Any pop-culture receptacle who hasn’t gone deaf or blind in the past four years is no stranger to the inexplicable cultural phenomenon known as the TWILIGHT Saga. Stephanie Meyer, the captain of this teenage girls’ attention-span-consuming cash cow, and her subsequently movie-directing cohorts and actors have taken the age-old story of Romeo and Juliet, mixed it with vampires and werewolves, given it an emo makeover and slapped it across bookstores, big screens, small screens, T-shirts, and every side of the Internet possible.

Unless you’re a swooning preteen female proudly wearing your Team Edward or Team Jacob shirt, you try to find an excuse before publicly acknowledging any comprehension of the saga: It reminds you of Shakespeare, you were in love with a guy like Edward, you were really moved by an episode of SAVED BY THE BELL—whatever you can possibly conjure to make yourself feel somewhat more comfortable with enjoying what was, before the stranglehold of Internet memes, Twitter and reality TV, considered a “guilty pleasure.”

NEW MOON, now out in a two-DVD set and on Blu-ray from Summit Entertainment, picks up right where the previous TWILIGHT left off: Edward and Bella walking around the gloomy Pacific Northwest, looking open-mouthed and generally uncomfortable, professing their everlasting infatuation with one another. Just like in any teenage romance, things go all haywire when Bella exposes Edward’s family to a paper cut, and an uncontrollable bloodlust causes the Cullen clan to skip town after the first 30ish minutes. Left behind, Bella picks up with her I-love-him-but-not-in-that-way Native American friend Jacob, who’s been lifting weights since the day he scowled at a tuxedo-clad Edward during the last movie’s prom. Soon, to Bella’s discovery, Jacob has become more in touch with his four-legged side, as he and his pack of werewolf buddies provide a new romp of special FX and character imagery for those slightly tired of the pasty-faced, crimson-lipped Brit with an American accent who stares as if he’s sizing up how well you’d fit in his trunk. Oh, and Jacob’s newfound transformation ability rips his clothes like the Incredible Hulk, so he spends a good portion of the movie shirtless (much to the

disappointment of female viewers, undoubtedly).

Under the clueless yet oppressive ruling thumb of her single workaholic father, Bella spends most of the movie grounded. Unlike the terms of “grounded” familiar to most, this situation leaves Bella pretty much free to do whatever she wants, including zipping around the lush green landscapes of Washington on a motorcycle without a helmet (gasp), cliff-diving or mountain-climbing. This new thrill-seeking, MTV Sports-themed Bella learns that her reckless behavior invokes the insanely protective nature of Edward, to the point that his creepy spectral image begins appearing, warning her to “stay away” when she sees dangerous fun. Through a series of miscommunicated telepathic events from Bella to Edward (read: typical female mind games), Edward thinks Bella has committed suicide and sets off for Italy, threatening the Volturi (a sort of Illuminati-like governing family for the vampire race) to expose himself in the sunlight for all the world to see. As permitted by the rules of being grounded, Bella jets off across the world to stop Edward, and they return to their forestry habitat so Edward and Jacob can continue to glare and growl over Bella’s affections while she stares on in either disbelief or constipation.

On the disc releases of NEW MOON, fans can check out a lengthy behind-the-scenes documentary that takes them all around the dreary landscapes, showing the making of the movie, the development of the characters’ wardrobe and other superficial insights into the TWILIGHT universe. This six-part making of does pay great service to the loyal fans of the books and their accompanying movie adaptations, providing exhaustive detail concerning the creation of the town of Forks, Washington and the care given to its most popular residents. There’s also the staple commentary provided by director Chris Weitz and editor Peter Lambert, guiding viewers through the production process responsible for translating the novel to the silver screen. Fans of the soundtrack can soak up music videos by Death Cab for Cutie, Anya Marina and Mute Math, plus special TWILIGHT-inspired band-rehearsal footage of Muse, whose global popularity has recently soared due to their involvement with the films. Those willing to shell out the extra dollars can pick up assorted retailer-specific special editions, which variously offer a seven-minute preview of ECLIPSE, the series’ next installment, exclusive interviews, outtakes, etc.

The TWILIGHT series never really takes itself as anything more than what it is—lovey-dovey teenage schlock—and NEW MOON simply caters even more to the spend-happy fans than its predecessor did. If your heart was stolen by Edward’s first slow-motion glide through the cafeteria, you’ll certainly enjoy the second installment. If you love rallying your snarky friends and hurling repeated insults, cleverly placed quips and ad-libbed lines at an otherwise passable movie, pick it up and let the good times roll. And if you insist on spoiling everyone’s fun, drive by your local theater as the fans line up for the midnight debut of ECLIPSE and yell, “TRUE BLOOD *rules*!”

MOVIE: *1/2

DVD PACKAGE: ***

{jcomments on}