

TV Review: Fargo Season 1 Episode 1: 'The Crocodile's Dilema'

The opening episode of this crime thriller manages to capture the mood of the original while delivering a new and nail-biting story. [Kate Barlow](#) reviews

Wednesday 23 April 2014



Rating: ★★★★★

Adapting an Oscar-winning well-loved cult film into a TV show only 18 years after its original release is a risky business. Especially given the fact that said film is directed by no other than the Coen brothers. However, in this grimly compelling crime thriller the high-risk strategy has paid off.

Perhaps one of the first things that has to be said about the TV adaptation of *Fargo* is that it is in no way a remake. Despite the fact that the episode opens in the same way as the film, with a message claiming (falsely) that this is a true story, from here on the entire storyline of the first episode is different. While versions of characters from the film version remain (although their names have been changed) – we see Martin Freeman deliver a version of Jerry Lundegaard to perfection, along with Allison Tolman as an ambitious police detective not dissimilar to Marge Gunderson, truly giving Frances McDormand a run for her money – new characters are also introduced, giving the story a burst of originality. Billy Bob Thornton as the devilish do-what-you-want Lorne Malvo opens the episode, setting the dark broody atmosphere for the rest of the 68 minute runtime (and, hopefully, the rest of the series).

Fargo 2.0 focuses on Lester Nygaard (Freeman), a salesman living in small Minnesota town Bemidji who is having some difficulty convincing people of his manhood. He seems unable to do anything right: fix the washing machine, escape the taunts of a high school bully, or be a role model to his younger brother. Nygaard thus becomes a source of endless derision and merciless abuse from his wife, brother, class

mates, and, well, just about everyone. However, upon meeting Malvo, Nygaard is given some advice which makes him dangerously pro-active: "You've spent your life thinking there are rules. There aren't". And thus begins Lester's downwards (or is it upwards?) spiral of violence and liberation from his tormenters.

The performances are genuinely extraordinary. From Freeman's mousy everyday man, Colin Hanks' high school bully, to the pitch-perfect Thornton, no one here plays a foul note. The performance that really stands out is Allison Tolman's Detective Molly Solverson: ambitious, good-natured and endearingly funny, she instantly gets the audience on side.

The brilliance of *Fargo* lies in its ability to capture the mood of the original film while still delivering a new and nail-biting story. As a Coen worshipper, this was something I was initially sceptic about. After all, can it really be possible to match the Coens in terms of wry humour, relatable characters or noir atmosphere? This adaptation may well come close.



Most Read Discussed

1. [Short Film Sunday: All These Creatures](#)
2. [TV Review: Endeavour - Series 3 Episode 2: 'Arcadia'](#)
3. [TV Review: Vera Series 5 Episode 2: 'Old Wounds'](#)
4. [Film meets fact - why is historical accuracy important?](#)
5. [TV Review: Endeavour - Series 3 Episode 4: 'Coda'](#)
6. [TV Review: Endeavour Series 2 Episode 2](#)

Write for Nouse Film & TV

[Get in touch with the editors](#)

[Join the Facebook group](#)

More in Film & TV

[Short Film Sunday: All These Creatures](#)

[Interview: Get Ready With Me director Jonatan Etzler](#)

[Short Film Sunday: Fauve](#)

[Netflix sued by Satanic Temple](#)

[Vintage Sundays Review: The Wizard of Oz](#)

[Review: Manbiki Kazoku \(Shoplifters\)](#)

[Who's Nouse](#)
[Website Credits](#)
[Contact Us](#)
[Advertising](#)
[Archives](#)
[Student Discounts](#)
[Print Editions](#)
[Mini-Sites](#)
[Nouse on Twitter](#)
[Nouse on Facebook](#)
[Nouse on Google+](#)

© 1964-2018 Nouse

[Policies](#) |

