

TV Review: FXX Launches with ‘The League,’ ‘It’s Always Sunny in Philadelphia’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on September 4, 2013 - 10:02am

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CHICAGO – If you were watching Fox Soccer Channel this weekend, you may have been startled to see it switch to repeats of hit comedy shows instead of sports commentary. The network is no more, replaced by FXX, a new brand of the hit FX network designed to appeal to a younger, comedy-driven audience. FX will keep shows like “The Bridge,” “Justified,” and next week’s premiere of “Sons of Anarchy.”



Television Rating: **3.5/5.0**

FXX gets to launch the fifth season of “The League” and the ninth season of “It’s Always Sunny in Philadelphia” tonight, followed by the return of “Totally Biased with Kamau Bell.” Both hit comedies come back relatively intact with “Sunny” seemingly willing to push the envelope even further in terms of arguable bad taste and “The League” bringing out some of its notable guest stars for the premiere. Both shows have brought their edgy sense of humor to their new home fully intact.



The League

Photo credit: FXX

“It’s Always Sunny in Philadelphia” kicks off the night with a very self-referential episode (the third chapter, in which the gang bemoans never being nominated for awards is even more self-aware) entitled “The Gang Broke Dee.” It’s a very, very funny half-hour but really only for those who have been with the show for the last decade; those who know that the gang really broke poor Sweet Dee (Kaitlin Olson) a long time ago. The butt of most of their jokes, Dee goes off the deep end, drinking, smoking, and generally wallowing in misery. In an attempt to get her back on the emotional horse, Mac (Rob McElhenney), Dennis (Glenn Howerton), Charlie (Charlie Day), and Frank (Danny DeVito) devise a plan to

give her faux applause at a stand-up comedy open-mic night. It turns out that Dee’s misery hits with the audience and she becomes a star. Few shows have better mined the concept of turning its character’s misery into comedy than “It’s Always Sunny.”



It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia
Photo credit: FXX

The second episode of the new season might cause a few ripples of controversy given that it tackles guns in schools but it does so in such a broad, “Sunny” way that I can’t imagine anyone taking it seriously. Charlie & Mac and Dennis & Dee end up on different sides of the gun debate in “Gun Fever Too: Still Hot.” Dennis & Dee learn that it’s not as easy to get guns on the street as they thought while Charlie & Mac argue over it would be wiser to guard a school with a gun or a sword. The way the “Sunny” writers break down ridiculous behavior on either side of the gun debate in this episode make it one of the strongest of the last few years. “Sunny” is back and, while maybe not as strong as the show’s peak, it’s at least as funny as last season and maybe even smarter.

I have to admit to growing a little weary of the gang on “Sunny”’s new-network-mate, “The League.” It’s still a very funny show at times and the premiere tonight produced one of my biggest laughs of the year (of course, it involves the scene-stealing Jason Mantzoukas as Rafi) but the extreme nature of the joke writing starts to wear thin after awhile. Each episode feels a little longer than its 22 minutes. It’s not unlike a presenter at a comedy roast — “funny,” “very funny,” and then “ugh, too far, get off the stage.” Especially the fact that the first two episodes have something of an obsession with male ejaculate. “Hey, we can say cum on FXX! Let’s say it a LOT!”

I know I’m being hard on the show but “The League” can be so deceptively smart, hiding its clever riff on modern friendship and relationships in gross-out humor and extreme jokes not unlike the best work of The Farrelly Brothers. So I’m harder on it when I feel the eww factor is outshining the characters or the potential intelligence.

And I love the cast. Katie Aselton steals the show most of the time (although she’s given little to do these two episodes...which could be part of the problem) and Nick Kroll has great comic timing. Everyone on the program is funny. I just want them to be given better scripts soon than these first two. I’m pretty sure they will.

The last seasons of “It’s Always Sunny in Philadelphia” and “The League” will be released by Fox next week, September 10, 2013. Why they waited until after the launch of FXX is beyond me but these are typically solid HD releases with strong transfers and interesting special features. If we get copies next week, we’ll let you know if that pattern continues.

“It’s Always Sunny in Philadelphia” and “The League” premiere on FXX tonight, September 4, 2013 at 9pm CST.



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Source URL (retrieved on **Apr 23 2024 - 9:23pm**):

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