TV Review: TNT’s ‘Leverage’ Returns For Promising Summer Season

Submitted by BrianTT [1] on June 18, 2010 - 4:02pm

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CHICAGO – The team behind “Leverage,” including producer/director Dean Devlin and star Timothy Hutton are back with a headline-grabbing summer diversion. With articles calling for the head of BP and reports on the continued economic crisis, this “Robin Hood” for the modern age or “Ocean’s 11” if Danny Ocean were a bit more philanthropic is as timely as the day it premiered. And it’s more consistently entertaining.



TV Rating: **3.5/5.0**

The cliched dialogue and still-underdeveloped supporting cast hold “Leverage” back from living up to its potential but the season premiere is a more tightly-edited, well-paced installment than most of the first two seasons, hinting at the possibility that perhaps this talented team has finally found the rhythm that’s just barely escaped them until now.

Nate Ford (Hutton) is a former insurance investigator who watched as corruption and corporate neglect led to the death of his son. In the first season, Ford gathered a team of social and technical experts who assisted him in revenge schemes to try and balance the fight between David and Goliath, but the second season (which is now on DVD with more details below) expanded the world of Ford and his team as they continued their pursuit for justice.



Leverage
Photo credit: TNT

Ford’s team includes a charismatic grifter named Sophie Devereaux (Gina Bellman), a muscle man named Eliot Spencer (Christian Kane), a technology wizard named Alec Hardison (Aldis Hodge), and one of the sexiest thieves on TV in Parker (Beth Riesgraf). Each of the four actors

and their characters have become more interesting in the two seasons since the show premiered, but they're still a bit underdeveloped. There's a difference between leaving your audience wanting to know more about a supporting player and not giving them enough screen time to satisfy. "Leverage" walks that fine line.

At the end of last season, Ford was sent to jail and torn away from his group. The premiere, "The Jailhouse Job," airing on June 20th, 2010, is naturally designed to bring the team back together but the opening scenes indicate that it may be a tough assignment simply because Ford doesn't want to make the great escape. He wants to do his time. The problem is that, of course, the prison is corrupt and Ford's moral drive forces him back into a job to bring down the entire system.



Leverage
Photo credit: Paramount

Most of the third season premiere of "Leverage" is consistent with the majority of this good-not-great show that delivers disposable, popcorn entertainment that sometimes purports to say something greater about the fight of the everyman but is really just trying to keep you one step behind Ford's complex scheme to keep you from changing the channel. What distinguishes this premiere is that it more consistently puts Ford himself on the back burner, allowing the supporting cast a bit of notable screen time.

The fact is that Hutton is still just mediocre in this part. He's not quite charismatic enough — not even as much as the rest of his team — to carry a show like the talented leads of similar shows on USA like "Burn Notice" or "White Collar." I like Hutton but he's still not quite comfortable in this character's shoes. As the rest of the show seems to be finding its groove perhaps Hutton will as well. If he does? "Leverage" could be a great show.

If you want to catch up with the adventures of "Ford's Five," Paramount released the second season of "Leverage" on DVD on May 25th, 2010. All fifteen episodes are presented in widescreen with a Dolby Digital 5.1 Surround Sound track. The episodes look and sound better-than-average for standard but it's a shame that they weren't presented on Blu-Ray as well.

The special features on the second season of "Leverage" are an impressive lot with commentary tracks on every single episode and a copious amount of special features including "The Creators of Leverage Q&A," "John Rogers Set Tour," "Behind the Boom Featurette," "The Hand Job Spoof Video," "Andy Lange Music Featurette," and "Season 2 Wrap Party Gag Reel."

The third season of 'Leverage' premieres on TNT on Sunday, June 20th, 2010 at 8pm CST. It stars Timothy Hutton, Gina Bellman, Christian Kane, Beth Riesgraf, and Aldis Hodge. It was created by John Rogers and Chris Downey.

'Leverage: The 2nd Season' was released by Paramount Home Video. The season was released on May 25th, 2010. It is not rated and runs 646 minutes.

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By BRIAN TALLERICO [15]
Content Director
HollywoodChicago.com
brian@hollywoodchicago.com [14]

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