

Friends: The one where they get back together

Review

By TJ REID
For the Keizertimes

As far as TV pitches go, “six friends live in New York City and do friend things” is not exactly what many people would call inspired or exciting, yet somehow the world ended up getting 10 seasons of just that with the now-classic sitcom *Friends*.

Even after all those years many found it hard to say goodbye in 2004 when the show finally ended, and I can’t remember a time since then when people weren’t clamoring for some kind of reunion or continuation.

Seventeen years (and a pandemic’s worth of free time) later, HBO Max gives us *Friends: The Reunion* (also known as *The One Where They Get Back Together*), a heartwarming movie-length stroll down memory lane that is full of variety, surprises. As a fan of the show, it would have satisfied me to simply watch the cast reminisce about the old days on the old sets in the old soundstage for two hours, but the folks at HBO wisely determined that such an approach would be boring to most people and infused the reunion with an array of formats. There are indeed some free-wheeling, unstructured conversations amongst former castmates (again, this is a unscripted celebration, not a special “where are they now” episode that features the characters themselves), but the special also has a more structured interview portion hosted by James Cordon, several welcome pre-recorded interviews with the three primary creators, a trivia competition amongst the primary cast that brings to mind a particularly memorable



The cast of the hit sitcom *Friends* recently reunited for an HBO Max special.

episode and reminded me that the people who make the show rarely know it as well as the fans, and many other segments that keep the proceedings from getting stale. There are also plenty of surprises to be had, from cameos (both welcome and superfluous) to a couple of juicy backscene tidbits that are only now being shared. The highlight for me had to have been a particularly soulful rendition of the classic that is “Smelly Cat,” starring Lisa Kudrow and ... well, it’s a surprise.

If *The Reunion* has any problems, it’s that it occasionally dips into self-aggrandizement territory, which I suppose is normal for this type of thing. Some of the cameos also didn’t make much sense and seemed to boil down to “find out which famous people like *Friends* and see if they want to record a talking head or wear Ross’s Sputnik costume from that one Halloween episode for a wheelbarrow full of cash” (looking at you, Bieber).

I also felt a tiny bit uncomfortable watching these real-life friends share a tear or two as they caught up, as if I was involved in some kind of mildly exploitative emotional voyeurism. But I guess that’s a me problem, yeah? Chalk it down to my dislike of “reality” television in general, I guess.

But these minor annoyances can’t put a damper on the pure fanservice that is *Friends: The Reunion*. It is a celebration of all things *Friends*, and the trip down memory lane is one well worth making if you’re a fan.

Friends: The Reunion is now available on HBO Max.

A Smarter Way to Power Your Home.

REQUEST A FREE QUOTE!

ACT NOW TO RECEIVE A \$300 SPECIAL OFFER!*

1 (844) 989-2328

*Offer value when purchased at retail. Solar panels sold separately.



Caption It!

By STEVE BREEN

