

TV Review: 'Breaking Bad' Picks Up Right Where it Left Off

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on July 14, 2012 - 4:14pm

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CHICAGO – One of my favorite things about “Breaking Bad,” the best drama on television by quite a critical distance, is the way writers play with time. One episode can take place over a few days while another very important week on the calendar may take up half a season just to get through its intense action. It’s just one of many ways in which this show’s amazing staff of writers play with expectations and tell stories in their own unique, mesmerizing ways.



Television Rating: **5.0/5.0**

And that’s really the best word to describe “Breaking Bad” these days. Has there been a more mesmerizing show in the last decade? The saga of Walter White (Bryan Cranston), a man who began a life of crime merely to protect his family but became a criminal mastermind, has become increasingly impossible to turn away from with each passing season. Season four (the best show of 2011) was arguably the climax of a linear series of events that led from the deaths of a couple of low-level meth dealers to the murder of the biggest drug lord in the United States. Where do we go from here when the season four finale really could have been a satisfying series one?



Breaking Bad
Photo credit: AMC

Clearly, with the awareness that this is the final season (which will be split into two halves to air this Summer and next), one shouldn’t expect the writers to go too far. They won’t be introducing a “new Gus.” Walt is the new Gus. If we look at season four as the arguable climax — Walt vs. Gus — season five is logically the epilogue. It’s the season in which things get tied up (although I wouldn’t expect an abundance of happy

endings) and the one in which it seems likely that Walt's drama is going to come right home. What will season five be about? No one has fully revealed it but my guess is that it has to center on Hank (Dean Norris), the largest remaining adversary for Walt and the fate of whom will either make Walt a true villain or stop his reign.



Breaking Bad
Photo credit: AMC

There's some evidence to support this theory in the stunning season premiere, "Live Free or Die," which picks up immediately after the events at Casa Tranquila. Gus and Salamanca are dead and Walt has "won." However, Walter & Jesse (Aaron Paul) forgot something very important, what could be a gigantic piece of evidence that brings their entire house of cards crumbling to the ground. And don't forget that Mike (Jonathan Banks) is still out there and there's a fate to a character who suffered a tragedy at the end of season four that you may have forgotten about or assumed wouldn't return. Never make assumptions about "Breaking Bad."

That's all I'm going to say in terms of plot specifics. The genius of "Breaking Bad" is in its unexpected plotting, the way that the show's writers are like Walter with his competition — one step ahead. The best dramatic shows find ways to be both unpredictable and believable. One is never quite sure where this show is going next but we take the ride, confident by now that the producers know exactly what they're doing.

The cast sure does. Walter is a villain now. If you didn't think he was last season, the revelation at the end of season four regarding Brock's poisoning surely, as Vince Gilligan said about it, sends Walter "*many, many more steps closer to hell*." Do you think season five is going to be about Walt turning around on that path? Neither do I. Don't expect redemption. And Cranston appears to be playing that increased malevolence right from the very premiere. He's simply amazing. Any list of the best TV characters of the modern era that doesn't include Walter White is incomplete.

And he's long been matched by a stellar supporting cast. I sometimes think Anna Gunn can hit a few too many of the same emotional beats (although that could be blamed on writing more than acting) but she's good in the premiere and Aaron Paul is typically spectacular. I think the one to watch this season is going to be Dean Norris if my suspicions about the final arc of "Breaking Bad" are true. I don't know where this great show is going. Very few people do. But I can't wait to find out. And when it's done, I'll pop in my Blu-ray of season one, and take the ride all over again.

Note: If you're a Dish Network customer upset that you won't be able to see the premiere because of ongoing problems with AMC and Dish, the network will stream it just for you if you go [here](#) [15].

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"Breaking Bad" stars Bryan Cranston, Aaron Paul, Anna Gunn, Dean Norris, Jonathan Banks, Betsy Brandt, RJ Mitte, Bob Odenkirk, and Jonathan Banks. It returns to start its fifth and final season on Sunday, July 15, 2012 at 9pm CST.



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