

## DVD Review: 'Breaking Bad: The Complete First Season' Features Gripping Performance

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on February 27, 2009 - 11:11am

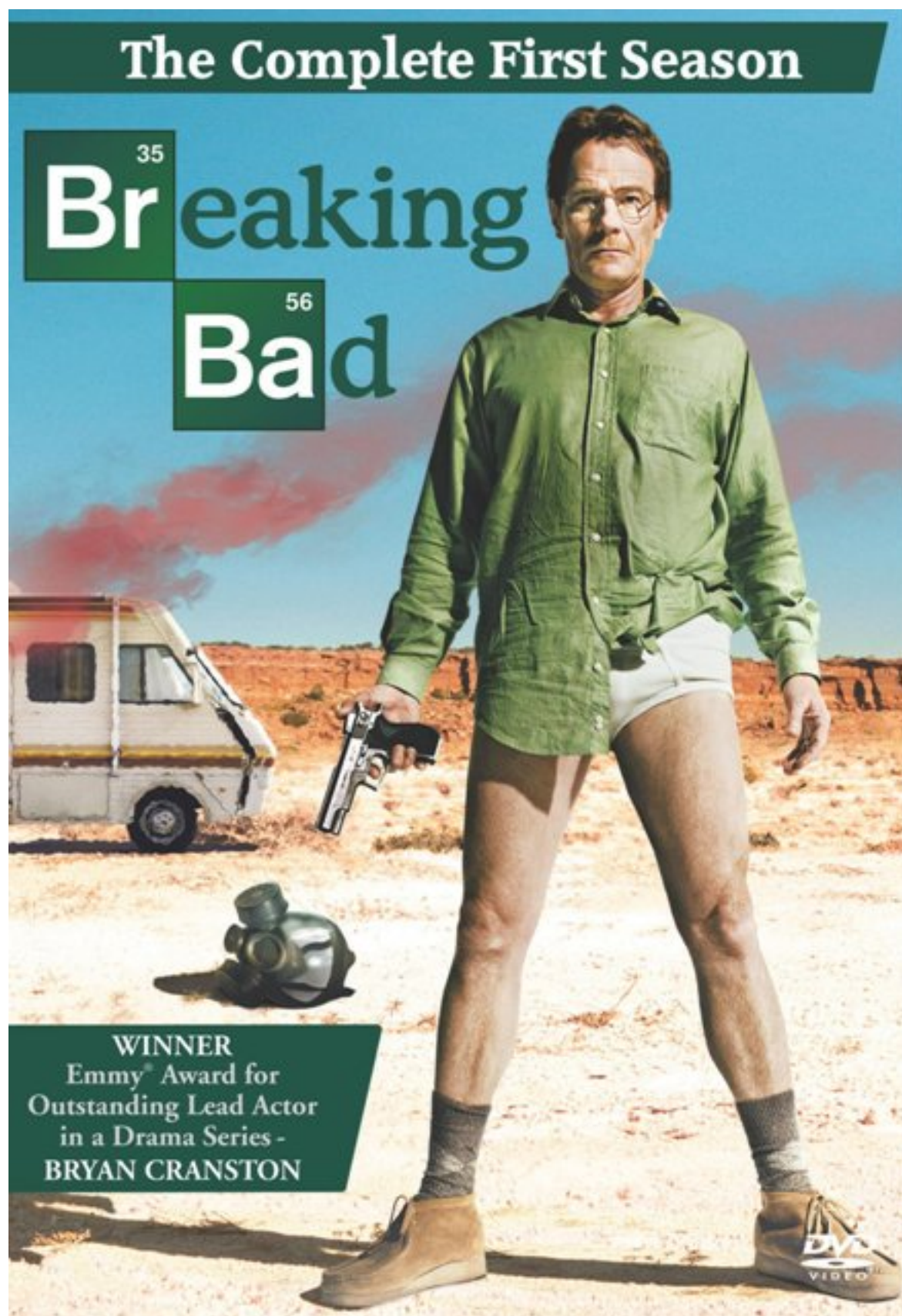
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DVD Rating: **3.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – AMC's "[Breaking Bad](#) [4]" is not one of my favorite shows on television but the lead performance by Emmy Award winner [Bryan Cranston](#) [5] is one of the most riveting I've seen in the last few years. He is pitch-perfect and everything that works about this unusual series comes from his great star turn.

As great as Cranston is on "Breaking Bad," I think the show still has some growing pains that I expect will be worked out in season two. The first season of the critically acclaimed show is hit-and-miss, but it's only seven episodes and nearly every one is better than the one that preceded it. It's a show still finding its voice and settling on its tone but it's easy to believe that the upcoming season two (debuting March 8th) could be one of the most interesting of the Spring.



Breaking Bad was released on DVD on February 24th, 2009.

Photo credit: Sony

Cranston, known before this for his underrated work on "[Malcolm in the Middle](#) [13]" plays Walter White, a brilliant creation from the mind of Vince Gilligan (a regular writer on "[The X-Files](#) [14]"). Walter is dying. Walter also happens to be a chemistry teacher.

With only a few years to live before he's killed by his terminal lung cancer, Walter takes a daring chance to provide for his family, lovely wife Skyler (Anna Gunn) and physically handicapped son Walter Jr. (RJ Mitte), The shy chemistry teacher becomes the shy crystal meth dealer, working with one of his most problematic former students (Aaron Paul) to make enough money so he can die in peace.

Almost immediately, Walter's drug-dealing business is a complete disaster. With a brutally dark tone, "Breaking Bad" is not for the faint of heart. Episodes are spent trying to figure out how to dispose of two bodies - one dead and rotting, the other breathing but tied to a basement post. Meanwhile, Walter has to deal with typical family problems and his deteriorating physical condition.

At first, "Breaking Bad" feels like it could be another variation on Showtime's excellent "[Weeds](#) [15]," but it's actually a much, much darker series. There are funny parts of "Bad," but there's a reason that Cranston won the Emmy for Best Actor in a Drama, not a comedy.

I think the very difficult tones in "Breaking Bad" are sometimes too difficult to juggle for even someone as talented as Gilligan, but Cranston is revelatory, doing some of the best work on television right now. He plays a combination of driven and depressed that's mesmerizing and believable. Walter has to both come to terms with his own mortality and do what it takes to provide for his family. And it's all there in Cranston's eyes. He's amazing.

"Breaking Bad" is still finding its voice. Even in these seven episodes, there was clearly an evolution. The first three are brutal and gory, but the tone gets a lot lighter in the final four. It will be interesting to see where they go with season two.

The episodes of "Breaking Bad" are presented in a very good widescreen transfer with a 1.78:1 aspect ratio and accompanied by an English 5.1 track. Special features include an audio commentary on the pilot episode by creator and cast including Vince Gilligan and Bryan Cranston, an audio commentary on episode 6, "Crazy Handful of Nothin'" by the same crew, "Making of Breaking Bad," screen tests, deleted scenes, Vince Gilligan's photo gallery, "Inside Breaking Bad," and "AMC Shootout - Interview with Vince Gilligan, Bryan Cranston, and Mark Johnson".

Sony has put together an impressive package for just seven episodes of television, a clear indication that everyone involved thinks this is merely the warm-up and that "Breaking Bad" could soon be very, very good.

*'Breaking Bad' is released by Sony Pictures Home Video and stars Bryan Cranston, Anna Gunn, RJ Mitte, and Aaron Paul. It was created by Vince Gilligan. It was released on February 24th, 2009.*



[16]

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