

TV Review: Dark, Foreboding Return of AMC's 'The Walking Dead'

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on October 16, 2011 - 10:17am

- [AMC](#) [2]
- [Andrew Lincoln](#) [3]
- [Brian Tallerico](#) [4]
- [Chandler Riggs](#) [5]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [6]
- [Jeffrey DeMunn](#) [7]
- [Jon Bernthal](#) [8]
- [Laurie Holden](#) [9]
- [Madison Lintz](#) [10]
- [Norman Reedus](#) [11]
- [Sarah Wayne Callies](#) [12]
- [Steven Yeun](#) [13]
- [Suzanne McBride](#) [14]
- [Television](#) [15]
- [The Walking Dead](#) [16]
- [Theater, TV, DVD & Blu-Ray](#) [17]

CHICAGO – The differences between the series premiere and the second-season premiere of AMC's "The Walking Dead," airing tonight on what has become the most critically-acclaimed network on basic cable, are striking. Frank Darabont brought an old-fashioned horror showman's sensibility to the first episode, but that season had a different purpose. It was a 6-episode mini-series for which a follow-up wasn't guaranteed. Now the show has a following, a longer season, and a change in tone to reflect its change in showrunner. It's so different that some fans who have already claimed the show jumped the shark when Darabont left will see nothing but proof of their backlash. Give it time. Let it get under your skin. By the second stellar episode, you'll be just as hooked as you were last year, maybe even more so.



Television Rating: **4.5/5.0**

The convoy of survivors of the undead apocalypse has different goals than they did last season. Where that season was about reuniting loved ones and hoping for a future together, the season premiere of "The Walking Dead" sets a new prime agenda — survival. Intangibles like hope, family, and community are giving way to pure survival instinct and working to stay alive above all else. In fact, the opening arc of the new season seems to imply that it is our community — our need to keep loved ones alive as much and maybe more than ourselves — that could be our greatest undoing.

Once again, the writers of "The Walking Dead" are working with themes and plots from the source material by Robert Kirkman without adapting them directly. Fans of the book will know immediately where things are headed after the jaw-dropping cliffhanger to the first episode and I can't wait to see how they play out beyond the second one (and, yes, the casting of Hershel Greene is PERFECT). This is one of those early comic book arcs that fans of the book couldn't wait to see adapted and it's a great setting for the first arc of season two.



The Walking Dead
Photo credit: AMC

Before that, the group is traveling on an Interstate when they stumble upon a broken-down group of cars. While they are pillaging them for supplies, they are set upon by dozens of zombies. They hide out but one of them is forced to run off into the woods. Do they stay and wait for her to come back? Chase after her? Just move on? Of course, the smart thing to do would be to leave such an exposed location but can they really leave someone behind? Isn't it their very humanity that's keeping them alive in the first place?



The Walking Dead
Photo credit: AMC

The tone is instantly very different from the first season, which often felt rushed being a 6-episode shot. Getting a full-season here has clearly allowed the writers more room to breathe and they're taking that opportunity. They're also pushing the boundaries of what can be done on television. Screwdrivers in eyes, rocks in brains, and even a scene in which a walker's stomach is cut open to make sure it hasn't eaten the missing party member — this is nasty, dark, brutal stuff that ends with a cliffhanger that will shock viewers into coming back next week.

Don't worry, the show's not that different. It's still about survivors and zombies. The production values are still ridiculous and the performances (especially Andrew Lincoln as leader Rick Grimes) are still strong throughout, arguably more so now that the actors know these characters better and have less-hurried episodic writing to bring them to life. Having said that, I am a bit more concerned about the writing than I was in season one. The dialogue seems a bit more clichéd at times and characters too often say exactly what they're thinking, especially in discussing the revelations at the end of season one. Yes, I know that asking for subtlety in a zombie series may be ridiculous but this show is good enough that I wish it was there (and it felt more often there in the first two episodes of season one). I'm also concerned that some of the ensemble's weaknesses will be revealed by the longer season and focus on character. Those of you that complained about season one being occasionally soapy should prepare yourself for more.

Overall, the premiere doesn't have the same impact as the series premiere (but very little could) and yet I think it's too soon to judge what will be a different kind of season for this show. Episode two features a large amount of drama that's not even zombie-related (as they wrap up the end of episode one). I like that. It's promising that this show will be able to surprise even its fans with something a little different. Don't judge too quickly. Don't jump ship because Darabont is gone. I can't guarantee the new season will have the same impact as the first but the opening pair of episodes gives me numerous reasons to believe it could. And maybe even top it.

If you still don't know what all the fuss is about, Anchor Bay released a Special Edition Blu-Ray and DVD of the first season to coincide with the second-season premiere. It is undeniably a bit of a double dip, trying to get hardcore fans to buy something they already own, but it does include new special features and stellar video transfers. If you don't own one of the best first seasons of the last several years, you really should.

'The Walking Dead,' which airs on AMC, stars Andrew Lincoln, Jon Bernthal, Sarah Wayne Callies, Laurie Holden, Jeffrey DeMunn, Steven Yeun, Madison Lintz, Suzanne McBride, Chandler Riggs, and Norman Reedus. The premiere was written and directed by Frank Darabont and executive produced by Gale Anne Hurd. The series returns on Sunday, October 16th, 2011 at 8PM CST. "The Walking Dead: Season One — Special Edition" was released on Blu-ray and DVD on October 4th, 2011.



[18]

By [BRIAN TALLERICO](#) [19]

Content Director

HollywoodChicago.combrian@hollywoodchicago.com [18]**Source URL (retrieved on Apr 25 2024 - 4:14pm):**<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/16072/tv-review-dark-foreboding-return-of-amc-s-the-walking-dead>**Links:**

- [1] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/briantt>
- [2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/amc>
- [3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/andrew-lincoln>
- [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/brian-tallerico>
- [5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/chandler-riggs>
- [6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/hollywoodchicagodotcom-content>
- [7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/jeffrey-demunn>
- [8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/jon-bernthal>
- [9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/laurie-holden>
- [10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/madison-lintz>
- [11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/norman-reedus>
- [12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/sarah-wayne-callies>
- [13] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/steven-yeun>
- [14] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/suzanne-mcbride>
- [15] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/television>
- [16] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/the-walking-dead>
- [17] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/dvd-theater-tv-news>
- [18] <mailto:brian@hollywoodchicago.com>
- [19] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#BRIAN>