

TV Review: Women Rule With Seasons of ‘The Closer,’ ‘Rizzoli & Isles’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on July 11, 2011 - 9:22am

- [Angie Harmon](#) [2]
- [Brian Tallerico](#) [3]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [4]
- [J.K. Simmons](#) [5]
- [Jon Tenney](#) [6]
- [Kyra Sedgwick](#) [7]
- [Lorraine Bracco](#) [8]
- [Rizzoli & Isles](#) [9]
- [Sasha Alexander](#) [10]
- [Television](#) [11]
- [The Closer](#) [12]
- [TNT](#) [13]
- [Theater, TV, DVD & Blu-Ray](#) [14]

CHICAGO – The battle for summer cable dominance continues with another night of new programming on TNT as the very-popular “The Closer” and “Rizzoli & Isles” return for new seasons on Monday nights. With strong female leads and cleverly-devised mysteries, these are strong programs for what they are and they make a solid pair at the start of a long work week. They’re not going to change your life or be your favorite shows of the season, but they deliver what they promise.



TV Rating: **3.5/5.0**

“The Closer”

Perhaps the intense, crowded slate of programming on TNT this summer (with 8 shows airing this season) is because the network knows they’re about to take some ratings and publicity damage when they lose their biggest hit (and one of the highest-rated programs in cable history). “The Closer” is coming to an end after seven strong seasons on the air that arguably peaked with an Emmy win for lead Kyra Sedgwick last year. Tonight’s episode, “Unknown Trouble,” kicks off a ten episode summer season that will then pick up again in the winter when the program will be officially, pardon the pun, closed.



The Closer

Photo credit: Karen Neal/TNT

What is there to say about “The Closer”? It’s a proven success, the kind of show that it would seem silly to get critical of in its final, seventh

season. Is it a “great” program? No, I don’t think it ever really has been, but it’s near-perfect escapism, the kind of mystery show that finds clever ways to wrap up the loose ends before the credits roll (and, sometimes, as in the premiere, leave a new one dangling). Sedgwick’s Brenda Leigh Johnson is the kind of memorable crime-solver who will stand the test of time. She’s a great character.

And she’s not about to change too drastically in the final season, despite an impending restructuring of the force and a pending lawsuit. The premiere features a massacre at the house of a rap artist that leaves the future hip-hop legend dead along with six innocent bystanders. Who would kill the Jay-Z wannabe? And how can Brenda find the bad guy with the weight of a possible lawsuit keeping her from doing it well?

Of course, Brenda DOES find the bad guy. She wouldn’t be “The Closer” otherwise and it’s no spoiler to say that the mystery of the season premiere of TNT’s biggest hit proceeds relatively predictably. It opens with a dead body, Brenda struggles to solve the case, but she eventually does. The key to “The Closer” has never been the mystery itself but how Brenda solves it. It’s a show that’s worked because it’s refreshingly devoid of fancy camera tricks or special effects. It strips things down to the victim, the criminal, and the people who solve the crime.

This season of television is surprisingly strong in the acting category with people like Bryan Cranston (“Breaking Bad”), Anna Paquin (“True Blood”), Louis C.K.(“Louie”), Larry David (“Curb Your Enthusiasm”), and many more giving great, memorable performances. Kyra Sedgwick has been a crucial part of the summer for years now, breaking records for cable ratings. Next summer won’t be the same without her.



TV Rating: **3.5/5.0**

“Rizzoli & Isles”

It may seem like an obvious match with “The Closer” (strong female leads solving mysteries), but I was very apprehensive about returning to “Rizzoli & Isles,” a mystery show that seemed pretty damn generic the last time I checked it out at the start of season one. It’s rare for a show that feels generated by a computer or a predetermined pattern to break free from that and find its own identity and I’m so sick of programs that don’t have their own personality. So, consider me stunned that the second-season premiere of “Rizzoli & Isles” is actually pretty entertaining.



Rizzoli and Isles

Photo credit: Matthew Rolston/TNT

What's changed? Most notably, the cast seems significantly more comfortable. They were playing the cliché — tough cop, overprotective Italian mother — or trying WAY too hard to sound genuine (especially in dialogue heavy with medical jargon that meant next to nothing) when the show began. I don't know if that eagerness to please settled down during the first season or during the break, but the show feels much more genuine and organic at the start of season two. These characters feel far more three-dimensional, which is what a mystery series needs to stand out. It's not one of the best programs of the season but, like its partner on the evening, it's quality escapist entertainment.

Angie Harmon is doing very strong work as Jane Rizzoli, a Boston police detective dealing with a traumatic injury from the shoot-out at the end of season one. She's friends with the medical examiner Maura Isles (Sasha Alexander), managing her intrusive mother (Lorraine Bracco), and even has a brother (Jordan Bridges) on the force. Bruce McGill, Lee Thompson Young, and, new this year, Chris Vance co-star.

The show belongs to Harmon, especially the first episode, which features not only her emotional return to crime-solving but a case involving a dead war hero. Harmon is quite good here, not in the range of the aforementioned "greats" of the summer season but she's getting closer. Kyra Sedgwick has to pass the torch to someone when "The Closer" ends and Harmon is not a bad substitute. As for the rest, Vance is a solid new addition and Bracco can really do this kind of material in her sleep. I'm not yet sold on Alexander but I'm also nowhere near as annoyed by her line delivery as I was last year.

Much like "The Closer," the writing on "Rizzoli & Isles" can be a bit frustrating but the show is much-improved from what I saw in its first few episodes. TNT is definitely doing something right this season with "Falling Skies," "Franklin & Bash," "Hawthorne," and more. With the return of "The Closer" and "Rizzoli & Isles," they'll have eight new shows a week on the air. More than ever, if you don't have cable this summer season, you might as well not have a TV.

'The Closer,' which airs on TNT, stars Kyra Sedgwick, Jon Tenney, J.K. Simmons, G.W. Bailey, Robert Gossett, Anthony John Denison, Michael Paul Chan, and Raymond Cruz. The seventh season premiere airs on Monday, July 11th, 2011 at 8PM CST.

'Rizzoli & Isles,' which airs on TNT, stars Angie Harmon, Sasha Alexander, Lorraine Bracco, Lee Thompson Young, Bruce McGill, Jordan Bridges, and Chris Vance. The second season premiere airs on Monday, July 11th, 2011 at 9PM CST.



[15]

By [BRIAN TALLERICO](#) [16]
Content Director
HollywoodChicago.com
brian@hollywoodchicago.com [15]

Source URL (retrieved on Apr 25 2024 - 4:15pm):
<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/14859/tv-review-women-rule-with-new-seasons-of-the-closer-rizzoli-isles>

Links:

- [1] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/briantt>
- [2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/angie-harmon>
- [3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/brian-tallerico>
- [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/hollywoodchicagodotcom-content>
- [5] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/labels/j.k._simmons.html
- [6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/jon-tenney>
- [7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/kyra-sedgwick>
- [8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/lorraine-bracco>
- [9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/rizzoli-isles>
- [10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/sasha-alexander>
- [11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/television>
- [12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/the-closer>
- [13] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/tnt>
- [14] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/dvd-theater-tv-news>
- [15] <mailto:brian@hollywoodchicago.com>
- [16] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#BRIAN>