

TV Review: Promising ‘The Good Wife’ With Juliana Margulies

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on September 22, 2009 - 9:41am

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CHICAGO – From the non-stop ads (especially the ones that played all weekend locally with Bill Kurtis), you would be forgiven for thinking that CBS’ “[The Good Wife](#) [15]” was solely about a scorned woman who enjoys slapping her lothario husband. There’s a lot more to the drama than that overplayed scene and the potential of the show is in the promise of watching a strong female character get past that moment, not play it over and over again.



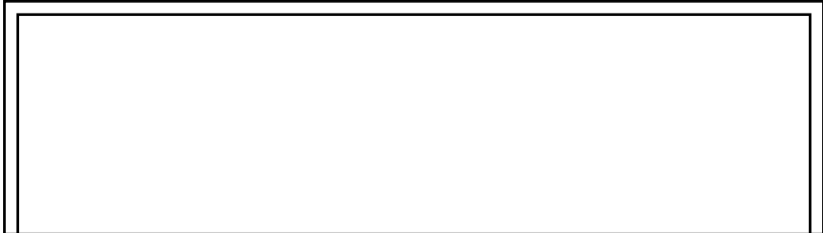
Television Rating: **3.5/5.0**

Emmy Award winner [Juliana Margulies](#) [9] (“[ER](#) [17]”) stars as Alicia Florrick, a woman who has always stood by her politician husband through thick and thin. You know those woman who you see standing next to the latest corrupt public figure as they give their apologies via press conference? That’s Alicia, who watches her world collapse when her husband Peter ([Chris Noth](#) [18]) suffers a very public sex and political scandal.



Juliana Margulies.
Photo credit: Eike Schroter/CBS

With Peter in jail and no one left to support their family, Alicia decides to return to the work force and pursue her original career as a defense attorney, taking a job at a prestigious Chicago law firm. An old friend and firm partner gives Alicia a chance and “The Good Wife” becomes an unusual legal show, featuring a lead character who has been out of practice for years but also has a major public persona.





Juliana Margulies.
Photo credit: Jason Bell/CBS

The promos have pounded the infidelity of Noth's character into the ground but it is a very minor part of the overall show. It's the impact of his dalliance with a prostitute that drives the series not the scandal itself. Of course, public sex scandals involving politicians like John Edwards, Mark Sanford, and Eliot Spitzer makes that the hook to draw in the audience, but the show will live or die on what's there after the tones of "Stand By Your Man" have faded from memory.

Less than ten minutes into the pilot, Alicia is moving on with her life, returning to legal practice where she's joined by a great ensemble cast (who should really at least get a cameo in the commercials) including Josh Charles ("Sports Night") and the always-excellent Christine Baranski. The young kids at the firm look at Alicia as a doormat, a dinosaur, or both, and Alicia gets tossed into boring pro bono case. Of course, she makes the most of it.

Margulies has been a great TV presence for years and her combination of intellectual grit and genuine sexiness drives "The Good Wife". In just one episode, she's completely believable, not falling into the melodramatic trap that a lot of other actresses would have allowed to overtake the show. Margulies takes this complex, interesting character and makes her completely three-dimensional. Even with good supporting work by Charles, Baranski, and Noth (who it's hinted will be back in a much bigger role very soon), "The Good Wife" belongs to Margulies and she nails one of the most fascinating new characters of the season.

I worry that "The Good Wife" will lose sight of the real Alicia and simply become another case-of-the-week legal show. In the pilot, the strength is the people trying the case, not the case itself. If the show can stay focused on maintaining Alicia's believability as more than just a plot device in a weekly case then "The Good Wife" could be actually be great.

'The Good Wife,' which airs on CBS, debuts on September 22nd, 2009 at 9PM CST. It stars Juliana Margulies, Christine Baranski, Josh Charles, Matt Czuchry, Archie Panjabi, Makenzie Vega, and Graham Phillips. It was created by Robert and Michelle King.



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