

TV Review: Sigourney Weaver Carries USA's Disappointing 'Political Animals'

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on July 15, 2012 - 2:40pm

- [Adrian Pasdar](#) [2]
- [Brian Tallerico](#) [3]
- [Brittany Ishibashi](#) [4]
- [Carla Gugino](#) [5]
- [Ciaran Hinds](#) [6]
- [Dan Futterman](#) [7]
- [Dylan Baker](#) [8]
- [Ellen Burstyn](#) [9]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [10]
- [James Wolk](#) [11]
- [Political Animals](#) [12]
- [Roger Bart](#) [13]
- [Sebastian Stan](#) [14]
- [Sigourney Weaver](#) [15]
- [Television](#) [16]
- [USA](#) [17]

CHICAGO – I'm a political junkie who naturally loves to follow the world of journalism as well and so I was psyched about the premiere of USA's mini-series, "Political Animals," a star-studded affair about how a powerful Washington family deals with a headstrong reporter and the secrets they still hope to keep. Sigourney Weaver makes her TV premiere in this political drama and she's supported by a stunningly strong cast. Sadly, the writing lets them all down a bit, choosing soap opera over satire.



Television Rating: **3.0/5.0**

Despite attestations by the people involved that the show isn't meant to be a commentary on the Clinton family, the parallels are obvious. We meet Former First Lady Elaine Barrish (Weaver) on the night she is conceding her shot at the Presidency after a hard-fought campaign, which also happens to be the same evening that she asks her philandering ex-President husband (a scenery-chewing Ciaran Hinds) for a divorce. Two years later, Barrish is Secretary of State, dealing with a crisis involving journalists kidnapped in Iran and a long-term interview with a writer (Carla Gugino) who has expressed disdain for the powerful female figure before.



Political Animals
Photo credit: USA

Of course, it wouldn't be a deconstruction of a political family without a few secrets. The Barrish family has two sons, one of which happens to

be the Secretary's Chief of Staff and is about to be married to a woman with secrets of her own and the other of which happens to be a drug-addicted, suicidally depressed homosexual. He gets a lot of drama in episode one to the point that it almost feels unfair but one imagines that "the more stable son" will have his share of future problems. Ellen Burstyn rounds out the cast as the crotchety matriarch who can say and do whatever she likes and will remind you of that fact. She's the Maggie Smith of this "Downton Abbey."



Political Animals
Photo credit: USA

And she rules. So does Weaver. So does Hinds. Even the young cast members are strong. Gugino over-plays a few beats but she's always been an interesting actress and James Wolk reminds me that I wish "Lone Star" had been given more time to find an audience. If people like "Political Animals" it will be because of what the cast brings to it.

Because it certainly ain't the writing. It may be dressed in more high-profile clothing, but this is sudsy soap opera writing not much different than what TNT is doing on "Dallas." And I think the disguise of allowing viewers access behind the political curtain makes it more annoying. I don't know what happens on a Dallas estate but I know damn sure that much of what goes down in "Political Animals" is the kind of activity that only happens on TV. Let's ignore the fact that someone as politically acute as Barrish would know not to ask for a divorce on the night she ends her campaign (it would be too much fuel for those who thought she was riding her husband's coattails), but she also wouldn't say half the things she does to Gugino's reporter in their very first scene together (an interview that makes Palin-Couric look downright cordial).

And then there's the dialogue. Barrish spits out things like *"I hate lying and telling people things will get better"* while her husband spouts gems like *"I don't eat shit. I serve it."* As much fun as it is to imagine Bill Clinton saying that with a serious face to Hillary, it didn't happen. It's dialogue like that reminds one of the missed opportunity here. It doesn't have teeth. It mistakes melodrama and vulgarity for bite.

But, damn, those great performances. Weaver is just fantastic and, despite my obvious reservations, I'm going to keep watching for her and much of the strong supporting cast (which will also include Vanessa Redgrave).

"Political Animals" is the kind of exaggerated world that only exists on TV and with the brilliant satire of "Veep," the Shakespearean saga of "Boss," the genius of "Game Change," and other recent political gems with which to compare it, USA's entry just barely loses the election. Although given how I expect it will do in the ratings, I look forward to the eventual second campaign.

"Political Animals" stars Sigourney Weaver, Ciaran Hinds, Carla Gugino, Ellen Burstyn, James Wolk, Sebastian Stan, Brittany Ishibashi, Adrian Pasdar, Dylan Baker, Dan Futterman, Roger Bart, and Vanessa Redgrave. It premieres on Sunday, July 15 on USA at 9pm CST.



[18]

By [BRIAN TALLERICO](#) [19]

Content Director

HollywoodChicago.com

brian@hollywoodchicago.com [18]

Source URL (retrieved on **Apr 20 2024 - 12:58am**):

<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/19240/tv-review-sigourney-weaver-carries-usa-s-disappointing-political-animals>

Links:

- [1] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/briantt>
- [2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/adrian-pasdar>
- [3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/brian-tallerico>
- [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/brittany-ishibashi>
- [5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/carla-gugino>
- [6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/ciaran-hinds>
- [7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/dan-futterman>
- [8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/dylan-baker>
- [9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/ellen-burstyn>
- [10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/hollywoodchicagodotcom-content>
- [11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/james-wolk>
- [12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/political-animals>
- [13] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/roger-bart>
- [14] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/sebastian-stan>
- [15] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/sigourney-weaver>
- [16] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/television>
- [17] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/usa>
- [18] <mailto:brian@hollywoodchicago.com>
- [19] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#BRIAN>