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**Portlandia: Season 2**

2011

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Over the past couple of years those living here in Portland, Oregon have watched as the city has went from something which is mentioned in movies or television to actually being center stage. There have been a few movies in the past which have been filmed here but now there are series such as *Leverage* and *Grimm* which claim the city as their home. Those who have been working here but don't live here have undoubtedly noticed that while Portland might have some things which you can find in other metropolitan locations, there are also those which are very unique to the city which is where a series like *Portlandia* come in.

Portlandia is a series which I've heard mentioned by friends and co-workers on a number of occasions but never had the change to sit down and watch until now. It's a sketch comedy show featuring Fred Armisen and Carrie Brownstein who have taken it upon themselves to highlight some of the more "interesting" aspects of the city. Of course with sketch comedy that's something which can play out extremely well in some bits while others just don't necessarily seem to have quite the comedic punch that you would think they would and while the series might be set in Portland, not everything featured is essentially about the city although some certainly are.

I found that the second season was something of a mixed bag. In most cases the bits weren't necessarily that hilarious in my opinion although there were those which stood out quite a bit. Probably one of the highlights and one which I have definitely seen in the downtown Portland area involves panhandlers. This isn't something that's unique to Portland but downtown you'll find it's generally a select group of kids, gutter punks, who are out begging for change. I've actually known some of them and those who I have weren't homeless but rather just kids living in the suburbs who pretend to be poor. The trend with them, and one which again isn't exclusive, it having a pet to gain sympathy but the skit takes it to an extreme going from a dog to a puppy, then to a fish, finally an amoeba.

There is one on going skit which is set in a feminist bookstore. Portland has these, too many of them and if it's not a bookstore, it's some type of other New Age inspired business with aged hippies running things who are a bit more than just feminists if you know what I mean. The two characters running the store are

always trying to push their anti-male opinions on anyone and everyone they can, often resulting in some rather funny moments.

The no bag at the supermarket bit was also mildly humorous especially with Portland recently having banned plastic bags and most people who visit the overpriced "alternative" supermarkets always having their recyclable bags with them. Also, No Olympics reminded me a great deal of Portland. There has always been an effort to bring another professional sports team to the city besides the Trailblazers but this is always met with opposition and never manages to materialize. Then there's DJ Night, yet another skit which isn't necessarily native to Portland, but has a great deal of comedy especially if you know anyone who is a DJ and these days, just as the skit shows, that can be pretty much anyone.

But for all of the good skits in *Portlandia*, the series has more which I really didn't feel managed to hit home. Some ran a bit too long although this isn't a huge surprise considering that Armisen is from SNL and if there's any single series that doesn't know when to end a skit (or a series for that matter) it has to be that one. Other skits just weren't funny at all while others felt as though they were focused on things which you really needed to have a good connection with in order to see the humor.

While this is definitely a low budget, independent series, *Portlandia* looks quite good in high definition although I found the choice of filters used for the opening credit sequence questionable. The series tends to make use of some of the more interesting locations in Portland and being a local, it's rather entertaining to see them in HD even though most I'm so familiar with it wouldn't take but a few minutes to travel there.

The first disc in the set features commentaries on four different episodes while the second disc is all extra material. On this disc you'll find *Portlandia: The Tour* – Seattle where the stage show that Armisen and Brownstein are part of makes its way north. *Inside Portlandia* is the typical making of which isn't too bad. There's also an extended version of Brunch Village, a single deleted scene, and a look at the upcoming book *Portlandia: A Guide for Visitors*.

Even being local I didn't find that everything about *Portlandia* was outright hilarious like so many have told me. The series has its moments and definitely ones which will be more humorous to those of us who live here than those who don't, but ultimately *Portlandia* ends up being too many misses, not enough big hit laughs for my taste.

Episode 2:01 – Mixology

Carrie and Fred discover the world of mixology on a quest away from the city.

Episode 2:02 – One Moore Episode

Doug and Claire become a bit obsessed with "Battlestar Galactica" and it begins to take over their lives.

Episode 2:03 – Cool Wedding

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Irys and Spyke plan an unconventional wedding; Candace and Toni hold an in-store book signing.

Episode 2:04 – Grover

Michelle and Brendan pull out all the stops to see that their son gains admittance to a prestigious preschool.

Episode 2:05 – Cops Redesign

At the request of the mayor, Carrie and Fred do a redesign of the Portland police force.

Episode 2:06 – Cat Nap

A Portland band decides they need a gimmick, so they enlist a new member and pick up an over-the-top groupie.

Episode 2:07 – Motorcycle

A visiting motorcyclist gets Peter and Nance all revved up but leaves them feeling old and unattractive, so they decide to do something about it.

Episode 2:08 – Feminist Bookstore's 10th Anniversary

A surprise guest turns up at the anniversary party for Toni and Candace

Episode 2:09 – No Olympics

Carrie and Fred try to get the mayor to ban the Olympics.

Episode 2:10 – Brunch Village

People flock to Portland's hottest brunch spot, but some are not happy about the wait to get in.

-mike-

Directed by:
Jonathan Krisel

Written by:
Fred Armisen
Carrie Brownstein
Karey Dornetto
Jonathan Krisel
Bill Oakley

Cast:
Fred Armisen
Carrie Brownstein

Blu-ray Features:
Aspect Ratio: 1.78:1
Audio: English Dolby Digital 2.0
English SDH Subtitles

Disc 1
Episodes:
2:01 – Mixology
2:02 – One Moore Episode
2:03 – Cool Wedding
2:04 – Grover
2:05 – Cops Redesign
2:06 – Cat Nap
2:07 – Motorcycle

2:08 – Feminist Bookstore's 10th Anniversary

2:09 – No Olympics

2:10 – Brunch Village

Special Features:

Commentary on "Mixologist," "One Moore Episode," "Cool Wedding" and "Brunch Village" by Fred Armisen, Carrie Brownstein, and Jonathan Krise

Disc 2

Special Features:

Portlandia: The Tour – Seattle

Inside Portlandia

Deleted Scene

Portlandia: A Guide for Visitors

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