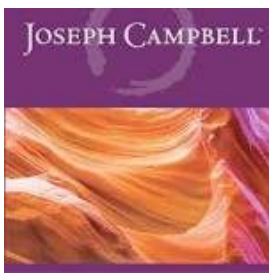




Television has not really evolved from its golden era, although **Portlandia: Season Two** (9/25, IFC) gives the past a run for the money. The set has all ten eps on one disc, some with commentary and a second disc of extras. I don't consider *Portlandia* on any level with classic skit comedy, yet each episode has at least one gag that convulses me with laughter. Like the ep *Cat Nap* where Fred Armisen and Carrie Brownstein induct their pet cat into their rock group. Of course, we all know that Armisen for years played drums, first with Trenchmouth and then with Blue Man Group, while Brownstein fronted Sleater-Kinney. This duo knows how to bring syncopation to their cultural humor. For classic sketch comedy I defer to **The Carol Burnett Show: Carol's Favorites** (9/25, Time Life) a six-disc set that has several lengthy interviews with people like Vicki Lawrence, Lyle Waggoner (don't forget he posed for *Playgirl* in the '70s), Tim Conway and late Harvey Korman and Burnett. Other extras show insight into the zeitgeist of the golden age, like one ep that goes back to *The Gary Moore Show* from 1961 where Burnett first made a sensation. Show guest from the ten episodes chosen here include Steve Martin, Shirley MacLaine, Vincent Price, Maggie Smith, Rock Hudson, Roddy McDowall (in full *Planet of the Apes* make-up for one skit); the list goes on. The thing about this show, yeah sure the humor is dated (although Conway as Simba in the *Born Free* takeoff will never lose its luster) but the musical numbers were often original and certainly of Broadway quality. The Jackson Five absolutely slayed during their appearance on a couple of songs ("Dancing Machine" with Michael pulling some vintage dance moves) and joining Carol for a skit where she plays a dorky schoolmarm while the kids sing "ABC."



Joseph Campbell: Mythos The Complete Series (Acorn Media, 9/18) contains 15 lectures on six discs Campbell performed in the 1980s. You're going to be an expert on comparative religion and myth from both Western and Eastern perspectives after watching these amazing if not meticulous eps, each one an hour and hosted by Susan Sarandon.



Closing out the television DVDs selections I deem important enough to get evangelical about would be **Thriller: Fan Favorites** (9/4, Image Entertainment). This 1961 series lasted two years and was hosted by Boris Karloff. Besides seeing performers that would establish their own personas in other popular shows/films of the '60s (Shatner, Chamberlain, Dick York, Russell Johnson, Donna Douglas) this horror and ghostly anthology legitimately has great black-and-white creep-me-out-late-at night endings. Most people have heard of the *Twilight Zone*, which aired during the same years, but *Thriller* deserves some newfound cult love. The shows have a decent budget, look slick and have great scripts (Psycho writer Robert Bloch has credit on more than one ep) as well as dense soundtracks.

– Michael Bergeron

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