

Blu-ray Review: HBO's 'The Newsroom' Rivets, Frustrates at Same Time

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on June 20, 2013 - 3:04pm

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CHICAGO – Aaron Sorkin's "The Newsroom," recently released on Blu-ray and DVD, drives me crazy. The HBO drama can be so thematically dense and brings up subjects too often missing from the national conversation but it can also be so frustratingly self-important and deluded in its vision of the way real people operate. Do you give it credit for the topics it raises or smash it for the heavy hand with which they're delivered? I have high hopes that season two will iron out some of the problems (stories of reshot episodes indicate that Sorkin heard his critics) but I'm still torn on how to feel about season one.



Rating: **4.0/5.0**

One thing that's not in question is simple — the performances on "The Newsroom" are uniformly stellar. Jeff Daniels, Olivia Munn, Alison Pill, and Sam Waterston should be on the minds of all Academy members holding Emmy ballots. Daniels, in particular, seems like the perfect mouthpiece for Sorkin's views of the way journalists and the news they cover intersect, often impacting one another. The thing is that I think I firmly agree with Sorkin in most of his politics and opinions about the general failure of journalism in the new century. However, he takes his chance to express those opinions with such pretension that they get muddled.

Take for example episodes 4 and 5, both of which raise remarkably important conversation topics about how we cover news and the importance of journalists embedded in international hot beds. In episode four, Sorkin and his team find a way to combine an indictment of TMZ gossip-mongering and a commentary on news outlets jumping stories without keeping the human interest story in mind. And they do so to Coldplay. Episode five has an ending that turned my stomach as it places the emphasis of cultural change not on the kids revolting against corrupt leaders or even the foreign journalist willing to risk his life to cover it but the ACN team's "Rudy" moment.

And yet within all of these "oh no, don't do that" moments that Sorkin devises there are nuggets of brilliance. Whether it's in a line delivery from one of the great actors or even just the realization that "The Newsroom" tackles subjects that even the media is afraid to cover much less narrative drama, this is a show worth watching. Just know that it's sometimes a show worth hating too.

As expected, HBO kills it with the Blu-ray release, offering great HD transfers, copious special features, and DVD & Ultraviolet copies in one package. The slogan used to be "It's not TV...It's HBO" and it applies to the way they handle Blu-ray as well.



The Newsroom: The Complete First Season was released on Blu-ray and DVD on June 11, 2013

Photo credit: HBO

Synopsis:

From the fertile mind of Aaron Sorkin (The Social Network) and executive produced by Sorkin, Scott Rudin and Alan Poul this behind-the-scenes drama takes a look at a cable-news program at the fictional ACN Network, focusing on the on-and-off-camera lives of its acerbic anchor Will McAvoy (Jeff Daniels), new executive producer MacKenzie McHale (Emily Mortimer), their newsroom staff (John Gallagher, Jr., Alison Pill, Thomas Sadoski, Olivia Munn, Dev Patel, and others), their news-division boss (Sam Waterston), and corporate owner (Jane Fonda). Overcoming a tumultuous first day - climaxing in a newsflash that a BP oil rig has just exploded in the Gulf of Mexico - the team sets out on a patriotic if quixotic mission to “do the news well” in the face of corporate and commercial obstacles, and their own personal entanglements.

Special Features:

- o The Rundown: Creator And Executive Producer Aaron Sorkin Along With Alan Poul, Greg Mottola, Jeff Daniels, Emily Mortimer, and Sam Waterston Discuss In Detail Their Experiences Shooting The First Season In This Exclusive Conversation
- o Mission Control: A Behind The Scenes Look At The State Of The Art Sets With The Cast And Crew
- o Inside The Episodes: Get The Inside Perspective On Each Of The Episodes With Revealing Interviews From Creator and Executive Producer Aaron Sorkin
- o Audio Commentaries
- o Deleted Scenes
- o Digital Copy Included

“The Newsroom: The Complete First Season” stars Jeff Daniels, Alison Pill, Thomas Sadoski, John Gallagher Jr., Dev Patel, Emily Mortimer, Olivia Munn, Sam Waterston, and Jane Fonda. It was created by Aaron Sorkin and released by HBO on June 11, 2013.



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