

TV Review: Entertaining, Action-Packed 'Human Target' Rocks

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on January 17, 2010 - 1:32pm

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CHICAGO – Fox has long struggled to find an action series as popular and accomplished as their massively successful “24”. It’s nowhere near as intense or self-serious, but the network has finally found an heir to the throne of Jack Bauer in the wildly enjoyable “Human Target,” an action series more reminiscent of weekly escapism of the 1980s but with modern production values. It’s a blast.



Television Rating: **4.0/5.0**

The massively charming Mark Valley (“Fringe”) stars as Christopher Chance aka The Human Target, a minor character from the world of comic books. The Human Target is not your average superhero. He wears no cape and has no super powers. Unless you count an apparent complete lack of fear as a superpower. Chance is a hired gun, a human shield who does whatever it takes to protect his assignment. As he says when a client asks where her bulletproof vest is, “I’m your vest.”



Human Target

Photo credit: FOX

Assisting Chance in his unusual profession are sidekick Winston (the great Chi McBride, recently of “Pushing Daisies”) and intelligence man/hacker Guerrero (the amazing Jackie Earle Haley of “Watchmen”). The opening episode features a client on a runaway train played by Tricia Helfer (“Battlestar Galactica”). The second episode, airing on Wednesday in the show’s regular timeslot, features a runaway plane. One assumes runaway cars and boats are probably inevitable.

From its cheesy opening credits to its "rescue of the week" format, "Human Target" reminds one of a kind of weekly escapism that's simply not that common any more but was everywhere in the '70s and '80s on shows as diverse as "I Spy" and "The A Team". Not everything needs to have the through line of "24" or "Lost". "Human Target" employs a mystery of the week format not unlike the billion-dollar "CSI" franchise but with a throwback action style that's refreshing and wildly enjoyable.



Human Target
Photo credit: FOX

It doesn't hurt that the show has remarkable production values. The first two episodes of "Human Target" pulse with theatrical quality filmmaking that's more accomplished and well-paced than most action films released in the last year. What's most promising is that the second episode is arguably more fun than the first, implying that the series creators didn't use up their entire bag of tricks in the pilot, as is often the case with a show like this one.

The pacing and direction of "Human Target" are its most effective weapons but just as "24" would be nothing without Kiefer Sutherland, the cast of Fox's likely new hit are essential ingredients. Valley is smooth, charming, and effective and McBride is simply one of the best TV sidekicks out there. The inclusion of Oscar-nominated Haley adds a wonderful dimension to the show.

Like a lot of great action movies and shows, the writers never take their concept too seriously, injecting the script with just enough tongue-in-cheek humor to make the brilliantly crafted action sequences even more effective. Non-stop action isn't nearly as exciting as a blend of character, humor, drama, and thrills. "Human Target" has the mix shockingly right from episode one.

"Human Target" is an old-fashioned show done in a fresh, new way. Stuck on Fox on Wednesday nights could be the kiss of death for the program (although the "American Idol" lead-in should provide a boost at the beginning) but one hopes that something this entertaining finds a loyal audience. It's doubtful that it will ever be appointment television like "24" but it's a wonderful fistful of popcorn entertainment and sometimes that's harder to pull off than it sounds. "Human Target" should be a direct hit for most viewers willing to tune in.

'Human Target,' which airs on FOX, stars Mark Valley, Chi McBride, and Jackie Earle Haley. The show premieres with a preview event on January 17th, 2010 at 7pm CST and then airs in its regular time slot on Wednesday, January 20th, 2010 at 8pm CST.



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