

TV Review: 'Marvel's Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.' Hits Target Audience

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on September 24, 2013 - 12:07pm

- [ABC](#) [2]
- [Brett Dalton](#) [3]
- [Chloe Bennet](#) [4]
- [Clark Gregg](#) [5]
- [Elizabeth Henstridge](#) [6]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [7]
- [Iain De Caestecker](#) [8]
- [Jed Whedon](#) [9]
- [Joss Whedon](#) [10]
- [Marvel's The Avengers](#) [11]
- [Marvel's Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.](#) [12]
- [Ming-Na Wen](#) [13]
- [Television](#) [14]
- [Theater, TV, DVD & Blu-Ray](#) [15]

CHICAGO – You can all breathe easy. It's not bad. Serious Marvel and Joss Whedon fans are probably having flashbacks after reading those two sentences. We were all incredibly nervous that one of the best writers in the history of television was going to get the biggest blockbuster in recent years and find a way to screw up "Marvel's The Avengers." Of course, he didn't, making arguably the best Marvel movie to date. The stakes aren't as high for ABC's "Marvel's Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D." but there has been a similar degree of concern, especially after rumors of reshoots and rewrites for upcoming episodes. "A new Marvel show with the name Whedon on it? And it's the most-buzzed new show of the season? Please be good. Please be good." It's good. And it could be great.



Television Rating: **4.0/5.0**

What separates the premiere of "Marvel's Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D." from 80% of the new dramas this year? It's purely entertaining as Hell. It's not perfect in terms of pacing and I wish it had a stronger central hero character like Tony Stark or Buffy the Vampire Slayer on which to peg its action but it's incredibly well-cast and features the kind of smart writing we've come to expect from the Whedon-verse. As he so often does, Whedon is tweaking genre expectations, knowing that you come to a show like this one with high hopes and a deeper-than-ever worldwide knowledge base of comic book lore. He not only plays with the Marvel world but does so in way that will remind viewers of "Buffy the Vampire Slayer," "Firefly," and other Whedon hits. It feels like a major Hollywood product filtered through Whedon's incredible brain. That's not a bad thing.



Marvel's Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.

Photo credit: ABC

Directly referencing the action of "The Avengers," "S.H.I.E.L.D." takes place not long after the destructive battle that ended that hit film and revealed the presence of superheroes around the world. S.H.I.E.L.D., led by a resurrected Agent Phil Coulson (Clark Gregg), tries to keep this new world stable, finding the superheroes who can now come into the light and stopping those who would work toward destruction.



Marvel's Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.
Photo credit: ABC

Like a lot of pilots, "S.H.I.E.L.D." is heavy on introductions. We first meet Agent Grant Ward (Brett Dalton), the alpha male new guy who joins S.H.I.E.L.D. and is introduced to its objectives and operatives – Agent Melinda May (Ming-Na Wen) is a legendary martial arts expert while Agents Fitz (Iain De Caestecker) and Simmons (Elizabeth Henstridge) somewhat serve as a two-headed Q with all the new toys they bring into the field. In the premiere, Ward, Coulson, and the rest of the agents are forced to deal with The Rising Tide, a group who seems to be working toward chaos, trying to expose S.H.I.E.L.D. This investigation forces them to cross paths with a charismatic hacker named Skye (Chloe Bennet).

Gregg and his car Lola are all over the ads because they are the only direct connection to one of the biggest films of all time but I was very happy to see that the supporting cast of "Marvel's Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D." was incredibly well-considered. The biggest problem for "Agents" would have been if Coulson was the only interesting character but the pilot immediately alleviates that concern. In particular, Bennet is charming, funny, and deft with that quick Whedon-speak that has defined his work. There's actually not a single weak link in the cast.

The weakness of the premiere comes down to plotting. There's a slightly melodramatic arc involving a commentary on the current economic state of the country that I just didn't invest in. I wanted to hang out with Fitz & Simmons instead. And that's a problem. The action on "S.H.I.E.L.D." is less entertaining to start than the witty dialogue courtesy of Whedon and his brother Jed (and Maurissa Tancharoen of "Dollhouse" and "Dr. Horrible's Sing-Along Blog"). That's not meant as too harsh of a criticism but fans of Whedon's work might be concerned that if he can't deliver on the action, this show could suffer the same fate as his last few outings.

However, if stronger dialogue scenes than action ones are the main reason for concern for "Marvel's Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.," do we really need to worry? Is that really a problem? "S.H.I.E.L.D." is so smart at times, referencing other comic book films and the very concept of an origin story. I want stronger heroes and a strong villain to carry me through the season but I think Whedon and co. will provide it. This is just issue #1. It's going to be fun to see where the next few books go.

"Marvel's Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D." stars Clark Gregg, Chloe Bennet, Brett Dalton, Iain De Caestecker, Ming-Na Wen, and Elizabeth Henstridge. It was created by Joss & Jed Whedon and Maurissa Tancharoen. It premieres on ABC on Tuesday, September 24, 2013 at 7pm CST.



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