

TV Review: NBC Delivers Medical Action With Excellent ‘Trauma’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on September 28, 2009 - 3:07pm

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CHICAGO – The wave of new fall shows is coming to an end this week with so many shows having debuted to date that we’ve already had our first cancellation of the season (The CW’s horrible “The Beautiful Life”). But NBC has saved one of the best for last in “Trauma,” an expertly produced and acted series that stands as the most promising of the three new medical series this season and arguably the show with the most long-term potential, period.



Television Rating: **4.0/5.0**

Character-driven, ensemble dramas like “Trauma” have been the backbone of television for a very long time. From “Hill Street Blues” to “ER,” viewers like to watch people who go above and beyond but also have everyday problems and insecurities like you and me. We need to see ourselves in these superhuman characters. It is their willingness to do what most people won’t that makes them unique but it is our commonalities that make them interesting. The premiere of “Trauma” has that balance of the everyday and the heroic down in the first episode.



Executive-produced by Peter Berg (who knows a thing or two about the ensemble drama having made NBC’s excellent “Friday Night Lights”), “Trauma” is being sold as the first medical drama series set in the field. These are the men and women who run in the direction of the explosion instead of the other way. When emergencies occur, the team from San Francisco City Hospital are immediately on the clock,

knowing that every second counts when it comes to saving lives.

The opening sequence of tonight's premiere of "Trauma" is a stunner, featuring an adrenalin-pumping helicopter crash that rivals most action sequences currently playing at the multiplex (it's certainly more well-done than anything in "Surrogates").

The copter crash sets the stage for some serious psychological scars by a few of the lead characters on "Trauma," which includes pilot Reuben "Rabbit" Palchuk (Cliff Curtis), paramedic Cameron Boone (Derek Luke), paramedic Nancy Carnahan (Anastasia Griffith), rookie pilot Marisa Benez (Aimee Garcia), rookie EMT Glenn Morris (Taylor Kinney), and Dr. Joe Saviano (Jamey Sheridan).

Being on a trauma team in a major city has to be one of the most stressful jobs in the world. When you lose someone because you couldn't get there fast enough, how do you let that go? Even on a successful day, one where you save a child's life, how do you not take home the emotional baggage of that to your own family? It is a job with nothing but massive highs and the lowest lows - saving lives or losing them. And "Trauma" captures that perfectly.



Anastasia Griffith
Photo credit: Mitchell Haase/NBC

The writing and production are very good but the cast of "Trauma" is what truly stands out after episode one. I like the team on "FlashForward" and "Glee" is its own special kind of awesome, but "Trauma" may have the best ensemble of any new show. Curtis and Luke have been great in film for years and bring the same intensity they have on the big screen to the small one. And Griffith takes a plot arc in the first episode that could have been melodramatic and makes it genuine. Let's hope she's a breakout star of the season.

Ultimately, the most frustrating thing about "Trauma" is that it's on a network that has made it clear that they don't care about shows like "Trauma" any more. The network that brought us "L.A. Law," "St. Elsewhere," and "Hill Street Blues" has given up five hours a week of scripted programming to a talk show host ("The Jay Leno Show"). Many TV writers have already made it clear that if NBC is done with them, they're done with the network. And yet here's "Trauma," one of the most well-written shows of the season.

I'm worried that if "Trauma" takes time to find an audience than the network that clearly doesn't care about writing will be quick to pull the plug. Then again, if the Leno experiment doesn't work maybe they'll be more forgiving and switch the focus back to shows like this one. "Trauma" is proof that adult, character-driven dramas are still worth the effort. Who would have guessed that would have been proven on NBC?

'Trauma,' which airs on NBC, stars McCliff Curtis, Derek Luke, Anastasia Griffith, Aimee Garcia, Taylor Kinney, and Jamey Sheridan. It was created by Dario Scardapane. The series premiere airs on Monday, September 28th, 2009 at 8PM CST.



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