

## TV Review: FOX Drama ‘Lie to Me’ Gets More Entertaining Every Week

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on June 7, 2010 - 10:39am

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CHICAGO – The great television creator Shawn Ryan (“The Shield”) has taken over “Lie to Me” and turned what was a pretty generic mystery-of-the-week show into something that’s deserving of your attention. Taking the great Tim Roth and making him much more than just a cog in the serial machine, the two new episodes of “Lie to Me” that air tonight and next week make for intense, excellent television.



Television Rating: **4.0/5.0**

When the show premiered back in January of 2009, I wrote, “*Cluttered TV scripts reek of desperation and “Lie To Me” is just not well-written. Roth is good and Williams isn’t bad, but TV has always been and will always be about the writing and the pilot for “Lie To Me” is a mess. The cases, the dialogue, the supporting characters - none of it works.*”



Lie To Me

Photo credit: Adam Rose/FOX

So what’s the best way to fix a writing problem? Bring in one of the best in the business. The scripts for the first two new episodes of 2010 (the show has been off the air since 2009 to make room for “American Idol”) — “Beat the Devil” and “Sweet Sixteen” — are significantly better than when the show began. Most notably, the stakes have been notably raised as the safety of Dr. Cal Lightman (Tim Roth) and his team is in jeopardy both weeks. These are not merely human lie detectors; they are guardians against the evil perpetrated by liars. There’s still a bit of work to do, but the new-and-improved version of “Lie to Me” is far more promising than when the show began.



Lie To Me.

Photo credit: Adam Rose/FOX

“Lie to Me” is based on the real scientific work of Dr. Paul Ekman, reimagined as Lightman, the head of The Lightman Group, a small collection of truth experts who assist government agencies, police detectives, federal law enforcement, and more in the world of deception. Dr. Lightman’s right-hand woman is Dr. Gillian Foster (Kelli Williams). Roth and Williams have an easy-going chemistry that’s deepened notably by the second episode of the 2010 season but Williams is starting feel like the weak link of the ensemble. She’s a solid actress who doesn’t quite fit in the new, darker version of “Lie to Me,” but that could change.

Lightman and Foster are assisted by the intellectual Eli Loker (Brendan Hines) and the charismatic Ria Torres (Monica Raymund). The former gets to play comic relief with his practice of “radical honesty” and the latter is the “natural,” the rare person who can pick up on all the physical ticks and verbal cues without much training at all. Mekhi Phifer and Hayley McFarland also co-star.

The lead guest star in the season premiere is Jason Dohring of “Veronica Mars” as someone who Lightman immediately nails as a psychopath and likely killer. Lightman’s target doesn’t shrink from the expert, almost taking it as a challenge that someone has the nerve to try and unmask his dark side. This is a man whose entire life is a lie in that he looks and acts normal but is anything but. He sees lying as a challenge and defeating Lightman as the ultimate victory. Dohring is fantastic and he has a few scenes with Roth that easily stand among the best of the show to date.



Lie To Me.

Photo credit: Adam Rose/FOX

And that’s not all in the first episode. It also features a very strong subplot with the great Howard Hessman as a man who believes he’s seen something extraterrestrial and comes to the Lightman Group to prove that he’s not lying. Clever.

The second episode focuses on a car bombing that allows for flashback as to how Lightman and Foster first crossed paths and emotional weight for Roth that’s often missing from the show. It’s another strongly written episode in that it twists Lightman’s character, presenting how he could be used as a tool of a corrupt government as much as for the cause of good.

“Lie to Me” is definitely smarter and more expertly made than when it premiered and the upgrade behind-the-scenes has invigorated Tim Roth, who has finely crafted this character into someone who stands alone instead of merely in the shadow of a character inspiration like Dr. House. I wish the rest of the ensemble lived up to Roth. While Phifer and Williams are good actors, they have yet to develop an identity in the world of this show. I worry that the series is starting to rely a bit too much on the guest stars instead of developing its own supporting cast but



“Lie to Me” is vastly more entertaining than I ever thought it could be and isn’t that all we’re looking for on Monday nights of a long work week? Don’t lie.

*‘Lie To Me,’ which airs on FOX, stars Tim Roth, Kelli Williams, Brendan Hines, Monica Raymund, Hayley McFarland, and Mekhi Phifer. The show was created by Samuel Baum and is executive produced by Shawn Ryan. The mid-season premiere airs on Monday, June 7th, 2010 at 7PM CST.*



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