

Mad Men: "The Jet Set" (Recap)

By Tom Rose
Fancast.com



Mad Men "The Jet Set." (AMC)

Now we're talking. Last night on [Mad Men](#) the entire episode felt like a dream sequence, a trick that Matthew Weiner has pulled off before (most notably with Tony Soprano as a Mid-Western business man) but rarely have the results been so satisfying. In fact, Betty rarely makes an appearance (except as a phantom look-alike at a Pasadena hotel poolside bar) and the show focuses on the "cats away, mice will play" maneuverings on both coasts. Creative cadges a business lunch and charges it to the no-show Right Guard people, and Duck decides if he's going to become a partner and edge Don out of the picture, he'll have to draw deeply from the well - a bathtub filled with gin.

The episode opens on a curvy leg under the sheets at the Sherry - Netherland. It belongs to Jane and as the camera slides up the flawless curves she's reciting poetry. "Who wrote that?" asks Roger. "I write a lot of poetry when I'm inspired." To be fair, the verse is little more than doggerel, but Roger bites. He tells Jane he loves her with all the air of a doomed man. It's been hinted at all this season. Is Roger dying? It would explain this fling after 30 years of marriage. He asks Jane to marry him and Jane like. Jane like very much.

Since Don has unexpectedly flown off to the Space convention in Pasadena with Peter, the office is hopping with naughty behavior. In the Right Guard idea meeting Peggy agrees to a break with lunch on the client. They're not invited. She angles for a date to see Bob Dylan with Kurt, the hot-shot young new talent that American Airlines insisted on before they went down in flames. Everybody else can see that it's a relationship that will go nowhere: Kurt's about to become the first openly gay character on '60s TV, but Peggy is blinded by hope. Sal is blinded by lust. The race is on to see who gets to wear lavender to the office first.

As the camera opens poolside in Pasadena, Don watches the action looking like The

Man In The Grey Flannel Suit, literally. Pete sidles up and explains "this is why I booked a day early." He knows the concierge can come up with some swimming trunks in no time, but Don is all business. "Pete, if you want a vacation, I can arrange it." Campbell is reduced to bellhop status as he explains that the airline lost Don's baggage. Looks like Don has too. At the poolside bar a pseudo European Royal type introduces himself to Don, explaining that a young lady in his group is intrigued by Don's ability to seem content all alone, surrounded by people. This just after Don sees Betty as an apparition barside. The young lady, Joy, snaps him out of it, quick. But Don, still holding on, declines an invitation to dinner.

Back in NYC Roger sits with his lawyer who is against the breakup with Mona. But Roger is set. "I don't want to die with that woman." The esquire sees the writing on the wall and gives in. As he leaves, Duck Phillips shows up. He makes a play with Roger for a partnership at the firm. He's been there 2 years and done his share of the heavy lifting. Roger is blunt. "You haven't exactly delivered on that 30 percent you promised." If Duck wants to move up, a new game plan is in order. He leaves the office with Roger's advice ringing in his ears. "If I were you, I'd go out there and make rain." Looks like it's gonna pour.

At the opening meeting in Pasadena a scientist talks about the future of mass destruction, enthusiastically pitching the MIRV missile, capable of 50 Nagasakis in one warhead. His matter of fact pitch includes a picture of the Russian landscape being wiped off the map. Don is stoically silent, with barely a grimace. Those piercing eyes tell me however, that he's either had a great idea for the next MIRV commercial, or his darkest fears are true: we're all gonna burn anyway. Have some fun before you go Don.

At the valet station in front of the hotel, Joy appears like a dream come true. She's getting her car and driving off to Palm Springs... wouldn't Don like to come? "Why would you deny yourself something you want?" Don blows Peter and General Dynamics off and climbs into the convertible. At the pool Pete explains away Don's absence: Don must be making a phone call. Long distance.

In Palm Springs we see Joy's group of, as she describes them "the Nomads." They don't work, although they all have an upper class vocation. They just party through life. Sounds like a precursor to the Hippy movement - without the mud. Don, still in his suit, faints dead away and is revived by the Hippy physician in the group. "You, my friend, are suffering from heat exhaustion." He tries to inject Don with a mystery shot, but Don only wants water and an aspirin.



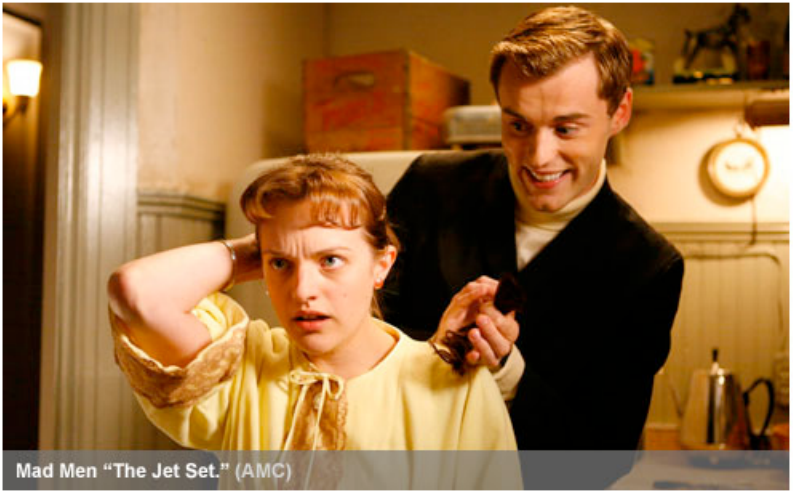
When dinner convenes later, Don is both revived and in a rare, congenial mood. And he's lost the Brylcreem and replaced the suit with a polo shirt and Dockers from one of the nomads' closet. He looks absolutely smashing playing the urbane NY biz exec ready for some fun. Joy falls hard. Right into bed. "Who are you?" asks Don. "I'm joy." Don is buying.

In the coffee break room back at Sterling Cooper a truckload of donuts is delivered to Ken. It's a weekly offering, signaling a big deal signing soon. Kurt takes the opportunity to proclaim his gayness to dispel the notion that a date to see Dylan with Peggy is romantic. "I make love with the men, not the voman" says Kurt in his Slavic tongue. Glazed topping drops from every jaw. Sal's has a bit of cream. "He's from Europe. Things are different there." But the Mad Men will be looking for another bathroom from now on.

Don and Joy wake to the wonders of Faulkner. The elderly gent who introduced them at the bar comes in and can't help remarking to Don "You. Are beautiful." That's when we find out Joy is his daughter. A very unconventional family dynamic. Don is seeing the light now. There is another world out there. And he wants to run it.

Back at the hotel Pete gets his wish to mix business with pleasure. The MIA Don has forced him to meet with the space cadets on his own so he decides to make it poolside. Something tells me he'll close the deal.

In Manhattan, Duck meets with his old boss from London just before a tour of the Cadbury factory. The fobs are lapping up the gin and offer Duck a round. Phillips tries to hold on to sobriety, but after the meeting with Roger, it's time for an old tactic. As he drains his glass for the first time in 2 years, the elixir rejuvenates his Adman killer instinct. Sterling is about to be fleeced by the old lady in a divorce and he'll be needing a bucket of cash. Duck promises to deliver S&C's clients with nary a conflict if the London boys buy the firm. "All you have to do is change the Welcome mat."



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Peggy meets with Kurt pre-Dylan and offers a glass of wine. It goes directly to her head and she wonders aloud "what's wrong with me?" Kurt has the answer... "I fix you." Turns out he's also a beautician. Who knew? As he lops off her ponytail and bangs, Peggy feels the old woman fall away to reveal the new Peggy. A thought crosses her eyes and as Jerry would say, "Conversion? You want to get him to switch teams?" But Kurt is happier with his own equipment.

In the pool with Joy, Don learns about off-shore tax breaks for the first time. She wants Don to run away with her and live with Dad. "He likes you. You're beautiful and don't talk much." But when Joy's brother-in-law pops up with the kids, tired and crabby from the long trip, the spell is broken. There is no escaping your problems, even with a phony passport.

Duck has a case of gin delivered to the office by a secret admirer from Piccadilly Circus. The war is on. Pete arrives back from Cali just as the boys watch President Kennedy on TV throwing down the gauntlet in the Civil Rights movement by calling in the National Guard. Pete's trip to Pasadena was spectacular, business-wise, but "I wouldn't want to live there." It's the people. They're strange. But Ken is more interested in the news at home. "Kurt's a homo." "What?" asks a bewildered Peter. Get used to it Pete.

Duck pops some minty Lifesavers before his meeting with Sterling & Cooper. He lays out the deal for the London merger and Coop likes the sound. "There's the man I've been hearing about all these years." As far as price, he'll take an offer. "Let them be the first to open the kimono."

Don awakes from his dream trip to the sound of laughing children by the pool. He's on the couch. Does that mean he banished Joy from his heart? He opens his wallet to retrieve a phone number. When the other party answers he says "Hello. This is Dick Whitman." He arranges a rendezvous with a ghost from his past who shall, for now, remain nameless. I have a feeling it's the recipient of the book mailed anonymously in the first episode.

As the show closes Don's lost luggage is delivered to the house. There's a knock at the door, but nobody's home. There will be a lot more baggage being dropped in the last two episodes this season, and not all of it Don's. Don't miss it.

Mad Men "The Jet Set": Old habits die hard

by Alan Sepinwall/The Star-Ledger

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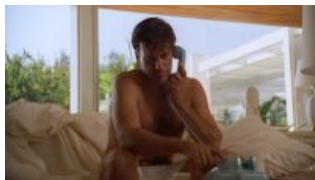


Spoilers for "**Mad Men**" season 2, episode 11 coming up just as soon as I change my hairstyle...

"Hello, it's Dick Whitman."

Especially taken back-to-back, "The Inheritance" and "The Jet Set" are the two most unsettling (or, if you're feeling less generous, frustrating) "Mad Men" episodes to date. Last week, we spent most of our time with the show's two most emotionally remote (or, IYFLG, dull) characters in Betty and Pete, while Don was largely a bystander, or simply absent. Tonight, we got a lot of action (by "Mad Men" standards) at the Sterling Cooper offices, but Don spent the hour in a remote location, surrounded by strange people and not acting remotely like the man we know. (That's the point, of course, which I'll be getting to in a minute.)

But those four words -- hearing the Don Draper of 1962 almost casually refer to himself by the name he's worked so hard to escape -- and the possibilities contained therein compensated for any of the problems I had with either episode. When I heard those words, all complaints were immediately replaced with questions: Who is he calling? Who on earth could be important enough to Don that he wouldn't have a problem acknowledging his true identity, when he essentially drove his brother to suicide by denying it? Is this the blonde from the 1950s car dealership flashback? The woman he sent the poetry book to? Are those two women one and the same?



And, in many ways, the use of the Dick Whitman name fit perfectly in an episode whose two main characters (Don and Duck) recklessly lapsed back

into old personas: Don as the runaway hobo, Duck as aggressive, hard-drinking wheeler-dealer.

Now, there are moments in "Mad Men" that require a lot of deep thought to decode. The final scene of "The Jet Set" isn't one of them. Don has already gone on this trip to escape the collapse of his marriage, and for him to wind up in California literally without any baggage -- and for that same baggage to wind up back at the Ossining house (where Betty has been having nightmares about suitcases) while Don resumes calling himself Dick Whitman -- well... it doesn't take an aerospace engineer to figure that one out.

Don's inner hobo, having already awoken when Don returned to the near-empty office last week, takes full control after that doomsday slide show (which Mo Ryan very astutely pointed out to me is like the dark mirror image of Don's Kodak sales pitch in "The Wheel") and winds up throwing in his lot with a group of rich Europeans who are even more-hobo-than-thou: rich and cultured enough to easily move from place to place, identity to identity (Willie treats Joy as his friend rather than his daughter) and never worrying about the consequences. Note the look on Willie's face when Pete asks if they ever met each other in Newport; it's the same expression we saw on Don's face when one of his old Army buddies bumped into him on the train last season. These are people who do not want to be recognized by anyone who knows them from a past stopover.



And you can see how Don starts to feel intoxicated being in their world. He's never fit in anywhere in the world, has at best done a good job of faking it, and here he's found fellow nomads, including a pretty young thing with a sexual appetite to match his own, and one who has no hang-ups about monogamy. But Don Draper's life isn't left behind as easily as his luggage; when he gets a look at the two small, sad children who are being dragged around the world by these dilettantes, he realizes that even his inner hobo has his limits. It doesn't send Don running back to his own kids (the same ones he was more than willing to abandon for Rachel Menken last year), but it at least puts the brakes on any thought of heading to Nassau with this crowd. (Or is he simply inviting the mystery person on the other end of that phone to join him?)

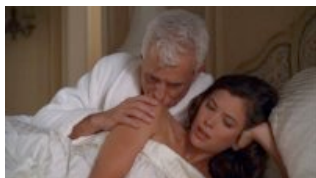
If it's uncomfortable to spend an hour with Don acting so quiet and passive, it at least matches the glimpses we got of him as Dick Whitman last season. Don Draper is master of all he surveys; Dick Whitman was a coward who pissed himself after a battle and tried to abandon his family to avoid getting into trouble at work. Don Draper is in charge at meetings; Dick Whitman collapses from heat exhaustion. (In a shot that I assume required a special kind of camera rig.)



Adding to the episode's sense of dislocation were a number of Fellini-esque touches: the almost menacing casualness of Willie's group (note Klaus' disappointment when Don declined to be injected with "medicine"), the glimpses of the woman at the hotel bar who looked like Betty in a certain light (and, for all I know, was played by January Jones in some of those

shots), and, especially, the way that in certain scenes as Joy, [Laura Ramsey](#) sounded **exactly** like January Jones. (Seriously: I had to rewatch the bit where Joy talks Don into coming with her to Palm Springs about seven or eight times to figure out whether Jones was just dubbing in the voice; an AMC publicist says that's Ramsey's voice the whole time.)

And making the Palm Springs sojourn more unsettling is our knowledge of what's going on back in New York, with Roger bracing himself for an expensive divorce so he can have his midlife crisis marriage to Jane, while Duck tries to take advantage of Roger's fiscal crisis and Don's absence to plot a Sterling Cooper palace coup.



Just as Don retreats back into his Dick Whitman habits, Duck returns to the behavior that made him such a star -- and then such a cautionary tale -- during his time in London. As Bert Cooper exclaims, not realizing that Duck has just nervously chewed a few breath mints to cover the smell of Tanqueray on his breath, "There he is! There's the man I heard so much about."

Though Duck has been set up as the antagonist to Don this season, it's hard not to feel for him, and not just because Mark Moses is so superb in the role. (Another scene I had to rewatch a bunch of times, but for different reasons: the very long pause that Duck takes after having what appears to be his first drink in years.) After his meltdown in London, he came back to America to reclaim his family and some professional respect, but his wife is remarrying, his kids are too old to need him, his dog is wandering the streets of Manhattan (if he's lucky; and this one is all Duck's fault), and his time at Sterling Cooper has largely been a failure, which Roger tells him in a blunt but not overly nasty way when Duck inquires about becoming a partner. It's hard to blame him for going back to his old mates from across the pond and making a bold power play.

The question is, will he be functional enough to pull it off? The scene in the restaurant with St. John Powell and the way Duck reacted to the gin passing his lips suggested I was wrong in my belief that he had resumed drinking earlier in the season. (My new guess is he sent Chauncey away because the pooch was too great a reminder of his drinking days.) So we don't know exactly how well he works once he's drinking, especially now that he's got that crate of liquor in his office to tempt him all hours of the day.

With only two episodes left in the season, this creates a lot of interesting possibilities for a potential season three, as Sterling Cooper gets to play with the big boys but also isn't in charge of its own destiny anymore. We know Don's going to come back to New York eventually -- the show wouldn't reinvent itself that much -- but he's really going to be kicking himself for checking out at this particular moment in time. The chaos that I expect this deal to create might give him enough cover to avoid getting in trouble for bailing on the aerospace convention, but I suspect he's not going to appreciate becoming a cog in a much bigger machine, whether or not Duck is the man running it.

Some other thoughts on "The Jet Set":

- Peggy also finds herself in a familiar pattern: developing feelings for a guy who for some reason (Pete because he's a sociopath, Father Gill because of his vows, Kurt because he's gay) can't reciprocate. But she seems on the road to breaking out of that pattern with a little hairstyling help from Kurt. We've already seen Peggy slowly reinvent her wardrobe (she'd have ditched the little girl clothes altogether, I expect, if she had a higher salary) and now she looks very much like a woman of the '60s in a flip 'do that's part Mary Tyler Moore as Laura Petrie, part Marlo Thomas as That Girl.



- I'd object more to the whole Fairy Godfather thing with Kurt -- He's so nice to poor Peggy! And he's a fabulous hairdresser! -- if the scene where he came out of the closet to his colleagues wasn't one of the funniest scenes in the history of the series. As Joan, Harry and Ken struggled to find something to say in response to his declaration of his sexuality, I laughed so hard it eventually morphed into a painful wheeze. And then, just as I was on the verge of pausing for air, I caught a glimpse of Salvatore's face and saw so many emotions -- fear, envy, and, after Ken's slur about not wanting to work with "queers," heartbreak -- washing over it. Just like Mark Moses' bit with the martini, Bryan Batt gave a little acting master class in that moment.



- Roger's been reading too much ad copy, claiming that his marriage to Jane will give him "the life I was always meant to have." Based on his surprise at learning she had composed that poem at the episode's opening -- and Jane's awareness of what was behind that surprise -- I don't see this relationship lasting any longer than it takes either one to get bored with the other, which

should be... how many episodes do we have left again?

- Another wonderful Salvatore moment (that, in retrospect, was a nice set-up for Kurt's coming out party): while discussing TV last night, Sal gets visibly upset at discussing "The Loretta Young Show," and then explains that he was nauseated by the ugly costumes and decor.

- Harry's reaction to the trouble down in Mississippi (why should people stir up trouble and give others reason not to watch TV?) and to Kurt's sexuality (calling him a pervert) make it pretty clear which side of the cultural divide he's going to be on as the series moves further into the '60s.

- If you watch the episode again, take a look at how Joan reacts whenever Smitty (the shorter, American of the two Smiths) is around. He clearly throws her off her game: she's not prepared for someone this young and not classically handsome being this flirtatious with her. In her own way, Joan may have just as tough a time adjusting to the '60s as Harry, because all the sexual rules she plays by are going to be thrown out the window.

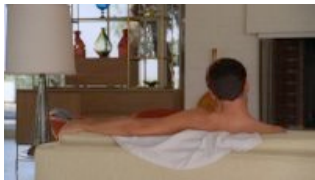
- Do you think Pete is going to hold Don playing hooky from the rocket fair over his head? Or would the writers not want to conclude two seasons in a row with Pete trying to blackmail Don with some damaging information? While he was embarrassed to be left at that initial meeting, Pete seemed to adjust to flying solo just fine by our next glimpse of him at poolside.



- Bob Dylan's eponymous debut album came out in March of 1962, and we're at least into late summer, if not early fall of the year by now. I wonder if season two will also close with a Dylan song. (And a non-anachronistic one, at that.)

- I blessedly watched very little of "The Nanny," so when Charles Shaughnessy turned up as St. John Powell, I didn't have the automatic "Oh, Mr. Sheffield!" reflex. On the other hand, I knew how to spell his name because I had watched a lot of "Airwolf" as a kid and Stringfellow Hawke's missing brother was a "Sinzhin."

- Yet again, we get a shot of Don reclining on a couch in the same pose as the opening credits. Has there been one in every episode this season and I'm only noticing it some of the time?



- I tried and I tried and I tried -- employing Photoshop at one point to try to enhance a screen capture -- but I could not successfully make out what name (if it was a name; it could have been an address) Don wrote down in Joy's copy of "The Sound and the Fury."

Just a reminder: no talking about anything in the previews for next week's episode.

What did everybody else think?

See more in [Alan Sepinwall](#)