My Thoughts on Babylon 5

For me, the best SCI-FI still dates back to the 1990’s! Mainly two series which forever will be my favorite TV shows: Star Trek: Deep Space Nine and of course [Babylon 5](https://scifitvshows.jouwweb.nl/overview-sci-fi-tv-shows-in-alphabetical-order/my-favorite-sci-fi-shows/babylon-5). That Babylon 5 was created in that day and age and ran for five seasons, certainly can be seen as a miracle. Network stations and cable stations didn’t want to burn their hands to a SCI-FI that didn’t began with Star Trek! There already was The Next Generation, why do we need another science fiction show, what is the need! Well, creator J. Michael Straczynski (JMS) finally sold Babylon 5 to an interested party after 4-5 years of trying. When The Next Generation began in 1987, JMS already was dabbling with the Narn and the Centauri in his mind. It took him several years to finally sell the show to tell his story, a story which was spread over five years, like a book with a beginning, a middle and an ending.

Yes, it was extra hard because it was not episodic but serialized storytelling. It was not like it is in this day and age where every episode is a part of the story-arc but the story-arc was heavy in most episodes but there certainly were also episodes where the story-arc was touched upon to a various degree. This to me is the perfect way of serialized SCI-FI, nowadays it often is too much story-arc, every episode is in service of the story-arc. It is no secret that Paramount also got the initial Babylon 5 script because JMS even pitched it there, and to me, there is no doubt in my mind that Deep Space Nine is created based on that Babylon 5 script JMS handed over to them. Ultimately, for me, it turned out terrific because these shows have become my all time favorite shows, but I can imagine JMS thinks differently about this.

Where Deep Space Nine was part of a franchise, Babylon 5 never got that far unfortunately, sure, it had a few tries, think of Crusade or The Legends of the Rangers, but ultimately it didn’t happen. Why this did not happen, I am not sure, but I think there are still many stories to tell in the Babylon 5 universe.

Babylon 5 has some of the best SCI-FI episodes ever created, seasons 2 to 4 were just amazing with episodes like “The Coming of Shadows, The Long Twilight Struggle, The Fall Of Night, Messages from Earth, Point of No Return, Severed Dreams, Interludes…, War Without End, Z’ha’dum, the Centauri episodes early season 4, The Face of the Enemy, Intersections in Real Time and many, many more, this hasn’t happened since.

Yes, The Expanse is phenomenal, but it doesn’t surpass Babylon 5 (or DS9). Of course this is my humble opinion. These characters G’Kar and Londo, two alien characters, one starts out very angry and villainy, but almost becomes a holy figure. The other one, starts out as a drunken old fool who has no power at all, becomes very powerful and is responsible for millions of deaths and gets in league with a aggressive alien race and gets in over his head. Like always, the characters make the story, if the characters are strong but flawed, to whom you can identify with it, the audience will most likely invest in the TV show.

When JMS suspected he would not get a 5th season, he started to finish several storylines, like the war with Earth storyline. JMS even already filmed the last episode of the series in case Babylon 5 really got cancelled. When TNT came to the rescue at the 11th hour, ordering a 5th season, it meant that the Earth war storyline already had ended, while if JMS knew about a 5th season earlier, the Earth war would have continued into season 5. The result was that season 5 started out with the Telepath’s storyline, which was….not that interesting, at least to me and many other Babylon 5 fans. Season 5 is seen as the weakest season because of the 11th hour rescue, otherwise I think we would have enjoyed the 5th season very much. Having said that, when the Telepath storyline is finished, around episode 12 or 13, it quickly becomes better again, to the level of storytelling we were used to in the previous seasons.

To me Babylon 5 finishes elegantly, some strong Centauri episodes until episode 18 and after that closing the remaining storylines, setting up a new crew who was going to handle the day to day operations aboard Babylon 5.

TNT wanted JMS to make season 6, but JMS always intended Babylon 5 to be a 5 year story, like a book, with an ending, so he declined this but luckily for us, a new show was being created. During season 5, TNT also produced a number of Babylon 5 films. My favorite one is “[In The Beginning](https://scifitvshows.jouwweb.nl/blogs/babylon-5-in-the-beginning)”, other movies were “[Thirdspace](https://scifitvshows.jouwweb.nl/blogs/babylon-5-the-movie-collection-thirdspace)”, “[River of Souls](https://scifitvshows.jouwweb.nl/blogs/babylon-5-the-movie-collection-the-river-of-souls)” and “[A Call to Arms](https://scifitvshows.jouwweb.nl/blogs/babylon-5-the-movie-collection-a-call-to-arms)”. The last one can be seen as a backdoor pilot for Crusade. Unfortunately, before the first episode even aired, [Crusade](https://scifitvshows.jouwweb.nl/blogs/crusade-season-one-rewatch) was cancelled, mainly because internal disagreements, meddling from the suits and so on. The ratings even were more than okay and SCI-FI channel desperately wanted to buy the rights for Crusade, but their budget no longer permitted that, so that was it for Crusade. The show itself was uneven regarding the quality of the storytelling, still, it has some strong episodes, a number of weaker ones too but the characters, most of them, were very interesting! Think of Galen, captain Gideon, Dureena and Max Eilerson. And I also really liked the dynamic between captain Gideon and captain Lochley, this was done so well and they obviously had a great chemistry together.

In 2002 JMS got another shot at a possible new TV show, with the backdoor pilot movie [The Legends of the Rangers](https://scifitvshows.jouwweb.nl/blogs/babylon-5-legend-of-the-rangers-rewatch). It really failed for numerous reasons, one of them was because it aired at the same time as the NFL Playoffs, so nobody was watching Legends of the Rangers. The telemovie was also flawed but it had a really promising storyline, an enemy even stronger than the shadows called *The Hand*. It had G’Kar, but the other characters I didn’t find that interesting to be honest. But since this only was a 90 minute telemovie, this certainly could have changed had a first season been green-lighted. Characters need to evolve over the course multiple episodes so I was confident this would have happened, plus most likely, if a season one had been approved, you can be certain that there would be a number of changes, just check the pilot The Gathering of Babylon 5 and the first episode of season one.

In 2007 we Babylon 5 fans again got hope when series of DVD releases was announced as “[The Lost Tales](https://scifitvshows.jouwweb.nl/blogs/babylon-5-the-lost-tales-rewatch)” of Babylon 5. One or two times a year perhaps, a DVD release would be released with two Babylon 5 stories. It was not preferable, I’d much rather have a TV series but I was happy to at least see some new stories of Babylon 5. But unfortunately, after the first release it soon became clear that there wouldn’t be another release. Warner Bros. was willing, but at an even lesser budget than the first DVD release. JMS said no to this because the budget for the first DVD release already too low, let alone having to work with even a lesser budget than that. So that is the story about Babylon 5. Yes, a few years ago we got the animated movie, which was fun but again, not what I prefer. Supposedly a second movie was also coming but haven’t heard anything about this in a long time. Few years back JMS was attached to a reboot of Babylon 5, but this plan also failed. To be honest, I don’t want a reboot, I much rather see a new story in the Babylon 5 universe, continued after Crusade or something, but I guess this is wishful thinking on my part.

Final Word:

I don’t know how many times I already watched Babylon 5. At least 15-20 times, and I am on the verge of starting a next rewatch, on Blu-ray! I just can’t be bored with this, it is fantastic television, I can only recommend it everybody. No, it is not all perfect, but it is like a book you cannot lay down because it is so good you want to continue reading it. I sure hope that in my lifetime we will get something new in the Babylon 5 universe and as I said, preferably not a reboot, but something new set after Crusade, but as I said earlier, probably wishful thinking.