

TV Review: 'Sons of Anarchy' Returns For Intense Fifth Season

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on September 11, 2012 - 9:59am

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CHICAGO – The Shakespearian tragedy that is “Sons of Anarchy” ascends to a new level of drama in the strong first two episodes of the fifth season as the writers pick up close to where they left off in the brilliant fourth year of one cable’s biggest hits. With fantastic guest stars like Jimmy Smits and Harold Perrineau, “Sons of Anarchy” seems likely to top even last year’s impressive numbers. And the quality hasn’t dipped at all as the entire cast seems enlivened by the remarkable intensity of the action. There’s no room to breathe this year on “Sons of Anarchy.” Strap in.



Television Rating: **4.5/5.0**

It’s impossible to recap how we got here over four seasons of gunfights, murders, betrayals, secrets, and extreme violence. “Sons of Anarchy” has become a fascinating drama about men and women who try to dig themselves out of damaging situations only to find the hole much deeper. Kurt Sutter has creating a study of repercussion. When you feel your way of life is threatened to the point that you need to take drastic action like murder to save it, what comes from that? Revenge breeds revenge. Crime breeds crime. And as past decisions have piled up at the door of SAMCRO, “Sons of Anarchy” has become more and more stunning television. The last season was easily the best and there’s reason to think that this year could top it.



Sons of Anarchy

Photo credit: FX

Where do we begin? Clay (Ron Perlman) is still recovering from the gunshots that nearly killed him in season four (and, in a glorious bit of visual irony, has to wear an oxygen mask not unlike Piney, who he killed last year...the "old man" of the club has been replaced by the man who murdered him). He's essentially ostracized from the club but he has an interesting bit of half-truth to try to regain favor in the season premiere.



Sons of Anarchy

Photo credit: FX

While Clay plans his next move, Gemma (Katey Sagal) is struggling. She gets drunk enough and smokes down enough that Tara (Maggie Siff) worries that she shouldn't watch Abel. She also has a one-night stand with a charismatic "companion-ater" (or pimp) named Nero Padilla (Jimmy Smits) that could develop into a more interesting relationship.

Clay and Gemma's departure from the King and Queen spots in the motorcycle club means that Jax (Charlie Hunnam) and Tara are now in tenuous control. The explosive action of the end of season four, which saw innocent people getting run over in sidewalk cafes and highway shoot-outs is going to have serious repercussions this season. Remember that woman who was thrown through the window when Tig (Kim Coates) plowed into the cafe? She has a powerful father named Damon Pope (the great Harold Perrineau) and he takes vengeance on Tig in arguably the most painful way that I've ever seen on television. This season is brutal.

And it’s fascinating. Sutter has painted a tapestry of never-ending violence with “Sons of Anarchy.” You have to kill to stay in power in this world but your crime of vengeance breeds another man’s fury. It never ends. And the people caught in the middle are the ones who suffer most of all. I worry that “Sons of Anarchy” is on an increasingly intensifying path of drama that will lead to a bit of unbelievable melodrama in future seasons but, for now, it’s grounded in something dark and real, like the final seasons of “The Sopranos” or “The Shield” in which it felt like there was danger around every corner.



What helps to ground “Sons of Anarchy” are the stellar performances. Sagal has been great from episode one. She should have been Emmy-nominated multiple times and she hasn’t lost a beat. Hunnam has been the real story here. He started relatively thin on a dramatic level but has really grounded Jax in the last few seasons. This is a young man torn between a club that he wants to see survive and a family life he wishes he could have. Hunnam is very good. Coates & Perlman are always good when their characters are given something to do (there’s really not a weak link in the cast now that I’ve become more forgiving of Siff, who didn’t work for me in the first two years but has gotten notably better). And then there’s this year’s guest stars — Smits and Perrineau are fantastic in the premiere.

There’s going to be a lot of interesting cable television this Fall including the return of “Boardwalk Empire,” “Homeland,” “Dexter,” and “The Walking Dead.” “Sons of Anarchy” could easily get buried in the shuffle and not get the press it deserves. The show has had some notable peaks and deep valleys since it premiered but it is now as confident and well-made as it’s ever been. Don’t miss it.

“Sons of Anarchy” stars Charlie Hunnam, Katey Sagal, Ron Perlman, Maggie Siff, Kim Coates, Mark Boone Junior, Tommy Flanagan, Ryan Hurst, Theo Rossi, Dayton Callie, Rockmund Dunbar, Jimmy Smits, and Harold Perrineau. It was created by Kurt Sutter. The fifth season premieres on FX on September 11, 2012 at 9pm CST.



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