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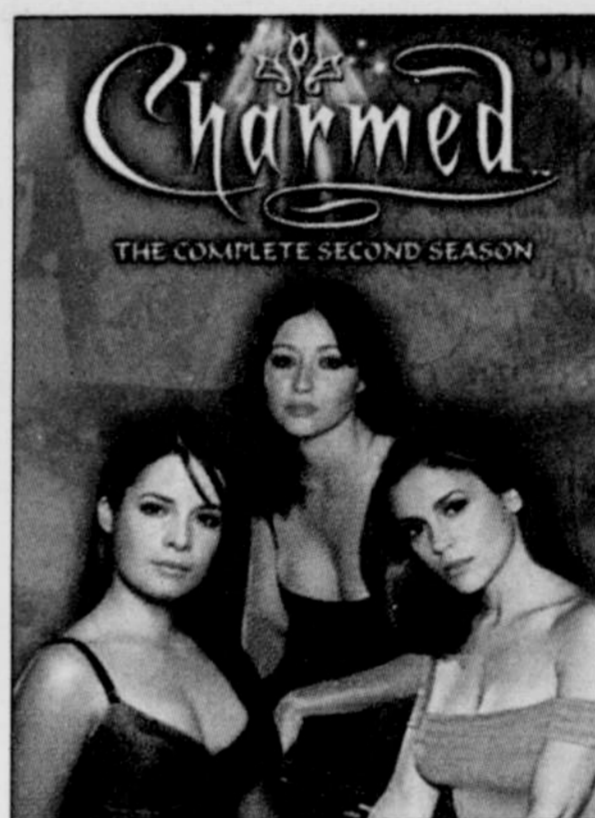
television

TV on DVD

Mystery, sex, magic and murder

by Andy Mangels

In the not-so-older days, I would videotape every one of my favorite television series for potential later viewing. After all, few of them were released on VHS, and those that were came in pricey boxed sets or in a paltry two-episodes-per-tape deal. The past few years have seen an explosion of TV shows coming to DVD in full-season sets, nicely designed and often full of extras. As I divest myself of videotapes, let's take a look at some recent releases of TV on DVD and analyze their queer appeal.



Charmed:
The Complete Second Season
Paramount

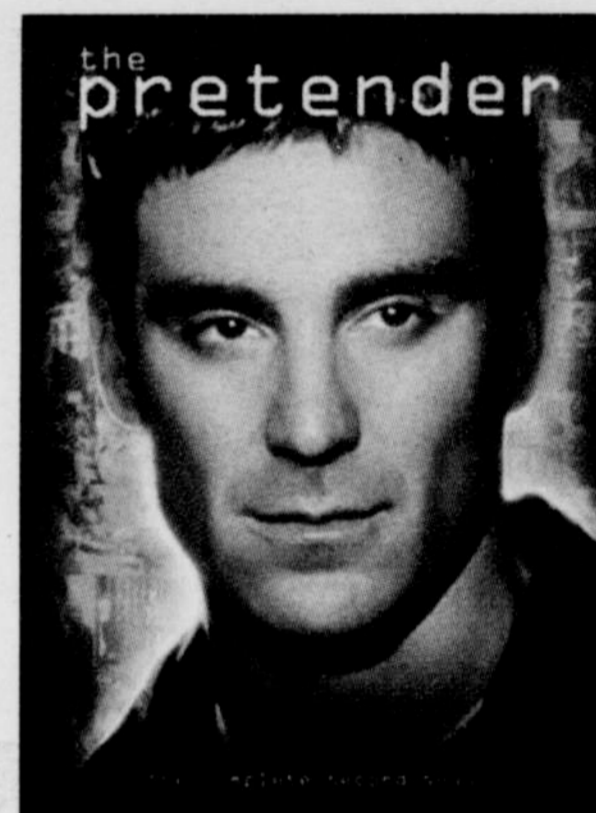
The three magical Halliwell sisters are back, vanquishing evil demons and warlocks in a San Francisco that is magically devoid of any gay people! With three pretty witches and a few judiciously hunky boyfriends—not to mention magical tongues planted firmly in cheeks—*Charmed* has always had a gay following. And while some may watch to see the train wreck that is überbitch Shannen Doherty, or the tacky fashions of Alyssa Milano, I was always a Holly Marie Combs fan (a leftover from her lesbian-baiting days on *Picket Fences*). Queer content is sketchy, but in one episode, Prue (Doherty) is turned into a man. Piper (Combs) books some cool “live” acts at her music club, including Paula Cole and the positively fierce Janice Robinson. The 22-episode *Charmed* set is fun but unmagically lacks any DVD extras.

Desperate Housewives:
The Complete First Season
Buena Vista

If you aren't watching *Desperate Housewives*, consider yourself officially out of the pop culture loop. Full of juicy mysteries, sexy shenanigans, duplicity, drama, comedy and gorgeous men and women, this soap opera is like “*Twin Peaks* meets *Dynasty*.” Created by Marc Cherry, a very out gay man (as the behind-the-scenes documentaries make very clear), the series is glamorous and glib, with the sparkle and wit of your favorite drag queen crossed with the drop-dead good looks of your husband- or wife-to-be. There are gay subplots aplenty, including a pair of underage gay teens and a mistaken-identity gay-bashing, as well as lots of male and female flesh on display. The DVD set contains all 23 episodes plus a kitchen



full of revealing extras, documentaries, commentaries and more secret dirty laundry. Top recommendations!



The Pretender:
The Complete Second Season
Fox

Jarod is a genius on the run from a secret research organization, and he takes on new identities and new professions each week as he tries to find out his true origins. Star Michael T. Weiss will be familiar to most viewers as “the hot guy from *Jeffrey*.” Oddly, as I recall, though he plays a fashion photographer and a gigolo, Jarod never assays the role of a gay man in any episode...perhaps as a result of concerns about Weiss' rumored orientation? Still, the series is pulpy fun, especially whenever tough-as-nails operative Miss Parker (Andrea Parker) gets her mad-on, which is in virtually every scene. The DVD features all 22 hours of the second season, plus commentary tracks and several making-of featurettes.

The Ren & Stimpy Show: Season Five and Some More of Four
Paramount

Nickelodeon's irreverent and often-grotesque cartoon series featured a fat, stupid cat named Stimpy