

TV Review: Amazing Actresses Anchor Showtime Season Premieres of ‘Nurse Jackie,’ ‘The Big C’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on April 8, 2012 - 9:08am

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CHICAGO – Emmy-winning “Nurse Jackie” starts its fourth season and the highly-acclaimed “The Big C” joins it for its third on Sunday nights starting tonight, April 8, 2012. While both shows have been frustrating at times over their runs, it’s impossible to argue with the talent that Edie Falco and Laura Linney bring to these shows, respectively. I have a clear favorite but it’s nice to have both ladies back on the most crowded night on TV.

On that note — it’s hard to believe that Falco, Linney, and Jeremy Irons are on one network on one night and that network is NOT the clear critical favorite for the evening. While “The Big C,” “Nurse Jackie,” and “The Borgias” will have their fans, it’s not a lineup that compares to AMC’s “Mad Men” and “The Killing” OR HBO’s “Game of Thrones,” “Girls,” and “Veep” (the latter two are premiering on the 15th and 22nd of this month respectively...come back for reviews).

While I respect the craftsmanship on display in “The Borgias,” the second season begins in too slow a manner for me to forget why I barely cared about season one. I love Irons and Colm Feore, but I’m not recommending the show enough to even review it. It makes me too drowsy.

“The Big C” and “Nurse Jackie” are different stories. The first is a show that showed immense promise at its start but has lost me somewhere along the way and the second features what is EASILY one of the best performances on TV right now and there’s a chance that season four could be its best.



Nurse Jackie

Photo credit: Showtime

“Nurse Jackie”



TV Rating: **4.0/5.0**

The strongest program on Showtime this evening is the one that has been their best comedy for years now (sorry "Weeds" fans...that show jumped the shark when they left Agrestic) and "Nurse Jackie" returns even wittier, more heartfelt, and smarter than when it left. It helps to add an actor as remarkably talented as Bobby Cannavale ("Win Win") to the cast. He's a fantastic performer who has not really ever been given the credit he deserves nor the major parts he should be considered for. He's good here, but I'd love to seem him anchor a Showtime show once his "Special Guest Star" run is over.



Cannavale plays Mike Cruz, a medical director from Quantum Bay, the company that is taking over All Saints Hospital and trying to turn it into a more profitable venture. In other words, Cruz and Nurse Jackie (Falco) are going to butt heads, although certainly not at the beginning as the fourth season opens with Jackie in rehab. It flashes back a week to detail how she got there — a definite rock bottom moment that I won't spoil — and that's where the season begins: With Jackie away from the rest of the stellar ensemble, for the most part. It's a risky move that I think pays off as it introduces some new characters and allows the amazing Falco some time out of her scrubs.

What I find most remarkable about the first two episodes of the fourth season of "Nurse Jackie" is the ease with which major events occur. There's something that happens that we've been waiting years to go down and it's done in a way that's almost casual and even humorously handled, where other showrunners would have turned it into a moment of extreme melodrama. The world of "Nurse Jackie" is one in which life-changing events happen without warning — a routine trip to the hospital goes horrible awry, for example — and I like the way the writers have used that backdrop to influence their tone. You don't know what day you'll end up in the ER and you don't know what day will be the rock bottom that leads you to rehab.

I do think that "Nurse Jackie" is sometimes still a bit overwritten — characters are too clever and too often have the perfect cynical barb at the ready. I like it most when Falco is allowed to find the realism in her incredibly complex character — a nurse, a mother, a lover, a friend, a wife, and, as much as she can't admit it, a junkie. It's going to be an interesting season.



The Big C
Photo credit: Showtime

“The Big C”



TV Rating: **3.0/5.0**

The “overwritten problem” is a much-more-prominent one in the world of “The Big C,” a show I SO DESPERATELY want to like because of my love for the great Laura Linney (who should have won an Oscar twice by now — “You Can Count on Me” and “Kinsey”...and maybe even “The Savages”) but the deeply over-written nature of the show has always been a problem and it feels like it’s getting worse. “The Big C” is one of those shows that feels like it’s constantly telling you how smart and insightful it is instead of actually feeling smart and insightful. And the “lesson” this year about living life to the fullest could be even more underlined than ever. I love Linney on it (and Oliver Platt is always interesting) but the program has always been just barely a success for me and I think that meter has now dipped below the recommendation line to a near-miss.

At the start of the third season, Cathi (Linney) discovers that her cancer is in serious remission and starts living life in a way that she never has before — stopping off at the bar enough to make friends with the regulars, and smoking while she drinks there. She survived cancer and her husband survived a heart attack (and now has a device that can shock his heart if it gets out of rhythm in a season premiere arc that is the perfect example of how this show feels more written than true) — why shouldn’t she be able to do whatever the Hell she wants? Linney is talented enough to find the truth in this character and I may stay tuned to see those wonderful moments when she does but it’s getting harder and harder to forgive the flaws of this program with each season premiere. Especially with all the competition on Sunday nights.

“Nurse Jackie” and “The Big C” return to Showtime on Sunday, April 8, 2012 before the second-season premiere of “The Borgias.” “Nurse Jackie” stars Edie Falco, Eve Best, Merritt Wever, Paul Schulze, Dominic Fumusa, Arun Gupta, Anna Deavere Smith, and Bobby Cannavale. “The Big C” stars Laura Linney, Oliver Platt, Gabourey Sidibe, Gabriel Basso, and John Hickey.



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