

Blu-Ray Review: ‘Hung: The Complete First Season’ Developed Right Chemistry

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on June 25, 2010 - 9:55am

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CHICAGO – HBO’s “Hung” doesn’t quite live up to the incredibly high standards of the best network on television but the sporadic writing on the show and very strong ensemble did produce enough interesting dramatic and comedic moments to warrant a look on the excellent Blu-ray release of the first season, timed to coincide with the premiere of season two on Sunday, June 27th, 2010.



The series premiere of “Hung” and even the next few episodes were missing that spark; the chemistry that elevates an experience from being just another one-night stand. The tale of a man (Thomas Jane) who lost everything in the horrible economy but maintained the rights to his giant pecker and how to use it was a hit-and-miss affair that too often missed for at least three episodes. Then the casting agent found the perfect supporting actress and gave her an excellent subplot and “Hung” finally started to find its rhythm. The ups started to outweigh the downs and there’s reason to believe that “Hung” could someday stand with the best comedies of the network.



Mary and Max was released on Blu-ray and DVD on June 15th, 2010
Photo credit: IFC Films

The funnier-than-you-think (don’t forget his amazing guest role on “Arrested Development”) Thomas Jane stars as the former high school sports legend turned middle-aged loser Ray Drecker, a Detroit high school basketball coach struck by a string of bad luck. His wife (Anne Heche) leaves him, his twin children Darby (Sianoa Smit-McPhee) & Damon (Charlie Saxton) take her side, he gets kidney stones, and his house burns down. Living in a tent in his own backyard, Ray is at the end of his line.





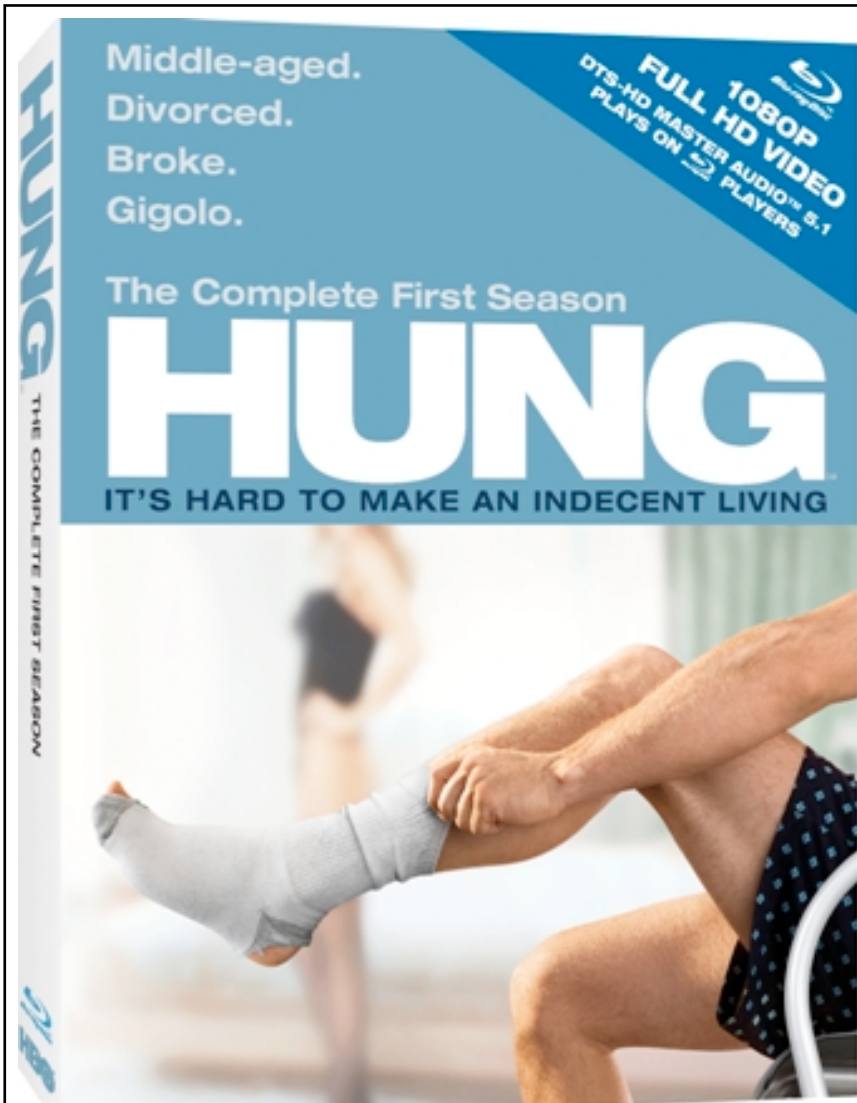
Mary and Max was released on Blu-ray and DVD on June 15th, 2010

Photo credit: IFC Films

Ray attends a seminar, where he runs into an old one-night stand, hippie poet Tanya (Jane Adams). They decide to take another trip around the quickie block and get into a fight in which Tanya suggests that the only thing Ray has left is his huge dick and that perhaps that's what he should use to make his fortune. She means it as an insult. Ray takes it seriously.

Before you know it, Ray is at the Motor City Casino meeting a client who answered his ad in the paper or happened across the picture of his penis online. He's skipping out on the basketball game he should be coaching, but he'll make the money so his son can go to the Goth concert he wants to attend by any means necessary.

For a few episodes, "Hung" feels stuck in neutral. Jane doesn't seem comfortable in the shoes of his character, Adams is a bit of a plot device, and Heche is presented with a shrill, thankless role. The kids are non-entities, mostly used to soften the fact that you're watching a show about a male prostitute. But he's a hell of a dad! A "my kid might be gay" plotline tacked on near the end doesn't work.



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Photo credit: IFC Films

Where does "Hung" begin to find the right rhythm technique? In the fifth episode of season one, Ray and Tanya have mostly found their business rhythm and the writers introduce a major subplot for the season with the introduction of a client who wants something a little unusual. She first asks for elaborate role-playing scenarios which she's constantly rewriting and, before you know it, Ray is actually going to couples therapy with her. He falls for the stunning beauty in a remarkably interesting twist on the classic dramatic plot of a business relationship turning into a personal one. Natalie Zea (now on "Justified") is simply spectacular, giving the show the zip that it needed to have from the beginning.

Her arc is a fascinating one as Zea clearly helped Jane figure out his character.

From there, "Hung" put together a second half of its first season that easily outweighed its first in every creative way. While sometimes still too dull, Jane finally found the righteous indignation that he should have had from episode one and Adams really developed a three-dimensional character, especially after being given a mother (Rhea Perlman) and romantic interest (Joshua Leonard). Even the writers seem reinvigorated, somehow making a line as cheap as "*Who do I have to f**k around here to get my kids back?*" effectively entertaining. For the record, Heche is still a non-factor and too often drags down the show. It's not her fault but the writers have given her nothing interesting to do. They better figure her out in season two or should just drop her altogether.

With a great cast and the creative freedom of HBO, there was a lot to like about "Hung" from the beginning, but it was missing that special something that takes a show from a mild diversion to appointment television. To watch how a show travels on that journey, check out the first season of "Hung," now on Blu-ray.

Special Features:

- o Commentaries on Episodes 1, 4, and 8 by Series Creators/Executive Producers Colette Burson and Dmitry Lipkin and writer Brett C. Leonard
- o "About Hung" — Behind-the-scenes look at the making of "Hung" featuring interviews with cast and crew
- o "The Women of Hung" — Explores the complex relationships between Ray Drecker and the women in his life
- o Ray and Tanya's Personal Ads

"Hung: The Complete First Season" stars Thomas Jane, Jane Adams, and Anne Heche. The show was created by Dmitry Lipkin. It came out on Blu-ray and DVD on June 22nd, 2010.



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