

## For All Time. Always. – *Loki* Season 1 Review

By Aurelio De Leon, Jr.

One thing I can say about the Marvel shows thus far, is that they're all different; their tone and energy all have distinctive characteristics that distinguish them from each other in a way that keeps them fresh. With *WandaVision* we had a decade-hopping sitcom style with a sinister and magical undertone, with *The Falcon and the Winter Soldier* we had a much more grounded action set up mixed with a political drama, and now with *Loki* we have a unique otherworldly, time travelling, mind-bending, magical adventure comedy. Though Loki has always been the upside to the earlier Thor films for his comedic and mischievous qualities, I never quite connected with or enjoyed the character beyond those surface level interactions. So much like the aforementioned shows, this was a great opportunity to explore another underdeveloped character and get a deep dive into what makes him tick. In that sense, these shows seem to be providing a sort of therapy for these severely damaged characters by placing them in the foreground to confront some harsh realities about themselves. (Spoilers ahead)

Co-starring alongside Owen Wilson as Agent Mobius and Sophia Di Martino as Sylvie or Enchantress, Tom Hiddleston's Loki takes its audience on a comedic thrill ride through time and reality, completely shattering our understanding of this universe. After the mishaps that take place in *Avengers: Endgame*, that timeline's Loki escapes with the tesseract and promptly gets captured by the Time Variance Authority or TVA; think of them as time police, maintaining the order of our main timeline. Loki thrusts us into the thick of it with heavy exposition regarding time travel, timelines, variants, and ancient time gods, but manages to introduce it in an amusing and appealing way while the audience is still bewildered by this whole new world. This series by far feels like the liveliest of the bunch; everything is working in conjunction and though its premise lends itself to more whimsy than the other two, it seems like it's having the most fun with the material. The likable characters, the varied settings, music, humor, plot, and world building are all in harmony, making this the standout Marvel show of the year for me. Even our mysterious antagonists throughout the show play their parts very well, both intriguing the audience and sowing doubt in the bureaucracy of the TVA (as if its DMV vibe wasn't enough to do that).

Developing relationships is one facet in particular where *Loki* really thrives, whether our characters' relationships are being strengthened or diminished. This can even be seen in one of our early antagonists in Ravonna Renslayer, played by Gugu Mbatha-Raw, and her relationship with Mobius. Clearly there is a lot of history between them and the show does a great job of creating it and stretching it to its limits in such a short amount of time. The familiarity and rapport they are able to establish in this short time also extends itself to the relationships that Loki finds in Mobius and even...himself. I think most people would agree after seeing this show that the spirited banter and chemistry between Mobius and Loki is nothing if not wholesome and it is truly riveting to see their budding friendship blossom before us. I think this friendship is only matched by Loki's relationship with another new character in Sylvie who we find out is a

variant female Loki from another timeline. Over the course of these six episodes this pair demonstrates such a complicated yet powerful connection with each other, and who other than our narcissistic gods of mischief can fall in love with different versions of themselves. The way these characters and their motivations balanced each other made them perfect foils to one another, especially considering how varied their paths in life were. Even up to the very end when Loki claims, "...you can't trust...and I can't be trusted," you can't help but feel for them in this cyclical, twisted, and tragic romance. The motif of these relationships building and falling apart are quite cathartic and it really grounds this fantastical adventure and makes it stand out among the rest. (Heavy Spoilers ahead)

All of these shows were really yearning for a formidable villain and I'm happy to say that I believe we have found that villain in *Loki*. Jonathan Majors is introduced into the MCU as He Who Remains, better known as Kang the Conqueror, a regular human scientist turned time lord who experienced the chaos of the multiverse and decided to streamline it. Majors plays this version of the character with a hint of eccentricity that highlights the encumbered mind of one so all-knowing. His presence alone marks an important milestone for future Marvel properties and the looming threat of his less than kind variants lurking around the corners of the multiverse is an exciting prospect. All these elements combined, not to mention the creative visuals and atmosphere created by the grand sets and sci-fi music, propel this series as one to watch out for...especially since *Loki* was the only show to have a season two confirmed so far. With that said, I'm more than excited at where this show will go and it's a must watch... For all time. Always.