

TV Review: 'Franklin & Bash' Makes For Enjoyable Summer Diversion

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on May 31, 2011 - 7:47pm

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CHICAGO – Chemistry between cast members is an underrated essential of hit television. We need to believe that a couple, whether they be romantic or a pair of buddies, aren't just actors on assignment. That feeling that a husband and wife or a pair of friends probably hate each other as soon as the director calls cut can sink a project that relies on chemistry.



Television Rating: **3.0/5.0**

That's why the successful friend chemistry at the heart of "Franklin & Bash," premiering this week on TNT (and heavily advertised during Bulls-Heat games) is such a refreshing surprise. TV veterans Mark-Paul Gosselaar ("NYPD Blue," "Saved by the Bell") and Breckin Meyer ("Robot Chicken," "Road Trip") have a believable rapport as long-time friends and their camaraderie makes the flaws of the sometimes-problematic storytelling easier to take.



Franklin and Bash

Photo credit: TNT

Jared Franklin (Meyer) and Peter Bash (Gosselaar) aren't just ambulance chasers. They take it a step further, waiting near a spot where they expect there to be an accident (due to a racy billboard) so they can be the first ones to hand out their business cards. They consider a case something of a failure of one of them isn't charged with contempt of court and they take the clients that other people won't touch, like the woman accused of sexing her husband to death in episode two (the great Natalie Zea of "Justified") or the woman fired from a men's magazine who claims it was because she was too sexy.

Franklin & Bash have been making waves for years but the turning point for them comes in the first episode when a major, suit-and-tie law firm (led by the great Malcolm McDowell) called Infeld Daniels swoops in and hires them to bring some energy and life to their dull company.

They're a successful firm but they could use some wild cards. Who's wilder than the legendary Franklin & Bash, two guys willing to start a fight just to distract reporters when a press conference goes awry?



Franklin and Bash
Photo credit: TNT

The title characters convince their new employers to let them bring along their employees (the aggressive Dana Davis & the agoraphobic Kumail Nanjiani) and the boys butt heads with the stuck-up A-list attorney at the new company (Reed Diamond of "Homicide: Life on the Street") while Franklin gets physically closer to the stunning Hanna (Garcelle Beauvais), but she might just be using him.

Each episode of "Franklin & Bash" centers around at least one headline-grabbing case while also detailing how these square pegs are fitting in the round holes of corporate law at Infeld Daniels.

The writing on "Franklin & Bash" needs some work, especially in the courtroom. I'm not a legal expert but the actual law in "Franklin & Bash" seems thin at best and the show actually gets less interesting when it actually gets in front of a judge. Most of the legal resolutions I've seen so far have felt more scripted than genuine.

Unlike most legal dramas, "Franklin & Bash" works best when it's not in front of a jury. The scenes in which Gosselaar & Meyer were primarily allowed to riff with each other, whether it be in the now-joint office they share or investigating a case, are easily the program's strongest. If the show's a hit it won't be for the not-so-memorable legal cases but for what the stars bring to it during depositions, at the office, and just around town.

The writing could be stronger. The supporting characters could be more richly-drawn. The courtroom scenes could come off less-scripted. But all of the criticisms of a show like "Franklin & Bash" fall away often enough that the show will get the job done for a hump day diversion as temperatures rise and you wish you still had summers off. And the most important thing to remember is that the chemistry that often takes time to develop is already there. Now let's see if they can build on it.

"Franklin & Bash" stars Mark-Paul Gosselaar, Breckin Meyer, Garcelle Beauvais, Reed Diamond, and Malcolm McDowell. It premieres on TNT on Wednesday, June 1st, 2011 at 8pm CST.



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