



# HELP ME! SYFY'S "VAN HELSING" IS OUR NEW SUNSHINE ON TELEVISION!

*AUGUST 1, 2016 JOE GRODENSKY*



*Since February, Universal Monsters Universe has been filling you in on everything that is Syfy's Van Helsing from Kelly Overton, to filming, and to San Diego Comic Con. This past weekend, Syfy aired an advanced showing of the pilot episode, commercial-free. We must say, it was a bloody forty-five minutes!*

"Pilot" Aired July 31, 2016 \*\*\*\*\* stars  
Written by: Neil LaBute and Jonathan Walker  
Directed by Michael Nankin  
\*spoilers contained within\*



**VAN HELSING – "HELP ME" EPISODE 101 – PICTURED: RUKIYA BERNARD AS DOC  
– (PHOTO BY: DAN POWER/HELISING S1 PRODUCTIONS/SYFY)**

**Van Helsing** begins in 2019 after a volcano has wiped out the western United States. Those who initially survived turned on each other as resources began to go scarce. They began to turn into vampires who prey on human flesh. Axel (Jonathan Scarfe), a former Marine, holes up in a Seattle hospital where he keeps human-turned-vampire Doc (Rukiya Bernard) in a cage until he can find a way to help her. We're introduced to the main cast – a group of survivors including Sam (Christopher Heyerdahl), Nicole (Alison Wandzura), Mohamed (Oliver Mahoro Smith aka Trezzo Mahoro) and Ted (Tim Guinee). As the hospital is being overrun, Vanessa Helsing (Kelly Overton) awakens from her coma showing the vampires, and the team, what she is capable of.



**VAN HELSING – “HELP ME” EPISODE 101 – PICTURED: JONATHAN SCARFE AS AXEL MILLER – (PHOTO BY: DAN POWER/HELISING S1 PRODUCTIONS/SYFY)**

From the way *Van Helsing* began, you knew you were in for something good. Director Michael Nankin delivered a solid pilot episode that introduces us to an unsure world filled with military, monsters, and a hero right up there with some of cinema's best. There was an introduction screen giving us the backstory, which then led into a shot of Vanessa laying on a gurney as the vampires break into the hospital. As soon as they enter her room, she wakes up and begins to fight back. One of them bites her, but he spits up her blood. The main character from the pilot was not actually Vanessa, but Axel. Jonathan Scarfe's character was hard-nosed, but had a sharp wit as well. You can already sense a relationship building between him and Vanessa as he defends her from the group when they discover what she can do. The opening episode was slow but effective. It was a steady build-up to the episode's conclusion; there were no parts that felt as if they dragged, especially once we get to the final ten minutes or so. There was enough action to keep it moving, but it was not action for action's sake. It was all relevant to the story. The only downside was they did not introduce all of the survivors by name, but we trust that by episode two, more of these characters will be fleshed out and not just mere slasher movie fodder for the post-apocalyptic vampires.

We do meet a character referred to as "Doc" played Rukiya Bernard, who's a revelation. She's beautifully creepy, or creepily beautiful? Either way, Ms. Bernard is a particular standout as she's a vampiric captive of Jonathan Scarfe's Axel. Doc plays a bit like one of the Deadites from Sam Raimi's **Evil Dead** and her performance and chatter works to unnervingly great affect.

SyFy is known for their stylish approach to television shows and they've found great success with recent hits like *12 Monkeys*, *The Magicians*, and *Wynona Earp*. Neil LaBute's *Van Helsing* is a sturdy addition to not only programming, but to horror as well. Not only does the show carry on the legacy of the famous monster hunter from Bram Stoker's gothic novel, but it also presents vampires in an exciting new way. In the tradition of **Nosferatu**, **Dracula**, **30 Days of Night**, and *The Strain*, SyFy's new series is one that fans will not want to miss.

*Van Helsing* was one of the more stylish of shows I've watched and while it does bring to mind AMC's *The Walking Dead*, this show is very much its own thing. There's a few shocks and in 45 minutes, the thirst for another episode is just as strong as a vampire looking to quench the bloodlust.

**VAN HELSING – SEASON:1 –  
PICTURED: KELLY OVERTON AS  
VANESSA VAN HELSING – (PHOTO  
BY: BRENDAN MEADOWS/HELISING S1  
PRODUCTIONS/SYFY)**



I know we still have a month of summer left, but is it fall yet? I cannot wait to re-watch this episode and the rest of season one of *Van Helsing*. The story is great and so are the characters. Kelly Overton is a natural and in this kind of role she comes off as very much her own, but with hints of other female protagonists like Alice in **Resident Evil** and Ripley in **Aliens**. I cannot wait to see her in action again this season and must give SyFy's *Van Helsing* five very big stars. This show will become your "sunshine" because it has certainly become mine.

**Don't forget, Van Helsing will re-air on Friday, September 23 when it officially kicks off on SyFy.**