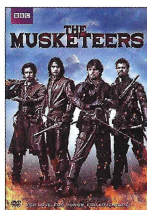


ments are well balanced, the cast chemistry is excellent, and Kaling delivers the goods as a strong and interesting woman in a professional setting. Compiling all 22 episodes from the 2013–14 second season, extras include deleted scenes and a gag reel. Recommended. (S. *Axmaker*)

The Musketeers ★★1/2

BBC, 3 discs, 578 min., not rated, DVD: \$34.98, Blu-ray: \$39.98

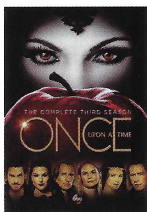


This new BBC take on Alexandre Dumas's classic swashbuckling adventure adds modern filmmaking techniques and more humor to the familiar story. Luke Paskalino is handsome country-boy swordsman D'Artagnan, who comes to Paris seeking revenge for the death of his father and ends up joining forces with the Musketeers—serious Athos (Tom Burke), scrappy Porthos (Howard Charles), and philtering Aramis (Santiago Cabrera)—against the schemes of Cardinal Richelieu (Peter Capaldi). While following the novel's general outlines—we have the foppish king (Ryan Gage), the savvy queen (Alexandra Dowling), the married young Constance (Tamla Kari) for D'Artagnan to fall in love with, and the scheming Milady (Maimie McCoy) working for Richelieu—it's more episodic than epic, with each segment revolving around a new plot set in place to frame the Musketeers (who are beyond the cardinal's control), manipulate the king, or discredit the throne. This version features a mixed race Porthos, a product of the slums who is a social outcast—except in the brotherhood of the Musketeers, where ability and loyalty are the measure of a man. Although it's a fun and breezy show with attractive young characters and caper-style stories in Old World settings (the Czech Republic stands in for 17th-century Paris), there's ultimately not much substance to the roles or the scripts. Compiling all 10 episodes from the 2014 debut season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes. A strong optional purchase. (S. *Axmaker*)

Once Upon a Time: The Complete Third Season

★★1/2

Buena Vista, 5 discs, 946 min., TV-PG, DVD: \$45.99, Blu-ray: \$79.99



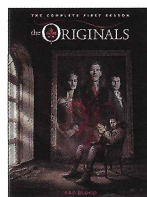
Newcomers to *Once Upon a Time* will likely be pretty befuddled by the central conceit of having a huge cast of fairy tale characters warp between fantasy realms and alternate lives in the real world. Season three begins on a sea voyage captained by Hook (Colin O'Donoghue) to the new setting of Neverland, where an evil Peter Pan (Robbie Kay) has captured heroic young Henry (Jared S. Gilmore), grandson of Snow White (Ginnifer Goodwin) and Prince

Charming (Josh Dallas). Although the Evil Queen's (Lana Parrilla) curse was broken in season two, another one is on the way—this time from Pan, et al. The Wicked Witch of the West (Rebecca Mader) also has some trouble in mind planned for everyone, whether they exist in the Enchanted Forest or Storybrooke, ME (and now even New York City). The show's ingenious panache binds the worlds and character dynamics together in a loopy, loony universe of dramatic make-believe that is soap-opera-complicated and demands a healthy interest in literary fantasy. But all of this creative reach can sometimes exceed the show's grasp, and the ambitious execution occasionally looks a little cheap. The large cast is a hit-or-miss bunch, although they all dive into the crazy with gusto (Robert Carlyle is splendid as ringmaster Rumpelstiltskin). Compiling all 22 episodes from the 2013–14 third season, extras include episode commentaries, behind-the-scenes featurettes, deleted scenes, and a bloopers reel (exclusive to the Blu-ray release is a skit with the show's writers, and more deleted scenes). Diehard fans will still appreciate, so consider this a strong optional purchase. (T. *Fry*)

The Originals: The Complete First Season

★★★

Warner, 929 min., not rated, DVD: 5 discs, \$59.98; Blu-ray/DVD Combo: 9 discs, \$69.98



This spin-off from *The Vampire Diaries* follows the “original vampires”—cruel vamp/werewolf hybrid Klaus Mikaelson (Joseph Morgan) and his purebred brother and sister, Elijah (Daniel Gillies) and Rebekah (Claire Holt)—as they return to New Orleans to investigate a plot against Klaus. A century ago, the trio were exiled from the French Quarter, which their family built and once ruled, and Klaus's former protégé Marcel (Charles Michael Davis) now controls the underworld with his pack, terrorizing witches and werewolves alike. “My family and I have done some terrible things,” Klaus admits in one episode, which is something of an understatement. Darker than its parent show, this new horror melodrama is like the original *Dallas* with fangs and black magic: siblings and friends forever double-crossing one another for power. The wild card is Hayley (Phoebe Tonkin), a werewolf pregnant with Klaus's child; supposedly, the blood of this baby can make any vampire or werewolf far more powerful. Yet another series featuring gorgeous young adults with supernatural abilities and loads of violence and blood, *The Originals'* appeal is likely limited to youthful fans of gothic soap opera. Compiling all 22 episodes from the 2013–14 first season, extras include a pilot episode commentary, behind-the-scenes featurettes, and panel discussions from 2013 Comic-Con and 2014 PaleyFest. Optional. (S. *Axmaker*)

Parks and Recreation: Season Six

★★★★1/2
Universal, 3 discs, 557 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.98

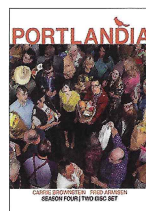


Originally created as a kind of companion to the American version of *The Office*—and fashioned in the same mock-documentary/reality-show style—*Parks and Recreation* has developed into the better series, thanks to clever writing, a brilliant ensemble cast, and characters who have continued to evolve. This set opens with a trip to London before launching this season's stories, which include: efforts by Pawnee City Councilwoman Leslie Knope (Amy Poehler) to save rival town Eagleton from a crisis, a nasty recall campaign to remove Leslie from office, Ron (Nick Offerman) settling into life as a married man and father of two girls, and a farewell to best friends Ann (Rashida Jones) and Chris (Rob Lowe) as they leave Pawnee (and the series). Poehler's supercharged, overextended, idealistic Leslie remains the center of *Parks and Recreation*, but the supporting cast members—who also include Adam Scott, Aubrey Plaza, Aziz Ansari, and Chris Pratt—are given room to explore their own characters and stories, adding to the eccentricities that make this a very funny satire of small-town life and politics. Although never a ratings powerhouse, it remains a critical favorite with loyal fans. Compiling all 22 episodes from the 2013–14 sixth season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes, deleted scenes, a gag reel, and a music video. Recommended. (S. *Axmaker*)

Portlandia: Season Four

★★★★

VSC, 2 discs, 242 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.95

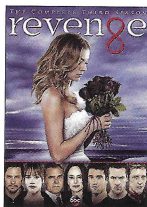


The cult sketch comedy series created by and starring *Saturday Night Live* alumnus Fred Armisen and former Sleater-Kinney guitarist Carrie Brownstein has become IFC's most successful original series, carving a distinctive niche for itself in pop culture thanks to its hilarious yet affectionate satire of modern subcultures in the city of Portland, OR (which could stand in for many hip college towns). Their familiar characters are back—including feminist bookstore partners Toni and Candace (who take on the actual Portland Trailblazers and their cheer squad in one episode), and bike punk Spyke and his girlfriend, Iris—as well as Kyle MacLachlan as the enthusiastic mayor. And returning guest star Steve Buscemi takes the spotlight in an episode centering on a comic conspiracy in the cutthroat produce industry. With Armisen's comedy contacts and Brownstein's music industry connections, the pair are able to attract a great variety of guest stars (in this season: k.d. lang,

Jello Biafra, Michael Nesmith, Maya Rudolph, and Kirsten Dunst, as well as Olivia Wilde as an exhibitionist eco-terrorist) who fit in well with the low-key humor and dead-on satire of Portland's collision of hipster, intellectual, yuppy, activist, foodie, and hypersensitive PC sensibilities. Presenting all 10 episodes from the 2014 fourth season, this is recommended. (S. *Axmaker*)

Revenge: The Complete Third Season ★★★

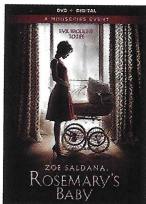
Buena Vista, 5 discs, 946 min., TV-PG, DVD: \$45.99



Though many of its most ardent fans consider this third season of the glossy ABC primetime soap opera to be a return to the quality of the debut run following a disappointing sophomore year, others will feel it is more of the same: a fairly absurd but almost ridiculously watchable tale of machinations among the rich and beautiful set in the glamorous Hamptons. The linchpin of the plot remains Emily Thorne's (Emily VanCamp) determination to avenge the framing of her father at the hands of the Grayson family, by marrying into the clan and destroying it from within, although she faces a strong rival in conniving Victoria Grayson's (Madeleine Stowe) efforts to outmaneuver her. The third season arc is cleverly structured, beginning with the shooting of a major character before flashing back to six months earlier and following the events that led up to the gunplay, after which the labyrinthine narrative continues before ending in yet another murder that will serve as a springboard for the next season. *Revenge* isn't really much more than slick trash, but like the best soaps, it is addictive, with Stowe in particular continuing to impress as the devious Victoria. Extras include an audio commentary, a behind-the-scenes featurette, deleted scenes, and a blooper reel. A guilty pleasure, this is recommended. (F. *Switek*)

Rosemary's Baby ★★★1/2

Lionsgate, 170 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$19.99



In a bonus feature interview, actress Zoe Saldana insists that this 2014 two-part miniseries is not a remake of Roman Polanski's brilliantly creepy 1968 film—but it is. The location has been changed and the time updated to modern-day, but otherwise the narrative doesn't stray from either novelist Ira Levin's original unnerving premise or Polanski's sinister take on witchcraft and devil worship. Rosemary Woodhouse—an appealingly strong yet vulnerable Saldana—and her husband, Guy (Patrick J. Adams), have fled New York to start anew in Paris (following Rosemary's miscarriage) with a plum teaching assignment for Guy at the Sorbonne. They “chance” upon a

huge apartment in an ornate old building, complete with high-class neighbors who seem to have unnatural designs on Rosemary. Of course, it's her baby they want, conceived in a paroxysm of hallucinatory violence with someone who is decidedly not her husband. Carole Bouquet and Jason Isaacs are terrific as the mysterious Margaux and Roman Castevet, whose coven needs Rosemary's spawn for anti-divine guidance. The lovely Parisian locations are used to great effect by director Agnieszka Holland, and she brings suspense and a seductive touch to the script. The psychological elements are balanced by a fair amount of gore (a bite of fresh human heart?), but the material still strains against the restraints of broadcast TV and might have been better served by the freedom of pay cable. Extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes. A strong optional purchase. (T. *Fry*)

South Park: The Complete Seventeenth Season ★★★

Paramount, 2 discs, 220 min., not rated, DVD: \$22.99, Blu-ray: \$42.99



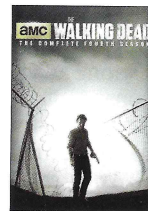
This short 17th season of the cult animated comedy series from Trey Parker and Matt Stone features only 10 episodes, but still serves up some solid quality laughs for a show that was never expected to last more than a few years. The set opens with Cartman using social media to protest NSA surveillance of his “private” information, and takes on the Affordable Care Act in a segment in which preschooler Ike goes through puberty due to a medication mix-up. But the highlight is a three-part story arc that weaves together Black Friday shopping, the war between the PlayStation 4 and Xbox One video game consoles, and the HBO series *Game of Thrones* into an epic spoof that concludes with a wicked parody of the infamous “Red Wedding” episode—complete with betrayals, zombie shoppers, a literal war-zone in the shopping mall, and a caricature of author George R.R. Martin. The series continues to drop in timely references, meaning that some of the details date quickly, but it's still a lively mix of social, political, and cultural satire that routinely crosses boundaries of taste. Compiling all 10 episodes from 2013, extras include mini-commentaries by Parker and Stone, and deleted scenes (the Blu-ray release also features crowd-sourced Twitter comments—via subtitles—on all episodes). Recommended. (S. *Axmaker*)

The Walking Dead: The Complete Fourth Season ★★★

Anchor Bay, 5 discs, 696 min., not rated, DVD: \$69.98, Blu-ray: \$79.99

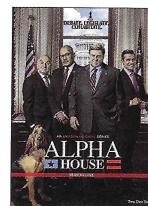
TV's first zombie survival series is equal parts intimate human drama and gory horror

spectacle, a show where beloved figures die and every death still matters to the characters (and viewers). As in earlier seasons, this one is split into a pair of eight-episode story arcs. Having made it through an attack by the vengeful “Governor” (David Morrissey), Rick (Andrew Lincoln), Hershel (Scott Wilson), and the other survivors work to transform their renovated prison sanctuary into a sustainable home—at least until new threats send them searching for another place. In flight, the group is splintered, with each installment focusing on individual traveling packs before finally being brought together for a cliffhanger finale that sets up a dramatic battle. Some of the episodes play like short stories that explore personal relationships as well as the moral dilemmas faced by the characters in this hostile world. Horror fans may consider the narrative too bogged down, while drama enthusiasts might be disturbed by the level of violence—but *The Walking Dead* still has plenty of viewers who appreciate both. Compiling all 16 episodes from the 2013–14 fifth season, extras include episode commentaries, behind-the-scenes featurettes, and deleted scenes (the Blu-ray release also includes two extended episodes and an additional commentary track). Recommended. (S. *Axmaker*)



A New Studio

Amazon has joined the ranks of studios creating original episodic programming, leading off with **Alpha House: Season One** (Amazon Studios, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99; Blu-ray: \$49.99), which compiles episodes from the 2013-14 debut season of Amazon's first series—a comedy created by Garry Trudeau (*Doonesbury*) that follows four Republican senators (John Goodman, Clark Johnson, Matt Malloy, and Mark Consuelos) who happen to be roommates. Also newly available is Amazon's tech start-up comedy **Betas: The Complete First Season** (Amazon Studios, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99).



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Visit Video Librarian Online (www.videolibrarian.com) for more reviews during November and December, including: *37 Days*, *About a Boy: Season One*, *Bitten: The Complete First Season*, *Chicago Fire: Season Two*, *Doctor Who: Deep Breath*, *Father Brown: Season One*, *Golden Boy: The Complete Series*, *Wizards and Warriors: The Complete Series*, and much more!