

## TV Review: 'Community' Returns with Hysterically Self-Referential Episode

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on March 15, 2012 - 10:57am

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CHICAGO – Leave it to the writers of “Community,” one of the best shows on television, to take TV lemons and make a tasty comedy beverage out of them. After being forced into hiatus by a network that has never known how to support or promote it, “Community” is finally back on Thursday nights, pushing “30 Rock” to the spot formerly occupied by the done-for-the-season “Up All Night.” It’s unlikely to impact the anemic ratings for NBC, but this is the most creatively powerful two hours of television on network television. And it arguably starts with its most impressive entry.



TV Rating: **5.0/5.0**

“Urban Matrimony and the Sandwich Arts” is a “Shirley episode” but, as usual, the entire ensemble gets to shine. The “A plot” is about a major turning point in Shirley’s (Yvette Nicole Brown) life as Andre (Malcolm Jamal Warner) proposes again and the two re-marry. At the same time, Pierce (Chevy Chase) has fallen from business prominence and wants to team with Shirley to open a sandwich shop in the Greendale cafeteria. Will Shirley choose business or marriage? Or find a way to pull off both?

Shirley’s marriage sends the rest of the “Community” gang on their own comedy arcs. Annie (Alison Brie) has a predictably supportive response but the big event challenges the cynicism of Britta (Gillian Jacobs) and Jeff (Joel McHale) as they push against the institution of marriage but end up using their assigned tasks for drunken personal revelations. Meanwhile, in the best (and most self-referential) plot, Troy (Donald Glover) and Abed (Danny Pudi) are forced to be “normal” for the wedding. After getting as much “weirdness” out of their systems as possible, their attempts at normal are absolutely hysterical.



Community  
Photo credit: NBC

An episode about a second start in which the characters try to be more normal — there hasn't been this self-referential a sitcom since the final season of "Arrested Development." And yet it works without the awareness that the writers are clearly using their situation as creative fodder. The writing is as strong as its ever been and, if possible, the show actually feels more confident than when it left. After "Community" was barely renewed for a second season, I felt like it came back stronger, as if the producers embraced its cult status and stopped trying to appeal to anything but their own sense of humor. That's when the show took off. Perhaps the recent awareness that NBC barely cares about their existence has given them another boost of creative freedom. This is one of the smartest comedy scripts of the season (there's a Jim Belushi line that is one of my favorites in the history of the show).

What will happen to "Community"? There should be ZERO expectation that this episode will pop in the ratings more than the show did before it left. Absence does not make the heart grow fonder in the world of TV. It makes one forget a show exists. The good news is that NBC is struggling across the board and I see no reason why they would renew "Whitney," "Are You There, Chelsea?," or even "Up All Night" over "Community." The students at Greendale have often survived by being the best in a group of underachievers. How appropriate.

Check out this cool video that NBC sent over before you make sure your DVR is set:

*"Community" stars Joel McHale, Gillian Jacobs, Yvette Nicole Brown, Alison Brie, Donald Glover, Danny Pudi, Jim Rash, and guest star Malcolm Jamal Warner. It returns on NBC on March 15th, 2012 at 7pm CST.*



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