

## TV Review: TNT Finds Escapist Fun Buried in New ‘Dallas’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on June 13, 2012 - 2:14pm

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CHICAGO – HBO’s “True Blood” has some serious competition this summer for your sleazy, sexy, soap opera time in the form of TNT’s rejuvenated and remarkably enjoyable reboot of “Dallas,” a show that really shouldn’t work but does so surprising ways. As J.R. Ewing (Larry Hagman) says in the premiere, “*Blood may be thicker than water...but oil is thicker than both.*” With stronger-than-expected performances, a consistent tone, and enough backstabs and double crosses to make the ladies of Wysteria Lane roll their eyes, “Dallas” is better than ever.



Television Rating: **4.0/5.0**

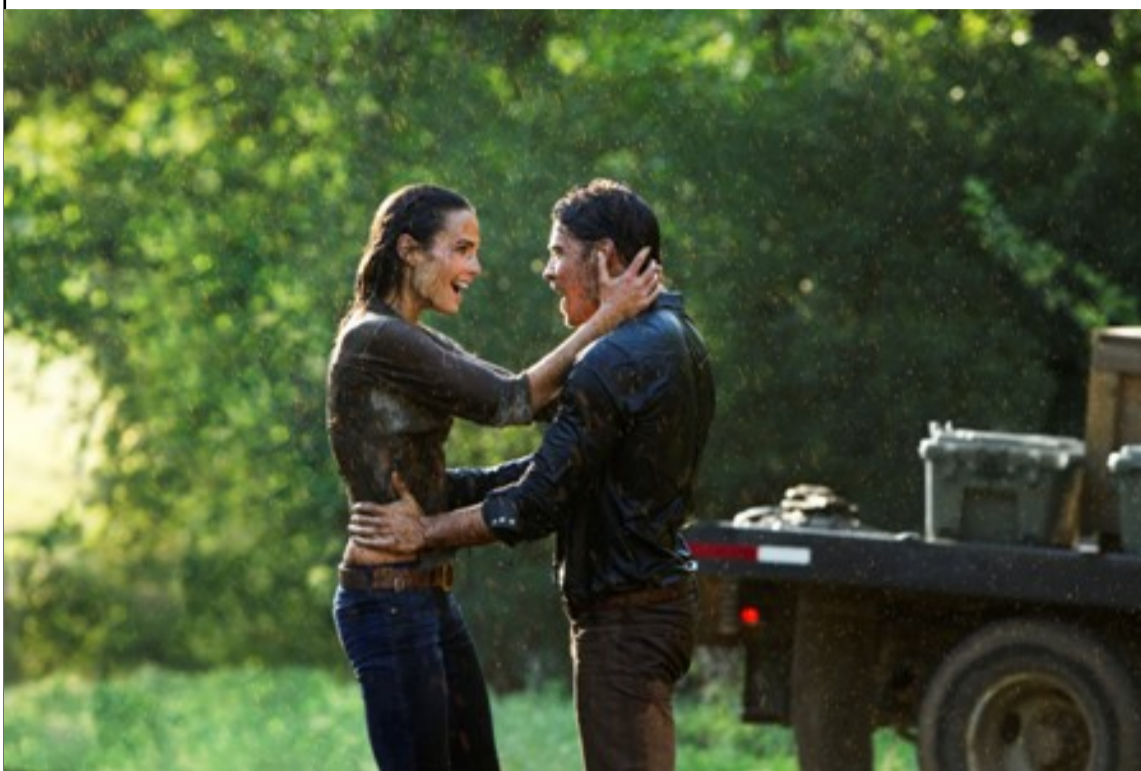
The producers of “Dallas” were smart to take their show and its fans completely seriously. They could have delivered a tongue-in-cheek ode to the days when nighttime soaps like “Falcon Crest” and “Knot’s Landing” ruled the ratings. It could have been pure cheese. Instead, they embraced their show’s mythology, building on it in ways that the original showrunners would have adored. It’s not a reboot or restart as much as if “Dallas” never went off the air over twenty years ago. And with its beautiful and surprisingly talented cast blending perfectly with familiar faces from the ’80s, “Dallas” works for multiple generations. It should be a huge hit.



Dallas

Photo credit: TNT

The basic hook of “Dallas” is simple — the drama of the Ewing clan from when the show was in its prime has moved to the next generation. Where Bobby Ewing (Patrick Duffy) and J.R. battled for control of the Ewing fortune, now their sons butt heads and betray each other. John Ross Ewing (Josh Henderson) is, of course, J.R. and Sue Ellen’s (Linda Gray) son, and the more devious of the two cousins who serve as the center of the piece. John Ross is drilling on the legendary Ewing estate of Southfork and finds an oil reserve right on the grounds. Grandma’s will prohibits him from drilling at Southfork and so the first few episodes of the rebooted “Dallas” are about wrestling for control of the show’s legendary setting, a clever way to introduce us to new characters while giving reasons for the old ones to stick around.



Dallas  
Photo credit: TNT

Bobby’s son Christopher (Jesse Metcalfe) is the dreamer, the guy who thinks there’s a way to keep the Ewing fortune growing through alternative fuel sources. On the first night (it’s a two-hour premiere), Christopher learns that his father Bobby is trying to sell Southfork, gets married to his (seemingly) sweet girlfriend Rebecca (Julie Gonzalo), and learns that his former girlfriend Elena (Jordana Brewster), now with John Ross, didn’t really leave him but received a break-up email that he never sent. Who forced Elena & Christopher apart? How can John Ross drill at Southfork? What will happen with Christopher’s dangerous fuel alternatives? Did I mention Bobby is dying of cancer?

Of course the return of a show like “Dallas” needs to feature drama at a wedding and lines like “*I know it was you.*” Don’t worry. The soap opera quotient of “Dallas” is high. If I sit and think about all the secrets, double crosses, and hidden agendas in just the first three episodes that I’ve seen, it can seem ridiculous. And yet it’s also remarkably enjoyable. This is high-grade cheese, the kind of twisting and turning narrative that works even as it’s getting more and more unrealistic. It’s just fun. If you don’t like “Dallas,” you just don’t like soap operas. It’s not high art. The characters are silly and don’t always behave the way people would in the real world. The dialogue is beyond over-the-top. But a show should be judged on its intentions and “Dallas” never sets out to be “Mad Men.” It wants to be sexy, silly, and nothing more than pure entertainment and it achieves those goals.



Dallas  
Photo credit: TNT

One of the main reasons “Dallas” works as well as it does is the very strong cast. In particular, Hagman is spectacular. He plays J.R. in 2012 like a Machiavellian master. He’s been manipulating lives for decades and he’s reached Howard Hughes levels of crazy. One gets the impression that he would stab literally anyone in the back to get his way and Hagman completely nails the part, finding the balance of menace and charisma to make the character work again and better than before. Duffy is personable and engaging but, outside of Hagman, the show really belongs to the young cast. Brewster in particular is better utilized here than she ever was on film — beautiful, charismatic, and interesting.

Weddings, parties, interrupted meetings, hidden agendas, infidelity — life hasn’t really changed much on “Dallas.” Fans of the heyday of the

nighttime soap have long lamented its disappearance from the TV landscape. Maybe the return of “Dallas” proves not that these shows went away out of lack of interest but because they’re harder to pull off than they look. Few have been as entertaining as “Dallas,” whether it’s 1982 or 2012.

*“Dallas” stars Josh Henderson, Jesse Metcalfe, Jordana Brewster, Julie Gonzalo, Brenda Strong, Patrick Duffy, Linda Gray, and Larry Hagman. It premieres on TNT on Wednesday, June 13, 2012 at 8pm CST with back-to-back episodes.*



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