

TV Review: Improved 'Lie to Me' Returns With Promising Season Premiere

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on September 28, 2009 - 2:20pm

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CHICAGO – When “Lie to Me” premiered earlier this year, the show simply didn't work. But a lot has happened since then.

The very talented Shawn Ryan (creator of “The Shield”) has come on board as executive producer and Tim Roth has expressed interest in developing his character as more than a cog in a mystery-of-the-week machine. Both the new emphasis on character and stronger writing makes for a season-two premiere that hints at a show with much more potential than when the series began.



Television Rating: **3.5/5.0**

Back in January, I wrote, “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.”



LIE TO ME: The Lightman Group returns to expose the truth behind the lies in the Season Two premiere of LIE TO ME airing Monday, Sept. 28 (9:00-10:00 PM ET/PT) on FOX. Pictured L-R: Brendan Hines, Tim Roth, Monica Raymund, Mekhi Phifer and Kelli Williams.

Photo credit: Sam Jones/FOX

From just the first few minutes of the second season premiere of “Lie To Me,” that crucial element of television - the writing - has clearly improved with a script by “Shield” and “Angel” alums Elizabeth Craft and Sarah Fain. Immediately, Dr. Cal Lightman (Tim Roth) feels like

more than just another variation on Dr. House - the quirky, eccentric man with all the answers. And both mysteries in week one are interesting and entertaining. There’s still a bit of work to do, but the new-and-improved version of “Lie to Me” is far more promising than when the show began.



LIE TO ME: Erika Christensen (L) guest-stars as a witness to a murder in the LIE TO ME Season Two premiere episode “The Core of It” airing Monday, Sept. 28 (9:00-10:00 PM ET/PT) on FOX.
Also pictured: Tim Roth (R) and Hayley McFarland (C)
Photo credit: Isabella Vosmikova/FOX

Based on the real scientific work of Dr. Paul Ekman, “Lie To Me” is about The Lightman Group, a small collection of truth experts who assist government agencies, police detectives, federal law enforcement, and more in the world of deception. Dr. Lightman’s right-hand woman is Dr. Gillian Foster (Kelli Williams). The clever chemistry between Roth and Williams is one of the few things that worked from minute one of “Lie To Me” and remains one of the strongest elements of the show.

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 at all. Mekhi Phifer and Hayley McFarland co-star.

The lead guest star in the season opener is Erika Christensen, doing excellent work as a woman who comes to Dr. Lightman claiming to have seen a vision of a murder. No one believes her but Cal instantly knows that she’s telling the truth. That’s his gift. But it seems physically impossible for her to be truthful about what she’s seen. Is she honestly psychic? The intriguing case takes Lightman’s attention away from a Supreme Court nominee being vetted by the Group to make sure he has no skeletons in his closet.

Both cases crackle with wit and energy in a way that was missing from the series premiere eight months ago. And both cases play with the overall theme of the show in that Cal and his team can tell when someone is lying but they can’t tell why. It’s the secret behind the lie that fascinates Lightman and Roth seems reinvigorated in the season premiere, as if he’s finally figured out a way to distinguish this character from his TV brethren on shows like “House” and “The Mentalist”.

The press release that accompanied the season premiere of “Lie To Me” featured a letter from Ryan in which he himself admits, “*Some shows find their feet right away. Others grow into their skin.*” Much to my surprise, “Lie To Me” has evolved into something interesting. It’s not yet must-see TV, but it could be on the way. And that’s no lie.

‘Lie To Me,’ which airs on FOX, stars Tim Roth, Kelli Williams, Brendan Hines, Monica Raymund, Hayley McFarland, Mekhi Phifer, Jennifer Beals, and guest stars Erika Christensen. The show was created by Samuel Baum. The season two premiere airs on Monday, September 28th, 2009 at 8PM CST.



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