

Breaking Bad's end left a void in my life, I filled it with Sons of Anarchy

Walter White is dead. Breaking Bad is done. There is no more to that story, and after an epically satisfying final season, it was time for me to also move on. No television series has ever grabbed me like Breaking Bad, with its flawless list of elements from the writing, to the actors, the visual aesthetics and editing, the music and sound, all congealing to form a wonderful paste that sticks in your mouth and brain and stays there, becoming a part of you. Walter White's story is one that will surely resonate with me for at least many years, if not always.

As Jesse Pinkman drove away, screaming at the wheel, as Walt slowly bled out, lying on the floor of his magic theatre, I realised I too would have to shift my gaze and look elsewhere for that all-encompassing escapism; a fresh story to brand the heart and mind. Needless to say, Breaking Bad left a void, a void I needed to fill. There was a distinct emptiness that episodes of Mad Men couldn't quench. Boardwalk Empire was over for now, Dexter for good, what did that leave me with? A clever little brother of mine pointed to Sons of Anarchy, and I'm happy to say that void is disappearing.

Created by Kurt Sutter, FX's Sons of Anarchy has been running episodes since 2008. I'd heard good things and approached the first episode with optimism, but no way did I ever expect it to be as good as it was. As pilots/series premieres go, Sons' first episode was one of the best I've seen, hooking me straight away, with some great characters, intense action and some deep personal mysteries that get you guessing straight away. We have a motorcycle gang, full of macho hilarity, disparity in the ranks, turf wars raging, gun businesses running, whilst a crazy mother pulls all the strings. There's a baby birthing, old love returning and a crack head baby-momma all thrown into the mix. And beyond all that, there's the promise of something more, a free and moral way for the Sons of Anarchy to make their living.

Many things made Breaking Bad special, but at its centre it was about a man trying to make his mark on the world, losing almost all sense of morality in the process. It was the deep personal change in Walt that was so mesmerizing to watch. I can't think of any TV series that has held that amount of personal transformation of a protagonist, constructed in such a concise and intricate manner that it all made perfect sense.

Our hero in Sons is, Jackson 'Jax' Teller, and though his journey starts on the opposite side of the law - as a gun running, happy-to-kick-some-ass-at-any-point biker 'club' member, after one episode you can see transformation is on the horizon.

With a lot of series, there are often filler episodes that don't seem to provide much other than dragging things out, more episodes means more money. This is an area where Breaking Bad really stood out, with every episode seemingly a crucial aspect of the story, always building towards something (even the episode 'fly' in my opinion, was as needed as every other episode).

Breaking Bad had Walt versus Jesse, in Sons we have Jax versus Clay, played perfectly by the always awesome Ron Perlman. Breaking Bad had Saul, and Sons has Unser, the worst police chief ever.

I've only seen two seasons of Sons of Anarchy, but so far so good. I truly hope I won't be rescinding this opinion piece once I've seen the rest, and based on evidence gathered so far, that seems unlikely, barring a catastrophic change in formula or a ridiculous plot twist. (The magic of the Island is actually a big golden light underground that Locke or Jack or Jacob or Hurley or someone has to protect or...wait, was it purgatory? Fuck if I know.)

I'm not saying Sons of Anarchy is as good as Breaking Bad. Sadly I have to concede that the acting by a large number of the supporting cast isn't always amazing, and some of the dialogue can be a little stilted. With Breaking Bad I'd completely forget I was watching a TV show and with Sons of Anarchy there are moments that pull you out of their world (for the amount of bullets fired, very few people seem to get hit.) That said, Breaking Bad is over and it will take something very special to equal it in my eyes. Sons of Anarchy comes close. That is a certainty. I suggest you take a ride with it.