

Blu-ray Review: Spectacular HD Box Set For First Season of 'Boardwalk Empire'

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on January 18, 2012 - 7:56pm

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CHICAGO – HBO long led the way when it came to TV on DVD releases, but they were never much for special features. I think the idea was that their programming spoke for itself. "It's not TV, it's HBO." So why should they do what their competition does when it comes to deleted scenes, commentaries, etc.? It was a bit frustrating to read press releases for great TV shows and realize that they were once again bare-bones editions. Which makes the bonus-packed first season of "Boardwalk Empire" all that more amazing.



Blu-ray Rating: **5.0/5.0**

There are two major pieces of bonus material on the first season Blu-ray release of "Boardwalk Empire," which recently hit store shelves — enhanced viewing on all 12 episodes and six audio commentaries with some of the most talented people to ever make television, including Steve Buscemi, CFCA Award Winner Michael Shannon, Michael Kenneth Williams, and Terence Winter. They alone make it a stand-out release. It also helps that one of the most impressive-looking programs in the history of television has been transferred with the level of expertise that only a network/studio like HBO can provide. This is one of the best TV on Blu-ray sets yet produced for one of the most awarded shows of the last decade.



Boardwalk Empire: The Complete First Season

Photo credit: HBO

Now, what about the show itself? I admire the first season of "Boardwalk Empire" more than I adore the show as entertainment. I still think this

program needs to work out some dramatic kinks. There's just not quite enough urgency to the storytelling. But what lavish, remarkable storytelling. The show looks amazing and has production values that are above nearly anything else on television, but I never felt as completely invested in the characters in the first season as I wanted to be (that element improves a bit with season two but still needs work).



It helps that this is easily one of the best ensembles on TV (clearly, the only element that anyone could possibly think needs a bit of work on "Boardwalk Empire" is the writing since the cast, directors (including Martin Scorsese), and production values are all beyond criticism). Steve Buscemi, Michael Shannon, Michael Pitt, Kelly Macdonald, Shea Wigham, Michael Stuhlbarg, Michael K. Williams and even Dabney Coleman — I wouldn't argue with anyone who wanted to claim that this is the best ensemble on TV.

And most of the criticisms I could possibly levy at "Boardwalk Empire" fall away when one considers that this is a review of the Blu-ray and not merely the show. As Blu-rays go, this is simply spectacular. The HD video and audio are as good as anything I've yet seen (and I've seen LOTS). The special features are extensive and fascinating, offering a deeper look into the making of this award-winning show than HBO has ever done with one of their programs. It's a dream set for fans of the program and is good enough that it could convert those who aren't already sold on it. Honestly, I looked for a complaint. Michael Stuhlbarg looks a little silly on the package. That's all I got.

Synopsis:

From Emmy-winning writer Terence Winter (The Sopranos) and Executive Producer Martin Scorsese, Boardwalk Empire begins in Atlantic City in 1920. It is the eve of Prohibition, and county treasurer, Enoch "Nucky" Thompson (Steve Buscemi) is looking to cash in. As the undisputed "Boss" of Atlantic City, Nucky leads a double life as a politician and bootlegger; Prohibition may have outlawed alcohol, but in Nucky's world it has opened up highly lucrative opportunities for gangsters and rumrunners looking to provide "liquid gold" for a thirsty nation. In a city defined by notorious backroom politics and vicious power struggles, Nucky must battle with a relentless federal agent, ambitious underlings, and opportunistic rivals - including Arnold Rothstein, Lucky Luciano, and Al Capone.

Special Features:

- o Making "Boardwalk Empire"
- o "Boardwalk Empire" Enhanced Viewing
- o Creating the Boardwalk
- o Character Dossier
- o Atlantic City: The Original Sin City
- o Speakeasy Tour
- o Audio Commentaries on Six Episodes including Terence Winter, Steve Buscemi, Michael Kenneth Williams, Michael Shannon and more

"Boardwalk Empire: The Complete First Season" stars Steve Buscemi, Michael Pitt, Kelly MacDonald, Michael Shannon, Stephen Graham, Shea Wigham, Vincent Piazza, Michael Stuhlbarg, and Dabney Coleman. The show was created and written by Terence Winter and the pilot was directed by Martin Scorsese. It was released on Blu-ray and DVD on January 10th, 2012.



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