

## TV Review: Don't Visit Eli Roth's 'Hemlock Grove' on Netflix

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on April 18, 2013 - 3:00pm

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CHICAGO – I was so ready for “Hemlock Grove.” I’ve liked more of Eli Roth’s work in the past than most critics and thought of the creative freedom allowed by a company like Netflix and what that could mean for the horror TV genre. After the home run that was “House of Cards,” could they really go back-to-back? Mere minutes into “Hemlock Grove,” you know that’s not the case. By the midway mark, I was just counting up the bad decisions (does Famke Janssen really need the worst British accent in TV?) as the plot is disposable, the characters aren’t memorable, and, worst of all, the sense of dread that must accompany a show like this one is nonexistent. It’s not scary, it’s not smart, it’s not good.



Television Rating: **1.5/5.0**

The main problem with “Hemlock Grove,” which will premiere in its entirety a la “House of Cards,” tomorrow, April 19, 2013, is one of tonal imbalance. This program has no idea what it is. At times, it feels like a crazy town story like “Twin Peaks.” At others, it’s a teen melodrama like “The Twilight Saga.” One minute, it’s camp (that’s clearly what Janssen is playing). At another, it’s drama. It so haphazardly constructed that it feels like that English class exercise in which one person starts a story and hands it to the kid next to him to continue. There’s nothing to latch on to here. No reason to care. I simply can’t imagine watching 13 episodes of it in a row (as many did with “Cards” and legions plan to do with “Arrested Development”). With weeks in between, the flaws may have been easier to overlook. With all of them in a row, it’s going to be the multi-car pile-up of bad TV.



Hemlock Grove

Photo credit: Netflix

Janssen isn’t even the lead (and takes so long to show up in the premiere that you may forget she’s involved). No, it’s another teen drama —

"The Vampire Diaries" with boobs and f-bombs (although not as fun as even that makes it sound). The annoying leads are Landon Liboiron and Bill Skarsgard (younger brother of Alex from "True Blood"). Liboiron plays the new kid in town, son to a mysterious woman (they're all mysterious in Hemlock Grove) played by the great Lili Taylor. They're a gypsy couple with secrets, of course. Skarsgard plays Roman, a mysterious type who would be TeamEdward to Liboiron's TeamJacob. Roman is a part of the wealthy family in town, the one that rules socially and may do so primally as well.



Hemlock Grove  
Photo credit: Netflix

The "action" of the premiere kicks off with a girl being brutally attacked by a creature that's clearly more than your average animal. What killed her? How is Roman's family related to the action? The gypsies? The first few episodes of "Hemlock Grove" throw so many bananas at the wall that one loses track of the arcs and stops caring how they're related. There may be some experiments going in town. There may be werewolves. There may be a reason to care.

I'm all for crazy TV. But it's a lot harder to pull off than it looks. Crazy without style is just silly. And "Hemlock Grove" is incredibly, incredibly silly. "House of Cards" felt like a show that could revolutionize the way people watch TV. It wasn't something the major networks didn't want. It was as good as anything on HBO or Netflix. There's no way that HBO or Netflix would have said yes after seeing the pilot of "Hemlock Grove."

Like all networks, Netflix is going through some growing pains. Show me one of your favorite shows and I'll show you a piece of junk on the same network. So perhaps it makes sense that the scales have been balanced in 2013 for Netflix. At least until "Arrested Development" sends them out of whack again.

*"Hemlock Grove" stars Famke Janssen, Dougray Scott, Bill Skarsgard, Landon Liboiron, and Lili Taylor. It was created by Eli Roth from the novel by Brian McGreevey. It premieres on Netflix on April 19, 2013.*



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Source URL (retrieved on Sep 25 2024 - 11:41am):

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