

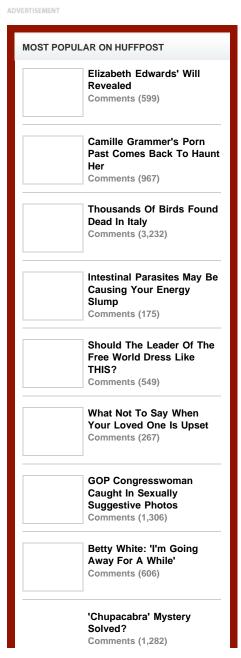
Comments 7

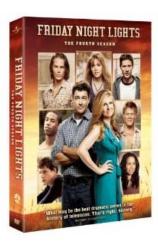






I don't give a hoot about football -- high school, college or otherwise -- so believe me when I say *Friday Night Lights Season Four* (\$29.98; Universal) is a very satisfying TV drama with one of the best ensembles around. It's also had a long, strange journey. It began as a best-selling nonfiction book, then it became an excellent film and finally a TV series. Every version of this story is worth checking out. The book is thoughtful and gripping. The movie is quietly wonderful. And the TV series is honest about high school (which TV often tackles in outrageous terms) and small town life (which TV either idealizes or hokums out of recognition).



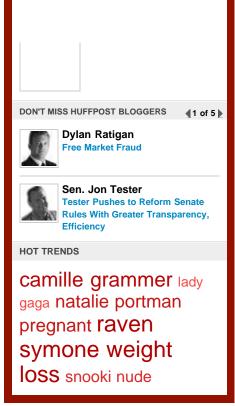


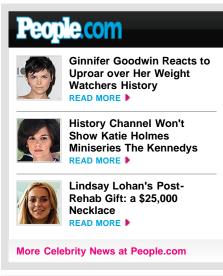
The first season of *FNL* is excellent and can be enjoyed on its own with a distinct beginning, middle and end. Season two is a train wreck rescued only by the top-notch cast. I would urge you to skip it and move right to season three, which was a solid return to form. And now the show has two more shortened seasons of 12 episodes each. Season four (just ended) and season five, which will debut on DirectTV and then air on NBC. Season four is nearly as good as season one, which is high praise. They didn't quite adjust to the shortened season, so some dramatic storylines feel rushed. And I was very nervous about the new quarterback Vince Howard (Michael B. Jordan) dealing with both a crack addict mom and the lure of thug life. But the small steps feel earned. And the past star athletes who are still hanging around town and feeling that their lives peaked a few years ago are just dead on target. (I mean you Taylor Kitsch.) And the fact that Zach Gilford didn't get an Emmy nomination for his work this season as Matt Saracen is absurd. Watch and you'll understand.

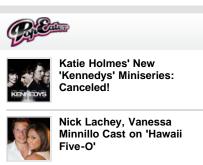
You've got to love a show that understands high school rivalries to know that the season finale doesn't have to be about winning the state championship It can be about keeping the OTHER team from even getting to the state championship. As good a depiction of real family life as you'll find on television right now, thanks especially to deserved Emmy nominees Kyle Chandler and Connie Britton. Is there any other show that makes clear exactly how hard married life can be without sending you to a divorce lawyer? Good stuff.

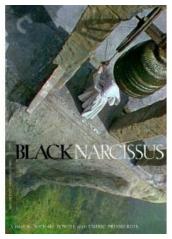


TEMPLE GRANDIN (\$26.98; HBO) -- So you know it swept the Emmys (five wins including Best TV Movie and Best Actress for Claire Danes) and you're wondering, is it worth renting or buying? Absolutely. This is the sort of drama TV movies were made for and the sort TV did so well for so long before the networks grew bored with them. I first heard about Temple on NPR, where they were interviewing this woman who designed new slaughterhouses that were more humane for the cattle by really understanding what the cattle were experiencing and making it as "natural" as possible. Oh and she was autistic and had built a device during college that mimicked the way cattle were held in place which calmed Temple when a hug from another person would just be upsetting. The movie has just the right sprightly, unsentimental tone and Danes is very good in the role of Temple, never trying to sentimentalize her or just as importantly give Temple more of an emotional journey than she had. Temple does a lot but she doesn't change a lot: she's pretty much always funny, direct and smart as people with highly functioning autism can be. I'm a little surprised David Strathairn (as her teacher) and Julia Ormond (as her mother) won Emmys as well simply because their work is so low-key. But I'm glad.











BLACK NARCISSUS (\$29.95 regular and \$39.95 BluRay; Criterion)

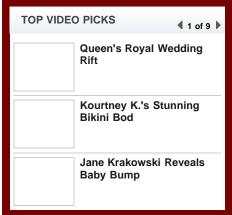
THE RED SHOES (\$39.95 BluRay; Criterion)

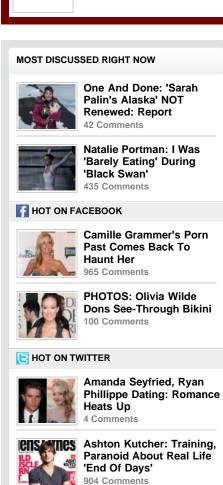
PANDORA AND THE FLYING DUTCHMAN (\$34.95 BluRay; Kino) -- I'm crazy about Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, the team that seemed to create a new genre every time they made a movie. God (and Marty) forgive me, but I've never quite fallen under the spell of The Red Shoes, but it certainly does look absolutely smashing and includes oodles of extras including Martin Scorsese, an ardent fan of this hyper-melodramatic dance film. But I did savor again the vertiginous spell of Black Narcissus (1947), which is probably one of the saner movies in their oeuvre but still comes across as a bizarre cross between a fairy tale and a Freudian drama. Nuns head to a former brothel in the Himalayas to offer education and medicine to the locals. Perhaps the most unexpected facet of the film is the complete indifference of the locals to the nuns and their ways while the nuns go slowly mad what with the isolation and the height (they really are perched on a cliff) and the sexual tension. Yes, the sexual tension as embodied to a hilarious degree by David Farrar who fancies head nun Deborah Kerr (discretely) but drives some of the others wild with desire. He's dressed in these...shorts, very silly shorts that almost emasculate him (riding a small donkey doesn't help either). But Farrar persists in wearing the shorts and he is so ... hairy and manly and does insist on walking around with his shirt unbuttoned and the scene where he strides in without a shirt seems almost indecent. It's a crazy, nutty, weird little movie and absolutely gorgeous to look at. More extras including Marty again. Finally, there's Pandora and the Flying Dutchman, a bizarre film by Albert Lewin that tries to do what Powell and Pressburger accomplish with ease: create a truly strange, distinct film. It fails, despite James Mason as the Flying Dutchman who becomes enamored with Pandora, embodied -- and I do mean embodied -- by the luscious Ava Gardner, who was driving Frank Sinatra wild at the time and no wonder. It's half-baked or over-baked or something, but boy does she look stunning in this lovely restoration.



Salma Hayek's Red Bikini Stands Out in St. Barts

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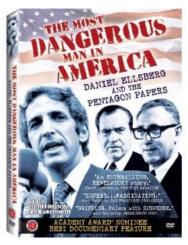




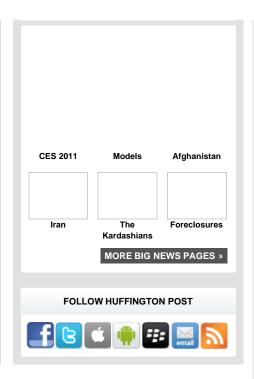




REPO MEN (\$29.98; Universal) -- Jude Law stars as a repo man in the near future when people can buy organs at exorbitant prices, but god help you if you miss your payments. Someone like Law will come and literally rip your heart out. It makes the endless phone calls and letters I'm pestered with seem downright pleasant in comparison. Not surprisingly, Law has an accident at work and wakes up to find they've replaced one of his organs. When he finds it hard to continue doing his job, it's not long before best buddy Forest Whitaker is cornering him with a scalpel in hand. The film is ghoulishly amusing at first but it really only has just enough plot to fill a Twilight Zone episode. If it had established the conceit in 10 minutes and had Law wake up towards the 23 minute mark and realize he was going to be hunted, everything would have been perfect. But the film drags it out with a new romance and an ending that any sci-fi fan with half a brain can see coming a mile away. Not bad, just too much of it.



THE MOST DANGEROUS MAN IN AMERICA (\$27.95; First Run) -- Don't make the mistake I did and keep putting off watching this Academy Award-nominated documentary about Daniel Ellsberg and the Pentagon Papers. Anyone who has enjoyed All The President's Men should check it out immediately. Most people know about the Pentagon Papers -- an archive that contained the "secret" history of US involvement in Vietnam and that pulled no punches. But the ins and outs of how it actually came to be printed, how Nixon's government tried to quash it, of Ellsberg's own journey from true believer to true radical (and thus true patriot) is gripping, fascinating and entertaining. As a sad commentary on the state of journalism, we hear editors at the New York Times saying that one reason they felt compelled to print the Pentagon Papers was the simple fact that when people discovered they had this info and HADN'T printed it, how damaging that would be to the paper's reputation. Compare that to the current New York Times -- which believed it had mountains of evidence that the Bush administration had lied to the American people and ginned up the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq as a pretext for war -- but DIDN'T print it because they were afraid it might affect the 2004 reelection campaign of Bush. And the Bush administration pressured them to hold off. Oh for the Seventies.







SGT. BILKO/THE PHIL SILVERS SHOW FIRST SEASON (\$39.98; MPI)

THE MOTHERS-IN-LAW: THE COMPLETE SERIES (\$39.98; Paramount) -- The Mothers-In-Law was pretty dated and tame even when it self-consciously debuted in the mod late Sixties. Overseen by Dezi Arnaz, it's only real assets are veteran stars Eve Arden and Kaye Ballard as neighbors whose kids get married and find moving to the garage isn't nearly far enough away from their meddling but well-meaning moms. It's kind of sad to see the production design and outfits try to be hip when the material is so irredeemably square. And Arden and Ballard can't do much about it, even though they do sometimes mug enough to play to the balconies. Still, the two seasons are nicely presented and the extras are where the real fun is to be found, including rehearsal footage, interviews and a "lost" pilot for The Carol Channing Show. In contrast, Sgt. Bilko is much older but far more durable. The fast-talking Phil Silvers never had a better role than the poker playing Bilko. The episodes on this series -- which won the Emmy for Best Comedy the first three out of four years it was on the air -- look basically the same as the episodes on the 50th Anniversary boxed set. That's probably a good pick for casual fans, but this landmark series deserves to be presented in its entirety. It may not be possible (I assume there was a live audience) but I would love to hear an episode without a laugh track. I think the show would be even funnier that way. It's that pointed and fresh.

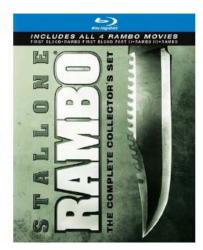


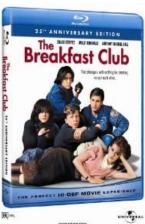
LOST: THE SIXTH AND FINAL SEASON (\$59.99 regular and \$79.99 BluRay; ABC)

HEROES SEASON 4 (\$59.98 regular and \$79.98 BluRay; Universal)

NUMB3RS SEASON 6: THE FINAL SEASON (\$57.99; Paramount) -- The end of the road for three shows, one championed by a passionate core of fans, one praised and then derided as it failed to deliver on its promise and one enjoyed by your mother and father on a Friday night. Frankly, Lost lost interest for me a long time ago and the plotlines were so convoluted it was impossible to dive back in. Just reading the plot descriptions gave me a headache. But the final season BluRay is loaded with impressive features about shaping the finale, along with bloopers and commentaries and other top-notch extras, including the BluRay only access via BDLive to Lost University, which is still such a hilarious nod to how complex the show became that I love it. As someone who stepped back in at the end, the finale was oddly moving, in a weird way, even though I couldn't possibly give a coherent answer to the many people who asked me what it meant. If you're a fan, the BluRay looks smashing. Heroes lost me right at season two. If they had just had a complete tale in each season a la 24, this show could have been great fun. Instead they just layered on the confusion. The last season might have redeemed itself a tad (it was dubbed Redemption after all), but it was too little too late. Since Numb3rs never pretended to be anything more than a police procedural with a little mathematics to gussy it up, it comes off best at the end. Rob Morrow and David Krumholtz have great fun in their roles as an FBI agent and his brilliant but oddball brother. Modestly engaging if you ever checked it out and ending with its dignity intact. But somewhere an adviser with a degree in matehmatics who used to double check the numbers of the writers to make sure they didn't mess up is out of work and desperately hoping Sudoku: The Game Show is greenlit.

BLURAY ROUNDUP BLURAY ROUNDUP BLURAY ROUNDUP





The flood of BluRay titles lets us revisit old friends after a face lift: they usually haven't looked this good in years. BluRay players are so cheap you should buy one: even if you don't buy BluRays, the players will make your standard DVDs look better on a hi-def plasma or LCD screen that can display the difference. And you can always rent BluRays. I'm annoyed that they are trying to keep them at a higher price point, but often when released they're very close to the same sale price as standard DVDs. What are you gonna do? They're not going anywhere and the next standard may well be downloads. Here are some catalog titles newly out.

STALLONE: RAMBO -- THE COMPLETE COLLECTOR'S SET (\$54.99 BluRay; Lionsgate) BULL DURHAM (\$24.99 BluRay; MGM)

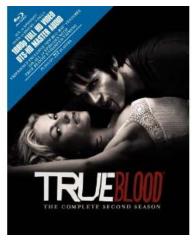
ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK (\$24.99 BluRay; MGM)

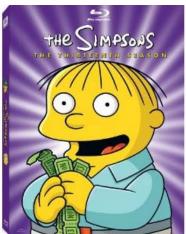
ELVIS ON TOUR (\$34.99 BluRay; Warner Bros.)

INSOMNIA (\$24.98 BluRay; Warner Bros.)

NANNY MCPHEE (\$26.98 BluRay; Universal)

THE BREAKFAST CLUB (\$26.98 BluRay; Universal) -- Sylvester Stallone is enjoying his biggest hit in nearly 20 years with The Expendables, so it's a good time to check in on his second-biggest franchise, Rambo. The first movie is the only one you really need to see, though the second has a cartoon appeal for capturing the Reagan era well. As a boxed set the BluRays are cleanly presented and BOY are they loud! Bull Durham just gets better and better. I still get misty over Field Of Dreams but clearly this is the baseball movie for the ages. Escape From New York, however, just looks silly. If you saw it as a kid, you might enjoy it on a nostalgic level, but I found it ridiculous, with Kurt Russell as Snake whispering all his dialogue and with his jeans so tight and hair so coiffed I thought he was gonna head straight to Greenwich Village and to hell with the President. Looks oddly like a video game, with our hero facing new challenges at each level. Elvis On Tour is pretty fascinating in a grim way; did Elvis realize how tired and exhausted and stuck in a Graceland bubble the movie made him look? Maybe it was a cry for help. Insomnia is typical Christopher Nolan, smart, well-acted, and cold. Nanny McPhee is just not very good family fare, no matter how much I adore Emma Thompson. And The Breakfast Club may have its problems. But so what if the blame always rests squarely on the parents and these teenagers are helplessly earnest? Sometimes, that's exactly what teenagers are like. And the cast is so good, no wonder they all went on to substantial careers.



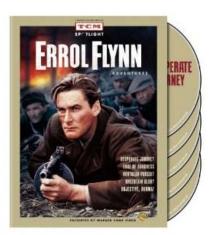


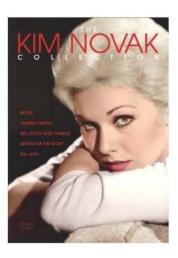


TRUE BLOOD COMPLETE SECOND SEASON (\$79.98 BluRay: HBO)

THE SIMPSONS THIRTEENTH SEASON (\$59.99 BluRay; Fox)

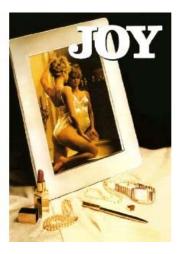
BATTLESTAR GALACTICA SEASON THREE (\$89.98 BluRay; Universal) -- If you're wondering about all the fuss over genuine phenomenon *True Blood*, you can read the amiable, less envelope-pushing series of books by Charlaine Harris. Then you can skip season one and dive right into season two, where the series found its mojo. The BluRay edition lets you access extra features and a timeline and updates but it's mostly notable for just looking terrifically good, like the cast of vamps and psychic waitresses and the rest on this HBO series. I could moan that 13 seasons should have been enough for the lovable but won't-go-away series *The Simpsons*. But even the titles of the episodes made me giggle and brought back good memories: "The Sweetest Apu;" "The Blunder Years," and "The Parent Rap" are just three. Standard-setting extras, as *The Simpsons* has done for years. And really, I take a visceral pleasure in how compact the entire season can be. Finally, unlike Lost and Heroes and so many other shows, *Battlestar Galactica* knew exactly where it was going all along. It may have taken a questionable detour here and there, but the confidence is there as they steer towards a satisfying finale in season four. And why oh why doesn't the criminally under-appreciated Tricia Helfer get more work? She can do it all and looks stunning to boot. Someone call Marty.





ERROL FLYNN ADVENTURES (\$49.98; Warner Bros.)

THE KIM NOVAK COLLECTION (\$39.95; Sony) -- What a contrast! The Errol Flynn collection contains just a tiny sliver of this star's work: five good to very good movies (with one clunker) filmed and set during World War II, four of them with the great director Raoul Walsh. You'd need five other boxed sets just to get an idea of everything he could do. On the other hand, The Kim Novak Collection has five films that tell you pretty much everything you need to know about her, with the exception of Hitchcock's Vertigo and The Man With The Golden Arm (and depending on how you feel about it, Billy Wilder's Kiss Me, Stupid). Flynn's set is notable for the WW II focus and is definitely highlighted by Objective, Burma! which has some new extras. It's a good sign that the TCM brand is a good bet for solid prints of classic movies. And I love the extras where you can pair movies with newsreels and shorts. Novak's set is also solid, with Middle Of the Night a 1959 Paddy Chayevsky passion project of hers that shows there might have been much more than this stunning blond was allowed to show. And Pal Joey is so well cast it's an eternal shame they tamed down the Broadway musical.





JOY (\$29.95; Severin)

JOY & JOAN (\$29.95; Severin)

LOOSE SCREWS: SCREWBALLS II (\$19.95; Severin) -- For various reasons (okay, one big reason), I'm not the best judge of erotica that dances on the edge of pornography a la Emmanuelle. However, I can tell you that the prints are decent, that *Joy* contains a chat with star Claudia Udy (who inexplicably turned down the sequel (which stars hardcore turned legit actress Brigitte Lahaie (of *Henry & June*, no relation) and that like *Porky's*, *Loose Screws* promises more than it ever delivers. But most of all, I must pay tribute to the DVD copy, which is wildly entertaining and lurid. *Joy*, it claims, was restored from "a print discovered in the screening room of a Paris brothel" and it contains, uncut and uncensored, the complete "Secret Orgy Dungeon" sequence. *Joy & Joan*, was restored from a print seized in a Marseilles vice raid! *Loose Screws* just has audio commentary and other extras, but it does present the international version in "Authentic VHS-Vision!"

Thanks for reading. Michael Giltz is the cohost of Showbiz Sandbox, a weekly pop culture podcast that reveals the industry take on entertainment news of the day and features top journalists and opinion makers as guests. It's available free on iTunes. Visit Michael Giltz at his website and his daily blog. Download his podcast of celebrity interviews and his radio show, also called Popsurfing and also available for free on iTunes. Link to him on Netflix and gain access to thousands of ratings and reviews.

NOTE: Michael Giltz is provided with free copies of DVDs to consider for review. He typically does not guarantee coverage and invariably receives far more screeners and DVDs than he can cover each week. Also, Michael Giltz freelances as a writer of DVD copy (the text that appears on the back of DVDs) for titles released by IFC and some other subsidiaries of MPI. It helps pay the rent, but does not obligate me in any way to speak positively or negatively of their titles.

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HUFFPOST COMMUNITY MODERATOR

aznurse 02:02 AM on 9/06/2010

366 Fans

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I do love Friday night lights!

Permalink | Share it

WeCanDolt 03:24 AM on 9/05/2010

2 Fans

Correction to my post: That would be Zach Gilford who plays quarterback Matt Saracen.

Permalink | Share it

WeCanDolt 03:08 AM on 9/05/2010

2 Fans

Friday Night Lights is my favorite show on television today, bar none, for many of the reasons described. It's the kind of show that only comes along once in a decade, and Season 4 is the best season since Season 1.

I have to disagree with Michael about Season 2. While in totality, it is the weakest written season (in terms of continuity due to the writers strike), I would never recommend skipping it. There is a problematic storyline among fans that I personally had no problem watching. Without a doubt, there are some fantastic episodes and many, many of the 'small moments' that make this show what it is that are not to be missed.

Back to S4, Michael failed to single out an episode called "The Son," which received an Emmy nom for the writer and should have received one for Zach Taylor, who plays beleaguered quarterback Matt Saracen. One of the best written/acted episodes of the entire show. Kyle Chandler and Connie Britton were not only Emmy worthy, but should have taken the statues home for their submitted episodes: S41 (East of Dillon, Kyle Chandler) and S42 (After the Fall, Connie Britton).

S4 also received another deserved Emmy nom for casting. Four new characters were successfully introduced in S4 so that, realistically, former students could graduate and move on with their lives. The news cast, along with Taylor Kitsch, Amy Teegarden, and Jesse Plemmons also turned in

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WhatEverHappenedToGarp 01:34 PM on 9/05/2010

9 Fans

No doubt about it, it is a fantastic show and I am puzzled about people not knowing about it, much less watching it. As far as I'm concerned every cast member is superb.

Permalink | Share it

GatorGrrrI 08:10 AM on 9/07/2010

20 Fans

So glad to see this show getting some love. Zach Gilford as Matt Saracen is just heart-brea kingly real. Fantastic actor and great writing made me cry weekly.

Permalink | Share it

howbutdat 01:56 PM on 9/07/2010

1 Fans

this is a good show, I agree. But Texas was first settled by Latinos and there are many many good football players with long family history of playing this sport. Why are they not represented as much as the white players and AA?

Permalink | Share it

HUFFPOST BLOGGER
Michael Giltz 12:54 AM on 9/08/2010
59 Fans



Thanks for reading and commenting WeCanDolt. I did reference the Zach Gilford episode, I just didn't name it or what it was about so as not to spoil the season. It was a great, truly great hour of television.

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