

Blu-Ray Review: ‘Doctor Who: The Complete Fifth Series,’ ‘Sherlock’ Are Both Great

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on November 21, 2010 - 5:31pm

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CHICAGO – Two of the more beloved and acclaimed properties in the 2010 BBC output were released on Blu-ray this month and both should be near the top of holiday wish lists for genre fans. The simple fact is that BBC is doing fantasy, science fiction, and even thriller better than anyone right now and one need look no further than “Doctor Who: The Complete Fifth Series” and “Sherlock,” two sets brimming with greatness.

“Doctor Who: The Complete Fifth Series”



Blu-Ray Rating: **5.0/5.0**

The eleventh doctor made his debut this year in the fifth series of the new version of “Doctor Who” and one of the best sci-fi programs of the ‘00s not only didn’t lose a step but arguably improved. The elder statesman of the best network on television in terms of genre programming (with other great offerings that include “Torchwood,” “Primeval,” and “Being Human” among others) shows no signs of its age with this incredible box set of entertaining programming, perfect HD video & audio, and an amazing amount of special features.

First, a very brief history. One of the most influential and beloved characters in the canon of TV science fiction had faded into relative obscurity until 2005 when Russell T. Davies rebooted the legendary franchise. It started with the great Christopher Eccleston in the timeless role but he quickly handed the controls of the TARDIS over to the excellent tenth doctor played by David Tennant, someone who was so good in the part that fans wondered if he could ever be replaced. Who could have the same blend of comic timing, charm, and straight-up heroism?



Doctor Who: The Complete Fifth Series was released on Blu-ray and DVD on November 9th, 2010

Photo credit: BBC/WB

Enter Matt Smith. He's far from a Tennant copycat but he brings a similarly-impressive amount of small-screen charisma with his own unique style, look, and energy. With the new doctor, a new showrunner (Steven Moffat) and a new female lead (Karen Gillan), "Doctor Who: The Complete Fifth Series" proved that shows this good can survive major creative shifts as long as they stay true to the fundamental appeal of the program in the first place. This is the same clever, witty, and subversive science fiction that has made "Doctor Who" a household name.

Smith finds a way to be somehow smooth and gawky at the same time. He's "nerd cool" in the way he often appears to stumble to his destination and yet believably plays the intellect of his character at the same time. His comic timing is excellent, especially when playing off the strikingly-beautiful Karen Gillan as his new companion Amy Pond. In a very clever move, Moffat designed a back story for Amy that creates a unique doctor-companion dynamic. It turns out that Amy has been somewhat obsessed with the Doctor since he first dropped into her life as a youth. He's kind of her childhood hero but also an object of sexual chemistry. Gillan matches Smith with pitch-perfect delivery and charming characterization. She screams future star.

The Blu-ray release of "Doctor Who: The Complete Fifth Series" looks about as impressive as any HD transfer I've recently seen. It's beautiful, as nearly every BBC/WB Blu-ray release typically ends up (and the sound mix is similarly strong: an essential part of the sci-fi experience in that the effects, music, and dialogue need to find just the right levels). The special features on past "Doctor Who" releases have been notable and they're not about to start releasing bare-bones collections now. This is yet another fantastic release for a fantastic show.

Special Features:

- o 2 "Meanwhile on the TARDIS" Additional Scenes
- o 4 "The Monster Files"
- o 3-Part Video Diary
- o 13 "Doctor Who Confidential"

- o 6 “In-Vision Commentaries”
- o Outtakes
- o Over 20 Teasers and Trailers

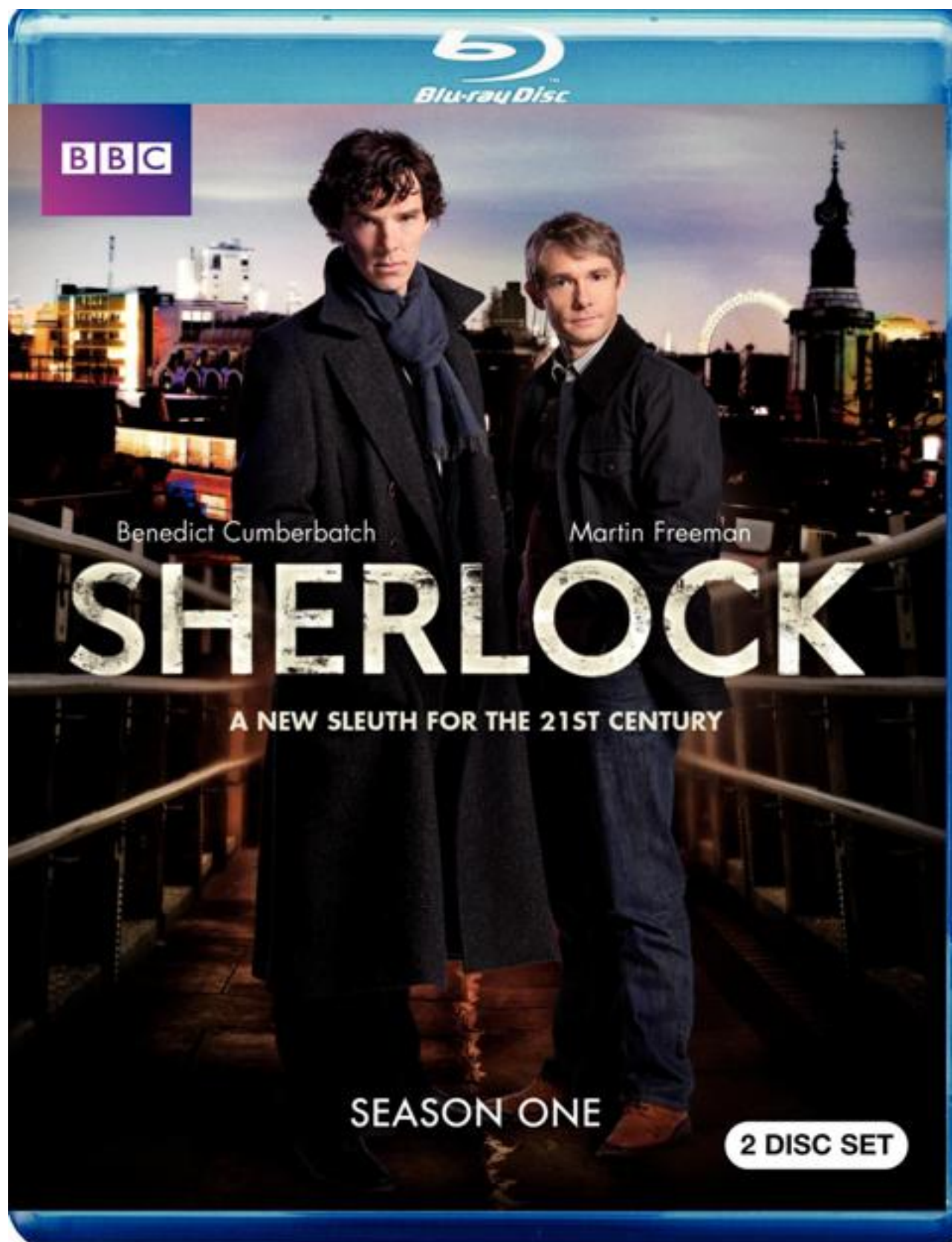
“Sherlock”



Blu-Ray Rating: **5.0/5.0**

I was familiar with “Doctor Who” going into my coverage of the fifth series of BD and have more than a passing knowledge of quality British programming but I had yet to catch up with the highly-buzzed “Sherlock,” a modern adaptation of the Sir Arthur Conan Doyle legend that replayed stateside not on BBC America but on PBS. I had heard it was great and you probably have as well. It’s even better than you’ve heard.

I would gladly watch hours of this version of “Sherlock” over the Guy Ritchie/Robert Downey Jr. incarnation which turned the brainy hero into an action star. This version has more in common with “Doctor Who” than mere studio and release date: It too was created by Steven Moffat. With his work on “Coupling,” “Jekyll,” “Doctor Who,” “Sherlock” and more, he needs to be considered for the short list of the most inspired TV writers working today. And “Sherlock” is arguably his best work to date.



Sherlock: Season One was released on Blu-ray and DVD on November 9th, 2010

Photo credit: BBC/WB

“Sherlock” is not a typical TV series by U.S. standards. There aren’t 22 episodes of generic mysteries of the week. Instead of that structure, the team behind the show produced what are essentially three TV movies with the same central characters but different mysteries. They are titled “A Study in Pink,” “The Blind Banker,” and “The Great Game” and they’re all five-star fantastic.

Benedict Cumberbatch (“Atonement”) stars as the title character, reimagined in modern times as something between an annoyance and a genius for Scotland Yard. This Sherlock is sort of a recluse, a man turned into a loner by his amazing insight. When he meets Dr. Watson (the great Martin Freeman of “The Office” and “Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy”) in the first film, he immediately knows that the good doctor was

injured in recent combat in Iraq or Afghanistan. When he later explains to Watson how he knew, it impresses the somewhat-sad doctor instead of pushing him away. An instant partnership is formed.

What can I say about "Sherlock"? It's smart, quickly-paced, funny, charming, and riveting. Mystery fans that have been fed a steady diet of popcorn entertainment with the U.S. franchises like "C.S.I." or "Law & Order" will be blown away by the taste of this full meal. This is television closer to "Prime Suspect" than "The Mentalist" and it nearly makes all other mysteries that aired in 2010 look stupid by comparison. Don't miss it.

Special Features:

- o Episode 1 Commentary featuring: Mark Gatiss, Steven Moffat, Sue Vertue
- o Episode 3 Commentary featuring: Benedict Cumberbatch, Martin Freeman, Mark Gatiss
- o Exclusive Pilot Episode: Sherlock - A Study in Pink
- o Unlocking Sherlock - The making of

"Doctor Who: The Complete Fifth Series" stars Matt Smith and Karen Gillan. It was released on Blu-ray and DVD on November 9th, 2010. It is not rated and runs 585 minutes.

"Sherlock: Season One" stars Benedict Cumberbatch and Karen Gillan. It was released on Blu-ray and DVD on November 9th, 2010. It is not rated and runs 270 minutes.



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