

Face the Reality: *WandaVision* Series Review

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After a nearly two-year hiatus, Marvel Studios returned to the limelight with its first Disney+ series finishing up this week: *WandaVision*.

Once a distant vision, *WandaVision* took 2021 by storm, capturing the full attention of the Marvel fandom every week with each new release. The series may be Marvel's first release since 2019's *Spider-Man: Far From Home*, but Kevin Feige and co. proved once again that they know exactly how to engage an audience, spur conversations and sell tickets (or subscriptions). In nine episodes, a plethora of unique styles and unpredictable plot twists kept fans theorizing for what would happen next.

But now, it's over. So, with some theories answered and some unresolved, let's take a look back at Marvel's debut Disney+ series.

SPOILERS AHEAD FOR *WANDA VISION!*



Look, any Marvel fan knows the sheer amount of speculating that this show came under. With each week, a myriad of new theories erupted onto the scene. Fans theorized on the multiverse, whether or not Vision was actually alive, if Wanda should/would become evil. There were many who thought this series existed to set up who they assumed would be the next "big bad" of the MCU, Mephisto.

I want to preface this review with one short statement: **I didn't buy any of it.** My expectations for *WandaVision* were set after the very first episode. In a short 30 minutes, I was engulfed into Westview and Wanda's vision for her perfect life. The show came out of the gates unique and unpredictable. Sure, I theorized just like any other fan, but I didn't fully expect any of my theories to come to fruition.

After the first episode, my expectations for *WandaVision* were the same each Friday. Up to the series finale, while many fans' expectations grew uncontrollable, mine remained the same. I only ever expected from *WandaVision* what I'd been led to expect: something **unique and unpredictable.**

For weeks, the show delivered. As Vision uncovered new layers of the truth behind Westview, we uncovered new layers of Wanda's heartbreak. From episode one to episode nine, Paul Bettany and Elizabeth Olsen deliver some of the most remarkable performances put to screen in the MCU, and that's saying something, considering the studio's longstanding staple of great casting. Kathryn Hahn is a showstopper as Agatha Harkness, Evan Peters is a delight as Pietro Maximoff, and Teyonah Parris made big waves in her MCU debut as Monica Rambeau. While the S.W.O.R.D. storylines weren't

always as engaging and thrilling as the events inside "the Hex," it was still great to see Randall Park and Kat Dennings return as Jimmy Woo and Darcy Lewis. In short, *WandaVision* took us on an unprecedented journey through one woman's grief while incorporating the MCU humor and characters we all know and love.

For eight straight weeks, the show didn't only meet my expectations, it surpassed them. From Vision getting inebriated by chewing gum at a magic show in the second episode, to the couple's relationship reaching a breaking point in episode five, to Agatha Harkness's **bop** of a theme song reveal in episode seven, Jac Schaeffer's writing and Matt Shakman's direction didn't disappoint.

As we traveled through the decades, Wanda traveled through the stages of grief. Each episode employed new unique styles while carrying the same sinister undertone throughout. It was engaging, surprising, and emotional. It was unlike anything Marvel Studios had ever done, and frankly, unlike anything **anyone** had ever done. It was an extraordinary piece of art. It was unique. It was unpredictable.

Until... it wasn't.



Wait just a second, before you tap away from this review. I know you didn't come here to read another

fan's ramblings on why they're mad Doctor Strange didn't appear and Evan Peters wasn't Mephisto and John Krasinski didn't cameo as Reed Richards and the multiverse wasn't officially revealed in the MCU and... I get it. I don't want to hear that either. That's not what I'm here to do.

I'm here to analyze why *WandaVision* worked so, so well for weeks, only to close out with a whimper instead of a bang. I've rewatched the series finale a few times, and no matter how much I want it to, the show simply fails to stick the landing. Again, I didn't expect Mephisto, Doctor Strange or the multiverse. I didn't need those things. What I expected was something unique and unpredictable, something the show had been for eight straight weeks. Yet, in the **most pivotal moments** of the entire series, *WandaVision* fails to deliver in either of those expectations.

Season finales are tough to nail, and series finales are even tougher. I understand it's not entirely uncommon for a series to fumble the bag in its most crucial moment. It's not like this is some travesty on the level of *Game of Thrones* Season 8. No, *WandaVision*'s finale isn't a total failure. In fact, it's nowhere even near an outright failure. It's good! It accomplishes everything the show set out to do. It keeps it small-scale, it doesn't overstep its boundaries. The focus remains on Wanda and Vision's stories and the enslavement of Westview.

We don't need any grand multiverse reveals or any celebrity cameos, we never did. Overall, it's admirable that the filmmakers didn't go for anything too big, it's good they remained focused on their characters. However, just because the finale doesn't deliver any massive, world-bending surprises, doesn't mean that the audience shouldn't have expected a thought-provoking and unpredictable finale.



For weeks, fans had been treated to such an unpredictable story. For weeks, fans were plunged into a world of fantasy, a world of drama, comedy and action, and a world of reality. We watched Agatha pull the strings behind the curtains and waited with anticipation to see her true intentions. We saw the S.W.O.R.D. storylines unfold and wondered what Hayward would do with Vision's reanimated body. We looked on while Wanda learned the history of witchcraft and we questioned how she'd escape without Agatha's knowledge. We even witnessed Evan Peters' Pietro return to the screen in a new franchise and pondered which version of Quicksilver he may be. These were engaging and interesting stories for weeks, until they weren't.

In week nine, we watched Agatha disappointingly become another bland villain shouting expository dialogue about power. We saw Hayward and S.W.O.R.D. unfold to be nothing more than a one-dimensional military villain trope. We looked on while Wanda defeated Agatha with runes we knew she never had the time to actually learn. We even witnessed Evan Peters' Pietro revealed to be **neither** version of Quicksilver, rather, nothing more than a penis joke. These engaging, interesting and unpredictable storylines simply fell right off our radar.

When fans expected a bombastic finale full of exciting plot beats and unique twists to match the first eight episodes, they were delivered a painstakingly predictable finale akin to so many superhero finales of past shows and films. They were delivered another CGI battle between magical heroes throwing glowing balls at one another with little to no emotional tension. They were delivered another boring

military villain with no humanity or real character to him. They were delivered another climactic moment in which the hero suddenly has knowledge she'd been established to not have. They were even delivered an **extremely** dissatisfying and weak payoff after weeks of exciting teases that X-Men Quicksilver actor Evan Peters would be playing some form of Quicksilver in the MCU.

I'm not saying *WandaVision's* finale is bad. It's not. There were even a few scenes that were as spectacular as the rest of the series. For example, the two Visions stopping mid-battle to discuss philosophy and reveal massive character details to one another was phenomenal. That led to a great payoff with Vision's "What am I?" line at the end of the episode tugging especially strong at heartstrings. Wanda and Vision's goodbye to their children and each other is absolutely gut-wrenching. Elizabeth Olsen, once again, gives an Emmy-worthy performance throughout the episode.

Like I said, it's a good episode. But it's not what the rest of *WandaVision* was. It's not unique, it's not unpredictable. There are no shocking revelations, no game-changing reveals. Almost every scene unfolds in a foreseeable and unsurprising fashion. Each plot beat is generic and common, nothing like the previous eight episodes, and **the series as a whole suffers because of it.**



I wanted to love *WandaVision* from start to finish. I wanted to herald it as one of the best things Marvel has ever done, one of the most exceptionally unprecedented shows I'd ever seen. I can say with full confidence that the first eight episodes were exactly that. It's saddening to see a show so incredible fail to meet its own expectations.

However, it's time to face the reality: **a good finale doesn't mean a satisfying one.** When a show spends its first eight episodes showcasing an inimitable story format and shocking its viewers at every turn, there's nothing wrong with expecting more of the same in its final episode, and there's nothing wrong with being disappointed if it doesn't deliver that.

At the end of the show, in an incredibly powerful moment, Vision and Wanda embrace for one last time as she lets her faux reality dissolve into nothingness. It's the payoff that I mentioned earlier, one of the only moments in the finale that truly matches the quality of the rest of the show. Her arc of the show is complete: Vision as she knows him is gone. She can't enslave and mind-control a town of people just to create her perfect fantasy. She has to move on. She has to face the reality.

After a mixed bag of a finale, *WandaVision* as we knew it in episodes 1-8 is gone. We can't force ourselves to be satisfied with something that doesn't meet the expectations it sets for itself. We have to move on.

We have to face the reality.