

coverstory

BY JAY BOBBIN



Lauren Cohan is among the stars of "The Walking Dead," which starts its final season Sunday on AMC.

'The Walking Dead' walks into its final AMC season

It'll be a long goodbye for "The Walking Dead," which its many fans aren't likely to mind.

The 11th and final season of AMC's hugely popular zombie drama starts Sunday, Aug. 22 – and it really is only the beginning of the end, since after that eight-episode arc ends, two more will wrap up the series in 2022. The Chris Hardwick-hosted "Talking Dead" postmortem will continue to follow each new episode, which also can be accessed a full week earlier on the AMC+ streaming service.

Noting that a summer start for "The Walking Dead" is unusual, executive producer Scott Gimple explained in a recent Comic-Con at Home session that the last season tells "a big story, and it takes a lot of turns. We reinvent (after) every eight episodes, so we're going to put the audience through their paces. We're going to give them an epic, extended goodbye."

Jeffrey Dean Morgan has been a big part of the "Walking Dead" cast as the sinister Negan, though the Season 10 finale saw major developments that could have made viewers more empathetic toward him.

Nevertheless, Morgan reasons, "I don't think that ever will sway the people who hate Negan. If there were people on the fence about him, that may have turned

them a little bit. The opportunity to tell that story was exceedingly special, and to do it with Hilarie (Burton, Morgan's wife, who played Negan's spouse Lucille) certainly made it one of the highlights of my time here."

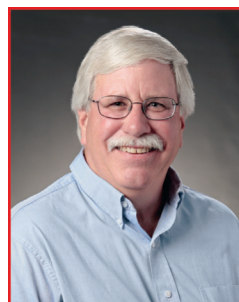
Lauren Cohan, who plays widowed mother Maggie, says she's been having "the most fun I've ever had on the show" since returning in Season 10 "in terms of just navigating this ocean of what you want to do and what you can do."

One of "The Walking Dead's" most prominent actors as Daryl Dixon, Norman Reedus notes, "I feel like my character has changed in all these different ways, but he takes little pieces of all these people he learned from. I know Negan is the show's big baddie, but if the apocalypse didn't happen, Daryl would be the one you wouldn't put your hand out and say hello to."

Executive producer Angela Kang is glad to get back to storytelling on a large scale as "The Walking Dead" concludes. "Obviously, the pandemic changed a lot of how we had to do everything," she reflects. "It was really fun to do these very focused, intimate episodes (to end Season 10), but with Season 11, we're going to go out with a bang. The stunts and scares are a lot of the fun for those of us who work on the show, and I'm really excited to share it with the audience."

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