

TV Review: Beloved 'Glee' Returns With Stellar Episode

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on November 11, 2009 - 11:32am

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CHICAGO – We have written here several times about the genius of “Glee” (in [May](#) [21] and again in [September](#) [22]), but with the show having been off the air for a few weeks so the Yankees could win another World Series, we thought it was a good time to assess how the show has been progressing by taking an advanced look at tonight’s episode, the wonderful “Wheels”.



Television Rating: **5.0/5.0**

Since the stellar debut, “Glee” has mostly been a series of highs but there have been signs of (no pun intended given the name of tonight’s episode) a show that could be accused of spinning its wheels. Some episodes have been a little lighter than others and some of the characters have threatened to become a bit repetitive. “Glee” is at its best when the character-driven humor is unexpected and unpredictable and there were recurring jokes in October “Glee” episodes that started to feel a little stale.

Don’t get me wrong. “Glee” is still the best new show of the year, but I can’t believe that I was the only one wondering how the series would progress not just through this season but the next one. Where does “Glee” go from here and how will they keep it fresh?



Quinn (Dianna Agron, L) and Puck (Mark Salling, R) work at the Glee Club's bake sale in the "Wheels" episode of GLEE airing Wednesday, Nov. 11 (9:00-10:00 PM ET/PT) on FOX.

Photo credit: Carin Baer/FOX

Tonight's episode, "Wheels," displays how - by diversifying the focus of the show and providing depth to even the most supporting characters. The moments that stand out in the first arc of "Glee" episodes are the unexpected ones - Kurt (Chris Colfer) using "Single Ladies" on the football field, Rachel belting out a moving version of "Take a Bow," the entirety of Kristen Chenoweth's amazing guest turn on "The Rhodes Not Taken," the best episode of the show to date.



Quinn (Dianna Agron) helps the Glee Club at a bake sale in the "Wheels" episode of GLEE airing Wednesday, Nov. 11 (9:00-10:00 PM ET/PT) on FOX.

Photo credit: Carin Baer/FOX

Tonight, the focus surprisingly shifts to Artie (Kevin McHale), who learns that the school won't pay for the handicapped bus to take him with the rest of the team to sectionals. His arc, featuring his first solo performance ("Dancing With Myself") is the thematic backbone of an episode that focuses on what Murphy does best with "Glee," satirizing the expectations inherent in traditional high school roles. Kurt and Rachel (Lea Michele) have a solo-off to see who will take "Defying Gravity" (from "Wicked") for the show with Kurt's dad (the great Mike O'Malley) pushing for equal rights for his son. And even Puck (Mark Salling) and Quinn (Dianna Agron) have character-building plotlines. Most surprisingly, a bit of depth is given to Jane Lynch's fantastic turn as Sue Sylvester. If she hadn't locked up an Emmy nod already, she has after this episode.

One of my concerns about "Glee" in October was that a few of the characters were starting to become their archetypes. In particular, Quinn always looked defeated and on the verge of tears. In "Wheels," not only do we finally get to see her smile during a cleverly devised food fight but we learn that she may not be through with Puck, another character who may not be as heartless as you first expected. Salling does his best work of the series to date tonight.

As for the writing (this ep was written by Ryan Murphy, the show's creator), "Wheels" is as tightly scripted as anything on TV so far this year. It flies by and still feels like nothing else on television. I'm stunned that a show can weave together musical performances of "Dancing With Myself," "Defying Gravity," and "Proud Mary" and still not feel forced.

So, where will "Glee" go from here? What happens AFTER sectionals? "Wheels" is evidence of a show that is willing to allow background singers to come forward and take their time in the spotlight. With that structure in place and with an ensemble as deep and talented as this one, the future of "Glee" looks bright.

'Glee' returns on FOX on Wednesday, November 11th, 2009 at 8pm CST. It stars Matthew Morrison, Lea Michele, Jessalyn Gilsig, Jane Lynch, Jayma Mays, Cory Monteith, Amber Riley, Chris Colfer, Jenna Ushkowitz, and Kevin McHale. It was created by Ryan Murphy.



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