

## ‘Damages’ Returns With Intense, Riveting Start to Season Two

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on January 6, 2009 - 12:39pm

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CHICAGO – The complex, twisted world of FX’s excellent “Damages” returns this week with a spectacular set-up for what promises to be another riveting season of twists and turns down the alleys of legal ethics and questionable moral behavior with an even more impressive ensemble than the one that won Emmys for its highly lauded first season.

The character played by Zeljko Ivanek, Emmy winner for Supporting Actor, may be dead and gone, but the rest of the cast, including Glenn Close, Rose Byrne, Tate Donovan, and even Ted Danson, are back, joined by three of the better actors that you will find on TV this season - Oscar winner William Hurt, Oscar winner Marcia Gay Harden, and Timothy Olyphant (“Deadwood,” “Go”). Hurt should clear his mantle now for an Emmy this summer and Close probably needs to make room for number two but they’re far from alone. “Damages” is a clear frontrunner for the best ensemble on television. Most films over the next few months won’t feature acting this impressive.



Rose Byrne (L) and Glenn Close (R) in Damages premiering Wednesday, Jan. 7 (10 PM ET/PT) on FX.

Photo credit: *Craig Blankenhorne/FX*

It may have been a year and a half since “Damages” was on the air, but in the world of Hewes & Associates, it’s only been a month since the disastrous end of the Arthur Frobisher case. In case you don’t remember the flurry of activity that ended season one, cutthroat attorney Patty Hewes (Glenn Close) watched her opponent in the courtroom Ray Fiske (Zeljko Ivanek) take his own life in front of her eyes. The problem for Patty (besides the emotional trauma) was that she was blackmailing the closeted defenseman, so she needed Ellen (Rose Byrne) to help clean up the evidence before the police arrived. Fearing that Ellen knew enough to ruin her life forever, Patty sent someone to kill the woman that she had grown close to professionally and personally.





Rose Byrne as Ellen Parsons on the season premiere of Damages airing on Wednesday, Jan. 7 (10 pm e/p) on FX.  
*Photo credit: Mark Seliger/FX*

Ellen survived the attack on her life, but her fiancé wasn't so lucky, getting killed on the same night by nefarious businessman Arthur Frobisher's (Ted Danson) people. With a dead husband-to-be and the knowledge that her boss tried to kill her, Ellen was approached by the FBI and tasked with taking down Patty Hewes from the inside. And that's the very brief version of a labyrinthine season that became one of the first basic cable shows nominated for a Best Drama Series Emmy ("Mad Men" was also nominated giving them the joint honor of being the "first").

The structure of the first season was essentially a flashback. The show opened with a bloodied Ellen running from a building and being arrested for the death of her fiancé. The series then worked back to that moment, detailing how the new attorney went from wide-eyed rookie to bitter veteran over the course of one case.

One of many questions answered by the premiere of season two is would the show followed a similar structure? Yes. The new episode opens with a monologue by Ellen in close-up to someone unseen. Only at the end of the scene, do we realize that sweet Ellen is holding a gun. It's going to be a different Ellen in year two.

Flash back six months to just one month after the end of the Frobisher case. Arthur survived getting shot in the gut and is recovering in a hospital. Ellen is undercover and being handed a fake case by the FBI to try and entrap Patty into doing something illegal. And Patty is being approached by someone from her past, Daniel Purcell (William Hurt), a potential whistle blower about to destroy a major company. Meanwhile, Ellen meets someone intriguing (Timothy Olyphant) in her anger management class. Marcia Gay Harden joins the supporting cast in the second episode as an attorney caught up between Daniel and Patty.

What is the link between Patty and Purcell? Will Tom (Tate Donovan) get caught up in Ellen's web with the FBI? Is the new guy in Ellen's life a genuine love interest or a vengeful nut job? Will the fact that Patty is guilty of conspiracy to commit murder be a part of the fabric of the show until its end? How can they ever drop it?





Glenn Close as stars as Patty Hewes on Damages airing on Wednesday, Jan. 14 (10 pm e/p) on FX.

Photo credit: Craig Blankenhorn/FX

The first episode of the second season of "Damages" - "I Lied, Too" - is a little cluttered, answering some questions from the last season and setting up new ones, but the show quickly settles into an interesting groove in the second episode and especially the excellent third episode. It's great to see the focus of the show switch and easily survive the transition from the Frobisher case to the Purcell one. How many series could survive the loss of its Best Supporting Actor winner (Ivanek) and the switch of focus away from his fellow nominee (Danson) and not only feel as good but arguably better? It's a testament to the writing team at "Damages," one of the best on television and one that clearly drew in actors as talented as Hurt, Harden, and Olyphant.

Like a lot of shows that succeed in their first season, the second chapter of "Damages" feels even more consistent and confident than the first. The team has figured out the shows strengths, the cast has grown accustomed to the unusual impromptu writing process (even the writers don't know how a season will end when they start a new one), and the pace and energy of the show has been set in stone. Close was nearly perfect from episode one of "Damages," but even she seems like a more interesting, well-rounded character in season two and Byrne is clearly having a blast playing "tough and bitter Ellen" as opposed to "naive and worried Ellen" from season one.

FX has forged a niche in original programming based on morally challenged, complex characters like Vic Mackey on "The Shield," Tommy Gavin on "Rescue Me", Sean McNamara & Christian Troy on "Nip/Tuck," and, the Queen of them all, Patty Hewes on "Damages". You won't find a more interesting character on television and she's surrounded by an even better supporting team than in the award-winning first season. Don't miss "Damages".

*'Damages,' which airs on FX, stars Glenn Close, Rose Byrne, Tate Donovan, William Hurt, Marcia Gay Harden, Timothy Olyphant, and Ted Danson. The premiere of season two airs on January 7th, 2009 at 9PM CST.*



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By [BRIAN TALLERICO](#) [16]  
Content Director  
[HollywoodChicago.com](http://HollywoodChicago.com)  
[brian@hollywoodchicago.com](mailto:brian@hollywoodchicago.com) [15]

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