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Michael Giltz

Freelance writer and raconteur

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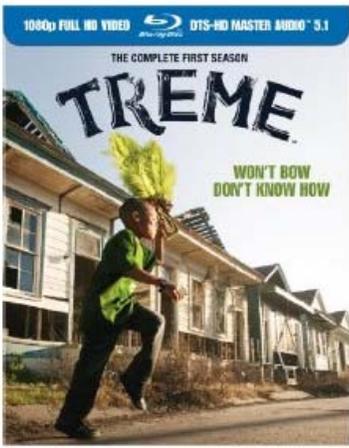
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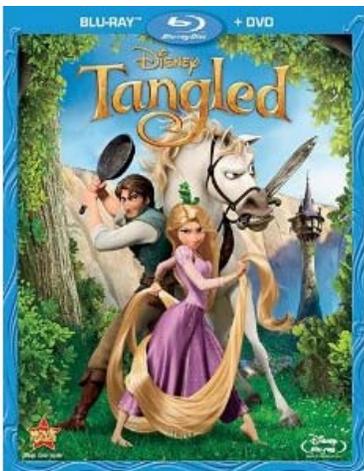
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TREME COMPLETE FIRST SEASON (\$79.98 BluRay; \$59.99 regular DVD; HBO) -- The new season of *Treme* begins on HBO April 24. The great cast and the track record of the people behind it (they did *The Wire*, a show I can confidently refer to as one of the best of all time and know it's true) mean I'll probably keep watching. But this look at New Orleans post-Katrina is one of the most frustrating shows I've ever watched. Half the storylines are low-key and engrossing -- a trombonist scrambling for gigs, a local Indian chief rebuilding his life and upholding traditions, one woman running a bar and the other a restaurant who both must deal with endless roadblocks. The other half of the show is filled with uninvolved storylines that make no sense whatsoever -- street musicians who wander about avoiding work, a goofball who runs for local office and then bizarrely stops despite loving the attention and even making money off a campaign song, a professor and writer who gains fame via his rants on YouTube. I have friends who love New Orleans and can tell me the specific source for every storyline and every plot twist, but the one basic rule of storytelling is that it's no defense to when a story makes no sense to respond, "But it happened!" Yet, what a cast! The great Khandi Alexander gets a role worthy of her talents as the bar owner, Wendell Pierce is funny and wonderful as the trombonist who juggles numerous women; and Clarke Peters is subtle and moving as the Indian chief. The white roles and actors invariably come off weaker, including John Goodman, Melissa Leo and Steve Zahn. (It's the writing, not them.) The exception is Kim Dickens as the restaurant owner, perhaps the only one in New Orleans who doesn't know when setting up an outdoor cooking business that you must always be prepared for rapid changes in weather. I could spend days mapping out exactly what frustrated me this first season. Hopefully, I'll watch in season two as they pull it together and deliver the show I know they are capable of producing.



TANGLED (\$39.99 BluRay combo or \$29.99 regular DVD; Disney) -- It's been more than a decade since Disney (not Pixar) delivered a wholly satisfying animated movie. That was 1999's blockbuster *Tarzan* and now it's joined by *Tangled* a spin on Rapunzel. It's not absolute peak Disney, but it's very solid fun from start to finish, with Many Moore's Rapunzel given a far more active role than in the fairy tale, Zachary Levi very winning as the thief with a heart of gold Flynn Rider, and a raft of good songs by Alan Menken. A spotlight must be shone on the horse Maximus. This non-speaking role steals the show from the very first moment he bursts onto the screen. Part bloodhound, part Inspector Javert and all hero, Maximus is

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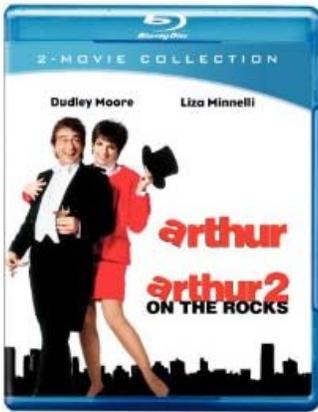
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tracking down Flynn but teams up with him and Rapunzel to see justice down. He is one of the most vivid characters in recent memory and everyone involved in creating him deserves applause. Often, one or more people will be in charge of a certain character's animation. On this film, I only see a credit for four people overseeing all the characters: Jin Kim, Glen Keane, Shiyoon Kim and Bill Schwab. They and the writers and sound people and others involved in bringing Maximus to life did a sterling job. Heck, he deserves his own short or spin-off series. I hate to think we'll never see Maximus again.



ARTHUR/ARTHUR 2 ON THE ROCKS (\$19.98 BluRay; Warner Bros.) -- If you own a Bluray player, you can finally -- finally! -- watch this delightful, Oscar-winning comedy in widescreen, the way it was shot. Dudley Moore, Liza Minnelli and John Gielgud all enjoyed career peaks thanks to a brilliant, hilarious script by writer-director Steve Gordon. It's a bittersweet, slightly melancholy but always very funny movie about a billionaire who discovers true love with a waitress. I wrote at length about the remake when it was shooting in New York. The original was my favorite movie of 1981 and remains one I can never watch enough. Will I see the remake? No, unless it gets such rapturous reviews I feel compelled. Heck, I never even saw *Arthur 2: Arthur On The Rocks* because it seemed so unnecessary. It's included on this modestly priced double feature which has no extras to speak of other than the original trailer.



TRON: LEGACY/TRON: THE ORIGINAL CLASSIC COMBO (\$79.99 BluRay combo; Disney) -- While Arthur is a terrible movie to remake, Tron is a perfect one. The original had a cool concept, lots of name recognition but wasn't actually any good. Unfortunately, the reboot isn't any better but boy does this set offer everything you could possibly want. You get a BluRay version of the new film in 3-D and 2-D and a 2-D version on a regular DVD plus a digital copy AND a DVD of the original film! Plus, needless to say, loads and loads of extras. Various other editions offer the new movie in less expensive and regular DVD only versions, but they're too numerous to mention. Undoubtedly in another 20 or so years someone will try again with this one. Life inside a computer is just too natural an idea not to explore and we do it more and more every day anyway. Maybe they'll do a comic spin by landing our hero in Twitter and force all dialogue to be limited to 140 characters? Just a thought.



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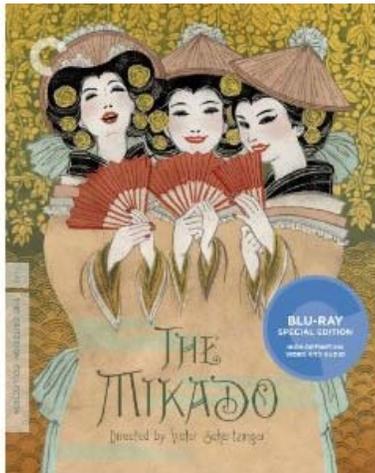
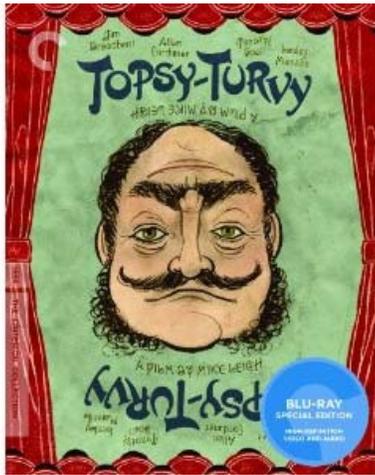


What Happened To Bradley Cooper?!

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Jerry Seinfeld, Donald Trump Rip Each Other In Heated Political War Of Words



TOPSY-TURVY/THE MIKADO (\$39.95 each on BluRay; Criterion) -- These two BluRay releases create one of the most delightful double bills imaginable. First comes Mike Leigh's Topsy-Turvy, a look at operetta impresarios Gilbert & Sullivan as they create their masterpiece The Mikado. Leigh has created many films I love (including Another Year, which comes out on DVD June 7). But this atypical 2 hour and 40 minute drama is his masterpiece. It's filled with a love of theater and actors and the act of creation. Then you can turn to the 1939 movie The Mikado which features members of D'Oyly Carte Opera Company, the troupe G&S founded to showcase their work. It's a rare bauble of a film from the greatest year in Hollywood history, both stage-bound and effervescent. Then comes the real shocker: the usually gruff and abrupt Leigh (who hates doing press) is warm and forthcoming when discussing this 1939 movie. He shares his opinion and even politely offers up countering opinions of others about the casting, the addition of scenes and other marginalia. His passion and love for G&S shines through. Both movies are presented with the usual Criterion care and a bevy of insightful extras.

HOT ON TWITTER POWERED BY TOPSY < 1 of 2 >

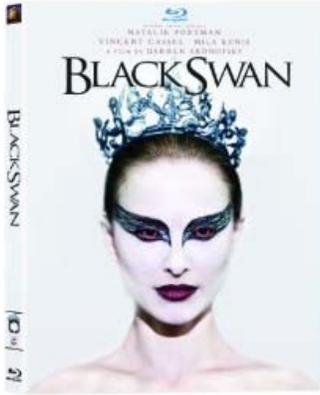
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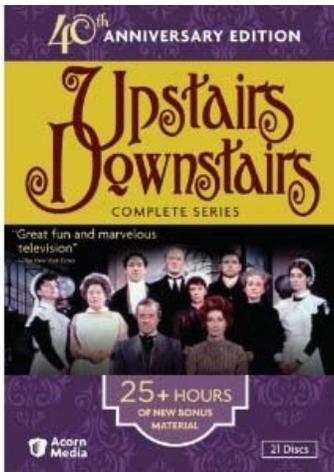
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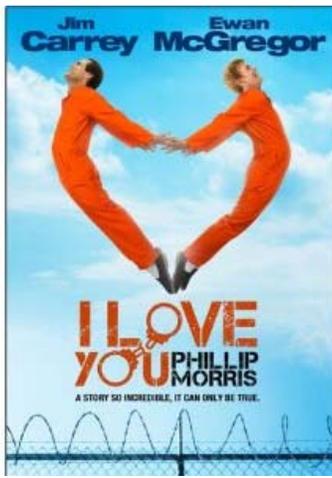
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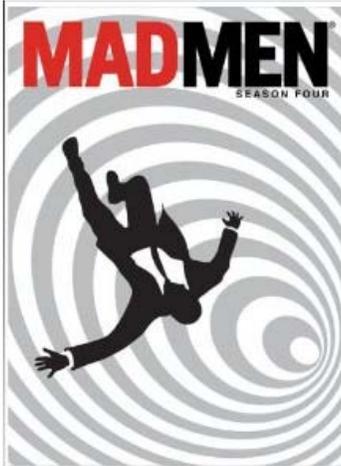
BLACK SWAN (\$39.99 BluRay or \$29.99 regular; FOX) -- This is unquestionably one of the success stories of 2010: a dance film with a psychological bent à la Polanski that proved a hit with critics and a genuine worldwide smash hit. It cost \$13 million to make and grossed an astonishing \$292 million worldwide. The story of a prima ballerina who is going mad under the pressure of performance, it contains some fun spicy work by Mila Kunis and an effective Barbara Hershey. I found the whole thing rather silly but many, many people disagree with me and I'm glad a clearly ambitious serious film proved so successful, even winning an Academy Award for star Natalie Portman. That can only mean good things for director Darren Aronofsky and his mercurial career.



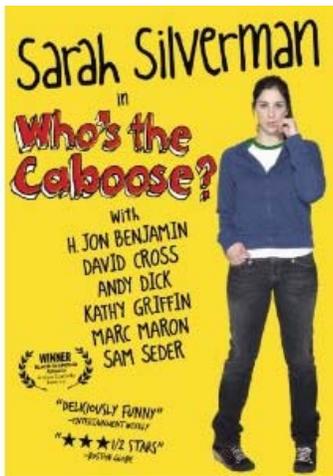
UPSTAIRS DOWNSTAIRS 40TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION (\$199.99; Acorn) -- One of the all-time greats, this TV series is one to savor. The unexpected batch of new episodes begins on PBS this Sunday. Longtime fans and newcomers should all dive into the original which goes from black and white to color but always maintains the highest standards of acting and writing. (Production is another matter. On early episodes, the sets are so rickety I sometimes fear if an actor leaned against a wall it would topple over.) This set contains all five seasons, which are marvelous from start to finish. I'm not quite ready to rewatch the series. But this set is bursting with extras, including one hour retrospectives for every season that go into delicious detail about studio machinations, infighting, changes to stories and characters and other dish that fans will love. It also includes the 25th anniversary retrospective and audio commentaries for 24 episodes. And yet I still don't know why Eileen Atkins isn't anywhere to be heard from. (If I missed her in all the wealth of extras, you'll understand.) On a negative note, the show is long overdue for remastering but does not get it here. Picture and sound are fine but should have been better.



I LOVE YOU, PHILLIP MORRIS (\$39.98 BluRay or \$27.98 regular DVD; Lionsgate) -- Is it possible to over-emphasize chemistry? It's a magical blending of two actors that can't really be predicted even with screen tests and readings. You just never know. This film by the writers of *Bad Santa* stars Jim Carrey and Ewan McGregor as two prison inmates who fall in love. Carrey is an inveterate con man and gives McGregor the lavish life Carrey believes they deserve. But Carrey's illegal activities keep getting him thrown into jail and away from his love. That's unacceptable so he begins a series of clever prison escapes that made him famous and shamed the Texas jail system to no end. Did I mention this really happened? Skipping blithely between comedy and drama, the film has some clever sequences and great scams. But through no fault of their own, I never bought that Carrey and McGregor were lovers. It's not out of any fear from them about getting physical; they just don't have any spark. Without that passion, nothing really matters. But the film does have some very fun moments, including mockeries of golf and Texas that won't be forgotten any time soon.

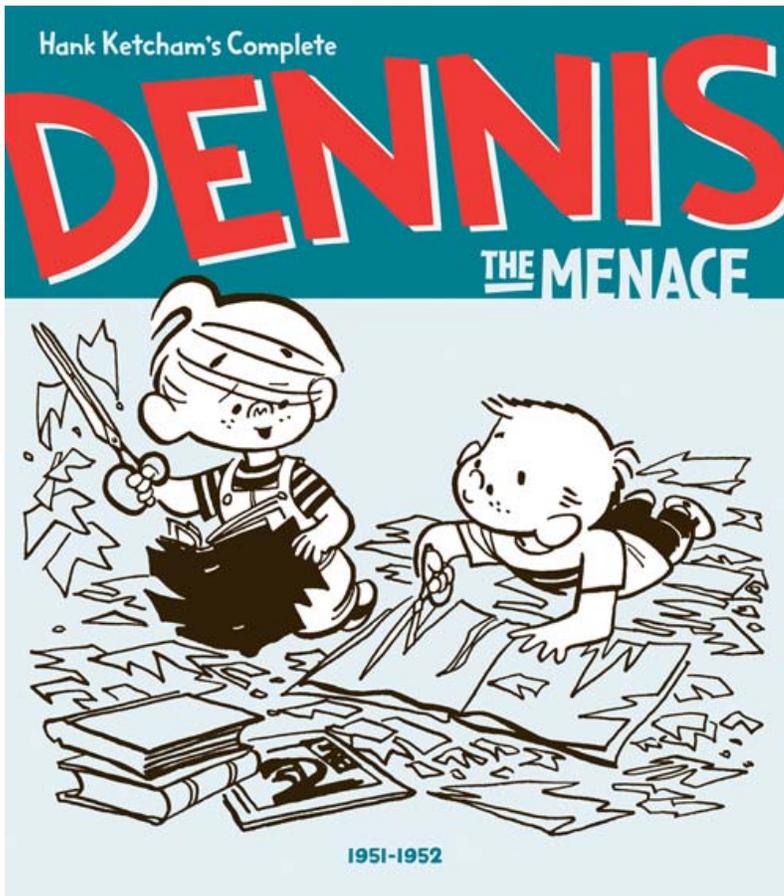


MAD MEN SEASON FOUR (\$49.98; Lionsgate) -- For some reason, studios delay putting out season boxed sets until right before the next season begins. That, of course, gives new fans very little time to plunge into a show and get up to speed so they can watch the new season. It also gives current fans very little time to reacquaint themselves with what happened previously. In the UK, they get the season boxed sets out as soon as the current run is over, giving fans the maximum amount of time to commit to a show. But in the US? You get *Treme* a few weeks before the new season starts. And you get *Mad Men* a few weeks before they THOUGHT the new season would start. But because negotiations hit some snags, the fifth season of *Mad Men* won't be airing until March of 2012. So we unexpectedly get a chance to deal with Season Four almost a year before the new one begins. Me, I've long found the show flawed by thinking it should be a Peyton Place-style melodrama and dread all flashbacks to Don Draper's childhood. Whenever an episode actually focuses on work (like the classic all-nighter pulled by Don and Peggy in episode 7 "The Suitcase") the show comes to life. But whatever its shortcomings, the excellent cast keeps me coming back. The regular DVD packaging, by the way, is notably chintzy and awkward to deal with.

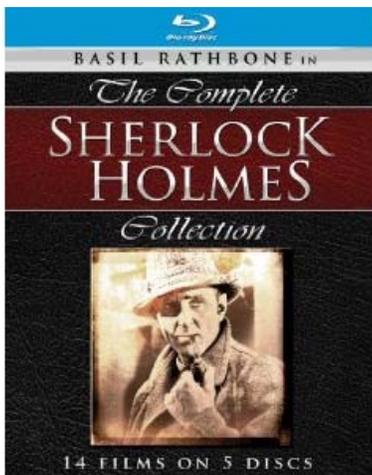


WHO'S THE CABOOSE? (\$19.95; Flatiron/New Video) -- This mockumentary spoofs the pilot season when actors scramble to get cast in one of the dozens and dozens of sitcoms and dramas that get to shoot an initial episode and hope they get picked up by a network. It's mainly a testament to how smart young talent often surrounds themselves -- or simply becomes friends with -- other talented people. Hence, this movie stars Sarah Silverman and also features about-to-be-ready-for-primetime talent like David Cross, Andy Dick, Kathy Griffin and H. Jon Benhjamin in a story co-written, directed and starring Sam Seder of Home Movies.





DENNIS THE MENACE SEASON ONE (\$29.93; Shout) -- It's easy to see why this mild sitcom was such an instant hit. Dennis was a lovable but frustrating kid who got into wholesome scrapes (breaking a vase, letting a dog get loose, "helping" his neighbor Mr. Wilson) that frustrated everyone around him. That was literally it. No one ever changed or grew, nothing ever happened. Every week Dennis would innocently create some mishap and his parents would hold their heads and Mr. Wilson would shake his fist. It made the series a Top 20 hit for three seasons, until even fans grew tired of the repetitiveness and it quickly faded away. But for fans of the scamp Jay North, Shout delivers all 32 episodes of season one in good shape and at a very reasonable price, along with some extras like a cross-over episode with *The Donna Reed Show*. Fans of the comic should definitely check out [Hank Ketcham's collected works](#), lovingly presented by [Fantagraphics](#). The jokes are just as familiar but his draftsmanship lifts it to high art.



THE COMPLETE SHERLOCK HOLMES COLLECTION (\$129.98 BluRay; MPI) -- This collection presents all 14 of the Basil Rathbone films. Twelve of them were beautifully restored by the UCLA Film & Television Archive. The first and best movies -- *The Hounds Of The Baskervilles* and *The Adventures of*

Sherlock Holmes, both from 1939 -- were NOT remastered but look fine. It's definitely a case of diminishing returns but Rathbone and Nigel Bruce put their indelible stamps on these roles and it's a pleasure to have all 14 in one compact collection that takes up the space of a single standard DVD. Extras include six audio commentaries by scholars (including one new one) and film footage of author Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. I still get a thrill out of knowing I'm probably enjoying a better print and image at home on my plasma tv than most fans saw in movie theaters some 70 years ago.



THE ALAN BENNETT COLLECTION (\$54.98; BBC/2Entertain) -- Here's a long-overdue set. Alan Bennett is a beloved figure in the UK with no equivalent I can think of in America. He was a groundbreaking comic in his youth, became a major dramatist, delivered sterling work on radio and, as an aside, one of the most popular chroniclers of British life via his memoirs and other pieces both written and performed. He also produced brilliant television and this set covers some of his best, including the acclaimed but long unavailable movie *An Englishman Abroad*. That story of a disgraced British spy for the Soviets living in Moscow wasn't the masterpiece I hoped for but certainly worth seeing, as is everything here, which features sterling talent like Danie Day Lewis, Alan Bates, Janet McTeer and many others. Now if we could only get a complete set of his TV masterpiece *Talking Heads* I could rest easy.

*Thanks for reading. Michael Giltz is the co-host 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 some titles released by IFC and other subsidiaries of MPI. It helps pay the rent, but does not obligate him in any way to speak positively or negatively of their titles.

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jayquintana 09:25 AM on 4/09/2011
157 Fans



Wow... I absolutely love everything about Treme. To me, it's the best drama on TV in the last 15 years -- yes, better than The Wire or The Sopranos.

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HUFFPOST BLOGGER

Michael Giltz 03:28 PM on 4/10/2011
78 Fans



Thanks for commenting. Glad you're enjoying the show.

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HUFFPOST SUPER USER

doctorj2u 10:27 PM on 4/08/2011
115 Fans



Treme is a great show if you "get" New Orleans. I guess you just don't get her. Luckily, I do and I love the dvd. To each their own.

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Michael Giltz 03:33 PM on 4/10/2011
78 Fans



I've only been to New Orleans a few times so I'm not hardcore expert like some of my friends. But I absolutely loved it; went in the off season. I would have moved there immediately after my first visit if I wasn't convinced I would sink into a mellow, worry about work tomorrow routine in about five seconds flat. It's a wonderful place for doing nothing, which I'm prone to. I know every plot line has its basis in reality but that doesn't mean it makes for good storytelling. I know some real street musicians are snobs and won't play anyone else's music or do studio work but that doesn't mean they convinced me of why the two street musicians on this show behaved the way they did. She didn't seem "above" doing studio work when offered a chance to record and get an album credit and make some money, she just seemed indifferent in a way that puzzled me. I didn't get those two at all. Again, half the storylines were just wonderful. But why did Steve Zahn drop the political campaign when he loved the attention and was making money? If he was worried a genuine candidate might get blocked by his siphoning off votes, couldn't he have said so? If it was for the "free pass," I say, really? Not when he was having fun. It was completely inexplicable to me, no matter what the real guy did.

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HUFFPOST SUPER USER

doctorj2u 11:03 PM on 4/10/2011
115 Fans



Part One:

LOL! Don't worry about it, Michael. I am a New Orleanian, and I don't understand an America that could leave one of their own cities to rot for years after being destroyed. So you see, we are equal. Anyway, let me try to answer you questions, 1,) A wonderful place for doing NOTHING??? Is enjoying the moments of your life nothing? In the end, those moments are all you have and to do it right takes energy, presence and creativity. I would say that is more than nothing. 2,) You say that "Treme" is not good story telling, even if it is telling the truth. I lived Katrina and the years afterwards and it is epic story telling. It is the story of struggle, abandonment and bravery in the face of it. That is the truth and I think David Simon has done it justice. 3,) Those street musicians are outsiders, but, anyway, money is not the great motivator in the culture of New Orleans, It used to be the enjoyment of the life of the city and in family, but Katrina added the insistance on the survival of the culture itself. We have seen what life is like without it. That is not an option for us.

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doctorj2u 11:05 PM on 4/10/2011
115 Fans



Part Two:

And finally 4,) Davis. LOL! I really laughed at this one. I am part of a blog called "Back of Town". It involves mostly a group of bloggers that fought for the city post Katrina. The John Goodman character is partially based on one of them, Anyway, they had a poll early on on the characters, Davis had 4% approval. I voted for him! That is another characterization of New Orleanians. We like our characters! They provide the entertainment in life. Davis is harmless. Enjoy his antics, He is the smile in the theater masks of Thalia and Melpomene. See you next season! (Well, in your case, maybe not.) I hope you make it. You may be surprised.

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luziannagirl 15 minutes ago (9:49 PM)

359 Fans



Look, I have yet to see "Treme". I'm just too busy living that wonderful South-of-I-10 Luzianna life to watch that much TV.

I gotta clean up the kitchen after making curry cream butternut squash and coconut milk soup and and backyard lettuce salad. Last week we had fresh Pontchartrain flounder fillets with homemade Hollandaise and a Spanish Tarragon garnish. We caught the flounder and grew the tarragon. And I gotta get up mighty early to troll the Trestles for specs and flounder before the wind kicks up whitecaps on big Lake Pontchartrain. And that's just fishing and food. I don't even indulge in music and

nightlife. Much.

But I will get around to renting Treme. Eventually.

As a former New Orleanian, my guess as to why N.O. characters seem indifferent to success is that at the end of the day, they calculate success differently than the rest of America.

It just ain't all about money, folks. There truly are some things money ---well lots of it anyway---just can't buy.

Life in South Louisiana is one of them.

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NHBill 01:14 AM on 4/08/2011

295 Fans

Must agree with you on Dudley Moore's Arthur.
Haven't seen it in years and now can't wait to get my hands on it.
Disagree on Treme and Black Swan.
They are both marvelous.
I love the total unpredictability of Treme.
Real life does just start and stop.
And Melissa Leo is doing some of her best and yet most understated work.
It's almost hard to imagine she's the same woman who won an Oscar for the Fighter.
Black Swan is a Horror masterpiece pure and simple.
They come very few and far between.
I've never heard of Alan Bennett.
Must find out more.
Thanks again MG.

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HUFFPOST BLOGGER

Michael Giltz 01:29 PM on 4/08/2011

78 Fans



Thanks for commenting. Certainly Treme is intelligently made with a great cast; glad you're enjoying it.

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