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Review: Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D. Season 6 Episode 5 - "The Other Thing"

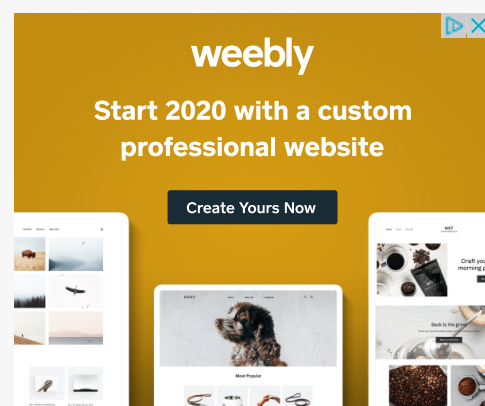
2019-06-18 16:15:00 by Chris Compendio

Back to as normal SHIELD can be

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It was a bit strange going from two high-concept episodes in three and four, each focusing on a different narrative, to a pretty standard one that tried to tie everything together. Now all of the pieces appear to be set, motivations seem to be clear, and characters are reuniting. Yet I still can't scratch away the feeling that something about this season of *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.* is really irking me at the moment.

I still haven't figured out why Clark Gregg is still in the cast. Maybe the showrunners felt that it wouldn't be the show about him, but take Coulson's face away from the "bad guy," make some plot adjustments, and you'd have essentially the same story. There must be a reason later down the road to justify the move, but the writers must be doing a poor job at leaving out clues, if they're even trying to in the first place.





Melinda May does the emotional heavy lifting in this episode, coming face to face with Clark Gregg's Sarge, all while flashing back to her final days with Phil Coulson on Tahiti. The show is going out of its way to distinguish Coulson and Sarge, eliminating possibilities of one being an LMD, Skrull, or what have you, further adding to the mystery. It makes me wonder why they look like each other in the first place. This episode however does add the frightening possibility that Sarge, a being who has been in the universe for a long time, might be the "original," with Coulson as the real doppelganger.

It's an efficient storyline, confirming to fans what they believed the endgame to be with the wider threat presented in this season. These evil parasitic "birds" (they're totally bats, despite what the show tries to tell me) are known as the Shrike, and Sarge and co. are here on Earth to destroy them before they take over yet another planet. Armed with this newfound information, May will have to make some difficult decisions while pushing the plot forward—these aren't exactly the nicest and most trustworthy dudes, but S.H.I.E.L.D. and Sarge's gang (mostly under S.H.I.E.L.D. custody at this point) will probably have to trade some knowledge.



By the time May returns to the S.H.I.E.L.D. Lighthouse base, she'll be greeted by the most boring and tepid plot line that the show has seen since its first season. I was excited by Mack starting his official tenure as Director, but with bouncy and interesting personalities like Daisy, Fitz, and Simmons across the damn galaxy (no Deke in this episode either, despite his big splash of a return last episode), all he has is Yo-Yo, who appears to have lost all personality in the gap year, and the mostly dull new scientist character Benson.

Yo-Yo is far too used to loss to react to losing his new boyfriend, the doomed redshirt Keller, and Mack's attempts to confront her do nothing for either of them or the audience. Meanwhile, Yo-Yo expresses distrust for Benson, for absolutely no reason other than the fact that this part of the episode needed some sort of drama. Benson does, however, make the essential discovery that the knives used to kill the Shrike share crystal properties with the mysterious Monoliths from seasons yore, promising some wild goose chases in the future, and at the very least, a change of scenery as Benson, who previously was indifferent and flummoxed by all of this S.H.I.E.L.D. business, suddenly becomes proactive to investigate further.



Meanwhile, Team Space has found themselves in a pickle. The Chronicons have taken Fitz hostage, and we learn that their homeworld has been destroyed by a mysterious plague. Knowing that the S.H.I.E.L.D. folks dabbled with time travel in the previous season, these passive observers-turned-belligerent survivalists strike a deal that end up turning the beloved Enoch against the S.H.I.E.L.D. crew, with Fitz and Simmons reunited (as hostages) and the rest (Daisy, Piper, Davis) back on Earth to reunite with the rest of the team.

Both groups have a lot to bring each other to speed about.

It all felt very contrary to what was described about these beings previously in the show, and it's another moving piece for S.H.I.E.L.D. to worry about. It's odd how disparate all of the plot elements of this season feel from each other: you have these parasitic bats threatening the world, the mythology of the Monoliths coming back into play, some dirty-looking sonuvabitch with Coulson's face, and a legion of emotionless robots trying to unlock the secret of time travel to save their own world. All four of these plot threads could all be their own seasons.

For those not keeping track, there are eight episodes to wrap all of that up, and somehow tie it into a cohesive whole. In its early days, I've doubted *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.* and have been proved wrong. It isn't unusual to see this juggling act from the show before (remember that season that juggled Ghost Rider, the Patriot, LMDs, and the Framework?), but with less space to work with, that juggling act is going to have to be a lot more impressive this time.



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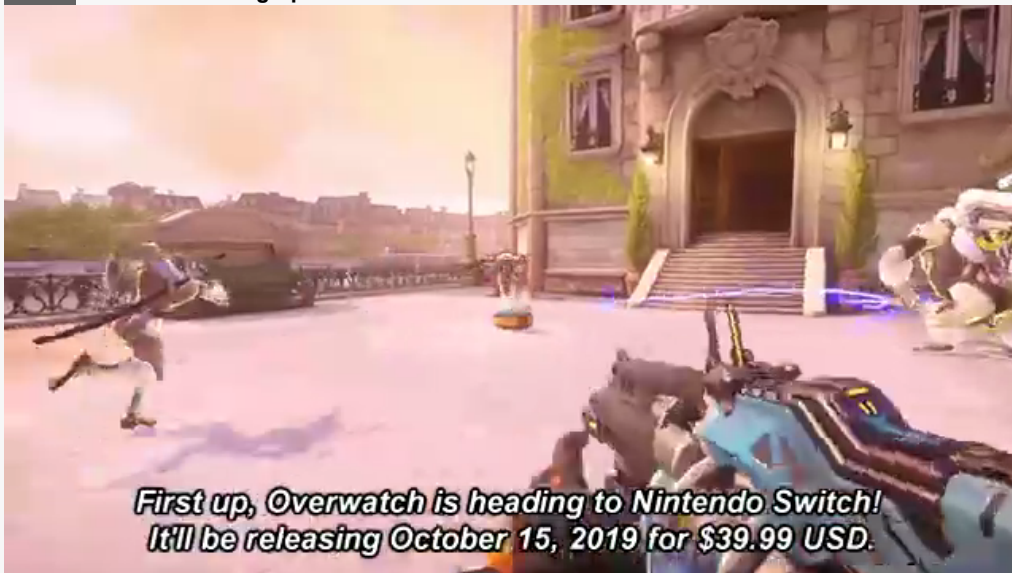
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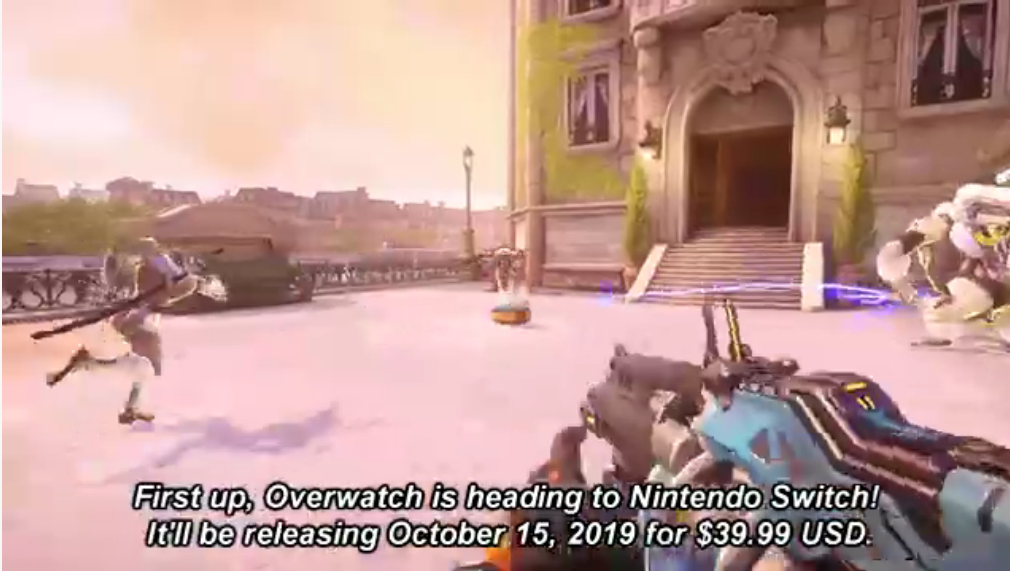
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Disney reveals launch windows for Marvel Disney+ shows, second season of The Mandalorian

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In an earnings call yesterday afternoon, Disney CEO Bob Iger revealed when fans can expect to see the company's upcoming slate of Disney+ shows. Pretty much everything is set to debut after the summer movie season, likely in an attempt to not cannibalize the ticket sales of Marvel's films this year. First up is *The Falcon and Winter Soldier* for August, followed by *The Mandalorian* Season Two in October, and rounded off with *WandaVision* in December.

Iger also stated that there will be much more *Mandalorian* coming after the second season. That could be hinting at spin-offs or possibly shorts, but the CEO didn't clarify. As well as that, Iger said that the *Star Wars* universe will be focusing on television productions in between now and whenever the next trilogy launches. Disney clearly isn't slowing down, even if "fans" are angry.

I kind of expected *WandaVision* to launch in December. The project was originally slated for 2021 and releasing it in December would still technically count as 2020. That's kind of a dick move, but I'd also

rather Disney take the time to make sure that show is solid. Same goes for *Loki*, which was conspicuously absent from this earnings call.

As for *The Mandalorian*, I have a feeling Disney is going to drive that series into the ground. Just call it a hunch, but Iger talking about "more" doesn't fill me with confidence.

