

## DVD Review: 'Caprica: Season 1.0' Has Fresh, Transcendent Appeal

Submitted by [mattmovieman](#) [1] on October 13, 2010 - 8:32am

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CHICAGO – As a relatively new visitor to the “Battlestar Galactica” universe, I found myself utterly enthralled by the inaugural season of “Caprica,” a prequel of sorts that’s garnering generally favorable reviews from fans. Created by Glen Larson in 1978, the “Battlestar” franchise was brilliantly re-imagined in 2004 by Ronald D. Moore and David Eick, who were clearly more interested in ideas than explosions.

For all of its action setpieces and standard sci-fi tropes, “Galactica” was a rare franchise reboot that succeeded in actually being about something, and the same can be said of this superb follow-up series. While “Galactica” centered on the war between mankind and machines (known as “Cylons”) being waged on distant planets known as the “Twelve Colonies,” “Caprica” is set fifty-eight years “before the fall,” illustrating the birth of the apocalyptic conflict.



DVD Rating: **4.0/5.0**

Yet “Caprica” is not bogged down in the type of tiresome exposition and stale self-importance that marred George Lucas’s “Star Wars” prequels. It also isn’t an in-name-only retread consisting of trendy actors playing dress up (as in J.J. Abrams’s “Star Trek”). One of the strongest aspects about “Caprica” is that it is an entirely different animal altogether. The camera is much steadier here than it was in “Galactica,” since the story is propelled more by a looming sense of dread than wall-to-wall chaos.

Instead of telling a ponderous origin story, “Caprica” delves into a rich and complex human drama, populated with three-dimensional characters whose identities are at once familiar and wholly alien. Inventor Daniel Graystone (Eric Stoltz) and lawyer Joseph Adama (Esai Morales) develop a strong bond after losing loved ones in a terrorist bombing. Graystone soon discovers that his deceased daughter, Zoe (Alessandra Torresani), had created an avatar of herself, which resides in a virtual game world where teens hack in and explore their inner id. Graystone becomes obsessed with bringing his daughter back, and enlists the help Adama, who’s also desperate to reunite with the wife and daughter that he had lost. But Zoe’s avatar has plans of her own...



Caprica: Season 1.0 was released on DVD on Oct. 5, 2010.

Photo credit: SyFy

Through the thin veil of fantasy, "Caprica" explores a host of timely, provocative issues. There's religious fanaticism embodied by Sister Clarice (the mesmerizing Polly Walker), who self-righteously recruits wayward youth into her terrorist plots. There's racism faced by Adama, an immigrant who encourages his son, Willy, to be proud of his heritage (Willy, of course, will grow up to be commander of the Galactica). There's also a great deal of corporate conspiracy, as Graystone utilizes Adama's mob ties to assist him in realizing his dreams.

The visual effects artists work miniature miracles on a limited budget, particularly in their green screen creation of New Cap City, an entirely artificial landscape inhabited by souls hopelessly lost in cyberspace. Morales brings commanding presence to his role, which has one of the most intriguing arcs in the series. Paula Malcomson, best known as Trixie on "Deadwood," is electrifying as Daniel's wife Amanda, who becomes gradually unhinged in the aftermath of her daughter's death. Torresani's charm and earthy beauty adds a great deal of intrigue to her character, who could've easily been aggravating in other hands. Magda Apanowicz is equally impressive as Zoe's devoted friend Lacy. If there's anything lacking in this series, it's an element of tangible awe in the fantasy. The show's heightened realism is so grounded and gritty that it sounds ridiculous when characters attempt to use language from "Galactica," such as "frak," which laughably stands in for another four-letter word. Yet that's a relatively minor quibble in light of such refreshingly intelligent and compelling television.

"Caprica: Season 1.0" is presented in its 1.78:1 aspect ratio with stellar picture and sound quality. The four-disc set comes equipped with episode-specific extras, as well as various additional featurettes. There's a brief preview of Season 1.5, which kicked off Oct. 5. Executive producers Ronald D. Moore and David Eick accompany director Jeffrey Reiner on the audio commentary for the unrated extended pilot episode, which provides a revealing look at how the creators and crew approached this series from an entirely different perspective. The producers explain how the addition of writer/co-creator Remi Aubuchon injected freshness into the "Battlestar" franchise. They also discuss the reason why their characters seem to be smoking a lot of the time.

Reiner's experience on "Friday Night Lights" made him feel right at home utilizing the fluid three-camera technique on the pilot. The cast approved of this technique, particularly Stoltz, who says it allows him to be in the moment, without worrying about hitting his mark. Resembling a mishmash of eras in American pop culture, the art direction assisted in contrasting the warm, noir-style world of Adama with the cold, mechanical world of Graystone. One of the most surprising artistic inspirations highlighted here is the cinema of Milos Forman, particularly "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" (the filmmakers fought to cast Walker for her uncanny ability to channel the power-hungry spirit of Nurse

Ratched).

The excellent array of special features include over an hour of video blogs and featurettes, an hour of deleted scenes, and various commentaries, many in the form of podcasts. Morales reflects on the show's bold critique of Western religion, arguing that it illustrates the insanity of waging wars over a belief in god. Some of the most memorable observations come from executive producer Kevin Murphy, who says that the show is meant to mirror modern times, which he believes are on the cusp of change. "It seems like we are one nasty disease away from a huge humanity course correction," Murphy predicts. And Aubuchon succinctly summarizes the show's transcendent appeal: "By watching something out of our time, we can start thinking about our own time."

*'Caprica: Season 1.0' is released by SyFy and stars Eric Stoltz, Esai Morales, Alessandra Torresani, Magda Apanowicz, Paula Malcomson, Sasha Roiz and Polly Walker. It was created by Remi Aubuchon, Ronald D. Moore and David Eick. It was released on Oct. 5th, 2010. It is not rated.*



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