

feature story

Twelve years after a surprise cancellation, the 'Deadwood' team reunites

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TV Media

HBO's long-awaited movie-length footnote to David Milch's 2004 to 2006 series "Deadwood" finally rides into town on Friday, May 31, providing fans an official conclusion after more than a decade of anticipation.

Miraculously, nearly everyone from the original cast has returned for "Deadwood's" swan song. The two faces of the series, Ian McShane ("American Gods") and Timothy Olyphant ("Justified"), reprise their respective roles as cutthroat saloon proprietor Al Swearngen and stubbornly principled lawyer Seth Bullock. Olyphant and McShane are only two of the many returning "Deadwood" alumni who went on to find enormous success elsewhere after the 2006 demise of the show, including Paula Malcomson ("Ray Donovan"), Dayton Callie ("Sons of Anarchy"), Anna Gunn ("Breaking Bad"), Robin Weigert ("Marvel's Jessica Jones") and Brad Dourif ("Once Upon a Time"). Against all odds, the huge ensemble cast has reconvened to deliver one final send-off to the show that gave many of them their break in the television industry.

Back in 2004, "Deadwood" was an unusual creature. It had the superficial trappings of a classic western but refused to indulge in the sort of palatable good-versus-evil tales found in many examples of that genre. Cowboy/outlaw duels and fancy gunplay set pieces were replaced with terrifying and realistic outbursts of violence, and the show seemed obsessed with exploring the thin line between civilization and chaos, using the illegal frontier settlement of Dead-

wood, North Dakota, as the crucible for its analyses. The language in "Deadwood" eschewed historical realism in favour of dense, ornate dialogue packed with modern profanity that called to mind an obscene Shakespeare more than it did a doughty man of few words like Clint Eastwood.

When "Deadwood" premiered, it was an immediate critical darling, but it never found the ratings footing it needed to survive beyond three seasons. The critical acclaim never slowed over those three years, with the show winning eight Emmys (from a total 28 nominations), but other factors eventually led to the show's demise. "Deadwood" was notorious for its chaotic set, with its unpredictable showrunner, David Milch ("NYPD Blue"), doing things like rewriting dialogue for performers on the fly or replacing scripts with completely rewritten material immediately before a day of filming began. Between the modest ratings and the stressful set, "Deadwood" was a logical target for cancellation, and in a surprise decision following the Season 3 finale, HBO announced that it would not be picking up the cast's options, indicating that a fourth season was unlikely. The HBO brass and Milch parted amicably, with HBO going out of its way to declare that the show was not officially canceled as such, and the door was left open to a continuation of the series in one form or another somewhere down the road.

Based on that "soft" cancellation, and the public statements of cast members claiming that they'd be willing to return to some sort of wrap-up project for "Deadwood," it didn't take long for rumours of a return to start flying.

Reports in 2007 had Milch agreeing to produce a pair of telefilms to close out the show, but

Timothy Olyphant stars in "Deadwood: The Movie"

that project never moved forward in a serious way. The cast of the show dispersed, "Deadwood's" sets were eventually dismantled, and Milch pursued other projects. Every few years rumours of a return sparked again, but as time rolled on, the prospect seemed more and more unlikely.

Then, in 2016, HBO's programming boss indicated that the network had given Milch the go-ahead to write a new movie-length "Deadwood" script. Two years later came the final announcement that the movie was on, most of the cast were returning, and that filming would begin in October 2018.

And now it's complete. It will be fascinating to see what Milch, his co-creators, and the cast have come up with to complete the project they were forced to abandon 12 years ago. The film will take place 10 years after the Season 3 finale and is set shortly before South Dakota's 1889 achievement of statehood and the town of Deadwood's final transition from an illegal settlement formed of a frantic gold rush to a legal entity in the United States.

While the resuscitation of "Deadwood" has generated widespread excitement, it also comes alongside some unfortunate news. Earlier this spring, Milch announced that he'd been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, and now the "Deadwood" movie is riven with a sense of grief and a concern that it could be the TV veteran's swan song not merely by choice but by fate. Milch has said he intends to continue writing through his health difficulties, but he hasn't revealed any specific projects yet.

Regardless of what the future holds for the creator and cast of "Deadwood: The Movie," the film itself will go down as an unlikely bonanza for audiences who held the original series dear and lamented its abrupt termination in the olden days of 2006. Those audiences will be able to revisit their temporarily lost, impossibly resurrected favorite on Friday, May 31, when "Deadwood: The Movie" debuts on HBO.

Late laughs

Conan

Prince Harry and his wife Meghan

Markle had their baby this morning. The baby is half British and half American. That means when he grows up, he'll drive in the middle of the road.



Facebook is introducing a new feature where you can select up to nine Facebook friends that you'd like to date. This new feature is called "Cheating."

In Britain, tests of English river shrimp found that every single one of them had traces of cocaine in their system. That explains the No. 1 complaint about English river shrimp, "It tastes like it's been awake for days."

Now that the president is refusing to hand over his tax returns, Democrats are considering their options. It's getting serious. They have two: they can either issue a subpoena or they call him every few minutes and say, "C'mon."

The Tonight Show With Jimmy Fallon

Will Smith is our guest tonight! So between him and the new royal baby that makes TWO Fresh Princes.



Today, a lot of businesses had deals to celebrate teachers, like "Buy One, Get One Free" burritos at

Chipotle. 'Cause nothing says "Thank you for shaping the future of this country" like a free burrito.

Today, we finally found out the name of the royal baby! Yeah, Meghan Markle and Prince Harry have decided to name him Archie Harrison Mountbatten-Windsor. Even Benedict Cumberbatch was like, "That is a mouthful!"

Archie Harrison Mountbatten-Windsor — it sounds like a British slip-and-fall law firm.

We are just a few days away from Mother's Day, and I saw that on Sunday, if you bring your mom to Hooters, she can eat for free. Here's how that breaks down: it's one day of free food, then 364 days of apologizing.

It's the weekend, and this Sunday is Mother's Day! I read that people spend \$8 billion more on Mother's Day than Father's Day. Which makes sense, since brunch and jewelry cost a little more than scratch-off tickets and a six-pack of Coors.

I heard that for Mother's Day, Americans spend \$2 billion on electronics. Then they spend two billion hours showing their moms how to use them.

It's the first time a president's kid has even been subpoenaed. And it's also the first time Don Jr.'s

ever been picked for something before Ivanka.

The Late Late Show With James Corden

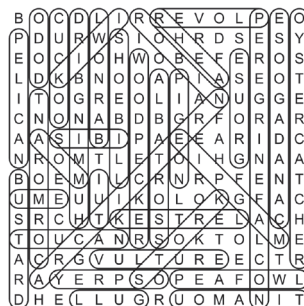


You remember when people were freaking out about the modern-day coffee cup that was spotted during Sunday's "Game of Thrones?" Well according to a new report, Starbucks gained an estimated \$2.3 billion in free advertising because of that slip-up. Isn't it great to see a \$90-billion company finally get a break?

The candy company that makes M&Ms, Snickers, Starburst and lots of other treats is currently offering a paid internship for someone to taste-test new candy flavors. Yeah, the position opened up after the previous person fell into the chocolate river and got sucked up in the tube.

After a very close vote, the city of Denver, Colorado, just became the first city in the nation to decriminalize hallucinogenic mushrooms. The announcement was made by Denver's mayor, a 30-foot-tall rainbow dragon that totally has your dad's face.

Last night in New York City, the annual Met Gala took place, one of fashion's biggest nights — or, as it's known, the Super Bowl for theater kids.



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