

## TV Review: Lena Dunham's Brilliant 'Girls' Takes Second Season Risks

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on January 13, 2013 - 10:13am

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CHICAGO – We live in a world that's so dependent on the new that it's difficult for as headline-grabbing a program as HBO's "Girls" to follow up a first season that landed it multiple nominations and year-end citations. What does Lena Dunham do next? Does she take the easy route and repeat herself? Does she do what most writers would do by setting up familiar situations for characters that worked the first time? Most sitcoms feature little character growth and essentially work on changing situations with characters we already know and like. Lena Dunham attempts something notable right from the beginning of the sophomore season of "Girls," leaving her characters adrift and trying to present that quarter-life crisis of apathy that so many indie filmmakers have tried to capture and fail. It's the smartest show on TV right now.



Television Rating: **5.0/5.0**

Everything seems even more uncomfortable this year on "Girls." The first season featured young women lost in a world of bad relationships, stupid jobs, and unfocused agendas but the characters seemed almost blissfully unaware of their own failings. Such is not the case in season two as these woman aren't just lost, they are starting to realize their lack of direction. What a daring idea for a TV comedy — not just the indiscretion of youth but what feeds it and how people try to change it. Whatever one may think of "Girls," and I do understand the program's detractors, no one can deny the risks that Dunham is willing to take as an actress, producer, director, and writer.



Girls

Photo credit: HBO



The second season of "Girls" picks up almost immediately after the end of the first. Scars have not yet healed from the fight between Hannah (Dunham) and Marnie (Allison Williams) as the latter arguably feels the most unfocused in her work and personal life while the former has kind of gotten her shit together. Well, in relation to Hannah's typical degree of shit-together-ness. She's got a new boyfriend (Donald Glover from "Community") and a new roommate in her gay ex Elijah (new regular Andrew Rannells, also of "The New Normal"). Dunham even turns the tables, making Adam (Adam Driver) the pursuer of Hannah.



Girls

Photo credit: HBO

Meanwhile, Shoshanna (Zosia Mamet) continues to struggle with her just-lost virginity and relationship with Ray (Alex Karpovsky), Jessa (Jemima Kirke) returns with her new husband Thomas-John (Chris O'Dowd), and Charlie (Christopher Abbott, who also pops up on "Enlightened" this season doing HBO double duty) may actually find himself back in the life of Marnie.

The overall plots of "Girls" aren't nearly the reason to watch. It's not a situation-driven show (although some of the arcs involving Elijah feel a bit forced) as much as it is about the details. The way Marnie looks different in hair and style in nearly every scene indicates a lack of focus. The way Charlie stands by the bathroom door as his new girlfriend uses the facilities because he doesn't want to risk the new girl having interaction with the old one. The subtleties of physical performance that Mamet displays in her first encounter with Ray. A subtle choice of music, a quick cut, a clever line - "Girls" is such a finely-tuned program, as well-directed as anything on TV.

Everyone wants to ask the same question — is it as good as season one? I feel like we need to wait to make that call. More than last season, the second outing of "Girls" feels like it will be a complete piece, more concerned about the season arc than episode to episode. Watching several in a row, it's easy to get lost in the world of "Girls," to wonder what these characters will do next. And that's the key. So much sitcom comedy and television writing telegraphs what the characters will do next to wrap up that week's arc. Dunham isn't worried about an episode-specific arc. She's looking at the bigger picture and it's a fuzzy one for these girls.

*"Girls" stars Lena Dunham, Allison Williams, Jemima Kirke, Zosia Mamet, Adam Driver, Christopher Abbott, Andrew Rannells, and Alexander Karpovsky. It was created by Lena Dunham. It returns on Sunday, January 13, 2013 on HBO at 8pm CST.*



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