

TV Review: Hugh Laurie Returns as Reliable as Ever on 'House'

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on September 20, 2010 - 8:13am

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CHICAGO – Last season of “House” opened with a divisive episode in which our beloved doctor (Hugh Laurie) spent some time away from Princeton-Plainsboro Teaching Hospital in a “Cuckoo’s Nest”-inspired tale of potential madness. Once again, the writers of one of the most successful shows of the last decade have chosen to start the new season of “House” with something a bit left-of-center in “Now What?,” premiering tonight on FOX, but this episode may have longer-lasting repercussions.



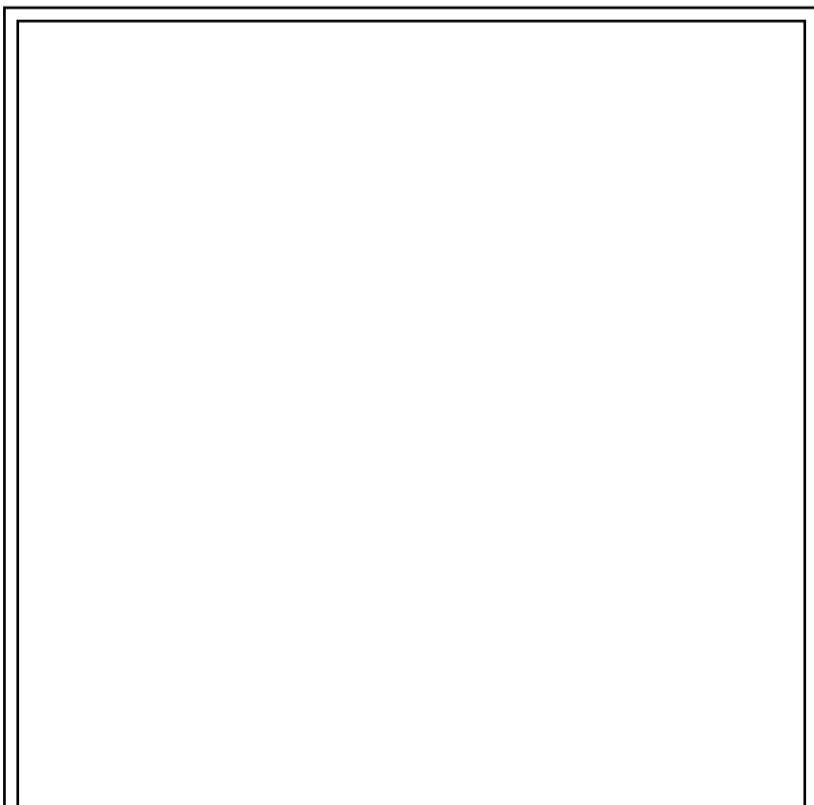
Television Rating: **3.5/5.0**

At the end of season six, Dr. Gregory House and Cuddy (Lisa Edelstein) finally had a seriously touching moment in which she revealed her love for him. As the title of the episode makes clear, now what? Can this often-divisive relationship turn into a romantic one? Having recently gone through the trauma of losing a patient, faced with this potential life-changing moment, and recognizing that his boss is lying next to him, House ditches work. He spends the day with Cuddy playing chess, making out, and trying to solve what could be his biggest mystery — Is there room for love in his cynical life?



Hugh Laurie returns as Dr. Gregory House in the seventh season of HOUSE premiering Monday, Sept. 20 (8:00-9:00 PM ET/PT) on FOX.
Photo credit: ©2010 Fox Broadcasting Co. Cr: Justin Stephens/FOX

It would have been remarkably ambitious (although probably a bit frustrating to some fans of the show) if the premiere of "House" had taken place entirely in the doctor's apartment, but the doctor's decision to take the day off has repercussions back at the office. Hospitals need to have a licensed neurosurgeon on staff or be forced to shut down their emergency room and even transfer the stable ICU patients to a building with a full staff. When the powers that be learn that there's no surgeon in the building, Chase (Jesse Spencer), Taub (Peter Jacobson), Foreman (Omar Epps), and Thirteen (Olivia Wilde) scramble to fill the position and stumble across a doctor in the middle of his own medical crisis.





House (Hugh Laurie, R) and Cuddy (Lisa Edelstein, L) explore a romantic relationship in the HOUSE season premiere episode "Now What?" airing Monday, Sept. 20 (8:00-9:00 PM ET/PT) on FOX.

Photo credit: ©2010 Fox Broadcasting Co. Cr: Adam Taylor/FOX

While they try to cure the surgeon and stay in business, the boys also try to deal with the revelation that Thirteen is leaving. She's headed to a medical trial for her Huntington's Disease. The varied responses from Chase, Taub, and Foreman are one of the highlights of the premiere. It's not a spoiler to reveal that Wilde is taking a leave of absence from "House" — it's been widely reported — but how it plays out is unexpected and interesting. She will be missed and can't return soon enough.

How dramatically rewarding can an episode of "House" be when its title character doesn't leave his apartment? While you have to give credit to the team of "House" for taking these kind of structural risks this many seasons into a program that could have easily gone stale by now, the season premiere undeniably spins its wheels a bit. The writing of the will-they-or-won't-they dynamic between House and Cuddy as these two determine the scale and boundaries of their relationship feels a bit undercooked. It's slightly understandable that neither of these confident people want to be the first to jump head first by revealing how clearly they want something long-term with the other but it leads to a slightly stagnant and unbelievable arc to the episode. I just didn't believe that Cuddy would sit around all day with House, far too unrealistically often with her shirt off, while the two talked around the issues of love. It feels forced.

Having said that, after seven seasons, the principal players on "House" are as confident and talented as ever. Laurie proves yet again that he can play the small moments as expertly as the big ones. He has developed this character far beyond his irascible hospital persona, making him feel well-rounded and three-dimensional in the quiet moments as well as the dramatic ones. And Edelstein has long been an underrated actress, so it's nice to see her given a chance to do something with depth, even if the writing lets her down.

"House" will quickly return to business as usual and I do admire the nerve of the writing staff to once again keep their doctor out of hospital scrubs for the entire premiere. Even if there could have been a more dramatically interesting way to accomplish the same romantic arc, it's refreshing to see a show in its seventh season taking creative risks for at least the premiere. And the ripple effect of the final scenes of the premiere will clearly carry through at least the first part of the seventh season. Consider the premiere just the appetizer — it may not be completely satisfying but it bodes well for the full meal.

'House,' which airs on FOX, returns on September 20th, 2010 at 7PM CST. It stars Hugh Laurie, Robert Sean Leonard, Omar Epps, Olivia Wilde, Jesse Spencer, Peter Jacobson, and Lisa Edelstein.



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