

TV Review: USA's Hit 'White Collar' Returns at Creative Turning Point

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on January 17, 2012 - 2:34pm

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CHICAGO – “*If you want a happy ending, it depends on where you stop the story.*” Such is the theme of the mid-season premiere of “White Collar,” USA’s hit show that has essentially been working on one arc that could be coming to a close since it premiered — the attachment of G-man Peter Burke (Tom DeKay) to con man Neal Caffrey (Matt Bomer). What if Caffrey had a chance to split? Would he take it? Or would he choose to walk the side of the tracks he used to rip off? These questions may not be completely answered by the end of this second half of the third season but it feels like we’ll be closer to the next phase of this massive hit.



Television Rating: **3.5/5.0**

The season was cut off with a cliffhanger (as all cable shows seem to be nowadays) as Burke’s wife (Tiffani Thiessen) was kidnapped and the agent realized that Caffrey had been hiding the Nazi treasure all this time. Not only had he been betrayed to a certain extent by someone he trusted but it put his most-loved one in jeopardy. How will Burke & Caffrey get Elizabeth back? How can Mozzie (Willie Garson) help? Will he or will he want to run with the treasure? And is there any possible solution that could keep everyone out of jail given the highly illegal dynamics of international theft? The answers to these questions and the asking of new ones keeps the mid-season premiere quickly-paced and engaging. It’s one of the more well-executed episodes in the history of the show.



White Collar
Photo credit: USA

Without giving anything away, the finale of the season premiere of “White Collar” closes some doors while opening up some fascinating channels for future storytelling. Of course, that’s all after it ties up the cliffhanger at the end of the mid-season premiere of the show. Before

we get too far, I'm not going to question one of the most successful networks in the history of television, but is anyone else annoyed by this new pattern? Just do a season and end it. Quit screwing with the scheduling.



White Collar
Photo credit: USA

With that out of the way, I said this at the beginning of season three back in June — *“The third season premiere of “White Collar” definitely feels like a show trying to find its identity after spinning several of the same plates in the air for two hit seasons and without clear direction on where to go for chapter three. Even the actors seem a bit lost in this lackluster premiere for a program that I said was getting bumpier last winter and is now in danger of going completely off the rails.”*

So where are we at? Did we go off the rails? The good news is that the mid-season premiere of “White Collar” feels notably more confident, as if the writers and producers figured out where to take the program in its next phase, told the actors, and they were revitalized by the new focus. It’s well-paced, well-written, and more fun than it was at the start of the season. I’m still not sold on this being as good as its fans think it is or that it could be (never have been), but this is an engaging hour of television and I’m encouraged about what could happen next.

The talent is surely there. Bomer and DeKay have long been the greatest strength of the show — their charisma, chemistry, and talent. And the emotional involvement of the arc of the mid-season premiere allows them to play to their strengths. Thiessen and Garson off solid emotional support in the premiere, but I still feel like they’re under-utilized in general on the program.

“White Collar” often works best when it’s at its most elaborate and there’s a LOT going on in the mid-season premiere of USA’s beloved program. Bomer and DeKay seem revitalized by what’s to come. And, for the first time since the show began, I can see why.

‘White Collar,’ which airs on USA, stars Matt Bomer, Tim DeKay, Tiffani Thiessen, and Willie Garson. The show returns with its mid-third-season premiere on January 17th, 2012 at 8PM CST



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