



Blood+: Part One DVD (Sony)

The first part of *Blood: The Last Vampire* anime spinoff *Blood+* is being released with two different packages. You can get the first five episodes or you can opt for the awesome

6-disc box set that includes the first 25 episodes, a T-shirt, and a preview of Dark Horse Comics' manga of the series. The show has many anime tropes, including random amnesia, monster (Chiroptera) attacks, obscure humor, and a sprawling complex narrative. In addition to the episodes, the sixth disc includes five "extensive" interviews with the creative team behind the show. Vampire lore continues to inspire and enchant filmmakers and viewers alike. Load up on garlic, drink some holy water, sharpen your stakes, and get ready for some sharp entertainment. (www.sonypictures.com) **7/10** By Nick Hyman



Damages: The Complete First Season DVD (Sony)
The Riches: Season 1 DVD (Fox)

The FX network has proved itself a worthy competitor of pay cable programming giants HBO and Showtime. Initially, shows like *The Shield*, *Nip/Tuck*, and *Rescue Me* raised the standard for how far the basic cable channel could push the envelope. Now two new 2007 series are having their first seasons released. *Damages* is a paranoid legal thriller that stars a fierce Glenn Close (who amazed in the 4th season of *The Shield*), Rose Byrne, and as a shockingly effective prick to end all pricks, Ted Danson. The DVD will satiate fans who are awaiting the show's second season with several featurettes, deleted scenes, and commentaries.

The Riches, while not as successful a series, is another shot in the arm of seemingly righteous American values, with Eddie Izzard and Minnie Driver as the heads of the Malloy family, who take on the identity of a wealthy family after unwittingly killing them in a car accident. You'll get a couple of commentaries, a gag reel, a couple of featurettes, and seven webisodes. The second season started in March. (www.sony.com, www.fox.com)

Damages: **8/10**
The Riches: **7/10**

By Nick Hyman



Dirt (FX, Sundays 10/9 Central)

Courtney Cox's Lucy Spiller is

back, and as *Dirty* as ever. If you missed season one's Monica-killing masturbation scene, don't worry, you'll be caught up in the recap. *Dirt*'s blatant parody of celebrity gossip feeds this fascination further with its accurate dramatizations. Year two sees a less abrasive, slightly toned down, tad more sympathetic, but still scandal-mongering Lucy—so much so she pops a stomach staple to get a paparazzi shot. Her modus operandi remains the same: What is more fun than seeing overexposed celebrities get *Dirtied*? (www.fxnetworks.com/dirt) **7/10** By Lily Moayeri



The Sarah Jane Adventures (Sci Fi Channel, Fridays 8/7 Central)

Doctor Who: Destiny of the Daleks DVD and Doctor Who: Planet of Evil DVD (BBC Video)

The second spin-off of *Doctor Who*, *The Sarah Jane Adventures* is decidedly more family-friendly than the sexed-up *Torchwood* and thus less interesting for

adults—but it's not without its charms. Journalist and freelance alien investigator Sarah Jane Smith (Elizabeth Sladen) was a companion of The Doctor in the '70s and made a guest appearance in the new *Doctor Who* in 2006. In *Sarah Jane's* first episode, 13-year-old Maria moves to the English town of Earling with her divorced dad and quickly becomes involved in an adventure concerning aliens who are producing a contaminated and mind-controlling soft drink. Only her strange neighbor Sarah Jane Smith can help stop the nefarious plot, along with the assistance of Luke, a human boy cloned by the aliens. This sets the stage for more adventures to come for Sarah and her young adventurers. For *Doctor Who* fans it's good to see Sarah Jane back in action (complete with a Sonic Lipstick, as opposed to The Doctor's Sonic Screwdriver), and her famous robotic dog K-9 even makes a brief appearance, but non-*Who* fans might be put off by the questionable performances from some of the younger actors and by the light tone.

BBC Video has just released two more classic *Doctor Who* stories on DVD, both starring fan favorite Tom Baker as The Doctor. 1975's *Planet of Evil* also features Sladen as Sarah Jane. The Doctor and Sarah land on a far-flung planet that's plagued by an antimatter monster and get caught in a story that purposely borrows from both *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and *Forbidden Planet*. The alien jungle sets are particularly impressive, especially as they were made entirely on a cramped soundstage and on a shoestring budget. Special features include commentary from Baker and Sladen and two informative making-of documentaries. 1979's *Destiny of the Daleks* features Romana (Lalla Ward) as The Doctor's companion, as the two end up on the Daleks' home planet of Skaro, where the robotic villains are attempting to resurrect their creator, Davros, and a race of androids named the Movellans intervene. The Daleks look a bit rickety in these episodes and the Movellan are ridiculous looking with their white dreadlocks. Special features include a documentary on the Daleks' real-life creator Terry Nation and an option to watch the episodes with new CGI effects added. As with most classic *Doctor Who* episodes, the slow pacing and dated special effects of both *Planet* and *Destiny* can't compete with the current *Who* series, but Baker is charismatic and the story ideas are intriguing.

All three are best enjoyed by pre-existing *Who* fans. Non-fans should first check out the current series of *Doctor Who*—its fourth season is currently airing on the Sci Fi Channel right after *Sarah Jane*. (www.scifi.com, www.bbcamerica.com)

All: **6/10** By Mark Redfern



The Kingdom: Series 2 DVD (Koch Entertainment)

Moody broody Dane Lars von Trier is best known for his downtrodden takes on human frailty. One of his most accessible works

(although "accessible" may be bit of a stretch) is his two seasons of *The Kingdom*. The Danish miniseries about a haunted hospital and its unique denizens was compared to *E.R.* for its setting and *Twin Peaks* for its sheer fucked-upness. For instance, in one of the series' many supernatural touches, German cult icon Udo Kier stars as a fully-grown grotesque newborn baby that will probably give you nightmares. This first ever DVD release of the second series is worth the wait with subtitled commentary from creator and co-director von Trier, a documentary, a music video, and bloopers(!). This is one of von Trier's very best works. (www.kochlorberfilms.com) **9/10** By Nick Hyman



New Amsterdam (Fox, Mondays 9/8 Central)

To jazz up this yet-another-cop-show, the central character, John Amsterdam, is immortal. Starting life as a Dutch soldier, he finds his way to New York in 1642. In the process of

saving a Native American girl's life, a shaman gives him immortality—until, of course, he finds his true love (gag). Fast-forward to the present day—Amsterdam has experienced numerous lives with varying careers, all of which conveniently help him solve hackneyed crimes in his current role as a homicide detective. The only thing helping *Amsterdam* is the inclusion of past lives because everything in the present is singularly commonplace. (www.fox.com/newamsterdam) **4/10** By Lily Moayeri



Newhart: The Complete First Season DVD (Fox)

With the success of *Superbad* and *Juno*, many have pointed out that the dry and slightly confused delivery of star Michael

Cera was inspired by comedian Bob Newhart. After a successful series in the '70s (*The Bob Newhart Show*), Newhart packed up and made another successful show in which he plays a do-it-yourself book author from New York who moves to Vermont and runs a bed and breakfast that's inhabited by small-town wack jobs. Buoyed by his dry wit and an awesome theme from Henry Mancini, the show ran from 1982-1990 and was a fairly consistent three-camera sitcom.

This first season was shot in hideous-looking video, and every one of the visually questionable episodes are featured here. You can also catch up with some of the surviving cast members (Tom Poston and Mary Frann have since passed) in three documentaries that add up to about 30 minutes. The episodes are both a fascinating documentary of terrible '80s style (check out the shoulder pads and rosy makeup) as well as an interesting record of the successful use of the sitcom format that has largely vanished these days. (www.foxtvdvd.com) **7/10** By Nick Hyman



The Return of Jezebel James (Fox, Fridays 8:30/7:30 Central)

Gilmore Girls fans, get ready to be disappointed yet again. First creator Amy Sherman-Palladino departs *Girls* during its

last season, and now she returns with a disaster of a show. *The Return of Jezebel James* stars Parker Posey as Sarah Thomkins, a successful children's book editor who learns that she's unable to conceive and recruits her reluctant not-so-successful sister Coco (played by *Six Feet Under*'s Lauren Ambrose) to be her surrogate when she reveals that she has turned her childhood imaginary friend Jezebel James into a successful series of books.

As silly as that sounds, that's what the whole show is hinged on. It might've worked if the show wasn't a traditional multi-camera sitcom, laugh track and all! I have no idea what everybody involved with the show was thinking. Some of the dialogue is catchy, but it's killed by the false rhythm of canned applause and laughter. Parker Posey, playing against type, is too perky-klutzy-nice. She's struggling in this new arena, and it shows. After having seen two episodes (including the pilot), I'd say this sitcom may be beyond repair. Posey and Ambrose appear to be slumming, while Sherman-Palladino is distancing herself even further from her most admired work. (www.fox.com) **3/10** By Nick Hyman



South Park: Imaginationland DVD (Paramount/Comedy Central)

It's hard to believe that *South Park* is about to air its 12th season. What's even harder to believe is how the show is still at the top of its game. This was clearly evident in the three-part *Imagination-land* episode that

aired last fall, in which nearly every pop-culture cartoon and sci-fi character appeared all in the service of getting Cartman's balls sucked. Before releasing the whole season, creators Matt Stone and Trey Parker have put together the three episodes as an uncensored director's cut.

The usually brief commentaries from Stone and Parker are extended to two-thirds of the film's running time. It's largely boring, but brief censored snippets about Tom Cruise and Scientology may put a smile on your face. Storyboards from two sequences and bonus episodes "Woodland Critter Christmas" and "Manbearpig" round out the set, which, despite its double-dipped intentions, is still a hilarious highlight from a series that at this point has earned classic status. (www.comedycentral.com) **7/10** By Nick Hyman



Tell Me You Love Me: The Complete First Season DVD (HBO)

The easy first impression one might develop of HBO's 10-episode long first season of *Tell Me You Love Me* is that there

is a gratuitous amount of softporn sex scenes—so much so they distract the viewer from what is actually happening.

Tell Me You Love Me is not plot-driven. The show revolves around three couples whose relationships are in various levels of crisis. If it feels difficult to watch events unfold, it is because the show plays very much as real life does—which is not entertaining and hard to get through. The characters are not necessarily likeable, but real people aren't likable, their problems aren't fun to watch. It may not be pleasant to observe their issues because it's not enjoyable to deal with your own problems.

The sex scenes dwindle towards the end of the first season, allowing the viewer to focus on the raw troubles of the characters. It takes a few hours to get to the point where the characters override the sex, but once it happens, you'll be invested. (www.hbo.com/tellme) **6/10** By Lily Moayeri



The Tomorrow Show with Tom Snyder: John, Paul, Tom & Ringo DVD (Shout! Factory)

Composing The Beatles Songbook: Lennon and McCartney 1957-1965 DVD (Pride/MVD)

What else is there to say about The Beatles that hasn't already been said? Well, if you're a

music geek or Beatles nut, you'll gladly sit through the familiar mythology again and again. *Composing The Beatles* focuses on the one-two punch of John Lennon and Paul McCartney's contribution to songcraft in the 20th century. Talking heads range from friend Klaus Voorman to music journalists from *The Village Voice* and *Rolling Stone*, and the doc is loaded with a surprising amount of footage and music. As with many Beatles-related documentaries, the 80-minute film covers familiar ground, but its unique songwriting angle is its saving grace.

Television interviewer Tom Snyder passed away last year, and watching the last ever televised interview with John Lennon and him was surreal, to say the least. *John, Paul, Tom & Ringo* is a collection of interviews with three members of the Fab Four on Snyder's *The Tomorrow Show*. In addition to dead men talking, Paul and Linda show up in 1979 and squash any hope for a Beatles reunion, and Ringo shows up in 1981 with his wife Barbara Bach to discuss his then recently released album and to remember John. For this Beatlemaniac, there can never be enough material for one of the best bands ever, so these releases are worthwhile. (www.shoutfactory.com, www.mvdb2b.com) **6/10** By Nick Hyman

Both: **6/10** By Nick Hyman