

## TV Review: Audiences Deserve Better Than Manipulative ‘Criminal Minds: Suspect Behavior’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on February 16, 2011 - 8:51am

- [Beau Garrett](#) [2]
- [Brian Tallerico](#) [3]
- [C.S.I.](#) [4]
- [CBS](#) [5]
- [Criminal Minds](#) [6]
- [Criminal Minds: Suspect Behavior](#) [7]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [8]
- [Janeane Garofalo](#) [9]
- [Kirsten Vangsness](#) [10]
- [Law & Order](#) [11]
- [Matt Ryan](#) [12]
- [Michael Kelly](#) [13]
- [Richard Schiff](#) [14]
- [Television](#) [15]

CHICAGO – Shouldn’t there be a rule against having the words ‘criminal’ and ‘suspect’ in the same title? We get it. It’s overkill. It’s just the first sign of many that the writers of this spin-off of the flawed-but-vastly-superior “Criminal Minds” don’t think much of their audience. Things like character and subtlety are out the window when you have BOTH criminals and suspects to deal with.



TV Rating: **1.5/5.0**

In favor of actual writing, the staff behind the two episodes I’ve seen of “Criminal Minds: Suspect Behavior” employ that all-too-common device of fearmongering and exploitation. The series premiere is, of course, about a kidnapping (the manipulative playground of crime drama writers who know that seeing kids in danger creates such a strong visceral response that they don’t have to do any actual writing) and the second episode sent for review (which will air in March) is about a woman in a field designed to help that ends up becoming a homicidal maniac.



Criminal Minds: Suspect Behavior

Photo credit: CBS

It’s really not hard to imagine someone who watches all of the “Law & Order,” “C.S.I.,” “N.C.I.S.,” and, now, “Criminal Minds” franchises simply never leaving their house. Why would you? It’s a twisted world out there, at least in the mind of TV writers. And as the market gets more crowded with programs like “CM: SB,” it’s going to be more and more difficult to stand out in the crowd. This one’s just not memorable enough to do so.

A depressingly-slumming Forest Whitaker stars in the spin-off as Sam Cooper, the head of a Behavior Analysis Unit of the FBI that specializes in finding psychos before they express what’s on their criminal minds yet again. Whitaker brings a bit of that “Ghost Dog” zen-like mentality to play here and that’s a reasonably entertaining take on the genre, but he looks bored half the time. Still, he’s easily the best thing about the

program.



Criminal Minds: Suspect Behavior  
Photo credit: CBS

In the first episode, an eight-year-old girl is stolen off a lawn in her subdivision in broad daylight while playing hide-and-seek with her brother. The plot thickens when another woman shows up at the crime scene to reveal that her daughter was kidnapped over a week ago but it's not getting as much attention because that crime occurred to a black family in a bad neighborhood (the social commentary is paper-thin, especially when one considers that the show itself opens with the white girl kidnapping as its hook to grab audiences, suggesting that it too is a part of the racial double-standard if you think about it).

Other cast members of the BAU include Janeane Garofalo, Michael Kelly, Beau Garrett, Matt Ryan, and Kirsten Vangsness. Richard Schiff guest stars. As for the supporting cast, no one really makes an impact. Garofalo is miscast, as is Garrett. Only Michael Kelly ("Changeling," "Fair Game") gets any sort of arc in the premiere as an agent with a dark past that could ruin the current case, but he's back in the background by the time the second episode sent airs in March.

The writing on "Criminal Minds: Suspect Behavior" seems nearly like what a computer program would produce if it had been fed the scripts for all the exploitative, manipulative, serial killer investigative series of the last several years. There's no sense of the human touch here other than in glimpses of Whitaker's performance. The man is definitely talented and it's easy to see that at moments in the premiere and the later episode sent but one also gets the sense that Whitaker knows he's above this material. It feels like he's in it for the consistent paycheck because there's nothing to challenge an Oscar winner here.

As the investigative series of the '00s and '10s continue to expand, it's not hard to envision a day when one could comprise nearly an entire network lineup of shows in which people commit horrendous crimes and are (usually) brought to justice. When these shows are done well — "The Mentalist," "Bones," "Castle," "C.S.I." — they have their own identity and personality instead of merely feeling like carbon copies of something TV producers think fans of these shows want to see. Great programs come about through creativity, not merely a desire to please a fan base. There's no creativity at play in "Criminal Minds: Suspect Behavior," merely exploitation, manipulation, and other tricks of this profitable trade.

*"Criminal Minds: Suspect Behavior" stars Forest Whitaker, Janeane Garofalo, Michael Kelly, Beau Garrett, Matt Ryan, and Kirsten Vangsness. It premieres on CBS on February 16th, 2011 at 9pm CST.*



[16]

By [BRIAN TALLERICO](#) [17]  
Content Director  
[HollywoodChicago.com](http://HollywoodChicago.com)  
[brian@hollywoodchicago.com](mailto:brian@hollywoodchicago.com) [16]

**Source URL (retrieved on Mar 28 2024 - 8:33am):**

<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/13398/tv-review-audiences-deserve-better-than-criminal-minds-suspect-behavior>

**Links:**

[1] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/briantt>  
[2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/beau-garrett>  
[3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/brian-tallerico>  
[4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/csi-0>  
[5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/cbs>  
[6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/criminal-minds>  
[7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/criminal-minds-suspect-behavior>  
[8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/hollywoodchicagodotcom-content>  
[9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/janeane-garofalo>  
[10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/kirsten-vangsness>  
[11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/law-order>  
[12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/matt-ryan>  
[13] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/michael-kelly>  
[14] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/richard-schiff>  
[15] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/television>  
[16] <mailto:brian@hollywoodchicago.com>  
[17] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#BRIAN>