

## TV Review: HBO's 'In Treatment' With Gabriel Byrne Continues Display of Acting Excellence

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on October 25, 2010 - 7:26am

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CHICAGO – There are not many better showcases for an actor or actress than HBO's amazing "In Treatment," one of the best dramas of the last several years, which returns tonight, October 25th, 2010, for another round of character-driven therapy. Irrfan Khan, Debra Winger, Amy Ryan, and Dane Dehaan join Gabriel Byrne in the third season of this spectacular program.



Television Rating: **4.5/5.0**

Each episode of "In Treatment" unfolds like an amazing one-act play. It could be my theatre major background that makes this program so revelatory for me but there's really very little on television that this critic finds more rewarding. We so rarely get to see intelligent characters speaking adult dialogue with all of its nuance, subtlety, self-sabotage, and revelation. With all of the typical traps of television stripped away to the bare essentials of what drama should be — writing, direction and performance — "In Treatment" remains one of the best programs on television.

HBO has never quite found the right structure for "In Treatment." The first season played out five nights a week and the network learned that this was not a show that people were prepared to commit to every night like "Entertainment Tonight." For season two, the five episodes were broadcast over two days. This must have worked a bit better because HBO is back to a similar structure, reducing the weekly commitment by 30 minutes and broadcasting two half-hour sessions on Monday nights, followed by two on Tuesday nights. Losing a plot arc by losing 20% of the show is a bit disappointing but if it gets enough people to watch that the show returns for a fourth season, then I'll gladly give it up.



In Treatment: Gabriel Byrne

Photo credit: Paul Schiraldi/HBO

*"My father is suffering, Dr. Weston."*

Mondays start with the shattering story of Sunil (Irrfan Khan), an older gentlemen who has stopped eating, showering, shaving, getting out of bed, leaving the house, or generally living at all. He used to live in India but when his wife passed away he was forced to move to the States and live with his son and daughter-in-law. They are the ones who bring him to Dr. Weston and it's an interesting opening to the show in that it's about a man's problems through two other people. When they leave, Khan really comes to life. He's an actor who has always said a lot with his eyes and in the silent moments and it fits this role perfectly. He's the most instantly captivating character of the new season.



In Treatment: Debra Winger  
Photo credit: Paul Schiraldi/HBO

*"I haven't been here five minutes and already I'm a parody of myself."*

The first two seasons of "In Treatment" were strong showcases for women, earning Dianne Wiest an Emmy for her work and acclaim for actresses like Hope Davis and Allison Pill. It's probably what drew the nearly-retired Debra Winger to the show and it's so great to see her back on the scene. She's clearly drawing on personal issues in her portrayal of an actress named Frances who has possibly lost something personal in her pursuit of the professional. Even her first session with Dr. Weston is a bit of acting as she purports to talk about her job and profession when it's really the fact that her sister is dying is what brought her there. Winger is good but this feels like something we've seen before — the actress with issues. It's the least immediately-interesting session of the new season but Winger is clearly talented enough to change that quickly.

*"Stop looking at me like I disappointed you or something. I'm not your f\*\*king kid."*

Newcome Dane Dehaan holds his own opposite the more-experienced ensemble as Jesse, an aggressive young gay man who alternately tries to get a reaction from his doctor and retreats into his own hipster persona. Jack is a fascinating enigma, a kid clearly looking for a parental figure (and Byrne is brilliant at how he balances being protective with being annoyed) but also unwilling to drop the facade that he's too cool for the serious drama going on in his life. He jokes about sharing and then honestly shares. It's as if he has to set up each moment of actual therapy with a Facebook status update for it to be real. And when he really breaks down, it's riveting television. Dehaan is an actor to watch. No doubt.



In Treatment: Irrfan Khan  
Photo credit: Paul Schiraldi/HBO

*"I understand it all. There's really nothing more for you to contribute to it."*



Amy Ryan returns to HBO (she appeared on "The Wire"), replacing Dianne Wiest as Paul's therapist in the final session of the week, one that Paul first attends merely because he needs more Ambien for his sleeping troubles. Ryan is perfectly cast in every way, although she's quickly becoming one of those rare actresses who feels believable in absolutely everything that she does from "Gone Baby Gone" to "The Office." And, as it did the last two seasons, the final session is where the depth of Byrne's performance really becomes clear. He's great in every moment of "In Treatment" but when he can let his guard down in his own sessions is where the actor truly shines.

This season is the first in which "In Treatment" is not working directly from scripts and characters from the original Israeli series that inspired it "Be Tipul." To be honest, the writing is one notch below the first two seasons, which instantly grabbed me. There are elements of this season that don't feel as well-conceived or executed as the first two, although that could change in time. The cast and writing team are definitely talented enough and I only criticize because I've loved the show so much for two years. It's still great. Don't get me wrong. But the first week of season three is a slight notch below the first week of either of season one or season two. Of course, those seasons were amazing enough that a slight notch below still leaves "In Treatment" as one of the best programs on television.

Check out a clip and set your DVR:

*'In Treatment,' which airs on HBO, stars Gabriel Byrne, Irrfan Khan, Debra Winger, Dane Dehaan, and Amy Ryan. The show was created by Rodrigo Garcia. The third season premiere airs on Monday, October 25th, 2010 at 8PM CST.*



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By [BRIAN TALLERICO](#) [13]

Content Director

HollywoodChicago.com

[brian@hollywoodchicago.com](mailto:brian@hollywoodchicago.com) [12]

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