

Blu-Ray, TV Review: 'Fringe' Returns With Riveting Episode, Great Season Set

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on September 17, 2009 - 4:45pm

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CHICAGO – If any show is going to go from mildly popular to breakout hit in its second season, I expect it will be “Fringe”. Why? Well, every element of the series has improved over the course of the first season and the finale of that initial chapter was such a stunner that it created a buzz that should carry into the second season premiere and beyond. If there’s a new “Lost” or “24” in 2010, don’t be surprised if it’s “Fringe”.



Television Rating: **4.0/5.0**



Blu-Ray Rating: **4.5/5.0**

I’ll admit to not being a big fan of the premiere of “Fringe”. I thought it was a little cluttered, unfocused, and unsure of whether or not it was “The X-Files,” “Lost,” or something else. Joshua Jackson didn’t feel right, Anna Torv was miscast, and I worried that John Noble would become tiring quickly.



Unexplained phenomena and terrifying occurrences continue in the second thrilling season of FRINGE premiering Thursday, Sept. 17 (9:00-10:00 PM ET/PT) on FOX. Pictured

L-R: Anna Torv, Joshua Jackson and John Noble.

Photo credit: Justin Stephens/FOX

Those concerns quickly dissipated as I worked through the excellent first season Blu-Ray release of "Fringe". Jackson almost immediately became a truly charismatic lead, Torv matched him scene for scene, Noble gave one of the best supporting performances of last season on any show, and Lance Reddick and Blair Brown stole many episodes in great supporting roles.



Walter (John Noble, L) examines Olivia (Anna Torv, R) in the FRINGE Season Two premiere episode "A New Day in the Old Town" airing Thursday, September 17 (9:00-10:00 PM ET/PT) on FOX.

Photo credit: Liane Hentscher/FOX

And then there's the finale. If you're going to rent or buy the first season of "Fringe" (and you should for reasons I'll get to more later), somehow haven't heard about the final shot back in May, and want to stay unspoiled, then bookmark this page and come back later.

Most of you probably saw or heard about the shot that hinted that the action in "Fringe" is now taking place in an alternate universe. Why? Maybe the standing World Trade Center towers gave it away.

For the last three months, that excellent final episode and its jaw-dropper of a closing scene created more buzz than any returning freshman show. So, how have the creators of "Fringe" rewarded that buzz? With a spectacular season two premiere that opens with a scene nearly as jaw-dropping as the one that ended last season.

Naturally, a show like "Fringe" lives and dies on shattering audience expectations. It's the kind of show that works when it stays one step ahead of its audience. The season premiere does exactly that, playing with what people usually expect to see in the first episode of a season.

Of course, a show like "Fringe" that thrives on unpredictability is one that only a heartless critic would spoil but let me say that "A New Day in an Old Town" contains perhaps the best opening scene in the history of the show, features the death of more than one character, details the disbanding of the Fringe Division, and, I believe, reaffirms that the "alternate universe" plot arc that ended last season will be a major part of this one.



Fringe: Season One was released on Blu-Ray and DVD on September 8th, 2009.

Photo credit: Warner Bros. Home Video

If it sounds like a lot for a premiere, it is and "New Day" can get a little cluttered. The amazing opening and shocking ending make it must-see TV on their own, but the material in the middle is a bit messy, as if the writers and cast are so excited to be back and on the verge of breakthrough popularity that they can't contain themselves, but the opening and closing acts make up for a lot of flaws in the middle.

The press release for the season premiere of "Fringe" promises "more action, more mystery, romance, comedy, and, of course, science". Based on the premiere, I believe all of that will happen but they forgot one - "more viewers".

As for the Blu-Ray release of "Fringe," it's a beauty. All shows should have HD transfers of the flawless variety provided by Warner Brothers. The show looks absolutely amazing in 1080p and the audio is particularly perfect with an expertly mixed Dolby 5.1 track that really enhances the show. The fact is that "Fringe" has feature film quality production values, making it a perfect fit for Blu-Ray.

The Blu-Ray release includes exclusive special features - "Fringe Pattern Analysis: Take a Closer Look at 6 Select Scenes with Experts Who Evaluate with Notes, Photos, and Diagrams," and BD-Live Enhanced features including exclusive writer/producer commentary.

Features on both the Blu-Ray and DVD include featurettes on the show's genesis and casting, the real science behind it and the remarkable visual effects. Other featurettes include "Deciphering the Scene" on every episode, "Dissected Files/Unaired Scenes" and "The Massive Undertacking Docupods" on select episodes, "Unusual Side Effects: Gag Reel," "Roberto Orci's Production Diary," and "Gene the Cow". The episode-related featurettes are interesting but very, very brief and it can be kind of annoying bouncing between menu and talking-head footage over and over again. But it's a minor complaint for a thorough, excellent Blu-Ray release for what could be the hottest show of the year.

The second season premiere of 'Fringe,' which airs on FOX, stars Anna Torv, Joshua Jackson, John Noble, Lance Reddick, Blair Brown, and Kirk Acevedo. The show was created by J.J. Abrams, Roberto Orci, & Alex Kurtzman. The series returns on Thursday, September 17th, 2009 at 8PM CST.

'Fringe: Season One' is released by Warner Brothers Home Video. It was released on September 8th, 2009. It is not rated.



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