

TV Review: Awful Rom-Com ‘Traffic Light’ Should Have Been Stopped

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on February 8, 2011 - 12:20pm

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CHICAGO – The failure of the romantic comedy on the big screen (no genre is in more dire straits right now creatively) has definitely crept into television as well with a continuous parade of bad relationship comedies, including two already in 2011, NBC’s “Perfect Couples” and the even-worse “Traffic Light,” debuting tonight on FOX.



Television Rating: **1.0/5.0**

There have been dozens of “Friends” rip-offs in the years since NBC’s mega-hit with only a select few that worked in the slightest (“How I Met Your Mother” comes to mind) and a TV graveyard of shows with creators that misunderstood at least one key element of what made that program a success. Clichéd writing, characters with little to no chemistry as friends or lovers, manipulative melodrama, an old-fashioned understanding of what differentiates men and women — I’ve seen it all in the years since Rachel kissed Ross. And now you can see it all in one show.



Traffic Light

Photo credit: FOX

“Traffic Light” is one of those programs that is convinced that men and women relate through a series of small lies. Do husbands and wives tell little mistruths to not rock the boat? Of course. But you’d think that was the foundation of love if you believed the modern rom-com sitcom.



Traffic Light
Photo credit: FOX

Take the premiere of "Traffic Light." Married guy Mike (David Denman of "The Office") hides from Lisa (Liza Lapira) in his car to watch "Iron Man," lies to her when he misses a work function she asks him to be at (which, of course, ends in him getting caught), and can't talk to his friends on his car Bluetooth when she's in the car. This is the most dysfunctional marriage I've ever seen in a pilot. Recent great married couple comedies like "Everybody Loves Raymond," "Modern Family," or even "The King of Queens" have balanced the white lies with what feels like true love. Mike & Lisa don't have that balance at all.

But they are only one-third of the failed trifecta of "Traffic Light." Adam's (Nelson Franklin) new relationship is starting out on the same ground of deception as his buddy. He just moved in with Callie (Aya Cash) and can't tell her that he'd like to go get a drink with his friends and so lies about how seriously perpetual bachelor Ethan (Kris Marshall) has taken a recent break-up. If you just moved in with someone and are already lying about going out on your own, don't sign any mortgage papers together. It's not going to last.

I know, I'm taking it all too seriously, but relationship comedies that work are built on a foundation of truth. We believed Ross & Rachel, Raymond's entire family, and Doug & Carrie. NONE of "Traffic Light" feels believable. It feels like a Hollywood cliché version of what relationships are supposed to be the world of the sitcom, not what they actually are. Women are nagging and demanding; men are idiotic and deceptive. Yawn. And even without a single kernel of truth to the show, it's just not funny. There's not one genuine laugh in the premiere.

And it wouldn't be nearly as awful if it didn't end with manipulation. After 20 laugh-free minutes, the paper-thin concept of the title of the show (the marriage is the settled-down "red light," the newly living-together is the "yellow light," and the single guy is the "green light") is explained in a moment of sheer heartstring-pulling designed to make it clear how close this group of friends is and how important they are to each other. Like the rest of the show, it doesn't work.

"Traffic Light" stars David Denman, Nelson Franklin, Kris Marshall, Aya Cash, and Liza Lapira. It premieres on FOX on Tuesday, February 8th, 2011 at 8:30pm CST.



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