

Back behind the badge

Allison Tolman stars as a police chief in 'Emergence'

By Kyla Brewer
TV Media

Now that the fall television season is in full swing, a cornucopia of new shows is competing for the attention of TV fans, and only the strong will survive. One of the most promising series seems to have it all with a mix of drama, mystery, suspense and science fiction, not to mention a very likable star.

Allison Tolman (" Fargo ") plays Jo Evans, a police chief who takes in a young girl, Piper (Alexa Swinton, " Billions "), after she's found unscathed near the scene of a mysterious crash in " Emergence," airing Tuesday, Oct. 1, on ABC. Piper has no memory of what happened or who she really is, so Evans tries to uncover the truth about the girl's identity while also trying to protect her from people with unknown motives. As the plot thickens, the investigation uncovers a conspiracy that puts Evans and her loved ones — including Piper — at risk.

Evans struggles to keep Piper and her own daughter, Bree (Ashley Aufderheide, " Going in Style," 2017), safe as she delves into the mystery behind the unexplained disaster. All the while, bizarre electronic disruptions wreak havoc around town and a strange cryptic symbol seems somehow related to Piper and the crash.

The role of Evans requires a careful blend of strength and empathy, something Tolman talked about in an interview with collider.com in July.

"What I really wanted to do was make sure that she was nurturing and caring and warm and really felt like a person we trusted with this kid," Tolman explained. "I wanted her to be driven by being good at her job and a sense of common decency."

Developed by " Kevin (Probably) Saves the World " creators Tara Butters and Michele Fazekas, " Emergence " was originally produced as a pilot for NBC. When the Peacock network passed on

the show, ABC snapped it up, but there aren't any hard feelings. According to deadline.com, NBC executive Paul Telegdy commented on the ABC pickup during an NBC Upfront press call.

" Emergence ' is a great show, one that we couldn't find a home for on NBC. We are delighted it has found a future on ABC," Telegdy said.

It's clear that ABC has faith in the series. The network has been heavily promoting " Emergence " since the pickup was announced, and it even tried to whet viewers' appetites by releasing the first nine minutes of the show's first episode a full month before the premiere date. On Tuesday, Aug. 27, the network gave audiences the opportunity to view the opening scene of the series, which could be watched on YouTube, ABC.com, Twitter, Facebook and Hulu, as well as on select on-demand services. In a unique twist, the video was released at 3:10 a.m. ET, which is the time of day the mystery begins for Evans and her colleagues at Long Island's Peconic Bay Police Department.

" Emergence " boasts an intriguing premise, but that isn't all it has going for it. The show's cast members have plenty of experience in television. In fact, this isn't even Tolman's first time playing a police officer. She gained widespread acclaim for her role as police officer Molly Solverson in FX's " Fargo," a reimagining of the famed 1996 Coen Brothers film of the same name. The breakout performance not only made her a star, but it also netted her Emmy and Golden Globe nominations, along with a Critics' Choice Television Award for Best Supporting Actress. Tolman's other television credits include " Downward Dog," " The Mindy Project " and " Good Girls."

While Tolman's co-star Swinton may be young, her resume is enough to make most seasoned actors jealous. She's appeared as Eva Rhoades in Showtime's " Billions " since 2016 and has



Donald Faison and Allison Tolman co-star in "Emergence"

snagged roles in " Manifest " and " Saturday Night Live," among other high-profile series.

The supporting cast of " Emergence " includes Donald Faison (" Scrubs ") as Evans' ex-husband, Alex, who's concerned about what's happening in their sleepy little town. Reuters investigator Benny Gallagher (Owain Yeoman, " The Mentalist ") wants to get to the bottom of what's going on as well. At the police department, Evans works alongside fellow officer Chris Minetto (Robert Bailey Jr., " The Night Shift "). She

also relies on the support of her best friend, pediatrician Dr. Abby Frasier (Zabryna Guevara, " Gotham "). Meanwhile, her father, Ed (Clancy Brown, " Carnivàle "), keeps his sense of humor as he battles cancer.

The stellar cast is sure to draw viewers, and ABC has a proven track record with the mystery-thriller-drama genre before. The network's " Lost " had TV viewers riveted with its story of plane crash survivors on a mysterious island when it premiered in 2004. A " Lost " alum could bring the

magic back with a recurring role in " Emergence." In August, news broke that Terry O'Quinn, who played John Locke in " Lost," would appear as ruthless self-made billionaire Richard Kindred in " Emergence."

With its supernatural bent, " Emergence " is part of a sci-fi/fantasy prime-time trend that includes superheroes, ghost hunters and even fairies. It may be tough to lure viewers from binge-watching such series as Netflix's " Carnival Row " and the Disney+ streaming service's " The Man-

dalian," and it'll also face stiff competition in its time-slot from the other big networks. CBS's established " NCIS: New Orleans " already has a loyal following and NBC's medical drama " New Amsterdam " pulled in impressive ratings last season, and both are in direct competition with " Emergence " for live viewers.

Only time will tell if ABC's latest offering will prevail in the ratings. Watch the mystery unfold as Evans strives to protect Piper in " Emergence," airing Tuesday, Oct. 1, on ABC