

Stranger things have happened...

Stranger Things Season 5 review

By: Camila Calderon

Stranger Things Season 5's first part was released on November 26, 2025, and as far as crazy starts go, the season has been a wild ride that has left viewers on their toes, brewing with anticipation every step of the way. Not only that, its profoundly heartwarming moments from the characters we all know and love leave their audience in awe of their newfound emotional discoveries that are almost always followed by comedic, but— at times— cheesy line deliveries.

The action begins as we accustom ourselves to the new version of Hawkins: heavily guarded by the military and completely isolated from society with a large gate to the Upside Down found in the Military Access Control Zone, also known as MAC-Z.

Greeted by the Morning Squawk every morning, Rockin' Robin uses her radio broadcast as a communication hub to send a secret, coded message to the group scattered across Hawkins about their next crawl. When the crawl doesn't go as planned, they face grave setbacks that lead to Holly's kidnapping among other unfortunate events. Determined to find Holly, they conduct a major search and use Vecna's next victim, Derek, in order to save other kids from facing the same fate they dedicate to save Holly from living.

Many character arcs have developed over the course of the season. For example, Will has significantly evolved from a timid, isolated boy to a man who is no longer scared of speaking out and embracing his role as Vecna's vessel. We also see a change in Hopper who at first used to be an alcoholic and heavy smoker grieving his daughter, Sarah, but has grown to become a loving man who seeks to protect his adopted daughter, Eleven. Another character we see evolve over time is Steve, who isn't a bully the way he was introduced in the first season, but now a full-time babysitter for six kids and loving it. Although, unsurprisingly, Murray is still his quirky self who hasn't changed at all.

Taking in a new aspect, the Duffer Brothers have outdone themselves with the fantasy of living with Henry, giving it a sort of Alice and Wonderland type of feeling with endless pancakes, dresses, and toys in order to satiate Holly during her stay. We also see breathtaking views that we encounter as Holly explores her eerily beautiful prison made by Henry as she discovers a new friend who forces her to perceive her fantasy to feel so large yet simultaneously limited.

It is safe to say that the quality of production in cinematography has significantly upgraded. From Will's satisfactory dolly zoom when he passes out in the barn to the screen blurring or pulsing when danger lingers nearby, the creative camera movements enhance our otherworldly experience. While Stranger Things's setting is widely known to be based in old times, they were able to find a connection to modern times by introducing Will's discovery about his sexuality which is an idea that we currently see on a daily basis.

One of the important relationships that has developed in season five is the deep, unexpected bond between Will and Robin. They ultimately share the same position and Robin guides him through his mix of emotions, providing the outlet that Will needed when it comes to helping him through his journey of self-acceptance.

Not to mention the genius music selection through the songs "Mr. Sandman" by the Chordettes that plays during the credits of episode one, Dustin's hilarious "Oh Yeah" by Yello scene, and the iconic "Running up That Hill" by Kate Bush.

On a more emotional note, the Duffer Brothers also explore many themes conveyed through multiple scenes. With Dustin, they show how bravery allows you to fight for something that you love that might not be seen as acceptable through the eyes of society. We delve into the ability to find love and

comfort, whether it be familial or romantic, in times of darkness when the world seems out of place throughout the entire group. We also tap into how grieving in the possibility or event of losing a loved one can bleed through emotional conflict within oneself through Hopper, Nancy, Dustin, and Lucas.

Leading up to the final plot twist, Will realizes that all the answers were within himself and the way they evoked that realization was through a touching montage of his happy childhood memories with Robin's inspiring words filling the silence before the final piece of the puzzle clicked into place. This visualizes the moment that Will finally embraces his newfound identity, role as a hero, and emphasizes his unique connection to the Upside Down, allowing him to truly fly.

Speaking from a personal perspective, I absolutely consumed the first volume and can't wait to see how the events unfold as the final season of the hit show draws to a close. Knowing what I want for Christmas now, I am bubbling with excitement and prepared to end my year with a possibly gut-wrenching yet one-of-kind finale.