

The Marquee Blog



Allison Tolman as Molly Solverson and Bob Odenkirk as Bill Oswalt in FX's "Fargo."
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['Fargo' comes to TV: Should you watch?](#)

Let's start with the bad news: the "Fargo" you keep hearing about - the one airing on FX Tuesday night - isn't a repeat of the 1996 movie.

Instead, it's a new 10-episode "limited series" from Noah Hawley ("Bones") that's like an homage to the Coen brothers' classic: it takes some of "Fargo's" elements and then applies them in an original way.

And that's the good news: FX's "Fargo" isn't a remake, and it's better off for it.

Like Joel and Ethan Coen's movie, the TV series "Fargo" revolves around grisly, supposedly true crimes taking place in the frigid and snow-packed environs of Minnesota through a lens that's very keen observer of human character.

The folks who populate "Fargo's" towns and the polite language they use will feel familiar, as will the series' darkly comic tone. Yet the story itself is a far more complex yarn, the better to keep you entranced for an entire season.

It starts with Martin Freeman's Lester Nygaard, an insurance salesman in a bad marriage who's been pushed around his whole life. After a chance meeting with a murderous drifter, Lorne Malvo (Billy Bob Thornton), a twisting chain of events begin to fall into place.

[USA Today's](#) Robert Bianco calls "Fargo" "thoroughly original and outrageously entertaining," praising the series' "refreshing" idiosyncrasies. "Hawley's 'Fargo' is something all its own, and yet something equally wonderful."

Obviously, trying to shape a new, sustainable TV series out of a cult favorite movie is about the same as signing up to fail. But "given the pitfalls that were possible," says [The Hollywood Reporter](#), "Fargo' is an extremely impressive concept pulled off with surprising vigor." (In case you're curious, the Coen brothers have also signed off on FX's "Fargo" and have producer credits to show for it, although they don't have any actual input in the shaping of the series.)

Even better, for those who never got into "Fargo" or who've never seen it, the TV series "quickly establishes itself as its own property, possessing the tone and style of the rightly admired Coen brothers classic, but pursuing a new tawdry true-crime tale," [Variety says](#). "Boasting a stellar cast and hypnotic tone, is 'Fargo' worth a 10-episode commitment? You betcha."

Not all TV critics were enraptured with "Fargo's" mix of brutality and humor: [Slate's Willa Paskin](#) thought that, while intriguing, "Fargo" isn't as original as many would like to think.

"All of these characters and all of these stories frequently add up to something handsome, funny, and weird. But 'Fargo' is missing the spark of originality that would make it great," she says. "If you're going to remake something as concise and self-sufficient as 'Fargo,' there should be a reason, and pointing out that unexpected evil lurks in the hearts of men is not a very good one. For that we have, and I am just barely exaggerating, almost every other drama on television."

Should you check it out for yourself? We say yes: FX's "Fargo" will air Tuesdays at 10 p.m.