

# Mike's Film Talk

## Van Helsing: Season One Premiere (Preview)

Spoiler Free By: Michael Knox-Smith



SyFy and Nomadic Pictures have teamed up to bring a new heroine to the small screen. *Van Helsing* is about a post apocalyptic world in the very near future. With two cast members from *Hell on Wheels* (along with its showrunner) and a plot that is evocative of *30 Days of Night* and *Daybreakers*, the new series could be seen as a reread of sorts.

It is not.

There are, however, glimpses of either homages or slight nods and winks to films in the “apocalyptic” genre. (Yes we know that is not a proper genre category but by this time, with so many of these films out there, it should be.) At its core however, *Van Helsing* is about vampires, many different kinds, and about dwindling numbers of human survivors.

In many ways it can be seen as a sort of mix of the vamps in “Night” and those

weird aberrations taking over New York in *The Strain*. This new survival horror (or fantasy as IMDb classes it) can be seen as a “coat of many colours.”

A mixture of tropes and themes that work well in the premiere. In the first three episodes, there are a number of characters in the verse. There are, however, only a few at the center of everything.

Van Helsing, played by Kelly Overton (*Legends, True Blood*) is of course the pivotal character. She is protected by the extremely focussed Marine Sergeant Axel Miller, played by Jonathan Scarfe (*Hell on Wheels, Ties that Bind*).

Doc is played by Rukiya Bernard and another *Hell on Wheels* alumnus Christopher Heyerdahl plays Sam, a deaf/mute. He is joined by Mohamad (Trezzo Mahoro).

On the vampire side is leader Dimitri (Paul Johansson) who commands an enormous amount of vampires.

*Van Helsing* is introduced in a time, literally three years from now, where everything is pretty dire. Miller is holding on to his original mission while all around him the world has gone to hell in a hand basket.

Vanessa Van Helsing has a secret, or two, and the vampires are desperate to get hold of her, dead or alive. She is a strong female character who is determined to find her missing daughter.

This tale is a bit science fiction with a little horror mixed in. There is also enough action and drama to keep things interesting for those who are not fans of the “undead.”

Overton is very convincing as the slightly confused and reluctant savior of mankind. Scarfe comes over very well as the good guy this time around, after his all too horrid Sydney Snow in *Hell on Wheels*.

Scarfe's fellow “Wheels” colleague, Heyerdahl has been given a character that relies upon sign language to communicate. It is a nice touch and allows the actor to rest his soothing tones.

Bernard gives Doc a bit of humor and pathos all mixed in together.

Showrunner Neil LeBute (*Hell on Wheels, Bill & Billie*) has delivered a series that focusses less on the hugger mugger trappings of traditional vampire mythology and zeroed in on the “reality” of the situation.

*Van Helsing* airs 23 September on Syfy. Tune in and catch this two hour premiere and see what you think of the newest heroine in town.