

# TV Review: Despite Flaws in Premiere, ‘Person of Interest’ Has Potential

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on September 22, 2011 - 1:45pm

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CHICAGO – I’m curious to see where “Person of Interest” is going and I guess that’s all that really matters when it comes to a series premiere. The ultimate test of a pilot is a simple one — Will you watch episode two? Does it hook you enough to keep you coming back and maybe even tell your friends to do the same? People will be talking about the premiere of “Person of Interest” and buzz matters. However, I can’t deny a bit of disappointment that it’s not as instantly engaging as other creations of the great J.J. Abrams like “Lost” or “Alias.” It’s more interesting than entertaining, which is fine for a pilot but not long-term.



“Person of Interest” is essentially a modern twist on the procedural. Could you a stop a murder before it occurs? What if you knew nothing but the SSN of the someone involved? You wouldn’t know how he/she was going to die or even if they should be suspected as a potential killer. “Person of Interest” re-works the mystery genre that has becomes such a staple (particularly on CBS) in a fresh way and the structure creates the aforementioned potential — this could become a really interesting Thursday night staple.



Person of Interest  
Photo credit: CBS

Or it could get stale and silly. I’m honestly not sure after the premiere, an episode with big ideas but somewhat-lackluster execution. Part of the problem is that I just don’t find Jim Caviezel to be an engaging lead but that’s something that could change as he becomes more accustomed to the character on a weekly basis. He plays a shell-shocked, presumed-dead, former-CIA agent named Reese and he does so with a gravelly-voiced, world-weary demeanor that comes off as a bit too cliched. As with a lot of things related to the premiere of “Person of Interest,” this is the kind of criticism that could iron itself out as the actor becomes more attuned to the character or it could hint at a lazy performance long-term. All I know is that I want Reese to be less of a superhero and more of a relatable protagonist.



Person of Interest  
Photo credit: CBS

Reese is approached by a mysterious billionaire named Finch (Michael Emerson, not straying far from the Benjamin Linus character that made him famous on "Lost") and told something incredible — this rich man can predict crimes before they happen. Well, he doesn't predict them "Medium"-style. He's developed a computer program that spits out a Social Security number of someone in trouble. He takes that number to Reese and they work together to solve the crime before it happens and stop it. In the premiere, the case involves a young prosecutor (played by the great Natalie Zea of "Justified") and some corrupt cops. Oscar nominee Taraji P. Henson plays a homicide detective who becomes involved in the odd dynamic duo of Reese and Finch although she plays a minor role in the premiere.

"Person of Interest" lacks subtlety and grace. References to 9/11 (Finch's system was developed to try to stop such events and predict the next major event) seem a bit manipulative, and it's one of those programs where the characters seem almost entirely surface-level or purposefully-weird like Finch. Emphasis on security camera footage (we're all being watched all the time!..."*Watching us with 10,000 eyes.*") feels a little heavy-handed as well. The action of the piece is its greatest asset as Abrams has assembled a top-notch technical team. "Person of Interest" sure looks great, and that can't be said about every new Fall program.

What doesn't work about "Person of Interest" can be fixed. It can be more subtle. It can be more character-driven. It can be less obvious. Or it could fall into the traps mentioned above and become generic. WAY more than any Fall program, I wanted a second episode to see how the show would develop and where it would go from here. I guess that's all that really matters.

*"Person of Interest" stars Jim Caviezel, Michael Emerson, Kevin Chapman, and Taraji P. Henson. It premieres on CBS on Thursday, September 22nd, 2011 at 8pm CST.*



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