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The Gifted: Magneto Was Right



Published 2 years ago on March 13, 2018

By **Chris Compendio** 

In five seasons and one-hundred episodes of television, our favorite agents of S.H.I.E.L.D. have frequently saved the planet from numerous catastrophic events—all without the rest of the world really noticing. In a way, this could serve as a metaphor for ‘Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.’ as a whole; the show has been a trailblazer in storytelling in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, but never reaches the same fanfare as the films, or even the Netflix shows. But as May reminded us in the previous episode, S.H.I.E.L.D. still has “a small but loyal fanbase.”

So it’s natural that this landmark event of a one-hundredth episode would want to pay some fanservice for that small and passionate base, in some fun, albeit contrived ways. And that fanservice comes in the form of a Doctor Who-esque “crack in time” that accesses our agents’ minds to create a “fear dimension” (a phrase that is difficult to take seriously) as a result of the Kree beacon blowing up three Monoliths in its proximity. And with that, it’s old enemies galore running amuck in the Lighthouse. Kreepers, LMDs, Roaches, and even Hive and Lash sort of but barely wreak havoc.

Fitz may have cracked a way to put an end to this wormhole nonsense, but this Gravitonium-powered method may put an end to the person who deploys it. Coulson, being the hero he is (or as we debated about later, the hero he wants to be), volunteers, to the protests of his teammates. There’s been so much suffering amongst the team, Daisy reminds him, and they’re going to need Coulson. But as Coulson dramatically collapses, we are thrown into an explanation on Coulson’s health and “the real deal” with Ghost Rider.

We had a moment in the previous episode in the “borrowed” van, where all of the S.H.I.E.L.D. members reminisce about all of the hardships and enemies they’ve faced. As much as this show is about stopping world-ending threats, it has also been an intensely personal journey for each of the characters. In this one-hundredth episode, it is more so about saving themselves than saving the planet. This is an episode that tries to mix in heavy, emotional beats with action sequences of spectacle, something that the show has usually excelled in.

“You did this wrong, Phil,” May tells Coulson, after he reveals that his deal with the metaphorical devil involved burning off the Kree blood that has kept him alive since his previous brush with death at Loki’s hands. Ironically, years later Loki would still be the cause of death for Coulson. It’s a secret that Coulson compartmentalized, hearkening back to the Nick Fury days of old. Fans have always felt that Coulson was the glue to the Phase One films, but here he serves a greater purpose as not only the glue, but as the symbol and inspiration for his team. “There’s nothing without you,” a tearful Daisy tells a dying Coulson—and with that, we are meant to think, is there a television show without Phil Coulson?

But with these circumstances coming to light, we have little time to think about that, sending Coulson straight to the rabbit hole. We wonder what kind of horrors this haunted house of a basement could provide for Coulson—his old friend, and secret HYDRA sleeper agent Sitwell? Yet another return from Ward? Heck, perhaps Tom Hiddleston had some time from its schedule. But only one figure is there to greet Coulson, and it makes sense on multiple levels. Mike Peterson was the show’s first “superpowered freak of the week,” the first superhero that the show created. With his self-aware apparition tempting Coulson, we have gone full circle.

And it’s truly a sequence to behold, one that is entirely a verbal exchange. This isn’t real, faux Mike Peterson tries to tell Coulson. He’s dying on the operating table, with all of the events being a dream, a fiction of his mind, merely a story of the hero that he wanted to be. Now, we as the audience must be thinking that this couldn’t be true—we’ve been invested in these characters for years, and so much of the show has been from the perspectives of others. But in this moment, the audience is questioning this reality the same way Coulson is. How can S.H.I.E.L.D. save the world over and over again with no one noticing? I felt a true, existential and anxious fear regarding one of my favorite television shows currently on the air. It almost serves as a metaphor for the television shows’ status as MCU canon—could it possibly be true that the entirety of ‘Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.’ was false, a mere fantasy?

The hard answer is a resounding no. Coulson wants to believe that all of this pain, suffering, joy and triumph (displayed through some well-edited smash cuts) was the real deal, and so do we the audience. And thanks to Deke, who ventures out into the outside world in a fish-out-of-water and almost Mr. Bean-like fashion, the real Mike Peterson and a bunch of extra S.H.I.E.L.D. agents are sent in as reinforcements. With Deathlok as Coulson’s wingman, we finally get into the spectacle. And... it ends fairly quickly. Seriously. It really only took one hit for each of these monsters to go down, even the behemoths of Lash and the very much so hyped Hive. Then Coulson puts the doodad in the crate and everything is fine, without the life-ending catastrophe that Fitz initially promised. It is a rushed and underwhelming climax—but hey, at least the show is totally, totally MCU canon. Right?

Now here is some fanservice that would melt even the hearts of the coldest Frost Giants: the wedding of Fitz and Simmons. With an excess of tragedy and loss and terror, the everlasting romance between these two has been a rare beacon of light, comfort and joy. “Organic” is an overused word by television writers and critics, but that’s just what Fitz-Simmons has been—something earned,

something to root for, something to cry over when they go through absurd, sci-fi-infused obstacles and triumph over them. It's this emotional exchange of vows, this visual of how far these characters we know and love have come, that is the force behind this episode—not the shoot-em-up of villain past. But 'Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.', always throwing shocking plot twists in the midst, had to drop the bomb that Deke is indeed, Fitz and Simmons' grandson. How this will factor into episodes to come is totally unknown to me, but will hopefully be something interesting to play with.

I wish I could say that I look forward to another one-hundred episodes of S.H.I.E.L.D., but that would be a bit too optimistic. It's interesting that showrunners and writers of this episode Jed Whedon, Maurissa Tancharoen and Jeffrey Bell created tension not just from the possibility of our protagonist's death, but from the very idea that this story and these characters, mostly unnoticed by both the Marvel Cinematic Universe and our real world, may not matter in the grand scheme of things. But if there is one lesson to be taken from this event episode, it is that regardless of what the answer is, regardless of whether your friends watch this show with you or not, regardless of the corporate politics between Marvel Studios, Marvel Television and Marvel Entertainment may be, 'Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.' matters. 'Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.' is real.

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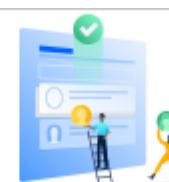


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Punisher Season Two Carefully Balances Frank's Humanity, but Struggles With Dual Conflicts



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By Brooklyn Wallace

PUNISHER SEASON 2 REVIEW



On January 18, *The Punisher* will be back on Netflix, with **Jon Bernthal** returning to keep the character alive on a platform where Marvel shows have been producing great quality, but still haven't been able to survive. Fans were first introduced to the character in *Daredevil* season two, where fans learned the backstory of Frank Castle, a veteran and father, whose family was killed in front of him after returning from war. When Castle returned to Netflix for his stand-alone series, we got a slightly altered background story, focusing on his war buddy, Billy Russo, played by **Ben Barnes**, as a force behind the killing of Frank's family that day by the carousel.

Season two of ***The Punisher*** has some strong moments, particularly in the beginning. While season one hinted that Castle's fighting days may be over, as he took the identity of Pete Castiglione and sat in on some group therapy, season two shows that Pete is just as much of a fighter as Frank.

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By **Caleb Borchers** 



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FEATURES

How Daredevil Season 3 Depicts the Fight Against Real and Present Fears



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By **Chris Compendio**



(Content Warning: mass shooting tragedies in the United States; Spoiler Warning for *Daredevil* season 3)

Those living in the United States have gotten too accustomed to bad news. Every mass shooting, wildfire, and other various tragedies have become distilled to push notifications on phones and headlines on cable news. I've felt a certain guilt for an increasing indifference as the bad news has

increased in volume, but I felt this even more so when the news finally reached me personally. The Tree of Life shooting in Pittsburgh set something off in me, as I went to school mere miles away from there, and I visited Squirrel Hill for leisure and errands regularly. I felt sorrowful and uneasy knowing that such a nefarious act was committed in an area I once considered to be practically my backyard.

It had an eerie and troubling effect on a piece of media that I treasured, as only a couple of weeks before this real-life tragedy, Netflix released season 3 of *Daredevil*, which prominently featured a

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