

TV Review: Don't Join Bizarre 'Cult' on The CW

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on February 19, 2013 - 10:55am

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CHICAGO – Man, “Cult,” premiering tonight on The CW at 8pm CST, is a weird, weird show. One can see the pitch that convinced producers to fund this misfire but it was never developed into anything entertaining or believable. Not unlike last week’s disastrous “Cult,” this show can’t decide if it’s camp or meant to be taken seriously, and so ends up in the chasm in between where shows go to die.



Television Rating: **1.5/5.0**

Hold tight for this plot description. “Cult” is the name of a show on The CW within a show called “Cult” on The CW. In the fictional show “Cult,” Billy Grimm (Robert Knepper of “Prison Break”) leads a group of followers who conform to his every need and follow his every order. Grimm is a Charles Manson-esque nutjob who stays one step ahead of LAPD detective Kelly Collins (Alona Tal) and proclaims his innocence, having his followers do his dirty work.

The fictional “Cult” has a huge following. People track the show’s every twist and turn a la “LOST” or “Breaking Bad,” developing a cult around “Cult.” But is the fictional show more than escapist entertainment? Is it purposefully creating its own cult? Is Billy Grimm real? And what about the hidden messages in the program that people claim to find and then disappear?



Cult

Photo credit: The CW

One such person is Nate Sefton, a guy who has had enough issues in his past that his journalist brother Jeff (Matt Davis) has started to ignore his paranoia. And then Nate disappears, drawing Jeff deeper into the cult of “Cult” with the assistance of a research assistant for the show named Skye (Jessica Lucas). Can Nate & Skye figure out the real story behind “Cult”?



Cult

Photo credit: The CW

The concept ain't bad. As social media and internet presences continue to create cults around pop culture items, the idea of a show that takes this to extremes, building its own dangerous following, is actually kind of clever. But it's also amazingly difficult to pull off tonally. This program might have worked with someone edgy like David Lynch or David Cronenberg to pull it off — the encroachment of new media in our daily lives has long obsessed both of them. But what they do is not easy. Finding the creepy factor beneath what we consider escapism takes a unique approach. We need to see something different when the curtain is lifted. "Cult" just gives us another curtain.

It is a show within a show and neither of them are interesting. The fictional "Cult" is nowhere near creative enough to believe that anyone would watch it longer than "Do No Harm" and Nate & Skye just aren't interesting characters to give a damn what happens to them or what they discover. There are some atmospheric moments but they're few and far between.

"Cult" needed to be totally strange to work and it feels like the producers weren't willing to embrace its unique concept and run with it. Shows like the fictional "Cult" worked because they were completely fearless ("LOST" was one of the most daring shows in the history of television). One can sense the fear in the production of "Cult," the desire to please. No one follows anyone or any show that begs to be followed.

"Cult" stars Matt David, Jessica Lucas, Alona Tal, and Robert Knepper. It premieres on Tuesday, February 19, 2013 at 8pm CST on The CW.



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