

TABLE TALK: Arrow- Pilot

Written by RJD

Friday, 19 October 2012 16:07 - Last Updated Saturday, 20 October 2012 10:49

It's another installment of Table Talk! Last time you saw one of these, two self-proclaimed Thor fans discussed the feature film of Thor. And now, myself and our very own Joshua McConnaughey will discuss the pilot episode of the CW superhero drama ARROW. We hope you enjoy hearing our thoughts as much as we enjoyed sharing them.



RJD: Alright, hello everyone who might be reading this in the future. I am here with fellow geek Gasparilla, and we are both going to discuss the recent pilot episode for the new television series ARROW on the CW. Hello, Gasp. Would you care to begin our discussion by telling me/us if you enjoyed the pilot to ARROW?

JM: Sure, Overall I have to say I actually liked the pilot. I was pleasantly surprised by it.

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RJD: That's good. That means we'll have some variation in this discussion, lol. Were there any specific parts of the show that jumped out at you, or was it just success on all fronts?

JM: Well I thought that there were some great action scenes, the score really went well with the show. I thought it was a great new show.

However I did not feel it was a great Green Arrow show.

RJD: Ok, what about this doesn't scream "Green Arrow" to you?

Incidentally, I thought the fights were handled pretty well also. And I will agree that this doesn't feel like Green Arrow either, but I'll say why I think so after you elaborate what you mean. I wouldn't want to step on your toes there.

JM: The character other than using the arrows and the slightly altered origin did not feel like the Green Arrow to me. For one the fact that he openly killed over a dozen henchmen without a second thought didn't strike me as very Green Arrowish to me. He was brooding and sort of dark and felt more like he was a Green Arrow/Batman hybrid of sorts lol.

RJD: I'm glad you said Batman first, lol. So I'm not the only one. Much of this plot, in fact, felt cribbed from Batman Begins, without actually feeling like it was very GOOD. Ollie's lady friend is a spunky DA with a heart of gold, like Rachel Dawes, and she's up against impossible odds with an unlikely ally in the new vigilante on the block. Ollie was gone long enough to be presumed dead, and has come back to clean up his city.

And truthfully, I was almost expecting this to be Batman with all the numbers filed off. After hearing that the creators of Smallville originally wanted to do a Batman show, but they could not, and then seeing Ollie on Smallville, where he often felt like the dark mirror to Clark, like Batman usually is, I was expecting a show where we get Batman in everything but name only.

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But unlike you, I don't think I'm quite as familiar with Green Arrow from the comics to say that this doesn't feel like him. I know that most stories I've read with him, he's cantankerous and he's loudmouthed, but he's ultimately a good person. And while we didn't get that here, I didn't entirely mind that we didn't get that version of Ollie, because the one in the comics didn't start out that way, either. I guess subconsciously I was thinking that he might some day become that version of Ollie but not right away.

JM: In the comics I've read he has a very similar code to not killing as Batman, though he has occasionally gone ahead and killed, he has never killed this many people in a short span that I could think of. I also thought some of the name dropping and character revelations for Merlyn, Black Canary, and Speedy either felt forced or sort of lame. This is definitely a much different character than what we got in Smallville though. (side note did you notice they used the Smallville Hospital and Luthor Mansion?)

RJD: Yes, I wholeheartedly thought that the name dropping was awful. Especially Merlyn. I don't know about you, but I kept comparing this show to Smallville when I was watching it. And I thought Merlyn was filling the Lex Luthor role. Since the Merlyn from the comics is an evil archer, I assumed that, if this show followed the pattern of Smallville, that in Arrow Season 5 or so, Merlyn would be a villain. And the Speedy thing, yeah, that was pretty awful, also.

The only one that could've felt very natural and not forced at all was Dinah Laurel Lance. In the whole episode, they call her Laurel, and then at the end, they call her Dinah. I don't know if that kind of "twist" was even necessary. People who don't read comics almost certainly don't know who Dinah is, and people who do read comics, they probably are familiar enough with Black Canary to know that Laurel is her middle name or maiden name. When I heard her name, I just sorta quietly filed away "ok, she's Black Canary."

One thing that I think is going to both hurt and help this show is that Green Arrow is a much less known commodity than Superman. With Superman, even though it was like 5 years into the show before Lex became a full blown villain, even the people who didn't read the comics knew in the pilot episode that that was the path Lex would soon travel. But with Arrow, I am not sure if people can instantly see that like you and I can, since we read the comics. So that can certainly be an advantage to them, I think. But it can hurt in that they will have to dumb it down even further with things like the name-droppings. I don't know, am I the only one thinking of Smallville and the ways this show is similar to it?

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And yeah, Ollie is living in Lex's house. I know they used that set in the X-Men movies, but at least it kinda felt like they were trying to disguise it. Here, it feels like they just walked onto the set the day Smallville wrapped up for good. That totally took me out of the episode when they got home.

JM: yeah, the fact that they used the set made me feel like this was a smallville spinoff, but only in those parts, I have heard though they only used the sets for the sake of the pilot to save money on budget and once they got greenlit they built new sets, so that could be an improvement of sorts. Though obviously that has nothing to do with the pilot lol. You are right indeed, the Green Arrow is a lessor known hero and there are many things fans of this show will know nothing about, heck even some comic book fans don't know much about the Green Arrow. Speedy using the drugs I can already see going down the path Speedy becomes an addict and OD type thing. I am actually somewhat interested to see what they do to turn Merlyn bad. As right now other then having a thing with Oliver's ex there is no where reason to hate his best friend.

I am not going to lie I think I will be following this show for a bit longer, but I don't really think this is a faithful adaption of Green Arrow at all, yet somehow I don't think I really care lol. I know that sounds bad, doesn't it.

RJD: Well, I have a guess. I think it'll go down the same road as Smallville. If you look closely, when Merlyn and Ollie were kidnapped by those bad guys, Ollie goes to see if Merlyn is ok, then he chases after one bad guy, and we see Merlyn open his eyes. So even though he lied to the police, I am thinking Merlyn knows more than what he is letting on. And then when Ollie later schedules his "welcome back" party where he does, Merlyn kinda questions Ollie about it while pretending like he doesn't know. I have a feeling this will be very similar to the angst that drove Smallville with Lex and Clark and Clark and Chloe and Clark and Lana. Merlyn knows that Ollie has a secret, but Ollie won't tell Merlyn, and that will drive them apart.

As for Merlyn and Dinah having a thing, that was one of 2 things that actually caught me by surprise. In all honesty, I think I like Merlyn better than Ollie, at this point. He clearly has a thing for Dinah, but he jeopardized that to try and repair the rift between Ollie and Dinah. Even after Dinah crushed Ollie, Merlyn tried to fix it. It could've ended with Ollie and Dinah getting naked together, and that woulda been a nice obstacle for Merlyn's seeming romantic feelings toward Dinah.

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The other thing that took me by surprise was that the police officer who we will be seeing a lot of is actually Dinah's father. I don't think that even came out til near the end, when he crashes the party looking for Arrow. I saw the trailer for this pilot and thought he'd be the Jim Gordon that is currently missing in the Batman Begins rip-off party. Which, I guess he could still become that role, but he won't be a fan of Ollie Queen any time soon, and rightly so, if I'm being honest.

What'd you think of Ollie's relationship to that whole family? The two sisters and then their father?

JM: Well I can definitely see the reason they do not like him. I think they can easily make it a somewhat interesting dynamic with the detective, being that he does not like Oliver but I can see him growing to like Green Arrow.

One of the things I did not see coming was Oliver's mom involvement in his kidnapping.

The points about Merlyn you mentioned are something I didn't think about until you mentioned it. Yeah I can see Merlyn does have suspicions and may have seen more then he let on.

RJD: The mom being behind the villains who kidnapped Ollie, I didn't see that one coming either. But I am not sure if I like that plot twist. That and the father in the flashbacks acting like he knows something weird is going on, both of these make me feel that Ollie is the very last person in control of his destiny, and that everyone else in the city is part of some weird conspiracy.

Going back to me comparing this to Batman Begins, in that movie, something traumatic happened to Bruce Wayne, and then he left to transform himself. But here, even though the yacht that Ollie and his father are on is capsized by a storm, it still feels to me like this event and many others are being manipulated by Ollie's mother and possibly other people in Starville (or whatever they thought they had to name his city).

In other words, I really think they should have simplified the plot. That both of Ollie's parents were somehow connected to the salvation of the city, but on both sides, it seems, that to me

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screams that Ollie is not in control of his life, and isn't even the one who decided that he was going to come back and save Gotham like Batman did. I hate to beat a dead horse with a stick, but it's an awful lot like Jor-El thinking that he needed to teach his son all of this mysterious mumbo jumbo when Clark was an adult and didn't need all of his parents to keep babying him like that.

Did you have any strong feelings about the mother and the hints of a conspiracy plot, or am I maybe over reacting?

JM: No, after the reveal I begin to think as well that the mother and her new husband were behind his ship sinking as well, maybe not so much to kill Oliver but to kill the father. When he returned from the dead, and she seemed to want to know what Oliver knew it implied to me that the Queen's and all of these people were in some weird Illuminati like group that controlled everything about the city.

RJD: And did you have a problem with that? I think for me, it implies that Ollie's own version of the heroic journey that we see so often isn't really his journey, but it's something that he's being manipulated into doing. His mom and dad are puppet masters, and he's the puppet. I just didn't care for that.

But speaking of Ollie's step dad, I like him. I know we haven't seen him much, but I realized I had seen him in Alien Vs Predator as the assistant to the old man. I liked him there too, but he had even less to do than here.

JM: again I think this all ties into why I think it doesn't feel like a Green Arrow show. The Green Arrow learned his lesson on his own and wasn't pushed into changing by others and trying to bring down corporate greed and fighting for the little man.

RJD: I think you just hit the nail on the head. Or part of the nail, anyway.

I think that's a good segue into the issues I had with Ollie on the Island. If there was one element of the comics I thought we'd get virtually untouched, it was Ollie ALONE on an island,

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where he learns archery to SURVIVE and then when he comes back, he uses that skill to fight crime. It is one of those "if it's not broken, why bother trying to fix it" things. And if going to the source material is too much of an innovative idea for these people, then they could copy something else, like they did with Batman Begins. I've seen a few people compare this to "Cast Away with Batman" and if they had just done that, I might've been happier. Because Cast Away is basically what I described. He is alone on an island, he learns to survive using skills he didn't have before.

But here, in the first 10 seconds of the show, I was already worried. He tells us in the narration that the island was named in Mandarin for "Purgatory." which makes me think that he met some mandarins on the island, and that the island is going to be some weird version of the LOST island. I don't necessarily mind changing the stuff from the comics when doing an adaptation, but making the island populated with other people makes no sense. If this was 1700, then yeah. But if there was even one other person on the island, then he should have been able to contact his mother as soon as he landed, it seems to me. From what we saw, his father was pretty vague about what Ollie had to do, so it isn't like he said that Ollie needed to stay on the island for 5 years and then leave, even if the opportunity to leave came earlier.

I think if Ollie's opening narration had just said "I was stranded for 5 years," then that would have been fine, for me. But then we see Deathstroke the Terminator's mask, and I don't even know what to think of that. Is Deathstroke working for Ollie's mother, and he knew they were on THAT island, and he came to kill Ollie's dad, maybe? I would have preferred Deathstroke not even meeting Ollie until after the show starts. It's weird that they're trying to combine this character into Ollie's origins, when Ollie's origins didn't need to be tampered with, I didn't think.

What did you think of the island?

JM: Right now like you I think the island leads me to believe he met and encountered others on it, they made a point to show that he could now speak Russian which also leads me to believe he learned from somebody on the island and just didn't read a book that washed up on shore. Plus all of the scars they pointed out I think will turn out to be from some weird test he did with a tribe or something on the island. Also taking in to account that he is suddenly up to date on technology that he should have no knowledge of after being gone for 5 years. and if somebody taught him that, how did they not have access to ways to talk to people off of the island.

I think they may have sort of ruined the whole island thing as well. To me, him being alone of

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that island would have been better, even if maybe he met some tribe that was trying to kill him or something taht were native to the island with no contact to the outside world, but that is not what some of the things seem to be hinting at all.

RJD: I am assuming that if you keep watching the show, you'll get a flashback to the island in each episode. Which just doesn't interest me. To me, the story isn't there. The story is in Star City, with all the corruption and Ollie fighting it. That would be like if each episode of Smallville had a 10 minute segment on Krypton. Nice gesture, but no. I think having Ollie meet all these people that you and I both seem to think he will meet on the island, that makes the sudden urgency to get back to the real world feel really weird that we see in the opening of the pilot.

I think I might be running out of things to talk about, but what did you think of Ollie's body guard/chauffeur, Diggle?

JM: I kind of liked him, and think he is going to become an ally of Oliver in the future that might know he is the Arrow (or they calling him just the Arrow ala the Blur? lol or is he the Green Arrow and they just shortened it for the title?)

RJD: Actually, I don't think they called him by name in the episode. He is just the hooded man, or the man in the green hood. I think, like you suggested, if they call him anything, it won't be his superhero name from the comics. A lot like "The Blur" from Smallville.

I saw someone say that this show is "about" what it takes to have a secret identity in the present day. And I assume they were talking about all of the scenes with Diggle and Ollie. Because Ollie's mom hiring a security guard to watch Ollie's every move seems to exist, from a story telling point of view, to make things harder for Ollie. But if I was going to watch any more of this show, I would get very aggravated with the Diggle subplots very quickly. It seems to me that Diggle should know that Ollie is the hooded man immediately. Ollie escaped from the car that Diggle was driving, so at that point, if I put myself in Diggle's shoes, I would think Ollie was going to find a prostitute or drugs. But then later at the party, Diggle sees Ollie steal his sister's drugs and throw them away. Diggle seems pleased with this, which was an interesting thing that I kinda wish we could have seen them discuss a little, even if it ended in Ollie saying "mind your own business." But then Ollie actually physically attacks Diggle so he can go off and be the hooded man. So by this point, Diggle shouldn't find it to hard to say "oh, this guy I'm guarding who attacked me, at that same time, an attack happened next door." I am afraid that in typical Smallville fashion that this is going to be dragged out for like 2 seasons before Diggle knows. IF

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the man has any brains at all, he should have found out in this very episode.

JM: I agree, that is not something that should be dragged out very long, like I said I have a feeling it may be sooner rather than later that he lets Ollie know he knows and like I suggested perhaps becomes an ally.

RJD: So any closing thoughts, Gasp? I personally don't think I'll be watching this show again. As is, it comes on at an inconvenient time for me, and I just don't see myself seeking out new episodes, after how luke warm/angry this episode made me feel.

JM: I will watch it again, Like I said I liked the show, just that its not a Green Arrow show, if I was looking at it as a pure Green Arrow fan I would be upset and not like it though. BTW you knew Diggle is named after one of the writers for Green arrow?

RJD: I knew there was a comic book writer, Andy Diggle, but I wasn't certain that was what they were going for.

If you have nothing else to say, I think we can safely conclude this installment of the Table Talk about the Green Arrow television show. Readers, let us know if you agreed or disagreed with us in the comments, and don't forget to rate the article to put a smile on our faces.

JM: I think we are good, was fun discussing the show