

TV Review: HBO’s ‘Entourage’ Returns With Renewed Energy

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on June 27, 2010 - 9:06am

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CHICAGO – How does one of the trendiest shows on television stay hot in its seventh season? It’s a question that the writers of “Entourage” must answer as cable’s beloved bad boys return tonight for another season of celebrity cameos and insider drama. The first two episodes are strong, indicating that perhaps a few of the last few season’s wrinkles have been ironed out, but only time will tell.



TV Rating: **3.5/5.0**

After years of critics and fans asking for a bit more time for the characters of “Entourage” not named Vinny (Adrian Grenier) or Ari (Jeremy Piven), most of us regretted what we had asked for as last season was easily the worst of the series to date. The writers pulled back from the saga of a celebrity and focused more on Drama (Kevin Dillon), Eric (Kevin Connolly), and Turtle (Jerry Ferrara) and the result was a snooze. Even Gary Cole looked bored.



Entourage: Season Seven
Photo credit: Claudette Barius/HBO

The balance seems restored in the strong first episode of the new season with a very funny guest turn from director Nick Cassavetes (“She’s So Lovely,” “The Notebook”). Cassavetes is aggressively helping an action movie with Vince and is pressuring the star to do his own dangerous stunt on the final day of shooting (a showdown between Ari and Nick is one of the series’ funniest in some time). The result of the alpha male pressure on Vince looks like it will ripple through the whole season but not in the way that you’d probably expect.



Entourage: Season Seven
Photo credit: Michael Muller/HBO

Meanwhile, Johnny Drama is trying to get a TV show out of his holding deal and realizing that he's the only member of the group not on easy street, Turtle is handling being a boss by hitting on his annoying but hot employee (Dania Ramirez), Ari is trying to sell the TV rights for the NFL, and Eric is planning his wedding to Sloane (Emmanuelle Chriqui). I know every show has different plotlines that fall flat for different viewers but sitting through the remarkably dull Eric & Sloane's wedding sounds like the first episode of "Entourage" that I might have to watch partially on fast-forward.

The second episode of the seventh season of "Entourage" is the show's eightieth, a remarkable feat for a series that one would assume couldn't stay "hip" for that long. As Chris Rock once said in one of his routines, "*No one wants to be the old guy at the bar.*" Creator Doug Ellin has wisely avoided that trap by tweaking his formula every year with some focusing on a certain project ("Aquaman," "Medellin") while others tracked Vince on his way up or down the fame ladder. This year's arc could be the most interesting in some time. Without giving anything away, the writers have crafted a very clever plotline for a show about a star who may be losing his edge. The fact that the show seemed to be doing the same over the last few seasons adds an intriguing layer to the action.

Of course, the biggest problem with the last couple seasons of "Entourage" has been the fact that the show too often felt like it was spinning its wheels, something that can't be determined after two episodes. The best seasons had a pacing and drive that made it one of the most entertaining shows on television but the writing and performances were simply lazier the last few years. I'm happy to say that the first two episodes of the seventh season feel more like the prime of the show than the recent decline, but it's impossible to say where the season is going or, more importantly, if the writers can maintain this tight pacing on the way there without dragging their feet again.

I'll admit to being a bit harder on "Entourage" than other shows because I've seen how good it can be. I show the series the same tough love that Ari shows his favorite client because the prime of this series was some of the best written comedy on television with great performances by the entire cast (not just the most-lauded Jeremy Piven). After a good-not-great fifth season, I was honestly depressed watching the string of ineffective episodes that made up the lackluster sixth outing of "Entourage". So, I'm very happy to report that the first two episodes of this season are better than anything from the last two. Keep it up boys. It's nice to have you back. Now stay there.

"Entourage" stars Adrian Grenier, Kevin Connolly, Kevin Dillon, Jerry Ferrara, and Jeremy Piven. The seventh season premieres on HBO on Sunday, June 27th, 2010 at 9:30pm CST.



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