

## “BEING HUMAN”: Season One (DVD/Blu-ray Review)

Written by Jorge Solis

Wednesday, 28 July 2010 15:30

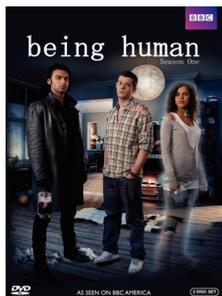
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The British TV series BEING HUMAN, whose first season is now on DVD and Blu-ray from BBC Home Video, explores the dynamics between a ghost, a vampire and a werewolf as they seclude themselves in a house together. These supernatural beings just want to live normal lives, but unfortunately, they cannot blend in with ordinary people.

The pitch sounds like a campy joke: Find out what happens when these three “creatures” stop being polite and start getting real. But there isn’t a punchline here, because creator Toby Whithouse doesn’t see this scenario as a cheesy gag. Fortunately for its passionate fan base, the series takes its plotline seriously with compelling characters.

Annie (Lenora Crichlow) never had confidence in herself before she accidentally died. Now, this heartbroken ghost watches her fiancé move forward happily, without her, in his everyday life. She becomes a poltergeist, with the house feeding off of her self-esteem; the building needs repairs because Annie is emotionally falling apart.



Mitchell (Aidan Turner) is the leader of the dysfunctional trio. In this mythos, vampirism represents drug addiction. Vampires are capable of quitting blood cold turkey, and the insatiable thirst is overpowering. Mitchell can be compared to an ex-junkie, someone who is always on the slippery edge amid sobriety and relapse. George (Russell Tovey) is cautiously afraid of being close to anyone, especially his roommates, because one night every month he changes into a werewolf. During the painful transformation, his mind fades away and he cannot control his body anymore. What if he wakes up one day and discovers he has slaughtered his only friends? At one point, Mitchell tries to persuade George to ask out one of their co-workers, but George sadly declines. Mitchell wants to know why and states, “I never know with you whether it’s Jewish guilt or werewolf guilt.” George quickly responds, “They’re pretty much the same thing.”

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Herrick (Jason Watkins), the season’s main antagonist, is a menacing bloodsucker disguised as an authority figure, a police officer. With vamps running the force, they can investigate their own murders and cover up their crime scenes. In the story arc, Herrick wants to instigate a full-blown war between humans and vampires, constantly tempting Mitchell to join him. Will Herrick succeed in his attempts to convince Mitchell to betray his friends?

Of the six episodes in the two-disc set, the fourth is the best and this writer’s favorite. Mitchell starts up a friendship with a lonely neighbor, a 12-year-old boy named Bernie. The community’s residents, especially Bernie’s single mother, become suspicious of their relationship, and due to a misunderstanding, Mitchell is falsely accused of being a pedophile. An angry mob forms in front of the house, throwing rotten tomatoes and starting fights. The protesters want Mitchell and his friends to leave—not because they’re monsters, but because they’re apparently a child molester and his associates.

On both the DVD and Blu-ray, the special features include behind-the-scenes featurettes, video diaries, character profiles, deleted scenes and an interview with Whithouse. Set designer Andrew Purcell gives a grand tour of the house explaining the design of each room, demonstrating how Mitchell’s bedroom is coffin-shaped. Storyboards document that werewolf transformation process, noting the use of prosthetics and makeup over the course of the scene. Though the video diaries consist of just the three leads clowning around on set, the profiles and featurettes provide more depth and insight.

The stars never focus on the show’s supernatural aspects, but rather analyze how they see their characters struggling with life, striving to be moral. For his part, Watkins explores his portrayal of Herrick as a charismatic guy who enjoys his dark soul. Crichlow and costume designer Stuart Meachem reveal the challenging limitation of having only one wardrobe for Annie in the entire series; together, they were able to create a flexible costume to represent each of the role’s emotional stages. These special features demonstrate how much thought and effort the cast and crew invested in the making of the show.

It was recently announced that BEING HUMAN will be remade by the Syfy channel, with writing duties shared by Jeremy Carver and Anna Fricke; Sam Witwer, Meaghan Rath and LOST’s Mark Pellegrino have been selected to head the cast. But don’t attempt to watch the American version without seeing the original (whose second season just began airing on BBC America). With its appealing cast and dramatic storylines, BEING HUMAN is definitely worth checking out—and can be described in one sense as the anti-TRUE BLOOD.

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