

## TV Review: USA Tries to Find Ratings Gold Again with ‘Common Law’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on May 11, 2012 - 2:51pm

- [Brian Tallerico](#) [2]
- [Common Law](#) [3]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [4]
- [Michael Ealy](#) [5]
- [Sonya Walger](#) [6]
- [Television](#) [7]
- [USA](#) [8]
- [Warren Kole](#) [9]

CHICAGO – Is the USA model getting a little tired to anyone else? Does every show have to be a mystery-of-the-week series? Can they try something totally new? “Common Law” is not as quirky as some of their other programs but if you showed me the pilot and asked me what network it was on, I could easily pick it out as a USA show. I guess there’s something to be said for branding and not fixing what ain’t broke but this is another safe diversion when I’m hoping the network could use its success for something a bit more ambitious in the near future.



TV Rating: **3.0/5.0**

To be fair, “Common Law” isn’t a bad show. It’s a hard show to get overly excited about and it’s not as instantly engaging or charismatic as the best of USA — “Burn Notice,” “Psych,” “Suits”. To use a baseball analogy, it’s a solid single. It works well enough that one can’t complain but it doesn’t make any highlight reels either. It could develop into something more interesting given the charismatic cast but, once again, USA sent only one episode for review, so that’s all I can judge.



Common Law  
Photo credit: USA

The set-up of “Common Law” is reasonably clever — two detectives who HATE each other to the point that they have to go to couples therapy because they happen to work well enough together that they can’t just split up. The oil-and-water buddy comedy and the cop show genre have been intertwined for decades and so the show has a familiarity right from the very beginning. I get that they’re trying to amp up the animosity although even that feels a bit overstated. These two bicker but they don’t really loathe each other like they could have in a more ambitious show. The fact is that the odd couple set-up really isn’t that essential to the show. We have to like these two guys and be interested in the crimes they solve. The set-up is just the foundation.

The two cops are ladies man Travis Marks (Michael Ealy) and Type A personality Wes Mitchell (Warren Kole). At the opening, they have been split up because they fought so badly that they pulled guns on each other. But Captain Phil Sutton (Jack McGee of “Rescue Me”) knows that they are the best choice to solve any crime. So he forces them to go to therapy with Dr. Ryan (Sonya Walger). Wes is a by-the-book former lawyer. Travis is a instinctual cop. On their own, they can’t see every side of a case. Together they’re unstoppable.

As is often the case with extended premiere episodes (tonight’s is 90 minutes), “Common Law” does feel a bit strained. It’s slow when it needs to pop. The show just doesn’t have enough personality to make its generic set-up work. However, Ealy and Kole are strong leads and that’s essential to USA hits. The best shows on this hit network are built around their central casting. I like the guys on “Common Law.” Let’s just hope they find something more interesting and original to do in future episodes.

*“Common Law” stars Michael Ealy, Warren Kole, Jack McGee, and Sonya Walger. It premieres on USA on Friday, May 11, 2012 at 9pm CST.*



[10]

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