

TV Review: Promising ‘No Ordinary Family’ With Michael Chiklis, Julie Benz

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on September 28, 2010 - 12:10pm

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CHICAGO – ABC’s “No Ordinary Family” features two of the better TV actors of the last decade in the great Michael Chiklis (“The Shield”) and Julie Benz (“Angel,” “Dexter”) and their remarkable charm carries a show that could be must-see viewing if it doesn’t fall into the same traps as similar high-concept shows like “Heroes” and “FlashForward.”



Television Rating: **4.0/5.0**

What’s so often forgotten in high-concept “Lost”-inspired shows is that audiences are always going to care about characters first. We loved “Lost” because we loved Jack, Kate, Sawyer, and Locke and we lost interest in “Heroes” when it lost interest in its own increasingly-ridiculous characters. With that in mind, “No Ordinary Family” holds promise because the premiere wisely focuses on the people more than their unique situation. If that focus can remain on the believable humanity of their characters instead of their superhuman powers than “No Ordinary Family” could be a lovely diversion; an odd blend between “Modern Family” and “Heroes” that could entertain for years. But there is a lot of TV Kryptonite out there that could bring these supermen down.



Romany Malco as George St. Cloud, Autumn Reeser as Katie Andrews, Kay Panabaker as Daphne Powell, Jimmy Bennett as JJ Powell, Julie Benz as Stephanie Powell, Michael Chiklis as Jim Powell and Stephen Collins as Dr. Dayton King.

Photo credit: Bob D'Amico/ABC

Chiklis and Benz star as Jim and Stephanie Powell, the increasingly-distant parents to Daphne (Kay Panabaker) and JJ (Jimmy Bennett). Like a lot of families, the business of life has pulled them apart. Stephanie works too hard and Jim has watched his teenage children go through the

days of adolescence in which kids simply start being annoyed by their 'rents. To try and bring the family back together, Jim drags them on a vacation in South America, where they get into a plane crash that they barely survive.



Michael Chiklis

Photo credit: Eric McCandless/ABC

When they make it home, each one of the Powells slowly learns that they didn't just survive their crash into the Amazon River and that they've come back a little more powerful than their suburbanite neighbors. Each of the superpowers plays off archetypal roles of the character. The patriarch develops super-strength to support his family, the mother who never has enough time develops the Flash-esque speed to reduce her commute time to seconds, the daughter going through the years in which every teenage girl wonders what their friends think of them can read minds, and the awkward young man who never did well in school suddenly has all the answers.

The premiere of "No Ordinary Family" requires so much set-up that it's hard to see where the program will go from here. The best elements of that first excellent season of "Heroes" were the parts of the show that were relatable. The concept of "What if you became a superhero?" is an instantly attractive one but we all saw how that program got weighed down with mythology and cliché. Will "No Ordinary Family" fall victim to the same trap?

There's reason to think that it won't. Chiklis and Benz have an amazing ability to feel genuine. They're simply better actors than most of the high-concept wannabe "Lost" clones have hired. With his work on "The Shield" and Benz's continual growth as an actress from "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" through "Dexter," they're two great actors that are fun to watch. They're easy to spend time with and that shouldn't be under-valued in the world of television. After a long day of work, we have to want to hang out with the characters on a TV show and half the battle was won in casting Chiklis and Benz (and the great Romany Malco of "Weeds" doesn't hurt either).

The structure of the premiere of "No Ordinary Family," which features interviews intercut with flashbacks, could get annoying if it's repeated throughout the season, but I don't believe it will be. And the final scenes aren't as effective as the ones in which the characters learn their new powers. We may not know where "No Ordinary Family" is going from here but it passes all the tests of a series premiere — it entertains on its own while also setting up the viewer enough to make them tune in next week. I'll be there.

"No Ordinary Family" stars Michael Chiklis, Julie Benz, Kay Panabaker, Jimmy Bennett, Autumn Reeser, Stephen Collins, and Romany Malco. The show debuts on ABC on Tuesday, September 28th, 2010 at 7pm CST.



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