

## Blu-Ray Review: 'V: The Complete Second Season' Fails to Save Sci-Fi Reboot

Submitted by [mattmoviemann](#) [1] on October 27, 2011 - 7:14am

- [ABC](#) [2]
- [Blu-ray Review](#) [3]
- [Elizabeth Mitchell](#) [4]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [5]
- [Jane Badler](#) [6]
- [Kenneth Johnson](#) [7]
- [Matt Fagerholm](#) [8]
- [Morena Baccarin](#) [9]
- [V: The Complete Second Season](#) [10]
- [Warner Bros. Home Entertainment](#) [11]
- [Theater, TV, DVD & Blu-Ray](#) [12]

CHICAGO – After two increasingly rocky seasons, ABC's soulless reboot of Kenneth Johnson's '80s miniseries and subsequent TV show "V" was finally cancelled. It ended the sci-fi serial on a tragic cliffhanger that was very much in keeping with the show's status as a muddled downer. Though some fans have signed petitions to get the show renewed on a different network, it's doubtful that "V" will garner a large audience outside of Comic Con conventions.

With its morose ensemble and cheap anti-Obama fearmongering, there was very little here to keep viewers engaged, aside from the loud rises in music that sound before every commercial break (and, in some cases, after every scene change). Leading ladies Elizabeth Mitchell and Morena Baccarin had ample screen time to perfect the art of the pensive, simmering stare, yet as good as the actresses were, the writers gave them little to do but engage in hour-long stare-offs.



Blu-Ray Rating: **2.5/5.0**

Regardless of the cast and crew's claims to the contrary, "V" is a black-and-white battle between good (represented by a rebel band of paranoid humans) and evil (the reptilian aliens with a tedious plan for taking over Earth). The ruthless queen of the invading Vs, Anna (Baccarin), supports universal healthcare and unleashes a "blue energy" initiative to cure global warming. Her championing of hope and change are merely a brainwashing smokescreen for her wicked intentions. She's clearly designed to represent the worst nightmares of Tea Partiers and birthers whose self-righteous activism is embodied by Father Jack (Joel Gretsch), a saintly man with a military background. In one of the show's multiple half-hearted attempts at moral ambiguity, Father Jack's anti-V hate speech at the pulpit inspires some radical churchgoers to kill peace activists. This subplot could've been provocative if there were the slightest shadow of a doubt that the aliens weren't malicious, guinea pig-gobbling monsters devoid of a birth certificate.



Elizabeth Mitchell stars in the second season of ABC's short-lived drama V.

*Photo credit: Warner Bros. Home Entertainment*

Though counter-terrorism agent Erica (Mitchell) resorts to dark methods in order to take down the aliens, utilizing interrogation techniques that would've been standard procedure at Abu Ghraib, it's never in doubt that she is a heroine with the purest of intentions. Her son, Tyler (Logan Huffman), is one of the only major characters appalled at the treatment of the Vs, but he's nothing more than a horny and naïve kid ripe for slaughter (it doesn't help that Huffman's performance has all the forced mannerisms of a soap opera caricature).

What made the second season a considerable improvement over the first were the darker and richer compositions in its digital backdrops, relieving them of their amateurish hollowness. The effects were of a very high quality for mainstream television, but the derivative creatures and landscapes that they produced failed to stir the imagination. It seems that the producers were so desperate to recapture the magic of Johnson's original series that they felt compelled to bring back members of the original cast. Actress Jane Badler, who portrayed the queen in the original "V," turns up in the thankless role of Anna's mother, while her former "V" co-star Marc Singer (who played journalist-turned-fugitive Mike Donovan), briefly materializes during the finale in a cameo aiming to entice viewers into returning for a third season. Sadly, his efforts were in vain.



V: The Complete Second Season was released on Blu-Ray and DVD on Oct. 18, 2011.

*Photo credit: Warner Bros. Home Entertainment*

"V: The Complete Second Season" is presented in 1080p High Definition (with a 1.78:1 aspect ratio), accompanied by English, French and Spanish audio tracks and includes nearly a half hour of deleted scenes. There's an unintentionally amusing riot sequence set in Father Jack's church featuring frightened extras so over-the-top that they might as well be mimes. About a third of the additional footage is from the finale, which had an entire scrapped subplot about the last heroic actions of Fifth Columnist Ryan Nichols (the consistently strong Morris Chestnut), whose character is swiftly discarded in the final cut. A 7-minute blooper reel is particularly cathartic, since it shows the actors breaking out of their sullenly colorless personas (it must be hard to remain serious all day).

Among the other scant extras available on this two-disc set is an extended featurette on the second season's visual effects, and the efforts made by supervisor Andrew Orloff to improve the overall look of the show from last season. He successfully avoided the bright colors that caused the digital sets to look like video game backdrops, while better utilizing the Zeus green screen set at Zoic Studios. The largest digital set of the season was the blue energy reactor featured in 121 shots, and the effects artists note that the show's use of long lenses (which blur the foreground and background) provided them with an additional obstacle when attempting to achieve an authentic look. One of the effects artists' goals was to show the lizard alien that resides beneath the Vs' skin in its entirety by the end of the season, though after endless sketches and drafts, the final product is disappointingly mediocre. Far more thrilling is the in-camera effect achieved by director David Barrett, who dove off a building in order to film the fall of a stuntwoman with his Canon 5D camera. In 25-minute featurette on the "Arc of Story," executive producer Scott Rosenbaum said that the creative team felt pressure to answer more questions in the second season, such as the key to Anna's ambiguous motivation. Rosenbaum said it was his eventual intention to turn "V" into a resistance show, while Baccarin teasingly notes that Anna has yet to reach her breaking point. Alas, the same could not be said for ABC.

*'V: The Complete Second Season' is released by Warner Bros. Home Entertainment and stars Elizabeth Mitchell, Morena Baccarin, Joel Gretsch, Morris Chestnut, Logan Huffman, Laura Vandervoort, Scott Wolf, Christopher Shyer, Bret Harrison and Jane Badler. The show was created by Kenneth Johnson. It was released on Oct. 18, 2011. It is not rated.*

By [MATT FAGERHOLM](#) [14]  
Staff Writer  
[HollywoodChicago.com](http://HollywoodChicago.com)



[13]

[matt@hollywoodchicago.com](mailto:matt@hollywoodchicago.com) [13]

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