

DVD Review: First Season of NBC Medical Dramas ‘Mercy,’ ‘Trauma’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on August 16, 2010 - 10:37am

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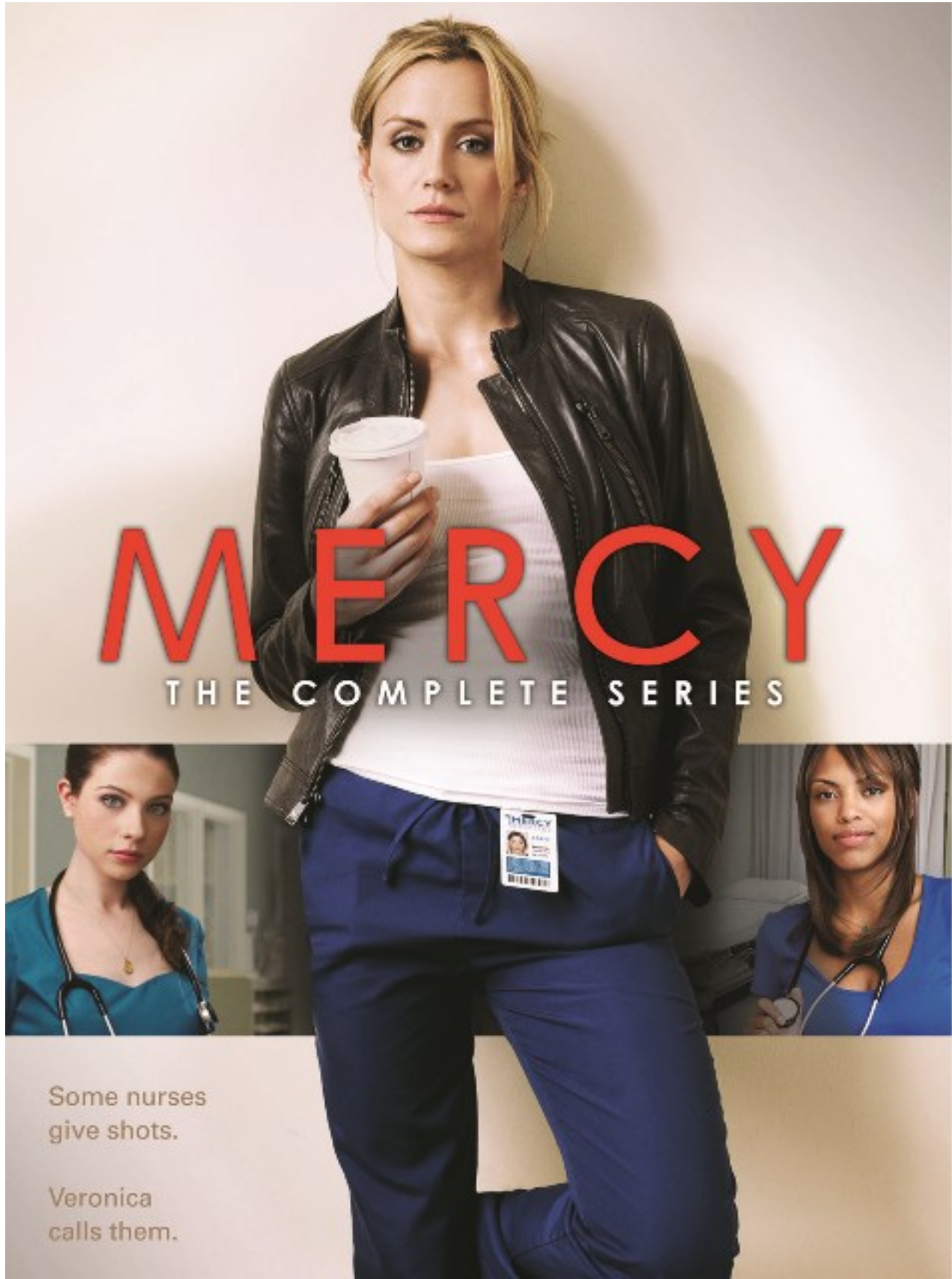
CHICAGO – It must have been rough to be on the NBC drama team in the fall of 2010. The network brass made it crystal clear that they cared little about scripted drama when they handed over five nights a week to Jay Leno, but the producers of the network’s two new medical dramas “Mercy” and “Trauma” had to push forward with their programs despite the diminishing reputation of their home. Both series made it through the first year but neither graduated to a second season. See what you probably missed with “Mercy: The Complete Series” and “Trauma: Season 1.”



DVD Rating: **2.5/5.0**

Neither program deserves mention in the best of the history of NBC, but both are the kind of shows that could have developed creatively if the network wasn’t in such dire straits. In particular, it feels like “Mercy” was unjustly swept under the rug. It’s not a perfect show, but the cast is strong enough that it feels like they should have been granted the time to grow into these characters. Was “Mercy” that much weaker than season one of “ER” or “Grey’s Anatomy”? Nope. But the show fell victim to the erosion of the network and a bumpy first season that often valued cliché over character.

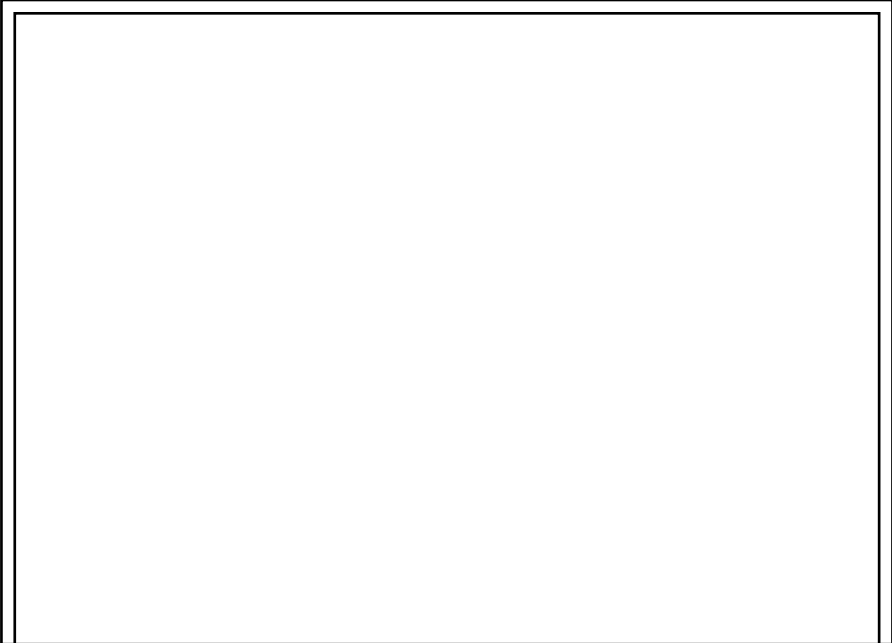
The gorgeous Taylor Schilling stars as Nurse Veronica Flanagan Callahan, a hospital worker who has brought home a few demons from her recent tour in Iraq. Joining Veronica in the hospital drama are the naive Chloe Payne (Michelle Trachtenberg) and tough Sonia Jimenez (Jaime Lee Kirchner) along with strong supporting work from James Tupper, Diego Klattenhoff, Guillermo Diaz, James Le Gros, and a guest turn by James Van Der Beek.



Mercy: The Complete Series was released on DVD on August 3rd, 2010
Photo credit: Universal

“Mercy” finished the 2009-2010 season in 76th place with an average viewership just above 6 million viewers. The cost of the show clearly outweighed keeping it on with ratings that anemic and it’s hard to see the program ever turning into a water-cooler show but I believe that it could have been a reliable stand-by in the middle of the just-passed decade when ratings for shows like this one on NBC were about 50% higher. “Mercy” was not a great program and it’s unlikely that anyone is truly lamenting its passing but if you pick up the complete series set, you will see a show that never really had a chance.

The DVD set courtesy of NBC/Universal is a very accomplished one with stronger-than-average standard video that looks about as well-mastered as some recent Blu-ray releases when upconverted. Each episode is presented in anamorphic widescreen with a 1.78:1 aspect ratio and accompanied by a Dolby Digital 5.1 track. I can’t wait for the day when all TV seasons are released on Blu-ray but this is a very strong old-ray release.





Trauma: Season 1 was released on DVD on August 10th, 2010

Photo credit: Universal

As for special features, the five-disc set includes an exclusive never-before-seen director's cut of the final episode, ten behind-the-scenes interviews with the stars of "Mercy," a gag reel, and commentaries as follow — Episode 1.1 "Can We Get That Drink Now?" (Executive Producer/Creator Liz Heldens and Executive Producers Gretchen J. Berg & Aaron Harberts) and Episode 1.14 "I Have a Date" (Series Stars Taylor Schilling, Michelle Trachtenberg, and Jaime Lee Kirchner).

It may be unusually titled "Season 1" but the four-disc set for "Trauma" is also a "Complete Series" release and yet another program that felt like a relic of a former era of NBC. Unlike "Mercy," "Trauma" started strong and went in the other direction and I'm not sure this show could have ever been fixed. By mid-season, the show too often fumbled as it tried to top the crazy action scene that came before. As they continued to struggle in the ratings, the writers of "Trauma: Season 1" clearly were trying to make a splash and they ignored the real strength of their show — the ensemble talent of Cliff Curtis, Derek Luke, Anastasia Griffith, and Aimee Garcia. It's a great cast that became lost in the Michael Bay-esque action.

Watching the show again on DVD, it is remarkable that a program with this high of a production value couldn't get it together. We've become so spoiled by film-quality action sequences on TV that they no longer draw on their own without characters for the audience to care about. Something will eventually shake the cobwebs of Leno off of NBC but "Mercy" and "Trauma" were victims of bad timing when the flaws of each program couldn't be given the time to be worked out.

The DVD release of "Trauma: Season 1" is a bit more disappointing than "Mercy." The video quality doesn't look quite as impressive, perhaps because of the on-location shooting and intense action sequences. This is definitely a show that should be been presented in HD. And the relative lack of special features is also disappointing with NBC/Universal including only one commentary on the pilot and a few deleted scenes. "Trauma" may have not had enough fans to get it to a second season but even the few that it did have deserved better.

"Mercy: The Complete Series" stars Taylor Schilling, Jaime Lee Kirchner, Michelle Trachtenberg, James Tupper, Diego Klattenhoff, Guillermo Diaz, James Le Gros, and James Van Der Beek. It was released on DVD on August 3rd, 2010 and is not rated. It runs 941 minutes.

"Trauma: Season 1" stars Cliff Curtis, Derek Luke, Anastasia Griffith, and Aimee Garcia. It was released on DVD on August 10th, 2010 and is not rated. It runs 767 minutes.



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