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***Los Angeles Press Club 2nd Place Award:** Best Commentary/Analysis of TV/Film Across All Platforms (Print, Online, TV and Radio)

***National Arts & Entertainment Journalism Los Angeles Press Club Finalist:** Best Commentary/Critique (Student Journalism).

“This is it,” Herb told BoJack in front of a door filled with the ever-encroaching void. The two shared a bare stage under the light of an enlarged moon. Even as the void closed in on him, Herb was a stoic and calm presence. I was sobbing and shaking like a child. I knew I would not be able to go as gently into that good night as he did, or as BoJack was finally about to. I wasn’t ready for the show to end with BoJack’s death, so quiet and sad.

Thankfully, it didn’t. But it did end gently, with a two-shot of Diane and BoJack, echoing with history and teeming with an unspoken and separate future. It feels as though it will continue, but it doesn’t. It gives us a perfect blend of closure while knowing that it isn’t over. Just that this “era of Hollywood” is over (now hysterically yet poignantly renamed “Hollywoob” because of Mister Peanutbutter’s time-tested inability to order correct signs).

Much of *BoJack Horseman* is a recurring cycle of BoJack almost getting better but failing to do so. He feels, “doomed to be the person he is,” even though characters constantly remind him he

is capable of change. This lesson takes five whole seasons to learn, culminating in a final season that centers around actually making the conscious effort and action to “be better,” no matter how hard it is. The next is to see what happens once he stops running from his mistakes and reconciles with those he’s hurt.

The first half of the sixth season ends with BoJack in what seems to be the most emotional maturity and stability he’s ever shown. But this second half of the season seems to be his final test, to see if he has actually chosen to be better. It ends up harder than it should be.

Most of season six brings the “Me Too” issues from past seasons to a head. BoJack seems to have finally assumed responsibility for all of his mistakes, which Diane and Princess Carolyn help him list out while he gets a call from Charlotte while teaching at Wesleyan. He manages to do the “right thing” and open up on TV about his tumultuous past and how he feels like a new person, separate from his mistakes.

But in true BoJack fashion, he pushes it too far by agreeing to do another interview. His hubris results in an exposure of nearly everything we have seen him do over the past six seasons and that was listed on that Wesleyan whiteboard. It also reveals a fact that viewers never knew about Sarah Lynn’s death three seasons prior — that he waited for 17 minutes before calling for help for Sarah Lynn that night in the planetarium and that, perhaps if he didn’t, she may have survived.



Still from *BoJack Horseman* season 6 (courtesy of Netflix)

The journalist interviewing BoJack grills him with a powerful point, “I keep hearing you say, ‘That’s not me, I’ve changed.’ But how can we believe you’ve stopped this pattern of behavior if you won’t acknowledge this pattern exists?”

In a previous interview he says he “doesn’t believe in rock bottoms,” that there is always “another rockier bottom beneath.” After the second interview, he gets “canceled” and is hated by nearly everyone in Los Angeles. This seems to be the rockier bottom, but what may be his rockiest comes in the form of a relapse after he signs away his claim to “Horsin’ Around,” his rise to fame that he has always clung to as both integral to his identity and something to move on from.

The result of this relapse is the one of the best episodes of the season and, potentially, of the entire series. In “The View From Halfway Down,” BoJack, during this relapse, reunites with the

faces of his past for, what he doesn't realize is, the final time. The audience has to relive the lives and deaths of main characters from past seasons in a surreal dream-like sequence. With an eerie reprise of season five's "Don't Stop Dancing," the audience realizes this is the final overdose we've been teased with all along: BoJack has drowned himself at his former home, mirroring both the painting that once hung in his office and the opening sequence. The episode ends with him realizing that Diane didn't pick up his call for her to stop him from killing himself, and he speaks with his imagined version of her as the black oozing tendrils of death close in on him under the stars.

His "happy" ending honestly I think would have been his death, where he would be able to escape the problems and relationships he left behind without ever actually having to be better and learning his mistake. BoJack even tells Secretariat that he wouldn't mind some sort of certificate that he got peace at the end of his life. But if BoJack died, I can't help but think of the message it would send to people that resonated with him and his struggles with depression, addiction, and getting better in general. To say that the only respite from these issues is death is a dangerous message to send.

But as he lives for Diane to tell him, "Sometimes life's a bitch, and then you keep living." He lives and has to "live with the shitty things he's done," just as Herb told him in the first season. He also has to live without everyone who was around him before. This does not necessitate a truly "bad" ending though; his death would've been his best ending, but him living isn't the worst. Perhaps this hinted separation from his friends will result in some sort of personal nirvana akin to Cuddlywhiskers' advice in season three, "Only after you give up everything can you begin to find a way to be happy." But this is something we will never get the satisfaction of seeing.

Despite the fact that this season focuses on BoJack, the women in the show eventually take control of their own narrative and separate themselves from him and it's for the better. They seem to get the most "traditional" sense of closure. Diane gets engaged to Guy and moves to Houston and manages to reconnect with and move on from Mr. Peanutbutter. Kelsey and Gina work on a superhero movie together and Character Actress Margo Martindale finally puts an end to her life of crime after reconnecting Todd with his mother. Princess Carolyn marries Judah and starts a production company with him.



Diane at lunch with Guy in *Bojack Horseman* (courtesy of Netflix)

Their stories are better with him out of it. When BoJack tells Princess Carolyn that it would be a “better story” if she had cold feet about her wedding and he could convince her to go through with it, she responds that it is, “a better story for you. I think I like it better this way.”

But the most closure seems to come from Diane and BoJack. It is where it all began and where it all ends, sitting on a roof that mirrors the pilot where BoJack agrees to allow her to write his memoir. When BoJack jokes about this being the last time they speak, you feel like it actually might be. “I think there are people that help you become the person that you end up being and you can be grateful for them, even if they were never meant to be in your life forever,” Diane told him.

The series finale seemed to resonate with a lot of fans that took to social media to sing their praises and gratitude to the show (even writing [Letters to BoJack](#) about what the show has meant to them). *BoJack Horseman* also means a lot to me. I’ve watched the show over the past five years, yet I feel like it has been watching me. Every year before the next installment, I would rewatch all the episodes that came before, picking up new things and reindulging in all of the laughs and emotions from before. The series has an uncanny talent at lining up with my own life, both when it originally aired and on rewatch, and that is part of the reason why it matters so much to me.

In season three, Sarah Lynn died from a heroin overdose; I watched the episode soon after my uncle had died from his addiction as well. In season five, Diane rediscovered herself after her divorce from Mr. Peanutbutter at the same time I was rediscovering myself after the break-up of my longest relationship. In season six, Diane is in a more stable relationship and taking responsibility for her mental health, and at this point, so am I. This last season took a trip to USC (Ewe-S-C in this partially anthromorphic world) and outside of my freshman year dorm. And as I am about to graduate and potentially leave Los Angeles, Diane’s monologue about her old “LA self” was particularly resonant. While she does not “miss” it, she’s grateful for what she learned along the way. I know that as I leave my college life behind, I’ll feel the same way.

I know that my personal ties to the show are not an isolated thing. Although this resonance feels so singular when watching the show alone, that singularity is something that many of the viewers feel, and it brings them together.

At a time where human connection is something we are both overloaded with and in desperate search of, *BoJack Horseman* feeds a need for that sensation that the watcher is both special for connecting to it and a part of this inside thing while also feeling less alone. Amid the sight gags and animal puns is a story that captures so many facets of the human experience and resonates with those that watch it. Perhaps it takes that dissonance, of seeing a horse or cat admit their flaws and fears, in order for us to see them for ourselves.



Still from *BoJack Horseman* season 6 (courtesy of Netflix)

It makes sense that, in an age of increased modernity, hyper communication, technological advancement, an increasingly absurd political climate, great class and equity disparity, and the impending climate crisis, that we gravitate towards something that feels stranger than real life. A reminder that, as weird as it is now, it can be weirder. Or as a way to comfort us, to remind us that we all are experiencing these strange dichotomies. Of humor and horror, rapidly bouncing between the two.

BoJack Horseman did just that. Even in heavy hitting episodes and moments dealing with depression, death, addiction, and the meaning of life, there were silly “Todd shenanigan” subplots and visual gags wrapped inside the colorful and bubbly world of animated humans and animals. This dichotomy is jarring to some, but that’s life. It is weird and funny and sad, often at the same time. A show that acknowledges all of this feels surprisingly real. I am so grateful for this show for helping me through some of the most tumultuous times in my life. Even though it wasn’t meant to be in my life forever, it was nice while it lasted. And if I ever get nostalgic, it’s always a rewatch away.

In the last scene of season six episode seven, BoJack sits through a recreated historical sermon. The pastor speaks to him in the pews once it is over. “Looks like you found some solace in our show,” he said. “Stay if you like. In 30 minutes, we start over.” Whether he is talking to BoJack or the viewer, is up to you.

<http://www.ampersandla.com/bojack-horseman-is-over-and-everything-is-maybe-better-now/>