

In defense of "Peacemaker" season two

Despite a mixed critical reception, the DCU standout remains one of TV's best

ELIJAH TEMPLETON

LIFE EDITOR

"Peacemaker," the latest installment in the revamped DCU, has just concluded its second and potentially final season, drawing a mixed reaction from fans and critics alike.

Some felt the season as a whole was a let-down, while others reserved their ire for the season's perceived underwhelming finale episode, which served more to set up the next plot points of the DCU as a whole rather than put the finishing touches on the more grounded and character driven plot elements that fans so adored in the first season.

Many of these complaints can be attributed to "Peacemaker" being the foundation upon which the DCU is being built, thus raising the stakes, both emotionally and logistically.

What once was a light-hearted, character driven, dark comedy now must set-up future plot points, flesh out the world and also build upon those smaller, more intimate character moments that defined the first season.

A tall task for 8 episodes of television, which James Gunn and co. managed to

pull off quite spectacularly.

The show is still funny, depraved and irreverent, but this season brings with it the added emotional baggage that our characters have been trying to run from since the first season began.

Having established the character flaws and shortcomings that prevented the characters from growing in the first season, Gunn was free to explore just what would happen if running was no longer an option.

If each member of the "11th Street Kids" had to face the thing that scares them the most, what might happen?

What would happen if the workaholic Emilia Harcourt (Jennifer Holland) could not retreat into her work and instead had to find out who she really is?

What if the anxiety riddled John Economos (Steve Agee) had to put himself in harm's way to protect his friends?

What happens to Leota Adebayo (Danielle Brooks) when her career and her relationship cannot co-exist?

These questions and more were examined to great effect in season 2 of "Peacemaker," which, for my money, is the most intimate and heartfelt piece of

art that Gunn has ever created.

The heart of "Peacemaker," unsurprisingly, is Peacemaker himself.

John Cena shines as Chris Smith, the titular anti-hero, in the most demanding dramatic role of his Hollywood tenure thus far.

Able to pull off the dichotomy of buffoonish immaturity and wounded vulnerability from scene to scene, Cena's performance is a true career defining moment that will likely earn him a few nods come award season.

Despite the inclusion of a multiverse that no doubt has become tiresome for some fans of comic book adaptations, "Peacemaker" remains grounded with interpersonal connections and deeply felt emotional scenes.

Too often, comic book media utilizes massive scale events like alternate dimensions to increase tension and stakes, often impossibly high, leaving audiences unable to emotionally invest, because if the heroes fail in their mission, the world as they know it will end and thus end the entire cinematic universe.

Gunn is able to use familiar concepts like the multiverse

and alternate worlds to both expand the scale of the DCU but also keep it firmly grounded in the ongoing arcs of our beloved characters.

The show is by no means perfect, sometimes struggling with pacing and feeling a bit bloated at times when Gunn is attempting to fit all manner of future plot points into a single episode.

Some fan favorite characters like Vigilante (Freddie Stroma) and Eagley get the short end of the stick as far as screen time goes and are relegated to sub-plots that don't amount to all that much in the end.

The show's success was established by the chemistry and relationships between the cast and characters alike and season two builds upon that model beautifully.

Despite it all, "Peacemaker" remains one of the best shows on television and sets a high standard for the DCU to chase in the future.

You can never please everyone, but "Peacemaker" season two definitely left me satisfied.

Official Score: 8/10



IMAGE COURTESY OF IMDB

Promotional poster for the second season of "Peacemaker."

"Smiling Friends" season three impresses two weeks in

ERIC FLUKE

STAFF WRITER

One of the most off-the-wall shows from the past decade kicked off its third season last Sunday, back with its same unique artstyle and humor, but with a few new elements in play.

"Smiling Friends," created by Zach Hadel and Michael Cusack, premiered back in 2022 on Adult Swim. It follows the daily life of Pim and Charlie, a pair of friends who work at a company called "Smiling Friends," as they go out and cheer up people who need a smile on their face even if they don't accomplish the task in the way they originally intended.

Hadel and Cusack were both originally YouTube animators before they made a splash onto the TV, which explains much of their absurd humor. This, combined with sprinkles of painfully realistic dialogue, mixing of different animation styles and live action, the character dynamics between the main cast and much more has contributed to what makes the show succeed.

While comedy is the main focus, there is a definite sense of narrative and character development throughout the series, keeping viewers seated for something beyond just the laughs.

Coming into the new season, I knew that if the show followed the same formula, I would enjoy it.

But then they did something a bit different that threw me off in an amazing way.

The season premiere, "Silly Samuel," followed Charlie and Pim trying to help the titular character figure out how to be taken seriously, despite his zany appearance. In this case, they ended up being unable to help him, but a freak accident caused by the other members of the "Smiling Friends" company acted as the duo's backup, giving Samuel a chance to make it known that his appearance did not undermine what he was saying.

The second episode of the season, "Le Voyage Incroyable de Monsieur Grenouille," brought back a recurring fan favorite character, Mr. Frog. Here, after causing insane amounts of mayhem in the previous seasons, Mr. Frog realizes he's achieved all he can and becomes depressed, so Pim and Charlie try to show him how there is still plenty left to strive for.

In the end, Mr. Frog ends up going back to his family, but is disowned and kicked out by his father for making a fool of the family. After sitting in the silence of a swamp, he essentially achieves nirvana and

eats "The Bug of Knowledge" while in this peaceful state.

He then proceeds to change into the appearance of a realistic frog, seemingly giving him what could be a happy ending to his character arc.

Both of these episodes hit it out of the park for me, but "Le Voyage Incroyable de Monsieur Grenouille" was one of my favorites of the entire series.

That's not to say that the first episode isn't great. "Silly Samuel" was a great taste of the series to come back to after its short hiatus. It follows sort of the same formula, but continued to leave me on the floor belly-laughing from the humor they were able to pull off.

From a hyperrealistic close up of Silly Samuel's face to a building inspector spontaneously turning into sand, there were very random moments that left me with giggle fits for the next five minutes.

It wasn't just the "random is funny" humor trope that made these scenes great. They were backed up by dialogue that completely downplays the absurdity that just happened, like Charlie walking into the sand cloud of the building inspector and in his casual tone saying "Hey, did that guy just turn into sand?". Sometimes the dialogue is used, other times it's the character

performing the action acting like nothing happened.

While "Silly Samuel" left hilarious scenes ingrained into my memory, "Le Voyage Incroyable de Monsieur Grenouille" was more out of left field and was one of the first episodes that really struck an emotional chord.

The episode may be a more absurd version of this idea, but it followed Mr. Frog through an existential crisis that people can relate to, minus the parts with becoming a dictator and eating people whole.

It found a way to make this concept humorous while also somewhat depressing, which shows true versatility and layers to unpack for this absurd comedy.

"Le Voyage Incroyable de Monsieur Grenouille" felt a lot more depressing than most episodes, but still found ways to keep the balance, which really showcases the writers' talent.

Season three of "Smiling Friends" has started out very strong and continues an upward trend in quality with the series. These episodes have set a great precedent for the series moving forward, which leaves me very excited to see where Hadel and Cusack take us next.

Official Scores:

Episode 1: 8/10

Episode 2: 10/10

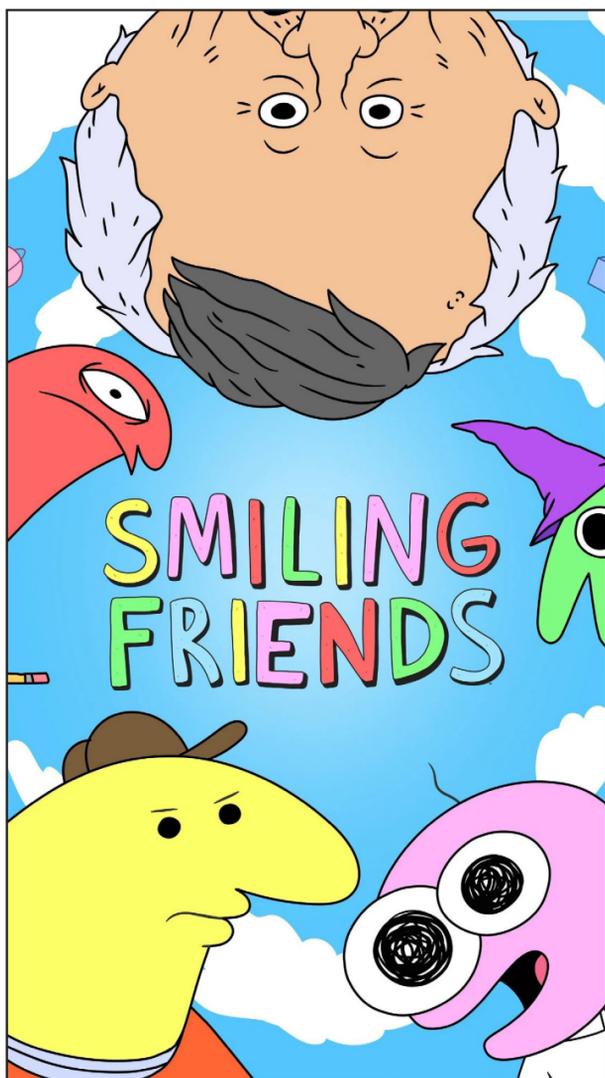


IMAGE COURTESY OF IMDB

Official poster for season three of "Smiling Friends."

Student Speaks: “Is brain rot even funny?”



Photo by Ella Dobson | Staff Writer
Micah Anderson is a first-year mechanical engineering major from Austin, Texas.

“Oh, it’s so funny. I love Italian brainrot. I think we should bring it back because it was too short. Where is Tralalero Tralala? I miss him so much.”



Photo by Ella Dobson | Staff Writer
Kholbi Austin is a first-year radiology major from Melbourne, Arkansas.

“Sometimes! I am, like, so brainrotted. I can’t count how many times I say “six-seven” in a day.”



Photo by Ahtziry Zuñiga | Staff Writer
Abby Gage is a first-year communications major from Jonesboro.

“Heck-freaking-yeah it’s funny. It’s hilarious. I think I go on TikTok just to look at brainrot. I don’t think I look at anything else, no home decor or cooking, just brainrot all the time.”



Photo by Ahtziry Zuñiga | Staff Writer
Reid Catton is a junior criminology major from Bryant, Arkansas.

“No way. I think it’s so overused.”

Red Wolves ROAD TRIP

ALL ROADS LEAD HOME

HOMECOMING SCHEDULE

MONDAY - HOT ONES @ HOME

CENTENNIAL HALL 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM
HOMECOMING COURT ANNOUNCED

TUESDAY - EVERYTHING'S BIGGER @ A-STATE

RED WOLF LAWN 6:00-9:00 PM
CARNIVAL GAMES, MUSIC, & FOOD

WEDNESDAY - MARDI GRAS MADNESS

HERITAGE PLAZA LAWN 11:00 AM-1:00 PM
JAZZ MUSIC, NEW ORLEANS STYLE FOOD AND CRAFTS

THURSDAY - PAPPARAZZI WITH THE PACK

HOMECOMING KING AND QUEEN VOTING OPEN 9:00 AM - 9:00 PM
CHECK A-STATE SAB SOCIAL MEDIA FOR "PAPPARAZI WITH THE PACK" CHALLENGE

FRIDAY - PARTY IN THE ASU

3:00 PM - 5:00 PM, ALUMNI CELEBRATION IN FOWLER CENTER GRAND HALL
6:30 PM, OUTSIDE RED WOLF CENTER "YELL LIKE HELL" EVENT
FOOD, PERFORMANCES, & LIP SYNC BATTLE

SATURDAY - GAMEDAY

CENTENNIAL BANK STADIUM
GATES @ 4:00 PM, KICKOFF @ 6:00 PM
VS GEORGIA SOUTHERN

Horoscopes

shailey wooldridge | mystic correspondent

 <p style="font-size: 0.8em;">You're feeling pulled between freedom and connection and may feel drawn to shake things up in your personal life.</p>	 <p style="font-size: 0.8em;">Surprises in love or finances could shift your priorities this week. Stay flexible, small adjustments may open big doors later.</p>	 <p style="font-size: 0.8em;">Venus in Libra heightens charm and curiosity, but Mercury's tense angles mean crossed wires are likely.</p>
 <p style="font-size: 0.8em;">This week there is a spotlight on your home life. Redecorating, reorganizing, and anything else you can do to make your space homey can soothe nerves.</p>	 <p style="font-size: 0.8em;">The Sun's square to Jupiter can inflate your expectations, be careful when making prior commitments.</p>	 <p style="font-size: 0.8em;">The Virgo moon this week recenters you, it's a great time for organizing, editing and tying up loose ends.</p>
 <p style="font-size: 0.8em;">You may feel a boost in creativity as Venus returns home to your sign this week, but it's more about rediscovering balance than chasing excitement.</p>	 <p style="font-size: 0.8em;">It's a good week to release old emotional baggage and see love or connection in a new light.</p>	 <p style="font-size: 0.8em;">Complete what's in progress instead of starting ten new projects. Friendships and group projects might surprise you.</p>
 <p style="font-size: 0.8em;">Collaborations, career relationships or even artistic projects could flow better than usual, but Mercury's foggy aspects mean you'll want to double-check messages and deadlines.</p>	 <p style="font-size: 0.8em;">A fresh perspective is coming, whether through learning, travel plans or shifting beliefs.</p>	 <p style="font-size: 0.8em;">If you stay realistic but trust your gut, you'll finish the week knowing what is really worth your time.</p>