

TV Review: Nathan Fillion, Stana Katic Have Perfect Chemistry on Promising ‘Castle’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on March 9, 2009 - 11:15am

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Television Rating: **4.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – Is it finally time for [Nathan Fillion](#) [13] to become a star? One of the most charismatic TV actors of the last few years should have become a legend for his work on “[Firefly](#) [8],” but that wasn’t meant to be. Now he’s back and just as good opposite [Stana Katic](#) [15] on the very-promising “[Castle](#) [5],” a mystery-of-the-week show distinguished by the excellent chemistry of its leads.

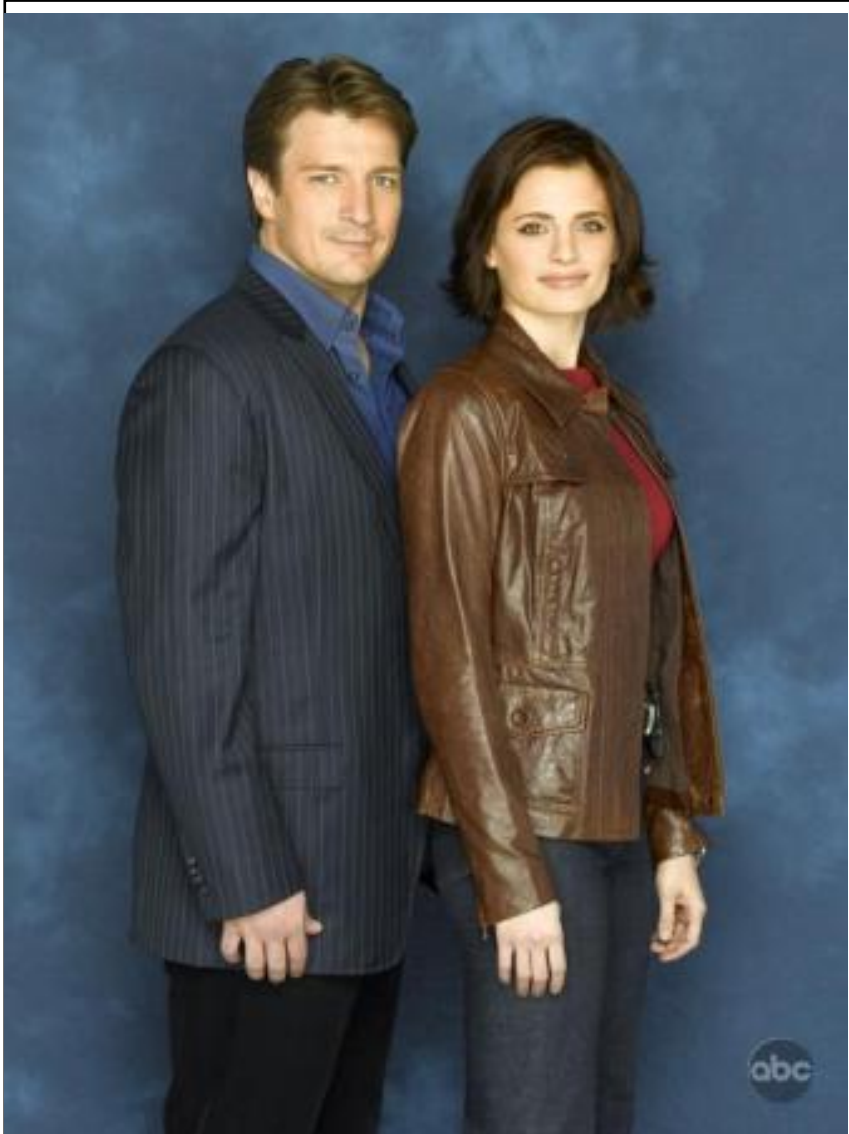
What sets murder mystery shows apart? Why does “[The Mentalist](#) [19]” turn into a phenomenon while so many others fail? Having seen dozens of these shows as a TV critic for years, it’s two things that are really common to successful shows of any kind - the chemistry of the cast and the quality of the writing. The former is fantastic in ABC’s new “Castle” and I believe the latter will get there too. With “[Dancing With the Stars](#) [7]” as a lead-in, this could be the first new hit of 2009.



Stana Katic and Nathan Fillion in Castle.

Photo credit: ABC/Eric Leibowitz

Fillion stars as mystery novelist Richard Castle, someone bored by his own characters and his own success. In the opening episode, “Flowers For My Grave,” he’s just killed off his popular lead character and is trying to figure out how to start a new book without him.



Stana Katic and Nathan Fillion in Castle.

Photo credit: ABC/Bob D'Amico

Castle is questioned by NYPD Detective Kate Beckett (the beautiful [Stana Katic](#) [15]) after a murderer starts to copy some of the crimes from lesser-known books by the author. The by-the-numbers Beckett and the flirtatious and funny Castle are a perfect TV pairing, a classic oil-and-water crime-solving combination like David and Maddie on “[Moonlighting](#) [12]” or Booth and Brennan on “[Bones](#) [3]”.

Fillion and Katic have undeniable chemistry, arguably working better together than some of those classic pairings did in episode one. Whatever works for you about the premiere of “Castle” will depend on how much you like the two leads. I liked them quite a bit and look forward to spending more time with them every Monday night.

Now, of course, a show can’t last forever with just two charismatic leads. There’s a supporting cast loosely sketched out in the opening episode that’s going to need to be further developed to truly support Fillion and Katic if the show is going to go from good to great.

Castle has a boozy mother ([Susan Sullivan](#) [16]) and intellectual daughter ([Molly C. Quinn](#) [11]) and both will clearly play roles in future plots. Right now, they feel like characters we’ve seen too many times before but the two actresses are good enough to turn them into something more. Time will tell.



Stana Katic and Nathan Fillion in Castle.

Photo credit: ABC/Eric Leibowitz

Another area of "Castle" that needs development is the supporting cast of the NYPD. [Ruben Santiago-Hudson](#) [14] plays NYPD Captain Roy Montgomery, [Tamala Jones](#) [17] plays Medical Examiner Lanie Parish, [Jon Huertas](#) [10] ad NYPD Detective Javier Esposito, and [Seamus Dever](#) [21] plays NYPD Detective Kevin Ryan.

None of them register positively or negatively in the premiere, but that's because the writers are forced to give most of their running time to introducing the two leads. As someone who believes every show is as good as its weakest supporting character, I hope the rest of the NYPD becomes as interesting as Castle and Beckett.

And what about the writing? The actual mystery of episode one is a little boring, but the repartee between the leads is better than average.



Stana Katic and Nathan Fillion in Castle.
Photo credit: ABC/Bob D'Amico

There was one unusual thing about the premiere that bugged me - it doesn't feel like NYC. Shows set in the Big Apple need to be gritty, dark, and with the life of the city that doesn't sleep. With its book-release parties, Hollywood production sheen, and sexy cast, "Castle" feels like an LA show. It's a minor thing, but setting can often be used to play a major character in a show like this one (ask fans of the "[CSI](#) [6]" franchise) and it would be nice if "Castle" felt a little more grounded in its location.

What's so promising about "Castle" is how much works in episode one. I happen to have watched the first episode of "Bones" again recently and there's more "right" about this premiere than that one. Of course, "Bones" developed into one of the more entertaining mystery series of the '00s.

"Castle" isn't there yet but shows like this almost always grow as the writers figure out how to best play their cast's chemistry to support each weekly mystery. If "Castle" gets better from here, Nathan Fillion might not just be a star - he could finally be a household name.

'Castle,' which airs on ABC, debuts on March 9th, 2009 at 9PM CST. It stars Nathan Fillion, Stana Katic, Molly C. Quinn, Susan Sullivan, Tamala Jones, CSI, Ruben Santiago-Hudson, Jon Huertas, and Seamus Dever. It was created by Andrew Marlowe



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