

TV Review: Fan-Favorite ‘Chuck’ Returns For Final Season

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on October 28, 2011 - 9:06am

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CHICAGO – There have been a number of casualties of the debacle of “The Jay Leno Show” but one has to believe that were NBC not in such dire straits when it comes to ratings (an increasingly depressing situation for the network with new lows nearly every week) that “Chuck” would have been canceled years ago. The program has been on “bubble watch” since its first season, when it dipped below 60th place in the weekly ratings. And yet here we are, reviewing the fifth-season premiere of the show that simply wouldn’t die.



Television Rating: **3.0/5.0**

After another round of “They haven’t canceled Chuck yet?” this Spring, NBC announced that they were bringing the program back for a fifth season and final season. Fans can look at it as a victory lap, closure on the show they’ve loved since its acclaimed premiere in the Fall of 2007. Detractors can point to the ever-decreasing numbers and marvel that this show was given a last-minute death sentence reprieve one final time. Either way, “Chuck” is one of the more unique ratings stories of the last five years and proof that NBC follows none of the rules when it comes to traditional TV decisions. No other network on TV would have kept “Chuck” on to the point that we will have a remarkable 88 episodes by the time the series ends. Some hits don’t have that kind of output and no one would call “Chuck” a hit.



Chuck

Photo credit: NBC

After an inconsistent fourth season (recently released by WB on Blu-ray in a well-transferred set with a cool interactive feature called the “Top-Secret Chuckipedia”), the creators of “Chuck” have argued that the fifth and final season will return the program to its roots. Last season ended with a cliffhanger (in the appropriately-titled “Chuck Versus the Cliffhanger”) and the new one opens with something of a

reversal of roles. Morgan (Joshua Gomez) is now the inexperienced holder of the Intersect (the government database wired into Chuck's brain in season one) and Chuck (Zachary Levi) and Sarah (Yvonne Strahovski) have to mentor him in much the same way that the title character was trained at the beginning. Chuck & Sarah own both the Buy More franchise and their own spy organization at which Morgan and John (Adam Baldwin) are employed.

The season premiere, "Chuck Versus the Zoom," opens with a cameo from the legendary Mark Hamill, who has taken Chuck, Sarah, and John hostage after catching them trying to steal his \$6 million vase. It's time for Morgan to put his Intersect knowledge to use for the first time. After the credits, the actual first case of the season is presented as a client comes to Carmichael looking for help with someone who bilked him in a Ponzi scheme. Enter Craig Kilborn in an effective guest-starring role as a super-creep. Yes, Craig Kilborn is still acting. I was a bit surprised too. Meanwhile, Chuck starts to feel a bit of jealousy that his friend Morgan has the info that once made him so special.



Chuck
Photo credit: NBC

"We're still working out the kinks" is the final line in the pre-credits prologue (and one repeated later) and it's ironic and yet also a bit sad that I'm pretty sure it's also meant to be a reference to the various iterations of the show over five seasons. This is a program with some clever writing and a strong ensemble that has still never quite figured out its identity. Half of the humor works, half doesn't. Half of the spy material works, half doesn't. "Chuck" is a likable show that's never really been a great one. It's no surprise to say that's not going to change this year. Having said that, if you've never had issues with "Chuck," I'd be surprised if you felt drastically let down by this final baker's dozen. At the same time, it's also unlikely to pull in enough new fans to make NBC regret making this season the final one.

In tune with looking at the final season as a victory lap, "Chuck" will feature several appearances from recognizable faces this year including guest-starring or cameo roles from not just Hamill & Kilborn in the premiere but Jeff Fahey, David Koechner, Carrie-Anne Moss, Danny Pudi, Rebecca Romijn, Stan Lee, Cheryl Ladd, Bo Derek, and more in future episodes. It's as if friends of the show are stopping by to say farewell and it could bring some fun energy to the final season.

How will history appraise "Chuck"? Will it be one of those shows that fans lament never having found an audience? Will people complain about a lack of critical recognition when they find it on Blu-ray and DVD? Probably not. "Chuck" is a decent show and I'm impressed that it stayed on as long as it did but, as much as it might pain fans to hear this, I wouldn't have been overly upset if had run the course it would have on every other network and been canceled years ago.

"Chuck: The Complete Fourth Season" was released by Warner Bros. on Blu-ray and DVD on October 11th, 2011 and it is a typically-strong release for one of the best TV-on-Blu-Ray companies on the market. All 24 episodes are presented in 1080p with a DTS-HD Audio track and a significant number of special features are included: "The Top-Secret Chuckipedia Interactive Experience," Declassified Scenes, "Chuck Versus Directing," Gag Reel, "Spying on the Cast — Operation Gomez," and "Buy Hard: The Jeff and Lester Story."

"Chuck" returns to NBC on Friday, October 28th, 2011 at 7pm CST. It stars Zachary Levi, Yvonne Strahovski, Joshua Gomez, Adam Baldwin, Ryan McPartlin, Mark Christopher Lawrence, Scott Krinsky, Vik Sahay, and Sarah Lancaster. The fourth season was released on Blu-ray and DVD on October 11th, 2011.

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