

DVD, TV Review: TNT's 'Leverage' Delivers Entertainment Despite Flaws

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on July 15, 2009 - 2:31pm

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CHICAGO – In a world where corporate bailouts and scumbags like Bernie Madoff dominate the news, it would seem like TNT's "Leverage" would be a natural choice for a summer diversion. The Timothy Hutton star vehicle is essentially "Robin Hood" for the modern age or "Ocean's 11" if Danny Ocean were a bit more philanthropic and it may not be groundbreaking television but it is something the broadcast network offerings have not been this season - mostly entertaining.x



TV Rating: **3.0/5.0**

Hutton stars as Nate Ford, a former insurance investigator who watched as corruption and corporate neglect led to the death of his son. In the first season, now on DVD (more details on that at the bottom of this review), Ford gathered a team of social and technical experts who assisted him in revenge schemes to try and balance the fight between David and Goliath.



Timothy Hutton.
Photo credit: Erik Heinila/TNT

The rest of "Ford's Five" include the highly skilled grifter Sophie Devereaux (Gina Bellman), the muscle man Eliot Spencer (Christian Kane), technology wizard Alec Hardison (Aldis Hodge), and the sexy thief Parker (Beth Riesgraf). It's a well-cast ensemble with each actor and character bringing something else to each crime and the overall show.



Timothy Hutton.
Photo credit: Erik Heinila/TNT

At the end of season one, Ford's group had gone their separate ways after the destruction of their headquarters. Consequently, a large chunk of the premiere of season two is devoted to reuniting the band.

The episode kicks off with an impressive car accident, which turns out to be the attempted murder of a bank whistleblower and his daughter. Nate witnesses the event, saves the passengers, and becomes involved in an elaborate mystery that will soon require the skills of Eliot, Sophie, Alec, and Parker.

The second season premiere of "Leverage" is consistent with the majority of this good-not-great show. It delivers disposable, popcorn entertainment that sometimes purports to say something greater about the fight of the everyman but is really just trying to keep you one step behind Ford's complex scheme to keep you from changing the channel.

So why is "Leverage" merely good and not great? What's holding it back?

The premiere of the sophomore season is a perfect example of everything that works about the show and what still needs a little fixing.

On the positive side of the TV ledger, this is well-paced, brisk, clever TV writing with a stronger supporting ensemble than average and witty dialogue.



Gina Bellman, Christian Kane, Timothy Hutton, Aldis Hodge and Beth Riesgraf.
Photo credit: Richard Foreman/TNT

On the negative, I'm still not buying Hutton nor Bellman. The former is a little too half-asleep to truly sell the charisma this character needs to have and the latter isn't quite believable as the multi-talented con woman she needs to be. I like the two actors but Hutton needs to show a little more energy and Bellman needs to play a little cooler.

Maybe "Leverage" will never be must-see TV, but there's a similar basic cable show about a small group of people turning the tables on more powerful ones that really took a giant leap in quality during its sophomore year - USA's "Burn Notice". That show always displayed a little more potential, but it's not hard to see "Leverage" settling into a similarly confident groove. Tune in and find out if it does.

If you want to catch up first, Paramount released the first season of "Leverage" on DVD on July 14th, 2009. All thirteen episodes are presented in widescreen with a Dolby Digital 5.1 Surround Sound track. The episodes look and sound better-than-average for standard but it's a shame that they weren't presented on Blu-Ray as well.

The special features on the first season of "Leverage" include commentary tracks on every episode and a series of brief featurettes. Fans should zip through "Leverage: Behind the Scenes," "Anatomy of a Stunt Fight," "The Cameras of Leverage," "Leverage Gets Renewed," "Beth Riesgraf's Crazy Actress Spoof," and Deleted Scenes from nine episodes.

The second season of 'Leverage' premieres on TNT on Wednesday, July 15th, 2009 at 8pm CST. It stars Timothy Hutton, Gina Bellman, Christian Kane, Beth Riesgraf, and Aldis Hodge. It was created by John Rogers and Chris Downey.

'Leverage: The First Season' was released by Paramount Home Video. The show was released on July 14thth, 2009. It is not rated.



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