

TV Review: USA Opens ‘Graceland,’ Begins Closure of ‘Burn Notice’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on June 6, 2013 - 12:43pm

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CHICAGO – USA and TNT have owned Summer television for the last several years with hits like “White Collar,” “Burn Notice,” “Royal Pains,” and “The Closer”. Both networks begin their assault on your DVR this month with new and returning shows as they try to find their next big hits and close out a few classics. USA is doing both tonight, launching the thriller “Graceland” and closing up shop on the over-the-hill “Burn Notice.” The former shows some promise while not quite breaking out of its genre while the latter proves with a lackluster premiere that it’s run out of ideas.



Graceland
Photo credit: USA

“Graceland”



In the '00s, the U.S. Government took a Malibu home confiscated from a drug dealer and turned it into a very unique place. People who are deep undercover still need a place to call home. And so “Graceland” was born. With strict rules about not letting strangers upstairs (think about if even one of the agent’s cover was broken and how it could topple the entire operation), a collection of undercover agents basically started living together. It’s like the FBI’s version of “Melrose Place.”

Our window into this unique and dramatically-engaging setting is through the eyes of FBI rookie Mike Warren (Aaron Tveit), the new guy

replacing a DEA agent recently shot in an undercover sting gone very wrong. Naturally, the inhabitants of Graceland are protective of their brother still in the hospital and hostile to the new guy taking his room. Let the hazing begin.

Warren gets the warmest reception from Johnny (Manny Montana), the guy who shows him around the house and teaches him the rules as he also tries to help him get to the bottom of his latest case, one in which he may have to kill a man to prove he’s not a cop. The charismatic Vanessa Ferlito and Brandon Jay McLaren play fellow agents while Serinda Swan gives our protagonist the most heat as the possibly-partnerless agent who just watched her friend get shot. The co-lead (and best reason to watch the show) is Daniel Sunjata. The “Rescue Me” star plays the legendary Paul Briggs, an FBI agent who has rewritten the book on undercover ops.

“Graceland” is cliched and familiar but also well-done and tightly paced. It’s enjoyable without being particularly memorable, which is often the standard with Summer TV, especially on USA. The USA Network has a brand of shows that don’t tax the mental faculties too deeply, rarely contain an ounce of subtlety, but feature enough interesting characters in entertaining stories that we go with it. We may forget after but we go with it. Their slogan used to be “Characters Welcome.” I imagine viewers will welcome the inhabitants of “Graceland.”



Burn Notice

Photo credit: USA

“Burn Notice”



Television Rating: **2.5/5.0**

Viewers used to adore the inhabitants of “Burn Notice” and I bet a lot of them still do but I couldn’t shake the feeling during the final season premiere that this is a show that went on at least one season too long. The first few years of “Burn Notice” were cool, inventive, and hinted at some potentially interesting places to go narratively. I feel like “Burn Notice” didn’t go to a lot of those places, choosing to tell too many of the same stories over and over again. In the season premiere, as Michael (Jeffrey Donovan) has gone deep undercover to keep his family and friends safe, the sense of deja vu is dense. And when the show tries to get darker, as in a violent opening fight scene, it doesn’t work tonally. I like “Burn Notice” as an entire series. I think it’s just time for Michael, Fiona, and Sam to ride off into TV history and I hope the final season picks up creatively from its lackluster premiere to give them the send-off they deserve.

“Graceland” and “Burn Notice” premiere on USA Network on Thursday, June 6, 2013 at 7pm CST.



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