

coverstory

BY JAY BOBBIN

'Billions' Season 5 lets Maggie Siff cash in



"Billions" begins its fifth season Sunday on Showtime.

"Billions" is about to give Maggie Siff a considerable payoff.

The Showtime drama about money and power has challenged the actress' character – psychiatrist and performance coach Wendy Rhoades – in recent years, almost sending her to prison over an investment gone way wrong, then exposing her spicy after-hours life to her great mortification. However, Wendy reclaims her personal power as "Billions" starts its fifth season Sunday, May 3.

Not only does she have to unite the warring camps of reunited hedge-fund rivals Bobby "Axe" Axelrod and Taylor Mason (Damian Lewis, Asia Kate Dillon), she makes a decision about her ruptured marriage to New York Attorney General Chuck Rhoades Jr. (Paul Giamatti). Around that, risky alliances and potential betrayals are off the chart, even by "Billions" standards.

"I think this is the season where she puts herself back together again in a way that feels good to her, morally, emotionally and maybe even spiritually," Siff says of Wendy. "She's determined that she really needs to make a life without Chuck at the center of it, and also that her (business) life at AxeCap is determined by her deeper motivations. We see her on a good path."

With Julianna Margulies ("The Good Wife"), Corey Stoll ("House of Cards") and Roma Maffia ("Disclosure") as Season 5 additions, Siff embraces "Billions" newcomers: "Because we shoot in New York,

we have amazing access to all of these incredible actors. It's always like a breath of fresh air, and it inspires us to show up each day with everything we have."

"Sons of Anarchy" alum Siff meets often with "Billions" creators and executive producers Brian Koppelman and David Levien to get, and sometimes give, a sense of where Wendy is going: "As the actress, you start thinking, 'Am I supposed to be real here, or am I supposed to be double- or triple-crossing somebody? What do I need to know in order to play this right?'"

"Billions" will take a break after seven episodes, since as with many series, the coronavirus pandemic shut down production. The plan is to finish and televise the rest of Season 5 later this year, though Siff admits picking up right where the filming left off might feel unusual.

"I think the show has always reflected the times interestingly," she reasons. "After (the 2016 election), I felt like there was a bit of a question about how people would feel about watching a show about billionaires, now that there was a billionaire in the White House. In subtle ways, Brian and Dave have been very smart about how the themes (of 'Billions') have adapted to the times, and I'm sure they will continue to be incredibly sensitive to that."

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