

## TV Review: The Lazy Days of Summer With ‘Rizzoli & Isles’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on July 12, 2010 - 10:11am

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CHICAGO – Yes, it is summer on cable: The season of soapy plotlines and unimaginative writing. Unfortunately, TNT’s new summer series “Rizzoli & Isles” falls prey to that. It’s based on the characters of best-selling author Tess Gerritsen, but is co-written and co-executive-produced by Janet Tamaro. And though Tamaro’s résumé includes one episode of “Lost,” it also includes the popular but campy “Bones” and the formulaic CSI franchise, “CSI: NY.”



TV Rating: **2.0/5.0**

The problem with the writing in “Rizzoli & Isles” is its laziness. It falls back on several classic narrative formulas, including “The Odd Couple,” “Silence of the Lambs,” and “The Sopranos.”



Rizzoli and Isles

Photo credit: Darren Michaels/TNT

“Rizzoli” is a cop drama about two women – one is a brilliant, meticulously dressed coroner (Sasha Alexander, of “NCIS,” and briefly, of “Dawson’s Creek”) and the other a rough-edged, tomboy cop (Angie Harmon, of “Law & Order”) who have an unlikely-though-convincing friendship that veers into the homoerotic. Alexander is pretty but vapid and somewhat bland as Jane Rizzoli’s counterpart Maura Isles. Plus, her medical-jargon lines are insultingly pedantic. Lines like: “*This is cupreous potassium, it helps us determine post-mortem interval,*” spoon-feeds the audience technical but insultingly expository information.





Rizzoli and Isles  
Photo credit: Eric Ogden/TNT

Beyond the Oscar-and-Felix archetype, the show also presents a schlocky, Italian-American stereotypes. Rizzoli, her competitive brother Frankie (Jordan Bridges), and her loudmouth mother come directly out of Francis Ford Coppola's central casting. Adding insult to injury, the caricaturish mother is played by Lorraine Bracco, which is a disappointing and clichéd career move from her after her multi-faceted role on “The Sopranos.”

The peripheral characters on the show are insubstantial. Potential Rizzoli paramour Gabriel Dean (a stiff Billy Burke) lacks interest or dimension. Rizzoli's estranged, animal-loving police partner (Bruce McGill) is awkwardly cast, and Rizzoli is relentlessly apologetic to the dejected Det. Korsak, although they seem like an odd match, lacking onscreen chemistry. Though it is never made clear to us in this episode why they are no longer partners, it is telling that we don't really care.

The last archetype is trotted out when Rizzoli visits her long-time adversary, a serial killer named Hoyt. The scene is an unapologetic imitation of “The Silence of the Lambs,” with its pseudo-sexual undertones and leering, obsessive, but reluctant connections. But the scene only manages to be slightly eerie – it's not tautly written enough to truly frighten.

Formulaic, lazy writing aside, Harmon is the best thing about “Rizzoli,” but even she has her limitations. What becomes clear is that though Harmon can do tough surprisingly well, she cannot fully deliver in the serious, tense moments because she lacks self-assurance on screen. Truth be told, “Law & Order” rarely required its alumni to be multi-layered and three-dimensional, and she was little more than a consternate but pretty face on that show. So perhaps her ability to deliver a taut serious scene has not yet been tested. Despite this shortcoming, which may resolve itself with experience and screen time, Harmon gives the role her all. Even though she sometimes displays her discomfort on screen, she clearly wants to embrace her unlikely casting as a tough-talking, working class cop. And her commitment goes a long way – if not all the way — to making the show work, despite its flimsy material.

*“Rizzoli & Isles” premieres Monday, July 12 at 9 p.m. CST on TNT. It stars Angie Harmon, Sasha Alexander, Bruce McGill, Lee Thompson Young and Jordan Bridges. Series writing by Janet Tamaro & David Gould, based on characters by Tess Gerritsen.*

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