

## Reviews of recent and upcoming DVD releases

**By Billy O'Keefe**

**McClatchy-Tribune News Service  
(MCT)**

"God Grew Tired of Us" (PG, 2006, Sony Pictures)

Unable to return to their Sudanese homeland for fear of persecution, a group of boys instead trekked for thousands of perilous miles in search of some kind of salvation. A handful of those boys hit the jackpot when a special program allowed them to start a new life in the United States. "God Grew Tired of Us" follows some of those boys \_ three in particular detail \_ as they adjust to a wildly different daily routine full of bus commutes, processed food, timecards and technology beyond anything they've ever dreamt of, much else witnessed firsthand. Making a living in the U.S. is tough for anyone, and it's exponentially difficult when you're all alone and trying to provide for yourself and a family thousands of miles away. "GGTOU" isn't the first movie of its kind; "Lost Boys of Sudan" covered similar territory four years ago. But any opportunity to revisit this remarkable story is one worth experiencing, and Panther's, John Bull's and Daniel's adventures are every bit as funny, heartfelt and inspiring as Peter's and Santino's were in the previous film. For anyone who has longed to put a face with the news, both films are must-sees.

Extras: Director/Lost Boys commentary, making-of feature.

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"It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia: Seasons 1&2" (NR, 2005, Fox)

Among the sitcom taboos explored on "It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia" in potentially uncomfortable detail: racism, abortion, homophobia, underage drinking, faking cancer, gun control, molestation, Nazism, and lying to a hot girl about her recently-deceased grandfather. Guess what? That's all within the first seven episodes. "Philadelphia" doesn't mess around. Much more importantly, though, "Philadelphia" doesn't subsist on shock value alone, despite what appearances might suggest. It's actually funny and well written, and by the time the novelty of the bizarre plot synopses wears off, the foursome that comprises the cast (Charlie Day, Rob McElhenney, Glenn Howerton and Kaitlin Olson) has sunk its collective claws in. It's a stretch to call "Philadelphia" the new "Seinfeld," but there is a definite resemblance once you get past the surface of the premise. Word of warning, though: Despite the appearance of Danny DeVito all over the DVD packaging, he doesn't surface until the second disc.

Contents: 17 episodes, plus cast/crew commentary, pilot outtakes, other outtakes, audition footage, making-of feature and a "Making A Scene" episode.

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"30 Rock: Season 1" (NR, 2006, Universal)

In 2006, for whatever reason, two shows about roughly the same thing \_ sketch comedy television \_ premiered on the same network. One contained the number 30 in its title; the other, the number 60. One was a drama, the other a comedy. And because everybody was confused, both struggled to find an audience. In the end, "30 Rock" \_ the funny one \_ survived, if barely. Good thing, too, because after a rocky growth period that created some so-so introductory episodes, "Rock" eventually emerged as the year's most cunningly funny new comedy. That's perhaps to be expected: "Rock" stars and comes

courtesy of former "SNL" star Tina Fey, co-stars another former castmate (Tracy Morgan) and the show's best guest host (Alec Baldwin), and gets a hand from a number of former players (including Rachel Dratch, who steal scenes under multiple guises). If these people can't make a funny show about a funny show, who can?

Contents: 21 episodes, plus cast commentary, five bonus shorts, two behind-the-scenes features, deleted scenes, wrap party footage, bloopers and more.

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"Martin Lawrence Presents 1st Amendment Standup: Season 1" (NR, 2005, Starz)

Are you ready for the craziest, most fearlessly extreme standup comedy you've ever heard in your life, with topics ranging from race to sex to scathing commentaries about race and sex? What's that, you say? You've already seen that countless times on everything from "Def Comedy Jam" to "Whiteboyz in the Hood" to "Big Black Comedy Show" to "P. Diddy Presents The Bad Boys of Comedy" to countless midday Comedy Central specials? Yeah, you have. Despite the name and bold promises on the back of the DVD case, "1st Amendment Standup" doesn't break any ground that wasn't already ground into dust. If anything, it's a bit pedestrian at this point, with most of the show's comics sounding like weak imitations of the Richard Pryors, Eddie Murphys, George Carlins and other taboo-breaking comedians who paved their way. "Standup" does feature some funny performances, but nothing here is any better than what you can hear on cable TV, for far less money, on any given night.

Contents: 11 episodes, plus two "best of" episodes (which more or less feel like reruns and might be a DVD first).

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"Rules of Engagement: The Complete First Season" (NR, 2007, Sony Pictures)

How's this for a crazy idea: Take one seasoned married couple (Patrick Warburton and Megyn Price), one newly-engaged couple (Bianca Kajlich and Oliver Hudson) and one single guy with no prospects (David Spade), add a laugh track, and call it a sitcom. Sure enough, most of "Rules of Engagement" feels a little too familiar: Married guy neglects wife, engaged couple does things that makes single guy gag, repeat. As a consequence, most of the episodes melt together, with Spade's character typically collecting most of the show's more unique storylines (and, subsequently, laughs). Still, despite its familiarity, "Engagement" never descends to unwatchable territory, nor is it near as banal as other CBS retreads like "Yes Dear" and "Still Standing." If nothing else, a genuinely funny last episode offers hope that the show will come into its own in season two.

Contents: Seven episodes, plus two behind-the-scenes features, bloopers and DVD-ROM content.

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"Private Fears in Public Places" (NR, 2006, Weinstein Company)

Over the course of what appears to be a week in snowy Paris, six people ... do stuff and talk. The common theme is love, but "Private Fears in Public Places" \_ which never quite makes complete sense of its title \_ isn't home to any monologues, tearjerkers or grand gestures. Overwhelmingly, "Places" is two hours of people talking and living mundane existences, neither an achingly powerful drama nor a side-splittingly wacky comedy. If the aforementioned description compels you to book it in the other direction, you'd best trust your gut, which almost certainly would be validated should you give this a chance. If you're still here, though, know this: "Places" may be dangerously even-keeled and even more dangerously loose with its plot, but it's also gifted with six good characters and enough strong writing to

prop them up in spite of all the forces working against them. You may not remember it a year from now, but that doesn't mean you won't enjoy it while it lasts. In French with English subtitles. No extras.

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#### ROUNDUP OF THE WEEK: NOTABLE RETURNING SHOWS ON DVD

— "Robot Chicken: Season Two Uncensored" (NR, 2006, Adult Swim): You've very possibly seen "Robot Chicken" without even knowing it, because few shows get as many clips uploaded to YouTube as this one. That legendary clip in which Emperor Palpatine takes a collect call from Darth Vader? It's in here. Also appearing in season two of the greatest stop-motion sketch show of our time: *Godzilla*, *Twinkie the Kid*, *Pikachu*, *Harry Potter*, the *Burger King* and so many more. Contents: 20 episodes (commentary on all), plus deleted scenes, deleted animatics, video diaries, bloopers, behind-the-scenes footage, image gallery and promotional material.

— "The Office: Season Three" (NR, 2006, Universal): Two offices merge into one, and the best comedic ensemble cast on television somehow gets better. If only all mergers were as fruitful as this one. Contents: 22 episodes, plus commentary, bloopers, Toby shorts, Dwight Shrute music video, "Make Your Own Promo" contest videos, "Lazy Scranton" video, live appearance excerpts and more.

— "Prison Break: Season 2" (NR, 2006, Fox): Ever wonder how someone could make a multi-season television series about breaking out of prison? Simple: Turn it into "The Fugitive." Season two of "Prison Break" finds Michael Scofield (Wentworth Miller), Lincoln Burrows (Dominic Purcell) and company over the wall and on the run, but the attention to dramatic detail that made the first season so good remains intact despite the drastic change of scenery. William Fichtner joins the cast as the pursuit begins. Contents: 22 episodes, plus commentary, two behind-the-scenes features and a remix of the theme song.

— "South Park: The Complete Tenth Season" (NR, 2006, Comedy Central): Chef dies (cause of death: Scientology?), as does the gang's social life after a run-in with "World of Warcraft." Cartman wants a Wii, and worlds collide when Bart Simpson joins Cartman in a two-episode crusade to get "Family Guy" canceled. Contents: 14 episodes, plus mini-commentaries on each episode.

— "Spongebob Squarepants: Season 5, Season 1" (NR, 2007, Nickelodeon): It's more of the same, really. But until "Spongebob Squarepants" gets old, is that such a bad thing? Season 5 includes the two-part "Friend or Foe?" episode, which previously was available separately and included five other episodes from this set. So if you paid \$15 for that instead of waiting for this, you've learned a valuable lesson in patience (and corporate double-dipping). Contents: 21 episodes, plus bonus shorts and trivia.

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(Billy O'Keefe writes video game and DVD reviews for McClatchy-Tribune News Service.)

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