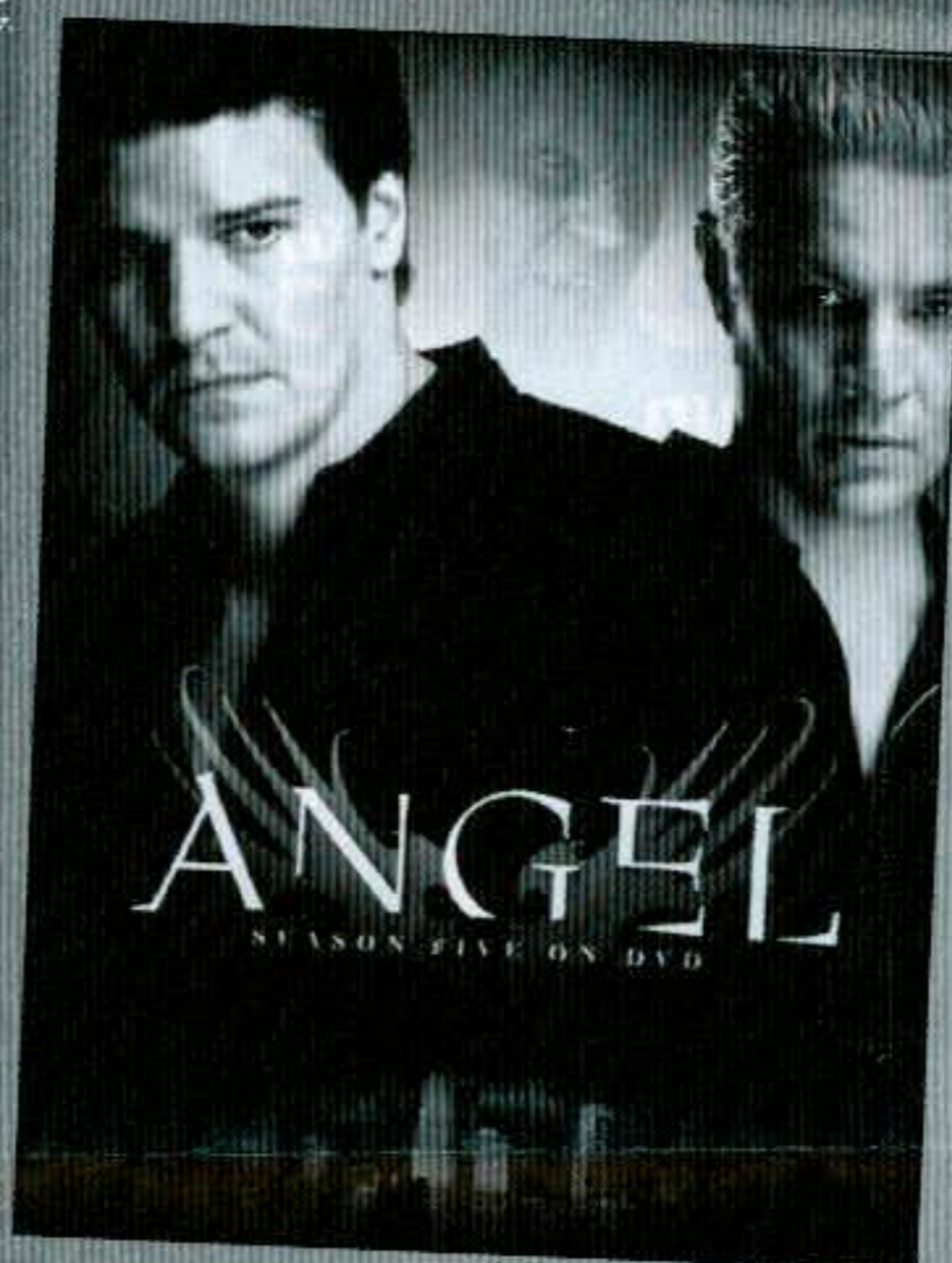


ANGEL: SEASON FIVE

(20TH CENTURY FOX)

If you're even reading this review, you already know about *Angel*, the spinoff of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, about a vampire with a soul fighting to become a champion. *Buffy* fans will probably want to decapitate me for saying this, but I've always felt that *Angel* was a better show. The main theme in *Buffy* is of a young girl who grows up too fast, burdened with responsibilities both social and supernatural, and the conflict between those responsibilities and the normal teenage life that she'd like to lead. *Angel*, on the other hand, is the story of a hero (David Boreanaz) who used to be the embodiment of evil, who now tries to redeem himself by fighting evil, including the evil within himself. The catch is that evil is necessary for human existence, making redemption impossible, a Holy Grail lying just out of reach. This makes *Angel* more of an existential Greek tragedy. It's darker and more serious, its themes more epic than *Buffy's* ever were. In essence, *Buffy* was a show for teenage girls, while *Angel* was a show for young men.

In order to stay alive, the fifth season had to make significant changes to satisfy the network. The multi-arc apocalyptic plot of the previous seasons is swept under the rug in favor of a more episodic format. Connor (Vincent Kartheiser) and Cordelia (Charisma Carpenter), main characters in the previous seasons, make only brief appearances in this one. For the most part, the supporting char-



acters are gone completely.

In the previous season, Angel and crew killed God and ended world peace in order to save humanity's free will. Seeing the innate Satanic virtue in this, the Senior Partners decide to reward Angel, so they hand over Wolfram & Hart to him. Now Angel has to use the law firm to do good, but still do just enough evil to keep their clients happy so they won't

just set up shop somewhere else. It's a moral quagmire, where every noble act leads to corruption, and it ends up changing Angel and his crew for the worse. Some more than others. Things are complicated even more by the appearance of Spike (James Marsters), the OTHER vampire with a soul, romantic rival and reluctant hero, who may or may not embody the champion spirit that's slowly dying in Angel. Spike pretty much steals the show whenever he's on screen, and the love/hate relationship between him and Angel results in some of the best scenes ever to appear on television.

Because of its more episodic format, the season takes a while to find its legs. The story arc starts to ramp up, the characters gain some depth, and the main conflicts are cemented. And the viewers respond: Season five had the highest ratings in *Angel's* history. By the time an old enemy returns (I won't say who), everything seems to be right on track. But, in the eleventh hour, with just a handful of episodes left in the season, the network announced it was cancelling the show. (I guess they figured it didn't meet the artistic standards of, say, *Seventh Heaven*.) This resulted in a season finale that probably pissed off more than one viewer, because it really wasn't much of an ending at all. But it fits in perfectly with the ethos of the series: No final victories, no redemption, just a life of constant struggle until you die. Good guys don't win, they just go down fighting.

(www.foxhome.com/angel)

KARL GIESING

ASSEMBLAGE V1.0

(GREY TWO-ELEVEN)

Doesn't break the molds the mission statement claims, but the production is clean and fluid. Most of the 20 videos are fairly old and numbingly cliché: Same dance moves, same breakdowns in their songs, same terrible yelping vocal melody.

(www.greytwoeleven.com)



TIM DEN

DEVO

LIVE 1980

(TARGET VIDEO/MVD)

This is how I want to envision Devo: In their prime, true to their mission. They arrive with "Whip It" in their red domes, the song tightly in their robotic grip. Song by song, they de-evolve, increasing the fluidness of their movements, and changing costumes.

(www.musicvideodistributors.com)



STEVO

DWARVES

FUCK YOU UP AND GET LIVE (MVD)

I had expectations of blood, bones breaking, people fucking on stage, and a frantic aural assault. This DVD revealed five reasonably normal-looking guys (as normal as you can look in a mask and bikini underwear) playing punk rock.

(www.musicvideodistributors.com)



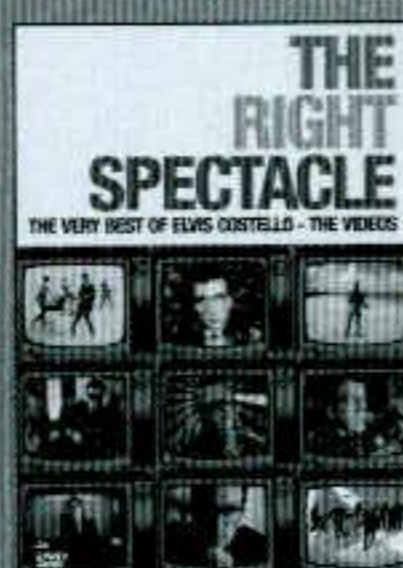
BRIAN VARNEY

ELVIS COSTELLO

THE RIGHT SPECTACLE: THE VERY BEST OF THE VIDEOS (RHINO)

Musically and fashion-wise, there's a lot best left forgotten. Music videos from '78 to '94, tackling every single, and six non-singles, plus a slew of late-'70s/early-'80s live TV appearances.

(www.rhino.com)



TIM DEN

GONE IN 60 SECONDS

(BCI VIDEO)

Old school action sequences, laughable acting, and serious sideburns. The gritty masterwork of H.B. Halicki, who did damn near everything for this 1974 film. Three featurettes, a DVD-ROM game, and a mail-in certificate to get frames and plates.

(www.gonein60seconds.com)



JOHN BIKOWSKI

I HEART HUCKABEES

(FOX HOME)

If you've questioned your purpose, or why you keep seeing the same stranger, you're ready to take the journey of life and love with the quirky all-star cast (Jason Schwartzman, Dustin Hoffman, Lily Tomlin, Mark Wahlberg, Jude Law, Naomi Watts, and more).

(www.foxhome.com)



MICHELLE GAJKOWSKI