



The Sopranos Sessions

Matt Zoller Seitz , Alan Sepinwall , Laura Lippman (Introduction) , David Chase (Creator)

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On January 10, 1999, a mobster walked into a psychiatrist's office and changed TV history. By shattering preconceptions about the kinds of stories the medium should tell, *The Sopranos* launched our current age of prestige television, paving the way for such giants as *Mad Men*, *The Wire*, *Breaking Bad*, and *Game of Thrones*. As TV critics for Tony Soprano's hometown paper, New Jersey's *The Star-Ledger*, Alan Sepinwall and Matt Zoller Seitz were among the first to write about the series before it became a cultural phenomenon.

To celebrate the 20th anniversary of the show's debut, Sepinwall and Seitz have reunited to produce *The Sopranos Sessions*, a collection of recaps, conversations, and critical essays covering every episode. Featuring a series of new long-form interviews with series creator David Chase, as well as selections from the authors' archival writing on the series, *The Sopranos Sessions* explores the show's artistry, themes, and legacy, examining its portrayal of Italian Americans, its graphic depictions of violence, and its deep connections to other cinematic and television classics.

The Sopranos Sessions Details

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From Reader Review The Sopranos Sessions for online ebook

Faith 09 says

I thought that this book was such a cool and interesting read. I never watched The Sopranos and probably never will but I still got so much out of this book!

Nefertari says

An absolutely titanic and thorough examination of one of the most groundbreaking television series out there. Incisive and funny, it cuts to the heart of each episode's themes and significant beats. Probably going to rewatch the Estonia...

Andrew Campbell says

Not only is it a great show, The Sopranos was a watershed for critical consideration of television. Matt Zoller Seitz and Alan Sepinwall are no johnny-come-latelys, they were writing about it for print (!) and acquainted with James Gandolfini and creator David Chase. The new, extensive interviews with Chase are alone worth \$20.

The Sopranos Sessions made me want to re-watch the entire series. Time being so precious, that's no small feat.

Karen says

This TV serial about New Jersey "made men" was a classic. "Less yacking, more whacking."

The Sopranos Sessions moves through the show, episode by episode, calling out the obvious and not so obvious details. These are followed by a series of interviews with David Chase (The Sopranos show-runner), in which he divulges his perspective on the controversial final episode. The book includes some additional essays, and sadly, Zoller Steitz' obituary for James Gandolfini.

The Sopranos Sessions is a must read for hard-core Sopranos fans.

Sandra Burns says

I received a free review copy of this book.

Love the beginning, so many little subtle things that I missed, the first time around. The authors writing, was

so good, I could see the episode in my mind.

However, The David Chase sessions, were way too long and boring. He seemed to repeat himself, and kept talking about his home in France. What does France, have to do with the book?

I did enjoy the morgue, also.

Would have been a better book, if the Chase sessions, would have been abbreviated.

Jeremiah Dollins says

This was just the book I wanted about one of the great television series of my lifetime. Sepinwall and Zoller Seitz bring such thoughtful and grounded insight to their essays about each episode of THE SOPRANOS. But the real pleasure here is the nine-part interview with David Chase about his experience working on and reflecting on the series. Chase offers some compelling ideas about his characters, and shares some cool facts about the performers, the writers, and the things that inspired the work. He also reflects on the ending, which leads to one of the book's best moments. This is a must-read for SOPRANOS fans. Doubt you need much to convince you, though.

Brian Klueter says

The Sopranos Sessions is not only the most definitive book about The Sopranos I've ever read, but one of the best books I've ever read about the TV medium itself. The obvious love and appreciation the writers have for the show, as well as their willingness to identify faults and shortcomings it sometimes creates, makes it an honest and extremely readable book about a subject worthy of discussion 20 years after its premiere. Whether you are new to the world of The Sopranos or watching it for the first time, this book will enhance any viewing experience and shine a new perspective on TV as legitimate art.

Dipra Lahiri says

Indispensable resource for hard core Sopranos fans, insightful commentary on each episode, and best of all, interviews with David Chase, which reveal the process and thinking that went into crafting the greatest ever TV series.

Michael says

Review TK.

Julie says

My father got sick in the summer of 1999, shortly after The Sopranos aired its first season on HBO. And though it hadn't yet become the watershed moment in television history that it was destined to become, my dad instantly and passionately adored this show. He was fascinated by "mob stuff" in general (movies like

Goodfellas, The Godfather and My Cousin Vinny were often re-watched in my home, whenever highly neutered versions of themselves aired on network TV).

But there was something about Tony Soprano, specifically, that spoke to my dad. Obviously he wasn't a gangster (he was actually an accountant) or even the least bit Italian, but I think he understood Tony on a profoundly personal level. They were both tough "manly" men on the outside, but with a soft spot in their heart, and a deep abiding love, for their families, good food, and animals. They also both loved to laugh, though their senses of humor tended toward the darker and dryer aspects of the comedic spectrum.

Watching The Sopranos with my father during the show's early years remain some of my fondest memories of him. We absolutely bonded over the show.

My father passed away in the summer of 2001, at the age of 53, from complications brought on by the same congenital heart condition that felled James Gandolfini twelve years later, at age 51. And though my dad and I never got to watch the rest of The Sopranos together in person . . . and never got to debate that controversial fade-to-black in the series final moments, I liked to think he was watching it somewhere.

Continuing to watch The Sopranos always made me feel close to my father. And reading The Sopranos Sessions did too. (Though admittedly, if ever presented with this book, my father would have likely said to me, "I don't know, Jules, 568 pages? Seems kind of highfalutin to me. Can't we just re-watch the episodes on Amazon Prime like normal people?")

To my father's posthumous point, The Sopranos Sessions was very long, and probably would only appeal to the die-hardest of die-hard fans of the series, like me. And I admittedly skimmed through a bunch of the "old news" articles at the end, which, I felt added very little to the analysis of the series, as a whole. But overall, reading The Sopranos Sessions was a refreshingly nostalgic and immersive experience for me. It kind of felt like a cross between, binge-watching your favorite show with a friend who is way smarter than you are, and taking a very esoteric college lit / film class, all wrapped into a convenient reading experience that could be enjoyed in manageable bites, while commuting to work, and just before bedtime.

The book is divided into four main sections. In the first the authors analyze each episode in order from pilot to series finale. In the second, those same authors interview showrunner David Chase about each individual season. In the third, we get a bunch of old news articles from the Star Ledger that appeared in the paper while the show was on air. And finally, in the fourth section, you get read a number of really touching obituaries and eulogies of actor James Gandolfini, including a posthumous letter to him written by David Chase, himself.

Oh, and there's this weird, but oddly fun, section where the two main writers of The Sopranos Session debate Tony's fate in that final fade-to-black, which, if you are a Sopranos fan, will undoubtedly remind you of similar arguments you had with your friends and family members back home, shortly after the episode aired . . .

Reading the episode-by-episode analyses did feel a bit like re-watching the show. Often, the authors would reference a scene, and I'd say, "Oh yeah, I remember that happening!" or "I hated that plotline," or "That episode was amazing!"

It also reminded me of how much I didn't remember about the series and prompted me to re-watch certain episodes on Amazon after reading a particular recap. (Spoiler alert: This show really holds up even all these years later!)

There is admittedly a bit of a constraint to this format of show review, because you are limited in analysis to what the authors find interesting about a particular episode, which may or may not be the same thing that you find interesting. There were a few times when the authors spent a long time analyzing a scene or plot line I didn't really care all that much about, and skimmed over another aspect of the show that really resonated with me. That said, overall, I thought this was an effective and efficient way to recap the series.

Chase's interviews are probably the most fascinating part of *The Sopranos Sessions*. In fact, if I was to edit the book, I may have argued for moving the Chase interview about each season, after that season's recap, instead of clumping them all together around page 400, where the reader is suffering a bit of fatigue, and may not be able to fully enjoy them.

What surprised me most about Chase's take on the series, was how instinctive he was about certain things, and how, often, we as viewers, analyzed what we saw on the screen way more than the writer himself! I also found interesting the parts of the interview where Chase would turn the tables and interview the authors on how they felt about certain characters and plotlines. In these moments, Chase often seemed to get defensive about a particular character or plotline that viewers either didn't seem to understand, or didn't interpret the way Chase thought they should interpret them. These interludes didn't always paint Chase in the best light. And yet, anyone who has ever written a work of fiction and taken ownership of the characters they created within it, can certainly relate to it.

Of course, everyone who reviews *The Sopranos Sessions* will talk about Chase's words about the finale, and whether he did or didn't finally admit to Tony's fate during the fade-to-black within the pages of the book. While I found it interesting to see Chase's thoughts on the matter, and his process going into that particular scene, I personally feel like that whole topic has been way over done. There are so many other aspects of the show that are more meaningful to me. I hate that they often get glossed over in favor of the series' last five minutes.

Perhaps, for me, the most emotionally evocative aspects of *The Sopranos Sessions* are the ones that pay tribute to James Gandolfini, who was, by all accounts, an amazing actor who helped engender *The Sopranos* with the legacy it has today. He also seems like a pretty amazing person . . . humble, kind, and generous to his fellow actors, and anyone who had the opportunity to cross paths with him.

Suffice it to say, I think my dad and James Gandolfini would have liked each other very much if they ever met. And who knows? Maybe they are both out there somewhere, sharing a large ziti dinner, while binge-watching old mob movies . . .

David Coleman says

Such a wonderful dive into the world of *The Sopranos*. I remember starting to watch the show on DVDs I checked out from Blockbuster Video. I ended up watching the final two seasons live on HBO. I've since rewatched the series multiple times, including along with the reviews in this.

Out of all those times, this was the most meaningful, as the authors teased out meanings and beauty that I hadn't considered before. There is so much subtext to the episodes, some of it made its way into my thick head but some of it was lost. The authors were able to elucidate it in ways that I found fascinating and enlightening.

Another real treat were the sessions with David Chase. Hearing his take on the series and moment made such a difference in how I viewed the show. This book is a perfect companion for the series and I'm glad I read it.

John says

If you are a fan of Sopranos and even after all of these years, wonder if you missed any moments, this book seems to fill in a lots of the past. It will make a great gift for diehard fans and it is so long that you could spend days reading. I received a complimentary ARC .

Joey B. says

Tremendous episode by episode insight into HBO's, The Sopranos. From the pilot, to "University" to "Pine Barrens" to "Whoever Did This" to the series finale, "Made in the USA."

Alan Sepinwall deconstructs the characters, dialogue, music and cinematography, and gives plausible answers to many common fan theories about what happened to Tony in the final scene.

Plus things that we might have missed, like what happens in EVERY seventh episode, what happens after our favorite characters are seen cooking eggs, and what is Tony's real fascination with the ducks.

Great read for true fans of the series.

Julie says

The Soprano's Sessions by Matt Zoller Seitz, Alan Sepinwall, Laura Lippman, (Introduction), David Chase, (Creator) is a 2019 Harry N. Abrams publication.

**Well, you woke up this morning
Got yourself a gun
Your mama always said you'd be the chosen one**

**She said, you're one in a million, you've got to burn to shine
But you were born under a bad sign with a blue moon in your eyes**

**And you woke up this morning
All that love had gone
Your papa never told you about right and wrong**

**But you're looking good, baby
I believe you're feeling fine (shame about it)
Born under a bad sign with a blue moon in your eyes**

Because you woke up this morning

**Got a blue moon in your eyes
Woke up this morning
You got a blue moon in your eyes**

**Well, you woke up this morning
The world turned upside down
Lord above, thing's ain't been the same since Howlin' Wolf walked into your town
But you're one in a million, you've got that shotgun shine
Born under a bad sign with a blue moon in your eyes
You woke up this morning
You got a blue moon in your eyes
Woke up this morning
You got a blue moon in your eyes**

**When you woke up this morning everything was gone
By half past ten your head was going ding-dong
Ringing like a bell from your head down to your toes,
Like a voice trying to tell you there's something you should know
Last night you were flying but today you're so low
Ain't it times like these that make you wonder if you'll ever know
The meaning of things as they appear to the others
Wives, mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers
Don't you wish you didn't function, don't you wish you didn't think beyond the next paycheck
And the next little drink?
Well, you do, so make up your mind to go on 'cause when you woke up this morning
Everything you had was gone, everything you had was gone**

**Woke up this morning
Woke up this morning
Woke up this morning, you want to be, you want to be the chosen one tonight
Yes, you know, because you just get help yourself**

**Woke up this morning
Woke up this morning
Woke up this morning
You got yourself a gun, got yourself a gun, got yourself a gun**

This book is AWESOME!!

The Sopranos has often been referred to as the best television show of all time. Although there have been many great shows before and since, I must agree with that assessment. The Sopranos wasn't just a groundbreaking crime drama, it changed television as we knew it, forever. Twenty years after the fact, and I still believe it should hold top honors. The authors were a little nervous about this book because twenty years IS a long time ago, especially in the television and entertainment industry. So much as changed in that time, and HBO is not necessarily the king of the hill any longer.

However, they needn't have worried. Despite the passage of time, any dated quality about *The Sopranos* is easily overlooked compared to the path the show paved for other great television dramas and the legend it created, which still stands unmatched today.

I loved the title of the book. It couldn't have been more aptly named. I also enjoyed the forward by author Laura Lippman, and David Chase's participation and interviews. He really made me chuckle in a few places as he expressed frustration with a coddled audience, who after years of having things explained to them like little children, couldn't manage to puzzle out the nuances of *The Sopranos*, constantly asking Chase questions, looking for pat answers, instead of using their brains to draw their own conclusions. Viewers simply were not used to that type of challenge coming from a television program.

This book is very comprehensive, detailing every single episode of every season. Oh, the memories!! The complexity of the show, the many juxtapositions, parallels, and ironies, the fantastic, second to none writing, and the performances all spring back to life, reminding me once more of just how incredible this show was.

The psychology behind public's fascination with the mob is so interesting. Seriously, Tony Soprano was the ultimate anti-hero. I shook my head many times at how often I found myself pulling for the guy. Really. Then I'd wonder what was wrong with me!! The guy was a serial adulterer and a stone -cold killer, for God's sake!! However, I don't think I was alone in that.

This book is a must for fans of *The Sopranos*. There are so many angles this book brought to my attention, that I'd either missed or forgotten about, even though I've watched the series at least three times from start to finish. Now, I want to watch it again, using this book as a guide so I can pick up on all those wonderful little Easter eggs, and pointers, the authors and David Chase provided for me.

The Sopranos, along with several other stellar HBO dramas and comedies, did bring television up to a much higher standard, where it even gave the movie industry a run for its money. The show helped spawn such outstanding shows as *Mad Men* and *Breaking Bad*, giving the industry respect it had struggled to obtain almost from its inception.

I can't say it held on to that level of quality programming, however. There are some quality programs out there, but they are far and few between, in my opinion. Thankfully, I still have all my DVD box sets of *The Sopranos* and can still watch the best show ever made as often as I like.

If you missed out on the show back in the day and are curious about it now, watch the series from start to finish- THEN add this book to your library or only read it in sections, due to spoilers.

Causal fans will become hard core fans once they study the show a little more and see the genius behind it.

Diehard fans- BUY THIS BOOK! You'll LOVE it!

5 stars

Caleb Wilson says

I think I've probably watched the show seven times through in earnest, and it's been background noise a few more times over as well. That said, I only have a few friends who have even watched the show, fewer still who agree with me that *The Sopranos* is the best show ever made, which makes this book essential. It's like having a friend (or a couple friends, really) to trade theories with, get trivia from, and participate in debates with. It goes down so easily that I read it in probably three or four sittings tops. If you're a die hard, this book is a must read.
