

DVD, TV Review: 'Parks and Recreation' Delivers on Early Promise With Great Premiere

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on September 17, 2009 - 9:35am

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CHICAGO – Improving with every episode of its short first season, now available on DVD, “Parks and Recreation” returns tonight with the best episode of comedy in tonight’s much-hyped cavalcade of premieres. Amy Poehler, Rashida Jones, Paul Schneider, and the rest of the cast and writers of “Parks and Recreation” are doing everything they can to turn their comedy into the next NBC must-see show. Do your part and tune in.



Television Rating: **4.0/5.0**



DVD Rating: **4.5/5.0**

Very few comedies come out of the gate without a few flaws. The first month of “30 Rock” didn’t have nearly the comic timing that made the third season an Emmy darling. It takes time to develop pacing, comic chemistry, and characters that the audience care about. Watching the first season of “Parks and Recreation,” you can see those essential ingredients start to click by roughly episode four, “Boys Club”.



Parks and Recreation
Photo credit: Universal

What happened by episode four? The team behind "Parks and Recreation" found the heart of the show. Just as Michael Scott on "The Office" needs to be more than a drooling moron and Jim and Pam bring a necessary emotional, relatable core to that hit show, "Parks and Recreation" suffered at the start for a lack of characters worth caring about. Not any more.

Poehler stars as Leslie Knope, an ambitious and hopeful small-town government worker in Pawnee, Indiana who dreams big but lives small. Most of the first season centered around Leslie's attempts to turn an abandoned construction site into a park after meeting the lovely local nurse Ann Perkins (Rashida Jones) and her moronic boyfriend (Chris Pratt).

Like "The Office" set in the world of small-town politics instead of paper production, "Parks and Recreation" features a cast of unusual workplace characters including Leslie's odd colleague Tom Haverford (Aziz Ansari), gruff boss Ron Swanson (Nick Offerman), and a cute city planner named Mark (Paul Schneider).

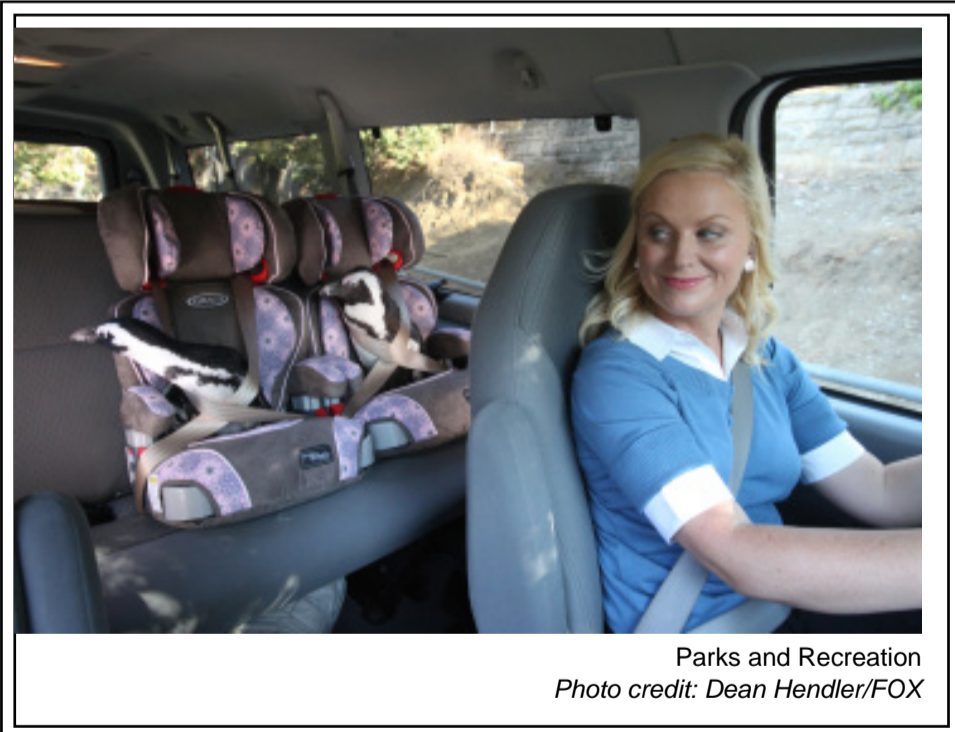
"Parks and Recreation" features the same dry wit, workplace humor, and awkward pauses of "The Office," but it started to develop its own identity over the course of the first season and opens the second one truly feeling like its own series.



Parks and Recreation
Photo credit: Dean Hendler/FOX

Written by Norm Hiscock and directed by the great Paul Feig, the premiere of "Parks and Recreation" is the best episode of the series to date, entitled "Pawnee Zoo". In a series of publicity events for the local zoo, Leslie decides that she'll stage a wedding for a pair of penguins after hearing that they mate for life. The small problem is that the two penguins at the local zoo happen to both be male and Leslie becomes the local poster child for gay marriage. Celebrated at the local gay bar The Bulge (which features a hilarious dance scene with Leslie) and asked to resign by the conservatives in town, Leslie is stuck in an awkward situation. Meanwhile, Ann faces an uncomfortable decision after Mark asks her on a date.

It feels like the renewal of "Parks and Recreation" has reinvigorated the writers and actors on the show. Next week's episode, "The Stakeout," directed by the great Seth Gordon, is just as good as the premiere and arguably even funnier.



Parks and Recreation
Photo credit: Dean Hendler/FOX

Poehler's timing has never been better than it is in the premiere and the supporting cast is becoming more likable every single week. It's way too early to say that "Parks and Recreation" is the best show on Thursday nights, especially with the great "The Office" and "30 Rock" in the conversation, but it's much closer to those already-classic comedies than anyone thought it would be after the premiere. Much like Leslie Knope, "Parks and Recreation" could surprise you.

Very surprising is the excellent season one DVD, which includes commentaries and deleted scenes on every single episode, along with an extended cut of the season finale.

Commentary participants on season one include creators Greg Daniels & Micke Schur, Rashida Jones, Nick Offerman, Paul Schneider, Chris

Pratt, Amy Poehler, and more.

Check out the season two premiere and then go back and catch up with life in Pawnee. Not only will you see a few very good episodes but you'll see the development of a series from good to great.

The second season premiere of 'Parks and Recreation,' which airs on NBC, stars Amy Poehler, Rashida Jones, Paul Schneider, Aziz Ansari, Aubrey Plaza, and Nick Offerman. The show was created by Greg Daniels and Michael Schur. The series returns on Thursday, September 17th, 2009 at 7:30PM CST.

'Parks and Recreation: Season One' is released by Universal Home Video and stars Amy Poehler, Rashida Jones, Paul Schneider, Aziz Ansari, Aubrey Plaza, and Nick Offerman. The show was created by Greg Daniels and Michael Schur. It was released on September 8th, 2009. It is not rated.



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