

## TV Review: 'Covert Affairs' Puts the Team Back in the CIA

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on June 7, 2011 - 11:22am

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CHICAGO – In an era where America's budget concerns are front and center, a TV series celebrating the awesomeness of the CIA seems a bit ill-timed. Piper Perabo portrays an undercover operative in the second season premiere of USA Network's "Covert Affairs."



TV Rating: **3.0/5.0**

The series does score some points for intrigue, mostly through the character of Arthur Campbell (Peter Gallagher), who portrays the CIA Director of the National Clandestine Service. He's in a bit of a legal pickle regarding his the division's actions, and the whole agency is on pins and needles regarding it. In the foreground is Perabo's Annie Walker, who is the centerpiece agent of the assignment du jour.

The second season opens with a flashback. Annie is romping on the beach, remembering a mission in Sri Lanka, where a former rogue operative Ben Mercer (Eion Bailey) is injured in a firefight trying to rescue an "asset" (CIA informant). Annie saved him, and their admiration for each other is growing deeper. Annie is with Ben as he recovers, but their idleness is broken by a team of gunmen shooting up the hospital.



Not Your Daddy's CIA: Christopher Gorham (Auggie) and Piper Perabo (Annie) in 'Covert Affairs'  
*Photo Credit: USA Network*

Annie moves Ben back to Washington, D.C., and resumes her life as an undercover operative in the Domestic Protection Division (DPD), who lives with her clueless sister (Anne Dudek) in upper middle class heaven. Annie's first case back is connecting with a Russian tennis star, who is also a CIA asset. She is aided by Auggie (Christopher Gorham), a ex-army veteran who was blinded in Iraq, and mentored by Joan

Campbell (Kari Matchett), the director of the DPD. Campbell is married to Gallagher's Arthur, and his internal troubles infiltrate their domestic life. Maybe Homeland Security can help?

There is a suspicion that the CIA helped fund this show (it is on the USA Network. Coincidence?) because all of the characters, even the blind guy, are just so gosh darn fabulous. There might even be, from the looks of it, an undercover hairdresser on staff. This is entirely distracting, including Annie's undercover story that she is a acquisitions expert for the Smithsonian Institution. Luckily her sister lives the domestic goddess life of soccer practices and her gourmet kitchen, because she has yet to notice Annie's sudden killer squints.

The second season of any television show is where elements of character and story get more savory, and Covert Affairs does have its share of possibilities. Ben Mercer is a here today, gone tomorrow spy, and obviously Annie wants to break that secret. Kari Matchett's Joan Campbell, despite her penchant for wearing cocktail dresses to work, does have a certain air about her that says she knows too much, and what she knows is dangerous. And although the blind guy is superfluous, Christopher Gorham turns on the charm and keeps him lucid.



Most Popular Couple, CIA Yearbook: Kari Matchett (Joan) and Peter Gallagher (Arthur) in 'Covert Affairs'  
Photo Credit: USA Network

It's hard to buy Piper Perabo as a spook, especially when she clicks her 4-inch heels on the shiny floors of CIA headquarters. The Case of the Russian Tennis Player is shoehorned in among all the back story, and doesn't work in context of everything else going on. This series is a fantasy world government agency, but most viewers buy that when relaxing in front of the tube, does anybody really care about line item budgets when Piper is in a bikini?

This show could make you wonder, where does the CIA rank in the new Homeland Security structure? What is the agency's greatest secret? And where does Joan Campbell get those stylish cocktail dresses? Now we're talking Covert Affairs.

*"Covert Affairs" starts its second season Tuesday, June 7th at 10pm EST/9pm CST on USA Network. Check local listings for channel location. Featuring Piper Perabo, Christopher Gorham, Kari Matchett, Anne Dudek and Peter Gallagher. Created by Dutch Oven and Universal Cable Productions.*



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