

# The sopranos



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Page 1 Now revised and expanded, including a very revealing radio interview with David Chase in April of 2008! \*Dozens of new visuals on all 4 pages and new content (“ Death and David Chase”) added to Part II. \*\*Check out an incredible Sopranos tribute video at the end of page 4. \*Note from author (December 6, 2010): Its been over three years since the finale of the Sopranos, yet the ending continues to be discussed and debated to this day. My piece has become more popular than I ever could have imagined but speaks to the viewer’s love of the show.

If this piece has done anything, it has illuminated for many people the show’s depth and artistic vision, the true genius of David Chase and his writers, and how the show fulfilled its early promise when the New York Times called the show “ The greatest work of popular culture of the past quarter century” back in 1999. I cannot tell you how many e-mails I have received from fans relaying how much this piece made them truly appreciate the artistry of the show and how they re-watched the entire series again after reading it.

Those final few minutes of the final episode is truly the greatest scene in the history of the medium; a scene constructed as a culmination of 8 years and 86 hours of epic storytelling. Chase created the scene for the fans who were willing to dig beneath the surface and see exactly how much thought and creativity went into every tiny detail of this show. The final scene has solidified the show as the greatest in television history (with all apologies to “ The Wire”), a show that is working on levels that could not possibly be comprehended on first viewing.

Some of have complained that I have the gall to call the piece “ Definitive,” but I think it has received more attention for that very fact (perhaps I should have meekly called the piece “ This is what I think happened”). Of course, I know it is not “ definitive” (only Chase knows, and I certainly have never heard from him) but I feel strongly that it is mostly correct. I also know that some of arguments may be stretching things a bit but that is part of the fun (those “ lesser” arguments often appear later in the piece).

Chase has given us a gift to be pored over and discussed forever. He has raised the bar for all shows to follow (for those looking for the current truly great series, I would recommend “ Mad Men” and “ Breaking Bad”) and for that we should all be thankful.... INTRODUCTION: “ If you look at the final episode really carefully, it’s all there. ”\* These are David Chase’s words regarding the finale of the Sopranos. He is right, it is “ all there”.

This is the definitive explanation why Tony died in Holsten’s in the final scene of The Sopranos. The following is based on a thorough analysis of the final season of the show and will clear up one of the most misunderstood endings in film or television history. Chase took almost two years to construct the final season of the show after the fifth season ended in June of 2004. The ending was orchestrated years in advance and is the culmination of an artist in complete control of his vision.

Part 1 will demonstrate how Chase directed, edited and scored the final scene of the Sopranos to lead to the interpretation that Tony was shot in the head in Holsten’s and how this ties into the “ never hear it happen” concept that Chase hammered into the viewer before the show’s final scene. This

explanation will be supported by words from David Chase himself, including a very revealing, largely unknown, radio interview of Chase in April of 2008. Part I will also discuss (and debunk) the other theories about the end including the “ Tony always looking over his shoulder” interpretation.

Part II will concentrate on what Tony’s death means and how his death was thematically constructed throughout the final season. Part III will focus on the use of symbolism in Holsten’s. Part IV will focus on The Godfather influence on the final season and Tony’s death. Part V will focus on how the final episode and final scene are linked to America’s war on terrorism. Part VI will concentrate on the “ fun stuff” created by Chase and his creative team to foreshadow Tony’s death. Part VII will discuss the possible inspiration of two films on the ending of The Sopranos.

Part VIII will speculate as to who may have killed Tony. Part IX will discuss the influence of Stanley Kubrick’s 2001: A Space Odyssey on the point of view pattern and the final scene. Some of these topics will overlap but the ultimate conclusion is the same: Tony’s death is the only ending that makes sense. \*Note: Chase’s original quote to the NJ Star Ledger the day after the finale aired is “ Anybody who wants to watch it, it’s all there”. Chase’s subsequent quote regarding the finale “ If you look at the final episode really arefully, it’s all there” was published in a UK newspaper on September 9, 2007 as the final episodes were set to air in the UK. The modified quote strongly suggests Tony’s death since there is essentially no reason to look at the final scene “ really carefully” if Tony lived as he is clearly alive the last time we see him. TABLE OF CONTENTS: Part I: How David Chase killed Tony Soprano: A look at the directing and editing in the final scene and the “

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Never hear it Happen” concept laid out by David Chase. Plus a closer look at why the other theories about the end just don’t hold up.

Part II: What does Tony’s death mean? How the themes of the final season and all 86 hours of the show lead to a family dinner in a small diner in New Jersey. This section also includes: Part II epilogue: “ It’s all a big nothing”: Death and David Chase. Part II subsection A: “ Two endings for a guy like me” Part II subsection B: “ Holsten’s is the consensus”: Carmela in the final season. Part III: The Symbolism of Holsten’s. Part IV: The final season and The Godfather. Part V: How 9/11, terrorism and the U. S. ar in Iraq unlock the keys to the final scene in Holsten’s. Part VI: Miscellaneous “ Fun Stuff” that could only be created by David Chase. Part VII: The Public Enemy and Goodfellas influence on the end of The Sopranos. This section also includes Part VII addition: The real life inspiration for the ending. Part VIII: Who Killed Tony? Part IX: Kubrick’s 2001 influence on the POV pattern and the final scene. PART I: How David Chase killed Tony Soprano: A look at the directing and editing in the final scene and the “ Never hear it Happen” concept laid out by David Chase.

Plus a closer look at why the other theories about the end just don’t hold up.

I. THE FINAL SCENE IN HOLSTEN’S IN “ MADE IN AMERICA”: Mr. Chase structures the final scene so that a significant portion of it is shown through Tony’s “ Point of View” (POV) so that the viewer experiences Tony being murdered. Here is a basic definition (from Wikipedia) of establishing a Point of View shot (POV): “ A point of view shot (also known as POV shot or a subjective camera) is a short film scene that shows what a character (the subject) is looking at (represented through the camera).

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It is usually established by being positioned between a shot of a character looking at something, and a shot showing the character's reaction (see shot reverse shot)" More importantly, Chase uses the ringing of the bell of the door of Holsten's to signal to the viewer when he will be using the traditional point of view shot discussed above (character looking at something/cut to a shot of what the character is looking at from the character's POV/cut back to a shot of the character, usually for the reaction).

This is repeated five times in the final scene to create a " pattern" that logically concludes that the last " shot" of the series (10 seconds of black and silence) is from Tony's POV. The implication being that Tony sees " blackness" and " nothingness". Tony is dead. So how exactly does Chase do it? A: Tony walks into Holsten's and a bell is heard. The door of Holsten's has a bell that rings every time someone enters the restaurant. Tony enters and Chase starts with a straight-ahead full shot of Tony looking at something in the diner.

The scene then cuts to a clear Tony point-of-view shot (hereafter Tony's POV) establishing the geography of Holsten's. Tony sees the whole diner which consists of mostly booths and a counter to his left with stools. Chase then cuts back to the prior angle but Tony's face is shown in close up (still looking straight ahead). The next cut is the Tony POV shot of the inside of the diner just shown previously except Tony is now sitting down at one of the tables in the middle of the frame (this is often called a " jump cut" as Tony is never seen walking to his table).

This opening sequence in the diner readies the viewer that they will be seeing certain things from Tony's POV. The awkward "jump cut" establishes that Tony's POV will be straight to the door (this will be critical) and that Meadow will have a clear view of Tony's murder when she enters Holsten's. The "jump cut" also further signals the importance of Tony's POV in the sequence because the viewer now has the same POV shot that Tony just had previously (Chase is subliminally putting "us" in Tony's head space).