



(l-r): Jackie Cook (Tessa Thompson), the fiery, flirty daughter of a professional baseball player and new Neptune High student, and Veronica Mars (Kristen Bell), in *VERONICA MARS* on UPN. Photo: Greg Schwartz/WB ©2005 Warner Bros Television

SECOND SEASON IS A CHARM

UPN RECEIVES IT'S LARGEST AUDIENCE (3.2 MILLION) FOR THE SECOND SEASON OF **VERONICA MARS**.

VERONICA MARS

Wednesday, 9-10 p.m. (UPN)

I have to admit that since the first episode of *Veronica Mars*, I watched the first season of this show somewhat religiously.

In season 1, Veronica (Kristen Bell) was a popular teenager dating Duncan Kane and hanging out with her boyfriends sister (and best friend), Lilly.

Her father Keith (Enrico Colan-toni) was the town's sheriff and her mother was a big part of their lives.

That was until Lilly Kane was murdered. Her father, as the sheriff was working on a hunch that someone in the Kane family may have murdered her.

The Kane family is the richest, powerful family in that town. And one thing is clear: Never go against the Kane's.

From that moment on, the life of Veronica Mars has spiralled downhill.

Veronica quickly became the social outcast in school losing all her friends including her boyfriend.

Her father lost his sheriff job and became a private investigator. The family no longer has the cash flow and her mother, couldn't bare the family shame, skipped town.

The episodes featured Veronica as she who would help her father investigate certain cases (most of the time without his consent) but mainly to obtain access and find

clues on who may have murdered her best friend.

With the help of her close friend Wallace and a gang leader, Veronica is determined to find out the truth.

Season 1 ended with a bang as the killer of Lilly Kane was revealed and critics were beaming about the second season of *Veronica Mars*.

But life for Veronica Mars wasn't all that pleasant at first. With rumors of cancellation lingering, UPN held their ground and kept the series on air.

That gamble paid off as UPN received its largest audience ever with the second season premiere.

In the heavily competitive 9-10pm hour, *Veronica Mars* kicked off its second season with its largest audience (3.2 million) and best adults 18-34 (1.75/5), women 18-34 (2.4/6) and women 18-49 (1.8/4) ever for the critically acclaimed series.

In the second season, Veronica attempts to settle in with "normal" life which includes working at an after school job and a return to popularity at Neptune High School.

Meanwhile, her father is on the television circuit promoting his book on the Kane murder titled "Big Murder, Small Town".

Veronica is pulled back into the life of investigating as her close friend Wallace is kicked off the basketball team for testing positive for drugs.

With the addition of Charisma Carpenter (*Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Angel*) to the series, things may not get back to normal for Veronica just yet. For this season at least. **A** —DENNIS A. AMITH



INITIAL D

Jay Chou, Anthony Wong
109 minutes, 2005, HK Import
Region 3 (Media Asia)

When word came out that *INITIAL D* was being made into the live movie, I was very anxious.

Knowing that directors Andrew Lau Wai-Keung and Alan Mak Siu-Fai would be directing this film (especially since their collaboration has led to the critically acclaimed film *INFERNAL AFFAIRS*), this film had a great chance to be adapted correctly from its anime and manga brethren.

The main hype of this film was because of the main star, popular singer Jay Chou who would be playing the main character of Takumi.

The reviews of the film from reviewers throughout Asia was 50/50. Many who had no knowledge of the anime or film and simply hated the fact that Jay Chou's character was the way it was and many felt his acting was just wooden.

Many felt that the film featured

too much on car racing and thus, those who got it and knew what *INITIAL D* and also have watched many Hong Kong films respected the film for what its worth.

I enjoyed the film. I was excited when I watched it and when it ended, I wanted more.

Was it faithful to the anime or manga? I think the directors did very well with the film, capturing the geekiness of Takumi's friends and the racing was just fun to watch.

I enjoyed the fact that there were a lot of HK stars who participated in this film and with the DTS soundtrack, enjoyed the sound of the engine roaring all over my speakers.

But I'm an *INITIAL D* fan, I'm also a Jay Chou music fan and I like watching cars race and drift.

But since *Initial D* focuses a lot on the racing, this is going to turn many viewers off. As one of the J!-ENT staff members have commented, "there's too much racing".

Oh well. I enjoyed it.

The DVD features a making of featurette, deleted scenes, outtakes, photo gallery, TV spots and trailers and promotionals done in Shanghai and Japan. As well as several Easter eggs.

Video is anamorphic Widescreen 2:35:1 and for audio a DTS-ES and Dolby Digital EX Surround tracks are available.

All in all, if you are open to something new and have an interest in import racing, I say give *INITIAL D* a chance. For a racing film, it's not as engaging as *Full Throttle* or *Legend of Speed* but I found it very entertaining.

B —DENNIS A. AMITH



GHOST STORIES VOLUME 1

75 minutes, 2005, RATED TV
G, 3 episodes previewed (ADV
Films). Available on October 25.

Before I watched the first episode of *GHOST STORIES*, I was hoping that this film would be different.

I don't know how many times I have watched a Japanese drama or anime where young school students go against the demons and monsters that are haunting their school.

When I started watching *GHOST STORIES*, I learned quickly that the anime dialogue is no way connected to the original Japanese series.

As the characters started talking about Rev. Al Sharpton and Tom Cruise and Satsuki ribbing on her brother and calling him retarded because of his lack of speaking well when excited. I was definitely surprised.

What essentially happened was ADR director Steve Foster

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The soundtrack to one of the most anticipated Anime features of 2005. Boom Boom Satellites, Basement Jaxx, Paul Oakenfold and more! TOF014

X(JAPAN)



Best
Arguably the most influential rock band in the history of Asian music, X(JAPAN) is now available in the US from Tofu Records. This set contains one CD with twelve hits spanning their career and on DVD with eight music videos. TOF005

T.M.REVOLUTION



Vertical Infinity NEW!
The new album, featuring the hit singles Ignited, from Gundam Seed Destiny, and Web of Night, used in the Japanese release of Spiderman 2. The US release features a bonus DVD with the hit Albireo performed live in Japan! TOF019



SEVENTH HEAVEN
The follow up to the hit album coordinate, featuring the hits Albireo and Zips! TOF008



coordinate
T.M.Revolution's hit US debut album, featuring INVOKE, as heard on Mobilesult Gundam Seed, and Heart of Sword -Yoake Mae, from Rurouni Kenshin! TOF002



SUMMER CRUSH DVD
Two Disc, Live DVD set featuring concert footage of T.M.Revolution's top hits spanning his career, as well as bonus behind the scenes footage! TOF003



Sonic Warp DVD
This limited edition DVD features six video tracks, including Heart of Sword - Yoake Mae from Rurouni Kenshin, performed live at OTAKON 2003. English and Roma-jl subtitles, and a Roma-jl lyrics sheet. TOF004

NAMI TAMAKI



Greeting
The highly anticipated debut album from JPOP Princess Nami Tamaki features the hit songs Believe and Realize, both title songs from Mobilesult Gundam Seed. TOF007

L'ARC*EN*CIEL



AWAKE NEW! OUT 9/20/05
The new full-length album features the hit singles Invitation to Freedom -Jiyuu eno shoutai, Killing Me, New World, and Poem -JOJOSH-I, plus the bonus track, HEAVEN'S DRIVE, performed live in Japan! TOF021



SMILE
SMILE features READY STEADY GO as heard on Fullmetal Alchemist. The US version includes the bonus track READY STEADY GO (hydeless version) so you can sing along! TOF010



Clicked Singles Best 13
A special reissue of Clicked Singles Best 13, with the original booklet and artwork, plus a never before released Roma-jl lyrics booklet. Own the best of L'Arc-en-Ciel, as chosen by the fans! TOF011



LIVE IN USA at 1st Mariner Arena
The New DVD from the biggest rock band in Japan featuring footage from their groundbreaking performance at OTAKON 2005, plus a bonus DVD with REVELATION, performed live in Japan! TOF017

ASIAN KUNG-FU GENERATION



Sol-fa NEW! OUT 10/18/05
Introducing the popular alternative rock band from Japan, whose song Rewrite can be heard as the new theme song to Fullmetal Alchemist. This version contains a special bonus DVD featuring two live performances! TOF022

POLYSICS



POLYSICS OR DIE!!!!
Don't miss your chance to bask in the glory of POLYSICS and their latest album, POLYSICS OR DIE!!!! Rest assured of imminent doom should you forego this spectacular record. TOF015

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rewrote the dialogue for this anime and did an improvisational adaption for it.

Foster brought in the best voice talent in anime (Chris Patton, Christine Auten, Greg Ayres, Hilary Haag, Illich Guardiola, Monica Rial and Rob Mungle) and took an anime that could have been uber-crappy and made it into a hilarious comedy.

The main storyline of *GHOST STORIES* features the adventures of new student Satsuki and her crybaby brother.

The two children, pet cat and their father move to the city of where their mother and father first met.

Through unfortunate circumstances, the two end up going inside a closed, haunted school as they try to find their cat.

Fortunately, they have the help of their neighbor Hajime and his nerdy Jewish friend and also the help from girl who is a hardcore born again Christian.

The kids learn that Satsuki's mother was a principal at the school and left a book on how to seal the monsters.

Thus the kids become somewhat of a Team Ghostbusters and as for that missing cat, it appears they accidentally sealed the demon in their pet cat.

The voice acting in this anime is top notch and to hear them improvise and come up with hilarious dialogue is just impressive.

A lot of the improvisation that we have seen in the past were usually featured on the DVD special features ala outtakes.

So, it's an understatement at the

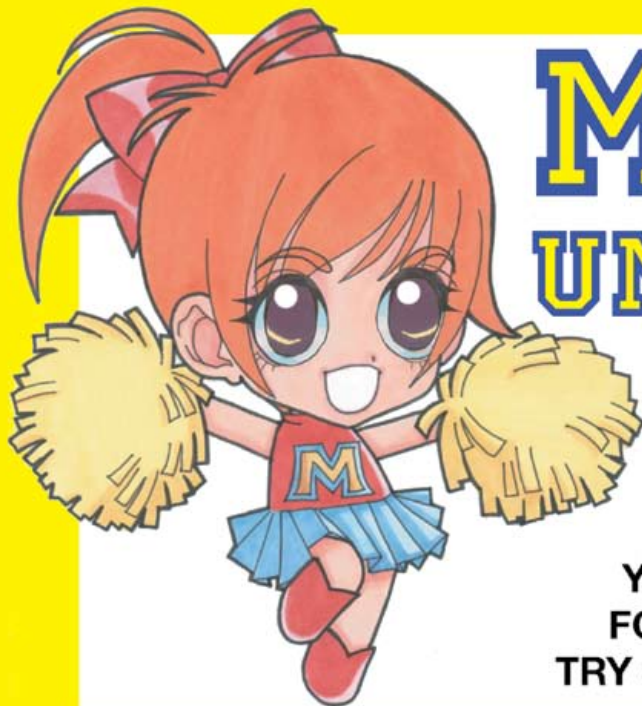
last, when actual episodes feature this improv acting. It's so surreal.

Sure, the animation may not be all that great and I was told that the original Japanese dialogue was not all that exciting. So, for ADV to really do something this different is awesome and absolutely hilarious!

As for the DVD, the final release (October 25) will feature 4 episodes (100 minutes) with special features such as a "ghost profiles" with background on Japanese folktales, clean opening and closing animation and more.

I'm not sure if this will start a trend for comedic improv acting for voice dubs in anime series but if it does happen, I'm definitely buying it! I highly recommend checking *GHOST STORIES* out.

A —DENNIS A. AMITH



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