I recently watched Independent Film Channel's [Portlandia: Season One \(http://www.amazon.com/Portlandia-Brownstein-MacLachlan-Buscemi-Heather/dp/B005OZIN20/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1325101006&sr=8-1\)](#) on DVD

(DVD/Blu-ray combo released December 6, 2011), and the program struck me as being clever and dumb at once. Such cognitive dissonance is unusual in highly opinionated people, but after the DVD was over, I just wasn't sure how I felt about what I had seen.

*Portlandia* stars Fred Amisen and Carrie Brownstein in what is essentially comedy sketches that are strung together into episodes. Some of the sketches work, others...well... This is not totally unexpected since we know Amisen from *Saturday Night Live*. What works is Amisen and Brownstein are adept at assuming a variety of characters, bending gender and stereotypes as they proceed, and that the sketches are fully developed, realized, and integrated. What didn't work particularly well (for me) was having the same two performers in the central roles in all six episodes.

The supporting cast is a repertory company performing different roles throughout the series. The cast deserves kudos for their natural performances and realistic reactions to the sometimes bizarre comments and behavior of Amisen and Brownstein. Steve Buscemi, Kyle MacLachlan, Aubrey Plaza, Selma Blair, Heather Graham, Jason Sudeikis, and Gus Van Sant make guest appearances, as do singer/songwriters Aimee Mann and Sarah MacLachlan in an especially



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amusing turn. We should also give credit to the *real* star of the show, the city of Portland, Oregon, with its unique locations and vibe. *Portlandia* is Portland's alter-ego, a city where the 1990s never ends.

Not knowing if I liked something is not the same as not knowing if it was entertaining. Looking back at the program, I asked myself "Would I watch future episodes?" Yes, I would; good performances, off-the-wall concepts, and quite a bit of absurdity make *Portlandia* worth the time invested.

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Two words describe Bob Etier: "female" and "weird." Like many freelance writers, there's something about her that isn't quite right. Read her stuff and find out what.

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