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FISHER INVESTMENTS'

'True Detective' second season rumor mill grinds on

By Nancy Dunham - SPECIAL TO THE WASHINGTON TIMES - - *Sunday, August 3, 2014*

Mimicking (and mining) the suspense of its eight-episode crime drama "True Detective," HBO is driving the buzz around its follow-up by keeping quiet about season two.

Rumors about the cast, storyline and crew are providing grist for journalists, websites and fans of season one, which racked up 12 Emmy Award nominations, including best actor nods for Matthew McConaughey and Woody Harrelson.

"I am very much part of that rumor mill," said Germar Derron, the Los Angeles-based founder and editor of pop culture site LookToTheCookie.org. "Of course, it's some of that mystery that makes it so compelling."

The star power of Mr. McConaughey and Mr. Harrelson initially lured viewers to the miniseries, but the show's overall excellence in writing, production and acting generated buzz and kept viewers returning. "True Detective" gave HBO its highest ratings since 2001.

By the March finale viewer interest was so high that the HBO Go website temporarily crashed, noted longtime TV critic Lisa de Moraes.

Ms. De Moraes reported that 3.5 million viewers watched the finale, 50 percent more than the 2.3 million who had tuned in for the January premiere of "True Detective."

Fans, perhaps spurred by the Emmy nominations, have spirited online debates about the series' loose ends, its less-than-sensational ending and what comes next.

What is known is that season two will be set in California but not Los Angeles, and it will have four leads, according to a Daily Beast interview with series creator Nic Pizzolatto.

Fans have speculated about the series' next stars, including Brad Pitt, Joaquin Phoenix and Josh Brolin. Mr. Pizzolatto has said the new roles have yet to be cast, but he hasn't denied rumors about which actors are being considered.

"There [are also rumors that] they're looking to make the cast more diverse, especially with women," Mr. Derron said. "A lot of the buzz is about how the series will drift" without Mr. McConaughey and Mr. Harrelson anchoring the lead roles.

"People just wanted more closure. For me, the finale was fine I personally think that it will work well as [independent] seasons and everything will make sense at the end," he said.

Filmmaker/novelist David S. Arthur said the key might be for series' creators to take the best parts of the first season and revise some production that wasn't as successful.

"I'm a professional filmmaker and I saw that as very advanced," Mr. Arthur said, noting the series' non-linear, 17-year-long narrative. "But I think at a certain point, it got in the way of the story. I wasn't sure that it didn't slow the story down a bit and made me wonder where they'd go from here."

Mr. Arthur also praised the existential dialogue between the two main characters, who forged a professional and personal relationship despite their seemingly opposite personalities, philosophies and lifestyles.

But Dale Archer, author of "Reading Between the (Head)Lines," suggested in a Psychology Today critique that the two detectives searching for a serial killer may not be as different as they seem, adding that each is working toward a secondary goal — personal redemption.

Novelist Anthony R. Howard praises the series but wonders if "the writers cheated."

While viewers focused on the relationship between the two main characters, Mr. Howard suggested the series' writers betrayed their own profile of the mastermind behind the killings.

"He's clearly not cunning, crafty, or able to pull off any of the deeds painted during the series," Mr. Howard said. "Hollywood cheats and most people don't notice, but this show was good enough to where I have to call it out."

How to resolve the discrepancies?

Mr. Howard said Season 2 may offer the writers an opportunity to paint a trail that will ultimately "show us the real mastermind. The writers are definitely talented enough to do it."

