

= The Sopranos =

The Sopranos is an American crime drama television series created by David Chase . Revolving around the fictional character and family of New Jersey @-@ based Italian American mobster Tony Soprano (James Gandolfini) , the show portrays the difficulties he faces as he tries to balance the conflicting requirements of his home life and his criminal organization . These are often highlighted during his therapy sessions with psychiatrist Jennifer Melfi (Lorraine Bracco) . The series features Tony 's family members , mafia colleagues , and rivals in prominent roles and story arcs , most notably his wife Carmela (Edie Falco) and protégé Christopher Moltisanti (Michael Imperioli) .

After the pilot was ordered in 1997 , the show premiered on the premium cable network HBO in the United States on January 10 , 1999 , and ran its six seasons with 86 episodes to June 10 , 2007 . The series then went through syndication and has been broadcast on A & E in the United States and internationally . The Sopranos was produced by HBO , Chase Films , and Brad Grey Television . It was primarily filmed at Silvercup Studios , New York City , and on location in New Jersey . The executive producers throughout the show 's run were David Chase , Brad Grey , Robin Green , Mitchell Burgess , Ilene S. Landress , Terence Winter , and Matthew Weiner .

The Sopranos is widely regarded as the greatest television series of all time . The series also won a multitude of awards , including Peabody Awards for its first two seasons , 21 Primetime Emmy Awards and five Golden Globe Awards . A staple of 2000s American popular culture , the series has been the subject of critical analysis , controversy , and parody . It has spawned books , a video game , high @-@ charting soundtrack albums , and a large amount of assorted merchandise . Several members of the show 's cast and crew who were previously largely unknown to the public have had successful careers after The Sopranos . In 2013 , the Writers Guild of America named The Sopranos the best @-@ written TV series of all time , while TV Guide ranked it the best television series of all time .

= = Production = =

= = = Conception = = =

Before creating The Sopranos , David Chase had worked as a television producer for more than 20 years . He had been employed as a staff writer / producer for several television series (including Kolchak : The Night Stalker , Switch , The Rockford Files , I 'll Fly Away , and Northern Exposure) and had co @-@ created one short @-@ lived original series , Almost Grown , in 1988 . He made his television directorial debut in 1986 with the " Enough Rope for Two " episode of Alfred Hitchcock Presents revival . He also directed episodes of Almost Grown and I 'll Fly Away in 1988 and 1992 , respectively . In 1996 , he wrote and directed the television film The Rockford Files : Punishment and Crime . He served as showrunner for I 'll Fly Away and Northern Exposure in the 1990s . Chase won his first Emmy Award in 1978 for his work on The Rockford Files (shared with fellow producers) and his second for writing the 1980 television film Off the Minnesota Strip . By 1996 , he was a coveted showrunner .

The story of The Sopranos was initially conceived as a feature film about " a mobster in therapy having problems with his mother . " After some input from his manager , Lloyd Braun , Chase decided to adapt it into a television series . In 1995 , Chase signed a development deal with production company Brillstein @-@ Grey and wrote the original pilot script .

Drawing heavily from his personal life and his experiences growing up in New Jersey , Chase has stated that he tried to " apply [his own] family dynamic to mobsters . " For instance , the tumultuous relationship between series protagonist Tony Soprano and his mother , Livia , is partially based on Chase 's relationship with his own mother . Chase was also in therapy at the time and modeled the character of Dr. Jennifer Melfi after his own psychiatrist . Chase had been fascinated by organized crime and the mafia from an early age , witnessing such people growing up , and having been raised on classic gangster films like The Public Enemy and the crime series The Untouchables . The

series is partly inspired by the Boiardo family , a prominent New Jersey organized crime family when Chase was growing up , and partly on New Jersey 's DeCavalcante family . Chase has mentioned American playwrights Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams as influences on his and the show 's writing and Italian director Federico Fellini as an important influence on the show 's cinematic style . The series was named after high school friends of his . Like the majority of the characters on the show , Chase is Italian @-@ American . His original family name is DeCesare .

Chase and producer Brad Grey , then of Brillstein @-@ Grey , pitched The Sopranos to several networks ; Fox showed interest but passed on it after Chase presented them the pilot script . Chase and Grey eventually pitched the show to Chris Albrecht , at the time president of HBO Original Programming , who decided to finance the shooting of a pilot episode .

The pilot episode ? originally referred to as " Pilot " but renamed to " The Sopranos " on the DVD release ? was shot in 1997 ; Chase directed it himself . After the pilot was finished and shown to the HBO executives , the show was put on hold for several months . During this time , Chase considered asking HBO for additional funding to shoot 45 more minutes of footage and release The Sopranos as a feature film . In December 1997 , HBO decided to produce the series and ordered 12 more episodes for a 13 @-@ episode season . The show premiered on HBO on January 10 , 1999 with the pilot episode . The Sopranos was the second hour @-@ long television drama series produced by HBO , the first being the prison drama Oz .

= = = Baer v. Chase = = =

Robert Baer (a former North Jersey prosecutor and municipal judge) lost a breach of contract lawsuit he filed against Chase in federal court in Trenton , New Jersey , alleging he helped create the show , but Baer won a ruling that a jury should decide if and how much Baer should be paid for services as a location scout , researcher , and consultant . The gist of Baer 's argument : in addition to Chase 's own sources and ideas , some characters , settings , and storylines portrayed in The Sopranos were allegedly inspired by tours and conversations the series creator had with Tony Spirito (" a restaurateur and admitted gambler who says he often did ' favors ' such as chauffeuring for wiseguys he had known all his life . His old pals included reputed notorious figure John ' Uncle Johnny ' Riggi and Louis ' Fat Lou ' LaRasso , a late underboss of the DeCavalcante crime family ") , Thomas Koczur (a homicide detective for the Elizabeth Police Department) , and people Spirito and Koczur introduced Chase to , in addition to communications and input provided by Baer , who 'd introduced Chase to Spirito and Koczur in the first place .

= = = Casting = = =

Like the characters they portray on the show , many of the actors on The Sopranos are Italian @-@ American . Many cast members had appeared together in films and television series before joining the cast of The Sopranos . The series shares a total of 27 actors with the 1990 Martin Scorsese gangster film , Goodfellas , including main cast members Lorraine Bracco , Michael Imperioli , and Tony Sirico .

The main cast was put together through a process of auditions and readings . Actors often did not know whether Chase liked their performances or not . Michael Imperioli , who beat out several actors for the part of Christopher Moltisanti , recalls " He 's got a poker face , so I thought he wasn 't into me , and he kept giving me notes and having me try it again , which often is a sign that you 're not doing it right . I thought , I 'm not getting this . So he said , ' Thank you , ' and I left . I didn 't expect to hear back . And then they called . " Chase also said he wanted Imperioli because he had been in Goodfellas . James Gandolfini was invited to audition for the part of Tony Soprano after casting director Susan Fitzgerald saw a short clip of his performance in the 1993 film True Romance . Lorraine Bracco , who had played the role of mob wife Karen Hill in Goodfellas , was originally asked to play the role of Carmela Soprano . She took the role of Dr. Jennifer Melfi instead because she wanted to try something different and felt the part of the highly educated Dr. Melfi would be more of a challenge for her . Tony Sirico , who has a criminal background , signed on to play Paulie

Walnuts as long as his character was not to be a " rat " . Chase invited musician " Little Steven " Van Zandt (known as the guitarist of Bruce Springsteen 's E Street Band) to audition for a part in his series after seeing him live at the 1997 Rock & Roll Hall of Fame ceremony and being impressed with his appearance and presence . Van Zandt , who had never acted before , originally auditioned for the role of Tony Soprano but felt the role should go to an experienced actor . Van Zandt eventually agreed to star on the show as mob consigliere Silvio Dante and his real @-@ life spouse Maureen was cast as his on @-@ screen wife , Gabriella .

With the exception of Oscar nominee Bracco (Goodfellas) , Dominic Chianese (The Godfather Part II , along with stage work) and Emmy @-@ winner Nancy Marchand (Lou Grant) , the cast of the debut season of the series consisted of largely unknown actors . After the breakthrough success of the show , many cast members were noted for their acting ability and received mainstream attention for their performances . Subsequent seasons saw some established actors (Joe Pantoliano , Robert Loggia , Steve Buscemi , Frank Vincent) join the starring cast along with well @-@ known actors in recurring roles such as Peter Bogdanovich , John Heard , Robert Patrick , Peter Riegert , Annabella Sciorra , and David Strathairn . Several well @-@ known actors appeared in just one or two episodes , such as Lauren Bacall , Daniel Baldwin , Annette Bening , Polly Bergen , Sandra Bernhard , Charles S. Dutton , Jon Favreau , Janeane Garofalo , Hal Holbrook , Tim Kang , Elias Koteas , Ben Kingsley , Linda Lavin , Ken Leung , Julianna Margulies , Sydney Pollack , Wilmer Valderamma , Alicia Witt and Burt Young .

= = = Crew = = =

Series creator and executive producer David Chase served as showrunner and head writer for the production of all six seasons of the show . He was deeply involved with the general production of every episode and is noted for being a very controlling , demanding and specific producer . In addition to writing or co @-@ writing 2 ? 7 episodes per season , Chase would oversee all the editing , consult with episode directors , give actors character motivation , approve casting choices and set designs and do extensive but uncredited re @-@ writes of episodes written by other writers . Brad Grey served as executive producer alongside Chase , but had no creative input on the show . Many members of the creative team behind The Sopranos were handpicked by Chase , some being old friends and colleagues of his ; others were selected after interviews conducted by producers of the show .

Many of the show 's writers worked in television prior to joining the writing staff of The Sopranos . Writing team and married couple Robin Green and Mitchell Burgess , who worked on the series as writers and producers from the first to the fifth season , had previously worked with Chase on Northern Exposure . Terence Winter , who joined the writing staff during the production of the second season and served as executive producer from season five onwards , practiced law for two years before deciding to pursue a career as a screenwriter . He eventually caught the attention of Chase through writer Frank Renzulli . Matthew Weiner , who served as staff writer and producer for the show 's fifth and sixth seasons , wrote a spec script for the series Mad Men in 2000 . The script was passed on to Chase who , after reading it , was so impressed that he immediately offered Weiner a job as a writer for The Sopranos . Cast members Michael Imperioli and Toni Kalem , who portray Christopher Moltisanti and Angie Bonpensiero , respectively , also wrote episodes for the show . Imperioli wrote five episodes of seasons two through five and Kalem wrote one episode of season five . Other writers the show employed throughout its run include Frank Renzulli , Todd A. Kessler (known as the co @-@ creator of Damages) , writing team Diane Frolov and Andrew Schneider (worked with Chase on Northern Exposure) and Lawrence Konner , who co @-@ created Almost Grown with Chase in 1988 . In total , 20 writers or writing teams (22 people) are credited with writing episodes of The Sopranos . Of these , two (Tim Van Patten and Maria Laurino) receive a single story credit and eight are credited with writing a sole episode . The most prolific writers of the series were Chase (30 credited episodes , including story credits) , Winter (25 episodes) , Green and Burgess (22 episodes) , Weiner (12 episodes) and Renzulli (9 episodes) .

Before directing *The Sopranos*, many of the directors had worked on other television series and in independent films. The most frequent directors of the series were Tim Van Patten (20 episodes), John Patterson (13 episodes), Allen Coulter (12 episodes), and Alan Taylor (9 episodes), all of whom have a background in television. Recurring cast members Steve Buscemi and Peter Bogdanovich also directed episodes of the series intermittently. Chase directed two episodes himself, the pilot episode and the series finale. Both episodes were photographed by the show's original director of photography Alik Sakharov; he later alternated episodes with Phil Abraham. The show's photography and directing is noted for its feature film @-@ quality. This look was achieved by Chase collaborating with Sakharov: " David wanted a look that would have its own two feet. [...] From the pilot, we would sit down with the whole script and break the scenes down into shots. That's what you do with feature films. "

= = = Music = = =

The Sopranos is noted for its eclectic music selections and has received considerable critical attention for its effective use of previously recorded songs. Chase personally selected all of the show's music with producer Martin Bruestle and music editor Kathryn Dayak, sometimes also consulting Steven Van Zandt. The music was usually selected once the production and editing of an episode was completed, but on occasion sequences were filmed to match preselected pieces of music.

The show's opening theme is " Woke Up This Morning " (Chosen One Mix), written by, remixed and performed by British band Alabama 3. With few exceptions, a different song plays over the closing credits of each episode. Many songs are repeated multiple times through an episode, such as " Living on a Thin Line " by The Kinks in the season three episode " University " and " Glad Tidings " by Van Morrison in the season five finale " All Due Respect ". Other songs are heard several times throughout the series. A notable example is " Con te partirò ", performed by Italian singer Andrea Bocelli, which plays several times in relation to the character of Carmela Soprano. While the show utilizes a wealth of previously recorded music, it is also notable for its lack of originally composed incidental music, compared to other television programs.

Two soundtrack albums containing music from the series have been released. The first, titled *The Sopranos: Music from the HBO Original Series*, was released in 1999. It contains selections from the show's first two seasons and reached # 54 on the U.S. Billboard 200. A second soundtrack compilation, titled *The Sopranos - Peppers and Eggs: Music From The HBO Series*, was released in 2001. This double @-@ disc album contains songs and selected dialogue from the show's first three seasons. It reached # 38 on the U.S. Billboard 200.

= = = Sets and locations = = =

The majority of the exterior scenes taking place in New Jersey were filmed on location, with the majority of the interior shots ? including most indoor shots of the Soprano residence, the back room of the strip club Bada Bing!, and Dr. Melfi's psychiatrist's office ? filmed at Silvercup Studios in New York City.

The pork store, a frequent hangout for the mobsters on the show, was in the pilot episode known as Centanni's Meat Market, an actual butchery in Elizabeth, New Jersey. After the series was picked up by HBO, the producers leased a building with a store front in Kearny, New Jersey. For the remainder of the production period, this building served as the shooting location for scenes outside and inside the pork store, now renamed Satriale's. After the series ended, the building was demolished.

Bada Bing!, a strip club owned and operated by the character Silvio Dante on the show, is an actual strip club on Route 17 in Lodi, New Jersey. Exteriors and interiors (except for the back room) were shot on location. The club is called Satin Dolls and was an existing business before the show started. The club continued to operate during the eight years the show was filmed there. As such, a business arrangement was worked out with the owner. Locations manager Mark Kamine recalls

that the owner was " very gracious " as long as the shooting did not " conflict with his business time . " Scenes set at the restaurant Vesuvio , owned and operated in the series by character Artie Bucco , were in the first episode filmed at a restaurant called Manolo 's located in Elizabeth . After the destruction of Vesuvio within the context of the series , Artie opened a new restaurant called Nuovo Vesuvio ; exterior scenes set there were filmed at an Italian restaurant called Punta Dura located in Long Island City . All the exterior and some interior shots of the Soprano residence were filmed on location at a private residence in North Caldwell , New Jersey .

= = = Title sequence = = =

Tony Soprano is seen emerging from the Lincoln Tunnel and passes through the tollbooth for the New Jersey Turnpike . Numerous landmarks in and around Newark and Elizabeth , New Jersey , are then shown passing by the camera as Tony drives down the highway . The sequence ends with Tony pulling into the driveway of his suburban home . Chase has said that the goal of the title sequence was to show that this particular mafia show was about New Jersey , as opposed to New York , where most similar dramas have been set .

In the first three seasons , between Tony leaving the tunnel and entering the Turnpike , an image of the World Trade Center towers is visible in his side rear @-@ view mirror . After the September 11 , 2001 attacks , this shot was removed , beginning with the show 's fourth season .

In a 2010 issue of TV Guide , the show 's opening title sequence ranked # 10 on a list of TV 's top 10 credits sequences , as selected by readers .

= = Cast and characters = =

The Sopranos features a large cast of characters , many of whom get significant amounts of character development ? regardless of level of importance . Some only appear in certain seasons , while others appear (sporadically or constantly) throughout the entire series . All characters were created by David Chase , unless otherwise noted .

Tony Soprano (James Gandolfini) is the series ' protagonist . Tony is one of the capos (and the unofficial underboss) of the New Jersey @-@ based DiMeo crime family , at the beginning of the series ; he eventually becomes its undisputed boss . He is also the patriarch of the Soprano household . Throughout the series , Tony struggles to balance the conflicting requirements of his family ? wife Carmela , daughter Meadow , son A. J. , and mother Livia ? with those of the Mafia family he controls . Because he is prone to bouts of clinical depression , after a fainting spell (triggered by a panic attack) , Tony 's physician refers him for treatment from psychiatrist Dr. Jennifer Melfi (Lorraine Bracco) , in the show 's first episode . She treats Tony to the best of her ability despite the fact that they routinely clash over various issues . Melfi is usually thoughtful , rational and humane ? a stark contrast to Tony 's personality . Tony , a serial womanizer , occasionally divulges his sexual attraction to Dr. Melfi ; Melfi harbors some degree of attraction to Tony , too , but never admits or acts on it . Melfi is far more attracted to Tony 's dangerousness and power . She is drawn to the challenge of helping such an unusual client , and naively assumes that their doctor @-@ patient relationship will not affect her personal life in any way .

Adding to Tony 's complicated life is his relationship with his wife Carmela (Edie Falco) , which is strained by his constant infidelity and her struggle to reconcile the reality of Tony 's business (which she is often in denial of) , with the affluent lifestyle and higher social status it brings her . Both have up @-@ and @-@ down relationships with their two children : the intelligent @-@ but @-@ rebellious Meadow (Jamie @-@ Lynn Sigler) , and underachiever A.J. (i.e. , Anthony , Jr .) (Robert Iler) , whose everyday teenage issues are further complicated by their eventual knowledge of their father 's criminal activities and reputation .

The starring cast includes members of Tony 's extended family , including : his disapproving , manipulative mother , Olivia " ' Livia " Soprano (Nancy Marchand) ; his aimless , histrionic older sister , Janice (Aida Turturro) ; his paternal uncle Corrado " Junior " Soprano (Dominic Chianese) , nominal boss of the crime family following the death of then @-@ acting boss Jackie Aprile , Sr. ;

cousin Tony Blundetto (Steve Buscemi) ; and , Christopher Moltisanti (Michael Imperioli) , often referred to as Tony 's " nephew " (but is actually his cousin by marriage) . Both ' Livia and Janice are scheming , treacherous , shrewd manipulators with major @-@ yet @-@ unaddressed psychological issues of their own . The single @-@ minded ambitious Uncle Junior is chronically frustrated by having not been made boss of the DiMeo family , despite old @-@ school mob traditions entitling him to the position by virtue of seniority . He feels his authority is perpetually undermined by Tony 's greater influence in the organization , and barely contains his seething jealousy at having to watch both his younger brother (Tony 's father) and now Tony , himself , leapfrog him in the organization . As their professional tensions escalate , Uncle Junior employs increasingly desperate , behind @-@ the @-@ scenes measures to solve his problems with Tony , who still idolizes his uncle , and wants to retain Junior 's affection and approval . Uncle Junior and Christopher are fixtures in Tony 's real family , as well as his crime family , so their actions in one realm often create further conflicts in the other . Christopher , an entitled , insecure DiMeo associate who is as ambitious as he is insubordinate and incompetent , is also a chronic substance abuser . Tony Blundetto is a well @-@ respected DiMeo family soldier who returns after completing a lengthy prison sentence ; he leaves prison committed to " going straight " (to Tony 's dismay) , but also has an intense violent streak .

Tony 's close circle within the DiMeo crime family includes : Silvio Dante (Steven Van Zandt) , who runs the family 's strip club headquarters , and other businesses ; Paulie " Walnuts " Gualtieri (Tony Sirico) , a tough , short @-@ tempered , aging soldier who is fiercely loyal to Tony ; and , Salvatore " Big Pussy " Bonpensiero (Vincent Pastore) , a veteran gangster who runs an automotive body shop . Silvio is Tony 's consigliere and best friend . Paulie " Walnuts " and " Big Pussy " (often called just , " Pussy ") have worked with Tony and his father ; Also in Tony 's criminal organization are : Patsy Parisi (Dan Grimaldi) , and Furio Giunta (Federico Castelluccio) . Patsy is a soft @-@ spoken soldier with a head for figures ; Furio , an Italian national who joins the family later in the series , serves as Tony 's violent enforcer and bodyguard .

Other significant characters in the DiMeo family include : Bobby " Bacala " Baccalieri (Steven R. Schirripa) ; Richie Aprile (David Proval) ; Ralph Cifaretto (Joe Pantoliano) ; Eugene Pontecorvo (Robert Iler) ; and Vito Spatafore (Joseph R. Gannascoli) . Bobby is a subordinate of Uncle Junior 's whom Tony initially bullies , but later accepts into his inner circle . Ralph is a clever , ambitious top @-@ earner ; but , his arrogance and obnoxious , disrespectful , and unpredictably violent tendencies turn Tony resentful . Richie Aprile is released from prison in season 2 , and quickly makes waves . Pontecorvo is a young soldier who becomes a " made " man alongside Christopher . Spatafore works his way up through the ranks to become top earner of the Aprile crew , but is secretly gay .

Friends of the Soprano family include : Herman " Hesh " Rabkin (Jerry Adler) ; Adriana La Cerva (Drea de Matteo) ; Rosalie Aprile (Sharon Angela) ; Angie Bonpensiero (Toni Kalem) , along with Artie (John Ventimiglia) and Charmaine Bucco (Kathrine Narducci) . Hesh is an invaluable adviser and friend to Tony , as he was when Tony 's father ran things . Adriana is Christopher 's loyal and long @-@ suffering girlfriend ; the two have a volatile relationship , but appear destined to stay together . Christopher often ignores Adriana 's advice , and winds up regretting it . Rosalie is the widow of previous DiMeo boss Jackie Aprile , Sr. , and a very close friend of Carmela . Angie is Salvatore Bonpensiero 's wife ; she later goes into " business " for herself , and quite successfully . Artie & Charmaine are childhood friends of the Sopranos , and owners of the popular restaurant , Vesuvio . Charmaine wishes to have no association with Tony and his crew due to fears that Tony 's criminal ways will ultimately ruin everything she and Artie have achieved . Artie , however ? a law @-@ abiding , hard @-@ working man ? is drawn to his childhood friend Tony 's glamorous , seemingly carefree lifestyle . Charmaine bitterly resents Artie 's chronic tendency to disregard her wishes while catering to Tony 's ; their marriage suffers greatly , as a result . Charmaine also had a brief sexual encounter with Tony (when he and Carmela had temporarily broken @-@ up) when all four were teenagers .

John " Johnny Sack " Sacramoni (Vince Curatola) , Phil Leotardo (Frank Vincent) and " Little " Carmine Lupertazzi , Jr . (Ray Abruzzo) are all significant characters from the New York City @-@

based Lupertazzi crime family , which shares a good amount of its business with the Soprano organization . Although the Lupertazzis ' and DiMeos ' interests are often at odds , Tony maintains a cordial , business @-@ like relationship with " Johnny Sack " , preferring to make mutually @-@ beneficial deals , not war . Johnny Sack 's second @-@ in @-@ command and eventual successor , Phil Leotardo , is less friendly and harder for Tony to do business with . Little Carmine is the son of the family 's first boss , and vies for power with its other members .

= = Episodes = =

= = = Season 1 = = =

When Tony Soprano collapses after suffering a panic attack , he begins therapy with Dr. Jennifer Melfi . Details of Tony 's upbringing ? with his father 's influence looming large on his development as a gangster , but more so that Tony 's mother , Livia , was vengeful and possibly psychopathic ? are revealed . His complicated relationship with his wife Carmela is also explored , as well as her feelings regarding her husband 's cosa nostra ties . Meadow and Anthony Jr . ? Tony 's children ? gain increasing knowledge of their father 's mob dealings . Later , federal indictments are brought as a result of someone in his organization talking to the FBI .

After ordering the execution of Brendan Filone and the mock execution of Chris Moltisanti , Tony 's uncle Corrado " Junior " Soprano is installed as boss of the family (following the death of previous boss Jackie Aprile , Sr. from cancer) , even though Tony actually controls most things from behind the scenes . Furious at Corrado 's plan to have him killed , Tony responds to the attempt on his life with a violent reprisal , and confronts his mother for her role in plotting his downfall ; she appears to have a psychologically @-@ triggered stroke . " Junior " is arrested by the FBI on non @-@ related charges .

= = = Season 2 = = =

Jackie 's brother Richie Aprile is released from prison at the beginning of the second season , and proves to be uncontrollable in the business arena ; he also starts a relationship with Tony 's sister Janice , who has arrived from Seattle . Tony 's friend " Big Pussy " returns to New Jersey after a conspicuous absence .

Christopher Moltisanti becomes engaged to his girlfriend Adriana La Cerva . Matthew Bevilacqua and Sean Gismonte , two low @-@ level associates dissatisfied with their perceived lack of success in the Soprano crew , try to make a name for themselves by attempting to kill Christopher . Their plan backfires ; Christopher kills Sean and , though critically wounded , survives their attack . Tony and Big Pussy locate Matthew and assassinate him . However , a witness goes to the FBI and identifies Tony .

Junior is placed under house arrest as he awaits trial . Richie , frustrated with Tony 's authority over him , entreats Junior to have Tony killed . Junior feigns interest , then informs Tony of Richie 's intentions , leaving Tony with another problem to address . However , the situation is defused unexpectedly when Janice kills Richie in a violent argument ; Tony and his men conceal all evidence of the murder , and Janice returns to Seattle .

Tony , realizing Big Pussy is an FBI informant , murders him on board a boat (with assistance from Silvio Dante and Paulie Gualtieri) , then wraps his corpse in chains and throws it overboard .

= = = Season 3 = = =

Following the " disappearance " of Aprile crew capo Richie Aprile , the return of the ambitious Ralph Cifaretto , having spent an extended period of leisure time in Miami , marks the third season . He renews a relationship with Rosalie Aprile , the widow of the deceased acting boss Jackie Aprile , Sr. , and former capo of the Aprile crew , which bears his name . With Richie assumed to have joined

the Witness Protection Program , Ralph unofficially usurps control over the Aprile crew , proving to be an exceptionally dexterous earner for the crew . While Ralph 's competitive merit would seemingly have him next in line to ascend to capo , his insubordination inclines Tony not to promote him and instead gives the promotion to the unqualified , but complacent , Gigi Cestone , causing much resentment and tension between him and Ralph . Livia dies of a stroke .

Jackie Aprile , Jr. becomes involved with Meadow and then descends into a downward spiral of recklessness , drugs and crime . Tony initially attempts to act as a mentor to Jackie but becomes increasingly impatient with his escalating misbehavior , particularly as Jackie 's relationship with Meadow begins to become serious . Inspired by a story from Ralph about how Tony , Jackie Sr. , and Silvio Dante got made , Jackie and his friends Dino Zerilli and Carlo Renzi make a similar move and attempt to rob Eugene Pontecorvo 's Saturday night card game , so they can gain recognition from the family , possibly getting them respected and made as well . The plan takes a turn for the worse when Jackie panics due to the heckling of the card dealer " Sunshine " and shoots him to death . Dino and Carlo are killed during the robbery , but Jackie manages to escape . Tony decides to give Ralph the decision regarding Jackie Jr . ' s punishment . Despite his role as a surrogate father , Ralph decides to have Jackie Jr. killed .

Ralph ultimately crosses the line when , in a cocaine @-@ induced rage , he gets into a confrontation with girlfriend Tracee and beats her to death . She may have been pregnant with his child at the time . This infuriates Tony to the point where he violates traditional mafia code by striking him repeatedly in front of the entire family . Bad blood temporarily surfaces between the two but is shortly resolved after Gigi Cestone dies of an aneurysm , thereby forcing Tony to reluctantly promote Ralph to capo .

Tony begins an affair with Gloria Trillo , who is also a patient of Dr. Melfi . Their relationship is brief and tumultuous . Meanwhile , Dr. Melfi is raped . Junior is diagnosed with stomach cancer ; following chemotherapy , it goes into remission . A.J. continues to get in trouble at school ? despite success on the football team ? which culminates in his expulsion .

= = = Season 4 = = =

Tony and Christopher stake out the retirement party of Detective Lieutenant Barry Haydu , the man who murdered Christopher 's father . Tony gives Christopher Haydu 's address . When Christopher asks why he had been allowed to live all these years , Tony says that he had been valuable , but that he has outlived his worth . Christopher waits inside Haydu 's home and ambushes him as he returns from his party . Haydu vehemently denies murdering Christopher 's father , but struggles to get away , yelling " I 'm sorry ! " when Christopher goes to shoot him .

New York underboss Johnny Sack becomes enraged after learning Ralph Cifaretto made an inappropriate joke about his wife 's weight . He seeks permission from boss Carmine Lupertazzi to have Ralph clipped , but is denied . Johnny orders the hit anyway . Tony receives the okay from Carmine to hit Johnny Sack for insubordination . Junior Soprano tips Tony to use an old outfit in Providence for the work . After catching his wife eating sweets secretly , instead of following the diet plan , Johnny Sack gives in , and bloodshed is averted .

Tony and Ralph invest in a race horse named Pie @-@ O @-@ My , who wins several races and makes them both a great deal of money . However , when Ralph 's 12 @-@ year @-@ old son Justin is severely injured when an arrow plunges into his chest , Tony comes to believe Ralph burned Pie @-@ O @-@ My in a stable fire to collect \$ 200 @,@ 000 in insurance money . Tony confronts Ralph the following morning and Ralph denies setting the fire . The two engage in a violent brawl , culminating in Tony strangling Ralph to death . Tony and Christopher dispose of the body ; they bury his head and hands at Mikey Palmice 's father 's farm and throw his body into a quarry .

While he is leaving court , Uncle Junior is hit in the head with a boom mic and falls down several steps . Tony advises him to take advantage of the opportunity , act mentally incompetent , and employ it as a ruse for not continuing the trial . Later , Eugene Pontecorvo intimidates a juror , resulting in a deadlocked jury , forcing the judge to declare a mistrial .

Following the death of Bobby Baccalieri 's wife , Janice pursues a romantic relationship with him . Christopher 's addiction to heroin deepens , prompting his associates and family to organize an intervention , after which he enters a drug rehabilitation center . Adriana befriends a woman who is an undercover FBI agent . When the friendship ends , the woman reveals herself as an FBI agent and tells Adriana the only way to stay out of prison is to become an informant . Adriana agrees and starts sharing information with the FBI .

Carmela , whose relationship with Tony is tense due to financial worries and Tony 's infidelities , develops a mutual infatuation with Furio Giunta . Furio , incapable of breaking his own moral codes and that of the Neapolitan mafia , clandestinely returns home to Italy . After Tony 's former mistress calls their home , Carmela throws Tony out . Tony is approached by Johnny Sack with a proposal to murder Carmine , which Tony turns down .

= = = Season 5 = = =

A string of new characters are introduced , including Tony 's cousin Tony Blundetto , who simultaneously along with other mafiosi , is released from prison . Among the others released are former DiMeo crime family capo Michele " Feech " La Manna , Lupertazzi family capo Phil Leotardo , and semi @-@ retired Lupertazzi consigliere Angelo Garepe . Tony offers Tony B. a job , but he respectfully declines , as he is determined to lead a straight life . He initially begins to take courses to earn a degree in massage therapy and aspires to open up his own massage parlor . After Carmine Lupertazzi dies of a stroke , his death leaves a vacancy for boss of the Lupertazzi family , which will soon be fought over by underboss Johnny Sack and Carmine 's son Carmine Lupertazzi , Jr . . After Feech proves to be an insubordinate presence , Tony arranges for him to be sent back to prison by setting him up with stolen property , violating his parole .

The war between Johnny Sack and Carmine , Jr. begins when Johnny has Phil kill " lady shylock " Lorraine Calluzzo . Tony B. ' s attempt to stay straight comes to a head when he gets into a brawl with his employer Sungyon Kim . Tony informs Tony B. that " it 's hard working with strangers . " Angelo , who was a good friend to Tony B. in prison , and Lupertazzi capo Rusty Millio offer Tony B. the job of taking out Joey Peeps in retaliation for Lorraine 's death . Tony B. initially declines but , desperate to earn , accepts the job . He catches Joey outside a bordello , shoots him , and quickly flees the scene . Johnny believes Tony B. is involved , and retaliates by having Phil and his brother Billy Leotardo kill Angelo . Tony B. finds the Leotardo brothers and opens fire , killing Billy and wounding Phil .

Still separated from Carmela , Tony is living at his parents ' house . Carmela , now the sole authority figure in the home , becomes frustrated as her rules lead A.J. to resent her ; eventually she allows him to live with his father . She has a brief relationship with Robert Wegler , A.J. ' s guidance counselor ; he breaks it off abruptly when he suspects that she is manipulating him to improve A.J. ' s grades . Tony and Carmela reconcile ; Tony promises to be more loyal and agrees to pay for a piece of real estate Carmela wishes to develop .

Tony gets Meadow 's boyfriend Finn De Trolio a summer job at a construction site , which is run by Aprile crew capo Vito Spatafore . Finn comes in early one morning and catches Vito performing fellatio on a security guard . Vito tries to buddy up to Finn so that he does not say anything to anybody else . He even asks Finn to a Yankees game , which Finn does not attend . Finn soon quits the job out of fear .

After covering up a murder that occurred at The Crazy Horse , Adriana is arrested and pressured by the FBI to wear a wire to avoid being charged as an accomplice . She refuses to wear a wire and informs the FBI that she may be able to persuade her fiancé Christopher to co @-@ operate and become an informant against Tony . She confesses to Christopher that she has been informing and that the FBI would give them new identities if they would testify . Christopher is grief @-@ stricken and nearly kills her . He leaves the apartment , saying he needs time to think . Tony has Silvio pick up Adriana under the pretense of taking her to see Christopher , but instead drives her out to the woods and executes her . Adriana ' s betrayal and subsequent execution is too much for Christopher to handle and he briefly returns to drug abuse to deal with the pain .

Phil Leotardo and his henchmen beat Benny Fazio while trying to acquire the whereabouts of Tony B. ; Phil also threatens to have Christopher taken out if Tony B. ' s whereabouts are not disclosed soon . To avoid any more of his guys getting hurt and to pacify New York , Tony tracks Tony B. to their Uncle Pat 's farm and shoots him . Phil , however , is furious that he did not get the opportunity to do it himself . Tony and Johnny meet at Johnny 's house in a reconciliatory manner , but Johnny is arrested by Federal agents , while Tony escapes .

= = = Season 6 = = =

Uncle Junior , now senile and confused , shoots Tony at the beginning of the season . Rendered comatose , Tony dreams he is a salesman on a business trip , where he mistakenly exchanges his briefcase and identification with a man named Kevin Finnerty . Tony 's recovery from the shooting changes his outlook , and he tries to mend his ways . However , he is faced with more problems in his business life .

Once out of the hospital , Johnny Sack 's daughter gets married and the Soprano family attends . There , Tony is shown very exhausted when taking off his shoes through security . In the process , he collapses to the ground , but is not hurt . Before the wedding , Johnny Sack is approved to leave prison for six hours to see his daughter get married , but has to pay for the metal detectors and the presence of the U.S. marshals at the event . As his daughter is about to drive away , the SUV that was escorting Johnny to the wedding blocks the car from leaving and an altercation begins in the driveway . In a moment of weakness and despair , Johnny Sack cries as he is put back into handcuffs and driven back to prison , greatly diminishing the respect his crew and Tony 's crew have for him .

Vito Spatafore is outed as homosexual after running into a friend at a New York night club . The rumor spreads quickly , and once word gets to Meadow that everyone else knows , she tells Tony and Carmela about the incident between Finn and Vito with the security guard . Finn then has to sit in front of Tony 's entire crew and tell them what happened with the guard , solidifying their thoughts on Vito 's sexuality . Tony is urged to deal with the problem by Phil Leotardo , now acting boss of New York with Johnny Sack in prison . Once Vito is outed , he runs away from the city and hides out in a New Hampshire town where he claims to be writing a book and meets with the locals . Vito also starts a romantic relationship with a male cook at a local diner . Eventually , Vito returns to New Jersey and asks Tony to allow him to return to work , albeit in Atlantic City . He continues to maintain that he is not a homosexual . Tony mulls over the decision to let him work , as well as whether to let him live . When Tony fails to act , Phil intervenes and kills Spatafore . When one of the members of the New York family , Fat Dom Gamiello , pays a visit to the Jersey office and won 't stop making jokes about Vito and his death , the two members of Tony 's crime family who are present kill Fat Dom out of anger at the disrespect he has shown . Once more , it appears that the families are on the verge of all @-@ out war .

During the first half of the season Chris and Carmine head to Los Angeles to try to sign Ben Kingsley for a film they are trying to make called Cleaver , which is basically a mix of The Godfather and Saw . But Kingsley passes on the picture . While in Los Angeles Chris goes back to using cocaine for a short period of time .

Tony considers killing several of his associates for relatively minor infractions . Christopher is unable to leave the mob , deflecting his problems by relapsing into drug addiction and kills his friend from Narcotics Anonymous , J. T. Dolan . He is then seriously injured in a car accident while driving under the influence of narcotics . Tony , the sole passenger , is not badly hurt , and suffocates Christopher to death . A.J. is dumped by his fiancée and slips into depression , culminating in a failed suicide attempt in the backyard pool . Dr. Melfi is convinced by friends that Tony is making no progress and may even be using talking therapy for his own sociopathic benefit . She drops him as a patient .

Johnny Sack dies from lung cancer while imprisoned , and Leotardo then consolidates his position in the Lupertazzi family by having his rivals for the leadership killed . Phil then officially takes over , igniting a resumption of the past feud with Tony and refusing to compromise with Tony on a garbage

deal . When Tony assaults a Lupertazzi soldier for harassing Meadow while she is on a date , Phil decides it 's time to decapitate the Soprano crew . He orders the executions of Bobby Baccalieri , who is shot to death ; Silvio , who ends up comatose ; and Tony , who goes into hiding . A deal is brokered whereby the rest of the Lupertazzi family agrees to ignore the order to kill Tony , giving Tony an opportunity to go after Phil . An FBI agent informs Tony of Phil 's location , allowing Tony to have him killed . Tony suspects that Carlo , a capo from New Jersey , has become an informant in an attempt to help out his son , who has recently been caught for dealing ecstasy . Tony meets his lawyer , who informs him that subpoenas are being given to New Jersey and New York crews alike .

Tony , Carmela , and AJ meet for dinner , while the Journey song " Don 't Stop Believin ' " plays in the background . The camera cuts away from the Soprano family and presents vignettes of other diners . As the tension increases , Meadow is shown struggling with parking then crossing the street to the restaurant . A man , who had been previously shown at the counter specifically taking notice of Tony , is shown entering the restroom , the door of which is directly facing and approximately 90 degrees to the table at which Tony and his family are sitting . As Meadow walks up to the door , the screen goes to Tony . The diner door opens with a bell ringing , Tony looks up and the show smash cuts to black and after a few seconds the credits roll in silence .

Chase 's decision to end the last episode abruptly with just a black screen was controversial . While Chase has insisted that it was not his intention to stir controversy , the ambiguity over the ending and question of whether Tony was murdered has continued for years after the finale 's original broadcast and has spawned numerous websites devoted to finding out his true intention .

= = Reception , effect and legacy = =

= = = Ratings = = =

The Sopranos was a major ratings success . Despite being aired on premium cable network HBO , which is available in significantly fewer American homes than regular networks , the show frequently attracted equal or larger audiences than most popular network shows of the time . Nielsen ratings for the show 's first four seasons are not entirely accurate , however , as prior to January 2004 Nielsen reported aggregate numbers for cable networks , meaning people watching other HBO channels than the main one , on which The Sopranos aired , would be included in the ratings estimates .

= = = Critical response = = =

Many critics have asserted that The Sopranos is the greatest and most groundbreaking television series of all time . The writing , acting , and directing have often been singled out for praise . The show has also received considerable attention from critics and journalists for its mature and artistic content , technical merit , music selections , cinematography , and willingness to deal with difficult and controversial subjects including crime , family , gender roles , mental illness , and American and Italian American culture . The Sopranos is credited for creating a new era in the mafia genre deviating from the traditional dramatized image of the gangster in favor of a simpler , more accurate reflection of mob life . The series sheds light on Italian family dynamics through the depiction of Tony 's tumultuous relationship with his mother . Edie Falco 's character Carmela Soprano is praised in Kristyn Gorton 's essay " Why I Love Carmela Soprano " for challenging Italian @-@ American gender roles . New Yorker editor David Remnick described The Sopranos as mirroring the " mindless commerce and consumption " of modern America .

The Sopranos has been called " perhaps the greatest pop @-@ culture masterpiece of its day " by Vanity Fair contributor Peter Biskind . Remnick called the show " the richest achievement in the history of television . " In 2002 , TV Guide ranked The Sopranos fifth on their list of the " Top 50 TV Shows of All Time , " while the series was only in its fourth season . In 2007 , Channel 4 (UK)

named The Sopranos the greatest television series of all time .

The first season of the series received overwhelmingly positive reviews . Following its initial airing in 1999 , The New York Times stated , " [The Sopranos] just may be the greatest work of American popular culture of the last quarter century . " In 2007 , Roger Holland of PopMatters wrote , " the debut season of The Sopranos remains the crowning achievement of American television . "

Time Out New York ' s Andrew Johnston had high praise for the series , stating : " Together , Chase and his fellow writers (including Terence Winter and Mad Men creator Matthew Weiner) produced the legendary Great American Novel , and it ? s 86 episodes long . " Johnston asserted the preeminence of The Sopranos as opposed to Deadwood and The Wire in a debate with critics Alan Sepinwall and Matt Zoller Seitz .

In November and December 2009 , a large number of television critics named The Sopranos the best series of the decade and all time in articles summarizing the decade in television . In numbered lists over the best television programs , The Sopranos frequently ranked first or second , almost always competing with The Wire . In 2013 , TV Guide ranked The Sopranos No. 2 in its list of The 60 Greatest Dramas of All Time , In the same year , the Writers Guild of America named it the best @-@ written television series of all time and TV Guide ranked it as the greatest show of all time .

Certain episodes have frequently been singled out by critics as the show 's best . These include the pilot , titled " The Sopranos " , " College " and " I Dream of Jeannie Cusamano " of the first season ; " The Knight in White Satin Armor " and " Funhouse " of the second ; " Employee of the Month " , " Pine Barrens " and " Amour Fou " of the third ; " Whoever Did This " and " Whitecaps " of the fourth ; " Irregular Around the Margins " and " Long Term Parking " of the fifth and " Members Only " , " Join the Club " , " Kennedy and Heidi " , " The Second Coming " and " The Blue Comet " of the sixth season .

= = = Awards and nominations = = =

The Sopranos won and was nominated for a large number of awards over the course of its original broadcast . It was nominated for the Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Drama Series in every year it was eligible , and is the first cable TV series to receive a nomination for the award . After being nominated for and losing the award in 1999 , 2000 , 2001 , and 2003 (losing the first time to The Practice and the last three to The West Wing) , The Sopranos won the award in 2004 , and again in 2007 . Its 2004 win made The Sopranos the first series on a cable network to win the award , while its 2007 win made the show the first drama series since Upstairs , Downstairs in 1977 to win the award after it had finished airing . The show earned 21 nominations for Outstanding Writing for a Drama Series and won the award six times , with creator David Chase receiving three awards .

The Sopranos won at least one Emmy Award for acting in every eligible year except 2006 and 2007 . James Gandolfini and Edie Falco were each nominated six times for Outstanding Lead Actor and Actress , respectively , both winning a total of three awards . Joe Pantoliano won an Emmy for Outstanding Supporting Actor in 2003 , and Michael Imperioli and Drea de Matteo also won Emmys in 2004 for their supporting roles on the show . Other actors who have received Emmy nominations for the series include Lorraine Bracco (in the Lead Actress and Supporting Actress categories) , Dominic Chianese , Nancy Marchand , Aida Turturro , Tim Daly , John Heard , Annabella Sciorra and Steve Buscemi , who was also nominated for directing the episode " Pine Barrens " .

In 1999 and 2000 , The Sopranos earned two consecutive George Foster Peabody Awards . Only three other series have won the award in consecutive years : Northern Exposure , The West Wing , and Breaking Bad . The show also received numerous nominations at the Golden Globe Awards (winning the award for Best Drama Series in 2000) and the major guild awards (Directors , Producers , Writers , and Actors) .

= = = Influence on television industry = = =

The Sopranos had a significant impact on the shape of the American television industry . It has been characterized by critics as one of the most influential artistic works of the 2000s (decade) and

is credited with allowing other drama series with similarly mature content to achieve mainstream recognition . It has also often been cited as one of the television series that helped turn serial television into a legitimate art form on the same level as feature films , literature and theater . TIME editor James Poniewozik wrote in 2007 , " This mafia saga showed just how complex and involving TV storytelling could be , inspiring an explosion of ambitious dramas on cable and off . " Also in 2007 , Maureen Ryan of PopMatters described The Sopranos as " the most influential television drama ever " and wrote " No one @-@ hour drama series has had a bigger impact on how stories are told on the small screen , or more influence on what kind of fare we ? ve been offered by an ever @-@ growing array of television networks . " Hal Boedeker , also writing for PopMatters in 2007 , stated that the series was " widely influential for revealing that cable would accommodate complex series about dark characters . The Sopranos ushered in Six Feet Under , The Shield , Rescue Me and Big Love . "

The series helped establish HBO as producers of critically acclaimed and commercially successful original television series . Michael Flaherty of The Hollywood Reporter has stated that The Sopranos " helped launch [HBO 's] reputation as a destination for talent looking for cutting @-@ edge original series work . "

= = = Depiction of stereotypes = = =

The show has been frequently criticized for perpetuating negative stereotypes about Italian Americans . Virtually all major Italian American organizations , including the National Italian American Foundation , Order Sons of Italy in America , Unico National and the Italic Institute of America voiced their concern that The Sopranos presents , as reality , a very distorted and harmful stereotype of Italian Americans and their cultural values .

In 2000 , Essex County officials denied producers permission to film on county @-@ owned property , arguing that the show depicts Italian Americans in a " less than favorable light . " In 2002 , organizers of the New York City Columbus Day Parade won an injunction to keep Mayor Michael Bloomberg from inviting cast members of The Sopranos to participate in the parade .

Fairleigh Dickinson University 's PublicMind found , in an August 2001 national survey , that 37 % of the 800 people polled said they watched the show regularly , and 65 % of this group (192 people , or 24 % of the total) disagreed that the show portrayed Italian Americans in a negative way . Professor William Roberts , an academic associated with the poll , and author of several books on modern Italian history commented that : " The show 's inflated image of organized crime casts a shadow over both the state and its Italian @-@ American community . "

At the end of the series the PublicMind conducted a second national survey on the Soprano series . In this poll 41 % of the 776 people polled said they watched the show regularly , and 61 % of this group (194 people , or 25 % of the total) disagreed with the idea that the show portrayed Italian Americans in a negative light . Professor Roberts , by then chair of Fairleigh Dickinson 's Public Administration Institute , stated that : " The show helped to perpetuate one of the more problematic and stereotypical images of Italian Americans . Both Italian and Italian @-@ American cultures have much more diverse and interesting heritages than the American public generally realizes . "

Humanities professor Camille Paglia , herself an Italian American , has spoken negatively about The Sopranos , arguing that its depiction of Italian @-@ Americans was inaccurate , inauthentic , dated and racist .

Chase has defended his show , saying that it is not meant to stereotype all Italian Americans , only to depict a small criminal subculture .

= = DVD and Blu @-@ ray Disc releases = =

All six seasons were released as DVD box sets , with the final season released in two parts ; two different versions of the complete series were also released .

In addition , the sixth season (both parts 1 and 2) were also released on Blu @-@ ray Disc and HD DVD in 2006 and 2007 , respectively . The first season was released on Blu @-@ ray in 2009 .

A complete series box set was released on Blu @-@ ray on November 4 , 2014 .