

coverstory

BY JAY BOBBIN



Sterling K. Brown

This is the end for 'This Is Us'

For those who didn't believe "This Is Us" would end after six seasons, believe it now, for the time has come.

Creator and executive producer Dan Fogelman always had the Pearson family's time-jumping saga planned for a predetermined period, which reaches its conclusion with the NBC drama's finale Tuesday, May 24. For the much-honored, widely acclaimed show that has been built on surprises, it's no shock that the contents of the final episode are being kept a mystery, though clues have been dropped to loyal viewers.

"It's hard ending something you love," Fogelman allows. "I don't know that everybody feels right now it's the right place to end it, because I think if we could all snap our fingers and just magically have more of this, we probably would ... but this has very much been the plan. Sterling (K. Brown, an Emmy winner for playing the series' Randall) used to come into my office and be like, 'It's six seasons, right? Is that really what you're thinking or ...?' And I was like, 'No. We're doing six seasons. That's the road map.'"

Co-star Milo Ventimiglia – whose Jack Pearson died during the show's run, though he has continued to be seen in flashbacks – maintains there isn't "a pressure so much as there's just an enjoyment" to drawing "This

Is Us" to a close. "I know there's expectation, but beyond that, reading what we've already held in our hands, it's going to deliver. It's truly, truly going to deliver."

Mandy Moore agrees. The actress-singer who has gone through an extensive age transformation in playing Jack's wife Rebecca says, "It's (been) such a gift to go to work every day and tell these stories and recite these words. I get to look in the eyes of these extraordinary people, Justin (Hartley, alias Kevin Pearson) and Chrissy (Metz, who plays Kate) and Jon (Huertas, aka family friend Miguel) and Sterling. We're truly a family, so in that sense, there's such an ease to just being able to look at each of them and tell them the truth of what these words really are."

Brown is certain that the strong connections forged among the stars of "This Is Us" will last for a long time. "I've still got your phone numbers," he tells his fellow actors during a press event. "Like, I can still call Mandy Moore, which gives me some credibility. But to not be able to see you every day, I'll miss you. I'll miss the story that we've had a chance to tell with one another. And I can't wait to do an 'E! True Hollywood Story' (looking back at the show). It's going to be awesome!"

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