

TV Review: ABC's 'My Generation' Wastes Talented Cast on Cliche

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on September 23, 2010 - 11:28am

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CHICAGO – The new ABC dramedy “My Generation” is all concept and no execution. Creator Noah Hawley (the vastly-superior “The Unusuals”) came up with an idea and found a talented cast and the creativity died shortly thereafter. The foundation is a clever and inspired one but the writing staff adds nothing more than cliché to it, piling on characters who feel barely two-dimensional and rarely finding a genuine moment in the lackluster and bloated series premiere.



Television Rating: **1.5/5.0**

The show opens with its high-concept set-up. A documentary crew visited a high school in 2000 and found a bunch of clichés like the nerd, the brain, the rich kid, and the rock star. And that's not this critic diminishing the characters — the doc-within-a-show literally labels them in those broad terms. Of course, the concept is that very few of us are exactly what we were in high school. So, how have these two-dimensional characters changed in the last ten years? Is the nerd still the nerd? What's happened to the rock star? Did the over-achiever over-achieve?

It's a great idea for a show. If TV has taught us anything it's that great ideas mean nothing without great execution. The simple character definitions in 2000 aren't any more refined in 2010. The faux-documentary feels just as false in its current-day updates as it does in its set-up. The over-achiever now works at a beachside bar. When reminded that his one word to describe his future was “success,” he feels as though he has it and few people with lives more difficult than surfing and flirting would disagree, but the consciously clever writing on the show underlines the irony of the over-achiever becoming a surfer as if it means something deep. It doesn't.



ABC's "My Generation" stars Keir O'Donnell as Kenneth, Anne Son as Caroline, Kelli Garner as Dawn, Sebastian Sozzi as The Falcon, Michael Stahl-David as Steven, Mehdad Brooks as Rolly, Daniella Alonso as Brenda, Jaime King as Jacqueline and Julian Morris as Anders.
Photo credit: Bob D'Amico/ABC

We could go over each character and how false the whole project feels, but the overall criticism is that the writing on "My Generation" basically boils its characters down to nothing more than the description given to casting directors to fill the ensemble. The most ironic thing about a show that thinks everything about life is ironic is that a show set up as a fake documentary feels more false than almost any other new program this year. There's rarely a moment that doesn't feel scripted, which wouldn't matter as much if the show wasn't so desperately trying to "be real."

The saddest thing about "My Generation" is how it wastes some talented cast members. Keir O'Donnell ("Paul Blart: Mall Cop"), Michael Stahl-David ("Cloverfield"), and Mehdad Brooks ("True Blood") are all interesting actors and Jaime King is a better actress than the faux-snob material she's been given here. Does anyone believe that there are twenty-somethings out there doing wine tastings in documentaries like this fake one? It may sound like nit-picking but when even the scene set-ups feel false, it can make it difficult to believe in the characters or what they're doing. And if a show like this is hard to believe, it's impossible to care.

For a show about how people change from high school to their quarter-life crisis and how much we as a country have changed in the last tumultuous decade to work, we must find the characters genuine. It's not impossible to see these talented actors build on the cliches and two dimensions they've been given but they're going to need much stronger writing to do so. In a very crowded timeslot (opposite "The Big Bang Theory," "Community," "Bones," and the similarly-skewing "The Vampire Diaries"), it's unlikely that the characters on "My Generation" will have the time to move beyond the cliché. The students of 2000 deserve better.

"My Generation" stars Julian Morris, Daniella Alonso, Mehdad Brooks, Kelli Garner, Jaime King, Keir O'Donnell, Sebastian Sozzi, Anne Son, and Michael Stahl-David. It was created by Noah Hawley. The show debuts on ABC on Thursday, September 23rd, 2010 at 7pm CST.



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