



TV SHOW REVIEW

BACK TO LAZY SUPERHERO SHOWS

NAFIS IMTIAZ ONISH

The Devil of Hell's Kitchen, the unyielding girl, the man with unbreakable skin and the sworn protector of K'un-Lun — an ensemble of heroes you did not know or care about until MCU's bold ventures into the TV screen. Unfortunately, the first season of "Marvel's The Defenders" is just as underwhelming as the adjectives that the show constantly throws at its superheroes.

"The Defenders" is a crossover of Marvel's underdogs whom you have grown to love from their stand-alone shows i.e. Matt Murdock aka Daredevil, Jessica Jones, Luke Cage and Danny Rand aka The Iron Fist. The fifth show of the MCU franchise, "The Defenders" was much awaited by its fanbase, including yours truly. Netflix had finally broken the shackles of below-par superhero shows (looking at you, CW) and stood as an example of how to craft the perfect superhero series through Daredevil. However, there has been a precipitous drop in quality from Daredevil and Jessica Jones to Luke Cage and the worst of the lot, Iron Fist.

The Defenders picks up from where Iron Fist left off. After extensively teasing about the mystic criminal organization who call themselves The Hand, the show finally connects the four stories. The show revolves around the heroes who are each

working individually with one common goal in mind — to save New York City. Burdened with their own personal challenges, Matt Murdock, Jessica Jones, Luke Cage, and Danny Rand realize that they likely won't be able to accomplish their goals working solo. That realization leads them to team up and form The Defenders.

To address a common question: do you need to watch ALL the episodes of the 4 shows chronologically? Well no, you do not. The show does a good job of explaining important plot points from the previous shows which effect the defenders. However, considering the show revolves heavily around Matt Murdock, it is better to binge watch the 2 seasons of Daredevil beforehand. Moreover, watching the standalones prior to the show will help you relate to the show more and get more of a reaction out of you. Since the very first show came out in 2015, I had a bit of trouble recognizing some minor characters and recalling their backstories. But that being said, you quickly get a grip of things whether you watch the standalone shows or not.

Back to the story, I felt the script let the show down. Yes, it is a superhero show but that is no excuse for lazy script-writing. The plot seemed way too simplified for the most part and everything felt a bit too coincidental. The major events were mostly being at the right

place at the right time. The fact that the Defenders' union was a pure coincidence takes all the joy out of it. What was supposed to be the biggest moment of the series felt disappointingly underwhelming as a result. Besides, the entire show promises very high stakes but it never feels like it.

The script was also intended to delve into the philosophies of being a "vigilante" but the writers failed to come up with a single original line. There were all the cliché lines you can think of from all the superhero franchises over the years which are basically the variants of "with great power comes great responsibility" and "the hero Gotham deserves but not the one it needs". The action sequences, again, were below par except for a few good long shots or pans. Daredevil was so widely loved for its raw, realistic action. When you compare Daredevil's corridor fight scene with those from The Defenders, you realize how much more visibly choreographed and "safer" the fight scenes have become.

Furthermore, superhero shows rely heavily on the lead characters. Yet, like everything else in the series, the characters too seemed a bit too familiar with all the formulaic traits. There is "The One", the key to the destruction, Iron Fist whose job is to keep reminding everyone every 2 minutes how he is the sworn protector. If "Bend the knee" hadn't

become the catchphrase of 2017 already, "I am the Immortal Iron Fist" would surely claim the title. Luke Cage serves as the force of good in the team while Jessica Jones is the reckless superhero. Daredevil is the leader of the team and probably the only mildly interesting character with somewhat character development. But nothing we haven't seen already.

There were a few positive sides nonetheless. The dynamic between Jessica and Matt was fun to watch and the moment when they first meet is undeniably the highlight of the season. The varying use of colours to reflect the different moods of the characters was pretty ingenious. While Jessica's scenes were more monochrome, Luke's scenes had more colour with rap playing in the background to paint a gleeful mood. Daredevil's scenes have a reddish taint to represent the chaos in his disturbed mind. The snappy comic-like transitions between the shots seem pretty cool at first but soon get overused. The final episode is the only decent episode where the events feel significant enough to engage the viewers.

So at the end of the day, The Defenders falls into the vortex of passable superhero shows capitalizing on its loyal viewership to make easy money. I desperately hope that they will come back with a well-thought-out script for the next season and restore our waning hope on superheroes.