

TV Review: Maggie Q Provides Guilty Pleasure Thrills in ‘Nikita’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on September 9, 2010 - 10:00am

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CHICAGO – There are certain programs that are easy for a critic to defend on the strength of their ensemble, the brilliance of their writing, or other easily identifiable elements that make them “work.” Pointing out that programs like “Mad Men” and “Lost” are above-average is like saying filet mignon tastes good. Duh. But every once in awhile there’s a program that’s a bit harder to defend and yet nearly as easy to enjoy. These are the guilty pleasures of the tube and a new one starts tonight in The CW’s “Nikita.”



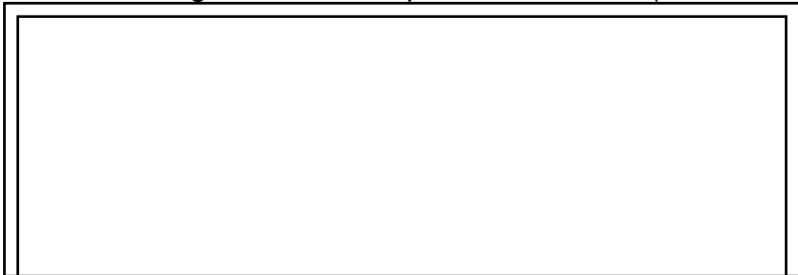
Television Rating: **3.5/5.0**

Is “Nikita” good? It depends on your definition of the word. On one hand, it will remind you of cheesy action programs that starred B-list actors like Pamela Anderson or Lorenzo Lamas, complete with over-the-top dialogue, two-dimensional characters, and ridiculous plot twists that defy all logic. On the other hand, not everything needs to be intellectually challenging to be entertaining. “Nikita” is ridiculous in all the ways that we want a show about a super-sexy trained assassin to be ridiculous. Luc Besson and fans of the original-and-far-superior “La Femme Nikita” may not be too happy that their source has been turned into a B-show but this character has grown much bigger than the original film. Based purely on the first episode, the new “Nikita” works on its own terms.



Maggie Q as Nikita
Photo credit: Kerry Hayes/The CW

The ridiculously sexy Maggie Q steps into the stiletto heels of Anne Parillaud, Bridget Fonda, and Peta Wilson as the title character now reimagined as someone who was burned by the agency for which she worked as a hired killer and now has the solitary goal of bringing them down. In the pilot, Nikita resurfaces after being assumed dead and makes clear her intention to bring down the company that killed her only love, including her former supervisor Michael (Shane West of “ER”) and his nefarious boss (Xander Berkley of “24”).





Maggie Q as Nikita
Photo credit: Jordin Althaus/The CW

While Nikita is causing problems on the outside, we’re also introduced to a new recruit played by Lyndsy Fonseca (“Hot Tub Time Machine,” “How I Met Your Mother”) and several of the other young future “Nikitas” (including the great Ashton Holmes of “A History of Violence”). The show cross-cuts between the “building” of a new assassin and the revenge planned by their most notorious one. Will Nikita bring down the company? Will the new girl be a hero or villain? Could Shane West chew any more scenery?

Of course, the plot is mostly an excuse to watch Maggie Q kick some ass at least once between commercial breaks and “Nikita” works on a purely visceral level. The most important element of the premiere — the action scenes — are well-done and entertaining. The program features film-caliber production values and, unlike most of the boring junk in theaters this year, never takes itself too seriously. Having said that, it’s strikingly easy to see this program falling apart shortly after its premiere by trying to become something more like “Alias” instead of focusing on its B-movie charms. It’s rare for a critic to suggest that adding depth to a show’s characters would be a problem, but “Nikita” would be wise to take itself even less seriously and not reveal that this cast isn’t that adept at actual character.

For now, they don’t need it. Maggie Q is charismatic, athletic, and intriguing. West, Berkley, and Melinda Clarke (“The O.C.”) are perfectly-cast villains. Fonseca, Holmes, and Aaron Stanford are incredibly watchable young stars. As long as the writers and producers of “Nikita” continue to attempt nothing more than what is essentially grindhouse entertainment for television, a franchise that no one thought would be active this long should continue to be surprisingly relevant.

Not everything should be “Mad Men.” The scope of television should be more diverse than that and provide B-movie entertainment along with its intellectual A-list programming. “Nikita”’s combination of sex, violence, and espionage demands that you just turn off your brain and enjoy. Keep its ambitions in perspective and you’re likely to enjoy “Nikita” much more than you expect.

‘Nikita,’ which airs on The CW, stars Maggie Q, Shane West, Lyndsy Fonseca, Xander Berkley, Aaron Stanford, and Ashton Holmes. The show premieres on September 9th, 2010 at 8PM CST.



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