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Portlandia Season Two Blu-ray Review

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Portlandia is IFC's hit sketch comedy series created, written by, and starring Fred Armisen (SNL) and Carrie Brownstein (WILD FLAG, Sleater-Kinney vocalist/guitarist). The show is driven by a series of hilarious character-based shorts all of which take place in "Portlandia", the creators' dreamy and absurd rendering of Portland, Oregon where 90s culture reigns supreme and political correctness is all the rage.



Studio: VSC
Year: 2012
Release Date: September 25, 2012
Run time: 220 minutes
Rating: NR
Audio: Dolby Digital 2.0 mix
Aspect Ratio: 1.78:1
Disc Spec: 2 BD
Region: A

While Season One was drawn from a pre-existing reservoir of carefully-honed ThunderAnt bits, Season Two feels as though it was largely written on demand with fewer and shorter opportunities for vetting and

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refinement. While this is a common phenomenon in any creative endeavor — Catcher in the Rye was by its very nature a one-time event — that doesn't make it any less disappointing. And this Portlandia isn't nearly as tight, fun or inspired as it was.

To be sure, there are funny routines here and there. For instance, the aggressively male exchanges between Armisen and Adam Samberg in the first episode are priceless, the main theme in "Grover" is genuinely funny (though nothing new; the application process for "elite" pre-schools has been parodied many times) and the Battlestar Galactica bit starts out brightly.

But more and more, the two creators run up against the old SNL problem: a sketch that is no more than marginally funny is permitted to run on long after it has ceased to be funny at all. Battlestar Galactica is a good example. It's inspired for exactly as long as it is focused on Fred and Carrie. Sometimes there's not even that essential spark. (The feminist book shop, such a reliable source of concisely-written fun in Season One, is almost dreadfully realistic here.)

Finally, the season is cluttered with useless celebrity appearances that doubtless increased Portlandia's visibility but ultimately do little to keep us entertained. There's nothing here than recalls Jason Sudeikis's motor-boating cult leader or Aubrey Plaza's impatient book shopper — characters that, conceived in the native spirit of the show, only elevated it. Tim Robbins as Ozzy Osbourne just drags it down. Success just might ruin Portlandia.

Movie Quality: 8/10

Special Features

- Portlandia The Tour: Seattle Special
- Inside Portlandia Special Deleted Scene Feminine Bookstore
- Brunch Village: The Director's Cut
- Fred, Carrie and Jonathan Krisel Commentary Over Four Episodes

Special Features: 6/10

Final Thoughts

This series is adequately diverting most of the time, but it's hardly as good as it thinks it is.

Overall Rating: 7/10

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