

## TV Review: Strong Mid-Season Premiere of USA's 'Burn Notice'

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on November 3, 2011 - 9:32am

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CHICAGO – I feel like I've written a dozen reviews of USA's hit "Burn Notice" and they all have basically the same theme — this is a show that could have been great but has now clearly settled for just being good. There's rarely anything overtly wrong with an episode of "Burn Notice," and the mid-season premiere is actually better than the show has been recently with strong scenes for its stellar supporting cast. There's nothing wrong with a good, entertaining show like "Burn Notice," and the mid-season premiere is more entertaining than most recent episodes. I just need to stop thinking that, with a few tweaks, it could be one of the best shows on TV instead of merely a fun one.



Television Rating: **3.5/5.0**

The summer episodes of "Burn Notice" ended with a flurry of activity, including the revelation that Anson (Jere Burns) wasn't just an explosive madman, but also held Fiona's (Gabrielle Anwar) freedom in his hands and was revealed to be the person who burned Michael (Jeffrey Donovan) in the first place. Naturally, the mid-season premiere picks up shortly thereafter, as Michael's opening narration is about how personal ties can be a spy's most vulnerable flaw. With Anson controlling Fi, he also controls Michael. With the formerly-rogue spy now working for the CIA, Anson uses his new puppet's access for his own personal gains. He's a twisted Charlie and Michael is the Angel.



Burn Notice

Photo credit: Glenn Watson/USA

In the Fall premiere, Anson sends Michael (which, of course, means Fiona as well) to Puerto Rico to obtain a virus for Anson to use against the government. Meanwhile, Sam (Bruce Campbell) and Jesse (Coby Bell) have a surprising choice for their next mission — using Michael's mom (Sharon Gless) as a spy asset. Splitting up the gang into two subplots is a bit disappointing but it gives Donovan and Anwar some significant screen time together and their increasingly-impressive chemistry has long been one of the strongest assets of the program. The too-brief location shift from Miami to San Juan also makes for a similar-but-different sense to the premiere — giving it a little spice without taking it to a location too different from which fans are accustomed. They should have spent more time in San Juan. Without spoiling anything,

they're back in Miami pretty quickly.



Burn Notice  
Photo credit: Glenn Watson/USA

"Burn Notice" has become more action-heavy over the last few years as the first half of the season ended with explosions and this one essentially begins with a heavily-armed assault. I still don't think the writers and producers of "Burn" are at their best when they focus on things that go bang. The show used to thrive on cool — beautiful people in a beautiful place with Bond-esque narration from one of the few noble spies left in the world. Michael Westen was the kind of guy who could do what needed to be done but also loved his mom, his best friend, and his ex-girlfriend. The show has lost a bit of that "cool factor."

It's through no fault of the cast. Donovan is very good in the mid-season premiere, correctly playing Michael as a man who seems nearly defeated by his current situation but, as fans surely know, is also constantly trying to figure out a way out from under Anson's thumb. Anwar, Campbell, and Gless have always been good-to-great and they are more of the latter here. The cast is the best thing about the current days of "Burn Notice."

There was a brief moment where it felt like the writing would live up to the cast (mostly in season two, easily the best of the program's history). Now it feels like the writing team of "Burn Notice" is pretty happy but not overly ambitious. The show's starting to feel a bit repetitive overall, even if this mid-season premiere is one of the stronger episodes of the show in 2011. I hope to see more like it as this half-season progresses and into the future of the show. Rarely have the writers more expertly used their entire ensemble, giving each of the players a great scene or two instead of focusing so heavily on Michael. "Burn Notice" has always been about Michael's connections as much as the spy himself and the best chance for the show to get back to that "potential for greatness" is to allow Anwar, Campbell, Gless, and Bell to shine as brightly as their leading man.

*The mid-season premiere of "Burn Notice" airs on USA on Thursday, November 3rd, 2011 at 9pm CST. It stars Jeffrey Donovan, Gabrielle Anwar, Bruce Campbell, Coby Bell, and Sharon Gless.*



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