

TV Review: Fan Favorites 'Eureka,' 'Warehouse 13' Anchor SyFy Line-Up

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on July 11, 2011 - 3:00pm

- [Aaron Ashmore](#) [2]
- [Allison Scagliotti](#) [3]
- [Brian Tallerico](#) [4]
- [Colin Ferguson](#) [5]
- [Eddie McClintock](#) [6]
- [Erica Cerra](#) [7]
- [Eureka](#) [8]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [9]
- [Joanne Kelly](#) [10]
- [Joe Morton](#) [11]
- [Neil Grayston](#) [12]
- [Salli Richardson-Whitfield](#) [13]
- [Saul Rubinek](#) [14]
- [SyFy](#) [15]
- [Television](#) [16]
- [Warehouse 13](#) [17]
- [Theater, TV, DVD & Blu-Ray](#) [18]

CHICAGO – SyFy brings back two of their hits tonight, July 11th, 2011, for brand-new seasons of wacky behavior with an unusual twist. "Eureka" and "Warehouse 13" have a lot in common with their charming, handsome leads, quirky senses of humor, and unique storylines. They're both about Area 51-esque places that we're not supposed to know about and the people who keep them under control. For me, there's an obviously superior program of the two, the best and most successful show currently on SyFy, but I'm sure fans will be happy to have both back for the summer season.



Television Rating: **2.0/5.0**

"Eureka"

Monday nights will now feature three new SyFy programs every week with "Eureka," "Warehouse 13," and "Alphas" airing back-to-back-to-back, in that order. Despite boasting an Oscar nominee, "Alphas" feels like the weakest of the three on opening night but "Eureka" is not far behind. And while "Alphas" has room to improve and some notable potential, doesn't it feel like "Eureka" has at least plateaued if not jumped the sci-fi shark? When the show debuted in July of 2006, it felt like it could be an original hit. It seemed to build on the success of other interesting genre cable series like "The 4400" and "The Dead Zone," and seemed like a show with nothing but potential. What happened?



Eureka
Photo credit: SyFy

To be fair, "Eureka" is a hard show to totally hate. There's nothing that notably wrong with it and the cast is talented, but it's woefully inconsistent. Tonight's mid-season premiere (this is technically the second half of season four), which features an unplanned rocket launch, is surprisingly dull. If you absolutely adore these characters and continue to be fascinated by the alternative timeline plot that has taken place this season then you'll probably be entertained. But step back for a minute and consider two things — One, this season premiere simply isn't engaging enough to bring in new viewers, and, two, shouldn't a mid-season premiere be an exciting "welcome back" for fans? This one feels like treading water for a show that too often does just that.

If you're completely unfamiliar, the title of "Eureka" refers to a small town in the Pacific Northwest which is secretly a community for the smartest people in the world. The unusual research and top-secret behavior leads to a few problems. Last season, the core characters — Sheriff Jack Carter (Colin Ferguson), Allison Blake (Salli Richardson-Whitfield), Henry Deacon (Joe Morton), Jo Lupo (Erica Cerra), and Douglas Fargo (Neil Grayston) — saw their lives turned upside-down after a bit of time-traveling left their current lives altered. The new season focuses on that along with "dramas of the week" like the aforementioned rocket launch which finds two of our favorite characters actually circling the Earth.

Not only is the rocket adventure somewhat dull but its resolution is surprisingly anti-climactic. This just isn't a strong hour of television. With some exciting guest stars upcoming, including Wil Wheaton ("Star Trek: The Next Generation"), Felicia Day ("Dr. Horrible's Sing-Along Blog"), and Ming Na ("Stargate Universe"), one would hope that the second half of the fourth season of "Eureka" would become more engaging but this is a disappointing way to start the SyFy summer.



Television Rating: **3.5/5.0**

"Warehouse 13"

Luckily, things get much stronger in the second hour of SyFy's new night of programming, as their "most successful series ever" returns with a very-entertaining season premiere. It's interesting to watch the entire night of new SyFy Monday programming because the comparison makes it so easy to see what "Warehouse" does right that's just not there on "Eureka" or "Alphas." With much-crisper dialogue, better pacing, and stronger performances, it's no contest to say that "Warehouse 13" at least starts more successfully than its Monday colleagues.



Warehouse 13

Photo credit: SyFy

The title refers to the location manned by a team of government agents. What are they guarding and maintaining? Powerful, often-magical artifacts collected by the U.S. government. They find something unusual and it goes in Warehouse 13. Of course, those unusual, sometimes-deadly artifacts often make it into the general population and it takes the Warehouse team to keep them under control. The team includes the charming Pete Lattimer (Eddie McClintock), caretaker Artie Nielsen (Saul Rubinek), super-smart Myka Bering (Joanne Kelly), and snarky Claudia (Allison Scagliotti).

At the end of last season, Myka left the team, which opens the door for a new recruit in season three, Steve Jinks (Aaron Ashmore of "Veronica Mars" and "Smallville"). Jinks can instantly tell when someone is lying to him and makes a perfect new partner for Lattimer. But what about Myka? Is she really gone? Of course, it's not much of a spoiler, to say that the case of the season premiere takes the team across Myka's path and the temptation to return for good is strong.

Why does "Warehouse 13" work? The characters are engaging and interesting, the dialogue is clever, and the pacing never lets up like it does on "Eureka" and "Alphas." The season premiere, which features a magical guitar, lightning bolts in the warehouse, and invisible snakes is always moving, whether it's through clever dialogue that finds a way to be both expository and entertaining or through action.

And Ashmore is a fantastic new addition to the series. He's very entertaining. That's the key word about "Warehouse 13" — it's just entertaining. It's not earth-shattering and it's a little forgettable after it's done but it's entertaining for an hour. If only we could say the same about more shows, even on the same network on the same night.

'Eureka,' which airs on SyFy, stars Colin Ferguson, Salli Richardson-Whitfield, Joe Morton, Erica Cerra, Neil Grayston, and Niall Matter. The fourth season returns on Monday, July 11th, 2011 at 7PM CST.

'Warehouse 13,' which airs on SyFy, stars Eddie McClintock, Saul Rubinek, Joanne Kelly, Allison Scagliotti, Aaron Ashmore, and CCH Pounder. The third season premiere airs on Monday, July 11th, 2011 at 8PM CST.

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[19]

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