

TV Review: Chaos Continues to Dominate HBO's Intense 'True Blood'

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on June 8, 2012 - 1:51pm

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CHICAGO – “*We done with all the supernatural bulls**t, you heard me?!?!’* — Lafayette (Nelsan Ellis). Does a pissed off Lafayette speak for you? Are you tired of all of the chaos on HBO's “True Blood”? Do you wish the show would stop with so many cluttered subplots and settle down? Well, keep wishing. The first two episodes of the new season, returning on Sunday, June 10, 2012 at 8pm CST on HBO, do mark a notable improvement over the second half of the last disappointing season but there's still room for improvement even if there's no room for more characters.



TV Rating: **3.5/5.0**

“True Blood” is a show that's almost impossible to review because fans of the program rely so heavily on the writer's skills at providing twists and turns every few minutes. For the last season premiere, I didn't even know I was spoiling something and I got angry emails. So, I'm going to avoid most of the plot details other than to say that the program naturally picks up, as it always does, right after the end of season four. Tara (Rutina Wesley) has just been shot by Debbie in front of Sookie (Anna Paquin), Eric (Alexander Skarsgard) and Bill (Stephen Moyer) are cleaning up the mess from their defiance of the Vampire Authority, Alcide (Joe Manganiello) has discovered that Russell Edgington (Denis O'Hare) has escaped, Jason (Ryan Kwanten) continues to struggle with his lust for Jessica (Deborah Ann Woll), and, oh, so many other things.



True Blood

Photo credit: HBO

Seriously, has there ever been a show more crowded with subplots than "True Blood"? Most soap opera writers would say, "Enough!" And yet, the paragraph above just scratches the surface. I haven't even mentioned Lafayette dealing with the grief over killing his boyfriend, the continued drama of Terry (Todd Lowe) and Arlene (Carrie Preston), Andy's (Chris Bauer) romance with Holly (Lauren Bowles), or Sam's (Sam Trammell) serious drama over killing a local werewolf pack leader. And into this chaotic stew returns Denis O'Hare's Russell, Michael McMillian's Steve Newlin (the cult leader from season two who's now a vamp), Scott Foley as Terry's former Iraq War colleague Patrick, and the great Christopher Meloni ("Law & Order: SVU") as Roman, the Guardian of the Vampire Authority. No one can ever argue that "True Blood" is boring.

But isn't it getting a little out of control? I must admit that my favorite moments in the first two episodes were the few quiet ones such as Lafayette grieving on his own or the clever interplay between a newly-single Jessica and Jason. There's a difference between complex shows with large casts and ones that just feel unfocused and "True Blood" too often sways to the latter. I'd be very happy if they killed off four to five characters to focus more on the interesting ones.

Having said that, there's still a lot to like here. As often as the writing frustrates me, one can't ignore the quality of the performances — especially an always-consistent Paquin, Skarsgard, Ellis, Manganiello, Bauer, Kwanten, Woll, O'Hare, and Meloni. This is one of the best ensembles on television. There's no question.

And the show looks great. It's one of the most confidently directed and interestingly designed programs on TV. Like a vampire, it glimmers you into thinking it's better than it is but there are enough elements that work that I'm still not going to give up on the program finding the clever mix of sexuality and supernatural that made the first two seasons so good. There's too much here to like even if it doesn't quite have the bite it used to have.

"True Blood" stars Anna Paquin, Stephen Moyer, Alexander Skarsgard, Nelsan Ellis, Rutina Wesley, Joe Manganiello, Ryan Kwanten, Deborah ann Woll, Todd Lowe, Carrie Preston, Chris Bauer, Sam Trammell, Christopher Meloni, Scott Foley, and Denis O'Hare. The fifth season premieres on Sunday, June 10, 2012 at 8pm CST.



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