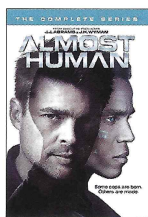


**Almost Human: The Complete Series** ★★½

Warner, 3 discs, 558 min., not rated, DVD: \$35.99

A mix of cop drama and sci-fi thriller, *Almost Human* is an odd-couple buddy show set in the future, where technology has given criminals dangerous tools, and the police force is augmented with androids designed to take the brunt of violence. Karl Urban plays old-school detective John Kennex, the squad maverick who prefers to go solo, while Michael Ealy is Dorian, an android designed to have emotions and learn human behavior. Although previous models malfunctioned—feelings conflicted with the logic of programming—Dorian impresses John with his loyalty, commitment, and sense of humor. Clever banter is interspersed throughout the action scenes as the partners take on high-tech gangs, genetically enhanced criminals, assassins with innovative weapons, illegal biotechnology, and deadly hackers. Minka Kelly plays beautiful and brilliant investigator Valerie Stahl, Mackenzie Crook is eccentric tech expert Rudy Lom, and Lili Taylor is Sandra Maldonado, the captain who trusts John's instincts—if not necessarily his decisions. Created by *Fringe* producer J.H. Wyman, *Almost Human* is an old-fashioned police drama set in a sci-fi universe (with an impressive futuristic design and expensive special effects) that mostly works because of the terrific chemistry between stars Urban and Ealy. Compiling all 13 episodes from the 2013–14 first (and only) season as part of Warner Archive's manufacture-on-demand line, extras include footage from the 2013 Comic-Con panel with the creators and cast, deleted scenes, and a gag reel. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

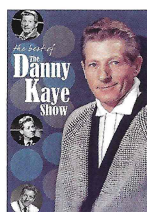


on a tropical island prison full of killers), and the season also serves up a new criminal threat masterminded by Slade Wilson (Manu Bennett), who holds a grudge against Oliver. Oliver also has a falling out with his mother (Susanna Thompson)—facing trial for her part in an earlier conspiracy—who runs for mayor. A fan favorite for the youth-skewing network, *Arrow* is one of TV's superhero success stories. Compiling all 23 episodes aired in the 2013–14 second season, extras include a bonus “recap” of earlier installments, behind-the-scenes featurettes, a 2013 Comic-Con panel, unaired scenes, and a gag reel. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

**The Best of the Danny Kaye Show** ★★½

MVD Visual, 2 discs, 300 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95

From 1963 to 1967, Danny Kaye's weekly variety show on CBS served as an Emmy Award-winning showcase for the versatile performer's rich range of musical comedy talents. This DVD set compiles six episodes that offer a wealth of surprises ranging from Rod Serling doing a brilliant self-parody of his *Twilight Zone* persona to Jack Benny making an unbilled guest spot in a *Cleopatra*-inspired sequence. Kaye is in his element sharing the musical spotlight with the likes of Ella Fitzgerald, Harry Belafonte (doing a “Hava Nagila” duet and waltzing together in a riff on “Shall We Dance?”), Liza Minnelli, Greek singing star Nana Mouskouri (in her U.S. television debut), and Gene Kelly. Comedy skits feature then-unknowns Jamie Farr, Harvey Korman, and Joyce Van Patten as part of Kaye's ensemble, with the star shining as a too-nervous character who is steamrolled by rambunctious strangers (including Art Carney as an overbearing repairman, and Jackie Cooper as a too-loud airplane passenger). While Kaye engages in self-indulgent shtick on more than a few occasions, he was clearly enjoying himself and that sense of fun carried over to his costars—indeed, one of the funniest moments here finds Belafonte flubbing a line and then laughing uncontrollably thanks to Kaye's clowning. Highly recommended. (P. Hall)



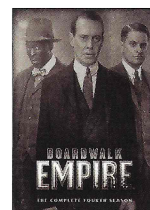
he will be free to continue his own operations (so the targets will not suspect him of betrayal) and will only work with young profiler Liz Keen (Megan Boone), who is fresh from Quantico and lacks field experience. Red has an almost paternal affection for her, but their exact relationship is left up in the air at season's end. The episodes are generally built around efforts to take down the villain of the week, while larger narrative threads (including an elaborate surveillance operation targeting Agent Keen) are woven throughout. A slick show with lots of action and ambiguous figures, *The Blacklist* wraps its dark conspiracies in high-end production values, but there's not much personality to the supporting cast (including Harry Lennix as unit boss Harold Cooper, stuck in a dimensionless role) or the recurring shadow players in the government power games (Alan Alda and Jane Alexander), let alone the bland Keen or her veteran partner, Agent Ressler (Diego Klattenhoff). Spader carries it all, but he's a heavyweight, lifting the show with a terrific performance. Compiling all 22 episodes from the 2013–14 premiere season, extras include episode commentaries and behind-the-scenes featurettes (the Blu-ray release also features additional featurettes). Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

**Boardwalk Empire: The Complete Fourth Season**

★★★

HBO, 4 discs, 720 min., TV-MA, DVD: \$59.99, Blu-ray: \$79.98

The penultimate fourth season of this HBO original series, which is set in the world of organized crime during the Prohibition era of the 1920s, introduces new characters to the story of Atlantic City bootlegger Nucky Thompson (Steve Buscemi) and his struggle to maintain control as Arnold Rothstein (Michael Stuhlbarg) in New York and Al Capone (Stephen Graham) in Chicago extend their reach. Jeffrey Wright plays Harlem power broker Valentin Narcisse, who runs his criminal activities beneath a façade of social works and tries to muscle in on Nucky's territory, while Nucky teams up with Florida speakeasy owner Sally Wheat (Patricia Arquette) to set up a liquor pipeline from the Caribbean, even as he tries to lie low when the FBI increases its investigations. The show features family drama as well, with Nucky's estranged wife, Margaret (Kelly Macdonald), turning her back on his life and money, and his brother, Eli (Shea Whigham), torn in his loyalties when Nucky recruits Eli's son into the bootlegging business. Also on hand is Jack Huston as Richard Harrow, the disfigured war veteran whose torments have made him a fan favorite. A handsome show with high production values, top-notch actors, complex characters, and a vivid period feel, *Boardwalk Empire* has earned critical ac-

**Arrow: The Complete Second Season** ★★★

Warner, 1,014 min., not rated, DVD: 5 discs, \$59.98; Blu-ray/DVD Combo: 9 discs, \$69.98.

In this second season of the CW's superhero series based on the *Green Arrow* comic books, the vigilante previously nicknamed “The Hood” is rechristened “The Arrow,” vows to no longer kill his opponents, and receives his iconic mask from a visiting scientist. *Arrow* retains its urban gothic atmosphere, high-tech secret headquarters, and civilian support team, with domestic melodrama playing out in the public and private life of Arrow's human identity, Oliver Queen (Stephen Amell), a once-spoiled rich kid attempting to take hold of the family business in the thoroughly corrupt metropolis of Starling City. This set adds another self-proclaimed crime fighter from the comics, Black Canary (Caity Lotz), who shares history with Oliver (seen in flashbacks as an ordeal

**The Blacklist: The Complete First Season**

★★★

Sony, 5 discs, 939 min., not rated, DVD: \$69.99, Blu-ray: \$75.99

James Spader stars in this high-concept conspiracy/espionage thriller as renegade government agent Raymond “Red” Reddington, a man who after decades of going rogue in the international criminal underworld turns himself in to the FBI—offering to help catch the world's worst criminals. The catch is that

