

## Blu-ray Review: Fan Service ‘Veronica Mars’ Returns Home

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CHICAGO – A TV movie for the silver screen, “Veronica Mars” is a historical film that was Kickstarted into existence by the will of 91,585 backers. Now, it stands like a crossroads in the intersection between TV and film, showing that what may work in TV doesn’t necessarily make for a great film.

In a way that gives the show its hip geeky edge, the dialogue of “Veronica Mars” is constructed around sporadic mad-libs, which includes name-drops to the Barenaked Ladies, “Sharknado”, Clint Eastwood, and the term “asshat”. In an admirable feat, the portion in which characters spout these phrases is fitting - while the “Veronica Mars” may not be all that funny, it doesn’t come as desperate for relevancy. Instead, it positions itself well-within a realistic pop culture stratosphere where movies, music, and celebrities are intertwined.



Rating: **3.0/5.0**

With questionable tact, “Veronica Mars” uses winks as a form of self-defense against people not already wooed by the movie’s simple existence. A name-dropping of “Kickstarter” can be heard in the first few minutes of the movie; later someone becomes mouthpiece to the film’s awareness by saying Veronica is “Neptune’s own Angela Lansbury.” But with this embedded awareness, this makes its goofier corners even more awkward as it becomes blind to how it looks.

The film’s product placement in particular is shameless. Considering the homemade quality of this movie (where Warner Bros. was framed in the “Veronica Mars” Kickstarter narrative to be the parents deciding whether to build the lemonade stand) it’s disappointing to have the venture turned into a commercial. While any awareness of this in the movie is too little, perhaps the sequel will fight back with snark against comments such as my own? Don’t people want their TV shows to upgrade to movies because there will be no more commercial breaks? What is this, HuluPlus?

In terms of assembling its broadest appeal, a viable whodunit, “Veronica Mars” does have craftiness with its mystery. It stays at least one footstep ahead of the viewer, and its supporting performances (Gaby Hoffmann, Ryan Hansen, Krysten Ritter, Martin Starr) sell the film’s diversions well. Although other story arcs (including one about police corruption) feel like time-fillers, “Veronica Mars” can have some decent strides.

Other corners cut in terms of storytelling show an inclination to a preset understanding of the series’ scope. In particular, the hazy view of the film’s focal town of Neptune, CA. Not only are dangerous rich kids causing trouble and thus creating lengthy “In Memoriam” segments at reunions, but apparently they’re turning it into the wild west. However, when Veronica’s dad begs of her, “Don’t let this town take you down like it does everyone else,” the tone is completely off. Is he joking? How awful can this sunny town of well-dressed people be? Based on the film, Neptune seems to be a place where crime only happens because a story beckons for it.

With its special features, this Blu-ray offers a satisfying response for its fan creation. A behind-the-scenes feature named “By The Fans” clocks at nearly 60 minutes and shows the film’s creation even in pre-Kickstarter days. While it doesn’t entirely erase skepticism about the necessities of using the franchise, the footage of Rob Thomas refreshing his computer to see his Kickstarter gain thousands in seconds is a trippy visual, and surely indicative of this phenomenon’s power. Much of the rest of this feature is indeed for the fans, with its admirers/donators gushing as to how much they love the franchise, and subsequently how much the franchise’s actors/filmmakers love the fans back.

Should “Fans Only” be the subtitle of “Veronica Mars”? Does this movie try to captivate the kudos of anyone more than those who paid to make it happen? Outsiders may not be able to pick out the special appearances or references, but the swift-enough movie raises a bigger issue. The true curiosity concerns whether this adaptation is for fans of movies that look and feel like actual movies, or if its only for those who are fine with films that could be TV specials.

Aside from Kickstarter, "Veronica Mars" is a movie vitalized by the expectations in TV storytelling, relying on the stretches of logic that are fair game for cramped 30 or 60 minute slots. Visually as well, the film also works for those who are more accepting of a glossy aesthetic, providing the HDTV glimmer of an image. For those looking to see their favorite show on something specifically bigger than a television, the familiar image might provide them comfort. For others, it's a downgrade.



Veronica Mars was released on Blu-ray on May 6, 2014

Photo credit: Courtesy of Warner Bros.

**Synopsis:** Our world is introduced/re-introduced to the universe of "Veronica Mars" with a slideshow and voiceover, which could be the opening credits for the original TV show for all I know. After the catchup we find our title hero (played with lightness by Kristen Bell) interviewing for a job at a law firm, where her potential boss Gayle Buckley (Jamie Lee Curtis) helps fill in more background with obvious exposition. We learn not long after that Veronica has a boyfriend (Chris Lowell) as well, who has become a good-humored support despite her history that everyone seems to know about. Veronica is brought back to this history when her ex-boyfriend Logan (Jason Doherty) is accused of murdering his pop star girlfriend. She utilizes her infamous skills as a local private investigator to unravel a mystery, while reconnecting with the many people from her high school who still share dark secrets.

**Special Features:**

- o By the Fans: The Making of the "Veronica Mars" Movie
- o More On-Set Fun - "Welcome to Keith Mars Investigation," "Game Show with Kristen Bell and Chris Lowell," "On Set with Max Greenfield," "Veronica Mars' Backers," "It's Not All About You, Monkey," "Young Veronica"
- o Deleted Scenes
- o Gag Reel

*"Veronica Mars" was released on Warner Bros. Blu-ray on May 6, 2014.*

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