

‘Lie to Me’ With Tim Roth Mistakes Concept For Content

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on January 19, 2009 - 11:23am

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Television Rating: **1.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – “[The Mentalist](#) [14]” is the only significant new hit for the 2008-2009 season and the number one rule in TV is that if something works once, try and replicate it. Viewers can expect to see dozens of clones of the [Simon Baker](#) [17] series in the next few years. It is into this atmosphere that Fox hopes their newest crime series, “[Lie To Me](#) [10],” can find a loyal audience.

Network TV ratings may be sliding across the board, but there is one genre that seems more resilient to the erosion than others - the crime drama. From network staples like “[CSI](#) [5]” to cable shows like “[The Closer](#) [13],” every network head is looking for the next procedural with a twist, the show that they can keep on the air for years, preferably with a revolving door cast and very little effort on their part.



The Lightman Group is a private agency hired to expose the truth behind the lies in the new series Lie To Me premiering Wednesday, Jan. 21 (9:03-10:06 PM ET/PT) on FOX. Pictured L-R: Kelli Williams, Tim Roth, Brendan Hines and Monica Raymund.

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Fox's "Lie To Me" is not a straight-up clone of "The Mentalist" (and, of course, it was in production before that show took off) but it certainly shares some character traits with CBS' massively entertaining program in that it's about a man who sees things in human behavior that the average crime fighter does not. Dr. Cal Lightman ([Tim Roth](#) [15]) can not only tell if a suspect is lying, but can often take it a step further and tell you *why* someone is being deceptive. "Lie To Me" is based on the true discoveries of Dr. Paul Ekman, an expert in reading clues in the human face, body, and voice, often brought in to investigate criminal investigations.



As the foremost deception expert in the country, Dr. Cal Lightman (Tim Roth, R) knows when someone is lying. He oversees The Lightman Group, a private agency hired to expose the truth behind the lies in the new series Lie To Me premiering Wednesday, Jan. 21 (9:03-10:06 PM ET/PT) on FOX.

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The Lightman Group, headed by Tim Roth's character, assists government agencies, police detectives, and federal law enforcement with issues of deception. Dr. Lightman's right-hand woman is Dr. Gillian Foster ([Kelli Williams](#) [9] of "The Practice"), a psychologist more interested in the general picture than her partner's detail-oriented approach. Their chemistry is the highlight of the premiere and what the writers will need to focus on if "Lie To Me" is going to improve.

Drs. Lightman and Foster are assisted by a lead researcher named Eli Loker (Brendan Hines) and a new-hire named Ria Torres (Monica Raymund). The former gets to play comic relief with his practice of "radical honesty" and the latter is the "natural," the rare person who can pick up on all the physical tics and verbal cues without much training.

The team behind "Lie To Me," including writer Samuel Baum ("The Evidence") and the executive producers of "[24](#) [18]" and "[Arrested Development](#) [19]," clutter their first episode with two cases, character introductions, and even jabs at real-life personalities to the point that the whole thing sinks under the weight of its concept. It feels forced.



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Religiously overprotected kids, a dead teacher, a philandering politician, hookers, and references to every famous liar from Kato Kaelin to George Bush is too much for one episode of any program. Cluttered TV scripts reek of desperation and "Lie To Me" is just not well-written. Roth is good and Williams isn't bad, but TV has always been and will always be about the writing and the pilot for "Lie To Me" is a mess. The cases, the dialogue, the supporting characters - none of it works

I could look Dr. Ekman and his fictional counterpart in the face and they would know I was not lying when I told them that their show is going to be a hit this year but it needs to get better quickly if it wants to survive after Simon, Paula, Randy, and the new girl leave the air. "Lie To Me" has the safest time slot on TV - post "American Idol".

But I think even the people making the series would need to practice self-deception to convince themselves that the series is anything but mediocre at best and borders on downright bad. It's very difficult to judge a procedural show after one episode. Next week's case(s) might be more interesting. But it feels like the problems with "Lie To Me" are deeper than a couple of cases with stupid twists. And that's no lie.

'Lie To Me,' which airs on FOX, stars Tim Roth, Kelli Williams, Brendan Hines, and Monica Raymund. The premiere airs on January 21st, 2009 at 8:03PM CST.



[20]

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