

TV Review: Mid-Season Premiere of USA's Clever Hit 'White Collar'

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on January 18, 2011 - 10:55am

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CHICAGO – The USA network, like TNT, has adopted an unusual launch pattern for some of their shows, dividing their seasons in two. So, while “Royal Pains” and “Burn Notice” had their second season premieres last summer, they now return for the second half of their sophomore chapters. It starts tonight with the return of the entertaining “White Collar,” a typically-clever ride that starts a bit bumpier in the winter than it was in the summer months but still delivers the escapism we could all use as the temperatures drop.



Television Rating: **3.0/5.0**

In many ways, “White Collar” is kind of the ultimate USA show. It constantly reminds the viewer of elements they've liked in other programs on the network. It has the buddy elements of “Psych,” the mystery-of-the-week refined by “Monk,” an international conspiracy not unlike “Burn Notice,” and beautiful people in gorgeous settings to rival “Royal Pains.” Audiences have caught on and turned the show into a reliable hit.



Matthew Bomer as Neal Caffrey

Photo credit: USA

If you need some catch up, the buddy comedy duo at the core of “White Collar” are a con man and a G-man who aren't as dissimilar as they may appear on the outside. The “bad guy gone good” is Neal Caffrey (Matt Bomer of “Chuck”), one of the few people on television who remind me of old-fashioned movie stars. He's handsome, suave, and rarely cracks under pressure. He can basically convince anyone to help him with a blink of his eyes (and his chemistry with a female co-star in the premiere is one of the highlights) but he's got a few other tricks up his sleeve as well. He has made millions in the world of white collar crime — mostly elaborate con games — and has now become a source for the government.



Tim DeKay as Peter Burke, Matthew Bomer as Neal Caffrey
Photo credit: USA

Neal works with the “good guy who likes to be bad every once in awhile,” Agent Peter Burke (Tom DeKay of “Carnivale”). Peter started more anxious and nervous, but the writers have opened up the character this season through his undeniable friendship with Neal. In fact, the mid-season premiere features Burke running a con of his own.

The concept of the first new episode of 2011 is undeniably clever. Of course, it picks up right where the mid-season finale ended with Mozzie (Willie Garson) being rushed to the hospital after being shot. Naturally, vengeance for the shooting of the beloved character takes center stage but it gets an interesting twist when the killer frames Burke and causes him to lose all of his government power during the investigation. Without typical routes to justice, Burke turns to Caffrey and the two form “Burke’s Seven,” which is also the name of the episode. Turning the G-man into the Danny Ocean of an elaborate con is pretty smart and the episode has some spectacular twists and turns.

Sadly, the clever concept doesn’t quite live up to its potential on paper. The mid-season premiere features more cliched dialogue than usual and some intense suspension of disbelief to believe a con that doesn’t seem like it would really work. A show like “White Collar” works almost like a con itself in that appearance can be everything. We’re willing to ignore plots that don’t really make sense if we like the witty repartee and the fashionable look of a program. When the dialogue rings false, the cracks can show. That happens a few times in “White Collar.”

Although there’s no real reason for concern. Bomer and DeKay are fantastic, getting better with every year, and every episodic program like “White Collar” has a few scripts that just don’t click as well as the others. Such is the case with the mid-season premiere of “White Collar.” USA has built a reputation around characters and the talented leads that play them like James Roday, Tony Shalhoub, Mark Feurstein, etc. Neal Bomer and Tom DeKay are great. It’s good to have them back in the DVR.

‘White Collar,’ which airs on USA, stars Matt Bomer, Tim DeKay, Tiffani Thiessen, and Willie Garson. The show returns for the rest of its second season on January 18th, 2011 at 9PM CST.



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