

TV Review: 'True Blood' Promises Bloody Good Time This Summer

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on June 11, 2010 - 3:50pm

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CHICAGO – Vampire and werewolf fans may be counting the days until the release of “The Twilight Saga: Eclipse” at the end of this month but HBO’s spectacular “True Blood” returns this weekend with an excellent start to a third season of one of the most unusual and consistently entertaining shows on television. Juggling a dozen characters and multiple plotlines, “True Blood” has arguably never been more confident or compelling as it is during the first quarter of season three that was sent for review. Strap in and prepare for a bumpy ride.



Television Rating: **4.5/5.0**

“True Blood” remains the most refreshingly unpredictable show on television and, consequently, only the most cynical critic would ruin the twists and turns of even the first half of the first episode. Like last season, the new one picks up immediately after the action of the last episode. Most notably, Bill (Stephen Moyer) has been kidnapped after proposing to Sookie (Anna Paquin), Jessica (Deborah Ann Woll) has turned into a killer after breaking up with Hoyt (Jim Parrack), Sam (Sam Trammell) is on the road, and Eggs (Mechad Brooks) was shot and killed by Jason (Ryan Kwanten) but Andy (Chris Bauer) took the blame/credit.



True Blood

Photo credit: HBO

"True Blood" is a show that I imagine is difficult to jump into without having seen the previous seasons. So, start with the two excellent Blu-ray releases of [season one](#) [18] and [season two](#) [19]. Some great television can be picked up mid-stream but "True Blood" is more satisfying if you know the characters and what they've been through the last two dozen episodes.

Season two was a bit more inconsistent than season one in that the unpredictability of the show often led to a random, haphazard plotting structure. It felt just as something was getting interesting - like Jason's involvement with "The Fellowship of the Sun" - the writers were moving on to something else. And the Maryann plotline went on too long and ended on a somewhat unsatisfactory note.



Anna Paquin, Alex Skarsgard
Photo credit: HBO

I mention this because the plate-spinning act that sometimes fell flat in season two seems to be back in prime form in the first trio of episodes from the new season. Characters aren't just off doing their own thing, they're often geographically hundreds of miles apart and yet the writers have found a perfect rhythm, allowing one subplot into the spotlight just long enough before moving on to another. Rarely has a show juggled so many major characters at one time as "True Blood" but it rarely feels cluttered or that one plot arc is more essential than another.

As for performances, Skarsgard continues his award-worthy, scene-stealing work as Eric, Nelsan Ellis seems reinvigorated by the passion of his early season arc (and the great Alfre Woodard pops up as his mom), Kwanten gets better every season, and Woll continues to deliver as the woefully underexperienced Jessica. And I wish Evan Rachel Wood, who returns as the Queen of the vampires, would get more screen time. On the negative side, I find Rutina Wesley less effective with every episode. She plays every moment turned up to eleven, making the arc she goes through grieving over Eggs ineffective because she's been so over-the-top since the beginning.

"True Blood" continues to be several things at once — social commentary, gothic soap opera, fantasy action film, and straight-up thriller. The writing is so consistently clever in its genre-jumping that this gumbo of religion, sex, violence, and mythology is often underrated. Making genre entertainment this bloody enjoyable is a lot harder than it looks.

After a few hiccups in season two, the confidence is back in the writing, dialogue, pacing, and plotting of "True Blood". It feels more seamless and crisply paced than ever before. "True Blood" is back and it's even sexier, bloodier, and more entertaining than ever. It's going to be a fun summer.

The second season of "True Blood" premieres on HBO on Sunday, June 14th, 2009 at 8pm CST. It stars Anna Paquin, Stephen Moyer, Sam Trammell, Ryan Kwanten, Rutina Wesley, Chris Bauer, Michelle Forbes, Nelsan Ellis, Deborah Ann Woll, Alexander Skarsgard, and Mehcad Brooks. It was created by Alan Ball.



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