

TV Review: ABC's Inconsistent but Intriguing 'Missing' with Ashley Judd

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on March 15, 2012 - 2:03pm

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CHICAGO – I'm right on the critical median with ABC's "Missing." On one hand, it's inconsistent, poorly written, and kind of just silly. It's tempting to dismiss like an overheated Lifetime movie. On the other hand, Ashley Judd is better than most Lifetime leads, the action is actually pretty tight, and I like the creative potential of a show that's promised viewers that it will wrap up its first story in ten episodes. Which hand wins out? You decide.



TV Rating: **3.0/5.0**

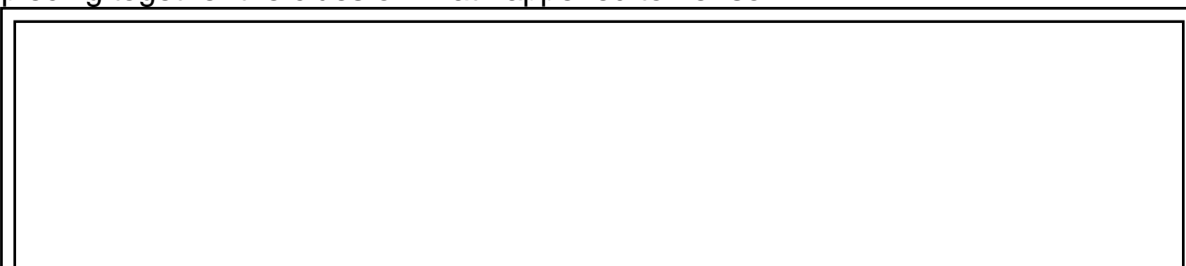
Judd plays a character who could be called "Mama Bourne." She looks like your average soccer mom but she's really a killing machine in pumps. The show opens ten years ago as Judd's Becca Winstone is speaking on the phone to her husband Paul (Sean Bean) and son Michael overseas. Without warning, her husband's car explodes, and we learn that this happy couple were actually not unlike Mr. and Mrs. Smith. Becca leaves the C.I.A. and we flash back to present day.



Missing

Photo credit: ABC

It's been ten years but the wounds of Paul's death — both of a child who saw his father's car explode and a wife who had to listen to it on the phone — are still healing. When Michael (now played by Nick Eversman) reveals that he has a study abroad option in Rome, Becca is cautious about letting him go. She reluctantly does so only to have Michael disappear a few weeks into his trip. Becca packs up and takes off for Italy, piecing together the clues of what happened to her son.





Missing
Photo credit: ABC

Before you know it, someone is trying to kill Becca and another C.I.A. operative (Cliff Curtis) is working to keep her in control. Becca reunites with an old flame named Giancarlo (Adriano Giannini), an Interpol agent, who offers to help and our supporting cast is in place. But don't mistake this for anything but a star vehicle for Judd. Curtis has a few decent scenes but this is Judd's show all the way. She's in nearly every scene.

And she kicks ass in a lot of them. Somewhat surprisingly, Judd proves to have some impressive action chops as the premiere of "Missing" includes some intense fight sequences. These scenes work. I can't believe I'm saying this but the best thing about an Ashley Judd-ABC show is the action. It doesn't hurt either to have beautiful location shooting around the world. It's nice to take an escapist trip to Europe every Thursday.

Everything else needs a little work. The writers and Judd hit the angry mom beats a bit too hard. We get it. You're a protective mother. Do you need to shout it every other scene? The dialogue too often approaches parody in this regard as if Becca needs to remind everyone why a C.I.A. killing machine would go after her missing son. The constant justification feels like melodrama instead of the dose of realism that this show could use. I know most people aren't looking for character development in a show like "Missing" but Judd is talented enough that she could pull it off if she had the right scripts.

And I like the idea that "Missing" will resolved its first story arc in the already-filmed ten episodes. In other words, no matter what happens with the ratings, you'll have your story. It's incredible that it's taken this long, but the networks are FINALLY starting to copy the cable model of HBO, FX, etc. — fewer episodes, guaranteed season. It will change the face of network TV whether or not this one works creatively or not. It might not be "Missing" but there will be a limited-run network hit that will finally move the cable model to ABC. Why not have Ashley Judd lead the charge?

"Missing" stars Ashley Judd, Sean Bean, Cliff Curtis, Adriano Giannini, Nick Eversman, and Tereza Voriskova. It premieres on Thursday, March 15th, 2012 at 7pm CST.



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