

SPOILER ALERT The Walking Dead reminds me of a friend who is generally enjoyable, has a few special talents but likes to sing, even though they have an awful voice and everyone has told them they suck. Yet, they still sing. And they sing loud and proud. And if you are their friend, you have to sit through it with thoughts like, "God, I hope this is the last time he sings. It's SO bad. He's embarrassing himself. It's like an American Idol blooper. Why can't he just tell jokes? He's GOOD at that..." The Walking Dead returns from its mid-season break with an episode that was (typically) a mix of really good and pretty bad. The good stuff was pretty loud and in-your-face, but there are still those disturbing tendencies to SING, despite having no talent for singing. Of course, the big news is that Tyreese is dead. As an event itself, I thought it was pretty good. The show is over-crowded and somebody needed to go. It also had the bonus of not seeing it coming. I wrote all through the fall season that the zombies had become totally unscary and would remain unscary until they ate someone with a name (nameless residents of Terminus don't count). As we saw Tyreese being bothered by the pictures in Noah's house and saw that creepy shadow lurking up behind him, we expected it to be yet another case of turning around just in time to fight the zombie off. But, that's not what happened. He got bit; and then we were treated to about 30 minutes of whether he could survive. There was actually some decent set-up for this sequence of events over the course of the show. Remember, Herschel had survived a bite when they amputated his leg. Maybe that meant Tyreese would survive? And comic fans know that in the comics, Rick lost a hand-- maybe this would be another case of the comic keeping a story theme, but applying it to another character. Alas, it was not to be. Tyreese is gone and it's worth reflecting on how his character was handled. In the big picture of The Walking Dead, he'll go down as a pretty good character. Character development is at a minimum, so his whole saga with Carol and the little girls counts as a pretty good moment. True, it had those lumpy parts about how much he LOVED Karen because they kissed that one time, but seeing how he grew to accept what Carol had done was pretty strong. Carol's part of the story was still stronger....but Tyreese's didn't totally suck. And on The Walking Dead, "not totally sucking" is an achievement in character development. The episode also did some pretty strong work with the zombies themselves. There had been a trend towards going for quantity over quality. I'm talking about all those not-very-scary-looking zombies that swarmed Terminus. That was the low point for zombies on TWD. Compare those wimpy things to the zombie that Tyreese fought with, that thing was scary-looking, had relentless chomping teeth... Bravo! Or the one that Michonne struggled with when a knife sticking out of its neck blocked her sword strike. Let's make the zombies scary again! And the jerky editing cuts and hand-cam stuff was also really strong. I keep saying that the editing and cinematography talent on TWD is top shelf when those people are unleashed to go something intense and scary. It's like they're all pent up, driving 45 miles per hour during the "character scenes" and suddenly they get a call from the police saying they can drive HOWEVER THEY PLEASE. Suddenly, all their passion for their work comes through and we get chopping, unsettling editing, low camera angles, uncomfortably tight shots of faces. A really strong showing for the editing and cinematography teams... If that was the whole of the episode, we'd be talking about how good it was, but unfortunately other things happened. For one thing, someone in TWD production said, "You know, we have that David Morrissey under contract to appear in another episode. He has to show up if we ask. Find his eyepatch in the costume department and tell him to get his ass over here." I mean, as Tyreese was seeing the dead people telling him it was okay to let go and die, did anyone let out a "woot" when the Governor showed up? Why dredge that hot mess back up? What the hell was he mumbling about again?

Something about "paying the bill?" An easily forgettable appearance. And there was more of the redneck from the shed prattling on about how good people can't survive in this apocalypse and how Tyreese's predicament just proves it. Which I'm not sure I understand at all. Tyreese got bitten because he was distracted, not because he was good and altruistic. But someone decided that the BIG TALK between the redneck in the shed and Tyreese was so momentous that it just had to be rehashed. Not to mention that the show is again lingering on this boring ethical debate about Being Good vs. Being Expedient. I guess it was nice to see Beth again and let her have a little swan song (literally). Beth Singing even gets a pass since the actress is a singer in real life and she sang a song that I recognized. The other big demerit for the show was its handling of Noah. A major problem with The Walking Dead is that it has too many characters to service in a 15-16 episode season at 45 minutes-a-pop. It is good to eliminate one or two (Beth, Tyreese), but to just move Noah to stage center isn't really helping matters. And I'm unclear why we should care about Noah. What is he going to contribute to the story that we don't already have in spades with any of the other characters? Right now he's just another dude who has lost people and had shitty things done to him. I couldn't even really remember why Rick & Co. were going somewhere with him at the beginning of the episode, but the show treated the quest to return Noah home as a really big deal that everyone was eagerly waiting for over the winter break. I mean, WTF? Nobody cares about Noah. So it's hard to really care about his anguish about seeing his home all ripped up and his family dead. And it's really hard to be moved when Tyreese starts mumbling to him about losing the woman he loved and hope and stuff. And then there was the thing where Rick and Glenn kept talking about whether it was okay to kill Dawn and whether it would change things or something. I couldn't tell if Rick was just trying to get away from Glenn and Glenn kept following him around and bringing it back up... The apocalypse would have to be weird that way, you know? Sometimes you want to talk about something and the only person there is sick of your bullshit, but can't really kill you either. But, in the end, you have to apply some analysis to be disappointed by the episode. The good parts were pretty loud and strong, so it's easy to paper over the weak crap. Now we get to continue the trek to Washington and maybe figure out what was going on with all the chopped-up zombies. THAT was weird, right? The post The Walking Dead: What Happened and What's Going On appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

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