

AV INDEPENDENT

True TV: 'Notorious' Is Criminally Dumb; 'Van Helsing' Puts a Femme Spin on the Vampocalypse

Written by Bill Frost



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Notorious (Thursday, Sept. 22, ABC), series debut: A really, really, really ridiculously good-looking lawyer (Daniel Sunjata) and really, really, really ridiculously good-looking news producer (Piper Perabo) delve into “the unique, sexy and dangerous interplay of criminal law and the media” in a beyond-stupid mash-up of *The Newsroom* and *Law and Order* with a vanilla title. (Considering its other useless new legal drama, *Conviction*, it’s like ABC isn’t even trying.) *Notorious* is based on a real-life behind-the-scenes media/law relationship that existed on ye olde *Larry King Live*,

pping the “Who Gives a Shit?” quotient by 10. Don’t worry; *Scandal* will be back before anyone notices.



Pitch (Thursday, Sept. 22, Fox), series debut: Female pitcher Ginny Baker (Kylie Bunbury) is called up to play Major League Baseball for the San Diego Padres because *shut up you sexist troll; it could totally happen, and why do you hate stories about strong women making their way in a man’s world?* Pure intentions and Bunbury’s impressive performance aside, *Pitch* isn’t the statement-making pinnacle of the fall season that Fox wants it to be, and *definitely* not the 10-season journey that co-creator Dan Fogelman envisions: It’s an overanxious, overacted mess that will probably annoy feminists and baseball fans alike—common ground for disparate camps! Mission accomplished?



MacGyver (Friday, Sept. 23, CBS), series debut: Despite a few done-to-death spy-ops clichés (bickering about old missions gone wrong, hiring quirky-hot criminal hackers, playing dress-up at the gala, etc.), the CBS reboot of 1985-1992 series *MacGyver* delivers a surprisingly fast and fun pilot episode—one down, 12 to go. It’s also inconsequential covert fluff that makes 2010’s *MacGruber* takeoff look like *The Bourne Identity*, but, c’mon, it’s Friday night. Lucas Till may look too young to be this accomplished at, well, MacGyvering, but he’s charming as hell, and co-star George Eads provides unexpected comic relief after all those years of *CSI* grimacing. Speaking of *CSI*: Is it necessary to apply slick graphics and labels to *every* object MacGyver 2.0 manipulates? We can recognize a paper clip without a freeze frame.



The Exorcist (Friday, Sept. 23, Fox), series debut: Remember A&E’s quickly failed *Damien* series? Neither does Fox. *The Exorcist*, of course, is based on the iconic 1973 horror film that managed to wrap up a hellacious case of demonic possession in about two hours; Fox has 13 hours to fill. When young, skeptical Father Tomas (Alfonso Herrera) and haggard, consumed Father Keane (Ben Daniels) convene/collide in Chicago to investigate an evil household presence (keep your mother-in-law jokes to yourself), the result is spooky, atmospheric and ... not much else. The result is kind of a letdown, considering that this is *THE EXORCIST* and all. Cue up Cinemax’s satanically superior *Outcast* instead.



Van Helsing (Friday, Sept. 23, Syfy), series debut: You may have caught the first episode of *Van Helsing* when Syfy snuck in a surprise preview of the new action-drama after *Sharknado 4* in July—or not, because, *Sharknado*. This vampire hunter is a woman (Vanessa Van Helsing, played by Kelly Overton), but that’s not the only twist: Vamps in this universe age; they can be turned back to human by being bitten by Helsing (!);

and *VH*'s showrunner is divisive film director Neil LaBute. It all works; Van Helsing is Syfy's best-yet entry in its comeback line of sci-fi dramas led by ass-kicking females, improving on recent winners like *Wynonna Earp*, *Killjoys*, *Dark Matter* and *The Magicians*. Now let's take a moment to forget that Hugh Jackman movie ...



Channel Zero, Aftermath (Tuesday, Sept. 27, Syfy), series debut: If the current season of *American Horror Story* isn't creepy enough for you, here's *Channel Zero*, a new anthology series based on tales of creepypasta (Internet urban legends); first up is "Candle Cove," wherein a man digs up increasingly disturbing memories of a kiddie TV show from his childhood. How bad could it be? How about a flesh-eating skeleton puppet and a child made entirely of teeth? *Channel Zero*'s implied terror and imagery is more effective than its dramatic execution, and the same goes for its Tuesday-night companion, *Aftermath*, which is yet another supernatural-apocalypse series—but this time, it's about family! Mom is Anne Heche, so just bring on The End already.